

# Daniele Petruccioli: A Visible “Performer” of Texts in Translation

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This article explores aspects pertaining to the translation of Philippe Djian’s best-selling novel *37°2 le matin*. The source text (ST) was published in 1985, and its English counterpart *Betty Blue: The Story of a Passion*, translated by Howard Buten, was published in 1988.<sup>1</sup> The 2010 Italian target text (TT) *37°2 al mattino* was translated by Daniele Petruccioli. The context in which Djian created the foreign text, the conditions under which Petruccioli translated it, the significant impact of these conditions and other contextual factors upon the TT, are analysed in relation to translation as process, product and activity. How and why translations should be evaluated and how translators should be perceived are key issues explored herein.

## **Non-Essentialist Conceptions of Translation**

In the framework of this case study, I draw on non-essentialist theories which emphasise the non-linearity, plurality, multiplicity and fluidity of translation as process, product and interpretive activity, and as a practice in which the roles, relations and impact of the agents involved are always contingent, unstable, and are not always clearly defined or limited. Such approaches seem the most effective tools to investigate the nature and impact of this complex socio-cultural phenomenon. Most importantly, they effectively undermine two frequently espoused and inter-linked essentialist (mis)conceptions relating to the workings of creative writing, re-writing, and (re)interpretation; translation is merely a type of creatively constrained writing which can be evoked by any of these three porous and overlapping terms.

The first misconception is the Author-God concept, the myth of the literary author who originates unrepeatable acts of pure creation, as opposed to appropriation, and retains complete control over all meanings attributed to and activated within his texts. Author becomes Scriptor, the embodied antithesis of these prescriptive powers. The myth of the original author disenfranchises both translator and reader, who can be said to share and exercise similar faculties since translation is invariably an act of interpretation in which any reader of the text engages (Barthes 51–54; Eco 20, 257; Zongxin 47). A text becomes a translation when

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<sup>1</sup>For details of the context in which Buten’s translation was written, see Borrey & Speedy.

it is declared as such; it is "consecrated" as such by the community in which it circulates, becomes "inhabited" by the Foreign Metatext which it substitutes and replaces (Hermans 103; Venuti 6). This declaration is legitimated by the establishment of a certain relationship of similarity between foreign text and translation, the nature of which differs according to context.

The myth of originality stigmatises translation, particularly when hierarchical dualisms pit original and translation against each other, branding translation as an inadequate and derivative reconstruction of the original. This can prompt translators to adopt regimes of fluency, transparency and over-domestication, according to Venuti, rather than one of visible textual intervention and recreation (Venuti 5–8). The second misconception, the conduit or "bucket" view of language reinforces and supports the Romantic Author-God concept, and portrays communication as a decontextualised, linear and stable exchange of information, free from interference and subjectivity.<sup>2</sup> This description denies the inherently metatextual conditions of text production, and overlooks the fact that all discourse is mediated and socially constructed narrative.

These myths are reflected in the labels ST for Source Text and TT for Target Text which are traditionally used within translation theory and the translation industry. "ST" implies that the "Source Text" is the locus of pure, original authorial genius and fixed meanings conveyed to the reader directly from the Author's mind. Moreover, "target text" suggests that textual influence only travels from source to target text, whereas in reality, target texts can influence other texts, and be considered as texts in their own right in certain situations. The biased misrepresentation and oversimplification of interpretive and creative processes latent in these terms begs their replacement. The terms Foreign Metatext (FM), and Translated Metatext (TM) reflect an important shift of focus from a prescriptive critical framework based upon flawed conceptions of the writing-reading process and the importance of textual originality, a spurious claim at best. Rather, these new names highlight the metatextual condition of all writing and neutralise the hierarchy attached to the ST and TT labels which implicitly devalues translation.

Reconceptualising the relationship between translator and author is not a theoretical exercise which has no bearing on the fortunes of translators or their prospective readerships. To subscribe to the traditional Romantic view of the Author-God and the superiority of the supposedly original authorial text over the derivative, second-rate translation is to condone the repression of individuals who provide an indispensable, cultural service: the translators themselves. This attitude breeds what Petruccioli calls the "misconception" that his vocation is "less a work than a mechanical process, to achieve which no great skills are needed; and that translators are not professionals, but more often bored, rich dames, that need not be paid for what they do" (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).<sup>3</sup> Another common mis-

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<sup>2</sup>See "Appendix 1: The Bucket and the Searchlight: Two Theories of Knowledge" in Popper.

<sup>3</sup>Petruccioli completed three questionnaires sent by the Author in 2011 and 2012. They provide valuable insight into the professional environment in which he translates, and the concerns which he faces as a professional literary translator. In our correspondence, he indicated that even though he

conception is that it is enough to be bilingual or to study a foreign language in order to translate (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). Accounts of the general working conditions of translators illustrate the negative impact which these entrenched perceptions have, as they indirectly legitimise or at least contribute to low pay rates, exploitative work contracts and other unfavourable conditions which many translators experience. Concerns about these popular conceptions of translation and translators are shared by qualified translators in general (Tosun and Kabukcik 301–02). Discrediting these myths, and regarding translators as “communication experts” increases the profession’s standing, and allows the latter to claim rights and standards of quality on an equal footing with other professionals (Tosun and Kabukcik 303).

Petruccioli, like Venuti (8–10), holds the narrow Romantic essentialist conceptualisation of reading and writing based on false assumptions responsible for the difficult condition of the translator in contemporary society. He observes:

We could call it a repression of literature. I think this has to do with Romantic idealisation of the author as a creator. You can't have two creators for a single work. In this Romantic ideology, there's just not enough room for both. This is why I try to explain and define my work as that of an “interpreter” (in the sense of a pianist for example) although I am very aware that, such interpretation being interlinguistic and not intersemiotic (to use the old but still widely cited [. . .] definition by Roman Jakobson), the acceptability of this definition remains quite controversial. Nevertheless I stick to it: it looks to me [. . .] the most suitable method to explain translators' work without touching the authors' ivory tower. . . (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence)

### **Translation as Derivative Copy or Constrained Performance?**

But in the final analysis, what is translation? An art or a science? Embracing postmodernist and deconstructionist perspectives, I am attracted to Zongxin’s view which embraces multiplicity and avoids making an “either/or” choice, preferring to establish a middle way. This is fitting for an examination of the translator’s role as a communicator operating in an in-between space. Translators must concern themselves with syntactic and grammatical issues, re-creating the text both semantically and pragmatically. This is the so-called “mechanical” part of the task. As re-writers and co-creators, they must also simultaneously take the foreign text and its author into account, making assumptions about the typical TM reader’s knowledge of the text, the competencies which the latter will bring to the text, the communicative intentions of the FM, levels of implicitness and explicitness and so on. These insights underlie every grammatical and lexical element of the translation produced. This second dimension is a performative one, more creative than the first: it goes

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is a proficient English speaker, he was concerned that his responses may not be as clear as those of a native speaker. He therefore permitted me to alter or correct elements in them which may impede understanding: “Please feel free to cut it or correct my English should it look a little rusty to you.” Such alterations are indicated in square brackets.

beyond pragmatics and semantics, from the page to the stage, as it were. Both dimensions are fundamental to the success of a translation, and so translation can be considered as both science and art (Zongxin 51).

Petruccioli's perspective shares some similarities to Zongxin's and most closely echoes that of Robert Wechsler. He therefore sees translation as an artform rather than as a scientific process and compares the translator's activity to that of a performing artist (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). A translation is a creative, artistic "textual performance" that is, the translator's individual interpretation of and response to a given foreign text. The latter attracts little notice however, whereas the distinct style of the performing artist is often praised. Moreover the performing artist frequently has opportunities to create and improve upon interpretations, whilst a translator typically produces only one translation of a particular work for his or her generation (Wechsler 7–8). Translators are also subject to more diverse and stringent constraints than many performing artists.

Despite these differences however, it is liberating for the translator to be considered as a performing artist. This perspective highlights the subjectivity of translational activity and the willing participation of the translator in the recreation of a text. Like the performer, the translator cannot lay claim to the composer's text, which is nevertheless marked by his influence. To acknowledge translators as performing artists boosts the status of the profession, and indicates that translation is a complex activity, which requires a wide range of skills and demands respect.

These concerns come to the fore when Petruccioli speaks of the relationship between author and translator. He recommends collaboration between the two only in cases where a translator is confronted with a knotty textual problem, as he is afraid of excessive authorial intervention. Petruccioli's attitude highlights the personal and subjective nature of translators' work, considered as both process and product. Translation is a creative process, in which collaboration between author and translator is not regarded as a key ingredient which will necessarily ensure a translation's success, even though it may in some cases be an asset, even an essential one (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

Petruccioli also speaks of his "voice" as a translator, a creative, idiosyncratic presence and identity which may be construed as representing the translator's position, imprint or influence on the translation which he produces. As mediator, he cannot escape reconstructing the text from a specific subjective vantage point because no one can be "voiceless" in their oral or textual productions.<sup>4</sup> For our purposes, taking Venuti's lead, the concept of voice may simply be defined as "the translator's discursive presence in a translated text" (Jiang 366). Lawrence Venuti states "the voice that the reader hears in any translation [. . .] is always recognised as the author's, never as a translator's nor even as some hybrid of the two" (238). However, this is only the illusion of the author in the reader's mind, and like most

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<sup>4</sup>The concept of the translator's voice is problematic, because, like many concepts in Translation Studies, it is not clearly defined. The characteristics of the latter and how it is to be analysed, treated and uncovered in translated texts are not notions which have been consensually agreed upon or ratified in the field (Jiang 369, 371–74).

voices that are reconstituted by the reading subject, they are not pure or single, but plural and fragmented. This is even more the case with the translator’s voice as opposed to other textual “presences” because the translator may be influenced by editors, advisers, and the like. Originally defined by Venuti, the translator’s voice is typically perceived as being eclipsed by entrenched translational norms of domestication, transparency and fluency. Therefore, in the context of his paradigm a translator’s voice is recognisable as such only in resistant translations. However this assumption paradoxically limits the choices of translators and silences their voices: a translator’s voice can also be expressed in their choice of domesticating, transparent and fluent strategies (Jiang 369, 378).

Petruccioli frequently describes his “voice” as an element which endows the TM with his creative presence and is indicative of it. Asked whether his rendering of Djian’s 37°2 *le matin* was influenced by Gaspare Bona’s 1986 Italian translation, entitled *Betty Blue*, or any other version of the book, Petruccioli declared that as a professional translator he felt the need to shelter his voice from interference, particularly as he is in the early stages of his career. He explains that he felt it was “imperative for me to find my own voice in translating this book. I don’t feel enough of a translator yet to confront my translation with others, while it’s still in progress. I need to create silence within myself, so as to [attune] my ear as keen[ly] as I can [to] the author’s voice. Other interpretations (regardless of their quality) might make me lose concentration on the original. But I’m the inadequate one, not other translators or translations” (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). Speaking of comparing his translation with other versions, he concludes “I will grow and learn to do it, I believe. But not yet” (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

Petruccioli sees the translator’s voice as a faculty, a creative talent which must be strengthened by the translator, and which develops alongside, and is to a significant extent determined by the “voice” of the author as it is perceived by the translator-reader. Describing the essential qualities and skills of a competent translator, he explains:

Apart from the obvious very good knowledge both of source and target language (*and* cultures), I believe everyone has his or her own. My—very personal—opinion, though, is that the most important quality of a competent translator (which also can and should be developed as a skill) is to have an ear for music. Each text has its rhythm, its music, made both of words and syntax, as well as of the author’s use of the various figures of speech. This makes what we call the voice of an author, and what I like to refer to as the *sound* of a novel. The first [step I take] as a translator is to listen carefully to the text, so as to let it talk to my ear. After this, [. . .] there is the need to verify these first impressions with an analysis of the various elements the text is made of (syntax, terminology, tone, repetitions, alliterative elements, rhymes, possible quotes, intertextuality, and so on). These are skills to be developed by means of study and experience. Translating has much less to do with the meaning of words than with the rendering of the *sound* of the written work of art. This is why I tend to look at translation as a musical art, that involves musical skills (to be translated into elements of speech).

(Petruccioli, Personal correspondence; original italics)

Clearly, Petruccioli is very aware of and takes pride in the individualised, performative aspect of translation, which he regards as an essential component of translation as process, product and activity. This aspect is seen in action in compensation strategies and is often stimulated by and perceived as a response to a lack of fit between FM, TM and their respective cultures. It is because equivalence is impossible in translation, that creative solutions abound, to create "similar" sound(s) in the TM as are found in the FM by the translator.

### **The Position of the Professional Literary Translator in Italy**

How do governmental, and other social institutions' attitude towards and perception of translation shape the Italian publishing landscape and how are they in turn shaped by the former? Ida Bozzi points out that translators in Italy are "co-authors who are invisible all too often"<sup>5</sup> for reasons discussed above (Bozzi, "La vita agra"). The figures speak for themselves as the minimum fee per "cartella"<sup>6</sup> is €11.35, but currently remains fixed at €12 to €13, while averages for similar units of text are significantly higher in other European countries such as Great Britain, Norway and Sweden (Ambrosi). The fees of the Italian translator are about half those received by German and French translators, and 20 to 30 percent lower than those of their Spanish counterparts (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

On average, Italian translators also work harder than their European counterparts, producing more than 1056 portfolios, the average figure for translations produced across Europe (Ambrosi 12). Fees are an unequivocal reflection of the value placed on certain professions, and are therefore closely intertwined with acknowledgement. Acknowledgement and recognition of the broad range of competencies which the successful translator must acquire will therefore contribute to a rise in fees (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). The complex array of skills that the translator requires are outlined by Tosun and Kabukcik, and include a sound knowledge of foreign languages, expertise in text types, creative and analytical ability, knowledge of translation theory and wide ranging cross-cultural knowledge (303). It is due to society's failure to acknowledge such capabilities, and the consequent lack of a decent living wage that "the best translators often give up and leave literary translation to beginners and amateurs" (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

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<sup>5</sup>All translations are my own.

<sup>6</sup>Ambrosi uses the ambiguous term "cartella", employed in the sphere of Italian translation and publishing, to indicate a unit of text. She implies that texts are divided and measured on the basis of the latter unit, which is limited and defined by a predetermined number of words. However, there appears to be no general consensus as to what the number of words that makes up a "cartella" is, even among translators. Some insist the term has gone out of fashion and that now Italian translators are paid per page or "pagina" and some say that it is equivalent to 1,500 words. For our purposes, it is simpler to assume that a "cartella" is equivalent to about 1,500 words. See [Wordreference.com](http://Wordreference.com) for a discussion of this controversial unit of measurement for texts.

Difficulties emerge because there is often little distinction between qualified and unqualified professionals which feeds and maintains the common misconception that translating is a mechanical job which doesn't require specific qualifications (Tosun and Kabukcik 307). Unqualified translators pressure their professional counterparts and low rates compel "translators to work at impossible speed[s] which [. . .] may affect quality [. . .] and also create dumping from non-professionals [. . .] [who] take advantage of their other incomes to accept low [. . .] fees for a work which they consider purely [. . .] [a] matter of prestige" (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

Fees and acknowledgement are in turn linked to copyright, the legal instrument that stamps a given translation as an authorised interpretation of a foreign author's text. The practice of copyright law regulates the otherwise unimpeded flow of interpretation, by preventing the widespread diffusion of unauthorised non-copyrighted versions in the commercial arena. However, this block is only a temporary curb and repression of potential and competing interpretations, since copyright typically expires seventy years after an author's death (Hermans 121–22). Italian law, like its Anglophone counterpart, sees the translator as a secondary author (Venuti 8–9; Bozzi, "La vita agra"). This status is increasingly acknowledged as a result of the struggle of Italian translators to be more visible as such; for example, some Italian publishers include the translator's name on the cover of translations (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

And yet this recognition is not reflected in the assignment of copyright, which is often represented as a single "monolithic right" instead of as an entitlement to be split up into several different rights, of which translators can claim a portion. Many translators are prevented from making such claims because contracts do not allow rights to be apportioned to translators. Translators may even be unaware they are entitled to certain rights, since most "relinquish them wholesale" (Bozzi, "La vita agra"). However, the assignment of rights to the translator is standard practice elsewhere according to Petruccioli (Bozzi, "La vita agra"). He explains that even the lifting of authorial copyright restrictions, which results in an opening up of the free flow of interpretations does not usually lead to the Italian translator reclaiming control over their work: "no publishing house gives them copyright of any kind (except in some very rare cases), and sometimes translators don't even get back the property of their intellectual work after the 20 years lap[se] established by Italian law on copyright" (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

President of the Italian Association of Translators and Interpreters (AITI), Sandra Bertolini believes that the root of the translator's difficult position lies in the fact that the profession remains unregulated. Translators are forbidden from publishing their rates, and are forced to work in a competitive free-market economy (Bozzi, "La vita agra"). Marina Rullo, the President of the Italian Translators Union, remarks that consequently, translators' low fees are not compensated for by royalties. Governmental and other institutions do not contribute to the translation sector by offering study grants, scholarships or funded translator training programs (Ambrosi 12). Moreover, there is no national standard for translator training. Ilide

Carmignani explains that the profession suffers from a great and seemingly irreducible inequality when it comes to training resources available to individuals (Bozzi, "La vita agra"). Tosun and Kabukcik concur that "unless there is a standard for the quality and the profession, neither the value people give to translators, nor the value translators give to the works to be translated will change" (302).

Finally, there are no nationally devised standard social security provisions or healthcare policies for Italian translators. Translators must pay for rights granted to most workers with no government assistance. Many respond by organising their own cover in collaboration with organisations of which they are members (Ambrosi 12; Bozzi, "La vita agra"). Petruccioli agrees that the lack of institutional support in Italy for the profession is concerning, and has been the subject of protest in a letter addressed to the government and signed by famous translators and writers, a move initiated by the recently created StradE, or *Sindacato Traduttori Editoriali*, an organisation which represents translators in the manner of a union. The reluctance of institutions to invest in the profession is thrown into sharp relief when the position of the Italian government is compared to that of its French counterpart: the former provides no commitment to funding whereas the latter "grants support both to French and foreign translators, apart from prizes" (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

Visibility of the profession in Italy is improving however as advances are being made by translators who raise awareness of translation as a profession. This is first and foremost instanced in the activities of Petruccioli and those of like-minded colleagues. In Petruccioli's opinion, the most important way in which visibility can be increased is to discuss translation and its challenges openly, to let people know how much they depend on translation for information about foreign language cultures and literatures (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). He comments:

In the last few years, especially thanks to translators' own action[s], translators are becoming a little more visible. Some publishing houses write the name of translators on the front cover, and all Italian book fairs organise conferences and workshops on translation (most of which [are] coordinated by Ilide Carmignani [. . .] one of the most active Italian translators [in terms of] letting people know about our work). Since 2011, Italy finally has its own House of Translation, located in Rome, where translators from Italian to other languages can come to work and speak about their work. It is directed by Simona Cives, whose work, projects and action on translation and the work of translators have changed Rome from a nothingness into one of the leading Italian cities on the matter. But it definitely is too small a start. (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence)

It appears that although the pace of change may be slow, the enthusiasm of translators to discuss their craft openly in defiance of the Western tradition of the invisible translator will continue. This will set the ground work for new ways of casting the translator as a participant in the process of literary creation and canon formation. The translator fills the cracks between meaning, and it is often the investigation of the threshold between the invisible and the visible that can be turned most to

account when it comes to initiating a change in modes of perception and of action, on both the macro and the micro-scale.

### **The Author-Scriptor of *37°2 le matin***

A collection of short stories entitled *50 Contre 1* [50 to 1] (1981) marked the literary debut of Philippe Djian, who was born in 1942 (Platten 1). His first two works made little impact until *37°2 le matin*, which was adapted for the screen by Jean-Jacques Beineix. Djian has written many works, the most recent being *Oh...* (2012). The French press dubbed him "the rock writer" as his texts are influenced by American culture, and American authors such as Jack Kerouac, J. D. Salinger and Ernest Hemingway (Jacob 90; Le Fol 2).

According to David Platten, the influence of the 1950s Beat generation is evident in much of his writing, betokened by the intense subjective identification between the first-person narrator and himself as an author. He is also known for imitating Kerouac's "spontaneous prose" style, a semi-conversational narrative technique, suited to memoir-style texts (Platten 11). His characters have Anglophone names, although the action in his novels is often set in an unspecified location (Noreiko 185; Vignol).

His preferred topics include relationships between the sexes, particularly the sexual aspects of such relationships. He also explores what it means to be a writer and the sacrifices which the vocation entails (Platten 6; Noreiko 188). He sees literary style as a practical tool which expresses one's own worldview, and hopes readers will respond to and learn from it (Fagioli & Sprenger 64). His novels typically include striking imagery, action and violence, combined with a subtle and refined approach to language. Despite being popular in several European countries early on in his career, Djian was rejected by most who were part of the 1980s French literary establishment because of his transgression of established narrative conventions, his flexible approach to grammar, and his use of slang, mixed with higher registers. His narratives are marked by orality, and draw on the simple, direct style commonly found in Anglophone prose, which differs from conventionally accepted elegant French literary discourse (Lapaire; Platten 1). However, it can be argued that "Djian is no longer a novelty act" since he has written several substantial works, becoming the literary equal of authors he admired. Moreover, a growing number of publications are dedicated to the study of his works (Corpataux 31). Despite his acceptance however, Djian continues to challenge accepted literary conventions, experimenting with a number of literary styles.

### **The Context of *37°2 al mattino***

The context in which Petruccioli's translation was written must be explored if his experiences as a translator are to be appreciated. Italy is seen to have "an enormous appetite for English-language books, making it one of the leading translating nations" (Lottman 65). Lottmann describes influential players in the Italian pub-

lishing industry, and among these, Edizioni Voland, publisher of *37.2° al mattino*. Its founder, Claudio Maria Messina, says it is “a small printing press [. . .] a fiction imprint for Italian and foreign authors. . .” (Lottman 65). Founded in 1995, it promotes a literature of “‘discovery’—of unknown cultures, of writers deserving an airing” (Lottman 65). The company’s catalogue includes authors described as “non-scontati” (Edizioni Voland) which translates here as “unpredictable” or “controversial”. Voland’s commitment to training aspiring translators is demonstrated by the company’s organisation of a “translation workshop” (Martini). Translators like Petruccioli, and Voland’s director Daniela Di Sora, provide guidance to translators entering the profession, thereby contributing to its professional development. They advise on the revision and correction of translation manuscripts, and the scouting tactics publishers employ to find translators (Martini).

Petruccioli says of Voland’s philosophy: “Voland rarely publishes American authors, as [the publisher] usually prefers writers who are representative of less mainstream literatures” (“Letteralmente” 71) and explains that the organisation is supportive of his needs, providing him with useful translation resources (“Letteralmente” 74). He describes Voland as “a small publisher” which works with several external collaborators. The atmosphere is “informal”, “collaborative” and as the company is expanding rapidly, there are considerable opportunities for translators (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

### **Daniele Petruccioli’s Profile**

The individual literary translator’s profile and experience are factors which undoubtedly impact significantly upon the style and quality of a translation. Before he was a translator, Petruccioli was a professional film, television and theatre actor (Agenzia Isabella Gullo). Whilst involved in performing arts, Petruccioli translated theatrical texts for the companies with which he worked (Etruscus). At length, he decided a career in translation was viable, particularly as he had a degree in Portuguese and Brazilian Language and Translation from l’Università Degli Studi di Viterbo among other qualifications (Agenzia Isabella Gullo; Petruccioli, “La lingua sregolata”). Petruccioli has translated several authors for many publishers, including Philippe Djian, for whom he is the “new voice” in Italy (Bozzi, “Le mille voci” 40; Etruscus). He is also a scout for several publishing companies (Petruccioli, “Varechina”) He translates from Portuguese, French and English into Italian, and specialises in Francophone literature (Bozzi, “Le mille voci” 40; Martini).

In general, the quality of Petruccioli’s translations is praised in reviews. He is described as having “intimate knowledge of Djian’s writing style” (Petruccioli, “Voland”). He writes for translation publications such as *Traducendo Mondi* and reflects on translation and his experiences as a literary translator, making himself visible by discussing his TTs, often alongside the authors of the foreign language versions. He also boosts the visibility of the profession by contributing to a blog entitled *The Room of the Translator*. Herta Elena Rudolph and Tiziana Cavasino created it, inspired by the “Writers’ Rooms” section in the Guardian and the page

headed "The rooms of our authors" in the Caltari Archive (Rudolph). The blog allows literary translators to share professional experiences with others, inviting descriptions of their individual workspaces. It emphasises that translated literature is marked by the presence of a literary mediator who is anything but transparent (Rudolph). In this way, the initiative makes literary translators or "invisible authors" who "work behind the scenes" visible (Rudolph 2011). Petruccioli also teaches translation as well (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

Petruccioli thus consciously maintains a visible profile for himself as a translator, and by so doing, contributes to making translation a more visible and appreciated professional force within the contemporary marketplace (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). In this way he counteracts the tradition of the "invisible translator" discussed by Venuti which is prominent in, though not exclusive to, the Anglo-American translation tradition and which has been significantly challenged over the last twenty years (6–7).

### **Translating 37°2 *le matin*: Decisions, Decisions, Decisions!**

Petruccioli regards interlingual translation as a creative yet constrained interpretation of the Foreign Metatext, subscribing to the widely accepted view that an effective translator must determine which important features of this text should be maintained through certain overall strategies of translation, particular decisions of detail and instances of compensation. He does not believe in a "one size fits all" approach to translation, commenting: "It always depends on the source book and on what you decide, by your interpretation, should not by any means get lost in the translation process. [. . .] But then this will only be my interpretation of the book" (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

Petruccioli mentions features which characterise Djian's distinctive style that ought to be preserved against translation loss. For him, these include a strong conversational or "oral rhythm and syntax, particularly [. . .] obscene language and characteristics such as parataxis, repetitions [and] the very creative use of French's *que* (relative pronoun and subordinating particle)" (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). He explains: "Djian [. . .] uses all oral techniques to outline the main characters of the book." However, Italian publishing is traditionally opposed to markers of orality and obscenity (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). The reluctance to publish narratives with an oral flavour is due chiefly to the historical development of the Italian language.

Petruccioli observes that consequently

It has been [. . .] difficult to convince my editor that almost everything that sounded obscene, strange, too oral or utterly incorrect in my translation was not due to my scarce effort as a translator, but represented the very soul of the language of the book. I had to comply to soften some of it, so as to avoid the risk that an Italian reader should find the result too sloppy, but I kept firm on the general issue that the language should reflect strong oral traits, lest we'd betray the inner structure of the text. (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence)

For Petruccioli, Djian's writings expose the Italian reader to a writing style with which they may be unfamiliar. They therefore add to the receiving culture's conception of literature. Petruccioli proposes:

Djian [. . .] has this incredible talent in using French style and work on the sentence at its best, in the tradition of Flaubert and sometimes even Proust, although using literature in a very pragmatic sense of being useful to life, the sense American literature had to him when he first met it (as he once said). His stories are very simple, often quite violent and anyway always very well narrated, with the classic beginning-middle-end structure, but this in some way doesn't seem enough to him. The writing is much more important than the story (I'm using his own words). His use of narration techniques is never an end in itself. Italian readers are not very much used to this, and they can learn a lot from his very free way of joining refined style and perfect narrating mechanisms. (Personal correspondence)

### **The Promising Directions of Translation Evaluation and Analysis**

Translation evaluation may serve many different purposes and open up new paths for research on translation, once traditional debates about the perceived fidelity of the translator to the foreign text hinging on the problematic notion of equivalence are put aside. It can also help to cement perception of the translator as a socio-pragmatic cultural and textual expert, a member of the socio-literary system who participates in canon formation and affects how communities and individuals perceive texts, authors and canons. This counters the mistaken conception of the translator as a mechanical conduit of foreign literature in the eyes of the political establishment and the general public (Zongxin 49; Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

In order to reinforce this nuanced perspective, translation critics would do well to conceive of translations as individualised artistic performances, and to emphasise the role of both the FM author and the translator as performers, in addition to analysing linguistic elements of these texts such as syntax and grammar. Critics should consider the relationship between an FM and its translations as similar to that existing between "an invariable drama text and its variable theatrical performances. . ." (Zongxin 51) and recognise that the conversion of linguistic elements by the translator goes hand-in-hand with their role as performative co-creator. As Zongxin explains "It follows that translation critics should go from page to stage in their treatment of both the original and the target-language texts, and back from stage to page for an evaluation of their functional equivalence. Critical Translation Studies is better served with focusing on stage rather than on page" (51–52).

Evaluations of individual translators' styles across a large corpus of translated material, similar to those of Mona Baker, will lead to the identification of the distinct discursive presence of individual translators in TMs, how they are manifested and affect readers. It can also heighten the appreciation of translators as artistic performers, since critics will learn to appreciate particular "voices" in translation.

Once critics determine the dynamics of particular translation, "a critic should be free to have his or her preferences, just as one might prefer Glenn Gould and another Maurizio Pollini" (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). In this sense, critics can appreciate a translation independently of its relationship to the original, as a new text circulating in the target culture. Critics should investigate and take into account the contextual factors and working conditions which impact upon the specific translation situations they investigate.

Translation evaluation and analysis highlights the importance of the practice in general, and helps critics, readers and translators appreciate the complexity of the decision-making process, and the justifications behind it. Evaluations enable them to appreciate facets of a foreign text which a given translation reveals or hides, and to understand why this is so. This concealing and revealing potential exists because a text's meaning can never be exhausted. This notion is easy to grasp if translation is conceived of as a prism in which texts and concepts can be refracted or modified, or if translation is perceived as a dynamic and renewable passage of energy, similar to a mechanical wave, which arises out of its context and simultaneously influences the former. Its impact is therefore not unidirectional, linear or predictable (Henitiuk 3–5).

Successive translations of foreign texts can enlarge the potential use and scope of the target language as is demonstrated by the substantial influence of the traditional Japanese narrative by Murasaki Shikibu entitled *The Tale(s) of Genji* on Western art and literature, through the refractive power of translation. This foreign work allowed Western culture to be permeated by Japanese influences, and created the potential for phenomena to be viewed through a reconstituted Westernised Japanese lens (Henitiuk 9, 19). Various TMs of the Japanese narrative also inspired the creation of new texts on which they were modelled in both Japanese and foreign cultures (Henitiuk 8–9).

Translations provide the critic with an opportunity to analyse how cultures relate to and perceive one another, why these perceptions are constructed, and what effects they have. With *37°2 al mattino*, Italian readers are introduced to narrative mechanisms and uses of language with which they are most likely unfamiliar. The recreation of these features sets a precedent in the target language, and revitalises it, increasing its flexibility and the resources it has at its disposal in terms of language use (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). There is also a feedback loop at work in translation: TMs may also influence the source culture, and cause them to re-evaluate and appreciate the foreign text in a different light. Many adaptations were spawned by multiple English translations of Shikibu's narrative, which in turn influenced Japanese interpretations and assessments of the original (Henitiuk 9). Djian's texts, influenced by English and American literature, likewise have the potential in translation to invite English critics and readers to reassess their interpretations of the literary sources Djian draws upon, and their significance.

Furthermore, the analysis and evaluation of translations can reveal potentially fruitful insights into how cultural institutions function, the myths that they sustain or challenge, how they impinge upon particular elements of a given sociocultural

environment. Examining the quantity and nature of existing translations of an author's works can also indicate how that author is perceived in the receiving culture, as well as the factors which influence these evolving perceptions. Any translation of a foreign text is one example of a path or "elliptical turning" that the latter can take, and any social and cultural ties it has become increasingly diffused and become increasingly refracted with each new version (Henitiuk 19). Finally, the translation process stamps foreign literature with prestige, as national literature becomes world literature, and is therefore accessible to a broader readership. The sum of "translative refractions" (i.e. authorised translations) is what constitutes world literature, and the elevation and integration of foreign texts in translation into this category is another promising perspective to investigate by means of translation analysis and evaluation (Henitiuk 18).

TMs can also be analysed and evaluated on another level, on both the micro and macroscale. TMs, whether analysed as the work of individuals in a particular social, cultural and political context or as part of a representative corpus of translation trends at a particular point in time, signal the translator's alignment with or rejection of both present and past norms, strategies, conventions and rules of the discipline which are negotiated in and through translation discourse. Therefore translations document the evolution of translation theory and practice, and for this reason also are valuable in and of themselves as discursive narratives (Hermans 120–21).

### **Where Does the Translator's Ultimate Loyalty Lie? Petruccioli's Focus on Text and Reader: A Bilaterally Committed Translator True to Himself and His Profession**

Petruccioli proposes that there cannot and should not be only one principle by which to judge translations, just as it is unrealistic to claim that there is a one-size-fits-all-approach, which is appropriate for any translation context. He diplomatically suggests "Maybe the last judgement should be left to the reader. If he finds it beautiful, then the translation is good" (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence). This remark shows that Petruccioli's perspective is strongly reader-oriented, as might be expected from a professional translator with the prospective reader or client in mind. In literary translation, textual fidelity may be an important and legitimate skopos determining translational action and it is for Petruccioli (Nord, "Manipulation and Loyalty" 35; Schäffner 236). A functional skopos-oriented approach to translation is defined by Christiane Nord, as one where "the translator's decisions are no longer guided by the linguistic and stylistic characteristics of the source text but by the constellation of participants and conditions of the communicative situation for which it is produced. Instead of equivalence between source and target texts, the aim is adequacy for the translation purpose[s]" ("Functional and skopos oriented approaches" 663).

Adherence to the loyalty principle incorporated in this approach means that the translator "is committed bilaterally to the source and target situations and is

responsible to both the ST sender (or the initiator, if he is the one who takes the sender's part) and the TT recipient" (Nord, "Scopos" 94). In order to fulfil these conditions the translator must consider conventional conceptions of translation, in order to determine what each partner in the translation process expects from the translated text in a particular instance of translation. However, it does not follow that the translator is obliged to satisfy these expectations—they may decide that to uphold the loyalty principle, certain conventions must be disregarded. Whatever the case, the translator has a duty to inform their partners of the decisions he makes, and to justify them to the latter (Nord, "Scopos" 95).

Petruccioli's remarks concerning his translation strategies indicate that he espouses concepts of textual loyalty. When asked what influenced his overall translation approach he says:

The text itself. I never let anything external influence my work (except of course possible [publisher] strategies [. . .] for market and target reader: [. . .] if I think that the publisher is asking me what might look to me like a betrayal of the text's inner qualities, or if what is expected from the translator looks to me too far from the kind of talent I'm able to display, then I consider refusing the work). (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence)

Clearly, he sees the text and the reader responses it elicits as the most solid anchor for his interpretations. If textual loyalty is unlikely to clash significantly with the target reader's understanding of the text and its aims, the concept of textual loyalty and an awareness of interpretive limits are sound principles that effectively guide him in his task.

That said, according to Petruccioli, it is impossible to judge whether a free translation approach or one that is more constrained and literal or even whether a balance between the two is the best option for all translators in any context because translation is context-bound. The fidelity issue also cannot be considered in general terms because a single translation often requires a mixed approach. In addition these decisions typically do not rest solely with the translator, as the translation process involves making choices which depend on the publisher, often in relation to the impact the translation should have on its intended readership (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence).

Linguistic fidelity being untenable, perhaps the alternative is to see the ideal translator as a responsible individual who is conscious of the demands of his profession. As such, he is faithful to specific tasks of translation, and makes a bilateral commitment to reconcile and negotiate the needs and desires of key parties, including his own as a performer of translated texts (Tosun and Kabukcik 305). It is fitting to let Petruccioli have the last word on the matter: "If I am a good performer, I will of course be faithful, both to myself *and* to what I have to perform" (Petruccioli, Personal correspondence; original italics).

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