

DisLocated Readings: Translation and Transnationalism

Leah Gerber and Rita Wilson

Monash University

In an attempt to foster new collaborations and departures, the theme of the ASAL mini-conference, 'DisLocated Readings: Translation and Transnationalism', (held 21-22 February 2013 at Monash University, Australia) drew attention to the translational dimension and the transnational currents of Australian literature, past and present. One of the principal aims of the conference was to explore the effects of globalisation on Australian literature in its broadest definition, encompassing life-writing, migrant, refugee and Indigenous fiction, as well as writing in languages other than English. The essays assembled here are truly transnational in focus, considering Australians writing in their own country and in different parts of the world, bi-cultural Australian writers, and the reception of Australian writing in translation. Amongst the essays selected for this special issue of JASAL it was particularly pleasing to note the great interest in this area of research from an upcoming generation of scholars in Australia, as well as from many others based overseas, confirming the multiple forms, directions, and intersections of studies into Australian literature and translation. When considering the submissions, we felt it would be constructive to give prominence to the work of these emerging researchers whose novel approaches are, to a degree, still developing. These readings have the potential to introduce new ways of thinking about Australian literature.

The first three essays in the collection consider transformative journeys, and metaphoric, cultural and linguistic translations. The conference intended to bring together scholars, creative writers and professional translators to exchange views on the theme of Australian literature in transition, and its translation and transnational contexts. It is for this reason that we begin this issue with a dialogue between Australian author Alice Pung and her Italian translator, Adele D'Arcangelo. Asking Pung and D'Arcangelo to discuss their journey of writing and translating, as well as the reception of the outcome by non-Anglophone readers, seemed an obvious way of weaving together dis-located ways of reading and understanding the Australian literary context. In this reflective piece, Pung comments on how her writing—which focuses on her experience growing up in multicultural Australia—is so frequently categorised as migrant literature within Australia, whereas the reception of her work in translation has instead highlighted her 'Australianness'. As D'Arcangelo comments, for the Italian reader, the work's Australian setting overcomes the boundaries of language and space, enabling a wider and more eclectic readership to become familiar with Pung's story.

A very different migrant experience is explored by Colleen Smee, who looks at the transnational literary journeys of Australian writer Amy Witting and a Lithuanian migrant Elena Jonaitis. Tackling two diverse genres, an autobiographical memoir and a fictional novel, the author recounts how Witting collaborated with Jonaitis, for whom English is a fourth language, empowering her to write her memoir, entitled *Elena's Journey*. Witting then undertook her own transnational journey to write her novel *Maria's War*, a book which is underpinned by Jonaitis' life experiences yet remains 'essentially Australian'. Smee's essay alerts us to the need to broaden categories of 'ethnic' Australian writings as including more than migrant narratives. In the third essay, Astuti brings to the fore, issues of gender, religion and conflicting cultures, in an examination of the symbolic narratives of reincarnation in two novels by Asian Australian women writers. Using settings across Australia and Asia, and

showing evidence of the writers' portrayals of Occidentalism through their Asian characters, Astuti explores the different ways in which these writers attempt to represent Orientalist stereotypes, via the theme of reincarnation.

The next series of essays interrogate another key theme of the conference: space, place, language and (trans)national literature. Anna Gadd begins by reflecting on her translation of Elizabeth Jolley's *Mr Scobie's Riddle* into Italian. Her focus is on the relationship between space and language, and on feelings of displacement conveyed through key words, such as 'home' and 'house', as well as through the neat distinction established by these. Gadd also investigates the way in which these concepts and key words are not always easily maintained in translation. Space is also a central interest in Page's investigation of James McAuley's relationship, as an Australian poet, with the physical landscape of his geographic home, and the execution of a poetic vision in the metaphors of landscape. The essay traces the various European influences on McAuley's poetry, including his translations of Georg Trakl in the 1970s, and examines the poet's struggle to establish moments of poetic vision in his vignettes of an authentic regional Tasmanian landscape against the persistent sense of Australia's lack of older cultures and traditions.

Moving on from literary studies to the field of translation studies, we note a growing interest in research into transnational space, as well as notions of spatial disruption in a transnational society. Questions around this theme, including those related to language and its position in a globalised society, are also central to the narratives of Janette Turner Hospital. Trevitt's article explores how Hospital's refusal to acknowledge any national ties is reflected in her work. It considers the use of imagery, intertextuality and a very careful choice of words (and languages) to explore the notions of movement and space that are pertinent to the discourses of transnationalism and translation today.

The final two essays investigate the transnational reception of Australian literature in non-Anglophone contexts. Kampmark surveys the reception of Australian literature in the Serbo-Croatian-speaking republics of Yugoslavia until 1991 and its reception in Serbian translation from 1991 until today. Comparing two anthologies of Australian fiction, the essay seeks to address which Australian authors have been translated most frequently; what might have spurred the interest in certain authors and works in particular periods; and what factors have contributed to the presence of Australian literature in Serbian translation. Gerber, too, looks at Australian works in translation, focusing on Australian children's texts by non-Indigenous writers translated into German. She examines how the notion of Aboriginality is translated into German, questioning whether the—often foreignising—strategies employed by the translators of these texts elicit similar reactions in target readers, particularly when it comes to racist terms.

In summary, our contributors have shown a willingness to push the boundaries of accepted approaches to the field, examining diverse literary products and the creative interactions among them. The various perspectives brought to bear on the discussion of Australian literary production reveal the processes of continual translation—of both the other and oneself—that are at work in Australian cultural spaces, and provide further insights into the debate on the 'transnational turn' in Australian literature.