

Preface

The literary text as a form of discourse that exemplifies certain aesthetic principles of composition has become an issue in the field of translation studies as far as transposition of meaning-systems, style, and cultural nuances are concerned. The assumption is that foreign literatures and cultures are generally accessible through the medium of translation and this poses a stimulating area for debate encompassing both theoretical and practical approaches. The aim of this issue of *Gramma* was to invite contributions that encourage discussion focusing on the appreciation of foreign literatures and cultures and/or the viability of conducting a comparison between them. We were fortunate to receive articles that encourage such discussion reflecting the 'state of the art' at this particular moment in the ongoing quest of circumscribing translation studies. Of course, it should be noted that scholars who have focused on other features of the translation process have appropriated theoretical notions from literary critics and other theoreticians (e.g. philosophers such as Derrida) in an effort to shed light on the problematics found in domains such as interpretation and ethnographic studies. Indeed, we also received contributions that introduced discussions centering round such problematics (cf. the articles of Apostolou, Anagnostou and Yemenedzi-Malathouni).

Translation studies has recently become a prominent field in which translation scholars, but also scholars representing other disciplines, have been challenged to come to terms with cross-cultural meaning-systems in an attempt to reveal and highlight the social significance and uniqueness of communication among different ethnic entities. As a result there has been a shift in emphasis from the traditional inspection of the discrete text to approaching translation as a process in which cultural manifestations have become the mainstay of research. This is due to the prevailing concern over the sensitive issue of cross-cultural communication within a heightened multi-cultural and diverse world community.

After an extended interval of meticulous linguistic scrutiny on the questions relating to the dissimilar forms of the source-text and the target-text vis-à-vis their “potential convergence,” a shift in emphasis has emerged - stamped with approval by scholars within the contemporary field of translation studies - whereby the process of translation takes place on the level in which cultural parameters hold sway. This particular shift has begun to focus on the intricacies of the signifying practices that emanate from specific ethnic communities, and especially of the text-producers of those communities who are immersed in re-presenting meaning-systems reflecting their *Weltanschauung*. The question that emerges is how the signifying practices of one community can be adequately transposed intact across the frontier of inter-lingual communication. Indeed, this particular question is the cutting edge of those determined to draft a blueprint in order to construct the foundations of a converging *modus vivendi* for cross-cultural communication. It is becoming clear now that the re-orientation within translation studies has expanded towards new horizons where scholars are offering crucial insights into the cultural adumbrations not only of the theoretical slant in unraveling translation processes *per se* (cf. the articles of Belau, Morgan and Johnson in this volume), but also of the practical implications involving the individual performance of text-production and reproduction (cf. Ganz, Vlachou and Minier in this volume).

If we concur with the prevalent trend that views translation as a meeting ground where the problematics of transposing texts from one ethnic community to another is seen as a grappling with the cultural niceties of meaning-systems and how to *manage* them, then we can begin to appreciate the efforts of anthropologists and ethnographers who in their fieldwork over the years have attempted to delve into and understand, with in-depth analysis, the signifying practices of the particular ethnic group(s) they were studying. Of course, it was their attempt to relate their unique experience of the studied group to the world at large. Hence, transposing (or translating for that matter) signifying practices was the hallmark of re-producing that experience (cf. Anagnostou and Yemenedzi-Malathouni in this volume). Indeed, one could construe the impact of their efforts on the inter-cultural transposition of signifying practices and meaning-systems to have marked the shift in emphasis found today in translation studies. This has paved the way for translation scholars who have recently begun to focus on the cultural nuances that are considered important for the purposes of underscoring - what we would like to refer as - the ‘inter-cultural meeting of minds’ and how those ‘minds’ are interpellated to manage meaning-systems within the realm of cross-cultural signification.

Juggling theoretical notions with precision and insight is offered by the authors in this volume who have shown concern with what translation as a process entails, especially when it comes to ferreting out the intricacies of text-production/text-reproduction within the said 'process.' Belau, for instance, evokes Derrida's notion of translation as a word implying the impossible - a notion that has been bandied about in past discussions. However, she culls ideas from Benjamin's theory of "translation and melancholia" to provide an insight whereby "the missed encounter" of transposition might allow the translator to encounter the problematics in which the process itself propels the necessity for attaining management of meaning. This particular theoretical 'slant' captures the essence of the ongoing discussion found within translation studies; and, thus, accentuates its importance for further contemplation. Johnson, in his paper, undertakes the task of combining "theoretical vocabularies" with the process of the translation act that sheds light on the atypical resolution of "self-translation" carried out by Samuel Beckett. These particular "theoretical vocabularies" produced by Gadamer, Benjamin and Levinas are a springboard for theoretical forays into unraveling the idiosyncratic translation inter-lingual games that Beckett himself indulged in. Morgan develops a theoretical tack that essentially re-cycles the metaphorical etymology of "transference" in its Greek mantle: "phoria" (introduced by Tournier). She also uses Benjamin in conjunction with Christian asceticism in order to portray the paradigm of translating notions across the social-political spectrum of meaning-systems that play an important role in cross-cultural understanding.

The next three articles focus on translation as textuality in particular contexts. Ganz's interest in cross-cultural text-production and reproduction in a milieu that is assumed to foster aesthetic appreciation of so-called marginal artistic productions within a multi-cultural Canadian society, opens up a vista in how individual texts may enhance the aesthetic appreciation of voices that have a say in putting on the cultural (and especially literary) map the ethnic élan of their particular background. Vlachou grapples with the sensitive issue of how texts depicting gender (especially the female) can have far reaching effects in portraying all the particularities of intimate (sexual) excitation, but when cross-culturally transposed can be suppressed in the target-milieu based on the hegemonic imposition that has the "power" to snuff out all details pertaining to sexual activity in general. This is an example of how cross-cultural meaning-systems - which can be considered as a possible side effect in overall transposition - are purposefully skewed for "supposed" moral reasons. Minier tackles an important issue that has been a perennial one in translation studies. This has to do with the critical

discourse conducted by critics over the issue of a “canonized” translation of a celebrated text (in this case Shakespeare’s “Hamlet” in Hungarian) and its “revision” for contemporary audiences. There is discussion of the implications that have arisen concerning the question of translational tampering as “taboo.”

Studies of translation that have moved beyond the traditional investigation of source and target texts can be found in two of the contributions. Yemedzi-Malathouni highlights the topical issue of “cultural otherness” that has sparked innumerable discussions recently. She focuses on the interesting historical period of Columbus’s adventure to usurp the domains of the New World and in which the cross-cultural means of communication he conducts with the natives becomes a contrivance for colonial hegemonic imposition and exploitation. Anagnostou, on the other hand, undertakes an analysis that endeavors to outline the ethnographic primacy of “multiculturalism,” “ethnic preservation” and the “cultural activism” of intellectuals within the social hodge-podge of contemporary (multi-cultural) American society. He attempts to use the concept of the ‘translation process’ as a theoretical input for elucidating the ongoing debates dealing with the interpretations of cultural Diasporas (in this case the cultural Diaspora of Greek-America).

Finally, Apostolou accelerates an innovative discussion on what ‘interpretation’ as a translation process involves. She draws sustenance from literary and psychological theories of the ‘double’ and Derrida to capture the peculiarity of what interpretation means as a process that incorporates the “body/text” enclosure. She plays with the notion of “presence/misconceived absence” in dealing with the “split of voices and bodies.”

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