

Introduction

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AnArche¹

“our translations even the best start out from a false principle they want to germanise indic greek english instead of indicizing, graecizing, anglicizing german [...] the fundamental error of the translator is that he holds fast to the state in which his own language happens to be rather than allowing it to be put powerfully in movement by the foreign language. [...] he must broaden and deepen his own language through the foreign one [...]”.

Rudolf Pannwitz qtd. in Benjamin

In the above excerpt, Walter Benjamin reaches the closing of his essay “The Task of the Translator” by quoting Rudolf Pannwitz, a German writer and philosopher, on translation. On the question why Benjamin quotes Pannwitz to make his point, rather than Schleiermacher or Wilhelm von Humboldt who had made the same point earlier, Steven Rendall suggests that “Pannwitz’s German [...] subverts the linguistic structure of the language, and particularly its syntax – and might thus be seen as having already achieved the kind of liberation of the word that translation is supposed to provide” (180).²

It is true that Rudolf Pannwitz is not only promoting the concept of an opening up of the translator’s language to that of the other, thus challenging any artificially imposed boundaries; he is also visually breaking these boundaries that

¹ The anarchic writing of the word “anarchy” as “anarche” has been invented by Fotini Apostolou to refer to its Greek origin, *αναρχία*, that better illustrates the reference to an “arche”, an origin, an authority and its loss. The word in English can also phonetically refer to the opening of the Bible in Greek (“ἐν ἀρχῇ” – “in the beginning”).

² It is interesting to note here that, contrary to Pannwitz’s, and consequently Benjamin’s, suggestions, most translators of the essay refused to follow this openness to difference (his an-arche), and forced the order of punctuation and capitalization on him. Harry Zohn’s well known translation of the essay, and the Greek translation by F. Terzakis are two examples of this.

translation has to dispense with. Sentences flow into one another without punctuation or capitalisation; syntactical order is also lost, thus highlighting the fluidity of writing and its potential *anarchy* of disorder.

Like translation, interpreting, by its very nature, challenges borders and boundaries. Starting from its ambivalent etymology in English, both concerning the origin of the word (either Latin or Sanskrit) and the fields it covers, it is a practice suspended between different spaces. In his book *Introducing Interpreting Studies*, Franz Pöchhacker underlines the etymological ambivalence: “The English word for ‘interpreter’ [...] is derived from Latin *interpres* (in the sense of ‘expounder’, ‘person explaining what is obscure’), the semantic roots of which are not clear. While some scholars take the second part of the word to be derived from *partes* or *pretium* (‘price’), thus fitting the meaning of a ‘middleman’, ‘intermediary’ or ‘commercial go-between’ [...], others have suggested a Sanskrit root” (9-10). In other words, the English word hides a double ambivalence: the geographical space of its etymological origin and its practical reference. It may be either of Sanskrit or Latin origin; if Sanskrit, the origin is the word *prath*, which means “to propagate”, “to disseminate” or “to spread”; if Latin, the origin could be either *partes* (parties) or *pretium* (price), which means that the practice entails either social interaction – interpartes – or an economic mediation – interpretium. What this ambivalence makes clear is that the process is suspended not only between the parties involved in communication but also between different spaces, disciplines and practices.

And since *GRAMMA/ΓΡΑΜΜΑ* is an inter-lingual journal moving between English and Greek, as its title testifies, we have to refer to the etymology of the Greek word for interpreter, *διερμυνέας/diermineas*, which takes us back to the ancient Greek god Hermes; to quote Walter Burkert from his book *Greek Religion Archaic and Classical*: “Successful communication with enemies and strangers is the work of Hermes, and the interpreter, *hermeneus*, owes his name to the god” (158). To understand the nature of the mediator god, it would be interesting to refer to Richard Palmer’s extensive reference to Hermes’ nature:

Hermes is [...] a mediator. He is the messenger between Zeus and mortals, also between Zeus and the underworld and between the underworld and mortals. Hermes crosses these ontological thresholds with ease. A notorious thief, according to legend, he crosses the threshold of legality without a qualm. “Marshal of dreams”, he mediates between waking and dreaming, day and night. Wearer of a cap of invisibility, he can become invisible or visible at will. Master of night-tricks, he can cover himself with night. Master of sleep, he can wake the sleeping or put the waking to sleep. Liminality or marginality is his very essence. (1)

The above excerpt gives a wonderful account of the nature of the mediating god, which shows the importance of his “liminality or marginality”, the perpetual back and forth movement between realms; for this god, boundaries are there to be chal-

lenged, very much like the practice of interpreting which always inhabits the margins, suspended between spaces.³

If we cross one more border we can deal with a word which means “interpreter” mainly in eastern countries but seems to cross all linguistic, cultural, political, historical boundaries, the word *dragoman*/δραγομάνος/*tercüman*. The etymology of the word, which leads us deeper into the chaotic maze of exchanges and boundary crossings, is the following: “In Arabic the word is تارجمان (*tarjumān*), in Turkish *tercüman*. Deriving from the Semitic quadriliteral root *t-r-g-m*, it appears in Akkadian as ‘targumannu’, and in Aramaic as *targemana*. Hebrew makes a distinction between מגרמם (*metargem*) – referring to a translator of written texts – and מגרומם (*meturgeman*) referring to an interpreter of spoken conversation or speeches” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dragoman>). In his book *In the Beginning: A Short History of the Hebrew Language*, Joel Hoffman goes deeper into origins in a parenthetical note:

(Though we know better than to use etymology to understand a word, the etymology of the root t.r.g.m. is interesting: It seems to come from a very old Semitic root r.g.m., meaning “word”. The *t* at the beginning came from an old causative construction, so that t.r.g.m. derived from the notion of “causing to be a word” or “turning into a word”. Surprisingly, the same r.g.m. root in Hebrew means “stone”. Though it usually appears in verbal form with the meaning “to stone (to death)”, one wonders if the connection between words and writing in stone might be preserved in this root). (167)

The origins, then, reveal the richness of the journey of the word, since we are taken back to the very beginning, to the “word” and its making; at the same time, we could possibly draw a link between speech and writing, or between speech/writing and death, as Hoffman concludes in his extensive reference.

Religion, history and politics are intermingled in the development of this word, since the dragomans were first used in the Ottoman empire because the Ottomans’ religion did not allow them to learn any language of peoples who were non-Muslim. These dragomans/interpreters, a position dominated by Greeks, soon surpassed the limits of a simple linguistic mediation and came to manage the foreign relations of the Empire, despite the dragoman’s “questionable fidelity to the in-terests of his employers” (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 1911: 222).

The European historical journey of the word is described in the 11th edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* published in 1911:

During the Middle Ages the word entered European languages: in Middle English as *dragman*, in Old French as *drugeman*, in Middle Latin as *dragumannus*, and in Middle Greek δραγομάνος. Later Eu-

³ For a detailed reference to the etymology of the Greek word, see Apostolou 2009: 1-3.

ropean variants include the German *trutzelmann*, the French *trucheman* or *truchement* (in modern French it is *drogman*), the Italian *turcimanno*, and the Spanish *trujamán*, *trujimán* and *truchimán*; these variants point to a Turkish or Arabic word “*turjuman*”, with different vocalisation. In Hungarian it becomes *tolmács*, which is further loaned into German as *Dolmetscher*, the standard present day word for “translator of spoken language”.

Inter-discipline

An age-old practice but a young discipline (or sub-discipline if seen within the broader context of Translation Studies), interpreting has been pursuing its multifaceted identities and manifestations in a number of research fields, as diverse as translation studies, cultural studies, literary studies or cognitive psychology and neurophysiology; through its different working modes – simultaneous or conference interpreting (SI) and consecutive interpreting; the array of inter-social and intra-social settings – business interpreting, liaison interpreting, diplomatic interpreting, military interpreting, court interpreting, educational interpreting, community interpreting, media interpreting; the different nature of the languages involved – spoken language interpreting and sign language interpreting; the simultaneous co-existence of a number of languages, especially in conference or meetings with multiple working languages, where relay interpreting gives out the aura of a babelic interaction;⁴ the diverse technological means through which interpreting can be provided – remote interpreting, telephone interpreting, video-phone interpreting.⁵

We should not forget that interpreters themselves come from a number of fields and different backgrounds, and are constantly called upon to broaden their language skills but also their knowledge backgrounds by working in a number of settings for people of different cultural, social, economic, educational, political backgrounds.

To underline further the interconnection of interpreting as a field of study with other subject areas, it would be worth mentioning that the landmark for the introduction of interpreting training in universities was a major political event, the Nuremberg trials of 1945-46, which marked the end of World War II. Due to the practical difficulties concerning interpreting into and from four languages (English, French, Russian and German) during the trial, with a translation team involving a total of 108 people, International Business Machines was asked to develop and install a system which allowed the interpreters to work simultaneously.⁶

⁴ Relay interpreting is defined by Pöchhacker as “indirect interpreting via a third language, which links up the performance of two (or more) interpreters, with one interpreter’s output serving as the source for another” (21).

⁵ In the first chapter “Concepts” of his work *Introducing Interpreting Studies*, Pöchhacker refers to types and settings of interpreting (9-26).

⁶ The article “Translations at the International Military Tribunal” in the online journal *Dimensions: A Journal of Holocaust Studies* provides detailed information on the interpreting process during the trials.

After the introduction of interpreting studies into university curricula, research attention has also focused on different areas of interpreting, such as conference interpreting, sign-language interpreting, or community interpreting. Especially the latter field has recently gained more attention due to larger numbers of people moving around the world for a number of reasons. This has led host countries to realise the problems arising from these multilingual communities whose members face problems when contacting public services (health care, police, justice, etc.).

The present issue

This issue of *GRAMMA/TPAMMA*, entitled “Challenging Boundaries in Interpreting Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches”, aims at foregrounding the diversity of interpreting studies, its constant challenging of boundaries. The papers included in the issue can be divided into three broad categories: Research in simultaneous interpreting, Interpreting and Human Rights, and Interpreting in the European Union. As the last section of the issue hosts papers from representatives of different institutions of the European Union, the editors considered that an introduction was necessary in order to situate the papers in a specific context.

The first section entitled “Research in Simultaneous Interpreting” hosts two papers: Ebru Diriker’s “Agency in Conference Interpreting: Still a Myth?”, and Konstantina Liontou’s “Strategies in German-to-Greek Simultaneous Interpreting: A Corpus-Based Approach”.

Ebru Diriker takes a critical approach to the neutral and detached role attributed to interpreters in simultaneous conference interpreting. She focuses especially on media presentations of the interpreting performance, giving specific examples from mainstream and social media and the “corrective” role they try to play in relation to conference interpreting. As she explains, it is loyalty to the original meaning that is considered of paramount importance by the media, while they are highly critical of any deviation from the original. This discourse renders interpreters vulnerable to criticism, which does not take into consideration the fact that “interpreters are active and critical decision-makers who perform under time constraints in settings that are characterised by visible and invisible complexities”, as the author states.

Konstantina Liontou presents a corpus study focusing on the strategies employed during German-to-Greek simultaneous interpreting. The material she uses comes from speeches by Members of the European Parliament, randomly chosen from the official website of the EP. She reaches the conclusion that interpreters resort both to “general” strategies, which are not influenced by the language combination of interpretation, and “specific” strategies, on which the language combination does have an effect. Liontou’s work reports on a pioneering study, since no such work has been carried out having the specific language combination as its main focus; as she states in her paper: “Greek is a language that is characteristically absent from interpreting studies”.

The second section entitled “Interpreting and Human Rights” hosts two papers: Eva Norström, Kristina Gustafsson and Ingrid Fioretos’ “Interpreters in Sweden – A Tool for Equal Rights?”, and Fotini Apostolou’s «Υπηρεσίες διερμηνείας για τους μετανάστες: Μία νέα πραγματικότητα στην Ελλάδα» [Interpreting services for immigrants: A new reality in Greece].

The paper by Norström et al discusses some of the results of two extensive and important research projects on community interpreting in Sweden (2008-2011). The authors present the situation from the perspective of the interpreter working mainly with children in interpreted meetings. Equal access to legal, social and medical rights, a prerequisite for a democratic welfare state, depends to a large extent on verbal communication between an individual and a public servant, such as a lawyer, a social worker, a teacher or a doctor. Non-Swedish speakers need interpretation in order to be able to contact these services and enjoy their full rights. The authors focus on the current conditions of these interpreting services: legal framework, civil servants’ attitude, interpreters’ qualifications, working conditions, etc. The paper concludes that there is still a lot to be done in order for the quality of community interpreting to be improved, so that it proves indeed “a tool for equal rights” for these children.

Fotini Apostolou’s paper presents an extensive and comprehensive picture of public service interpreting for immigrants and refugees in Greece. The paper starts from the legal framework that provides for these services both in the asylum process and criminal proceedings. This is followed by a discussion of the real conditions of these services, and the problems that arise by deficits in quality, with reference to specific examples. It also presents specific projects recently implemented in the field of community interpreting in other sectors, such as health care. The paper closes with a reference to training programmes for community interpreters in Greece.

The last section entitled “Interpreting in the EU” includes an introduction and four papers, three by representatives of EU institutions and one by the president of EULITA⁷: Olga Cosmidou, Director-General for Interpretation and Conferences in the European Parliament (DG INTE); Marco Benedetti, Director-General for Interpretation in the European Commission; Liese Katschinka, President of EULITA (European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association); Alison Graves, Head of Unit for Interpreter Training and Contacts with Universities in the European Parliament.

Olga Cosmidou, the Director General for interpreting at the European Parliament, presents the interpreting services provided by the EP, which is “a pioneer in interpreting ‘exploits’”, as she very aptly puts it in the title of her paper, since the EP is the only institution of the European Union (and worldwide) which functions with a regime of 23 official languages in its daily operations. This is because the EP is the only body with members elected directly by the citizens of 27 member states; therefore, it is imperative that no language barriers are imposed to par-

⁷ EULITA (European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association) is an international not-for-profit association set up by the European Union in 2009.

ticipation. It is interpretation that makes the EP “anti-Babel”, to use her term, and “the secret is quality”, since only top conference interpreters are selected to work for the Directorate General for Interpretation and Conferences of the European Parliament. Olga Cosmidou also discusses organisational problems, the most important of which is the level of professionals; this has led the interpreting services of the EU to establish networks with universities around the world, since interpreting is a “global” and “mobile” profession.

Marco Benedetti, Director General for Interpreting of the European Commission, discusses the highly important role of interpretation in the European Commission “as one pillar of its multilingualism policy which has not only the aim to spread language knowledge for a better integration of Europeans, but also to guarantee an equal linguistic treatment of all its citizens”. The author presents the work of the Directorate General for Interpretation (DG SCIC) in the European Union, and its efforts to promote the interpreter profession through its own initiatives or through its involvement in international cooperation. Marco Benedetti also discusses the link between interpreting and human rights, which has led the EU to reflect on legal interpreting, such as the right to interpretation and translation of important documents, the provision of sign language interpretation in court procedures, the quality of interpretation and translation services, the training of interpreters and translators in legal matters. The paper also highlights the important role of the interpreter in the preservation of the immigrants’ mother tongue, since interpreting “guarantees the essential right of each European to speak his own language”.

Liese Katschinka, the president of EULITA, highlights the importance of interpreting in criminal proceedings as a human right, which has been established by the Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by the Council of Europe sixty years ago, and is reflected in the EU Directive on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings. The paper discusses the variations in legal interpreting standards in the various EU member states, an issue which calls for action by all involved stakeholders. EULITA was set up in order to contribute “to activities geared to achieve high-quality standards for interpreting services in judicial settings” by fostering associations of legal interpreters in EU member states, by establishing close links with universities running courses for legal interpreters and translators and, by establishing relations with European and/or national associations of judges, prosecutors, lawyers and judicial staff.

Alison Graves gives an overview of interpreter training provided or supported by the European Parliament. As the author states “further training for interpreters is the only way to keep pace and ensure that our standard of service is maintained at the high level our clients have learned to expect and demand”. Alison Graves presents the different types of training provided for conference interpreters: language training both for the acquisition of new languages (through language courses organised by the EP) and the maintenance of existing working languages (through regular summer universities for staff); thematic training through appropriate seminars, lectures or workshops; training provided by inter-

preters aiming to support student assessment and virtual classes (conference and/or web-streamed classes). Finally, the author presents the efforts of the EP to bridge the gap between theory and practice through the organisation of two pilot programmes: *Passerelle*, which introduces newly accredited interpreters into the EP working environment, and *Seminarium*, which provides pre-accreditation coaching to a number of select graduates.

Finally, considering the inter-lingual character of the journal and the current topic, the editors thought that it would be appropriate to have the general introduction and the introduction to the EU section in both English and Greek, especially given the deficit in literature on interpreting in Greek.

We hope that this issue will make a significant contribution to interpreting studies and broaden our knowledge of the field.

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