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Contours of Translation Studies in Australia

Anthony Pym

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Abstract

Although portrayed as Anglo-Irish culture that invaded an Indigenous culture and then added immigrant cultures, Australia is a space of multilingual superdiverse cities where translation plays a hidden but constitutive role in developing historical awareness, providing social services and moving towards an inclusive society. The need to provide social services to immigrant communities drove early advances in remote interpreting and professional certification, without the language-rights policies that have prevailed elsewhere. The policy discourse on multiculturalism has been dominated by language learning and, in the case of Indigenous communities, language recuperation, often with scant awareness of the roles played by translation in setting in place the materials and motivation for learning. Loosely reflecting current multilingualism, recent historical work on the presence of Malay, Indonesian, Chinese, German, Valencian, French and other languages in the early trade contacts, settlements and missions is nevertheless revealing an extremely diverse past. Yet there remain unknowns. In particular, there are indications that translation between pre-invasion Indigenous languages may have been for reasons other than information transfer, and that it was probably secondary to code-switching by polyglots. This may provide clues for the ecological virtues of non-translation in a contemporary world where technology allows everything to be translated.

1. Introduction

Research and scholarly debate on translation (which here includes interpreting) has remained a marginal concern in Australia, despite the many major social issues in which translation is involved. Australia requires translation for the inner workings and historical identity of its richly multilingual society, based on waves of immigration and on problematic relations with Indigenous communities. It has responded to those needs by enacting a diversity-based language policy, achieving advances in translation services across physical distance, and developing perhaps the world's most complete and complex institution for certifying translators and interpreters. Hence one might expect translation scholars to be particularly involved in the relevant social issues and the institutional responses to them. What one finds more readily, though, is a policy discourse dominated by the ideologies of language learning, a mode of professionalisation focused on the pragmatics of service provision, and a narrative past full of facts but without critical awareness of how language relates to alterity. Here I thus seek out discourses on translation in the margins: among translators, translator trainers, missionary linguists, critical historians, and the writers and filmmakers who increasingly make language alterity a feature of Australian cultural products.

2. Translation and Language Policy

The history of Australia as an insular English-speaking country is marked by prolonged ideological dominance of what Michael Clyne (2008), translating from the German “monolinguale *Habitus*” (Gogolin 1993), named the “monolingual mindset”. Australia has nevertheless become a space of multilingual superdiverse immigrant-based cities.

Why the focus on immigrant communities? Because the decades immediately after 1950 were marked by growing European immigration. The professionalisation of translators and interpreters was then a coordinated government response to the language problems experienced by the newly arrived immigrants, as made clear in a series of surveys from 1971 (Gentile 2018). The 1975 Henderson Report traced out the relation between poverty among immigrant communities and the failure to provide adequate language services.

In was in that context that Australia set about debating its national language policy, formulated in 1987 (Lo Bianco 1987, 1990; Ozolins 1993). Translation was to fit in with that policy. Unlike the European context, where policies were fundamentally designed to protect national languages (Coulmas 1991), the impetus behind Australian language policy was highly pragmatic, attempting to overcome linguistic exclusion from social services: “Interpreting and translating ought to be regarded as an *aspect of service provision* in Australia rather than a welfarist program for the disadvantaged” (LoBianco 1987, 14, italics mine). Translation could thereby be seen as a means to an end, rather than a question of rights in themselves.

In retrospect, this distinction provides an important key to understanding the position and role of Translation Studies in Australia. As Ozolins points out (1991, 108), the trainers of translators and interpreters in Australia in the 1980s were virtually inventing their professions as they went, operating through trial and error: “there was no strong research tradition elsewhere – here or overseas – on which they could draw, certainly for the type of interpreting practiced in Australia, and only marginally for the kinds of translations generally undertaken here”. To take the most obvious example, work on simultaneous interpreting is important for Europe but of relatively little consequence in Australia, where there are fewer multilingual conferences. Interestingly, Ozolins (1991, 109) gives a 1990 list of areas where research was felt to be needed: user attitudes, assessment procedures, cognitive issues, curriculum development, and the socioeconomics of translation and interpreting. International Translation Studies has since developed in all those areas, but it would be difficult to argue that Australia led the way.

That said, the relation between translation and language policy has not entirely been left to the pragmatics of service provision. One of the clearer aims of Australian language policy has been to foster languages other than English, which are seen as national resources and potential generators of wealth (Ozolins 1993, 256). As Hlavac (2016a, 61) comments with respect to the 1987 policy, multilingualism “was now no longer a liability but an aspirational outcome of school instruction”. In keeping with this vision, the government white paper *Australia in the Asian Century* (2012) saw enhanced language learning as necessary for relations with Asia, but it had little to say about translation. That is, although linguistic diversity is clearly related to translation services, most of the research on Australian language maintenance has continued to focus on education, not translation. This would seem partly due to conceptualisation of translation as an aspect of service provision, as well as to the prevalence of immersion methodologies among language educators, with translation seen as a

non-communicative teaching method (see Pym, Malmkjær and Gutiérrez-Colón 2013, 98–106). Indeed, Lo Bianco (2009, 56) complained that one of the reasons for the decline in language learning was “too much emphasis on the teaching of translation and grammar”. Translation, or at least a certain non-creative way of using it in the language class, was seen as an impediment to language learning.

There are, nevertheless, several obvious connections between translation and language learning that still warrant investigation. First, the production and coordination of learning materials for many languages often requires translation processes, particularly in the recuperation of Indigenous languages (see below). Second, most obviously, if people do not learn languages well, they cannot perform well as translators (a logical point made in Hlavac 2016a and partly captured in generational terms in Hlavac 2016b), and additional training is required to work as professional translators or interpreters. Although Valverde (1990) argued that the internally available multilingualism could be put in the service of export industries, the kind of language spoken at home by “heritage speakers” is not the kind of terminology-heavy language, often written, needed for export industries. In policy and in practice, translation has conceptually remained by and large a function of service provision.

In stark contrast with such pragmatism, a provocative human-rights claim has been made by Chakhachiro (2017), who argues that errors in official translations into Arabic challenge “the right of migrants to preserve their languages and cultures within Australian law” (3) and thus compromise Arabic speakers’ “rights as full citizens to engage and integrate in the Australian society, and to be included and empowered through communication in their own language” (17). These claims are remarkably European in tenor, based on an ideal of multilingualism where all official languages should have equal rights and where democratic participation can in theory be in any one of those languages. The actual policy documents in Australia, however, seem not to contemplate any right to participate in all aspects of society in a language other than English. Galbally (1978, 104) certainly spoke of immigrants’ “right to maintain their cultural identity and heritage”; the *Multicultural Bill* of 2018 makes much of “promoting” access to services, “encouraging” the maintenance of cultural diversity, and ensuring “the right of multicultural Australians to fully participate in Australian society free from discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status”. As a consequence of such policies, the Australian government supports multilingual education programmes and finances major media channels (SBS radio and television) that offer services in languages other than English (see Carroll and Mueller in this volume). Language is certainly in the mix of values that are to be cherished, but only to the extent that you cannot be discriminated against because of the language you use. That is not the same thing as having the right to exercise full citizenship in a language of your choosing. Unlike New Zealand, Australia never signed a treaty in terms of which such rights could be accorded. In Australia, rights concern services, and translation is only an aspect of service provision.

To that extent, Australian language policy has helped bring translation knowledge particularly close to social needs. At the same time, it has steered research away from abstract rights and clear of relations with language learning.

3. Professionalisation as a Response to Social Needs

Australia was the first country in the world to offer free telephone interpreting to its immigrant communities, operating from 1973 in Melbourne, Sydney and Perth (Ozolins

1998). Why telephones? Because one thing the country has, in abundance, is distance, both internal and external: distance has been recognised as an actant in Australian history since the work of Geoffrey Blainey (1966). Just as radio had been used for education in remote areas, telephones made geographical sense for interpreting.

Australia was also the first country in the world to devise a comprehensive national accreditation scheme for translators and interpreters. The National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) was incorporated in 1977 and remains to this day the most intricate, self-justified and bureaucratic system of its kind, with a developed meta-translational discourse. Given the date, NAATI's creation can be seen as a response to systemic failures within immigrant society, where language differences were associated with poverty. That is the context within which translation and interpreting have been professionalised in Australia.

In historical terms, NAATI must stand out as a success story. In 2020 it reported certifying “practitioners in 179 languages including 40 Indigenous languages” (2020, 8), producing a total of “15,621 practitioners holding 20,683 credentials” (25). NAATI also endorses 33 translator-training institutions in Australia, which gives it a degree of control over how translators and interpreters are taught. Training in the code of ethics of the Australian Institute of Translators and Interpreters (AUSIT) is obligatory, and in 2019 the endorsed institutions were obliged to incorporate materials dealing with family violence, for example. (Much as educators resist centralised control, this particular imposition did indeed respond to a growing social need.) Given the complexity of testing in so many languages and at several levels of skills, NAATI funds research on translation and interpreting, particularly on testing, and it regularly involves translation scholars in its surveys and internal reviews (see, for example, Hale 2012, Tobias et al. 2020). In a national academic system that values outreach and community engagement, university researchers are generally pleased to cooperate with NAATI, which thus institutionally orients scholarship towards the problems of national service provision. Cooperation is similarly seen when academics work with the Australian judiciary with respect to court interpreting, leading to exemplary research such as mock trials to test the effects of simultaneous versus consecutive interpreting (Hale et al. 2017). When Sandra Hale of the University of New South Wales presented this research in her plenary to the 2016 Congress of the European Society for Translation Studies in Denmark, there was general envy at the degree to which it embodied enlightened institutional involvement. Another world-class piece of applied research is the set of well-documented 2017 guidelines as to how the judiciary should work with interpreters (JCDD 2017). Just as Australian translation policy has been favourably contrasted with European policy, since it is targeted “at the level of populations rather than political and economic elites” (Podkalicka 2007, 249), Australian translation scholarship at its best might be characterised as engaging with national institutions to address problems within the embedding society.

At the same time, academic integration with national institutions can lead to a lack of critical distance. Some uncomfortable questions are generally not raised. One might, for example, calculate that the translation market in Australia requires the equivalent of at most 4,000 full-time translators and interpreters (updating Pym et al. 2012, 77), which contrasts poorly with the 15,000 or so reported by NAATI in 2020 or the “over 33,000” translators and interpreters said to have been accredited or certified by NAATI in previous reports (NAATI 2016, in Miers 2017, 12). It is hard to say what the numbers actually represent (the sums are presumably accumulative, and many translators and interpreters work part-time), but the quantitative relation between certification and the market would appear to be loose at best.

One notes that from 2001 NAATI accreditation meant added points in migrants' visa applications, which is a usage quite different from servicing social language needs directly. And then, to touch another potentially delicate point, NAATI is a non-profit company owned by the governments of Australia, which are also the main employers of translators and interpreters. That is, technically, the professionalisation process is regulated by employers, not by translators and interpreters themselves. There is logically some (often unspoken) tension between NAATI on the one hand and the main professional association (AUSIT) and the union (Translators and Interpreters Australia) on the other hand, with the latter seeking to improve working conditions from the perspective of professionals. Some tension can also be found between academics and practitioners, with the latter often convinced that scholars have never worked as translators or interpreters and know little about professional work. That tension exists all over the world, but the fact that academics in Australia work in collaboration with national institutions does little to calm the waters.

As for working with the judiciary in order to solve problems, one recalls the exemplary work of Diana Eades, who wrote a 1992 handbook to help judicial practitioners interact with Indigenous speakers. Eades then reported seeing her handbook being used by lawyers in order to exploit Indigenous pragmatics for their own purposes: "So the handbook which had been written to help lawyers in more effective communication with Aboriginal witnesses appeared to be used to help the cross-examining counsel in this case to have *less* effective communication with the Aboriginal witnesses" (2014, 211). Scholarship provides knowledge to whomever wants to apply it, and involvement with institutions might not always work for the greater good.

Some of these issues surfaced in the Australian press during the COVID pandemic of 2020, when official health information was translated into some 87 languages. This was a complex, urgent operation, with information changing rapidly. In at least two cases, though, the published materials mixed different languages as if they were the same language: Farsi and Arabic in one case (*ABC News* 13/8/2020), Turkish and Bahasa Indonesia in the other (*ABC News* 27/10/2020), and there were numerous reports on less blatant errors in the translations. This might have been the most that the wider Australian public had ever heard about translators and interpreters. So how could the world's most established translator certification system have gone so terribly wrong? The case is remarkable not particularly because of responses from translation scholars, but because agitation in the media led to a clear response in Victoria, which was the state most affected at the time. Millions of dollars were thrown at the communication problem, with most of the funds not going to certified translators and interpreters but to bilingual community leaders and mediators who could explain the health information in one-on-one conversations. That is, certified professionals and their legalistic code of ethics were largely side-stepped; greater public bets were placed on spoken conversation as a mode of behaviour-change communication. Such moves outside of the professional domain arouse concerns among professional translators and interpreters, who see non-credentialled mediators and community leaders as their rivals.

Such moves beyond the profession, with a focus on what kinds of translation succeed in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, have been picked up in a few sociolinguistic approaches (notably Hlavac 2016b, which is a detailed study of the maintenance of Macedonian in Australia). Yet the mainstream attachment to professionalism and its institutions (mainly NAATI) seems not to invite scholarship down that path. There is little appetite for a wider reflection on multilingual behaviour-change communication.

As in many countries, a prime connection between scholarship and the social uses of translation is through translator-training institutions. In 2021, Australia has some ten university-based Masters and two BA programmes in translation. Together, they teach a total of 36 languages paired with English, which is impressive but still far short of the languages for which NAATI offers certification. There are numerous non-university institutions that offer vocational courses in translation and/or interpreting, providing courses in some of the Indigenous and lesser-spoken languages not offered in the university system. It is in the universities, though, that teaching programmes generate academic jobs and thus an internal demand for the research and publications by which academics achieve promotion. Any close connection between translation research and social needs thus depends on what happens in universities.

Tertiary education is Australia's third largest export industry. In the university-level training of translators and interpreters, the field is dominated by students from China and by work on Chinese-English translation, to the extent that translator training in most other languages could not profitably be offered without fairly high proportions of courses being shared courses with Chinese-language students. That is, one language pair effectively funds most of the training and research done with respect to other language pairs (much the same could be said of university-level translator training in the United Kingdom and the United States). This international dimension potentially contradicts any close relation between Translation Studies and the grassroots social needs of an immigrant society. The Chinese-language market is fed by trade, technology and the priorities of China's foreign policy. It is not oriented towards the day-to-day concerns of providing social services to a multilingual community.

How that particular disjunction pans out depends very much on the individual institutions. To judge by the topics that students select for the research-based components of the Masters programmes, and indeed by the PhD theses written by Chinese students in Australia, at least some of the international students do research on Australian texts and contexts. This in turn might help raise productive questions about linguistic diversity in other parts of the world, including service provision in minority languages in China.

4. Indigenous Languages

There may have been over 250 languages spoken on the continent at the time of the European invasion, with more than 800 language varieties. But was there a translation history prior to that moment? Language historians have frustratingly little to say about the possible roles of translation between Australian Indigenous languages. Language contact has been well studied in terms of pidgins, mixed languages, koines arising from long-term contact between varieties, code-switching, polyglot speakers, receptive multilingualism (intercomprehension), translanguaging, and the development of Australian Kriol and Aboriginal English (Vaughan and Loakes 2020). In Arnhem Land, in particular, complex exogamy traditionally means that everyone learns several languages (McConvell and Bowern 2011), which could in theory preclude the need for translation between Indigenous languages.

A fascinating case is the northern island of Waruwi, where some 400 people use nine Indigenous languages plus English as a lingua franca (Singer and Harris 2016). I once cited Waruwi as a community in which no translation should be necessary: if everyone can understand a couple of other languages, why would there be any mediators? Wrong, my colleague Ruth Singer informed me: "there are a lot of practices in any case that involve mediated communication – not only translation between languages but also 'prompting'

where somebody whispers in another person's ear and they repeat it to a third party" (personal communication, 30 May 2017). Much of the mediation may be intralingual, but what is striking here is one of the reasons for it: there are "avoidance relations" that prohibit direct conversation between certain family members. Our blind assumptions about the social functions of translation are thus thrown out of kilter: translation may not be just for someone who does not know a foreign language system; there may be other kinds of translation within languages, and other reasons to translate.

The relative silence among researchers with respect to translation between Indigenous languages may be due to some kind of ideological blindness, compounded by with the difficulties of reconstructing the oral practices of the past. That said, the paucity of conceptual work can also be taken at face value, as indication that there was little translating taking place, or at least nothing in accordance with Western concepts of translation and interpreting. Other modes of mediation may have met immediate purposes. There is some evidence that mutual sharing of exact information was not a high priority. One notes, for example, that the considerable diversity in Australian Indigenous languages was not met by the development of any major lingua franca: there is no language called "Australian Aboriginal". Was there simply no need for such a thing in a culture of spoken mediation? Part of the reason might also be that the Indigenous use of language was primarily as a marker of the speaker's belonging, giving speaker and listener places among complex human relations and in Country. When that identity function of language is considered more important than conveying disembodied information, there is reduced need for translation in the sense of repetition in another language. (This might also explain features like gratuitous acquiescence, when the speaker agrees with what is said regardless of inaccuracies – the social relation is more important than the information.) The Western translation form, on the other hand, involves ideals of immediate and necessary intelligibility, where the practice and especially the technologies of translation separate information from language as identity performance (see the critiques in Cronin 2017, Moorkens and Rocchi 2021). When we translate, or when we speak and write with a view to our words being translated, we typically remove all the variants that mark our place. That separation might not to be part of some Indigenous language practices – which is one way of explaining the researchers' relative silence on the matter. Further, in our ideal world of accessible information, everything should be translated as much as possible. In a sustainable world, however, not everything can or should be translated. At a moment when many make gestures to the ecological integration of Indigenous knowledge but are hard-pressed to locate exactly where such knowledge could lie, it may be that the relative absence of translation in Indigenous language practices marks out not just a cultural refusal to separate form from content (such that language choice is part of the message), but also a practice of alternatives to Western translation.

The first translation work in Australia, in the Western sense of "translation", was probably in the accounts of encounters with Indigenous languages and their various captured informants (Wakabayashi 2011a). Isolated words and phrases were precariously pinned to each other in attempts to reach understanding and trust. The more serious translation work on Indigenous languages is nevertheless to be found in the various Christian missions from the mid-nineteenth century. The missionaries studied the local languages, producing dictionaries and grammars that involved translation into their own European languages. Since then, interlinear translations have been a part of virtually all linguistic studies on Indigenous grammar and lexicons, although not in a way that invites critical reflection on the translation process itself.

Something a little different happened, however, in Carl Strehlow's work on the Aranda and Loritja around Hermannsburg near Alice Springs, following the Lutheran mission founded there in 1877. The immediate aim of Lutheran evangelisation was undoubtedly to learn the Indigenous languages and cultures, with the ultimate goal of infusing them with Christian ideology: the linguistic work was part of the invasion. Strehlow thus preached in Aranda and translated the gospels and German baroque hymns, which are still sung today in Aranda and Pitjantjatjara. His work on these languages nevertheless led the other way as well: he translated a series of myths, chants and tales from Aranda into German, comprising the first volume (1907) of his monumental ethnographic study of the Aranda and Loritja.

Those translations use various strategies. Key Aranda words are inserted in the German texts as loan words, either in parentheses or in the body of the text, and phrases are glossed in extensive footnotes. The chants are rendered in strict interlinear word-for-word versions, then followed by full prose translations (called "free translations"). These different uses of translation are strongly reminiscent of the inductive language-learning methods ensuing from Prussian New Humanism, which developed around von Humboldt from the late eighteenth century. That is, these translations look rather like a detailed workbook for someone who wants to learn Aranda. In the notes we also find extensive translation analysis. In the first note, the key term *altjira* is glossed as follows:

A linguistic derivation for *altjira* has not yet been found. The natives now associate it with the concept of that which has not become. When asked about its meaning, the informants repeatedly assured me that *altjira* signifies one who has no beginning, who has not been produced from another (*erina itja arbmanakala* = one that no one made). When Spencer and Gillen (Northern Tribes of Central Australia, p. 745) say "the word *alcheri* means dream", the assertion is not correct. "To dream" is *altjirerama*, derived from *altjira* (God) and *rama* (to see), thus "to see God". [...] In Aranda, "dream" is not *alcheri* but rather *altjirérinja* [...]. The word *alcheringa*, which Spencer and Gillen say means "dreamtime", is clearly a corruption of *altjirérinja*. The natives know nothing of a "dreamtime" as a period; the reference is to the time when the *altjiranga mitjina* [totem gods or spirits] roamed the earth. (Strehlow 1907, 2, my translation)

The criticism here is of some importance, and not just because "the dreamtime" or "the dreaming" have become standard English renditions of the temporal concept. Strehlow was implicitly objecting to Spencer's portrayal of Indigenous culture as inferior and undeveloped and thus easily absorbed into European words and concepts through simple equivalence, as in the blunt statement "alcheri means dream" (cf. radical translation in Quine 1960). Spencer's translation strategy went hand in hand with his desire for Indigenous identity to be bred out, and indeed for the Hermannsburg mission, where mixed bloods were not welcome, to be closed down. For Strehlow, however, the lexical complexities of the languages indicated conceptual sophistication, embodying the intricacy of a worldview that was a singular, legitimate and developed contribution to human thought, alive and in the present tense. This can be seen in the constant attention to detail in his multi-volume work on the Aranda and Loritja, expressing respect and involvement in the life of the other. In principle, for him, there was to be no easy absorption of the Indigenous into any European language. Of course, in the passage translated above, Strehlow himself does rather fudge the issue by fleetingly equating *altjira* with "God" in the passage above (since previous missionaries had appropriated the word as the Aranda equivalent of the Christian God) even though, in the rest of this passage, his translation leaves the temporal concept significantly without a stable equivalent. That

said, the section titles and von Leonhardi's preface to the volume use the similarly untranslatable "Urzeit" to do much the same work as Spencer and Gillen's "dreamtime".

For the best of the missionaries, simple equivalences were never going to be easy. Some kind of equivalence-based translation was nevertheless required in later exchanges between Indigenous languages and Western institutions. In considering interpreting needs at Land Council meetings, Brennan (1979, 10) noted that while Central Land Council consultations in Central Australia were able to take place in up to eight "mutually intelligible" languages, Northern Land Council meetings took place in English, since it was not possible to choose a few languages that would cater to the linguistic diversity there. That made translation necessary. Since the 1970s, there has been slow but commendable progress in the provision of translation and interpreting services in Indigenous languages. Indeed, of the actions recommended in the 2009 policy document *Indigenous Languages – A National Approach*, the only ones to be funded were reported as being increased resources for translation and interpreting services, which were in turn seen as the only way that language resource centres could become self-funding (Neumann 2012, 11, 26). There is something unabashedly realistic and yet slightly perverse in a human-rights report where translation and interpreting are seen not as ways of enhancing or recuperating Indigenous languages, but as sources of employment:

In remote and regional Australia, much of the Indigenous-specific employment is reliant on employees being able to speak Indigenous languages. Languages are the basis of employment in translating and interpreting, cultural knowledge industries and a range of Indigenous liaison positions aimed at facilitating community access to government services. (Australian Commission on Human Rights, 2009)

On the pragmatic level of service provision, translation here justifies maintaining the language, and not the other way around.

Although translation was part of invasion, it can help in language maintenance and recuperation, and it can do so in ways that involve more than providing employment. More than a century after the first incursions of the missionaries, perhaps the most exciting linguistics being done in Australia is for the maintenance, diffusion or revival of Indigenous languages. Textbooks are being produced to help Indigenous children learn the language that, for one reason or another, their parents or grandparents were made to forget. This is one of the most noble uses of linguistics, combining historical guilt with scholarly passion, oriented towards a robust multilingual future. The use of translation in this context should connect with language defence and recuperation projects happening elsewhere in the world. In Australia, however, there seems to be limited awareness that language revival intimately involves translation. Once again, language policy as a whole is focused on language learning, in a context where the language-education community has been immersed in immersion for so long that it has trained itself not to see translation when it is there.

5. Studies by Historians

Despite the monolingual mindset, the history of Australia is full of languages, almost wherever you look. Scholars of Australian history regularly deal with situations of language contact, and mediators between languages then appear in their narratives with some regularity. Most notably, there are numerous accounts and discussions of Bennelong, the

main Indigenous mediator between the first British colonisers and the Eora, mainly in Sydney (e.g. Smith 2009) and then in the United Kingdom (e.g. Fullagar 2009). A tragic figure between worlds, labelled a “thorough savage” after his death (*Sydney Gazette* 9 January 1813), Bennelong might bear certain parallels with La Malinche in Mexico: he has similarly been subject to generations of storywork on both sides of the divide across which he worked (Dortins 2009). When dealt with from a Translation Studies perspective by Wakabayashi (2011a), there is nevertheless clearer attention to the ethical quandaries of representing the other, greater searching for what is *not* said in the narratives, and the ability to frame the encounters through comparisons with other “contact zones”. Yet one cannot easily accuse Australian historians of having marginalised this particular translator.

Considerable work has been done on the historiography of the Christian missionaries in Australia. A case in point is the New Norcia Mission in Western Australia, where the basic historical spadework requires translation. The pages of *New Norcia Studies*, from 1993, carry translations from Italian and Spanish, feeding into work by historians of the order of George Russo and Geoffrey Bolton. The New Norcia website nevertheless notes: “Many of the records are still locked up in foreign languages, predominantly Spanish” (New Norcia Benedictine Community 2021). Of other missions we know rather less about the languages. There was a French Trappist mission at Beagle Bay, north of Broome, that was taken over by German Palatines from 1901. So French and German were there. And with the Trappists was the Valencian friar Nicolas Emo, who worked in Spanish in Broome for a community of some 300 Filipinos engaged in pearling and fishing. Emo compiled a basic Yawaru-Spanish dictionary and grammar (Nailon 2005) and is reported as having used French to speak with the Irish-Australian Daisy Bates, who also took notes on Indigenous languages at Beagle Bay (Salter 1971, 81).

Other areas of contact, however, are not as clear as far as translation is concerned. When Geritson (1994, 126–31) claims that 16% of the Nhandu language in Western Australia was derived from Dutch, the historian can point to material records of Dutch sailors marooned in the area from 1629, but not to any particular mediator. That would require another order of evidence, which is hard to come by. Similarly missing are accounts from the Indigenous sides of such encounters, perhaps for similar reasons: oral transmission, concealed knowledge, or perhaps no perception of anything of importance (Wakabayashi 2011a). On the other hand, when Malayan words appear in the Indigenous languages of the northwest and north, the evidence points not just to exchanges with trepangers who seasonally came from Macassar in Sulawesi at least from the late eighteenth century (Macknight 2011), but also to interpreters that can be named. Paul Thomas (2012, 2013) offers studies of three: the Malay Abraham Williams, who was a cook on Flinders’ voyage of discovery in 1803; the Timorese Tingha de Hans, who lived in the Northern Territory in the late nineteenth century; and Sri Lankan-born Malay interpreter Oodeen (later called John O’Dean) who worked for the government of New South Wales in the 1820s. In this case, the historian’s interest is primarily in showing that Australia’s exchanges with Indonesia have a long past. Thomas nevertheless makes the point that Oodeen, the only professional mediator among the three, attracted attention through his descendants in Australia and from the Malay and Sri Lankan communities in Australia, who saw him as an early Muslim precursor of themselves. The multicultural Australia of the present thus helps promote awareness of Australia’s multilingualism of the past.

These historians, in gathering records and seeking biographies, have helped undo the image of Australian history as an Anglo-Irish culture that invaded an Indigenous culture and then added immigrant cultures, mostly European. We are now starting to see a history where, right

from the early contacts, there were many languages involved, both European (Dutch, German, French, Portuguese, Spanish) and Asian (Malay, Filipino, Japanese, and the tumultuous influx of languages in search of gold, particularly Chinese). Although translation is rarely the main focus for historians, in Australia its traces abound.

6. Translation as Disruption in Cultural Products

There are many fields where Australian translation scholars work no differently from the general international university system. When we read about translation theory in Andrew Benjamin (1989), Judy Wakabayashi (e.g. 2011b), Anthony Cordingley (2018) or even Anthony Pym, one would have to look very hard to find consequences of Australian origins. Not surprisingly, all these scholars have worked and published extensively outside Australia. Similarly, when cognitive translation studies are done by South African and Irish scholars based in Sydney, for example, there is no reason their work should be related to an Australian context. Further, excellent translators who work in Australia (one thinks of John Minford on the Chinese classics or Brian Nelson on Zola and Proust) operate within the international system of English-language publishing and, in those two cases, carry British passports. International publishing, like the international academic jobs market, explains much of what happens in Australia.

In studies on Australian literature, translation does nevertheless play a role and becomes an object of reflection. The Australia Council for the Arts primarily supports ex-translations, providing grants for translations of Australian creative writing. As mentioned, there is any number of Honours or Masters theses on translations of Australian texts into French, German, Italian, and so on, where the students pick up the odd mistaken cultural reference and comment on translation difficulty. There are PhD theses in the same vein (for example, Cain 2001, Frank 2002, Gerber 2014, Reed 2015), as well as studies based on new translation projects, where the difficulties are experienced at first hand (for example, Pym 1989, Vuaille-Barcan 2012). The Australia Council's policy and the university theses operate within a frame where translation into other languages is seen as having a legitimating function, affording Australian writing some kind of consecration. This can then have an impact on internal discussions of literary value. A case in point is the Serbian Australian B. Wongar, who wrote in the 1990s as an Australian Aboriginal. His writings were only debated seriously in Australia following their translation into French (in *Les temps modernes*) and German (translations by Annemarie and Heinrich Böll). That kind of translation effect, implicit in the policy of supporting ex-translations, self-positions Australian literature as peripheral, drawing value from a superior and more central space.

There is nevertheless a secondary publishing system within Australia for a different kind of literary translation, similar in some respects to American university presses or to what Bourdieu (1999) found among the smaller French publishers outside of Paris. It is there that one might seek, if not exactly an Australian discourse on translation, then at least a set of translation practices that are politicised within a national context. Brigid Maher in this volume explores some of these presses.

Part of this secondary publishing system concerns the translation of Indigenous texts into English, surveyed by Shoemaker (2004) and Fitzgerald (2020), among others. There is often no clear borderline between what is translation and what is Indigenous writing in English, with the point of contention becoming the literary medium itself. Shoemaker's study is called *Black Words, White Page*, where the medium of the page itself can be seen as problematic for

modes of textuality that are fundamentally multimedia: spoken texts that gained resonance from and in painting, dance and song become less than authentic when translated onto the printed page. This is a problem for many cultures around the world (cf. Washbourne 2016).

Within the Australian production space, innovative translation practices are nevertheless not hard to find, both within and beyond the printed page. A few examples from recent years:

Omid Tofighian's translation of Behrouz Boochani's *No Friend but the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* (2018) tells the inside story of an illegal government refugee detention site (the Persian text was sent out from the prison as text messages). It includes an elaborate narrative introduction by the translator, who thus becomes part of the tale. The translated novel has become a flagship for protest against the Australian government's inhuman and illegal treatment of refugees. It was awarded the Victorian Prize for Literature in 2019.

Ely Finch's 2019 translation of Wong Shee Ping's *The Poison of Polygamy*, which was the first Chinese-language novel in Australia, is similarly interventionist. The edition is bilingual, with copious notes on the original text and especially the context of the novel's original publication in a Chinese-language newspaper in Melbourne in 1909–10. The translation works to illustrate the multicultural roots of Australian cities.

Roderick MacKay's 2020 film *The Furnace* is situated in the Western Australian goldfields of the 1890s. It includes five spoken languages besides English: Pashto and Dari (languages of the 'Afghan' cameleers), Punjabi, Cantonese and Badimaya, an Indigenous language of the area around Mount Magnet. Since the last speaker of Badimaya had died one year before the film was shot, the language was pieced together from the available evidence. The scenes were then translated into that putatively original language (discussed by linguists at a seminar at the University of Western Australia on 29 May 2020).

In these practices, translation is no longer used as a search for external legitimation but more as an instrument of internal disruption: translation is in your face. And that is precisely what translation can do in all the practices mentioned above: the social use of translation insists that public services be delivered in a diverse multilingual space, that Indigenous languages be a growing part of that space, and that what is translated in Australia can have more than commercial effects on the international stage.

This comes in a context where, in terms of prolonged poverty and spiritual despondency, a huge northern swathe of Australia should be regarded as a failed state. Only with difficulty does the Australian national anthem *Advance Australia Fair* represent a national identity. On January 1, 2021, the line in that anthem "for we are *young* and free" was officially changed to "for we are *one* and free", in very belated recognition that the world's oldest continuous culture cannot be described as "young". That switch is translation from English to English, undeniably minor but likely to remain memorable for a generation. At a rugby match on December 6, 2020, that anthem was begun in one of the Indigenous languages of the Sydney area then finished in English, making an even clearer statement of diversity.

Despite the many low points, there are a few rising contours to be found. Such acts of translation, far from dividing languages and hiding the other, can bring an often-unnoticed multilingual identity to the surface.

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