

---

GENTZLER, Edwin. *Translation and Identity in the Americas, New Directions in Translation Theory*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2007, 214 p.

---

Edwin Gentzler is an American German-studies, comparative literature, and translation scholar. Known for providing the first comprehensive overview of emerging trends in the rapidly developing interdiscipline of translation studies in his first book *Contemporary Translation Theories* (2001), he is exploring themes from his first book in *Translation and Identity in the Americas, New Directions in Translation Theory* (2007).

In this study, Gentzler examines the mixture of cultures that constitutes the Americas and the effects these mixtures have on language and translation. From Brazil, Canada to the Caribbean, Gentzler goes behind language and the process of translation within a community. He takes a look at the history of a country and how this history has affected the language(s) used within the country. He talks about colonialism and how this was the beginning of translation because languages and cultures were being brought to new places, “during the colonization process immigrants arrived from all over the world, certainly from Europe as colonizers, from Africa as slaves, and from Asia and Latin America as laborers, bringing their specif-

ic languages and cultures” (10). Gentzler believes because of the history of colonialism within the Americas, translation is not just an activity but a movement that can help out, “these immigrants, migrants, and refugees are always in the process of translating, both as means to resist assimilationist pressures. The Americas are primarily made up of immigrants, migrants, and refugees, and thus translation operates in the Americas not as an isolated linguistic or literary activity, nor as a postcolonial metaphor or trope, but as concrete, historical movement with the power to include and exclude” (7).

Gentzler believes that translation is an open door to a new world in that it enables people to enter a translated world. In other words, a translation facilitates the opportunity to learn about a new culture and its people. However, this opportunity has a limit, according to Edwin Gentzler’s study, which proposes that translation, perhaps unintentionally, restrains on identities and cultures.

Translation nowadays is more frequent throughout the

Americas than forty years ago. More languages, other than Spanish and English, are being translated, such as French, Portuguese, and Italian to name a few. New languages and dialects are being discovered due to translation. However, Edwin Gentzler points out that translation has affected communities because of the way translators depict the non-English speakers. Translations have a tendency to cast away the non-English speakers; “one of the reasons why there is so much poverty and ghettoization in the culture of the United States is that the parts that do not fit—invariably are cast aside. Examples include Amerindians relegated to reservations, Chinese immigrants centralized in Chinatowns, blacks impoverished in urban ghettos, Latinos relegated to the *barrios*, and many ethnic minorities and non-English speakers, mostly men, incarcerated in a disproportionate fashion. With no national translation policy, there is no policy of mediation, negotiation, com-

munications, or inclusion" (9). Gentzler explores translation as a whole; the pros and cons, the effects of translation on a whole community, and what the Americas as a whole has to offer the epidemic that translation has become. He believes that with a better structure of translation, then translators will not outcast a group of people.

The titles of each of the seven chapters, in this work are notable: Chapter 1; Introduction: New Definitions, Chapter 2; Multiculturalism in the United States, Chapter 3; Feminism and Theater in (Quebec) Canada, Chapter 4; Cannibalism in Brazil, Chapter 5; The Fictional Turn in Latin American, Chapter 6; Border Writing an the Caribbean, Chapter 7; New Directions. The book begins with a forward by translation theorist and comparative literature scholar, Susan Bassnett. In her foreword, Bassnett gives us some quick facts about Edwin Gentzler. She also goes into giving some insight into the chapters of the book. Bassnett

as a translation theorist herself also gives us her opinion and review of the book, "Translation, he suggests, is not a secondary, marginal activity; rather, it is a pro-active potentially liberating activity that stimulates innovation. The examples of how translation has functioned across the Americas serve to stress the importance of the articulation of different narratives of cultural diversity and linguistic independence. The next step is to use the lessons that can be learned from understanding past cultural trauma in order to reach out to new possibilities in a troubled global age. (Susan Bassnett, Foreword xiii).

In the second chapter titled "Multiculturalism in the United States"; Gentzler discusses the fact that even though the United States is a varied country varied in terms of cultures and ethnicities, lacks translation or at least translations that do not outcast a group of people. He affirms "minorities are excluded from that power sharing, often because of the very *lack* of available trans-

lations and inadequate policies” (page 5). The power he refers to is the power that English-speak-

ing people have when it comes to translating.

Anabel Castelán  
St. Lawrence University

---