

Looking Through the Glass: An Overview of Literary Translation Theory in Italy

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This paper is intended to make some Italian studies on literary translation more visible to an international readership. The Italian translation tradition is strongly influenced by the dominant foreign traditions and struggles to make itself heard abroad. My paper will first outline the current theoretical situation by mentioning the different ways Translation Studies is named in Italy; it will then continue by analysing the contributions which have influenced and paved the way for the development of literary translation studies in Italy, i.e., Mattioli's phenomenological approach, Folena's orientation, and the contribution set forth by the publication of the journal *Testo a Fronte*; the last part of the paper will focus on the studies of literary translation carried out by scholars of comparative literature and foreign language scholars who use Translation Studies within their fields.

Keywords: literary translation, translation theory, Italian, poetics, rhythm

1 Introduction

In this global world in which translation plays a vital role and where the studies on translation are often seen in a wide international context, it is time to make Italian studies on translation more visible. Italian translation studies, in fact, seem to have had very little impact on the international community, in spite of the fact that many interesting writings have been published since the middle of the 20th century.

The first important contribution to translation studies in modern age comes from Emilio Mattioli's 1965 essay entitled *Introduzione al problema del tradurre*, which owes much to the philosopher Luciano Anceschi's writings from the Phenomenology School on the status of translation and translator; another important moment in the history of Italian translation studies is the publication of Gianfranco Folena's 1991 essay *Volgarizzare e Tradurre*, which was originally published in 1973, at the time the only critical translation history from Ancient times to Humanism; however, the *turn* in the Italian translation tradition was given by the publication of *La traduzione del testo*

poetico edited by Franco Buffoni in 1989 followed in October of the same year by the first issue of the journal *Testo a Fronte*. The creation of this periodical signals a new approach in Translation Studies in Italy which will be followed by most translation theorists: the focus shifts from theory and history to theory and practice, i.e., the work and practical activity of the translator goes hand in hand with translation theorization: they are not two distant worlds, but they are closely interwoven.

Since the institutionalization of Translation Studies as an academic discipline, reflection on translation (as a process) and translations (as products) has evolved from a branch of linguistics or comparative literature to an independent discipline, which tries to combine the heuristic approach of language sciences and the historical and social investigations of cultural and literary studies. This characteristic feature of translation studies is reflected in the different names that the discipline has been given through the years, each exemplifying a determined theoretical approach. Namely, the 1950s-60s trend to give the study a scientific basis led to the use of the designation *Science of Translation*, which later changed into *Translation Theory* (1970s), with a more intercultural approach. However, the need for “much more to be done”, as pointed out by Holmes (2004:182), did not “fall within the scope of theory formation”, nor did the other ambitious names as *traductology*, created by Harris (1977), *science de la traduction*, *traductologie*, *Übersetzungswissenschaft* (or *Translationswissenschaft*), which “did not reflect the state of the discipline” (Lambert 1991: 76).

Therefore, while in English the discipline has been labelled *Translation Studies*, after Holmes’ seminal paper *The Name and Nature of Translation Studies* (1972), in French, Spanish and Italian, the names *traductologie*, *traductología* and *traduttologia* are mainly used. The 2002 Italian version of Delisle et al.’s 1999 *Translation Terminology*, *Terminologia della Traduzione*, edited by Ulrych, mentions only *traduttologia* as the term used to refer to the discipline, even though the labels *Scienza della traduzione* and *Teoria della traduzione* are as widely used in academia as is the English *Translation Studies*, which is sometimes even preferred to the Italian designations, as considered more appropriate (Nergaard 2007: 2; Ulrych 1997: 214). Salmon (2003) explains that a slight difference between *teoria della traduzione* and *traduttologia* exists, with the first hinting more at the speculative and interpretative component of the discipline, while the latter is the term preferred by the linguists. Already in 1989, when Buffoni’s *La traduzione del testo poetico* appeared, the word *traduttologia* was considered specialized terminology used by experts within

Translation Studies, and not a word of common speech, as it was unconceivable that people would study translations (as process and products).

Things have not changed much since then, seeing the little attention that translation studies have had in the Universities throughout the country. In comparison with other European countries, at the moment there are very few PhD programs specialized in translation in Italian Universities (only Bari, Bologna, Milan – IULM, Rome – LUSPIO, Sassari, Siena and Trieste have offered PhD programs in Translation Studies in recent years); in addition, translation is studied either in language acquisition programs, or in comparative literature programs, or in conjunction with a foreign language, e.g. English and translation, French and translation, etc. Among the different branches within the studies on translation, therefore, some deal openly with linguistics, while others fall into the critical area of literary studies. As matters stand, the linguistic approaches have managed to make themselves heard also outside Italy, such as corpus-based translation studies or audiovisual translation, not to mention the important recognition that interpreting studies have abroad with the schools of Trieste and Forlì; unfortunately, the Italian literary translation tradition still suffers from little international recognition¹. Therefore, my paper will focus on the work of some scholars in the field that have not received as much acknowledgement. This may also be due to the fact that many relevant essays remain untranslated and thus unavailable to an international reading public.

2 Some perspectives in contemporary Italian literary translation tradition

2.1 Introducing the studies on translation: Emilio Mattioli

When in 1965 philosopher Emilio Mattioli's essay *Introduzione al problema del tradurre* appeared in a journal edited by Luciano Anceschi, it was preceded by the first Italian translation of one of the fundamental writings on translation theory, i.e. Roman Jakobson's *On the Linguistic Aspects of Translation*.² This is quite meaningful, seeing that Mattioli takes into account as a translation problem the alleged untranslatability of

¹ It is a curious fact, for instance, that Emilio Mattioli's, Franco Buffoni's and Franco Nasi's works are barely present in John Benjamins' online *Translation Studies Bibliography*, not to mention the fact that Antonio Lavieri's and Antonio Prete's writings are totally neglected.

² Jakobson's essay, first published in R. Brower (ed). 1959. *On Translation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, was translated into Italian from French by Fernando Bandini (1965. "Aspetti linguistici della traduzione". *Il Verri* 19: 98-106) and from English by Luigi Heilmann and Letizia Grassi (1966. "Aspetti linguistici della traduzione". *Saggi di linguistica generale*. Milano: Feltrinelli. 56-64).

poetry as theorized, each with a different perspective, by Roman Jakobson (“poetry by definition is untranslatable” [Jakobson 2004: 143]) and by the philosopher Benedetto Croce, among others. Crocean neo-idealist point of view and Jakobson’s normative approach (Lavieri 2005: 10), are firmly rejected by Mattioli, and later opposed, in his 1983 essay, by a conceptualization of translation as a literary genre³, which will influence all his subsequent thinking. Mattioli claims that the question is not whether it is possible or impossible to translate; rather, he suggests that the thing be seen from a phenomenological point of view, with “how can we translate?” and “what is the meaning of translating?” as the main questions:

[...] alla tradizionale domanda: “si può tradurre?” proponiamo di sostituire altre domande: “Come si traduce?” e “Che senso ha il tradurre?” Ancora una volta si propone di sostituire alla domanda di tipo metafisico la domanda di tipo fenomenologico.⁴ (Mattioli 1965: 128)

Once agreed that the untranslatability of poetry is no longer a valid idea (“superamento dell’obiezione pregiudiziale” [Mattioli 1989: 8]), the second step is to see a literary translation as a literary text, which, as such, has its own poetics: just as the source text is the expression of the author’s poetics, the target text becomes the expression of the translator’s poetics, with each translation of a single source text as expression of a different translator’s poetics. Once again Anceschi and his definition of poetics is mentioned: “la riflessione che gli artisti e i poeti esercitano sul loro fare indicandone i sistemi tecnici, le norme operative, le moralità, gli ideali”⁵ (quoted in Buffoni 2004: 22). The idea is that a literary translation is the product of the relationship between two poetics: the author’s and the translator’s. Therefore taking into account the translator’s poetics in order to understand a translation is as productive as considering the author’s poetics to understand an original work.

La riflessione sulla tradizione traduttiva è un compito importante della cultura contemporanea, scoprire come l’altro è stato ascoltato, come è risuonata la voce degli antichi nel corso dei secoli è importante anche per capire l’altro del nostro tempo...⁶ (Mattioli 2004: 22)

³ This is not totally new in the international panorama, though, as the title of the German version of Jiri Levy’s 1963 work suggests, *Die literarische Übersetzung. Theorie einer Kunstgattung*, or as mentioned in Mounin’s *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction*, 1963.

⁴ “We suggest, then, that the traditional question “is translation possible?” be substituted by “how can we translate?” and “why translating?”. Once again we suggest that the phenomenological approach takes over the metaphysical one.”

⁵ “What artists and poets do, when they ponder on and indicate the techniques, norms, moral values and ideals present in their works”

⁶ “Meditating on the translation tradition is an important task of contemporary culture, if only to find out how the Other has been heard, how the voice of the Ancient has resounded over the centuries; this is also important to understand the Other at our times...”

The translator's poetics is not only the expression of an individual's poetics, but also the expression of the culture of an age, for we do not translate linguistic codes, but language/cultures. Objections to this view, especially to recognizing an artistic value to a translation, come mainly from the generally accepted ideas that a translator must be transparent, humble, subject and a slave to the source text, with the only illogic task of producing a strict copy of the original work. The contribution that a translator's poetics brings to the understanding of the two works, the original text and its translation, becomes particularly meaningful not only in a contemporary perspective, but also, as suggested by Mattioli (2001: 37), in order to be able to recover the historical traditions.

Mattioli contributed to the development of Italian Translation Studies by introducing both Friedmar Apel's and Henri Meschonnic's works on translation into Italy. As Mattioli himself confessed many times, he is much indebted both to Anceschi's phenomenological theories which lay the foundation for a dynamic vision of translation as opposed to the static views promoted by neo-idealist thinkers, and to Henri Meschonnic's *poétique de la traduction*, especially his rhythm theory (Mattioli 2001: 11ff). Opposed to the traditional idea that rhythm has a regular pattern (think of the cardiac rhythm or the circadian cycle), Meschonnic's notion of rhythm has to do with language, and as such it can be regular at times or disorganized at other times. By defining rhythm as "une organization ou configuration du sujet dans son discours" (Meschonnic 1981: 71), Meschonnic shifts away from a conceptualization of language in structuralist terms and introduces a rhythmic organization of the discourse of the subject which becomes movement, *Sprachbewegung*, to use Apel's terminology, 1982, which Mattioli often quoted (Mattioli 1989: 18). The idea of a language in continuous movement clashes with the commonly accepted thought that the so-called source text is still and cannot be modified; on the contrary, it changes with the passing of time, because the words it is made up of do change with the passing of time. The meaning of a text cannot be established once and for all, it is continuously reinterpreted by the readers of the text, and re-read by its translators.

Therefore, the conventional oppositions word-for-word/sense-for-sense, fidelity/infidelity, visibility/invisibility, are considered meaningless and surpassed; the idea is that Translation Studies, especially when dealing with literary translations, should move beyond dichotomies and taxonomies of this kind, and think "outside the box". This is the thought that Buffoni had in mind when he edited the volume *La traduzione del testo poetico* in 1989 following a conference organized by the University

of Bergamo in 1988, and when he gave birth, together with Mattioli, to the journal *Testo a fronte* in 1989.

2.2 The historical value

Gianfranco Folena's *Volgarizzare e tradurre* is probably the best example of an inspiring interest in the history of translation theory. It was originally published in 1973 as "'Volgarizzare' e 'tradurre': idea e terminologia della traduzione dal Medio Evo italiano e romanzo all'umanesimo europeo" and was part of a collection of essays entitled *La Traduzione. Saggi e studi*, published by LINT, Trieste. In 1991 the essay was published in a booklet and introduced by an important preface in which Folena lamented contemporary lack of interest for the history of translation theory and where he pays tribute to George Steiner's *After Babel* (1975) and Antoine Berman's *L'épreuve de l'étranger* (1984). His famous "Per noi non si dà teoria senza esperienza storica"⁷ (Folena 1991: ix) brings into question the dominance of Formalist Linguistics and expresses the need for a historical approach to translation theories, thus anticipating the cultural turn of the 1990s. Not only was he concerned with the development of the semantic field of "translation" from ancient Greek and Latin to the vernacular romance languages, but he also made the first analysis of Leonardo Bruni's essay *De interpretatione recta*, one of the most representative works on translation of humanist tradition about the qualities of a "correct" translation.⁸

Folena's work is also mentioned in Shuttleworth & Cowie's *Dictionary of Translation Studies* for having coined the terms *horizontal translation* and *vertical translation* (1999: 71, 195). Folena distinguishes two types of translations typical of the Middle Ages, which are defined according to the relationship between the languages involved in the translation: *horizontal translation* is a translation between two languages which have a similar semantic, morphological and lexical structure, and are culturally close (a translation from Italian vernacular into French vernacular, for instance); *vertical translation* occurs when the source language (usually Latin in the Middle Ages)

⁷ "You cannot have theory without considering the historical experience"

⁸ Bruni's essay has only been hinted at by Steiner (1998: 248, 276, 311) and commented on by Mattioli (2001: 52) and Munday (2008: 23). Following Folena's essay, Costantino Marmo's translation into Italian was included in Nergaard's anthology (2002: 73-97), while Stefano Ugo Baldassarri's appeared first in the journal *Testo a Fronte* in 1999 (21: 5-30) together with a comment by the translator (*Testo a Fronte* 21: 31-34), and then, in 2003, in *Umanesimo e traduzione da Petrarca a Manetti*, published by the University of Cassino. A complete version in English edited by Griffiths, Hankins and Thompson is available in *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni. Selected Texts* at pages 217-229. An extract appears in Lefevere's anthology (1992: 81-86). A more recent version dates back to 1997 and is contained in Robinson's anthology (1997: 59-60). Bruni's essay has been translated into French by Charles Le Blanc (2008).

becomes the model language(/culture) for the target language (Folena 1991: 13). This distinction, that Folena might have drawn from Terracini's hinting at Cervantes's "traducir... de la reinas de las reinas de las lenguas, griega y latina" vs. "traducir de lenguas fáciles" (Terracini 1996: 37), brings about two issues: on the one hand, horizontal translation caused a "blurring of distinction" between translation, imitation, borrowing and original work, which had the effect of producing similar translations ("volgarizzamenti") of classical works, and which was typical of the age; on the other hand, the conceptualization of the existence of a model system which would influence the language and culture of the country into which that model literature is translated, reminds us of Even-Zohar's and Toury's systems paradigms (Pym 2010: 70ff), exemplifying that translations play a role in the development of cultural systems, just as certainly Latin did in the development of Italian literature and culture.

2.3 The "turn" of literary translation theories in Italy

Testo a fronte, the most prominent scientific journal of literary translation theory and practice in Italy, first appeared in October 1989, and since then, it has successfully contributed to the development of Translation Studies in Italy, publishing thousands of articles, essays, reviews and translations every half year. The index of all 47 issues of the journal is available online, which makes the periodical the main source of literary translation bibliography in Italy. Founding fathers Franco Buffoni and Emilio Mattioli, together with George Steiner, Lawrence Venuti, Henri Meschonnic, to name a few, added up to the dissemination of translation theory in Italy, where nothing had been published and the external references were still limited to Benjamin's *The Task of the Translator* or Mounin's *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction*.

It has been just thanks to this journal that Translation Studies debates have started and been developed in Italy, for several important publications of essays would otherwise be left untranslated and thus unavailable to most scholars: some essays have in fact been published in the form of articles in this journal before being made into books. Another important characteristic of the periodical is the exploration in every issue of a seminal work, essay, or paper, which is recontextualized according to the new trends in the field: this gives readers a chance to see from a new perspective what has been written. Also, the section "quaderno di traduzioni" enables young translators to make themselves more visible by publishing their translations: the idea, claimed many times by Buffoni himself (2004: 12), is that a translation is not a kind of "inferior

work”, but it contributes to the *Überleben*, to the *afterlife* of the original work, to use Walter Benjamin’s terminology.

The original idea which is at the basis of a publication like *Testo a Fronte*, and which is to be found also in the two book series which are inspired by the theoretical views of the journal, namely *I testi di Testo a Fronte* and *I saggi di Testo a Fronte*, is that poetry translation is not mere translation practice: it is the product of the translator’s life experience just as the original work springs from the author’s life experience. The impact that linguistics and semiotics have had on the discipline has too often restrained translation analysis following aesthetic principles. *Testo a Fronte* has contributed to see things from a different perspective: first of all, any theory cannot exist without the historical experience; secondly, a translation is seen as an independent text with its own poetics. This implies that it is impossible to separate form from content, and that all the dichotomies that for years have dominated the field (free vs. literal translation, faithful vs. unfaithful, word-for-word vs. sense-for-sense) are doomed to get discarded.

In order to overcome the deadlock that any debate on the above-mentioned dichotomies would cause, Buffoni suggests that five new concepts be taken into account, which have been debated and discussed in several issues of the journal: language movement (the *Sprachbewegung* that was so dear to Mattioli), pre-text, intertextuality, poetics and rhythm (2004: 17-24). All concepts are developed around the core principle that the relationship between an original work and its translation is not a hierarchical one, but it is based on time: a text can move towards the future just as the language moves as time passes by, but it can also move towards the past, if taking into account the pre-texts, that is, all those private epitexts which contributed to the creation of the text (Genette 1997: 395); intertextual reading and analysis of original text and translation will then help the reading public understand the poetics and the rhythm which are at the basis of the work.

2.4 Translation poetics

Despite the fact that Translation Studies has hardly been recognised any academic autonomy in Italy, three different orientations emerge in the discipline, each contributing to different aspects of the field of study: translation at the core of some studies within the field of language acquisition, (*Didattica delle Lingue Straniere*); translation as an epistemological device in literary studies, especially comparative

literature; translation in language-oriented programs, matching a foreign language, (*Lingua e traduzione inglese, Lingua e traduzione francese*, etc.). In order to give a general idea of the different approaches within the field, I have chosen some impressive contemporary works by Italian translation theorists, whose contribution to translation studies is little known to a foreign public. In the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, for instance, Duranti's portrayal of the Italian translation tradition, is unfair to all contemporary contributions, as the most recent theorists mentioned are Folena and Terracini, which leaves out twenty years of translation theories (Duranti 2009). Despite the reference to "several serious scholars in Italian universities", there is no hint at the different approaches or contributions carried out by many original figures.⁹ In the works of Antonio Lavieri, Franco Nasi and Antonio Prete, to name but a few, innovative ways of thinking about translations are theorized and exemplified through the analysis of the concrete practice of the translator's work. Translation theorization, in fact, should originate from the connection with the practical activity and be opened to its different aspects: (i) the contribution of the translator's poetics; (ii) the importance of history in the theory and practice of translation; (iii) the use of a comparative method of study for an interdiscipline such as Translation Studies. (Nasi 2001: 146)

Antonio Lavieri, expert of the theoretical and epistemological problems of literary translation, has been the first in Italy to theorize translation through fiction; his volume *Translatio in fabula* is the first contribution on the character-translator. This essay analyses the way fiction theorizes and reflects on translation issues through the characters-translators in the works by Miguel de Cervantes, Jorge Luis Borges, Abdelkebir Khatibi, Nicole Brossard, and others, who engage in continuous reflections on translation theory in general and its metalanguage in particular. There is a strict relationship between literature and translation, which leads the reading public to think translation not only in terms of communication but also in aesthetical and poetic terms. In this work, Lavieri has coined "racconti di traduzione" to refer to translation tales, and focuses on the relationship between theory and practice, "pratiche teoriche", and the way translation, with its epistemological approach and comparative method, functions as a bridge which links and binds together all the other Humanities, from Literary and Cultural Studies to Social Science and Ethnography.¹⁰ The combination of different

⁹ Also Venuti's 2004 [2000] *Reader* is of no help for the Italian cause, seeing the strong dominance of English oriented writings presented in the collection (Lavieri 2012: 222).

¹⁰ See also Prete 2011: 60-76, the chapter entitled *Traduzione e affabulazione* reflects once again on the relationship between translation and fiction.

theoretical perspectives and the representation of “l’imaginaire du traduire” have a socio-symbolic involvement in the reworking of translation practices.¹¹ Together with his contribution to the analysis of the relationship between translation and fiction, Lavieri has continued the work started by Emilio Mattioli by assuming the direction of what once was only an aesthetics series, *Strumenti* published by Mucchi, Modena. The booklets now published under the label *Strumenti – seconda serie* are intended to add to the contemporary translation debates through reflections on theoretical matters, representation of historical traditions and analysis of practical activities.¹²

A writer and translator into Italian of many famous English authors, such as Roger McGough and Brian Patten, Franco Nasi recently gave a lecture in Durham University School of Modern Languages and Culture entitling his talk “Sisyphus, the rocks and the rivers: on the happy-melancholy of the translator”. The title sums up his theories as a literary translator. Translating poetry is a very hard task: just as Sisyphus, the mythical man who would roll a rock up to the mountain to see it fall down to the ground again, the translator’s activity seems an absurd effort. Yet, the myth of Sisyphus, that was interpreted negatively in the Western tradition, is here reconsidered with a positive attitude: translating makes a literary work and its language alive. Nasi considers a translation as an autonomous reformulation of the original text into a linguistically and stylistically different system with a different target (Nasi 2004: 84), which opposes the untranslatability of poetry claimed by Croce and Jakobson. Only in his latest collection of short stories/essays (Nasi 2008) is the translator faced with the tragic fate of being a translator; hence, the melancholic feeling of being unable to communicate the perfection of the original work and of being unable to enjoy the original text as any other reader does.

As essayist, poet and translator, Antonio Prete has been repeatedly faced with the assumption that to be able to translate a poem you have to be a poet first, as Leopardi, the greatest poet of Italian Romanticism, claimed while translating Virgil’s *Aeneid*. If, on the one hand, translating is defined as a tiring practice, a great challenge,

¹¹ The importance of such a work and its innovative contribution to Translation and Literary Studies is testified by the organization of an international congress, which was held in Brussels in May 2009 and which brought the same title as Lavieri’s essay, i.e., *Translatio in fabula, enjeux d’une rencontre entre fictions et traductions*; a collection of the essays then followed in 2010, edited by Klimis et al.

¹² The first issue 1/*Teoria* is a collection of essays by Jean-René Ladmiral, *Della traduzione. Dall’estetica all’epistemologia*, edited by Antonio Lavieri; the second issue 2/*Pratiche* is a critical essay by Viviana Agostini-Ouafi, *Poetiche della traduzione. Proust e Debenedetti*; the third issue 3/*Storia*, which is into print, is entitled *L’âge épistémologique de la traduction* and is edited by Florence Lautel-Ribstein and Antonio Lavieri.

a bet, a risk (Prete 2011), on the other hand, it is seen as a kind of magic, some alchemy which changes the perfect phraseology, music, rhythm of the original text into another text as magical and as perfect. In the shadow of the other language, of the other text, as the title of his latest book suggests, the first, original text is recreated, brought back to life. His criticism of the pouring of thousands of abstract and sterile theories and ideas on translation practices is aimed at suggesting that the reflection on translating be done on the actual practice of translation, by taking into account the relationship between two languages and by considering the challenges that each text may pose (2011: 53-54). As an expert of the Italian translation tradition, which goes from Leopardi to Montale, from Quasimodo to Sereni, Prete's focus is all on the relationship between the poet's and the translator's poetics. In fact, the act of translating is at the same time practice and experience of the otherness for the translators involved in Prete's analysis: "esperienza di un'ospitalità che è incontro, conoscenza, trasformazione di sé e della lingua"¹³ (2011: 128).

Apart from the works of some individual scholars, the Italian interest in Translation Studies is also evident in more general studies, such as the anthologies published in the last decades by *Strumenti Bompiani*, Nergaard's *La teoria della traduzione nella storia* (1993) and *Teorie contemporanee della traduzione* (1995) which include seminal essays by the most prominent scholars from all fields, linguistic, philosophical and historical, as well as Bollettieri Bosinelli and Di Giovanni's collection of essays *Oltre l'occidente* (2009) which offers a different view of the translation phenomenon seen from the cultural perspective of non-western translation theorists. Another interesting perspective is the language-oriented one, with works focusing on language interference and other linguistic problems, such as Cardinaletti and Garzone's *L'italiano nelle traduzioni* (2005) or *Lingua, mediazione linguistica e interferenza* (2004) as well as Salmon's *Teoria della traduzione. Storia, scienza e professione* (2003), an all-inclusive manual for the ones who approach Translation Studies for the first time.

3. Conclusions and ideas for future work

Appealing to many disciplines in the humanities, Translation Studies has attained an independent status in almost all European countries where the theory and/or practice of translation and interpreting are given academic autonomy. In Italy, we are still suffering from a lack of independence which places the studies on translation within linguistics or

¹³ "Experience of hospitality which means confronting, getting to know each other, turning into another self, in another language".

comparative literature. In this situation, the studies on literary translation have evolved first with Mattioli's phenomenological approach, and later with Folena's interest in translation theorization from a historical perspective; the shift from theory and history to theory and practice is first attempted by the creation of *Testo a Fronte*, the only literary translation journal which has contributed, and still does, to the development of a theoretical approach to literary translation which reckons the practical activity of translating, which sees the work of the translator not as a secondary or side job, but which, even "under the shadow" of the original text, contributes to the afterlife of that text.

The phantom or demon of theory, which seems to haunt all translation theorizations since the 1960s, is seen with scepticism by scholars such as Lavieri (2004: 7; 2007: 58) and Prete (2011: 53), who reject a normative approach to translation practice and hope for a new conceptualization of translation as theoretical practice in relationship with the other Human Sciences. They advocate for a comparative method as the only valid research method in Translation Studies, as any translation issue involves at least two languages and two cultures. Translation phenomena can be seen and described from a variety of perspectives, and different fields and disciplines can offer different ways of seeing it, which are not competitive but enlightening and reinforcing. The initial intention of this paper, to make the Italian studies on translation more visible in an international context, is now followed by a more concrete hope: that the most meaningful essays might be translated into English soon, as to give credit to all this crucial thinking, decisive steps in the developments of Italian literary translation tradition.

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Biography

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