



Within the framework of the research project  
*Rhythm Concepts in Translation and Translatology*  
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from the *Institute for Translation Studies and Specialised Communication* of the University of Hildesheim  
invite to the international conference

## Henri Meschonnic's rhythm concept in the Translation and Translation Studies

from 2 to 4 October 2019,  
at the University of Hildesheim.

### Description

Like few others before and after him, the French poet, linguist and translator Henri Meschonnic propagated a 'linguistic reflection of the transition'. This formulation has not been chosen by chance, as Meschonnic's radical credo condenses in the inseparable interweaving of language theory and linguistic action, written and spoken language, everyday and poetic idiom. According to Meschonnic, the aim is to overcome the dichotomous thinking of linguistics and to release language from the dissecting table of structuralism. Instead, the living language of the subject or the subject-in-language is to be brought to the fore.

In the writings of his predecessors, for example in Émile Benveniste's collection of essays *Problems of General Linguistics* (especially the explanations on the subject and on the rhythm of language) and in Wilhelm von Humboldt's linguistic-philosophical oeuvre, the well-read author found innovative impulses with which structuralist semiotics of language à la Saussure were to be left behind. The essence of language, therefore, does not consist in the systemic nature of hermetically sealed structures that occupy a certain position, a certain value in the linguistic system. Sentences and texts are not merely the linear concatenation of discrete signs. Rather —as Humboldt has already emphasized— language is execution, an activity (*energeia*), one that takes into account all eventualities of the moment: the subjects of communication, the situation, the numerous references in and beyond the text. If each text experiences its own, ever new actualization, if its meaning manifests itself in its performance, i.e. in its rhythm, this has far-reaching consequences for the translation process. Translation is then not the creation of a target text that is in a static and ever-valid equivalence relationship to the original, but rather an activity that is always new and that is to be always related to the source text. In this respect, translation is always to be conceptualized as co-creation, which, instead of appeasing its author as an invisible translator (*Venuti*), makes him visible as a historical being.

Meschonnic has left behind a broad oeuvre: These include the six volumes entitled *Pour la poétique*, four monographs on rhythm and its significance for translation, some of which are extensive: *Critique du rythme* (1982), *Politique du rythme. Politique du sujet* (1995), *Poétique du traduire* (1999), *Éthique et politique du traduire* (2007). The extensive oeuvre, of which only a very small selection has been mentioned here, has received little attention in German-speaking countries.



On the occasion of Meschonnic's 10th year of death, an international conference will be held to take stock of the reception of his theorems in translation studies. In particular, Meschonnic's very complex conception of rhythm, its conditions and consequences for the translation process will be explored. According to Meschonnic, linguistic activity in flux can be excellently demonstrated by (new) translations.

We invite academics from Germany and abroad to submit proposals for lectures on the following topics in particular:

- What distinguishes Henri Meschonnic's rhythm concept? To what extent does it differ from other rhythm theories?
- What does Meschonnic take from his sources? And how does he advance the discourse about rhythm, language and translation?
- Which translations take into account Meschonnic's theorems on rhythm and how do they affect the target text? How do they influence the actions of the translators?
- What role does rhythm play in different (forms of) translation(s)?
- How could rhythm in Meschonnic's sense be described not only as a design element of literary translations, but also of other forms of translation, such as technical translation, interpreting, audiovisual translation, etc.?
- Which points of contact do Meschonnic's theorems offer with the rhythm of current translation studies?

## Organizational matters

The conference will take place from 2 to 4 October 2019 at the *University of Hildesheim* (Germany). The conference languages will be German, English and French. During the conference, several translators of Meschonnic's (theoretical) writings will also report on their experiences.

We ask all interested parties to send us original proposals for a 25-minute lecture (plus 15-minute discussion time). Please send the lecture title, abstract (approx. 1500-2000 characters incl. spaces and bibliography) as well as a short biography with mention of the current affiliation in the Word format to [agnetta@uni-hildesheim.de](mailto:agnetta@uni-hildesheim.de). The deadline for submission of contributions is 01.06.2019. You will be informed about the acceptance by 30.06.2019.

The conference starts on 02.10.2019 at about 13 o'clock and ends on 04.10.2019 at 16 o'clock approximately. Participation in the conference is free of charge. The assumption of travel and accommodation costs is intended, but cannot yet be confirmed at this time.

You will find further information under [www.uni-hildesheim.de/rhythmus-und-translation/](http://www.uni-hildesheim.de/rhythmus-und-translation/). If you have any questions, please contact the organizers [agnetta@uni-hildesheim.de](mailto:agnetta@uni-hildesheim.de) or [maelzers@uni-hildesheim.de](mailto:maelzers@uni-hildesheim.de).

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