

by block, than from essay excursions, missions into and around a subject. One is caught up in a process of thinking and writing. In that process, words begin to take on a voice. Like Montaigne's, Steiner's voice invites you to walk with him; you go along, not quite knowing where, for the sake of walking.

Erata doesn't ignore his life story. Most chapters begin with a phase of the author's life, within which a subject is discovered. A child's summer boredom, in the mid-1930s, leads to an unlikely plunge into a book of heraldry, and the first grasp of reality as unending, individuated details. An initiation into male adulthood, mediated by an athletic undergraduate roommate at the University of Chicago, modulates into a consideration of how a university can transform its students almost by accident—by putting them in the proximity of teachers and scholars whose excellence seems beyond reach. As one might expect, Steiner devotes a chapter to teachers—most memorably Allen Tate and Donald MacKinnon. And, as Steiner readers have learned to expect, there is an unexpected gem in the middle of this essentially commemorative essay: a deft analysis of the personal and stylistic limits of that preeminent New Critic, R. P. Blackmur.

If I had to define George Steiner's mission in a few words, I would use Arnoldian terms: to articulate the best that could be thought and said about human culture, from the perspective of a century that seems to have put all in doubt, including the capability of language itself. He steps around the ironies that would arrest a lesser writer, preferring to push against the paradoxes, the impossible questions that challenge the power of speech to encompass. The systems beyond language, the unspeakable horrors of our history (he insists on "our"), the multiple worlds represented by different languages "after Babel"—these are worth the effort. Chapter 8 marks the serious center of his concern, wherein he once more considers the question of evil, whether at the end of a very bloody century we can claim any moral progress for humanity. And, after rising to this theme, how appropriate that he become lyrical in a chapter that seeks to link language to

music, a compound of human endeavor that seems to resist the acids of deconstructionism.

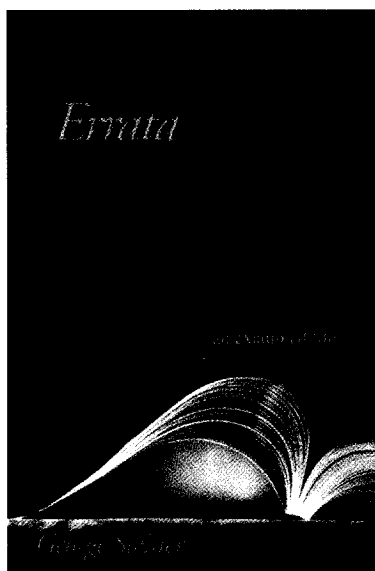
There is an obvious and easy irony here: for all of his somber observations, George Steiner's own process of thought and articulation enlivens one to the very possibilities of human existence.

W. M. Hagen
Oklahoma Baptist University

Translating Literatures, Translating Cultures: New Vistas and Approaches in Literary Studies. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, Michael Irmscher, eds. Stanford, Ca. Stanford University Press, 1998. xviii + 214 pages. \$49.50 (\$17.95 paper). ISBN 0-8047-3083-0 (3544-1 paper).

A collection of eleven essays originally presented at an international conference titled "Translating Literatures, Translating Cultures," which took place at Stanford University on 17–18 March 1995, the book under review proposes to introduce to the American academy some "prominent trends" in translation studies arising from the Center for Advanced Studies in Literary Translation, at the University of Göttingen, Germany. The importance of those new approaches and "vistas" would come from the fact, among others, that "in the United States . . . the rise of translation studies has remained largely unnoticed in the humanities," as the editors point out in the book's introduction. However, this assertion is quite problematic, not only because translation has already become a central issue in the American humanities, but also because those approaches could not be exactly described as *new*, since they lie in a well-established field of research which extends back, for example, to Walter Benjamin, who is oddly excluded, for all intents and purposes, from the discussions presented by the authors, despite the fact that their supposedly "new vistas" are largely built upon many of his essential arguments concerning translation. The editors' emphasis in presenting the "Göttingen approach" as something very fresh is more related, I would say, to the collapse of *Germanistik* after the Cold War and the consequent necessity of regaining the prominence lost by German studies within a scholarly environment which apparently no longer pays attention to Goethe's language.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first displays the philosophy of the Göttingen school in comparison with three other translating approaches, described as follows: a) the "traditional view" that relegates the translator's place to a sort of *shadow culture*, as if he were a kind of invisible mediator of merely interchangeable languages; b) the "science of translation," a prescriptive, ahistorical, and source-oriented procedure that concentrates on translating language instead of transferring culture; and c) the "polysystem theory," proposed among others by Itamar Even-Zohar, which focuses exclusively on the target language and culture. The "Göttingen approach," in contrast, introduces a historical, descriptive, and transfer-oriented means of translation, wherein lies its decisive contribution to the field of translation studies. It combines *source* and *target* considerations toward a translating process that takes into account the unique places and cul-



tural eras inherent to the process of cultural transfer, as well as the differences among linguistic systems.

Although this "cultural approach" sounds avant-garde, we should not forget that Benjamin had already postulated the importance of historical and cultural considerations as a basis for translation. Even if his concept of *pure language* is far from a cultural strategy, the Benjaminian distinction between *meaning* and *form* clearly provides the foundations of the Göttingen approach, even though its supporters fail to acknowledge the author of *The Task of the Translator*. Numerous scholars and writers such as Haroldo de Campos, José Paulo Paes, Octavio Paz, Paulo Ronai, and Jorge Luis Borges, among others, employ the same strategies of translation. However, the book fails to extend its scope beyond basically Anglo-German references.

The second part of the volume concentrates on the cultural transfer of German philosophy and literature into the American context, especially during the nineteenth century. Although the authors emphasize a dualistic historical approach, this section falls in contradiction and inadvertently highlights the indebtedness of the American literary tradition to the German one.

The third section analyzes actual cases: translations of prose, poetry, and drama from and into German. Here we discover the book's most important article: Helga Essmann delves deeply into the role played by translation anthologies within German culture as a basis for the construction of national literary identity, as well as the concept of *Weltliteratur*. As Peter Uwe Hohendahl points out (in "The Fate of German Studies after the End of the Cold War," *Profession 1998*), from Kant to the Frankfurt School the German tradition has made a large contribution to literary, philosophical, and cultural studies. German studies worldwide now face the task of fighting for their singularity and assuring their place in the global market of ideas. Mueller-Vollmer and Irscher's edition is part of these efforts. The book ought to be read taking such background information into account. In doing so, we can dismiss its claims to novelty and focus on its real importance: it expands upon a great tradition of knowledge and constitutes a welcome contribution to translation studies based upon a cultural approach.

Marcus Vinicius Freitas
Federal University of Minas Gerais (Brazil)

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

1. Publication Title: World Literature Today.
2. Publication Number: 060-680.
3. Filing Date: 29 September 1990
4. Issue Frequency: Quarterly.
5. Number of Issues Published Annually: Four.
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$40 Individual, \$48 Institution.
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: World Literature Today / 110 Monnet Hall / University of Oklahoma / Norman, OK 73019-4033.
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: University of Oklahoma / 119 Evans Hall / Norman OK 73019-3074.
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of:

Publisher: University of Oklahoma / 119 Evans Hall / Norman, OK 73019-3074.

Editor: William Riggan / World Literature Today / 110 Monnet Hall / Norman, OK 73019-4033.

Managing Editor: David Draper Clark / World Literature Today / 110 Monnet Hall / Norman, OK 73019-4033.
10. Owner: University of Oklahoma / 119 Evans Hall / Norman, OK 73019-3074.
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders: None.
12. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income-tax purposes have *not* changed during the preceding 12 months.

13. Publication Title: World Literature Today.
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Summer 1999.
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:

	Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months	Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
A. Total no. copies	2,200	2,200
B. Paid and/or requested circulation		
1. Counter sales	30	30
2. Mail subscriptions	1,640	1,615
C. Total paid and/or requested circulation	1,670	1,645
D. Free distribution by mail	104	102
E. Free distribution outside the mail	20	20
F. Total free distribution	124	122
G. Total distribution	1,794	1,767
H. Copies not distributed	406	433
I. Total	2,200	2,200
J. Percent paid circulation	93.1%	93.1%

I certify that all information furnished above is true and complete.

/s/ William Riggan, Editor