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Reading across Cultures: The Role of Translated Literature in Multicultural and Multilingual Communities

Ireland's 2016 census provided a picture of increasing linguistic and cultural diversity, reflecting both the wider patterns of migration and mobility in the EU and the particularities of the Irish position. Previously characterized primarily by outward migration, with limited experience of multiculturalism, Ireland's current status as a technological and commercial contact zone between the Anglophone world and other major global marketplaces means that, as well as providing refuge to political and economic in-migration, Ireland actively calls for a multilingual workforce drawn from beyond its borders. Reading across Cultures responds explicitly to this changing landscape by addressing the ways in which individuals, groups, and communities negotiate linguistic and cultural diversity. Focusing on Cork as a city that has been marked out for its relative success in using cultural activities to promote a sustainable and inclusive society, it sets out to establish the role translated literature specifically plays in promoting understanding and tolerance between cultures. Working with local reading groups, the project explores the ways in which readers read translated literature, how they talk about and make sense of the "other" and respond to cultural difference more generally. Plotting the ways in which the reading experience affects their attitudes towards the changing communities in which they live, the project seeks to establish how exactly reading literature in translation can enhance understanding between cultures, as proposed by numerous scholars, translators, and educators since the "Cultural Turn" in Translation Studies. Collaboration with key players in the literary environment in Cork, in particular the Munster Literary Centre and Cork City libraries, provides an exceptional overview of the literary landscape, offering insight into how the cultural and literary events they organize create communities of readers who mutually inform and influence the reading experience. The results have the potential to inform the process and practice of a wide range of practitioners including publishers, translators, policy makers, cultural institutes, writers, literary organizations, and festivals in Ireland and beyond.