

Call for Papers: New deadline of 15 January 2021

33rd Conference of the Canadian Association for Translation Studies
in collaboration with ESIT, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3 (France)

“Translations, Translators, Interpreters and Subversion”

University of Alberta (Edmonton, Alberta): **DISTANCE**
31 May, and 1 and 2 June 2021

Keynote speaker:

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In political science, subversion is generally negatively connotated, because it implies a form of destruction. From the Latin *subversion*, or to “overturn, overthrow” (Mahoney, 2002–2019) and ruin, subversion is the “process of trying to destroy the authority of a political, religious, etc. system by attacking it secretly or indirectly” (Oxford, 2019) and “[t]he undermining of the power and authority of an established system or institution” (Oxford, n.d.), by encouraging citizens to question the existing order in the aim of overthrowing it. The Termium record for the term classifies it under the fields of “psychological warfare” and “political theories and doctrines,” and its definition provided by NATO is similar to the one we just saw: “Action or a coordinated set of actions of any nature intended to weaken the military, economic or political strength of an established authority by undermining the morale, loyalty or reliability of its members.” (Termium, 2015) in the ultimate aim of destroying it. These definitions include the words “destroy,” “attacking,” “undermining” and “weaken,” which all suggest some degree of violence. To sum up, subversion generally aims to undermine and destabilize the established, more often than not political or religious, order by insidiously demoralizing citizens, who will then overturn or destroy it.

However, subversion can also play a positive role through the healthy questioning of the values of a socio-political or religious system. For example, subversively translated poems were produced by early 19th century Decembrists, who wished to renew the Tsarist system in place. Certain poems illustrated the injustices of the system, while others promoted a liberal constitution (Baer 2010). The Russian translators of these poems were not neutral; they were actively engaged in a fight that called upon their resourceful creativity. Their subversive translations opened up alternative avenues to the dominant system and instigated a revolution in the way people thought. This more positive understanding of the term as a catalyst for positive change is that one that tends to have currency in translation studies research that focuses on the relation between translation and power.

The issue of subversion has been broached in studies that examine relations between translation and power (see, for example, Tymoczko et Gentzler, 2002), and in those that examine the links between translation and resistance (see, for example, Tymoczko, 2010). Moreover, in 2013, the University of Porto organized a conference on the theme of version and subversion in literature (“Version, Subversion: translation, the canon and its discontents”), and, in 1991, literary translator Suzanne Jill Levine published *The Subversive Scribe*, in which she explores her collaboration with revolutionary Latin American writers who confront the sexual

and cultural taboos of their respective cultures, by treating translation as a creative act that is a form of “(sub) version” (Levine, 1984, p. 84). Nevertheless, the theme has not yet been the object of focussed, yet broad, and in-depth discussion. In fact, translation studies research that touches on subversion is not limited to politics and literature, but rather includes more generally any discipline that involves culture (Alvarez et Vidal, 1996) and that requires creativity. Research findings tend to share the view that one cannot understand translation without taking into account the subjectivity of translators and their translations, and that translations can be manipulated with a subversive aim in view (see, for example, Lefevere, 1992).

In contradiction with the myth of the neutral, submissive and docile translator, translating subjects, like all humans, are imprinted with a subjectivity that is inscribed in their history and culture (Fournier-Guillemette, 2011). Researchers have studied subversive translation in the former Soviet Union or in Fascist Italy (Delisle, 2003), in Victorian Great Britain (Merkle, 2010; O’Sullivan, 2010), in Latin America (Bastin, Echeverri and Campo, 2010) and in the French classical era (Ballard and D’hulst, 1996), to name but a few examples. The interest of TS in subversion has thus been manifest at least since the beginning of the 1990s and has taken numerous forms. The time is now ripe to undertake a comprehensive reflection on the place of subversion in translation and interpreting, and the relationship that translators and interpreters have with the subversive practices of their profession.

Below we suggest several lines of enquiry to guide critical discussion; however, the list is not intended to be exhaustive.

Translation studies (TS) approach centered on:

- the product (translation, interpreted discourse; case studies of negative and positive subversion);
- the process of subversion (including manipulation); subversive measures;
- the agent (translating subject, including interpreters, multilingual writers-translators);
- norms (translator/interpreter positioning in relation to norms, whether they be linguistic or institutional; relationship between subversion and transgression).

Interdisciplinary TS approaches, considered from the perspective of:

- politics and policy;
- social psychology;
- ideology;
- creativity (e.g. literary, semiotic)

Critical approaches, looking at in particular:

- the relationship between activism and subversion;
- the relationship between resistance and subversion;
- definitions and limits of the concept *subversion* and its derivative forms (*subversif/ve*);
- translator and interpreter neutrality.

Papers should not be more than 20 minutes in length. Proposals (in English or French) should include **the following two documents:**

- A **250 to 300-word** abstract in Word format, which will be included in the conference program, and
- Biobibliographical information (affiliation, title/rank, email address, three recent publications).

You may propose a session of three or four paper presentations. Each of the paper proposals that will form your session must be presented according to the above requirements and sent to the co-organisers.

Please send your paper proposal **by 15 January 2021** to the conference co-organisers, Isabelle Collombat, Fayza El-Qasem and Denise Merkle, care of the following email address: act.cats2021@gmail.com.

Decisions on paper acceptance (substantially revised proposals initially submitted in 2019, and new proposals) will be announced by the **end of February 2021**.

P.S. The Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, under whose auspices our conference will be held, has decided that the 2021 University of Alberta Congress will be a distance (online) only event. So, no need to worry about travel restrictions, airline travel and possible COVID infection. From your work or home computer, you'll be able to participate in the CATS conference, as well as in other events organized by the federation (e.g. Big Thinking talks) and sister scholarly associations.

The CATS team is working very hard to offer delegates an enjoyable and intellectually stimulating online conference experience, with ample networking opportunities. Registration information will be published on the Congress website in early 2021.

We very much hope that you will wish to share your research with translation studies colleagues during this (first!) virtual CATS conference, organized in collaboration with ESIT.

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