

Is translation always an intercultural process?

Sara Rovira-Esteva

Grup de recerca InterAsia, DTI, IEII (UAB)

Procesos interculturales de Asia Oriental en la sociedad internacional de la información: ciudadanía, género y producción cultural

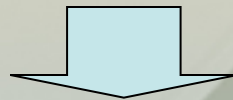
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Introduction

- Starting point: **Is translation always an intercultural process?** → Is there always the same degree of linguistic and cultural material exchange?
 - Beliefs about the original text and the function attributed to literature
 - Power relations between cultures in contact
 - Target culture norms about translation
 - Ethics of translation

Theoretical and methodological framework

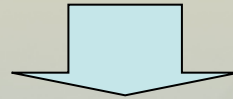
- Literary work as a document or a piece of art?
 - non-literary motivation → window onto contemporary events and society (learning about the Other)
 - aesthetic or entertainment values (literary enjoyment)



- Translator's *invisibility* (Venuti, 1995):
 - Make the pages flow, reads as if it was an original
- *Domestication* of the text (Venuti, 1995):
 - re-modelled (distorted) to fit target culture

Theoretical and methodological framework

- Ethnocentric perception or ethnorelative approach to the Other?
 - denying or minimising differences
 - finding ways of adapting or integrating them



- Translation project motivated by an ethics of sameness or difference (Venuti, 1998):
 - Foreign texts are rewritten to conform to styles and themes prevailing in domestic literatures to enable readers' self-recognition
 - Domesticating the texts to some extent, but at the same time representing the diversity

Theoretical and methodological framework

- Analysis of texts and paratexts:
 - Texts (original + 3 translations).
 - Paratexts are those productions that surround the text and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, i.e. to ensure the text's presence in the world, its “reception” and consumption in the form of a book. (Genette, 1997: 1)
 - Peritexts: covers, preface, titles, typography...
 - Epitexts: interviews, reviews, e-mails, blogs...
- How is the book offered to the public

The object of study

- Chun Sue's (春树) *Beijing wawa* (北京娃娃) (2002).
- *La muñeca de Pekín* (Pérez, Shan y Canales) (2003)
- *La nina de Pequín* (Rovira) (2003)
- *Beijing Doll* (Goldblatt) (2004)



The object of study

- Women's life writing:
 - literature is a way of self-expression, used as a process of discovering and self-assertion;
 - constructs a gendered identity around her literary and musical preferences, as well as her social net (youth punk subculture);
 - critical and subversive of China's mainstream ideologies and institutions → her writing becomes a site of ideological struggle towards the dominant culture.

The object of study

- Idiolect characterised by a hybrid language:
 - fresh, direct and ready to take-away street language;
 - quotes from the Chinese classics.
- The text is largely composed of directly or indirectly quoted conversations and the first person narrative hardly distinguishable in style from the dialogues.
- Highly heterodox in its paratextual presentation
 - Bits of her life in the form of excerpts from her diary, photos, e-mails, handwritten poems...

Textual and paratextual analysis

Translator's notes	Spanish	Catalan	English	=
TOTAL	63	27	0	8

- The English text tends to adapt, paraphrase or omit Chinese cultural and intertextual referents as well as linguistic puns and swear words.

Textual and paratextual analysis

- Information found in the cover:
 - Author's pen name (春树)
 - Title (北京娃娃)
 - Subtitle (十七岁少女的残酷青春自白)
 - Subtitle in English (I, Seventeen, Badness Gire) [sic]
 - Name of the publisher (远方出版社)



Textual and paratextual analysis



- Author's English pen name (Chun Sue)
- Title (Beijing Doll)
- Subtitle (A novel) → change in genre
- Laudatory quotation from *Asian Weekly* (“Reveals the cruel youth of a new generation... uncensored, raw and bloody.”)
- Designed to domesticate the product (calls for reminiscences of an identifiable musical referent).



Textual and paratextual analysis



- Author's English pen name (Chun Sue)
- Title (La niña de Pequín)
- Name of the publisher (Empúries)
- Name of the series (Narrativa) → change in genre

Textual and paratextual analysis



- Author's English pen name (Chun Sue)
- Comment about the book (El relato autobiográfico de una joven rebelde. Un canto al espíritu punk y la búsqueda del placer).
- Title (La muñeca de Pekín/北京娃娃) → bilingual
- Name of the publisher (El Aleph)

Textual and paratextual analysis

- Original back cover:
 - Text almost totally coincident with the book's preface.
- English translation back cover:
 - Press quotations with laudatory comments about the book (Time, Asian Weekly and Inter Press Service).
 - Presentation of the book (Banned in China for its candid exploration of a young girl's sexual awakening... This headline-making autobiographical novel...).
 - Translator's name (Howard Goldblatt)
 - Publisher's name (Riverhead Books)
 - Genre indication (Fiction) → change of genre

Textual and paratextual analysis

- Catalan translation back cover:
 - Reminder of author's English pen name (Chun Sue)
 - Reminder of book's title (La nina de Pequín)
 - Translator's name (Sara Rovira)
 - Publisher's name (Empúries)
 - Name of the series (Narrativa, 219) → change of genre
 - Presentation of the book (*La nina de Pequín és una novel·la transgressora que ha estat prohibida a la Xina. (...) De resultes de la seva gosadia, Chun Sue té avui prohibit sortir de la Xina).*

Textual and paratextual analysis

- Spanish translation back cover:
 - Reminder of book's title in Chinese (北京娃娃)
 - Name of the series and publisher's name (Modernos y clásicos de El Aleph)
 - Presentation of the book (En clave autobiográfica, *La muñeca de Pekín* relata las andanzas de una adolescente rebelde y da voz a una nueva generación que busca amor y libertad en un entorno de alienación urbana y placeres efímeros).

Textual and paratextual analysis

Ortotypographical aspects

CHINESE	ENGLISH	CATALAN	SPANISH
Table of contents	x	only partially / at the end	✓
Chapters and subchapters	x	✓	✓
Different types	✓	x	x
Horizontal and vertical printing	✓	horizontal	horizontal
Texts in English	-	✓	✓
Morpho-syllabical and alphabetical writing	x	x	x
Pictures, e-mails, handwritten poems, diary excerpts, etc.	x	x	x

Textual and paratextual analysis



Internet as a site for self-expression

- Interesting to examine how she uses cyberspace as a site to construct her own identity and to explore social relationships.
- Chun Sue's life is still unfolding and her self-understanding constantly changing as she engages in the act of writing → shares her writings, pictures and the music she likes with her friends and virtual admirers.

<http://chunsue.blogcn.com/> (2004 → 2009)

<http://blog.sina.com.cn/springtree> (2010 →)

Conclusions

- Anglo-American culture sees the literary text as a piece of art:
 - The translation has to read fluently as if it were originally written in English
 - The translator has to be invisible
 - Ethics of sameness
 - Domesticate the text to fit anglo culture and conform it to domestic aesthetic values and agendas

Conclusions

- Distortion of the original's identity through the process of translation:
 - Autobiography → fiction / novel
 - Multicultural character → Monocultural
 - Transgressive in content and form → conservative
 - Heterodox format (collage style) → orthodox
- The ethics of translation behind the English translation silences the author's voice, both the verbal and non-verbal → much less cultural exchange.

References

- Genette, G. 1997. *Paratexts. Thresholds of interpretation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Venuti, L. 1995. *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation.* London: Routledge.
- Venuti, L. 1998. *The Scandals of Translation. Towards an ethics of difference.* London & New York: Routledge.