

43rd International Wolfenbüttel Summer Course

Cultural Translation

(Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, 14-26 July 2019)

Convenor:

Doris Bachmann-Medick (University of Giessen)

Application deadline: 15 March 2019



Kader Attia, *Modern Architecture Genealogy*, 2014

Topic

In the wake of the current “translational turn,” the category of translation has developed far beyond its traditional linguistic and textual dimension. As a cultural practice it has become a “modus operandi of our times” (Robert Young). As an analytical category it has become a “vital meeting point” (Lawrence Venuti) of the humanities and social sciences. But “translation” also has strong historical potential – for viewing historical events, processes, scenarios, and periods through a new lens and for questioning assumptions about stable cultural “identities.” Conceived from this perspective translation does not only explore a new problem field, but unfolds into an **analytical category** or **methodological concept** that has a wide, transdisciplinary range of application: it becomes effective as a valuable tool for investigating scenarios and situations that contain shifts between different contexts or passages from one level to another – indeed from one culture into another – that are more complex than those of hermeneutic understanding or mere transfers and mediations. Translation brings the production of meanings in microscopic scenarios to the fore, by acknowledging breaks, ruptures, asymmetries, misunderstandings, and transformations. Cultural Translation, thus, is not a transmission between holistic cultures, nor a mere bridge-building operation. It has to be seen as a negotiating force in in-between-zones. As such, translation must also be seen as a revealing **cultural and social practice**, at work in historical situations of passages, in context changes and upheavals in such various fields as conversion, mission, diplomacy, peace negotiations, status changes, etc.

This summer course aims at more than just riding the fashionable wave of the recent expansion of the translation category into an inflationary metaphor. To the contrary, it aims to return to a more concrete understanding of cultural translation, especially by referring to historical, anthropological, and other empirical case studies. This orientation includes a microscopic view of specific translational situations, interactions, and negotiations and a refocusing on mediators and cultural brokers – concrete persons who are involved in an intercultural or political encounter but are all too often suppressed.

We will cover the following transdisciplinary topics:

- The formation of a “translational turn“ beyond the transmission of languages and texts (introduction)
- Linguistic transmissions as cultural translations (early modern period, translation in peace negotiations and diplomacy) (Gerstenberg)
- Translation as a category in contrast to hybridity, transfer, transformation, transcription, travelling concepts, etc. – providing insights into micro-processes of historical transformation
- Cultural translation and its impact on a new conceptualization of culture (culture as constituted by translation, as a dynamic of differences which translation helps not to bridge but to negotiate; the translational character of cultural objects themselves in their non-holistic structure, hybridity, and complexity) (the example of the Habsburg Monarchy as a multiethnic society)
- Translation as a modus of dynamic entanglements, hybrid overlappings and translational identities outside states of national belonging (the example of the Middle Ages)
- Translation as an analytical category – epistemological dimensions (against dichotomous binaries, suggesting in-between thinking, exploring new methodological approaches to interstitial spaces considered as translation zones)
- Translation as an “agency of difference“ (Haverkamp)
- Translation as a social (or historical) practice – at work in border situations, context shifts, creations of third spaces, actor-oriented perspectives (Fuchs)
- Translation as a political tool (cultural interventions in power/gender asymmetries, social movements, migration) (Doerr)
- Translation of concepts – (transcultural) conceptual histories (Begriffsgeschichten) from the perspective of translation (Lianeri)
- Transfers of knowledge resp. visibility/image cultures as translation processes (role of emotions, images, media, etc.) (Kern)
- Empirical/historical examples for translational approaches (field studies on conversion, mission, diplomacy, human rights, the arts, etc.) (Kern, Gerstenberg, etc.)
- Translation in postcolonial contexts and global history – displacement, unequal power relations, dealing with asymmetries (Mignolo, Chakrabarty).

Course tutors

- **Nicole Doerr** (University of Copenhagen, Department of Sociology)
- **Martin Fuchs** (Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, University of Erfurt – Anthropology, Sociology, Indian Religious History)
- **Annette Gerstenberg** (University of Potsdam, Romance Linguistics, French and Italian)
- **Margit Kern** (University of Hamburg, Department of Art History, Latin America)
- **Alexandra Lianeri** (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Philology, Classics Department, Translation Studies)

Organisation

The Summer Course is addressed to masters and doctoral students and will be conducted in English. Mornings will be devoted to presentations by the participants and to workshops led by senior scholars in the field. Key readings (in English and German) will be circulated in advance. In the afternoons, participants will be able to use the holdings of the Herzog August Bibliothek for their own work and will have opportunities to hold individual or group discussions with those teaching the course.

The library offers up to fifteen places for participants and will cover their expenses for accommodation and breakfast. Each participant will receive a subsidy of 100 Euros to cover living costs. Participants are expected to pay their own travel expenses.

There are no application forms. Applicants should state their reasons for wishing to participate in the course and send a c.v. that describes their academic career and their current research. Please also supply the address of an academic referee who may be contacted to provide a reference if needed. The deadline is **15 March 2019**.

Applications should be submitted, preferably by email, to:

forschung@hab.de

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