

M.^a Carmen África Vidal Claramonte. *Translating Borrowed Tongues. The Verbal Quest of Ilan Stavans*. New York and London: Routledge, 2023. 128 pp.

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Vidal Claramonte is a thinker who, as her subject of study in this book, Ilan Stavans, lives in borrowed tongues and translates between them: the language of translation studies, philosophy, comparative literature, art, and sociology, among others. Her “multilingual” approach to every subject she studies performs what has been defined as the Outward Turn of our discipline (Bassnett and Johnston 2019; Vidal Claramonte 2022), a turn that not only enriches our field but that also widens the importance and influence of the thinking of translation in human and social sciences. Furthermore, this volume brilliantly continues the path she opened in previous research, where she tackles the translation of the “atravesado” (2015) or the ideas of the border and translingual literature (2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022).

In this book, *Translating Borrowed Tongues: The Verbal Quest of Ilan Stavans*, Vidal Claramonte analyses the multifaceted figure of the Mexican-American author, thinker, editor, sociolinguist, and translator Ilan Stavans. She delves especially into his translation work as a migrant with multiple identities, translations that reflect his hybridity, and a very singular take on this task. Stavans envisions translation out of binary oppositions – which explains Vidal Claramonte’s interest in his figure since her research has always been aligned with poststructuralist theories. Stavans is, following the words of Vidal Claramonte, a “translated translator” (p.2), someone who is at home “not being at home.” Therefore, as a writer (of translations), he pushes the boundaries of a language that is *never* one, as Derrida already posed in *Le monolinguisme de l'autre* (1996).

Stavans, as a case of study, as a writer/translator in the postmonolingual era, is an example of paramount interest to explore the challenges that new hybrid voices pose to translators. The disquiet that emerges from the blurring of linguistic and cultural boundaries is a main point of concern for contemporary research in translation studies and beyond. These hybrid spaces that Vidal analyses in Stavans’ work, following Apter’s concept of “zone” (2006), “are a *topos* that facilitates the exploration of difference by forcing us to leave behind the known familiar space as well as our mother tongue” (p.20). Thus, the work of Stavans is to be

understood within this translangual and postmonolingual framework. A space that exceeds single and monolithic systems.

After situating Stavans' production, the author analyses his multiple identities through different examples of his literary production. These situate him as someone who lives between worlds, who is more than one, and who exceeds the ideal of unity (Stavans 2017, 7). He is *himself* and *other* at the same time, the translated translator. He even transforms his name, wearing the masks of different pseudonyms that carry with themselves other identities, other stories. As a translated subject, Stavans goes even further and affirms that he "lives in translation without an original" (2021, xvi). This idea leads him to reflect on the process of *becoming* rather than simply *being*. As Vidal Claramonte points out, not only does this perspective mirror itself in his translation and writing, but also opens new paths to thinking about existence and identity as concepts linked to difference. Difference "as the shape of the world that surrounds us" (p.40) contrasts with paradigms of unity and monolingualism, which had structured modern thinking, politics, and society.

To go further in her research of Stavans' translangualism, Vidal Claramonte also delves into his use of *verba peregrina*, words that travel, borrowed words, words that come from elsewhere. These words from elsewhere work as the stone that breaks the mirror of unity and single identity. They are a perpetual reminder that we *live* in translation, in the border, in fluid spaces that no one fully owns. As Vidal Claramonte reflects, such is the case of Spanglish in Stavans, a "polycentric, uneven, multi-layered territory that has overcome binarisms and essentialisms" (p.52). New language(s) for new translation paradigms aligned with poststructuralist positions.

The volume's author also underlines the tremendous political power that border languages such as Spanglish(es) may have as a means of social vindication. She also points out the huge literary and academic statement that Stavans' translations into Spanglish represent (among others, *Don Quixote*, *El Little Príncipe*, or *Alicia's Adventures in Wonderlandia*).

Stavans challenges the "purity" of languages in his translations and also several paradigmatic concepts in Translation Studies, such as the idea of "original." For him, there is no "primary and secondary text, but rather a text and a previous text" (p.76). In this Borgesian light, he understands "original" texts already as translations (without originals).

Thus, in his quest for the plural, Stavans is one of the most fascinating thinkers from whom we can learn in Translation Studies. In this fundamental volume, Vidal Claramonte successfully achieves her goal of giving an overview of his translation work and thinking. Nevertheless, this book also exceeds the figure

of Stavans and helps us understand the current translingual and postmonolingual scenario we inhabit as readers and translators.

Funding

Open Access publication of this article was funded through a Transformative Agreement with Jaume I University.

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Publication history

Date received: 29 March 2023

Date accepted: 31 March 2023

Published online: 24 July 2023