Translation Practices

Through Language to Culture

Edited by
Ashley Chantler and Carla Dente

INTERNATIONALE FORSCHUNGEN ZUR ALLGEMEINEN UND VERGLEICHENDEN LITERATURWISSENSCHAFT

Translation Practices

122

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List of illustrations

1. Churlishness, Amiens cathedral
2. Herod in his bath, Amiens cathedral

in Emily Eells's essay.

1. Pomponesco. Argine Po visto dalla piazza
2. Sabbioneta. Dal Palazzo Ducale verso nord
3. Comacchio. Argine Agosta

in Marina Spunta's essay.

Contents

Editors' Preface 9

Manfred Pfister
Introduction 11

Language as Means

Lynne Long
The European Lending Library:
Borrowing, Translating, and Returning Texts 17

Silvia Cacchiani
Translating Intensifiers:
(Non-)Equivalences Across English and Italian 31

Stephen Coffey
The Coining of Italian Phraseological Units Through
the Translation of Analogous English Phrases 47

Elisa Mattiello
Difficulty of Slang Translation 65

Monica Boria
Translating Humour: The Case of Stefano Benni 85

Sonia Cunico
Translating Characterization:
Dario Fo's *Morte accidentale* Travels to Britain 99

Kate Litherland
Translating 'America' in 90s Italian Fiction 115

Culture as Target

Emily Eells
La Bible d'Amiens: Translation and Transformation 131

Philip Shaw
Translating Desire: Ovid and Three Romantic Poets 145

Luanda Stannard
'She Rises Anew in my Words':
Translating Sainthood in Michèle Roberts's *Impossible Saints* 153

Languages of Culture

Lorna Hardwick
Playing Around Cultural Faultlines:
The Impact of Modern Translations for the Stage on Perceptions
of Ancient Greek Drama 167

Manfred Pfister
John/Giovanni Florio: The Translator as Go-Between 185

Ashley Chantler
'Paring His Fingernails'? The Textual Editor as Translator 203

Dave Postles
Translating the Self: The Alias, Alas! 211

Marina Spunta
The New Italian Landscape:
Between Ghirri's Photography and Celati's Fiction 223

Appendix

David Platzer
Translating Dacia; Two Poems 241

Bibliography 251

Notes on Contributors 277

Editors' Preface

This book is one of the many outcomes of interdisciplinary research activities which have developed for over a decade by a group of scholars working in the Universities of Pisa and Leicester, with contributions by several colleagues from other European institutions.

Preceding volumes arising from the Leicester-Pisa relationship include: *Scenes of Change: Studies in Cultural Transition*, ed. by Carla Dente and Jane Everson (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 1996); *Romancing Decay: Ideas of Decadence in European Culture*, ed. by Michael St John (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999); *Displaced Persons: Conditions of Exile in European Culture*, ed. by Sharon Ouditt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); *The Poetics of Transubstantiation: From Theology to Metaphor*, ed. by Douglas Burnham and Enrico Giaccherini (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); *Proteus: The Language of Metamorphosis*, ed. by Carla Dente, George Ferzoco, Miriam Gill, and Marina Spunta (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); *Collaboration in the Arts from the Middle Ages to the Present,* ed. by Silvia Bigliazzi and Sharon Wood (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); and *Myths of Europe*, ed. by Richard Littlejohns and Sara Soncini (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

Translation Practices represents the final volume in the first stage of a communal experience that has now developed into a four-year, jointly-funded research project on Anglo-Italian cultural exchange, linking Leicester and Pisa with other universities (Paris X, Freie Universität, Berlin) and distinguished scholars around the world. We are extremely grateful to the British Academy for funding this initiative.

Sincere thanks are due to Martin Stannard and Greg Walker, without whom this and the above volumes would not exist; Manfred Pfister for his advice and support; Pamela Cologna for her hard work and invaluable assistance; and to all the contributors to this volume for their wonderful essays and their patience.

Ashley Chantler and Carla Dente
November 2007

Introduction

This anthology of essays reflects in many ways the ‘cultural turn’ translation studies have taken over the last two decades.[1] These essays, most of them focused on Anglo-Italian transactions, are therefore no longer merely concerned with the linguistics of translation as traditional translation studies were, but extend the field of research into the cultural dimensions of transposing a text from one language or semiotic code into another. And they do this in three different though closely related ways.

Firstly, following Roman Jakobson’s distinctions between three types of translation – ‘We distinguish three ways of interpreting the verbal sign: it may be translated into other signs of the same language, into another language, or into another, nonverbal system of symbols’[2] – they consider as translation not only the prototypical translation of a text from one language into another but also the all-pervasive processes of translating verbal or non-verbal signs within one language and culture. After all, ‘interpreter’ denotes not only someone who translates into or from a foreign language but also all those who provide meta-texts in the same language – ‘interpretations’, explanations, commentaries, editions[3] – to promote understanding across historical or cultural gaps. In this sense, we are all translators: we constantly interpret, explain, and translate to each other – and to ourselves! – written, spoken and non-verbal texts. And the latter, Jakobson’s ‘nonverbal system of symbols’, can also serve as the target-code – as in media-transposition of texts and the manifold dialogues of words and images among aesthetic practices,[4] or, in everyday life, in the performative codes of body language.

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[1] This turn is documented in a number of recent anthologies and studies; cf. in particular Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Translation, History and Culture* (London/New York: Routledge, 1990) with the editors’ ‘Introduction: Proust’s Grandmother and the Thousand and One Nights: The “Cultural Turn” in Translation Studies’, pp. 1-13; *Translation/History/Culture: A Casebook*, ed. by André Lefevere (London/New York: Routledge, 1992); *Constructing Cultures: Essays in Literary Translation*, ed. by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (Clevedon/Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 1998) with Susan Bassnett’s essay ‘The Translation Turn in Cultural Studies’, pp. 123-40; *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by Mona Baker (London/New York: Routledge, 2001).

[2] Roman Jakobson, ‘On Linguistic Aspects of Translation’, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 114.

[3] For editing as a kind of translation cf. the contribution by Ashley Chantler in the present volume.

Secondly, the cultural turn of translation studies has shifted the focus of research from the linguistic mechanics – and the verbal art[5] – of translating from one language into the other to the social role a translator plays and to the institutions of translating supporting this role, to the functions translation serves both for the source and the receiving culture and to its cultural impact, to the kinds of readers it is targeted on and their particular predispositions and requirements. Theorizing and exploring translating as a social practice highlight, for instance, questions of political constraints (censorship) or support (sponsorship), the economics involved in the international transfer of texts, the role of translation in transcultural canon formation,[6] its imbrication in (post-)colonial hegemony and the subversions and reversals of this relationship, or the gender aspects of an art that has traditionally been defined as ancillary (and thus feminine) is now frequently turned into a feminist art of re-writing powerful source texts.[7]

Finally, this cultural turn has extended the very notion of translation to a whole range of mediating inter- and intra-cultural activities beyond translation 'proper', i.e. translation in the traditional and narrow sense of the word. In this extended sense we are all – and always – translators. As Salman Rushdie reminds us in *Imaginary Homelands*: '"Translation" comes, etymologically, from the Latin for "bearing across". Having been borne across the world, we are translated men'.[8] Rushdie, of course, speaks of the postcolonial subject here, but in an incisive and existentialist way this applies to all of us, constantly mediating, and mediated, between different meaning-making worlds, sign systems, and texts. Translation in this wider sense of the word is what we are constantly engaged in, and not only when we pursue the time-honoured profession of translators, which literally translate texts from one language into the other. Thus, the inter-lingual translation has become a metaphor for the whole range of social activities and processes of mediation, from the hermeneutics of understanding and interpretation to personal, cultural and intercultural dialogical engagements and on to exchanges of material and cultural capital. And this process of metaphorization – which is, as the shared etymological sense of *metaphor* and *translation* already indicates, a mode of translation in its own right – also works the other way round: dialogue and intertextual transposition, transplantation and metamorphosis, lending, borrowing and returning,[9] export and import, travelling and traffic, negotiations and transactions and other forms of social and cultural exchange have come to be increasingly used as illuminating metaphorical models for the analysis of inter-lingual translation. The great mythical model for this conjunction of the narrower and the wider senses of translation is Hermes or Mercury, messenger and mediator between the gods and men and therefore the god of hermeneutics, but at the same time the god of merchants, thieves, spies and other shape-shifters. The modern anthropologists' 'go-between' is clearly his conceptualized descendant,[10] and his theatre of activities, a 'Third Space' in-between – a 'liminal' space in-between self and other, in-between cultures and language – has been highlighted by Homi Bhabha as the increasingly crucial site of meaning-making in our society: 'we should remember that it is the "inter" – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture'.[11]

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[4] Cf. Marina Spunta on the dialogue between literatures in this volume.

[5] Cf. on this David Platzer's comments on his own translations of poems by Dacia Maraini.

[6] Cf. André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London/New York: Routledge, 1992) and Lynne Long's, Emily Eells's and Philip Shaw's contributions in the present volume.

[7] Cf. the contribution of Luanda Stannard.

[8] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism* (London: Granta Books, 1992), p. 17.

The following diagram seeks to map this ever-widening field of translation studies and at the same time map the thematically varied contributions to the present collection of essays. Its *horizontal* axis is *product*-orientated and represents in a rough and ready sliding scale the major forms the processes of translation are represented in. Each one of the boxes could and should, of course, be further subdivided and internally differentiated. Dictionaries, for instance can be intra- and inter-lingual and they should also include comparative phraseologies,[12] and the box for media transpositions contains a wide range of formations from ekphrasis and illustrations to verbal images, from dramatization and musical settings to film versions. The *vertical* axis is *process*-orientated and tabulates in a more or less systematic fashion the various practices and activities linked to translating and the controlling metaphors that provide models for these linkages.

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[9] Cf. again Lynne Long's contribution on the 'European Lending Library'.

[10] Cf. Lorna Hardwick's contribution on 'playing around cultural faultlines' and my own on John Florio as go-between.

[11] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 38.

[12] Most of the contributions to the first section of this volume, 'Language as Means', belong here; cf. Cacchiani's comparative study of intensifiers in English and Italian and Stephen Coffey's on Italian phraseological units deriving from English via the copying process of 'calquing', Elisa Mattiello on the translation of slang and Monica Boria on the translation of humour, Sonia Cunico on verbal characterization in Dario Fo's *Morte accidentale di un anarchico* translated into English, Kate Litherland on the presence of American youth culture and its discourses in recent Italian fiction, and Dave Postles's historical reconstruction of conventions of *aliases* as translations of proper names.

TRANSLATION dictionary edition commentary same-language tr. 2nd-language tr. media transposition

understanding and interpreting

intertextual/intermedial dialogues

transfer and transplantation

metamorphosis

lending, borrowing and returning

appropriation

travelling and traffic

export and import

transactions, negotiations

imitation and emulation

imitation and subversion

go-betweens performing in liminal spaces

transcultural canonizings

All these concepts and notions play a role in following discussions; indeed, it is the space created by the horizontal and vertical axis where the field work of translation studies in this volume takes place.

Manfred Pfister
Montepescali, 2007

Language
as
Means

Lynne Long

The European Lending Library: Borrowing, Translating, and Returning Texts

1. Translation theory

In the 80s, when Translation Studies began to emerge as a separate discipline, there was much shifting about and moving over of cultural and literary theories to make room for translated texts, firstly as a cultural phenomenon and secondly as an integral part of any literary system. Translation had always had a place as a communicative medium, a language learning tool or a method of text access. It had long been the subject of philosophical and literary observations by classical writers like Cicero, Horace, Jerome and Augustine[1] and its strategies outlined and defended, especially in reference to translated works, by seventeenth century poets such as the Earl of Roscommon and John Dryden.[2] Its significance as an active and creative force in the advancement of early vernacular literatures, however, and in the development of individual writers had been, and to some extent still is, overlooked.

Cultural theorist Itamar Even-Zohar's revised essay on the position of translated literature within the literary polysystem identifies translated literature as a 'most active system' within any literary polysystem. A young, peripheral or weak literature or a literature in crisis will turn to translated literature as a source of innovation or renovation.[3] A later essay discusses ‘cultural interference’, the influential effect upon each other of cultures in close proximity or with close contacts.[4] Gideon Toury’s work in progress addresses the idea of ‘culture planning’ in and through translation: the selective borrowing of high status texts, what we would call classics, to be translated into (usually) minority languages for the purpose of building up and developing the culture into a stronger position *vis à vis* other cultures.[5] When Turkey became a republic in the 20s and adopted Western script, translations of what were considered the classics of European and American literature were commissioned to feed into the new young literary system.[6] Yan Fu and later Lin Shu translated mainstream literary and philosophical works from Europe into Chinese in the early twentieth century with the aim of enriching and informing Chinese culture.[7] Minority languages like Catalan, Breton and Friesian survive and maintain their position by having texts central to the European canon, the Bible for example, translated into the vernacular.[8]

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[1] Cicero, 'De Optimo Genere Oratorum', in *Western Translation Theory: From Herodotus to Nietzsche*, ed. by Douglas Robinson (Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 2002); Horace, 'Ars Poetica', in *Western Translation Theory: From Herodotus to Nietzsche*, ed. by Douglas Robinson (Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 2002); Jerome, 'Letter to Pammachius', in *Western Translation Theory: From Herodotus to Nietzsche*, ed. by Douglas Robinson (Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 2002); and Augustine, 'De Doctrina Christiana', in *Western Translation Theory: From Herodotus to Nietzsche*, ed. by Douglas Robinson (Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 2002). Relevant extracts may be found in Douglas Robinson, *Western Translation Theory* (Manchester: St Jerome Publishing, 1997).

[2] Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon, *An Essay on Translated Verse* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1685); John Dryden, *Sylvae* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1685). In Dryden's prefaces to his own translations, particularly in the preface to *Sylvae*.

It is almost as if, within the context of European literature, there is an undefined but recognisable pool of classic texts essential to the vernacular culture. Any literature needing to launch its own development or to raise its status to that of its neighbours or competitors selects and translates from these high status works. Within Europe, these works might include Greek and Latin literary and philosophical classics, early vernacular epics, the Old and New Testament and folk tales. Folk tales and children’s literature in the vernacular ensure material for young people to read; the vernacular Bible solemnizes important rituals in the local language.

Against the background of the ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies, André Lefevere developed the premise that each translation comes with its own purpose, patronage, ideology and capacity for manipulation. Every translation is, in fact, a rewriting of the original source text, whatever the 'original' is perceived to be. Many translations become treated as or perceived to be originals. 'Rewriters', Lefevere tells us, 'adapt, manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant, or one of the dominant ideological or poetological currents of their time.'[9] This is to see translation as a kind of literary appropriation and implies that even the selection of the text to translate from the library of available classics may have some political, literary or cultural implication for the target culture, which of course it did in many of the cases quoted earlier.

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[3] Itamar Even-Zohar, ‘The Position of Translated Literature within the Polysystem’, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti (London/New York: Routledge 2000), pp. 193-94.

[4] Itamar Even-Zohar, ‘Laws of Cultural Interference’, in *Papers in Cultural Research* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2005), available at: http://www.tau.ac.il/~itamarez/papers/ culture-interference.htm 2001.

[5] Gideon Toury, ‘Culture Planning and Translation’, in *Proceedings of the Vigo Conference “Anovadores de nos, anosadores de vos”*, ed. by A. Álvarez and A. Fernández (Vigo: Vigo University, 1997), available electronically at: http://www.tau.ac.il/~toury/works/gt-plan.htm 2001.

[6] Saliha Paker, ‘Turkish Tradition’, in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by Mona Baker (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 579.

[7] Eva Hung and David Pollard, ‘Chinese Tradition’, in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. by Mona Baker (London/New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 370.

[8] The complete Bible was printed in Breton in 1889; Catalan had partial translations in the 13th century and a complete one in the 19th; the Sater Friesian Bible is a work in progress.

One of the qualities of a classic text, Walter Benjamin informs us in his 1923 essay *Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, is its translatability:

> Translatability is an essential quality of certain works, which is not to say that it is essential that they be translated; it means rather that a specific significance inherent in the original manifests itself in its translatability.[10]

Benjamin goes on to point out that as a translation of course comes after the original, the translation marks the afterlife, the survival, the *überleben*, the continued life of the original. We might assume from this that each generation requires a new translation of a classic text, since language is constantly changing, but quite often, as we know, revered classic texts are not modernized or rewritten in their own languages, only by translators into other tongues.

The classic text, then, because of its status and translatability, forms the basis of what can be described as the European lending library. Texts are borrowed, read, translated and returned to the library, sometimes in the same form, sometimes rewritten. Translations of these texts are used to enhance the status of a culture when its own resources are stretched but they also rejuvenate and re-engage the creativity necessary for the culture to generate material of its own. Translations can also be manipulated and shaped to fit the target culture's ideology, or rewritten to emphasize a different aspect of their content.

Is it possible to test out the modern cultural and literary theories of translation against a historical background to see how these models stand up retrospectively? Working on a very much smaller scale with medieval texts might help to measure more accurately what has become immeasurable today by

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[9] André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London/New York: Routledge 1992), p. 8.

[10] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 16-17.