TTR
Traduction, terminologie, rédaction

Presentation

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In recent years there has been increasing interest in the connection between translation and politics, with a number of publications providing an initial mapping of a territory that is still to a large extent neglected (Gagnon, 2010; Fernandez and Evans, 2018; *TTR*'s special issue edited by Gagnon and McDonough Dolmaya, 2019), especially from a diachronic perspective. This focus on the political dimension derives, of course, from a general interest in the relations between culture, power and ideology which found their expression in translation studies, in particular in relation to literary texts, in the "cultural turn" of the 1990s (Álvarez and Vidal, 1996; Tymoczko and Gentzler, 2002). This turn towards the interface between translation and politics has been characterized by a significant widening of the field of research and a strong interdisciplinary approach within which, however, it is possible to identify some specific areas of research. One of these is the increasing interest in translation policies in specific historical contexts and their political impact (e.g. Rundle, 2010; Baumgarten and Cornellà-Detrell, 2018). Another is the theme of activism and translation, especially in terms of translators' agency in relation to issues of social justice and asymmetrical power structures in both Western and non-Western contexts (Tymoczko, 2010; Boéri and Maier, 2010; Baker, 2013; Gould and Tahmasebian, 2020). The ways in which translation can function as resistance under

totalitarian regimes has also received much attention (Rundle and Sturge, 2010; Sturge, 2004; Popa, 2010; Sherry, 2015) while the role played by translators and interpreters in situations of war and conflict has become a fast-growing field of research (Inghilleri and Harding, 2014; Baker, 2006; Bielsa and Hughes 2009; Wolf, 2016; Ruiz Rosendo and Persaud, 2016; several works in the Palgrave series "Languages at War", such as Kelly and Baker, 2012; Franjié, 2016; Guo, 2016; Laugesen and Gehrmann, 2020; Pantuchowicz and Warso, 2020). The relation between translation and political activity in a particular historical framework has also been a subject of interest (Chappey, 2013; Leech 2020), as well as the ways in which classics in political thought have been translated (Zancarini, 2015; Piselli and Proietti, 2017).

The accumulation of these studies on the political dimension of the act of translation has contributed to a general move away from a focus on literary texts alone towards a more inclusive consideration of texts which can be literary, political, philosophical or journalistic. The work presented in the two special issues of *TTR* follows this generally interdisciplinary framework, moving beyond a primarily literary methodological approach and towards one which highlights specific questions relating to the historical contexts in which these translations take place (Rundle 2012, 2014, forthcoming 2021). The present issue has a more marked diachronic focus, with papers ranging from the early modern period until the early 19th century in Europe, whereas the following issue will present examples relating to the 20th century and contemporary questions in Western and non-Western contexts.

The essays presented here cover a wide variety of translation events, and, of course, thus answer questions which are often specific to the particular historical context, as we have said. They share, however, a view of translation as a particular form of political doing, as a particular means by which a political act can be carried out. They share, in other words, a perspective that highlights the performative aspect of translation, its "doing something" and having an effect in the world through "the doing of translators, readers and audiences" (Bermann, 2014, p. 288) at a particular time and in a particular place. As such, translation is action in the same way as was indicated many years ago by Edward Said for writing in general: the very "act of taking hold of language (*prendre la parole*)" is carried out "in order to do something, not merely in order to repeat an idea verbatim" (Said,

1985, p. 378). And of course this view of translation as a performative act is an extension of the performative and pragmatic perspective on language deriving from the work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969).

But the act of translation also has its specific characteristics, involving the shifting of meaning from one linguistic and cultural environment to another. This shift necessarily involves a positioning of the translating subject which invalidates any supposed neutrality of the translator as the translator's conduct is "never innocent" (Álvarez and Vidal, 1996, p. 5) and always takes place from within a specific cultural, social, historical and political context (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990; Bassnett, 1998; Schäffner, 2007). The choices made in the act of translation involve, in other words, a conscious positioning and commitment on the part of all those involved, and as such inevitably carry with them a political dimension.

The first part of this issue explores translations of the classics between the 16th and the 17th centuries in Europe and highlights the ways in which their translation can represent, although in many different ways, a political act. This can be seen in the first two papers, which focus on the political dimensions of the translation of classical texts.

Brice Denoyer's essay, for example, shows how the choice of the alexandrine, linked to the translation and the reappropriation of the theatrical heritage of the ancient world, had an undeniable political scope. During the 16th century, because of its prestige, it became the verse *par excellence* of the powerful and kings in French tragedies. This choice of the alexandrine was linked to the reinvention of the ancient model of tragedy by the humanists and brought about a transformation of the genre itself. It no longer related exclusively to religion but opened up fully to the sphere of politics, understanding this to mean the representation and discussion of issues relating to the public sphere and which take on a political meaning also in relation to the context in which theatrical works were put on. The authors of the 16th century translated, or perhaps it would be better to say they operated a cultural transfer of, some key elements of ancient rhetoric, reappropriating them and adapting them to their own time. The operation went beyond the recreation of the tragic genre and beyond the confines of literary genre and rhetoric, becoming a true meeting point of poetry, theatre and politics. The choice of the alexandrine to translate political writings and tragic dialogues thus brings to

light the dialectics of the political confrontation, incorporating in metaphorical terms the complexity of politics and enabling it to become the object of representation and debate.

Andrea Catanzaro's paper also relates to the political dimension of translating the ancient world. He focuses on 17th-century England and specifically on Thomas Hobbes' late translations of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* published from 1673 to 1677. Hobbes chose to come back to his activity of translator of Greek texts into English—he had finished Thucydides' *Eight Bookes of the Peloponnesian Warre* in 1628—not only for his own amusement, as he claimed, but because translation allowed him to continue to promote his own political thought despite age, illness and censorship. The lexical analysis of the original Greek text by Catanzaro suggests that a number of words, lines and sections of lines are modified in Hobbes' translation of the Homeric poems because they do not fit his political theory. These changes are related primarily to two main categories of Hobbes' political theory: escaping from the *bellum omnium contra omnes* [war of all against all] of the natural condition of man and, after the creation of the state, the removal of internal and external conflicts. In particular, the former, which constitutes a specific focus for Catanzaro with numerous examples, enables Hobbes the translator to create or reinforce a dichotomy between sovereign and subjects in order to clearly identify a sole source of power. His analysis of the lexis used by Hobbes shows that he aimed to use the translation of the Homeric poems, as he had used Thucydides' *Eight Bookes of the Peloponnesian Warr*, as a means not only for educating and spreading his political thought but also to continue to influence contemporary debate and to create the conditions, as he saw it, for a long-lasting situation of peace and safety.

The next three essays focus on the dissemination of key philosophical texts by Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith in France and England in the 18th century, placing translation at the heart of the circulation of innovative political, social and economic ideas that characterized the Enlightenment. As such, they contribute to a growing body of literature on translation and the circulation of ideas in the context of the European Enlightenment (Oz-Salzberger, 2006; Andries, 2013). As Guy Rooryck and Lieve Jooken highlight in their respective essays, this was a time when the border between original and translation was somewhat blurred and current practices justified translators' interventions as "creative acts"

based on rhetorical techniques such as *amplificatio* (expansion) and *brevitas* (reduction/omission). This freedom gave translators much scope for textual actions that, in the cases examined here, turned their translations into political acts. This political dimension is clearly brought out by Guy Rooryck who examines four English translations of Voltaire's *Lettres écrites de Londres sur les Anglais et autres sujets*, published anonymously in 1734 and in which, under the guise of a foreign visitor assessing political, social and artistic aspects of England, the author attacks French absolutism. Rooryck compares the first translation, *Letters concerning the English Nation*, published in 1733 in London and translated by John Lockman, with the French version and three more recent English translations, published in the 20th century. He shows that the first 18th-century translation emphasizes and makes explicit the *non-dit* of the French text whose subversive meaning had to be toned down to avoid repercussions in France. By contrast, the more recent versions, formally closer to the original French, lose the earlier translation's political sharpness and intensity and emerge as less audacious. This shows how criteria of fidelity and accuracy, which have represented for a long time the benchmark according to which translation has been (and still is to a certain extent) assessed, have a limited usefulness. John Lockman's freer translation is closer to the political spirit that informed Voltaire's text than the most recent and most faithful translations. As Rooryck argues, translations must be understood in relation to the cultural codes in which they are embedded.

Lieve Jooken also deals with the English translation of a classic of the Enlightenment, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Du contrat social; ou principes du droit politique* (1762), whose support of popular sovereignty and criticism of despotism made it a fundamental point of reference during the French revolution. Jooken looks at two English translations of Rousseau's text, the first, *A Treatise on the Social Compact; or the principles of political law*, translated in 1764, and the second, *An Inquiry into the Nature of the Social Contract*, which appeared in 1791, and focuses on the translator's argumentative voice with the aim of identifying the way in which the two translations render the treatise's philosophical argument. By means of a comparison of selected excerpts from the first four books, Jooken shows how both translators emphasize Rousseau's argument on the importance of liberty and the abusive nature of power but it is especially the 1791 translation that acquires a strong political connotation. Set within the

context of the ongoing revolution in France and an English print-cultural space actively involved in the circulation of philosophically radical texts, the 1791 translation is characterized by lexical choices that stress the despotic character of royal power, strengthening the argument for popular sovereignty. The analysis of the "Preface" provides further evidence of the political character of this translation as the anonymous editorial voice highlights the role played by *Du contrat social* in preparing "the way for the Revolution," perhaps implying that its translation could have a similar role in England.

The political function which can be fulfilled by paratextual elements, already highlighted by Jooken, becomes the central theme of Nadine Celotti's article which is concerned with translations into French of Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), a text whose publication sparked great interest both in Britain and other European countries and was immediately perceived as an innovation in economic thought. Celotti looks at four translations of *The Wealth of Nations*, published between 1776 and 1802, within an "effervescence traductive" which testifies the impact of Smith's work in France at a time of great social and political transformation. In Celotti's analysis, the prefaces take centre stage as textual political arenas: it is through these paratextual scaffoldings that Smith's work in translation is evaluated, deemed necessary for the progress of science and seen as a means for government to promote innovation in the economy. The author shows, in particular, how Garnier's preface to his 1801 translation was turned into a political tool that goes well beyond this text type's traditional introductory and explanatory role, as the translator uses it to enrich and even correct *The Wealth of Nations*, clarifying Adam Smith's idea of political economy.

The focus on translation in the context of the Enlightenment period shows the extent of the interrelation of the "national" cultures which were emerging in the romantic and revolutionary periods. The French Revolution itself, despite the adjective, was at least in part a transnational (and as a consequence, translational) event, part of a process of "revolutions without borders" (Polasky, 2015; see also Mucignat and Perovic, 2018). This is true not only for the revolution and Bonapartist experience but, it should be remembered, also for the counterrevolution, which was a pre-eminently European phenomenon (Tulard, 1990). The essay by Francesca Piselli and Regina Lupi examines one of the textual actualizals of this European

counterrevolution, Jacques Mallet du Pan's *Mercure britannique*, a counterrevolutionary bi-weekly review which appeared in French in London between 1798 and 1800, but issued also in English, Portuguese and Italian translation, the latter, the *Mercurio britannico*, published in Venice. The translation of periodicals was itself clearly a political act, an attempt to contrast the expansion of revolutionary France. But, as Piselli and Lupi point out, the translation into Italian also availed itself of a particular instrument to enable the translator's own, sometimes discordant voice, to emerge, once again through paratextual elements. In particular, the notes to the Italian version enable the translator to put forward his or her own views, especially in relation to material directly concerning the conquest of Italy by the Napoleonic troops. The essay demonstrates that any analysis of historical or literary events which aims to collocate them within a wider transnational context must take account also of the way translation had a political, as well as literary, function.

Laura Tarkka's essay looks at three different translations of Johann George Zimmerman's *Vom Nationalstolze* [*An Essay on National Pride*] (1768) into English: an anonymous translation of 1771, published soon after the appearance of the original; Samuel Hull Wilcocke's retranslation of 1797; and a final, also anonymous translation published in 1805. As in the case of the different translations of Voltaire and Rousseau, comparing retranslations enables her to highlight ways in which specific political contexts (in this case the original one of the high Enlightenment and subsequently those of the post-Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods) inevitably change the political connotations of the translated text. Specifically, the later retranslations changed the political connotations of Zimmerman's original, modifying an approach which was broadly republican into one in which national pride could also be contemplated and analyzed in a monarchical context. The comparative analysis further allows her to highlight ways in which translational choices can take account of events occurring since the publication of the original. Wilcocke's translation, for example, included a veiled reference to the particular violence of the French Revolution (notably to the guillotine) and the use of the phrase "common sense" which inevitably, given the context, associated the text with the well-known pamphlet by Thomas Paine. This focus on the differences between translations carried out in different contexts methodology, is, of course, especially suited to demonstrating precisely how, despite the protestations

of transparency and neutrality, particular historical frameworks determine translational choices and render translations political acts.

Moving beyond textual and paratextual analysis, Jane Elisabeth Wilhelm shows, in her essay *Traduire la liberté. La démocratie libérale de Benjamin Constant*, how Constant conceived of political action as in itself an act of translation. Constant, from a Swiss Huguenot background, was a writer situated intellectually and personally on the "carrefour des cultures française, allemande et anglaise" and active in the cosmopolitan group of the late imperial and Restoration period known as the Coppet Group, which included such figures as Madame de Staël, Schlegel and Sismondi. For Constant and the Coppet Group, the need to reinterpret the revolutionary experience and promote the principles of liberal democracy was seen as a problem involving the circulation of ideas in a framework of cosmopolitanism and was thus pre-eminently a problem of translation. On one level, this involved a consideration of the French experience in its wider European context, something which unavoidably required translation. But as Wilhelm shows, translation was embedded in a deeper manner in Constant's political thought. For him, translation is an activity that highlights the importance of our relation to difference and alterity, one of the essential components of liberal democracy. It thus involves also an act of "interpretation": a dialectical relation between text and translation, between original and reinterpretation, between the past and the present. It is an approach that, as Wilhelm indicates, closely ties Constant to the hermeneutic paradigm of translation which emerged first with his contemporary Friedrich Schleiermacher, and finds its later expression in the work in particular of Ricœur and Gadamer. Translation in this light is of necessity a political act, functioning to "vaincre un éloignement, une distance, entre l'époque culturelle révolue à laquelle appartient le texte et l'interprète lui-même" (Ricœur, 1969, p. 20).

The political act of translation then, in these contributions, emerges in a number of different ways and through different methodological approaches. The standard comparison of source and target texts enables critics to focus on the ways in which lexical choices and the amplification or cutting of the original contribute to the political orientation and objectives of the translator. Beyond this comparative analysis, however, and in line with an important strand of recent work in translation studies taking Genette's foundational work (1987) as its starting point (Batchelor, 2018; Elefante, 2012; Tahir Gurçaglar,

2011), the paratextual apparatus used to frame texts (prefaces, notes and such like) is clearly a conduit for the political aims of translators. Translation in itself, the transposing of meanings from one linguistic and cultural context to another, emerges here as a clearly political act, a means to create a cosmopolitan and transnational context in early modern, Enlightenment, revolutionary, counterrevolutionary and post-revolutionary Europe. It is a framework, as Constant recognized, which was fundamental to the promotion of a model of the successful management of diversity in politics. Translation, as such, was above all a political activity.

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