

# Translating Wor(I)ds: Christianity Across Cultural Boundaries

## Introduction

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## Contents

1. Presentation
2. Mission: languages, translation approaches and experiences
  - 2.1 Translating *God*
  - 2.2 Systems of knowledge
  - 2.3 Empowerment
3. Literature and scholarship
  - 3.1 Religious experience re-created in fiction: empowering the author and the reader
  - 3.2 Conscientisation

## **1. Presentation**

This volume unites articles which are based on presentations given at two colloquia held at the University of Stirling: “Translating Christianities” and “Translating God”.<sup>1</sup> Whilst the

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<sup>1</sup> “Translating Christianities”, December 2015, was organised by the editor of this volume (see < <http://www.translatingchristianities.stir.ac.uk/past-conferences/translating-christianities/> >) and “Translating God”, May 2017, by the editor, with Brian Murdoch and Stephen Penn (see < <http://www.translatingchristianities.stir.ac.uk/files/2015/10/Translating-God-Colloquium-4-5-May-2017-Schedule-and-Abstracts-01-05-17.pdf> >). I would like to thank Brian Murdoch and Cândida Barros for having read some of the contributions and provided the authors with comments.

first one aimed at a general discussion of the transmission and interpretation of Christianity across different fields and disciplines, the second one focused on the translation of the word *God*<sup>2</sup> and related terms into different languages, in a number of, mostly colonial, settings.

The contributions to both colloquia dealt with the translation of culture in the context of religion, which one may imagine as a rather straightforward enterprise that implies a uni-directional process undertaken to transfer a message into a different (kind of) language, providing explanations and interpretations of diverse content and form. Our studies show that these processes can be bi-directional or even multiple because all works studied give evidence of how the authors resorted to different cultural traditions and languages and interrelated them.

Thus all contributions to this book deal with a form of translation of Christian concepts, be they of linguistic and/or cultural nature. They have in common that they describe and analyse much more than the translation of a situation, experience or text; they also explain how content is conveyed and which factors play important roles in this process of interpretation and explanation, which has one main objective: that of communication across boundaries. All our studies focus on experiences, attitudes and objectives reflected and pursued in the translation of culture(s), and several are also directed towards an analysis of the word and its translation in linguistic terms.

They draw on different disciplines, analysing texts in literary, ethnohistorical and/or linguistic terms and highlighting the processes of translation across cultures, from the Early Middle Ages, via the colonially dominated 16th to early 20th centuries, to today's 'modern', post-colonial world. The papers show that similar methodological and ideological challenges have to be confronted when transposing Christian ideas to other cultural spheres, be it in a literary, missionary or in a contemporary university context. The studied works and con/texts reflect a not always orthodox way of understanding Christianity, trying to convey and communicate worldviews and religious concepts for recipients beyond the authors' cultural boundaries. By using different methodological tools, the contributors to this volume show the manifold and innovative ways in which this field of the translation of culture can be approached.

The articles about colonial missionaries<sup>3</sup> give evidence of how these implemented their faith and knowledge, often contextualising their interpretations of the Christian world by drawing on personal experiences, and at the same time they appropriated it for their own purposes. When taking a superficial look at the protagonists, they seem to be in agreement and concordance with the orthodox Christian enterprise and objective, but a closer analysis shows that particular creative ways of interpreting their religious beliefs can be seen as 'alternative', some even as 'subversive', interlacing different religious worldviews. Our contributions analyse translation approaches in their sociopolitical contexts and in the transmission from one, hegemonic language and culture, to another,

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<sup>2</sup> In this introduction all terms I mention and discuss are italicised.

<sup>3</sup> For interesting case studies in similar contexts from across the world see Mills and Grafton eds. (2003).

less powerful one. The languages and cultures' perceived and real inequality is due to the political constellation of colonial or post-colonial, or even quasi-colonial situations.

Some contributors to this book use mainly linguistic evidence to show that translation is always also the outcome of the social production of knowledge; others emphasise the situational contexts to explain how the authors/translators they studied tried to connect different cultural experiences and universes, to bridge the gap between 'their' language and culture and those of the 'others', and the contributors highlight the role the author/translator had or wanted to assume in this effort.

The first part of the book addresses mission: languages, translation approaches and experiences. Here the contributions about the translation of *God* explore how the concept of deity was conveyed to other cultures and languages, mostly in a colonial context. Two articles, about the colonial authors' intentions to translate Western knowledge into different cultural situations and languages, specifically examine the missionaries' cultural and intellectual background within their systems of knowledge. Another contribution analyses women's roles in the missionary enterprise and how they became empowered through their agency. In the second part of this volume, on literature and scholarship, two articles present how religious experience was re-created in fiction and the authors crossed cultural boundaries in their lives and works, and by empowering themselves they also empower their audiences. The final contribution discusses critically and from the scholarly angle how religious studies have been created and taught in different academic settings and traditions and what the future challenges are.

Below I will summarise, discuss and contextualise important aspects of the contributors' analyses and results.

## **2. Mission: languages, translation approaches and experiences**

### **2.1 Translating *God***

When Christianity is taught in a non-Christian culture, the translator faces obvious difficulties; especially the expression of abstract religious concepts presents a range of problems which have always preoccupied philosophers and theologians. We may think, for example, of the spread of Christianity in medieval Europe, or of the Spanish Jesuits in Peru attempting to convert the indigenous peoples. How are concepts, enshrined in written form in an original language (Hebrew, Greek or Latin)<sup>4</sup> or later in a mediating language (like Spanish in Latin America), to be transferred comprehensibly into the languages and hence the minds of the converted? The translation of *God* also reflects power-relations which are revealed in the imposition of new ideologies beyond Europe, by medieval, renaissance and modern rulers, in the contexts of the Iberian, British or other empires. The contributors address these questions by examining how *God* or other

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<sup>4</sup> For example, the Council of Trent's authors reflected on the translations of *Amen* which different classic authors had offered (Council of Trent Catechism 1934 [1566], Part IV: The Lords' Prayer, p. 588).

spiritual concepts such as *Holy Ghost* or the *Trinity* are translated, how the idea of the supreme being is rendered in other languages and cultures, and which methods are used to reformulate Christian terms and their meanings in the languages of the other(s).

The contributions about the Goths of the Germanic region (1st millennium AD) (Murdoch<sup>5</sup>), the Mayas of Guatemala (16th century) (Sachse), the Marathi people of Southern India (18th century) (Eliasson), the Zulus of South Africa (mid-19th century) (Colenso) and the Aranda-speaking peoples of Central Australia (turn of the 19th to the 20th century) (Moore) show how missionaries struggled for more than 1500 years with the translation of the term *God* and related words. Those who tried to convert other peoples to Christianity belonged, of course, to different European cultures and religious orientations: the young Church which spread from its origins through Europe, the Spanish Dominican and Franciscan friars of Central America, the Portuguese Catholic Church in India, the Anglicans in South Africa and the German Lutheran Church in Central Australia, respectively.

Whilst we may not want to doubt the individual missionaries' sincere intentions, we have to be aware that the power the missionaries had, or the lack of it, varied greatly and thereby shaped their work. The early missionary efforts in the Germanic and other European region were certainly less organised (von Padberg 2009: 16-17; cf. Fletcher 1997: ch. 2, esp. p. 37) than those of the Iberian empires. But whilst the latter became more powerful, and the Spaniards, for example, dominated and colonised the conquered peoples, this was mainly the case in the central areas of the conquered territories (e.g. Central Mexico and the Central Andes) rather than in marginal regions which were more difficult to reach and administrate as the inhabitants resisted 'pacification' (e.g. Venezuela [Sarion], the Mapuche of Chile [Jones 1999]). In other regions the missionaries found the local lords' and empires' power overwhelming; in China, for example, the missionary enterprise depended on the good will of its government (Ross 1994: ch. 6; Helm 2002: ch. 3.1).

Another difference was that of the civilisations with which the missionaries-colonisers found themselves confronted: purely orally transmitted traditions and beliefs (like in South Africa and Australia) posed other challenges than those which had been laid down in their own writing (like in the Germanic regions or India). In Latin America information about indigenous culture was written down in the Roman alphabet, by indigenous 'intellectuals', but these, of course, already lived in the era of colonisation and their texts can therefore not be considered as strictly pre-Hispanic traditions (e.g. the Maya *Popol Vuh*).

Considering these very different contexts and working conditions we can therefore expect diverse approaches to the translation of *God* into the languages the converts spoke. Although all missionary authors coincided in the underlying idea that the native deities were not more than superstition or even the work of the Devil (see Sarion), they all ended up using native-language words, taken from exactly the indigenous cosmovision they so deeply disapproved of.

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<sup>5</sup> The underlined names are those of the contributors to this volume.

What certainly contributed to their lexical choices was the familiarity of the most dedicated missionaries with indigenous traditions, such as that of Domingo de Vico in Guatemala (Sachse), who resorted to indigenous epithets of Maya deities; or that of Strehlow in Central Australia, who also translated indigenous myths into German (Moore). Whilst they tried to understand the regional cosmivision, we must not forget that their interpretation and re-working in Christian instructive texts must have relied not only heavily on their own knowledge of the languages, but also been guided and filtered by their indigenous collaborators (e.g. in the Aztec mission [Dibble 1974: 229]) and interpreters (Colenso) – who may also have had their own agenda.

Moreover, the kind of materials which were translated or written varied greatly. The authors of the Catholic empires centred their efforts on the catechism and related instructive texts (such as sermons) because the Bible was not to be translated and made generally available. On the other hand, the efforts of the more recent Protestant missionaries focused on the translation of the Bible and thereby seem to follow in the very early footsteps of the Church, where we already find Wulfila's Bible translation into Gothic.

Let us now look at the translation of the word *God* which is central to the above-mentioned contributions.<sup>6</sup> The Franciscans and Dominicans in Mexico debated whether it was better to use loanwords or to re-semanticise native-language words, i.e. give them new meaning(s). Thus the loanword *God* (of the respective indo-European languages of the missionaries) was not the first and only choice. As the contributors to this volume show, the Spaniards and Portuguese debated the aptness of using the loanword *Dios*, and they all accompanied it by other, indigenous, words. The Protestant missionaries in Australia also discussed possible terms, and Strehlow deliberately opted for the native language term *Altjira*; similarly the Anglicans in South Africa did not come to a unanimous decision. The choice of the most adequate translation method was always related to the evaluation of the indigenous people's 'capacity' to understand Christianity, but often the arguments were also rooted in theological and political debates (Sachse, Colenso).

In this context it may be worthwhile to remind ourselves that the missionaries' monotheistic cosmivision had its own origin in polytheistic worldviews (Wainwright 2018: section 1), and although this recognition may not always have been obvious to them, it was definitely present in much 16th/17th centuries writing. For example the Spanish lexicographer Cobarruvias ([1611] 1977: 727-728, s.v. 'idolo') recognised that the *gentiles* (*pagan ancestors*) had believed in more than one god. The priests were also familiar with polytheistic elements in their own contemporary religious belief. This becomes evident when the catechism explained the first commandment carefully (Council of Trent

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<sup>6</sup> For the term *God* and related ones in translations into Amerindian languages cf. also the abstracts of "Dios(es) y diablo(s) - La traducción de conceptos cristianos e indígenas en textos religiosos de las Américas", a symposium held at the 56th International Congress of Americanists, Salamanca, in July 2018, organised by Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz and Katja Hannß. < <https://translatingchristianities.wordpress.stir.ac.uk/files/2019/02/56-ICA-2018-Dioses-y-diablos-resumenes-julio-de-2018.pdf> >.

Catechism 1934 [1566], Part III: The Decalogue: 367ff.)<sup>7</sup>. And the Spanish scholar and priest Azpilcueta's 16th century confession manual reflects the concern with respect to polytheism when he writes that the penitent should be asked about idolatry (Muguruza Roca 2018: 45-46). All this is evidence that the concept of polytheism was not completely removed from their minds.

Moreover the notion of a triune god had already been debated in early Christianity, where Arianism saw the Trinity as a polytheistic concept (McCall 2010: 73-84). It is therefore important to keep in mind that being exposed to a cosmivision of more than one deity was not something inconceivable for these well-trained theologians, but rather an ever-present challenge. This also explains why the authors of the Council of Trent gave detailed explanations of the key terms and concepts of the Trinity (e.g. the Trinity in the Council of Trent Catechism 1934 [1566], Part I, Article I: The Creed, p. 20ff.). And the scholar José de Acosta, who was in charge of the composition and translation of the texts of the Third Lima Council, argued that, just like the Indians, the theologians do not and cannot have a clear understanding of what the mystery of the Trinity really is because it is not a matter of understanding, but of belief (Acosta [1577] 1987, vol. 2, libro V, cap. VI: 230-231, paragraph 3).

Let us then see how, in this context of long-standing comprehension, transmission and translation traditions and challenges, and according to the authors of our contributions to this topic, the missionaries tried to convey this most complex concept of the one, triune God to other, polytheistic peoples. Obviously, the availability of data varies greatly and is especially scarce with respect to the Old Germanic languages. It is interesting that the intensive occupation with God as Trinity is above all found in the texts of the Iberian empires, whilst it seems that the much more recent Protestants are mainly concerned with the translation of the term *God*.

Frauke Sachse shows that, following the approach of the Dominicans in Mesoamerica to include indigenous language terms in order to transmit Christian concepts, Domingo de Vico did not go so far as to translate *Dios* using only the Maya word which existed for an indigenous deity, but he accompanied the loanword by Maya *Great Lord*, and moreover he explained that other epithets were to be used, such as *Framer and Former*, probably an established indigenous-language term. Again drawing on Maya discourse, Vico used Maya *our mother our father* to convey that there is only one God. This makes sense in particular when he translates *God Father* and *God Son* using the loanword plus the Maya word for *father* and *son* respectively, possibly implying the idea of family descendance. The translation of *Holy Spirit* is rather complicated because the word employed for *spirit* seems to have had a number of meanings, but could literally be understood as *God Breather* and is related to the other two elements of the Trinity through a linguistic kinship indicator. In later sources the loanword *Spiritu Santo* is more

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<sup>7</sup> The council of Trent elaborated a catechism for parish priests which was meant as guideline for all and should be translated into native languages (which in the first instance meant the European languages, of course). This 1566 catechism provided the basis for the later works of the missionaries of the Catholic Church.

frequently used. The term *Trinity* is expressed through the established Maya attribute *threesome* (similar to Old High German *driunissa*, literally *three-ness* [Murdoch]) but of which we don't know whether this was a lexical as well as semantic neologism.<sup>8</sup> Thus, whilst both religious orders, Franciscans and Dominicans, opted for maintaining the Spanish words *Dios*, as well as *persona*, in their Maya texts, it is clear that the Dominicans preferred to co-textualise these words with those that had a particular religious meaning in the indigenous language. The same was done in the Andean Quechua catechism under the direction of the Jesuits (Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz 2016: 415, 418-420; cf. Sarion where it becomes evident that the Franciscan approach was not as unified as one might think).

Pär Eliasson discusses the case of the nature of the persons which conform the Trinity. Here the anonymous author of the Indian Marathi text did translate *pessoa*, using the Marathi word *zann* which had the everyday meaning of *person*. Again and apparently following an established tradition, some elements of the Trinity – *Trindade* itself and *Spirito Santo* – were kept as loanwords. This can be explained because the Marathi words would refer to their *threefold god* and the human spirit respectively and therefore not be suitable in this context because in this particular case a threefold deity was seen as an obvious 'pagan' parallel to the Christian Trinity.<sup>9</sup> A similar concept of manifold deities existed in Andean culture, where the missionaries made it explicit that there was no relationship between the Christian triune God and indigenous multiple deities (Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz 2016: 426-431).

Not only the Iberian missionaries gave native words new meanings (or at least intended to do so), creating a semantic (not a lexical) neologism. This method had already been used by the ancient Gothic authors-translators. As Brian Murdoch explains, they employed *gub* for *God*, but the Gothic word referred to a native supernatural being. Probably in order to make it completely clear that these old deities were not identical with the Christian God, they also wrote professions of faith in which particular deities were explained as *evil*. On the other hand *God* was also rendered as *drohtin*, a word for a Germanic *warrior-lord* who was expected to provide food for his people. With respect to the Holy Spirit, the translation of *heilag gaist*, meaning *Holy Ghost* in English, was a loan-translation, using the target language's equivalents, but these were imbued with powerful native meaning, including *gaist* as the *essence of the departed*. As mentioned above, a loan-translation was used for *Trinity*: Old High German *driunissa*, literally *three-ness*. We can therefore assume that the converted people could integrate new religious phenomena into their own worldview, rather than replace it with a new religion.

In a similar way semantic neologisms were the most frequent solutions the Protestant missionaries opted for more than a millennium and half later. According to David Moore, despite the polysemous character of the word *altjira*, which in Central Australian Aranda

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<sup>8</sup> A neologism can be a new lexical entity, in terms of form and meaning, or it can be a new meaning which is added to the established one (Meger 2010: 14, who cites Kinne).

<sup>9</sup> It has always been difficult to grasp the character of the Hindu deities (Wainwright 2018: section 7.3).

included the concept of *dreaming*, *dreamtime* (related to the ancient times of creation), as well as *eternal*, *uncreated*, it was adopted, not uncontroversially, for translating *God*. For this to happen it had to undergo not only semantic change, but it was also affected in its grammatical construction of animacy and agency (ergative instead of accusative).

According to Gwilym Colenso the missionaries of the Zulus in South Africa did not agree unanimously on one term for *God* either, but despite inter- and intra-confessional quarrels about the most adequate word, the translation bishop Colenso suggested, *uNkulunkulu*, which according to his indigenous consultants already had the meaning of a divine being in African religion, became the established translation. It is still present in 21st century ritual (see e.g. devotional texts of the Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of South Africa 2019: < <http://reachsa.org.za/?s=zulu&submit=Search> >).

Like in the case of the debate between the colonial Franciscans and Dominicans as to what was best, loanwords or re-semanticised indigenous words, a discussion also took place between individual missionaries and between different missionary groups in South Africa. Possibly because the case is more recent and well documented, it can be seen that beyond theological arguments, the missionaries tried to position themselves with respect to their assumed civilisatory role in the colonial empire: Zulu religion was either seen as having monotheistic roots (also already supposed by Vico in 16th century Guatemala and by Garcilaso in 17th century Peru [see Serna Arnaiz 2006:14]) or as the expression of 'crude' thinking.

Beyond the Guatemaltecan, African or Australian missionaries' debate about the 'correct' translation it is interesting to observe how the translation decisions which gained more influence in scholarship entered its discourse and arguments (see Colenso; for a systematic analysis Cox 2014: ch. 1). This reflects the power struggles of the missionaries as well as Western scholars rather than independent research conclusions, and it even contributed to the creation of contemporary discussions among Western scholars about how religion is constructed (see Roberts; cf. Murray 2003).

As we see in the articles, different suggestions and choices were made by the missionaries to translate *God*, and all solutions included the re-semanticisation of native-language words. However, we do not know much about the indigenous people's contribution to them or influence on them, how they actually used the translated words themselves, or which ones, in their daily lives.

It would be an interesting follow-up study to find out what has become of the terms: are they still used and do they refer to Christian, native or hybrid elements of culture? We can see that in all regions the authors discuss with respect to the translation of *God*, still today indigenous peoples' and European worldviews are blended, as the following examples show. In the far north, road projects have been stopped by the 'elf' lobby, which reflects many Icelanders' belief that the earth is alive (Associated Press in



Re[y]kjavik 2013; Murdoch). On the theological level African and European cosmologies are interlaced (cf. Elphik and Davenport eds. 1997, esp. Klaaren 1997: 380-382).<sup>10</sup>

In the 20th century in the Andes a villager from Southern Peru describes the World Mother as Trinity (using in Quechua key Spanish words from the catechism – *in italics*; Gow and Condori eds. 1976: 9-11; transl. Dedenbach-Salazar):

Kay pacha paqarimantan kay Pachamamaqa niq kasqa: “Ñuqan kani *Santa Tirra*, Uywaq, ñuñuq, ñuqan kani.  
Pacha *Tirra*, Pacha Ñusta, Pacha *Virgen* ñuqa kani,” niq kasqa. ...  
Kay *Santa Tirrapin* tiyan panpa ukhupi kimsantin *pirsuna* – Pacha *Tirra*, Pachamama, Pacha Ñusta.

Since the birth of the world Pachamama [World Mother] said: “I am the *Holy Earth*, the Nurturer, the Breastfeeder am I.

I am World *Earth*, World Inca Princess, World *Virgin*”, she said. ...

The *Sacred Earth* resides inside the plains [as] three *persons* together - World *Earth*, Pachamama [World Mother], Inca Princess.

## 2.2 Systems of knowledge

The contributions discussed above reflect how the missionaries had to mediate between Christian and indigenous knowledge systems by translating the term and concept of *God*. The two articles which follow give us some further insight into the in/compatibility of these systems and how two missionaries dealt with this challenge.

In her contribution Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar Sáenz analyses how the Spanish Jesuit scholar Diego González Holguín combined his knowledge of Christian and Andean religion in order to explain Christianity to the newly converted. He had studied oriental and classical languages in Alcalá de Henares, and when, in 1607/08, he wrote his grammar and dictionary of the Quechua language he had been living in Peru for approximately 25 years, of which he spent some as rector of the renowned Jesuit missionary and linguistic research centre in Juli on Lake Titicaca. As far as we know, González Holguín did not write or translate (or at least publish) any texts, but through his studies and work he was certainly familiar with them. Therefore his most common translation methods reflected the earlier ones and those used in texts: word-for-word equivalents (easiest in the case of objects which were known and used in both cultures), loanwords (for objects and concepts new to the indigenous world) and semantic neologisms or re-semanticisations (often for complex concepts) [supposedly] new to the indigenous world). Thus, due to his linguistic and theological background and training on the one hand and his familiarity with Andean culture on the other, González Holguín followed to a certain point the methods his predecessors had used in their works. However, not only did he add more words, derivations and compounds than his dictionary-writing predecessors, but he also used extensions of

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<sup>10</sup> See also, for example, for Australia: Austin-Broos (1996), Charlesworth et al. eds. (2017); for Latin America: Gossen and León-Portilla eds. (1993: Pt. 3 and 4); for Marathi-speaking India: Zelliott and Berntsen eds. (1988).

meanings and metaphorical paraphrases as well as equations, through which he re-contextualised Christian contents so that the indigenous converts – via the missionaries who taught them – would be able to understand them within their own cultural framework. Thus, for González Holguín the Holy Communion is the Inca's powerful travel provision, the Eucharist is the Inca sacrifice of the baby llama, and Christ's blood is Inca sacrificial painting. He makes it clear that these contextual equivalents are created on purpose, and that for him they are the most adequate translations and explanations. We can see, then, that under the veil of Christianising Andean religion he also Andeanises Christian religion. Thus González Holguín seems to be – probably short of subversive – a true 'cultural broker' between worlds, using his knowledge of both cultures to create a new one.

Roxana Sarion shows in her study of the 17th century Franciscan missionary Matías Ruiz Blanco, who lived and worked in what is today Venezuela, how he re-conceptualised the Carib world on the basis of his own European system of knowledge. Similar to González Holguín, he held important positions in the religious order, such as chronicler and commissioner to the missions. In over 30 years among the indigenous Píritus of Venezuela, he wrote linguistic and doctrinal manuals about and in the 'general language', Cumanagot, and was thus well familiarised with its linguistic system. He defended the indigenous peoples' rights before the Spanish Crown, but he could not detach himself from his Western conception of the essentially 'demonic' character of the Píritus. This tension may have been partly due to the colonial circumstances and historical development of the regions. For example, after first unsuccessful efforts to convert the indigenous nomadic peoples pacifically, the Franciscans established (much later than in Mexico and Peru) re-settlements, thus facilitating the imposition of economic and political structures of the Europeans. Another challenge was the linguistic diversity of the languages in the province. By the end of the 17th century several doctrinal texts had been written in Cumanagot, and Ruiz Blanco's texts of Christian instruction appeared in 1683 and 1690. In his account of Carib traditions for other missionaries his discourse was characterised by explaining indigenous rituals and practices from within his own worldview: curers were representatives of the Devil, and the most respected supernatural being became associated with the Devil himself.<sup>11</sup> He related Carib beliefs to those of Greek mythology, which, of course, were 'false' as well.<sup>12</sup> However, following Aristotle (and in this way using the ancient Greeks in an inconsistent manner), he showed that the Carib concept of the soul was 'wrong'. This form of understanding and comparing knowledge systems was the background for his translation methods. Besides adopting loanwords for the *Trinity* and certain ecclesiastical terms, he used re-semantisations of Cumanagot words, such as *sin*, *guilt* and the *Devil*, the latter being translated by using the native-language word for their deity. Like González Holguín and the Mexican Dominican and Franciscan missionaries, he was conscious and deliberate in his approach: he discussed earlier translated versions of the Christian doctrine, and following St. Jerome, he opted for a translation *ad sensum* rather than *ad litteram*, as well as

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<sup>11</sup> Very similar to the Peruvian Third Lima Council sermons (Tercero catecismo 1585: sermon XIX); for Mexico cf. Farriss (2018: ch. 7 - The Word of God, esp. p. 181-183).

<sup>12</sup> This was a widespread approach also found, for example, in the 16th century Jesuit conversion texts for the Tamils (Županov 2003: 110). Cf. also Cobarruvias, mentioned above in section 2.1.

disagreeing with the Third Lima Council's recommendation about loanwords. He made it explicit that he chose explanations and paraphrases over literal equivalents, taking the audience into account, and he even worked with indigenous consultants – methods quite similar to those of González Holguín. But despite his explicit linguistic considerations he was torn between trying to 'indigenise' Christian concepts in Cumanagot words on the one hand, and demonising their faith on the other.

### 2.3 Empowerment

Whilst the articles about Latin America as well as those about the Protestant missionaries in Central Australia and South Africa look at how male colonial theologian-linguist missionaries tried to convey the Christian message in the native languages to the indigenous peoples, reflecting as well as creating new power relations, especially in the Anglican world of mission there is another group of participants in the evangelisation projects, and these are missionaries' wives or daughters who joined their partners or parents overseas. Alison Jasper brings to light not only the challenges and achievements of women missionaries in China, but also shows the complexity of the circumstances in which they lived and worked: rather than the 'typical' trajectory often found in the lives of male missionaries, the women's family contexts, in addition to gender-restricting social attitudes, made female lives very different from male lives.<sup>13</sup>

Although they hardly ever went as missionaries on their own, accompanying their husbands brought them fulfilment in a personally and socially recognised role denied to them in their own country or difficult to achieve in their patriarchally organised homeland. Through letters, their lives and works show that – beyond the discourse of power inequality – the colony was a field of experimentation and innovation; in the cases Jasper describes, these women, short of being 'feminists', did become agents of their own, often following charitable agendas and thus communicating with the indigenous people on a different basis. This is not to say that they opposed the predominant colonial ideology of the 'barbarian' native who had to be 'saved'. We do not know much about their immersion into the native culture through language skills, but Jasper mentions that there are documented cases in which these women became fluent in the local languages and therefore had more personal ways of communicating with the indigenous people.

It is interesting to see that the story of the missionary's wife who is a person in her own right is also found in the case of Frieda Keysser who was married to Carl Strehlow, the missionary in David Moore's contribution about the understanding and interpretation of the concept of the divine in Australia. Peter Sutton (2012) writes about Frieda's biography (J. Strehlow 2011): "The author's overtly central corrective, perhaps, is to bring missionary women out of the shadows of their husbands. Frieda, who died in 1957,

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<sup>13</sup> Although living in convent-like communities in 17th century Lima and not dedicated to missionary tasks, the so-called *beatas*, 'blessed' women, gained a certain independence from men and could, through education and work, create their own space (see Van Deusen 1999). It may therefore be worthwhile considering them in Jasper's framework of 'female genius' and empowerment.

is a significant character in her own right. Her work to reduce infant mortality at Hermannsburg was both effective and heroic”.

It was at the time the missionary women described by Alison Jasper worked in China that in 1926 in Edinburgh the first woman graduated from the School of Divinity. Elizabeth Hewitt wanted to work as a missionary in China, and for this she wanted to be ordained. A first petition was made to the General Assembly in 1931, but women can only be ordained since 1968 (Orr 2018: 1:37), which shows the Church establishment’s reticence to enable them to acquire equal status. This small episode is interesting in our context in so far as the missionary women we read about can also be seen as forebears of the acceptance of women as priests, and it would be interesting to know more about the networks they established.

Another case is documented by Adasi (2017), who shows that women who played important roles in missionary work in the colonial era of the Basel mission in the then Gold Coast were often seen in the first instance as ministers’ wives; according to Adasi, this situation can even be found almost a hundred years later, in the Presbyterian Church. In this case it seems that conservative European conceptions of the role of women in the Church coincide with a culture-specific image of the woman in Ghana – two not dissimilar structures meet.

This historical and contemporary context of women’s work in the Church(es) emphasises the importance a further analysis of women’s roles from the point of view of the ‘female genius’, which Jasper discusses, might have. With respect to the 21st century such studies might even reveal an emic rather than only etic perspective of the ‘female genius’.

### **3. Literature and scholarship**

#### **3.1 Religious experience re-created in fiction: empowering the author and the reader**

As opposed to the information and documents about Christianisation in the Germanic, Ibero-American and British past, the pieces Irving and Darroch present are fictional. Their authors are both – although in different ways – closely related to the narrated events: Elias Haddad, a Palestinian who was educated and worked in a Christian orphanage; and Edwidge Danticat, author of Haitian origin brought up first in Haiti and then in the USA (Munro 2010) – both translate their knowledge of the world into the fictional medium, thereby showing how the personal interpretation of stories gives them a particular force and, appealing to an emotional understanding, explain complex circumstances of religious and socio-cultural hybridity to an interested lay audience. The cultural translation and interpretation of empire and colonial history in form of artistic discourse permits us a differentiated view of history and culture and has the potential to empower the audience and readers to recognise and stand by their colonial, syncretic heritage.

The translation of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Nathan der Weise* into Arabic, little before the foundation of the state Israel, made by the Christian Palestinian schoolteacher

Eilas Haddad, reflects the recurrent timeliness of the play. Not only had it been controversial even in its own time and country of origin and become more so later under the Nazi regime, but the complex sociopolitical situation in Palestine also made it an important part of its literary discourse. Sarah Irving explains how Haddad uses the play to promote understanding and tolerance among groups of different faiths, but above all he employs it to advocate rationalism and condemn fanaticism, in order to accept all religions as equal. His work also evokes our 21st century world, where religious conflicts reflect fundamentalist attitudes rather than those related to religious belief. In this sense Haddad's approach is still a radical and topical one.

Situating Haddad's work in the translation studies debate about 'domestication', Irving sees this (often negatively judged) translation approach as a form of empowerment. Originally written in Germany for a German audience and set in the 'Orient', Haddad 'returns' the play to its original setting and thus uses it as an argument in the debate of his time. The theme was common in the literary discourse of the period in the Middle East, which shows that the translation of this play was not an exceptional enterprise, but that the inter-faith relations and their interpretation was an important part of the consciousness of cultural diversity.

Translation then, as Irving shows, is not only the conveyance from one language to the other, using domesticating or foreignising techniques to bring a text closer to the audience (as originally seen by Schleiermacher [1813] 2004, and later made more popular by Venuti 1995: 19-20); the translator's contextualisation of the work and his motivation reflect his participation and advocacy of the translated text as a political instrument. Thus Haddad is a 'visible' translator (cf. Venuti 1995). Through an artful and creative translation and the translators' comments the re-created text gives evidence of political challenges and tensions as well as highlighting Haddad's objectives and his wish to empower Palestinians to create their own interpretation and discourse of cultural diversity. In this respect, he is an empathetic translator, quite different from those we meet when two religious systems clash and the author-translator does not only try to explain his own world to the other, but also wants to change that other world into something 'better', a something dominated by his and his government's desire for power (see Robinson 2011 for an interesting discussion of the writing on translation and empire).

Fiona Darroch shows how literary fiction can reveal the complexity of cultural history and religious expression, in this case in the context of emigration and diaspora. Informed by historical and contemporary theoretical writing about the role of religiosity in Haiti and modern thought, this article shows how, in the framework of the colonial and postcolonial development of Haitian culture, Christian and native religious beliefs and practices have become intertwined in the contemporary world of emigrants. Darroch's sensitive analysis of Danticat's fiction makes it clear that the native symbolism and meaning of the goddess Erzulie underlies the characters' efforts to infuse their difficult experiences of life in the diaspora with the strength to survive – personally and culturally. In the contemporary world indigenous beliefs underlie the cosmovision of those who live in postcolonial times: a more integrated and complex vision and understanding of the super/natural

characterises their cultural experiences. Not only does the deity as powerful helper support the protagonists, but she also empowers the women in her story so that they become feminine agents, their connection to Haitian history, culture and religion giving them their particular agency.

### 3.2 Conscientisation

In the context of learning and teaching Richard Roberts argues that in the current tendency of our universities to alienate students from critical and theoretical thinking, in our post-modern, globalised and technologised world it is essential to incorporate this thinking in our study and conveyance of religion (in the forms of religious studies and theology). Religion is becoming increasingly more important, as, for example, fundamentalist movements, but also esoteric views and practices show. Therefore he reviews the historical development of different strands of religious studies in Great Britain, including a view to the Continent and North America. He shows how in different eras scholars have tried, within theoretical frameworks, to grasp the meaning of religion and thus communicate it to students. Roberts argues that theoretical thinking has to critique the growing hegemony of managerialism which shows the characteristics of 'idolatry' because it is used as an end in itself. In order to overcome this tendency, religious thinking has to incorporate into its arguments approaches which originate in other fields, such as ecology and the study of gender – these will enable us to 'make sense' of an ever more crisis-ridden world. Explaining religion in these terms will help us overcome managerial efforts to make students docile wheels in a world dominated by market necessities.

Setting Robert's thoughts in the context of the pedagogy of liberation, an uncritical transference of aims which invade all fields of critical thinking and tries to render them invalid can only be avoided by the conscientisation of students, by learning and teaching in the framework of critical thinking, i.e. a socially conscious and conscientious 'translation' of contents and methods of how to arrive at them. It is worth noting that in 1970 Freire (2000) already postulated a critical pedagogy in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and it is remarkable that his studies, developed in the Brazilian context of unequal power structures, are becoming ever more timely, and the banking concept of education (ibid. ch. 2) is also visible in economically and technologically leading countries.

Fortunately the studies assembled in this book show that this critical approach is present in established as well as younger scholars' work who think about religion and power, and that it is expressed, described and interpreted from a number of different disciplinary perspectives.

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