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## VENUTI'S VISIBILITY IN ONE HUNDRED STROKES OF THE BRUSH BEFORE BED

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### Abstract

Taking as a case study the English translation of *Cento colpi di spazzola prima di andare a dormire* by Melissa P., a bestseller in which a Sicilian teenager narrates her erotic fantasies and experiences in form of a diary, this article analyses to what extent Lawrence Venuti's pronouncements on foreignizing translation and the visibility of the translator are reflected in his own creative work. After placing Venuti's notions of foreignizing and domesticating translation in a historical context, this case study analyses Venuti's visibility as a translator of the Italian bestseller considering the paratextual material of his translation, the choice of text to be translated, and the translation discourse itself.

**Keywords:** *Literary Translation, Venuti, Visibility, Schleiermacher, Polysystem Theory, Melissa P.*

## VENUTI'NİN ONE HUNDRED STROKES OF THE BRUSH BEFORE BED'İNDE GÖRÜNÜRLÜĞÜ

### Özet

Melissa P.'nin çok satanlar listesine giren ve Sicilyalı bir genç kızın cinsel fantezilerini ve tecrübelerini günlük şeklinde anlattığı *Cento colpi di spazzola prima di andare a dormire* adlı eserinin İngilizce çevirisini temel alarak, bu çalışma Lawrence Venuti'nin kendi yaratıcı eseri görünümünde olan çevirisinin ne derecede çeviriyi yabancılaştırdığını ve çevirmenin görünürlüğüne sağladığını incelemektedir. Tarihsel bir çerçevede Venuti'nin çeviriyi yabancılaştırma ve yerelleştirme ile ilgili görüşlerini sunduktan sonra, bu olgu çalışması, çevirideki metinler üstü materyalleri, çevrilmesi için seçilen bölümleri ve çeviride kullanılan söylemi göz önünde bulundurarak, Venuti'nin İtalya'nın çok satanları arasında bulunan bu eserin çevirmeni olarak çevirideki görünürlüğüne inceleyecektir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** *Edebi çeviri, Venuti, Görünürlük, Schleiermacher, Çoklu Sistem Teorisi, Melissa P.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As is well known within the discipline of Translation Studies, Lawrence Venuti's theoretical work has at its core the view that translation should manifest a cultural other and visibly be a translation instead of adapting the text to domestic values and conceal the intervention of the translator. The self-effacement of domesticating translation, so Venuti, brings with it the self-effacement of the translator. It is hoped that foreignizing translation can instead counteract this self-effacement of translator and translation and thus increase the status of translators. In this article, I aim to assess to what extent Venuti's theoretical pronouncements on foreignizing translation and the visibility of the translator are reflected in his own creative work. I take as a case study his translation of *Cento colpi di spazzola prima di andare a dormire* by Melissa P., a Sicilian teenager's narration of her erotic fantasies

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and experiences in form of a diary. The book was published in 2003, when the author was seventeen, provoking a scandal in Italy. It has since then sold around two million copies and been translated into 40 languages (Fazi quoted in Telese, 2011). In 2005, a film adaptation with the title *Melissa P.* followed, produced by Francesca Neri and directed by Luca Guadagnino (imdb, 2005). Venuti's translation, *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush before Bed*, was published a year after the Italian original by Serpent's Tail in the UK (2004a) and by Grove/Atlantic in the US (2004b). In 2012, Venuti's translation further appeared as audiobook by Bolinda Publishing (2012b) and in a Kindle Edition by Serpent's Tail (2012c).

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO VENUTI'S FOREIGNIZATION

Venuti's concept of foreignizing translation is indebted to the German tradition of literary translation, and in particular to the philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. During a lecture held in 1813, Schleiermacher formulated his famous maxim arguing that there are two main methods of translating:

Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him. Or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him. (Schleiermacher, 1992, p. 149)

In other words, a translation either asks the reader to adapt to foreign values or it adapts the foreign text to domestic values. Schleiermacher preferred the former method, a translation that would ask the reader to move towards the author. Schleiermacher's maxim can be traced back to Johann Jakob Bodmer's "Ninety-Fourth Letter" published in 1746 (1992, p. 127-128). In 1819 Goethe reiterates the idea, stating that the translation method that moves the translation towards the original is the most recent but also the most sophisticated one, a method to which the masses still need to get used to (1969, p.36).

The aim of a translation strategy that highlights the foreign is to retain the otherness of the text: the translation should be 'turned toward a foreign likeness' (Schleiermacher, 1992, p. 155). It should achieve the same effect the original would have on a reader 'who is familiar with the foreign language' (1992, p. 152), but nevertheless 'is still conscious of the difference between that language and his mother tongue' (1992, p. 152). If implemented on a large scale, so Schleiermacher (1992), this strategy of closeness to the foreign text would enable the reader to gain an understanding of the original language and what the work owns to it.

However, Schleiermacher also pursues a twofold political agenda – to resist French hegemony and to develop and enrich the German language – and sees translation as a tool to achieve these aims. In his view, the German language can 'completely develop its own power only by means of the most many-sided contacts with what is foreign' (1992, p.165). His vision is that of a German nation that unites 'all the treasures of foreign art and scholarship in its language' (1992, p. 165) and therefore becomes the cosmopolitan centre of Europe, the 'heart of Europe' (1992, p. 165). This idea has previously been formulated by Goethe and A.W. Schlegel (Lefevere, 1977, p. 46) and is clearly intended as a means of resistance to French hegemony.

Venuti, too, sees in foreignization a tool to pursue ideological aims. What he shares with Schleiermacher is the quest to increase the prestige of translation (Lefevere, 1977; Venuti, 1995; 1998) and to challenge the dominant culture. However, while Schleiermacher's agenda is to strengthen the role of German language and literature and overcome French cultural hegemony, Venuti's aim is to undermine the dominant role of his own culture.

This apparent contradiction can be explained by the different contexts in which both scholars formulated their views. German literature was still emerging in Schleiermacher's times, in a period when Germany was culturally and politically dominated by France, and French was the language of aristocracy and Latin that of scholarship (Venuti, 1995). According to Itamar Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory (2004), translated literature occupies a central role within a receiving target literature that is not yet firmly established. This is certainly true for modern German, the evolution of which, as George Steiner (1998, p. 280) puts it, 'is inseparable from the Luther Bible, from Voss's Homer, from the successive versions of Shakespeare by Wieland, Schlegel, and Tieck'. This central role – of the translated literature and therefore also of the translator – has implications on translational behaviours, as the translator actively participates in the shaping of the domestic culture:

Since the translational activity participates, when it assumes a central position, in the process of creating new, primary models, the translator's main concern here is not just to look for ready-made models in his home repertoire into which the source text would be transferable. Instead, he is prepared in such cases to violate home conventions. (Even-Zohar, 2004, p. 196)

A weak system striving for innovation and enrichment therefore adapts translation discourses that highlight the source-texts' foreignness as it needs system-external input and therefore does not shy away from breaking with domestic conventions. In a strong, dominant system on the other hand, translated literature occupies a peripheral role (Even-Zohar, 2004). Globally, the most dominant culture of our times is certainly contemporary Anglo-American culture. The peripheral role of translation within such a dominant system implies that translated literature is conservative, confirming the status of the domestic literature through established values and current discourse instead of shaping new ones. As Even-Zohar puts it, 'the translator's main effort is to concentrate upon finding the best ready-made secondary models for the foreign text' (2004, p. 197). In such a context – a context where translated literature occupies a secondary, peripheral role – translators are destined to occupy a similarly secondary role. The translator is 'invisible' as Venuti (1995) puts it. The more translators conform to the values of a dominant domestic literature, the more they render themselves invisible and the more they fulfil the role assigned to them by the dominant culture.

Venuti's proclaimed agenda, as outlined in his seminal monograph *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995), is to counteract this invisibility. He envisages that visibility can be achieved by applying a foreignizing translation strategy that would normally have its place in a weak system rather than a dominant one. Such a strategy can work towards disrupting this dominance from within and by doing so it can enable both translated literature and translator to claim a more central role and therefore gain more visibility. This visibility can be achieved in various ways – by means of the choice of text to be translated, by striving for visibility in the paratextual material, and by making the translational process visible in the translation discourse.

### **3. VISIBILITY IN THE PARATEXTUAL MATERIAL**

One way to make translators more visible is to grant them a more prominent presence in the paratextual material. The following discussion will examine Venuti's visibility in the peritexts (such as the translator's preface, the book cover, the copyright notice) and the epitexts (such as the publishers' promotional material) of his translation of Melissa P.'s bestseller, *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush Before Bed*.

A preface, for example, provides the translator with the opportunity to communicate translation choices and strategies to the reader and therefore increases the reader's awareness of the translation process. In an interview, Venuti shares his views on writing a translator's preface:

I find it important to write introductions to my translations that not only discuss the foreign text and its cultural situation, but that call attention to the act of translation. ... [T]hey also make the translator's work visible by offering to describe the discursive strategy applied in translation. (Venuti, 2001, p. 28-41)

However, despite the importance Venuti seems to assign to translators' prefaces, there is only a short note preceding his translation of *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush before Bed* in the UK edition:

The translator would like to thank Melissa P., for her patient answers to queries about stylistic matters; Lauren Wein, for her help with sartorial terms; and Martha Tennent, for her steadfast support, moral and otherwise. (Venuti, 2004a, n.p.)

This short note is neither followed by the translator's name, nor does it discuss translation strategies or choices. Although the mere presence of some form of a translator's preface calls attention to the fact that the text is a translation, the content enforces the illusion of transparency, that is, the illusion that the translation is an exact representation of the source text. The remark about having received 'help with sartorial terms' in particular portrays translation as pure terminology work, a mechanical task gravitating around substituting lexical items with their equivalent in the target language, and therefore as a task where translation decisions made are either

correct or incorrect. Nothing in this preface foregrounds the creative process of translation – a task founded in the translator’s subjectivity that renders every translation unique. Translators who portray themselves as living dictionaries and terminology databases rather than as creative word artists, portray themselves as a replaceable commodity. This is clearly in contrast with Venuti’s proclaimed strive for visibility and increased professional status.

Another important aspect is copyright. Venuti stresses how important it is that translators insist on contracts that acknowledge their moral rights as original authors of their translation and ‘copyright the translation in the translator’s name’ (1995, p. 311). In fact, both the UK (2004a) and the US edition (2004b) of *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush Before Bed* grant Venuti the copyright for his translation and acknowledge it on the title page. However, although by acknowledging the copyright the publishers implicitly acknowledge Venuti as the producer of the target text, neither the UK nor the US edition mention his name on the book cover. The UK edition by Serpent’s Tail (2004a) cites Venuti’s name on the first page under the name of the author (in smaller font), while the US edition (Venuti, 2004b) only mentions Venuti’s name in the copyright notice on the title page. The Kindle edition by Serpent’s Tail in its imprint Profile Books not only fails to mention Venuti’s name on the cover, but also no longer cites his name on the first page below the author (Venuti, 2012a).

This failure of prominently displaying the translator’s name not only undermines Venuti’s quest for visibility, but it is also not in line with clause 7 of the *Model Translator/Publisher Agreement* issued by The Translators Association in London in 2004, the year Venuti’s translation was first published. This model agreement is a specimen publishing contract, drafted and revised after a document regarding the legal protection of translators and translations entitled *Recommendations on the legal protection of translators and translations and the practical means to improve the status of translators* was adopted and approved by fifty states in 1976 (The Translators Association, 2004):

The Publishers undertake that the Translator’s name shall appear on the title page and jacket/cover of their edition of the Translation and in all publicity material (catalogues, advertisements, etc.) concerning it, and shall use their best endeavours to ensure that this undertaking is adhered to also in other editions of the Translation and that the name of the Translator is mentioned in connection with all reviews and quotations of the Translation. (The Translators Association, 2004)

It is also not in agreement with clause 12 of the *Translator’s Model Contract* issued by the PEN Translation Committee in the US in 1999, which was publicly accessible as a guideline on its website in 2004, the year the translation of Venuti first appeared in the US, and which states that ‘[t]he Translator’s name shall appear on the jacket front or front cover of the book, on the title page, and in all publicity and advertising copy released by the Publisher, wherever the author’s name appears, in a type size not smaller than 75 percent of that for the author’s name’ (PEN Translation Committee, 1999). PEN further underlined the importance of this request with an explanatory note, stating that it ‘considers this provision essential not only for the sake of individual translators but for the profession as a whole, and strongly urges all translators to insist on its inclusion in any contract with a publisher’ (PEN Translation Committee, 1999). The current *Model Contract for Literary Translations* issued by PEN America further requires that ‘[t]he Publisher agrees to print the Translator’s approved biography on the back flap of the hardcover edition, on the back cover of and/or within any trade paperback edition of the Translation, and within any electronic edition’ (PEN America, 2017).

When the newly translated book was promoted on the publishers’ websites in the US (Grove/Atlantic, 2004) and UK (Serpent’s Tail, 2004), a similar disregard of the moral rights of the translator could be detected. Although the US publisher Grove/Atlantic mentioned Venuti’s name immediately after the source-text author’s name, using the same font size, none of the quotes from the reviews cited (– taken from *The New York Times*, *Bust*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly*, *The Times*, *Corriere della Sera*, *Gazzetta del Sud*, *Les Echos*, *Il Manifesto* –) mentioned the translator or the fact that the product is a translation. Two review quotes referred to linguistic issues, but they were taken from Italian sources<sup>1</sup> and thus referred to the original text. The publisher clearly did not differentiate

1 The two quotes read as follows: ‘rendered with language much more elegant and precise than one would ever expect from a mere teenager’ (*Corriere della Sera*); ‘*One Hundred Strokes of the Brush Before Bed* is imbued with a literary voice, the echo

between the language of the Italian original and that of the English translation, maintaining therefore the illusion of transparency and actively contributing to undermine the translator's visibility.

The UK publisher, Serpent's Tail, promoted the book together with four other titles on its home page when it came out in 2004; a very prominent position and an indicator how much marketing attention the publisher dedicated to this title. By clicking on the book cover the reader was then directed to a page entirely dedicated to the title. On both pages the publisher made no mention of the translator or the fact that the book is a translated title. The quotes from reviews cited (– taken from *The Times*, *BelleDeJour.com*, *New York Times*, *Les Echos*, *Bookmunch* –) again mentioned neither translator nor translation. One review quoted referred to style, but again it was a foreign source (*Les Echos*)<sup>2</sup>, therefore not differentiating between the language of the original text and its translations.

At the time of writing, in 2018, the situation is unchanged. Grove/Atlantic mentions that the book has been translated from the Italian by Venuti, using the same small font size as for the author's name (Grove/Atlantic, 2018), while Serpent's Tail makes no mention of Venuti or the fact that the book has been translated from Italian (Serpent's Tail, 2018).

This lack of visibility in the paratextual material shows how Venuti's quest for increasing the profile of the translator is far from having become standard practice in the publishing world. The choice not to include a preface discussing translation strategies does not necessarily mean that the editor overruled the translator; it could in fact be Venuti's own decision. However, other factors, like the UK publisher's omission of the translator's name both on the website and the book cover, clearly indicate that the view that translators, as authors of the target text, should be granted equal status with the author of the source text is still not common practice.

#### 4. VISIBILITY THROUGH THE CHOICE OF TEXT

As regards the text itself, the translator has two ways to foreignize, according to Venuti – translation discourse and the choice of text. Concerning the latter, Venuti argues that 'the translator can resist the dominant discourse in Anglo-American culture by restoring excluded texts and possibly reforming the canon of foreign literatures in English' (1995, p. 117). He reiterates this concept in his book *Scandals of Translation*, stating that 'the very choice of a foreign text for translation can also signify its foreignness by challenging domestic canons for foreign literatures and domestic stereotypes for foreign cultures' (1998, p. 81).

One example where Venuti puts this concept into practice and opts for a foreignizing text choice is his translation of I. U. Tarchetti's novel *Fosca* (1869) which is published in 1994 under the title *Passion*. Tarchetti (1839-1869) himself was a 'foreignizing' writer insofar as he appropriated foreign texts to contest the realism of writers like Manzoni and the bourgeois values realism represented. Tarchetti introduced the Gothic Tale to Italy, inspired by foreign writers like E.T.A. Hoffmann, Edgar Allan Poe and Gérard Nerval, and initiated a reformation of the Italian literary canon (Venuti, 1995, p. 149-150), inspiring in turn writers like Dino Buzzati (Venuti, 1995, p. 186). However, Venuti's choice to translate Tarchetti is foreignizing not only because he chose to translate an author that can be regarded as foreignizing in the context of the author's own domestic culture, but also because, as Venuti argues, Tarchetti's work challenges dominant Anglo-American values. In the introduction to his translation, Venuti states that the text 'dissents from the reigning concept of female beauty', 'demystifies the idealization of romance that pervades contemporary culture' and 'questions the realism that has long held sway in Anglo-American fiction' (1994, p. xv). Furthermore, as William Weaver (2000), translator of Italo Calvino and Umberto Eco and former mentor of Venuti, points out, Italian writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are 'largely ignored' by Anglo-American readers. Venuti's translation of Tarchetti's novel is therefore in line with his call to restore excluded texts in order to pursue a possible reformation of the domestic canon for foreign literature.

Another example are Venuti's anthologies of stories by the Italian writer Dino Buzzati published in 1983 (*Restless Nights: Selected Stories of Dino Buzzati*) and 1984 (*The Siren: A Selection from Dino Buzzati*). Dino

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of a physical vibration miraculously caught in the web of the author's language' (*Il Manifesto*).

2 The quote reads as follows: 'Seventeen years old, Melissa P. has become a literary phenomenon in Italy... a real literary talent in the Sicilian fabular tradition of Giovanni Verga' (*Les Echos*).

Buzzati (1906-1972), like Tarchetti, is an exponent of the fantastic genre. While canonized in Italy, Buzzati was not readily available in translation into English and hardly known to most English-language readers until Venuti's translation project (Venuti, 1983, p. ix). Venuti's choice to translate Buzzati is thus a foreignizing choice in so far as it introduces thus-far excluded texts into the domestic literary system, therefore potentially reshaping the domestic canon. In 1985, shortly after the publication of Venuti's translations, Buzzati's major work *Il Deserto dei Tartari* was translated by Stuart Hood into English under the title *The Tartar Steppe* – 45 years after the publication of the original (Index Translationum, 2004). Venuti's foreignizing strategy presumably paved the way for Hood's translation and possibly also his own translations of Tarchetti (*Fantastic Tales* in 1992; *Passion* in 1994).

Venuti's choice to translate Buzzati and Tarchetti clearly counteracts domestic trends in publishing behaviour. *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush before Bed*, on the other hand, complies with the Anglo-American literary canon of realism as well as with contemporary publishing trends in Anglo-American culture as the commercial success of related books like *The Sexual Life of Catherine M.* by Catherine Millet (translated into English by Adriana Hunter) or *Brass* by Helen Walsh show. Furthermore, Melissa P.'s book is not the only contemporary bestseller by a young Sicilian woman writer in this genre that has been translated into English. *Volevo i pantaloni* by Lara Cardella, who probably provoked as much scandal in 1989 with her accounts of sexual oppression as Melissa P. with her erotic diary a few years later, was translated into English in 1994 by Diana Di Carcaci (*Good Girls Don't Wear Trousers*) (Index Translationum, 2004). How much Melissa P.'s book is in line with contemporary trends is further clearly evidenced in two articles published in *Publishers Weekly* in 2004. The first article deals with the revival of the Black Cat Imprint of Grove/Atlantic and cites Judy Hottenson of Grove/Atlantic stating that the first list comprises four paperback originals released 'to get booksellers' attention' (Publishers Weekly, 2004a). One of these four titles is Venuti's translation of *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush before Bed*. Hottenson states further that the four titles are 'in the Grove tradition' and adds:

They wouldn't sell as well in hardcover, but they're perfect in paperback for a younger, hipper audience. We think the market is calling out for something like this. (Publishers Weekly, 2004a)

The second article mentions Serpent's Tail, stating that the independent small-press publisher 'stays afloat with bestsellers like Catherine Millet's *The Sexual Life of Catherine M.* and Melissa P.'s *100 Strokes of the Brush before Bed*' (Publishers Weekly, 2004b). It is these kinds of bestsellers that help publishers like Serpent's Tail to finance the publication of 'experimental writers like Jelinek', the Austrian playwright and novelist who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2004 (Publishers Weekly, 2004b).

These comments demonstrate that the choice to publish Melissa P.'s book in translation is dictated by commercial interests rather than motivated by a quest to challenge domestic canons. And in this sense, the decision to publish Melissa P.'s book in English is not so much the choice of an individual translator, but one made by the publishing industry per se. Dino Buzzati might still not be readily available in English translation without Venuti taking on his cause. However, there can be little doubt that a contemporary bestseller like *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush before Bed* would have been translated and published in English with or without Venuti taking an interest in it. In a commercial project of this kind, the translator fulfils the role of an anonymous supplier: Rather than taking active part in the shaping of the editorial landscape, the translator occupies a passive role, executing the commission of a publisher. In a constellation such as this, the translator is an interchangeable service provider and therefore invisible.

## 5. VISIBILITY IN THE TRANSLATION DISCOURSE

The translator can challenge domestic values through the choice of text to be translated, as discussed above, or also through the translation discourse itself:

A translator can...choose a foreign text that is marginal in the target-culture, but translate it with a canonical discourse (e.g. transparency). Or a translator can choose a foreign text that is canonical in the target-language culture, but translate it with a marginal discourse (e.g. archaism). (Venuti, 1995, p. 310)

In other words, if the chosen text is canonical – and as seen above, *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush before Bed* complies with contemporary publishing behaviour in the target culture – the translation discourse must be marginal, if the translation were to question domestic values and render the translator visible.

In Venuti's notion of 'marginality' lies a decisive difference to Schleiermacher's idea of moving the reader towards the author. Schleiermacher (1992) favours a translation discourse that foreignizes in a mimetic sense, in the hope that this will allow the target-text reader a closer appreciation of the original than a more naturalizing translation discourse would offer. Venuti (1995), on the other hand, maintains that discursive innovations and deviations in the translation discourse can only ever be appreciated in relation to the value-system of the target language itself. Schleiermacher's idea of translation discourse is therefore foreignizing only insofar as 'its approximation of the foreign text entails deviating from dominant domestic values' (Venuti, 1995, p. 146). Venuti suggests creating a translation discourse in relation to the receiving culture instead, deviating from the dominant domestic discourse, hence 'marginal', and therefore both signifying 'the linguistic and cultural differences of the text' (1995, p. 23) and challenging domestic values.

As regards Anglo-American literature, a translation discourse is marginal if it stands in contrast to fluent discourse, the canonical discourse of Anglo-American publishing (Venuti, 1995). Venuti argues that fluent discourse conceals 'the translator's crucial intervention in the text' (1995, p. 1) and thus gives the illusion of transparency, the illusion that the reader has unobstructed, direct access to 'what is present in the original' (1995, p. 5). It is this illusion of transparency that renders the translator's creative work invisible to the reader: 'The more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text' (Venuti, 1995, p. 2). Fluent discourse is achieved through 'the translator's effort to insure easy readability by adhering to current usage, maintaining continuous syntax, fixing a precise meaning' (Venuti, 1995, p. 1).

However, Venuti (1995) also acknowledges the constraints of a strategy that works to disrupt fluent discourse. Unless an original work is in the public domain, the author's copyright encompasses works derivative of his or her own work. Hence, translations of works not within the public domain cannot be published without prior authorization by the copyright holder. Secondly, translators are often contractually bound to adhere closely to the foreign text and to be 'faithful' to it. Clause 2 of the *Model Translator/Publisher Agreement* issued by The Translators Association (2004), for example, demands that 'the Translation...shall be faithful to the Work and rendered into appropriate English'. Although the agreement does not define 'faithfulness' or what exactly is meant by 'appropriate English', notions such as these are usually connected with the illusion of transparency and 'fluent discourse' (see e.g. Venuti, 1995, p. 310). A translator who decides to adopt a foreignizing strategy therefore risks being accused of breach of contract and having to bear the legal consequences resulting thereof. Venuti maintains that translators of contemporary literary texts therefore need to intervene in a subtle way, they 'need to develop a more sophisticated literary practice' (1995, p. 311). This literary practice could take the form of discursive variations and experiments 'with archaism, slang, literary allusion and convention' (1995, p. 310). In the following paragraphs, I will analyse which translation strategies Venuti employed in *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush before Bed* to counteract the illusion of transparency and to call attention to the foreignness of the text.

Venuti creates a heterogeneous discourse. An elevated register (e.g. *she levels her languid, haughty gaze at me*, p. 1; *surrounded by a verdant garden and myriads of the freshest, most colourful flowers*, p. 8) is mixed with colloquial expressions (*my snoopy mother*; p. 4; *the beep-beep of the buttons*, p. 15) and slang words, most often containing sexual references (*cunts*, p. 17; *fucking*, p. 75; *bang*, p. 131). The heterogeneity thus created reflects the heterogeneous discourse of the original which equally switches between different registers. The most salient device employed by Venuti that highlights the foreign, however, is selective reproduction, a term introduced by Meir Sternberg (1981) denoting the inclusion of source-language lexis in the discourse of the translated text. Venuti selectively reproduces Italian words such as *piazza* (pp. 5; 116); *villa* (p. 5); *Firenze* (p. 7); *Campidoglio* (p. 14); *arrivederci* (pp. 34; 83); *grazie* (pp. 36; 57; 76; 83); *un bacio* (p. 37); *Duomo* (p. 44); *torta di mele* (p. 77); *ciao* (pp. 83; 144); *brava* (pp. 100; 120); *ciao, bella* (p. 100); *motorino* (pp. 36; 127); *simpatico* (p. 136) or French words like *joie de vivre* (p. 100); *adieu* (p. 147). Some of these foreign words however have entered the English language and are listed as entries in the OED (*piazza*; *villa*; *brava*; *ciao*; *simpatico*; *joie de vivre*; *adieu*); some of those not

listed are source-text realia (*Campidoglio; Duomo; torta di mele; Firenze*), others like *arrivederci* or *grazie* are readily understood also by English speakers. *Motorino* is explained through the context (*I didn't start the scooter right away. The traffic at that hour is terrible, even on a motorino*; p. 36). However, other realia that could have been kept in order to increase the foreignness of the reading experience like time indications and measurements have been converted to Anglo-American standards: for example, *15,25* (p. 9) becomes *3:25 pm* (p. 1); *metro e sessanta* (p. 13) becomes *five foot two* (p. 6). Instead of experimenting with these conventions, Venuti ensures transparency.

The reproduction of foreign lexis can have a defamiliarizing and therefore foreignizing effect. G. V. J. Prasad for example argues that many Indian English writers do not use 'Indian words and expressions for local colour, to create an exotic ethnographic text, [but to] attempt to make the process of reading as difficult as that of writing' (1999, p. 54). This view is shared by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, who argue that selectively reproducing foreign lexis 'forces the reader into an active engagement with the horizons of the culture in which these terms have meaning' (2002, p. 64; see also Carbonell i Cortés 2003, p. 156). Furthermore, embedding foreign lexis without explanation counteracts the trend of leaving references to dominant cultures implicit, while references to minority cultures are often translated. However, Venuti limits himself to sparingly reproducing easily comprehensible foreign words, thus giving the translation an 'Italian flair' without rendering it difficult to read and without creating a foreignizing effect in the sense of disrupting the reading flow. Instead of defamiliarizing, he exoticizes.

Furthermore, Venuti explicates to ensure his text is easily accessible to his readers, giving transparency priority over alienation:

Rising up from the sea are the Faraglioni, the rocks that the cyclops Polyphemus hurled at Odysseus (masquerading as "Nobody") after the Greek had blinded him. (Venuti, 2004a, p. 25)

In comparison, the Italian is less explicit:

Sorgono dal mare i Faraglioni che Polifemo lanciò a nessuno dopo che questi lo ebbe accecato. (Melissa P., 2003, p. 30)

[Rising up from the sea are the Faraglioni, that Polyphemus hurled at Nobody after he had blinded him.]

This is clearly a domesticating choice that takes into account the fact that the target-text audience in general might be less familiar with Greek mythology than the Italian audience of the source text and thus ensures the easy readability of the translation.

However, Venuti not only domesticates allusions to different cultures, but also allusions to his own domestic culture as the following examples show. The heroine of Melissa P.'s diary has an affair with a teacher who calls her *Loly* (pp. 81; 110; 113; 114; 131) or, less often, *Lo* (p. 110). He himself signs a note to her as *prof. Hubert* (p. 85). Although slightly obscured, the allusion to Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita* is obvious. Nevertheless, Venuti decides to disambiguate the allusion and opts for *Lo* in all instances (pp. 85; 117; 118; 121; 141) and changes *prof. Hubert* to *Professor Humbert* (p. 89). Furthermore, on page 121 Venuti spells out the name *Lolita*, contrary to the original, translating *Lui vuole bene a Loly* (p. 114) as *He loves Lolita* (p. 121). Contrary to the above-mentioned explicitation relating to Greek mythology, this choice cannot be explained by the target-text audience's lack of familiarity with the cultural reference – quite on the contrary, one would expect audiences in the US and the UK to be more familiar with Nabokov's English-language novel than audiences in Italy are. The increased transparency of the allusion thus enforces the dominance of the Anglo-American culture rather than questioning it. Further, such a translational choice is in clear contrast to Venuti's suggestion of experimenting with literary allusions (see Venuti 1995, p. 310).

The text alludes to two further Anglo-American works: *Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath (p. 1) and the poem 'A dream within a dream' by Edgar Allan Poe (p. 69). Although these allusions are equally explicit in the original (*campana di vetro*; p. 9; *Un sogno dentro un sogno*; p. 67), they are presumably easier to identify for an English-language

reader, who on average should be more acquainted with Anglo-American literature than an Italian reader. Nevertheless, Venuti avoids any experimentation that could enhance the foreignness of the reading experience for his English-language readers.

Venuti further domesticates the syntax. Whereas the Italian tends to have long sentences, Venuti often shortens them. Contrary to Schleiermacher's idea of moving the reader to the author, Venuti's idea of a foreignizing discourse does not involve a close following of the foreign syntax. Nevertheless, constructing short, easily readable sentences rather than mirroring the often-complex structure of Italian is arguably a domesticating choice as it is in line with target-language expectations. In the example below Venuti splits one Italian sentence into several English sentences:

E dentro di me i rimproveri erano forti e violenti: "Adesso non ti calcolerà più! Idiota!", ma in fondo cosa potevo dire, la verità è questa, sono vergine. (Melissa P., 2003, p. 14)

Inside me the reproaches were loud and harsh. "He'll never pay attention to you again! Idiot!" But in the end what could I say? The truth is that I'm a virgin. (Venuti, 2004a, p. 7)

Furthermore, Schleiermacher insists that translators have to be consistent in their choices and either adopt a naturalizing discourse or a discourse that highlights otherness throughout. For Venuti, however, aiming for consistency is not a priority as the following hybrid construction illustrates:

The moon is partly hidden; it seems to be watching me with its compassionate, indulgent gaze. I ask her what I should do. (Venuti, 2004a, p. 147)

The moon (*la luna*) has female gender in Italian. Venuti first domesticates, using the pronoun one would normally use in English to refer to the moon (*it; its*), and then foreignizes by using a female pronoun (*her*). This hybrid solution renders the text opaque to such an extent that it is likely to confuse a reader who has no knowledge of Italian and therefore no possibility to infer to whom the female pronoun in the second sentence refers to. Opting for the foreignizing pronoun throughout, on the other hand, would have allowed the reader to grasp the content.

Although the discourse is heterogeneous and the selective reproduction keeps reminding readers that they are reading a translation, there is little evidence of experimentation throughout the text. Generally, transparency and easy readability seem to have been given priority over foreignization. Editorial constraints imposed by the publisher and/or author might be the reasons for this. However, editorial constraints do not sufficiently explain domesticating the sentence length as illustrated in the above-mentioned example. Adhering to the sentence length of the original could indeed be an option for subtle foreignization without having to accept a considerable decrease in readability.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

In *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush before Bed* domestication outweighs foreignization. Venuti's own visibility suffers in this unbalanced compromise. What might be the reason for this?

It is certainly questionable if Melissa P.'s book is an appropriate text for a foreignizing translation strategy. However, Venuti maintains that 'linking translation practices to theoretical concepts must not be seen as resulting in elitist translation, or translations that necessarily limit their audiences' (2001, p. 33). This point seems to be proved by the debate between Matthew Arnold and Francis Newman regarding the translation of Homer. As Venuti (1995) points out, Newman foreignized for populist reasons, while Arnold domesticated for elitist and academic reasons.

Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference. Newman foreignized a classical text to make it accessible to the broad public, while *One Hundred Strokes of the Brush before Bed* is popular literature. Heavy foreignization would make the text inevitably more opaque and difficult to read, therefore running the risk of failing to reach a wide audience. Subtle foreignization on the other hand (see Venuti's 'sophisticated literary practice' mentioned

above) might go unnoticed by the majority of its readers. The popularity of Melissa P's book is without doubt more grounded in its provoking content than the literary quality of its style. In other words, many of the readers might not be interested in, or because of their educational background, not be very perceptive to issues of style. Seen in this light, Venuti's choice to limit his foreignizing translation strategy mainly to the inclusion of the odd foreign word – a device easily detectable for any reader – seems reasonable.

Remains the question though, why Venuti chose to translate this particular text and – particularly given his stature, his visibility as a translation scholar – why he did not insist on more paratextual visibility during the contract negotiations.

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