

**MAHER, BRIGID (2011): *Recreation and Style, Translating Humorous Literature in Italian and English*.  
Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 193 p.**

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topics that the reader could not find in the manual. In fact, one can find some extra useful material, such as contrastive lexical aspects between German and English, which is a very helpful resource given that most Spanish speakers (and translators) have German as their L3 after English, and there could be interferences between this pair of languages too.

Finally, the third broad section of the manual (Parts 4 and 5) proposes a collection of reference works concerning the topics covered in the book, and also a set of web sites where the reader can expand his/her knowledge of the German language and culture. These two sections are practically the same as the previous edition, but this fact does not demerit its usefulness.

The professor's guide is a *corrigé* for all of the activities proposed in *TA-E*. The solutions proposed will certainly be helpful for self-learners, students in general, and professors and instructors, but this last group will find more value in the guide's didactic instructions and suggestions. These are proposed as an aid for the tutors – during the learning process – to implement the handbook's activities more effectively in the classroom or workshop. The guide's suggestions are a good source for ideas to vary the class dynamics. Last of all, the professor's guide also gives the user an extra bibliography (different from the one proposed in the manual) to complement each of the book's topics and chapters.

On the whole, *TA-E* is a rigorously conceived and edited didactic handbook which belongs to the Spanish education tradition to move away from traditional teaching techniques to student and process-centered activities. This intends to foster the development of critical and autonomous apprentices, capable of adapting to real life tasks.

The author, Silvia Gamero Pérez, has devised a helpful and original tool – based on her scientific and classroom research, along with her teaching experience – which will prove to be handy for teachers because of the variety of well-designed materials that can be easily adapted, and brought to specific class situations. Also, students will find the coherent structure of the manual useful, and the convenient translation resources, skills, and strategies that they can obtain by working with it.

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## NOTES

1. We will refer to it as *TA-E*, from now on.

## REFERENCES

- GAMERO PÉREZ, Silvia (2005): *Traducción alemán-español: Aprendizaje activo de las destrezas básicas*. Castelló de la Plana/ Madrid: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I/ Edelsa.

MAHER, BRIGID (2011): *Recreation and Style, Translating Humorous Literature in Italian and English*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 193 p.

Except maybe for puns and other wordplays, humour has not often been addressed in translation studies and yet, humorous texts can be very challenging for the translators, on many levels. With *Recreation and Style*, Brigid Maher makes an insightful contribution to the matter by exploring the possibilities and the limitations of the translation of humorous elements and styles in literary texts. Her goal is to understand and illustrate how literary translators manage to transfer various humorous styles from one language to another and from one culture to another, which is sometimes deemed as an impossible task. As Roland Diot wrote, for instance, "when it comes to translating humour, the operation proves to be as desperate as that of translating poetry" (1989: 84). Maher also studies how the notions of humour, language, culture and identity are all related in literary works, and how the translator's "creativity and playful rewritings," to quote the summary of the book, are key elements in this translational process. As a lecturer and researcher at La Trobe University as well as a professional literary translator (she's actually the vice-president of the Australian Association for Literary Translation), Maher is certainly in a good position to offer a rich and accurate contribution to the matter, from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

*Recreation and Style* is influenced by various academics fields, from comparative literature to cultural studies, and filled with examples taken from the English translations of texts by Italian authors Rosa Cappelletto and Dario Fo, Italian translations of British authors Will Self and Anthony Burgess, as well as Maher's own translations of Italian novelist Milena Agus. By undertaking this bi-directional analysis, Maher contributes to the perception of literary translation as an exchange between different cultures that was advocated by many authors before her, the most famous being certainly Antoine Berman. As for the chosen language pair, it's important to note that the abundant explanations accompanying each case study allow the reader who's unfamiliar with the Italian language and literature to follow Maher's reflection and fully understand her points. Besides, the occasional use of backtranslations lets every reader grasp the dimensions of the translators' initiative by him or herself.

The obvious first step for Maher's project is the not so evident task of defining the concept of humour itself, in a literary perspective. For her study, and according to her heterogeneous corpora,

she used a very broad definition that covers irony, satire, parody, farce, wordplays, grotesque and so on. The first chapter thus begins with a short reflection about the multicultural perception of humour, the so-called “universals of humour” and equivalence. The overview of the variety of humorous styles that follows then gives the reader a very good idea of how text-based humour works, and the social and cultural implications that the translator must consider in order to, for instance, “reinforce social norms” (p. 4) in the case of more traditional humour, or successfully transgress these norms. Humour, then, is mostly a cultural phenomenon since it is “born of the peculiar cultural, historical and social experience of a group of people” (p. 7) and its translation becomes a functional activity that requires the translator to play the role of a cross-cultural negotiator, whose main goal is first and foremost to retain the humour. As Jeroen Vandaele (one of the few authors named by Maher who wrote about humour in translation studies) mentions, “it is obvious that the translator has failed when no one laughs at translated humor” (2010: 149). Beyond this challenge of making the target readers “laugh,” Maher aims to study the many factors that influence the translator, including notably the target literary systems, the norms in translation and the involvement of various parties such as editors and publishers. As a theoretical framework for her analysis, Maher mentions, among others, the contribution of André Lefevere on the cultural aspects of translation, the work of Ana María Rojo López, for whom the successful cross-cultural reception of humour relies on shared knowledge and cultural background, and Maria Tymoczko’s notion of “comic paradigm” which basically determines “what is or is not generally considered funny in a given culture at a given time” (p. 9). Combining such theoretical preoccupations with observations of carefully selected examples, Maher demonstrates that the translation of humour requires the translator to act as a decision-maker whose creativity “enables unlikely exchanges” (p. 19) between different cultures.

Chapters 2 and 3 study examples of Italian to English translations of humorous texts that rest on a cultural tradition well-known in the source culture but not necessarily in the target culture. First of all, in Rosa Capiello’s *Paese fortunato*, a young and poorly educated Italian woman describes her immigration story in Australia. The humour then comes from the constant cultural shocks experienced by the narrator, and her use of irony and grotesque imagery to depict various situations. The narrator’s tale is strongly influenced by the “Italian traditions of caricature and exaggeration” (p. 15), and is written in an unconventional Italian-

Australian dialect, that was certainly a challenge to translate in Australian English. To maintain Capiello’s narrative style and the unique voice of the protagonist, the translator chose not to respect the English language conventions and constraints. This led to a translated version imbued by a deep sense of foreignness for the target readers, similar to what the narrator is experiencing in her adoptive country. Since the humour of *Paese fortunato* sometimes comes from the ironic use of English words in the Italian discourse, Maher notes that the translator preserved the effect by switching the language register or using compensations, notably by emphasizing the *Australianness* of the event and characters depicted by the characters. It’s also notable that the translator felt obligated from time to time to tone down the narrator’s exaggerated and unflattering description of Anglo-Australians, who are after all the target of the translation. Eventually, the translation received mixed reviews, not because of translation losses, but more because of these abundant exaggerations used to convey the narrator’s feelings that seemed still too overwhelming and acerbic for Australian audiences. In Chapter 3, Maher compares four different British translations and adaptations of Dario Fo’s politically engaged and satirical play *Morte accidentale di un anarchico*. The different approaches adopted for translating humour in theatre shows how creativity is crucial to the process, especially in theatre where adaptations and modifications are traditionally more common than in most other areas of translation, and where performability is a key factor. Maher begins her comparison by examining how the translators dealt with the play’s historical and political setting. More specifically, one version is set in Milan like the source text but also “includes references to contemporary issues in Britain” (p. 55), another pushes the domesticating approach further by giving a more British feel to the play even though the action remains in Milan (by moving a bombing from the Bank of Agriculture to a pub, for instance), and another one is set in present-day England, with updated cultural and political references. Maher rightfully notes that these kinds of creative initiatives are encouraged by Fo himself, to make sure the target public experience the same feeling as the Italian public. Except for one very foreignizing translation that wasn’t necessarily done to be performed on stage, all other versions show various levels of adaptation to accommodate the target public, especially when it comes to comical elements. This leads Maher to the conclusion that to translate comedy, the translator must try to draw “frames their audience will recognize, while at the same time trying to avoid rewriting the humorous style of the play so

much that it becomes unrecognizable.” (p. 59). She also insists on the close link between humour and language, and how humour is preserved in the character’s voices through lively and natural translated dialogues. However, she points out that each domesticating initiative must not be taken lightly, as in certain cases, translators took unjustified liberties or made omissions that significantly altered humorous parts of the play, making it less subtle or weakening its satirical content.

Chapters 4 and 5 cover the English to Italian translations of Will Self’s *Dorian, an Imitation* and of Anthony Burgess’ *A Clockwork Orange*, respectively. In his parodic rewriting of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Self imitates the style, language and humour of Oscar Wilde and brings the famous story to the late twentieth century, making certain themes such as drug use and homosexuality much more explicit. This case raises obviously many questions about intertextuality and translation, as Self’s translator must consider Wilde’s novel, its multiple Italian translations and the knowledge of Wilde’s work among the target readers. If the translated version doesn’t consider its readers’ cultural background, the intertextual dimension of the work will be lost or harder to notice and enjoy. The translator had to choose between being loyal to Self’s style or facilitating the Italian readers’ experience and this led to a translation that may be easier to read, but in which humorous and parodic elements are weakened. Maher argues that the Italian text seems toned down in part because of the lexical and stylistic differences between the source and the target languages, but mostly because of the translator’s tendency to respect the publishing norms instead of transgressing the rules and pushing the boundaries of the language, just as Self did. This “desire to avoid unusual linguistic usage” (p. 103) then leads to a text where the link between the flamboyant style and themes is less clear, and where the black humour is less confronting. However, the Italian version also features strong points, like the translator’s creativity when it comes to the frequent puns, compensating the inevitable loss by adding new puns that fit the spirit and the style of the novel. The following chapter studies *A Clockwork Orange*, a novel narrated in a strange language that illustrates the characters’ dark and violent reality. Burgess shocks, amuses and unsettles his readers with “striking effects through its vocabulary and narrative style” (p. 105), notably by creating grotesque contrasts between the sound of a word and its meaning and by using a partially invented argotic language, the Nadsat, that the readers must decode. This represents a major challenge for the translator, who according to Maher must undertake many creative

interventions to convey the novel’s atmosphere and timelessness feeling. Interestingly, Maher presents a quotation of Burgess claiming he’s the kind of writer whose work’s poetic effects, word plays and linguistic ambiguities demand a translator who’s himself a “committed writer” (p. 108). First, the recreation of Nadsat in the Italian version, in which the language’s Russian influences were replaced by Italian dialectal words, is studied by coupling selected units of translation. The chosen translational strategy has a major impact on the readers’ understanding of the novel, since they instantly are more familiar with the Nadsat vocabulary, which isn’t the case of the English-speaking readers. The reading experience of the Italian version is thus easier and less demanding on the reader’s part. This represents a major shift from Burgess’ vision of strangeness and unfamiliarity, which also has consequences on the novel’s humorous elements that come from the sound of the created words or double meaning with the English language (Maher gives the example of the Nadsat word *horrorshow*, which means “good”). Various bilingual excerpts further demonstrate that the Italian version seems indeed less ironic, funny, scathing and energetic because of the translator’s choice to use a more standard vocabulary closer to the reality of his readers. A relevant addition to this chapter is Maher’s own retranslation of a large excerpt in which she modified the translator’s Italianized Nadsat by returning to the created language’s original Russian roots, an initiative that proves that it is possible to produce an Italian version that keeps the humorous, dark and dynamic qualities of the source text.

In chapter 6, Maher recounts her own experience as the translator of Italian novelist Milena Agus. Studying her own work as a professional translator allows her to adopt a different analytic point of view, providing insights about every factor that influenced her interpretation and every challenge she faced while translating specific cases of irony and grotesque humour in Agus’ book *Mal de pietre*. First of all, after reflecting on the importance of titles in literary works, Maher shows how successful translations in other languages can inspire translators. In this case, the multiple meanings of the original title couldn’t be retained, so the English title *The House in via Manno* is a direct translation of the Dutch version’s title (which focuses on another theme of the novel). The particular narrative style of Agus’ novel represents another aspect of the translation of humour, which is this time linked to orality and timing. Maher admittedly read her translation aloud to make sure it had the same spontaneity, naturalness and oral qualities, as if the text had to be told instead

of read to be truly funny. In practical terms, it means that she dealt with the colloquial style of the original by playing with the structure of her text, sometimes separating paragraph-long sentences and adding many conjunctions, commas and dashes. Maher also explains how she preserved the cultural identity of the novel by keeping Italian words, and by exploiting the target readers' background knowledge of Italy, in order to "increase their appreciation of [the text's] humorous and ironic potential" (p. 144). She concludes the chapter with observations about the translation process and the overall reception and marketing efforts of *Mal de pietre* in the target culture. Finally, the last chapter is a short reflection on the creativity needed to translate humorous texts of all kinds, as demonstrated by the previous case studies. Maher states that translation can be the site of ingenious gain and that it can ultimately open up "the target literary system to new cultures and influences" (p. 162). She recalls how every minor decision can affect the whole translation, and the importance of both micro and macro aspects in the interpretation of a text, humorous or not. She also notes that if the translators sometimes seem to favor more conservative translations over recreation, it is because he risks having all the blame and none of the credit. *Recreation and Style* ends with further research ideas inspired by the conclusion of each case study and that could deepen our knowledge of the interaction between humour, creativity, culture and translation.

In the context of translation studies, the originality of Maher's work is that it comprehends humour as a very broad and multifaceted phenomenon. Instead of focusing on specific comic elements such as puns or one-liners, she studies other kinds of humour that were seldom explored in translation studies, from grotesque to cross-referential parodies and subtle innuendos. Besides, Maher completely understands the crucial importance of cultural backgrounds in comedy, as she includes elements such as critical reviews, book covers, marketing initiatives and previous translations in her reflection. Even if these paratextual considerations often go beyond the translator's role or power, they will have a major impact on the reception of his or her work in the target culture. The practical recommendations and suggested alternative translations found throughout the book are also a welcomed addition. *Recreation and Style* is not only a relevant and original contribution to the study of humour in translation, but also a heartfelt tribute to literary translators and their underestimated creative abilities.

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AWAISS, Henri et HARDANE, Jarjoura, dir. (2010): *Jean-René Ladmiraal, le dernier des archéotraductosaures, interviewé par l'ETIB*, Beyrouth, École des traducteurs et d'interprètes de Beyrouth, Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines, Université Saint-Joseph, Collection «Sources-Cibles», 122 p.

Paru en 2010, «année Ladmiraal» par la multitude d'événements organisés un peu partout autour de l'œuvre et de la personnalité du grand traductologue, l'ouvrage publié à l'Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth dans la collection «Sources-Cibles», dirigée par Henri Awaiss et Jarjoura Hardane, innove une formule originale; il réunit, dans une première partie, les questions des chercheurs, cadres et étudiants, et les réponses du grand chercheur, en la mémorable journée-hommage du 22 avril, placée sous le signe de la créativité. La deuxième partie présente succinctement l'œuvre de Jean-René Ladmiraal.

Ce livre collectif commence par un «Prélude» sous la forme d'un conte où, bon esprit, Henri Awaiss raconte à Saint-Exupéry qu'il est revenu, habillé d'une laine blanche et portant un foulard bleu, pour visiter la huitième planète, celle de la traductologie. Lui, ce Grand Petit Prince est, bien sûr, Jean-René Ladmiraal qui, avec plaisir, fraîcheur et une grande disponibilité, se prête à ce jeu de questions-réponses. Le rôle d'animatrice est revenu à Elsa Charabati, qui a su bien gérer le temps d'une journée et d'une rencontre exceptionnelles.

La lecture de cet ouvrage éclairant autant qu'agréable par sa formule, nous fait découvrir et redécouvrir le chercheur aux solides repères théoriques mais également celui qui tâtonne, nuance, raffine encore ses idées ou en découvre, avec gravité ou enjouement, de nouvelles, grâce à cet entretien pluriel. Elle nous fait découvrir aussi l'essentiel de la traductologie ladmiraalienne, en formule décontractée, métaphorique, «exotérique et accrocheuse» (p. 60), qui laisse pourtant entrevoir aux connaisseurs son fertile noyau scientifique.

Le volume respecte le déroulement de la journée-hommage où les interviewers ont posé