

**Rebecca Ruth Gould and Kayvan Tahmasebian (eds) (2020). *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*. London: Routledge, pp. 562, £190/£35.99 ISBN: 9781138555686/9781315149660**

**A** comprehensive interdisciplinary volume with thirty-one essays divided into eight parts, *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*, part of the *Routledge Handbooks in Translation and Interpreting Studies* series, makes a bold, significant and timely intervention on the relatively under-researched phenomenon of translation activism. With a transnational perspective that covers varied and original case studies from diverse languages, cultures, geographies and time periods, the premise of the handbook centres on the role of translation in inciting change and mediating social injustice. Especially compelling are its focus on minority cultural and linguistic contexts and its emphasis on the potential of translation to give voice to the political struggle of underrepresented communities. The contributions are underpinned by diverse theoretical and applied approaches, grounded in the rigorous application of translation theories as well as in first-hand experience and observation. Topics range from feminist approaches to food, to activist wall art, to legal interpreting and anticolonial translation. There are useful links made between the chapters under the subheading “Related topics”, to be found at the end of each essay, which not only facilitates comparative study and reflection, but also highlights the universality of many of the issues at play.

The editors’ introduction emphasises the significance of the project in shaping new directions in the field and helpfully teases out a nuanced definition of “translation activist”, highlighting the “act” which is central to activism.

The second chapter, “Theory, practice, activism: Gramsci as a translation theorist”, is a contribution by Marta Natalia Wróblewska, who shows how Antonio Gramsci’s prison notebooks can be read as activist translation. The critic emphasises the potential of his “open Marxism” for contemporary Poland, where progressive movements continue to be hampered by the accusations of communism.

Michela Baldo’s essay “Activist translation, alliances, and performativity: Translating Judith Butler’s *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* into Italian”, which comprises the third chapter, examines the influence of the Italian translation of Butler’s 2015 work by Federico Zappino on queer transfeminist groups in Italy. Baldo interrogates the persistent power dynamics in activist translation through analysis of its intersections with concepts of performativity, solidarity and alliance.

Chapter 4 “Thought/translation” by prominent Iranian activist Morad Farhadpour, abridged, translated into English and briefly contextualised by

the editors, outlines the vital role played by translation in advancing intellectual radicalism in Iran, particularly during the reformist movements of the 1990s.

Manuel Yang's essay "Translating Marx in Japan: Yoshimoto Taka'aki and Japanese Marxism", which makes up the fifth chapter in the volume, is an analysis of Yoshimoto Taka'aki's reformulation of Marxist ideology for the Japanese New Left in the 1960s, which is included as an abridged translation into English by the contributor.

In Chapter 6, "*Okyeame poma*: Exploring the multimodality of translation in precolonial African contexts", Kobus Marais brings to light the multimodality of interlingual practices in pre-colonial African contexts through analysis of data on *okyeame* (linguist) and *okyeame poma* (linguist's staff) of the Akan people.

In Chapter 7, "Translator, native informant, fixer: Activism and translation in Mandate Palestine", Sarah Irving shows how the everyday practice of Palestinian Arab translators in the British-ruled Palestine of 1920-1948, whilst not overtly political, implicitly engaged with the anticolonial struggle for social justice.

By way of contrast, the eighth chapter, "Translation in the war-zone: The Gaza Strip as case study", by Malaka Shwaikh, shows how Orientalist approaches to translation in Palestine's Gaza Strip have obscured indigenous voices and perpetuated imperialist discourse.

Chapter 9, a contribution by Eylaf Bader Eddin entitled "Translating mourning walls: Aleppo's last words", uses Barthes' work on reading images, coupled with "thick translation", to expose the limits of the English-language translations of Aleppo's activist wall-art following the 2016 Syrian ceasefire.

The tenth chapter, Hafida Mourad's "Resistance, activism and marronage in Paul Bowles's translations of the oral stories of Tangier", considers Tymoczko's definition of translation as resistance and engagement in relation to the translations of oral stories from Tangier by American composer and writer Paul Bowles (1910-1999), suggesting they defy norms of both Moroccan and American culture.

Chapter 11 returns to the Iranian context with a piece by Mehrdad Rahimi-Moghaddam and Amanda Laugesen, "Translators as organic intellectuals: Translational activism in pre-revolutionary Iran", on the potential of translators as "organic intellectuals" to simultaneously undermine and bolster dominant discourse in the pre-revolutionary period.

In the twelfth chapter of the volume, "Translating for *Le Monde diplomatique en español*: Disciplinary norms and activist agendas", Tania

P. Hernández-Hernández analyses the impact of the work of the translators of four editions of left-wing periodical *Le Monde diplomatique* in Mexico between 1979 and 2010.

Chapter 13, "Written on the heart, in broken English" is a personal account by Ayşe Düzkan of her experience as an activist translator in Turkey working in dialogue with international feminist movements. Düzkan, who has been imprisoned for her activism, explores how translators in minoritised languages resist the dominance of English through the use of what she terms "broken English".

Chapter 14, "Writing as hospitality: Translating the fragment in Arabic and English", is also a reflective piece by Palestinian poet and researcher Yousef M. Qasmiyeh that explores the impossibility of locating origin in fragmentary writings in Arabic and English.

Brahim El Guabli's "Joint authorship and preface-writing practices as translation in post-'Years of Lead' Morocco", the fifteenth chapter, considers cases of joint authorship and preface-writing in Moroccan testimonial prison literature which surfaced from 1998-2009 as activist translation.

Chapter 16, by Amanda Hopkinson and Hazel Marsh, is entitled "Activist narratives: Latin American testimonies in translation" and examines the intersections between testimony and translation activism, in this case though the multimodal translations of song and oral *testimonios* from across the Americas.

The seventeenth chapter, "The right not to have an interpreter in criminal trials: The Irish language as a case study", by Noelle Higgins, draws on the case of *Ó Maicín v. Éire* in discussing the impediment posed by lack of access to a bilingual judge and jury for speakers of the Irish language.

"The right to understand and to be understood: Urban activism and US migrants' access to interpreters", the eighteenth chapter, by Sahar Fathi, also focuses on legal interpreting, in this case in relation to language access for immigrants in the United States.

Chapter 19, "Feminism in translation: Reframing human rights law through transnational Islamic feminist networks", by Miriam Bak McKenna, analyses the work of activist translators in Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) and Sisterhood Is Global Institute (SISI) in providing inclusive and culturally sensitive translations of women's rights discourse for Islamic communities.

In Chapter 20, "Against a single African literary translation theory", Mukoma Wa Ngũgĩ outlines the importance of multilingual translation between and beyond the African continent's many languages, emphasising the political

dimension of the translation of African literatures and the need for engagement with African translation theories.

Also on African literature, Chapter 21, “The single most translated short story in the history of African writing: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and the Jalada writers’ collective” by Moses Kilolo, explains the development and challenges involved in the widespread translation of the Gikuyu-language fable “The Upright Revolution: Or Why Humans Walk Upright”, which was undertaken by the translation collective Jalada, of which Kilolo was founder. “The dialectics of dissent in postcolonial India: Vrishchik (1969-1973)” by Khushmi Mehta comprises Chapter 22. Mehta examines how the translation of regional Indian literatures in the Vrishchik periodical served as an act of dissent, challenging monolithic conceptions of national culture in the wake of decolonisation.

Chapter 23, “Bengali Dalit discourse as translational activism: Studying a Dalit autobiography” by Bidisha Pal and Partha Bhattacharjee, centres on the activist collaboration between translator and writer in the case of the memoir of Bengali Dalit author Manoranjan Byapari.

Aria Fani’s “What is asylum? Translation, trauma, and institutional visibility”, Chapter 24, interrogates the legal category of asylum, arguing that activist translation and interpretation of the associated legal jargon is crucial in ensuring fair asylum claims. Fani draws on case studies from his work as interpreter for Central American asylum seekers in California.

In Chapter 25, “Citation and recitation: Linguistic legacies and the politics of translation in the Sahrawi refugee context”, Yousif M. Qasmiyeh and Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh explore the problematic processes of translation and citation in accounts from the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria, showing the need for translation which does not replicate colonial identifiers.

“Resistant recipes: Food, gender and translation in migrant and refugee narratives”, Chapter 26, by Veruska Cantelli and Bhakti Shringarpure, uses the framework of feminist food translation to contest gendered stereotypes about food in relation to refugee communities. The authors demonstrate the act of resistance inherent in translations of recipes and cookbooks by migrant women.

Chapter 27, “Late-Qing translation (1840-1911) and the political activism of Chinese evolutionism” by Kuan-yen Liu, analyses the role of ideologically-conscious cultural translation in influencing the policies and reforms in Chinese political culture during the Late-Qing Dynasty.

In Chapter 28, “‘The pen is mightier than the sword’: Exploring the ‘warrior’ Lu Xun from 1903 to 1936”, Min Gao examines how writer and translator Lu Xun sought to incite social change in China through his translation work, with a focus on his concept of “hard translation” [*yingyi*].

Omid Mehrgan draws on his own experience as a translator in Iran in Chapter 29, “The political modes of translation in Iran: National words, right sentences, class paragraphs”, to show the limits of postcolonial approaches to translation processes in contemporary Iran, especially given the “dichronism”, or competing influences of tradition and modernity, in the post-revolutionary period.

In Chapter 30, “Civil resistance through online activist translation in Taiwan’s Sunflower Student Movement”, Pin-ling Chang embeds extensive data from *CNN iReport* in Bourdieusian theory to examine how digital technologies enabled activist translation during the Taiwanese Sunflower Student Movement of 2014.

Finally, to close the volume, Paul F. Bandia offers an Afterword, “Postcolonialism, activism, and translation”, summarising the many forms that activism can take and the ways in which it responds to systems of oppression.

Overall, this foundational volume demonstrates the wealth of activist translation taking place across the globe, highlighting the crucial role of the translator-mediator in combating inequality and empowering the disenfranchised. It shows how translation is an inherently political act, with essays that underline the responsibilities of the activist translator in the crossing of cultural and linguistic boundaries whilst elucidating the potential pitfalls of the translation process. The urgency of this multilingual, multicultural and multimodal project resonates all the more in the climate of 2020+, with the global surge in right-wing populism, the eruption of Black Lives Matter protests and the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. ***The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*** will no doubt serve as a useful and indeed accessible text of reference for translators, scholars, teachers and students in the field of Translation Activism and, more broadly, across the disciplines of Translation and Interpreting Studies, Literary and Cultural Studies, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science and Legal Studies.

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