<Recto: *Introduction: Translation as Negotiation*

Verso: *Dario Tessicini>*

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<CT>Translators, interpreters and cultural negotiation</CT>

<AU>*Dario Tessicini*</AU>

There is no act of translation that is not also an act of negotiation. And just as translation is never free of negotiation, negotiation contaminates the production, transmission and reception of translation. Negotiation is inscribed in the very fabric of translation from both a linguistic/semiological and a historical viewpoint: for the content of the translation has to find a way through the language frontier, translators and interpreters need to refrain from falling into the traps set out by well-known theoretical and pragmatical hurdles over which theorists have haggled since Antiquity.

Long-discussed issues of equivalence and fidelity, adequacy and appropriateness can be subsumed under the concept of negotiation when this is intended as a compromise in which each party goes back and forth with offers and concessions, and is ready to accept both gains and losses as part of the transaction: 'in order to get something, each party renounces something else, and at the end everybody feels satisfied since one cannot have everything' (Eco 2003: 106). The semiologist's view is that the interlinguistic translation (à la Jakobson), itself a form of negotiation, is contaminated by a process of mediation similar to, or at least explained in terms of, mercantile business: the price of goods is agreed upon by seller and buyer through a process by which the exchange is stipulated through a compromise between what the buyer is willing to pay and what it costs the seller to part from the merchandize. As buyer and seller negotiate a transaction, an exchange of goods or services, translators and interpreters negotiate interlinguistic translation. Similar to a commercial transaction, the terms of the compromise are agreed by the parties involved in the process: 'a translator is the negotiator between those parties' (112), the original text and its author, the publisher and the context of the publication, the destination's cultural framework and the intended public.

Eco's cognitive semiotics by which the production of knowledge and meaning is always the result of negotiations and compromise (a 'contractual' process according to Bianchi and Geri 2013:

30) is paralleled by, and to a certain extent has underpinned, cultural studies on the history of translation (for instance Delisle and Woodsworth 2012). In a seminal contribution on cultural translation, Peter Burke reframes the question acknowledging that the concept of negotiation bears cultural significance, for 'it has expanded its domain moving beyond the world of trade and diplomacy to refer to the exchange of ideas and the consequent modification of meaning' (2007: 9). In this widened sense, a negotiated translation is the end result of a process of adaptation where the parties involved accept 'losses or renunciations' including the possibility of renegotiation. This does not necessarily involve an interlinguistic translation: the seventeenth-century Jesuit Matteo Ricci's decision to dress as a Confucian scholar while on his mission in China was meant to 'translate his social position into Chinese'. But what appeared to be an effective translation of cultural meaning in the context of Ming China, was deemed unacceptable in Rome, and Ricci's choice was revisited ('renegotiated') by his successors in the Jesuit China Mission.

The convergence between Eco's semiological outlook and Burke's cultural history does not give way to significant overlap. While Eco's metaphor of negotiation remains strictly within the boundaries of a mercantile conceptual and linguistic framework (Eco 2003: 104, 559, 564), Burke and others (Pym 2000) look more widely to the assorted world of cultural conduits, missionaries and ambassadors (such as the Jesuits). The extension of the negotiation metaphor leads to the study of non-literary texts, i.e. political, historical, religious and scientific, and to issues connected to manipulation, hidden agendas and the relation between translators and authority. Framed in these terms, the semantics of the negotiation metaphor change considerably, becoming a function of the historical circumstances that shape methods and practices of translation. But would this also mean that the concept of negotiation loses its explicative power when tested against the wide variety of translation phenomena across different cultural domains and historical times?

Philology and ancient history provide clues that help clarify how the cultural configuration of translation and interpreting is indebted to the concept of negotiation intended as commercial and diplomatic mediation. The archaic meaning of the Latin *interpres*, 'an agent between two parties, a broker', attested in Plautus, precedes and lives alongside that of 'explainer, translator, interpreter' found in Cicero and Julius Caesar (Lewis and Short 1879: *ad vocem*). The word *interpres* may have had a juridical connotation: Cicero uses it to mean the translator in the *De optimo genere oratorum* – and there is no need to recall here the tire debate – and a political intermediary in his *Familiar Letters*(10, 11, 3). But the roots of the word are in the sphere of commercial exchanges: the form – *pres* should not be understood as derived from *partes*, a medieval interpretation by Isidore of Seville which sees the translator as a linguistic intermediary transferring the message from one part to the other.[1] Rather, the etymology of *(inter-) pres* links to *pretium* ('value', 'price') and to the

Greek verb *pérnemi*, whose semantic field encompasses the idea of 'trafficking', 'trading' (Ernout and Meillet 1967: 534; Rochette 2000). The interpreter is thus the centre of the commercial transaction as the individual that allows the *pretium* to be negotiated between the parties. In classical literature the *interpres* frequently acts as an intermediary and a negotiator in business or political transactions: Cicero's passage in the *Familiar Letters* and many others in his works entwine the *interpres* with a sphere of political and business mediation: the *negotia* that Cicero undertakes with Lepidus using as *adiutores* and *interpretes* his brother Laterensis and his friend Furnius, or the accusation moved to Claudius in the *Verrine Orations* to act as *sequester* and *interpres* on behalf of Verres. The term *sequester*, a technical term used in commerce and the law, indicates 'a depositary, a trustee', but also a 'go-between', interlacing its meaning with that of the *interpres*. Plautus' comedy *Curculius* stages one of these instances where in a fake letter, the young Phaedromus tricks the banker Lyco to act as an *interpres* which involves assistance in the negotiation, handing in the agreed sum under the terms of the deal (that is, the role of a *sequeste*r) and making sure that the transaction (in typical Plautus' fashion, the price to redeem a slave girl) goes smoothly (Bettini 2012: 91–8).

Military and diplomatic negotiations are also covered by the semantic field of *interpres*. Interpreters populate ancient military histories from Xenophon's *Anabasis* onwards (Roland 1999: 15–16). Their profile fluctuates between language boundaries and political frontiers: hired for their specialist knowledge they sometimes acted as informants and military consultants, as related by Livy where interpreters of the Etruscan language foiled a dangerous ambush: Etruscans soldiers disguised as shepherds tried to lure the Romans out of their camp, but the interpreter grew suspicious of their language, demeanor and appearance, and warned the Roman military commander that they were the enemy in disguise (Peretz 2006; Bettini 2012: 89–90).

Just as in a negotiation the mediator needs to be trusted by both parties, translators and interpreters are historically and semantically configured in terms of faithfulness. Maurizio Bettini (2012: 106–112) provides a compelling analysis of how the cultural metaphor of negotiation develops from the commercial and diplomatic realm to the linguistic and textual. The *fidus interpres* originally conceived as a mediator-diplomat gradually loses part of its meaning once his role and function are reconfigured within the literary domain. Horace's foundational passage in the *Ars poetica* (132–4: 'nec uerbo uerbum curabis reddere fidus/ interpres') is now usually read as a methodological statement against a literal translation, *verbo (pro)verbum*, as opposed to the sense-for-sense translation or other forms of dynamic and semantic equivalence between the source and the target language. But at the time of its production, Horace's *fidus interpres* chimed more with Sallust's translators and diplomats (*fidissimi interpretes*) from *The Jugurthine War*[2] than with St

Jerome's *Letter to Pammachus* where the dichotomy between literal and literary translation is inextricably linked to theological concerns and the sacrality of God's Word (Bettini 2012: 200).

When seen under this light, classical philology and ancient world's anthropology provide a further layer and a substantial extension to the cognitive metaphor and cultural product of translation as negotiation (and translators-interpreters as mediators/negotiators). The semantic configuration of the *interpres* as a trusted negotiator imprints the structure of commercial and diplomatic transactions into the meaning of translation and interpreting, yet without separating it from the linguistic aspects and the methodological debates that characterize its history.

What the reader will find in this book is a reformulation of the issue in terms of questions around the intellectual, social and professional identity of translators and interpreters when their role involves a negotiation with institutional powers (be them medieval rulers, modern States, an army of invasion or a dominant culture). Surprisingly little is known of the ways in which interlinguistic mediations are affected by, or become themselves implicit or explicit forms of authority and power; even less is known of how the mediations took place, how the mediators worked, and how the work of translators and interpreters is inflected when in contact with other parties of the negotiation process – including other translators and interpreters.[3] The implied, unanswered questions multiply as researchers and scholars try to assess whether there were recurrent and identifiable patterns in terms of intercultural mediators' social class, education, professional activities, and so on or whether each case should be considered the result of a unique and often unprecedented set of causalities, coincidences, and contextual circumstances that will never allow researchers to map typologies of intercultural mediators.

This volume, far from being exhaustive, provides historical samples ranging from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century and giving due consideration to non-European experiences. The subject matter is arranged chronologically in order to facilitate reading and emphasize similarities between synchronic historical conditions and determinants. Forms of negotiation and mediation engrained into the activity of translation are framed within specific contexts, emphasizing the relations between translators and other parties, especially when these are in a position of authority (political or cultural) with respect to the translators. From this viewpoint, what this volume wants to bring to the fore is how the mediating role of the translators is determined by the immediate beneficiaries of the translation. One illuminating case showing how translation is inflected through social practices of negotiation is offered by Isabella Lazzarini's analysis of medieval diplomacy in Chapter 2. Here the needs of political communication across Christian Europe as well as between European powers and the Muslim world involved a variety of diplomatic practices, such as permanent and occasional envoys, and social actors with different linguistic and socio-cultural

skills, whose activity was determined by the nature of the negotiation they were entrusted. 'In this perspective – Lazzarini writes – translation crosses, as well as it redefines, multiple boundaries domestic and foreign alike, and it interferes with acts on both politics and diplomacy, not only connecting people or pursuing political purposes, but also interpenetrating languages, discursive resources, and communication techniques'.

The world of commercial and diplomatic negotiation emerges as a defining force of the activity of translation and intercultural mediation at various stages in the European and Mediterranean history.[4] But Northern European countries, as well as their colonies, were by no means excluded from this pattern. At the beginning of the seventeenth century in the Dutch colony of Taiwan interpreters were often requested to play roles in diplomatic exchanges and in the power structure of the colonial government. The study by Pin-ling Changin Chapter 8 shows how the Dutch used Formosan interpreters to pacify the island. As they had often been trained by the Spanish, Spanish became an intermediary language between the Formosans and the Dutch. Not only did interpreters have diverse backgrounds but they also had multiple roles, whether because their employment was not permanent and therefore they held other jobs, or because the Dutch used them as envoys, deputies, and negotiators: see for instance the case of the Chinese merchant and interpreter Pinqua who first negotiated on behalf of the Dutch to reopen trade routes between China and Taiwan, and then convinced the Chinese military leader Koxinga to take over Taiwan in 1661. In Europe, the works by the diplomat polyglot Lodowick Bryskett studied by Sergio Portelli in Chapter 6 are to a large extent consequential to their author's experience as a diplomatic agent at the service of the English government. Relying on his Italian heritage – his father was a Protestant émigré, and an informant of Sir William Cecil – Bryskett's *Discourse of Civill Life* is modelled upon Baldassarre Castiglione's *Courtier*, also the work of a diplomat. As in the Urbino staged by Count Castiglione, the fictional court of the *Discourse* relives memories of past dialogues among friends of the author, diplomats and politicians, many of which were already dead at the time the work was published. In Bryskett's works the worlds of diplomacy and translation conflate into a literary dialogue on manners and *cortesia* with the inclusion of translations and adaptations from works of literature and moral philosophy.

Methodological issues on the translation of literary, philosophical and religious works have been a traditional focus of debate in translation studies and translation history. They have been included in this volume as well, as the answer to the question of 'how to translate' is often a function of the conditions in which the translation takes place, be them ideas, historical circumstances, cultural habits or social constraints. The chapters by Tatjana Dijurin, Dario Brancato and Madhuvanti Karyekar readdress the question of the 'how' by looking at methodological

questions inflected by historical and social contexts. The production of translations in Serbia was facilitated by the patronage of Despot Stefan Lazarevic (himself the translator of at least one work from Greek), who created the conditions for a significant cultural renewal in Serbia prior to the Ottoman occupation. The foundation of a *scriptorium* in the Resava Monastery was meant to have a political as well as cultural significance in order to strengthen Serbia's relations with Byzantium and Hungary. Similarly, political significance was attributed to the translation of Severinus Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* solicited in 1549 by the duke of Florence, Cosimo I de' Medici, to satisfy Emperor Charles V's desire to have an Italian version of the work. Three of them were produced by Benedetto Varchi, Lodovico Domenichi and Cosimo Bartoli between 1550 and 1552, and these offer a unique opportunity for comparison between different techniques and strategies. Brancato's analysis subverts a long-standing interpretation that sees the personal competition between the three authors as the main explanatory avenue, while arguing that the duke's preference for Varchi's translation was the result of Varchi's theoretical stances on linguistics (the 'questione della lingua'), their practical application to Boethius' translation, and their value for the duke's cultural propaganda outside Florence.

Problems of fidelity, equivalence, and domestication run across translation history, and become more acute when the distance between the parties increase. August Wilhelm Schlegel's translation into Latin of the Hindu sacred poem *Bhagavadgītā* (or*Gītā*) sparked controversy among German philosophers and translators. On the pages of academic journals as well as in lectures to the Academy of Sciences, Wilhelm von Humboldt defended Schlegel's work, while Friedrich Hegel attacked it. In Chapter 9 Madhuvanti Karyekar provides a captivating analysis of this debate, stressing the role of the philosophers as cultural mediators and educators within Romantic exoticism and nationalism.

From medieval Serbia through to Renaissance Florence and nineteenth-century Germany, issues of cultural identity and policy permeate translation history: political power intervenes in the translators' activities either directly or indirectly. Mohammed Emami's study of the publication in post-revolution Iran of American short stories in Persian translation is based on a large survey of works (310 short stories by 61 American writers) which provides ample evidence of how translation is affected by political factors, i.e., government censorship and provisions to enforce it. This intervention undoubtedly shifts the balance of power within the negotiation, whereby censorship produces in turn self-censorship or restraint: 'the prevailing critical intervention seems to remain that of the translator, who sees the anticipated audience through the prism of what the editor, publisher and government officials may say before the translation can be read.' Here gains and losses are negotiated under direct pressure from the authority. In turn, state and international

institutions may, and sometimes do, act in the opposite way by promoting translation as a way of preserving and transmitting the cultural memory of endangered languages. In Chapter 11 Veronica Razumovskaya investigates the context of translation and the translation practices relative to Yakutia and Yakut language, the heroic epos *olonkho* in particular, inviting reflection on how public bodies and authorities can improve legislation for the preservation and development of the language and cultures of ethnic minorities.

A further group of chapters deals with the polychromatic world of the early modern 'functional' translators and interpreters: informants, diplomatic agents, merchants, captives and slaves, multilingual and multicultural figures able to cross frontiers by choice, interest, or necessity, and to negotiate all sorts of boundaries and constraints (prison and enslavement among them). Natalie Zemon Davis revisits the life and cultural crossings of Hasan al-Wazzan/Leo Africanus, a Muslim born in Granada in 1488, and whose family took refuge in Fez after 1492. At the service of the sultan of Fez, he honed his linguistic skills and knowledge of the African world, traveling as merchant, emissary and informant of the sultan. Captured by pirates in 1518, Hasan al-Wazzan was transferred to Rome, converted to Christianity under the name of Giovanni Leone, and then later on became Leo Africanus, the author of an influential *Description of Africa* included in Giovanni Battista Ramusio's collection of travel books, *Navigationi et Viaggi*. From diplomat to captive, from captive to learned guest and consultant before being able to return to his country after the sack of Rome, the Italian travels of al-Wazzan/Leo Africanus often involve his participation in projects of translation – a trilingual Arabic-Hebrew-Latin dictionary promoted by the Jewish scholar Jacob Mantino, also a refugee from Spain like al-Wazzan's family; and a Latin translation of the Qur'an that al-Wazzan was asked to revise by Cardinal Egidio of Viterbo in 1525. These enterprises required careful balancing between al-Wazzan/Leo Africanus's Muslim heritage and the newly acquired Christian identity: gains and losses, omissions and balance, transliteration and translation became essential parts of his strategy to communicate his world to European readers.

Similar questions of how translators and interpreters negotiate their own identity when forced to operate in adverse circumstances are essential to the tale of Malinche recounted by María Laura Spoturno in Chapter 7. An interpreter between the Spaniards and the Mexica, and a controversial figure of Mexican history, Malinche was a Nahua slave woman acting as Captain Cortés' interpreter, intermediary, and mistress. Although her practice of translation involved relay translation from Spanish to Mayan, an intermediate language for Malinche, and from Mayan to Nahuatl, Malinche was sometimes referred to as the 'tongue' of Cortés, and despite the conditions under which she started performing her activity, she gained considerable power in negotiating on behalf of the Spaniards. Relations with powerful authorities and questions of social mobility also

colour the life and activity of Michel Angelo Corai, a polyglot refugee, interpreter and translator, diplomatic agent and negotiator investigated by Federico Federici in Chapter 5. A native from Aleppo, Corai reached Italy in the late 1590s. Through his knowledge of languages he acquired considerable influence negotiating both informally and officially between European powers and the East. As a reward for his services Corai was ennobled in Mantua, becoming a Knight of the Holy Roman Empire: like other figures navigating through language and cultural frontiers in the early modern world, the life of Michel Angelo Corai calls into question the social role of translators and interpreters, and the possibilities offered by their profession in terms of personal advancement and social mobility.

<H1>Notes</H1>

[1] Isidore of Seville. 2006. *The* Etymologies *of Isidore of Seville.* Edited by S. A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and O. Berghof, with the collaboration of M. Hall: X, 123, 220. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 'Translator (interpres), because he is the medium 'between the sides' (interpartes) of two languages when he translates'. As a secondary meaning, the *interpres* is a mediator between God and mankind. He reads the divine message and deciphers it.

[2] See the account of the negotiations between Romans and Numidians in Sallust 1931: 108–109, where the Numidian Dabar, 'a man of inferior birth' is 'beloved by the Moor' and 'faithful to the Romans'. Dabar is summoned by Sulla to a secret meeting together with other 'trusthworthy interpreters' in the role of 'mediator, an upright man who was trusted by both of them'. The episode is recounted by Bettini (2012: 110) and Rochette (2000: 88–9).

[3] On collaborative and relay translation see Bistué 2013, and in this volume the examples in Chapter 2 (diplomatic relations with the East requiring more mediators) and 4 (the linguistic and cultural re-translation of al-Wazzan's *Description of Africa*).

[4] As for commerce, diplomacy and translation across North Africa, Spain and the Netherlands, see the research by García Arenal and Wiegers 2006, and Wiegers 1996 on early modern Moroccan Jews and *conversos*.