

## DECOLONISATION WITHOUT CONSENSUS: THE PRAXIS OF GLOBAL SOUTH TRANSLATION

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The word ‘decolonisation’ is often contentious and rarely straightforward. The word ‘translation’ is perhaps not inherently challenging, yet it often occurs in political contexts. However compelling both terms may be for Global South students like me in Anglophone contexts, it is very easy to lose sight of their simultaneous overlapping themes and the potential pushback they receive. To a greater or lesser extent, both words advocate for making marginalised voices visible. History has shown this. *Translation and decolonisation* offers a timely interdisciplinary conversation between often-differing terms around their praxis, and will be of interest for scholars in areas such as Postcolonial Studies, Translation Theory, Contemporary Literary Studies, Sociology, Anthropology, Linguistics, History, and Migration Studies.

Although the collection foregrounds perspectives from the Global South, Latin American voices are noticeably underrepresented, particularly Indigenous voices. Without them, the debate around land, its ownership, dispossession, and potential restitution is left unexplored, despite its centrality to many decolonial movements. This example illustrates, as the editors acknowledge, that the term decolonisation has become overused and inflated (Chambers and Demir, 2024, p. 2). The chapters differently address their concerns about the possibility of achieving decolonisation, which adds a political awareness of both the term and the limits of each editor’s disciplines – in other words, the collection anticipates scepticism. One example the book offers is that decolonisation can work as a theory in relation to sociology and linguistics. In addition, the contested term can also serve as a means to achieving solidarity, as seen in the case of Pakistani magazine *Āwāz* or the Zapatistas Movement. Alternatively, it may operate as an underpinning ethos or value, particularly in contemporary novels that grapple with neo-colonial narratives and refugee or migrant contexts. Besides giving voice to emerging scholars, the book opens with a reprint of an essay by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and closes with a reprint of one by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, signalling the persistent influence of these authors on the postcolonial field to date. It thus continues to pursue a praxis on decolonisation through translation, which is essential for marginal voices to avoid being ventriloquised, and to avoid reducing decolonisation to an echo of social justice, critical methodologies, or settler perspectives (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012, p. 107; Tuck and Wayne Yang, 2021, p. 63). In doing so, the editors

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address the longstanding neglect of South-to-South conversations in both fields and attempt to prioritise them instead.

The essays deal with a range of linguistic contexts, which suggests that English is not the sole entry point or medium for unveiling other locations, as the editors call it (Chambers and Demir, 2024, p. 8). Yet, it remains a monolingual book for those who are at least acquainted with postcolonial practices, and whose entry point is persistently Anglocentric. Starting with Spivak, the collection introduces the problem of the role of the translator in Global South contexts through the historical and geographical representation of Bengali, intertwined with Spivak's own name and authoritative voice. In the second chapter, Kathryn Bachelor deepens the divisions between the postcolonial and the decolonial, building on Walter Mignolo's concept of decoloniality. The chapter could have been further enriched by Indigenous views, especially in the light of Indigenous scholar Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's claim that "Walter Mignolo and company have built a small empire within an empire" (Rivera Cusicanqui, 2012, p. 98). If Indigeneity is a category for a heterogeneous group that has persistently been denied ongoing existence, epistemological autonomy, and land ownership, its absence in this collection is striking.

The main challenge of the collection is summarised in Paul F. Bandia's chapter, which problematises the extent to which intersectionality moves away from anglonormativity to enhance challenging linguonormativity (Bandia, 2024, p. 58). He does so by focusing on EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion), an umbrella term where decolonisation is insufficiently tackled by institutional values. A feminist lens in the collection is offered by Tejaswini Niranjana's chapter, which unveils the classroom imbalances through a gender perspective. Niranjana compellingly draws our attention to the potential engagement between decolonisation and multivocal pedagogical practices in India. Abdelmajid Hannoum's chapter, 'On translation ideology', maps the asymmetries of structural language theories, though it may rely too heavily on philosophies of language to further shape (or not) the anti- or de-colonial goals of a text, obscuring the possibilities of shaping decolonisation in practical terms.

Claire Chambers' and Gargi Binju's articulation of literary analysis enhances the nuanced interdisciplinary impact of the collection. They focus on novels by R.F. Kuang and Ayesha Manazir Siddiqi, and on M.G. Vassanji's work, respectively. Underscoring a world of in-betweenness in these novels, both chapters consistently challenge the potential of fiction to reveal the heterogenous nature of belonging and language learning in Asian-African, Asian-American and Asian-English contexts. Sara de Jong's chapter grounds the reader in political translation, this time in the US-led NATO war in Afghanistan. She interrogates the consequences of translating and interpreting underrepresented voices, so that a seemingly simple multilingual exchange operates vis-à-vis power relations.

In Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez's chapter, we read a compelling critique of the Eurocentric framework underpinning the definition of human rights, which is a refreshing view to understand today's conflicts where the West is a key actor. These reflections, for example, evoke the ongoing raids by ICE in the USA, and the urgent need to dismantle

colonial notions underlying anti-immigration policies. The next chapter organically moves on towards activism, where in a more personal tone, Maureen Freely illustrates the often-unspoken boundaries between local history and translation. Translating is rarely a neutral task, and so she draws on the value behind the exhausting endeavour of making voices accessible and available. Freely suggests that translation can also be a tool to resist colonisation (Freely, 2024, p. 203), comprehensively highlighting the role of entities such as *English PEN* or journals like *Asymptote* through her own personal and intimate ‘constant turmoil’ (Freely, 2024, p. 205).

Haider Shahbaz effectively draws our attention to a case study that, unlike solidarities of the Bandung Era or the Tricontinental times in the 1960s, focuses on the Pakistani magazine *Āwāz*, founded in the 1970s by the progressive feminist and Urdu writer Fahmida Riaz. A South-to-South collaborative tension can be found in the next chapter, where Peiyu Yang illustrates Arab-China solidarity, critically addressing a romanticised version of China. Her more local approach to Palestine-China solidarity through Ghassan Kanafani’s work is refreshing, especially as she pays attention to the use of the female body to resist the Zionist occupation and its counterpart in China. This chapter demonstrates that decolonisation remains relevant to demystify South-to-South collaboration as a monolithic strategy.

The greatest contribution of this collection is that, instead of focusing on the widely explored contributions of magazines such as *Lotus* or *Tricontinental* to solidarity, decolonisation, and translation, the authors further underscore the role of South Asian, Palestinian, and Chinese translations instead. It is therefore fitting that the collection ends with a chapter by recently deceased author Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong’o, which focuses on African languages, their publishers and the academic world, mirroring the pervading colonial structures that permeate the rest of the contexts in the collection. Wa Thiong’o thus reiterates an enduring challenge: to do more for our languages and in our languages (Wa Thiong’o, 2024, p. 223).

Beneath the surface of heavily theoretical ideals around decolonisation, *Decolonisation and Translation* makes the depth of the Global South visible, as Freely puts it, without expecting consensus (Freely, 2024, p. 205). It addresses the complexities of Global South cultural translations, while making the debate heterogeneous and politically grounded. The collection is ambitious, yet accessible for readers who are neither translators nor literary scholars, as translation moves vertically through the uneven languages and horizontally through (de)colonial hierarchies. Decolonisation and translation interact, overlap, intersect, and differ in many places: in hostile political environments, in the comfort of a literary analysis, within the precarity of teaching spaces, and during the draining task of feminist and migrant activism. This is only a sample of wider endeavours that can finally be uncovered in *Decolonisation and Translation*.

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