

Cultural mediators in Europe 1750–1950 (Leuven, 5–7 Jun 2014)

Leuven, Jun 5–07, 2014

Deadline: Oct 1, 2013

Tessa Lobbes

The research groups “Translation and intercultural transfer” and “Cultural History since 1750” of the KU Leuven organise an international colloquium on “Cultural mediators in Europe 1750-1950”, June 5-7 2014 in Leuven, Belgium.

This conference wants to advance understanding of the complex yet largely unknown cultural transfer activities that helped shaping international, national and urban cultures during the last two centuries in Europe. A privileged way to gain insight in these transfer activities is to focus on the agents, i.e. the cultural mediators who embody them.

We want to focus specifically on those cultural mediators who develop a broad range of partly overlapping transfer activities through different cultural fields (literature, painting, music, theatre...), different languages and geo-cultural frontiers.

- They are multilingual writers and publishers, multilingual literary and art critics who promote specific artistic subsets as typically national, international or regional; they are art dealers who organize (inter)national art exhibitions; they are self-translators or translators who translate, adapt, plagiarise, summarize, censor, manipulate, ... works of other language communities. Recent studies illustrate how mediators freely combine several of these transfer techniques even within one and the same work.
- They are active in a variety of more or less institutionalised intercultural and inter-artistic networks (editing boards of magazines and periodicals, salons, literary and artistic associations, art and music academies, artists' workshops, reading circles etc.) which promote or oppose their transfer activities.
- They are real migrants, persons with hybrid identities, who develop transfer activities in several geo-cultural spaces, which considerably sharpens their intercultural and international consciousness.

These complex but crucially important transfer roles are rarely acknowledged as such or studied in any depth because they transcend traditional disciplinary divides (translation studies, literary studies, history...) and their binary concepts (source-target, national-international, cultural-intercultural...). The study of cultural mediators and their transfer activities is therefore preferably

- interdisciplinary and collective, bringing together methods from translation sociology, descriptive translation studies, transfer studies, cultural history...
- process- and actor-oriented, in order to discover the complex intersections of which cultural products are the surface result;

- start from the assumption that translation has to be studied in relation to other transfer techniques and that “le débat académique opposant transferts, comparaisons et croisements se résout de lui-même dans la recherche empirique” (Charle 2010:16).

In short, “we need histories that describe the meshing and shifting of different spatial references, narratives in which historical agency is emphasized, and interpretations acknowledging that the changing patterns of spatialization are processes fraught with tension” (Middell & Naumann 2010 :161).

The colloquium is open to the totality of these historiographical and translational questions, preferably tackled by means of case studies analysing e.g.:

- How and why mediators’ transfer activities created new forms of writing and translating and new actor roles, challenging the very distinctions between translation, self-translation, multilingual writing, adaptation ... How and why did they introduce or oppose new artistic practices? Did they undertake inter-artistic or field-transgressing activities? Did they assume different attitudes/strategies towards discursive and artistic mediating activities?
- Which networks – informal or institutionalized, urban or (inter)national, intra-cultural or intercultural – organized, supported or controlled these transfer activities? « Les premières manifestations d’un transfert ne sont pas des œuvres, souvent diffusées et traduites à une époque très tardive, mais des individus échangeant des informations ou des représentations et se constituant progressivement en réseaux. » (Espagne & Werner 1987: 984).
- What was the function and effect of these transfer activities on the consolidation or disintegration of multiple cultural identities? Special attention should be paid to multiple interactions, implying multiple directions and effects which a conceptualization in terms of ‘source’ vs. ‘target’ cannot fully grasp.
- Which diachronic evolutions can be distinguished in mediating activities? Did a shift from heterogeneous to more homogeneous cultures possibly change the form, the content and the effects of discursive transfer techniques and of mediation as a whole?
- How do these insights lead to a new historiography of cultural practices and cultural transfer?
- Which theoretical and methodological frameworks are most helpful to study discursive, artistic and institutional mediating activities? And which methodological implications does the study of intercultural and international transfer practices have on the basic assumptions of cultural history, translation studies and literary studies?

Proposals of 300 words approximately (English or French) and a short CV should be submitted to the organizers (reine.meylaerts@arts.kuleuven.be) before October 1st 2013. Notification of acceptance will be given by November 15, 2013. Papers and discussions will be held in English and French.

Reference:

CFP: Cultural mediators in Europe 1750-1950 (Leuven, 5-7 Jun 2014). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 8, 2013 (accessed Jan 31, 2023), <<https://arthist.net/archive/5548>>.