

Book review

Kristiina Taivalkoski-Shilov and Bruno Poncharal, eds., *Traduire les voix de la nature / Translating the Voices of Nature* (= *Vita Traductiva* 11)

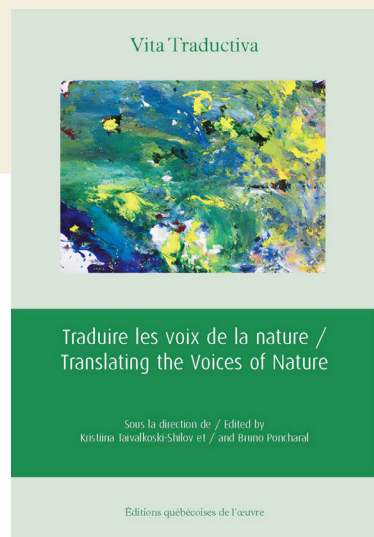
Quebec: Éditions québécoises de l'œuvre, 2020, 235 pp. Print version: ISBN 978-2-924337-15-8, electronic version ISBN 978-2-924337-16-5.

Reviewed by Tamara Mikolič Južnič 
and Adriana Mezeg 

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

In response to increasing worldwide interest in eco-translation, or the ecology of translation—fed above all by the pressuring effects of climate change and increasing concern for the environment, as well as a new awareness of the role of translation in the fight for a better, more sustainable future—Kristiina Taivalkoski-Shilov and Bruno Poncharal have produced a valuable overview of some of the central themes in the field. The volume is certainly timely, considering the increased interest in eco-translation in recent years, at least since Cronin's (2017) seminal work, and the number of conferences and panels dedicated to the topic (most recently at the IATIS 2021 conference in Barcelona).

Taivalkoski-Shilov and Poncharal, with the collaboration of six other authors, have assembled a collection of articles with a broad scope. Drawing on Taivalkoski-Shilov's considerable knowledge of the concept of voice and Poncharal's interest in environmental policies, the edited volume spans a wide variety of topics and territories, all connected by the overarching theme of reconceptualizing translation studies (and translation as a practice) to include the relationship and especially communication between humans and non-humans—that is, nature in its various forms. The discourse necessarily culminates in the need to expand “the sphere of translation ethics to account for the non-human world as well as the human” (7). This is achieved in all the contributions, and primarily in Taivalkoski-Shilov's introduction, through the



concept of voice, as explained in Taivalkoski-Shilov (2013), which “has proven to be an effective tool with which to study a wide range of complex interactions in translation” (9). Because the concept of voice is understood as polysemous (*ibid.*), it lends itself well to being applied to a number of features of non-human nature or actors in the translation process, as shown through the contributions to the volume.

Following Cronin’s (2017) appeal for a move toward a post-humanistic perspective, the authors of the articles build on existing concepts in the framework of eco-translation, expanding on them to encompass previously (virtually) unexplored phenomena. The fundamentally social and cultural approaches focus more or less overtly on the equality and interconnectedness of man and nature in all its forms, in a move away from the anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism that characterized several thinkers through history (see especially Wioleta Karwacka’s and Agnes Whitfield’s articles).

In addition to the introductory article, the volume is composed of four sections, to which a note on the contributors is added at the end.

In the introductory article, “Increasing Ecological Awareness in Translation Studies: A Voice-Based Perspective,” Kristiina Taivalkoski-Shilov sets the theoretical framework and reveals the motivations behind the conception of the volume. She embraces Cronin’s (2017) post-humanistic perspective in expanding the scope of translation studies to account for ethical concerns related to the non-human. The second part of her article introduces the contributions to the collection, offering a synthetic overview of the volume and extracting the most important common ideas in them. As Taivalkoski-Shilov (17) notes, one of the recurring conclusions of the articles collected in the work is that non-human voices are easily (and probably often) “misconstrued, misinterpreted or even erased in translation”.

The second article, “Frictions of the Environmental Imaginary in Translation: The Minakata/Dickins Collaborative Translation of Kamo no Chōmei’s *Hōjōki*” by Daniela Kato, presents the voices of two translators whose differing approaches to environmental imagery, summed up with the position of power appropriated by the English translator Frederick Dickins at the expense of the Japanese Minakata Kumagusu, result in two versions with a diverging eco-political agenda that reflects the translators’ agency. The article provides a detailed presentation of the lives and motivations of the two translators and the complications that arose due to Dickins’ changing social position.

The third article, “Les voix de la nature dans la nouvelle de Gottfried Keller *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* et dans ses traductions” by Mathilde Fontanet, presents a comparative analysis of the short story *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (Romeo and Juliet in the Village), written in 1856 by the Swiss author Gottfried Keller, and its five main translations into French, published between 1864 and 1949. In the source text,

nature manifests itself at several levels in the form of voices associated with the narrative voice. The author of the article confines herself to three passages that focus on descriptions, narrative structure, and elements of characterization. By examining the extent to which the voices of nature from the source text are reproduced in the French translations, the author shows that all the translators paid attention to the voices of nature, but none of them succeeded in reproducing their intensity and preserving their complexity, which is the art of translation.

The second section of the volume, devoted to animality and subjectivity, contains two articles. In the first, “Paroles de bêtes et critique de l’anthropocentrisme chez Angela Carter: de la traduction à la réécriture de *La Belle et la Bête*,” Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère continues her earlier research on the dynamics of translation and rewriting of fairy tales. In this article on translation, ecocriticism, and ecopoetics, the author discusses Angela Carter’s English translation and two rewritings of the fairy tale *La Belle et la Bête* (Beauty and the Beast) for adults, which reveal Carter’s critique of anthropocentrism. Focusing on the representation of nature and the verbal exchanges between the two protagonists, Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère presents Carter’s feminist and ecocritical approach to the translation and rewriting of *La Belle et la Bête*, which changes our perspective on the work.

In the second article, “De *Being a Beast* (Charles Foster) à *Dans la peau d’une bête*: traduire l’expérience animale?” Bruno Poncharal first discusses the difference between the original (sub)title of Foster’s *Being a Beast* and its French translation (literally, ‘In the Skin of a Beast’), which leads to an inevitable distortion of the animal experience in the translated text. The author then focuses on the linguistic changes at the epistemological level and attempts to define the changed perspective on human–animal relations in the source and target texts. He concludes that the morphosyntactic malleability of English is better suited to capture the diversity of animal subjectivities and remove the boundary between animals and humans.

The third section of the volume is dedicated to editorial, pedagogical, and translational challenges and starts with the sixth article, by Kristiina Taivalkoski-Shilov: “Introducing *Silent Spring* in Finland in 1963 and 1970,” which stresses the influence of two paratextual voices on the reception and success of a translated book. The accompanying texts of the two versions analyzed, written by two prominent figures with different views on the value of *Silent Spring* for Finnish society, appear to determine the success (in the earlier journalistic translation) and the failure (in the book edition, reprinted in 1970) of the work. While Taivalkoski-Shilov shows how the two translations differ in handling certain important passages, with the first translation following the original (or its intentions) more closely, she highlights how it is through the paratexts and peritexts surrounding the translations that the real agenda of the publishers can be revealed.

Agnès Whitfield's article, "Translating Animal Voices in a Changing Pedagogical and Environmental Context: Thompson Seton's *Wild Animals I Have Known* in French," focuses on two animal stories by Ernest Thompson Seton and compares how the voices of animals are represented in the original by Seton, who assumes a multiple role as author, protagonist, and narrator, and by the French translator. Whitfield shows how Seton's intersemiotic translation of the animals' voices is manipulated in the translation for them to adhere to the changes in the social context of the target text.

In the next article, "Assessing Shifts in Animal Intentionality and Anthropomorphism in the Translation of Popular Science Texts from English into Polish," Wioleta Karawacka departs from the majority of the other contributions to the volume both in the choice to analyze popular science texts instead of literary texts and in the design of the research, for which she analyzed student translations, concentrating on their treatment of anthropomorphic elements in the source texts. Again, the results show how the translated texts tend to misconstrue the animals' voices, amplifying their anthropomorphism and intentionality. Despite the small scale of the study, the results are significant in that they expand the scope of the volume outside literature.

Similarly, the last article, "Translation, Natural History and Music: Thinking Communication beyond the Verbal" by Lucile Desblache, is also a step beyond the more traditional understandings of the concept of translation toward the inclusion of non-verbal translation as represented in natural history and music. These concepts, which seem to be unrelated at first glance, are brought together by Desblache to open new horizons for future research in eco-translation.

In conclusion, whereas Cronin (2017) focuses more on intralingual and intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 1989), the articles in this volume explore interlingual aspects, shedding light on the way the voices of nature are treated by translators in translations and by other actors present through paratexts and peritexts. One of the most valuable aspects of the edited volume is the inclusion of research contrasting a range of different languages (most frequently, but not exclusively, English in combination with another language, such as Japanese, French, Polish, or Finnish) in different historical periods and in different text types, as well as other semiotic systems, showing how ecological concerns in translation can be found anywhere. Although the scope of the individual articles may be limited by a (perhaps necessarily) small number of texts analyzed or by the number of available subjects for study, each of them represents a part in the collective character of the volume.

References

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About the authors

Dr Tamara Mikolič Južnič is Assistant Professor at the Department of Translation Studies of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia). She was the lead researcher in two EP projects and published two volumes as well as articles in several journals and edited volumes. Her research interests include translation studies, translator and interpreter training, community interpreting, contrastive linguistics, corpus linguistics, Italian linguistics.

Dr Adriana Mezeg is Assistant Professor at the Department of Translation Studies of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia). Her research interests include literary translation, translation flows between Slovenian and French, power relations in the translation market, analysis of translations and translation strategies from French into Slovenian and vice versa in various text types using a corpus-based approach. She is a co-author of two university textbooks on French grammar, an author of a scientific monograph and an editor of several books on translation studies.