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**“NZ@Frankfurt: Imagining New Zealand’s Guest of Honour Presentation at the 2012 Frankfurt Book Fair from the Point of View of Literary Translation”**

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# NZ@FRANKFURT: IMAGINING NEW ZEALAND'S GUEST OF HONOUR PRESENTATION AT THE 2012 FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

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With over 7,000 exhibitors from over 100 countries and circa 300,000 visitors each year the Frankfurt Book Fair is a playground for political, economic, and cultural imaginings, including many domestic and foreign places. The Book Fair is often conceived of and studied as a site of intercultural politics and commerce but has not yet fully been explored as a site of translation and translator's agency. This essay offers critical reflections upon metaphors for the translator, arguing that a shift of the base metaphor in comparative literature studies of translation from conflict to friction could redirect interdisciplinary translation studies. I propose that the friction metaphor leads toward an appropriate balance between complex detail and ordering reduction of data that allows us to describe the intensity and the challenges of translation without recreating the old-established realities we already know.

Comptant plus de 7,000 exposants, une centaine de pays participants, et au-delà de 300,000 visiteurs chaque année, la Foire du Livre de Francfort est un vivier pour les imaginaires politique, économique, et culturels, et met ainsi en représentation plusieurs lieux locaux et étrangers. La Foire du Livre est fréquemment conçue et envisagée comme un site de commerce international et de tractations politiques, mais elle n'a pas été étudiée en tant que site propre à la traduction et à l'agentivité du rôle de traducteur. Cet article offre une réflexion critique sur la métaphore pour le traducteur, en arguant qu'un déplacement, dans les études en littérature comparée de la traduction, de la conception basique de la métaphore du conflit à la friction peut engager les études interdisciplinaires de la traduction dans une voie inexplorée. Je propose que la métaphore frictionnelle pointe vers un équilibre entre les détails complexes et une réduction des données qui permet de décrire l'intensité et les défis de la traduction sans retomber dans les poncifs ou paraphraser les connaissances acquises.



Fig. 1

The reflections on metaphors for the translator I want to offer in this essay are based on my observations of encounters between a number of agents, including myself, involved in the networking for New Zealand's Guest of Honor presentation at the 2012 Frankfurt Book Fair. My involvement in what I call the NZ@Frankfurt network was work-related and connected to the following institutions: the University of Auckland (UoA), the Goethe-Institut Wellington, the New Zealand Society for Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI), the New Zealand Centre for Literary Translation (NZCLT), the New Zealand Literary Translators (NZLitT) initiative and the New Zealand German Business Association Inc. (NZGBA).

Initially, I was motivated by a desire to gain experience in literary translation and supplement my income but also to contribute in some way to this unique cooperation between my native country and my host country. My first contact with the NZ@Frankfurt network was through the New Zealand Literary

Translators initiative, which was set up shortly after the official announcement mid-2011 that New Zealand had accepted the offer to be the Guest of Honour in Frankfurt. The members of this initiative are highly qualified translators who are also first-generation immigrants to New Zealand. They understand their role as ambassadorial and aim to promote and support translations of New Zealand literature overseas. I gladly followed their invitation to become a member and was soon able to absorb the world of literary translation in the context of real-life commercial pressure and competition, as opposed to the rather privileged and abstract point of view that I had so far been accustomed to as a scholar of Comparative Literature. At the same time I applied for membership with the NZSTI. Here, I found interesting opportunities to discuss my ideas and questions about the socio-political context of translation with translators who mainly worked in a non-literary environment, such as medical, legal, or technical translation.

In June 2012 the NZSTI held its annual conference in Wellington and included in its programme a Frankfurt Book Fair roundtable, which brought together representatives of the NZCLT, the Goethe-Institut, the New Zealand publishing industry, the NZLitT and me. The event memorably reflected the gist of the conference's title "Translating and Interpreting: Celebrating Strength in Diversity" as the panel members addressed and discussed in detail the different expectations each had as participant in the NZ@Frankfurt network and how it so far had shaped the cooperative processes they were involved in.





Fig. 2



Fig. 3 (Müller)

Fig. 4 (<http://medienarchiv.buchmesse.de/detail.html?assetId=34549&lang=en>)

Shortly after the conference a review of the Guest of Honour press conference held on 17 June 2012 in Germany appeared in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ). It stirred up a controversy about how much or how little New Zealand's presentation actually focused on books. The main points of dispute were that Peter Jackson's film adaptation of *The Hobbit* (Fig. 2), which was also the theme for the 2012 Cosplay (short for costume play), was largely diverting attention towards New Zealand as location for fantasy films and outdoor recreation; that the rich narrative tradition of the Maori was mainly presented in the form of carvings (Fig. 3), dance (Fig. 4), textile art and graphic art, and tattoos rather than books; and that a large number of the books that would be presented in translation at the Fair were either reprints of the usual suspects, i.e. Janet Frame, Frank Sargeson, Alan Duff, Witi Ihimaera, or travel and cook books (Platthaus). Unfortunately, a professional translation (in English) was never made available to the New Zealand public, and thus many of the responses neglected the extent to which the author had attributed the deplorable state of the New Zealand book at the Fair to a great shift within the German book industry towards "transmedia storytelling" and a lack of courage to support the import of fresh New Zealand literary works. It was obvious that the Frankfurt Book Fair network both in New Zealand and in Germany was marked by cooperation that was not necessarily built on a common point of view or shared goals. Every group represented in this network

imagined New Zealand@Frankfurt in a very different way.

During this time, I also worked as part-time tutor for the German and the English Departments at the University of Auckland and became involved in activities that were designed to raise interest amongst students and staff for the Book Fair. In response to the *FAZ* article, I had wanted to create a roundtable with representatives of both departments and experienced my own share of difficulties translating from one culture to another. Following the suggestion of a more experienced colleague, I chose the title “The Frankfurt Book Fair – Eine verpasste Chance/A Missed Chance?” for the event and sent out invitations. The responses were unenthusiastic, and I should have known better. In a German context, it is quite common to use a negative question like this to provoke contradiction. Especially as the book fair was yet to take place, I expected my guests to happily disagree. But the feedback I received clearly showed that such a set-up did not translate well into the New Zealand context. One letter of refusal pointed out that I might not be up to date with recent developments being undertaken to promote the Fair in New Zealand and that only if I was willing to change the character of the foreseen roundtable and set a positive, forward-looking framework would they consider participating. Another respondent explained that she had found the title disheartening but thought that the informed and robust debate I was proposing would be very healthy. The roundtable never eventuated. I instead created and chaired a roundtable

with members of the New Zealand Society of Authors (formerly PEN New Zealand), which allowed me to see that independent authors and literary translators shared a number of experiences in their efforts to gain ground within the NZ@Frankfurt network. Overall, my impression from this observational period was that cooperation among different agents in the NZ@Frankfurt network was fraught and the whole formed a highly complex system of interaction that involved multiple points of view and diverse goals and strategies that kept developing and evolving.

I soon discovered that scholarship had already addressed the complexity of the Frankfurt Book Fair but mainly in terms of its historical development and its economic and promotional relevance for different sections of the literary industry. Detailed studies on the task of the translator in the context of the world’s largest platform for literary and cultural exchange are still lacking, despite the fact that the Fair established the “Weltempfang” (World Reception) Centre for Politics, Literature and Translation in 2003. Geographic presence at the Fair has thus not yet been translated into a presence within the larger book fair, academic or public conscious.

Available historical and monoperspective studies of the Frankfurt Book Fair substantiate the fact that the annual event is a reference point of major relevance for the entire system translation, meaning its function as a platform for cultural diplomacy, literary discussion and economic development. The Guest of Honour phenomenon at the Book

Fair lends itself to a transdisciplinary approach, drawing on economic, cultural, political and psychological elements to answer the question: How do translators position themselves in the Frankfurt Book Fair network? In the following I will address some of the methodological challenges and offer reflections on how these can be met.

### **A Highly Complex System of Interaction**

Each year in October, the Frankfurt Book Fair produces a variety of commercial, cultural and national topics in association with an ever-evolving global literary book market. With over 7,000 exhibitors from over 100 countries and circa 300,000 visitors each year, it is considered the world's largest book fair. Heir to a 500-year-old tradition, the Frankfurt Book Fair today has almost nothing in common with its original character, especially with regard to its function. Consequently, the opinions of experts and observers about its significance and meaning for the book industry diverge greatly.

Periodisations are difficult to establish due to developmental overlaps, gaps in available sources, and altering foci. However, major recent studies (Füssel in 1999, Niemeier in 2001, and Weidhaas et al. in 2007) seem able to agree on several caesuras in the developments of the Fair since its reestablishment after WWII. The Fairs are generally set themed in close relation to the economic and cultural forces in Germany dominant during the given periods: the internationalisation in the 1950s, with

1953 marking the year in which foreign exhibitors outnumbered the domestic ones for the first time; the politicisation in the 1960s, in particular, the peak years 1966 and 1969 of the left intellectual and student protest movement; the growing commercialisation in the 1970s, indicated by the introduction of "Schwerpunktthemen" (focus topics) that did not have a strong lobby but helped to embed the Fair within a larger network of international initiatives and debates,[1] which was then replaced in 1984 by the "Schwerpunktländer" (focus countries); lastly, the increasing significance of electronic media from the 1990s onwards; the connecting of emotion and information and growing event culture inaugurated by veteran art fair organizer Lorenzo Rudolf, who ran the Fair from 2000-2003 ("Buchmesse"). One might say that one function dominates a certain chapter in the history of the Fair because certain social, political, commercial and technological developments draw attention to it, but in its entirety the Fair is multifunctional.

The establishment of focus countries in the 1980s is a particularly good example of how intricately interwoven cultural and economic functions are in the context of the Fair. On the one hand, the focus countries grew out of the idea to support themes that otherwise did not have a strong lobby in the system of the Fair (Thielmann 130). On the other hand, the focus countries organise and finance a great number of events, which is of substantial economic benefit to the Fair. [2] Another indicator is the fact that the guest nations themselves often seize the



opportunity to accentuate other economic branches within their program. In 1988, for example, Italy presented a vibrant tourism industry and Japan, guestland in 1990, foregrounded their strong high-tech industry. Platthaus's critique regarding a lack of focus on New Zealand books thus cannot entirely be reduced to the book industry's recent trend away from printed paper.

Having the guestlands largely design and organise their presentations themselves was intended to ensure that enough cultural translation occurred in advance to avoid a repetition of the debacle that transpired during the presentation of India in 1986, which was then still in the hands of the Fair itself:

*Although the tone of initial reports in the media was generally neutral and innocuous, it soon became clear that the coverage was primarily dependent on clichés relating to classical India, instead of addressing the complexities of the present. Unfamiliar philosophies, complex plotlines, a bewildering delineation of characters, and even the unfamiliar pronunciation of the Indian authors reading their works in English were all perceived as being too foreign for public consumption. The audience remained either puzzled or indifferent. (Weidhaas et al 204)*

On the other hand, Iceland's focus on fables in their 2011 "Fabulous Iceland" presentation was hugely successful. Whether and the extent to which a shift of responsibility from the receiving culture to the guest country resolves matters of

cliché and unfamiliarity or puzzlement and indifference merits case-by-case studies.

In connection with the financial cost of presenting as Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair, Niemeier points out that guest nations display a need to out-do each other, which has led to ever-increasing sums spent and a growing Eurocentrism in the selection of the guests owing to their better financial standing (Niemeier 53-4). In other words, economic interests have pushed aside the original idea of drawing attention to marginal topics. Instead, as recent studies of the Fair's incentive measures and development of funds for translations indicate, translator initiatives take on the task of lobbying for economically less fortunate literatures (cf. Bachleitner and Wolf 2010).

The attention national PR and cultural translation have received in academic and public forums point to the political significance of the Fair. This is often addressed in heated debates, which occur in Fair-external settings. The Platthaus review and ensuing reactions in New Zealand are just one of many ways in which this can occur. Weidhaas et al. describe another example from the 1980s. Under the Schwerpunkt "Black Africa," apartheid became a hotly debated issue, openly addressing the diachronic role of Germany as host country and colonial power. South African writer James Matthews expressed his confusion openly at a public session titled "The Function of Modern African Literature?" in the Conference Hall of the Römer:

*I ask myself what the devil I'm doing here. I am only half-literate, and yet I have been given a room at a super-luxury hotel. I push a button and food is brought to me. Should I be won over? This country, like all other European countries, has exploited my country. And where is the compensation? This is the first time I have even been allowed to leave my country. For twenty years I was refused a passport. How come I have one now? Is your country so powerful that it can exploit us and still negotiate a passport for us at the same time? (as quoted in Weidhaas et al. 197)*

His words found a receptive audience and led to further processing through the German public (Weidhaas et al 204-207).

While serving as a major reference point for topical debates of global politics and ideologies, the Fair itself subscribes to neutrality and freedom of thought and expression: "The founding members [of the Fair] were inspired by the idea of an international literature without national censorship, the free development of opinion as the foundation of democracy" (Schulz 2458-2488).

<sup>[3]</sup> Historical analysis shows, however, that the Frankfurt Book Fair network is too complex to yield to clear-cut boundaries. As the Fair often necessarily responds to the socio-political climate at a given time, the neutrality principle has been challenged with different outcomes on several occasions.

In 1950, a stall run by a neo-Nazi publisher was removed by other stall owners, who consequently demanded that such publishers be excluded in

advance. This demand was refused under reference to the neutrality principle. The exclusion of anti-religious literature, on the other hand, which was a condition for the booking of the Paulskirche in 1949, had been, after much heated debate, accepted. Other significant examples of indirect censorship include China's boycott of the Fair in 1957 in response to Taiwan's participation; the exclusion of Iran from the 1989 Fair in response to Ayatollah Khomeini's call for a fatwa against British writer Salman Rushdie following the publication of *The Satanic Verses*; the closure of the Fair to visitors, including experts, at the height of the protests in 1968 on the Sunday afternoon that the Peace Prize was awarded in the Paulskirche; and the seizing of the GDR state publishing company's showcased "Braunbuch über Kriegs- und Naziverbrechen in der Bundesrepublik" (Brown Book of War- and Nazi-Crimes in the Federal Republic) by the Frankfurt district judge's office followed by massive protests by other exhibitors (cf. Niemeier 45-46). Another incident worth mentioning occurred in 1967, when the GDR as well as the Soviet Union threatened to boycott the Frankfurt Book fair when the organisers refused to use the statename "GDR" for the books published in the East German country.<sup>[4]</sup>

The permeability of the system, meaning that certain functions can be transferred from actors who solely work within the Frankfurt Book Fair network and others who may only be temporarily attached to the wider Frankfurt Book Fair network (newspapers, exhibitions before and after the Fair, externally organised



roundtables), makes it difficult to determine the positioning of the translator by looking at his/her function. A better way to approach this topic is through an interdisciplinary focus on interaction.

### **Chaos and Order**

The Fair's multifunctionality and permeability have already pushed research towards elements that are not solely profit focused, such as culture and politics. The contributions to the Suhrkamp anthology *50 Jahre Frankfurter Buchmesse* (1999) reflect the growing interest in analyses that critically assess the field of tensions between cultural and commercial interests. Stephan Füssel, the volume's editor, emphasises the Fair's significance as a connection point between the history of the German republic after WWII and a scaled book industry:

*Due to the fact that one does not only trade economic goods at the Fairs, but also heatedly debates their contents, the history of the Frankfurt Book Fair can be traced as a mirror image of the history of the Federal Republic and also of the European and worldwide book markets. [5] (8)*

The selected essays in the anthology emphasise historico-political aspects of the Fair and also to a large extent reinforce the aforementioned periodisation of the Fair. For example, Füssel and Fischer focus on the early internationalisation of the Fair after WWII. Scheideler and Schneider describe politically motivated countermovements in the German public in the 1960s. Sabri examines

the bestseller marketing of the 1970s. Thielmann, Rütten and Fischer look at the consequences of the introduction of focus topics for the Fair and the shift towards nationalism and economic outsourcing through the introduction of focus countries. Götz considers the shift towards electronic media against the background of the 1984 focus topic "Orwell 2000." Next to a detailed historical representation, the anthology delivers a valuable impression of the Fair as a complex system of communication and interaction, which promotes further shifts in methodology.[6]

The shift in study towards the sociological embeddedness of the Frankfurt Book Fair and its diverse actors can be traced to the far-reaching influence of the foundational works of the cultural turn in the 1970s, such as Hayden White, Clifford Geertz, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. In translation studies, Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* in particular facilitated the growth of socio-cultural translation studies. Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem and Gideon Toury's descriptive methodology set the course for researchers to engage in mapping the micro (individual instances of translation) and macro (the socio-politics surrounding a translation) levels of literary and practical translation. This has helped to discern the cognitive, social and cultural constraints under which translators operate counter to the reducing of translators to the status of transcoders and translation machines that had historically forced them into invisibility (Venuti 1995).

While the surge of new methodologies and perspectives on translation has widened the scope of translation studies, the new avenues in translation research have also led to new challenges. Attention to the specificity of translation runs the risk of producing data that is chaotic and lacking in explanatory force. The visual representation Şehnaz Tahir-Gurçağlar developed of the network model to map the network composed of publishers, translators, authors, editors, readers, and government and literary institutions illustrates the shortcomings:

CHAOS BEFORE ORDER: NETWORK MAPS AND RESEARCH DESIGN IN DTS 735

A Network Map for Translated Popular Literature in Turkey in the 1940s based on Alim Kızıltan as Gateway

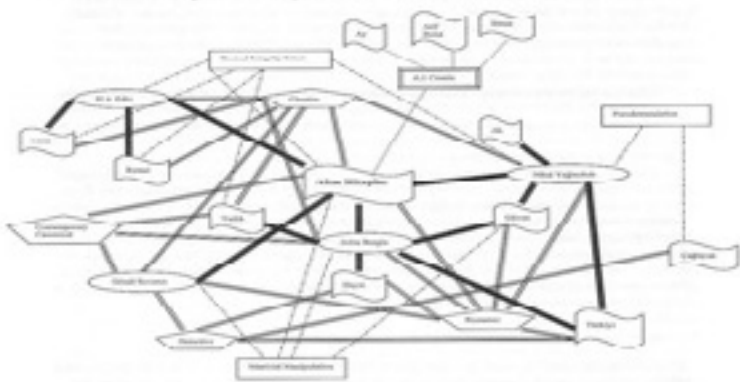


Fig. 5

Acknowledging that the visual representation is problematic in a number of ways, Tahir-Gurçağlar foremost criticises the model's failure to fully exhibit the available data: "the more elements one adds to the map, the more complex it becomes and the lines become impossible to trace on a two-dimensional plane. Since the goal is to be as comprehensive as possible with the inventory of elements, visualization is nearly impossible and the map becomes conceptual" (736).

The multifariousness of the object of study makes conceptual models that help structure it all the more attractive. But the problem here is that the structuredness of the model may distort the unstructuredness of the object. A case in point is the ATCS (Acquired Capabilities for Translation Systems) by Thomson-Wohlgemuth and Thomson. It lays out the relationship between five core abilities (professionalism; organisation; consistency; refinement; innovation) and related behaviours (commitment, discipline; communication, teamwork; service; self-reflection; embracing change) compared to the five gears of a car.

Acquiring capabilities in translation 117

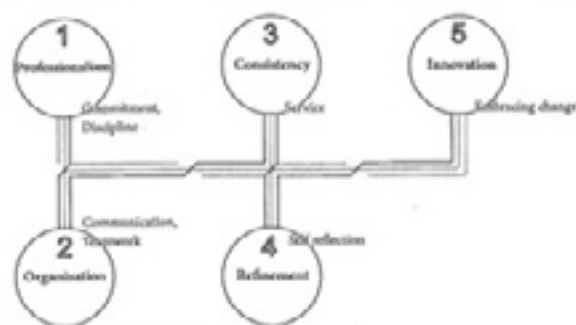


Figure 1. The ACTS model

Fig. 6

The 5-gear-model suggests a neat hierarchical sequence of processes, and the language the authors employ to describe the model reinforce the sense of order, of straightforward cause and effect: "Used together, these should enable an organisation to create an effective, disciplined process so as to meet the requirements of its customers, minimising internal costs and in the hope that everyone in the organisation

can take pride in their work (see Figure 1 above)” (257). Of course, there are other ways to represent collected data, but visual representations as in the two figures above illustrate the challenge in descriptive translation studies very clearly: how does one position and direct one’s study? From comprehensive detail or data chaos to order (Tahir-Gurçağlar) or within order (Thomson-Wohlgemuth and Thomson)?

This is a challenge common to studies that face complex socio-cultural data. Reviewing the status quo of studies available on the Frankfurt Book Fair, Niemeier assumes that it is the deterrent effect of data complexity that explains the lack of interdisciplinary studies in the field (xi). Her own study offers an insightful overview of the historical development of the Fair and investigates how actors of the “System Book” position themselves at the Fair. She links the complexity of the Fair to necessary adjustments of scientific approaches:

*The course of the fair is shaped by economic, cultural, political and psychological interests. The fair turns into an instrument for the production of collective experience. This inevitably influences scientific approaches to the book fair, because, if one considers all aspects of it seriously, one has to study it differently. We are dealing with a complex system and a personal experience, thus the non-rational components also belong within our focus. All the more important it is to draw on as many perspectives as possible to help better understand the emotional, not purely profit-oriented relationship between branch and book fair. (Niemeier xi-xii)<sup>[7]</sup>*

Consequently, her study makes use of historical studies, analyses current coverage in the trade journals, periodicals and public media, and draws on conversations with exhibitors, visitors and representatives of the *Ausstellungs- und Messe AG (AuM, subsidiary of the Association of German Publishers and Booksellers)*, statistics released by the Frankfurt Book Fair, and her own experience, observations and targeted interviews (xii).

Like Tahir-Gurçağlar and Thomson-Wohlgemuth and Thomson, Niemeier uses figures to represent parts of her methodology and findings. Three figures represent the relationship between main agents/participants at the Fair: one represents the “System Book,” which includes agents, publishers, authors, buyers, readers, reviewers, libraries, distributors and book sellers (58), another situates the Fair within the “System Book” (59), and a third illustrates the network of interactions between the different groups participating in the Fair, which includes the exhibitors/publishers, book sellers, authors, the public, politicians, media, the organisers/AuM and other service providers (food, accommodation, banking, security, medical, transport, etc.) (88). Niemeier’s figures share the same shortcomings as the others, namely the reduction of detail and complexity; however, the directionality in her study is different. The figures appear at the beginning of the respective chapters “System Book” (58 and 59 of 57-85) and “Internal Structure” (88 of 86-112). Niemeier thus moves from a simplified representation to elaborate detail and

complexity. Simplification of data is the point of departure not the goal, and neither is complexity. While this approach is preferable to the other two studies, ideally, an interdisciplinary study of the translator's positioning in the NZ@ Frankfurt network would include both directions from a simplified approach to complex details to a meaningful ordering or reduction of data. But how?

### **Friction - An Invisible Gap Made Visible**

Niemeier's study stands out from the larger sum of monoperspectival approaches to the Frankfurt Book Fair, but it still shares one of the most common blind spots: the translator. Given the early internationalisation, the focus on foreign countries, and the fact that the Fair is often heralded as a site that offers a plethora of opportunity to strengthen international ties through "cultural diplomacy"; and given that the job of the translator is often described as that of a bridge maker, a mediator between cultures, and a tourist guide, it is quite surprising how little mention there is of this group of participants in connection with this annual event. Even the scholarly essays coming from Translation Studies, such as the contributions by Hofer and Messner and Fischer, Pölzer, Seidler and Havranek to the 2010 anthology *Streifzüge im Translatorischen Feld: Zur Soziologie der literarischen Übersetzung im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Exploring the Translation Field: The Sociology of Literary Translation in German-Speaking Countries) are incomplete in so far as that they mention the Fair predominantly in connection with its function as the creator of incentive measures and development

funds and less in connection with how translators interact with other actors in the Frankfurt Book Fair network. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the Fair only relatively recently, in 2003, added the *Übersetzerzentrum* to its programme, a centre for translators, which aims to facilitate contact with agents and colleagues and wants to bring more attention to the translator as envoys of cultural and linguistic diversity. Although it seems more likely that the preconception of the translator as invisible has been and still is an unfortunate starting ground for a shift of (self-)positioning.

Invisibility is just one of the many metaphors that have shaped the way in which we understand translation. These metaphors aid in training successive generations of translators and theorists, and often also determine what facets of translation are deemed to be important and therefore merit study. As such they play a central role in the modelling of methodologies in translation studies, which needs to be critically examined.

Scholars in disciplines as diverse as medicine, business, advertising and music, have recognised the importance of metaphors to their research. This is due to the unique role metaphors play in connecting the literal and the abstract and, as many scholars argue, in directing thought as well as action. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who have greatly contributed to establishing the cognitive importance of metaphors, point out that metaphors are a means of structuring our perception. They can



highlight or make comprehensible and often reduce particular aspects of any given experience (87). The metaphor and the aspect it describes build a strong sense unit. So strong, Lakoff and Johnson argue, that they can become “guides for future action” and even “self-fulfilling prophecies” (112).[8] At the same time, metaphors are partial and imperfect, as Mike Hanne reminds us in “Metaphors for the Translator”: “it is rare to find a single phrase being treated as exhausting the metaphorical potential of a person, object or phenomenon” (211). Thus metaphors are permeable entities that allow for development and redirection of thought and perception. The large number of metaphors traded in translation studies is evidence of this.

An attempt to discuss here the manifold metaphors in circulation in translation research can only be as partial and imperfect as any metaphor. Many metaphors for translation, however, share that they reflect the overarching “secondary” quality of translation as a form of communication that “provides access to something, some message, that already exists” (House 3). As such, translation entails intuitive associations with falsity and treason. From a politically engaged perspective – be it in relation to (post-)colonial power struggles or current international affairs, or simply within the field of translation itself – invisibility quickly becomes a matter of complicity, challenging translators to position themselves on the scale of conflicting ideas. Do you follow source-focused or target-focused approaches (Pym; Venuti)? Have you explored your social context

(Even-Zohar; Hermans 1985, 1994; Toury) in order to determine whether you are complicit in the construction or dislocation of empires (Spivak; Salama-Carr; Milton and Bandia)? Summarising the gist of major contributions to the discipline, Myriam Salama-Carr writes: “The notion of ‘conflict’ is part and parcel of contemporary discourse on translation and interpreting” (1).

The import and growing acceptance of the conflict metaphor can also be linked to globalisation and its perceived creation of a world that is “increasingly polarized” (Salama-Carr 1) and “conflict-ridden” (Baker 1). Focusing on the role translations and translators play in conflict situations such as warfare, racial persecution, etc. gives Translation Studies the opportunity to attach itself to a larger public platform (Apter). The extreme context lends the reality and intensity of the challenges of translation immediate relevance. But, like any other metaphor that comes to dominate a scientific discipline, the conflict metaphor threatens to limit the range of theory development and study. A focus on translation in connection with global conflicts leads to a displacement and distancing of issues that are too mundane to merit much interest or attention under less extreme circumstances. It is another form of ‘othering’ the translator and discounting the everyday life challenges of literary translation.

Further at stake is the notion that conflict supports the perceived incompatibility that results from the theoretical dichotomies in translation: “source/target,” “domestication/ foreignisation,”

“coloniser/ colonised,” “individual/ system.” Oxford Dictionaries defines conflict amongst others as “a serious disagreement or argument, typically a protracted one”; “a prolonged armed struggle”; “a state of mind in which a person experiences a clash of opposing feelings or needs”; “a serious incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles, or interests.” The conflict metaphor moreover reinforces the sense that the main task of translators is to perform only secondary communicative acts; they serve to mediate a preexisting disagreement or situate themselves in relation to preexisting dichotomies. What is needed is a metaphor that denotes a shift from perceived complicity (neutrality) and incompatibility (theoretical dichotomies) of translation and translators toward specific instances of contact between translators and other actors.

To meet this need and to overcome the problems inherent in the confining conflict metaphor, I suggest that it be replaced with ‘friction.’ Scholars in other disciplines have proposed and illustrated that a focus on friction produces better results because it challenges the bias that successful intercultural cooperation is the consequence of smooth interaction. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing argues that friction forces the scholar “to become embroiled in specific situations” (1) and thus lays bare the transformational processes that turn universal aspirations into local currency: “Speaking of friction is a reminder of the importance of interaction in defining movement, cultural form, and agency” (6). Her study

of collaborations between transnational investment groups and local interest groups in the Indonesian rain forest is a valuable warning against assuming that such collaborations are based on common viewpoints or goals, or that they will necessarily result in reciprocal benefits.

The notion of cultural contact inherent in the friction metaphor has been picked up by Shenkar et al., who analyse the organisational and research ramifications of the ‘cultural distance’ metaphor in international management (IM). They propose friction as substitute metaphor for ‘distance’ to counter a research environment “where ‘messy’ cultural encounters and their potential for disagreement antagonism, and conflict are never dealt with; where social and political overtones are squelched; and where sensitivities relating to hierarchical positioning and power differentials across partisan interest are habitually overlooked” (909). The friction metaphor, in their view, can help to redirect research in their field leading to studies which anticipate and aim to understand the dialectical and developmental nature of cultural interaction and provides better answers to the challenges of international management.

Looking at collaborations between international conservationist groups and indigenous communities, Jim Igoe similarly comes to the conclusion that a close study of types of frictions that arise in different situations is essential to predict the likelihood of certain outcomes. The outcomes can be predicted in relation to patterns, which, with the

help of such study can be attributed to certain variables.

For instance, alliances between conservationists and indigenous communities are more likely where indigenous peoples have legal authority over natural resources; where they have been allowed to live inside protected areas; where indigenous leaders have good accountability to their constituency; and where indigenous peoples initiated the relationship with conservationists rather than vice versa. In situations where the conditions are the opposite antagonisms are more likely to prevail. (386)

These three examples show that the friction metaphor has improved studies by providing at least three important vectors that allow for a balance between complex detail and meaningful reduction of data: 1) the shift from abstract to concrete; 2) the premise of dialectical, possibly uneven and developmental nature of interaction; 3) the filtering of complex data into patterns with relative explanatory force.

Of course, this suggested symbiotic existence between the friction metaphor, theory and method remains to be tested for Translation Studies, and not just in the context of the Frankfurt Book Fair. Like all metaphors, it has limits that will necessarily be revealed. My hope is that friction will make a modest contribution toward tapping the rich veins of innovative metaphors that signify a willingness to imagine and explore transformed conceptualisations of Translation Studies.

## Endnotes

[1] In 1978, for example, the topic was “Kind und Buch” (Child and Book), which was shortly after the UNESCO had declared 1979 to be the International Year of the Child. The Fair successfully positioned itself as the send-off for a worldwide initiative and debates about how different societies treated children (Thielmann 139f.).

[2] In 1999 up to 40% of the events were organised by the guestland (Niemeier 106).

[3] „Die Gründungsmitglieder [der Messe] beseelte der Gedanke einer Internationalität der Literatur ohne nationale Zensur, Freiheit der Meinungsbildung als Grundlage der Demokratie.“ Compare also “Eine Zensur findet nicht statt.” (1980) and “Zensur findet nicht statt.” (2009). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

[4] This is documented in detail by Seyer (175-180).

[5] „Da bei diesen Messen ja nicht nur mit kaufmännischen Waren gehandelt, sondern auch über die Inhalte vehement diskutiert wird, kann die Geschichte der Frankfurter Messe als ein Spiegelbild der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik und auch des europäischen und weltweiten Buchmarktes nachgezeichnet werden.“

[6] Moreover, that the last four of the ten essays explore the Fair’s focus topic/focus country aspect can be seen as indicator for the growing importance of the Fair’s event character.

[7] „Wirtschaftliche, kulturelle, politische und psychologische Interessen prägen den Messeverlauf, sie wird zum Instrument für die Erzeugung kollektiver Erfahrungen. Dies beeinflusst die wissenschaftliche Betrachtung der Buchmesse unweigerlich, denn nimmt man all dieses ernst, muß man die Messe anders untersuchen. Wir haben es mit einem komplexen System und einer persönlichen Erfahrung zu tun, also gehören auch die nichtrationalen Komponenten in den Blick. Umso wichtiger ist es, möglichst viele Perspektiven heranzuziehen, die helfen, das emotionale, nicht nur absatzorientierte Verhältnis zwischen Branche und Buchmesse besser zu verstehen.“

[8] In this connection Hofer and Messner (2010) point out that the status of the translator as invisible is continually reinforced because translators have to a large extent internalised the desire that translations should not be recognisable as such (43).

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## Image Notes

Fig 1 <http://derstandard.at/1348286004455/Ein-Elchtest-fuer-die-Gutenberggalaxis>

Fig 2 <http://www.thebigidea.co.nz/news/industry-news/2012/oct/122641-hobbits-take-over-at-frankfurt>

Fig 3 <http://www.cafedigital.de/2012/10/13/frankfurter-buchmesse-2012-%E2%80%93-der-tag-der-kiwis/>

Fig. 4 <http://medienarchiv.buchmesse.de/detail.html?assetId=34549&lang=en>

Fig. 5 From Tahir-Gürçağlar

Fig. 6 From Thomson-Wohlgemuth, Gabriele and Ian Thomson

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