

Cooking the Books? Translation and the Great Transformation

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Anthropologists of the early human have pointed to the advent of cooking as a crucial stage in the evolution of the human as we currently understand the term. The specific interaction between humans and their tools in the process of food preparation was fundamental to the emergence of exoskeletal humanity. Taking this Great Transformation as a starting point I want to situate translation and food within an emergent paradigm of Translation Ecology, suggesting that in the translation-food nexus there is a rich seam of possibility in a reconsideration of the relation between language, food and the environment. To this end, the lecture will focus on three determining elements:

1. Food and Entailment. In this part of the lecture we will argue that one of the technologies that has enabled food production over centuries has been the technology of translation. We will examine the nature of this language entailment and ask whether the contemporary crisis in mass food production and the attendant ethical issues do not also have implications for the practice and direction of translation.
2. Food and Untranslatability. Emily Apter has argued in her recent work *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (2013) that the notion of translatability may be complicit in a homogenization of the literatures and languages of the world. We will examine the notion of the 'untranslatable' in terms of the arguments and discourse around food with a view to suggesting that untranslatability may be the very condition of food in circulation rather than an obstacle to it.
3. Food and Diversity. This section of the lecture will revisit arguments around biocultural diversity and explore the relationship between food and translation through the notion of *translational sustainability*.

The overall argument I wish to advance is that consideration of food and translation calls for a reconceptualization of what it is we do as translators and as translation scholars.