

Self-discovery through Migration in the Translation Zone

Denise Merkle
Université de Moncton

Wangtaolue Guo's "Rhizomizing the Translation Zone: Xiaolu Guo and *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*" examines contemporary Chinese British writer Xiaolu Guo's awareness of the co-presence of languages while learning English in London, and its effects on her writing and sense of identity. For her writing is a process of both interlingual and cultural (non) and (mis)translation, an aesthetic process that takes place in a translation zone of rhizomic becoming. On arriving in London from Beijing to an unfamiliar language and culture, and feeling initially "lost in translation," as detailed in her dictionary-cum-journal of self-discovery, the protagonist shares her translational writing and increasing familiarity with a new language and culture, which finally liberate her. From her position as a bilingual author, Xiaolu Guo uses translanguaging as a distancing technique; while exacerbating the challenges of writing in a foreign language, translanguaging frees her to destabilize specific syntactical structures in her second language. A migrant navigating a translation zone in the novel, Guo explores how the space between languages and cultures instils the philosophy of becoming into those who travel, while she comes to appreciate the creative possibilities of plurilingual expression. In the end, what she gains far outweighs the initial feeling of loss.