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Translation as Theory and Practice
A Multilingual Approach to Translation
Challenges and Tensions

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Translation always implies establishing a contact between cultures, and thus it inevitably leads to an 'experience of the other', with the possibility of developing a range of different types of 'encounters'. Therefore, translation is no neutral act of communication, having important consequences on the delicate dialogue between cultures, especially in the case of unbalanced contacts between a 'strong' and a 'weak' culture, which also justifies the central role that translation has always played for countries like those in Latin America.

To study translation from a cross-cultural perspective first of all implies to acknowledge its role in society, and to stop regarding it only as a specialized and 'detached' field. It is a stimulating position for translation studies, which inevitably leads to a more open approach, extending the discourse about translation, and translation criticism in particular, outside their traditional borders. This confirms the opinion that it is too limiting to conceive the study of translation only on an 'interlinguistic' level, thinking that similar processes of text transfer can be activated in both 'interlinguistic' and 'intersemiotic' translation, and thus this research aims to prove that it is possible for translation criticism to combine a cross-cultural perspective with a more comprehensive approach to translation, inclusive of interlinguistic and intersemiotic forms. In other words, the hope is to show how the tensions and dynamics created by the transposition of a written text, a novel, into a foreign language and culture can be better detected and understood by applying a fundamentally similar approach to the study of more than one transformational form of the same source text (ST), including therefore both written and filmic target texts (TTs).

Trying to put such a hypothesis to the proof, and verifying if and how it is relevant to translation criticism, the research identifies two almost contemporary, yet very different Latin American novels (Antonio Skármeta's *Ardiente paciencia*, and Gabriel García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*) as case studies, and focuses on their encounters with our Western culture, through both their interlinguistic and intersemiotic translations. This way the study deals with different semiotic languages, which means therefore that it is particularly important to identify an adequate tool for analysis, and from this point of view a promising support has been found in Peeter Torop's table for "Translatability of Culture". Although mainly developed for interlinguistic translation, the table proves to be applicable also to intersemiotic translation, and in both case studies it actually contributes to highlight tensions and dynamics which are more or less overtly present in both written and cinematic TTs. If in the first case study, the analysis reveals a clear process of 'deterritorialization' and assimilation in the long 'journey from the margins', the second case study, instead, offers interesting examples of culturally aware and committed translators. There are relevant implications for translation criticism, as it stops being an aloof and academic arena, only aiming at detecting and scientifically describing translation

methods and norms. The research shows that the identification of a translation method almost inevitably leads the observer to reflect on the way the translator's choices influence the readers' perception of the ST within the framework of the receiving culture, and the ultimate focus of translation criticism becomes the practical consequences of translation on the 'meeting' of two different cultures.

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Chapter 1 – Interlinguistic Translation

Part 1 - The State of the Art

1.1.1a - The boom of translation studies

Traduttore traditore: that is how translation is defined in a witty and long-lived Italian aphorism, which proves to be well-pointed indeed, since even the literary translation of such a simple phrase could automatically be considered inadequate, as Roman Jakobson himself had to remark.

If we were to translate into English the traditional formula, *traduttore traditore*, as “the translator is a betrayer”, we would deprive the Italian rhyming epigram of all its paronomastic value.¹

If such an aphorism could be discarded as mere *locus communis*, this cannot be done with several other authoritative theories which now and again have attacked the very notion of translation throughout the last century. Yet recent decades have seen an undeniable flourishing of translation studies, as shown also by the steady increase in the number of research centres, academic departments, courses and journals, as well as schools for translators and interpreters.

Actually, translation, as both theory and practice, has been playing a more and more vital role in our contemporary society. There may be many reasons for this: from the spread of globalisation, with people or groups of people from different cultures and languages coming into closer and more frequent contact with one another, and ICT and information science trying to develop more reliable models of artificial translation, to the increased interest in semiotic studies, for which the very notion of translation is always pivotal.²

¹ R. Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation”, in R. A. Brower (ed.), *On Translation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), now in R. Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2 (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1971), p. 266.

² In particular, see U. Eco, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa - Esperienze di traduzione* (Milano: Studi Bompiani, 2003), p. 17: “Le ragioni per la crescita degli interessi traduttologici sono molte, e convergenti: da un lato i fenomeni di globalizzazione, che mettono sempre più in contatto reciproco gruppi e individui di lingue diverse, poi lo svilupparsi degli interessi semiotici, per i quali il concetto di traduzione diventa centrale anche quando non viene esplicitato (si pensi soltanto alle discussioni sul significato di un enunciato come ciò che teoricamente dovrebbe

Moreover, translation studies have adopted an increasingly interdisciplinary nature, becoming remarkably fertile and wide-ranging: varieties of linguistics, literary criticism, philosophy, cultural theories and studies, anthropology and sociology, psychology and psychoanalysis, sex and gender studies.

At the start of the new millennium, translation studies is an international network of scholarly communities who conduct research and debate across conceptual and disciplinary divisions.³

To attempt a comprehensive overview of the state of the art of translation would therefore risk becoming a very huge task, and at any rate it would be outside the scope of our research. Therefore, what follows should not be taken as a systematic review of all current main translation theories, but rather a deliberately personal attempt at identifying and organizing those key issues and theories which can be most relevant and stimulating for the type of study intended here.

1.1.1b - Antitheses and translation studies

When I was trying to organize and systematize the great number of unstructured materials taken from an inevitably wide range of articles and essays, I found a very good starting criterion in the undeniable recurrence of antitheses in translation theories. The world of translation studies seems to be dominated, or rather structured by a series of powerful antitheses:

- translatability vs. untranslatability
- language as interpretation (hermeneutics) vs. language as communication
- autonomy of the translated text vs. dependence on the source text
- functional equivalence vs. formal equivalence
- source-oriented vs. target-oriented
- foreignizing and historicizing vs. domesticating and modernizing
- translation as mutual understanding vs. translation as assimilation
- traditional comparative studies vs. intercultural and cross-cultural studies.

1.1.2a - The issue of translatability

The fundamental issue of translatability inspired intense debates especially in the 1950s, with the radical and sceptical extremes of Willard Van Orman Quine and Vladimir Nabokov on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the most

sopravvivere nel passaggio da una lingua a un'altra), e infine l'espansione dell'informatica, che spinge molti a tentare e ad affinare sempre più modelli di traduzione artificiale".

³ L. Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 334.

radical linguistic analysis, land marked by Roman Jakobson's 1959 essay.⁴ Yet, we can say that this basic antithesis has never really been overcome, and it continues to surface from time to time. This is all too natural, since different theories about translatability are strictly – even if sometimes only implicitly – connected to even more vital and controversial assumptions about language use and meaning: language as communication, or language as hermeneutics, or even as polisemy.

For example, when Quine questions the empirical foundations of translating by focussing on a basic semantic “indeterminacy of correlation” that cannot be resolved even in the presence of an environmental “stimulus meaning”,⁵ and Nabokov refers to national literatures as realities which, although internationally influenced and affiliated, develop according to their own national ways so as to produce unique and therefore untranslatable masterpieces, it is evident that such views imply the notion of an indissoluble connection between language and culture.

On the opposite side, Jakobson denies the idea of meaning as determined by reality, but rather sees it in relation to “potentially endless chains of signs”, since Jakobson conceives the meaning of any word or phrase as a semiotic fact. “Translation involves two equivalent messages in two different codes”, a remark evidently based on the assumption of language as communication, which leads Jakobson to strongly assert the notion of translatability: “all cognitive experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language”.⁶

The theoretical background to which we must refer here is the distinction between an instrumental notion of language and a hermeneutic one, with the former conceiving language as communication, expressive of thought and meaning – where meanings are either based on reference to an empirical reality or derived from a context that is primarily linguistic – and the latter, hermeneutics, regarding language as interpretation, constitutive of thought and meaning, where meanings shape reality and are inscribed according to changing cultural and social situations.

It is with post-structuralism and especially with Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory that in the 1980s a further development occurs and the debate about translatability re-emerges. More explosive notions of language and consequently of translation are introduced: language is conceived as a site of uncontrollable polysemy. According to deconstructionists, on the one hand,

⁴ See note 1.

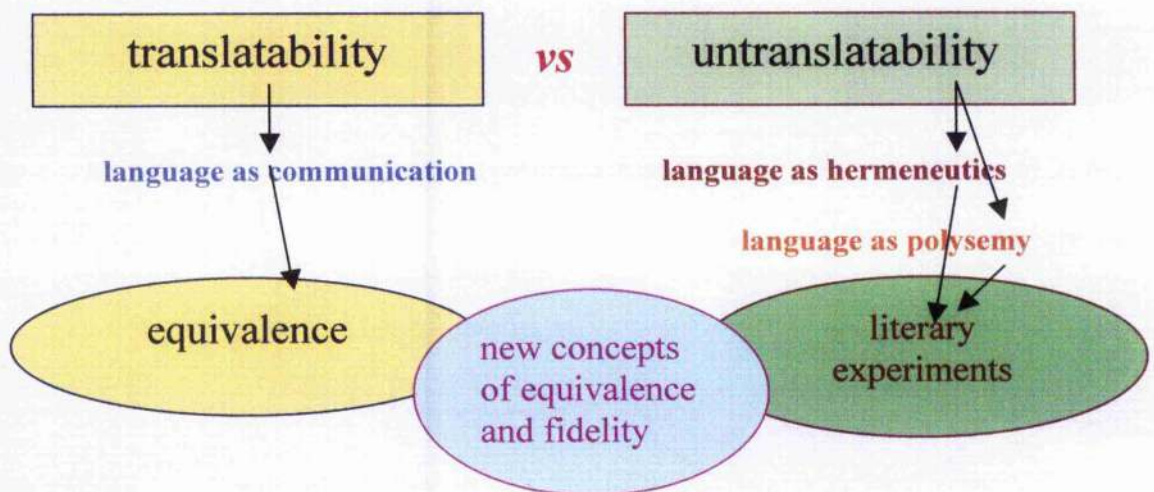
⁵ “Userer, Cassirer, Sapir, and latterly B. L. Whorf have stressed that deep differences of language carry with them ultimate differences in the way one thinks, or looks upon the world. I should prefer not to put the matter in such a way as to suggest that certain philosophical propositions are affirmed in the one culture and denied in the other. What is really involved is difficulty or indeterminacy of correlation. It is just that there is less basis of comparison [...] the farther we get away from sentences with visibly direct conditioning to nonverbal stimuli and the farther we get off home ground”, W. Quine, “Meaning and Translation” (1959), in L. Venuti (2000), p. 112.

⁶ R. Jakobson (1971), pp. 262-263.

translation inevitably reduces and alters the source text, yet, on the other hand, it also releases target potentialities which rebound upon the foreign text in an unsettling way. Even the very notions of semantic unity or authorial originality come to be questioned. Thus, both source and target texts come to be seen as derivative and heterogeneous, made up of diverse linguistic materials, which tend to destabilize the work of signification, making meaning plural and divided.

As Venuti's anthology sums up very clearly (2000, p. 218), according to theorists like Derrida and Paul de Man, translation is doomed to inadequacy, and the scepticism of post-structuralists is even more corrosive than either Quine's or Nabokov's. For Derrida and de Man the problem does not actually lie in the incommensurability of cultures and literatures, but rather in the inherent indeterminacy of language, in the unavoidable instability of the signifying process. As a consequence, post-structuralism fosters literary experiments, in the same way that the hermeneutic tradition had previously done, with the well-known models of Pound and Borges, while renewed attention is given to developing new and more challenging concepts of equivalence and fidelity.

The following diagram will help to visualize the complex frame of different positions, as outlined till now.



1.1.2b - Autonomy and equivalence in translation

The key issue of equivalence is in evidently close relation to another pair of contrary concepts: dependence vs. autonomy of the translated text. It is true that the 20th Century, since its very first decades, and with even greater emphasis in its closing part, does not seem to have ever really questioned the relative autonomy of the translated text. Its status as a text in its own right can be said to be generally accepted: of course, it is usually regarded as a derivative one, but nonetheless it is always seen as an independent form of writing, distinct from

either the foreign, i.e., *source* text, and from any other texts originally written in the translating, i.e., *target* language.

Yet, when further developed, this basic assumption has proved to be much more multifaceted and controversial, as the closely related intertwined debate around the notion of equivalence can show. Once again, the synthesis proposed by Venuti's anthology can help to recall how the notion of equivalence becomes a controlling concept, especially in the 1960s and in the 1970s.⁷

The 1960s opened with translation coming to be seen as a process of communication of the foreign text by establishing a relationship of identity or analogy with it. As a consequence, translation theorists tended to assume that the foreign text was a stable object, at least stable enough to be seen as possessing invariants, and thus reducible to precisely defined units, levels and categories of language and textuality. While literature on equivalence became fundamentally normative, the signal novelty of Georges Mounin's 1963 important essay was to affirm that equivalence in translation is possible, since it is based on universals of language and culture.⁸

Only two years after Mounin's essay, J.C. Catford reaffirmed the notion that translating is a unidirectional process, where textual elements from a source language are substituted by equivalent elements in a target language. Yet, at the same time, he drew attention to the inevitable problem of lexical and grammatical deviations, or 'shifts', which, however, do not imply untranslatability at all, but rather point to a more flexible and communicative strategy.

By 'shifts' we mean departures from formal correspondence in the process of going from the SL (source language) to the TL (target language) [...] It is clear [...] that translation equivalence does not entirely match formal correspondence [...] This casts doubts on the advisability of setting up *any* formal correspondence between the particular terms of the English and the French article-systems.⁹

A gradual evolution and overcoming of the notion of *formal equivalence* can be seen even better in the essays by Anton Popovič (1970 and 1976).¹⁰ After pointing out that shifts do not occur deliberately, because a translator wants to write autonomously, but rather because he strives to reproduce the work he is translating as faithfully as possible, Popovič later proposes four distinct types of equivalence:

1. a *linguistic* equivalence, based on homogeneity on the linguistic level of both texts, thus making possible a word by word translation;

⁷ L. Venuti (2000), pp. 121-125.

⁸ G. Mounin, *Les Problèmes théoriques de la traduction*, Paris: Gallimard, 1963.

⁹ J. C. Catford, "Translation Shifts" (1965), in Venuti (2000), p. 141.

¹⁰ A. Popovič, "The Concept of 'Shift of Expression' in Translation Analysis", in J. S. Holmes, F. De Haan and A. Popovič (eds), *The Nature of Translation*, The Hague: Mouton, 1970. For the 1976 essay, see next note.

2. a *paradigmatic* equivalence, on the level of the vertical paradigmatic expressive axis (for example, the grammar elements);
3. a *textual (syntagmatic)* equivalence, on the horizontal level of the syntagmatic structure of a text, i.e. equivalence of form and shape;
4. a *stylistic (translational)* equivalence, based on the *functional* equivalence of elements in both texts and "aiming at an expressive identity and with an invariant of identical meaning".¹¹

Functional immediately echoes the much more relevant contributions by Eugene Nida, who in 1964, and then later together with Taber in 1969, introduced the controversial distinction between 'dynamic/functional' and 'formal' types of correspondence, which is worth a closer look, being an undisputable landmark in the study of translation.

After pointing out how translations differ because of three basic factors (the nature of the message, the purpose of the author and the translator and the type of the audience for whom the translation is meant), and after admitting that no absolutely exact translation is possible, since "no two languages are identical", Nida states that there are basically two types of equivalence: one which may be called *formal* and one which is *dynamic* or *functional*. If the first one focuses on the message itself in both form and content, striving to get a new text which matches as closely as possible the different elements in the source language, and consequently such an approach can be regarded as mostly *source-oriented*, the other position instead is much more *target-oriented*. In fact it is based on "the principle of *equivalent effect*": the relationship between receptor and message in the new text should be substantially the same as the one in the original text.

As is well known, Nida is totally in favour of functional equivalence, and since the time he was writing some of his developments have gone on influencing, or even, dominating the editorial market of the Western countries, with what effects we shall discuss later.

A translation of dynamic equivalence aims at **complete naturalness of expression** [*bold characters are mine*], and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture; it does not insist that he understands the cultural pattern of the source-language context in order to comprehend the message.

[...]

An F-E [= formal-equivalence] translation normally attempts not to make adjustments in idioms, but rather to reproduce such expressions more or less literally, so that the reader may be able to **perceive something of the way in which the original document employed local cultural elements** [*bold characters are mine*].

¹¹ A. Popovič, *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* (Dept. Of Comparative Literature, University of Alberta, 1976), quoted in S. Bassnett-McGuire, *Translation Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1980), p. 25.

A consistent F-E translation will obviously contain much that is not readily intelligible to the average reader. One must therefore usually supplement such translations with marginal notes.

[...]

The conformance of a translation to the receptor language and culture as a whole is an essential ingredient in any stylistically acceptable rendering. Actually this quality of stylistical appropriateness is usually noticeable only when it is absent.

[...]

Such an adjustment to the receptor language and culture must result in a translation that **bears no obvious trace of foreign origin** [*bold characters are mine*].¹²

However, it should not be forgotten how in the 1980s Susan Bassnett questioned an excessive and superficial use of Nida's key-notion of 'equivalent effect' since it could "at times lead to very dubious conclusions". While confirming the relevance of the functional approach, Bassnett stresses the necessity to broaden the notion of equivalence, taking into consideration the cultural-temporal context of the translated text. And she quotes Lotman and his distinction between an internal organization or structure and the structures outside the text, or, in other words, between the autonomous and the communicative aspects of a text. A translator should keep both tensions in mind: equivalence in translation should never be conceived as a 'search for sameness', which can never exist, but rather should aim at an approach that perceives equivalence as a 'dialectic' between the signs and the internal/external structures of both the source and the target texts.¹³

Following this line, some theorists, like Werner Koller, have pointed out the relativity of the very notion of equivalence, which comes to be regarded as influenced by a number of coexistent causes. Koller mentions the always-present double link of translation: with both the source text and the communicative conditions in the target context. Moreover, he states, different equivalence frameworks – both in the source and in the target texts – must be focused on and kept in mind. And, on the one hand, he refers to extra-linguistic frameworks, such as the historical and cultural backgrounds to production and reception as well; but, on the other hand, he thinks also of the semantic and pragmatic frameworks which determine the linguistic, stylistic and aesthetic norms of both texts.¹⁴

¹²E. Nida, "Principles of Correspondence" (1964), in Venuti (2000), pp. 126-140.

¹³"Equivalence in translation should not be approached as a search for sameness, since sameness cannot even exist between two TL versions of the same text, let alone between the SI and the TI version", S. Bassnett (1980), p. 29.

¹⁴W. Koller, "The Concept of Equivalence and the Object of translation Studies", *Target*, 7:2 (1995), pp. 191-222, quoted in N. Dusi, *Il cinema come traduzione* (Torino: UTET, 2003), p. 44.

Yet, unlike the theoretical current generally known as *Translation Studies*, Koller insists on giving great relevance to the source text, the linguistic and stylistic structures of which must always be given attention.

Another important contribution to the development of the issue of equivalence is offered by Anthony Pym. In his writings, Pym has often affirmed the key-difference between 'text transfer' and translation. He defines 'transfer' as the movement of a text across time and space, even within the same culture, "the simple moving of inscribed material from one place and time to another place and time".¹⁵ Whereas transfer is to be seen as 'material' movement, translation is seen as a semiotic activity, and both the material and the semiotic movement are related so that translation not only enacts a transfer, but "can also represent or misrepresent its materiality". Translation usually takes place when the cultural borders, the frontiers, are crossed: it is the necessity to 'cross borders' that makes translation necessary. Thus, translation can be seen as a response to transfer, and transfer almost becomes a necessary precondition for translating: "if someone is translating or has translated, then something has moved or is meant to move".¹⁶

However, the texts that reach the translator 'do not fall from the sky', and this truism is valid for translated texts as well. As time and space differences have great relevance and influence on both the translator's choices and the readers' reactions and their feed-back, Pym affirms the necessity to always refer to the 'translation regimes', i.e., the 'negotiating procedures' governing the relationships between individuals and texts, which influence and direct transfer, developing important networks of relations. These procedures are sets of norms that co-ordinate and influence the behaviour of single individuals within their own cultures, but also with regard to specific fields: in other words, they are both 'intersubjective' and intercultural.

As a consequence, equivalence comes to be developed through a textual strategy which manipulates the competence of the reader up to the point he thinks that the solutions proposed by the target text he/she has in front of him/her are the real intentions of the source text. Therefore, according to Pym, equivalence is not a "predetermined relation that translators passively seek" but a transitory fiction aptly produced by translators so that the receivers come to believe that what they are reading is not a translation at all. And that opens the way to the notion of equivalence as an 'interpersonal contract': an equivalence always to be negotiated.

Pym thinks that translators should be taught in terms of 'translational regimes':

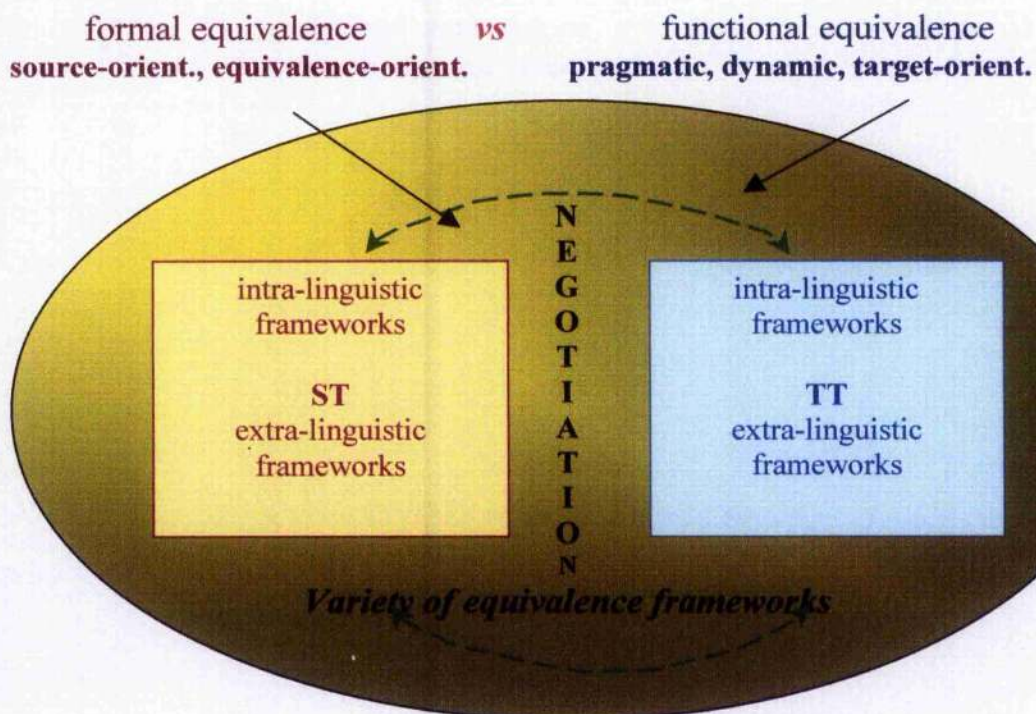
Only when translation rules are recognized as **ethical decisions** [*bold is mine*], when notions of split loyalty and potential treason are accepted as

¹⁵ A. Pym, *Translation and Text Transfer. An Essay on the Principles of Intercultural Communication* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992), p. 13.

¹⁶ A. Pym (1992), p. 19.

something more than idle metaphor, and when the technologies of means are accompanied by hard thought about why intercultural relations are important and how they can be improved, only then might we develop properly translational regimes.¹⁷

Once again let us try to graphically synthesize the main issues emerged.



1.1.2c - Towards the linking of theory and practice

All of the above clearly shows how rich the debate about translation has become, and yet in 1985 Theo Hermans opens his essay "Translation Studies and a New Paradigm" once again lamenting the very marginal position occupied by translation within the study of literatures, mostly due to the generally assumed supremacy of the source text.¹⁸ When analyzing translated texts, scholars tend only to point out the high qualities of the ST and the inadequacies of translation: this leads to a source-oriented reading, which inevitably becomes repetitive, predictable and prescriptive.

¹⁷ A. Pym (1992), p. 174.

¹⁸ The essay published with the Italian title "Un nuovo paradigma per la traduttologia", in *Testo a fronte*, 5:9 (1993), pp. 25-33, is taken from *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1985).

At any rate, as Hermans reminds his readers, since the mid 1970s an international group of scholars have been trying to overcome the deadlock of heavily source-oriented criticism. It is not a proper *school*, but a number of independent specialists who, even if working in different countries, and focusing on different issues, agree on, and share some basic principles in translation. What they share is an idea of literature as a complex and dynamic system, as well as an approach to translation which is:

- descriptive rather than normative
- target-oriented
- functional and systemic
- interested in the norms and rules which govern the production and reception of translated texts
- aware of the place and the role of translation within a single literature as well as within the interaction of literatures.

We can say that the 1970s and 1980s see the appearance of what is to be regarded as a new discipline, centred on translation. Theorists aim to produce a comprehensive theory which can also be used as a guideline for the production of translated texts, in other words, the main trend is towards the linking of theory with practice. As Susan Bassnett affirms:

To divorce the theory from the practice, to set the scholar against the practitioner as has happened in other disciplines, would be tragic indeed.¹⁹

Different names have been used for what is actually a common branch of studies: the French speak of *Traductologie*, but in the translation journal *Babel* it is referred as *Translatology*.²⁰ The Anglo-American use the phrase *Translation Studies*, which, however is also used to refer to a specific current and approach to translation. *Traductologie*, which self-defines as translation meditating on and studying itself through its actual experience,²¹ has seen even recently an important contribution thanks to Peeter Torop's *Total'nyj perevod* (1995).²² Torop is firmly convinced that contemporary translation science more and more urgently needs a comprehensive methodology which allows the development of a scientific metalanguage, necessary to 'translate' and make homogenous the specific terminologies of the number of disciplines which have been dealing with translation. And that is exactly what he tries to contribute to through his systematic approach and impressive work of research.

¹⁹S. Bassnett (1980), p. 7.

²⁰About Translatology, in particular see G. Radò, "Outline of a Systematic Translatology", in *Babel*, 25:4 (1979), pp. 187-195.

²¹As pointed out in N. Dusi (2003), p. 61.

²²Partly published in Italy on *Testo a fronte*, 11:20 (1999), pp. 5-47. Recently fully translated into Italian by B. Osimo as *La traduzione totale* (Rimini: Guaraldi, 2001). According to my research, not translated into English yet.

Among other issues, his bulky essay focuses also on translation criticism, always with a *total* (i.e., broad and comprehensive) approach, and the grids, tables and guidelines he proposes can therefore be of great help for our research. The table "Translatability of Culture" is particularly stimulating, even if, of course, it needs to be 'tailored' and integrated for one's research needs. It focuses on 'translatability parameters' (parameters of language, time, space, text, work of literature, socio-political approach) matching them with a range of available translation strategies.²³ This way, the table fosters a more open-minded approach - less repetitive, predictable and prescriptive, yet highly scientific and comprehensive - in the studying of translation, including also such disputed issues as domestication and neutralization, and the political significance of translation.²⁴

With regard to the current of *Translation Studies*, on the other hand, first of all we should remember that the phrase is chosen by Bassnett as the title for her famous essay, which we have already mentioned. However, in this context, rather than Bassnett's important essay, we prefer to refer to Hermans's already mentioned analysis and description of *Translation Studies*, and thus, following his introduction, we begin by mentioning Itaman Even-Zohar and his key-notion of literature as 'polysystem'.²⁵

According to Even-Zohar, literature is conceived as a body consisting of numerous forms, highly varied and dynamic, within which the elements may either be in contrast with one another, or, in any case, move continuously. Among the most vital oppositions determining literature, there is the contrast between primary or innovative models and secondary or conservatory ones, or the opposition between the center and the periphery of the polysystem. But what is the function of translated literature for any given literature, and what is its position within that polysystem? Even-Zohar's innovative thesis is that translated literature in itself is a particular literary system.

Translated works do correlate in at least two ways: a) in the way their source texts are selected by the target literature; b) in the way they adopt specific norms, behavior and policies which results from their relations with the other home co-systems

[...]

It seems that these points make it not only justifiable to talk about translated literature, but rather imperative to do so.

[...]

In other words, I conceive of translated literature not only as an integral system, within any literary polysystem, but as a most active system within it.²⁶

²³ Torop's table will be further commented on in chapter 3 of this thesis.

²⁴ Torop (1999), p. 38.

²⁵ "Polysystem Theory", in *Poetics Today*, 1:1 (1990), pp. 1-94.

²⁶ I. Even-Zohar, *The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem*, in Venuti (2000), p. 193.

Consequently, translated literature may become central or peripheral within the polysystem, and thus it shares the innovatory/primary repertoires or the conservatory/secondary ones: that depend on the 'specific constellation' of the system under study. As Even-Zohar explains, the very principles of selecting the works to be translated are determined by the situation concerning the (home) polysystem. For example, texts might be chosen because of their compatibility with new approaches and the supposedly innovatory role they may assume within the target literature, and in that case translated literature would maintain a central position within it. Otherwise, translated literature may maintain a secondary position, therefore generally employing secondary models: in such a situation, norms, already conventionally established by a dominant type in the target literature, would become determinant. Thus translation is no longer seen as a phenomenon "whose nature and borders are given once and for all", and for which prescriptive rules can be fixed. On the contrary it depends on the existing relations within a certain cultural system.

Hermans, in the conclusion of his synthetic but effective presentation of the Translation Studies group of theorists, points out that, unlikely many other conventional studies on translation, the approach based on the notion of literature as a polysystem is never prescriptive. The Translation Studies approach expects the specialist to work without any preconceived notions about what actually 'translation' consists of, or where the exact borders between translation and non-translation are, since even these notions would inevitably turn out to be prescriptive.²⁷

The notion of literature as a polysystem of interrelated forms is shared also by Gideon Toury who develops it further, focusing on the 'polysystem canons' that constitute 'norms' influencing and limiting the translator's work. 'Norms', of course, are very far from being normative rules to be respected by a translator, being rather constants, regularities that can be detected in translated texts, and which, therefore, can contribute to configure a culture-specific translation behaviour. After confirming that for the study of translational norms it is vital to choose a target-oriented approach – an 'epitome' – as norms can only be applied at the 'receiving end', Toury shows that norms can be expected to operate at every stage in the translation event. "It is norms that determine the (type and extent) of equivalence manifested by actual translations"; yet, it should not be forgotten, norms are unstable, changing entities, since they are intersubjective factors, moreover linked also to specific historical moments.²⁸

Another important contribution to *Translation Studies*, as well as an original development of the polysystem theory, is to be found in Hans Vermeer's *skopos*theorie.²⁹ 'Skopos' is the translator's aim or purpose, which is paramount

²⁷ T. Hermans (1990), p. 31.

²⁸ G. Toury, "The Nature and the Role of Norms in Translation", in Venuti (2000), pp. 198-211.

²⁹ H. J. Vermeer, "Ein Rahmen für eine allgemeine Translationstheorie", *Lebende Sprachen*, 23 (1978), pp. 99-102.

in any translation project. Of course several factors may determine the aim behind a translation, making it quite complex, and leading to a textual realization which may differ widely from the source text in its attempt at successfully reaching the targeted audience.

The target text, the *translatum*, is oriented towards the target culture, and it is this which ultimately defines its adequacy. It therefore follows that source and target texts may diverge from each other quite considerably, not only in the formulation and distribution of the content but also as regards the goals which are set for each, and in terms of which the arrangements of the content is in fact determined.³⁰

Thanks to André Lefevere (1982), the concept of literary system and norm becomes even more complex and rich, to some extent marking the shifting of the textual and target-oriented approach to a view of translation as 'communication between cultures'. Lefevere opens his essay with a paradox: the success of a writer's work is generally achieved through "misunderstandings and misconceptions", which he, from now on, refers to as 'refractions'. As a matter of fact, writers and their works are always set against a certain background, and thus we can say "they are refracted through a certain spectrum", as they themselves may refract previous works or writers through another spectrum.³¹

All this radically denies the unfortunately still widely-held assumptions about the sacred character of the text, as well as the idea of the originality of an author, as if he/she were creating *ex nihilo*. These assumptions have their roots in Romanticism, and in translation they lead to the illusion of the possibility of recovering the author's 'true intentions'.

Lefevere shows us instead that refractions have always been present in literature, and have been highly influential, even if they have not been enough studied.

A refraction (whether it is translation, criticism, historiography) which tries to carry a work of literature over from one system into another, represents a compromise between two systems and is, as such, the perfect indicator of the dominant constraints in both systems.

[...]

The degree of compromise in a refraction will depend on the reputation of the writer being translated within the system from which the translation is made.

[...]

³⁰ H. J. Vermeer, "Skopos and Commission in Translation Action", in Venuti (2000), p. 223.

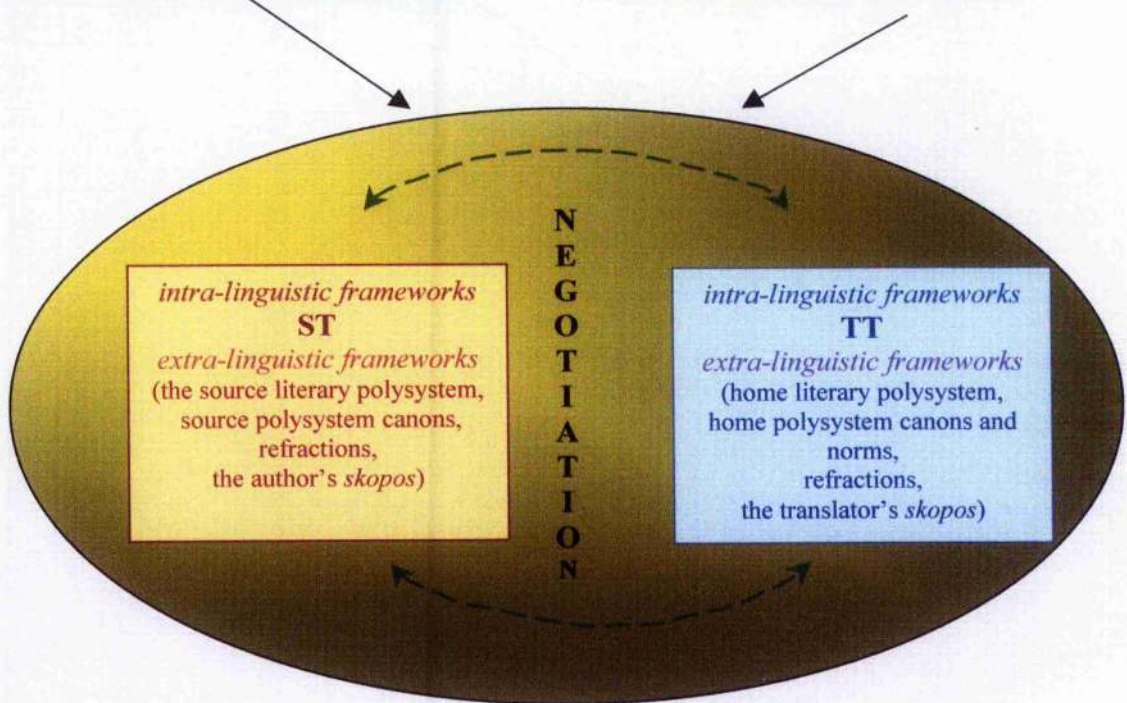
³¹ A. Lefevere, "Mother's Courage Cucumbers -- Text, System and Refraction in a Theory of Literature", in Venuti (2000), pp. 233-249.

The degree to which the foreign writer is accepted into the native system will, on the other hand, be determined by the need that the native system has of him in a certain phase of its evolution.³²

Like his predecessors, Lefevere points out that neither the natural language nor the politics of the receiving country are sclerotic and fixed, which means also that the spectrum through which refractions are made keeps changing as well. Moreover it should be remembered that those who produce both refracted and original literature do not operate as *automatons*, and they act under the constraint of their time and location: they of course devise their own strategies to cope with them, “ranging hypothetically from full acceptance to full defiance”. And Lefevere rightly recommends flexibility when system categories are applied to individual cases.

If now we take up again the diagram on page 15, it seems natural to integrate it with these latest contributions, which in fact help to clarify and make more meaningful that otherwise rather vague phrase: ‘extra-linguistic frameworks’.

formal equivalence **vs** functional equivalence
source-orient., equivalence-orient. *pragmatic, dynamic, target-orient.*



³² A. Lefevere (2000), p. 237.

1.1.2d - The risks of domestication

To regard translation as a strategic moment for communication between cultures, necessarily leads to focus on another much-discussed antithesis: 'domesticating' (and/or 'neutralizing') versus 'foreignizing'. As we have already had the opportunity of remembering, domestication finds its model in Nida's theorization with his ideal of 'complete naturalness of expression', leading to a text with no trace of foreign origin. But Nida's position is based on the conception of language as communication and function.

Thus, it is no wonder that starting from a completely different notion of language, language as hermeneutics and interpretation, George Steiner follows another direction. In his 1975 essay *After Babel*, which Venuti rightly defines as the most widely known work in translation theory since the Second World War, Steiner further develops the ideas of the German Romantic theorists Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm von Humboldt that translation must reveal the foreignness of the foreign text.³³ Any "great translation must carry with it the most precise sense possible of the resistant, of the barriers intact at the heart of understanding".³⁴

Steiner's well-known hermeneutic four-step motion theory clearly avoids looking at both the ST and the TT *per se*, as if in a vacuum.³⁵ The view of translation as a "hermeneutics of trust, of penetration, of embodiment, and of restitution" draws attention to the delicate border and relation not only between two texts, but rather between the two texts and the worlds that surround them, which is also confirmed by the highly metaphorical language and images Steiner tends to use in *After Babel*.

If translation necessarily starts with a moment of 'trust' (certainty of communication, notwithstanding systems of meaning which are very different, and may even be antithetical), the second move must be one of 'aggression': "the translator invades, extracts and brings home".³⁶ The image evoked by 'home' is better explained with the third phase, 'embodiment', which after all expresses an incorporative movement, and, Steiner points out, that the import is not made in a vacuum, since "the native semantic field is already extant and crowded". But Steiner reminds us that the action of embodiment is always rather risky and complex for any language, or any traditional and symbolic set or cultural ensemble, and this explains why there are various degrees of assimilation and placement of the new text, ranging from total domestication to equally total strangeness. However, if it finished here, the hermeneutic motion would be incomplete and even *dangerous*.³⁷ Thus, the fourth move, 'reciprocity', becomes

³³ L. Venuti (2000), p. 124.

³⁴ See in particular G. Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (London, Oxford and New York: OUP, 1975), p. 378.

³⁵ G. Steiner (1975), chapter 5, "The Hermeneutic Motion".

³⁶ G. Steiner (1975) p. 298.

³⁷ G. Steiner (1975), p. 300.

essential. Translation has begun with an act of trust, which necessarily “puts off balance”, since it implies leaning towards the confronting text, so as to “circle and invade it cognitively”.

We come home laden, thus again off-balance, having caused disequilibrium throughout the system by taking away from the “other” and by adding to our own. The hermeneutic act must compensate. It must mediate into exchange and restored parity.

[...]

The work translated is enhanced [...] The original text gains from the orders of diverse relationship and distance established between itself and translations. The reciprocity is dialectic: new “formats” of significance are initiated by distance and contiguity.³⁸

With regard to the issue of foreignizing, another interesting and original position is that developed by Henry Meschonnic.³⁹ The French scholar, being firmly convinced that translating must be developed as a poetics in its own way, affirms that language and literature must be seen as intrinsically linked. But he argues that when speaking of translation, specialists should shift their focus from *langue* (language) to *parole* (speech, writing) and thus to the text as a text unit. That means that the translation of a literary text must ‘do’ what a literary text ‘does’. Whatever the languages involved, there is only one starting point: to understand the specific, unique way a subject has transformed, by inventing, the ways of expressing meaning, feeling, thinking, (i.e., one’s peculiar way of living within the language, of influencing the language), which is the fundamental richness and basis for the building of any text. It is exactly this creative process that translation should aim at reproducing and be faithful to. The implication is to stop conceiving a text as something expressed once and for all, i.e., as a product, and instead to regard it as an ‘act of expression’, as a process.

According to the French theorist, it is not in the moving from one language to another that we should strive for equivalence, trying to hide linguistic, cultural and historic differences, but rather in the moving from a text to a text, from one act of expression to another, and thus what we should strive to point out is, instead, a linguistic, cultural and historic ‘otherness’. And Meschonnic argues that the history of translations in itself actually opposes relation to transfer. Instead translation is not to be seen as cancellation of differences, but as exposition of differences: translation not aiming at transforming *langues*, but at exploring the infinite mixing (Meschonnic uses the evocative metaphor *mestizaje*) and ‘otherness’ of speech and writings.⁴⁰

³⁸ G. Steiner (1975), pp. 300-01.

³⁹ In particular, see H. Meschonnic, *Poétique du traduire*, Verdier, 1999, extracts of which have been published in Italian in “Testo a fronte”, 12:23 (2000), as “Poetica del tradurre – Cominciando dai principi”, pp. 5 - 28, and “Il traduttore e l’odio della poetica”, pp. 29-36.

⁴⁰ Yet such a metaphor could be rather misleading, as Néstor García Canclini points out in his *Hybrid Cultures – Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (1989; transl. 1995,

Before concluding this section about domesticating and foreignizing with the theorist who has paid the greatest attention to these issues, Lawrence Venuti, there is another contribution to be remembered: that of Philip J. Lewis, who, focusing on the English versions of Derrida's provocative French texts, comes to develop original views on the concepts of equivalence and fidelity.⁴¹ He notices that the first American translators of Derrida tend to a 'weak' translation, characterized by privileging the 'us-system' (the usual, the useful, the common linguistic usage), which inevitably implies to opt for what domesticates or familiarizes a message, avoiding all that might upset or abuse language and thought. Against that, he points to a different way open for translation, one which sees translation (strong, 'forceful' translation) to dare to take risks and to value experimentation, by tampering with usage and seeking "to match the polyvalence of the original by producing its own".

It is here that Lewis introduces the notion of 'abusive fidelity', as opposed to pseudo-fidelity based on the 'us-system'. Of course the 'abusive move' cannot be directed at just any element of the ST, but must be based on careful interpretation, so as to identify the "points or passages that stand out as clusters of textual energy". What is even more important, this abusive fidelity shows a dual function: "that of forcing the linguistic and conceptual system of which it is a dependent and that of directing a critical thrust back toward the text it translates and in relation to which it becomes a kind of unsettling aftermath".⁴²

The strategic choices of domesticating and foreignizing then become the key issues in Venuti's thought, as the title of one of his best known essay clearly shows: *The Translator's Invisibility* (London and New York, 1995). Venuti laments that, if foreignization as a method can be said to be specific to countries like France and Germany, at least in some historical moments, the situation is much more negative in the Anglo-American culture, which has long been dominated by domesticating theories, where the ideal to attain is absolute fluency.

A translated text is judged acceptable by most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently, when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent /.../ the appearance in other words that the translation is not in fact a translation, but the 'original'. The illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse, of the translator's effort to

Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 11): "I prefer the last term [*hybridisation*] because it includes diverse intercultural mixtures -- not only the racial ones to which *mestizaje* tends to be limited - and because it permits the inclusion of the modern forms of hybridisation better than does 'syncretism', a term that almost always refers to religious fusions or traditional symbolic movements".

⁴¹ P. E. Lewis, "The Measure of Translation Effects" (1985), in L. Venuti (2000), pp. 264-283.

⁴² P. E. Lewis (1985) in L. Venuti (2000), p. 271.

ensure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning.⁴³

Venuti invites us to see the political and moral implications of the invisible-translator approach, which he denounces as "imperialistic abroad and xenophobic at home". Hence the invitation to translators and translation critics not to be passive. A 'strategy of resistance' and a radical rethinking of fidelity in translation must be developed, so as to seek to restrain the otherwise dominant ethnocentric violence of translation.

Here Venuti follows P.E. Lewis with his notion of 'abusive fidelity', and his model of the translator as one who aims at recreating analogically the abuse that occurs in the original text. Thus, in the trend of post-structuralism, Venuti advocates experimentalism: translating must be innovative, even if resorting to the elements already available in the translating language and culture. In fact, it should use them so as to recreate a new reality which is 'defamiliarizing', even if still intelligible in the translating language.⁴⁴

However, special competences are necessary for such a task, as knowledge of the source-language culture could not be enough for a translation to produce a text which is readable and resistant to reductive domestication at the same time: a translator must have equally deep knowledge of the target-language culture, and not only the present one, of course. Therefore, when choosing a foreign text, a translator must be aware of all the implications, and must start with a 'cultural' diagnosis: "the canon of foreign literatures in English, as well as the canons of British and American literature, set against patterns of cross-cultural exchange and geopolitical relations".⁴⁵

This way, a translator who wants to restrain the ethnocentric violence of translation, can either choose a foreign text that is marginal in the target-language culture, but translate it in a canonical way, i.e., according to the transparency approach, or opt for a text which is regarded as canonical in the

⁴³ L. Venuti (1995), p. 1. To confirm the persistence of Venuti's accusation, see the page devoted to translation in the supplement "Cultura e spettacolo" in *La Stampa* (21st October 2006, p. 24), where the translator's position is represented by Elena Lowenthal in an article entitled "Lowenthal: sono brava se divento invisibile" ("I am good if I turn invisible"). Lowenthal then affirms that: "Una fra le cose che mi piacciono di più nel lavoro di traduzione è la trasparenza inevitabile di questo mestiere. Il suo saper stare ai margini del testo. In filigrana. Ci sei e non ci sei. Teoricamente, più ci sei meno ci sei: più sei bravo e più scompaia nel passaggio fra una lingua e l'altra, dando così l'impressione che il tuo autore abbia scritto nella lingua verso la quale lo stai conducendo" ("One of the things I like best in my job as a translator is that it inevitably implies my being transparent. A translator must remain at the edge of the text, in the wirework. You are, and you are not there. Theoretically, the more you are present, the less you are present: the more skillful you are, the more you disappear in the transfer from a language to another, thus creating the impression that your author has actually been writing in the language towards which you are leading him/her", *my translation*).

⁴⁴ L. Venuti (1995), p. 291.

⁴⁵ L. Venuti (1995), p. 309.

target-language culture, and translate it with a non-canonical and therefore marginalizing discourse.

Yet, Venuti is perfectly aware that the ethnocentric violence connected to translation is rather intrinsic and inevitable. And this issue is especially focused on in a later essay, which is published in his 2000 anthology.⁴⁶ Here Venuti stresses that, however much defamiliarized a translated text is, it is still inscribed to “domestic intelligibilities and interests”, in other words, it is subject to “domestic inscription”. But, Venuti wonders, what solutions are realistically open, if cross-cultural communication unaffected by domestic intelligibilities and interests still seems an unattainable utopia? How can the ethical and political ideal to build up “a community with foreign cultures, a shared understanding with and of them” be attained?

The answer that here Venuti provides, points to a strategic element, the ‘remainder’, as Venuti calls it after Jean-Jacques Lecercle, and which a translator releases in the hope – not in the certainty – of bridging linguistic and cultural borders. Actually, any language use tends to influence and vary the standards of the language, by sampling different formations, both substantial and marginal (regional or group dialects, jargons, stylistic innovations, archaisms, neologisms). All that is to be regarded as a ‘remainder’, because it helps “to exceed communication of a univocal meaning and instead draws attention to the conditions of the communicative act”.

Any communication through translating will involve the release of a domestic remainder, especially in the case of literature. The foreign text is rewritten in domestic dialects and discourses, registers and styles, and this results in the production of textual effects that signify only in the history of the domestic language and culture [...]

Can a translation ever communicate to its readers the understanding of the foreign text that foreign readers have? Yes, but this communication will always be partial, both incomplete and inevitably slanted towards the domestic scene. It occurs only when the domestic remainder released by the translation includes **an inscription of the foreign context** [*bold characters are mine*] in which the text first emerged. [...]

A translation of a foreign novel can communicate, not simply dictionary meaning, the basic elements of narrative form, but an interpretation that participates in its “potentially eternal afterlife in succeeding generations”. And this interpretation can be one that is shared by the foreign-language readers for whom the text was written. **The translation will then foster a common understanding with and of the foreign culture** [*bold characters are mine*], an understanding that in part restores the historical context of the foreign text – although for domestic readers.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ L. Venuti, “Translation, Communication, Utopia”, in Venuti (2000), pp. 468-488.

⁴⁷ L. Venuti (2000), pp. 470, 473.

We should here observe, incidentally, that, with regard to this debate, Torop's contribution is of particular interest, also because he widens the perspective by introducing a subtle but vital distinction in his already mentioned table 'Translatability of Cultures'. Unlike Venuti, who focuses only on the opposition between 'foreignizing' and 'domesticating', Torop, besides 'nationalization' or 'naturalization' (the synonyms he uses for the strategy of 'domestication') gives great relevance also to 'neutralization, which he rightly identifies as the dangerously most recurrent strategy for translation in a more and more globalized and leveled world.

However, although more radical in his attacks, Venuti does not deceive himself: to favour intercultural understanding through translation is a hard and delicate task, bordering on the verge of utopia. In spite of all that, he keeps thinking that the goal must be sustained. Translation must foster a domestic community which is open to foreignness. It is a vital target, indeed. And as such, it is a goal that the author of this research personally shares, although also agreeing with Umberto Eco when he rightly affirms that, when facing the issue of making a choice about foreignizing or naturalizing, too rigid dichotomies should be avoided and are better solved through a plurality of solutions which must be negotiated one by one.⁴⁸

Here Torop's words come back to mind when he states that one of the missions of translating (at least ideally) resides in striving to oppose to cultural neutralization and leveling, whereas nowadays, even in democratic and developed countries, the trend is not for *total* translation, as he would advocate, but rather for what it should be more appropriate to call *totalitarian* translation.⁴⁹

1.1.2e - Translation as communication between cultures

Translation and translatability are actually seen as central to cross-cultural discourse by Wolfgang Iser. Pointing out how cross-cultural discourse radically differs from traditional comparative studies, he questions the very notion of comparative culture, at least in the way it is usually approached. Iser accuses traditional comparative studies of turning the very act of comparing into the goal and essence of cultural studies, which implies reducing it to little more than an empty category, interested only in differences and points of contact between the examined cultures. But such comparing studies cannot justify their evaluation

⁴⁸"Nel continuum delle soluzioni possibili, anche le dicotomie troppo rigide [...] devono essere sciolte in una pluralità di soluzioni negoziate volta per volta" ("In a continuum of possibile solutions, even too rigid dichotomies must be solved through a variety of solutions which have to be negotiated one by one", *my translation*), U. Eco, *Dire quasi la stessa cosa - Esperienze di traduzione*, Studi Bompiani, Milano, 2003, p.191.

⁴⁹ P. Torop (1999), p. 20.

and conclusions, since the comparing, by itself, is not provided with any implicit system of values to refer to.⁵⁰

Instead Iser focuses on the cross-cultural implications of translation. And he points out that the more a culture is distant and foreign to us, the more essential the support of translation becomes, as the specific nature of the culture we meet can be detected only by projecting it onto something which is familiar. With this, a foreign culture is not simply inserted into the target culture, but it is the very structure of the target culture that has to be modified so that it can make room for what would otherwise be difficult to locate.⁵¹

According to Iser, the notion of translatability is in itself in opposition to the principle of cultural hegemony, as it aims at 'mutual interpretation', whereas the mere meeting of cultures or the interaction of different levels of culture implies either the assimilation of what seems to be interesting and useful, or the suppression of what is otherwise seen as different and menacing. This is apparently confirmed by the fact that, if there is a strong conviction that a culture has firm and strong foundations, a cross-cultural discourse can be seen only as a foreign intrusion, and the encounter between cultures leads to assimilation, guided by the principle of selecting only what may be relevant for the culture concerned.⁵²

Iser's views can be better understood if integrated with the work of Anton Popovič. The Slovak researcher highlights how the TT is the result of a cultural interaction, in other words, the TT is the synthesis of the source and the target cultures, and he identifies three possibilities of cultural interaction:

- the source culture is stronger than the receiving one, and thus it becomes dominating in the TT;
- the target culture is stronger and therefore dominating, with the effect of a TT which does not respond to philological needs, but rather tends towards maximum readability [this case would correspond to the image of Anglo-American culture as denounced by Lawrence Venuti];
- the two cultures have the same strength, and the TT is a result of this mutual influence.⁵³

⁵⁰ See D.H. Pageux, "Le traduzioni nello studio delle letterature comparate", in *Testo a Fronte*, 13:24 (2001), pp. 49-65; taken from *La littérature générale et comparée* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1994).

⁵¹ W. Iser, "Il concetto di traducibilità: le variabili dell'interpretazione", in *Testo a Fronte*, 12:22 (2000), pp. 13-29; it is the Italian translation of a lecture delivered at *Graz Anglistenstag*, Graz, in 1994.

⁵² W. Iser, "The Emergence of a Cross-cultural Discourse", in S. Budick and W. Iser, *The Translatability of Cultures – Figurations of the Space Between* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 261.

⁵³ Anton Popovič's positions are amply explained and commented in B. Osimo's *Corso di traduzione* (Rimini: Guaraldi, 2000), which is also available online (see in particular part 2, chapter 35).

In regards to this third possibility, Iser thinks that, if we accept the notion of translatability, this inevitably shifts the focus to the "space between cultures".⁵⁴ Of course it is not the space between cultures that determines the peculiar structures of each of them; yet it is undeniable, as he points out, that it is through it, and thanks to it, that "a mutual mirroring of cultures" is brought about. The 'space between' makes this mirroring possible just because it belongs to none of the cultures and thus it is able to create the proper conditions for self-observation within each culture.

From this point of view, the space between paves the way to an experience of 'the other'. And Iser suggests an open list of transpositions of the 'other' that can be detected in every cultural document:

1. encountering the other awakens awareness of a duality which results in an experience of difference;
2. bracketing, suspending or even excluding the other allows for an exploration of difference that raises the question of why there are such disparities;
3. incorporating the other aims at assimilation, which leads to a politics of cultural relationships;
4. appropriating the other highlights goals of utilization that are meant to remedy existing deficiencies;
5. reflecting oneself in the other entails heightened self-awareness, which leads to self-confrontation;
6. recognizing the other as primordial generates a call to responsibility prior to any possible knowledge of the other, and may produce an ethics based on imponderable commitment.⁵⁵

Such a catalogue offers Iser the rationale for raising the issue that "there is no selfhood without an other". And then, referring to the relationships between cultures, he states that, even when it does not undergo a process of assimilation or appropriation, in any case, the experience of the 'other' needs a special type of translation, a process that should not be governed by a pre-existing frame of reference, unlike normal comparisons. Of course, mutual interpenetration and understanding must be always guaranteed, which necessarily implies also a certain degree of incorporation of the 'other'; however, translating the 'other', above all, means to acknowledge and to respect what rightly pertains to the other, avoiding forcing it into preconceived notions and frames.

It is a delicate process, and yet the 'border between cultures' must be crossed to make communication possible, and this leads to "the very act of going beyond" linguistic and cultural barriers, to use Bhabba's own words, who aptly

⁵⁴ See also, Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994), London and New York: Routledge, and N. G. Canclini (1995).

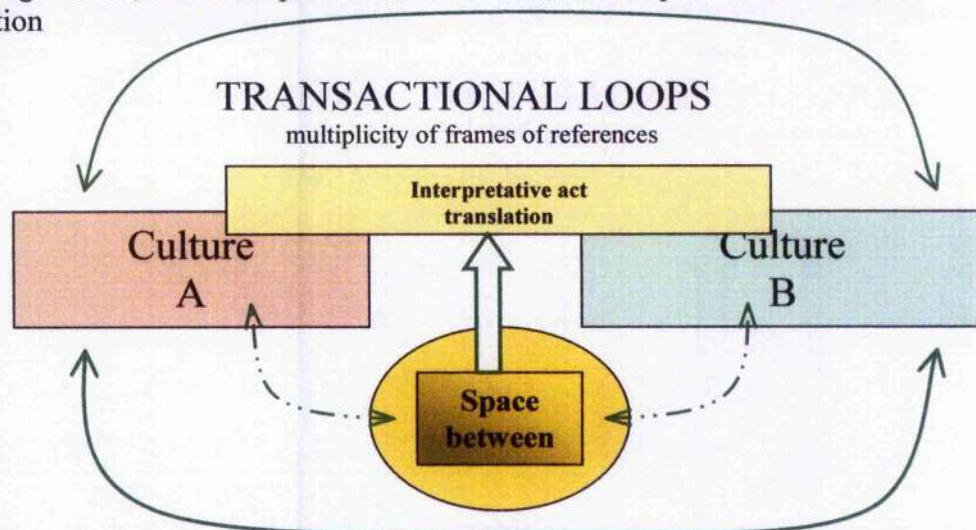
⁵⁵ W. Iser (1996), p. 298

chooses an apparently paradoxical quotation to open the introduction to his essay.⁵⁶

A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which *something begins its presencing*.⁵⁷

Therefore it is necessary to 'master' the space between foreignness and familiarity, a space that could be described as a 'black box', at least at first sight. To try to fully understand and interpret an 'other', 'another', who is practically impossible to identify and to really know, actually means a continuous shifting from the known to the unknown, so as to get the unknown closer to something more familiar. Thus, Iser says, this type of approach, this cross-cultural discourse, brings about a "mutual patterning" and "repatterning" and is based on what he calls "transactional loops". These "transactional loops" work chiasmically, that is to say, they express a double movement within and without each of the cultures, endowing the 'blank box' with high dynamism, and "exposing each one to its otherness".

To begin with, the foreign culture is modeled, or 'clothed', on conditions set by the receiving culture, and thus it becomes defamiliarized; since some kind of 'fashioning' of the foreign culture is necessary in order to make its transmittance feasible. However, what is activated, is an exchange between *in* and *out* information. During such an exchange, what is familiar is subject to be changed whenever it does not correspond to the goal which has been set: that of understanding and interpreting the other. Thus, the exchange implies an actual double correction: the information which has first been provided, comes back after being altered, and thus provokes, in its turn, a new provision of revised information



⁵⁶ H. K. Bhabha (1994), p.4.

⁵⁷ From Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", in H.K. Bhabha (1994), p.1.

In order to make a foreign culture become understandable for us, we must be able to change our outlook on what has been familiar to us until that moment, since it is on the point of being penetrated by something unknown and unfamiliar. Transactional loops make possible that change of outlook, by remodeling the information provided by the first mutual contact, thus provoking a revision also of the goal which the first information was meant to reach. This way 'transaccational loops' also set the basis for a new type of contact, which can be brought about only by adopting a strategy of continuous negotiation, although Iser never uses the word himself.⁵⁸ Consequently, the frames of reference specific to the individual cultures must be put aside, since a cross-cultural discourse must develop its own frames of reference, its own guidelines. It cannot just substitute one frame for another; on the contrary, it must develop and establish a multiplicity of frames of references which might suit different circumstances.

What does that all actually imply for translation? Iser is convinced that any interpretation is an act of translation, which as such opens a space between cultures whenever it occurs. The 'space between' by itself would inevitably mean some resistance to translation, and yet it is that very resistance that can also boost the attempt to bridge the gap, thus leading to translation, becoming a support to effective translation, rather than a hindrance.⁵⁹

Yet Venuti's doubts persist and come back to mind - what solutions are realistically open, if communication between cultures is always intrinsically affected by the logic of domestic intelligibilities and interests? With Iser, we could try to answer that translation may help a receiving culture to remain open to a "shared understanding with and of foreign cultures", provided the translator is aware of, and works for the mutual patterning and repatterning that his/her translating can activate. In other words, if it is true that there must be an inevitable spectrum of domestic intelligibilities through which a translator must filter the foreign text, however much defamiliarized he/she would like it to be, it must also be remembered that the very process should itself enter the dynamism of the 'space between'. Thus, if the translator chooses a cross-cultural discourse approach, his/her experience will see the inevitable 'domestic inscription' inherent in the initial approach, enter in its turn the transactional loops, and in this way it will be ultimately changed and transformed into something new, and his/her interpretation will participate in the "potentially eternal afterlife" of a

⁵⁸ W. Iser (1994), p. 19.

⁵⁹ With regard to the notion of a space between cultures, especially if seen as linked to the so-called phenomenon of 'creolization', Bruno Osimo remembers Toury's critical position: "What is totally unthinkable is that a translation may hover in between cultures, so to speak. As long as a (hypothetical) interculture has not crystallized into an autonomous (target) systemic entity, e.g., in processes analogous to *pidginization* and creolization, it is necessarily part of an *existing* (target) system". But in this regard, the Italian researcher immediately comments that he regards this more as a terminological debate than as a substantial theoretical difference (Osimo, 2000, part 2, chapter 35).

translated text, to repeat W. Benjamin's famous phrase, quoted by Venuti himself.⁶⁰

Yet Iser, like Venuti, is aware of, and openly admits, the difficulties of such an approach, and when concluding the 'coda' to the discussion reported in the 1996 essay, this is his final meaningful remark.

Although we embarked upon the road towards a cross-cultural discourse, we never finally reached our destination. This may be due to the fact that a cross-cultural discourse requires a certain amount of self-effacement, perhaps a suspension of one's own stance, at least for a certain time, in order to listen to what the others are trying to say. There is an **ethics inherent in a cross-cultural discourse** to which Emerson alerted us when he asked that we should "**rinse our words**".⁶¹ [*bold characters are mine*]

What Iser points out about cross-culture discourse is to be extended to translation studies, in which an ethics is inherent as well. Thus, if our research is going to approach translation through the perspective of cross-culture pragmatism rather than through a more conventional philological focus, it should never lose sight of the more subtle implications hidden in translation, that is to say, the political and moral implications of transferring a text from a culture to another.

1.1.3 - Translation criticism

Until now we have mostly focused our attention on the process of translation, while only implicitly hinting at translation criticism, which is, however, the field of our research. In this regard we should therefore mention Bruno Osimo, who, in his articulate and comprehensive course on translation (2000), devotes the last ample section to translation criticism, hoping to bring attention to what he denounces as an unduly neglected field of studies. The Italian academician thinks that it would be necessary to reconcile 'different realities', from translation evaluation in firms or by publishers, to translation evaluation at college or in translation criticism. Above all, with his volume he hopes to contribute to overcome the existing gap between a descriptive-only approach often adopted in the current of Translation Studies, on the one hand, and on the other, the need to evaluate translated texts, a need which cannot be ignored. Therefore he invites researchers to focus more on this area and contribute to further develop the debate.⁶²

In this section, Osimo gives pre-eminence to Gideon Toury, who in regard to translation criticism, defines a three-stage model for the comparison between the TT and the ST:

⁶⁰ W. Benjamin, "The Aufgabe der Übersetzung" (1923), in L. Venuti (2000), p. 17; the article is translated into English with the title "The Task of the Translator".

⁶¹ W. Iser (1996), p. 302.

⁶² B. Osimo (2000, online), part 5, chapter 40, p. 3.

1. the TT is located in the context, the receiving culture;
2. individual passages of the two texts are compared in order to identify general translation regularities (norms);
3. the results are analyzed so as to improve the 'critical patrimony' for further translation analysis.⁶³

Even more interesting, at least for our research, is the contribution of Dirk Delabastita, who bases his theory of translation criticism on two strategies: cultural analogy and cultural homology. As Bruno Osimo explains, the first one, cultural analogy, is similar to 'functional equivalent', whereas a homological translation "leaves the reader the task of filling the cultural gap between oneself and the text".⁶⁴ Delabastita further works on this division between analogous and cultural translation, applying it to language, culture and the whole text, and also integrating it with what are usually regarded as translation 'mistakes' (omission, addition, and metatextual rendering). Osimo points out how Delabastita's model is elaborated and developed by Torop, whose table *Translatability of Culture* we have already mentioned as particularly relevant for this research. One of Torop's merits is to show that the task of the translation critic is to identify the method adopted by the translator, and then check if he/she is consistent with it throughout the text, in other words, if the method is properly and coherently applied. As Osimo aptly comments, "the descriptive approach here allows itself a normative aspect: without criticizing the single translator's style, but criticizing a translator that hasn't any personal characteristic style".⁶⁵ To be more precise, in this case Torop is referring to one (the seventh) of the nine types of translation criticism identified by him, the 'translational method criticism', but it is a type of analysis which he finds of particular interest, and which, at any rate, is the approach which we are going to follow in our research, at least initially. Our focus will be on the identification of consistent translating methods in TTs as well, but always in the light of a special perspective, that of the awareness, if any, of translation as communication between cultures.

⁶³ B. Osimo (2000, online), part 5, chapter 39, p.1. Osimo refers to G. Toury's 1995 essay, *Descriptive Translation Studies – and Beyond*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamin.

⁶⁴ Osimo (2000, on line, part 5, chapter 39, p. 1) is quoting from D. Delabastita, *There's a Double Tongue. An Investigation into the Translation of Shakespeare's Wordplay, with Special Reference to 'Hamlet'*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993.

⁶⁵ B. Osimo (2000, on line), part 5, chapter 39, p. 3.

Part 2 – Awakened in translation

1.2.1a - Translation and Latin America

We concluded the previous section by focusing on the ideological implications of any translating act, pointing out that translation necessarily implies establishing a contact between cultures, thus leading to an 'experience of the other', which is very far from being uniform and smooth. As we have seen, all this implies great potentialities, but equally great risks, as translation can develop very different types of encounters, from 'mutual interpretation' to 'cultural hegemony', assimilation or even suppression. Such a delicate role of translation can be easily perceived whenever approaching a "literature of underdevelopment", to use Todd Oakley Lutes' s phrase.⁶⁶ This seems to be particularly the case for Latin America, since there is no other place where these issues can be perceived of such paramount importance. The question, then, is 'why'? In some ways the first reason that comes to mind is obvious: it is because of its proximity and even direct contact with the 'epitome' of Western culture, the U.S. Actually, as Lutes evinces, Latin America is in a peculiar and almost unique position regarding modernity. If it is true that it is similar to other 'less developed' areas, in that it supports a traditional culture which has to face imminent modernization and development, however, we should remember that it is difficult to find other regions which "exist so directly in the shadow of modernity".

American culture constantly subjects Mexico to an intense barrage of modern influences, and the rest of Latin America receives the same treatment, made only slightly less intense by the factor of distance. These Latin American communities are microcosms of the clashes that characterize the transition to modernity in general: old vs. new, Europeans vs. Indian, soldier vs. farmer, television vs. storyteller, etc.⁶⁷

However, proximity to the Northern giant would not be a sufficient reason to justify the fact that translation is pivotal and central to Latin America, as the interesting volume *Voice-overs – Translation and Latin America*

⁶⁶ "[This] experience of underdevelopment occurs in cultures where economic modernity is forcefully imposed from above while the accompanying impetus toward social modernity, with its insistence on achieving real social and political equalities, is paradoxically opposed by the same forces" (T. O. Lutes, *Shipwreck and Deliverance – Politics, Culture and Modernity in the Works of Octavio Paz, Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa*, Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2003, p. 59).

⁶⁷ T. O. Lutes (2003), p. 40

Literature, edited by Daniel Balderston and Marcy Schwartz clearly shows (2002). The two editors open their introduction by affirming that translation is to be regarded as both a mechanism and a metaphor for the transnational cultural reality in the contemporary Americas. "Translation continues to be one of the main tools, and defining images, of Latin American culture in its relation to world cultures".⁶⁸ And Beatriz Sarlo seems to be moving in the same direction when, in her recent book *La máquina cultural*, she declares that translation can be seen as a "function of a cultural machine" that has contributed to develop Latin American culture in general.⁶⁹

Balderston and Schwartz clearly show how the reasons for this have to be found in the very history of Latin America: its colonial past and its post-Independence process of unfolding and redefining cultural identities. All the countries in Latin America (about twenty) have adopted as their official languages those of their colonizers from Europe, either Spanish or Portuguese, while at the same time several native tongues have continued to exist. It would be interesting to follow in detail the history of translation in Latin America starting from the time of the colonization, with the enormous task of communication which it implied for both the Europeans and the indigenous peoples with their hundreds of different languages. But, although that would be outside the scope of this research, and it is necessary here to synthesize, it could be worth remembering with Balderston and Schwartz that, even after reaching independence, the emerging new nations in Latin America went on having important cultural, political, and economic connections with Europe, and later with the U.S., which built up a complex and still existing geopolitics, as recent literary trends continue to reveal.⁷⁰

Thus, it is no surprise that Latin American literature, as well as its literary movements, have continuously revealed a conscious pondering and consideration on the many languages present in the Americas, and that awareness has imbued their texts. That is why translation can be seen as "central to the process of self-identification in the throes of cultural and linguistic differences, in Latin America's 'constant production of differential sites of enunciation'".⁷¹ And, since such conscious reflection on linguistic issues has meant a complex projection onto other cultures and literatures, and this has played a vital role in defining images of Latin America, it is not difficult to understand how the deriving process of self-identification cannot have been without conflicts and contradictions. On the one hand, the new nations of Latin America would perceive Europe and Western culture as the former colonizers of the past, from which it is still necessary to detach, but, on the other hand, Western culture maintains its fascination and its influence as a source of 'high' culture and

⁶⁸ D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), p. 1.

⁶⁹ B. Sarlo, *La máquina cultural: maestras, traductores y vanguardistas*, Buenos Aires: Ariel, 1988.

⁷⁰ D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), pp. 2-3.

⁷¹ D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), p. 3.

civilization, almost as a model with which to identify. "This straddling and overlapping of cultural associations and relationships is what marks the literature of the Americas".⁷²

As W.D. Ashcroft aptly remarks, what already characterizes postcolonial writing, even before it is translated, is the strong presence of foreign terms, neologisms, ethno-rhythmic prose, transcription of dialects and syntactic fusion, so much that Balderston and Schwartz can think of outlining and 'unveiling' a story of translation, by detecting it in the 'multilingual otherness' embedded in the original Spanish, Portuguese, and most recently English of Latin American texts.⁷³ However, if the intersection of languages is a distinctive sign of post-colonial literature in general, this is even more evident for Latin American writing. Translation and language difference and transformation are hallmarks of "a writing which actually installs distance and absence in the interstices of the text", to use Ashcroft's evocative images.⁷⁴

All this explains the cultural relevance of translation in Latin America and why that literature can be identified as particularly relevant for a research focused on the cultural issues of translation as both theory and practice. It is no coincidence that many Latin American writers and intellectuals have worked as translators themselves, sometimes even for important periods in their lives, and have been highly enriched by that experience, always incorporating it into their writing as well as into their systems of thought. Among others, Julio Cortázar, Octavio Paz, Jorge Luis Borges, Alfonso Reyes, and José María Arguedas. In particular, Borges's interest in translation was very keen indeed. It is Balderston and Schwartz's opinion that Borges's attention to translation reveals an intense effort to build up connections between his national surroundings and the world, and consequently even his fascination with foreign literatures should not be taken as an evidence of disassociation and alienation from his national reality, but rather as a sign of an "extremely local preoccupation with belonging and place in a heterogeneous, post-colonial society".⁷⁵ And it is interesting to remember how Borges even perceives the translated text as a special and privileged *locus*, a site of 'transnational nexus' between the center and the periphery, arriving in his essay on Beckford's *Vathek* at provocatively and ironically denouncing the original as 'unfaithful' to the translation.⁷⁶

1.2.1b - The displacement of exile

⁷² D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), p. 3.

⁷³ W. D. Ashcroft, "Constitutive Graphonomy: A Post-Colonial Theory of Literary Writing", in S. Slemon and H. Tiffin (eds.), *After Europe: Critical Theory and Post-Colonial Writing*, Sydney: Dangaroo, 1989, p. 61; D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), p. 3.

⁷⁴ W. D. Ashcroft (1989), p. 61.

⁷⁵ D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), p. 5.

⁷⁶ Quoted by D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), p. 5.

We should also keep in mind that interest in translation has surged again and has kept on playing a crucial role even in the more recent history of Latin America. Starting with the Cuban revolution in 1959, and then going on because of the brutal military repressions in Brazil, Chile, Argentina, etc., in the 1970s and 1980s, attention to translation became crucial, as the second half of the twentieth century saw the displacement of thousands of intellectuals: necessarily, political exile gave new momentum to the issue of translation.

In order to flee repressive regimes, many writers 'returned' to Europe, providing an ironic twist to Latin America's complicated relationship with European literary traditions that projects in translation had been attempting to resolve. Not only did writers produce fiction, poetry, and journalism abroad denouncing the human rights violations at home; this recent chapter in Latin American writing also recorded the bombardment of 'foreign' cultures in the Spanish of exiled writers facing linguistic and cultural alienation in Western Europe and North America.⁷⁷

For a perceptive discussion of the above mentioned difficulties of writers and intellectuals in exile, but with a special focus on gender problems, we should refer to Francine Masiello's article, "Bodies in Transit: Travel, Translation, and Gender", which analyzes different works by Argentinean women writers about their experiences of painful estrangement and, in some cases, also equally distressing return.⁷⁸ Interestingly enough, in all these works translation and attention to "the liquid borders of language" seem to be a key issue, since it is through translation that the exiled foreigner "negotiates difference" and tries to overcome the "anxiety of displacement". Yet, translation does not necessarily annul the "violence of linguistic difference", and Masiello draws attention to a particularly dramatic text: Griselda Gambaro's *Es necesario entender un poco*.⁷⁹ The text questions the way differences in linguistic power can influence and determine the relationship among individuals. The story takes place in the eighteenth century and its protagonist is a highly educated Chinese translator who is taken by a Jesuit to France, where, despite his great skills at translation and his great culture and knowledge, he fails to understand the language of colonial rule, the language of power, and ultimately is relegated to an asylum, thus becoming a victim of his linguistic and racial difference. The message of the story is that meaning in language appears to be determined by colonial mastery: "the whip and the prison ultimately control language and our access to meaning. Translation is a matter of power".⁸⁰ This is a particularly dramatic text, but also the other contemporary Argentinean writings examined by Gambaro, although not always so tragic, highlight the fact that "slippage and

⁷⁷ D. Calderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), p. 7.

⁷⁸ In D. Calderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), pp. 213-223.

⁷⁹ In *Teatro 6*, Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 1966.

⁸⁰ F. Masiello (2002), p. 216.

displacement are the soul of translation” for the exiled Argentinean, even if he/she returns home: “these gestures render one’s condition as eternally ‘foreign’, even within the limits of home”.⁸¹

Balderston and Schwartz observe that there are many examples of Latin American narrative and poetry in exile that use translation as a metaphor for displacement and alienation, the distinctive conditions of the exile experience. In particular, they mention José Donoso and his novel of exile, *El jardín de al lado* (1996), where the protagonists are professional translators and frustrated writers, as well as other writers like Cristina Peri Rossi and Luisa Futoransky (the latter is amply analyzed in F.Masiello’s above mentioned article) who render the complex experience of urban life in exile through images of Babelic linguistic chaos.⁸²

Another vivid testimony of the difficult condition of the Latin American intellectual who has experienced exile is offered by Ariel Dorfman in his “Resisting Hybridity”.⁸³ The author begins by lamenting that history has taught him the need to be a hybrid, although he had never wanted to be one. Then he goes on to explain how he was born in Argentina and consequently Spanish was his native language and his ‘first love’; but then, at the age of two and a half, he had to follow his father to the U.S., where, because of a serious illness (he had caught pneumonia) he had to be isolated in hospital for three weeks, and he lets the reader imagine what a nightmare that experience must have been for such a young child, in his case even more so because of the linguistic barriers that dramatically increased his isolation. As a consequence, when he left the hospital, comprehensibly enough, he rejected his native language, absolutely refusing to speak a single word of Spanish from that moment on: “I wanted to belong, I wanted to blend in”.⁸⁴ But then came the bitter awareness that full integration would not be possible for him, and that he could never give the impression that he was a native English speaker. Later in life, in 1954 he went to Chile, where he encountered the language he despised and regarded as “barbarian”; however, slowly and gradually, he was seduced by the music of the Spanish language, as well as by Chile as a country and as a community, especially the revolutionary part of Chile. Thus, as he explains, he became bilingual and “less of a gringo”. When he went back to the U.S., to Berkeley in the late sixties, he wanted to test his Spanish/English identity, and as a result he took the important decision never to write another word of English again: English was an ‘imperial’ language. Then, with the Allende revolution and all the hopes and enthusiasm it brought along, he went back to Chile, as the revolution represented for him a way out of his existential exile, that is to say, out of his constant condition of duality and of being a hybrid: revolution meant the possibility to start anew. But after Pinochet’s coup, the positions of the

⁸¹ F. Masiello (2002), p. 222.

⁸² D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), p. 10.

⁸³ In D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), pp. 55-60.

⁸⁴ A. Dorfman (2002), p. 55.

languages changed, since, finding himself once again abroad, in exile, English became the language of denunciation and protest, his 'major weapon' against the military dictatorship. "How could I deny myself the use of English in that struggle?"⁸⁵ So English found a subtle way to creep back, and he even started writing books in that language, thus becoming a Latin American who writes in English, but still a Latin American, as he has always wanted to stress. And he is aware that probably this is the reason why there remains in his writing a certain strangeness, a "weirdness": there is something "irreducible, residual" in his texts, and, he comments, any translator, even if it were him translating himself, should "entice readers" into that difference, and definitely not suppress it. "Using English for me allows the remainder to shine through, to resonate".⁸⁶ And then he concludes:

When you are bilingual in some ways you are constantly translating, or you are constantly taking into account the other language. I speak both English and Spanish like a native, though that is not entirely true. I speak each of them with a slight tilt or nod in the direction of the other. Each language is inhabited by the other [...] You don't just switch languages, you don't just switch countries. Behind it is the rush of history and, unfortunately, a great deal of pain.⁸⁷

1.2.1c - Language and cultural identity

Meaningfully enough, Ariel Dorfman is not an exceptional case as a Latin American writing in English: in fact, the phenomenon has been burgeoning in the last recent years. To the point that Balderston and Schwartz suggest the need of rethinking many of the conventional approaches to language and cultural identity in the U.S.⁸⁸ First of all, a rethinking of translation itself, because it plays an essential role in these texts, characterized as they are by a hybridized language, what could be called 'Spanglish', with an ample use of code-switching and cross cultural word plays. And even more, because now there is also a growing tendency to 'translate-back' these texts into Spanish, leading, among other things, to highlight how the Spanish language varies considerably throughout the Americas. For example, as Balderston and Schwartz remember, the Dominican U.S. writer Julia Alvarez found inadequate the Argentine translation of her best-known novel *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, so that it was necessary to arrive at a new translation into Dominican Spanish. And difficulties and losses in translation from English into Spanish in writers like Julia Alvarez, Cristina García, and Sandra Cisneros, are evinced by Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, who even hypothesizes the

⁸⁵ A. Dorfman (2002), p. 56.

⁸⁶ A. Dorfman (2002), p. 57.

⁸⁷ A. Dorfman (2002), p. 57.

⁸⁸ D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), p. 8.

'impossibility' of translation into only one language because of the multilingual presences in the STs.

It seems that what is lost in translation is precisely the bilingualism of the original episode, or the contact between languages that enriches the nuances of the narration [...] This "untranslatability" of the text is paradoxical, since Latino/a writing is based on a continuous practice of translation, displacements and exchanges, both cultural and linguistic.⁸⁹

1.2.2a - A complex neighbourhood: Latin America and the US

What we have just been observing, already hints at another core-issue: the delicate and complex cultural relationship between Latin America and its powerful neighbour, the U.S., with obvious consequences for the translation process itself. Among the essays specifically devoted to this issue, Stephen F. White's article, "Translation and teaching: The Dangers of Representing Latin America for Students in the United States", offers an attentive reading of this context, clearly aiming at fostering awareness and responsibility among intellectuals.⁹⁰ White begins by reporting the opinion that the United States is a very 'parochial' country, an opinion which he amply shares and contributes to clarify.⁹¹ First of all, because taking into consideration the U.S. publishing industry, it clearly appears to him that Northern American publishers have very little interest in translated works. Referring to the 1999 *Bowker Annual*, White explains that only a meagre 2.2 percent of all the hard and trade paper title published in the U.S. are translations, whereas other countries, even if much smaller than the U.S., seem to have a more meaningful percentage. And here he quotes the data provided by Lawrence Venuti: 6 percent in Japan, 10 percent in France, 14 percent in Hungary, 15 percent in Germany, and 25 percent in Italy.⁹² Of course, White comments, there are, and there will be, translations of the 'classics', Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa, Isabel Allende, etc., as their works are now international best-sellers. However, it cannot be denied that "the United States is fundamentally an isolated, inward-looking country with little interest in what happens in literature beyond its borders".⁹³ And such a harsh judgment is indirectly confirmed by Maarten Steenmeijer, who in his research about the international success of Spanish American fiction (the research this time is widened to include Europe also),

⁸⁹ Y. Martínez-San Miguel, "Bitxtualidad y bilingüismo: reflexiones sobre el lenguaje en la escritura latina contemporánea", in *Centro Journal*, 12:1 (2000), p. 21 and 23, quoted and translated in D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), p. 8.

⁹⁰ In D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), pp. 225-244.

⁹¹ White refers to two articles: K. Campbell, "U.S. Consumers Say 'Yes' to Books", in *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10 (1955), and H. R. Lotman, "One Notable Trade Imbalance: The Buying of Book Translations", in *Publishers Weekly*, 12 (June 1995).

⁹² L. Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

⁹³ S. F. White (2002), p. 239.

finds out that the new narrative from Latin America was introduced more slowly into the U.S., and in general later, than in some European countries like France, Germany and Italy.⁹⁴ And what about England? According to Steenmeijer's research, there are scarcely any differences between the two countries, because, obviously, England and the U.S. tend to publish the same translations.

Evidently, however, it is not only a problem of percentage and numbers. White rightly wonders about the factors that have determined, and still determine, the publication of Latin American literature in the U.S., rightly implying that they are not only literary ones. As María Eugenia Mudrovcic helps us to remember, in the fifties, partly because of the Cold War, attention and funds were mostly shifted to Asian and Soviet studies, so that no major Northern American university was developing any significant program focused on Latin America.⁹⁵ The situation radically changed with the Cuban Revolution in 1959, which suddenly revived international interest, opening the way to the so-called 'boom'.⁹⁶ And here Gabriel García Márquez's bitter words come to mind.

In a sense, the boom in Latin American literature in the US has been caused by the Cuban Revolution. Every Latin American writer of that generation had been writing for twenty years but the European and American publishers had very little interest in them. When the Cuban Revolution started there was suddenly a great interest about Cuba and Latin America. The revolution turned into an article of consumption. Latin America came into fashion. It was discovered that Latin American novels existed which were good enough to be translated and considered with all other world literature. What was really sad is that cultural colonialism is so bad in Latin America that it was impossible to convince the Latin Americans themselves that their own novels were good until people outside *told* them they were.⁹⁷

Mudrovcic's research evinces the role played in the U.S. by the influential Center founded by Rodman Rockefeller in 1962 (the Inter-American Foundation for the Arts, IAFA), in regard to the Western burgeoning interest

⁹⁴ M. Steenmeijer, "How the West Was Won: Translations of Spanish American Fiction in Europe and the United States", in D. Calderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), pp. 144-155.

⁹⁵ M.E. Mudrovcic, "Reading Latin American Literature Abroad: Agency and Canon Formation in the Sixties and Seventies", in D. Calderston and M. Schwartz (eds.) (2002), pp. 129-143.

⁹⁶ See R. G. Mead's comment: "Since about 1960, when the so-called boom in the 'new Latin American literature' began to be visible, U.S. publishers, readers and critics have all shown an unprecedented degree of interest in Latin American authors [...] Courses in Latin American literature in translation were offered on many universities campuses, and professors of literature who five or ten years before might have asked (and sometimes did) 'Is there a Latin American literature' quickly became specialists in Borges or Cortázar in English" ("After the Boom", in *Américas*, 30.4 (1978), pp. 2-3).

⁹⁷ G. Plimpton (ed.), *Latin American Writers at Work*, United States of America: The Paris Review, 2003.

in Latin America. For example, the literary journal of the Center, *Review*, became an important element for promotion, which, however, clearly reveals that the Center's self-imposed mission was not simply to support Latin American literature, but also to 'mould' it, that is to say, to define and build up its meaning and its value. This meant that in order to make Latin American literature more acceptable, and to place it into the mainstream, it was necessary to "de-emphasize" the least alluring aspects, while at the same time finding the right perspective and note to make Latin America literature more attractive for the U.S. market. Mudrovic refers to the necessity to play down the social realism correlation that U.S. critics usually linked with Latin American literature, and to build up an image which could be perceived by the New York cultural elite as closer to their idea of modernity and contemporariness. Such a literary canon was found in Modernism, because, as Mudrovic goes on explaining, it was seen to better express the "aesthetic dictates of the Cold War", since modernist works, rightly or wrongly, were usually seen as more neutral and subtly "apolitical".⁹⁸

Although we cannot completely follow Mudrovic in her equation of Modernism with the Boom writers of Latin America, since it would be a too rigid and reductive schematisation for the complexity of the Latin American literature of those years, yet her discourse is interesting when it shows the relevant role played by the modernist canon, at least in the way it was conceived and promoted by the IAFA. The Center, thanks to its pervasive power (or to use Mudrovic's phrase, its 'monopolistic patronage') and "pyramidal structure", came to create "the standard of authority" by which to accept or reject, in other words, to authorize Latin American writers. Meaningfully enough, USA reviewers and literary critics seemed to need Western literary canons to legitimise Latin American writers, who were systematically compared to Modernist classics, as clearly shown by the example mentioned by Mudrovic, who remembers how the American magazine *Time* welcomed Gabriel García Márquez's Nobel Prize with the headline: "Literature: A Latin Faulkner".⁹⁹

It was the IAFA that selected the Latin American titles to translate, chose and paid the translators, actively worked to secure market success, and even sponsored writers' visits if they could not afford to come to a promotional event.¹⁰⁰ As a side-effect, however, the IAFA "also restricted access to the U.S. cultural field, carefully selecting which authors to endorse or which works to translate [...] In this context, Modernism worked as a politics of exclusion more than as a category of inclusion", as Mudrovic comments, before concluding

⁹⁸ See N. Larsen's essay "The 'Boom' Novel and the Cold War in Latin America", in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 38:3 (1992); quoted by Mudrovic (2002), p. 136. Neil Larsen's thesis is that Modernist texts were not really chosen for what they said or represented, but rather "for what they did not say or represent, for their scrupulously maintained neutrality as purely self-referential languages of form, or what Guilbaut calls their 'political apoliticism'" (p. 773).

⁹⁹ M. E. Mudrovic (2002), p. 137.

¹⁰⁰ See M. E. Mudrovic (2002), p. 137.

that, without the Cold War and the Center for Inter-American Relations, the Latin American canon in the U.S. would probably be different (arguably, a more heterogeneous and more open body of texts and writers), which clearly confirms the determining presence of forces that were not only literary, but also political and economic.¹⁰¹

1.2.2b - The making of a commercially successful image

Teresa Longo addresses the political and economic logic behind the Latin American literary canon in her essay *Pablo Neruda and the U.S. Culture Industry* (2002). Longo observes that Latin American poetry “is selling like *pan caliente*” in the U.S., especially Neruda’s poetry, although it is not the authentic Chilean poet, but rather a “romanticized, de-politicized and (p)re-packaged” Neruda. As the most eloquent example, she names the compact disc *Poetry Suite from the Postman* (1996), which she refers to as a “spin-off product” of the film *Il postino*.¹⁰² At first sight in line with Neruda’s thought, the CD seems to try to convey a Nerudian concern with the promotion of community, and *Poetry Suite* presents itself as “a Valentine to Pablo Neruda”, a “hopeful inspiration”, combining the most “diverse” voices, and “distinct perspectives”. However, it would be more appropriate to define these voices as the oddest and most improbable ones, as the poems are recorded by such celebrities as Julia Roberts, Wesley Snipes, Madonna and Andy Garcia, etc., in separate studios in Seattle, New York, Kansas City and Hollywood: a very different condition from the communion and community Neruda was evoking. “The message, again, is simple: Latin American poetry is a commodity that feeds the desires [...] of U.S. consumers. Truth, love, communion and community - the products of an essentialized Latin America eager to open its overflowing coffers - can be purchased for \$16.95”.¹⁰³ Clearly, Longo sees this tendency to romanticize and ‘essentialize’ Neruda’s poetry as part of a more general and lethal trivialization of Latin American culture, since an ‘essentialized’ Latin America is useful to “serve and nourish” the U. S.¹⁰⁴

Although with a less ideological perspective, the authoritative essay *The Modern Latin American Novel* by R.L. Williams confirms the subtle power of Western culture in defining and building up the canons for international success for Latin American writers: the modernist strategies of the so-called writers of the ‘Boom’, “as well as the magical realism that virtually became the trademark of Latin American writing, appealed to a broad audience in the USA; and writers

¹⁰¹ See M. E. Mudrovcic (2002), p. 139.

¹⁰² The film will be part of my first case-study and thus will be amply focused on in chapter 4 of this thesis.

¹⁰³ T. Longo (ed.), *Pablo Neruda and the U.S. Culture Industry*, New York and London: Routledge, 2002, pp. XVII and XX.

¹⁰⁴ T. Longo (ed.) (2002), p. XVII.

from Latin America with the talent to utilize these two elements well developed a vast readership in English".¹⁰⁵

Going back again to White's research, there is another crucial aspect in the cultural and literary relationship between the U.S. and Latin America which he exposes: the vast majority of studies about Latin America that are published in the U.S., are not from Latin American experts, but are rather written in English by U.S. academics.¹⁰⁶ And thus he rhetorically asks who actually represents Latin America in the U.S., leaving John D. French to provide the disquieting answer: "In the English-speaking world, Latin Americans are most often written about than read. As a result, the educated public in the U.S. continues to learn most of what it does know about the region from Latin Americanists who are themselves foreigners to the national realities they study".¹⁰⁷ White also zooms in on the translation process itself, and the way it influences representation, together with the issue of the teaching of Latin America in the U.S. He starts from Clayton Eshleman's strong position which labels as "translational imperialism" the way that 'first world' translators manipulate 'third world' texts, reshaping their 'raw' material so that the reader is led to believe that the foreign, "colonized" author is mirroring the literary conventions of the "first world". Thus White laments that multilingual translators, even when engaged in the process of self-criticism, as well as monolingual editors and reviewers, all of them speak about translation mainly in terms of "smoothness" ('invisibility', if we want to use Venuti's words) and about the way translation can be assimilated into literary and thematic traditions of the English canon.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, it is White's opinion that it is important to promote "translation awareness", beginning with the adoption of a different kind of approach to teaching Latin American works in English translation. It is important to remind students that "there is a text behind the text before them", a text which has been thought of, and written in a language that expresses a different world view and culture. Students (and we could add here, often teachers as well) may need to be reminded, or perhaps informed, that translation implies ideological choices. Instead, White observes that many U.S. academicians, especially those who work in the increasingly common field of cultural studies, present translated texts in their classes as if they were originally written in English, that is to say, in a thoroughly "unproblematic notion of

¹⁰⁵ R. L. Williams, *The Modern Latin American Novel*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998, p. 56.

¹⁰⁶ S. F. White (2002), p. 237.

¹⁰⁷ J. D. French, "Translation: An Imperative for a Transnational World", *LASA Forum*, 28.1 (1977), p. 44.

¹⁰⁸ C. Eshleman, "Addenda to a Note on Apprenticeship", in *Translation Review*, 20 (1986), p. 4; S. F. White (2002), pp. 237-8.

representation”, ignoring how translation can “completely occlude the violence that accompanies the construction of the colonial subject”.¹⁰⁹

To approach translation practice and teaching with the aim of raising awareness, so that cultural presences and differences are not ‘lost in translation’, but rather ‘awakened in translation’, is a complex and challenging issue, as we noticed at the end of the first part of the chapter, quoting Iser’s thoughtful observations and comments. It is no coincidence, therefore, that White concludes his article with a long series of open questions, which he provocatively leaves unanswered as a stimulus for further debate and discussion, and which we re-propose here as a way of recalling and summarizing the core-issues highlighted in part 1 and chosen as a privileged focus for our research.

Are market forces the sole explanation as to why so few works written by Latin American authors across the disciplines are available in English translation? What are the pedagogical implications of this paucity of translated material? Should both teacher and translator question the paradigm of the ‘smooth’ translation and attempt to take students and reader closer to the original language of the author? What is ‘foreign’ about the original text in relation to the translation and how might ‘foreignness’ manifest itself in beneficial ways in the English version? If one accepts the desirability of locating a particular work in a social and historical context in the classroom, why shouldn’t this process be taken a step farther by means of the discussion of the situatedness of the translation/translator? How should teachers and students seek ways to define their own cultural identities in relation to what Venuti calls “the text and culture of the translation”?¹¹⁰ Can students be taught to read texts translated into their first language with a translator’s eye so that there might be a dialogue between translation and original text? Can analysis of Latin American literature highlight discussions of the translation itself by, as Venuti says, “calling attention to the multiple, polychronic forms that destabilize its unity and cloud over its seeming transparency”?¹¹¹ And, finally: How might teachers of Latin American literature in translation change their students’ stereotypical perceptions of Latin America?¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Here White himself is quoting from Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial context*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Here White is quoting L. Venuti (1988), p. 93.

¹¹¹ L. Venuti (1988), p. 96.

¹¹² S. F. White, (2002), p. 243.

Chapter 2 – Cinema as translation

2.1a - Film/literature studies

Cinema as translation is the intriguing title chosen by the Italian scholar Nicola Dusi for his authoritative essay about 'intersemiotic translation'.¹¹³ I have chosen it also as the title of this chapter, since it sounds particularly appropriate in this context, foreshadowing one of the most controversial– and still unsolved – issues in film/literature studies: the role and position of adaptation/film transfer as regards the study field of translation at large.

Moreover, I hope it can suggest a more open and stimulating approach to film/literature study, which seems to be particularly urgent if we remember how, only a few years ago, an important American scholar, Brian McFarlane, found this field of study depressing, and in great need of a new stimulus.

In view of the nearly sixty years of writing about the adaptation of novels into film [...] it is **depressing** [*bold characters are mine*] to find at what a limited stage the discourse has remained [...] It seems to me that the study of adaptation has been inhibited and blurred by three chief approaches:

- the near-fixation with the issue of fidelity;
- the reliance on an individual, impressionistic sense of what the two texts are like; and
- the implied sense of the novel's supremacy or, the other side of this particular coin, the sense that a film is a film and there is no point in considering it as an adaptation.¹¹⁴

Actually, McFarlane's remarks could be somewhat misleading: film/literature studies have gradually become much richer and more complex, especially since the early 1990s, notwithstanding the unfortunate persistence of the above-mentioned three approaches. At any rate, when entering film/literature studies, after focusing on interlinguistic translation, one surprisingly encounters many of the familiar issues and antitheses already pointed to in the first chapter:

¹¹³ N. Dusi, *Il cinema come traduzione - Da un medium all'altro: letteratura, cinema, pittura*, Torino: Utet, 2003

¹¹⁴ B. McFarlane, *Novel to Film – An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 194.

for example, the notions of 'original' and 'fidelity', translatability vs. 'untranslatability' (here to be read as 'adaptability' vs 'unadaptability'), language as communication vs language as hermeneutics and polysemy, a source-oriented approach vs a target oriented approach, just to mention some.

2.1b - Film and translation

When focusing on the close relation between film and translation, Nicola Dusi knows he is going to walk further along a path already opened. Actually, the very title chosen for his book (*Il cinema come traduzione*) clearly echoes the title of the 1992 innovative essay by Patrick Cattrysse: *Film (Adaptation) as Translation*.¹¹⁵ Cattrysse begins his essay by declaring that his methodological proposals will concern "the study of film in terms of translation", as he is convinced that an extension of the concept of translation is something to be worked for. Also because that new and extended idea of translation would inevitably lead also to a new approach to the study of film (adaptation) itself, thus providing us "with new insights into the fundamental patterns of communication in both film and translation". And near the conclusion of the essay, Cattrysse reaffirms this core idea even more vigorously:

From what has been explained above, it must be clear [...] that the similarity of the problems and the questions raised within the study of film adaptation suggest that the specificity of the issues studied by translation studies is very relative. As a consequence, **there seems to be no valuable argument to keep reducing the concept of translation to mere cross-linguistic transfer processes [bold characters are mine]**. The scope has to be extended to a contextualistic semiotic perspective.¹¹⁶

Incidentally, we should remember how, almost contemporarily in France, another expert, G. D. Farcy, had reached a similar provocative position, to the point of declaring that translation practice is not really different from adaptation to another linguistic code, grounded on the belief that in both cases the calque is possible.¹¹⁷

As we will see later on in this chapter, Cattrysse bases his proposals on the application and development of some particular translation theories. Interestingly enough, this is also the process followed by an Italian, Giovanni Nadiani. Even if focusing his attention on the study of hypermedia, but still moving within the so-called Translation Studies Current, the Italian researcher starts from Antoine Berman's contribution and reaches a similar conclusion to

¹¹⁵ P. Cattrysse, "Film (Adaptation) as Translation: Some Methodological Proposals", in *Target, International Journal of Translation Studies*, 4:1 (1992), pp. 53-70.

¹¹⁶ P. Cattrysse (1992), p. 68.

¹¹⁷ G. D. Farcy, "L'adaptation dans tous ses états" in *Poétique*, 96 (1993), pp. 387-414.

Cattrysse's.¹¹⁸ In his 2002 essay, Nadiani draws attention to the *traslazione* (or transfer), of a foreign work into a language and culture), and points out how this is not carried out by translation only, but also by a number of textual (and non textual) transformational forms which are not strictly translation-like. All together, they produce the *traslazione* (transfer) of a work of art.

In its turn, as Nadiani explains, any *traslazione* of a text is part of a wider set of *traslazioni*, or *circolazioni* (loops), which move along two directions, directions that are sometimes even contradictory: 1) that of communication, and consequently that of mankind as producer of communication; 2) that of migration, and therefore that of mankind as a migrating reality, always changing and hybridising. As a consequence, he states, the very notion of translation criticism must be widened: it must include the criticism and study of all the other components, that is to say, of all the other 'transformational forms'. "L'operare della critica sulla traduzione letteraria [...] sarà costretta ad affrontare 'tutto il resto' compreso e compresso nell'oggetto traduttivo', adeguando la propria strumentazione alle nuove esigenze e alleandosi con la 'critica ipermediale'".¹¹⁹

Obviously, the relation film/translation becomes the core issue in Dusi's comprehensive essay. Yet, Dusi immediately wants to make clear that, not only is he perfectly aware of, but he fully accepts the first common objection to viewing cinema as translation: although speaking of translatability, even in the case of films based on books, we must never forget that we are always dealing with works that are autonomous in their inner coherence and cohesion, in other words, they are not interchangeable texts.¹²⁰ However, in his opinion, that does not exclude reciprocal interdependences, and that is the point where his interest lies. Dusi takes up Roman Jakobson's definition of 'intersemiotic translation' as one of the forms of interpretation of a linguistic sign by means of non-linguistic sign systems.¹²¹ And, as a form of *scommessa* (bet) with himself, Dusi chooses a challenging goal for his essay: to prove through his essay that Jakobson is right. The hope is therefore to "tell something more", to add something to both film and translation research, when reasoning about the varied modes of the *relazione traduttiva* ('translation relation') – even if often these are not very evident at all – occurring between 'linguistic' semiotics and 'non linguistic' ones.

As Dusi explains, referring back to Lotman, intersemiotic translation is a complex action, never a mere transcodification, but rather a transcultural event, which is also dynamic and functional, always in tension between the need to be faithful to the source text and the need to produce a text which may be

¹¹⁸ G. Nadiani, "La critica letteraria nell'epoca della letteratura digitale (Alcuni spunti a partire dai 'metodo Bertman')", in *Testo a Fronte*, 14:27 (2002), pp. 5-23.

¹¹⁹ "The criticism of literary translation will have to 'deal' with all the rest, included and compressed within the 'translation object', thus adapting its tools to the new needs and aligning itself with hypermedia criticism" [*my translation*], G. Nadiani (2002), p. 22.

¹²⁰ N. Dusi (2003), p. 4.

¹²¹ R. Jakobson, "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation", in *On Translation* (R. Brower, ed.), Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1959; quoted in N. Dusi (2003), p. 3.

understood and accepted by the target culture. It is this dynamism which, according to Dusi, explains the translatability between different language systems, systems that are partially open, since the borders between them are not abolished but rather work as filters, preserving the differences.¹²²

However, even among semioticians, the idea of including film (adaptation) within the wider area of translation studies is not all that obvious. For example, Umberto Eco, the Italian *guru* of semiotics, as well as Dusi's *Maestro*, stresses a more prudent note, when confirming that intersemiotic translation can be regarded only as 'adaptation', and not as translation.¹²³ Dusi, of course, dutifully reports his *Maestro*'s opinion, but reaffirms his belief in the possibility of speaking of *relazioni traduttive* (translation relations): "a nostro avviso, il problema posto dalle diverse materie e sostanze dei testi e dagli implicite discorsivi si può risolvere, come vedremo, in una *efficace traduzione tra forme*".¹²⁴

2.2a - Film and novel: two different semiotic systems

The delicate issue of the relation between film and translation can be better understood if we see it connected to other, even longer debated questions: the undeniable specificity of the two systems, and the consequent necessity to define, or redefine, the notions of fidelity and of original. The literature about these points is quite abundant, since, as easily understood, all the writing about film adaptation has to deal with them, at least implicitly.

With regard to the specificity of the two systems, the most vividly expressed opinions are no doubt those of the father of American adaptation studies, George Bluestone, who in his well-known 1957 essay, on the one hand proclaims that film must be approached, respected and studied as an art form, with its own properties and laws, and, on the other, stresses the "root difference between the two media", using effective analogies to disperse any doubts.¹²⁵

It is insufficiently recognized that the end products of novel and film represent different aesthetic genera, as different from each other as ballet is

¹²² N. Dusi (2002), p.7

¹²³ However, Eco often affirms his interest in intersemiotic translation and rejects the accusation of having a diffident and sceptical attitude towards them. "Sono, al massimo, scettico circa l'opportunità di chiamarle traduzioni, anziché, come vedremo, trasmutazioni o adattamenti. Ma questo non è scetticismo, è prudenza terminologica" ("if I am sceptical, at the most my scepticism refers only to the choice of the term 'translation', rather than to transmutation or adaptation. But this is no scepticism, it is terminological prudence" [*my translation*], U. Eco (2003), p. 23.

¹²⁴ "According to us, the problem raised by the difference in materials and substances of texts can be solved through an effective *translation between forms*" [*my translation*], N. Dusi (2003), p. 9.

¹²⁵ G. Bluestone, "The Limits of the Novel and the Limits of the Film" in *Novels in Film*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957; inserted in T. Corrigan, *Film and Literature: an Introduction and Reader*, Apple Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999, pp. 197-213.

from architecture. The film becomes a different *thing* in the same sense that a historical painting becomes a different thing from the historical event which it illustrates. It is fruitless to say that film A is better or worse than novel B.

[...]

The film, being a presentational medium (except for its use of dialogue), cannot have direct access to the power of discursive forms [...] A film is not thought, it is perceived.¹²⁶

In other words, as the commonplace goes, the novel tells, but the film shows and presents. In the following decades the rather schematic differences pointed out by Bluestone have been studied and described much more systematically, and not only by semiotics. We could refer to the interesting observations by Michael Klein when, among other things, he invited the reader to take into consideration how films represent "an encyclopaedic and synthesising art form" which actually combines not only aspects of literature, but also of painting, photography, dance, music, etc.¹²⁷ Obviously, this art form has its own set of conventions for presenting the world: for example, a director, when trying to transpose or translate his interpretation of a novel, can rely on the camera (its position, its movement), or on the editing, the performances, the setting, the music, etc., but the final product is also influenced by distinct film codes and conventions, as well as by culturally signifying elements. However, Klein thinks that the result, although apparently different and distant from the novel, can still be seen as a very interesting transposition.

Meaning that may have been lost when the text of the narrative first became the screenplay, condensed and bereft of some of its linguistic resources, may be resurrected subsequently by the new medium in different form and through a different kind of imaginative process.¹²⁸

Some years later, starting from the notion that film shows and novel presents, McFarlane, tried to offer a more comprehensive approach to the specificity of film, and described how and where the differences between the two 'language' systems can be detected:

- first of all, in the way the 'told story' works symbolically, whereas the 'presented story' would work 'through an interaction of codes';
- in the uses of tenses, since films, according to him, cannot present action in the past, as novels very often do;
- in the spatial and temporal orientation of the film which "gives it a physical presence denied to the novel's linearity".¹²⁹

¹²⁶ G. Bluestone in T. Corrigan (1999), pp. 200-201.

¹²⁷ M. Klein, G. Parker (eds.), *The English Novel and the Movies*, USA: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981.

¹²⁸ M. Klein, G. Parker (1981), p. 5.

¹²⁹ B. McFarlane (1996), p. 29.

As Dusi aptly points out, adaptation studies have mostly identified the main differences between the two semiotic systems in their different way of representing reality, through distinct degrees and areas of vagueness. And it is this difference in vagueness which, for example, Umberto Eco detects as the main obstacle to considering adaptation a proper form of translation. Eco affirms that any film transposition of a novel inevitably implies making explicit many of the inferences of the written text, whereas a translation should never 'say' more than its source text does, that is to say, it should respect the 'reticence' of the original.

È noto a molti che Melville in *Moby Dick* non ha mai detto *quale* gamba mancasse al capitano Achab. Si può discutere se questo sia fondamentale per aumentare l'aura di ambiguità e di mistero intorno a questa sconcertante figura, ma se Melville è stato reticente forse aveva le sue ragioni, e vanno rispettate. Quando John Huston ha "tradotto" il romanzo in film, non poteva fare a meno di scegliere, e ha deciso che a Gregory Peck mancasse la gamba sinistra. Melville poteva rimanere reticente, Huston no.¹³⁰

Once again, Dusi partially agrees with his *Maestro*, but also tries to look at the other side of the coin. One of his objections to Eco's view coincides with Klein's observations, when he pointed out that a director has many means of conveying his interpretation of a text (from camera position and movement, to lighting, framing, setting, and so on), and moreover film elements are always worked out and processed through editing and post-production. And Dusi remarks that, in each of these steps, a film can develop ambiguity and vagueness.

Neither should we forget the important role played by the film soundtrack: "L'uso dei codici verbali, e in generale di quelli sonori, permette quindi al film di *riaprire* il senso denotato dalle immagini, rivestendole di nuova indeterminazione".¹³¹ And therefore film transposition does not only move away from vagueness and reticence, but may also move toward hiding and distancing information. Dusi invites us to think of memorable shots where the use of a subjective point of view, or a long shot, and off screen shots, can all help to develop vagueness. As an example, he mentions the shot in Benigni's *La vita è bella* where Guido is executed off screen, and what we hear is only the shooting, which is exactly what young Jousha can hear from his hiding place.¹³²

¹³⁰ "As well known Melville in *Moby Dick* has never specified *which* leg captain Achab had lost. It can be debated whether this detail is vital to increase the halo of ambiguity and mystery surrounding this disquieting character, yet if Melville chose reticence it means he had reasons for that, and we must respect them. When John Hudson 'translated' the novel into film, he could not choose, and decided that Gregory Peck was without his left leg. Melville could be reticent, Huston could not" [*my translation*], U.Eco (2003), p. 328.

¹³¹ "The use of verbal codes, and in general of sound codes, lets the film *reopen* the otherwise denoted meaning of images, endowing them with new vagueness" [*my translation*], N. Dusi (2003), p. 121.

¹³² N. Dusi (2003), p. 125.

2.2b - The issue of originality in film transposition

A logical corollary to the debate about the specificity of the two language systems concerns the question of the key notion of fidelity to an original. For example, Patrick Cattrysse thinks that the study of 'film translation' could help us to reconsider the concept of original. Since a film is usually called 'original' if based on an 'original' screenplay, it is right to wonder whether the so-called 'originals' are actually so 'original' after all, thus casting doubts on the assumption of 'fidelity to an original'. "What kind of intertextual or intersystemic links with previous discursive practices and situations can be found? How are they labelled and why are they labelled the way they are?"¹³³

It is no surprise, of course, that also fidelity, that other "big issue", as James Griffith ironically labels it, is dealt with again and again by film/literature studies. Griffith himself devotes great attention to the question, while trying to offer new perspectives, as the title itself chosen for his essay suggests, *Adaptation as imitations – Films from Novels*.¹³⁴ Starting from the idea that a faithful adaptation depends on the filmmaker's interpretation, and that more emphasis should be put on the audience's response, Griffith quotes another expert, Joy Gould Boyum, and suggests that, when a person has previously read the novel, one will have already created the movie in one's mind, and therefore it is not likely at all that the film will fulfil the spectator's expectations, preference being usually given to the written work.

Ultimately we are not comparing book with film, but rather one resymbolization with another, inevitably expecting the movie projected on the screen to be a shadow reflection of the movie we ourselves have imagined.¹³⁵

Against such narrow-minded attitudes, Griffith proposes the ideas of the so-called Chicago school of literary criticism, which he appreciates especially for the flexibility of their Neo-Aristotelian approach. Among other things, they would question the idea that the elements of a work are "matters of abstract definition", preferring to think that they are rather "matters of factual artistic choices". The approach of evaluative judgment should be that of viewing the work in relation to the fulfilment of inherent potentialities in those factual choices, rather than in relation to what could be seen as inherent in those abstract definitions. For Griffith there is a fundamental difference between an imitation and a copy. Unlike a copy, an imitation does not try to 'capture' all the qualities of an object, which would be a "perversion". As such, an imitation should only be judged by the choices it "embodies".

¹³³ P. Cattrysse (1992), p. 68.

¹³⁴ J. Griffith, *Adaptation as Imitations – Films from Novels*, Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated Univ. Press, 1997.

¹³⁵ J. Griffith (1997), p. 34.

Of course, in setting out to adapt a novel to the screen, a filmmaker usually makes many choices along the same lines as those of the novelists [...] The average audience regards fidelity as a question of how much is left in: how much of the plot and how many of the characters survive the usual condensing of the novel's action [...] The more particularly elemental analysis of the Neo-Aristotelians would take us beyond this common notion of fidelity to more specific questions of technical and formal fidelity. **Fidelity concerns the kinds of choices made, not the number of choices that match the author's** [*bold characters are mine*].¹³⁶

All this brings back to mind André Bazin's critical model, as well as the principles of the so-called *Nouvelle Vague*. Writing about Bresson's film (1950) based on Bernanos's novel *Le journal d'un curé de campagne*, Bazin states that it is no longer a matter of translating as faithfully and sympathetically as possible, even less to take the novel only as a revered source of free inspiration, aiming at a film that may be a "repetition", or a copy of a work.¹³⁷ It is rather a matter of building up 'upon' the novel, and 'through' the cinema, a work which is set in a second position. In other words, according to Bazin, adaptation should not be viewed as a film production relatively comparable to the novel: the film becomes a new aesthetic entity which "like the novel is **multiplied** by cinema [*bold characters are mine*]".

Dusi takes up these ideas, and develops them to justify his terminological clarification: not 'adaptation' but 'transposition'. The first one, 'adaptation', would imply the idea of 'conforming' to particular needs, of fitting into an obliged and rigid form: 'adaptation' would therefore suggest a "univocally oriented translation process", strictly regarding the written text as the source and the target text as the product of a "coercion". Instead, Dusi finds that 'transposition' suggests the idea of 'going beyond' and through the source text, thus multiplying its semantic potentialities. According to him, transposition suggests the idea of a structure which is both ordered and flexible, and which, as such, supports the transfer from one text to another, while respecting the inherent differences and coherences.¹³⁸

2.2c - Fidelity in film transposition

Dusi's position can be taken as representative of the semiotic response to the core issue of the specificity of the two sign languages, and to the consequent problem of fidelity. Otherwise, the clear differences between cinema and literature sign languages can lead to an actual dualistic *impasse* in the debate,

¹³⁶ J. Griffith (1997), p. 41.

¹³⁷ A. Bazin, "Journal d'un curé de campagne et la stylistique de Robert Bresson", in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 3 (1951), quoted by N. Dusi (2003), pp. 15-16.

¹³⁸ N. Dusi (2003), p. 16.

even more when that is associated with the principle that 'story' and 'discourse' in a work of art cannot be separated. It is undeniable that, if any sign language is 'constitutive of thought and meaning', that is to say, meaning is indivisibly bound to the particular signifying system used for its embodiment, it is impossible to conceive a significance separable from it, and available to other discourse systems. As Griffith himself rightly points out, if we assume that art is based on an "inseparable relationship of form and content", and therefore each art is defined according to its medium, "then the issue of film adaptations of novels becomes a very simple matter: the adaptation cannot be the same thing".¹³⁹

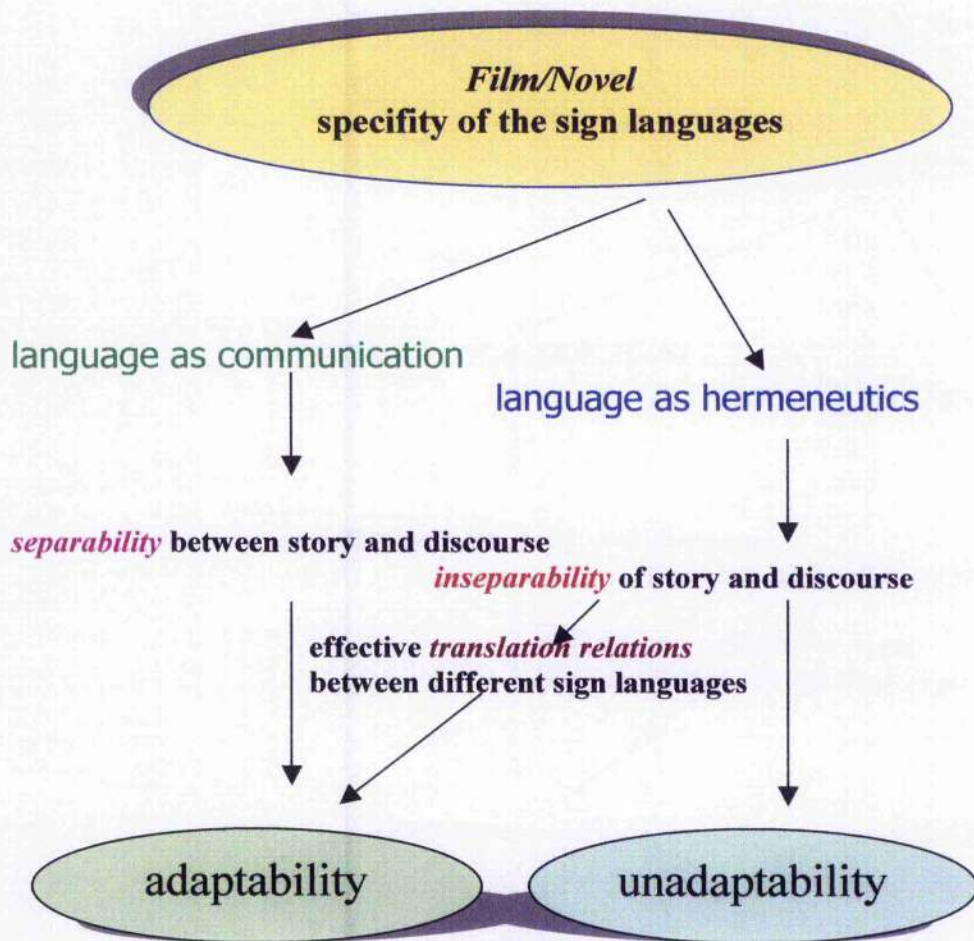
Let us think of the position of Jean Mitry, the French cinema expert who in the Sixties denied any possibility of real 'translation' between the two types of texts, which he sees as utterly different in both the 'signifier' and the 'signified'; and consequently in his opinion, the idea of transferring the forms of literary expression into those of the cinema would be only a piece of non-sense.¹⁴⁰

However, it is in the very distinction between 'story' and 'discourse' that a 'third way' for the film/novel relation has been developed. This third way places itself in open opposition to the previous negative view, according to which film and novel can only be totally autonomous entities, and adaptation as such would be intrinsically impossible. Therefore, with regard to the 'adaptability'/'unadaptability' antithesis, this way can be placed on the same side as those approaches based on the principle of 'translation relations' between forms (Cattrysse, Bazin, Dusi), since it leads to the same belief in the possibility of transposing a text from one semiotic language to another. Yet, it follows a radically different path, proposing a 'separatist' view of the work of art: separability of narrative from its concrete medium of expression (see the following scheme). We must say that this view has met with greater and greater popularity, unfortunately not always for the best. As Griffith laments, "this separatist view has gained such predominance as to be accepted uncritically and taken as a given of popular criticism".¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ J. Griffith (1997), p. 30.

¹⁴⁰ J. Mitry, *Esthétique et psychologie du cinéma II. Les formes*, Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1965, quoted in N. Dusi (2003), p. 14.

¹⁴¹ J. Griffith (1997), p. 30.



This is not to deny, of course, that the ‘separatist view’ stems from authoritative theorists as well, especially from Seymour Chatman’s 1978 essay, *Story and Discourse – Narrative Structure in Fiction and Discourse*.¹⁴² According to Chatman, there is a universal code of narrativity which would transcend its embodiment in any one discourse system. In his turn, Chatman starts by quoting Claude Bremond’s principle of the existence of “a layer of autonomous significance” in a text, “endowed with a structure that can be isolated from the whole of the message”. Thus the level of narrative manifested by any narrative message is to be conceived as being “independent of the techniques that bear it along”, that is to say, regardless of the process of expression used.¹⁴³

¹⁴² S. Chatman, *Story and Discourse – Narrative Structure in Fiction and Discourse*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978.

¹⁴³ C. Bremond, *Logique du récit*, Paris, Seuil, 1973, quoted by S. Chatman (1978), p. 19.

Such is also Chatman's belief in the "transposability of the story", which he sees as the strongest reason for proposing the idea that "narratives are indeed structures independent of any medium". Chatman further explains his views, by distinguishing between 'reading', which he sees as an ordinary activity, limited only to the surface or manifestation level, and what he labels as 'reading out', i.e., "working through to the deeper narrative level".

Reading out is thus an "interlevel term, while mere "reading" is "intralevel"[...] reading out seems to be a relatively transparent term for "decoding from surface to deep narrative structures". Narrative translation from one medium to another is possible because roughly the same set of events and existents can be read out.¹⁴⁴

Developing these principles, but also using Roland Barthes's classification and terminology, Brian McFarlane aims at building up a more exhaustive, as well as more effective, adaptation theory. The investigation line he follows is to identify what is possible to transfer or adapt from novel to film in the transposing process, so as to distinguish it from what, being dependent from differing signifying systems, cannot be transferred. The first one he identifies mostly as 'narrative', whereas the latter is essentially grouped as 'enunciation'.¹⁴⁵

In this context, Griffith's already mentioned complaint about how uncritically the separatist view tends to be accepted and applied, can be better understood if we look at those texts that mostly aim at teaching adaptation principles and practice. Just one example: *Principles of Adaptation for Film and Television* by Ben Brady, which is meant to be of practical help and support for "those who wish to approach the task of adaptation themselves."¹⁴⁶ The guidelines provided are thoroughly and unquestionably focused only on narrativity.

Somewhat in this line, but perhaps even less convincing, is then the position taken by Millicent Marcus in her otherwise interesting and illuminating essay, *Filmmaking by the Book - Italian cinema and Literary Adaptation*. Marcus introduces a rather improbable distinction between adapter and spectator: it is her opinion that, whereas for an adapter the separability of story and discourse is a "useful and necessary assumption", that distinction is no longer "tenable" for the public reception of the two media, "whose psychological and sociological consequences are so intimately bound to their medium-specific languages that to distinguish them becomes an exercise in academic frivolity".¹⁴⁷ But we personally think that this very distinction between the levels of

¹⁴⁴ S. Chatman (1978), p.42.

¹⁴⁵ B. McFarlane (1996), p.22.

¹⁴⁶ B. Brady, *Principles of Adaptation for Film and Television*, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1994.

¹⁴⁷ M. Marcus, *Filmmaking by the Book - Italian cinema and Literary Adaptation*, Baltimore, Maryland, London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993, p. 14.

adaptation and of reception is not 'tenable' (if the principle of unseparability in a text is valid, then it must always be valid, for the spectator as well as for the adapter), and thus risks becoming 'pure academy' in its turn.

2.2d - Film and literature: possibilities of a dialogue

When we started this short survey of novel/film studies, we observed that there are many interesting points of contacts with the broader field of translation studies, and mentioned Patrick Cattrysse's contribution, although briefly and promising to develop the point later. The original methodological proposals of his essay are, in effect, openly drawn from those 'polysystem theories' which have played, and are still playing, such an important part in translation theory and practices, as we have tried to point out in the first chapter.

Following the polysystem approach proposed by the research field of *Translation Studies*, Cattrysse urges adaptation studies to undergo a similar reaction against various traditional procedures and situations. He denounces especially all 'source-oriented' views, biased by the ideal of a 'faithful' reconstruction of the source text, and equally attacks scholars' *a priori* expectations for adequacy and norms of equivalence of the adapted text to its 'original'. Instead, he admires the polysystem approach because it has substituted normative attitudes, which are a necessary corollary to source-oriented methods, with functional and descriptive ones.¹⁴⁸

Coherently with such principles, Cattrysse does not provide a definition of adaptation based on an idea of faithfulness to the original, but deliberately keeps a pragmatic position, adopting an approach that Dusi defines as more 'sociological' than 'semiotic'.¹⁴⁹ As he states, any adaptation must be seen as the final product of a process, conceived and perceived as strictly connected to a particular historical context. Obviously this implies, also for novel/film studies, the necessity to identify and analyse 'transpositional norms', and the hierarchical relations between them, which can determine, or, at any rate, can greatly influence the whole process.

As Cattrysse clearly shows, genre norms and the position of the respective literary and cinematic genres can be of the utmost relevance during the selection and also the adaptation process.

When the importing genre holds a stable and successful position, the **function** of film adaptations tends to be **conservative**. As against this, when the stability of the film genre is endangered, the function of film adaptations becomes **innovative** [*bold characters are mine*]. The conservative or innovative function of film adaptations seems to determine the selection policy, as well as the ways of adapting the source texts. If the function of a film adaptation consists in sustaining and

¹⁴⁸ P. Cattrysse (1992), p.54.

¹⁴⁹ N. Dusi (2003), p. 25.

preserving a stable and successful genre, the selection policy consists in selecting source material which corresponds maximally to the dominant film genre conventions, the conventions of the literary genre are abandoned and the source material is largely modified to meet the cinematographic genre needs. But when the function of the film adaptation consists in renewing a petrified film genre which is on the verge of decay, both selection and adaptation policies are reversed: source texts are selected which are different from the dominant cinematographic genre conventions, and, instead of being modified, those different literary characteristics are imported as they are into the film adaptation, in order to revitalize the outworn film conventions.¹⁵⁰

Like Cattrysse, Millicent Marcus also draws inspiration and models from *Translation Studies*, but she refers specifically to André Lefevere's vital notion of 'refraction'. Rightly thinking that Lefevere's propositions can 'revitalize' the argument about adaptation, in the same way as it has been highly stimulating for translating transaction, she uses them to talk about the way a novel is reworked into a film to suit the needs of a specific public. As pointed out in the previous chapter, Lefevere's theory of refractions has the merit of drawing attention to both source and target systems, thus making the concept of literary system and norm even more complex and rich, and above all suggesting the shifting of the target-oriented approach to a more articulate view of translation as 'communication between cultures'. If we take some of his ideas (the natural languages and politics of both systems are not sclerotic and fixed; those who produce both 'refracted' and 'original' literature do not operate as *automatons*, etc.) and apply them to the field of novel/film relation, we can only agree with Millicent Marcus: the terms of the debate must be renegotiated. Moreover, film and novel are not monolithic entities, but rather "fluid constellations of codes, subject to many of the same intertextual influences and ideological constraints".¹⁵¹

Marcus does not push the transfer of Lefevere's notion further, and therefore does not clearly include Lefevere's opening towards a view of translation as bilateral communication. Yet, the idea of adaptation as a form of mutual exchange between film and literature seems to be very promising, and is instead unduly neglected, although with an important exception. We must remember that Timothy Corrigan turns bilateral cultural communication into the pivotal issue of his long introduction. The relatively exhaustive historical survey of the relationship between film and literature which he provides, is firmly rooted in the main principle that such a relationship is to be considered a historical pact, and as such it has kept changing and has 'shifted its terms' within different cultures. As Corrigan shows, gradually the *dynamic of exchanges* has grown in relevance and is now more articulate, moving towards a more equitable

¹⁵⁰ P. Cattrysse (1992), p. 59.

¹⁵¹ M. Marcus (1993), p. 22.

sharing, in which both film and literature become aware that the other is participating in common theoretical and aesthetic concerns. And the phrase aptly used by Corrigan to describe the present result of this *pattern of exchanges* between literature and film is: the creation of "an 'intertextual' dialogue on problems of representation and interpretation".¹⁵²

2.3 - *Towards a cross-cultural approach to film transposition*

Even if synthetic, and with no ambition at all to be exhaustive and comprehensive, hopefully this survey of film/novel studies may be of help to stress how complex and multifaceted the debate has become. Our main aim, when approaching and starting to 'browse' the bulky film/novel literature, was fundamentally to find out if, how, and to what extent, adaptation/film transposition studies could not only be analysed in parallel, but actually integrated into a single research project about translation theory and practice. Now, we can say, we have found a positive answer to such a hypothesis of broadening the field of translation.

It is true that the debate about whether it is right to regard film transpositions as proper 'translation' or rather as 'adaptation' (or, as Dusi suggests, as 'transposition'), is still unresolved, and is likely to remain so. In any case, that debate does not lie within the scope of our research, and we therefore now prefer to move on, starting from the necessary identification of those main principles that can be agreed on, and can be shared with inter-linguistic translation, as particularly relevant for our future research. As a way of summing up, therefore, let us try to point out what these core ideas are:

- interest in the notion that inter-linguistic translation is only one of the various transformational forms that guarantee the transfer of a work of art, and therefore translation criticism should pursue a wider perspective;
- belief in the possibility for the film/novel relation to develop effective *relazioni traduttive*, translation relations between forms;
- diffidence about 'separatist' approaches, based on the distinction between story and discourse in a text;
- agreement with the idea of film transposition as an 'ordered but flexible structure', which guarantees the transfer from one sign language to another, while respecting the inherent differences and coherences of the two texts;
- agreement with the view of film/novel relation as a historical pact, thus subject to continuous redefinitions and negotiations, with the corollary of the necessity to always identify and redefine transpositional norms as well;

¹⁵² T. Corrigan (1999), p. 60.

- interest in the approach to the film/novel relation as bilingual communication, intertextual dialogue; in other words, interest in film transposition seen as a privileged set of two-directional dynamic exchanges.

These are the principles that should become the guidelines of our study, a research which aims at focussing on an even closer linking between the two fields of cinema and translation. The idea is to take into consideration and study Western film transpositions of novels from marginal literatures (those of Latin America), after examining also their interlinguistic translations, thus focusing on a dialogue involving English, Italian and Hispanic cultures.

Obviously, any film transposition of a foreign novel always directly involves inter-linguistic translation as well, since filming is not only a visual art, and dialogues usually play an important role. Dubbing and subtitling could be interesting targets for research in themselves. But here the hope is to go 'further', or rather to move towards a wider approach, crossing the border of interlinguistic translation in a more cross-cultural perspective. We have seen at the end of the first part of chapter one about translation, that the cross-cultural outlook can be difficult and disquieting, sometimes verging on utopia, and yet, no doubt, it is always very stimulating, especially if we think of the issues of 'foreignizing' vs 'domesticating' and 'cultural levelling', or translation as 'mutual understanding' vs translation as 'assimilation'. But how will it be possible to apply these antitheses to the study of film transposition of foreign novels? Does it make sense?

As a logical consequence of what was said above about the film/novel relationship, the answer can only be 'yes'. Yet, we are perfectly aware that this is an almost completely untrodden path in film/novel studies. There are only some quick hints by experts, as for instance when Michael Klein observes, *en passant*, that cultural factors may significantly affect adaptation, and gives the example of English novels transposed into American films, and therefore targeted to an American audience. The consequence very often is that they have been "filmed in accordance with the Hollywood codes and conventions familiar to the modern American market".¹⁵³

Andrew Dudley is probably the only one who gets closer to the view of translation as an 'experience of the other'. He is proposing his own classification of types of adaptation: borrowing, intersection and fidelity of transformation. The one which he finds most interesting is the second one, intersection, and when he tries to offer a definition of it and has to identify its distinguishing characteristic, he chooses as a defining element that of deliberately preserving the uniqueness of the original text "to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated in adaptation". And he looks back to André Bazin's theories, but also to some of Paolo Pasolini's films, which he defines "as adaptational events

¹⁵³ M. Klein and G. Parker (1981), p. 10.

in the intersecting mode". Because all of them "refuse to adapt", instead presenting the 'otherness' and distinctiveness of the source text.

[unlike the mode of *borrowing*] such intersecting insists that the analyst attend to the *specificity* of the original within the *specificity* of the cinema. An original is allowed its life, its own life, in the cinema.¹⁵⁴

Dudley does not develop these issues any further, but his image of a novel "allowed" to go on living its own life even when transposed into a film, can be taken as a very promising, although 'daring', beginning for the analysis of case-studies of varied episodes of transposition of literary texts.

¹⁵⁴ A. Dudley, "Adaptation", in *Concepts in Film Theory*, 1981; now in T. Corrigan (1999), pp. 262-72.

Chapter 3 – From the Andes to the Apennines - A journey from the margins: the written text.¹⁵⁵

3.1a - A promising case study

Probably only an Italian reader can immediately identify the background for the headline chosen for this chapter, with its reference to a well-known short-story by Edmondo De Amicis, *Dagli Appennini alle Ande* (*From the Apennines to the Andes*), however this title should generally convey the idea of moving from one place to a very distant one, with the implicit notion of a difficult transfer from one marginal culture to another.¹⁵⁶ This is what in some ways occurs with the first case we are going to study, which is centered on a Chilean novel, *Ardiente paciencia* by Antonio Skármeta. Not only is it an interesting piece of literature from a so-called marginal culture, and thus worth studying in the ways it has been translated into Western languages, but what makes it even more promising is the complex evolution that the text has undergone since its first appearing.

Skármeta first wrote *Ardiente paciencia* as a radio play when he was in exile in Germany in 1982, about ten years after leaving Chile. A short time later (1983), he turned it into a play in two acts, and then, in the same year, into a film, for which he was both the script-writer and the director (subtitled in German as well as in English). The script was based on a yet unpublished and much longer version of the novel (about 400 pages, and including a prologue and an epilogue), which was in fact later distilled into the present text first published in Hanover and in Santiago in 1985, and then translated into more than fifteen languages. The English translation, *Burning Patience*, appeared two years later, in 1987, while the Italian translation was published in 1989, but with a relevant change: the title became *Il postino di Neruda*.

As Skármeta himself said during his first speech at Xavier University in 1988, all this shows that his “noble postman was already well established in

¹⁵⁵ Part of this chapter was presented at the Society for Italian Studies Postgraduate Colloquium, University of Cambridge, April 2005, and the relative paper, with the title “A Postman’s journey/Il Viaggio di un postino - The Transformation of Antonio Skármeta’s *Ardiente paciencia*”, has been included in M. Boria and L. Rizzo, L. (eds.), (2007), *Laboratorio di nuova ricerca. Investigative Gender, Translation & Culture in Italian Studies* (Leicester: Troubadour).

¹⁵⁶ *Dagli Appennini alle Ande* is one of the most famous stories in *Il Cuorè* (1886), which was very popular in Italy many decades ago.

world literature".¹⁵⁷ Yet it was nothing compared to the subsequent enormous success of the film *Il postino*, a remake directed by Michael Radford and starring Massimo Troisi, which had appeared in Italy in 1994 and then had been launched in the USA and all over the world by Miramax in 1995. As a result, the novel was reissued in both Spanish and English, being renamed "to capitalize on its association with the popular movie": respectively, *The Postman* (1995) and *El cartero de Neruda* (1996).¹⁵⁸ Moreover, thanks to the recent advent of DVD technology, now the film *Il postino* is available not only with subtitles in a great number of languages, but also in dubbed versions in English and Spanish.

Yardín Gordils underlines the exceptional development of Skármeta's text as a way of introducing his personal and intriguing reading of the two film versions.

Metáforas en espejos repetidos son las sucesivas versiones de *El cartero de Neruda*: la radionovela, la obra teatral, la película y la novela homónimas *Ardiente Paciencia*, del director de cine y teatro, guionista y narrador Antonio Skármeta, así como la adaptación libre de la novela chilena a Italia del filme *Il postino*, dirigido por el cineasta inglés Michael Radford, y "los etcéteras". Míranse en ellas a un espejo azogado con la poética de Neruda -- interrogando -- estructural y semánticamente -- los mecanismos de la representación o traslación (metáfora).¹⁵⁹

That is exactly what should make this case study promising: the possibility of integrating the study of how Skármeta's novel has been translated into two main Western languages and cultures, English and Italian, together with its transpositions into film, first by the same author, and then by a group of Europeans (director, script-writer and actors).

¹⁵⁷ With this quotation from Skármeta's speech, *Dialogue with a director*, Irene H. Hodgson opens her interesting essay, *The De-Chileanization of Neruda in "Il Postino"* (Teresa Longo (ed.), *Pablo Neruda and U.S. Culture Industry*, New York and London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 97-113), where she also explains that this was one of the three speeches delivered by Skármeta at Xavier University, and as he spoke in English, she did not have to alter or filter his "charming and witty" language.

¹⁵⁸ I. Hodgson (2000), p. 98.

¹⁵⁹ "What else are the successive versions of *El cartero de Neruda* if not repeated metaphors mirroring one another: the radio play, the drama, the film and the homonymous novel *Ardiente paciencia*, by the cinema and theatre director, script-writer and novelist Antonio Skármeta, as well as the free adaptation of the Chilean novel to Italy by the film *Il postino*, directed by the English film-maker Michael Radford, and 'the etceteras'. In all this, we can see a mirror blurred by Neruda's poetics, questioning -- structurally and semantically -- the very mechanisms of representation by transfer or translation (metaphor)" [*my translation*], Yanis Gordils, "El mundo como metáfora en *El cartero de Neruda* o *Ardiente paciencia* y en *Il postino*", in *Torre: Revista de la Universidad de Puerto Rico*, 6:20-21 (2001: April-Sept.), pp. 331-79.

3.1b - A text based on metaphors

Even at a first reading, *Ardiente paciencia* surprises for its overall simplicity: in plot, in structure, in discourse; yet it is a very rich and evocative text. As aptly pointed out, the novel could be summed up as "the story of two love-affairs linked by metaphors".¹⁶⁰ The real and passionate love of a young postman, Mario Jiménez for Beatriz González in a small Chilean village, Isla Negra, which reflects the love of the poet Pablo Neruda for his country. *Ardiente paciencia* has been even read as an allegory of the fall of the Allende government in Chile, since the action develops between 1969 and 1973. When the novel begins, preparations are underway for the presidential election, and Mario has got a job as a postman but with only one client (although a very popular and well-known one, who therefore receives a huge amount of mail). Mario witnesses Pablo Neruda's initial acceptance as the Communist Party's presidential candidate, a candidacy which is later promptly and more happily withdrawn as soon as the Unidad Popular (Popular Unity) backs Salvador Allende.

The link between the two stories, the fictional private story and the historical public one, cannot be ignored, as often confirmed by critics. For example, Guillermo García Corales writes:

La trama individual de la novela confluye en el espectáculo de lo colectivo. La aventura amorosa del muchacho y Beatriz se cruza con la historia de Chile desde 1969 hasta 1973: la elección de Salvador Allende como Presidente de la República en 1970; la candidatura presidencial, la embajada en París y el Premio Nobel de Neruda; las huelgas; el desabastecimiento; el golpe del estado; el fallecimiento del poeta; y los arrestos policiales (de los cuales el propio Mario termina siendo víctima al fin del relato).¹⁶¹

The plot of *Ardiente paciencia* makes the individual and the collective walk "codo con codo" (arm in arm), to use Grínor Rojo's words.¹⁶² And that is proved by the fact that Mario's most intense moments of love-making coincide with important moments of political attainment for Unidad Popular: he makes

¹⁶⁰ Raffaele Lampugnani, "Objectivity, Political Commitment and sexual Metaphor in Skármeta's *Ardiente Paciencia*", in *Love, Sex and Eroticism in Contemporary Latin American Literature*, Melbourne: Voz Hispánica, 1992, p. 119.

¹⁶¹ "The individual plot of the novel is subsumed in the collective experience. The romantic episode of the boy and Beatriz intersects the history of Chile from 1969 to 1973: the election of Salvador Allende as president of the republic in 1970; his presidential candidacy, the ambassadorship in Paris and Neruda's Nobel prize; the strikes; the shortages; the coup; the death of the poet; and the police arrests (of which Mario himself becomes a victim at the end of the story)", G. García Corales, "Carnavalización del discurso nerudiano en 'Ardiente paciencia' de Antonio Skármeta", *Hispanic Journal*, 16:1 (1995: spring), pp. 66-7. Also quoted by I. B. Hodgson (2000), p. 101, to whom I am indebted for the translation.

¹⁶² G. Rojo, "Skarmetiana del exilio", *Crítica del exilio*, Santiago, Chile: Pehuén n.d., p. 129; quoted by I. Hodgson (2000), p. 102.

love to Beatriz for the first time on the night of September 4th, when the people are all celebrating Allende's victory, and similarly he cannot find a better way of celebrating the Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to his friend Pablo Neruda than by making love to Beatriz in the kitchen and dedicating their exceptional orgasm to the poet.

Skármeta himself explains that the original project was born from a metaphor: Pablo Neruda, the poet, became 'silent' and died a short time after the military coup that killed President Allende as well as democracy in Chile. It seemed that violence had silenced utopia and poetry. "Era una metáfora que ofrecía la historia. Decidí recogerla con unción".¹⁶³

It is in this nexus binding together love, poetry and the triumph of left-wing causes, that poetry and its important tool, metaphors, become the 'connecting tissue' between love and politics, to the point that in *Ardiente paciencia* metaphors make left-wing ideology the 'natural associate' of exuberant sexuality and passion. As Stephen Henighan points out, the whole novel is in fact characterized by a war between metaphors on the one side, and on the other side, their counterpoint, proverbs and refrains, which are seen as the sterile tool of the right-wing adversaries.¹⁶⁴ On the side of metaphors, of course, there are Neruda, Mario, Beatriz; on the opposite side, Beatriz's mother, Rosa, and the right-wing politician, Labbé.

In the novel, Neruda himself explains to young Mario what he means by metaphors: "Para aclarártelo más o menos, son modos de decir una cosa comparándola con otra", a way of saying something by comparing it to something else.¹⁶⁵ In other words, by disrupting the literal meaning for supraliteral understandings, metaphors insist on the vertical proliferation of meaning and revitalize reality. They join things together, and thus carry on communication. Ethan Shaskan Bumás comments that in this sense in *Ardiente paciencia* "metaphor is a microcosm of communication in general". According to him, the main characters actually interact through metaphors that help them come together in spite of their differing cultures and backgrounds: it is only when they have found a common basis on which to relate to one another, and which in some ways makes them similar, that communication can be enacted.¹⁶⁶

Bumas rightly points out that communication is not the only thing to run "smoothly" in Isla Negra; so does life in general. And this "pastoral atmosphere", where even an uneducated postman can be fascinated by poetry and can confer with one of the "continent's immortals" is made possible by the

¹⁶³ "It was a metaphor that history was offering. I decided to pick it up and honour it" as quoted by Y. Gordils (2001), p. 332.

¹⁶⁴ "Traditional politics, like advertising, is portrayed as a realm dominated by sterile, slogan-based language", Stephen Henighan, "The Metaphor War and the Proverb Artillery: Language and Power in Skármeta's *Ardiente Paciencia*", in *Romance Notes*, 39:2 (1999), p. 178.

¹⁶⁵ A. Skármeta, *Ardiente paciencia*, Barcelona: Plaza & Janes Editores 1986, p. 22.

¹⁶⁶ E. S. Bumás, "Metaphor's Exile: the Poets and Postmen of Antónið Skármeta", in *Latin American Literary Review*, 21:41 (1993: June), p. 13.

miracle worked by poetry and thereby by metaphors themselves: metaphors defy conventional language and, particularly in Neruda's poetry, they seem to have their origin in the programmatic world of primal images taken directly from nature, memory, dream. This seems to be proved by the fact that, although the common people of Isla Negra were usually illiterate, they were fairly well-acquainted with Pablo Neruda's verses. That is shown again and again by *Ardiente Paciencia*, and Skármeta himself had the opportunity of explaining and testifying that such an idyll between a country and its poet was no fiction, but real history, as Bumás invites us to remember.

Skármeta has spoken of accompanying the historical Neruda to a campaign rally where poor people yelled out for poetry, and a suspicious Neruda asked for suggestions, surprised to hear a virtual table of contents gather from throughout the crowd. This is just to point out the possibility of pastoral in this oral state, similar to the one in which poetry was born.¹⁶⁷

Some critics have even identified Neruda's poetry as the real protagonist of the novel. No doubt Neruda's poetry, which amply imbues the discourse, plays here an important role, but more than that, it is poetry in general which makes *Ardiente paciencia* "un verdadero poema en sonido e imagen" (a true poem in sounds and images), "una maravillosa ligazón entre poesía y realidad" (a wonderful joining of poetry and reality).¹⁶⁸ As already observed, the novel chooses simplicity as its distinctive characteristic: omniscient narrator, chronological and linear development, basic plot, unrefined syntax, popular imagery, and so on. Yet, the lyrical treatment of language is sustained from the very beginning. And the result is a highly individual discourse, vivid and energetic like the world it wants to evoke, as, for example, when, in its most intense moments, it almost seems to explode into 'linguistic fireworks': from noticeable accumulations of synonymic adjectives (at times more than twenty), to exceptionally extended periods, created by an almost never-ending combination of sentences. Poetry, however, cannot live together with violence, and after the *golpe* all metaphors are immediately silenced. "Metaphor seems to be in exile", Bumás comments. "In the reign of the Junta, Skármeta seems to be saying, either metaphor becomes inappropriate or the world becomes a less hospitable place for metaphor".¹⁶⁹

3.1c - Pablo Neruda as a fictional character

In a note on the back cover of the first Spanish edition of *Ardiente paciencia*, Skármeta explained he was bringing out the less famous Neruda to the

¹⁶⁷ E. S. Bumás (1993), p. 13 and note 9. Bumás explains that Skármeta mentioned this rally at an international conference in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1992.

¹⁶⁸ R. Lampugnani (1992), p. 119.

¹⁶⁹ E. S. Bumás (1993), p. 14.

Chilean people, almost as the reverse route of what Mario does. And Bumás aptly observes that the central metaphor of the novel is Mario's profession: he brings his national poet letters from all over the world, and, being a postman, he links together letters and *belle lettres*; in addition to that, he is not only a postman, but also an apprentice poet.¹⁷⁰ That Mario's profession acquires a special relevance in the novel is further stressed by the special gift he gets from Neruda: the 'official anthem' of the postman, the Beatles version of the song *Mr. Postman*, to which music the no longer young poet magically dances in front of Mario's hypnotized eyes, conjuring up one of the most intriguing scenes of the novel.

Of course, what Skármeta does, is much more complex than simply act out Mario's profession of carrying *lettres* to the world. It is true that the novel shows Neruda from a more intimate point of view, while at the same time amply letting his poetry imbue the text, but what Skármeta is developing in *Ardiente paciencia* is rather a subtle process of literary demystification, an operation which moreover appears to be double targeted: on the one hand, it seems to be directed towards Neruda himself, or better towards the myth built on him as a national poet, and on the other hand, the focus is more subtly on the acclaimed literary tradition of the so-called writers of the *boom*. With regard to the first point, it should be observed that the year 1982 saw the appearance of another Chilean text, Jorge Díaz's *Desde la sangre y el silencio (Fulgor y muerte de Pablo Neruda)*, which confirms a growing interest for the Chilean poet some years after his death (1973). However, although referring to the same historical person, the texts present two very different characters. If Díaz uses Neruda as the image of the glorious hero and martyr for the freedom of Chile, Skármeta rather wants to highlight the Poet's great humanity.

Already in the Forties, Pablo Neruda had come to be regarded in Chile as the Poet: a solemn and emblematic figure. As Guillermo García-Corales observes, his image had been gaining in relevance, being linked to the ideals of freedom and social justice, thanks to his political involvement with the Communist Party. Moreover Neruda has often been visualized as a catalyst for the quintessence of a Chilean culture which aims to reach the universal.¹⁷¹ And clearly this idea was greatly reinforced by the award of the Nobel Prize in 1971, and even more by the poet's death in 1973, which almost inevitably was seen as coinciding with the death of socialist utopia and freedom, two ideals to which he had contributed so much. Thus, for the collective imagination in Chile, this coincidence raises the poet to an almost legendary level, and it has been noted that Neruda's posthumous cult was even exaggerated during the dictatorship, to the point that the real man was increasingly replaced by a petrified symbol, thus marginalizing not only Neruda's humanity, but also the passion and values of his whole poetry.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ E. S. Bumás (1993), p. 10.

¹⁷¹ G. García Corales (1995), p. 70

¹⁷² J. Edwards, *Adiós poeta*, Madrid: Tusquest, 1991, p. 34.

That is why *Ardiente paciencia* has this important function when questioning such a monolithic view of both Neruda and his poetry.

Nadie, hasta la publicación de esta novela, había logrado crear una obra que tuviera al poeta como personaje de ficción, inserto poética y vitalmente en un contexto popular; en interlocución, por lo tanto, con los lenguajes desformalizados de la plaza y del mercado.¹⁷³

This is exactly the core issue of García-Corales's very interesting reading of the novel. As he rightly observes, Skármeta is one of the writers of the generation of the so-called *novísimos* who mostly borrow from popular culture and imagery to develop a 'dialogue' with his fictional world. In this regard, García-Corales speaks of *carnavalización* ('carnivalizing'). By this word, he refers to the effects provoked by carnival rites and celebrations on literary forms: carnival is a special kind of performance which abolishes any distance between actors and audience. At its very roots there is the demystification of power, "la desacralización del poder".¹⁷⁴ This way, the distance between individuals is replaced by free and spontaneous contacts, and at the same time dichotomous elements, such as the sacred and the profane, the serious and the comical are bridged. To use Skármeta's words, we should speak of an 'aesthetics of promiscuity', and by that he refers to the interaction in his narrative discourse between elements from high literature – Neruda, first of all, but also Shakespeare, Dante Alighieri – and elements from popular culture: the Beatles, rock music, Chilean folk music, movies, etc.

Ardiente paciencia is pervaded by Neruda's poetry, which however appears in the novel as deeply transformed – García-Corales uses an even stronger word, "distorted" – since Neruda's lines are set in a popular and familiar context. Consequently, those very lines are modified and masked in a carnival-like way, and García-Corales affirms that it is in this demystifying transformation that the ideological subtext of Skármeta's narrativity lies: that the great power of poetry is alive at any level of life.¹⁷⁵

Skármeta was perfectly aware of that: "La vinculación del pueblo chileno con la poesía es grande" (great is the link between the Chileans and poetry), and through this text he openly reveals the ways literature is alive, that is to say, at

¹⁷³ "Till the publishing of this novel, nobody had dared to create a piece of work which would deal with the poet as a fictional character, and which would vitally insert his poetry into a popular context, therefore interacting with the informal languages of the street and of the market" [*my translation*], G. García Corales (1995), p. 71.

¹⁷⁴ About the role of carnival as an important historic form of alternative and subversive comic culture, see Michail Bakhtin's studies. It was Bakhtin who developed the theory according to which the presence of carnival elements in literature is subversive, since it disrupts authority and introduces alternatives (J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, London: Penguin Books, p. 111). Through the 'carnavalesque' what is serious is constantly turned upside down, without however never dissolving it, but rather distilling and integrating it.

¹⁷⁵ G. García Corales (1995), pp. 65-6 and 76-7.

work in society.¹⁷⁶ Elzbieta Sklodowska points out that, although such decontextualization of Neruda's poetry could suggest parody, instead the novel leads to a different message: Neruda's poetry has transcended its artistic and historical context and has achieved an unexpected social function.¹⁷⁷

3.1d - Skármeta and the writers of the Boom

The implications of Skármeta's narrative choices and solutions are wide, besides the demystification of Neruda as a national hero, and *Ardiente paciencia* reveals also a 'critical dialogue' with the most revered exponents of the so-called Latin-American Boom, and their interest in the most arduous linguistic and structural experiments. It is this narrative style, therefore, to be deliberately abandoned by Skármeta for lack of legibility. Let us see how Elzbieta Sklodowska comments, referring to the self-ironical prologue that introduced the first version of the novel:

La conciencia metaliteraria del escritor chileno [...] establece un diálogo abierto con los "ismos" consagrados de la literatura hispanoamericana[...] Mientras que el pre-texto visible con el cual está jugando Skármeta está constituido por la poesía de Neruda, existe también un diálogo velado con esta veta de la narrativa del boom que ha ofuscado su propia legibilidad entregándose a los vertiginosos experimentos lingüísticos y estructurales. La misma sencillez formal de *Ardiente Paciencia* [...] desafía la poética del hermetismo. La ausencia de las estrategias literarias experimentales resulta en un anacronismo deliberado y hasta la historia de una pasión amorosa entre adolescentes parece pertenecer a épocas más románticas que la nuestra.¹⁷⁸

3.2 - Torop's table for 'Translatability of culture'

Since, as we have seen, the deliberate simplicity of *Ardiente paciencia*, with its 'aesthetics of promiscuity' and ideological implications, creates a rich and idiosyncratic discourse, this means that Skármeta's novel provides a

¹⁷⁶ Quoted by A. Choucifo Fernández, "Desde la sangre y el silencio y *Ardiente paciencia*: Pablo Neruda, figura pública/figura privada", in *Moenia: Revista Lucense de Lingüística y Literatura*, 2 (1966), p. 113.

¹⁷⁷ E. Sklodowska, "*Ardiente paciencia* y *La casa de los espíritus*: traición y tradición en el discurso del post-boom", in *Revista de Estudios Iberoamericanos*, 9: 1 (1991), p. 36. It should be clarified that Elzbieta Sklodowska does not mean 'parody' as a 'burlesque perversion' of another text, but rather as a 'metadiscursive attitude'.

¹⁷⁸ "The metaliterary conscience of the Chilean writer [...] establishes an open dialogue with the sacred "-isms" of Latin American literature [...] While Neruda's poetry is the visible pre-text with which Skármeta is playing, there is also a hidden dialogue with the top of that boom fiction which has become obscure by indulging in dizzy experiments in language and structure. The very formal simplicity of *Ardiente paciencia* defies the poetics of Hermetism. The absence of literary experimental strategies results in a deliberate anachronism, and even the simple story of a love between two adolescents rather seems to belong to ages more romantic than ours" [*my translation*], E. Sklodowska (1991), p. 35.

particularly challenging test of how a TT could, and should, address both the personal discourse and the meaningful cultural references of its ST. However, before starting with the actual reading of the translation of the Chilean novel into English, it is vital to establish what tools of analysis will be used.

In chapter one, although *en passant*, we mentioned Peèter Torop's essay and his useful guidelines. His table *Translatability of Culture* can be of great relevance, even if of course it needs to be 'tailored' to meet the target of this research and the above-mentioned peculiarities of Skármeta's novel. Above all, a promising approach can be found in Torop's idea of focusing on parameters of translatability, matching them with a range of available translation strategies. Thus, partly following and partly integrating his table, it will be possible to develop a tool which should hopefully favour systematic description of different TTs, while avoiding any pre-conceived frame of reference: in other words, the target is to identify a comprehensive tool which can support a descriptive, but not normative approach. But first let us start by observing the full version of Torop's table, in the English version proposed by Bruno Osimo, and also made accessible online.¹⁷⁹

• TOROP'S TABLE OF CULTURE TRANSLATABILITY

Parameters of translatability	Possible translation strategies
<i>Language</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grammar categories • <i>realia</i>¹⁸⁰ • conversational etiquette¹⁸¹ • associations¹⁸² • world image¹⁸³ • discourse¹⁸⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nationalization (naturalization) • trans-nationalization • denationalization • <i>mélange</i>¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁹ B. Osimo (2000, on line version), part 2, chapter 31, pp. 2-3.

¹⁸⁰ *Realia* are important cultural terms since they are words that exist only in one given culture, like *spaghetti* in Italian, or *balalaika* in Russian. As Torop explains, a translator can choose among several options to render them. "The translator can choose to simply transcribe (or transliterate when the alphabets are different) the word, or to translate it: in this case, he/she has the opportunity to create a neologism, to substitute the cultural words with other *realia* (usually of the receiving culture), to provide an approximate translation", B. Osimo (2000, on line version), part 2, chapter 32, p. 1.

¹⁸¹ 'Conversational etiquette' is determined by the culture given types of relations (for example, familiar, non-familiar address) influencing dialogues.

¹⁸² "Words with peculiar connotations [...]: for ex., trade marks that give an idea of luxury or deprivation, colours indicating mourning, love, jealousy, etc.", B. Osimo (2000, online version), part 2, chapter 32, p.2.

¹⁸³ The degree of explicitness of a language. As a clarifying example, Torop mentions the problem of translating the Japanese words *haiku* or *tanka* into English which is made more

<i>Time</i> ¹⁸⁶	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • historical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - authorial - of the events • cultural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • archaization (abstract past) • historization (concrete past) • modernization • neutralization
<i>Space</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social (sociolects) • geographic • psychological¹⁸⁷ 	perceptive concretisation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • localization (translation with comments) • visualization (graphical representation of situations) • naturalization (adaptation) • exotization • neutralization
<i>Text</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gender signals (gender codes) <i>chronotopic levels</i> ¹⁸⁸ : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • narrator and narration¹⁸⁹ • expressive aura of the character • author's lexicon and syntax • expression media system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preservation – non-preservation of the structure (element and level hierarchy) • preservation – non-preservation of cohesion

difficult since English tends to be more explicit (less figurative), B. Osimo (2000, on line version), part 2, chapter 32, p. 2.

¹⁸⁴ "The *discourse* aspect is linked to the awareness of the specific translation problems related to scientific and technical jargons", B. Osimo (2000, on line version), part 2, chapter 32, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ 'Nationalization' tends add familiarity; 'denationalization' levels differences and peculiarities, whereas 'mélange' (mixing elements of different cultures) and trans-nationalization aim at not concealing the 'otherness' of the ST (B. Osimo, 2000, on line version, chapter 32, p. 2).

¹⁸⁶ The time parameter can refer to the period of the source culture (for example, the presence or absence of appropriate stylistic means to transfer specific styles), the author's historical time and the time in which the events are set (B. Osimo, 2000, on line version, chapter 32, p. 2).

¹⁸⁷ "*Psychological space* concerns both the reader and the translator. It is important for the reader to perceive the inner unity of the text, attainable using both lexical coherence and imagery of the text", B. Osimo (2000), part 2, chapter 32, p. 2.

¹⁸⁸ "Per quanto riguarda l'analisi cronotopica, basata sull'opposizione 'mondo proprio/mondo altrui, occorre suddividere il testo in livelli, che stanno uno dentro l'altro come matryoshke. Si procede con un'analisi tematica, seguita dall'analisi della realtà rappresentata nel testo e del legame personale dell'autore con questa realtà: L'analisi cronotopica prevede tre livelli: *cronotopo topografico* (tempo e luogo dell'intreccio), *cronotopo psicologico* (mondo soggettivo dei personaggi), e *cronotopo metafisico* (mentalità/concezione dell'autore)" ("With regard to the *chronotopic* analysis, based on the opposition personal world / world of the others, it is necessary

<i>Work</i>	
Metatext complementarity (book) ¹⁹⁰ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presupposition • interpretation • reaction of the readers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • readers' version • intratextual clarification • interlinear commentaries • special commentaries at the end • general systematic commentaries • metatextual compensation
<i>Socio-political manipulation</i>	
Norms and taboos (<i>editio purificata</i>) Translation tendentiousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (tendentious) purification of the texts • text orientation

As we can see, it is a very articulate and detailed table, which hopefully will prove useful for our research. If Peeter Torop's important theoretical contributions have recently come to be better known, at least in the Italian context (but not in the Anglo-American world, where he has not been translated yet), the appreciation of his discourse, however, seems to have been mostly confined to the field of theory. Therefore it becomes a challenging goal to prove that Torop's table is relevant for translation criticism as well, moreover extending its use even to film transposition. In this regard, we should mention Bruno Osimo's comment, when he points out how Torop's parameters "have been chosen in order to be applicable not only to interlingual translation, but to intersemiotic translation, as well".¹⁹¹ However, naturally enough, not all the parameters and points of the table are equally relevant to each of our case studies. To start with, for the analysis of the two interlinguistic translations of Skármeta's novel, our focus will be mostly on the following parameters:

- language,
- text,

to divide a text into levels, each one including another as with Russian dolls. We must begin with a thematic analysis, followed by the analysis of the reality represented in the text and the analysis of the personal connection between the author and that reality. The *chronotopic* analysis includes three levels: the *topographical chronotopes* (the time and space of the plot), *psychological chronotope* (the subjective reality of the characters), and the *metaphysical chronotope* (ideas and outlook of the author)", [*my translation*], B. Osimo, "Nota del curatore" [editor's note], P. Torop's (1999), p. 45.

¹⁸⁹ Narrator and narration can be an important element in a text and need special attention in translation: Torop makes two clarifying examples: the problem of transferring narrative styles derived or based on oral story-telling and the case of the opposition narrator/author, which besides point of view and perspective, can influence the language as well (Torop, 1999, p. 32).

¹⁹⁰ "The work parameter has to do with the creation of the metatext as a book, as a published volume, sometimes with critical apparatuses, notes, afterward, chronologies, etc. This parameter influences the perception of the work by the audience", B. Osimo (2000, on line version), part 2, ch.33, p.2.

¹⁹¹ B. Osimo (2000, on line version), part 2, ch.32, p.3.

- work,
- socio-political manipulation.

This leads to a simplified version of the above grid.

Parameters of translatability	Possible translation strategies
<i>Language</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar categories • <i>realia</i> • associations • Conversational etiquette 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nationalization (naturalization) • trans-nationalization (exotization) • denationalization • <i>mélange</i>
<i>Space</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social (social dialects, jargons) • geographic (territorial dialects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • localization (translation with comments) • naturalization (adaptation) • exotization • neutralization
<i>Text</i>	
<i>chronotopic</i> levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • narrator and narration • expressive aura of the character • author lexicon and syntax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preservation – non-preservation of the structure (hierarchy of elements and levels) • preservation – non-preservation of cohesion
<i>Work</i>	
<i>Metatext complementarity (book)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • model reader¹⁹² • interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intratextual explanation • interlinear commentaries and notes • special commentaries and information either at the end or at the beginning • metatextual compensation
<i>Socio-political determinacy</i>	
norms and taboos translation tendentiousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (deliberate) purification-neutralization • text orientation

¹⁹² This is an integration to Torop's table. About 'model reader', see Umberto Eco: "[Lettore Modello è] un insieme di condizioni di felicità, testualmente stabilite, che devono essere soddisfatte perché a un testo sia pienamente attualizzato nel suo contenuto potenziale" ("The model reader is a sum of happy conditions set by the text itself: only if they are fully met, the potential contents of the text can be fully develop"), [my translation], *Lector in fabula*, Studi Bompiani: Milano, 1979, p. 62.

3.3a - The English translation

Skármeta's novel was translated into English, under the title *Burning Patience*, by Katherine Silver and published in the USA in 1987 by Pantheon Books, a division of Random House, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada; a year later, it was published also in Great Britain by Methuen, London. Moreover, after the great success of the second film version, *Il postino*, the producer and distributor Miramax immediately decided to reprint the English translation in 1995, but this time with a new title which could favour the association with the popular movie: *The Postman*.

When starting the analysis of a novel in its translation, the first aspect that has to be checked is obviously its overall structure. In this case, we can observe that the division into chapters is identical in both ST and TT, and there are no macroscopic deletions, provided we remember that the translation is based on the edition of the Chilean novel printed by Ediciones del Norte in 1985 in Hanover, and in 1986 also in Barcelona by Plaza & Janes Editores, editions which already presented the text without the original prologue, while deciding instead to preserve the short epilogue.¹⁹³ In that regard, we should not forget that several years later, in 1993, there was actually a new edition of the novel in English, still by Katherine Silver, but this time including also the prologue translated by Juanita García Godoy (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf, 1993).¹⁹⁴ It was, however, to remain an exception, and all later editions have been just a reprinting of Katherine Silver's translation, without the prologue.

After observing that Silver's TT is not introduced or accompanied by the translator's comments on her own translation strategy and methodology (which is no surprise, after all, since publishers seldom let translators' voices be heard), we can comment that the initial overall impression is that this translation could be defined as a 'faithful' one. As already noticed, the TT does not show any striking divergence from the ST, and from that point of view we could say that this translation seems to be fairly 'close' and faithful to the 'original text', of course implying with that only a traditional and vague notion of fidelity.

3.3b - The parameter of language: grammar categories

It is the moment, then, to start to have a closer look at the TT, with recourse to the table commented above in section 3.2.

¹⁹³ Chapters are not numbered in neither ST and TT, but they are clearly identified.

¹⁹⁴ The prologue provides the background for the main story of Mario and Neruda, since a fictional narrator, who introduces himself as a journalist, explains how he has personally witnessed the facts he is going to write about, and moreover he has been asked by Beatriz González to write about her *desaparecido* husband. The prologue then had an important metatextual value, even more because it introduced ironic hints at the literary intentions of the text.

Unlike English, Spanish is usually described as a language characterized by differences in noun genres, or by agreement in number and gender between adjectives and nouns, articles and nouns, and moreover the two languages sometimes differ also in tenses and verb modes, like the indicative imperfect, or the subjunctive with all its tenses; and the list could be much longer, of course. Equally interesting are the differences in syntax between the two languages, with Spanish characterized by a certain inclination to more articulate and complex sentences, which seems to be accompanied by a greater flexibility in clause structure and word order.

On paying attention to these aspects, we are just focusing on the first section of the table, the parameter of 'language', and specifically on the first point, grammar categories and syntax, with the goal of identifying which translation strategy the TT has adopted in this regard. To start with, let us take a short example from chapter 3: it is the first direct dialogue in the novel between Mario and Neruda, and it follows the opening of the letter from Sweden regarding the Nobel Prize.

Mario, que presentía el fin del diálogo, se dejó consumir por una ausencia semejante a la de su predilecto y único cliente, pero tan radical, que obligó al poeta a preguntarle:

- ¿Qué te quedaste pensando?

- En lo que dirán las otras cartas. ¿Serán de amor? (20-21)¹⁹⁵

Mario, who had a sneaking suspicion that the dialogue was about to come to an end, took the liberty of drifting into a state of absent-mindedness similar to that common in his only and favourite client. Mario's lapse was so total, however, that the poet felt compelled to ask, 'What are you thinking about?'

'Oh, just about what might be in your other letters. Maybe they're love letters?' (15)¹⁹⁶

The difference in length between the two texts is obviously the first characteristic to be noticed. The first sentence in Spanish is expanded from two in the ST to three lines in the TT, and is split into two sentences. The latter decision can be easily explained by the nature of English syntax and prose, which prefers to avoid too complex and tortuous a linking of dependent and independent clauses. Yet there is more to observe: we can detect clear examples of addition in the TT which cannot be explained merely on the grounds of linguistic adaptation and compensation:

- "had a sneaking suspicion" for "presentía" (suspected): expressive amplification;
- "took the liberty of drifting" for "se dejó consumir" (literally, 'let himself be worn out'): here the TT shows a rendering which is a more

¹⁹⁵ All quotations from *Ardiente paciencia* are from the 1986 edition by Plaza & Janes Editores, Barcelona.

¹⁹⁶ All quotations from *Burning Patience* are from the 1988 Methuen Edition.

typical specimen of a (target) text-type than a word by word translation. However, it is not a neutral transformation, as it also turns the action into active (a deliberate action) rather than passive. If we analyse the whole scene, we can see that Mario is completely absorbed and fascinated by this relationship with the poet, and with the world which the poet seems to open before his eyes. It is true that he is only seventeen years old, and therefore has the innocent impertinence and spontaneity of a teenager, which in fact endears him to Neruda, yet in this scene he is practically spell-bound, and passive rather than active. Even more important is the shift in register: from the colourful, vivid and concrete language used by the narrator in the ST to the more generic and more abstract lexicon of the TT;

- “a state of absent-mindedness” for “ausencia” (absence): paraphrastic translation, which unfortunately loses the figurative power of the ST noun. “Ausencia” combines two functions into one word: the literal and the figurative one, whereas because of its common use “absent-mindedness” has no metaphorical resonance any longer;
- “might be”, “maybe”: paraphrastic translation to make the text more explicit – the ST vividly conveys the idea of possibility, in the first case, only through the future (“dirán”), and in the other just by the interrogative structure.

When analysing the short extract above, even if my intention was to start by focusing only on the first point of the language section of the table, it has been almost impossible to avoid attention to other aspects, which would properly belong to another section of the table. In fact, some of the remarks above would point to the parameter of text, specifically to the chronotopic analysis, rather than to the grammar and syntax of the language. Of course, these aspects will be dealt with further later on.

However, for the moment, let us focus again on the parameter of language with two other short examples, this time only for their language relevance. In the first extract, in order to make Mario understand the important notion of metaphor, Neruda gives an example taken from nature.

Porque los nombres no tienen nada que ver con la simplicidad o complicidad de las cosas. Según tu teoría, una cosa chica que vuela no debería tener un nombre tan largo como *mariposa*. Piensa que *elefante* tiene la misma cantidad de letras que *mariposa* y es mucho más grande y no vuela – concluyó Neruda exhausto. (22)

‘Because the names of things have nothing whatsoever to do with how simple or complicated they are. According to you, a small thing that flies around should not have a name as long as *butterfly*. *Elephant*, after all, has fewer letters than *butterfly*,’ he concluded, by now quite out of breath, ‘and it is much bigger and doesn’t fly.’ (16-17)

It is interesting to observe how the TT prefers to avoid the use of abstract nouns ("simplicidad" and "complicidad": simplicity and complicity), recurring to a paraphrastic translation which sounds more usual and common for the TT language background: "how simple or complicated they are". More relevant, at any rate, is the way the TT has preserved the function of the example given by Neruda: on the one hand, it has opted for a word translation of "mariposa" and "elephant", but then, since the two words in English would not consist of the same number of letters as in Spanish, it has adapted the comparison to the English language, butmaking it still sound appropriate.

On another occasion Neruda again turns to comparisons based on lexicon, but this time further complicated by metonym. Mario has just told the poet about his falling in love with Beatriz, and Neruda has immediately thought of Dante Alighieri, obviously an unknown name to Mario.

-¿Qué haces?
 -Me escribo el nombre del poeta esc. Dante.
 -Dante Alighieri
 -Con <h>.
 -No, hombre, con <a>.
 -¿<A> como <amapola>?
 -Como <amapola> y <opio>. (38)

'What are you doing?'
 'I'm writing down the poet's name - Dante?'
 'Dante Alighieri'
 'Is that spelled with an H?'
 'No, my son, with an A'
 'A as in animal?'
 'As in animal and instinct'. (26)

"Amapola" means poppy and this explains the metonymy: poppy / opium, and the reference to opium sounds particularly effective in this context, where Neruda mentioning Dante's Beatrice and linking her to Mario's girl, has also openly evoked the idea of "incommensurable" loves, loves that therefore would make you dream as opium does. Of course, it would not have been possible to use the English word here, as a noun beginning with *a* would be necessary. Once again, therefore, the TT has tried to preserve the function, at least partially. Thus it has used "animal" and has recreated the figurative effect by choosing "instinct" as a noun belonging to the same semantic field and referring to the defining specific quality of animals. Yet, if we think of the context, Dante Alighieri's Beatrice and incommensurable love, then we can see how the replacement of "opium" by "instinct", although evoking the idea of loss of rationality, also degrades it to the animal condition, rather than to the privileged sphere of dreaming, which is a unique human experience.

3.3c - The parameter of language: conversational etiquette

In the short extract above there is also another important issue to note: it, in fact, includes a conversational tag, which is clearly culturally connoted. "Hombre" is a typical conversational tag in Spanish; it obviously implies an informal register, and here, in this context, also a certain affectionate teasing by the elder poet. The TT opts for a replacement: "my son", which sounds perfectly natural for an English context and reflects Neruda's affection, if not his fond irony.

Although in *Ardiente paciencia* dialogues are only seldom introduced as reported speech, conversational tags, when present, play an important role in this novel, first of all as relevant cultural markers. It will be interesting to observe whether the strategy shown in the above case is, or is not, the rule in the TT. The Spanish language has the courtesy form *Usted/es*, which is absent in English, but can be replaced by other markers. Apart from that, the dialogues in the ST abound in titles like *Don*, but also *Señor*, *Doña*, *ñora*, *Viuda*, and also proper conversational tags like the above mentioned *hombre*, or *mijo*, *mija*, as well as colloquial exclamations, *pu'*, *diantres*, *pues*, and so on.

Judging from what we have till now observed about the TT, we would expect to find all these titles and conversational tags and exclamations replaced in English so as to be functionally equivalent, while still sounding perfectly natural to an English speaker. However this is not always the case. Starting from the already commented *hombre*, if it is translated as "my son" in the above extract, however it is not translated as a conversational tag any longer, but as an emphatic phrase: only a few pages before, and still in a dialogue between the same two characters, Neruda's remark "¡Metáforas, hombre!", becomes "Metaphors, I said!". Similarly, if in the immediately previous line, *Don Pablo* is translated as *Sir*, as it always is in the first three chapters of the novel, then, inexplicably enough, with the fourth chapter, the TT decides to stop replacing the Spanish title with an English equivalent, and it suddenly makes a calque and inserts the *Don* into the text, even without any italics. And the calque is kept hereafter.

In the ST, Mario addresses the right-wing deputy as "Señor Labbé", unlike Pablo Neruda, whom he always refers to, or addresses as *Don*, and the different titles reveal a different type of respect: cold and only formal respect for Labbé, instead affectionate veneration for Pablo Neruda. But, at least in the first chapters, the TT has only *Sir* or *Mr* for both; and that also includes Mario's boss at the post-office. And if we go on focusing on this aspect, we find that even another solution is adopted for Beatriz's mother, "Doña Rosa viuda de González". *Doña* is replaced and nationalized with *Mrs*, but *viuda* is regularly completely omitted.

The same lack of a coherent strategy could be detected in the colloquial exclamations in the text. They tend to be replaced and nationalized, but once again, not always: sometimes they are just omitted, to the detriment of discourse

energy, not to mention, of course, that of cultural communication. But there are also a few exceptions even here: i.e., cases where the TT tries to compensate and, through addition, inserts extra notes of colourful and popular emphasis. For example, at the closing of the second chapter, where the phrase "God forbid!" has no equivalent in the ST.

Otra mañana con sol de invierno, muy parecida a otra tampoco descrita en detalle antes, relegó la dedicatoria al olvido. Mas no así la poesía. (17)

On another morning of pale, wintry sunshine, much like the one just mentioned, he forgot all about dedications but not, God forbid, about poetry. (13)

Incidentally, it is worth noticing that in this case the TT has preferred to unite the two separate sentences of the ST, and has also added "pale" to make more explicit the image of the ST. However, one wonders if all these unnecessary transformations have actually contributed to making the discourse more vivid, or rather vice versa. The very short sentence that closes the chapter ("Mas no así la poesía") has a unique relevance in the Spanish text, also thanks to its musicality and rhythm (three stresses rhythmically distributed, alliteration of *s*, repetition of *a* and *í*, a sequence of two one-syllable nouns and the last noun that groups all the vowels of the previous words), and the same cannot be said for the corresponding closing in the TT.

Another example, again from a dialogue between Mario and Neruda:

-¡P'tas que me gustaría ser poeta!
-¡Hombre! En Chile todos son poetas. Es más original que sigas siendo cartero. (23)

'Wow! I sure would like to be a poet!
-You know what? Everybody and his brother is a poet in Chile. Being a postman is much more original. (17)

The added idiom "everybody and his brother" evidently tries to counterbalance the neutralization of the Spanish *P'tas*, which is apparently regarded as too vulgar and consequently rendered by an innocent "wow".

3.3d - The social and geographic space

The idiom "everybody and his brother" is going to occur again in the TT. In one of the last chapters, after the *golpe*, the idiom is introduced in the translation of the only dialogue in the ST which is connoted by an ostensibly regional voice. It is the dialogue between Mario and the recruit guarding the post-office, and the way the recruit speaks distinguishes him from all the local inhabitants, as the analysis of the psychological *chronotope* can show. The

language of Mario and of the other characters has a territorial and social 'flavour', but nothing compared to the language spoken by the recruit, which denotes a very low social and cultural background. It is true that, with the exception of Mario, the inhabitants of Isla Negra are mostly illiterate, yet the link between the Chileans and poetry is great, as the character Neruda himself fondly observes in the novel. Thus the language that the people of Isla Negra speak is never 'degraded', and communication is guaranteed in the small community, at least until the *golpe*. Consequently, the language that the recruit speaks, immediately points him out as an off-key stranger, and in fact Mario does not really communicate with him. At first the recruit tries to begin a conversation with Mario, but there is no room for real communication after the *golpe*: the two young men actually speak two different 'languages', and the recruit cannot even understand Mario's sarcasm, nor what he implies by both his challenging gesture (ostentatiously wearing the postman cap, which till then he had usually preferred not to put on), and by his lapidary concluding remark. Consequently, the soldier can only reply by stressing again his brutality and vulgarity.

En la puerta, un recluta fumaba curvado por el frío, y se puso alerta cuando Mario llegó a su lado tintineando las llaves.

-¿Quién soy yo?-le dijo, sácardole el último humo al tabaco.

-Trabajo aquí.

-¿Qué hacís?

-Cartero, pu.

-¡Vuélvete a la casa, mejor!

-Primero tengo que sacar el reparto.

-¡Chís! La gallá está a balazos en las calles y vo todavía aquí.

-Es mi trabajo, pu.

-Sacai las cartas y te mandai a cambiar, ¿oíste?

[...]

-¿Todo en orden?- le preguntó el recluta al salir.

-Todo en orden.

-Te pusiste el gorro de cartero, ¿eh?

Mario palpó algunos segundos la dura armazón de su fieltro, como si quisiera comprobar que en efecto cubría su pelo, y con un gesto desdeñoso se tiró la visera sobre los ojos.

-De ahora en adelante hay que usar la cabeza sólo para cargar la gorra.

El soldado se humedeció los labios con la punta de la lengua, se puso entre los dientes centrales un nuevo cigarillo, le retiró un instante para escupir una dorada fibra de tabaco, y estudiándose los bototos, le dijo a Mario sin mirarlo:

-Échate el pollo, cabrito. (152-54)

A young recruit sat smoking at the door of the post office, huddled against the cold. When he saw Mario, shaking his keys, he stood up and came to attention. 'Who are you?' he asked, inhaling the last puff of smoke.

'I work here.'

'What do you do?'

'I'm a postman.'
 'Better get on home'.
 'But first I have to get the mail'.
 'Listen, everybody and his brother is out there shooting at each other and you want to deliver the mail?'
 'Hey, it's my job.'
 'Okay, but get the mail and than get lost.'
 [...]

'Everything in order?' the recruit asked him as he left.
 'Everything's in order'
 'You put on your cap, huh?'
 Mario touched the stiff band as if to make sure that it really was covering his hair, and with a deprecatory gesture, pulled the visor down over his eyes.
 'From now on, our heads should only be used to wear hats.'
 The soldier wet his lips with the tip of his tongue, placed a new cigarette between his front teeth, removed it to spit out a fibre of golden tobacco, and staring at his boots, said to Mario, 'Go for it, man.' (110-11)

The psychological *chronotope* of the recruit is evidently neutralized by the English text. The use of the national idiom "everybody and his brother" by itself cannot counterbalance the overall neutralization of the discourse: the splitting of the first sentence and the decrease in vividness (a generic "shaking" for the onomatopoeic "tintineando", tinkling; an even more neutral "inhaling the last puff of smoke" for the very figurative phrase "sacandole el último humo al tabaco", which already evokes an idea of violence, literally meaning "drawing out the last puff of smoke"); the double deletion of Mario's exclamation "pu" (shortened for "puta", i.e., whore); finally, the substitution of the closing brutal and idiomatic remark in the ST by an irreprehensible "go for it, man".

In conclusion, what is here conveyed by the TT? Once again, we could only speak of a certain overall functional but neutralizing and levelling equivalence.

The notion of language as communication is then clearly at the base of the strategy adopted by the TT for the translation of such cultural markers as proverbs, idioms, stereotypes. However, in this case the criterion is the substitution by national ones, immediately recognizable and understood by an English-speaking reader (therefore, in this case, strategy of nationalization rather than neutralization). Just a few examples: "I'm as strong as a horse" for "Soy de hierro"; "Friday the thirteenth" for "Martes 13"; "Can't win 'em all! Win a few, lose a few" for "Sácate la cola"; "Can't shut the table door once the horse has bolted!" for "A lo hecho, pecho"; "The early bird catches the worm" for "¡Pájaro que come se vuela!"; and so on.

3.3e - The parameter of language: 'realia' and associations

Other important cultural markers are so-called *realia* and associations, especially as in *Ardiente paciencia* they play a relevant role, ranging from

words referring to everyday objects to references to cinema, literature and music. As Victoria Verlichak's interview with Antonio Skármeta points out, any Latin-American piece of writing addressing Latin-Americans is highly rich in cultural allusions, even if it is an apparently more basic dialogue.¹⁹⁷ Yet, when dealing with *realia* and associations, the TT does not seem to have developed any proper and sustained strategy, as already observed till now. In some cases they are either replaced or omitted (substitution or deletion), but mostly they are just copied and not translated (total repetition).

As well known, in the case of choosing total repetition of non translated *realia*, a translator could also integrate the text by recourse to a *metatextual translation*, thus providing the TT with critical notes, appendixes, or similar, so as to convey, at least partially, what could not be transmitted directly through the text translation. It is true that this is a controversial solution, sometimes opposed by authors themselves.¹⁹⁸ At any rate, this is not the option adopted by Katherine Silver. And, if in the case of *realia* connected to the Western world, the TT reader has no difficulty at all in getting their cultural implication, instead their referential function is likely to be lost with the others, which may even sound rather 'off-key' in an otherwise usually nationalized or neutralized context. This is particularly evident, for example, in the pages describing the spontaneous celebration for Pablo Neruda's Nobel prize, organized by Mario together with all the other people of Isla Negra.

El ensayo tuvo lugar en el tablado de la hostería, y todo el mundo supo de antemano, que para la noche se bailarían *La vela*, (of course según dijo el oculista Radomiro Spotorno quien vino extra a Isla Negra a curar el ojo de Pablo Neftalí, arteramente picoteado por la gallina castellana en los momentos en que el infante le escrutaba el culo para anunciar oportunamente el huevo) *Poquita fe*, por presión de la viuda, la cual se sentía más a tono con los temas *calugas*, y con el rubro zangoloteo de los inmortales *Tiburón, tiburón, Cumbia de Macondo, Lo que pasa es que la banda está borracha* y – menos por audaz cargosería del compañero Rodríguez que por distracción de Mario Jimenez – *No me digas que merluza no, Maripusa*. (134)

The rehearsal took place on the porch of the tavern so everyone in town knew beforehand that they would be dancing to 'La vela' ('Of course,' said Radomiro Spotorno, the ophthalmologist who had made a special trip to Isla Negra to treat Pablo Neftalí's eye, the eye that the hen had cunningly pecked at the very moment the boy was examining her anus to be able to more opportunely announce the egg's arrival), 'Poquita fe', for the widow, who was more in tune with that kind of corny music, and in the heavy twisting and

¹⁹⁷ "En una obra de arte latinoamericana, para latinoamericanos, hay un cúmulo de subentidos, que puede transformar el más banal de los diálogos en la más profunda reflexión sobre la vida", V. Verlichak, "Entrevista con Antonio Skármeta: Del *Entusiasmo* a *La insurrección*", *Unomásuno* (México) July 3rd 1982, p. 4.

¹⁹⁸ See Gabriel García Márquez's comments in chapter 5 of this thesis.

turning category, 'Tiburón, tiburón', 'Cumbia de Macondo', and 'Lo que pasa es que la banda está borracha' (or, It's just That the Band Is Drunk). (96-7)

The first thing to observe, apart from the repetition of non translated *realia*, is the deletion of both the last song title and the comment that introduces it in the ST, which, at any rate, are elements that would be incomprehensible without any metatextual explanation. Surprisingly enough, then, the previous song title ("Lo que pasa es que la banda está borracha") is repeated in both Spanish and English in the TT. Instead, the references to the musical tastes of Beatriz's mother, the widow, lose both their cultural connotations and popular register, through paraphrastic and weak translation: "that kind of corny music" could be a perfect example of recurrence to what Philip J. Lewis labels as the 'us-system' (see 1.1.2d); "in the heavy twisting and turning category" is less vivid than the corresponding phrase in the ST. Finally, we can notice that the TT prefers to choose a more dignified "anus" (from the scientific register, thus matching and confirming the tone introduced by the previous "examining" for "escrutaba") for the popular "culo" of a hen, which by the way loses its specificity: just a hen, not a "gallina castellana". Incidentally, we should also point out the objective difficulty of avoiding neutralization when rendering the pleased remark of the ophthalmologist, who wants to stress his different *status* by using an English quotation, "of course": being in a different language, "of course" is immediately detectable in the ST, but obviously this is no more the case in an English TT.

3.3f - The parameter of text

In section 3.1b, on introducing *Ardiente paciencia*, we stressed the unique role played by poetry throughout the novel, at least before the *golpe*: the result is a highly lyrical and idiosyncratic discourse, and not only thanks to the numerous direct quotations from Neruda's poetry, diary and speeches. It is a challenging task for a TT if, after identifying the hierarchy of the constitutional elements (*logemes*) of the ST discourse, it wants to develop an appropriate strategy of translation.¹⁹⁹ As the table in section 3.2 shows, the choice is between preserving or not preserving that hierarchy as well as the coherence of the ST structure.

In *Ardiente paciencia* what distinguishes the discourse is the impression of lyrical simplicity conveyed and sustained throughout the novel. But obviously that impression is aptly built up: on the one hand, there is a simple story, a linear and chronological plot, an apparently unrefined syntax and vocabulary; on the other hand, for example, we can see how after all the syntax used is not all that elementary and careless, even looking, on closer examination, rather artfully constructed through emphatic inversions of word order, anaphors, exceptional strings of adjectives, unusually prolonged

¹⁹⁹ For *logeme* see G. Rado (1979), p. 189.

sentences. Moreover, the text discourse is a magical texture of unrefined vocabulary and vivid imagery (sometimes very direct), closely intertwined with literary and rarer *lexicon*. As a result, the language of the text is highly musical, and often figurative as well, abounding in rhetorical figures, especially metaphors and metonymias, *oxymorons* (the very title of the novel is an example), but also alliterations, sound repetitions, skilful use of stresses and rhythm.

The extracts analysed above, even if selected and examined mostly from with regard to the first parameter, have already offered glimpses of the way Katherine Silver's translation has tackled the evocative discourse of this Chilean novel. Therefore now it will be interesting to have a closer look at the TT from this specific point of view, the parameter of text. The focus this time will be, first, on an example of specific language (a quotation from Neruda's journals), then on a paragraph showing the peculiar use of adjectives in Skármeta's novel.

The two extracts are from the same chapter which, in fact, opens with Neruda's memories about his campaigning for the presidency.

Dos días más tarde, un afanoso camión cubierto por afiches con la imagen del vate que rezaban "Neruda, presidente" llegó a secuestrarlo de su refugio. El poeta resumió la impresión en su Diario: "La vida política vino como un trueno a sacarme de mis trabajos. La multitud humana ha sido para mí la lección de mi vida. Puedo llegar a ella con la inherente timidez del poeta, con el temor del tímido, pero, una vez en su seno, me siento transfigurado. Soy parte de la esencial mayoría del gran árbol humano". (49)

Two days later a boisterous truck plastered with posters of the bard and 'Neruda for President' slogans arrived in town and kidnapped him from his retreat. The poet summarized his impressions in his journal: 'Political life fell upon me like a thunderbolt and separated me from my work. The masses of humanity have been the greatest teacher I have had. I can approach them with the innate timidity of a poet or the caution of a shy man, but once among them, I feel transformed. I am part of the essential majority; I am but one more leaf of the great human tree.' (34)

The TT undoubtedly offers what can be defined as an 'accurate enough' translation. On the other hand, however, it should be noticed that the opening sentence shows the previously noted tendency to add and to make the text more explicit and clearer, but also more 'diluted' ("arrived in town" is an addition). Similarly "boisterous" does not fully render the Spanish "afanoso" (labouring), which would imply an idea of stress and urgency and perhaps also of not great affluence on the side of Neruda's party (an old truck hurrying along, and perhaps also up bad roads). Yet these are minor details; and therefore let us rather focus on the TT rendering of Neruda's memories.

If the translator has clearly decided to preserve all the metaphors and images used by Neruda, it is the musicality and vividness of the Poet's language which is only partially evoked. "Separated from my work" renders the overall idea conveyed by "sacarme de mis trabajos", but "sacarme" (to take me out of) recalls and reinforces the image introduced by "refugio" (shelter), and the whole sentence structure in the ST (past tense and infinitive, rather than two past tenses connected by "and" as in the TT) is more immediate. Similarly "the greatest teacher I have had" is less intense than "la lección de mi vida" (the lesson of my life), although there is no difference in meaning. Decrease in intensity is even more evident with "transformed" for "transfigurado" (transfigured), with all its sacral halo. Moreover, what characterizes Neruda's prose is a highly poetic use of repetition of words ("timidez", "tímido", "humana", "humano") and sounds ("vida política vino", "multitud humana", "el temor del tímido", etc), and an artful alternation of one/two-syllable nouns with longer ones (for example, "inherente timidez" gets further relevance from the combination of two multiple syllable nouns as well as from the alliterative repetitions of *i*, *e*, *n* and *t*; or the already mentioned "transfigurado" is the longest word in the paragraph). Undoubtedly the TT shows an interesting alliterative repetition of *n* and *m* throughout the paragraph, but not much more than that, and its discourse generally sounds more neutral, definitely more prose-like.

The second extract refers to Mario and precedes the gift of a note-book from the right-wing deputy Labbé, as a public recognition of the young man's poetical vocation.

Las carcajadas de los pescadores explotaron tan rápidas como el rubor en su piel: se sintió atorado, atarugado, asfixiado, turbado, atrofiado, tosco, zafio, encarnado, escarlata, carmesí, bermejo, bermellón, púrpura, húmedo, abatido, aglutinado, final. Esta vez acudieron palabras a su mente, pero fueron: "Quiero morirme". (53-4)

The fishermen's laughter rose as quickly as the blush in Mario's cheeks. He felt suffocated, choked, embarrassed, confused, paralysed, awkward, pink, scarlet, bright red, vermilion, purple, sweaty, defeated, trapped. When he could finally formulate his words into a sentence, it was, 'I want to die'. (37)

The exceptional string of adjectives in the ST consists of seventeen adjectives, reduced to fourteen in the TT. Apart from that, the TT includes only perfectly understandable and common lexicon, absolutely unlike the Spanish text, which moreover concludes with an adjective, "final", which is very effective thanks to its metonymic use (Mario feels to have reached the bottom, the breaking point, near the abyss: so much as to identify himself with the end, and for analogy asking for death). The TT detects only the chronological implications of "final", shifting it to the following sentence where it is rendered as a more neutral adverb, "finally".

3.3g - Translation strategies in Katherine Silver's TT

When we started the analysis of *Burning Patience*, we lamented the usual absence of any note from the translator. Of course, that would never replace the critical analysis of a TT, yet it would always be interesting to read what a translator writes about his/her actual experience, and what degree of theoretical awareness there is behind his/her work; moreover, it would be possible to compare the translator's writing with the founding of one's own critical analysis. At any rate, the reading carried out in the previous sections should provide some answers to the main questions that have prompted the analysis itself. Mainly: what notion of language, what concept of equivalence, what orientation and translation policy is at the basis of the transferring of this Chilean novel into an English-speaking culture?

If we take into consideration the distinction between an instrumental notion of language (which conceives language as communication, expressive of thought and meaning), and the notion of language as hermeneutics (regarding language as constitutive of thought and meaning), this TT clearly sides with the first.²⁰⁰ As we have seen, many of the choices adopted by the TT are based on a pre-eminence given to the conservation of meaning, of content. It is evident that the TT does not aim at formal equivalence, but rather at a dynamic/functional type of equivalence, which would refer back to Nida's theoretical contributions. In fact, if we take the main principles of Nida's target-oriented theory and check them against the TT, we can say that the TT actually aims at 'complete naturalness of expression'. We have observed how it usually makes adjustments in idioms, proverbs, lexicon, conversational tags, as well as in syntax, by either nationalizing or neutralizing them. In other words, its adjustment to the receptor language and culture hopes to result in "a translation that bears no obvious trace of foreign origin", while preserving the "equivalent effect" of the ST. But does it actually attain it?

As we noted in chapter one (1.1.2b), the very key-notion of 'equivalent effects' can be quite vague and misleading, if it is not broadened and made much more complex as well as precise, so as to include a 'dialectic' between the 'frameworks' of both the source and the target text. And this is precisely what seems to be missing in *Burning Patience*.

To sum up, we could say that the translation strategies fundamentally adopted by the TT are:

- nationalization, through either addition or substitution (with regard to grammar categories and syntax, conversational tags and titles, and sometimes also with regard to cultural stereotypes, proverbs and idioms, for which, however, the strategy of neutralization is also adopted);

²⁰⁰ See section 1.1.2a.

- neutralization, through either deletion or substitution (with regard to the topographical *chronotope*, especially the intertwining of high culture and lyrical/figurative language with colloquial, uneducated lexicon, but also with regard to the level of personal/psychological *chronotope*, and to functional styles, such as memoirs and letters)
- purification, through deletion or substitution (partial translation) of 'vulgarity'.

It should be observed that the neutralizing strategies adopted inevitably influence also the definition of the 'model reader' by the text, which in its turn may contribute to the interpretation of the text and finally even to the readers' reception. In other words, the choice of neutralizing and purifying strategies can undermine or contrast with the very principle of 'equivalent effects', contributing to set a different model reader, that is to say with Umberto Eco, a changed "sum of happy conditions" for the developing of the potential contents of the text.²⁰¹

Moreover, even from the point of view of a strictly functional approach, this TT could be accused of not being consistently coherent. In fact, the very attempt to cancel any trace of foreign origin is not persistent, thus leading to contradictory solutions, as for example in the case of the translation of *realia* or of some conversational tags. But these can be considered as exceptions. On the whole, *Burning Patience* rather seems to confirm Venuti's critical description of Anglo-American culture as dominated by 'domesticating' approaches, if by 'domestication' we mean a translation strategy resulting in the cancellation, or in any case the levelling of what could be 'defamiliarizing', in other words, of what could open the way to a real 'experience of the other'.

3.4a - The Italian translation: a different title

In 1989 *Ardiente paciencia* was translated into Italian by Andrea Donati and published by Garzanti Editori, who have also published all the subsequent editions and reprinting. As already mentioned, and unlike the English TT, the Italian translation had a different title: *Il postino di Neruda*. It is no minor change. The phrase "ardiente paciencia" is a complex reference, at intertextual, intratextual and extratextual levels. It was used by Pablo Neruda in his Nobel prize speech on October 21st 1970, and the last part of the speech is amply quoted in the novel; but, in his own turn, Neruda was quoting from the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, although deliberately applying the phrase to another context. Rimbaud was referring to the entry into modernity; the Chilean poet was referring to a new society, based on social justice, and was stressing what it meant to try to overcome the isolation of Chilean culture. Therefore, the issue

²⁰¹ See note 192 in this chapter.

that arises from that speech and indirectly from the title of the novel is precisely the difficulty that faces regional voices and marginal cultures in being heard.

"Hace hoy cien años exactos, un pobre y espléndido poeta, el más atroz de los desesperados, escribió esta profecía: "A l'aurore, armés d'une ardente patience, nous entrerons aux splendides villes." "Al amanecer, armadas de una ardiente paciencia, entraremos en las espléndidas ciudades."

Yo creo en esa profecía de Rimbaud, el vidente. Yo vengo de una oscura provincia, de un país separado de los otros por la tajante geografía. Fui el más abandonado de los poetas y mi poesía fue regional, dolorosa y lluviosa. Pero tuve siempre la confianza en el hombre. No perdí jamás la esperanza. Por eso he llegado hasta aquí con mi poesía y mi bandera.

En conclusión, debo decir a los hombres de buena voluntad, a los trabajadores, a los poetas, que el entero porvenir fue expresado en esta frase de Rimbaud: sólo con una ardente paciencia conquistaremos la espléndida ciudad que dará luz, justicia y dignidad a todos los hombres.

Así la poesía no habrá cantado en vano." (136)

"Esattamente cento anni fa, un povero splendido poeta, il più grande e atroce dei disperati, scrisse questa profezia: *A l'aurore, armés d'une ardente patience, nous entrerons aux splendides villes.* "All'aurora, armati di ardente pazienza, entreremo nelle città splendide".

Io credo in questa profezia di Rimbaud, il veggente. Io vengo da un'oscura provincia, da un paese che la geografia ha separato di netto dagli altri. Fui il più derelitto dei poeti, e la mia poesia fu regionale, dolorosa e piovosa. Ma ho sempre avuto fede nell'uomo. Non ho mai perso la speranza. Perciò sono arrivato fin qui, con la mia poesia e la mia bandiera.

In conclusione devo dire agli uomini di buona volontà, ai lavoratori, ai poeti, che l'intero avvenire è espresso in quella frase di Rimbaud: soltanto con ardente pazienza conquisteremo la splendida città che darà luce, giustizia e dignità a tutti gli uomini.

Così, la poesia non avrà cantato in vano."(94-5)²⁰²

As Yanis Gordils rightly points out, the metaphor of the *splendides villes* taken from Rimbaud, and recontextualized by Neruda, was to be further developed and to echo again (extratextual reference) in the dramatic farewell speech by Salvador Allende on September 11th 1973.²⁰³

Trabajadores de mi patria: tengo fe en Chile y su destino. Superarán otros hombres este momento gris y amargo, donde la traición pretende imponerse. Sigán ustedes sabiendo que, mucho más temprano que tarde, se abrirán las

²⁰² All quotations from *Il postino di Neruda* are from the 2004 edition by Garzanti, Milano.

²⁰³ Y. Gordils (2001), pp. 338-9. Actually it is the whole message by Neruda rather than the single metaphor that Allende clearly refers to.

grandes alamedas por donde pase el ombre libre para construir una sociedad mejor.²⁰⁴

In its turn, the novel echoes Allende's speech, as the word *amargo* (bitter) becomes the final word of the book, thus closing the circle and giving further relevance and meaning to the title phrase "ardiente paciencia": a strong message of hope and resistance in a very bitter moment. It should not be forgotten that *Ardiente paciencia* was written by Skármeta during his exile in Germany.

However, as Skármeta himself insisted, his novel should not be read as a political text, even if it has obvious and important political implications. "La canción de los Beatles *Wait a minute Mr. Postman* recuerda que se refiere a un cartero y el cartero es el personaje central de la obra... he sido muy discreto al final porque no quería hacer una obra política".²⁰⁵ Thus, if Skármeta himself affirms that the main character in the novel is the postman, and this could explain and partially justify the different title for the Italian TT, it cannot be denied that this way much is missed in the Italian title, both historically and culturally.

Moreover, something else should be observed about the title chosen by Skármeta. It is obviously an *oxymoron*, and the *oxymoron* is actually a recurring rhetorical figure in the novel. We could even say that, being a rhetorical figure that closely unites opposites, it becomes a sign for the style and narrativity of the novel, based as they are on an "aesthetics of promiscuity", to use once again Skármeta's words. And the very relationship at the core of the novel, the friendship between a great poet and a poorly educated and simple postman, could be seen as a happy *oxymoron* itself.

3.4b - The parameter of language: syntax

Like *Burning Patience*, the Italian version also follows the chapter structure of the ST and is based on the edition of the Chilean novel printed by Ediciones del Norte in 1985. We started by pointing out how the obvious differences between English and Spanish would make grammatical, morphological and syntactical adaptations likely to occur. Therefore, with such languages as Italian and Spanish, we are less prepared to meet cases of neutralization and domestication, thinking that the linguistic similarity of the

²⁰⁴ Quoted by Y. Gordils (2001), p. 339. "Workers of my country: I believe in Chile and its destiny. Other men will overcome this grey and bitter moment, when treason wants to assert itself. Keep going and be sure that sooner than later the great avenues will open for the free man to walk through and to build a better society".

²⁰⁵ "The song *Wait a minute, Mr Postman* by the Beatles reminds us that it refers to a postman and the postman is the main character in the work... I have been very discreet in the final part as I did not want to write a political work", [my translation], J. Woodyard, "Entrevista a Antonio Skármeta, dramaturgo chileno", *Chasqui*, 14-15 (Nov. - May 1989), pp. 86-92.

two texts should make it easier for a translator to preserve a personalized use of language in the ST, obviously if that is his/her choice.

Such seems to be the case, as shown by the following extract, the beginning of the second chapter. It is an particularly long sentence, exceptionally interrupted twice by a colon, and characterized by an emphatic clause structure in the opening lines (with the dependent clause preceding the independent clause that governs it). Of course, all this refers to the level of the *topographical chronotope*, yet the similarity of the two languages clearly helps the translator in the decision to preserve that personal flavour in the TT, and thus it can also be examined with reference to the parameter of language.

Lo que no logró el Océano Pacífico con su paciencia parecida a la eternidad, lo logró la escueta y dulce oficina de correos de San Antonio: Mario Jiménez no sólo se levantaba al alba, silbando y con una nariz fluida y atlética, sino que acometió con tal puntualidad su oficio, que el viejo funcionario Cosme le confió la llave del local, en caso de que alguna vez se decidiera a llevar a cabo una hazaña desde antiguo soñada: dormir hasta tan tarde en la mañana que ya fuera la hora de la siesta y dormir una siesta tan larga que ya fuera hora de acostarse, y al acostarse dormir tan bien y profundo, que al día siguiente sintiera por primera vez esas ganas de trabajar, que Mario irradiaba y que Cosme ignoraba meticolosamente.(13-4)

Ciò che non ottenne l'Oceano Pacifico con la sua pazienza simile all'eternità, lo ottenne il semplice e dolce ufficio postale di San Antonio: Mario Jimenez non solo si alzava all'alba zuffolando, il naso sgombro e gagliardo, ma aggrediva il suo compito con tanta puntualità che il vecchio funzionario Cosme gli affidò la chiave dell'ufficio, caso mai si fosse deciso una volta tanto, a compiere un'impresa da tempo sognata: dormire al mattino così a lungo che fosse già l'ora della siesta, e concedersi una siesta tanto lunga che fosse già l'ora d'andare a letto, e andando a letto dormire così bene e profondamente da sentire il giorno dopo per la prima volta quella voglia di lavorare che Mario irradiava, e che Cosme ignorava meticolosamente. (11)

The TT has clearly opted for the conservation of the syntax, clause structure and even the punctuation of the ST, exactly as we had expected. Moreover it shows particular care in the choice of vocabulary, which happily reinforces the images in the text: "gagliardo", "aggrediva", "impresa". That is why, if we now decide to take up again the extracts we had previously chosen for the English translation, and start observing the first one, we are not prepared for what follows:

Mario, que presentia el fin del diálogo, se dejó consumir por una ausencia semejante a la de su predilecto y único cliente, pero tan radical, que obligó al poeta a preguntarle:

- ¿Qué te quedaste pensando?

- En lo que dirán las otras cartas. ¿Serán de amor? (20-21)

Mario, che presentiva la fine del dialogo, fu preso da un'inquietudine così assoluta di fronte all'incombente assenza, quella del suo prediletto e unico cliente, che costrinse il poeta a domandargli:

"Che cosa stai pensando?"

"A quello che diranno le altre lettere. Saranno d'amore?" (15)

The 'I' not only transforms the sentence structure introducing an interpolated clause ("quella del suo prediletto"), a noun ("inquietudine", anxiety) and an adjective ("incombente", imminent), which would not be necessary for language reasons, but by doing that, it somewhat distorts the sentence. Mario gets absorbed into his thoughts and is completely absent-minded, but the ST does not openly say that he is worried at the idea of the imminent absence of his friend, or at least, it only metaphorically and subtly hints at that: Mario's state of absent-mindedness is so absolute to resemble the absence of his favourite client.

Even more surprising is the second extract, where the TT incurs in an undeniable translation slip.

Porque los nombres no tienen nada que ver con la simplicidad o complicidad de las cosas. Según tu teoría, una cosa chica que vuela no debería tener un nombre tan largo como *mariposa*, Piensa que *elefante* tiene la misma cantidad de letras que *mariposa* y es mucho más grande y no vuela – concluyó Neruda exhausto. (22)

"Perché gli uomini [*bold is mine*] non hanno nulla a che vedere con la semplicità o la complessità delle cose. Secondo la tua teoria, una cosa piccola che vola non dovrebbe avere un nome lungo come *farfalla*. Pensa che *elefante* ha lo stesso numero di lettere di *farfalla*, ed è molto più grande e non vola", concluse Neruda esausto (16).

The Italian language has allowed any linguistic adaptation of Neruda's example to be avoided: in fact, the two nouns, butterfly and elephant, have the same number of letters in both languages. Unfortunately, however, "uomini" here is utterly out of place, and thus the sentence sounds absurd and incomprehensible; of course, it is an obvious slip: in Spanish, *hombre* can be easily mistaken for *nombre* at a quick reading.

3.4c - The parameter of language: conversational etiquette, 'realia', idioms

Trying to proceed with order, and thus following Torop's table, we can observe how the TT adopts a strategy of conservation with regard to conversational tags and titles, which, however is difficult to classify: neither proper nationalization nor transnationalization. In fact, if in modern Italian the commonly used titles and conversational tags would rather be "Signore" "Signora", nobody would find the option for "don", "donna", or "vedova"

particularly strange, even if these titles had a territorial connotation, being especially connected to provincial areas and to Southern Italy, where in fact the Spanish influence on the language and culture was much stronger than everywhere else in Italy.

With regard to *realia*, cultural stereotypes and markers, such as idioms and proverbs, the Italian translation chooses solutions which are mostly similar to those adopted by the English TT. Thus with *realia* the solution will be mostly a total reproduction of untranslated names and phrases, without any metatextual explanation; while for idioms and proverbs, nationalization through adaptation will be the rule. But even in this regard there are of course a few exceptions, as, for example, in the case of the ominous "Martes 13", which is literally translated in the TT, while in an Italian cultural background the negative association would be more with Friday the 17th, since 13 is usually regarded as a lucky number.

However, the Italian text normally prefers adaptation, as shown by the decision to preserve the effect of idioms or proverbs, thus expressing an epigrammatic and vivid message through an immediately recognizable and culturally connoted phrase in the TT culture: "togliti le piume" (61) for "sácate la cola" (89); "inutile piangere sul latte versato" (66) for "a lo hecho, pecho" (97); "ogni asino ha il basto che si merita" (82) for "cada chanchito busca el afrecho que le gusta" (118), etc.

A quick look at an extract already examined in the section about the English TT, the one regarding the celebration of Neruda's Nobel Prize.

El ensayo tuvo lugar en el tablado de la hostería, y todo el mundo supo de antemano, que para la noche se bailarían *La vela*, (of course según dijo el oculista Radomiro Spotorno quien vino extra a Isla Negra a curar el ojo de Pablo Neruda, arteramente picoteado por la gallina castellana en los momentos en que el infante le escrutaba el culo para anunciar oportunamente el huevo) *Poquita fe*, por presión de la viuda, la cual se sentía más a tono con los temas *calugas*, y con el rubro zangoloteo de los inmortales *Tiburón, tiburón, Cumbia de Macondo, Lo que pasa es que la banda está borracha* y – menos por audaz cargosería del compañero Rodríguez que por distracción de Mario Jiménez – *No me digas que merluza no, Maripusa.* (134)

La prova ebbe luogo sul tavolato dell'osteria, e tutti seppero in anticipo che quella sera si sarebbe ballato *La Vela* (of course, come disse l'oculista Radomiro Spotorno, venuto appositamente a Isla Negra per curare l'occhio di Pablo Neruda, beccato da quella furbona della gallina casigliana nel momento in cui l'infante le scrutava il culo per annunciare tempestivamente l'uovo), *Poquita fe*, su istanza della vedova che si sentiva a proprio agio con i motivi *calugas* e con il rosso dimento degli immortali *Tiburón, tiburón, Cumbia de Macondo, Lo que pasa es que la banda está borracha* e - meno per audace molestia del compagno Rodríguez che per distrazione di Mario Jiménez - *No me digas que merluza no, Maripusa.* (93)

As already remarked, both TTs recur to a total reproduction of the Spanish untranslated *realia*, but the Italian text is more accurate than the English one in not omitting any detail, which in any case does not change the overall bewildering effect, since it does not make the whole passage more meaningful and relevant for the reader, since both TTs are without any metatextual comments. Moreover, it must be noted that the Italian TT shows here the occurrence of another unfortunate translation slip: “rubro” (a Latin American word meaning heading, section) has been misread as ‘rubio’ and thus translated as “rosso”.

3.4d - The parameter of socio-political manipulation: taboos

The example above has shown another interesting difference: we have pointed out how the English text prefers to use a more neutral and noble word for the Spanish *culo*, which instead is not avoided by the Italian text. And this is not the only case where the two TTs seem to have a different approach to swear words and ‘taboo words’. The novel is based on an ‘aesthetics of promiscuity’, as we have already highlighted. Therefore, poetry plays a central role, but so does love, including sexual love, because the two are intimately connected and paralleled. As Raffaele Lampugnani shows, in *Ardiente paciencia* love scenes are important and sexual imagery creates a powerful ‘subtext’ to forcefully convey his political views:

Powerful images relating to the human tongue and to oral sex dominate metaphoric discourse in *Ardiente Paciencia*. Words are the principal tools of communication and seduction in the novel, and not exclusively on the part of Mario. [...]

Thus it is not difficult to conceive a parallel between seduction, sexual activity and political wooing. Mario’s moments of sexual stimulation and love-making coincide markedly with stages of political attainment on the part of *Unidad Popular*; he finds no better means of celebrating Neruda’s political speech delivered on the occasion of his acceptance of the Nobel Prize than to throw a party and end it with “un orgasmo tan...” [*an exceptional orgasm*]²⁰⁶

The Italian TT would seem to be more aware of this issue, since it does not shun from using broad exclamations like “cacchio!” or “stronzata”, unlike the more neutral English text. With ‘sex words’, however, it is less direct, but never like the English TT. If we look at one of these love scenes between Mario and Beatriz, and compare the two TTs, we can see how the English TT recurs to clumsy paraphrases or to nouns, adjectives and verbs as neutral and cold as possible. The Italian text is more direct and closer to the strong sensuality of a love scene which is introduced, and it is no coincidence, by the image of a *torero* (bullfighter). Yet the Italian TT still prefers to recur to medical anatomy

²⁰⁶ R. Lampugnani (1992), p. 121.

and technical lexicon more than the ST, which does so only once (with "lubricaba", lubricated).

Con un ademán de torero desprendió el delantal de Beatriz, le rodeó sedoso la cintura y le desbarrancó su pico por la cadera, como a ella le placía, según probaban esos suspiros que expulsaba tan fluidamente, cual esa savia enloquecedora que le lubricaba la zorra. Con la lengua mojándole la oreja y sus manos levantándole las nalgas, se lo metió de pie en la cocina sin molestarse en quitarle la falda.

-Nos van a ver, amor - jadeó la muchacha, ubicándose para que el pico le entrara hasta el fondo. (139)

This settled, he removed Beatriz's apron with the ease of a bullfighter, grabbed her by the waist and rubbed his member along her thigh, a gesture for which she showed her approval with sighs of delight and an abundance of tantalizing juices that lubricated her sex. His tongue wetting her ear and his hands lifting her up by the buttocks, he penetrated her right there in the kitchen without even bothering to remove her skirt.

'Someone's going to see us, my love,' the girl murmured, adjusting her position to receive the full length of Mario's member. (101)

Con mossa da torero sciolse il grembiule di Beatriz, le circondò morbidamente la vita e le piazzò il pene fra le gambe, come tanto le piaceva a quanto provavano i sospiri che esalava con la stessa fluidità dell'eccitante linfa che le lubrificava la vulva. Leccandole l'orecchio con la lingua e tenendole le natiche sollevate con le mani, glielo infilò in piedi, in cucina, senza disturbarci a toglierle la gonna.

"Ci vedranno, amore", ansinò la ragazza adoperandosi affinché il pene entrasse fino in fondo.(97)

If we focus on the ST, we can see that the secret for the successful eroticism of this love scene lies in its being absolutely explicit in the sex terminology used, while not stopping being also evocative. The whole sex scene is metaphorically described as a series of magical *ademanes* (movements), like those of a bullfighter, whose irresistible art is openly evoked to introduce the scene ("con un ademán de torero"): elegant, charming and sinuous movements ("le rodeó sedoso", "con la lengua mojándole"), followed by very determined and apparently effortless actions ("desprendió", "le desbarrancó", "se lo metió", "sin molestarse"). Perfectly consistent with the *topographical cronotopos*, the text uses low-register, and regionally connoted, sex terms ("pico", "zorra"), which, however, are happily integrated into the metaphorical narrative.

That is exactly where the English TT fails:

- "this settled": unnecessary amplification, which moreover shifts the metaphor of the bull fighter from the opening position to the end of the introducing clause;

- “with the ease of a bullfighter”, weaker translation, which rather undermines the metaphoric effect of the introductory image “con un ademán de torero”: as already pointed out, thanks to it, all the subsequent movements by Mario become the winning gestures of those of a bullfighter;
- “grabbed her by the waist”: not an accurate translation. Moreover the ST with its *sinestesia* (“le rodeó sedoso”, and silk suggests elegance and smoothness), evokes a much more erotic and sinuous movement, which reinforces the metaphor of the bullfighter, whose movements are ‘encircling’, insinuating and elegant;
- “rubbed”: no accurate translation, which weakens the effect of alternation of smooth, sinuous movements introducing determined and “fatal” actions.

As already observed, the Italian TT is clearly more convincing in the rendering of this love scene, especially in regard to the prolonged metaphor of the bullfighter. Yet, like Katherine Silver, even the Italian translator seems to be ‘shocked’ by too direct and low-registered terms like “pico” and “zorra”, and both texts clearly opt for purification and neutralization: the English TT with “member”, “her sex”; and the Italian TT with “pene”, “vulva”.

3.4e - The expressive aura of the character

Continuing the chronotopic analysis of the Italian translation and thus moving from the level of the narrator (*topological chronotope*) to the personal level of characters (*psychological chronotope*), we can observe how, in the case of the dialogue between Mario and the recruit, the TT decides to neutralize the language, exactly like the English text. The only difference between the two TTs is in the degree of vividness of the dialogue, as when rendering the recruit’s closing remark, which the Italian TT translates as “Fila via, stronzo”, respecting the aggressiveness and vulgarity of the corresponding phrase in the ST, differently from the English translation. However, in any case, both TTs annul the recruit’s *chronotope* which loses its functions as a territorial and social marker, denouncing his low cultural and educational background.

There is another passage where the *psychological chronotope* is of great relevance. It is from the last encounter between Mario and the dying poet. Almost till the end, the chapter confirms the usual type of narrative structure of the rest of the novel, classical omniscient third person narration alternating with direct dialogue (‘heterodiegetical’ third person narration, alternating with direct dialogue, internal and external focalisation, i.e., on both narrator and characters).²⁰⁷ But then suddenly there is an evident shift in narration: direct

²⁰⁷ For the distinction between ‘heterodiegetical’ and ‘homodiegetical’ narration, see G.Genette, *Figures III*, Paris: Seuil, 1972.

dialogue disappears, and the focalisation completely abandons the narrator for the character, until the final virtual fusion of the two characters, Mario and the poet, before the introduction of the poem. For the first and only time in the novel, the narrator disappears, hidden behind a character's thoughts, and the text turns into a long free interior monologue, almost verging on stream of consciousness, yet keeping the formal markers of third person narration. The discourse becomes visionary and hallucinated, and highly lyrical, until flowing into actual verse, and finally closed by Mario's imploring request (but by then narration has again shifted back to 'normality'), which makes the closing of the chapter even more touching for a Chilean reader who knew all too well how that death would coincide with the death of liberty in Chile.

La mano de Neruda temblaba sobre la manilla de la ventana, quizá queriendo abrirla, pero, al mismo tiempo, como si palpara entre sus dedos crispados la misma materia espesa que le rondaba por las venas y le llenaba la boca de saliva. Creyó ver que, desde el oleaje metálico que destrozaba el reflejo de las hélices de los helicópteros y expandía los peces argentinos en una polvareda destellante, se construía con agua una casa de lluvia, una húmeda madera intangible que era toda ella piel pero al mismo tiempo intimidad. Un secreto rumoroso se le revelaba ahora en el trepidante acezar de su sangre, esa negra agua que era germinación, que era la oscura artesanía de las raíces, su secreta orfebrería de noches frutales [...] por esa misma agua que un día había rajado el ataúd de su padre tras atravesar lechos balaustradas y otros muertos, para encender la vida y la muerte del poeta como un secreto que ahora se le revelaba y que, con ese azar que tiene la belleza y la nada, bajo una lava de muertos con ojos vendados y muñecas sangrantes le ponía un poema en los labios, que él ya no supo si dijo, pero que Mario sí lo oyó cuando el poeta abrió la ventana y el viento desguarneció las penumbras:

“Yo vuelvo al mar envuelto por el cielo,
el silencio entre una y otra ola
establece un suspenso peligroso:
muere la vida, se aquieta la sangre
hasta que rompe el nuevo movimiento
y resuena la voz del infinito”.

Mario lo abrazó desde atrás, y levantando las manos para cubrirle sus pupilas alucinadas, le dijo:

- No se muera, poeta. (164-5)

La mano di Neruda tremava sulla maniglia della finestra, forse nel tentativo di aprirla, ma nello stesso tempo come se palpasse fra le dita contratte la medesima materia spessa che gli vagava per le vene e gli riempiva la bocca di saliva. Credette di vedere che dall'ondeggiare metallico che spezzava il riflesso delle pale degli elicotteri e diffondeva pesci argentei in un pulviscolo scintillante l'acqua costruisse una casa di pioggia, un umido legno intangibile che era tutto pelle ma nel contempo intimità. Un rumoroso segreto gli si

rivelava ora nel trepidante ansimare del suo sangue, quella nera acqua che era germinazione, che era oscuro artigianato delle radici, loro segreta oreficeria di notti pregni di frutti [...] dalla stessa acqua che un giorno aveva squarciato il feretro di suo padre dopo aver attraversato letti, balastrate e altri morti, per accendere la vita e la morte del poeta come un segreto che ora gli si rivelava e che, con la casualità propria della bellezza e del nulla, sotto una lava di morti dagli occhi bendati e dai polsi insanguinati gli deponeva una poesia sulle labbra, che egli non seppe se recitò, ma che Mario udì quando il poeta aprì la finestra e il vento sguarnì le penombre:

“Io torno al mare avvolto dal cielo,
il silenzio tra l’una e l’altra onda
stabilisce una sospensione pericolosa:
muore la vita, si acquieta il sangue
finché irrompe il nuovo movimento
e risuona la voce dell’infinito”.

Mario lo abbracciò prendendolo alle spalle, e alzando le mani per coprirgli le pupille allucinate, gli disse:
“Non muoia, poeta”. (114-5)

The Italian TT offers an accurate translation, showing an awareness of the peculiarity of the text discourse. That is undeniable, but it is equally undeniable that the Spanish text has a stronger and more evocative resonance, through parallelism, through semantic intensification and repetitions, and above all through alliterative sounds and rhythm. The TT mostly opts for a word by word translation, thus preserving the figurative language (metaphors, metonymies) of this piece of prose. And even the syntax of the ST is mostly reproduced, as are many of the rhetorical figures. Yet literalism in this case does not guarantee equally poetical effects: it is simply not enough. In order to understand this, let us quickly focus on the sentence introducing the lines of verse: the ST has an emphatic “sí” to give relevance to Mario’s hearing; it shows great musicality thanks to the alliterative sounds of “ventana”, “viento”, and finally concludes with that “desguarneció las penumbras” (literally, ‘stripped down the half-light’) the metaphorical power of which is highlighted by the use of the polysyllabic verb in this context. All this is lost in the transfer from the ST to the TT, although the Italian text does not make any semantic alteration.

Of course, a translation should find its own way to render poetic language, and even if we think that it is not the translation critic’s task to make suggestions, nor to adopt a normative approach, yet we cannot abstain from observing that, when rendering poetic language, a form of compensation should be developed: in other words, less ‘literalism’ and more ‘experimentalism’ could be welcomed in this case.

The feeling of inadequacy, however, is much more evident with the English TT.

Neruda's hand was shaking as it held the window lever. Maybe he wanted to open it, but the whole time, as if he felt between his burning fingers the same thick fluid that ran through his veins and filled his mouth with saliva, he thought he saw, rising from the metallic waves that broke up the reflection of the helicopter's propellers and spread out the silvery fish into a scintillating cloud of dust, a house of rain being constructed out of water, out of a damp, intangible wood that was intimate, though only a shell. A murmuring secret was now revealed to him through his feverish blood (that black water of germination) and trembling veins (the artisanry of our dark roots) [...] by the same water that had once seeped through his father's coffin after passing through other beds and other deaths. This secret now illuminated the poet's life and death, and with that haphazard nature common to beauty and nothingness, under a deluge of dead bodies with bandaged eyes and bleeding wrists, a poem came to the poet's lips. He did not even know he was reciting it, but Mario heard it as the poet opened the window and the wind tore through the shadows:

*I return to the sea trapped in the sky,
the silence between one wave and the next
creates a dangerous suspense,
life dies, the blood rests
until a new movement breaks
and the voice of infinity resounds.*

Mario hugged the poet from behind, and lifting his hands to cover his hallucinating eyes, said, 'Don't die, poet'. (120-1).

The first characteristic to be noticed is obviously the modification in syntax: splitting of sentences, addition of clauses (already in the first line, "as it held"), introduction of brackets. This might be explained with the nature of English syntax and prose, which, as already observed, prefers to avoid too complex and tortuous linking of clauses. Yet here the syntax of the ST is deliberately hallucinatory and visionary, and making it "smoother" and more intelligible is no innocent decision. Moreover it is not only the syntax that is neutralized, but also part of the metaphorical and figurative resonance of the text. For example: the metonymy "que era toda ella piel" ("piel/skin" evokes the idea of a sensitive part of the human body, as well as contact with the outside, but also with an inside which it contains and wraps) is rendered as "shell", which is inanimate and not sensitive, and which expresses only the effect of containing; "un secreto rumoroso" (literally, "a noisy secret") becomes "a murmuring secret", where the oxymoron of the ST is lost; "en el trepidante acezar de su sangre" (literally, "in the trembling puffing of his blood") is neutralized as "his feverish blood"; "su secreta orfebrería de noches frutales" (literally, "in the secret craftsmanship of fruitful nights") is completely omitted.

3.4f - In search of a method

It is important at this point to try to systematize what we have observed about *Il postino di Neruda*: on doing that, we immediately become aware that in the case of the Italian TT it is somewhat more difficult than for the English text to outline a proper translation strategy. As we have seen, many of the choices that the English TT adopts are based on a clear pre-eminence given to the conservation of meaning and content. If we take up again the four basic questions that had emerged after reading the English TT (what notion of language, what concept of equivalence, what orientation and translation policy are at the basis of the transferring of this Chilean novel into a Western culture), the first issue that arises is that, unlike its English equivalent, the Italian TT does not seem to adhere to an instrumental notion of language (language as communication). If the English TT opts for a functional and communicative approach (fundamentally target-oriented), the attention the Italian text pays to the idiosyncrasies of the Chilean novel would reveal a different and more complex notion of equivalence. This cannot be ignored, but, on the other hand, it is also true that the solutions adopted by the Italian TT do not show constant or consistent results (and unfortunately the text is not even free from translation slips). In comparison with the English TT, there is a minor occurrence of both nationalization and neutralization, but there are also meaningful exceptions. All this leads to identify the following main strategies in the Italian TT:

- Nationalization:
 - absent with regard to the linguistic code, as well as to conversational tags and titles
 - overtly present with regard to cultural markers such as idioms and proverbs.
- Exotization: present with regard to *realia* (yet their full cultural implications are lost with most Italian readers, since the TT does not provide any metatextual commentary).
- Neutralization:
 - absent in the attention paid to the topographical *chronotope* and to personal *chronotopes*, but subtly present in the lack of compensation for occasional use for word for word translation
 - overtly present in the flattening out of any social and territorial connotations of the recruit's *chronotope*
 - subtly present in the transformation of the title of the novel: even if the mention of Neruda in the title could apparently point in the opposite direction (exotization), the Italian title completely leaves out the powerful chain of references of the ST title, with its historical, political and cultural implications; moreover, the title in the Italian TT does not function as the sign of the text discourse any longer, because

of the disappearance of the *oxymoron* created by the phrase "ardiente paciencia".

The Italian text, therefore, cannot be described as clearly source-oriented nor as target-oriented: it rather reveals a translation approach based on a notion of translatability established and defined case by case, and applied to each single text unit, apart from its totality. The Italian translator, as often is the case with translators, measures his choices and action on himself, on his linguistic sensibility, focussing on separate meaningful text unit. The risk, as we have seen, is to miss an overall view of the text, as well as the political and cultural implications of any translation activity.

Such issues sometimes tend to be overlooked by more traditional translation criticism. Instead, they have been highlighted by a reading which focuses on translation as a strategic moment for communication between cultures. In this we have been supported by Torop's table *Translatability of Culture*, which has fostered a more systematic and consistent targeting of the critical issues we had identified in the first chapter, while also favouring the comparison between different TTs. The challenge now is to widen the discourse, so as to include also the two films based on *Ardiente paciencia*, aiming at finding if the analysis of the film transpositions can evince similar, or, at any rate, comparable translation dynamics and tensions, thus hopefully casting further lights on what observed till now.

Finally, it should be remarked that our research, even if trying to adhere to a descriptive approach, in line with what Torop defines "translation method criticism", could not entirely avoid evaluation, which in fact surfaces when stressing the lack of an overall and consistent translation method in one TT, the Italian text, and when lamenting the 'cultural levelling' effect of the translation method of the other, the English one. And these are no minor flaws, after all.

Chapter 4 – A journey from the margins: the cinematic text.²⁰⁸

4.1a - Skármeta's film transposition, "Ardiente paciencia" (1983)

I have already explained that one of the reasons for choosing this work for a case study is the very articulate evolution it has undergone since its first appearance as a radio-play. As Yanis Gordils aptly shows, not only has *Ardiente paciencia* been through almost all the different transpositions and permutations offered by the era of new technologies and globalisation (radio-play, drama, novel and film), but, even more interesting, this text can be identified as one of those cases where the writing and the filming have been intimately influencing each other.²⁰⁹ Actually, the right chronological order should be:

- 1) radio-play (1982),
- 2) drama,
- 3) draft of the novel (unpublished; more than 400 pages),
- 4) first film transposition (by Skármeta, 1983),
- 5) new and published version of the novel (about 100 pages, 1985),
- 6) second film transposition (different director and title, 1995).

Let us now focus on the first cinematic text, which, as we have already observed, comes to represent an important 'in-between' phase of filtering and decanting for the novel itself. The film *Ardiente paciencia*, for which Skármeta was both script-writer and director, was financed by the German television but actually made in Portugal, mostly with Chilean exiles, like the author himself. It is worth stressing the personal involvement of all the cast in the story narrated, in the political message behind it, as well as in the crucial historical phase Chile was experiencing at that moment. Irene B. Hodgson notes that the playwright-poet Oscar Castro, who plays Mario in the film, lost his mother to the military repression, and had been imprisoned and suffered torture himself. And while in prison, he had done his best to organize theatre in the prison camp. The son of Roberto Parada (the actor who plays the role of Neruda with striking physical

²⁰⁸ Part of this chapter was presented at the International Conference "Translating Regionalized Literature: theory, practise, case-studies – Tradurre linguaggi regionalistici in letteratura: teorie, pratica, analisi specifiche", University of Leeds and Università "La Sapienza" Roma, Rieti 17-18 settembre 2005, and the relative paper, with the title "A Journey from the Margins - The Transformation of Neruda", has been included in N. Armstrong, and F. Federici (eds.), *Translating Voices – Translating regions* (2006), Roma: Aracne Editrice, 2006, pp. 72-89.

²⁰⁹ Y. Gordils (2001), p. 340.

resemblance) had been *degollado* (his throat was cut) by Pinochet's secret police and the actor had received death threats himself, but went on acting.

The budget was very limited and everything that had been brought into exile (posters, music LPs, objects, etc.), was used to recreate the atmosphere of Chile in the Allende period. However, as Hodgson comments, Skármeta "succeeded so well that Chileans seeing the film once it could be shown in Chile thought that it had been filmed at Isla Negra".²¹⁰ Thus, if it would be too restrictive to regard *Ardiente paciencia* as "a symbol of the dialogue between the exiled writer and those remaining in Chile", or at any rate as a film mostly addressing the Chileans, yet, it is no doubt a Chilean film.²¹¹

Skármeta's film, in Spanish but with English and German subtitles, was shown on German television with some success; some months later it made its debut in Caracas and won the top award at the 5th Festival de Cine Ibérico y Latinoamericano at Biarritz and also at the 9th Festival de Cine Iberoamericano de Huelva. However, at an international level, it has remained rather marginal, as proved by the fact that most short reviews of the later 1995 film (*El postino*), mention Skármeta's novel but do not seem to have heard of his film. It is not even often mentioned nor reviewed in international cinema journals, and when it is, it is not always favourably commented on. For example, the short review in *Cahiers du Cinéma* literally tears it to pieces, finding its *mise-en-scène* amateurish, the shooting uncertain and ineffective, etc., and, even worse, it accuses the film of lacking political and historical depth.

Mais l'amateurisme du propos et de la mise en scène désarme vite toutes les bonnes volontés. Le cadre manqué de décision, les plans fixes sont paresseux et les belles images sur belle musique confinent au dépliant touristique. Plus grave encore, le film manque singulièrement de sens politique et historique [...] L'inconsistance d'*Une ardente patience*, prouve en tout cas une nouvelle fois, que le bons sentiments ne sont pas le gage d'un bon cinéma.²¹²

It is an unfair judgement. It is true that the film looks rather amateurish, and the already mentioned limited budget (only \$ 200,000) mostly explains why. However, the film has its own intrinsic merits, as a text and as a 'filter' for the later revision and publishing of the novel, and above all, it certainly does not lack political depth. This is understood, for example, by Moreno who underlines

²¹⁰ I. H. Hodgson (2000), p. 102.

²¹¹ G. Rojo, "Skármetaiana del exilio", *Crítica del exilio*, Santiago, Chile: Pehuén, n.d., pp. 133-4.

²¹² "But the amateurish props and mise-en-scène are disarming, against any good will. The framing lacks determination, the master shots are slow and the beautiful images matching beautiful music border on tourist advertisement. Even worse, the film astonishingly lacks political and historical meaning [...] Once again the inconsistency of *A:P.* proves that good willing does not guarantee good quality cinema" [*my translation*]. The review is not signed, only the initials (T. J.); *Une ardente patience*, in *Cahiers du cinéma*, 407-408 (1988: May), p. 143.

how the film, notwithstanding a very basic production, does not spoil the full appreciation of its wonderful story.²¹³

Actually, the limited budget favoured the development of a dynamic and direct text, which in its simplicity, comes to be seen as a "linda parábola", to use Skármeta's own words. Thus the film tells a deliberately simple, but not naïf story; in other words, *Ardiente paciencia* should not be dismissed as an improbable fairy tale, and should be rather received as "a short story that uses familiar events to illustrate a religious or ethical situation".²¹⁴ It may sound a paradox, but the straitened circumstances happily helped to focus on the communication and the interchange between the four main characters, thus highlighting poetic language and the role of metaphorical polysemy.

Me vi obligado a dejar de lado todos los efectos épicos que estaban previstos en el guión original. Entonces, cuando escribí la novela, ya sabía que la magia, el secreto, consistía en reducir el mundo a la tensión entre los dos protagonistas, y que de esa tensión surgiera todo un mundo infinitamente más rico.²¹⁵

Thus, with greater emphasis than in the draft of the novel, the film *Ardiente paciencia* succeeds in bringing out to Chile, and to the world at large, the private figure of Neruda, the less famous side of the great poet. We must remember what we have already pointed out in the previous chapter: by the Forties, Pablo Neruda had already come to be regarded in Chile as The Poet, a solemn and emblematic figure. His image had kept gaining in relevance and the poet had risen to an almost legendary level, and not only in Chile: the risk was that the real man could be replaced by a petrified symbol, thus marginalizing not only his humanity but the passion and values of his whole poetry.

Ardiente paciencia, as both film and novel, is pervaded by Neruda's poetry, which however appears as deeply transformed. Neruda's lines are set in a popular and familiar context, and consequently, although apparently the same, they are fairly modified and masked in a carnival-like way. As we have seen, at the very roots of carnival lies the demystification of power, and what has been noted in this regard in the previous chapter about *Ardiente paciencia* as a written text, is even more valid for the film *Ardiente paciencia*. It is in this demystifying transformation of Neruda's poetry that the ideological subtext of

²¹³ "Una modestísima producción que, a pesar de su patente falta de medios, permitía disfrutar de la magnífica historia que contaba", Moreno, Francisco, "El cartero (y Neruda)", in *Equipo reseña*, 1966, p. 176.

²¹⁴ Definition of 'parable' on *English Dictionary and Thesaurus*, Collins.

²¹⁵ "I found myself obliged to leave aside all those epic effects which were included in the original script; when I wrote the novel, I already knew that the chemistry would consist in reducing the world to the tension between the two protagonists, and from that tension a infinitely richer world would emerge" [*my translation*], M. I. González and M. Grosso, *Ardiente paciencia: Guía de trabajo para el profesor*, Sudamericana: Buenos Aires, 1995, p. 7.

Skármeta's narrativity can be found: the great power of poetry is alive at any level of life.²¹⁶

In *Ardiente paciencia* metaphor is described as one of the main tools of poetry, and therefore the dialogue where Neruda explains to Mario what he means by metaphors rightly becomes a key scene in the film: it is the first time we meet the poet, as in the opening scene of the film we had seen him only as a silhouette walking on the beach and had heard his voice over reading his memories. Now in this dialogue his first appearance is introduced by a black frame (the dark inside of the house on the opening of the door) from which Neruda emerges, greeting Mario. He comes down towards the young boy and stops only a step above him. But Neruda is sweetly and encouragingly smiling, so that intimacy is immediately developed, and it is interesting to observe how Mario shifts his position during the conversation, as if he were trying to find the right balance in his relationship with the poet, stepping up when the poet opens the letter from Sweden (so slightly above Neruda) and then stepping down again. The stepping up perfectly matches Mario's questions and comments, half-way between admiration, curiosity and cheeky exuberance (typical of a seventeen-year-old boy). But with the following definition of metaphors by Neruda, the poet is again slightly above Mario, which is not a minor detail, and after hearing Neruda's clear but acute explanation, Mario is absolutely spell bound, as his movements and location reveal. First he kneels down to pick up a still closed parcel and moves a little to the right to sit down so as to be able to take the most of what his 'master' will tell him: the typical position of the student looking up to his *maestro*. But Neruda again opts for a less formal and more intimate relationship with his young 'disciple' and sits down next to him.

The camera is kept on Mario all the time and on his ecstatic reactions, for some moments even leaving Neruda out of frame, with only his voice being heard. As Neruda sits down, and they continue the conversation about poetry, Mario immediately passes him the parcel, which Neruda will open only a few moments later, when he tries to put an end to the conversation. What he then takes out of the box is a bell, which in the following scene, they will place together near the house, overlooking the sea. The camera evocatively closes up on the bell, clearly stressing its figurative value, and thus aptly introducing that momentous question from Mario about the possibility that the whole world can be seen as "a metaphor of something", a hypothesis which leaves the poet almost speechless. No wonder therefore that the metaphorical image of the bell will be taken up again twice in the film: in the scene of the recording and before the last dialogue between Mario and the dying poet, near the end of the film.

²¹⁶G. García Corales (1995), pp. 65-6 and 76-7.

4.1b - A methodological digression

Before going on with the analysis of Skármeta's film transposition, however, it is necessary to make a clarifying digression. In the previous chapter, with the aim of favouring a systematic description of different TTs, we decided to start with the identification of an adequate tool of analysis, which hopefully would be flexible and comprehensive at the same time, favouring a descriptive, but never normative approach. Clearly, Torop's table is developed mostly for interlinguistic translation criticism, but in its identification of parameters (language, space, time, text, work, socio-political commitment) and corresponding translating strategies, it can be applicable and relevant also for film transposition, or at least it is our hypothesis that the dynamics of cultural translation identified by Torop are at work in both interlinguistic and intersemiotic transfer processes. Therefore, since we will keep referring to it as a guideline also for the study of the two films based on Skármeta's novel, it might be useful to repeat it again, of course in the simplified version we had identified in the previous chapter, but with the integration of the parameter of time, which will be particularly appropriate for the second film transposition.

Parameters of translatability	Possible translation strategies
<i>Language</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grammar categories • <i>realia</i> • conversational etiquette 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nationalization (naturalization) • trans-nationalization (exotization) • denationalization • <i>mélange</i>
<i>Time</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • historical • authorial • of the events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • archaicization • historicization • modernization • neutralization
<i>Space</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social (social dialects, jargons) • geographic (territorial dialects) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • localization (translation with comments) • naturalization (adaptation) • exotization • neutralization
<i>Text</i>	
<i>chronotopic</i> levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • narrator and narration • expressive aura of the character 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preservation – non-preservation of the structure (hierarchy of elements and levels) • preservation – non-preservation of cohesion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • author lexicon and syntax • hierarchy of elements and levels 	
<i>Work</i>	
Metatext complementarity (book) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • model reader • interpretation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intratextual explanation • interlinear commentaries and notes • special commentaries and information either at the end or at the beginning • metatextual compensation
<i>Socio-political determinacy</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • norms and taboos • translation tendentiousness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (deliberate) purification-neutralization • text orientation

4.1c - Examples of relazioni traduttive in Skármeta's transposition

The parameters of language, space and time are not particularly relevant for the analysis of Skármeta's transposition, since *Ardiente paciencia* is a thoroughly Chilean film, and thus it even reinforces the cultural connotation of the text through the Latin-American accent of the actors. The focus, instead, will be on the parameter of 'text', because it is in this regard, the *chronotopic* levels, that it is interesting to understand if and how the transposition develops any effective translation relation with the novel, by exploiting the potentialities offered by a different 'sign language'. And the answer is 'yes', as we could even make out in the sequence already commented, and as it is confirmed by further analysis.

To start with, the segment of Neruda leaving Isla Negra for his presidential campaign is rendered in both novel and film mostly by juxtaposing Neruda's memories, through a quotation from his diaries, and Mario's feelings of despair at his dear friend's departure. However, the film articulates the sequence in three scenes: 1) a scene to evoke the electoral campaign (based on personal contact and the power of words, rather than on affluent mass media communication), through a long shot of the rather shabby truck with which Neruda will be campaigning, covered with red flags and posters; 2) the scene of Neruda taking leave from Mario; 3) and a scene devoted to Neruda's memories.

This last scene is particularly evocative: first a long shot of the truck from a high angle with the musical voice over of Neruda narrating his memories, followed by a prolonged close-up of the rear mirror of the truck against a washed out and blurred sea in the background. In the mirror it is possible to read the three central letters of the poet's surname in red, and red is also the colour of the truck, part of which it is also possible to see in the mirror,

while in the foreground, a blurred ribbon (of course, red) is blowing. As the voice over goes on, very slowly the camera pans and the mirror disappears closing the scene on a shooting of the sea, still overwhelmed by light. The visual metaphors and the verbal ones effectively explain and reinforce one another: Neruda mentions the "innate timidity of the poet" when approaching the "masses of humanity", and those three letters which only partially let us read his surname rather seem to evoke this shyness, and above all suggest the futility of attaching oneself to an 'empty' name. It is not in a name, the semblance of an individual identity, that one must seek oneself, even if that name is Neruda. The only real and possible identity is that of a human being: "una vez en su seno, me siento transfigurado. Soy parte de la esencial mayoría del gran árbol humano".²¹⁷ It is no coincidence that the letters and the truck are framed by a rear mirror, which by itself suggests the idea of 'leaving behind', and actually all the traditional points of reference (including the red colour, symbol of political identity) leave the frame one by one, as they belonged to the individual and historical man, not to his new 'transfigured' identity, perfectly evoked by that image of a sea blurred by the overwhelming light. It should be noted that 'transfigurado' (transfigured) has a religious resonance, which unfortunately the English sub-titles (and the same occurs in the English translation of the novel) completely neutralize with a generic 'transformed'.

This is just an example of how the cinematic language can not only 'translate', but even increase the potentialities of the written page. This is partially possible also because cinematic language is a complex sign code, including sound and music among the others, and from that point of view *Ardiente paciencia* is interesting indeed. Music and dancing play an important role in the novel itself, as cultural conveyors first of all, but also with diegetical functions, becoming distinctive signs of a private code between Mario and Neruda. It has to be observed, however, that in the novel they can be effective as cultural conveyors only for a Chilean reader, who is well acquainted with the song titles, singers, types of music and dancing mentioned in the text. As we have already observed in chapter 3, such cultural references cannot be appreciated by a foreign reader since the translated texts analyzed do not provide any metatextual help. In the film, by contrast, their cultural function is preserved for the spectator of any nationality, by the very fact that music does not have to overcome any linguistic barrier.

A key role, both in the novel and film, is played by what Neruda calls "the postman's official anthem": *Please, Mr. Postman* by the Beatles. It is a present from Neruda, which becomes even more precious for Mario because the old poet dances it for him. It is a magic moment in their friendship, when the mythical poet definitely loses all his statutory rigidity and formality, completely entering the private and personal code, linking himself to the demystifying

²¹⁷ "Once among them I feel transformed. I am part of the essential majority; I am but one more leaf on the great human tree".

power of that dancing. The message of this scene is even stronger in the film, and this is a clear case when a film is in a more advantageous position than a novel, thanks to visual images and sounds. Choreography and lighting reinforce the feeling of intimacy; Beatles' music is of course very lively and enthralling; Roberto Parada, who offers a fond and affable image of elderly Neruda (and we have already noted his physical resemblance), is certainly not an elegant and sexy dancer, but his movements are harmonious, playful and charming. Mario is astonished, incredulous, but absolutely enchanted, and the camera is rightly kept always on him, alternating wide/medium shots with close-ups and big close-ups of Mario's face with Neruda in the foreground, slightly blurred, merrily dancing in front of him and repeatedly entering and leaving the frame.

The song *Please, Mr. Postman* will be taken up again in the dramatic closing shot of the film: Mario is being taken away by the secret police of Pinochet and at the very moment he is made to get into the car, he looks up and the camera symbolically freezes on a close-up of his worried face, while the Beatles' song starts and goes on with the credits of the film. In the 'bitter' moment when everything seems to be lost (because there are no doubts about Mario's tragic destiny), this song, while evoking the privileged relationship with Neruda and poetry (past moments of serenity, which now seem destroyed for ever), also evokes Neruda's and Allende's message of 'ardiente paciencia' and resistance even in desperate moments. One must be able to keep on waiting, this seems to be the final subtle message of the film, but only if waiting does not imply passivity: waiting with 'patience', but with 'burning patience'. And the lyrics of the song insist again and again on 'waiting'; the postman is invited to wait, but there is also the waiting for the postman by someone who strenuously, although patiently (we could use here 'with burning patience'), hopes to get a word, a letter.

Wait!

Oh yes, wait a minute, Mr. Postman

Wait

Wai-ai-ai-ait Mr. Postman.

Mr. Postman, look and see (oh yeah)

You got a letter in your bag for me (please please Mr. Po-o-o-stman)

I've been waiting such a long time (oh yeah)

Since I heard from that girl of mine.

There must be some word today-ay-ay

From my girlfriend so far away

Please Mr. Postman look and see

If there's a letter, a letter for me.

I've been standing here waiting Mr. Postman

So-o-o- patiently

For just a card or just a letter

Saying she's returning home to me.

[...] [*bold added*]

4.1d - The role of visual and auditory metaphors

The idea of waiting is repeatedly taken up in the film through subtly linked visual and auditory metaphors, thus reinforcing conceptual metaphors already at work in the novel. As we already noted, Skármeta stressed that the idea for the story of *Ardiente paciencia* had come to him from a metaphor offered by the history of Chile: Neruda died almost immediately after the *golpe* that had suppressed democracy, thus implying that violence and dictatorship 'blow out' utopia and poetry together. It is no coincidence that one of the musical *leitmotifs* of the film is the song *La vela*. We have seen that the novel explicitly mentions this song among several other titles in the paragraph describing the celebration of the Nobel prize for Neruda, but, unlike the novel, the film gives it an almost diegetical function, choosing it as the contrapuntal soundtrack for two key-sequences.²¹⁸

'Vela' in Spanish means 'candle', and in the song it is associated to the idea of 'blowing out', as the spectator can clearly understand from the closing lines of the song

Son mis recuerdos tan amargos
Que yo todo olvidaré
Que bien mentía,
Puesto que se fue
Yo la olvidaré
Uno a uno ya se han marchado
El último apagó la vela
Y ahora me dormiré [*bold added*]²¹⁹

The blowing out of a candle is an even too obvious metaphor for extinction and death, and the famous phrase from *Macbeth* immediately comes to mind: "Out, out, brief candle". Moreover the song finishes by mentioning sleep, a common image for 'eternal sleep', i.e., death.

It is surprising then that in the film Skármeta uses this song as the musical soundtrack for the long sequence of the falling in love of the two teenagers. The song starts softly, and almost imperceptibly, in the first scene of the sequence, when Mario unsuccessfully tries to ingratiate himself with Beatriz's mother. Then the music continues in the following two scenes on the beach (thus becoming a connecting element for the whole sequence), where Mario succeeds in making Beatriz fall in love with him mostly by recurring to the chemistry of Neruda's poetry, which he impudently plagiarizes. And what is going on is observed by the mother, who is mostly present (through over-the-

²¹⁸ See previous chapter, section 3.3e.

²¹⁹ "My memories are so sad that I'll forget everything, as she was lying and left, I'll forget her. One by one everybody has left, and the last one has blown out the candle, and now I'll sleep" [*my translation*].

shoulder shots) just as a black and sinister shadow in the foreground, thus controlling and revealing the point of view of the shooting.

The following scene is at the inn again, and outside at the table two fishermen are drinking a bottle of wine and singing the musical theme of *La vela*, but not the words, when Beatriz, as if in a *trance*, arrives from the beach, gets to their table and, for no reason at all, takes away their wine. The fishermen, astonished, automatically stop singing. Thus the metaphor of blowing out the candle introduced by the song in the shot immediately before, is now echoed by the 'blowing out' of the song itself, sounding a strong contrapuntal note to the blossoming of a teenage love.

The same omen is to be repeated with even greater emphasis in the closing of another key sequence: the celebration of the Nobel prize to Neruda. After listening to Neruda's speech on television, where the poet, through the screen, entrusts the onlookers with the political message of the metaphor implied in 'burning patience', Mario opens the celebration and the lively, merry dancing begins. In the meantime, other television news follow, much more worrying. Only Mario's boss pays attention to them; the others go on dancing without listening, but now the music has changed and shifted to a much more sombre tune. It is in fact the already heard song *La vela*, which again links more scenes. The pairs go on dancing: medium shot on Mario and Beatriz who, still dancing, go out of the frame; then focus on the boss, at the centre of the frame, isolated from the others, standing clearly absorbed in worried thoughts, and observing the dancers with folded arms: he cannot join the general merriment. (Cut) the song continues, long shot on the outside of the small inn on the beach, dusk, then the lights girdling the roof of the inn symbolically lit up; (cut) the music goes on, night, Mario's and Beatriz's bedroom, close-up on a hand that switches off the lamplight on the bedside table in parallel with the lyrics of the song: "el último apagó la vela", in the foreground, red cover of Neruda's book, in the background the lamplight next to the framed photo of Mario and Beatriz at their wedding; at the switching off of the light the song abruptly stops, leaving out the closing line. (Cut) dark frame, no music: a clearly sinister omen.

It is to be noted that the same framed photo of the wedding had previously closed a much less gloomy sequence, that of Mario's recording of the sounds of Isla Negra, where the photo had been associated with the crying of their new-born baby, and thus linked to fertility and birth, not to death. And that sequence had been characterized by another *leitmotif*, the French song sent by Neruda from Paris: *J'attendrai*. As Neruda himself informs Mario, it is a 1938 song by Rina Ketty, and if in the ST it is once again only a written reference to a song, not necessarily known to the reader, now in the film the actual song materializes and comes into the foreground with its refrain: "I will wait, day and night: I will wait for you to return". Another song, then, where the central word is 'wait', exactly as in the Beatles' song, the 'postman's anthem'.

Moreover it is also true that even the metaphors of the candle and of the lamplight, with all the funereal connotations they seem to have in this film, can

have an ambivalent function, also evoking other images, connected to the hopeful idea of vigil and eve. One image naturally comes to my mind, as part of our collective imagery: that of the 'wise virgins' in the Gospel parable, patiently waiting throughout the night to welcome the groom, whose coming is certain, but not the time of his coming. So the waiting can be long and unnerving, but what distinguishes and saves the 'wise virgins' is that they prudently stock up enough oil for the lamps to keep on burning the whole night so as to be ready for when the groom comes: in other words, they know what effective waiting means.

The *fil rouge* of all this subtle and complex echoing of visual and audio metaphors therefore is to be found in this special type of 'waiting', which the 'postman anthem' turns into the distinctive sign of the postman, and, we must remember, the postman is one of the core metaphors of *Ardiente paciencia*. Thus we can conclude that this is a clear case of *relazione traduttive* between the novel and the film, with the cinematic text offering its highlighted rendering of figurative discourse, and in this regard Skármeta's film transposition confirms the interest of Nicola Dusi's approach to 'cinema as translation'.

As I have mentioned, the metaphor of the postman is central to the novel. Neruda 'delivers' his poetry and metaphors to the people, like a postman. Mario, the postman, 'delivers' the messages of the world to the poet: written messages, or even messages (telegrams) learnt by heart (a powerful metonymy) as the only way of escaping censorship. Neruda sends Mario a cassette, with "his voice in a cage", thus prompting Mario to prepare another cassette, his own cassette to reciprocate the poet. Skármeta, it has been observed, 'delivers' the private Neruda to the world, and thus invites us to read, or re-read his poetry in a new light and with greater hope of understanding his message.

At the core of the metaphor of the postman therefore lies the idea of communication and reciprocity, and actually communication is the happy miracle brought about by poetry, as metaphorically embodied by the friendship between Mario and the poet. That the reciprocity of communication is a gift, almost a miracle, explains an otherwise illogical episode in both film and novel. When Mario's otherwise serious and reserved boss delivers the young man the yearned for letter and parcel from Neruda in Paris, and thus acts as a postman for the postman Mario, he decides to dress up as a very improbable angel, even with flapping wings. Of course there is irony in this scene, but a certain sacred halo is preserved, and at any rate the exceptionality of the event is stressed, as well as the metaphorical function of the postman. In fact it is a magic moment for Mario, when his 'burning-patient waiting' has been rewarded by the 'miracle' of that cage from which the *pájaro*, Neruda's voice, spreads around its singing.

Moreover, in the film another religious symbol is figuratively associated with the postman, making the metaphor of the postman more complex: the bell. As we have seen, the bell is introduced in the first scene where Mario delivers mail to Neruda; then it will be an important element in the recording, marking

the reciprocity of communication between the two friends; finally, it closes the circle, appearing again in the meeting with the dying poet, when for the last time Mario plays his role as a postman, but this time, it is after the *golpe*, and therefore there is no ringing from the bell: metaphors are silent and so are bells.

4.2a - Radford's and Troisi's transposition, "Il postino" (1995)

In 1984 the reviewer of *Ardiente Paciencia* in *Variety* concluded hoping that the film would find "international outlets" with greater budgets, confident that both Neruda's and Skármeta's literary reputations should help to develop "an afterlife for the film".²²⁰ It went better than expected, then, if we think of the enormous success of the second film transposition *Il postino*, in 1995, only a decade after Skármeta's film (*Il postino* appeared in Italy in 1994, but was launched by Miramax in 1995; production: Cecchi Gori; director: Michael Radford and Massimo Troisi; screenplay: Anna Pavignano, Michael Radford, Furio Scarpelli, Giacomo Scarpelli, Massimo Troisi; starring: Massimo Troisi, Philippe Noiret and Maria Grazia Cucinotta). It got the Oscar for Luis Bacalov's music and four Oscar nominations: for Best Actor, Best Director, Best (adapted) Screenplay, Best Picture, rather than simply Best Foreign-Language Film, which in itself was already of great relevance.

With regard to the nomination of *Il postino* as Best Foreign Film, Angelo Restivo comments that Hollywood in the Nineties on the one hand was dominated by the "globally marketed blockbuster" mentality, but on the other hand also wanted to locate 'art' in some other places, and from that point of view the clichéd Italy was "the perfect locus for the signifier 'art'". Moreover Italy also evoked the glorious past of Italian cinema in the fifties and sixties, and therefore it is no coincidence that in the nineties the Academy recognized Fellini and Antonioni, the great masters of Italian cinema, with lifetime achievement awards.²²¹

The success of the film *Il postino*, especially in the USA, and in Italy of course, led to a reissuing of the novel by Miramax, although with a new title to tie it to the film (more than 30,000 copies sold). Miramax edited also an anthology of Neruda's love poems, *Love: Ten Poems by Pablo Neruda* (more than 45,000 copies sold) and also a CD featuring Bacalov's soundtrack with celebrities reading the poems: Sting, Julia Roberts, Glenn Close, etc.,²²² which, according to the reviewer of *The New York Review of Books*, Michael Wood, "range from dutiful to disastrous".²²³ And New Directions, the publisher of

²²⁰ Vol. 313:10 (Jan. 4, 1984); pp. 24 and 28.

²²¹ A. Restivo, *The Cinema of Economic Miracles*, Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002, p. 169.

²²² The reading is now included as an extra in the DVD issue of the film.

²²³ Quoted in I. Hodgson (2000), p. 98.

Neruda in the USA, commented that after the release of the film Neruda's books had been "flying off the shelves".²²⁴

In this regard, we can only agree with Mindy Aloff when she affirms that, whatever one's response to the film itself, it cannot be denied that *Il postino* has done a great deal for Skármeta's novel and for Neruda's poetry as well. But then we should ask: what service has it really done? From this point of view, Aloff is the first one to stress the losses.

Most reviewers of the film *Il postino* simply mention that it is a free transposition of Skármeta's novel, but clearly have never read *Ardiente paciencia* – and almost all of them seem to be unaware that there was a previous transposition (the first film transformation, Skármeta's *Ardiente Paciencia*, is not mentioned even in the Miramax reissue of the novel). But those few who instead compare *Il postino* and the novel on which it is based, speak of the inevitable surprise experienced by those who, being intrigued by the film, have bought the book.

Il postino displaces the novel at three levels, as Luis Antezana points out: physically (from the written page to the cinema), contextually (from Chile to Italy, the Isle of Capri), chronologically (to a previous time, about twenty years before), and even modifies the story, first of all by providing a different ending (in the novel, Neruda dies almost immediately after the *golpe* and Mario becomes a *desaparecido*; in this film, Neruda, who had gone back to Chile, comes back for a short visit to find that Mario had died during a political rally where he had gone to read a poem he had written for his great Chilean friend Neruda) and by changing the age of the protagonist (in the novel Mario is seventeen years old, while Troisi's Mario is clearly in his late thirties, and the same can be said for Beatriz who should equally be an exuberant teenager).²²⁵

It should be noted that although the contextual and chronological displacement was carried out very scrupulously to make it still sound plausible, *Il postino* cannot avoid some anachronisms regarding Neruda's poetry (for example, when it quotes from his *Odas elementales*, which at any rate were written in 1954, two years after the new historical period chosen by the film), which would be noticed only by a spectator well acquainted with Neruda's work.²²⁶

²²⁴ The comment by New Directions is mentioned by Mindy Aloff ("I Read it at the Movies: Burning Patience, Pablo Neruda, and *Il Postino*", in *Parnassus: Poetry in Review*, 22:1/2, 1997, pp. 105-19), who also refers how in March 1996 Miramax Films were awarded the first Frank O'Hara Citation by the Academy of American Poets "in recognition of the tremendous contribution the film and its producers have made to the appreciation of poetry in America".

²²⁵ L. Antezana, "Desplazamientos poéticos y mass media", in *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*, 29:58 (2003), pp. 25-38.

²²⁶ Y. Gordils (2001, pp. 344-5) stresses the care of the scriptwriters of *Il postino* in recreating an accurate historical background, even coherently applying Skármeta's method of interpenetration of fiction and Neruda's fully respected biography. Thus, even if the film *Il postino* displaces Skármeta's text chronologically and contextually, it does so while still adhering to Neruda's biography. The film changes the time and the setting for the story so that it coincides with

These are minor flaws, of course; the real issue are the displacements operated by *Il postino*. However, the same Antezana affirms that notwithstanding all these changes, the film does not 'interfere' with the ST, since the beauty of Skármeta's story comes out intact. And this is also the opinion expressed by Skármeta himself in an interview on *La Repubblica* (July 2004), where he stresses that his text is not only a Chilean story, but a story about the discovery of poetry, which is a transnational theme. But of course there are contrasting opinions that lament the 'de-chileanization' carried out by *Il postino*, to use I. Hodgson's term. And 'de-chileanization' is the first word of

Neruda's sojourn in Capri from 10th February 1952 to the moment when the Chilean Government revoked the order of detention against the poet and he could go back to Chile on 12th August of the same year. And Gordils goes on showing how the faked newsreel at the beginning of the film very faithfully follows Neruda's description, in *Confieso que he vivido*, of the exceptional "flowery" fight that prevented his expulsion from Italy ordered by the Christian Democrat prime minister De Gasperi on request of the Chilean Embassy in Rome.

"Ya en la estación de Roma, donde tenía que descender a cambiar de tren para continuar mi viaje a la frontera, divisé desde la ventanilla una gran multitud. Oí gritos. Observé movimientos confusos y violentos. Grandes brazadas de flores caminaban hacia el tren levantadas sobre un río de cabezas.

-¡ Pablo! ¡Pablo!

Al bajar los estribos del vagón, elegantemente custodiado, fui de inmediato al centro de una prodigiosa batalla. Escritores y escritoras, periodistas, diputados, tal vez circa mil personas, me arrebataron en unos cuantos segundos de las manos policiales. La policía avanzó a su vez y me rescató de los brazos de mis amigos [...] A todo esto, las flores caían al suelo, volaban sombreros y paraguas, sonaban puñetazos como explosiones. La policía llevaba la peor parte y fui recuperado otra vez por mis amigos [...] Eran adhesiones del pueblo romano.

Al cabo de media hora de pugilato llegó una orden superior por medio de la cual se me concedía el permiso de permanecer en Italia. Mis amigos me abrazaron y me basaron y yo me alejé de aquella estación pisando con pena las flores desbaratadas por la batalla.

Amanecí al día siguiente en la casa de un senador [...] Allí me llegó un telegrama de la isla de Capri [...] ofreciendome una villa, en el propio Capri, para que yo la abitara.

Todo parecía un sueño."(297-8)

("In Rome railway station, where I had to descend and change train to reach the border, I made out a huge crowd through the train window. Heard cries. Noticed confused frantic and violent movements. Huge armfuls of flowers were walking towards the train carried high above a stream of heads.

- Pablo! Pablo!

On stepping down the train, elegantly watched over, at once I found myself at the very heart of an extraordinary battle. Writers (men and women), journalists, M.P.s, perhaps about one thousand people, snatched me away from the police in a few seconds. The police came forward in its turn, and took me back from the arms of my friends [...] In the meantime, flowers were falling to the ground, hats and umbrellas were being flown around, and punches resounded like explosions. The police were getting the worst and I was rescued again by my friends[...] It was all support from the people of Rome.

After half an hour of boxing, an order from above arrived, which allowed me to stay in Italy. My friends hugged and kissed me and I left that station sorry for trampling on all those flowers the battle had left around.

On the following day I woke up in the house of a senator [...] There I got a telegram from the isle of Capri [...] offering me a house to live in, exactly there, in Capri.

It was all like a dream" [my translation].

the title of an already quoted paper by Hodgson, who vehemently concludes the article:

Il postino's narrative presentation – even of the love story – lacks the substance of Skármeta's story, which is Mario's story, Neruda's story, and Chile's story.²²⁷

It is undeniable that this 'de-chileanization' is a loss, especially from the point of view of translation as cultural communication, but in itself it is not the first time that a film transposition has modified the setting and the time of a novel. Thus the analysis of the film *Il postino* should overcome this first negative reaction and try to go further and deeper.

4.2b - A commercial success

First of all, what are the ingredients of the film's success? The main one is clearly Massimo Troisi: his warm, ironic, striking performance (praised by all reviewers, even by those who criticize the film), appreciated even more, if possible, because of the awareness that tragically this was his last performance. Troisi, in fact, suffered from heart disease, and already seriously ill during the recording of the film, he died in his sleep in his sister's house the day after shooting the last scene.

In the commentary provided as an extra in the DVD of the film, director Michael Radford repeatedly draws attention to the great art of Troisi's performance: certainly in the great tradition of Neapolitan acting (De Filippo, Totò), yet with his own style. Radford is particularly fascinated by the expressiveness of a nuanced gesture (like a touching of his hat, for example) or a tenderly mischievous face, and above all by his astonishing hand language.

As the reviewer of *Sight & Sound* Julian Graffy observes, Troisi "does not so much play as inhabit the role of Mario".²²⁸ On seeing the film, we immediately become aware that all the world is at the service of Massimo Troisi, as the review in *Positif* comments:

Il est vrai que lorsque l'acteur napolitain est sur l'écran, on ne voit que lui: sa manière nonchalante de se déplacer, sa diction à la fois limpide et empêtrée dans les hésitations, sa façon malicieuse, d'établir le contact avec son entourage (son père, sa fiancée, Pablo Neruda lui-même dont il gagne l'amitié avec un mélange de candeur et de malice) l'imposent de façon éclatante.²²⁹

²²⁷ I. Hodgson (2000), p. 109.

²²⁸ J. Graffy, *The Postman*, in *Sight & Sound*, 5: 11 (1995), p. 49.

²²⁹ "It is true that when the Neapolitan actor is on the screen, he is the only one to be noticed: his nonchalant way of moving, his diction limpid and hesitating at the same time, his canny way of establishing a contact with those around him (his father, his girlfriend, even Pablo Neruda whose

Instead, Radford's direction has provoked controversial opinions, as have the screen-play and even the Oscar winning music. However, it cannot be denied that *Il postino* is a "beautiful, highly-polished film, with intense visual beauty", as even Hodgson concedes.²³⁰ Radford's direction is in the tradition of Hollywood classic cinema: great attention is paid to the mise-en-scène, especially to the framing and the choreography (which could be defined as 'formal'), as well as to the lighting.²³¹ The photography is impressive. No doubt all that provides a beautiful setting for the wonderful dialogues between Neruda and Mario taken from Skármeta's novel, which justifies the commercial success of the film.

Just a quick example: the sequence of the first meeting of Mario and Neruda in *Il postino* is introduced by a shot of the impressive landscape surrounding the house. It is a key-shot in the film, giving an immediate feeling of the mixture of oppressiveness and fascination evoked by that beautiful Mediterranean nature. A filter is clearly used to make the sea water deep blue ("blue blue" to use Radford's phrase in his commentary to the film), and that highlights the contrast when the camera panning over finally frames the house, painted bright pink.

The appeal of the scenery, very often enhanced by Balakov's music and, as we have seen, also by a skilful use of filters, is therefore strong, but, if we start analyzing it better, we see how unfortunately it is appealing to the point of becoming too perfect: postcards, images for tourist advertisement. "This is fake Italy: Italy for exports", Julian Graffy rightly stresses in his already quoted review for *Sight & Sound*. And Angelo Restivo expresses even harsher judgments: "images wrenched from their narrative context in a postmodern blur of past and present".²³² The stereotyped British/American image of Southern Italy: strikingly beautiful landscape on the one hand, backwardness on the other. Moreover, the action should take place in Capri, but nothing clearly identifies the place in the film, which was actually shot in Pantelleria, Procida and Salina.

And Graffy laments a "certain narrative lethargy":

The film abandons poetry for a lazily predictable tale of Mediterranean backwardness, stocked with cliché characters – local fishermen, smouldering dark beauty [...], black-clad widow, seedy politician, anti-Communist local priest implying that Neruda may have eaten his own children – and helped along with sentimental detail. Despite Troisi and three other Italians being credited, with Radford, for the screen-play, this is fake Italy: Italy for export.²³³

friendship he gains by means of a mixture of innocence and mischievousness) are compulsive" [*my translation*], unsigned review (only initials), *Postitif*, 423 (1996: May), p. 58.

²³⁰ I. Hodgson (2000), p. 109.

²³¹ 'Formal' is actually the adjective used by Radford himself in his audio commentary in the DVD of the film.

²³² A. Restivo (2002), p. 170.

²³³ J. Graffy (1995), p.49.

Thus, referring again to Torop's table with parameters and translation strategies, and applying it to Radford's film transposition, we can say that, if we look to the parameter of space, at first sight we might think of a strategy of nationalization, but a second glance would rather suggest neutralization. It is not a film about Italy, as Gordils rightly points out: it takes place in Southern Italy, but the setting and the cultural context are not the main interest for a film that tends to universalize and globalize the story it presents.²³⁴ The same can be said for the apparent process of historicization activated by changing the time of the story: it is only a surface operation, to justify the chronological displacement, which at any rate remains marginal, peripheral, and not even very convincing, especially in its attempt to recreate the political depth of the novel.²³⁵ The vagueness of the political cause in the film makes Hodgson speak of a "safe kind of politics", which certainly had a more guaranteed appeal for American audiences.

In Ardiente paciencia, Neruda's political role is an integral part of the plot [...] The political is present in *Il postino* only in passing. It appears mainly in conversation between Mario and his communist boss [...] Thus, while the political is not entirely absent in *Il postino* [...] the film offers a rather unspecific and, therefore, "safe" kind of politics. In Skármeta's novel, the workers who will eat at the bar are Unidad Popular textile workers rewarded for their production with a seaside vacation. *Il postino* generates easy (U.S.) audience sympathy for the working man, while *Ardiente paciencia* is clearly identified with the Unidad Popular government [...]

There are just two scenes in *Il postino* in which Neruda directly speaks of politics to Mario: one in which Neruda tells Mario why he wrote the *Canto general* and another in which he asks if they protest at not having running water on the island. But Mario does not appear to be moved by Neruda's remarks. In fact, when Mario's communist boss assures him that losing the elections is only a battle and they will win the war, a still-unconvinced Mario asks what they would do once they threw off their chains. The scenes seemed forced, even calculated to justify the changed ending. Those who watch Skármeta's film are not surprised when it is clear at the end that Mario will not be coming home, an ending true to Chilean reality. But except to echo the ending of Skármeta's work, there is no apparent reason for Mario's journey to end in tragedy in the Radford film.²³⁶

²³⁴ Y. Gordils (2001), p. 347.

²³⁵ In this regard A. Restivo (2002, p.170 and 172) comments: "*Il postino* is "historical" in the sense that it is set in 1952, but the adoption of what Foucault has dubbed the *mode rétro* is the film's overarching strategy for history's containment, insofar as history spreads itself out in the style and mise-en-scène while losing its narrative dimension [...] It is in this sense that the film renders history as archival, disconnected from narrative, while at the same time rendering politics incomprehensible".

²³⁶ I. Hodgson (2000), pp. 104-5.

Once again, therefore, we should speak of neutralization, not only with regard to the parameter of time, but also to that of socio-political determinacy. And this becomes even more evident if we compare the way love is treated in the ST, *Ardiente paciencia*, and in *Il postino*. As we already pointed out in the previous chapter, in Skármeta's text there is a tight nexus binding together love, poetry and the triumph of left-wing causes. Poetry and its tool, metaphors, become the 'connecting tissue' between love and politics, to the point that in *Ardiente paciencia* metaphors make left-wing ideology the 'natural associate' of exuberant sexuality and passion. And in the novel that is proved by the fact that Mario's most intense moments of love-making coincide with important moments of political attainment for Unidad Popular: he makes love to Beatriz for the first time on the night of the celebration of Allende's victory, and similarly he cannot find a better way of celebrating the Nobel Prize for Literature awarded to his friend Pablo Neruda than by making love to Beatriz in the kitchen, dedicating their exceptional orgasm to the poet.

In Skármeta's film only the first of the two love scenes is presented and the strong eroticism and exuberance of the written page is only partially evoked. But at least the first part of the scene, the erotic game with the egg, is highly effective and emotionally involving. The music soundtrack perfectly matches and even strengthens the *mélange* of playful exuberance and innocent excitement and desire of this first sex experience between two teenagers. Beatriz (a mix of childlike innocence and teenage temptress, to use Irene Hodgson's happy description) is the one who creates the game and is clearly in control, and the camera is mostly kept on her.²³⁷ She is dressed in white, symbol of innocence, but her tight blouse and mini-skirt exalt her undeniably great sex-appeal. For the moment Mario is kept out of frame, but the point of view as well as the visualization are his: it is not an objective shooting, since we are clearly watching through his spell-bound eyes, so that we share his increasing excitement and bewilderment. The fascinating game begins and Beatriz makes the egg sensuously roll over her breast and body, but the camera never abandons her seductive and attractive face, while egg and hands enter and exit from the frame. Then, when the erotic game is reaching its climax, and the girl silently invites Mario to take away the egg from her mouth with his lips, the exciting, boisterous music fades away and from that moment on, very evocatively, only the distant music of the sea-waves (a *leitmotif* throughout the film) accompanies the following love scene.

All this with regard to Skármeta's film; instead, in Radford's *Il postino* physical love and eroticism are kept 'at a distance', i.e., out of frame. The erotic game with the egg in Skármeta's text is only half suggested in *Il postino*, with the egg being replaced by a table-football ball, and followed only by a chaste, romantic kiss. It is true that in this film the small ball picks up again a note already introduced also by the novel (the first meeting of Mario and Beatriz at

²³⁷ I. Hodgson (2000), p. 104.

the table football, where the girl holds the small ball with her lips and for a moment provocatively bends towards Mario as if inviting him to take it away from her mouth), and metaphorically develops it throughout the film: as Mario comically shows it to Neruda when he tries to convince him to write a poem for Beatriz, the ball becomes the sign of their love, and finally introduces the appearance of Mario's child at the end of the film (when Neruda and Matilde enter the inn, they are 'welcomed' by a bouncing white ball immediately followed by the young boy). Both are episodes that have been introduced by the screenplay, and so in the film the ball becomes an evocative metonymy for Mario's life parable, but stops being an erotic symbol. And consequently we should speak of a 'safe', more neutral kind of love for *Il postino*, which contrasts, incongruously enough, with the overt sensuality and dark voluptuousness of the actress who plays the role of Beatriz, Maria Grazia Cucinotta. And Hodgson acidly observes, "rather than seeing her as an innocent, one might wonder why she seems to have had no other suitor prior to Mario's infatuation with her".²³⁸

All that also contrasts with Neruda's passionate poetry, especially that inspired by his love for Matilde Urrutia.²³⁹ This leads to another anachronism in the film: the months in Capri were a perfect love interlude for Neruda and Matilde, almost at the beginning of their love story, since in the first months of 1952 he had not yet informed Delia del Carril (who had been his affectionate partner for eighteen years) of his intention to leave her for Matilde. Thus the chronological displacement of *Il postino* should evoke a moment of passionate love in the life of Neruda, and not comfortable, mature love as it actually does in the film.

There was nothing chastened about the period that Neruda and Matilde spent on Capri, yet the love between them that the movie portrays isn't new, it's comfortable - the tigers tamed, the wounds under wraps. Their most explicitly erotic moment is the execution of a rather sedate tango.²⁴⁰

It could also be objected that Skármeta's Neruda has nothing of the passionate lover, but we must remember that that Neruda is twenty years older than *Il postino*'s Neruda, in other words, in *Ardiente paciencia* Neruda is rightly shown as an elderly man who has settled down at last. But let us focus on the choice of a "rather sedate" tango for the dancing of Neruda in *Il postino*. We have already stressed the role played by dancing in *Ardiente paciencia*, both as cultural marker (the popular dancing to celebrate Neruda's Nobel prize) since authentic local music is played, and as a private code and symbol of the special friendship between Mario and the poet (the Beatles' song). The tango *Madre*

²³⁸ I. Hodgson (2000), p. 105.

²³⁹ "On Capri, Neruda and Matilde were able to live together for the first time since they met. The effect on Neruda's poetry appears to have been incendiary", M. Aloff (1997), p. 116.

²⁴⁰ M. Aloff (1997), p. 116.

selva is also a cultural marker, of course, but a more blurred, a more unspecific one: it evokes the clichéd image of the Latin American lover, and it is more specifically linked to Argentina, rather than to Chile. It rather trivializes Latin America, as well as Pablo Neruda himself: the very comparison of the scene where Mario watches and admires Neruda dancing in each film could not point to more striking differences of approach in the portrayal of Neruda: a non elegant, but playful and charming Neruda in *Ardiente paciencia*, a competent but stereotyped and self-absorbed dancer in *Il postino*.

4.2c - Pablo Neruda and poetry in 'Il postino'

It has been observed that this deliberate universalization and neutralization in Radford's film is adopted with the aim of shifting the focus onto poetry and love, thus enhancing an already important element in Skármeta's text. A key element for this nexus between poetry and love is obviously Neruda and his poetry, in both film and novel. But, with *Il postino*, Neruda, and consequently also his poetry, undergo an important metamorphosis, as we have already started to notice.

First of all, he becomes a more aloof, distant and self-absorbed character, and incidentally it should be noted that the dubbing of Noiret (the famous French actor who interprets Neruda) respects the cinematic cliché of a Spaniard speaking Italian (perfect Italian, but with an accent, and every now and then interspersed with some words in Spanish), except when he recites his poem about the sea, because in that case the dubbing of Noiret's voice illogically shifts to a French accent.

However, in this regard, we should not forget the relevance of Skármeta's operation in deliberately demystifying Neruda's persona and in 'carnivalizing' his poetry, with an implicit distancing from the more overtly political and rhetorical poetry of the first Neruda, culminating in the *Canto general* of 1950.²⁴¹ But, as Aloff remarks, the transformation of the character of Neruda in the film *Il postino* is after all only another operation of market, since a poet like Skármeta's Neruda, with all his benevolence, his humanity and also his spontaneous irony, "is hardly a figure with whom a contemporary audience will identify". There is nothing of the *vate* (the charismatic guru) in him.²⁴² Therefore Radford's film opts for a more traditional and clichéd portrait of the great poet, on the one hand, while at the same time almost 'punishing' him and making him small at the end of the film, with that memorable scene of the camera zooming out from Neruda on the beach dwarfed by the majestic cliffs

²⁴¹ In this regard, it should be noted that *Il postino* introduces ample quotations from *Canto general*, which instead were obviously not present in the novel, since *Canto general* represents a more solemn and public voice in Neruda's poetry, which is outside Skármeta's focus.

²⁴² "For our age, which likes to believe [...] that greatness in art is conjoined with monstrous personalities, Skármeta's portrait of Neruda would seem a species of fairy tale", M. Aloff (1997), pp. 113-4.

behind him, as well as by the events that took place. The man is dwarfed (a poet, even a great poet is only a man, after all), but not poetry: this seems to be the message, as the film ends with the English translation of a poem by Neruda (not present in the novel or in the script), affirming the irresistible power of poetic vocation.²⁴³

And it was at that age... Poetry arrived
In search of me. I don't know, I don't know where
It came from, from winter or a river.
I don't know how or when,
No, they were not voices, they were not
Words, nor silence,
But from a street I was summoned,
From the branches of night,
Abruptly from the others,
Among violent fires
Or returning alone,
There I was without a face
And it touched me.

It is a beautiful poem, and an evocative closing for a film, at first sight. However, it is only the initial part of a longer text, from the collection *Memorial de Isla Negra* (1964), entitled *La poesía*, which stresses how writing, seeing and hearing are intrinsically connected and even dependent one on the other, favouring the development of the poet and his becoming aware of his poetical vocation, as we can see if we go on reading the text.

I did not know what to say, my mouth
Had no way
With names,
My eyes were blind,
And something started in my soul, fever or forgotten wings,
And I made my own way, deciphering
That fire,
And I wrote the first faint line,
Faint, without substance, pure
Nonsense,
Pure wisdom
Of someone who knows nothing,
And suddenly I saw
The heavens
Unfastened
And open,
Planets,

²⁴³ It is the translation by Anthony Kerrigan from Pablo Neruda, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Nathaniel Tarn, London: Jonathan Cape, 1970, pp. 457-459.

Palpitating plantations,
Shadow perforated,
Riddled
With arrows, fire and flowers,
The winding night, the universe.

And I, infinitesimal being, drunk with the great starry
Void, likeness, image of
Mystery,
Felt myself a pure part
Of the abyss,
I wheeled with the stars,
My heart broke loose on the wind.

The longer second part is essential. Without the rest of the poem, the initial exaltation of the power of poetry risks remaining vague and indistinct, as what has been denounced as “the most painful change in the movie” confirms.²⁴⁴ We are here referring to Mario’s recording of the sounds of the isle for Pablo Neruda who is far away, which in *Il postino* is a completely autonomous decision of Mario, a ‘monologue’, rather than part of a ‘dialogue’. In *Ardiente paciencia*, instead, the recording is prompted by Neruda who, far from forgetting Mario, has sent him a cassette-recorder, explicitly inviting him to give sounds to his emotions, and Skármeta’s film transposition evocatively underlines the intimate connection between Neruda’s prompting and the development of Mario’s poetic and physical creativity (Mario actually becomes creative, since he writes a poem and becomes a father).

In Skármeta’s *Ardiente paciencia* Neruda invites and encourages Mario to look at reality with new eyes and new years, and then to record that ‘looking’, by fixing the experience and his feelings, that is, by ‘writing’ it through the sounds that metonymically evoke it. It is the sensitivity of the child, which precedes the word and the actual skill of speaking, and this is a fundamental condition for a poet. Y. Gardils explains how this is a key notion in Neruda’s poetry.

La concepción del poeta como alguien que *mira* con intención y, por tanto, *admira* las *maravillas* de la naturaleza y se asombra ante ese *milagro* es piedra angular de la poética de Neruda, cuyo primer poema publicado se titula “Mis ojos” (1918) y cuya “condición de poeta” [...] antecedió su capacidad de verbalizar sus descubrimientos.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ M. Aloff (1997), p. 117.

²⁴⁵ “The idea of the poet as someone who gazes intensely and thus comes to admire the wonders of nature and is astonished at these miracles, is a corner stone in the poetry by Neruda, whose first poem is entitled *My Eyes* (1918) and whose ‘being a poet’ came before his ability to give words to his discoveries” [*my translation*], Y. Gardils (2001), p. 359.

To help Mario develop this pre-verbalizing sensitivity, as a fundamental step in his poetical and existential development: this is exactly what Neruda has done by his gift, the cassette-recorder with the invitation to Mario to go around Isla Negra and 'give voice' to his feelings. This way not only does Neruda invite Mario to record the sound of the bells, the cries of birds, the crashing of the waves, but he even says to him: "If you hear the silence of the stars, tape it", which would sound absolutely illogical in any other context, but which is particularly pregnant here.

This explains why, the episode of the recording, although important also in *Il postino*, actually becomes a key sequence in *Ardiente paciencia*, perhaps one of the best moments in Skármeta's film. In *Ardiente paciencia* Neruda's message, with his voice over, connects several scenes: when it starts to be heard, Mario stands up and moves from right to left towards the cassette recorder on the table, a medium shot shows him crouched down between the Beatriz and her mother, so as to be fondly closer to the voice "singing from the cage": his boss, also absorbed and attracted by the message as by a magnet, moves and gets close to the family group, and standing on their left creates a virtual line connecting Beatriz's white blouse, his own shirt, and his white angel wings, the formality of the frame thus underlying the sacredness of the message; (cut) long shot on the group on the beach, with the message going on; (cut) Neruda's voice continues to be heard, while a series of shots (alternating close-ups, big close-ups, and long shots) start to show Mario already acting out on Neruda's prompting, thus also beginning to use and to develop his own personal creativity and imagination. Then Neruda introduces the song, *J'attendrai* and the camera zooms out into a series of long shots of Mario, recording the seagulls cries frightened by his joyful running along the beach. (Cut) Night, Mario and Beatriz in their bedroom. Again the soundtrack provides the linking to a following scene, and in fact the French song continues. Mario gets up with the recorder in his hands. The song finishes and gives in to Mario's recording: his own 'text' has thus begun. At first he only provides news about himself (he is now working in the kitchen of the inn, which he hates, as the contrast with the image that accompanies this piece of information reveals: we see him glancing at a celebrity magazine with photos of beautiful and elegant women) and then he starts reciting his poem on Neruda, no longer only a 'sound poem', but a 'word poem': at last he has overcome his initial sterility. Of course, it is a rather 'crude' piece of poetry, but it is not the product of plagiarism any longer, and marks his progress. As such, it is worth being listened to (by the way, we can observe that Mario's poem is instead only 'mentioned' in *Il postino*, but left out, as the spectator can only have a glimpse of the sheet of paper on which it is written, when it falls down to the ground at the Communist rally after the attack of the police).

At the beginning of the poem, the camera shoots a surreal image of Paris; (pan) and the image of Paris turns out to be a framed one hanging on the wall, the pan continues and reveals other objects and memories on the wall,

among which Neruda's cassette and the cover of the Beatles's long-playing record attract the attention. During the pan on the walls of the bedroom, the poem finishes and gives way to the sounds recorded by Mario, thus the images that match the sounds are not in parallel (the corresponding images had in fact been introduced before). These images are metonymically linked to his life and not to the recording, but clearly by now Mario has understood the teaching of his *Maestro*: poetry and life are intimately linked and go together. The closing shot of the whole sequence reaffirms it: a close up on the framed photo of the couple on their wedding day, at last matching the recorded sound with the crying of the new born baby, the fruit of that marriage. Thus physical and spiritual fertility is visually and metaphorically evoked again.

The important message of this evocative key-sequence is, therefore, that poetry is a powerful and revolutionary means, able to influence society from its very roots, producing reciprocal understanding and ultimately communication and creativity. As such, the recording becomes the outcome, and visual index²⁴⁶ at the same time, of how Neruda has succeeded in helping Mario to give voice to his most inner feelings. As Diana Conway comments:

By showing how a barely educated postman learns to savor poetic language, Skármeta has paid Neruda the highest literary compliment. Neruda's credo was that poets must write for the common person.²⁴⁷

We should remember that what Skármeta rejects is only a certain idea of poetry, "el modelo vático", more rhetorical and solemn, but not the intimately and subtly subversive power of poetry, in which he strenuously believes. That is why, even if, in its own way, the recording of the sounds of the island is also a relevant sequence in *Il postino* (highly suggestive and lyrical as well), what is missing in Radford's film is the ideological and metaphysical depth the episode has in Skármeta's film transposition *Ardiente paciencia*. Thus, broadly speaking, we could detect in *Il postino*, even in this regard, another case of neutralization and trivialization.

4.2d - Cinema of loss and mourning

We have already noticed that the Miramax reissuing of Skármeta's novel explicitly links the text to *Il postino*, but does not even mention Skármeta's transposition. The same occurs with Radford's film. Would it be appropriate then to consider it a remake, that is, a new cinematic text based on an explicit interplay of equivalences and changes with regard to a previous film? As Dusi points out, in the case of a remake a certain knowledge of the previous film should be included in the 'intertextual competence' of the model spectator that

²⁴⁶ Regarding the difference between symbol and index, see J. Monaco, *How to Read a Film*, New York, Oxford: O.U.P., 2000, p. 164.

²⁴⁷ D. Conway, "Neruda, Skármeta and *Ardiente paciencia*", in *Confluencia*, 7:2 (1992), p. 141.

the film anticipates and develops at the same time.²⁴⁸ Could that really be said to occur with *Il postino*?

The shooting of Mario walking along the beach in *Il postino* could be said to remind us of similar scenes with Neruda and Mario in *Ardiente paciencia*; also the bed in Beatriz's room, in the scene of the dialogue with her aunt (her mother in Skármeta's film) is framed in a curiously similar way in the two films. Yet, apart from that, the two texts seem to have so little in common.

Instead, *Il postino* clearly activates other intertextual references. At the beginning of the film, the scene of the news reel about the arrival of Neruda at Rome railway station and later in the Isle of Capri, with the reaction of the spectators watching it in a village cinema, evokes similar metatextual scenes in Tornatore's *Nuovo cinema paradiso*. The spontaneous and ingenuous involvement of the audience, their identification with the cinema, the cinema as an image of reality, and reality as cinema: all these are elements which give depth to the newsreel scene, and which are shared with Tornatore's film, with its tracking of the changing nature of the audiences from a major identification to greater sophistication, and a nostalgic meditation on the role of cinema.

The complex relation between cinema and reality, continuing the old theatre/life *adagio*, seems to be an eternal theme in art, and this newsreel scene in *Il postino* is particularly successful in showing the screen as a prolonged metaphor, "la pantalla como metáfora en espejos repetidos" (the screen as a metaphor through multiple mirrors), to use Gordils's phrase. The empirical audience watches Mario and the fictional audience of local fishermen watching the newsreel in a cinema, and reacting with great emotion when they can recognize themselves on the screen in the newsreel. But what makes the scene more complex is that the newsreel, although pretending to be historical and thus 'faithful' to reality, is instead a fake newsreel, since it is itself a transposition of a literary text, Neruda's memoirs, *Confieso que he vivido* (see note 226 in this chapter). That is not all: the faked newsreel includes some 'bits' of history. In fact, as director Radford explains in his commentary to the film, the documentary was shot in Rome in the station that Mussolini had asked to be built for Hitler's visit. However the station was not finished in time for that event (and paradoxically enough, Mussolini had to rely on Cinecittà carpenters to create an emergency fake station for the newsreel of Hitler's visit), but it was of course ready for Radford's filming, and thus, although the newsreel in *Il postino* is a fake, the station was 'real'.

²⁴⁸ "Nel caso di una trasposizione da un'opera letteraria, e in modo gradualmente diverso anche per tutto quello che eccede o precede il film, come il fatto che esso sia un *remake* o un *sequel*, lo spettatore modello previsto e costruito dal testo potrà possedere una propria 'competenza intertestuale' ", ("In the case of a transposition from a work of literature, and in a gradually different way also with all that is outside and before a film, as for example the fact that it may be a *remake* or a *sequel*, the expected and test-developed model spectator can have one's own specific intertextual competence", *my translation*), N. Dusi, (2003), p. 110.

This initial intertextual reference to Tornatore's film is moreover unequivocally strengthened by the casting of Philippe Noiret, who played a similar father-like role in *Nuovo cinema paradiso*: Alfredo, the cinema projectionist. Moreover, in both films, the character has fundamentally the same function of helping a younger and ingenuous person to discover and acquire artistic appreciation. Furthermore, there are only a few years of distance between the two films, as *Nuovo cinema paradiso* appeared in 1989, and Tornatore's film was an even greater world success, well-known and appreciated also by US audiences.

This intertextual reference can thus help us to identify *Il postino* as 'cinema of nostalgia', of which of course *Nuovo cinema paradiso* is a great example.²⁴⁹ In this regard, we should mention Rosalind Galt's, *Italy's Landscapes of Loss: Historical Mourning and the Dialectical Image in "Cinema Paradiso", "Mediterraneo" and "Il Postino"*, which rejects the definition "films of postmodern nostalgia" for the three films. According to Galt, such a 'reading' would be reductive, as it would not take into consideration the special historical perspective of the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the films were made, "and from which specific perspective this projected narrative of romantic loss makes political sense".²⁵⁰ I must say, however, that if Galt's thesis could perhaps seem appropriate for the other two films, particularly for *Mediterraneo*, it is not so convincing for *Il postino*. But whether it is to be regarded as Postmodern or not Postmodern, we can clearly speak of nostalgia, loss and mourning for this film.

Loss and mourning are really the central themes in Amy Lawrence's reading of *Il postino*, which focuses on the psychology of the reaction of the audience. Lawrence starts from the influence that the death of the film star, Massimo Troisi, inevitably has on the perspective with which the film's reception is filtered, thus strengthening its reading as a tale of loss. But it is the story itself that is one of longing in *Il postino*.

We know from the first that their discrepant positions (in terms of education, status, confidence, etc.) makes any lasting friendship between Mario and Neruda unlikely. But we want it to be true anyway [...] Knowing that the unlikely friendship between a world-famous poet and a humble Italian postman can't last, in a sense we spend the film waiting for the moment when Mario knows he has been forgotten. And it does happen, exposing Mario as naive and gullible (which, of course, he is) and Neruda as too famous and forgetful (which he is).

[...]

Like Neruda, when we hear of Mario's death, we are put in the position of having come too late. The star has gone and for a moment we fear we won't

²⁴⁹ See in particular M. Marcus, "Giuseppe Tornatore's *Cinema Paradiso* and the Art of Nostalgia", in *After Fellini* (same author), John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2002, pp. 182-199.

²⁵⁰ *Screen*, 42:2 (summer 2002), pp. 158-173.

see him again. The closer we get to Mario's death, the fewer close-ups we see of the actor. [...] Walking alone on the beach, Neruda listens, remembers, or imagines the sounds of the rally [...] the poet confronts layer upon layer of loss. As he recedes in significance, replaced by shots of the cliffs and the sea, the film ends with a poem. Affirming the irresistible power of poetry, *Il postino* ends with the fervent hope that art (poetry, sound, film) can still the longing for the irrevocable absence of character and star.²⁵¹

All this becomes even more evident, if we remember the film's closing dedication in English: "To our friend Massimo".

4.3 - A bitter conclusion for a long journey from the margins

If we accept Lawrence's interpretation, and thus *Il postino* comes to be seen as a touching tale of metaphysical longing and loss, then we must also admit that Radford's film is far indeed from the perspective of *Ardiente paciencia*, both as a film and a novel, with its message of resistance and endurance in tragically bitter moments.

Italy for export, Latin-American music for export, Neruda for export, poetry for export: this seems to be for the moment the point of arrival of this long journey from the margins. The process of neutralization had already emerged through the analysis of the two interlinguistic translations, especially in the case of the English TT, as seen in chapter 3. Such a tendency towards leveling is then confirmed by the study of the intersemiotic versions of *Ardiente paciencia*. And, whereas Skármeta's transposition has helped to provide supporting examples for Dusi's theory of "translation relations between forms", the 1995 film transposition *Il postino* has clarified the process of 'deterritorialization' and neutralization perceptible also in the written TT's. And what has occurred to Skármeta's text, through its various transfers, comes to confirm a generalized and wider process of 'deterritorialization' which seems to affect our societies at large, and which after all is a by-product of globalization.

In this respect, Luis Cárcamo-Huechante and José Antonio Mazzotti's thoughts can offer an appropriate conclusion for this study case. Wondering if and how it is possible to fight the progressive process of abstraction of the global era, they find an answer in the building up of a 'critical conscience' for which, interestingly enough, poetry is playing a key role.

Entonces, cabe preguntarse, ¿cómo lidiar con esta intensificada abstracción de la era global? ¿Cómo construir posibles espacios y tiempos – así, en plural – de intervención concreta y localizada? [...] Si la dinámica del capital global ha acentuado la abstracción, en tanto desmaterialización, desrealización y desterritorialización de los signos, el poema ofrece la posibilidad de un experiencia con el texto como cuerpo, como materialidad [...] Las tramas espaciales y temporales de los textos de poesía sugieren estas localidades y diferencias que, en sus

²⁵¹ A. Lawrence, "Il postino", in *Psychoanalytic Review*, 83: 4 (1996), pp. 632-633.

complejas, aunque minúsculas, singularidades, activan dislocaciones y, al mismo tiempo, nuevas formas de vinculación transnacional en la vastedad hegemónica de la globalización.²⁵²

²⁵² "Then it is right to wonder how we can fight this intensified abstraction of the global era. How can we build realistic places and moments – exactly like that, in the plural – of concrete and localized intervention? If the dynamics of global capital has increased abstraction, as well as dematerialization [...] and deterritorialization of signs, the poem offers the possibility to experience the text as a body, as materiality [...] the spatial and temporal webs of texts of poetry point to these localisms and differences, which in their complex even if minimal singularities activate dislocations and, at the same time, new forms of trans-national connections within the huge hegemony of globalization" [*my translation*], "Dislocamientos de la poesía latinoamericana en la escena global", in *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*, 29:58 (2003), pp. 13, 15.

Chapter 5 –The committed translator: the written text.

5.1a - Gabriel García Márquez and the Latin American novel

A gap of only four years separates Skármeta's *Ardiente paciencia* (1985) from the publication of the second Latin American text I have chosen as a case-study for this research, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* by Gabriel García Márquez (1981), so that the two novels can be rightly regarded as contemporary. Moreover, also *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is also a short novel, like Skármeta's book. Yet, the two texts could not differ more. To start with, it is useful to remember how in 1981, when he wrote it, Márquez was already enjoying mass popularity, unlike Skármeta; and this novel came unexpectedly since he had been silent for some years in the form of self-imposed 'publication strike' (actually, he had vowed not to publish anything until dictator Pinochet would be deposed, and freedom and democracy restored in Chile). A year later, in 1982, Márquez was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, which confirmed his status as a world famous literary giant, and explains why critics tend to refer to him as the 'soul of Latin America', and Ruben Pelayo writes, in his monograph essay about him, that "he is probably the best-known Latin American writer of the twentieth century and a genius in his ability to touch people of all cultures and inspire many other writers".²⁵³

Márquez' success had been established with *Cien años de soledad* (1967), which provoked a 'literary earthquake' (to use Mario Vargas Llosa's words), first throughout Latin America, but soon all over the world as well. Pablo Neruda even saw it as the 'greatest revelation' in Hispanic literature since Cervantes's *Don Quijote*.²⁵⁴ Gene H. Bell-Villada summarizes well the role played by *Cien años de soledad* in the world literary panorama.

By 1967 there were informed readers who were aware that in Latin America something new was taking shape. Already the work of Alejo Carpentier and Julio Cortázar had been proving that the diverse exquisite corners into which the novel had painted itself were neither final nor necessary. But it was *One Hundred Years of Solitude* that was to make the difference. Breaking from the claustrophobic atmosphere that had permeated French and American

²⁵³ See J. Mellen, *Literary Masters – Gabriel García Márquez*, Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2000, p. 49; and R. Pelayo, *Gabriel García Márquez – A Critical Companion*, London: Greenwood Press, 2001, p.15.

²⁵⁴ See J. Mellen (2000 a), pp. 49-50.

writing, Gabriel García Márquez reopened the doors and windows and took on the life of the streets, giving us a vast panorama in which every historical situation [...] was fully conjured up. The book came written with utter authority, had the voice of a wise yet involved and caring speaker, who [...] truly knows everything about and everyone in a society, from its high notables to its sullen rejects, and moreover sees fit to tell the whole world about them.²⁵⁵

Above all, *Cien años de soledad* is often referred to, and has been identified, as the quintessential novel of 'magic realism', the 'magic realism book *par excellence*'.²⁵⁶ Of course, there is both truth and oversimplification in such a definition, since even Márquez himself has played down the importance of this characteristic in his books, and has even showed impatience towards literary critics and experts, as when, for example, during an interview he said that he could not understand all the excitement about his *Cien años de soledad*, provocatively suggesting that, according to him, the book did not even deserve such disproportionate success. Similarly, Márquez has also often stressed how, in any case, he is to be considered a very 'realistic' writer, since reality for him does not limit itself to include facts, but also "the people's myths, their beliefs, their legends", so that supernatural elements come to be part of everyday reality.²⁵⁷ However, what Márquez's words actually implied can be better understood through the view of Gregory Rabassa, the long-established translator into English of many of Márquez's works, including *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*. It is Rabassa's opinion that Márquez should not be studied only for his magic realism, but rather because he "offers reality in its several dimensions, the ones we are hard put to explain without recourse to naked formulas".²⁵⁸

In any case, *Cien años de soledad* greatly contributed to the so-called 'Boom' of the Latin American novel in the 1960s, a denomination which, in spite of its vagueness, epitomizes the international recognition Latin American fiction reached by the 1960s. As Raymond L. Williams observes, the Boom was a result of an unprecedented confluence of forces and coincidences occurring in Latin America, and "for the first time, the most gifted novelists of Latin America had an immediate outlet and a broad readership in the USA".²⁵⁹ However, by the early 1970s, the union between the writers of the 'Boom' began to dissipate and by the mid-1970s the 'Boom' as a literary period in the history of Latin America can be considered concluded. Which does not imply at all, of course, a decrease in the number and relevance of new original works produced in Latin America. Regarding Gabriel García Márquez, for example, the works that followed *Cien*

²⁵⁵ G. H. Bell-Villada, 'García Márquez and the Novel', in *Gabriel García Márquez* (special issue), *Latin American Literary Review*, 13 (January-June 1985), 25, p. 18.

²⁵⁶ See R. Pelayo (2001), p. 20.

²⁵⁷ Mentioned by J. Mellen, *Gale Study Guides to Great Literature: Literary Topics – Magic Realism*, Farmington Hills, MI: The Gale Group, 2000, p. 62.

²⁵⁸ Mentioned by J. Mellen (2000 b), p. 62.

²⁵⁹ R. L. Williams (1998), p. 56.

años de soledad, were received with almost the same enthusiasm all over the world, including *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*. As Joan Mellen notes, *The Times Literary Supplement* defined *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* as “a mesmerizing work that clearly establishes Márquez as one of the most accomplished, and the most ‘magical’ of political novelists writing today”, and the *New York Review of Books* welcomed the novel in an equally favourable way, stressing its original style, “the investigation of an ancient murder takes on the quality of a hallucinatory exploration, a deep groping search into the gathering darkness for a truth that continually slithers away”.²⁶⁰ And, although *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* can be seen, from a certain point of view, as the least magical of Márquez’s books, it is also understandable that from another perspective a critic like Ambrose Gordon interestingly perceives it as ‘the most magical’, and completely agrees with the author’s opinion that this is his best book.²⁶¹ Similarly, Joan Mellen confirms that it is to be considered one of the ‘finest novellas’ of the twentieth century.²⁶²

Joan Mellen dutifully mentions also the appearance of small ‘voices of dissent’ even for a novel which she defines as ‘exquisite’, and, among other reviews, she cites the attack by the right-wing *National Review*, that especially criticizes characterization: characters “are left without development or chiaroscuro. They seem cryptic and surface-hard: film characters really [...] Beyond a Warren Report-meticulous detective reconstruction, it is hard to care much for these people. Emotion, you see, might skew our clarity”.²⁶³ In any case, in spite of these minor ‘voices of dissent’, it cannot be denied that *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is one of Márquez’s most successful novels, and therefore it would rather be more interesting to wonder how this novel ranks in the contemporary world literary panorama. Being written at the beginning of the 1980s, should it be seen as a so-called ‘post-Boom’ and ‘post-modern’ text? In this regard, it is interesting to observe how a critic like Raymond L. Williams tries to define a clear opinion, but still hints at the possibility of discussion and of different views on the matter, when he affirms that *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* “could arguably be called a postmodern novel”.²⁶⁴ It is actually a complex issue, which, therefore, we had better leave aside, at least for the moment.

5.1b – ‘Crónica de una muerte anunciada’: a hybrid

Crónica de una muerte anunciada is not pure fiction, since it is based on an actual murder that took place in Sucre, Colombia, in 1951. Márquez does not specify the year and uses an anonymous town, unknown to the international

²⁶⁰ See J. Mellen (2000 a), p.50.

²⁶¹ A. Gordon, “The seaport beyond Macondo”, in *Gabriel García Márquez* (1985), p. 86.

²⁶² J. Mellen (2000 a), p. 95.

²⁶³ See J. Mellen (2000 a), p. 51.

²⁶⁴ R. L. Williams (1998), p. 123.

reader, and consequently without any peculiar resonance. Yet, as Pablo L. Avila remarks, the setting in this novel does not look *despersonalizado*: unlike what often occurs in Márquez's previous works, the setting in this text appears to be unequivocally identifiable as Latin American, and, more specifically linkable to the coastal strip extending from Colombia to Southern Mexico.

A pesar de que en las obras anteriores de Gabriel García Márquez el paisaje es arbitrariamente despersonalizado [...] en *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* por el contrario, se muestra con trazos decididamente marcados [...] incluso organizado según los cánones de la urbe entendida en sentido tradicional [...] los habitantes divididos en alta burguesía, de la que Santiago Nasar formaba parte, media burguesía: alcalde, juez, cura, médico, funcionarios, etc., y pequeña burguesía: empleados, artesanos – la familia de Ángela Vicario, por ejemplo-, y por último los servios, el pueblo. [...]... paisajes inequívocabilmente americanos [...] y que de todas formas corresponden a la faja que va de la costa de Colombia hasta el Jalisco mexicano.²⁶⁵

What distinguishes this novel is that, when the story begins, from the very first sentence, the name of the victim is disclosed, and Santiago Nasar is practically already dead from the opening of the 'curtains', since it is immediately revealed that he is going to be killed on that very day, and the names of the killers and the reason, and the way he was murdered, are also communicated within a few pages. The Vicario brothers, the twins, are going to stab him to death to revenge the lost honour of their sister, Angela Vicario, who had been brought back to her parents by her husband Bayardo San Roman on the very night of their extravagantly luxurious wedding, because she is discovered not to be a virgin. Everybody seems to be informed in the town, except the future victim and his mother, and yet nobody (with very few exceptions) seems even to try to prevent the murder. Thus, the main elements of the story are provided from the very beginning, and yet, even if already acquainted with them, the reader is completely involved in the decoding of all possible reasons, circumstances, and motivations for the crime. This is possible even after many years, because facts and events are narrated as moments of a detailed and meticulous attempt at documenting and explaining the absurd murder. And the author/narrator, who presents himself as a friend of the victim, and a witness to the events himself, guides the reader through an intricate and

265“Unlike Gabriel García Márquez's previous works where landscape is subjectively depersonalised [...] in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* it is very clearly outlined [...] including the fact that it is organized according to the canons of a traditionally conceived town [...] the inhabitants are divided into high middle classes, to which Santiago Nasar belonged, middle middle classes: the mayor, judge, pastor, doctor, officials, etc., low middle classes: civil servants, artisans – Angela Vicario's family, for instance – and finally servants, and commoners [...] undeniably, an American landscape [...] which in any case corresponds to the strip line that stretches from Colombia as far as Mexican Jalisco” [my translation], P.L. Avila, “Una lectura de ‘Crónica de una muerte anunciada’”, *Casa de las Americas*, 24 (1983), 140, pp. 28-9.

detailed labyrinth of surprises, which however do not lead to any clear and tangible answer.²⁶⁶

Although the plot would suggest that *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is in the tradition of thrillers and detective stories, the novel is actually much more of a hybrid genre. If Williams describes it as “a mystery novel in reverse”, and Kercher is fundamentally on the same line, speaking of the “demystification of detective and gothic novel”, Mellen defines the text as “an epic in novella form”, after reporting that Márquez himself in an interview highlighted another aspect of his novel, and referred to it as a “terrible story of love”. Campanella even speaks of a modern Latin American transposition of classical Greek tragedy, while Pelayo points out that *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is a combination of different genres, journalism, documentary writing, realism, and detective story, to finally conclude that it is a “hybrid”.²⁶⁷

5.1c – ‘Crónica de una muerte anunciada’: evocative echoes in a title

The very title of the novel can already reveal some clues, especially two words are worth observing: *crónica* and *anunciada*. As Gordon explains, the first one, *crónica*, means quite simply a feature story, thus evoking journalism and the author’s personal long experience in that field; therefore it also hints at the problematic issue of the relation between literature and journalism, that is to say, between fiction and reality, and between detachment and creative participation. In this regard, there are some remarks by Márquez that can be illuminating. In fact, Márquez, who has always regarded journalism as a ‘literary form’, explained in an interview to Silvana Paternostro, who was then a young journalist on training, that “if there is one false fact in a reporting piece, then everything else is false. In fiction, if there is a fact that can be verified [...] then the readers are going to believe everything else [...] The strange episodes in my novels are all real, or they have a starting point, a basis in reality. Real life is always much more interesting than what we can invent [...] To move between the magical and the astonishing, one has to become a journalist”.²⁶⁸

Márquez actually started his career as a journalist, and when he worked as a reporter and a film critic in Europe in 1955 and sent his articles, his *crónicas*, to the Colombian newspaper *El Espectador*, he was already ‘an adept at the genre’, to use Gordon’s phrase, who quotes and analyses one of those

²⁶⁶ Gabriel García Márquez is present as a character only in two of his texts: in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* and in *Cien años de soledad*, as E. Waters Hood points out in his essay *La ficción de Gabriel García Márquez – repetición e intertextualidad*, New York: Peter Lang, 1993, p. 138.

²⁶⁷ R.L. Williams (1998), p. 103; D.M. Kercher, “García Márquez’s, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* [Chronicle of a Death Foretold]: Notes on Parody and the Artist”, in *Gabriel García Márquez* (special issue), *Latin American Literary Review*, XIII (January-June 1985), 25, p. 93; J. Mellen, *Literary Masters* (2000), p.134; H. Campanella, “De la literatura a la literatura”, in *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, May 1982, 383, p. 426; R. Pelayo (2001), pp. 113, 116.

²⁶⁸ S. Paternostro, “Three days with Gabo”, in G.Plimpton (2003), pp. 160-1.

crónicas, "His Holiness goes on vacation", showing how that example of 'superior journalism' can serve as a model and a paradigm for the later novel, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*.²⁶⁹ When asked in the exhaustive interview inserted in Plimpton's essay, *Latin American Writers at Work*, if he thought that the novel could express things better than journalism, Márquez strongly denied any real difference between the two forms, while confirming his strong appreciation for both, as well as his constant adherence to reality, in spite of the fact that his writing has so often been praised for imagination. "There is not a single line in all my work that does not have a basis in reality. The problem is that Caribbean reality resembles the wildest imagination", he openly affirms, and at the question about the relation between journalism and fiction in his own works, he explains that he thinks the influence has been reciprocal. "Fiction has helped my journalism because it has given it literary value. Journalism has helped my fiction because it has kept me in a close relationship with reality". And later on, commenting on the interviewer's remark that a journalistic quality in his writing could be detected in the habit of describing seemingly fantastic events in such minute detail to make them sound real, he completely agrees. "That's a journalistic trick which you can also apply to literature. For example, if you say that there are elephants flying in the sky, people are not going to believe you. But if you say that there are four hundred and twenty-five elephants in the sky, people will probably believe you."²⁷⁰

All this explains why, notwithstanding the clear reference to journalism, this novel cannot be a mere *crónica* in the traditional way: it is a much richer relationship between literature and journalism that the reader of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* must be prepared to encounter. The very fact that, as we have already mentioned, the novel uses an anonymous town, mingles fictitious and real characters, specifies the day and even the exact moments, but not the year, when the events occurred, all this proves that this is no 'conventional journalism'. Yet, as Gonzalo Díaz-Migoyo comments: "it is an account no less imaginary for being faithful to the facts and, conversely, no less historical for being a work of the imagination".²⁷¹

The other word *anunciada* reveals even more complex and delicate resonance. Literally translated, it reads as 'announced', which in itself should not imply any difficulties of interpretation. However, this is not the case. Gordon comments that the Spanish participle has here the same strength and function of 'announced' in Agatha Christie's *A Murder is Announced*, and therefore there is no further implication of any sinister prophecy with that word.²⁷² But here is the point: does announcement imply irrevocability, or only foreknowledge? and what about the effect of the narrator's written account (the death 'aftertold'): can it modify the future, even if it cannot undo the past, as Lois Parkinson Zamora

²⁶⁹ A. Gordon (1985), p. 84.

²⁷⁰ G. Plimpton (2003), pp. 136 and 138-9.

²⁷¹ Quoted in R. Pelayo (2001), p. 115.

²⁷² A. Gordon (1985), p. 89.

wonders?²⁷³ Perhaps influenced also by the English translation, as we will better see later on in this chapter, critics often tend to detect and to stress an ominous note in that *anunciada*, a note which they see amply confirmed by the role that dreams play in the novel. *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* opens describing the dream of the protagonist on the very morning of his death. E. Waters Hood comments that this dream, like the other dreams that are presented in Márquez's texts, does not show a surrealist complexity, yet the very fact that recently Santiago had been having persistent dreams is enough to turn them into a disquieting omen. "La muerte más anunciada en el pueblo, se anunció repetidamente hasta en sueños".²⁷⁴ Moreover, they were all dreams with trees, which is reported as an indisputably bad omen, but which, however, is tragically missed by both the protagonist and even his mother, who instead enjoyed a good, and usually well-deserved, reputation for being an infallible interpreter of dreams. Here, therefore, lies a tragic irony, because dreams should actually be privileged vehicles for prediction, and yet in this case they fail completely. "Hay sin embargo, una ironía en la modernidad de la historia de Gabriel García Márquez: todo podría haberle revelado a Nasar su funesto futuro, excepto el vehículo de predicción favoritos de los antiguos, los sueños".²⁷⁵ Another bad omen can be detected in the very name of the protagonist, Santiago Nasar: as Richard Predmore points out, to unite the name of the Patron Saint of Spain, who once used to be popularly called 'Matamoros' (which means, 'kill Moors') together with an Arabic surname, can be seen as another disquieting note, an omen foretelling disasters.²⁷⁶

However, as we have seen, Gordon is of a different opinion and he is not alone in inviting us to reconsider the actual value of that *anunciada* in the novel title. Gerald Martin is even more determined to deny any sinister and ominous connotation, telling us to avoid any hurried interpretation of a title which he finds very appropriate for a novel that he defines as "superbly subtle and ambivalent".

The point of the word *anunciada* (announced) is to imply that the death is not unavoidable (or inevitable) whereas the primary meaning of 'foretold' tends to imply the opposite. That which is announced is by definition known; that which is foretold, much less so. Well, the whole point of the novel is to portray

²⁷³ L. Parkinson Zamora, "Ends and Endings in García Márquez's, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* [Chronicle of a Death Foretold]", in *Gabriel García Márquez* (1985), p. 106.

²⁷⁴ "The most announced death in the village, was repeatedly announced even in dreams" [*my translation*], E. Waters Hood (1993), pp. 161, 165.

²⁷⁵ "Undoubtedly, there is some irony in the modernity of Gabriel García Márquez: everything could have revealed Nasar his sinister future, everything except the means favoured by our ancestors, dreams" [*my translation*], H. Campanella (1982), p. 426.

²⁷⁶ R. Predmore, "El mundo moral de *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*", in *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, Dec. 1982, 390, p. 706.

a death that everyone could have prevented and nobody did prevent and to inquire how and why this could have happened.²⁷⁷

5.1d – 'Crónica de una muerte anunciada' and fate

As the last quotation clearly reveals, what might at first sight seem only a rather sterile and academic discussion, instead leads to focus on a core issue: that is, what role, if any, destiny and fate play in the novel, and ultimately what main message is conveyed by the text? In this regard, however, opinions differ even more, not unexpectedly, given the complexity and subtlety of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*. If, as we have seen, Martín rejects a reading that considers Santiago Nasar's death inevitable and determined by destiny, on the other side, the following firm statement by Predmore perfectly incarnates a view which seems to be, at least implicitly, shared by a good number of critics. "Tema central en la narrativa de Gabriel García Márquez, la fatalidad aparece aquí como protagonista indiscutida, como metáfora suprema de la insensata y desdichada vida de los hombres".²⁷⁸ One could agree that there are many clues in the novel that would seem to hint at a heavy presence of fate in human life; and yet, we should not forget that such an opinion is openly refuted by Márquez himself in the years after the publication of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*: "lo que puede parecer fatalidad en *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* es simplemente un elemento del mecanismo narrativo".²⁷⁹

Among those who highlight the role of destiny in this novel, as in all of Márquez's texts, Hortensia Campanella is the one who makes of the centrality of fate in man's life the clue for an original reading of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, which is based on an idea of fate seen as a blind power determining man's life and death, with man either fretting or succumbing to this external force, which he cannot even define and understand. Would it then be correct, also for this modern novel, to speak of the presence of two 'irreconcilable forces in the Hegelian sense of tragedy'? According to Campanella, the answer is yes: *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is the most evident example of such a new form of tragedy, a tragedy which, in any case, maintains the main characteristics of the classical one.²⁸⁰ Among other elements, for example, Campanella mentions the presence and function of the Greek chorus, since almost the whole coastal town is not only represented (almost eighty characters), but is actually

²⁷⁷ G. Martín, "Translating García Márquez, or, The Impossible Dream", in D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (2002), p. 160.

²⁷⁸ "Already a core theme in Gabriel García Márquez's works, here fate seems to be the undisputable protagonist, as the supreme metaphor for man's absurd and wretched life" [*my translation*], R. Predmore (1982), p. 706.

²⁷⁹ "What may look like fate in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, is merely an element of narrativity" [*my translation*], quoted in P.L. Avila (1983), p. 38.

²⁸⁰ H. Campanella (1982), p.425. About the presence of elements of classical tragedy in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, see also P. L. Avila (1983), L. Parkinson Zamora (1985), G. H. Bell-Villada (1985).

turned into an active participant in the events, thanks to the people's ceaseless commentary on every development in the story. Moreover, Camapanella finds another element of classical tragedy in the fact that the function of the previous and basic knowledge of classical myths which Greek spectators would have, and which was essential for the understanding of the tragedy, is here replaced and provided by the message of the very first lines of the novel: the opening of the novel immediately informs the reader about the protagonist's death, and subsequently the message is ritually repeated in various ways, so as to become almost an obsessive 'refrain', a beginning that has to be remembered ("un comienzo para ser recordado").²⁸¹

5.1e – 'Crónica de una muerte anunciada': the tragic hero

Closely connected to the issue of the tragic form is the collateral one of the tragic hero. If we should accept that Márquez's novel is a modern form of tragedy, or, even more specifically, the 'Latin American transposition' of Greek tragedy, this would imply that Santiago Nasar should be seen as a modern version of the tragic hero. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle provides this definition of the tragic hero:

There remains, then, the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement, of the number of those in the enjoyment of great reputation and prosperity [...] The perfect Plot, accordingly, must have a single and not (as some tell us) a double issue; the change in the hero's fortunes must be not from misery to happiness, but on the contrary from happiness to misery; and the cause of it must lie not in any depravity, but in some great error on his part.²⁸²

Santiago Nasar's fortunes abruptly change from happiness, youth and prosperity, but what has brought that about? As Predmore remarks, the novel has also been interpreted as a denunciation of a barbaric moral code, still persistent in a backward society: Santiago Nasar has to die because a virgin has lost her honour, and only blood can 'wash' and redeem that stain. The town does not even discuss the prevailing moral code, and some of them only have doubts about the victim's actual guilt (but not about the moral principle), as most think that he is very likely to be completely innocent of the crime. This is Richard

²⁸¹ G. Fernández Ariza, *El Héroe pensativo – La melancolía en Jorge Luis Borges y en Gabriel García Márquez*, Málaga: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Málaga, 2001, p. 26). Fernández recurs to this phrase for another memorable beginning from Márquez and with a similar use of time: "Muchos años después, frente al pelotón de fusilamiento, el coronel Aureliano Buendía había de recordar aquella tarde remota en que su padre lo llevó a conocer al hielo", *Cien años de soledad*.

²⁸² J. A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, London: Penguin Books, 1998, p. 926.

Predmore's thesis: Santiago Nasar's bad luck was to live in a town with a perverted notion of morality; "la novela de Gabriel García Márquez expresa mucho más de lo que dice. Parte esencial de lo que expresa es una crítica feroz del código de honor imperante en el pueblo".²⁸³ If that is the case, then, Santiago would fit Aristotle's definition: he is from the upper middle classes and enjoys some reputation in his town, he is not 'pre-eminently virtuous', but also not particularly deprived, and thus his error would be an actual error of judgement, rather than an act of depravity: his fatal fault lies in the fact that he is not able to perceive what is going on around him, and ignores the sinister omens that are provided.

However, this reading is not thoroughly convincing: it seems to be too superficial a thesis for a much richer text. In this regard, for example, Campanella and Avila offer a more stimulating perspective, when they both stress the ritual character of this sacrificial death, and years later are echoed by Pelayo, who, proposing a Biblical reading of the novel, even suggests that Santiago incarnates the persona of Jesus.²⁸⁴ But if Avila speaks of the expiation of a collective fault, which is deliberately left vague and general, through the ritual and barbarian sacrifice of a propitiatory victim, Campanella develops the concept further, and proposes an intriguing approach to the novel, based on a social perspective.²⁸⁵ According to Campanella's thesis, Santiago, although probably not guilty regarding the crime which he is accused of, is not completely innocent either, exactly like the tragic hero: he incarnates the values of a social class, and because of them he deserves a death penalty, although he is killed by "involuntary emissaries" since the Vicario brothers act prompted by other moral values. Such a connotation is also observed *en passant* by Avila, who speaks of the "insane thirst" of the common people for the death of a rich person, but it is comprehensively highlighted by Campanella.

Pero el héroe, que se encamina ciego hacia su destrucción, nunca es enteramente inocente. Su culpa es *hybris*, o pecado de exceso: de algún modo ha ido más allá de lo que es permitido, ha habido una transgresión y el orden debe ser restablecido mediante un acto ritual de purificación [... Pero] es necesario establecer una diferencia de punto de vista fundamental. No es imprescindible hacer una lectura social de la *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* para comprender que el enfoque que le interesa al autor no es el del individuo, aunque la historia pueda parecer tan personalizada. [...] De este modo, Santiago Nasar, encarnando determinados valores de un grupo, es asesinado por involuntarios emisarios de otros valores. El tenía, *en exceso*, las cualidades superlativas de una clase social. Su talento natural, alabado en varios momentos de la narración, no tiene nada que ver con su muerte. Es,

²⁸³ "Gabriel García Márquez's novel expresses more than what it overtly says. An essential part of which is fierce criticism against the honour code prevailing in the village" [*my translation*], R. L. Predmore (1982), p. 711.

²⁸⁴ R. Pelayo (2001), p. 131.

²⁸⁵ P. I. Avila (1883), p. 39; H. Campanella (1982), pp. 426-7.

sin duda, una muestra de "justicia superior" que quien espera con toda naturalidad apoderarse de la virginidad de Divina Flor – como un derecho [...] – sea asesinado para vengar un acto de deshonra que parece seguro que no cometió [...] Los héroes de Esquili y Sófocles son responsables por sus actos y los de sus antepasados; Santiago Nasar es responsable por su clase.²⁸⁶

These are all interesting readings of the novel, which will be useful for our research and will have to be kept in mind later on when we will be dealing with both interlingual and intersemiotic translations of this text. And, in this perspective, there is another interesting reading to remember: the one offered by Lois Parkinson Zamora, whose thesis is that in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, more than in previous works by Márquez, tragedy and apocalypse co-exist. The title of the novel itself, and immediately afterwards the opening sentence, already reveal the apocalyptic nature of the following text, according to Parkinson Zamora, who, not surprisingly, interprets *anunciada* as 'foretold'. As he explains, the apocalyptic writer, in fact, seeks in past and present history those elements and patterns by which it is possible to foretell the future, and here, in this novel, tragedy is 'molded and modified' by the apocalyptic vision, which provides a "temporal pattern of initiation and conclusion", and gives meaning and coherence to an otherwise isolated and totally absurd death. What seems to be at stake, for both narrator and townsfolk, is the possibility to use Santiago's death to foretell their own. The inhabitants of Santiago's town, urged by the need to situate that individual death, as well as their own, in a larger context of human history, link their efforts directly to apocalyptic narration, which "responds to the human desire for conclusion".²⁸⁷

Referring to Octavio Paz's view about the presence of elements of Dionysian festivals in the Latin American fiesta, with their combination of collective frenzy and merriment with violence and death, Parkinson Zamora outlines how merriment (the exceptional wedding party) and murder are actually intertwined in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*. It should be remembered that Greek dramatic tragedy developed out of a form of ritual sacrifice in honour of

²⁸⁶ "But the hero who walks blindly towards his destruction, is never thoroughly innocent. His guilt is *hybris*, i.e. a fault of excess: in any case, he has gone farther than permitted, a transgression has occurred and order must be established again through a ritual act of purification [...]. However] we must define a fundamental difference of point of view. It is not necessary to have a sociological reading of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* to understand the author's focus is not on the individual, although the story may seem to be so individualized [...] This way, Santiago Nasar, incarnating specific values of a group, is killed by involuntary emissaries of other values. He was endowed, in excess, with the high qualities of a social class. His natural talent, shown in different moments of the story, has nothing to do with his death. Undoubtedly, it is an evidence of a 'superior justice' that one who is waiting to own Divina Flor's virginity as his perfectly natural right, will be murdered to revenge an act of dishonor which he certainly has not committed [...] Aeschylus's and Sophocles's heroes are responsible for either their own acts or the acts of their ancestors, Santiago Nasar is responsible for his class" [*my translation*], H. Campanella (1982), pp. 426-7.

²⁸⁷ L. Parkinson Zamora (1985), p. 109.

Dionysus.²⁸⁸ Octavio Paz observed that the Latin American fiesta, in its ecstatic frenzy of death and life, succeeds in uniting the past and the future into the present moment, as occurred in the ancient Dionysian festivals, and Parkinson Zamorra thinks that this seems to be perfectly confirmed in the novel, where, symbolically enough, the murder occurs on a Monday. "Although it is of course the beginning of the work week, Monday is likely to be the end of the weekend in the worlds about which Gabriel García Márquez writes [...] So Monday signifies the simultaneity of beginning and end, the conflation of past and future in a timeless present which characterizes both the murder and the fiesta that occur on that day".²⁸⁹

5.1f – 'Crónica de una muerte anunciada': time and memory

It should be evident by now that time, and the "novelistic exploration of the nature of time and time's end" is a core issue in this novel, which in spite of its title, is much more complex than a *crónica*, especially if the word is taken in the traditional sense²⁹⁰. As the narrator tries to shed light on an otherwise absurd death, and examines documents, or reports past memories and myriad interviews, the structure of the narration more and more often shows how past, present and future conflate, sometimes within a single sentence, as the rightly famous opening sentence of the novel already reveals.

El día en que lo iban a matar, Santiago Nasar se levantó a las 5.30 de la mañana para esperar el buque en que llegaba el Obispo (7).²⁹¹

Unlike a proper *crónica*, the narrative structure of the novel gradually builds up a text, which is actually more synchronic, rather than diachronic, characterized as it is by frequent and deliberately unsettling *anacronias*, prolepsis, flash-backs and flash-forwards, and made even less linear by recurring repetitions of the same event, Santiago's murder ("the end seems endlessly repeated", to use Parkinson Zamora's phrase), or of the same sentences and single words, *anaphoras*, allusions, and so on.²⁹² In this regard, R. Pelayo comments that the narrative structure of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, while seeming familiar to the Gabriel García Márquez reader, starting as it does in *medias res*, is rather deceptive, like its hybrid genre. Despite the fact that the story is told with precise references to time (an almost "rigid adherence to the exact hour and minute", but not to the year and month), the time line is

²⁸⁸ See J. A. Cuddon (1998), p. 426.

²⁸⁹ L. Parkinson Zamora (1985), p. 113.

²⁹⁰ Parkinson Zamora (1985), p. 104.

²⁹¹ All quotations are from G.G. Márquez, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, Barcelona: Plaza & Janes Editores, 1981. "On the day they were going to kill him, Santiago Nasar got up at five-thirty in the morning to wait for the boat the bishop was coming on.", G.G. Márquez, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Gregory Rabassa (transl.), London, Penguin Books, 1982, p.1.

²⁹² Parkinson Zamora (1985), p. 109.

deliberately and arbitrarily 'jumbled' and haphazard, and there is a sense of simultaneity, even if the narrative is moving forward.²⁹³

The tension, therefore, is between chronometric time versus mythological and cyclical time, a constant preoccupation for Márquez, and for twentieth century literature in general. "Mythological time [...] is impregnated with all the particulars of our lives: it is as long as eternity or as short as a breath, ominous or propitious, fecund or sterile. This idea allows for the existence of a number of varying times. Life and time coalesce to form a single whole, an indivisible unity". This is how Octavio Paz, among others, evocatively defines mythological time, distinguishing it from man's everyday experience, characterized by the flowing of separate moments, one following the other in a linear sequence. "When man was exiled from that eternity in which all times were one, he entered chronometric time and became a prisoner of the clock and the calendar [...] Man ceased to be one with time, ceased to coincide with the flow of reality".²⁹⁴ *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* presents this tension between the idea of an endless and senseless repetition of human drama, on the one hand, and, on the other, people's struggle against cyclical patterns of life, in the wish to find a meaning for one's own destiny.

Nuestra conducta diaria, dominada hasta entonces por tantos hábitos lineales, había empezado a girar de golpe en torno de una misma ansiedad común. Nos sorprendían los gallos del amanecer tratando de ordenar las numerosas causalidades encadenadas que habían hecho posible el absurdo, y era evidente que no lo hacíamos por un anhelo de esclarecer misterios, sino porque ninguno de nosotros podía seguir viviendo sin saber con exactitud cuál era el sitio y la misión que le había asignado la fatalidad. (109)²⁹⁵

In this exploration of the nature of time and man's individual ending and destiny, what role can memories play? *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* seems to present itself as an attempt to defeat time, and to struggle against 'oblivion's voracity', by going back to a past event with the meticulous approach of the faked chronicler, attempting, through documents and individual memories, to succeed in throwing light on human behaviour and life, while at the same time trying to bring back to present a past and dead moment. But documents are subject to the devouring power of time themselves, and memories clearly remain always subjective and tied to a character, being filtered through his/her consciousness, so that, it appears, what can be known is only what characters can

²⁹³ R. Pelayo (2001), p. 117. See also J. Mellen (2000 a), p. 36, and Parkinson Zamora (1985), p. 109.

²⁹⁴ As quoted in T. O. Lutes (2003), pp. 71-72.

²⁹⁵ "Our daily conduct, dominated then by so many linear habits, had suddenly begun to spin around a single common anxiety. The cocks of dawn would catch us trying to give order to the chain of many chance events that had made absurdity possible, and it was obvious that we weren't doing it from an urge to clear up mysteries but because none of us could go on living without an exact knowledge of the place and the mission assigned to us by fate", G. Rabassa's translation, p. 97.

remember, or want to remember. And the novel necessarily ends leaving all the main questions unanswered, thus decrying the ephemeral condition of memories, and the illusory nature of history and myths as well. As Fernandez Ariza comments, "la narración es en esencia una arte de recordar: los ámbitos del recuerdo están siempre localizados en función del transcurso del tiempo, de tal forma que el recuerdo revela la caducidad y el poder destructor, así como su poder de guardián de la memoria, de la sabiduría y de la revelación".²⁹⁶

5.2a - Gabriel García Márquez's perspective on translation

All that we have observed about *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* confirms what a delicate and challenging task it must be to translate it, as well as Márquez's works in general, and thus it comes naturally to wonder what personal positions the Colombian writer has developed with regard to translation issues, and what relationship, if any, he usually establishes with his translators. Unlike other Latin American writers, Márquez does not make translation a pivotal core in his literary world, despite being fluent in three languages. However, despite the relative marginality of translation in his writings, it is still a topic which he has sporadically, but brilliantly, dealt with, perhaps out of necessity, being prompted to express his opinions about the issue of translation by the international huge success of his works, obviously based on transposition in different languages all over the world (twenty-one, according to Márquez himself), and often even in countries and cultures very different from his own. In a short paper, entitled "The Desire to Translate", Márquez starts by dutifully paying tribute to translators and to their invaluable contributions to literature and culture, contributions that unfortunately tend to go unnoticed, he comments, whereas critics and readers are always ready and willing to detect flaws and "harp on their defects".²⁹⁷ He even defines the translator "a brilliant accomplice", implying the fundamental role played by a successful translator, and suggesting an intimate and equally creative interaction and co-operation between him/her and the source text. However, a few paragraphs later, he cannot avoid observing that the relation between translator and author is unlikely to be an easy one, since "it is unlikely that a writer would ever be satisfied with the translation of any of his or her works. In every word, in every phrase, in every emphasis of a novel there is almost always a secret implied meaning that only the author knows".²⁹⁸ This is the reason why it is to be hoped that an author co-operates with the translator as far as possible, he comments, but again, immediately afterwards, he partially corrects himself, admitting that for him to have to read the translations

²⁹⁶ "Narration is essentially the art of remembering; the boundaries of a recollection are always defined with regard to the passing of time, so that recollections reveal its lapsing and destroying power, as well as its power as the guardian of memory, and of wisdom and revelation." [*my translation*], G. Fernandez Ariza (2001), p. 50.

²⁹⁷ G.G. Márquez, "The Desire to Translate", in D. Balderston and M. Schwartz (2002), pp.23-5.

²⁹⁸ G.G. Márquez (2002), p. 24.

of his works in the three languages he can speak is a real nuisance, "for me there is nothing more boring than reading the translations of my novels in the three languages in which I am capable of doing so. I don't recognize myself in any language other than Spanish".²⁹⁹

Despite this, on the same page he expresses great admiration for his English translator, Gregory Rabassa, to the point of saying that he has found some passages from his own works that he liked better in Rabassa's translation than in Spanish. The reasons for his high opinion of Rabassa's work, is that he thinks Rabassa first reaches a comprehensive and overall understanding of a text, and only after that he passes to transfer it into English, but "writing it all over again" in that language, thus revealing an idea of faithfulness which is much more complex than mere literalness. Rabassa is "intuitive" rather than "intellectual", he seems to have read the book and then rewritten it from his recollections, as Márquez explains when prompted to express a judgement about translators during a long interview with George Plimpton. And Rabassa is the only name Márquez mentions of all his other translators, also because he is the only one who has never asked Márquez for clarification and extra information to later put a footnote in. Actually, this is the only specific point on which Márquez takes a stand and voices a drastic opinion. "I have great admiration for translators except for the ones who use footnotes. They are always trying to explain to the reader something which the author probably did not mean [...] A good translation is a re-creation in another language".³⁰⁰

In expressing his absolute opposition to any metatextual compensation, Márquez actually touches a delicate issue for translation as communication between cultures, as we have already seen in previous chapters. He does it *en passant*, only showing clear adversity against one of the possible solutions available to translators when trying to transpose cultures as well as languages, but without really entering the topic, or hinting at different solutions. Yet, later on during the interview, the problem of not hiding cultures surfaces again, even if inadvertently, when Márquez confesses the uneasiness he experiences whenever he finds himself far from his linguistic and cultural surrounding, since he is aware of having a strong feeling of belonging, a feeling that refers only to Latin America, and not to elsewhere in the world. Which also explains his already quoted doubts about the possibility that an author may be satisfied with the translation of his/her works. Márquez, in fact, is perfectly aware of the strong cultural components in his works, "I think my books have had political impact in Latin America because they help to create a Latin America identity: they help Latin Americans to become more aware of their own culture", as he points out in another interview.³⁰¹ It is no coincidence, after all, that the problem of building up a national identity for Latin America and getting it recognized and accepted by the Western culture is a central note in his Nobel Prize speech in 1982. Thus,

²⁹⁹ G. G. Márquez (2002), p. 25.

³⁰⁰ G. Plimpton (2003), p. 147.

³⁰¹ J. Mellen (2000 a), p. 131.

another Latin American writer stresses a note similar to the one struck by Pablo Neruda ten years later, equally denouncing the isolation, or, as he says, the "solitude" of Latin America in the world context, and the reluctance of other nations to accept Latin America for what it really is and thus take it out of its "state of solitude".³⁰²

5.2b – Gregory Rabassa and translation

Gabriel García Márquez is not the only one to praise the professional merits of Gregory Rabassa. He is often mentioned in papers as the English translator of the Colombian writer, almost his translator *par excellence*, even if he has not translated into English all of Márquez's works. For example, when describing the reasons that favoured the so-called 'Boom' of the Latin American novel in the 1960s, Raymond I. Williams says that the phenomenon was the confluence of several factors, "institutions, individuals, and circumstances", among which, besides the Cuban Revolution, or the role played by Harper and Row publishers in the USA, and the Spanish literary agent Carmen Balcells, he mentions "the appearance of a brilliant translator, Gregory Rabassa".³⁰³ This explains why Rabassa, of all translators, is invited to take part in the international debate about translation, as he is asked to introduce and comment his ideas and opinions in D. Calderston and M. Schwartz's already mentioned volume *Voice-overs – Translation and Latin America* (2002). The very title chosen for his paper sounds interesting, "Words cannot express... The Translation of Cultures" (pp. 84-91), promising a focus on the key issue of this research. Expectations are met: although not a theorist himself, Rabassa proves to be a translator who does not limit himself to mere practice, but, starting from his huge experience, ponders over problems, so as to develop a more systemic approach, and, at least indirectly, so as to take a stand in the crowded arena of translation studies. Despite the fact that he does not mention names and theories, his position can be clearly defined, especially in regard to translation as communication between cultures.

Some parts of his paper remain in the tradition of practical advice and scattered observations from an experienced translator, as, for example, when he suggests that a translator must be "doubly aware of possible ambiguities" in both source and target texts, and in order to be able to make the right choice, he/she must have developed an "instinct", based on prolonged "astute observation" of the culture and cultures. But more interesting ideas begin to appear between the lines, as in the following paragraph where he introduces adjectives like "adventurous" and "original" to describe his idea of what a translator should be.

³⁰² As quoted in J. S. Brushwood, "Reality and Imagination in the Novels of García Márquez", in *Gabriel García Márquez* (1985), pp. 9, 14. On the isolation of Latin America in the world context, and the tendency of Western culture to favour a clichéd and stereotype image of it, see chapter I, part 2, of this thesis.

³⁰³ R.I. Williams (1998), p. 55.

The translator must be modest, then, must be careful, cannot impose himself, and, yet, he must be adventurous and original, bound all the while to someone else's thought and words. In this sense translation is a baroque art, one where the structure is foreordained but where the second artist must decorate it according to the lights of his own culture.³⁰⁴

Thus, as regards the antithesis between a source-oriented or a target-oriented approach in translation, Rabassa opts for a softer solution which wisely avoids too drastic dichotomy, in one way in line with theorists like Umberto Eco, and his idea of avoiding rigid divisions in favour of a continuous 'negotiation'.³⁰⁵ However, later in the paper, he reveals a clean break with pure functional theories of language: language for Rabassa cannot be identified with mere communication.

The fact that language is culture and culture is language is brought out most sharply when one tries to replace his language with another. A person can change his country, his citizenship, his religion... more easily and smoothly than his language.³⁰⁶

Such awareness that 'language is culture' (in other words, language as hermeneutics) implies also recognition of the difficulties of creating a translation that tries to foster 'a mutual mirroring of cultures', to use Wolfgang Iser's phrase, rather than a neutralizing translation leading to cultural assimilation.³⁰⁷ In this regard, Rabassa specifically mentions the difficulties linked to differences in syntax between languages: it is often because of differences in the way words "are strung together", that even apparently simple texts, which had not created any problems of interpretation when reading, had then proved to be a sort of nightmare for the translator. And Rabassa comments that unfortunately this is a rather forgotten field and that there are no systematic studies of grammar and syntax from a cultural point of view, except for a few notions concerning personal pronouns and forms of address. Not that he believes it is possible to preserve the grammatical structure of the original, so as to show that behind the translation there is actually another text, because "to do so would be to produce some kind of gibberish that would be unintelligible to both sides". And yet, in his opinion, the solution cannot be found in either neutralization or domestication. Rabassa does not use this terminology, of course, but, in any case, he makes his mind very clear: "there ought to be some kind of undercurrent, some background hum that lets the English-speaking reader feel that cultures do not translate easily".³⁰⁸

³⁰⁴ G. Rabassa (2002), pp. 87, 89.

³⁰⁵ See chapter one, section 2.3, of this thesis.

³⁰⁶ G. Rabassa (2002), p. 91.

³⁰⁷ See chapter one, section 1.1.2e of this thesis.

³⁰⁸ G. Rabassa (2002), p. 89.

Here lies the problem: to preserve the individual identities of cultures and the richness that they convey, without turning translation into an 'unintelligible gibberish'. Is this possible or is it only an ambitious utopia? Rabassa seems to keep an open mind, although never forgetting the difficulties and the risks that are involved in such an approach to translation. Similarly, when he focuses on the thorny problem of rendering regional voices, he ponders over and rejects the 'handy' solution of replacing a territorial language with another dialect or jargon from the target culture, which, just to give an illustrious example, was more or less what D.H. Lawrence had done when in order to translate the unique language of Verga's *Mastro Don Gesualdo* he had turned to the jargon of the miners of Northern England.³⁰⁹ Referring to Latin American literature, Rabassa firmly affirms that to make Martín Fierro sound like a Northern American cowboy would simply be a disaster.

To make Martín Fierro a cowboy is to ruin the poem. The gaucho and the cowboy lived on the plains, rode horseback, herded cattle, and fought Indians, yet it is ludicrous to think of John Wayne as a gaucho. It is the culture that matters, and culture is often made up of the lesser details [...] These small things add up to make the similarities disappear. The talk of the gaucho is peculiar to his caste, as is that of the cowboy, but they are not interchangeable, and to translate gaucho speech into cowboy dialect would be to ruin the effect. Here is where the translator cannot follow the writer from the other side of the fence, but must be most creative himself. Keeping custom in mind, he must conceive of an English that the gaucho would speak if he spoke English. This will, of course, be pure invention, but if successful it will not only bring a language across the divide, it will bring a culture.³¹⁰

It cannot be denied that this way Rabassa points at very courageous and innovative solutions, thus choosing a position which inevitably will not be suitable for the majority of translators, and will sound even more exceptional, if we take into consideration the prevailing trends in Western cultures, mostly moving towards invisible translation. However, if 'cultures do not translate easily' and so much is inevitably lost in translation, as a reaction a translator should be even more careful and aware of what is at stake, as Rabassa affirms, implying that the border between a translation that, in spite of its efforts, inevitably deprives a work of important cultural aspects, and a translation that does not even bother and thus strips it completely, is a narrow, but still vital line. And although Rabassa prefers to use his own vocabulary, which cannot be linked to any specific theory or position in translation studies, the phrase he uses, 'acculturate our English' is clearly in the same furrow of 'foreignizing'.

³⁰⁹ See my article "Traduttori del Verga in lingua inglese", in *Italianistica*, 11 (1982), 1, pp. 35-47.

³¹⁰ G. Rabassa (2002), p. 90.

We translators, then, by our very act of translating are divesting the work of its most essential cultural aspect, which is the sound of its original language. After this it is very essential that we preserve whatever slim shards of the culture may be left lying about, and the way to do this is to acculturate our English.³¹¹

5.3a – Rabassa's translation: the title

Crónica de una muerte anunciada was almost immediately translated into English, in 1982, that is, the year after its publication, and with a title, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, which is only partially a literal translation from the ST. As we have seen in section 5.1c of this chapter, the original title is in itself open to evocative echoes and varying interpretations, especially for the two words: *crónica* and *anunciada*. With regard to the first one, *crónica*, at first sight the choice of the corresponding noun *chronicle* would seem almost a binding choice, and yet, it is not a completely neutral rendering, as Ambrose Gordon observes, but already a subtle form of interpretation. If in Spanish *crónica* can mean both a historical chronicle, or account, as well as a news report, or feature and article (and we have seen how it is this second meaning which seems to have here greater relevance, especially thanks to Márquez's interest and personal experience in journalism), in the English version, however, the word comes to be divested of its reference to journalism and to the complex interaction between it and literature. It does not mean a 'feature story', a 'report', but it rather introduces a literary and historical connotation. However, this way the first word of the title comes to raise other evocative echoes for the English reader. Unlike what its Spanish equivalent does, "*chronicle* may evoke memories of King Alfred and the Venerable Bede", to Anglo-Saxon readers, as Gordon comments.³¹² Moreover, 'chronicle' does not only seem definitely connected to history, but to a past and glorious stage of writing of history, as the *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* explains.³¹³

Even more strategic seems to be the choice of 'foretold' for *anunciada*. If we check 'foretell' on Collins English Thesaurus, these are some of the synonyms we can find: "adumbrate, augur, forebode, forewarn, predict, presage, prophesy, vaticinate". Thus 'foretold' becomes in the title of the TT a "clear hint at dark prophesy", and for that very reason Gordon finds it "misleading", although "resonant and attractive".³¹⁴ We have seen in the previous sections of this chapter how delicate and subtle the reading of this *anunciada* is in the ST, since it actually opens the way to different interpretations of the meaning of the whole novel, and is connected to the question of which role, if any, fate and destiny play in man's life. It cannot be denied, however, that the title chosen by

³¹¹ G. Rabassa (2002), p. 91.

³¹² A. Gordon (1985), p. 84.

³¹³ J.A. Cuddon (1998), pp. 134-5.

³¹⁴ A. Gordon (1985), p. 89.

Rabassa is both 'resonant and attractive': thus one tends to wonder if it is attractive mostly because it is resonant, and if so, what actually makes it so resonant. Apart from the already mentioned connotation that accompanies 'chronicle', the resonance of the other critical word 'foretold', with its 'hint of dark prophecy', is particularly amplified by the postponing of the past participle, which certainly makes the whole phrase more emphatic and *recherché*. This explains why Lois Parkinson Zamora finds this title so interesting and important for his own peculiar reading of the novel: according to him, even if the original title in Spanish is more direct in both syntax and diction, when translated by Rabassa, it takes on a "Biblical tone", thanks to the inverted word order and the "apocalyptic ring" of 'foretold', which Parkinson Zamora finds perfectly justified by the apocalyptic nature of the very text.³¹⁵

It is this apocalyptic and prophetic note which is so debated by critics, as we have previously seen, but none of them seems to dislike the title in English: even those who find it 'misleading', cannot deny its value, as Gerald Martin fully explains in the following extract, a part of which I have already quoted at the beginning of this chapter, but repeat here again, as particularly appropriate and clarifying.

Chronicle of a Death Foretold is another example of the irresistible mistranslation. Here the English is clearly 'better' than the very prosaic Spanish one, literally, 'chronicle of an announced death', contrasting with the way the rhythmical swing of *Cien años de soledad* finds little echo in the English version. Yet the effect is, first, to make the title again more literary in several ways, including word order; second, once more, to bespeak a Hispanic 'world' of destiny, superstition, and – yes – romance whose direction is the very opposite of García Márquez's intention in this superbly subtle and ambivalent work. The point of the word *anunciada* (announced) is to imply that the death is not unavoidable (or inevitable) whereas the primary meaning of 'foretold' tends to imply the opposite. That which is announced is by definition known; that which is foretold, much less so. Well, the whole point of the novel is to portray a death that everyone could have prevented and nobody did prevent and to inquire how and why this could have happened. To say that a death is foretold is to imply quite a different concept of destiny [...] Here the whole novel is, in one sense, lost. Would I have given another title? Probably not.³¹⁶

The phrase 'una muerte anunciada' is repeated more than once in the ST, every time with slight additions, which are all meant to increase emphasis. When translating it, the TT always confirms both the choice of 'foretold' and the postponing of the natural word order, even making the literary note (or Biblical tone, to use Parkinson Zamora's phrase) more relevant.

³¹⁵ L. Parkinson Zamora (1985), p. 106.

³¹⁶ G. Martin (2002), p. 160.

Nunca hubo una muerte tan anunciada (59)
There had never been a death more foretold (50)

[...] para que se cumpliera sin tropiezos una muerte tan anunciada (112)
[...] so that there should be the untrammelled fulfillment of a death so clearly
foretold (100).

If in the first case the postponing of 'foretold' in the TT makes up for the loss of the very effective and powerful beginning of the sentence in the ST, which shows an emphatic inversion in word order (adv. + verb + subj.: "nunca hubo una muerte"), in the second example the postponing of the past participle 'foretold' in the TT conjoins with other subtle changes which strain the natural flow of the English language, so as to make it sound really more 'Biblical', dignified, and somewhat less familiar and more 'foreignizing'. First of all, the choice of 'untrammelled' is to be noticed: a rather rare term, uncommonly long and united to another long word, 'fulfillment', with which it creates alliterative effects (*m*, *n*, and *t*), and, in its turn, 'fulfillment' then creates alliteration with the strategically postponed past participle 'foretold'. Moreover, 'untrammelled fulfillment' renders, through an abstract noun + adjective phrase, what in the ST is expressed very directly by a subjunctive verb and a metaphor based on a familiar and colloquial phrase, 'sin tropiezos' ('tropezón' in standard Spanish), literally, 'without stumbles'. Thus the TT opts for what could be defined as a sort of inverted 'hyponatization', which, together with the postponing of 'foretold', actually has a 'displacing' effect.³¹⁷

Crónica de una muerte anunciada opens with a short but effective epigraph, a couplet taken from Gil Vicente: "La caza de amor / es de altanería", which Rabassa directly presents in his own translation, as "the hunt for love / is haughty falconry", where the figurative value of the metaphor is made even more explicit through the addition of 'haughty' (expressive amplification). Gil Vicente is quoted again later in the novel, this time, however, without mentioning the source, but simply relying on the active co-operation of the model reader to whose attention the sentence is signaled because in italics in the text: *Halcón que se atreve con garza guerrera, peligros espera* (75).³¹⁸ The English TT translates it as follows: "A falcon who chases a warlike crane can only hope for a life of pain". It respects the italics and even adds quotation marks, but does not provide any further help for the reader, thus practically implying that the model reader who the TT needs and establishes, has enough competences to identify the source, which is however rather improbable, at least considering the majority of the British/American readers of the novel. Apart from that, however, it can be

³¹⁷ For 'hyponatization' the *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Words* provides the following definition: "A form of personification in which an abstract quality is spoken of as something human [...] Nor uncommon in everyday usage" (406). Therefore, the opposite rhetorical transformation goes in the direction of creating greater distance from everyday language.

³¹⁸ For 'model reader' see chapter 3, note 192.

noticed that 'garza' is 'heron' and not 'crane', but 'crane' is necessary for rhyme sake, 'crane' and 'pain', and moreover it activates an assonance with the preceding 'chases', /ei/ that together with the other assonance /ai/ between 'warlike' and 'life', tries to reproduce the distinctive sound effects of the ST. In this Rabassa already seems to reveal a tendency to center his translation on subtle but rich aspects of the language, rather than on more visible elements in the text.

5.3b - The parameter of language: grammar and syntax

Before going further into the analysis of Rabassa's translation, it is important to make it explicit that in this case, as with Skármeta's *Ardiente paciencia*, the reading will be mostly guided by Peeter Torop's theoretical model, with his invitation to focus on six translatability parameters for cultural translation (the parameters of language, space, time, text, work, and socio-political commitment) and to match them with a range of translation strategies. The aim is to sustain a systemic approach throughout this second case study, too, while at the same time providing further opportunities for testing once more the concrete applicability of Torop's table "Translation as Cultural Communication".³¹⁹ However, as we had done with the previous case study, Torop's comprehensive table will be used in a flexible way, that is to say, selecting and applying only those elements which suit the TT we are going to examine and describe.

Thus, beginning with the first parameter which is that of language, we will start by trying now to define what translation strategies the English TT adopts regarding grammar and syntax. What emerges immediately is that the differences between the two languages, in both grammar, and clause and paragraph syntax, do not lead to any prevailing strategy of 'denationalization' (or 'neutralization'), nor to 'nationalization', which is no surprise, after all, considering Rabassa's personal views and preoccupation about the cultural value of grammar and syntax in a text. As is obvious, there are cases of necessary linguistic adaptations, determined by the differences between the English and the Spanish language, cases where the translator is not really left with much of a choice. It may occur because of the lack of a tense (for example, the Spanish imperfect and pluperfect) in English, or of a diminutive suffix, as in the following sentence: "El día en que lo iban a matar, Santiago Nasar se levantó a las 5.30 de la mañana para esperar el buque en que llevaba el Obispo. Había soñado que atravesaba un bosque de higuerones donde caía una llovizna tierna" (7) / "On the day they were going to kill him, Santiago Nasar got up at five-thirty in the morning to wait for the boat the bishop was coming on. He'd dreamed he was going through a grove of timber trees where a gentle drizzle was falling" (1). The two imperfect verbs ('iban', 'llevaba') are correctly rendered with a past

³¹⁹ See chapter 3, section 3.2.

continuous and the pluperfect with a past perfect. All of them are rather expected choices; less expected, however, is the introduction of a contraction ('he'd dreamed'), not present, and nor even possible in the Spanish language, a linguistic element which deliberately plays a different note, suggesting a colloquial register in the opening paragraph of a text, the title of which instead had rather evoked a Biblical and literary ring. Moreover, this note of oral register goes in the opposite direction to the choice taken when the figures in the ST ('5.30') are expressed more formally by letters ('five-thirty'). But here we would be entering a different parameter, and therefore we will come back to this later on, when dealing with *chronotopic* analysis, within the translation parameter of text, to which the later observations would actually refer. Instead, let us take another example of necessary linguistic adaptation: "el buen marido de Clotilde Armenta, que era un prodigio de vitalidad a los 86 años" (110) / "Clotilde Armenta's good husband, who was a marvel of vitality at the age of eighty-six", in this case, if the use of letters where the ST has figures is again a choice and not a necessity, the recurrence to a more neutralizing solution ("at the age of eighty-six") is instead almost inevitable, since the highly expressive union of article and number of years in the ST ("a los 86 años"), with all its colloquial flavour, is impossible to reproduce as such in the English language.

These were just a few examples of linguistic adaptation determined by the differences between English and Spanish; but there are also, of course, other cases of transformation which are more of a choice on the side of the translator, as in the following extracts. "Tenía el vestido de lino blanco lavado con agua sola, porque era de piel tan delicada que no soportaba el ruido del almidón" (11) / "He was dressed in white linen that had been washed in plain water, because his skin was so delicate that it couldn't stand the noise of starch" (5). In Spanish the causative clause does not need an explicit subject, which however cannot be omitted in the English TT: in any case, this fact would not lead to identify the subject with Santiago's skin, as the TT does, which at first sight would not even seem to make the clause sound logical any longer: skin cannot hear. However, if the ST implies that Santiago could not stand the very noise of starched cotton, since that by itself was an unpleasant 'omen', being always followed by inevitable and well-known uneasiness, the TT increases the figurative value of the sentence, by transferring the feeling from Santiago to his very skin.

The last example confirms the subtlety of Rabassa's translation approach, but there are other cases where the translator's choice can be more immediately explained, as when too long a paragraph in the ST (about one page and a half) is split in the TT, so as to make it more easily understandable and smooth for the English reader: "[...] Esto respondía a la leyenda prematura de que Bayardo San Román no sólo era capaz de hacer todo, y de hacerlo muy bien, sino que además disponía de recursos interminables. Mi madre le dio la bendición final en una carta de octubre [...] (33)" / "That was in reply to the premature legend that Bayardo San Román not only was capable of doing everything, and doing it quite well, but also had access to endless resources. // My mother gave him the

final blessing in a letter in October" (26). However, understandably enough, the solutions adopted by the TT are not always 'happy' ones, as in the following extract, where the impossibility of literally translating into English a Spanish verbal phrase (based on an imperfect, but expressing future in the past) prompts a rendering which ends with modifying the very meaning of the sentence of the ST, with its stylistically characteristic conjoining of past and future. "lo único que ella pudo hacer por el hombre que nunca había de ser suyo, fue dejar la puerta sin tranca" (19) / "The only thing she could do for the man who had never been hers was leave the door unbarred" (12). In the ST, the sentence refers to Divina Flor, who at the time of Santiago's killing, is still too young to become his 'prey', although it is clear to everyone that she is destined to the young master's bed, which she has started to anxiously look forward to, and because of which, instead, her mother, Victoria Guzmán, has started to fear and hate the young master, seeing Santiago as a threat impending over her daughter. Thus, that future in the past of the ST is actually dense with meaning, implying, among other things, how destiny can unpredictably overturn social rules, as well as expectations and fears; all this is lost if the verbal phrase is not literally translated as 'the man who was never to be hers', but is rather rendered through a past perfect 'had been', which moreover is not logical, given the young age of the girl.

Nonetheless, more than these cases of linguistic adaptations prompted by differences between the two languages, it is interesting to observe how the TT pays great attention to syntax, often resorting to inversion of normal word order, postponing the subject, extended and protracted sentences, all of which contribute either to increase emphasis or to strengthen the note of oral telling as well as the 'Biblical ring', exactly as it occurs in the ST. But, if it is true that in the ST these should be regarded mostly as stylistic characteristics (*chronotopic* elements) of Márquez's narrativity when writing *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, it is also true that they are syntactical elements which are more 'natural' for the Spanish language; in other words, they do not require such a straining of the linguistic medium, as they do when introduced into the English language. In this regard, therefore, the English of Rabassa's translation clearly confirms his idea that in order to preserve "whatever slim shards of the culture may be left lying about" it is necessary to skillfully and courageously work on the language. From this point of view, the English of Rabassa's text actually sounds a bit 'acculturated', an English that apparently has been interacting with the Spanish of the ST.

Let us look at some examples, which will help to clarify the point.

Era una costumbre sabia impuesta por su padre desde una mañana en que una sirvienta sacudió la almohada para quitarle la funda, y la pistola se disparó al chocar contra el suelo, y la bala desbarató el armario del cuarto, atravesó la pared de la sala, pasó con un estruendo de guerra por el comedor de la casa vecina y convirtió en polvo de yeso a un santo de tamaño natural en el altar mayor de la iglesia, al otro extremo de la plaza. (10)

It was a wise custom established by his father ever since one morning when a servant girl had shaken the case to get the pillow out and the pistol went off as it hit the floor and the bullet wrecked the cupboard in the room, went through the living room wall, passed through the dining room of the house next door with the thunder of war, and turned a life-size saint on the main altar of the church on the opposite side of the square to plaster dust. (4)

The TT, apart from rendering the implicit clause 'al chocar' (on hitting) as an explicit and more direct one, 'as it hit', does not split the prolonged sentence, so as to make it smoother, and even reproduces the *polysyndeton*, repeatedly linking the clauses with 'and'. Perhaps even more remarkable is the repeated use of the postponing of the subject (*hyperbaton*) and inversion of word order, as shown by these two examples. "[...] desde la orilla opuesta llegaban canoas adornadas de flores" (26-7) / "from the opposite shore came canoes bedecked with flowers" (21); "tampoco se supo con que cartas jugó Santiago Nasar" (49) / "Nor was it known what cards Santiago Nasar was playing" (41), although in the latter example the TT, after reproducing the initial inversion, opts for a more normal syntax structure for the second clause, leaving out the *hyperbaton* of the ST.

Moreover, there are cases where the TT even strengthens the emphatic structure of the ST, in this maybe helped by the linguistic differences of the languages, that, far from being a hindrance, rather come to help the translator, as it occurs in the following extract where the TT not only respects the fairly exceptional length of the sentence, but also introduces a word repetition in two consecutive clauses (*epiphora*), which is actually prolonged throughout the whole sentence. However, as I have just remarked, it must be observed that in this regard the TT is helped by the nature of the language: the repetition of the direct third person pronoun, 'him', is after all the exact rendering of the ST, with the only difference that the Spanish language has separate forms for the direct, indirect and prepositional object pronoun. Moreover, the omission of the subject in English is not possible, except in coordinate clauses, and the possessive adjective is needed when speaking of parts of the body or clothes, and this leads to the insistent repetition of 'he' (*anaphora*) and 'his' in the TT. Finally, the TT profits from another 'happy coincidence': both Spanish verbs 'contestar' and 'responder' mean 'answer', which favours the introduction of the *anaphora* in the TT.

Lo habían puesto ahí pensando quizá que era el sitio de honor, y los invitados tropezaban con él, lo confundían con otro, lo cambiaban de lugar para que no estorbara, y él movía la cabeza nevada hacia todos lados con una expresión errática de ciego demasiado reciente, contestando preguntitas que no eran para él y respondiendo saludos fugaces que nadie le hacía, feliz en su cerco de olvido, con la camisa acartonada de engrudo y el bastón de guayacán que le habían comprado para la fiesta.(51-2) [*bold characters are mine*]

They had placed **him** there thinking perhaps that it was the seat of honor, and the guests stumbled over **him**, confused **him** with someone else, moved **him** so **he** wouldn't be in the way, and **he** nodded **his** snow-white head in all directions with the erratic expression of someone too recently blind, **answering** questions that weren't directed at **him** and **answering** fleeting waves of the hand that no one was making to **him**, happy in **his** circle of oblivion, **his** shirt cardboard-stiff with starch and holding the *lignum vitae* cane they had bought **him** for the party. (44) [*bold characters are mine*]

5.3c - The parameter of language: cultural terms or 'realia'

Realia represent a macroscopic cultural element in a text, being words that exist only in one given culture and refer to specific objects and things that are typical, and as such they are one of the most obvious elements to be focused on by cultural translation criticism. However, this does not imply at all that they are automatically the most important ones in a text, even from a cultural perspective; or, at least, this clearly seems to be the way Rabassa considers them. Meaningfully enough, we can say that in this regard his TT does not show particularly striking nor courageous solutions, and neither is there clear evidence of any particular translational strategic coherence in dealing with them, unlike what has emerged in the previous section. Apart from geographic proper names, which he simply transcribes (with the exception of the phrase 'prófugo de Cayena' (39), where the TT opts for an interpreting substitution to make it more explicit for the reader: 'had escaped from Devil's island', 32), he usually tends to translate cultural terms literally, in this revealing adherence to both domesticating and neutralizing strategies. This is the case, for example, with most names of institutions or of public buildings (Club Social / social club, Banco del Estado / State Bank, Casa Cural / parish house, Casa de Salud / Rest Home, and so on), with only very few exceptions: if the name of Santiago's cattle farm, 'el Divino Rostro' is translated as 'the Divine Face', 'el Hotel del Puerto' is simply transcribed in the TT, even if a literal translation could be expected, given its similarity to the previously mentioned cases.

With the other types of *realia*, specifically those referring to concrete objects tied to the Northern Colombian culture of the ST, the solutions adopted vary between two main options: either they are just transcribed, that is, not translated, or they are translated, with varying degrees of precision. The first option is adopted for both *realia* which have by now become part of the general cultural knowledge of a Westerner, such as 'merengue' (43) or 'fado' (21), as well as for *realia* which, instead, the English/American reader of the TT is very unlikely to be acquainted with, like 'cumbiamba', a traditional Colombian dance (45; in italics in the TT), or 'papiamento', a local dialect (30), and which, at any rate, are not accompanied by any type of commentary or notes. It is true that for this choice of avoiding footnotes Rabassa is praised by Márquez, as we have previously seen, and yet, if these *realia* are introduced by the TT without any

cultural mediation, it cannot be denied that the two terms, 'cumbiamba' and 'papamiento' remain rather obscure, with the consequence that the note of 'exotization' which they would seem to be striking, risks remaining too difficult and distant to become an active element for the reader. Moreover, in many other similar cases, this is not the translation strategy adopted by the TT, even if it is not easy to detect any clear selective criterion to justify the difference in solutions, thus confirming an impression of lack of translational coherence with regard to this particular aspect. However, as observed at the beginning of this section, in Rabassa's case it is more the lack of real interest and attention to the issue of translating *realia* that should be observed, as his main focus seems to be on other aspects of translation. In any case, what is to be observed is that, even when the decision is not to write the *realia* down in the text, but instead to translate them, the TT does not offer a consistent solution. Sometimes the choice is for substitution by a more generalizing (and therefore 'neutralizing') equivalent: 'higuerones' (7) / 'timber trees' (1), 'caribañolas' (24) / 'manioc fritters' (17), 'cachaca' (124) / 'uplander' (111). Or, similarly, the TT can recur to substitution by a functional equivalent, as with 'hacienda de ganado' (9) / 'cattle ranch', which however inevitably evokes Northern America, or 'guayacán' (52) / 'lignum vitae' (44), which rather strikes an apocalyptic and Biblical ring. Finally, it is to be observed that the TT in some cases also opts for interpretative or descriptive translation: 'papayeras' (46) / 'groups of bass' (39), or 'caucheros' (110) / 'rubber workers' (98). But the result, unfortunately, is the same, a loss from the point of view of culture communication, as shown in both these two latter examples where the strategy remains one of 'neutralization'.

5.3d - The parameter of language: vocative names and tags

Despite the low occurrence of vocative names in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (only two examples in all), these cases are worth focusing on, since their translation proves to be anything but automatic and smooth. The first one is the vocative noun 'blanco', by which Victoria Guzmán addresses her master Santiago Nasar on two occasions, both occurring in the hours immediately before his death. Despite the fact that it is reported after several pages, the second piece of dialogue, chronologically, would precede the other, and this explains why, although already showing repressed hostility and disrespect in the use of the vocative name, it certainly sounds less aggressive than the later one. Victoria Guzmán, who had been seduced and then discarded by Santiago's dead father, and knew that a similar fate would be reserved to her daughter, as the girl was clearly destined for the young master's 'furtive bed', had therefore plenty of reasons for not feeling any affection for Santiago. Her hostility is perfectly concentrated in that vocative noun, 'blanco'. If in the second occurrence in the text the vocative noun apparently sounds only as a mocking of the young man's attire, it actually hides deeper and much more earnest social connotations, as the context for the other occurrence reveals.

Victoria Guzmán le mostró el cuchillo ensangrentado.
- Suéltala, blanco – le ordenó en serio -. De esta agua non beberás mientras yo
esté viva. (14)

Victoria Guzmán showed him the bloody knife.
'Let go of her, whitey, ' she ordered him seriously. 'You won't have a drink of
that water as long as I'm alive' (8)

-Blanco – lo llamó -: ya va a estar el café. (78)

'Whitey,' she called to him, 'coffee will be ready soon' (68)

The choice of 'whitey' is half way between a literal translation and substitution by a functional equivalent. As Collins Thesaurus Dictionary explains, the name 'whitey' is chiefly Northern American, and it is contemptuously used by black people. Thus, it perfectly conveys anger and frustration against the representative member of a privileged class, and in this regard it is a 'happy solution', actually increasing the colloquial and popular tone of the dialogue. However, on the other hand, besides indirectly evoking a different culture, it also runs the risk of introducing an overt racial tone of anger which instead is rather more social in the ST.

The complexity of effectively transposing conversational nouns and tags, without losing or altering their subtle cultural resonance, can be detected even more with the other case, the tag 'nifia', used also twice in the novel, but by the protagonist, Santiago Nasar, in the last chapter of the novel (actually, the second time the tag appears at the end of his very last sentence, pronounced immediately before dying). In both occurrences, Santiago uses it as a tag preceding a woman's first name, and he is always addressing two characters who, although their age is not specified, are likely to be at least middle-aged: the first one, 'nifia Sara' (116), is the owner of a shoe shop, and the second one is the narrator's aunt, 'nifia Wene' (135). The conversational tag 'nifia' is of common use in Latin America, when fondly, but still respectfully, addressing a woman, without any direct reference to her age. As such, there is no immediate equivalent in English, which is confirmed by the fact that the TT does not adopt a single solution, as if still looking for a satisfying solution difficult to find. The first time, 'niña' is translated as 'Missy' (104): "an affectionate or disparaging form of address to a young girl", according to the Collins Thesaurus Dictionary, and thus connoting the term from the point of view of the character's age, unlike the equivalent in the ST. This occurs also in the second case, even if the TT recurs to another tag 'child', and effectively postpones it, 'Wene child' (122). Thus, in both cases, we can say that although the colloquial register is appropriately stressed, from a cultural point of view much is 'lost in translation', although perhaps inevitably.

5.3e - The parameter of space: social space and geographic space

What greatly contributes to giving Gabriel García Márquez's narrative style its unique 'flavour' is certainly its being so anchored to the popular way of telling stories, being based on his grandmother's voice, as Márquez himself has often explained. If this is true for his writing in general, it is even more the case for *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, if we remember the active involvement in the story of almost a whole coastal town from Northern Colombia. With so many of its inhabitants acting as a classical Greek chorus through their continuous and direct comments, the language of the ST is socially and geographically strongly characterized. It implies that it is a language more arduous to transfer, and, in any case, the social and the geographic spaces of a text are usually deeply interconnected, as social differences tend to be different in various cultures. This explains why the rendering of jargon, slang, dialect, with similar ones in the target culture may be highly risky, as Rabassa himself has pointed out. However, in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* it would not be correct to speak of the presence of any actual jargons or dialects: it is rather the whole narrative language which is subtly imbued with localisms, as well as characterized by a popular register, which perfectly cohabit and even become an important factor of internal cohesion and harmonization for a text which is clearly a hybrid of different genre codes, from journalism and thriller, to gothic novel and tragic love story. It could be objected that here we are again hinting at another level of analysis, the parameter of text with the *chronotopic* levels of analysis; it is true, but what we have just observed actually confirms the strong interdependence of these parameters in the ST, and thus we are confident that, while still concentrating mostly on one parameter, the analysis will also highlight more general conclusions.

Let us first focus on those examples which seem to be preeminently connected to the sub-parameter of geographic space, the cultural implications of which are usually most difficult to render fully and correctly. The ST offers interesting occurrences of vocabulary which not only vary from Castilian Spanish, but denote a clearly local and regional voice probably to the point of not sounding completely familiar even to readers from other parts of Colombia. The list would be long, of course, but even if we limit our attention to some of the most striking cases, we can see that the TT always provides accurate renderings, which however tend to be culturally neutral and generic, losing or, in any case, blurring their relevance from the point of view of geographic connotation. For example, in the case of 'monte' (9) the regional use of the noun is detected and the word is correctly translated as 'in the country' (3), which however is perfectly standard English, whereas 'monte' with this peculiar meaning is not normal in Castilian Spanish. Similarly, 'huacales' (21) is rendered as 'crates' (15), 'conduerma' (55) as 'drowsiness' (47), 'guayabo' (116) as 'hullabaloo' (104), 'guiso' (118) as 'stew' (106), or 'me hice bolas' (116) as 'I got all mixed up' (104), and so on. They are all examples of vocabulary which, like many other words present in the ST, very often are not even present on a standard

Spanish dictionary, or if they are, they are always accompanied either by the general comment 'Latin American', or with an even more precise geographical indication. As already stressed, however, the English of the TT does not reveal any specific geographic echoes, although, at least with regard to the popular register, Rabassa's text shows some effort to recreate the colourful voice of the people, thus paying attention to the sub-parameter of social space. Some interesting examples:

- "Me agarró toda la pancha"(18) / "He grabbed my whole pussy" (12). It is Divina Flor who is speaking and is referring to the vulgar attention paid to her by her master Santiago Nasar. Since this is direct speech and therefore it is not filtered by narration, her actual words are direct and low-registered. We can see how the TT fully recreates the popular register, but not the cultural connotation of the ST image, with its localism: the English taboo word is of more common use.
- "La mujer me dijo: 'Ella mastica a la topa tolondra, un poco al desgaire, un poco al desgarrate'" (89) / "The woman said to me: 'She crunches like a nutty nuthatch, kind of sloppy, kind of slurpy'" (78). This is a really interesting example, which shows Rabassa's skill as a translator at his best. The core image of surrealistic craziness (the extract is from a dream) is accurately conveyed, through a courageous mingling and intertwining of both interpretative translation and substitution with functional equivalent, supported by a secure handling of the language. "Nutty nuthatch", which replaces the otherwise untranslatable "topa tolondra" of the ST, is a carefully chosen simile: it is based on an image which, if not familiar and popular, is in any case taken from a natural context, in this perfectly in line with the ST, and is also particularly appropriate for its sound effects, which recreate an alliteration as the image of the ST does. Even more subtly, the TT increases the figurative effect, introducing a *diaphora*: 'nutty' means 'crazy', but it also contains the word 'nut', which is actually present in its literal meaning in the adjacent noun, 'nuthatch', a bird feeding on nuts.³²⁰ Finally, it is to be noticed that a similar care in the rendering is shown also in the second part of the saying, which recreates both the anaphora and the alliteration of the ST, "kind of sloppy, kind of slurpy".
- "Doce días después del crimen, el instructor del sumario se encontró con un pueblo en carne viva" (111) / "Twelve days after the crime, the investigating magistrate came upon a town that was an open wound" (99). In this case, the TT, by working on the syntax of the clause, gives special relevance to the central metaphor (it is no longer expressed by a prepositional phrase as in the ST, but is instead directly introduced by the copulative verb 'to be') thus making up for the slight loss of vividness which would occur because of the

³²⁰ *Diaphora* derives from the Greek word *diaphoros*, meaning 'different', and is therefore a rhetorical figure which consists in the repetition of a word but with a different meaning or shade of meaning.

impossibility to render the ST phrase literally, since 'en carne viva' is in itself more direct and disquieting than the more technical 'an open wound' of the TT.

5.3f - The parameter of text: narrator and narration, or the topographic chronotope

We have already mentioned the thorny issue of translatability more than once during our reading of Rabassa's translation of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*. This is almost inevitable, given the very peculiar style of the narrative language of Márquez's novel. The author is present in the text, as both character and narrator, but although he shows the intention of filtering the story as a 'chronicler' and a 'journalist', declaring the aim of being as objective and informative as possible, he actually gives voice to so many other characters (either directly or through documents and memories), to the point that his role as main narrator tends to become blurred and even to merge with a myriad of many other voices and points of views. Consequently, notwithstanding the presence of the echoes of so many genres, the distinctive feature of this narrative language remains its closeness to popular oral storytelling, which makes it so intimately rich in cultural connotations. It is not just a matter of vocabulary, but it clearly also influences the syntax of the text (explicit clauses preferred to implicit ones; abundance of emphatic structures; long sentences linked by polysyndeton), and it can be detected even in the unique taste for death and gruesome elements, as well as in the love for strong contrasts, and for combinations of the macabre and the beautiful, or in the recurrence of taboo words, which are always introduced as a spontaneous way of talking, without any morbid interest at all. We have already had glimpses of all this while dealing with the other parameters, and thus we will add now just one more example, referring to the very last pages of the novel, where finally the protagonist's repeatedly 'announced' death, is fully narrated. Santiago has been stabbed several times and his entrails have even been exposed; however, although mortally wounded, he has the strength to walk into his home, a horrible and gruesome sight for everybody, even if he astonishingly manages to keep up his usual charm and elegance. The contrast could not be more appalling, and the novel actually indulges in stressing it, even 'foretelling' it through the vision of him that Divina Flor had shortly before the killing.

"Fue una vision nítida", me contó Divina Flor. "Llevaba el vestido blanco, y algo en la mano que no pude ver bien, pero me pareció un ramo de rosas."
(130)

Se incorporó de medio lado, y se echó a andar en un estrado de alucinación, sosteniendo con las manos las visceras colgantes. [...] Empezaban a desayunar cuando vieron entrar a Santiago Nasar empapado de sangre llevando en las manos el racimo de sus entrañas. Poncho Lanao me dijo: "Lo

que nunca pude olvidar fue el terrible olor a mierda." Pero Argénida Lanao, la hija mayor, contó que Santiago Nasar caminaba con la prestancia de siempre, midiendo bien los pasos, y que su rostro de sarraceno con los rizos alborotados estaba más bello que nunca. (134)

"It was a very clear vision," Divina Flor told me. "He was wearing his white suit and carrying something that I couldn't make out well in his hand, but it looked like a bouquet of roses." (118)

He stood up, leaning to one side, and started to walk in a state of hallucination, holding his hanging intestines in his hands. (121)

They were sitting down to breakfast when they saw Santiago Nasar enter, soaked in blood and carrying the roots of his entrails in his hands. Poncho Lanao told me: "What I'll never forget was the terrible smell of shit." But Argénida Lanao, the oldest daughter, said that Santiago Nasar walked with his usual good bearing, measuring his steps well, and that his Saracen face with its headstrong ringlets was handsomer than ever. (122)

If the insistence on the macabre detail of Santiago's bowels is slightly softened by the use of a more technical word like 'intestines' for 'visceras' (incidentally, it should be observed that, in its obsessive reference to this part of Santiago's anatomy, the ST actually displays a striking range of synonyms, from the more aseptic 'intestinos' and 'visceras', to 'entrañas' 'tripas', and even 'tripajo', which can hardly be matched in the English language), and the ominous association between 'ramo de rosas' (bunch of roses) and 'racimo de sus entrañas' (bunch of entrails), is unfortunately weakened in the TT ('bouquet of roses', 'roots of his entrails'), yet there is a case of expressive substitution/amplification which is remarkable.³²¹ In describing Santiago's ringlets as 'headstrong', where the ST simply has 'alborotados' (rough, not in order), the TT increases the figurative value of the language, introducing, thanks to the *hypallage*, a clear reference to Santiago's strenuous courage, which makes his beauty greater and more desperate at the same time.

This last example fundamentally confirms what has emerged from the previous analysis. Coherently with his theoretical premises, and being aware of his responsibilities as a translator, Rabassa's TT succeeds in not completely 'hiding' the ST, in other words, his TT cannot be accused of becoming another example of 'invisible translation'. As we have seen, he laments that the act of translating, in itself, risks divesting "the work of its most essential cultural aspect, which is the sound of its original language". Since Rabassa is aware that this very aspect is so vital in Márquez's novel, he clearly tries to keep the 'original sound' of the language in mind when translating, trying not to lose it completely. That does not prevent difficulties and even failures, of course. No doubt, there are losses, as well as moments which denote a decrease of attention and focus in his TT; and we have tried to systematically detect and scrupulously

³²¹ About the ominous symmetry created in the ST by 'ramo' and 'racimo', see L. Parkinson Zamora (1985), p. 107.

note them down through our analysis, along with, however, more interesting aspects of his translation method. We should remember that he has said that a translator must be adventurous and original, and, all things considered, we can conclude that these very adjectives can provide the best comment to his TT. However, his creativity and courage are not usually shown when dealing with the macroscopic cultural elements of the text, such as, for example, the *realia* or the other terms referring to a specific geographic space in the strict sense of the word; in these cases, his translation strategy can even be said to opt for a certain degree of neutralization. We have nevertheless seen that when there are chances to preserve any 'slim shards of the culture' (to use Rabassa's own words again), he often tries hard to keep the language as vivid as possible. Yet, it is true that by itself this would not be enough to render his text striking, as it is not a sufficiently distinctive and exceptional feature. What is much more worth pointing out is that the English of this TT is clearly the result of a fruitful, and carefully sought-after tension with the language of the ST, signs of which can be traced in its peculiar syntax, or in the Biblical and apocalyptic ring, elements which are present already in the ST, but which are stressed even more in the TT, starting from the very rendering of the title. In this, Rabassa has actually been faithful to his precept: 'to acculturate our English'. From this perspective, his translation, although not exempt from weak points, can be rightly studied as an interesting model.

5.4 - The Italian translation

Crónica de una muerte anunciada was translated into Italian by Dario Puccini in the same year, 1982, as the publication of the English version. At first it was published by Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, but in 1999 it was reissued by Giulio Einaudi Editore. Being a literal translation of the Spanish one, the Italian title, *Cronaca di una morte annunciata*, does not lend itself to the same type of comments as has occurred with the title of the English TT, and this immediately suggests a different approach to translation altogether. This is actually the case, as we will try to outline through a synthesis of the results of an analysis carried out in parallel with that done for Rabassa's translation. What emerges from such a reading is that in Puccini's TT the macroscopic cultural elements are clearly focused on and highlighted (unlike in Rabassa's text), whereas the more subtle, but consistent ones, seem to be more overlooked. Similarly, if attention to the popular and oral character of the language can be detected in a number of cases, through examples of interesting nationalizing solutions, however, the overall impression is that, unlike the English text, the translation approach of the Italian TT appears to be more traditional and less adventurous in its choices, thus making it more difficult to balance an overall effect of cultural neutralization.

Differences between the two TTs can be observed from the beginning, besides the already mentioned title. To start with, Puccini decides not to translate the epigraph, the couplet from Gil Vicente, which he simply writes down

(repetition), without any metatextual comment. Nevertheless, this is not the case with the other quotation, still from Gil Vicente, which appears later in the text: this time the TT does not opt for repetition, preferring to present the small extract translated in prose, but keeping the italics of the ST: *Halcón que se atreve con garza guerrera, peligros espera* (75) / *Pericoli s'aspetti, il falco che corre dietro a gazza guerresca* (49). Even if in prose, the translation apparently tries to preserve a distinctive note for the language of this quotation, through both the literary structure chosen for the first clause, and the alliterative effects created in the second part: /k/ ('falco che corre'), /r/ ('corre, dietro, guerresca'), and /g/ ('gazza guerresca'). Apart from that, what is worth pointing out is that this time the translator thinks it is important to accompany the quotation with an informative footnote, which, also referring back to, and now translating the opening epigraph, explains how both quotations are taken from the same work; moreover the footnote chronologically localizes the poet Gil Vicente in the Sixteenth Century and provides the original text in Spanish. In that, Puccini's translation clearly differs from Rabassa's: the English TT never resorts to footnotes, for which, at any rate, it has Márquez's full approval, as we have seen. If Márquez's dislike for the use of footnotes in translations is absolute, and an author's opinion is always influential (even more when that author is such an authoritative name as Márquez), however, I personally think that too rigid normative prescriptions are not always the best solutions, and a more open mind should be kept also in this regard. Actually, in this case, I do not find the footnote of the Italian TT intrusive, but on the contrary of some help for the reader.

A similar solution (repetition of the Spanish word in the Italian TT, but in italics and with a concise explicatory footnote) is adopted for most of the *realia*, with the exception of "merengue", too well known to need any metatextual comment, and, "caribañolas" (24), "fado" (27), "hacienda de Ganado" (9), "caucheros" (110), all of which are rendered through a periphrastic explanatory translation: respectively, "frittelle di yuca ripiene" (14), "romanza d'amore" (16), "fattoria con allevamento di bestiame" (4), "cercatori di caucciù" (74). At any rate, the occurrence of footnotes is kept very limited (on the whole, only eight footnotes, of which only one is longer than a line), so that I think it is possible to agree that such a sparing use of metatextual commentary, rather than doing any harm and spoil the reading of a text, could even become a useful means to preserve some 'slim shards' of the culture of the ST. All that said, however, I agree that these are only macroscopic but superficial elements, that is to say, they are immediately detectable, but much more than that is at stake, something for which footnotes cannot provide any help. In this regard, Rabassa is right when he says that a translator must be courageous and look for creative solutions, solutions that have to be original, alternative, and even adventurous and risky. That is what his translation actually tries to achieve, and what, instead, cannot be exactly said of the Italian TT, as clearly emerges when focusing on the parameters of space and text.

Let us look at the geographically connoted terms. As already noticed in Rabassa's text, it is this very geographic resonance of the language that is irremediably lost. Also the Italian TT always recurs to a standard Italian, as we can see, for example, when it is translating words from the ST which instead would provide a Latin American alternative to Castilian Spanish. We should distinguish, however. There are cases in the Italian TT when the Latin American words are translated through functional equivalents that only preserve their general meaning, but neutralize both their geographic and social resonance, as in the following examples: "huacales" (12) / "gabbie" (12); "guayabo" (116), / "postumi di sbornia" (77); "vivencias" (51) / "aspetti di vita" (32), "conduerma" (55) / "tormento" (35), "guiso" (118) / "pasticcio" (79), and many others. However, there are also other cases which show that, despite geographic neutralization, at least care has been paid to preserving the social dimension, by stressing the colloquial and popular voice and finding vivid national equivalents (nationalization). This is particularly evident when translating taboo words, which the Italian TT renders perfectly respecting, or even highlighting the popular register: "toda la panocha" (18) / "tutta la passera" (10), "pendejo" (60) / "coglione" (39), "pinga" (71) / "l'ucello" (46), "me hice bolas" (116) / "restai di merda" (78).

As a natural consequence of what has just been observed, we could imagine that such characteristic would be more marked with those terms referring to the other sub-parameter, that of social space. Surprisingly, instead, we find here the same ambivalence as before in the choice of translation strategies. Actually, cases of neutralizing translation occur, but there are also interesting opposite examples of the recurrence to the strategy of nationalization. Let us look at some examples on both sides.

Neutralization:

- "con un sedimento de estribo de cobre en el paladar"(8) / "con un residuo sapore metallico sul palato" (3). This is a clear case of correct functional equivalent, which however neutralizes the figurative value of the phrase. The overall meaning is conveyed: an unpleasant taste in the mouth, as disagreeable as that left by metal. But in the ST "estribo de cobre" does not generically refer to metal, and rather means 'copper stirrup', thus evoking a concrete object which pertains to Santiago's everyday life, as well as to the culture of his class. Thus, in the ST it is not a neutral phrase at all, and from this point of view the translation provided here, "residuo metallico", sounds more vague.
- "cerrada de luto hasta la empuñadura"35) / "chiusa nel lutto fino ai polsini" (22). Once again, the ST uses the language figuratively, recurring to a metaphor, the vehicle for which ('empuñadura' means 'hilt') derives from, and at the same time hints at, the characters' everyday experience, exactly as in the previous example.

- “se me alojó la pasta” (115) / “mi mancò il coraggio” (77). The TT only renders the meaning, but through an aseptic phrase, which is far from the vividness of the metaphor of the ST with its reference to the routine of dough rising and baking, and the text is thus missing a vivid cultural connotation.
- “andaba solo, igual que su padre, cortandole el cogollo a cuanta doncella sin rumbo empezaba a despuntar por estos montes” (102) / “andava solo, al pari di suo padre, a tirare il collo a qualunque donzella sperduta cominciava a spuntare in questi paraggi” (68). The ST offers another example of a metaphor which is based on a culturally concrete and well-identifiable reality: ‘cortar el cogollo’ literally means ‘to take the best part of a plant’ (in Latin America, ‘cogollo’ refers to ‘the top of a sugar cane’). In this case, the TT also uses a phrase, ‘tirar el collo’, which still refers to everyday life in the countryside (it refers to the traditional way country people kill a farmed hen or a rabbit in Italy), and conveys the essential meaning of ‘ruining somebody’, as its equivalent in the ST does; and yet, the phrase chosen by the TT is more of a fairly common idiom in everyday colloquial speech, than an actual popular metaphor.

Effective nationalization and domestication:

- “nos dijo el milagro pero no el santo” (113) / “ci disse il peccato ma non il peccatore” (75). The idiom of the ST is aptly substituted by an equivalent idiom, equally of very common use in Italy.
- “que no se cocinaba en dos aguas” (125) / “era gallina da brodo” (83). Another case of happy substitution, functionally equivalent from the point of view of both meaning (an old woman, whose flesh is so gaunt and shriveled that would take a long time to cook if it were boiled) and figurative/idiomatic value (the TT chooses a vehicle for the metaphor which is still from the everyday traditional experience of people living in a small provincial town).
- “era un prodigio de vitalidad a los 86 años” (110) / “era un prodigio di vitalità a 86 anni suonati” (74). Here the TT, by adding the emphatic adjective ‘suonati’, succeeds in rendering the colourful implication of that plural article put before the number of years in ‘a los 86 años’ in the ST. The Spanish phrase is not literally translatable into English, and a periphrastic rendering, such as the English ‘well over 86 years’, would miss the popular story-telling register and neutralize the phrase.
- “La mujer me dijo: ‘Ella mastica a la topa tolondra, un poco al desgaire, un poco al desgarrate’” (89) / “La donna mi disse: ‘Mastica alla carlona, un po’ controvoglia, e un po’ alla cogliona’”

(59). On analyzing Rabassa's translation, we have already taken up this extract from the ST, and pointed out the interesting strategy he uses here to render such a peculiar saying. But this can be a successful example also for Puccini's text. Obviously, Puccini also resorts to a functionally equivalent substitution, the elements of which are clearly chosen with great care, paying attention to the 'voice' and colour of the language. The Italian TT turns the saying into a convincing specimen of popular and oral poetry, thanks to the presence of freely interpreted metrical lines (irregular *settenari*), which even come to form a sort of 'tercet', with the first and third line rhyming together, and then creating an assonance with the last word of the second line, all completely in the tradition of popular storytelling. It is a perfect case of an effective use of the strategy of nationalization, as the saying sounds all the more natural to an Italian reader also thanks to the adverbial phrases 'alla carlona' and 'alla cogliona', both very common and rooted in Italian low-register speech, as the etymology of the first one confirms ('alla carlona' actually derives from an old popular anecdote about Emperor Charles the Great, 'Carlo Magno', and means 'alla meglio e peggio', 'somehow or other').⁶⁰ In this, the two TTs differ, because Rabassa's text rather stresses a note of surrealistic craziness, and, although convincingly anchoring its images to a natural context, does not rely on national long-established idioms and cultural phrases, as instead the Italian TT does.

We have already had the opportunity of stressing how Márquez's distinctive narrative style in *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, and in his works in general, is intimately intertwined with a specific culture, to the point, as we have seen, that Márquez declares that he cannot recognize his voice in other languages and contexts than those of Latin America. Yet, the cultural richness of his narrative language cannot be reduced to a specific setting, or use of vocabulary or even a local 'accent' in the language. These are all vital elements, of course, but there is also much more, and that is why the analysis of the *topographic chronotope* is so relevant, as we have actually seen with the English TT. Rabassa clearly adopts a foreignizing strategy and mostly relies on syntax and figurative resonance to create a vital tension between the ST and his TT. It is specifically through the analysis of this parameter, however, that Puccini's translation appears to be more traditional, showing that, in spite of an accurate rendering of macroscopic cultural elements, and overall attention to the popular register and to the vividness of vocabulary, the Italian TT is not always able to

⁶⁰ This etymology is referred to in several sources, but see in particular *Il Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, Treccani, 1955), that explains how 'carlona' is an *accrescitivo* (augmentative suffix), adapted from old French 'Charlon', to mean Emperor Charles the Great, who used to be presented in French late romances as a good-natured and simple person.

convey, or at least to 'point at' the deep originality of the language of the ST. Despite the greater similarity of Spanish and Italian, this TT does not always tend to follow Márquez in his continuous 'stretching' and intensification of the language, with inevitable 'diluting' results. Sometimes this side effect can be the consequence of the rendering of an explicit clause into an implicit one, in contrast with the style of popular oral storytelling, or in other cases, it can occur because of the use of an abstract noun chosen to synthesize a clause, as well as it can be produced by the normalizing of an emphatic word order, or by the use of complex and convoluted structures. Let us quickly look at some examples.

From an explicit to an implicit clause:

"Había soñado **que** **atravesaba** un bosque" (7) / "aveva sognato **di** **attraversare**" (3)

"Después de **que** **le prometió** a mi germana Margot que iría a desayunar a nuestra casa" (114) / "Dopo **aver promesso** a mia sorella che sarebbe andato a far colazione a casa nostra" (76)

"[...] le pidió **que alcanzara** a Santiago Nasar" (115) / "[...] gli chiese **di raggiungere** Santiago Nasar" (77)

From an explicit clause to an abstract noun:

"[...] por qué cedió al impulso de esperar donde sus abuelos **hasta que llegara** el obispo" (109) / "[...] perché aveva ceduto all'impulso di attendere due ore là dove vivevano i suoi nonni **fino all'arrivo** del vescovo

Normalization of emphatic structure:

"[...] **nunca le pareció** legítimo que la vida se siviera" (112) / "[...] **non gli parve mai giustificato** che la vita" (75)

Use of convoluted verbal structures:

"[...] como era da **pensar que lo fuera** en un buen febrero de aquella época" (8) / "come era da **supporre dovesse essere** in un perfetto febbraio di quell'epoca" (4)

"De manera que su despreocupación consciente **hubiera sido** suicida" (114) / "Di modo che la sua consapevole calma **sarebbe dovuta risultare** suicida" (76). [*bold characters are mine*]

These are just a few examples, but hopefully they should suffice to show the point. If it could be said that they show only subtle changes, which is true from a certain point of view, it cannot be denied, however, that they are relevant in regard to the detecting of a translation strategy in a TT. This can be even

better grasped when we think again of the 'adventurous' solutions adopted in this very regard by Rabassa's text. It can be concluded, therefore, that, this is not a text which strives to enhance a risky but also more intimate relation with the ST. The Italian translation rather seems to prefer safer and more traditional strategies, mostly leading to 'neutralization' and 'invisibility'.

We had closed the first case study observing how the extension of the critical discourse about translation so as to include a "contextualistic semiotic perspective" (to use again Cattrysse's words) had helped detect and better identify the dynamics activated by the transfer process. With *Ardiente Paciencia* what had emerged was, on the one hand, the danger of an approach connoted by lack of theoretic awareness and ideological commitment, detectable at both interlinguistic and intersemiotic translation levels, but, on the other hand, it had confirmed also the possibility for dissimilar semiotic systems of developing interesting *relazioni traduttive*. Now, with *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*, the analysis of its written translations, while showing the obstacles and 'thorns' of cultural translation, has revealed the potentialities of a transcultural approach which strives not to lose sight of the ultimate goal: to remind of, and not to cancel the source text (and the culture which has produced it); in other words, to reveal, and not to hide 'the other'.

It is a challenging task, and we have seen how a translator must be determined and committed, as well as talented, obviously. The question is whether such a target is realistically sustainable even when the transfer is from the written page to the screen. In the previous case study the film *Il postino* offered a negative answer in this regard, but the film transposition of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is signed by one of the most *engagé* of Italian directors, Francesco Rosi. It will be particularly interesting, therefore, to identify the translation strategies and results of his *Cronaca di una morte annunciata*, especially after our encounter with Gregory Rabassa's very personal style.

Chapter 6 –The committed translator: the cinematic text

6.1a - Francesco Rosi, cinema as challenge

When in 1987 Francesco Rosi directed the film transposition of Márquez's novel, of which he had also written the screenplay together with Tonino Guerra, he had already an established reputation, and was universally regarded as an interesting Italian *auteur*. Beginning his apprenticeship with one of the Masters of Italian cinema, Luchino Visconti, in the shooting of *La terra trema* (1948), Rosi had already been noticed with his first two feature films, *La sfida* (*The Challenge*, 1957) and *I magliari* (*The Swindlers*, 1959), but fully revealed his originality and very personal vein only in *Salvatore Giuliano* (1961). The film immediately attracted the favourable attention of international film critics; and interest in his filmography continued also with subsequent films, although Rosi with his provocative and courageous choices, in both cinema and politics, also started to raise debates and controversies. Among his most famous titles before *Cronaca di una morte annunciata*, we should remember: *Le mani sulla città* (*Hands Over the City*, 1963), *Il caso Mattei* (*The Mattei Affair*, 1972), *Lucky Luciano* (1973), *Cadaveri eccellenti* (*Illustrious Corpses*, 1975), *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (*Christ Stopped at Eboli*, 1979), *Tre fratelli* (*Three Brothers*, 1980), *Carmen* (1984).

Cronaca di una morte annunciata, actually, follows three films, which had already shown how Rosi was trying to widen his artistic quest. It is important to remember that *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* marks an unexpected turn in Rosi's filmography, as Francesco Bolzoni remarks: "in un paese profondamente turbato dal caso Moro, e da altri casi misteriosi, il regista, con qualche sorpresa di alcuni, tornò a leggere uno dei libri più caratteristici del dopoguerra. *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* di Carlo Levi aveva convinto gli italiani, e non solo gli italiani, a scoprire il mondo dei contadini del Meridione [...] La scelta di Rosi poté sembrare una fuga all'indietro, quasi l'adagiarsi su una moda (in quegli anni, altri registi si erano confrontati con la società contadina [...]) Fin lì Rosi, facendo sua una suggestione che era stata dei neorealisti, si era occupato di temi di immediata attualità".³²² Thanks to his previous films, Rosi had even come to be identified

³²² "In a country deeply upset by the Moro case, and by similar mysterious cases, the director [Rosi] surprised the Italian audience by focusing his attention on the reading of one Italy's most striking post-war books. Carlo Levi's *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* had induced the Italians, and not only them, to rediscover the world of the Southern country people. [...] Rosi's choice could be interpreted as a backward flight, almost an acceptance of a fashion, since in those years other directors had dealt with the rural society [...] Till then, inheriting a Neorealist stance, Rosi had

with a very peculiar type of film-making, halfway between documentary, investigation, denunciation and political thriller: an *auteur engage* par excellence. Undeniably, until *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*, his films had systematically shown magistrates, generals, police officers, or powerful politicians, as the actual protagonists of the sinister and mysterious power struggles that had determined the last decades of Italian history. Rosi "narra storie collettive, storie che rischiano di venire rimosse, di essere cancellate dalla memoria stessa delle classi che dovrebbero ricordarle".³²³

The very title chosen by Carlo Testa for his volume about the Italian director, amply proves what we have just observed: *Poet of Civic Courage – The Films of Francesco Rosi*.³²⁴ However, Anton Giulio Mancino rightly invites us to abandon the often abused and therefore vague and misleading adjective 'civic' for such a director as Francesco Rosi. To label him like that could be the quickest way to 'embalm' him, he comments: "al cinema di Rosi [...] la prima caratteristica da riconoscergli, infatti, è proprio quella della politicità voluta, diretta, e determinante ai fini stessi della sua qualificazione estetica".³²⁵ 'Political cinema', then, rather than cinema of 'civic commitment'? If Rosi himself seems to confirm this view, in any case, we must remember that 'political' does not imply for him the adherence to any specific banner.³²⁶ "Con i miei film ho cercato più che altro di capire il mio Paese e di raccontarlo attraverso uno strumento", Rosi explains.³²⁷ In this, his stance would seem to be similar to that of Márquez himself, when the Colombian writer declares in an interview with Joan Mellen that if his books have had some political impact in Latin America it is because they have helped to create a Latin American identity, and not because they were written with any deliberately political intent. Although a political activist of the Left, Márquez remains strongly convinced that 'literature should not be used as a firearm'.³²⁸ Rosi's position is both similar and different from that of Márquez: like him, the Italian director does not conceive art as political propaganda, yet his approach is more ideologically connoted, as most of his best known films prove.

always focused only on urgent contemporary issues" [my translation], F. Bolzoni, *I film di Francesco Rosi*, Roma: Gremese Editore, 1986, p. 7.

³²³ "He tells collective stories, which would risk being suppressed, being wiped away from our memory by those very classes that should preserve them" [my translation], F. Bolzoni (1986), p. 9.

³²⁴ Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 1996.

³²⁵ "The first characteristic to be acknowledged in Rosi's cinema is that of its deliberate and direct political stance, determining also its aesthetic values" [my translation], A.G. Mancino and S. Zambetti (eds.), *Francesco Rosi*, Milano: Editrice Il Castoro, 1998, p. 10.

³²⁶ See C. Testa (1996), p. 3.

³²⁷ "Through my films I have mostly tried to understand my own country and to narrate it by means of an expressive tool" [my translation], quoted in A.G. Mancino and S. Zambetti (1998), p. 5.

³²⁸ J. Mellen (2000 a), p. 131.

Un film vede, documenta, denuncia, immagina, racconta. Per fare questo, pensa. Quindi, pensa anche la politica. Se pensa la politica, lo può fare in due maniere: esporre e sostenere una tesi, oppure inserirsi dialetticamente in un dibattito politico. Nel primo caso rischia la propaganda; nel secondo, corrisponde meglio alla definizione di 'politico', in quanto la politica è dialettica e dibattito. La propaganda ha in qualche caso prodotto dei capolavori [...] Personalmente la mia scelta è stata sempre quella del dibattito. [...] *Salvatore Giuliano*, *La mani sulla città*, *Uomini contro*, *Il caso Mattei*, *Lucky Luciano*, *Cadaveri eccellenti*, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*, *Tre fratelli*, *Dimenticare Palermo*, sono, tra i miei film, quelli che considero esplicitamente politici. A questo punto devo però confessare che non amo molto l'etichetta di cinema politico, perché la ritengo limitativa dei valori umani ed estetici di un film.³²⁹

Rosi is right in bringing attention to the 'aesthetic values' of cinema, since, his own films too often have been judged only through the parameter of ideology and contents, thus overshadowing the originality of his cinematic research. Already in *Salvatore Giuliano* it was not only the courage of a director in dealing with hot political and social issues that became apparent, but also a new way of making cinema: a sort of deliberate contamination between filmic and journalistic techniques, between documentary and dramatization, or TV investigation and historical-narrative reconstruction.³³⁰ As Carlo Testa points out, this 'blending' of aesthetic and civic categories was particularly innovative, in producing films where "intellectual rigour comes to fruition as aesthetic enjoyment".³³¹ Up to *Cadaveri eccellenti*, the stories of his films were developed without a chronological editing and a traditional structure (that is to say, without a clearly identifiable beginning, crescendo, climax and conclusion), and another distinctive trait was that Rosi's films clearly skipped the 'private' and psychological dimension, rather focusing on a 'public' and collective side, by showing deliberately static characters. It is in this regard, therefore, that critics point out how with *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*, and *Tre fratelli* a new note is clearly struck.³³² Although Rosi rightly defines both as 'political' texts, these two films, each in its own very distinctive way, show a return to the

³²⁹ "A film sees, documents, denounces, imagines, narrates. In order to do that, it thinks. Thus, it also thinks about politics. If it thinks about politics, it can do it in two ways: to put forward and support a thesis, or to dialectically enter a political debate. In the first case, it risks to become propaganda; in the second, it better suits the idea of 'political', since politics is dialectics and debate. In some cases propaganda has produced some masterpieces [...] Personally, my choice has always been on the side of debate. [...] *Salvatore Giuliano*, *Hands Over the City*, *Just Another War*, *The Mattei Affair*, *Lucky Luciano*, *Illustrious Corpses*, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, *Three Brothers*, *The Palermo Connection*, are those which I regard as the most overtly political ones of all my films. Here, however, I must admit that I do not really love the label of political cinema, as I consider it limiting the human and aesthetic values of a film" [*my translation*], quoted in A. G. Mancino and S. Zambetti (1998), p. 6.

³³⁰ See A. G. Mancino and S. Zambetti (1998), p. 11.

³³¹ C. Testa (1996), pp. 2-3.

³³² About Rosi's cinematic style, see in particular F. Bolzoni (1986), pp. 10, 13 and 14.

private, or better, a reaching out to the public through the private, and an artistic research which opens up to more contemplative, metaphysical and even lyrical notes.

What has not changed, however, is Rosi's fundamental approach, and his honesty in declaring it. He is a Leftist, but a Leftist who firmly and sincerely believes in a political fight which aims at radical reforms, not at violent revolution, in politics as well as in cinema.³³³ It is Anton Giulio Mancino's view that Rosi does not move against, but within the existing structures of cinema (the industrial, as well as the artistic ones), because, although he is aware that what comes out will necessarily be a 'product' for the market, he is also firmly convinced that, as a powerful and influential means of contact with mass audiences, cinema should be aptly 'moulded' so as to turn into an effective instrument for correcting the 'acritical and passive' characteristics of modern consumerism itself: in other words, Rosi's aim is to produce a radically different 'product' which can influence and improve the market, being a product that is provocative and transgressive, but still recognizable and acceptable by the market. "Da qui, un puntare alla razionalità dello spettatore attraverso l'aggancio emozionale; un procedere sul filo del rasoio tra coinvolgimento e distanziazione; un mirare all'opera aperta, che stimoli lo spettatore a metterci qualcosa di suo, ma proprio perché costruita secondo regole che gli sono abituali".³³⁴

A 'sincere' reformer like him necessarily avoids sticking to already experimented and 'worn out' solutions, and necessarily goes on searching and risking, thus continuously "embarking on new voyages of discovery", to use Patrick White's happy metaphor.³³⁵ This perhaps helps to explain why the original path of development traced by Francesco Rosi's films has generally been little understood and not fully appreciated in his own country, Italy, as the back cover of F. Bolzoni's essay points out with emphasis. Different has been the perception of his art abroad, in France, in particular, but also in the USA. Foreign critics, especially in the last decades, seem to have been more perceptive and receptive towards his films. Particularly meaningful, in this regard, is the reaction to his film *Tre fratelli*, which has been coldly received in

³³³ See A. G. Mancino and S. Zambetti (1998), p. 12: "Va rilevato, d'altra parte, come la posizione di Rosi nei confronti del cinema sia intimamente connessa a quella che egli assume ed esprime, più in generale, nei riguardi della società. La linea emergente dei suoi film è pure definibile come politicamente improntata ad obiettivi di riforma" ("it must be noted that Rosi's position with regard to cinema is intimately connected to the one he, more generally, takes and expresses about society. The stance emerging from his film is equally definable as politically aiming at reform", *my translation*).

³³⁴ "Hence, to aim at the spectator's rationality through the emotional involvement; a moving on the razor's edge, between involving and distancing; to strive towards an open work, which can seduce the spectator to add something of his own, but only because the work appears to be built according to rules which he is acquainted with" [*my translation*], A.G. Mancino and S. Zambetti (1998), p. 11.

³³⁵ P. White, *Flaws in the Glass*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Book, 1983, p. 182.

Italy, whereas the British and American critics clearly appreciated its qualities, and in general attention and high interest is shown by foreign observers, from the Hungarians to the French.³³⁶ And, as we will see later on, indifference, bordering on vague hostility, is even more clearly detectable among Italian commentators in the case of the film we are going to study.

6.1b - Francesco Rosi on film transposition

Francesco Rosi's interest in film transpositions of literary works does not start, nor ends, with Márquez's novel. If we do not want to include *Tre fratelli*, since it is only very freely based on a literary text (Andrej Platonov's short story, *Tretij Syn*), and *Dimenticare Palermo* (equally a free transposition of a novel by Edmonde Charles-Roux), his filmography includes five film transpositions of famous novels, plus a film transposition of an opera. In 1970, with *Uomini contro* (*Just Another War*), Rosi works on Emilio Lussu's *Un anno sull'altopiano*; then in 1976 *Cadaveri eccellenti* based on Leonardo Sciascia's *Il contesto*; followed in 1979 by *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* from Carlo Levi; in 1984 he undertakes Georges Bizet's opera, *Carmen*; in 1987 the new challenge of Márquez's novel, and finally, in 1996, his last film, which is another important film transposition, *La tregua* (*The Truce*) based on the homonymous text by Primo Levi. This explains why in the long interview inserted in Carlo Testa's volume, Rosi is explicitly invited to define his position about the conjoining of literature and cinema, and to explain what aims determine his choices, and how they affect his approach.

To a filmmaker, to an artist, what may be the difference between making a film based on a pre-existent text, and one based instead on a free creation, or on a social theme, in which no literary work preexists? [...]

Let me begin by saying that, as far as I am concerned, whenever I shoot films drawn from works of literature I always try to transpose those books which (with all the due, respectful distance I acknowledge between myself and the authors of those books) I could have 'written myself', or at least I would have been *interested* in writing myself: I have never chosen a book on the basis of it being a good commercial platform for the launching of the corresponding film. Instead, I have always chosen books that echoed my own way of seeing and perceiving the problems dealt with by their authors.³³⁷

What were then the reasons that attracted Rosi towards Márquez's text? Sandro Zambetti defines as "symptomatic" Rosi's interest in this novel, and goes on observing that at least "on paper", the novel presents itself as structured

³³⁶ 14 See F. Bolzoni (1986), pp. 132-3, and M. Marcus's illuminating analysis (*After Fellini*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002).

³³⁷ Interview conducted in Rome, 24 May 1994. Transcript translated and edited by Carlo Testa (1996), pp. 138-154.

in a similar way to *Salvatore Giuliano* or *Il caso Mattei*.³³⁸ Certainly the novel has a non chronological 'editing' of the story, as we have observed in the previous chapter; and to that, we could add other elements, such as its being a 'hybrid' of genres, including journalism, or its being centred around a tragic death, the real causes of which remain mysterious; also important is the deliberate absence of psychological depth in characterization, and finally, the presence of civic and social notes (the cruelty of the code of honour, and the hidden but strong hostility against the rich classes), which are all aspects that show affinity with Rosi's cinema. However, it is Rosi himself who, on the point of starting to shoot the film, remarks that, although at first sight the novel seems to be 'written for the cinema', it is instead a very complex literary text, which develops along a metaphysical, rather than mysterious dimension.³³⁹ Michael Ciment, interviewing Rosi in Colombia after two months of shooting, reports that the director even admitted that it was the most difficult film he had ever directed, and later further explained: "this is Márquez' most literary achievement. In his book, the characters hardly ever speak, which helps to create a more visual film but makes it difficult to explore individual psychology".³⁴⁰

In regard to the relevance of the theme of the code of honour in his reading of this story, Rosi himself, in an interview with Francesco Bolzoni, highlights how Márquez's text shows a *delitto d'onore* (a crime of honour), which is very different from those committed both in Sicily and in Mediterranean countries: a crime which is experienced by a whole urban community as a sacrificial rite, the sacrifice of the purifying lamb. According to him, individual behaviours and responsibilities, rather than fate, conjoin with collective ones in this 'announced death'.³⁴¹ It is a point which is really crucial for Rosi, who discusses it on other occasions. A *delitto d'onore* in itself is not an extraordinary event, but extraordinary are the cultural context and the way it takes place, Rosi explains. And, although the Italian director is aware of how difficult it may be for people in Europe to understand that there are places in the world where such a sacrifice is expected in order to wash out a stain not only from the honour of a girl, or a family, but from that of a whole community, he firmly believes it is well worth exposing how people can feel at ease, safe and protected by faiths or ideologies, which, on the other hand, dangerously implies a disappearing awareness of individual responsibilities. As he explains, a myth like that of honour, which has to be respected at any price, can equally cover up human cowardice and weakness.³⁴²

³³⁸ A. G. Mancino and S. Zambetti (1998), p. 135.

³³⁹ See F. Bolzoni (1986), p. 38.

³⁴⁰ M. Ciment, "Chronicle of a Film Foretold", in *Sight and Sound*, 56: 1 (1986-1987: winter), p. 19.

³⁴¹ F. Bolzoni (1986), p. 38.

³⁴² A. G. Mancino and S. Zambetti (1998), p. 6.

Let us now return to Rosi's interview with Carlo Testa, starting from the point when he comments on the differences in approach when writing and directing a screenplay based on a well-known novel.

[...] There certainly *is* a difference between the two patterns. That comes across in the very way a film is written. The script of a film arising from the direct observation of reality [...] enjoys a freedom that comes to fruition by the use of all available sources of information and inspiration. For example, when I made these two films [*Hands Over the City*, *The Mattei Affair*] just as was the case when I made *Tre fratelli*, I not only drew upon the observation of reality, but also turned to a narrative form derived from journalism, from television, from various sources of information – from the news, to put it briefly. By contrast, a novel or book has *already* carried out its own process of historical sedimentation of a given topic. Therefore, when one turns to a book by a great author, one is forced to move within narrower, predetermined bounds. One cannot choose a masterpiece such as Levi's *Christ stopped at Eboli* and then use it exclusively as a source of raw material. That simply would not be a legitimate way to proceed. Using a book as a source and as a point of reference carries with it the obligation to respect a certain narrative structure. Surely, this narrative structure will eventually, when translated into images, have to muster the specific demands made upon them by the images themselves, which are different from those imposed by words. Thus it is that the film also eventually becomes an act of writing [*scrittura*], to the extent that the creative process involved in a film is autonomous with respect to its literary antecedent.³⁴³

As we can see, Rosi, obviously, does not use any translation studies jargon and technicalities, such as, for example, 'intersemiotic translation': it would be completely outside his field and scope. Yet, we could say that, even if not theorizing about it, he perfectly assumes the role and task of the 'intersemiotic translator'. In this perspective, it is no coincidence that he does not use the common term 'adaptation': not only is he aware of the fact that the novel and the film are intimately, but not hierarchically connected, but, more important than that, he knows that both are texts, in other words, both the novel and the film are 'acts of writing', although each one follows its own semiotic language.

6.1c - Gabriel García Márquez and the film transposition of his works

Although Gabriel García Márquez has had a long interest in cinema, dating back to the late Forties and to his enthusiastic discovery of Italian Neorealism, triggered off by De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (*Bicycle Thieves*), and has even written some screenplays himself, his relationship with cinema has never stopped being one of 'love-hate'.³⁴⁴ Similarly, his position about the film transposition of

³⁴³ C. Testa (1996), pp. 145-6.

³⁴⁴ See P. A. Paranagua, "G.G.M. et le cinéma", in *Positif*, n.316 (1987: June), pp. 19-22.

his own works has been 'ambivalent', to use J. Mellen's term, even if it would probably be more exact to describe it mostly as distrustful.³⁴⁵ As J. Mellen goes on to explain, with regard to Márquez's masterpiece, *Cien años de soledad*, the writer has practically prevented any transposition of the novel for the screen, and his reply to those who asked him about his other famous novel, *El amor en los tiempos del cólera*, is particularly revealing: "I don't mind as long as it's a Latin American movie. By that I mean one that is directed by a Latin American, that exudes the atmosphere of Latin America, that shows our character, our way of being, our society, because those are the things that define this drama." He very honestly admits that he is aware that he could not be satisfied with any transposition of his works, and therefore wisely concludes that the best solution for him is to absolutely avoid getting involved, which is exactly what he has preferred to do with Rosi's film, too. And J. Mellen tells how, when Rosi proposed to show Márquez his screenplay, the novelist replied, "Don't show it to me because if I read it, the film will probably never be made. I am thinking of my book and you are thinking of your film. I wrote the book alone; you make the film alone." Later, Rosi thanked him, as Mellen mentions.³⁴⁶ This is also confirmed by Michael Ciment, who reports Rosi's comment of implicit perfect understanding of Márquez's view:

We are close friends and we have a mutual esteem. But, like all writers who know about cinema, he is well aware that a film is autonomous in relation to a literary work. He said to me very clearly, "The book is mine, the film is yours".³⁴⁷

However, it cannot be denied that, especially when he stresses the necessity for his works to be transposed by Latin American directors, being texts very intimately intertwined with a very specific culture, Márquez's view makes the task all the more difficult for Rosi, or better shows how risky and arduous the task can be. What is meaningful is that Márquez is not distrustful of film transposition in itself, but is rightly concerned about the difficulties of establishing a correct dialogue across cultures, doubts which he has often expressed even about translation of his works at large, as we have observed in the previous chapter. Rosi is aware of that, but nonetheless he is not deterred, and lucidly embarks on what he appropriately calls a 'challenge'. "È un'altra sfida, se vuoi", he tells Francesco Bolzoni³⁴⁸, which is echoed by Michael Ciment at the very beginning of his long article:

Some film-makers thrive on challenges, as though difficulties of all kinds stimulated their creative impulses. Such is Francesco Rosi. Why else would a

³⁴⁵ J. Mellen (2000 a), p. 114.

³⁴⁶ J. Mellen (2000a), pp. 114-5.

³⁴⁷ M. Ciment (1986-7), p. 20.

³⁴⁸ "It's another challenge, if you want", F. Bolzoni (1986), p. 35.

64-year-old director with his record of festival honours, of critical and commercial successes, decide to shoot for seventeen weeks in Colombia, six days a week, under the tropical sun, with an average temperature of 35° to 40° centigrade, 70 per cent humidity and in an environment threatening enough for the producers to give each actor a bodyguard?³⁴⁹

6.2 - The film and the opinions of the critics

Critics are divided, in some cases even vehemently, about Rosi's *Cronaca di una morte annunciata*. But often they simply seem to be disconcerted and in difficulties at expressing a clear judgement about this film, which fundamentally they do not like. Rosi's arduous approach to Márquez's 'planet' has proved to be a challenging experience indeed, as Paola Taggi remarks, even more because expectations were high, and the film was expected to be, 'was due to be', a market success, at least because of its high financial budget. And a success it was, after all, Taggi comments, notwithstanding the 'savage' reviews in the foreign press and the more muffled criticism of home papers. Yet, she states, the film, with all its cinematic elegance and beautiful scenery, remains fundamentally "useless": "L'impressione di un lungo, elegante spot, di uno sguardo 'turistico' formalmente ineccepibile ma gettato sul vuoto non è facile scacciarla".³⁵⁰ And thus Taggi's conclusive remark aptly synthesizes the prevailing accusations that were raised against the film.

If the exquisite photography of Pasqualino de Santis is unanimously praised, as well as the accomplished mastery of Rosi's direction, the film is accused of lacking real dramatic tension. The film's language is said to remain descriptive and resonant, bordering on "mannerism", but lacking political, historical and psychological depth (Massimo Garritano).³⁵¹ If there is undeniable aesthetic pleasure in the film, this time, however, Rosi's 'intelligent aestheticism' is found to be 'portentous-even ridiculous' (Mark Le Fanu).³⁵² Also other reviewers speak of 'pompous' and 'calligraphic' style, especially with regard to the prominent role that the Colombian landscape and nature come to play in Rosi's film. "Il paesaggio colombiano, marginalmente descritto nel libro, si trasforma in più occasioni da sfondo a protagonista".³⁵³ Moreover the film is said to lack internal coherence and cohesion, and is even accused of bordering on melodrama and cheap lyricism; furthermore, characters do not seem to properly relate to each other, and particularly criticized is the choice of Rupert Everett for

³⁴⁹ M. Ciment (1986-7), p. 19.

³⁵⁰ "It is not easy to suppress the impression of a long, elegant, 'touristic' advertisement, formally perfect, but overlooking a void" [my translation], P. Taggi, "Cronaca di una morte annunciata", in *Segnocinema*, 29 (1987: September - October), p. 109.

³⁵¹ Review in *Quaderni di cinema*, n. 32 (1987: March-April), p. 41.

³⁵² Review in *Sight and Sound*, 56:3 (1987: summer), p. 222.

³⁵³ "The Colombian landscape, marginally described in the novel, in more than one case shifts from mere background to be the protagonist" [translation], unsigned review, only the initials (R.P.), in *Cinema Nuovo*, n. 308-9 (1987: July-October), p. 63.

the role of Bayardo San Roman, the rich and mysterious stranger (but not a foreigner) who arrives in the village and marries Angela. As Mark Le Fanu points out, the actor is required to play an upper-class Colombian, and therefore he should be supposed to be speaking Spanish, which he is not, since the actor cannot speak that language: "making a virtue of necessity, the script has turned him into a 'gringo'".³⁵⁴

One might comment that these reviewers generally seem to forget and overlook the fact that this film is a transposition, and in any case, even when they refer to Márquez's text, they do not always seem to be really well acquainted with it. Thus, in this film Rosi is accused of not being faithful to his distinctive trait; he is blamed for abandoning a type of cinema which aimed at building up an emblematic history of a culture and of a country, and is criticized for diluting a personal style of cinema which could 'make history' through the analysis of individual and symptomatic cases; he is even stigmatised for lack of psychological depth in characterization. But these, in themselves, cannot be regarded as flaws in Rosi's film: they are specific characteristics of the ST, and therefore the analysis should be extended to the novel as well. In this, Mark Le Fanu is more honest when he implicitly admits that he is not acquainted with the novel, and openly wonders whether "the false melodrama lies in the book itself, or in its adaptation".³⁵⁵

However, Rosi's *Cronaca di una morte annunciata* has also its passionate 'champions'. To start with Thomas Elsaesser, who, although also suggesting the risk for Rosi's social commitment of mellowing into melodrama, finds that the film assumes "an epic sweep" thanks to its complex chronology, interweaving of scenes, and "a dense forest of symbols" and repetition of motifs.³⁵⁶ But above all, it is the French film journal *Positif* that devotes a whole section (with four detailed and appreciative articles) to this film. Remembering how Rosi's filmography is characterized by a constant and fertile tension between the fabulous, the mythical, the dreamlike on the one hand, and on the other, the bare document, the cult of historical and social reality, Robert Benayoun affirms that with *Cronaca di una morte annunciata* Rosi seems to have at last reached the happy balance between the two dimensions. "Ceux qui cantonnent Rosi dans sa veine testimoniale minimisent l'aspect lyrique, exacerbé, spectaculaire, cérémonial de tous ses films".³⁵⁷ Much more direct is the opening of Michel Sineux's paper, accusing intellectual Parisians in general, and specifically the French critics of Rosi's films, of 'cultural imperialism', and even of false information. Sineux, who finds Rosi's 'one of the most modern' approaches to reality, provides a well supported and passionate analysis of the film as

³⁵⁴ M. Le Fanu (1987) p. 222.

³⁵⁵ M. Le Fanu (1987) p. 222.

³⁵⁶ Review in *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 54: 641 (1987: June), p. 164.

³⁵⁷ "Those who corner Rosi into his testimonial vein, minimize the lyric, exacerbated, spectacular and ceremonial aspect of all his films" [*my translation*], R. Benayoun, "Dialectique du clair-obscur chez Francesco Rosi", in *Positif*, n. 316 (1987: Juin), p. 12.

transposition. First of all, he affirms, Rosi, like Márquez, aims at a style which can be defined as 'participative', in that they both try to directly involve their addressees, either the reader or the spectator, by creating complex texts focused on images of reality that need active decoding.

Contrairement à ce que l'on a pu lire un peu partout, le travail d'adaptation accompli par Rosi sur le récit de García Márquez est exemplaire, en ce sens qu'il n'invente jamais, se contentant seulement de transposer visuellement en développant des virtualités présentes en état de latence dans un récit littéraire par excellence.³⁵⁸

According to Sinoux, the accusations of melodrama and sentimentality are absolutely unfounded and ridiculous, and they imply that it has not been understood how the film rather offers a contemporary way of 'revisiting' classic tragedy. If this transposition is a success, it is mostly because the very structure of this type of film has allowed Rosi to conjoin and intertwine different styles which separately had already punctuated his creative work: the analytic approach (in his film dossiers), the contemplative interiorization (detectable in *Il Caso Mattei* and *Lucky Luciano*), the obsession with time and death in *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* and *Tre fratelli*, and finally the operatic lyricism in *Carmen*. And Synoux concludes that it is thanks to the perfect blending of all of them that Rosi's *Cronaca di una morte annunciata* reaches its exceptional plastic and dynamic unity as well as its metaphysical depth.

6.3a - The film and the overt rendering of a culture

Such a diversified reaction to the film can only partially help our reading, apart from its intrinsic curiosity in that it clearly reveals how criticism of any form of contemporary art, including art cinema, often finishes with very subjective positions, which make the pretence to be authoritative sound all the more arbitrary and preposterous. Those reviews certainly can provide good elements for analysis, but the focus and the aim in this research are, and must remain, different: the issue is for us what type of communication between cultures is activated whenever there is a transfer across borders, and our approach is descriptive, rather than evaluative and normative. Thus, we will again start by loosely following Torop's table (at least, with regard to the division in parameters), since, although it is not conceived for intersemiotic analysis, it can still help to develop a more systemic and organic discourse, as we have already had the opportunity to point out in the previous chapters.

³⁵⁸ "On the contrary to what we can read almost everywhere, the work of adaptation accomplished by Rosi on García Márquez's story, is exemplary, in that he never invents, but only limits himself to visually transpose, thus developing the potentialities that are latent in such literary text par excellence" M. Sinoux, "Le récit et les images", in *Positif* n. 316 (1987: June), p. 16.

Remaining faithful to the teaching of his Master, Luchino Visconti, Francesco Rosi decided to rigorously shoot on location also in this film, "going through the ordeal of a contact with reality to test the authenticity of peoples and places" as Michael Ciment comments.³⁵⁹ The film is shot partly in Cartagena-de-Indias (some interiors, like those at the Vicarios' or at the Nasars', and the beginning of the film with the background of modern skyscrapers), but mostly in Mompox, which Rosi had chosen for its old Spanish colonial architecture, although it was a rather haunted town since the time the Rio Magdalena changed its course. He definitely did not want to forsake the idea of shooting there, even if only a year before a similar plan had to be dropped for the shooting of some scenes of Roland Joffé's film *The Mission* because of impossible conditions.³⁶⁰ Designer Andrea Crisanti highlights how wonderful the architecture of Mompox is, since this is the town where the Spaniards took refuge when they were attacked by the English at Cartagena, and where they built impressive cathedrals and rich mansions.³⁶¹ Thus, the setting is fundamentally authentic throughout the film, with only some exceptions: the huge square that stages Santiago Nasar's murder, for example, is not the square in Mompox, since the actual one was not big enough for the mise-en-scene Rosi was conceiving; but, although a fake one, it is still a faithful and realistic reconstruction of it on a larger scale, which took five months and the work of 150 workers to build.

All this amply shows how aware Rosi was of the necessity to have a 'full immersion' into the cultural reality of the text he was to transpose onto the screen. It is true that he could speak fluent Spanish and, when embarking on this Colombian experience, he was already no stranger to Latin America, since in the 1960s he had spent six months in Bolivia working on a project on Che Guevara; yet, he knew it would not be an easy task for a foreign director to approach the unique cultural complexity and richness of Márquez's novel. It is clear that shooting on location, trying to avoid artificial settings as much as possible, along with a meticulous attention to details, from urban settings and internal ornaments, to natural landscapes and local fauna ("D'Italie on n'a pratiquement rien amené. On a tout recherché sur place", as Crisanti comments), all this leads to the great relevance played in the IT by *realia* and cultural signs in general.³⁶² Evidence of a high hybridization of races, as well as carefully chosen images of architecture and urbanization, the peculiarity of local customs, celebrations, music and dancing, the exuberance of tropical vegetation, the abundance and contact with a myriad of different and exotic animals: they all contribute to identify and colourfully define the setting. The insistence on such elements (not always directly justified by the ST) is so marked that they

³⁵⁹ M. Ciment (1986-7), p. 19.

³⁶⁰ M. Ciment (1986-7), p. 19.

³⁶¹ A. Crisanti, "De Rosi à Tar Koski". In *Positif*, n. 315 (1987; May), p. 10.

³⁶² "There is practically nothing from Italy. Everything was found on the spot" [*my translation*], A. Crisanti (1987), p. 10

cannot be overlooked by even the most superficial and careless of spectators, to the point that, at least in this aspect, we can clearly speak of 'exotization'. Without entering into any form of evaluative remarks, or agreeing with Paola Taggi when she speaks of "sguardo turistico" (a tourist's perspective), we can however comment that in this need to stress overt cultural elements (which instead would be implicit if the text were kept within its national borders), the film actually reveals the 'hand' of a foreign author, moreover influenced by the awareness of addressing an international audience, who, as such, are equally foreign with regard to the culture shown by the film, and, like the director himself are more likely to be influenced by expectations of exotic emotions.

6.3b - The parameter of space

A different solution seems instead to be adopted by the filmic TT in dealing with the parameter of space, or at least this is the first impression. The language of Márquez's novel is definitely connoted from both the geographic and the social points of view. In the previous chapter we have already had the opportunity of remarking how, notwithstanding the absence of any actual social jargon or regional dialect, the whole narrative language is subtly imbued with localisms, as well as characterized by a colloquial and low register in the tradition of oral story-telling, which, however, does not contrast with a variety of genre codes. A double parenthesis must be opened here. First, we should specify that in extending the use of Torop's table, which is conceived for a verbal text, to the analysis of filmic transfers, we would be conducting a very arbitrary operation, unless we are aware that Torop's translation parameters must be taken as broad categories, thus leaving room for necessary adaptation to a different semiotic language. This explains why, for example, in the previous section, which corresponds to Torop's first parameter, the parameter of language, we have focused on culturally meaningful visual signs, identifying them as *realia*, and temporarily leaving aside the verbal language, which is, in any case, playing an important role as well, as we are going to see.

Secondly, it has been possible for me only to examine the Italian dubbed version of Rosi's film, which, at any rate, is the official one. We learn from the reviews, that also in this case Rosi remained faithful to his principle of shooting in direct sound, and for that reason the character of Bayardo San Roman, played by Rupert Everett, was artfully turned into a 'gringo' to cover the linguistic problems of the actor, as we have already mentioned. It would have been very interesting, therefore, to have the opportunity of listening to the original sound track, although we are a little dubious about the possibility that the Spanish spoken by such an international cast could convincingly sound like that spoken in the region portrayed by the film, unless the actors were all dubbed. There is only one exception: Lina Botero, the daughter of Fernando Botero, the famous Colombian painter, who interprets one of Angela Vicario's sisters. But the other main actors were: the well-known Italian actor Gian Maria Volonté (Cristo

Bedoya), Anthony Delon, the young son of the French star Alain Delon (Santiago Nasar), the Italian actress Ornella Muti (Angela Vicario), the famous Greek actress Irene Papas (her mother), Lucia Bosé, who at least was of Spanish origin (Placida Linero, Santiago Nasar's mother), Caroline Lang, daughter of a French Minister of Culture (Margot, Cristo Bedoya's sister), Carolina Rosi, the director's own daughter (Flora Miguel, Santiago Nasar's fiancée).

If with regard to the live soundtrack we can only make hypotheses, we can instead definitely conclude that the Italian spoken in the official version is a standard, almost 'aseptic', language, with neither regional nor social inflections. It is true that dialogues are limited in the ST, and, consequently, it is not only through them that the local and popular 'flavour' of the language is conveyed in the novel. Yet, it cannot be denied that, at least as regards the spoken language, the translation strategy here adopted appears to be mostly that of neutralization. However, apart from the actual language spoken by the characters, there can be other alternative ways, other signs through which a filmic TT can try to transfer such an important cultural element, and, in effect, the visual solutions adopted by the film are varied. Rather than the lively colloquial and low-register note characterizing the tradition of popular story-telling in Márquez's narrative writing, the film tries to stress the social and racial elements, perhaps more in line with Rosi's habitual interests, but, as we have just said, this is not achieved through the language.

It is interesting to notice that the poor and the common people, all of whom are either blacks or mestizos, are clearly presented as external to the main story. The film begins with the voyage back of the narrator, Cristo Bedoya, a white middle-class man (a doctor), who from the ferry-boat intently watches the poverty-stricken outskirts of the town, against which a rich mansion stands. It is the residence of the powerful family of Santiago Nasar and it is to that class that also the narrator belongs, as do all the other main characters. But before really entering the story, the guiding gaze of the narrator lingers a little bit longer on the life ashore, which appears to perfectly confirm the previous images of poverty. The poor, the workers, the common people, are only introduced in these initial scenes of the narrow crowded streets of Mompox, and will appear again, and in foreground, only at the end of the film in the dramatic scene of the murder of Santiago, which in the film precedes the return of Bayardo San Roman to his abandoned wife Angela. In between, almost framed by the presence of the blacks and mestizos, there is the incongruous flowing of the life of the upper and middle classes, with their elegant houses, absurd moral codes and tragic destinies, a life that excludes and victimizes the poorer classes, who however are also witnesses and implicit judges to the final punishment of the affluent. At least, this seems to be the strong message of all those powerful portrait shots at the end of the film, a long gallery of faces who impassively watch the ritual sacrifice of a representative of the white rich slaughtered by other members of the same middle class, although less rich than him. It could be observed, however, that Santiago Nasar is killed for other reasons, and not for

his responsibility as a member of a social class, and therefore his crime should not even directly affect them, the poor and the mestizos. Moreover, if it is true that the code of honour is experienced as a common moral value by the whole town, the poor are left outside the story, rather as a frame to it, so that the shared moral code does not seem to justify the stern gaze and guilty lack of assistance which is shown by all the by-standers, and which is so powerfully and vividly highlighted by the camera. Thus, thanks to superb photography (colour contrasts, effects of light/darkness, framing) and to very effective editing, creating dramatic alternation and contrast of the more and more anxious looks of the victim with the impassive and cruelly severe faces of the witnesses, the poor, implicitly makes these low-class blacks and mestizos play a more direct role than that of mere spectators, and their silent presence at the beginning and end of the story seems to turn them into sinister 'avengers', thus increasing the social and racial tensions latent in the story.

It is, of course, a subjective and questionable choice by a director who is clearly aware of the need to take risks in order to transfer his 'respectful', but still 'personal', reading of the text through what is necessarily his own 'act of writing'. This explains the tension created here, with regard to the parameter of space, by the translation strategies adopted: neutralization for the language spoken in dialogues and in voice-over comments, but 'emphasizing' of the social and racial contrast in showing a society where the colour of the skin, and the origin of one's own ancestors, clearly determines personal positions and possibilities in life, so that, in this respect, we should once again speak of a more subtle, but still clear form of 'exotization' in Rosi's film.

6.3c - The parameter of text

The reviews of the film generally agree that the TT has fundamentally respected the novel, and do not even notice or comment on the change of the narrator. From a certain point of view, we could agree, since it cannot be denied that Rosi never forgets his 'obligations' towards the text he is working on, and the need to respect a certain narrative structure, and thus this film is very far from being a so-called 'free adaptation'. Yet, there are some important modifications to be pointed out, at the level of both narrative structure and contents, if not really at the level of the story, which is instead fundamentally left unaltered. These modifications regard three main points: the narrator, the love story between Bayardo and Angela, and the gruesome episode of the autopsy of Santiago's body.

Starting with the first element, we must remember that *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is one of the two novels where Gabriel García Márquez is directly present as a character. In this text, as already observed, not only is he present as the 'homodiegetic' first person narrator, but he also uses the names of his relatives for some of the characters and even introduces a number of hidden autobiographical details. However, although he is the author of the informal

'inquest' and is emotionally involved in the story with its aftermath, as a close friend of the victim and also because in the past he had lived in the town, and moreover he is the character guiding the piecing together of the scattered and confusing pieces of the absurd 'puzzle', in the ST the narrator is never in the foreground, and the story is in effect much more choral, building up through a myriad of subjective memories and witnesses. In other words, the narrator is inside the story, but he is not really a full character, as we have already pointed out in the previous chapter (section 5.3f).

This could explain why in this film Rosi has decided on a different approach than in apparently similar cases: unlike this film, in his other two transpositions based on texts presenting the authors as 'homodiegetic' narrators (*Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* and *La tregua*), his decision is to fictionally respect this characteristic of the STs, and have actors playing respectively Carlo Levi and Primo Levi. But in these cases, the role played by the narrator is much more ponderous in the texts, and meaningfully Rosi even decides to highlight it, by shifting the focus of his filmic texts onto the characters of the two writers and on their role and function as both witnesses and interpreters of vital moments in the history of Italy. With *Cronaca di una morte annunciata*, instead, he keeps the homodiegetic narrator, but shifts it from the author, who is completely left out, to another character, Cristo Bedoya (a close friend of young Márquez), while, however, still trying to give significance to him and to his role as the provider of a narrative frame. The choice of a favourite actor with Rosi, Gian Maria Volonté (starring in *Uomini contro*, *Il caso Mattei*, *Lucky Luciano*, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*) by itself already implies a special relevance for this character, and also immediately evokes a very peculiar type of observer: a committed, receptive and rational onlooker. Moreover the screenplay decides to fictionalize the narration itself, by introducing the main story through the long initial sequence of Cristo Bedoya leaving the skyscrapers of Cartagena and approaching the old town by ferry-boat, and showing him later, during the film, while looking at, and making comments on old photos of him as a young man together with the victim and other characters, or showing how he tries to provide a plausible explanation to those who are wondering at his re-opening of an old and forgotten case. In this regard, however, it should be noted that some reviewers like Thomas Elsaesser or Massimo Garritano, do not seem to find this amplification of the narrative frame really convincing, suggesting that the film has opened with a narrative 'path', which is then left without proper development, unlike what instead occurs in *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* and *La tregua*.³⁶³ In particular, Paola Taggi does not approve of the use of the narrative voice-over, which alternates with scenes where Bedoya acts as a proper 'homodiegetic' narrator, and which she finds to have the detrimental effect of 'cooling down' the drama and the effect of the otherwise vivid flash-backs.³⁶⁴

³⁶³ T. Elsaesser (1987), p. 163; M. Garritano (1987), p. 40.

³⁶⁴ P. Taggi (1987), p. 109.

These remarks may be true, but the character of Cristo Bedoya, as he is transformed in the film, certainly is functional for the introduction of the analytic approach and the 'contemplative interiorization' look, which contribute to create that hybrid of genres distinguishing the ST itself, even if, in order to achieve that, the filmic TT partly resorts to different elements from those used by the novel.

The story of the love between Bayardo and Angela is given clear pre-eminence in the film, almost becoming a film within the film. The love story already occupies completely one of the five sections of the novel, and part of the fourth one, but to that already significant attention, the screenplay adds several minor scenes and dialogues, to the point that practically half of the film is devoted to it. In both texts, it is an extraordinary love story, since Bayardo destroys his marriage and hopes of happiness on the very first night of his ostentatiously rich wedding, and then completely goes out of sight, reappearing mysteriously after a very long time, to come back to his aged wife who has, equally astonishingly, started to love him from the very moment she has been so badly mistreated and abandoned by him, and for more than thirty years has kept sending him love letters, which he has dutifully piled up without ever opening any of them. As we remembered in the previous chapter, Márquez himself has defined the novel "a terrible story of love", and this would therefore justify the choices of the film in this regard. The emphasis in the screenplay is moreover accompanied by a corresponding cinematic accentuation: different movements of the camera (for example, in the initial sequences the camera is more static, with dramatic rhythm created mostly through a very effective editing, while with the arrival of Bayardo the camera starts moving more, following the character), a clear slowing down of the narrative rhythm, different colours to evoke the magic moments of this love, and above all a linear chronological development, differently from the other sequences. All this has the undeniable effect of identifying and isolating this part of the film as traditional romance cinema, so that the introduction of dialogues and smaller episodes, in spite of providing more clues and making the love story less obscure, does not really explain the core mystery of this relationship and the apparent incongruity and incoherencies of the two characters. The paradox is that this love story, with all its 'magic' and fabulous elements, works perfectly in the ST, where it is kept in a context of folk oral story-telling (the way of narrating Márquez had learnt from his grandmother), but is much less convincing the very moment it is 'diluted' and neutralized in order to make it plausible and more in line with traditional love film dramas, or melodramas. This explains why this is the aspect of the film that critics liked least, and which led to the already reported accusation of 'melodrama and cheap lyricism', and to the denunciation of lack of psychological depth in characterization.³⁶⁵

³⁶⁵ See previous section about the critical reaction to the film.

The third main modification introduced is the omission of the episode of the autopsy on the body of Santiago Nasar, that in the novel opens the fourth section and lasts for six pages, full of gruesome notes. It is a 'massacre', almost like a second killing of the poor victim, all the crueller for being pointless (a 'stupid' order from the conceited and inexperienced mayor, who does not really know what should be done in such cases) and not even carried out by a doctor, but by the parish priest, moreover with very limited and rudimentary tools. The outrageous dismemberment and dispersion of the body of a handsome twenty-one-year-old man concludes with the grotesquely revolting episode of the priest/surgeon who, not knowing what to do with the sliced-up intestines ("las vísceras destazadas") "gave them an angry blessing and threw them into the garbage pail" (76). A few pages before, characteristically interrupting the narration of the autopsy with a flashback to the moment of Santiago's death, it had been described how those very dogs that, at the beginning of the novel (and therefore at the beginning of the day when Santiago would be killed), were feasting on the guts of rabbits in the kitchen, were then trying to eat the very guts of their young owner agonizing on the same kitchen floor. On analyzing the English translation by Gregory Rabassa, we have already had the opportunity of commenting on this strong association/contrast of beautiful and macabre elements in Márquez's writing, so characteristic of his narrative style, but also so symptomatic of a specific cultural background. On that occasion, we pointed out how the very closing image of the novel is that of Santiago, 'handsomer than ever', but soaked in blood, and holding 'el racimo de sus entrañas' (the bunch of his entrails) and spreading around a terrible smell of shit, who is walking with his 'usual good-bearing', before collapsing face down onto the floor. Perhaps, it would have been too strong an image for an international audience and maybe for Rosi himself. We should remark that even in his famous film-dossiers about violent murders (such as, for example, *Salvatore Giuliano*, or *Cadaveri eccellenti*), although always trying to give an honest and realistic rendering of facts, Rosi never gave too detailed or shocking rendering of killings. Thus it does not seem a coincidence that both the episode of the autopsy, and the grueling recurring motif of the entrails are completely omitted in the film, and moreover this could not simply be explained on the grounds of the need for a screenplay to simplify and shorten the plot, so as to keep it within the time limit of a feature film. Otherwise, if the need to synthesize had been Rosi's prevailing criterion, then the enlargement of the love story would appear to be totally incongruous and out of place.

6.3d - The parameter of text: the interweaving of narrative styles

If in the last case, Rosi's film reveals a neutralizing rendering in regard to the clashing combination of the beautiful and the macabre, and a more subtle, but still detectable form of neutralization could be noticed also in the dilution and lengthening of the love story, however, it would not be correct to infer that

neutralization is to be identified as the prevailing strategy adopted by Rosi's film for the fundamental parameter of text. Besides the already mentioned strengthening of the social and racial note, there are other interesting elements in this film that rather point to the opposite direction. First of all, the non chronological treatment of time and the hybridization of genres, so relevant in the novel, are equally important in the filmic TT, to the point that, at least in this regard, Márquez and Rosi are really on the same wavelength. This is evident from the very beginning of the film, and in the series of sequences that precede the arrival of Bayardo San Roman, but it is perfectly confirmed also later, and especially in the impressive sequence of the killing and death of Santiago.

Since it would not be appropriate to analyze all of them, let us focus only on a particularly meaningful sequence: the first main flashback of the film, this time introduced in a rather traditional way by the close-up of the photo on Santiago's tomb. The fading out of the photo introduces the fading in on Santiago, smiling and exuberant, running through thick and luxuriant tropical vegetation. Santiago is dressed in white and thus he creates a vivid contrast with the surrounding green of the trees. The flashback is also introduced by the continuing music from the preceding scene at the cemetery, but now a rhythmic beating becomes audible: it vaguely recalls the rhythmic drumming which had characterized the musical theme of Cristo Bedoya's initial voyage on the ferry-boat at the opening of the film, even if now it clearly appears to be a heartbeat. It is Santiago's heartbeat, which immediately evokes a dreamlike atmosphere, confirmed by the fact that his movements are strangely slowed down and colours start gradually taking on a more and more washed out shade. The effective and quick editing of the shots in this scene, highlights how the dream turns into a nightmare, with the young man who stops smiling and becomes more and more anxious and perplexed (exactly the same worried looks he has in the tragic sequence of his death) at the sinister and mysterious presence of threatening birds (and here, of course, the immediate intertextual cinematic reference is to Hitchcock's masterpiece, *The Birds*, which increases the ominous feeling of dismay in the audience).

The nightmare ends, and the following shot is of Santiago waking up, but the theme of the birds is immediately taken up again in the following short scene of the waking up of his mother, who, looking out of the window, is attracted by a flock of big birds flying high in the sky, with some of them then landing in the garden. Scenes and shots follow one another with a tense, highly involving rhythm, as in a classic thriller or action-drama film: the short conversation with the mother who misinterprets Santiago's dream, is followed by the sequence in the kitchen, with more interruptions of the linear chronological line by repeated shifting forward and backward between the past of that Monday when Santiago was to be killed, and the present of Cristo Bedoya carrying out his personal investigation and questioning the characters involved in the facts. Scenes in direct dialogue alternate with short scenes commented by Cristo Bedoya's voice-over, and the effect of this interweaving of temporal levels, suggesting a free movement between time segments, is skillfully accompanied and reiterated by an open use of

the frame, with characters physically leaving and reentering the framed image: such a link between the movement within the frame and the movement within the temporal unit implies the use of a sophisticated, and 'specifically cinematic' code.³⁶⁶ Very effective, then, is the shifting from the concluding frame of the flashback inside the house of Santiago, which ends with a striking close-up on the left part of the face of Divina Flor. Half hiding herself behind a massive dark door, the young girl is thoughtfully watching her young master, while the narrator's voice-over, stressing how the young man that the girl is watching is actually doomed, leads into the present with a long shot of Cristo Bedoya in the middle of the sunlit square. The camera is kept fixed on him, while he, resuming his voice-over, goes on talking and starts approaching the camera. He talks and purposefully stares into the camera in the typical style of a TV-reporter from the 'field', clearly addressing and involving the audience outside the 'stage'. His stern and inquisitive look is immediately followed by a further flashback, which links up with the previous flashback, and effectively begins with the moment when Santiago, who has just left Divina Flor and his house, walks into the square. He is walking and smiling, in a confidently, charmingly cocky way ('with his usual good bearing', we could add), but objects and people, mostly vividly coloured, in contrast with his clothes and the prevailing white of the surrounding chalk buildings, keep passing between him and the camera, so that the sight of him is continuously obstructed, somewhat ominously. Once again, spectators are 'subliminally' reminded of the delicate relationship between the magic art of cinema and reality, while at the same time they are called to keep up with their task as both spectator and witness. Here we can understand, therefore, what Sandro Zambetti means when he comments that this film is actually a 'metalinguistic' text, much more than the previous ones by Rosi, and instead more similar to the following ones, *Dimenticare Palermo* and *Diario napoletano*.³⁶⁷ And Antonio Mancino's words also come back to mind, when he reflects on the originality of Rosi's message:

Lo schermo non come specchio della realtà in cui il pubblico sia spinto ad identificarsi, ma come luogo *convenuto* di una rappresentazione della realtà di fronte alla quale lo spettatore possa mantenersi consapevole del proprio esser *fuori* dalla rappresentazione stessa e *dentro*, invece, alla realtà da cui questa ha

³⁶⁶ The open form, in contrast with Hollywood style close-form became a favourite technique in the sixties with such directors as Godard or Antonioni. In particular, see J. Monaco (2000), p. 185. "Just as important as the actual frame size, although less easily perceived, is the filmmaker's attitude toward the limit of the frame. If the image of the frame is self-sufficient, then we can speak of it as a 'closed form'. Conversely, if the filmmaker has composed the shot in such a way that we are always subliminally aware of the area outside the frame, then the form is considered to be 'open'".

³⁶⁷ A. G. Maccino and S. Zambetti (1998), p. 136.

preso le mosse, e si senta quindi indotto a confrontare il proprio punto di vista con quello dell'autore.³⁶⁸

Central to the film, but also very controversial, is the scene of the romantic boat excursion on the river by the fiancées, Bayardo and Angela. The episode has no correspondence in the S'I, and the long scene is often cited in reviews, both in favour or against. Those who dislike it, accuse it of being a useless and 'over lyrical' digression, shot only with the aim of offering beautiful and exotic natural shots; those who are in favour, admire the great photography and the evocative value of this scene, and Michel Sineux, the 'paladin' of Rosi in this film, mentions it as the best evidence of the success of Rosi's and Tonino Guerra's screenplay. Sineux observes how, through images, and music (the two characters keep silent until the very conclusion of the scene, and thus the sign language used is purely visual and auditory), the film is able to evoke and condense a complex element of the story: an engagement, which the novel says lasted four months, and the omen of a personal drama that will lead to a prolonged and suffered estrangement before finally leading to the conclusive meeting. Certainly, it is a scene that cannot be easily forgotten, and not only for its undeniable aesthetic pleasure, but for the subtle strategy on which it is based, and through which the message detected by Michel Sineux comes to develop. At first sight, it could be discarded as just another oversentimental love scene, one of those many where a glamorous and exotic setting covers up the weakness of the text. But, when better analyzed, we can see how, if we still would like to define it as a classic scene, we should also admit that it is a subtly 'revisited' one: the two lovers not only do not talk throughout the scene, but not even look at each other (Angela even turns her back on her fiancé) and sit at the very opposite ends of the long canoe. The editing evocatively alternates close-ups of their absorbed and thoughtful faces, and shots of local animals, mostly birds, usually taken while they are flying away from the boat or otherwise shown to remain completely indifferent to the two human beings flowing by. For a love scene with all the classic elements of romance (the beautiful and exotic natural setting, the time of the day, the sun setting, the excursion on a boat, etc.) there is really nothing that evokes passion or the real matching of two souls and bodies. The very presence of so many birds, because of their recurring presence in the film, is quite ominous, and, in any case, nature, if not openly hostile, is shown here to be at least indifferent. Even when finally Bayardo stands up and gets closer to Angela to ask her what house in the town she would prefer for their future home, he does not get close to her, but stops and stands in the middle of the boat; Angela briefly replies, however without turning towards him.

³⁶⁸ "The screen not as a mirror of reality with which the audience are led to identify themselves, but as an *agreed on* space for a representation of reality, watching which the spectator can still be aware of being, at the same time, outside the representation itself, but also inside the reality in which this very representation is rooted, so that he feels encouraged to compare his view with that of the author", [my translation] A. G. Mancino and S. Zambetti (1998), p. 12.

Moreover, there is no real feeling, no apparent involvement in their voices, as if they were mechanically acting out a play: and in this final image they are actually shot in wide angle as silhouettes against the setting sun, shadows rather than real persons, as though we were the spectators of an oriental silhouette performance, at a shadow theatre. Thus, although we can partly understand (and to a certain point, even share) the feeling of disappointment and unease among Francesco Rosi's 'aficionados' at the parts of the film about the love story between Bayardo and Angela, we must, however, say that, at least in this long sequence of the excursion on the river, Rosi is evidently trying to use the conventional means of cinema in order to provoke a non-conventional reaction, so as to hopefully raise an active reply in the audience. In other words, we could say that if at first sight the strategy adopted in this long scene would seem to be a neutralizing one, instead the result aimed at is the very opposite: a defamiliarizing effect.

6.3e - The parameter of text: textual and autointertextual repetitions

We have already observed in the previous chapter how repetitions play an important role in Márquez's novel, reinforcing the awareness of the tension between a chronological and linear time that inexorably marks human life, and circular and mythical time. Edward Water Woods highlights the frequent occurrence and the function of repetitions in Márquez, in that they become a formal device to help to suggest how, in contrast with the flowing of human life, things eternally repeat themselves. There are many examples of recurrence of motifs and actions within a single text, as well as repetition of syntax structures or of nouns and phrases ('textual repetitions') and repetitions between texts of the same author ('autointertextual repetitions').³⁶⁹ If this is a distinctive feature in the Colombian writer's style, it equally becomes a relevant element in Rosi's *Cronaca di una morte annunciata*. Obviously, Rosi does not mechanically resort to the same motifs and typology of repetitions, and also introduces his own 'autointertextual' references.

In the film, textual repetitions actually interweave a subtle and complex web of echoes that cannot be missed even on first viewing. Some acquire an undeniable metaphoric resonance, such as the already mentioned and almost obsessive presence of birds. Apart from the birds of the nightmare, and also those marking the romantic boat-excursion of Angela and Bayardo, birds are constantly present throughout the film, and their recurrence is made more complex by the introduction of the sub-theme of the contrast between caged birds and wild birds. The theme is first introduced by Santiago who, annoyed because as usual the bishop has not even bothered to land and meet the people (his 'flock') gathered on the bank to welcome him, metaphorically 'frees' his justified frustration by materially 'freeing' the caged cocks intended for the

³⁶⁹ E. Waters Hood, *La ficción de Gabriel García Márquez -- Repetición e intertextualidad*, New York: Peter Lang, 1993.

bishop. Then the metaphor is taken up again by the first image Bayardo has of Angela, who appears on the balcony hanging cages with birds on the outside wall of her house, and a similar scene occurs in the final sequence of their love story: the two lovers are aged now, but the situation and even the perspective are the same (Bayardo is looking up to Angela who walks along the balcony to hang small cages with birds). This association of Angela with caged birds, which circularly frames her story with Bayardo (but in between, instead, there is the boat-excursion with so many birds flying off free), not only lends an ominous note to an otherwise happy ending for their relationship, but also stresses how Angela is not destined to fly away from the cruel 'cage' society has created for a young woman like her.

Even more persistent is the theme of water, as rain (in the nightmare and later when Cristo Bedoya is examining the old documents of the trial) but above all as the flowing of water in the river. The film opens with Cristo Bedoya embarking on what is perceived to be a painful voyage back, vaguely reminiscent of Conrad's voyages into darkness, a voyage upstream, both materially and metaphorically (Cristo Bedoya is going back, upstream and towards his past). Numerous are the images of life along and on the river, as well as the arrivals and departures of the ferry-boat, openly evoking the idea of eternal repetitions. But one shot, which strategically marks the shift from the first part of the film to the other, masterfully expresses the figurative value attributed to the river in this film. The first part of the film was focused on Santiago Nasar's looming destiny and concluded with the close-up of Cristo Bedoya's mother petrified in horror at the announcement that Santiago has just been killed while, instead, she was desperately rushing to try to prevent his murder. Another important part is about to start with the arrival by boat of the mysterious stranger, Bayardo, a sequence which, however, represents a further past in regard to the past of the murder. In between, there is a short, but highly meaningful scene, with Cristo Bedoya, in the present, sitting immobile under a big tree (which will appear again in the final part of the film) looking at the flowing water of the river, but clearly absorbed in his thoughts. The initial long shot shows in foreground the tangled and dark roots of a mangrove, which occupy three quarters of the frame with their artistic bending. In the washed out background we can see Cristo Bedoya from behind, silently looking at the river. In the left top corner, already partly out of the frame, a long boat is steadily moving and then completely goes out of sight and out of frame. With a matching cut, the camera follows the man's gaze, and focuses on a floating bundle of vegetation which is passing by, with an elegant heron standing motionless on it; then a new cut, and very subtle flashback to only a few seconds before: similar shot of Cristo Bedoya from behind, but this time it is a middle shot and the perspective is from another angle, so that he appears to be on the right of the frame, and in that moment nothing is floating on the water; then, suddenly, the bundle of vegetation with the heron, that very bundle that had just passed by, enters the frame again and the camera pans and follows it, so that it is now Cristo Bedoya

who disappears from the frame. New cut again, with a close up of the man in profile, who then turns towards the invisible spectators, and, staring into the camera, picks up again the storytelling, which, in voice-over, leads into the sequence of the arrival of Bayardo. It is, indeed, a perfect way of conveying the idea of contrast between movement and stillness, entrances and exits, flowing and eternity. The man is motionless, and so is the bird; however the bird is moving thanks to the movement of water, which in its turn continuously, though inadvertently, goes out of the frame and continuously enters it, always different and always the same, following the flowing of the river. The bird itself seems to have already passed by, but then arrives again and continues its floating; we do not see it finally go out of the frame, unlike the boat in the initial shot, but we know it will do the same. And when Cristo Bedoya starts speaking, in one single sentence he matches Santiago's killing and Bayardo's arrival from the river, in an eternal circle of death and life.

There are, then, many other examples of perhaps less frequently noted, but still equally relevant recurrences, such as the repetition of the close-up on Santiago Nasar's photo on his tomb, at the beginning and at the end of the film, or, even more important, the memorable shot of Santiago's dead body in the square that synchronically frames the final sequence of the love story of Bayardo and Angela, dramatically stressing the sacrificial and ritual value of that death. This last example is also a clear case of 'autointertextual' reference, because the vertical long shot (Rosi has often been praised for his aerial use of the camera) of Santiago Nasar's sprawled body on the unpaved floor of the square has the function of a signature, the author's signature to his own film, since it immediately recalls the celebrated opening shot of the film that made Rosi world famous, *Salvatore Giuliano*. Moreover, the resemblance is increased by the similarity of the position of the two dead bodies, similarity which is further stressed by an internal textual repetition, since Santiago's position is the same assumed by Angela when, equally in long vertical shot, she sprawls, somewhat melodramatically, on the bed of her tragic first night.

We have already mentioned the relevance of the presence of the actor Gian Maria Volonté, who had previously worked with Rosi in other important films, and, in particular, his presence now, in this film transposition, interpreting a contemplative and thoughtful middle-aged narrator, who is also a doctor, immediately evokes the actor's excellent interpretation of Carlo Levi in Rosi's *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*. The list of 'autointertextual' repetitions could be long and worth observing, and, even if we have here to necessarily limit the analysis, it is interesting to observe how the evocative effect of the heartbeat of Santiago Nasar in his nightmare links the film to a similar scene in *Tre fratelli*, where it is equally used to counterpoint a nightmare. Even more meaningfully, the transgressive cinematic technique of the character's direct gaze into the camera (by Cristo Bedoya, but also later and more mysteriously in the final sequence by Bayardo himself) will be used again by Rosi in his last film, *La tregua*, where, with greater emphasis, it becomes the concluding "visual sealing

of the covenant of witness” between the authors (both Primo Levi and Francesco Rosi) and the spectators of the film, and thus the means of stressing the moral imperative of keeping the testimony alive, of not forgetting the Shoah.³⁷⁰

6.4 - A mixed result

Francesco Rosi has clearly taken very seriously his task as a ‘film transposer’, therefore not merely relying on his charisma and his accomplished experience as a master of Italian cinema. As repeatedly pointed out in several interviews, he seems to have been perfectly aware of the necessity for a director to have a close and vital contact with the authentic culture and people of the areas where he is going to set his films. That has been his rule from the beginning, in any type of films, film-dossiers, fiction films, film transpositions of literary texts and of operas. However, with *Cronaca di una morte annunciata*, Rosi has had to deal with a type of text and writing where culture, and this time a distant one from Europe, is playing a crucial and delicate role, so much that even its author, Márquez, does not seem to find it possible that a director from outside Latin America can convey the distinctive ‘flavour’ of his work. Therefore, it has been a ‘challenge’ for Rosi, a hard experience, indeed, and the film is the result of this difficult encounter. To Rosi’s credit, we must immediately say that he seems to have always carefully pondered his choices, and has really striven to disclose and communicate that culture and the role it has in the novel. Thus, there is little risk of ‘cultural assimilation’ with regard to Rosi’s film, which on the whole cannot be accused of cheap ‘commercialization’ and ‘neutralization’, as often, instead, is the case with film transpositions from marginal literatures, which, for example, we have seen in the previous case study with the film *Il postino*. However, his attention paid to the local culture risks focusing too much on the macroscopic and surface elements, those that usually strike the attention of a foreigner, and his film is even too rich with *realia*; in other words, the film sometimes borders on excessive *exotization*. As we have already had the opportunity of remarking, the surface aspects are not the ‘nerve center’. What is really vital, but also difficult to transfer is the magic uniqueness of Márquez’s narrative writing, so rich in local and traditional ‘echoes’. As with the case of interlingual translation, also for film transposition this is the real core issue, and, in a parallel way, the director/translator has to courageously look for alternative and innovative solutions, rather stretching the potentialities of the expressive means at his disposal. That is what Rosi actually tries to do, and which explains many of the solutions we have examined, from increasing the social and racial note, to recreating the hybridization of film genres and the tension between linear and mythical time, or, even, more strikingly, to increasing the metalingual value of the filmic text, as well as creating a powerful and ‘defamiliarizing’ interweaving of textual and autointertextual references, and so on.

³⁷⁰ See M. Marcus (2002), p. 262.

However, the culture of Márquez's text is not simple to convey, and moreover, to make courageous choices as Rosi tries to do, is also highly risky: the danger is producing a text which may lack internal cohesion, or, at any rate, may not be fully understood in its scope. Unfortunately, this seems to be the case with Rosi's film. It is certainly a rich text, as we have seen, and, from the point of view of the study of film transpositions, it proves to be a case worthy of greater attention, especially for the rare cultural awareness on which it is based. Yet, it has received a generally hostile critical reaction, and, from a commercial point of view, it certainly has not been a success, as proved by the fact that it is no longer available on the market as either DVD or video-cassette, even on-line. The copy on which this research is based is a recorded version from Italian RAI Due, with traditional splitting into two parts, and even with some TV advertising. What a striking contrast with the film which has been the subject of my first case-study: *Il postino*. Michael Radford's film was a 'blockbuster', and today it is freely available as both video-cassette and DVD, even at very cheap prices. Moreover, paradoxically, it was also received more benignly by critics, although, to be more precise and objective in this regard, we must say that specialized critics and journals never devoted great attention to it, rightly regarding the film more as a commercial product than as an artistic text. As we have concluded when analyzing it, *Il postino* is a pleasant film, a film that does not take great risks, and which is enjoyable, especially thanks to the great performance of the protagonist, Massimo Troisi. However, it shows very little, if any, cultural awareness. As a film transposition, it clearly reflects a 'totalitarian' logic of cultural assimilation and globalization, and therefore is much less interesting a model to be studied, although, sadly, it expresses a more winning formula than Rosi's hard-fought solution.

Conclusion

The title chosen by the European Society for Translation Studies (EST) for its 5th international congress (Sept. 2007) is particularly intriguing: "Why Translation Studies matter". The question is if, and how, it is possible to achieve actual influence and impact outside the world of academic communities. Given the fact that Translation Studies in its modern form as a distinct inter-disciplinary field of research has been in existence for several decades, with an increasing number of specialized journals and enthusiastic scholars engaged in it, as the announcement and call for papers underlines, the question is whether this is still a privileged but limited and isolated arena. "Does it matter to other academic communities by contributing new knowledge and new methods from the realm of translation? Does it matter to society at large, for instance by showing what impact translation-related phenomena have had on various communities?"³⁷¹

It is actually a preoccupation that has also informed this research. It is true that at first, when beginning a general overview of the literature and the debates in the field, our aim was fundamentally to define the present 'state of the art', and to better understand the existing main currents and results, if possible without having any pre-conceived expectation; that is to say, the initial step was actually meant to be only an 'exploring inspection', as neutral as possible. Thus, chapter one has shown the possibility of several and sometimes very diversified perspectives in the huge field of translation: from a more traditional philological approach, based on absolute reverence for the 'original' text and the principle of 'fidelity', to target-oriented methodologies, more interested in identifying and studying the historically determined norms that influence the entrance of a text into a receiving language and culture. However, a main point has emerged at the end of such a variegated picture of theories and positions: the fact that translation is not a neutral act of communication at all, having important consequences on the delicate dialogue between cultures, especially in case of unbalanced contacts between a 'strong' and a 'weak' culture', which also justifies the central role that translation has always played for countries like those in Latin America.

To study translation from a cross-cultural perspective clearly implies to acknowledge its role in society, in other words, to give a positive answer to the question raised by the EST announcement: yes, translation does matter to society. As a consequence, it is necessary to have a more comprehensive and more open approach, and translation should not be seen as a 'detached' field of academic studies, deprived of any ideological implications or any consequence on human communities. This regards translation theory, first of all; then, of course, also translation practice, since translators should enact a 'strategy of

³⁷¹ Announcement and Call for papers, 5th EST Congress, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, 3rd-5th September 2007.

resistance' towards a common tendency in the Western world towards cultural assimilation, as Lawrence Venuti states; but one should remember that a cross-cultural perspective is equally relevant for translation criticism. A direct consequence is the need to extend the discourse about translation and translation criticism in particular, outside their traditional borders.

This is confirmed also by the other main point which has emerged from the initial overview of the 'state of the art': it is not correct to conceive the study of translation only as interlinguistic translation, seeing it as completely separate from other forms of text transfer. Thus chapter two has focused on the possibility of studying 'films in terms of translation', which has led us to define the central hypothesis for our research. Sharing Patrick Cattrysse's idea that similar strategies and processes can be activated in both interlinguistic and intersemiotic translation, the issue has become to prove that it is possible to integrate this view of intersemiotic translation with a cross-cultural approach to translation criticism, also hoping to show how the tensions and dynamics created by the transposition of a written text into a foreign language and culture can be better detected and understood by applying a similar approach and perspective to the study of other transformational forms of the same source text.

Obviously, it has been important to identify case-studies that are appropriate for this type of translation criticism, and the choice has fallen on two almost contemporary, but completely different Latin American novels, and on their encounter with Western culture through interlinguistic and intersemiotic translation. The analysis of both texts has moved from the study of the way they were translated into two main 'First World' languages, English and Italian, and has proceeded with the examination of what their filmic transposition by Western directors has implied from a cultural point of view. We are aware that to work on transpositions of a text, both within the same semiotic code as well as between autonomous codes, each one with different structures and internal coherence (novel and film), can be very risky. Methodological precision and awareness are needed, but also flexibility and adaptability. In order to avoid confusions and generalizations in this type of translation criticism, which would sacrifice the autonomy and specificity of the different semiotic languages of the TTs, it is essential that the analysis remains systematic and consistent throughout, but we should be aware that the very fact that we are dealing with different semiotic languages can make the process very 'treacherous' and confusing. Thus it becomes extremely important to choose adequate tools, which can be useful in prompting systemic observation, while at the same time helping to keep the study 'on the right track'. In this regard a very promising support has been found in Pe ter Torop's table for "Translatability of Culture". It is a table mainly studied for interlinguistic translation, but, since it focuses on fundamental translatability parameters and translation strategies, it can be applicable also to intersemiotic translation, without hindering specific analysis for each distinct semiotic language, or at least this is what the research has sought to test and prove.

In the first case-study, Skármeta's film transposition of his own novel has offered inspiring examples of the possibility for film and novel to develop "un'efficace traduzione tra forme" ("an effective translation between forms"), and more examples in this direction have been offered also by Rosi's experience in the second case-study, thus confirming Nicola Dusi's theory about the potentialities of intersemiotic translation.³⁷² However, apart from that, much more has emerged. The analysis of the interlingual versions of *Ardiente paciencia* in chapter three has revealed either the lack of a consistent translation method with regard to culture translation in the Italian TT, or a tendency towards levelling and neutralizing in the English TT. The risk of assimilation by the target culture has emerged more clearly in chapter four on examining the second film transposition of the novel, this time by a Western director, Michael Radford: *Il postino*. Thanks to a flexible application of Torop's translatability parameters and strategies, it has been possible to better detect this process of 'deterritorialization' and assimilation, and to understand how the film has unquestionably further developed the tendency towards levelling and neutralization already perceptible in the written TT's.

The issue of culture translatability is central also in the second case-study, where, however, both Gregory Rabassa's English translation of *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (chapter 5) and Francesco Rosi's film transposition (chapter 6) have offered interesting models to be studied: they are committed translators, who, moving from a keen awareness of the almost insuperable difficulties of translating cultures as well as languages, understand that they must be courageous and adventurous. Both are ready to take risks, and their TTs are consequently not in line with traditional forms of translation, and are much more interesting for that, although not exempt from moments of failures and flaws.

The study of *Il postino* and Rosi's film as Western transpositions of novels from distant literatures has revealed tensions and dynamics that are far from being limited to the specific case, and even to intersemiotic translation as such. The problem clearly does not seem to lie in the distinct individuality of different semiotic codes, the verbal and the filmic language: the issue remains how to create a TT that can establish a fruitful dialogue with the Target culture and tradition, while not assimilating or flattening the Source culture, or at least trying to minimize the levelling and domesticating effects. As such it is no longer a problem limited to the cinematic transfer of literary texts, but it clearly highlights a core issue for translation at large, since it is connected to the very essence of translation; in other words, this is a particularly urgent problem because it highlights the fact that by definition translation implies a 'crossing of borders' and therefore a more or less traumatic 'bridging' of cultures. Yet the study of translation from an intercultural point of view has only recently started to be given more attention in translation theories, although the delicacy and complexity of what is at stake clearly indicates that the topic would need much

³⁷² N. Dusi (2003), p. 4.

further development and discussion, and there is still a long path to travel. This does not mean that we want to play down the significance of a number of relevant contributions: for example, Lawrence Venuti's passionate position; or in the area of Translation Studies, Gideon Toury's adequacy-acceptability theory, which is actually centred on the fundamental relationship of a text to both the producing and receiving cultures; or Dirk Delabastita's model of translation criticism based on strategies of "cultural analogy" and "cultural homology"; and, obviously, the often mentioned contributions by Péeter Torop. However, although the path has been opened, further study in this direction is necessary, and one of the issues that awaits proper study is the fundamental problem pointed out by this year's EST announcement: the need for integrating theory and practice, which, if crucial for translation studies at large, is even more urgent with regard to an intercultural approach, including, or rather starting from the field of translation criticism. Yet, this is still a completely overlooked area, and indeed translation criticism in general is a rather neglected field of study, as Bruno Osimo declares at the conclusion of his comprehensive translation course.³⁷³

Thus translation criticism has become the focus of our research, which, however, has shown the limits of a descriptive-only approach (as mostly prompted by Translation Studies), proving that Osimo is right when he affirms that it is necessary "to overcome the contradiction between a descriptive-only approach and the need to evaluate".³⁷⁴ It is true that, if the target of an analysis is to identify the translation method adopted in a TT, then it is vital to develop a systematic and rigorous model of observation (identifying appropriate frameworks for analysis), especially when studying more than one TT and working with different semiotic codes at the same time, as we have done in this research. But this also implies that in this way translation criticism, almost automatically, tends to become evaluative as well. First of all, because a systematic analysis also inevitably highlights whether or not a translation method, once chosen, is then consistently applied throughout the TT.³⁷⁵ Moreover, an even more delicate form of judgement is implicit because the identification of a translation method almost inevitably leads the critic to reflect on the way the translator's choices influence the readers' perception of the ST within the framework of the receiving culture; in other words, this means that the ultimate focus of criticism can become the practical consequences of translation on the 'meeting' of two different cultures.

We are aware that there may be the risk of falling into normative approaches, based on rigidly pre-conceived principles and norms, a risk which is obviously to be completely avoided. But we are equally aware of the delicate

³⁷³ B. Osimo (2000, on line version), Part 5, chapter 40, p. 3.

³⁷⁴ B. Osimo (2000, on line version), Part 5, chapter 40, p. 3.

³⁷⁵ In this regard, see B. Osimo's comment: "The descriptive approach here allows itself a normative aspect: without criticizing the single translator's style, but criticizing a translator that hasn't any personal characteristic style" (2000, on line version, part 5, chapter 39, p. 3).

position played by translation in intercultural dialogue, and we think therefore that ideological attention and consciousness can, and must be important for academic translation criticism as well. Of course, it is always necessary to distinguish between different types of translation criticism, mostly depending on the different functions and scopes that criticism can have, and thus general rules should be avoided also in this regard. However, translation criticism should not be based on an *a priori* omission of evaluation, which can even become an important corollary of systematic observation. Thus, through our research we have come to see how, referring to Torop's list of different types of translation criticism, we can even hypothesize a further type of translation criticism, which would result from the integration of Torop's n. 7, "translational method criticism", with n. 8, "qualitative criticism".³⁷⁶

The intercultural perspective has been given even less attention in film transposition studies, which increases its urgency, especially taking into consideration the growing influence of visual media and the increasing power of globalizing policies in communication. In our case, such an approach has actually been particularly relevant for the progress of this research, since the decision to choose case studies which would allow both interlingual and intersemiotic translation analysis, has actually favoured the highlighting of such important issues, the value of which would perhaps have been more difficult to identify if the two fields of translation had been kept separated. Moreover, it has been possible to observe how, in both interlingual and intersemiotic translation processes, Torop's translatability parameters (and their relative culture translation strategies) are similarly at work, thus confirming our initial hope that Torop's table, if not rigidly followed, could effectively support a systematic analysis carried out simultaneously on TTs from different semiotic codes, and could therefore help highlight the growing delicacy and complexity of cultural 'encounters' in our media-communication dominated society.

In the first pages of chapter two we mentioned Patrick Catrysse and his innovative view of the importance of studying films 'in terms of translation', and now, at the moment of concluding, his words come back to mind, sounding particularly discerning, and much more than a mere provocative intuition.

The similarity of the problems and the questions raised within the study of film adaptation suggests that the specificity of the issues studied by translation studies is very relative [...] There seems to be no valuable argument to keep reducing the concept of translation to mere cross-linguistic transfer processes. The scope has to be extended to a contextualistic semiotic perspective.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁶ "Translational method criticism. Consists in the individualization of the translational method and inquiry on how such a translation method influences the reader's perception. Criticism is evaluative as well, but limited to checking the consistency within a chosen method" [...] "Qualitative criticism. Deals with understanding what the practical outcome of a given method is within the framework of the receiving culture" (B. Osimo, 2000, on-line version, Part 5, chapter 39, pp. 3-4).

³⁷⁷ P. Catrysse (1992), p. 68.

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