

Conference Report

Translation: An Elizabethan Art – Revisited

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On October 24-25, in Ragusa Ibla, 6 speakers participated in the Colloquium *Translation: An Elizabethan Art – Revisited*. This by-invitation-only event, hosted by the School of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Catania-Ragusa, in partnership with the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Milan, brought together scholars to share new developments in the field of translation during the Elizabethan Age. In the beautiful scenery of the Hyblean landscape, the conference programme included 4 single slots over two days, with each session being chaired by a different moderator. Unfortunately, Carmela Nocera from the University of Catania, whose presentation “Translation as *filia temporis*: Queen Elizabeth's eulogy in George Pettie's *The Civile Conversation* (1581)” scheduled for the second day, was unable to take part. The Colloquium was well attended by graduate, postgraduate and PhD students, as well as colleagues. Among visitors, we particularly appreciated the participation of Donatella Montini, La Sapienza University, Rome, who came to Sicily to join in the conference.

On the morning of the first day, speakers were invited to visit The Castle of Donnafugata and its gardens, in the countryside just outside of Santa Croce Camerina. After lunch, the conference was opened by Professor Nunzio Zago, Head of the School of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Catania-Ragusa, who welcomed the participants. The first session was chaired by Massimo Sturiale who introduced the first of the two plenary speakers, Robert Cummings (Glasgow University), who spoke about England's cold and slow welcome of Italian feminine rhyme, thought by some literates to be reduced to comic works, as a companion to burlesque writings. Through the analysis of some prefatorial materials of English translations from the Italian language published in the late 15th/early 16th centuries and the discussion of some case studies, he problematized this widespread approach, through the analysis of some translations. For instance, Harington's English version of Ariosto's *Furioso* preserved the feminine rhyme in the target text in contrast with Thomas Campion's rhymeless verse on the model of classical quantitative verse.

The second speaker of this first session, John Denton (University of Florence), argued for the existence of prominent Translation theories in Renaissance England, and highlighted the major contribution made by Lawrence Humphrey, author of the *Interpretatio Linguarum* written in Latin. Denton then divided translation historians into “negativists”, those who have blatantly ignored Humphrey's treatise, and “positivists”, those who have recognized its major contribution. He concluded his presentation by stressing the necessity for an annotated translation of Humphrey's work, possibly including Harvey's substantial annotations in the margins of the copy held in Trinity College, Cambridge.

After a pleasant coffee break, the second session opened. This was chaired by Brenda Hosington and included two presentations addressing two Elizabethan translations, from English into Italian and from Italian into English respectively. Giovanni Iamartino (University of Milan), discussed Sebastiano Roccagliata's translation of William Tyndale's *The obedience of a Christian man* (1559), dedicated to Sir Thomas Copley. After having examined the prefatory material of the work, in which Roccagliata explains to Sir Copley the reasons for his dedication, he focused on the address to the target text readers by the Italian translator, including a few ideas due to become key points for future theory, for example, simplicity rather than impressiveness, faithfulness to the sense

and the usage of words rather than to the single words, and the impossibility for any translation to be perfect and final. Iamartino concluded his presentation by making a binary comparison between the Source Text(s) and the Target Text. On the one hand, he weighed a single translation unit in Italian against the five different editions of Tyndale's work in order to conclude that Roccatagliata's translation was based on the 1548 edition. On the other, he examined some of the textual passages in the two languages, which were followed by a discussion of translation strategies.

The last speaker of the first day was Massimiliano Morini (University of Udine). He analysed the 1602 translation of Guarini's *Pastor Fido* by a kinsman of Sir Edward Dymoke alongside Richard Fanshawe's *Faithfull Shepherd*, first printed in London in 1647. Comparing several passages from these two versions, he presented the style of the first as simpler and more compact, whereas the second was a more faithful version to the complex rhetorical construction of the Source Text. However, Morini suggested discussing literary translations from a historical perspective and as products of their time, rather than in terms of faithfulness – that is to say, based on how much the target text is either close to or far from its source text. This approach, for instance, would classify Dymoke's text more as the result of a "pre-Romantic" approach, which considers the skipping of long passages of text or simplifying as a strategic necessity. While Fanshawe's later version would be seen as the expression of an aristocratic idea of translation which narrowly focused on the translator's stylistic and elocutionary bravura.

On the night of October 24, the guest speakers had dinner in a restaurant located in the Gardens of Ragusa Ibla, and here they enjoyed some Mediterranean food in the stunning location of a former Capuchin monastery. Dinner on Thursday evening was a welcomed chance to spend time together. Personally, sitting in the company of international experts, I had an amazing time, and the conference dinner was the most desirable end to day one.

Professor Cummings chaired the session scheduled on the next morning and introduced the second plenary speaker, Brenda M. Hosington (University of Warwick), who delivered a fascinating lecture on the usage of paratexts in the Elizabethan age. These numerous texts give us an idea of the general approach adopted by Elizabethan translators who moved towards cultural transition, adaptation of ideas to the target culture and, in Venuti's terms, domestication. Paratexts are then to be considered as an advertising strategy revealing a close relationship between Early Modern English translation and Early Modern Print, an area where little research has so far been carried out. This can be observed in the visual differences in title pages or in the significant addition of explicit information, and was clearly exemplified by the instances examined by Brenda Hosington, such as Hoby's translation of Castiglione's *The Book and the Courtier* and John Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays* (1603). Based on Genette's classification, these paratextual materials, which originally combined typographical features and dedications, not only appealed to the intentions of the reader but they were ostensibly aimed at a domesticating change in 'skopos'.

The second session on Friday 25, chaired by Iamartino, included the last two contributions. Alessandra Petrina (University of Padua), gave an effective presentation titled "Approaching Petrarch's Trionfi: Prologues and dedicatory epistles in the early modern English translation". The main focus of her paper was Petrarch's reception in England, which, as stated by Coogan, was only firmly established at the end of the 16th century after *The Canzoniere* was published. However, the English translation of the *Triumphs* was extremely popular during the 16th century and appeared in numerous editions. Through the examination of dedicatory letters and prefatorial materials, Petrina classified the translation in pentameter couplets by Henry Parker as very much concerned with the

moral weight of Petrarch's work. Instead, William Fowler's Preface to his *Triumphs*'s adaptation in Scots (1587) reveals his aim to recreate a Scottish poetry tradition. Anne Hume, a Scots woman, compiled another partial translation, which was published in Edinburgh in 1604. Hume's Preface to her translations suggested the possibility of a cultural milieu for her work and for the role of women as translators.

The last speaker on day two was Massimo Sturiale (University of Catania), who brought a new perspective to the paratexts of the Elizabethan age and argued for the active role played by the protestant Italian community in England during the Reformation and the concurrent flood of translations. Sturiale went on to investigate some liminary materials found in religious texts from 1547 to 1657, which were duly recorded either in M.A. Scott's 1898 and 1916 lists or on the online Renaissance Cultural Crossroads Catalogue. After having noticed that prefatory materials by the translator actually exceeded the number of paratexts which were not by the translator in the texts of his corpus, he pointed out the Elizabethan translator's viewpoint by means of a linguistic analysis (lexical clusters, personal pronouns, semantic fields) which was carried out using the same corpus which is currently made up of 70,000 words. At the end, further research on discourse markers as well as on coeval translations of Catholic texts was announced.

The Colloquium was concluded by the organisers (Giovanni Iamartino and Massimo Sturiale) who summarized the key points covered in the seven presentations. The organizers did an outstanding job putting the event together. After having thanked all the contributors, they did not miss out on the opportunity to give special thanks to all students and staff members who ensured the smooth running of the event.

Before either leaving or spending some more days in the area, the participants met for lunch in the main square of Ragusa Ibla where they could sample the typical Sicilian granita served with a brioche at the foot of the baroque Cathedral on a beautifully sunny day which all went to enhancing the warm atmosphere of a great event!