IJoC | **Translations**

The Stimulating Challenges of
Translating Contemporary Swiss German Poetry

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This article addresses the linguistic and cultural challenges that contemporary Swiss German poetry presented to an Italian translator. It is an outcome of a two-year experience of translating more than 100 short poems by Werner Lutz from German into Italian. The poems were translated based on a complementary twofold, seemingly contradictory approach comprising both a source-oriented viewpoint emphasizing nostalgia for the original and the unavoidable target-oriented perspective that stresses "an ultimate untranslatability" of many expressions. To highlight both aspects, the poetic language of Lutz is examined in terms of linguistic and cultural differences between German and Italian, and by presenting a comparative treatment of the translation problems.

Keywords: *translation studies, translating contemporary poetry, Swiss German poetry, Werner Lutz, negotiation, source-oriented approach, target-oriented approach*

Despite the plethora of theories within the field of contemporary translation studies (TS), attempts to propose a comprehensive approach addressing the intense, prolonged controversy among the various theories have been few (cf. Bolaños Cuéllar, 2002; Snell-Hornby, 1988; Snell-Hornby, Pöchhacker, & Kaindl, 1994). Within the numerous and significant methods in the study of translation, modern and contemporary approaches incline toward two main working areas: linguistics- or text-oriented theory, and nonlinguistics- or context-oriented theory (Bolaños Cuéllar, 2002; Halverson, 1997; Venuti, 1998). The debate between advocates of these two modes of thought shows no sign of reaching a positive resolution, as evidenced by their still mutually exclusive bibliographies. To aid the debate, they should be recognized as two complementary perspectives whose studies and results can help translators approach their work from a wider, more comprehensive standpoint. This study expands on this line of research. It highlights the artistic talent of the very prominent contemporary Swiss German writer Werner Lutz (1930–) to illustrate the experience of being first to translate some of his poems into Italian. Without pretending to develop an exhaustive and ultimate theory, the translating experience presented here is one of the few

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attempts to propose a comprehensive approach that challenges the mutual exclusivity of the two main contemporary trends in TS.

A writer, artist, and graphic designer from Basel, Werner Lutz is considered one of Switzerland's foremost living lyric poets and has begun to cultivate his artistic talent on the international stage. However, of his 12 collections of lyrics only two have been translated: *Kissing Nests* in English (Lutz, 2013b) and *Doar liniştea ierbii* in Romanian (Lutz, 1999).

Lutz's talent consists of portraying, as would a painter, those features of his natural surroundings that have slowly charmed him in his life. The article thus presents poems that convey his sincere, intimate, almost naïve relationship with nature and everyday life. It also explores the way he used irony to express his delicate dealings with humans and their odd attitudes to life, as well as the antipoetic quality of his diction that sometimes also works with irony on conventional images.

Structurally, the article has three sections. The first highlights the theoretical background behind contemporary TS and the method used to translate Lutz's poems. The second section presents the experience of translating the poems in three subsections—one each for his close relationship with nature, his lexis, and his use of irony. They focus on the poet's language and the resulting linguistic and cultural challenges the translation experience posed to an Italian translator. The concluding remarks of the third section discuss the comprehensive attempt of the study in relation to the translation approach presented in the article.

Theoretical Background

For years, the most prominent scholarly concepts for approaching the discipline of TS have led to studies based on two main different methods. These methods also gave rise to opposing approaches to translating a text, according to different philosophical foundations, that is, concepts of the nature of translation (Schaeffner, 2001). John Catford (1965) distinguishes, for example, between formal correspondence and textual equivalence, Eugene Nida (1969) between formal and dynamic equivalence, Peter Newmark (1981) between semantic and communicative translation, Juliane House (1997) between overt and covert translation, and Pym (2010) between natural and directional equivalence.

Earlier, the German philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) stressed the importance of leaving the two perspectives separate. In his view, each translator faced an important choice between two distinct possibilities: "bringing the author to the reader" or "taking the reader to the author." Any attempt to combine them would, he maintained, produce a highly unreliable result and carry with it "the danger that writer and reader might miss each other completely" (Schleiermacher, 1813/2012, p. 49). In line with this concept, the two main trends in TS—the *linguistic* and the *pragmatic* approach—could be reexamined as a *source-* or *text-oriented* and a *target-* or *context-oriented* attitude.

Translating from a linguistic point of view implies taking the source text (ST) into account as the constitutive factor—the main reference of both the product and the process of translation (House, 1997).

The resulting target text (TT) is equivalent to the ST in its linguistic and textual structure of lexical, syntactic, morphological, and semantic elements.

From the pragmatic point of view, the focus from the outset is on the communicative purpose of translation and hence on the TT and its factors (Munday, 2008). The communicative function of the TT actually determines how the text is translated and how it will function within the target culture (Reiss, 1971/2004). Pragmatic approaches thus tend to regard translations as going far beyond the structural factors of language toward communicative and cultural concerns.

In contrast with Schleiermacher's rigid view, this study aims to show a possible combination of the two main trends. The defense of the idea that combining the two paths would make the translation a failure actually implies a rigid theoretical position that cannot help but see a text as a new event to be discovered in its unforeseeable uniqueness. Not surprisingly, many scholars highlight the logical consequence that the whole translation depends on a single text, each translation being a single, specific event (Calabrese, 2000).

The trend of functionalist approaches may assist in proposing a comprehensive perspective for TS. Though they continue to receive much criticism, especially from scholars of the linguistically based approach (Koller, 1995; Newmark, 1991; Pym, 1997; Schreitmuller, 1994), their significant contribution is widely recognized. In contrast to the linguistically based trend, for example, Christiane Nord (1997) acknowledged that each successive translation process involves more factors, requiring a dual analysis: a *retrospective* analysis regarding both intratextual (linguistic) and extratextual (pragmatic) aspects of the ST, and a *prospective* analysis of the TT's features. It also anticipates what is considered the chief factor in the translating process—the function the TT will have for the intended addressee, which determines how translators approach their work. Functionalists thus consider strictly the figure of the translator, describing the crucial steps of the entire activity of translation. A comprehensive approach to translation should therefore take into account the vast potential of the discipline of TS and involve various scientific fields. Each text is a communicative event and thus "a network of interwoven relations" (Bolaños Cuéllar, 2002, p. 84), so a comprehensive analysis should begin with the complexity of both ST and TT structures.

The Method Used

The method used here to approach the poems by Werner Lutz accords with both textual linguistics and pragmatics, holding that the key to good translation is *negotiation* (Eco, 2003), a *compromise* translators must reach in interpreting a text (Gadamer, 1960). The method derives from the long experience of one of the most brilliant living theoreticians on literature and language, Umberto Eco, whose essays are grounded in the teachings of semioticians such as Charles Sanders Peirce and Roman Jakobson.

According to Eco, each translation's purpose is to allow target readers not only to comprehend the semiotic world of the ST but also, concurrently, to transform it by adapting it to their semiotic universe. This means it would be inappropriate to establish a rule that governs a priori the decision of whether the translation will be source- or target-oriented. A good translator should instead use both

criteria alternately and flexibly, in relation to the concrete problems found in the text. In fact, Eco (2003) held, the idea of translation corresponds to "a process of *negotiation*, by virtue of which, in order to get something, each party renounces something else" (p. 129). The two parties in this process are the original text with its own rights and its author, who claims a right over the whole process; and the translated text and the cultural milieu in which it is expected to be read. The translator is therefore considered a negotiator between the parties.

A similar concept grounding the standpoint of this study derives from Gadamer's (1960) writings on hermeneutics. The German philosopher highlights the painful awareness of the unavoidable gap that opens between the spirit of the original wording and that of the TT whenever translation is required. Because of the near impossibility of entirely overcoming this gap, translators should come to a compromise by trying to see things as the author of the original text did. Each translation should therefore create a connection between the meaning of the ST and the world of the target reader. The idea of compromise derives from Gadamer's concept of the understanding–event as a "fusion of horizons," in which horizons are mingled to generate true understanding. This dialectical concept follows from the rejection of opposing alternatives that arises from awareness that people do not exist in closed or unique spheres.

In line with these key concepts, my translations of Lutz's poems are based on a twofold, apparently contradictory standpoint rooted in the theoretical perspectives of both main trends in TS. As Koller (2000) stressed, each translation is characterized by a double-bound relationship with both the ST and the communicative conditions on the part of the receiver.

The source-oriented viewpoint emphasizes the translator's *nostalgia* for the original (cf. Benjamin, 1972; Croce, 1936) and consequent comprehensible intention to allow foreign readers to enjoy the peculiarities of the ST. The nostalgia is determined by the translator's aspiration to create a "clone" of the ST in the target language (TL) and culture.

Meanwhile, the unavoidable target-oriented perspective draws attention to the "ultimate untranslatability" (Horton, 2002, p. 96) of many expressions in the original version. The difficulty of translating literary works is due to both their textuality, which is their development of linguistic resources beyond the potential of their conventional meaning; and their contextuality, which is their artistic relationship to the external world. This perspective therefore highlights the theoretical and practical impossibility of an ideal translation and consequently the impracticability of a perfect rewording of the original (Koller, 1972, 2002).

To underscore these aspects, Lutz's poetic language is elucidated by pointing out linguistic and cultural differences between German and Italian, and presenting translation problems in a comparative way. Prompted by Nord's functionalist approach (1991, 1997), the focus on the problems of translation ultimately causes the two main perspectives (source-oriented and target-oriented) to cohabit within a comprehensive approach to translation. As both product and process, translation is seen here as an intercultural communicative act between author and translator–interpreter, and between translator–interpreter and the text's target recipient; consequently, the focus is on the decisive role of the translator.

The Experience of Translating the Poetic Language of Werner Lutz

Highlighting the method of translating Werner Lutz's poetic language through the linguistic and cultural differences between German and Italian, I followed a privileged route constituted by the many compounds that distinguish the German language. Moreover, the number of *Wortschöpfungen*—literally, "word creations"—that spontaneously flowed from the author's pen to strike the reader is problematic for Italian translators, emphasizing that poets risk never being profoundly, intimately, and completely understood and felt by any people but their own (Valéry, 1989; Mathews, 1959).

Indeed, consciousness that translating a poem actually meant composing another poem (cf. Croce, 1936; Mathews, 1959) gradually molded the entire work. For an Italian translator, the challenge consisted in conveying as accurately as possible the *effect* of the ST so as to produce a sort of echo of the original (Benjamin, 1972; Eco, 2001). For this reason the ancient ethical aspect of activating an attitude of profound listening to the original during translation was even more crucial.[2] The aim of the next paragraph is thus to introduce the reader to the general atmosphere of Lutz's poems, which vividly convey a close and almost human relationship with nature.

A Close Relationship with Nature

Lutz's talent consists in portraying, as a painter would, the features of his natural surroundings that have slowly charmed him over his life. Many of his poems convey an intimate, sincere, almost naive relationship between nature and everyday life, letting the reader easily discern the poet's esteem for the elements of the natural environment. Lutz's verses contain specific motifs expressed by images flowing one after another before the reader's eyes to form pictures that need only be admired.

Born in the hills of the Swiss canton of Appenzell AR at the foot of Lake Constance, Lutz would have enjoyed the region's fresh air and admired the intense green of its meadows. Plunged in such primitive nature, he almost fell in love with it. Hence, writing became a need. Created at dusk, at night, or in the morning, his lyric is conceived by listening to classical music, looking in the mirror, or walking along the banks of the Rhine recalling the garden of his youth. In Lutz's hands, nature receives human life:

> A branch is fumbling for me
> a green voice
> is looking for closeness[3]

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[2]Aristotle, for example, highlighted the importance of an interior, positive listening attitude toward each reality to be known (*Rhetoric*, II, trans. by Kennedy, 1991).

[3]All verses and full poems given in English or Italian and lacking specific references to official translations were personally translated by the author of this article. Italian translations will only be provided in the sections dedicated to issues emerging from the translating experience.

Ein Zweig tastet nach mir
eine grüne Stimme
sucht meine Nähe (Lutz, 2006, p. 38)

In terms of the specifics of traditional poetry, Lutz's verses exhibit the relatively free syntactic relations typical of prose writing, which are conducive to somewhat unhindered translating activity. In the above poem, for example, a line break interrupts the continuity of the syntax in the second verse. As happens in many of his poems, the stylistic device of the *enjambment*—the interconnection of the suddenly altered line—creates brief suspense in the reading. Nevertheless, the simple syntactic structure preserves the overall semantic content, enabling the translator to go on working without difficulty, as the following poems testify.

Lutz loves everything that nature is able to offer. He can even see his own love reflected in it. A commonly unnoticed detail can conjure a love story like the one he saw growing between a river and the branches of plane trees:

Look
a love story
is born
between the plane trees
and the river

Sieh da
eine Liebesgeschichte
hat sich angebahnt
zwischen den Platanen
und dem Fluss (Lutz, 2013, p. 35)

Similarly, he identified his old garden—where "just before [his] twenties" he would walk barefoot whenever he wanted—as his first love:

Just before my twenties
there is my garden
the first love . . .
on which I walk bare-foot
whenever I want . . .

Kurz vor Zwanzig
liegt mein Garten
die erste Liebe . . .
in dem ich barfuß gehe
so oft ich will . . . (Lutz, 2006, p. 13)

Everything is preserved alive in the poet's memory, so that verbal tenses humble themselves: the past mingles with the present, wherein the old joys can be lived over again. For Lutz, memory is not only the thought of ancient times and facts, but a present event that can awaken the memory of something still vital and contemporary to him.

Nature is so commingled with human life that even the words of a problematic letter become 'little cabbage butterflies' to be destroyed:

> Postscriptum
> destroy the letter
> just little cabbage butterflies
> can be easily
> obtained from them
>
> *Postscriptum*
> *zerreiß den Brief*
> *kleine Kohlweißlinge*
> *sind leicht*
> *daraus zu machen* . . . (Lutz, 2004, p. 50)

However, even when it was possible to preserve the poems' global semantic content, it was often difficult to vigorously maintain lexical features that reflect the typical attributes of the German language. Consequently, the encounter of both standpoints—the nostalgia for the original of the source-oriented perspective as well as the ultimate untranslatability of the original, highlighted by the target-oriented perspective—allowed an attempt to join them through a compromise. The resultant linguistic effort is evident in the translation of those poems that clearly challenge translators with a dearth of parallel constructions. The following paragraphs illustrate this effort by describing the translating process.

Lexical Choices

The language of Werner Lutz is not elaborate or particularly refined, as he generally uses terms taken from everyday life and situations. The main distinguishing feature of his poetry is the number of compounds and words created from two or more lexemes. German is known for its ability to create new words by combining elements from within its lexical heritage. The two main word creation methods are *derivation* and *composition* or *compounding* (Weinrich, 1993). Whereas derivations are words made up of a root to which affixes can be attached according to specific rules, compounds are morphologically complex words consisting of two or more lexemes that can have a verbal, adverbial or nominal (adjectival or substantive) origin. Challenges in the translations here arose mostly from differences between the German and Italian languages.

As a German-speaking writer, Lutz commonly uses compound words, as witnessed by the titles of his anthologies: *Farbengetuschel* (color whispering), *Treibgutzeilen* (drifting verses), and *Bleistiftgespinste* (pencil-thoughts), to name a few. Most of these compounds are unique, coined linguistic items produced

by human imagination and the poet's artistic use of linguistic rules, so they do not appear in (mono- or bilingual) dictionaries of general language. Their adequate rendering therefore depends on the translator's ability to find an equivalent (Rega, 2013). Moreover, they are sometimes intentionally ambiguous, and the reader must infer their connotation from the meaning of the single lexemes in the context where they appear. *Schattenhangschreiten*, for example, can signify both the "striding forward of the shadow along the slope," and an unspecified "striding forward along the shadowy slope." This intelligent way of creating unusual and ambiguous compounds appeals to the curiosity of the reader, who is invited to approach the poems with an open mind.

Adding even more appeal to the translating challenge was Lutz's good use of word creations—invented terms derived from his naive, often ironic attitude toward things and situations. Words associated with natural events and elements or with everyday situations are fine examples of the variety of his choices. In a short poem of four lines, for example, he depicted "young and fresh legs"—obviously female legs—by comparing them to the freshness of the early morning:

> Wow
> so early
> on such **young and fresh legs**
> **like the morning**[4]

> *Ein Ohlala*
> *so früh schon*
> *auf so **morgenfrischen***
> ***morgenjungen** Beinen* (Lutz, 2004, p. 11)

> Ohllallaa
> così presto
> **su gambe**
> **così giovani e fresche**
> **come il mattino**

The translation problem here lay in rewording the text into a language constrained by distinct compounding processes with a different frequency of application. Despite a comprehensible nostalgia for the peculiarity of the original, the translator often had to turn to a negotiation with the TL. In the case of an Italian translation, for example, the only linguistic expedient to render adjectives such as *morgenfrisch* and *morgenjung* was constitute them using longer forms, most frequently the genitive form with particle *di* (of), and the comparative form that treats the adverb *come* (like) as a preposition or conjunction expressing ideas of similarity and comparison (Collins, 1987).

Among the hills in his place of origin, the poet admires the dusk and a hilly land "in a waving motion" (*wellenbewegt*), feeling surrounded by "stalk-green eyes":

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[4] All emphasis in the poems and quoted parts are by the author.

> Ascent descent
> a hilly land **in a waving motion**
> a dusk **in a waving motion**
> and everywhere stalk-green eyes . . .
>
> *Aufstieg Abstieg*
> **wellenbewegtes** *Hügelland*
> **wellenbewegte** *Abenddämmerung*
> *und überall halmgrüne Augen* . . . (Lutz, 2002, p. 65)
>
> Salita discesa
> una regione collinosa **dal moto ondulatorio**
> un crepuscolo **dal moto ondulatorio**
> e tutt'intorno occhi verde-stelo . . .

The German compound *wellenbewegt* is composed of two lexemes and could not be reworded into Italian with a corresponding one-word compound. Nor would it have been appropriate to render it via word-for-word translation within a source-oriented perspective that would strictly convey its denotation (*mosso dalle onde*, "moved by the waves"). Hence the translator had to take into account the connotation of the original and try to render its effect for the TT reader. A possible solution lay in the three-word Italian phrase *dal moto ondulatorio*. The presence of the consonant *l*, which characterizes the first lexeme of the German compound, and the five occurrences of the vocalic *o*, which resembles a circle and reproduces the five occurrences of the vocalic *e* in the second German lexeme, were deemed a compromise phonetic interpretation endowing the phrase with the same effect conveyed by the original.

Through poetry, Lutz makes nature, and especially the rain, vibrate and quiver among the words. Thus the spring rain can seem to resemble the action of falling in love, confused by the "heart's wind" and the puzzling feelings of the heart:

> Maybe
> spring rain resembles
> the initial phase of falling in love
> **upset by the heart's wind**
> **ruffled like a love leaf**
> and by falling down already broken
>
> *Möglich*
> *dass Frühlingsregen beginnender*
> *Verliebtheit gleicht*
> **herzwindzerzaust**

herzblattverwirrt[5]
und oft im Fallen schon geknickt (Lutz, 2006, p. 34)

Possibile
che la pioggia primaverile
assomigli all'innamoramento
scompigliato dal vento del cuore
turbato come foglia d'amore
e spesso nel cadere già spezzato

This poem steps up the challenge to translators with its unusual three-word compounds. I answered by appealing to the aesthetic value of the ST, trying to reproduce it in the TT. The two word-creations *herzwindzerzaust* and *herzblattverwirrt* form a type of anaphor, the second being structurally complementary to the first. However, the impossibility of finding a corresponding Italian compound caused a translation problem. One solution was to privilege a phonetic expedient as a negotiation between the German compound and its Italian rewording. Thus the last two words of the translated word-creations (*cuore* and *amore*) rhyme, and the three accented words of both verses (*sconquassáto*, *vénto*, *cuóre*; *scompigliáto*, *fóglia*, *amóre*) form a rhythm.

In this way the poem containing these compounds conveys a strong melancholy felt upon seeing spring rain falling to the ground. The rain is compared to a man's falling in love—his being upset by the heart's wind (*herzwindzerzaust*) and ruffled like a "heart leaf" (*herzblattverwirrt*). The Italian version proposes seeing the *Herzblatt* as a "love leaf" (or "loving leaf") instead of the heart leaf of a word-for-word translation, attempting to maintain the phonetic effect instead of the precise denotation of the verse. Meanwhile, the target-oriented linguistic choice reflects awareness of the German language's peculiarity of creating such special linguistic effects with word compounds. The translation therefore takes into account not only the main features of the ST and the different structure of both languages, but also the addressee and the cultural difference provided by the TT.

Unlike Italian, German is a highly *flexional* language, and its rich compounding potential allows creating of unusually long compounds. Flexional languages indicate grammatical relationships through grammatical devices termed affixes (e.g., English: walk-s, walk-ed, walk-ing; German: geh-e, geh-st, geh-t) or internal changes in words (e.g., English: mouse/mice, goose/geese; German: Maus/Mäuser, lese/liest). These devices enable flexional languages to build very long terms by combining already existing simple words. In teaching German linguistics to students, for example, teachers frequently use extremely extended compounds like the funny and appealing "Donaudampfschifffahrtsgesellschaftskapitänsmütze" (*Danube steamboat shipping company captain's hat*) to demonstrate that the length of German words is theoretically unlimited in almost all fields (especially in scientific terminology like that in biochemistry).

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[5]A further analysis of this poem and its Italian translation is offered in Salvato (in press).

In this regard, a very apt example consists of three consecutive compounds in the poem "Nacht" (Night):

> *Dropping towers spring cradles*
> *throat gargling*
>
> Tropfentürme Brunnenwiegen
> Gurgelgeister (Lutz, 2004, p. 28)
>
> Cascate di gocce culle di sorgenti
> gargarismi della gola

Switzerland is known for its abundant water resources, rivers, lakes, and mountain streams. Springwater from a sand or gravel water-bearing soil formation called an aquifer or a water flow usually feeds through fissured rock. Where rock or clay layers block the underground flow, the water is forced upward to the surface and may emerge either invisibly, as an outflow into a river, stream, lake, or the sea, or overtly as a spring, where it can be tapped. People tap spring water in natural hollows, where particular water acoustics create strong sound effects that Lutz has put into words by creating the three fascinating compounds.

In the original text, these words' phonetic peculiarity is so obvious that the reader would enjoy them best by listening to the writer express the entire poem in his native language. *Tropfentürme*, *Brunnenwiegen*, and *Gurgelgeister* seem to be terms taken from children's tales, and being able to render them into Italian is a highly appealing prospect. However, the impracticability of a perfect rewording of the original text is evident in the ultimate untranslatability of literary texts especially, so translators should dare to convey similar assonances, consonances, and alliterations in the TL. In this specific case, an Italian translator faced the twofold challenge of finding out what types of springs are active in Switzerland while also seeking Italian expressions that can render the same onomatopoeic effect found in German.

To convey each artistic German expression created as only a single word (i.e., a two- or three-term compound), the Italian translator turned again to the genitive construction expressed by the particle *di* (of) with the determinative article: *di gocce*, *di sorgenti*, *della gola*. For a single German word (a compound substantive like *Tropfentürme*), Italian uses three elements (two substantives and a particle, *cascate di gocce*), making the translated version longer. A first, strictly source-oriented translation had produced a word-for-word version, most notably for the first and the third compound (*torri di gocce*, *folletti della gola*). Were this version maintained, however, the Italian translation would lose an important feature of the original text: the phonetic, that is, onomatopoeic sound that reproduces the unusual noises heard in water spring cavities. The German version expresses them through the voiceless plosive alveolar *t* in both lexemes in the first compound (**T**ropfen**t**ürme) and the thrice-occurring voiced velar plosive *g* in the third compound (**G**ur**g**el**g**eister). The absence of corresponding Italian terms drove the translator to look for similar onomatopoeic words in yet another negotiation between the ST and the TT. The twice-occurring voiceless plosive alveolar, for example, can be rendered into Italian with the voiceless velar plosive *k*, heard twice in the plural Italian simplex **casc**ate. As for the voiced velar plosive of the third

compound, it can be rendered as a phrase in which same voiced velar plosive occurs three times (**g**ar**g**arismi della **g**ola). The translation of the three word creations is also characterized by words containing the long consonants *l* (in *culle* and *della*) and *c* (in *gocce*). This compromise reached with a linguistic expedient helps convey in Italian the strange sounds expressed in German with almost the same effect produced by the original.

Another poem, originally entitled "Für Liliane" (For Liliane; Lutz, 2004, p. 64) expresses the poet's gratitude to his partner. In it Lutz thanks her for the many experiences they have had together and enumerates these one after another to build one of his longest poems. One of these experiences, expressed through the compound word *Wurzelstolperlachen*, appealed strongly to the translator's ear. The term is composed of three lexemes: two substantives, *Wurzel* and *Lachen* (root, laughter) and the verb *stolpern* (to stumble). The second substantive, *Lachen* (laughter), derived via the word-creation method termed *conversion*, was translated into Italian as a plural (*risate*), alluding to the laughter the two protagonists must have shared whenever one of them stumbled on a root. However, it proved impossible to maintain the uniqueness of the term in Italian, so instead it was grammatically and syntactically transformed into a long phrase with three plural substantives, three articles, and three prepositions:

> for the laughter about the stumbling on the roots
>
> *Wurzelstolperlachen*
>
> per le **risate** sulle **inciampate** nelle **radici**[6]

The lack of punctuation is a visible semantic device in Lutz's lyrics. Lutz does not use punctuation marks and often connects two verses through an enjambment, which momentarily suspends the flow of thought with a breathing pause. The enjambment is intended to make the reader pause for an instant and focus on the words to enjoy their phonetic peculiarity.

Unlike his earlier work, in which punctuation still occurred, Lutz's most recent poems hold no trace of it. The reader thus has direct access to the world portrayed by the poet and can feel free to interpret the relationships among the words. A first example is the adjective *frech* (*impudent*), which appears between two substantives without punctuation and can thus be read both anaphorically or cataphorically, as if it referred to both:

> Young remain the girls
> eternally young
> the years **impudent** the sparrows
> fly over them
>
> *Jung bleiben die Mädchen*
> *ewig jung*

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[6] For further analysis of this poem and its Italian translation, see Salvato (in press).

> *die Jahre **frech** die Spatzen*
> *fliegen über sie hinweg . . .* (Lutz, 2004, p. 10)

> Giovani restano le ragazze
> sempre giovani
> gli anni **sfacciati** i passeri
> volano via sopra di loro

The Italian translation easily conveys the same double possibility of reading the adjective as referring to both substantives between which it appears.

A different, somewhat problematic translating process occurred with the poem "Jemand fragt" (Someone Asks; Lutz, 2006, p. 87), which appeared in 2006 with punctuation (a semicolon introducing the direct speech and a comma between the two questions). Recently, Lutz decided to erase all punctuation marks and publish it as follows:

> Someone asks
> are you a **diver** too
> do you also **dive** into yourself
> toward yourself

> *Jemand fragt*
> *bist du auch **Taucher***
> ***tauchst du auch** in dir*
> *nach dir*

> Qualcuno domanda
> **fai** anche tu **immersione**
> **t'immergi** anche tu dentro te
> verso te stesso

The effect of the lack of punctuation in German is remarkable, because one would expect a semicolon as an introductory signal to the direct speech ("Jemand fragt:") and a question mark at the end of both questions. A capital letter would also be proper both after the semicolon ("Bist du…") and at the beginning of the second question ("Tauchst du...").

In the poem, a particularly challenging expedient for Italian translators is the German derivate *Taucher*, from the verb *tauchen*, which at first can provoke diverse and futile attempts at translation. German–Italian dictionaries (Hoepli, 2009, p. 1053; Paravia, 1996, p. 932; Sansoni Tedesco, 2006, p. 1079; Zanichelli, 2014, p. 1041) render *Taucher* as *sub*, *subacqueo*, or *sommozzatore* (*frogman*), which are actually a counterpart of the German substantive. The problem arises in the third verse, when the poet uses the same term (*Taucher*) in the verbal form (*tauchst du*). The above-mentioned Italian renderings cannot operate in the same way the German term does, as they do not have a verbal form.

Consequently, a word-for-word translation would deprive the text of its peculiarity. The solution was found in the compromise offered by a phraseologism. The verbal construct *fare immersion* (to practice diving), in fact, is not a single substantive, but it contains the substantive *immersion*, whose verbal counterpart in the following verse is *immergersi* (to plunge, to dive). This linguistic device thus allows the term's anaphoric effect to be retained, and consequently also the chiasmus structure of the original version:

<div align="center">

bist du auch **Taucher**   fai anche tu **immersione**

tauchst du auch   **t'immergi** anche tu

</div>

Moreover, it is interesting to note that the pronoun *du/tu* (you) and the adverb *auch/anche* (too) are similarly in opposite positions and thus also remain in the chiasmus structure.

From a theoretical point of view, this translating device ultimately allows the source-oriented and the target-oriented perspectives to cohabit. According to the functionalist approach, translations are intercultural communicative acts with the ST, which—as stated above—functions as an offer of information (Jabir, 2006), and with which the translator must always reckon. At the same time, the focus on the decisive role of the translator draws attention to the translating process and to the translator's power to adapt the TT according to what is supposed to be the best choice (Nord, 1991).

The Ironic Aspect

As a poet, Werner Lutz does not forget the ironic aspect of everyday life, through which he expresses his delicate dealings with people and his odd attitudes to various situations. His irony is never biting. On the contrary, it is plain, almost tender.

When annoyed by a female figure, for example, he comments on the situation by portraying her as an "extremely chattering rain cloud," which indeed permits the (male) reader to imagine the enduring annoyance:

> A female rain cloud
> extremely chattering
> has been following me since early in the morning
>
> *Eine weibliche*
> *überaus geschwätzige Regenwolke*
> *begleitet mich seit heute früh* (Lutz, 2006, p. 115)

Indeed, Lutz's irony is a sign of his personality. A video of him reading one of his poems to a German-speaking public attests that his irony is like a mirror reflecting his simple character and candid way of looking at himself and at the features of human beings.[7] The poem is a naive request that the Lord

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[7] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqVB055MXjo

bestow just a single hair, as a boy might make upon becoming conscious of his weaknesses compared to his fellows, except that the hair should be green.

> Lord let
> a single green hair
> grow on my head
>
> then Charles
> and his colleagues will say
> we have underestimated **him**
> **the guy**
>
> Herr lass wachsen
> ein einziges grünes Haar
> auf meinem Haupt
>
> dann werden Karl
> und seine Kollegen sagen
> wir haben **ihn** unterschätzt
> **diesen Kerl** (Lutz, 2004, p. 31)

Focusing on the last two verses, it is worth comparing the original German version with the Italian one, in which nothing is lost:

wir haben **ihn** unterschätzt	**l'**abbiamo sottovalutato
diesen Kerl	**il ragazzo**

The translation renders the unusual construction with a double direct object, expressed through a personal pronoun (German: *ihn*; Italian: *lo*, contracted to *l'*) and the corresponding substantive in the following verse (German: *diesen Kerl*; Italan: *il ragazzo*), without losing the final effect of suspension after the verb.

Difficulties initially beset the translation of one of Lutz's most recent poems, "Verehrte Ferne" (Revered Distance), whose irony was not immediately grasped because it is obscured by an atmosphere of sweetness and reverence much like that found in many Italian Renaissance paintings, which can distract the careless reader from a correct interpretation. In this case, the difficulty lay in the antipoetic quality of Lutz's diction that also lends ironic effect to conventional images. The poem is actually a brief spoof of the redundant expressions in formal letters, that is, empty rhetorical phrases that mechanically recall repeated phrases with no real content. The short letter is addressed to a female figure—a personified "revered distance" who, like a muse, can linger as a delicate thought worthy of a sweet tribute:

Revered distance

your spacey opinion
is also my opinion
and I greet **you**
in everlasting love
over the **hills**
as far as the **valleys**

and remain always
yours Werner Lutz (Lutz, 2013b, p. 85)

Verehrte Ferne

ihre *luftige Meinung*
ist auch meine Meinung
und so grüsse ich **sie**
in unvergänglicher Liebe
über **Hügeleien**
und **Tälereien** *hinweg*

und bleibe für immer
ihr *Werner Lutz* (Lutz, 2009, p. 100)[8]

Illustrissima lontananza

il **suo** arioso pensiero
è anche il mio pensiero
perciò **la** saluto
colmo d'intramontabile amore
superando **vallate**
e **collinate**

per sempre
suo aff.mo Werner Lutz

To translate the poem thus required a focus on its linguistic devices. The irony is expressed through two linguistic expedients. First, the poet used pronouns and possessive adjectives in the polite form, not capitalized, as would be proper in German (*ihre* instead of *Ihre*; *sie* instead of *Sie*; *ihr* instead of *Ihr*). Second, he inserted two bizarrely invented terms, *Hügeleien* and *Tälereien*, which are derivatives

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[8] By rendering the bizarre linguistic choice in the original with the plain terms *hills* and *valleys* without a corresponding suffix, the English translation loses the author's ironic viewpoint.

created by adding the German nominal suffix *-ei(en)* to *Hügel* and *Täler* (nouns in standard German). This suffix usually signals that the action expressed in the nominal form is repeated, so the term assumes a pejorative connotation by designating a negative situation or activity (e.g., *die Heuchelei*, hypocrisy; *eine endlose Rennerei*, an endless running around; *die ewige Kopiererei im Büro*, the relentless task of making copies in the office).[9] For this reason, the suffix is nowadays no longer productive, and the derivative is considered an obsolete word that takes on an ironic character. To render this same effect in the Italian translation, it thus was necessary to avoid the capitalization that is also typical of formal Italian epistles and find a corresponding suffix able to convey a negative effect. Avoiding the capital letter for personal pronouns is the first signal to the TT reader, who should grasp from the poem's atmosphere that something is unusual in it. Similarly, the Italian suffix *-ate* (*vallate*, *collinate*; see Dardano 1996)—the plural form of the feminine singular *-ata*, which conveys a pejorative effect—renders in Italian the impression given by the German suffix, preserving the ironic effect.[10]

Concluding Remarks

This study has proposed a foundation for long-term research on a far-reaching method of approaching the art of translation. The starting point is a focus on the stimulating challenges that translating contemporary Swiss German poetry presented to an Italian translator. This focus is presented via a more compelling theoretical contribution that may stimulate scholarly thought about translating artistic works into different cultures by interpreting them from a wider standpoint. Literary translations are distinctive in this regard.

Translating or analyzing translations of novels or poems reveals the cultural treasure held in the ST at the linguistic level of lexical, syntactic, and semantic identities as well as the textual level of dynamic, pragmatic, and functional factors. Consequently, literary translations require not only familiarity with the grammatical aspects of the source language, but also pragmatic understanding of the situation in which the ST is set. Furthermore, as language is an integral part of culture, translators are expected to be both bilingual and bicultural experts (Snell-Hornby, 1988).

Also for this reason, then, translations should take a wider, preferably interdisciplinary approach, as they imply an overview of various disciplines intersecting at different levels with the proper activity of interpreting a text. Indeed, any translation is a complex phenomenon that should be approached by integrating various methodologies that together can offer translators an accurate overview of the ST and an appropriate base from which to approach the TT reader.

Mary Snell-Hornby (1988) attempted to bridge the gap between literary translation and linguistics by presenting "an integrated approach" based on combined experience in the theory and

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[9] Derived substantives with the suffix *-erei* are often an extension of an occupational designation, e.g., *die Gärtnerei*, botanical nursery; *die Bäkerei*, *the bakery*; *die Wäscherei*, laundry. The German examples are taken from Weinrich's German grammar (1993, pp. 963–964).

[10] Further commentary on this poem, and specifically on the problems of rendering both the proper name *Karl* and both bizarre terms, is offered in Salvato (in press).

practice of translation. Her starting point was the idea that translation is grounded in the multidimensional character of language, where different elements interact dynamically. Polarized dichotomies and the concept of rigorous borders, as in Schleiermacher's (1813/2012) view, were thus replaced by the notion of a *gradual transition* featuring blends and blurred edges. However, her standpoint tended to eliminate basic concepts like equivalence, which is unavoidable, at least in its natural connotation of rendering an original text into a corresponding version. A similar critique applies for Nord's functionalist approach. Even though she highlights the importance of both retrospective and prospective analysis, her viewpoint dethrones the ST to a simple "offer of information" that is actually not enough for a comprehensive viewpoint.

This article has expanded on this line of research. At a theoretical level, it aimed to help highlight the importance of approaching the art of translating texts with a wider and comprehensive method, leaving aside rigid and separate views eliminating elements that are naturally part of the translating process. The study conveyed that it is possible to extend the perspective of scientific research in translation fields to further, more comprehensive reflections on language and its interpretation, reasoning forward from a strict empirical viewpoint. The preliminary conception was that, in contrast to Schleiermacher's strict angle, the two main theories operating in contemporary TS—the text-oriented and the context-oriented—should be recognized as complementary perspectives that should assist translators' approach to their work. The analysis thus offered an example of what the Italian semiotician Umberto Eco (2003) considered the key to good translation: Given that it is inappropriate to establish a priori whether the translation should be source- or target-oriented, a process of negotiation should be introduced in relation to the concrete translation problems found in a text, so that both criteria can be used alternately and flexibly.

At the pragmatic level, the article provided a personal example of what negotiation can mean by describing the challenges of translating contemporary lyrics. It analyzed the first Italian translations of some of the Swiss German writer Werner Lutz's poems in parallel with their original versions. The analysis highlighted the different linguistic and stylistic ways of reporting the content-related scope of noteworthy expressions, focusing on the compromise (Gadamer 1960) derived from awareness that man does not exist in closed or unique spheres.

The poems do not take a traditional form such as a sonnet with rhyme and rhythm. Lutz is a contemporary writer who, instead of following a specific set of rules, introduces changes according to the inspiration of the moment. His inspiration leads him to compose poems of differing lengths—five or 10 lines, or even just a single verse. This structural aspect has a counterpart in the many typical obstacles and difficulties a translator faces in approaching a text to reword it into another language. The main difficulty concerns the lexical and syntactic charm that the original version exerts on the translator, particularly those lexical terms that Lutz created to express sudden and unique feelings evoked by the many facets of nature. Especially German-speaking poets communicate their feelings through expressions that present a series of challenges for Italian translators, who consequently must tackle German compound words, keeping in mind both the ST's aesthetic and semantic features, and the cultural and communicative situation in which the TT is received.

German has a richer compounding potential than does Italian. Moreover, linguistic items coined in lyrics are products of both human imagination and the artistic use of linguistic rules. Therefore they are frequently unique coinages whose correspondence to conceptual or lexical gaps in the TL and whose absence in dictionaries of general language can make their translation a complex problem. Neologisms in fine literature should be rendered as such into the TL. However, when ready-made equivalents for such creations cannot immediately be found, translators face a twofold challenge: They must resort to the conventional morphology and structure of the TL while also looking for possible original creations within the TL system that can convey the expressive effect of the SL text. The same occurs with onomatopoeic words that vocally imitate sounds from the natural world. Newmark (1993) proposed that their meaning "derives from the spontaneous cries of humans and animals" and "the noise of the wind and the rain" that are reflected in spontaneous emotions, noting that "translators who are writers have to be aware" (p. 15) of such universal sound elements.

Spontaneity, a typical feature of literary texts, often generates linguistic and cultural translation problems. Confronted with a unique and creative expression, a translator is thus required to become a literary writer too by looking for, or even creating, a corresponding expression in the TL that can convey the same effect as the original. Defending a rigid theoretical rule in the translating process, then, would not help but see a text as a new communicative event to be discovered and interpreted in its unforeseeable uniqueness. A human is not a fragmented being but a whole endowed with reason, and the innate need for unity and completeness in acting and knowing affects the whole person. Deciding a priori the translation's typology is therefore inappropriate regarding not only the uniqueness of a new text but also humans' inborn inclination.

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