

## Introduction

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The second volume of the series takes its inspiration from the International Workshop on Translation: *Between Texts, Beyond Words: Intertextuality and Translation*, which took place in Venice on 26-27 November 2014. The workshop's keynote speaker, professor Lawrence Venuti, who is also a member of the Scientific Board of this series, gave an opening lecture entitled "Translation, Intertextuality, Interpretation".

During the workshop, papers on translation processes and translation discourse were presented, touching upon relevant subjects across different linguistic and cultural contexts. A particular focus was devoted to the issue of intertextuality and its relevance in both translation practice and theory.

This book is built upon a reflection on the various intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between certain Asian traditions (such as those of China, Japan and Persia) and the West. However, it also deals with other significant aspects of translation as a dynamic intersection between cultures and texts, tackling important translational issues, such as the translation of the Chinese self *vis à vis* Western modernity; the translation of the Bible and of Christian terms into Japanese and Chinese; the translation of metaphors from Persian poetry; and the relation between Chinese and Western translation studies.

Intertextuality is a pivotal concept derived from Bachtin's theories on plurilingualism and from the idea of "polyphony" developed by Julia Kristeva - who gave it the following definition: "each word (text) is an intersection of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read (1980, 66)". The notion was taken up again, among the others, by Cesare Segre, who underlined its pervasiveness not only in the literary texts but also in every day forms of communication. He suggested the term "interdiscorsività" (interdiscursivity) to describe, "i rapporti che ogni testo, orale o scritto, intrattiene con tutti gli enunciati o discorsi registrati nella corrispondente cultura e ordinati ideologicamente" [the relations that every written or oral text entertains with all the ideologically ordered utterances or discourses reported in the corresponding culture] (1982, 23). This multiplicity of voices and thoughts within the same text is also realised

by means of textual parody and rewriting (Genette 1997), allowing for a re-proposition of the text/discourse of the Other in new and often critical forms. Perceiving and recognising the existence of the ideas of the Other, or “ideologemes” (Bachtin 1981), interspersed in the text is a key element for detecting a range of interlinguistic and intercultural interferences during the process of translation. For this reason, a translation cannot ignore the existence of such ideologemes, as the hermeneutic process is often one of disambiguation.

Intertextuality may take different forms, as explored in some of the essays in this volume, which addresses a variety of translation issues, including: religious translation and the adaptation of cultural values and terms in Aldo Tollini and Raissa De Gruttola’s articles; the translation of some rhetorical figures (hyperbole, metaphor and comparison) from Persian into Italian (Daniela Meneghini); Chinese writer Zhang Ailing’s practice of self-intertextuality and the need for translators to reconstruct the plurality of voices and texts embedded in her autobiographical fiction (Nicoletta Pesaro); and last but not least, the presence of interdiscursivity at a theoretical level through an overview of the fundamental attitudes towards translation in late Imperial and Republican China, such as the role played by translation as an enrichment of Chinese culture, language and literature and as a form of self-expression (Monika Gaenssbauer).

In the field of translation, the encounter between Asian traditions and Western culture was of course quite a fertile one; modern readers/scholars are usually more acquainted with the effects of this encounter on Asian cultural productions than on Western ones. The importance of religious translations in the cross-cultural relations between Asia and Europe is hardly a neglected topic, yet it is definitely worth investigating more in depth, by taking into account the bidirectional flow of words and “ideologemes”, also in order to enrich our comprehension of historical and practical factors of great significance for translation studies and theory. In their contributions to this volume, both Aldo Tollini and Raissa De Gruttola analyse the processes and outcomes of this encounter, by focusing on the introduction and dissemination of Western culture/religion in Japan and China. Tollini notes “the huge task of translating technical terms of Christianity into Japanese language”, underlying that “[t]wo very different cultures came for the first time in contact and serious problems of understanding were to be solved” (104). According to De Gruttola, “the approach of the missionaries in China to the Bible conformed to the directions given by the Church hierarchies all over the world” (28); this entails that the ideological factor, i.e. the will to keep a tight control on the contents of the Bible, heavily impacted the translation practices and strategies applied by the missionaries/translators. Thus, the intersection of cultures and voices here was deeply affected by ideological factors, which were often dealt with by means of technical (linguistic) solutions or a complementary paratex-

tual strategy. On the one hand, in the pre-modern Japanese translation of Christian terms, the former strategy was based on the use of paraphrases, phonetic transcription and “[t]ranslation by the most similar indigenous term” (103); but the strongly “mediating” role played by the first missionaries/translators is also remarkable, in that they chose to employ common words rather than terms which were more specific/precise but liable to misunderstanding. On the other hand, one example of the latter solution is the use of chronological tables and geographical maps inserted in “the first complete text in Chinese for Catholics” (26), whose aim was to fill the many epistemological gaps of the target readers in respect of the history and culture of the Bible.

Religious translation presents a variety of practical tools and theoretical issues for both Asian and Western translation studies. The transfer of religious texts and concepts from one culture to another usually involves a critical comparison of cultural and social values as well. We should bear in mind that the first important peak in translation activity and theory in China was reached with the endeavour to translate Buddhist texts in the period from the mid-2nd to the 11th century. Later, new translation theories sprouted up at the turn of the 20th century – the most important phase in the making of modern Chinese translation theory – when two thirds of the literary production was based on translations of foreign literature. The impact of foreign thought and literary works in Chinese culture led to a stream of translational theories, which intermingled with the long-standing local tradition of Buddhist translation. The existence of radically different translation practices – we might even call these a different “culture of translation” – is a topic that deserves further exploration, as Gaenssbauer demonstrates in this volume. Her contribution sheds light on the complex relationship between diverse traditions within translation studies, where – despite the increasing number of remarkable new perspectives, such as the ones opened up by Susan Bassnett and Maria Tymoczko – a Eurocentric attitude still prevails. Two levels of investigations are at work here: on the one hand, the transfer of ideas and values that are introduced into Chinese society and negotiated by the translators – often by means of the so-called practice of “redaction” (37); and on the other hand, the shaping of a peculiar practice and theory of translation stemming from the need to cope with the novelty represented by Western literature and philosophy, once this has been assimilated into, or adapted to, the receiving culture. The concepts of “redaction” and “collective translation” (another staple in Chinese translation studies, which has been discussed before by Marta Cheung and Eva Hung), as well as the importance assigned to images in Chinese translation theory, no doubt represent a valuable supplement and integration to Western theories. These elements are the outcome of a centuries-old practice that, nonetheless, is also present in Western translation practice to some degree.

Some of the articles address more specific details of the translator's activity, exploring the range of skills and strategies which must be applied in order to "accommodate the unfamiliar" represented by the proto-text - when it comes to introducing this into a radically different context, remote in terms of space and time - or, in other words, to develop, as Sell puts it, an "empathetic imagination" (40). The reader can therefore delve into the hard and sometimes controversial choices made by the translator with respect to the mystery embodied by a literary text reflecting a remote tradition - as in the case of the Persian poet analysed in Daniela Meneghini's article - or a restless and continuously revised self (such as that of the Chinese writer Zhang Ailing, the subject of my own contribution).

Meneghini stresses the responsibility of a translator, faced with the challenge of translating the work of an author who lived in 12th-century Persia and built his poetry on a sophisticated rhetorical web made of "figurative language, comparisons, metaphors and hyperboles" (55). I agree with her when she claims that one must be equipped with "philological attention, patient interpretation, honest negotiation with the original" (55), in order to allow the words and the voice of the author to be adequately "heard" and recognised by the contemporary Italian reader. In my analysis of my own translation of Zhang Ailing's posthumous novel, *Little Reunions*, I discuss the risk of flattening the multi-layered structure of the prototext, which is made up of self-translation, self-rewriting, self-intertextuality and other cross-references. I also reflect on the impact that the normalisation and homogenisation often required by the publisher's standard editorial practices might impose on the text, if these rich embedded references are ignored or deliberately effaced.

A final remark should be made concerning the sophisticated level reached by studies on translation (carried out both by theoreticians and by practitioners) in rethinking the encounter of European languages and values with specific Asian cultures. Indeed, reflections such as those offered in this volume can contribute to, and enrich the new dialogue between Western and Asian traditions in the field of translation, a dialogue that is increasingly being invoked and felt to be necessary. Tymozcko (2010, 49) has recently stressed the importance of

a postpositivist epistemology [which] is not merely recognition of the importance of perspective for the construction of knowledge about translation, but ultimately an activist assertion of the value of alternate perspectives on translation in relation to those of dominant cultures.

Although devoted to different aspects, languages and epochs, all the essays in this volume provide insightful reflections on the various ways in which cultures intersect "between texts and beyond words". In line with the general approach of the series, the volume encompasses a range of

diverse perspectives on translation – from the analysis of theoretical issues to the craft and choices of the translator, from historical developments to the cultural and theoretical implications of translation.

This volume has been published thanks to the kind financial support of my friend and colleague, Prof. Fiorenzo Lafirenza, whose views and strategies as a translator have always been most valuable to my own work.

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