

Hybridity in
Londonstani's
Italian Translation

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By

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Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



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This book first published 2019

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-3668-8

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-3668-5

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to Professor Francesca Vigo and Professor Marco Venuti for their support, patient guidance and useful advice on this monograph. I am forever indebted to my father, my mother, my sister Leda, and my boyfriend Rosario for their infinite patience and love.

INTRODUCTION

This volume investigates how fictional literary varieties and characterising discourse in a literary text can be translated and reproduced in the target language and culture. For this purpose, selected examples from Gautam Malkani's debut novel *Londonstani* (2006) and its Italian translation by Massimo Bocchiola (2007) are analysed and discussed, in terms of the solutions they offer for the study of linguistic variation as a translation issue; and in terms of the constraints involved in the translation of linguistic varieties. Literary varieties always pose serious problems to the translator who is required, not only to recreate the denotative meaning of the message, but also the complex correlation of information on the speakers, prestige norms and other external norms (the author's intention, sociolinguistic stereotypes etc.) that are a factor in the indirect portrayal of a character for another receiver and in another culture. This is even truer for *Londonstani* where literary varieties and characterising discourse are pivotal and text-constitutive.

As its title immediately suggests, the novel provides valuable insight into the question of multiple identities among British Asians for its "constant emphasis on the protagonists' efforts to construct their common identity" (Tomczak 2014, 267) or rather, their "situational, fake, cut-and-paste ethnicity" (Tomczak 2014, 276).

The celebration of a cultural, religious and linguistic hybridity may not seem particularly original since racial and ethnic diversity and the construction of a metropolitan identity have been central to cinema and literature for decades. Movies such as *Bend it like Beckham* (Chadha 2002) and *East*

is East (O'Donnell 1999), and novels like *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Kureishi 1990), *Brick Lane* (Ali 2003) and *White Teeth* (Smith 2000) have successfully explored the so-called “new geographies of identity” (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996) shaped from a multi-racial nation, and the experiences of constructing diasporic identities in the so-called “diaspora-space”, where multiple subject positions are continuously claimed and contested (Avtar Brah 1996; Westwood 1995).

As a *Bildungsroman*, *Londonstani* tells of four young men (Hardjit, Ravi, Amit and Jas) in Hounslow and their attempt to become men or more exactly, *desi* “rudeboys”. Subdivided into three sections, “Paki”, “Sher” and “Desi”, the narrative can be defined as an allegory of a broader shift in British Asian identity from the experience of prejudice and victimhood (Paki), through aggressive self-segregation (Sher), to active participation in the rebuilding of Britishness (*desi*, meaning countryman). The main characters reject mainstream culture and their conventional immigrant identities and, instead, create their own cut-and-paste identities influenced by American hip-hop culture, Bollywood movies, Afro-Caribbean and Asian street gangs, and Bhangra music, elements that, while certainly being perceived as cool, become instrumental in gaining social status and constructing a *desi*, urban identity (Sharma 1996; Kaur and Kalra 1996). In fact, the construction of a “hegemonic *desiness*” (Sharma 2010) that reinforces nation, patriarchy, heterosexuality and ethnic authenticity is enacted in the text through the centrality assigned to hip-hop, and its outrageous consumerism, misogyny and Bling Bling jewellery, all analysed in the volume. However, *Londonstani* goes one step further in that it constructs the characters’ “in-betweenness” (Bhabha 1994) through their vibrant hybrid language. Importantly, the plot-twist in the final pages of the book will disclose the protagonist’s unreliability as a narrator, thus proving that

ethnicity and masculinity are performative. In fact, the two main themes of the book are performed identities and language, and *Londonstani* specifically aims to shed some light on the role of language in constructing identity. Language, while simultaneously reflecting and determining belonging in itself, becomes more than just a tool with which to communicate: "Self-narration and language are intertwined; the story is not just made by what one says, but it mainly depends on the way in which it is narrated" (Renna 2015, 268).

Rather than claiming to authentically represent the way religious, racial or ethnically-defined communities live, the novel self-consciously mimics the way the hybrid urban subcultures of London are performed. In addition, its "crazy lingo" celebrates the varied cultural and linguistic influences from different continents and racial and ethnic origins, such as Bhangra, American hip-hop, R&B, and Bollywood movies, providing a new sense of belonging.

The destabilisation of inherited ethnicities has provoked the renegotiation of ethnic otherness through non-standard mixed language practices that appear to draw on styles and languages that are not normally regarded as belonging to the speaker and that have been referred to as "heteroglossia" and "crossing", among others.

Contemporary urban vernacular features (Rampton 2010), Caribbean affiliations, forms and cultural practices from hip-hop slang, Bhangra music, Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi expressions, and popular Americanisms are delivered in a very informal and conversational style, which employs "textspeak heterography" and "eye dialect" to amplify the novel's visual effect and render the dialogues more audible and more realistic.

Gautam Malkani's *mimesis* of teen talk inevitably poses several translational issues. The translator has to recreate (for

a readership and culture that are not as well-acquainted with multiculturalism as British readers) the wide range of extra linguistic connotations and fictional functions associated with such hybrid language.

I think that the so-called functionalist approach known as *Skopostheorie* (Reiss, Vermeer and Nord) which sees translation as aiming to convey linguistic peculiarities in accordance with the function(s) they cover in the source text released to the target language reader may prove effective in coping with linguistic hybridity.

The main contributions and insights the study draws on are:

1) “Functionalist” translation “brief” (Nord 1997) and analysis of the context of communication. With the aim of simulating a professional translation environment, drawing from *Skopostheorie* and, in particular, from C. Nord (1997), we specify what plausible translation “brief” might have been assigned by the commissioner, that is the publishing house. Nord explains what happens in a professional environment in the following terms:

[...] translation is normally done “by assignment”. A client needs a text for a particular purpose and calls upon the translator for a translation, thus acting as the initiator of the translation process. In an ideal case, the client would give as many details as possible about the purpose, explaining the addressees, time, place, occasion and medium of the intended communication and the function the text is intended to have. This information would constitute an explicit translation brief (Nord 1997, 30).

2) Assis Rosa’s (2012) categorisation of the main procedures for translating linguistic varieties (normalisation, centralisation, and decentralisation).

3) House's (1997) "overt" vs. "covert" translation theory, and Venuti's (1995) "foreignising" vs. "domesticating" translation strategies.

4) Malone's (1988) taxonomy of translation strategies, primarily those concerned with the lexico-grammatical level, sometimes combined with the so-called "compensation", a set of "techniques of making up for the loss of important ST features through replicating ST effects approximately in the TL by means other than those used in the ST" (Hervey and Higgins 1992, 35).

Using Rosa's "communicative meaning", we examine some extracts from the novel where hybrid discursive profiles are created by formal mimetic discourse and by less prestigious oral or socially non-standard literary varieties. We consider the consequences that may result from translation shifts in the indirect characterisation of literary characters in the novel and how their ST hybrid diction and idiolects and the communicative meaning associated is recreated in the Italian translation. A contrastive analysis of some extracts from source text and target text help us discover what "creative" solutions have been found by the Italian translator, Massimo Bocchiola, and whether his translation has flattened and normalised the narrative and descriptive value of the varieties employed in the original.

The book is divided into three chapters and is organised as follows. The introductory chapter focuses on the relationship between translation and equivalence, and reviews some of the most noteworthy translation theories and recent contributions to Translation Studies, which today is the most widely accepted definition of the academic discipline that deals with the study of translation as an autonomous field of research, and concerns the study of both literary and non-literary translation (Baker 1998, 277). Equivalence has always been

considered so essential to any definition of translation that it has often been conceived as a sort of *tertium comparationis* between a source text and a target text (Munday 2016; Snell-Hornby 1988). Consequently, even though some of the scholars that we mention discarded such a concept, the theories here analysed will be roughly divided into four main groups according to the way they conceive translation equivalence. Catford, Jakobson and Nida, who were mainly concerned with linguistics and described translation as “[...] the replacement of textual material in one language (the source language) by equivalent textual material in another language (the target language)” (Catford, 1965: 20) belong to the first group of scholars. Functional theories from Germany in the 1970s-1980s (Reiss, Vermeer and Nord) mark a move away from linguistic typologies towards a consideration of culture that will be the main focus of the so-called “Cultural Turn” from the 1980s and 1990s. Strongly influenced by the Polysystems Theory, Deconstructionism, Post-colonial Studies and Gender Studies, the “Cultural Turn” moves interest away from language equivalence issues to wider extra-linguistic and cultural factors thus underlining the importance of both source and target culture norms in translation activity and the fundamental role of the translator as a creator. Susanne Bassnett, André Lefevere and Lawrence Venuti, the most representative theorists of this approach, claimed that the study of translation should equal the study of cultural interaction and underlined the importance of both source and target culture norms in translation activity and the fundamental role of the translator as an intercultural mediator and creator, and “one of the most important and most effective promoters of cross-cultural connection with the literature of other lands” (Holmes 1970, 93). Moreover, thanks to new perspectives provided by Post-structuralism and Deconstructionism (and therefore Post-colonial Studies and

Gender Studies), translation becomes an act of creative rewriting (Bassnett 2002); the concept of semantic unity, authorial originality and copyright, which continue to subordinate the translated to the foreign text, are questioned, and an original text only differs from its translations chronologically. The last group of studies dealt with contributes to the so-called "Contextual Turn", whose functionally-oriented approach is heavily indebted to Halliday's Functional Systemic Grammar, and seems to conciliate the previously-mentioned exclusively linguistic and cultural perspectives thanks to the development within linguistics of new paradigms which considered "[...] language as a social phenomenon that takes place within specific cultural contexts", like discourse analysis, text linguistics, sociolinguistics and pragmatics (Ulrych and Bollettieri Bosinelli 1999, 229).

The final part of the chapter is devoted to one of the most challenging and thorny issues - a supposedly linguistic, cultural and contextual equivalence between language pairs: the translation of linguistic varieties.

After a review of the most remarkable and contrasting definitions of linguistic varieties, we deal with the theories and strategies for the translation of linguistic varieties. Catford, (1965), Hatim and Mason (1990), Berman (2012), and Leighton (1991) demonstrate that translating geographical accents into a TL is always problematic and dialectal equivalence is difficult if not impossible to achieve. Which dialect in the TL should be chosen, if any? If the translator renders an ST dialect into a standard variety, s/he will be taking the risk of losing the effect of the ST. If s/he translates an SL dialect into a selected TL one, the risk will be that of causing inadvertent effects with respect to the target audience. Similar problems are faced by a translator tackling other kinds of dialects, such as social or non-standard ones, with all of

their socio-cultural implications as in the case of *Londonstani*. Chapter 2 analyses the so-called “extralinguistic factors” (Shei 2005) providing the novel’s background information (namely the themes, the language, the author’s intention and so on) necessary for the contrastive analysis in Chapter 3.

Starting from Rosa’s definition of linguistic varieties as a patterning of sounds, grammatical structures, vocabulary, texture, and structure (linguistic form) carrying contextual information on users and uses, and also associated with a given social status and prestige (2012, 80), Chapter 3 qualitatively analyses and discusses Bocchiola’s Italian translation of *Londonstani* according to the supposed functions the hybrid language covers in the source text, and, in the end, it provides a brief conclusion and the possible implications of the study with respect to the correlation between literary varieties, multilingualism and literary translation.

CHAPTER 1

TRANSLATION AND EQUIVALENCE

1. 1 Overview

It is widely known that the practice of translation is not a recent phenomenon. However, the study of the field developed into a proper discipline only in the latter part of the twentieth century. The various approaches contributing to its development provided the discipline with different names during the twentieth century. Due to constraints of time and space, we focus on the most remarkable and recent contributions to Translation Studies; today the most widely accepted definition of the academic discipline that deals with the study of translation as an autonomous field of research, and concerns the study of both literary and non-literary translation (Baker 1998, 277).

Equivalence has always been considered so essential to any definition of translation that it was conceived as a sort of *tertium comparationis* between a source text and a target text (Munday 2016; Snell-Hornby 1988). Consequently, even though some of the scholars that we mention discarded such a concept, the theories here analysed will be roughly divided into four main groups according to the way they conceive translation equivalence. Catford, Jakobson and Nida, who were mainly concerned with linguistics and described translation as “[...] the replacement of textual material in one language (the source language) by equivalent textual material in another language (the target language)” (Catford 1965, 20), belong to the first group of scholars. Functional theories from

Germany in the 1970s-1980s (Reiss, Vermeer and Nord) mark a move away from linguistic typologies towards a consideration of culture that was the focus, from the 1980s and 1990s, of the so-called “Cultural Turn”. Strongly influenced by the Polysystems Theory, Deconstructionism, Post-colonial Studies and Gender Studies, the “Cultural Turn” moved the interest away from language equivalence issues to wider extra-linguistic and cultural factors thus underlining the importance of both source and target culture norms in translation activity and the fundamental role of the translator as a creator. The last group of studies dealt with contributes to the so-called “Contextual Turn”, whose functionally-oriented approach is heavily indebted to Halliday’s Functional Systemic Grammar, and seems to conciliate the previously-mentioned exclusively linguistic and cultural perspectives.

The final part of the chapter is devoted to one of the most challenging and thorny issues in the field of a supposed linguistic, cultural and contextual equivalence between language pairs: the translation of linguistic varieties.

1. 2 Linguistic approach

The label “Translation Studies” was first introduced by James Holmes in his 1972 article “The Name and Nature of Translation Studies”, in which the scholar attempted to define the discipline as a whole and not just as a subject strictly dependent on linguistics. Since Holmes’s paper, and by 1995, the time of Snell-Hornby’s second edition of *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach*, TS has gradually evolved into an “interdiscipline” or “multidiscipline”, two terms that better convey its plurality of perspectives and methodologies drawn from fields of studies such as literary theory, anthropology, philosophy and cultural studies, and encompassing not only literary translation but also interpreting,

dubbing and subtitling (Ulrych and Bollettieri Bosinelli 1999, 237)¹.

Such growing interdisciplinarity with its “commitment to break away from exclusively Eurocentric origins” (Baker and Saldanha 2009, xxii) followed the more linguistically-oriented approaches (like those of Vinay and Darbelnet, Mounin, and Nida, see Munday 2016, 15-16) that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s and whose academic investigation was represented by Nida, and, in Germany, by Wills, Koller, Kade, Neubert (Munday 2016, 16). These scholars conceived the study of translation as a science and after the Second World War the label “Science of Translation” was adopted by Nida in the title of his 1964 book *Toward a Science of Translating*, while Wills and Koller, took up the German equivalent *Übersetzungswissenschaft* (Munday 2016, 16). The word “science” suggested a quest for objectivity² and a systematisation typical of sciences in general, and, for this reason, machine translation was thought to be highly achievable (Baker 1998, 140-149). Equivalence³ was the controlling concept of the time and contrastive linguistics research helped identify general and specific differences between language pairs. Such a contrastive approach influenced important research on translation, such as Vinay and Darbelnet’s taxonomy in *Comparative Stylistics of*

¹ Similarly, Hatim claims, “translating is a multi-faceted activity, and there is room for a variety of perspectives” (2001, 10).

² Of a different opinion is Willard van Orman Quine who thinks that it is very difficult to establish the meaning of a term even in the presence of an environmental “stimulus” because there is no correlation between meaning and stimuli and we do not know how other people categorise their experiences (Venuti 2000, 67).

³ Up to the end of the 1970s, as Snell-Hornby reports (1988, 15), most linguistically-oriented theories were centred on the concept of equivalence (e.g. Reiss 2000; Wilss 1977).

French and English: A Methodology for Translation (1958/1995) and Catford's *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (1965). Translating meant communicating the foreign text by establishing a relationship of linguistic identity (firstly in meaning and then in style) with it, without taking socio-cultural and pragmatic factors into account, and conceiving translation as a communicative act. It follows that this translation methodology was termed source-oriented: the translated text was deemed exclusively to be ancillary and functional to the original (Bertazzoli 2009, 73).

In his *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* (1959), Jakobson claimed that translation (seen as a process of recoding two equivalent messages in two different codes) is inherent in every form of human communication and the model sender-message-receiver can easily be applied to the translation process. Jakobson was particularly interested in the thorny problem of equivalence in meaning between words in different languages. This interlinguistic difference between terms and semantic fields would be linked to a basic issue of language and translation. On the one hand, linguistic universalism maintains that beyond surface realisations of meaning in a different language there is a shared way of perceiving the world, on the other, linguistic relativity, as demonstrated by the famous "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis" (1956) claims that languages categorise experiences of the world differently. The latter would lead to untranslatability, but in Jakobson's view, although languages may differ from one another grammatically, translation would still be possible and "whenever there is deficiency, terminology may be qualified and amplified by loanwords or loan-translations, neologisms or semantic shifts, and finally, by circumlocutions" (2012, 128)⁴. Moreover, Jakobson thought that the issue of "[...] full

⁴ There seems to be some similarity between Vinay and Darbelnet's theory of translation procedures and Jakobson's theory of

equivalence between code-units” (2012, 127) affected both interlingual translation (proper translation) and intralingual translation (when verbal signs are interpreted by means of other signs of the same language) where full synonymy is difficult to achieve likewise⁵.

Another remarkable contribution to a linguistic approach to translation came from Eugene Nida’s 1964 above-mentioned book entitled *Toward a Science of Translating* and from the co-authored *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Nida and Taber 1969). Apart from the effective attempt at systematising translation as a science by providing some techniques (the same techniques and procedures that he experimented with during his translation of the Bible), Nida’s contribution is paramount. It replaces the old adjectives, such as “free”, “literal”, “word-for-word” and “sense-for-sense”, used to describe the age-old translation debate, with two basic concepts: “formal equivalence” and “dynamic equivalence”.

translation. Both theories claim that translation can never be impossible since the translator can rely on other procedures such as loan translations and neologisms in order to cope with the cultural or grammatical differences between ST and TT (Vinay and Darbelnet 1995, 128-37).

⁵ George Steiner is convinced that “inside or between languages, human communication equals translation” (1998, 29). He goes on to say, “Any model of communication is at the same time a model of translation, of a vertical or horizontal transfer of significance” (1998, 47). Steiner also makes a further distinction by adding the horizontal and vertical transfer of significance (translation across space and time) to Jakobson’s threefold model of translation (intralingual, interlingual and intersemiotic translation). He claims: “Strictly speaking, every act of translation except simultaneous translation as between earphones is a transfer from a past to a present. [...] the hermeneutic of import occurs not only across a linguistic-spatial frontier but also requires a motion across time” (Steiner 1998, 351).

“Formal equivalence”, which in the second edition by Nida and Taber (1969, 22-28) is referred to as “formal correspondence”, consists of a TL item that represents the closest equivalent of an SL word or phrase, and focuses attention on the message itself in both form and content according to standards of “accuracy” and “correctness”, like in gloss translations or in legal and academic documents (Nida 1964a, 159). “Dynamic” or “functional equivalence” is based instead upon the principle that the SL and the TL words trigger the same impact on their respective readers (Nida 1964a, 159). This receptor-oriented approach was later to be criticised by culturally-oriented translation scholars for discarding foreignness or cultural references of the ST in favour of complete naturalness and fluency, and for the so-called “implausibility of equivalent response” (Qian Hu 1993b, 455-56) and the impossibility to measure its effect and identify an ideal receptor (Larose 1989, 78). Despite the many doubts on the feasibility of that goal, Nida’s great achievement was to have moved translation theory away from the sterile debate between “free” and “literal” translations.

1. 3 Functional theories of translation

The 1970s and 1980s marked the emergence (especially in Germany) of a functionalist and communicative approach to the analysis of translation. We look at Katharina Reiss’s work on text type, Hans J. Vermeer’s *Skopos* theory, which focused on the purpose of the target text and finally, at Christiane Nord’s model.

Reiss started from the concept of equivalence but maintained that equivalence should be sought at text level, rather than at word and sentence level (1989, 113-14). Her approach borrowed from the three functions of language elaborated by German psychologist Karl Bühler (1934). According to him, language can have an “informative”,

“expressive” or “appellative” function. Reiss links such functions to specific text types: “informative”, “expressive”, “operative” (whose aim is to persuade the reader) and “audio-medial” (now called multimodal)⁶ (1989, 108-09). Consequently, she links specific translation methods to them, such as plain prose and explicitation for informative texts; the identifying method, where the translator adopts the author’s point of view for expressive texts; the adaptive method for operative texts, and finally, the supplementary method (combining written words with images and music) for dealing with audio-medial texts (Reiss 1976, 20). To conclude, Reiss claims, “the transmission of the predominant function of the ST is the determining factor by which the TT is judged” (1989, 109).

Another major contribution to a functional perspective on translation came from Reiss and Vermeer’s *Skopos* theory, as expounded in *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action* (2013), in which the issue of equivalence is dealt with by prioritising the so-called *skopos* (purpose or aim in Greek) of a text. Namely, it is crucial for the translator to know in advance, why the source text is to be translated in order to be able to create a “functionally-adequate” target text. “Functional adequacy” is a key concept that can be achieved through two main rules: “the coherence rule”, which means that the target text must make sense to the target text receivers (Reiss and Vermeer 2013, 101), and the “fidelity rule”, which states that there must be coherence between the translator’s reception and interpretation of the source text and the translator’s encoding of such information for the target text receivers (Reiss and Vermeer 2013, 102). However,

⁶ Reiss recognises the existence of hybrid texts, namely texts with more than one function. For instance, a biography can be considered both an example of informative and expressive text and so on.

Christiane Nord, another major representative of this approach, stresses that, even if functional adequacy is one of the most important criteria in a translation, the relationship between the source text and the target text must also be based on the so-called “loyalty principle”:

[Loyalty is] the responsibility translators have toward their partners in translational interaction. Loyalty commits the translator bilaterally to the source and the target sides. It must not be mixed up with fidelity or faithfulness, concepts that usually refer to a relationship holding between the source and the target texts. Loyalty is an interpersonal category referring to a social relationship between people (1997, 125).

In *Translating as a Purposeful Activity* (1997), Nord presents a functional model where three aspects are particularly relevant: 1) the importance of the translation commission (“translation brief”); 2) the role of source text analysis; and 3) the functional hierarchy of translation problems.

- 1) The comparison between the “translation brief” of the source text and target text helps the translator prioritise what information to include in the target text. The “translation brief” should give information on the intended text function, the addressees, the time and place of text reception, the medium (speech or writing) and the motive (why the source text was written and is now being translated) (Nord 1997, 59-62; Munday 2016, 132).
- 2) The role of “source text analysis” (Nord 1997, 62-67) follows the comparison between the two profiles (ST and TT) and focuses on the most relevant factors that must be taken into account to achieve a functional translation. These items are (2005, 87-142) the subject

matter, the content or meaning of the text, text composition, lexis, non-verbal elements and so on.

- 3) The functional hierarchy of translation problems establishes a hierarchy (Nord 1997, 62ff; 2005, 189ff): after the comparison of the intended function of both the source and target text that helps the translator identify the most adequate type of translation to produce, the analysis of the source text elements helps determine those functional elements that may be reproduced or adapted, thus leading to the “translation style”: a documentary translation⁷ will be more source-oriented, while an instrumental translation more target-culture-oriented.

This functional approach is very useful for our analysis of *Londonstani*'s Italian translation.

1.4 The Cultural Turn

The notion of equivalence has continued to be a central and dominating concept. Even those scholars who criticise its importance for translation recognise equivalence as a

⁷ In her *Text Analysis in Translation* (2005), Nord makes a distinction between two types of translation: “documentary” and “instrumental” translation. The former works as a document of the source text by giving access to the ideas of source text. Examples of “documentary translation” are word-for-word translation, literal translation and “exoticising translation” where specific culture-bound elements are retained in the target text in order to maintain the local colour (2005, 80-81). An instrumental translation allows the target text receivers to read the target text as though it were a source text written in their own language. Examples of such translation are translations of computer manuals. It is important to underline that such subdivision is very similar to House's “overt” and “covert” translations (1997).

controlling concept. The notion of equivalence, which is a representative concept throughout the history of TS especially in linguistically-oriented theories, has been criticised particularly by theorists invoking a cultural frame of reference. In the 1980s, the shift from linguistically-oriented approaches to culturally-oriented ones came to be known as the “Cultural Turn” (Snell-Hornby 1990). Susan Bassnett (1980/2013) devotes a section in the chapter entitled “central issues” of Translation Studies and Mona Baker’s *In Other Words* (1992/2011) structures the chapter of her book around different types of equivalence (at word, phrase, grammar, and text levels).

Susanne Bassnett, André Lefevere and Lawrence Venuti, the most representative theorists of this approach, claimed that the study of translation equals the study of cultural interaction:

[...] in these multifaceted interdisciplines, isolation is counter-productive...The study of translation, like the study of culture, needs a plurality of voices. And similarly, the study of culture always involves an examination of the processes of encoding and decoding that comprise translation (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998, 138-39).

A linguist like Snell-Hornby defined translation as a “cross-cultural event” (1988), H.J. Vermeer claimed that a translator should be “pluricultural” (Snell-Hornby 1988, 46), while V. Ivir stated that “translating means translating cultures, not languages” (1988, 35). The translator becomes an intercultural mediator and interpreter, and “one of the most important and most effective promoters of cross-cultural connection with the literature of other lands” (Holmes 1970, 93).

The idea of equivalence that had characterised the previous period (until the 1970s) and the so-called “prescriptive”

Translation Studies (aimed at detecting universal norms that would distinguish neatly faithful translations from unfaithful ones) were replaced by the concepts of “acceptability” and “adequacy” respectively, and by “descriptive” Translation Studies. One of the main contributions to such a cultural shift came from the Polysystems Theory, which is based upon the notion of system that Tel Aviv scholar, Itamar Even Zohar took up from the Formalists in the early 1970s⁸. The Polysystems Theory focuses attention on the way the target culture receives the foreign text, and on the acknowledgement that linguistic, extra-linguistic and extra-textual phenomena work together for the production of meaning. Gideon Toury, who continued Even Zohar’s work, consolidated the analysis of the way a translated text is welcomed by the receptor culture, and developed the notion of translation norms. In fact, translation is subject to both the norms operating in the target

8 Original compositions, translations and all the norms governing the production, promotion and reception of texts constitute every national literary polysystem. Translations may either occupy central (especially in minor literatures) or peripheral positions (in major literatures), and perform innovative or conservatory literary functions. Translated literature can either be innovative (when it introduces new literary forms and techniques into the home literature) or maintain the *status quo*. It is innovative in three cases (Even Zohar 2012, 163-64):

- 1) If the polysystem is not yet crystallised (young literature)
- 2) If the literature is peripheral or weak
- 3) If a crisis or a vacuum in literature occurs.

In the past, “pseudotranslation” was an “alibi” for introducing innovation into a literary system especially when the system was resistant to deviations from canonical models and norms. Very famous cases of “pseudotranslation” were James McPherson’s *Ossian poems* first published in 1760, and the manuscripts found written in a foreign language as in Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (Bassnett and Lefevere 1998, 28).

system and to those operating in the source system. Two kinds of norms regulate translation: “preliminary norms” either selected from the standards of the source culture or the receptor culture, and “operational norms” that guide the translator’s choices during the decision-making process. These norms dictate “adequacy” or “acceptability”⁹ and influence the translator’s strategies more than the linguistic discrepancies between two linguistic systems (Toury 1995, 53-61). This new perspective signalled a shift from source-orientedness to target-orientedness and an emphasis on the constraints in the translator’s work. Nowadays, it is generally accepted that external factors imposed by those people who commission the translation, the so-called “patrons” (now publishing houses), are as powerful as linguistic and cultural issues¹⁰. Toury also proposed two laws: “the law of growing standardisation” (2012, 267-74), which states that “in translation, textual relations obtaining in the original are often modified, sometimes to the point of being totally ignored, in favour of more habitual options offered by a target repertoire” (2012, 268). This refers to the preference for linguistic options that are more common in the target text, for instance there is a tendency towards a general standardisation and loss of variations in the target text. “The law of interference” (2012, 274-79) sees interference from the source text as inevitable: lexical and syntactic patterns of the source text are copied by default into the target text.

⁹ If the translated literature is in a primary position, the translator’s strategy is adequacy. If the translated literature has a secondary position, it serves to maintain already established norms (acceptability) (Even-Zohar 2012, 166-67).

¹⁰ Power and control in art have been operating since Horace’s times. His phrase *fidus interpret* (faithful interpreter) would suggest that the object of the translator’s *fides* is not the original text but his patron (Lefevere 1992, 14).

As well as the Polysystems Theory, Post-structuralism and Deconstructionism (and therefore Post-colonial Studies and Gender Studies) have provided TS with new perspectives on translation, the role of the translator and equivalence (Bassnett 2002, 6). Post-structuralism and Deconstructionism, discarding the assumption of the superiority of the original over its translations, regard language as a site of uncontrollable polysemy and reject the idea of a literary text with a single purpose, a single meaning, or one singular existence: every individual reader creates a new and individual purpose, meaning, and existence for a given text. Therefore, translation becomes an act of creative rewriting; the concept of semantic unity, authorial originality and copyright, which continue to subordinate the translated to the foreign text, are questioned, and an original text only differs from its translations chronologically. To this purpose, Lawrence Venuti:

Translation is a process by which a chain of signifiers that constitutes the source language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation...Both foreign text and translation are derivative: both consist of diverse linguistic and cultural materials [...]. A foreign text is the site of many different semantic possibilities that are fixed only provisionally in any one translation [...] (1995, 1).

All translations reflect the translator's readings and interpretations, and the translator is an independent artistic creator mediating between cultures and languages and assuring the survival of a written text in time and space:

The writer must fix words in an ideal shape, while it is the translator's task to free those very words from the boundaries of the source language donating them a new life in the target language (Bassnett 2002, 5).

Despite the acknowledgement of the translator's creativity, invisibility is the term that best describes the translator's situation and activity in contemporary Anglo-American culture. In *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995), Venuti complains about the tendency to label a translation as adequate or faithful only if the reading is fluid and the presence of the translator is not directly detectable. This is due to the individualistic conception of writing as the *locus* where the author freely expresses their thoughts and feelings without any linguistic or cultural filter (Venuti 1995, 1) and to the "prevailing conception of authorship" (Venuti 1998, 32):

On one hand, translation is defined as a second-order representation: only the foreign text can be original, an authentic copy, true to the author's personality or intention, whereas the translation is derivative, fake, potentially a false copy. On the other hand, translation is required to efface its second-order status with transparent discourse, producing the illusion of authorial presence whereby the translated text can be taken as the original (Venuti 1995, 7).

The audience or implied reader and the function or *intentio operis* (Eco 1995, 80) that a translation should comply with in a given society are fundamental laws to take into consideration as well. Moreover, according to André Lefevere, translators are forced to operate bearing the conceptual and textual grids of both source and target systems in mind. These grids derive from the cultural and literary conventions of a given time (Bassnett Trivedi 1999, 15) and function through certain markers placed across the text that trigger certain "expected" reactions on the reader's part. However, these markers are frequently used to manipulate, to construct and translate the foreign culture into western categories (Lefevere 1999, 77). Consequently, translation then becomes a very dangerous instrument exploited by