

## **Translation and Other Transcultural Acts: Resistance to Language Imperialism in the Age of English**

Milda Danyté

Transcultural acts can be interpreted, as does Bill Ashcroft, as ‘that mutual alteration which occurs when two cultures come into contact’ and a ‘dynamic flow of cultural interchange’ (Ashcroft 2001: 122, 24) or can be seen as part of an imperial relationship in which, in Mary Louise Pratt’s words, ‘subordinated or marginal groups’ have only the freedom to ‘select and invent from the materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture’ (Pratt 1992: 6). Between these two extremes are many different kinds of cultural communication, some of which can be called enriching, and others demeaning or destructive. Definitions in major dictionaries often tend to focus on the recipient of such communicative acts. For example, the on-line version of the *Collins English Dictionary* refers to transculturation as a sociological term, ‘the introduction of foreign elements into an established culture’ (2003). The on-line *Merriam-Webster* definition is a little fuller: ‘a process of cultural transformation marked by the influx of new culture elements and the loss or alteration of existing ones’ (2012). In effect, these definitions make transculturation little different from the process of acculturation, in which immigrants gradually absorb elements from the dominant culture around them, and so lose much of their original identity. Minority cultures, which often feel threatened by larger cultures, may well interpret transcultural acts in this way but there are more nuanced ways of interpreting transculturation. Ronan Bennett, for example, commenting on Fernando Ortiz’s original use of the term, states that ‘transculturation emphasizes the agency involved in cultural change, as well as the loss that accompanies cultural acquisition’ and treats the contact zone as ‘never a one-way phenomenon’ (Bennett 2009).

Arguments about whether transculturation in an age of globalized communication is or is not a positive force surface in a good number of discussions about translation, which, especially for minority languages, is one of the major kinds of transculturation encountered on a daily basis and in all aspects of life. One of the major practitioners of postcolonial translation theory, Maria Tymoczko, asserts that translation ‘is powerful and it is not innocent’ (Tymoczko 1999: 18). Her view of translation as a transcultural act with serious

consequences is fundamental to this discussion, since I focus on issues that arise for minority languages when faced with English language imperialism in intercultural communication today. This is not a simple problem, as countries whose language is a minority one within the world are very eager to gain knowledge and be able to participate in economic, cultural and political exchanges. Most people see the entry into global systems that translation enables, along with the use of a single language of communication in many spheres of life, as highly desirable. Yet linguists warn that easier communication comes with a price, especially for minority-language cultures, which have a history of problems in relations with majority-language countries. The focus of this article is on translation as one of the major types and instruments of transculturation. After offering a personal experience of how translation can be viewed more as an act of invasion than of communication, I survey how recent translation theory perceives power relations within the act of translating. Then two specific areas in which translation as a form of transculturation is a sensitive issue are considered: the effect of the global dominance of English-language culture on young people, and the effect of using English as the language of scholarly communication in the academic world in non-English countries.

I first recognized that the hegemony of majority languages, especially English, is one that arouses strong emotions because of the reaction to a paper I delivered in 2008 at a Lithuanian conference in applied linguistics. My subject was changing trends in Lithuanian translation practice after 1990, when the country regained its independence and began to integrate its publishing market into the Western one. I examined the way in which proper names were translated from English into Lithuanian in a large number of novels, concluding that in this period of transition, there is a growing tendency to follow Western practice of leaving the names unchanged. In the Soviet period, Lithuanian translators transcribed names phonologically so that readers would know how to pronounce them and also added case endings, as Lithuanian is a highly inflected language in which the grammatical role of a noun is indicated by its ending. Two older professors of Lithuanian linguistics criticized me very sharply for using a purely descriptive approach and not indicating that this was a sensitive issue in Lithuania. In effect, they wanted me to adopt a prescriptive position, condemning those translators who simply left the foreign name as it was in the original English text. No one, they stated, had the right to remain neutral over such issues and references to 'language traitors' were made.

At the time the accusation that I was not a true patriot seemed out of place and even absurd to me. I knew that the writing of proper names, especially of Polish-origin Lithuanians, was a controversial political issue, but it was only with time that I became interested in exploring how an apparently minor issue in translation is related to the lack of power that may be felt in specific societies. In addition, as a Lithuanian Canadian, born and educated in English-speaking

Canada, I began to see that I had accepted the English position on the beneficial side of having a single language for global communication too simplistically.

For East European language cultures, to take those I am most familiar with, societies that are now attempting to propagate their national languages and cultures after many decades of repression in a Soviet regime, entry into the so-called 'free world' has produced very ambiguous results. Translation from Western literature, which in a global Anglophone world turns out to function as a new kind of cultural imperialism, is all the harder to combat because it operates within a free market system. Choices made at all levels of translation become vitally important in countries that equate national identity with linguistic distinctiveness. Interestingly, in post-Soviet countries like Lithuania, cultural guardians are less concerned today with how translated literature breaks norms in the sense of *contents* than in how the process of translation breaks *language* norms.

### **Power Relations In Translation Theory**

The study of how unequal power relations between different countries affect the translation process began well before theories of postcolonialism were applied in translation studies. Already in the 1970s Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory, developed by him and colleagues in Tel Aviv, became influential in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and Canada. Polysystem theory postulates that a specific cultural system governs each linguistic society at a particular time in its history. More than one such system exists for different aspects of culture, but in this discussion, as in much of Even-Zohar's work, the focus is on the literary system. Each system is regulated by six different factors: the market, the product, the producer (which includes writers, translators and publishers), the consumer, the institution (for example, educational, academic and ideological institutions) and the repertoire, including both rules from the ideological institutions and the whole range of literary traditions such as genre and style (Even-Zohar 1990b: 33-44).

In each literary system, some of these factors play a more important role than others. For example, in European countries under Soviet or Communist regimes, the Communist Party, through a variety of agencies, was the dominant institution and had power at all stages of literary production, deciding which texts could be published or translated. In the same countries at present, however, market forces, consumer demands and producers have replaced any political party, and interact to make such decisions.

Working in Israel when the official state language, Hebrew, was being transformed from a language of limited usage to one serving all the needs of a modern society, Even-Zohar had an excellent opportunity to study how translated texts filled the gaps in the literature needed by readers, and how these translated texts entered and dominated the Hebrew literary system. (Even-Zohar 1990c: 49).

One of his observations, which is pertinent to the question of majority and minority-use languages, is that in the West there are peripheral and central literatures, and that ‘peripheral literatures [...] tend more often than not to be identified with the literatures of smaller nations’. Although he calls this idea ‘unpalatable’ he states that ‘we have no choice but to admit that within a group of relatable national literatures, such as the literatures of Europe, hierarchical relations have been established since the very beginnings of these literatures’ (Even-Zohar 1990c: 48).

From this analysis he develops a set of hypotheses to explain why certain foreign texts and languages are chosen for translation, calling this process ‘literary interference’. One of these can easily be supported by the East European experience since the collapse of the Soviet Union: ‘Interference is mostly unilateral’ (Even-Zohar 1990a: 59). For example, though hundreds of texts are translated annually from English into Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian, very few move in the opposite direction to reach English-speaking readers. Further, Even-Zohar suggests that the choice of source literatures is not random or based on literary criteria: it is governed more by the ‘prestige’ and the political ‘dominance’ of the source country (Even-Zohar 1990c: 59). In an age in which the USA still dominates the world politically, it is not surprising that so many of its cultural products are translated into minority languages. English, which first gained prestige through the British Empire, has maintained it through the power of the United States. In this way, although countries in Eastern Europe were never colonies of either the UK or the USA, culturally they now experience a colonial status in regard to English-speaking countries.

One can go further and state that, in a linguistic and cultural sense, even majority-language societies like Germany, France, Spain and Italy also have a colonial status in relation to English-speaking countries if one looks at their literary systems and the direction of translation. In the mid and late 1990s this imbalance became one of the central objects of research for Anglo-American translation specialists, in particular Lawrence Venuti. For him, as for the Tel Aviv scholars, translation is ‘an asymmetrical act of communication’ (Venuti 2000: 484), a way in which the imperial power (in this case, the USA and, to a lesser extent, the UK) force their menu of culture onto the dominated, showing very little interest in what the dominated power itself produces. However, Venuti himself writes from an American point of view. When he objects to the way that translators (thinking of English ones) ‘domesticate’ the foreign text and argues that instead they should ‘foreignize’ it (Venuti 2000: 468), he runs up against strong resistance from translators in other language cultures, especially minority ones. Lithuanians, for example, feel that, rendering the English text into a very Lithuanian one is a way of safeguarding and propagating Lithuanian, while introducing foreignisms of lexis or syntax would reduce the language’s unique character.

### **Growing Up In The Age Of English**

In the age of English, translation as a significant form of transculturation may be interpreted as performing an imperialistic role for non-English linguistic communities. At present in minority-language societies like the Baltic and the Scandinavian states, for example, the largest part of the print and media culture encountered by children and adolescents comes through translation, and most of this from American or British English. Emer O'Sullivan states that the quantity of translated texts in children's literature can vary from one to eighty percent in different language societies, with the UK and the USA importing the least. Using the full records kept by Sweden, she shows that, up to the mid-nineteenth century most children's literature for young Swedes was translations from German, but around this time British literature, helped by new print technology that made cheaper editions possible, started to distribute its English-language literature all over the world and so featured as a new major source for translators: by 1975 75% of all translated literature for children and youth in Sweden was British or American in origin (O'Sullivan 2005: 66-67). The figures have grown over past decades and, according to O'Sullivan, are similar all over the Scandinavian states: she calculates that 80% of titles for young readers are translations, even in Sweden, which in the second half of the twentieth century has produced very successful writers of children's literature (O'Sullivan 2005: 68). The dominance of English as a source culture would be higher still – and here my own research over the past seven years in Lithuania supports her findings – if some countries, notably Germany, Austria, Canada, France, and the Scandinavian states, did not fund translation to get their own authors in other language markets (O'Sullivan 2005: 70; author's unpublished research 2004-2011).

When one turns to literature for adolescents, the primacy of English-speaking cultures as sources is even more significant. Teen or young adult literature is a relatively new phenomenon, developing in English-speaking countries in the last quarter of the twentieth century, while no such category of literature existed in most Eastern European countries while they were run by Communist or Soviet regimes. English authors are generally the main writers of those novels that become very popular not only in their own countries, but also internationally. Since the 1990s, when a truly globalized cultural market developed with the help of the internet, the world of literature for younger readers has seen the phenomenon of the almost simultaneous success of certain texts in their original language and in translations all over the world. Once publishers absorbed the implications of the commercial success of the *Harry Potter* series as a global event, with the novels themselves supported by film versions and a variety of advertising events, they began to search for more series that can be marketed in the same way that rock music or Hollywood films are. Although it is

theoretically possible that some Dane, Lithuanian, Czech or Bulgarian writer could produce the next global bestseller for youth, it is very unlikely because English-language publishers are wary of translated texts, and it is only the very largest of these publishers who can afford to invest in the kind of campaign that makes a book a global success.

Furthermore, to understand the gravity of the situation from the point of view of minority-language societies, one has to remember that books form only part of the culture of children and youth. If one moves to the film media in particular, the dominance of films for this audience produced by the USA is staggering. Moreover, while minority-language cultures can and do produce books for children, they have no financial possibilities to mount something like the *Shrek* series, even with state support. The same is true for television series aimed at American adolescents: for instance, all my Lithuanian students are familiar with *The Simpsons* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, even though they get these shows a decade or more after the original viewers. When other elements of popular culture for young people, like electronic games, rock music and internet social sites are added, it can be seen that a child and teenager growing up in a minority-language society like those in Eastern Europe frequently engages with cultural products from other languages. With English the first foreign language taught in most schools, and its value emphasized as a necessary tool for all kinds of jobs, young members of minority-language societies today in effect grow up within a double cultural system, one based on American and British culture, both in translation and in English, the other their own native-language culture.

Michael Cronin, an Irish translation scholar, cites a phrase created by V. Shiva, ‘monocultures of the mind’, and finds in the current supremacy of English such a monoculture (Cronin 2003: 74). What is worse, in his opinion, is that the globally propagated version is a very superficial kind of culture based primarily on commercial interests; he states that ‘the traces of US popular culture to be found throughout the world from Nike trainers to Simpsons T-shirts to McDonald’s restaurants are held up as examples of a hybrid world’ but in fact they do ‘not advance the cause of genuine and difficult cultural openness but simply [...] imply the fundamental rightness of US market penetration and cultural dominance’ (Cronin 2003: 53).

Behind economic power, as David Crystal (1997) bluntly states, lies another kind of power based on force: ‘A language becomes an international language for one chief reason: the political power of its people – especially their military power’ (cited in Thompson 2003: 47). Political and military occupations seem naturally associated to linguistic invasion for countries like Lithuania, which has a long history of resistance against attempts to assimilate it by larger neighbours; this historic past has made the sudden eruption of English into its culture suspect and painful. In the nineteenth century Lithuanian patriots fought successfully against attempts at russification by the Czarist empire of which it

was then a part. Supported by the Catholic Church, which understood that the use of Russian was closely related to the attempt to convert Lithuanians to the Orthodox religion, parents refused to send children to Russian-language schools and employed secret tutors to educate them in Lithuanian. When laws were passed that Lithuanian texts could be published only if they used the Cyrillic and not the Latin alphabet, books and newspapers in Lithuanian in the Latin script were printed abroad, with the help of the diaspora community. Later, in the early twentieth century, linguists removed polonisms from the Lithuanian language. The communism of the Soviet regime after the Second World War was also associated with new attempts at linguistic russification, but again these were successfully kept at bay.

Yet in the 1990s, when Lithuanians were celebrating their reinstated independence, English was quickly accepted by parents, educators and young people themselves as the language that had to be learned. This became all the more evident in the twenty-first century when Lithuania became part of the European Union. Linguists who had been methodically clearing the native language of Russian words and syntax now found themselves almost helpless against the deluge of anglicisms, for Russian had met resistance at a popular level, while English was now associated with the future economic and cultural development of the country. Using anglicisms while speaking or writing Lithuanian became a form of cultural snobbery, evident not only in areas that had no terminology in Lithuanian like computer science, but also in everyday discourse by politicians and business people. The Lithuanian experience, which can be found in many Eastern and Central European countries, is part of what Itamar Even-Zohar refers to as happening during ‘turning points [...] historical moments where established models are no longer tenable for a younger generation’ (Even-Zohar 1990c: 49). Similarly, Ieva Zauberga, writing in the late 1990s, observes that Latvian writers faced the need for a very sudden change in style: ‘The techniques of writing painstakingly elaborated under the totalitarian regime – subtext, understatement, implication, metaphor – had to be discarded with the advent of the era of openness’ (Zauberga 1999: 188). Writers associated with national resistance just a few years earlier, lost popularity as translated texts provided a vision of the world more in tune with what readers were experiencing around themselves.

Another historical phenomenon of the past two decades for these countries, mass migration to other countries for temporary or permanent employment, has also created a very sudden gulf between generations. Young people, those most likely to migrate, see little reason to improve their native language but are well-motivated to learn English well. As thousands of young Lithuanians settle in other countries, especially English-speaking ones, their parents find that they cannot communicate with their grandchildren unless they learn English. This pressure on the older generation, many of whom were proud of their long

resistance to Russian, has raised issues that are linked with patriotism as well as the practical problems of mastering a foreign language which they do not otherwise need. Communication through different electronic media has greatly increased this pressure, stimulating the creation of private English classes aimed at this specific audience.

### **Transculturation or Language Imperialism?: The Academic World**

The effects of English language power are also felt by majority-language cultures in ways that can be both similar and different from the effects on minority languages. Discussion of this issue is often raised by non-English speaking academics, who argue that English scholars often write as though nothing of value has been created in various intellectual spheres by non-English cultures. For example, Chris Wen-Chao Li points out that current translation theory in the West ignores – and is possibly ignorant of – Chinese scholarship, which long preceded any theoretical discussion in Western countries. According to him, Chinese tradition differentiates between *yiyi*, translation, and *yinyi*, sound translation: sound, except in the translation of poetry, is a marginalized topic (Wen-Chao Li 2007: 45-47). Wen-Chao Li points out that although early textbooks on translation theory and practice by Eugene Nida and John Catford in the 1960s did pay attention to topics concerning sound, Peter Newmark in 1981 already gave these less space, while since the 1990s, the period in which English-language dominance reached new heights, influential texts produced by Mona Baker, Jeremy Munday and the German critics Christoph Gutknecht and Lutz J. Rolle completely ignore the topic of sound translation (Wen-Chao Li 2007: 46).

Another problem felt by academics and researchers in all fields is analysed very clearly by Robert Emery Prud'homme, a French-speaking professor of chemistry in Montreal. Since the rise of the separatist movement in the 1960s, francophone Quebec has been notable for its aggressive legislation to promote and protect the French language. However, although English is no longer the dominant language of politics, commerce and culture in the province as it was before, Prud'homme points out that the use of English in the global exchange of academic information is making real inroads into French in Quebec. He approves the use of English as a single common language for international exchange, commenting that Latin long served this function (Prud'homme 2012: 7). However, he is troubled by the fact that at national conferences in Canada, such as those sponsored by supposedly bilingual organizations, French is disappearing as a language of presentation. Further, he notes that if academics at such conferences choose to speak in French, the rooms are half-empty, though French is both officially a national language along with English and also taught as the first foreign language in all English-speaking schools (Prud'homme 2012: 7). Even at conferences in France and Belgium, he states, researchers in



chemistry, physics and engineering who work at French-speaking institutions give their papers in English (Prud'homme 2012: 7).

Even more disturbing, to his mind, is that the younger generation of professors in Quebec francophone universities now often write applications for funding to Canadian organizations in English, something they justify by explaining that their applications will be evaluated by international experts who presumably know English but do not necessarily read French. Moreover, Prud'homme notes a sharp drop in French-language publications in scientific journals. His time-line for this change is interesting, as it corresponds to that seen in other spheres: in the 1970s it was still not hard to publish an article in French, but in the 1980s, this became increasingly difficult, so that now, for example, even a German specialized journal on macromolecular chemistry no longer carries any articles in French or German.

In a similar vein, Johan Heilbron notes that researchers are becoming reluctant to publish in their own languages because this affects their citation rate, which is often used as a criterion for promotion and funding. According to Heilbron's figures, 'scientific production in the US is [...] characterized by the lowest percentage of foreign references and foreign co-authors'; foreign references in American journals amount to about 25 percent, while those in Japanese and European journals are between 40 and 71 percent. Heilbron concludes that 'the reality of transnational exchange is a process of uneven exchange' (Heilbron 2010: 314). Prud'homme ends his discussion even more pessimistically, arguing that although at present, discussion of science in French is possible, he is not sure that this will be the case in twenty years, which will mean a narrowing of the French language itself. Eventually this will affect the language of communication at French-speaking universities, since it will make sense to teach the sciences and engineering either entirely in English or in a mixture of French and English (Prud'homme 2012: 7).

If this is the case for a language like French, what hope remains for minority languages? Languages do not simply die out with their last native speakers; they can also fossilize, remaining alive only at a popular level of discourse and not continuing to grow as new realities appear. In countries emerging from Soviet or communist control, this has led to another kind of generation gap, in which well-established specialists in many fields who never learned English have been marginalized within their scholarly community. Again, a distinct generation gap appears, with the younger speakers of a non-English language no longer feeling any deeper necessity to use their native language in all aspects of life. In a globalized world, in which inter-linguistic communication is necessary, using English seems a simpler solution. Michael Cronin states that 'languages, like their speakers, are trusted if they inspire confidence, but if a language is not deemed adequate to the purposes of the present, then it is no longer the language of futurity' (Cronin 2003: 122).

### **Can Translation Serve as a Transcultural Act of Resistance to the Dominance of a Single Language?**

Yet a purely pessimistic approach is out of tune with the whole notion of transculturation and translation as bringing people together with those they regard as culturally ‘other’. A useful note of optimism is provided by the Interdisciplinary Research Group on the Americas, which emphasizes Fernando Ortiz’ statement that transculturation produces a ‘new reality, which is not a patchwork of features, but a new phenomenon, original and independent’ (cited in GIRA 2012). From an ethical point of view, this concept may be problematic. For example, the creation of African-American jazz cannot erase the fact of the horrors of slavery and the continued prejudice experienced by African Americans today. Still, the remarkable beauty of jazz music is also a reality, and its formation the result of many years of transculturation within the USA. These are two sets of historical facts that exist side by side.

The Interdisciplinary Research Group on the Americas also refers to the useful concept of border-crossing – an idea at the heart of both translation and transculturation. The group’s website states that borders ‘become a place where identity is at stake for those who cross borders, come against them, move around and beyond them. Simultaneously, borders are themselves moving, since they are being redelineated, and their location and role questioned’ (GIRA 2012). One cannot claim that border-crossing is an easy process or one that can be met with either whole-hearted approval or disapproval of those on both sides of the border. Jim McGuigan sees this kind of continual and uneasy movement as typical of the present age: ‘In a globally networked world, the person’s place is displaced - that is, it is affected by forces operating in other places. [...] Traditions do not exactly disappear in these circumstances but are constantly reinvented. [...] There are no set rules for conduct; new ones are persistently tried out to see if they will work’ (McGuigan 2010: 109).

To take up the Lithuanian example, the feeling that the native language and culture are under strong threat by English hegemony is not universal by any means among the younger generation. Many seem to feel that conservative and defensive approaches are part of a continuing ghetto mentality among an older generation who endured the experience of attempts at forced transculturation on the part of the Soviet Russian regime. Now this defensive attitude seems less necessary, and younger people do not feel threatened by English hegemony in the same way that older ones were by Russian hegemony. A young writer, Gabija Grušaitė, who now lives in England but has lived in Asian and Arabic countries, stated in an interview in 2011 at the Vilnius Book Fair, ‘I see the influence of other languages on Lithuanian as a very positive one’ (Grušaitė 2011: translation from Lithuanian mine). The same idea, though not conceptualized so clearly, is

shown by the thousands of young Lithuanians who have made the *Harry Potter* series the biggest bestseller in Lithuanian literary history, and by those adolescents who now enjoy teen literature, a genre previously unheard of in Lithuania, and now composed mainly of translated novels. For these readers, it is not so important whether the author is Lithuanian or not, but that, like the British writer Melvin Burgess, who is extremely popular in Lithuania, that these novels address subjects like teen sexuality, pregnancy, conflicts with parents, substance abuse and the like, about which they need to read and reflect. Moreover, for several years, some teen literature has been produced by young Lithuanian writers, encouraged by Lithuanian publishers who see a potentially lucrative market sector. In this way, translation offers a model of opportunity which, in the long run, may result in broadening the rather thematically restricted world in which Lithuanian literature still operates.

Another way of looking at translation as a positive transcultural act that supports cultural and linguistic diversity instead of suppressing it is the process known as localization. Michael Cronin defines this as 'taking a product that has already been designed and tailoring it to meet the needs of a specific local market' and emphasizes that it is now a major part of the work of professional translators (Cronin 2003: 13). When the World Wide Web was devised it was an English language means of communication but very soon by 2001 it was noted that more than half its users were non-English speakers, a figure that rose to about two-thirds by 2005, and that market studies indicated that most users in Europe, Latin America and Japan 'would show a distinct preference for native language sites', the figure being as high as 75% for Latin America and 80% for Japan (Cronin 2003: 14). Exactly the same proved true for multinational corporations selling to a global market; it was found that 'in the case of foreign sales, the equation is simple: "no translation, no product"'; 'the objective then becomes the simultaneous availability of the product in all the languages of the product's target markets' (Cronin 2003: 15).

One might think that a country of only three million consumers like Lithuania is too small a potential market for multinationals to bother translating its products. However, two forces have worked together to show that this is not true. One is the legal requirement made by Lithuania, like most countries, that products from cosmetics and pharmaceuticals to electronics include translated explanations of products and instructions for their use. Even more significant is what happens to the transcultural experience when the translated product is a cultural one like a book or a film. Children playing Harry Potter games in homes and schoolyards make their magic commands in the translated versions given by Zita Mariene in her translation of the series, not in J.K. Rowling's own invented words. Another very profitable market, viewers of animation films like the *Shrek* series, had to be dubbed into Lithuanian in order to be successful: before this, the films were provided with subtitles, but since the child audience could not read

these, the cinema experience became a chaotic one including parents reading the subtitles aloud for the audience. Now Lithuanian children do not only hear Shrek and his companions, and the characters in many other animation films, speaking in Lithuanian, but also enjoy the fact that the voices are those of well-known Lithuanian actors, just as in the original they were well-known English-speaking actors. Character idiolects and dialects change, of course, so that the experience of viewing these films in Lithuanian is what Fernando Ortiz argues that transculturation could produce, something ‘original and independent’ (cited in GIRA 2012).

Translation, then, is a double-edged sword in the transcultural process. Cronin claims that ‘translation is not simply a by-product of globalization but is a constituent, integral part of how the phenomenon both operates and makes sense of itself’ (Cronin 2003: 34). He also adopts British sociologists Scott Lash and John Urry’s 1994 theory of ‘multiple modernities’, adding that ‘not every part of the planet will experience globalblization at the same time [...] each country or community translates elements of the global and international economy into local circumstances’ (Cronin 2003: 34). Although, writing from an Irish point of view, he is not always optimistic about the future of minority languages and cultures in the age of English, Cronin does refer to how translation can contribute to ‘a politics of recognition’ (Cronin 2003: 34).

East European language cultures like the Lithuanian one cannot be said to oppose transculturation even if there is a natural fear, born out of long experience as a minority culture within the world. Translators reflect both the desire to encounter the other and the anxiety associated with this encounter. As Jorge Braga Riera explains, translators constantly make choices which serve as ‘a clear indicator of the degree of tolerance in the host culture [...] to things foreign’ (Braga Riera 2009: 179). The selection of specific translation strategies, as what to do with foreign proper names, may indicate distinct resistance to what is seen as language imperialism, yet the act of translation opens the native language and culture to foreign worlds.

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