STYLISTIC APPROACHES TO TRANSLATION: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: As argued by Jean Boase-Beier (2006; 2011), who realized the first systematic studies on stylistic approaches to translation, Stylistics has had a relatively small role in translation theory. Yet, the study of style is one of the main linguistic tools scholars of Translation Studies are given to understand the "textual-conceptual functions" (Jeffries 2014) and to be able to recognize them in translation. That is, to be able to analyse (and explain) how linguistic resources are used to produce meanings and how these meanings are recontextualized through translation. Drawing on these premises, the article aims at presenting an overview on stylistic approaches to translation. In particular it aims at exploring the origins of the interaction between Stylistics and Translation Studies and looking at its current developments. In this perspective, narrowing the focus from a general introduction to Stylistics to the application of the stylistic framework to literary translation, the article highlights the necessity to reach a more organic synergy between Stylistics and Translation, the latter intended as both a theoretical discipline and a professional practice. Finally, a comparative linguistic analysis of textual excerpts taken from Sarah Ladipo Manyika's novel *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun* (2016) and from its Italian translation, *Storie della mia città* (2020), offers an insight on the interaction between Stylistics and translation, showing how their synergy can be used to unveil the social and political implications that sometimes are concealed in, or disguised through, the creation of a fictional world.

Keywords: stylistics, translation studies, style, Sarah Ladipo Manyika, Nigerian literature.

1. Stylistics and textual analysis

This article aims at offering an overview on the relationship(s) between Stylistics and Translation Studies, exploring the possibility of applying the stylistic framework to the practice of translation. Even though Stylistics can be a useful tool for the analysis of any textual typology, the article is mainly concerned with literary texts. Thus, the references to Translation Studies are to be intended, more specifically, as references to Literary Translation Studies.

Drawing on the necessity to speculate on theories and methods, the article moves from a general presentation of Stylistics. Then it tries and explores the role played by style in the process(es) of translation and the role played by stylistic analyses in the translation practice. Even though the main focus of the article remains theory, its final section is devoted to a brief presentation of a case-study. The objective of the case-study is 'suggesting' how to bridge the gap between translation theory and practice and encouraging further studies on the application of the stylistic framework to the practice of (literary) translation.

Through times, Stylistics has commonly been referred to as "the analysis of the language of literary texts" (Mills 1995: 3), even though some scholars point out that stylistic techniques can be used in the study of any kind of texts, not just literary ones (see Simpson 1993; Verdonk 2002).

What is central to the discipline is the emphasis on the language of the text, and that is the reason why linguistic models are interrogated in order to undertake stylistic analyses. Thus, the very concept of language raises the first questions:

- Is language to be intended as 'just' a tool to communicate with other people and/or communities?

- Is it a vehicle for new ideas to be spread or for old ideas to be revived and re-discussed?

-Is it as a site of negotiation of power relationships?

Stylistics scholars try to answer to these (and other) questions using different models of language in their linguistic analyses.

In her pivotal work[1], Sara Mills (1995) highlights the centrality of an active reader in the processes of textual interpretation. Readers are indeed not to be intended as mere receivers of the (literary) text since the process of textual interpretation is not a linear transaction between an author and a reader. Authors and readers participate in a bidirectional relationship that is affected and moulded by personal, socio-historical and political contingencies. If we think about translators as readers *par excellence* of a (literary) text, Mills' idea of an active reader, that is a reader who "participate" in the process(es) of textual interpretation, helps us think about translation as a positioned practice (Venuti 1995, 2000; Tymoczko 1995, 2010; Bassnett 2002, 2011; Bassnett and Lefevere 1998; Federici and Marino 2018). Yet, it is important to remember that textual

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[1] In *Feminist Stylistics* (1995), Sara Mills schematizes the role of the author and of the readers in the "Conventional model of text" and in the "Feminist model of text". Comparing the two models she offers an overview on the elements that affect and mould the relationship between authors and readers, that is between the context of production of a (literary) text and the context of reception.

interpretation for translation purposes does not depend entirely on readers (and consequently on translators). This means that even though the figure of the reader/interpreter is central in the dialectic process of textual elaboration and reception, texts address readers. In other words, texts "invite" readers' interpretations according to specific linguistic devices. This tendency to address the reader, either directly or indirectly, is what Mills defines "dominant reading"; that is, the presentation of "certain ways of interpretation as the most likely to make sense of the text" (Mills 1995: 50). In contrast to what may be imagined, the dominant reading does not correspond to the writer's intentions (which normally cannot be recovered) but to the position(s) a text offers to its readers in a precise time, that is according to the social, cultural and economic scenario of a precise historical moment. For example, a text which portrays women's associationism is more likely to be read, today, within the ideological framework of feminism and women's empowerment. That is both because of the ideologies circulating nowadays and because of the availability of other texts and discourses on women and female agency that reinforce these ideological positions.

In a sense, the dominant reading suggests what are the most evident "relations of *struggle*" (Fairclough 1989: 34) at issue in a text. That is, what are the most evident power relations discussed by means of language, defined by Paul Simpson as a "specific site for struggle" (1993: 5). The recognition of the dominant reading and of the power relations displayed in a text is one of the first steps of a translator's preliminary work.

Even though the concept of the dominant reading has been largely addressed in literary theory (Mills 1995: 55), little has been written about its role in the translation process(es). In the essay *La voce del testo. L'arte e il mestiere di tradurre* (2012), Franca Cavagnoli points out how the dominant[2] 'guides' the translator in her/his process to achieve coherence in the target text without affecting the intentions and the integrity of the source text. Therefore, Cavagnoli suggests that when a translator starts to translate a text, s/he has to be aware of both the implied reader and the implied focus of the final product. In other words, a translator needs to know who s/he is translating for, and according to which criteria.

In this perspective, Franca Cavagnoli re-elaborates what Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi claim in their *Post-Colonial Translation* (1999): translation acts take place in socio-historical, cultural and political contexts that mould both translation choices and the reception(s) of the translated product(s). In their words: "translations are always embedded in cultural and political systems, and in history [and] the strategies employed by translators reflect the context in which the texts are produced" (1999: 24). Bassnett and Trivedi's considerations encourage the contemplation of translation as both a positioned practice and product. The scholars maintain that translations do not exist in a vacuum but are the result of choices made by translators according to their positioned reading(s) of the source text and to the publishing practices of the target publishing

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[2] For a deeper insight on the concept of the dominant please refer to Roman Jakobson, "The Dominant" in K. Pomorska and S. Rudy, *Language in Literature* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 1987), 41.

scenario. In this way, the scholars point out how many variables can be involved in the translation process(es) and how the perception of the translated text changes if we look at it not just as the result of a set of linguistic correspondences but as a new text for which the translator acts as a creative, interlinguistic and intercultural mediator (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999; Popovič 2006; Ponzanesi 2014; Boase-Baier, Fawcett and Wilson 2014).

2. Stylistics and Translation Studies

In 2006, Jean Boase-Beier has written extensively about the intersection between Sylistics and Translation Studies, filling a gap in the study of style and translation. In *Stylistic Approaches to Translation* (2006) she has pointed out the role style plays in both translation theories and practice. In her perspective, style is not just one of the core elements of textual interpretation, but also a key concept to approach translation from both a theoretical and a practical point of view.

As outlined by the previous paragraph, texts, intended as forms of language in use, are "a *part of*, as well as a *consequence of*, social process" (Fowler et al. 2019 [1979]: 26). This implies that, while managing a text, translators need to be aware of the fact that they are not just transferring sets of meanings from a language and from a socio-cultural panorama to another; they are possibly handling ideologies and power relationships, and they are repurposing them into a different socio-cultural scenario through the use of an alien language.

In her study of style and translation, Jean Boase-Beier explains how translation process(es) cannot guarantee an exact correspondence between the style of the ST and that of the TT. That because style itself is subject to interpretation, both in the source and in the target text. Thus, she recognizes three degrees of linguistic observation; in each of them style has a specific meaning:
- the style of the ST depends on textual interpretation;
- the style of the TT bears the marks of the translator;
- the style of the TT depends on the interpretation(s) of its readers.

In other words, the style of the ST is not just a result of authorial choices; instead, its perception depends on the translator's interpretation. As argued by Lawrence Venuti, the style of the target text is the result of a translator's "decision process" (1986: 182); meaning style transposition to another language is not just a transfer. Translators are, in this perspective, authors in the second-degree. Last, Sara Mills tackles the role of the addressee(s), explaining that the style of the TT depends also on the interpretation(s) of its addressees, that is the "actual readers" (1995: 23) of the (translated) text.

These observations raise some questions:
- in which ways does the style of the ST influence the translator's interpretation?
- Which style do scholars address when they talk about the style of the TT?
- What kind of style do readers of target texts interpret?

While the first two questions regard the description of the translation practice and will be answered in the following sections through the help of a case-study, the last one addresses the issue of reception, which is not the main focus of this

article. Its focus, indeed, is not on the reader as 'final receiver' of the translation product, but on the translator intended as both 'provisional receiver' of a textual product in a source language and an 'author in the second degree' of a textual product in a target language. As the case-study will show, this article addresses translated texts as non-definitive products, highlighting the importance of final readers in the operations of textual making sense, but without delving into book market issues and the reception of texts intended as goods.

The practice of translation has raised many questions along the years; the very figure of the translator and her/his position in relation to that of the author has been discussed and re-discussed as a controversial issue (Venuti 1986; Maestri 2018: 1-12). In the past, translation was considered as a secondary activity in which translators were not expected to manipulate the texts they were working on, but to respect a criterion of "fidelity" which was rooted in what Walter Benjamin called the 'reine Sprache', that is the 'pure Language'. As Umberto Eco explains in *Dire quasi la stessa cosa. Esperienze di traduzione* (2003: 345-351), Benjamin's "reine Sprache" is not an actual language but rather a metalanguage between a source text and a target text which functions as a "*tertium comparationis*" (Eco 2003: 347). Since it is not possible to reproduce the same exact meanings of a source text into a target language, the translator should rely on the fact that every language reminds to a pure language, a *reine Sprache*, in which all the single languages make sense in the same way. However, as the following sections explain, new theorisations (Bassnett 2002; Bassnett and Lefevere 1998; Gentzler 1993) about Translation Studies, and the contribution of Cultural Studies in determining a new focus of Translation Studies on cultural issues, have changed both translators' attitude towards translation practice and scholars' approach to the discipline.

Once established the concept of fidelity[3] to the *reine Sprache* as antiquated, Paul Ricœur retrieves the idea of fidelity in his study of translation as one of the paradigms of human communication and linguistic and cultural interrelationships (2001). He maintains that translation is always possible since it is always possible finding a way to express a concept across languages and cultures. The consequence is that the more distant the linguistic and cultural landscape are, the more manipulated the source text will be, in order to accommodate to an alien scenario. Thus, in the philosopher's opinion, the only kind of fidelity translators can rely on refers to the language capacity to convey a meaning, or a set of meanings. In this perspective, translators have the role to

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[3] For further references on the concept of fidelity see, among others: Walter Benjamin. "The Task of the Translator. An introduction to the translation of Baudelaire's Tableaux Parisiens". Trans. by Harry Zohn. In Lawrence Venuti (ed.) *The Translation Studies Reader*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); John Cunnison Catford. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics*. (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1965); George Steiner. *After Babel: Aspects of language and translation*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975); Jacque Derrida. "Des Tour de Babel". Tran. by Joseph F. Graham. In Joseph F Graham (ed.) *Difference in Translation*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 165 – 207; Amparo Hurtado Albir. *La notion de fidélité en traduction*. (Paris: Didier Erudition, 1990); Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi. *Post-Colonial Translation*. (London: Routledge, 1999). Hans J.Vermeer. "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action". Trans. by Andrew Chesterman. In Lawrence Venuti (ed.) The Translation Studies Reader. (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

guarantee this passage, and in this stands their challenge and their ethics (Ricoeur 2001).

In this perspective, Lawrence Venuti (1986) argues that one of the greatest injustices translators suffer is that to be alienated from their works. In fact, in *The Translator's Invisibility* he mentions readers, editors and publishers' unfair claim that a translation reads as the source text:

> a translation is judged acceptable […] when it reads fluently, when the absence of any awkward phrasings, unidiomatic constructions or confused meaning gives the appearance that the translation reflects the foreign author's personality or intention or the essential meaning of the original text. What is so remarkable here is that both attitudes completely efface the translator's crucial intervention in the text: the more "successful" the translation, the more invisible the translator, and the more visible the author or meaning of the original text (Venuti 1986: 179).

The translator's invisibility, that is the translator's scant recognition as an agent of mediation who bears her/his own social, cultural, political and traditional background and does her/his work according to these frameworks, is strictly related to the desire of publishing, promoting, reading transparent works. Yet, Sara Mills' feminist model of text (1995: 23) has anticipated how much the quest for transparency is an ineffective one, since any text originates from a texture of relations which often are to be found outside the text itself, that is in its contexts of production and reception. Drawing on Mills' work, it seems clear how opacity[4], rather than transparency, is the principal characteristic of a text. In this perspective, the translator works as a mediator between two kinds of opacities: that of the source text, for a foreign readership, and that of the target text. Thus, the role of the translator is not that to convert the opacity of the source text into transparency. The translator's role is recognizing an amount of productivity in the opacity of the source text, interrogating this opacity and reframing it in the hosting linguistic and cultural scenario.

These observations bring into play Maria Tymoczko's definition of translation as refraction (1995: 12). The scholar uses the physics concept of refraction to focus on the idea of multiplicity that translation carries with it. As a wave passing from medium to another can change direction countless times, similarly one source text can be translated into countless target texts, because translation acts are not performed in a vacuum, but are the result of a set of choices translators make according to their social, cultural, political and geographical position, and according to their background of knowledge and experience. The idea of translation as refraction problematizes, once again, the role of context intended here as both the context of production of the target text and that of its reception. In this perspective, translation cannot be considered as an activity which has repercussions just on the linguistic or on the literary sides

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[4] For a deeper insight on the concept of "transparency" and "opacity" refer to *Poétique de la Relation*. Paris: Gallimard, 1990 and to *Traité du Tout-Monde*. Paris: Gallimard, 1997 by the philosopher and writer Édouard Glissant.

but also on the social constructions that are expressed through language and conveyed across cultures thanks to translation practice.

3. (Re)Shaping Translation/(Re)Shaping through translation

Between the 1970s and the 1980s, the rise of Polysystem Theory, the shift from linguistic to descriptive approaches and the application of Polysystem Theory in the field of translation (Even-Zohar 1990; Baker 1998; Venuti 2000) led translation scholars to discuss the role of the receiving culture while dealing with translation as both a process and a product (Marino *forthcoming*).

In this regard, Maria Tymoczko (2010) suggests that the focus had gradually moved from "*how* to translate per se toward larger ethical and political perspectives on the activity of translating" (2010: 5) to the role and the functions of translation products in relation to the power mechanisms of the receiving contexts and to the agency of the translator intended as intercultural mediator. In this light, translation is to be intended as a highly transformative process and as a social practice (Venuti 1986: 185). That because the distance between two or more languages, cultures and social, traditional, economic landscapes is rendered productive through several practices of transformation in which the dialectic relationship between the polysemy of the source context of production and that of the target context of production engenders new meanings. Because this "transformative labor" (Venuti 1986: 187) is shaped by and affects the ways in which individuals and communities perceive themselves and interact with each other, translation is a social practice. It is a form of change and transformation, and for this reason it plays a central role in defining and redefining the cultural and social institutions that shape human life (Venuti 2019).

Yet, since all translations come from interpretative acts, the act of translating entails both ethical responsibilities and political commitment (Ricoeur 2001; Venuti 2019; Tymoczko 2010) that oblige scholars to look at translated texts as both creative and social objects. In this sense, the concepts of 'centrality' and 'marginality' used by Itamar Even-Zohar in *The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem* (1990) and the concepts of 'power' and 'activism' used by Maria Tymoczko in *Translation, Resistance, Activism: An Overview* (2010) offer an insight into the investigation of representation, intended as both a cross-cultural and a cross-linguistic practice. On the one hand, Even-Zohar's concepts encourage "a speculation about the role of (translated) literature in de-centring, or (re)shaping" (Marino *forthcoming*) the aspect of the literary polysystems that host translated works. On the other hand, Maria Tymoczko focuses on the role of ideology and on the social issues/constraints that affect translation process(es) as well as the final products of the translation process(es).

Translators, who create a bidirectional relationship between two or more languages and cultures, enable the circulation of 'foreign voices', yet they are not the only responsible for the image, the weight and the role an author, or even an entire literary genre, acquire in the receiving panorama. There are many other aspects related to the book industry, to market rules, to the role of literary festivals, to the role of education, that could not be addressed in this article but

play a substantial role in determining, affecting or obstructing the transmission of different identities, intended as one of the most evident results of the translation process(es) (Summers 2013; Ponzanesi 2014; Marino 2017). Nevertheless, as André Lefevere (1992) points out, translations are usually the only chance, for readers who cannot read foreign languages, to be confronted with foreign texts/narratives. Lefevere's claim recalls the idea of translation as a social practice found above. Enabling the circulation of foreign texts in their mother-tongues, translators do not 'simply' give voice to foreign authors; they encourage linguistic and (socio-)cultural dynamism. Bassnett and Trivedi's definition of translation as "locational disrupture" (1999: 12) helps probably clarify the statement above: more than an interlingual transfer, translation causes a shift among linguistic, cultural, social and political scenarios. This brings to a (re)negotiation of both the equilibrium of the source and of the target contexts. Both of them are affected by translation, meaning neither of them remains static, immutable (Bassnett 2014; Sontag 2004).

As the following section shows, creating a synergy between Stylistics and Translation Studies means approaching the translation process(es) with an increased awareness of what it means dealing with linguistic constructs which encode cultural, social and political meanings that need to be decoded and reframed in order to be conveyed. Indeed, using Stylistics as an epistemological tool to engage with textual interpretation means approaching translation as a place of struggle where cultural, social and political issues are discussed and re-signified through language reframing.

4. Working Stylistics and Translation Studies together: a case-study

Drawing on the theoretical premises presented in the previous sections, this section is devoted to the presentation of a case-study that aims at offering a much deeper insight on how Stylistics and Translation Studies can be worked together, contributing to the realization of the translation project.

Thanks to selected excerpts taken from Sarah Ladipo Manyika's novel *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun* (Cassava Republic Press, 2016) and from its Italian translation *Storie della mia città* (Frassinelli, 2020) this section is intended to show what role style can play in textual interpretation, intended as the preliminary step to translation process(es). Moreover, a comparative analysis of the extracts of both the source and the target text is intended to demonstrate how the study of style, connected to the study of the social, cultural and political specificities of a text can give translators the instruments to interpret both the linguistic and the non-linguistic aspects of the text they are about to translate.

In Noaki Sakai's words: translation is a process of "social transformation where new power relations are produced" (2009: 87). This means that translation is a liminal practice, it takes place on borders, on margins. Finding themselves in the interstitial spaces between two (or more) linguistic, cultural, political and social landscapes, translators question the concept of borders/margins as they come across differences, gaps, lacunae that need to be

interpreted, discussed, negotiated in order to be reframed into another linguistic and cultural scenario[5].

In some sense, Sarah Ladipo Manyika moves on margins and plays with them in *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun*. Probably because of her diasporic life and travel experiences[6], Sarah Ladipo Manyika has grown accustomed to the idea of margins reshaping identities, that is the reason why she struggles not to be "labelled" according to a nationality. Thus, while she is sometimes defined as Afro-American, Nigerian-born, American, British, African she does not want to be framed, as much as she does not want to be exoticized. In this regard, she claims: "I'm an African writer and a British writer and an American writer and a global writer and a female writer and a black writer and a serious writer and a silly writer and … All this to say that my being African is a salient part of my identity but only one part" (Tapureta 2016). Ladipo Manyika writes out of the Western literary canon and seems to have no interest in being legitimized by it. To a Western gaze she writes from the margins, that is far from the canons of central/Western literatures. Moreover, the plot of *Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun* revolves around the character of Morayo, an old woman of Nigerian origins who lives in San Francisco. Morayo is a retired teacher of literature who wears eccentric dresses and drives a very old car. Portraying the life of an old woman (an immigrant) Sarah Ladipo Manyika offers a counter-narration of femaleness/womanness in American phallocentric society. Writing a *Vollendungsroman/Reifungsroman*[7] (Cavigioli 2005: 138), that is a story about ripeness, maturity, senility, without indulging in piety, the author 're-discusses' the margins of man-centred societies, problematizing the role and the weight aging women have in the (American) society. In order to do so, Ladipo Manyika dedicates several pages to Morayo's body, not just to her physical description, but also to what she 'does' with her body. (For example, Morayo seduces, gives herself pleasure). In these ways, she deconstructs, through the use of irony, clichés and gender stereotypes, as the textual examples show further on in this section.

The considerations above function as a preparatory work, that is they prepare the translator to textual interpretation and allow her/him to read the text suspiciously, that is conscious of the power relationships that may be hidden through language (Simpson 1993; Mills 1995; Verdonk 2002). In other words, the

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[5] In the postcolonial discourse, Homi Bhabha uses the terminology of translation to address postcolonial migration. In that perspective, translation worked as a metaphor for interlingual and intercultural encounter: the contact between the migrant and the hosting communities takes place in a third space, or an in-between place, where meanings are remediated, reshaped and negotiated, originating a hybrid culture/language. Further references about the concept of in-betweenness and cultural translation can be found in Bhabha 1994; Trivedi 2007 and Bassnett 2014.

[6] She was born in Nigeria in 1968, not many years after Nigeria's independence from the British rule (1960) and during the civil wars which broke out after the declaration of independence (Nigerian Civil War or Biafran War, 1967-1970). She was raised in Nigeria but then travelled with her family in Kenya and finally in Britain, where she studied at the University of Birmingham. She kept travelling after the degree, she moved in France and in the US, where she received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. After that, she settled in California where she taught literature at the San Francisco State University.

[7] The term was coined by literary critic Constance Rook (see Cavigioli 2005 for further references) as opposed to *Bildungsroman*. While the term *Bildungsroman* refers to coming-of-age novels/stories, the term *Vollendungsroman* or *Reifungsroman* refers to senility, to late life and its accomplishments/challenges.

context of production of a text is as important as its co-text in textual interpretation since it helps translators interrogate the text properly and thoroughly.

It may be useful remarking, at this point, that the observation and the comments that follow, about the translation choices operated by the Italian translator Annarita Briganti, are not to be intended as critiques to her work. Their main goal is showing how a theoretical apparatus realized intertwining Stylistics and Translation Studies can be used in the practice of translation. In this perspective, it may be important also remembering that translation practices do not originate definitive products. On the contrary, translation products are provisional artifacts, their unicity depends on the translator's interpretation(s), and yet their temporariness depends on the fact that any source text can be subject to continuous re-interpretations. Indeed, translations originate from reading processes and from processes of textual interpretations. Yet, in turn, textual interpretations are affected by the translator's socio-cultural background, by the context in which the text has been produced and by the context in which it is received and interpreted. For this reason, the same text could be translated and repurposed infinite times across time and space, and according to the changing of its interpreter/translator.

The extract that follows is taken from the initial part of the book, in which readers can follow the main character in one of her walks around the city and read and feel what happens to her since the focalization is internal.

Table 1. First textual excerpt and translation.

Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun (pp. 16-17)	Storie della mia città (pp. 22-23)
'You look awesome,' says a stranger, startling me from my thoughts. 'Well, so do you,' I smile, noting the man's carefully manicured lime-green fingernails. I enjoy this sort of attention from San Francisco's gentlemen. It's one of the things that I love about the city. And because of men like this, men not sexually attracted to women, I find this city gentler than most. And what's more, here in San Francisco, both men and women seem to admire my sense of style. Whereas if I were back in London or certain parts of New York, where buba and gele are commonplace, I know that I wouldn't turn heads, not at this age at least. And back in Nigeria, where so many are dressed like me, I wouldn't draw any attention at all.	"Sta benissimo", dice un estraneo, distogliendomi dai miei pensieri. "Anche lei", sorrido, notando la manicure dell'uomo, un verde acido. Mi piace il modo in cui gli uomini di San Francisco curano il loro aspetto. È una delle cose che amo della città. E poiché gli uomini si curano così tanto, uomini non attratti dalle donne, trovo questa città più gentile della maggior parte delle città. Inoltre, qui a San Francisco uomini e donne sembrano apprezzare il mio senso dello stile. Sebbene, se tornassi a Londra o in alcune zone di New York, dove *buba* e *gele* sono all'ordine del giorno, so che non farei girare la testa; non alla mia età, comunque. E, se tornassi in Nigeria, dove la maggior parte delle persone sono vestite come me, non attirerei l'attenzione.

As regards the macro-textual aspects of the extract, here the protagonist de-centres and re-centres the reader's point of view and invites her/him to re-think her/his idea of senility and aging women. With sentences like: "here in San Francisco, both men and women seem to admire my sense of style"; "if I were back in London or certain parts of New York, where buba and gele are commonplace, I know that I wouldn't turn heads, not at this age at least"; "back in Nigeria, where so many are dressed like me, I wouldn't draw any attention at all" the author gives visibility to Morayo's body, describing her aspect but also her eccentricity and *joie de vivre*. Morayo loves admiring gazes despite her age, and she is very honest about it. Giving Morayo's body space and attention, Sarah Ladipo Manyika invites a discussion about the racialized female body and about a female body who is growing old. She counter-narrates senility through the narration of a body that still stands for itself.

Language has to serve the writer's purpose. That is the reason why the source text has a colloquial register and a syntactic structure that reminds of spoken language. The author tries to reproduce the idea of a person who speaks for oneself. Reading this extract, readers are literally into the protagonist's mind and have access to her thoughts in the very moment in which they are produced. For this reason, in the ST many sentences start with the conjunction "and". The frequent full stops are the equivalent of pauses in spoken language, while the conjunction at the beginning of some sentences gives the idea of a thought flow and it also gives a quick rhythm to the text. The Italian translator has not preserved all of the "and" conjunctions the writer put at the beginning of some sentences. From a syntactic point of view, it is quite uncommon in Italian using the conjunction "and" to start a sentence after a full stop. Thus, it is normally avoided, unless it is a specific stylistic choice. In this case, the translator reproduces the syntactic structure of the ST two out of three times (E poiché gli uomini si curano così tanto…; E, se tornassi in Nigeria…), while she decides to render the third case: "And what's more, here in San Francisco…" with "Inoltre [Moreover], qui a San Francisco".

In the first excerpt, two culture-bound terms are also present: buba and gele. They are two Yoruba words that indicate, respectively, a type of blouse and a very specific type of headdress. The writer chooses not to highlight their presence in the ST. Differently, the translator uses italics to signal the presence of untranslated terms in the target text (TT) but the two words are not further explained, neither with a footnote, nor in a glossary at the end of the book. Thanks to the context, Italian readers who are not familiar with Nigerian culture manage to understand buba and gele have something to do with clothes, thus it is not a real obstacle to the comprehension of the text as a whole. Yet, in this case, the translator challenges readers to be active and to search for the words themselves if they want to know more about their meanings. It is also interesting the attitude of the writer in this sense. It may be true that an English-speaking reader could probably be more familiar with words coming from the Yoruba culture because of England colonial history and because of migration phenomena towards the ex-mother-country soon after decolonization. Yet, what is interesting is that not signalling the presence of Yoruba words within the English text the writer is (consciously or not) performing a political act. She is contaminating the

language that was first imposed to Nigerian people (English) with one of the most spoken national languages of the country. In this perspective, Ladipo Manyika is showing that the deconstruction of colonial practice(s) is done also through language.

Speaking about the capacity language has to deconstruct (or reinforce) power mechanisms, clichés and social roles (like gender ones), the following excerpt portrays Morayo during a moment of self-pleasure.

Table 2. Second textual excerpt and translation.

Like a Mule Bringing Ice Cream to the Sun (p. 24)	Storie della mia città (pp. 33-34)
Standing by the sink in *tadasana*, I gaze across the city, I think of Mrs Manstey in her solitary New York apartment. And then as a neighbour's washing machine thumps to the end of a spin cycle, I hear the noise again; only this time the sound is unmistakable. I'm surprised at first, not in the noticing of it but in the wave of desire that grips my body as I put down my green Harrods mug and step quietly out of the kitchen into the living room. The whimpering has grown louder, as does the quickening thud that gives rhythm to the couple's lovemaking in the apartment next door. I make my way to the couch where I lie on the futon, smiling as I sweep around my mind for a suitable person with whom to enjoy this unexpected surge of feeling. It's Dawud that joins me first, smelling of falafel and lilac as we lie together, legs intertwined. I kick a cushion out of the way and then it's the neighbour that takes Dawud's place, his calloused hands gently cupping my breasts as he massages my nipples. But soon, inevitably, it's Antonio whose fingers slip between my thighs, his breath tickling my neck. I close my eyes now as I whisper his name and then, letting go, I abandon him for the warmth that my touch has kindled.	Stando al lavello nella posizione tadasana, faccio vagare lo sguardo sulla città. Penso alla signora Manstey nel suo solitario appartamento di New York. Poi la lavatrice del vicino fa un rumore sordo alla fine di un ciclo di lavaggio. Sento un altro rumore: solo che stavolta è inconfondibile. Sono sorpresa, non per il fatto di notarlo, ma dall'ondata di desiderio che invade il mio corpo quando metto giù la tazza di Harrods verde e mi sposto lentamente in soggiorno. I gemiti sono diventati più alti, così come il rumore crescente che dà il ritmo alla coppia di amanti nell'appartamento vicino. Mi siedo sul divano, mi stendo sul futon, sorridendo mentre penso con chi potrei condividere questo inaspettato aumento del mio desiderio. Dawud mi viene in mente per primo, odore di falafel e lillà mentre siamo stesi insieme, le nostre gambe sovrapposte. Sposto un cuscino con un calcio e il vicino prende il posto di Dawud, le sue mani callose che stringono il mio seno mentre mi massaggia, dolcemente, i capezzoli. Ma presto, inevitabilmente, sono le dita di Antonio che scivolano tra le mie cosce, il suo respiro che mi fa il solletico sul collo. Chiudo gli occhi mentre sussurro il suo nome, poi, lasciandolo andare, lo abbandono per il calore provocato dal mio stesso tocco.

If narrating senility and aging female bodies may mean narrating women's experiences 'by subtraction' (an aging (female) body loses beauty, health, sexual appetite, etc…) (Cavigioli 2005; Melon et al. 2012; Ricaldone 2017), Sarah Ladipo Manyika continues to pursue the objective of shifting the narration of senility from

the margins to the centre. She tries to deconstruct the (Western?) canonic idea of an old woman showing how much life can an aging body emanate. At the same time, she challenges the taboo of senile sexuality, using a very 'imaginative' language. Readers are able to visualize the scene, because, in this case, sentences are longer than the ones in the previous example, and because of the use of numerous progressive verbs (noticing, whimpering, quickening, lovemaking, smelling, cupping, tickling, letting go). On the one hand, longer sentences enable the writer to indulge on details. On the other hand, progressive verbs contribute to create a rhythm that reproduces the atmosphere of the self-pleasuring. Indeed, the way in which the verbs are arranged throughout the text (the rhythm is ascending from "noticing" to "tickling" and then descending from "tickling" to "letting go") tries to reproduce the intensity of the sexual act onto the page.

In Italian the text loses a great part of its rhythm because the translator has to adapt the English syntax to the syntactic structure of a Romanic language. It is not possible for the Italian translator to maintain the progressive verbs, so she opts either for transforming them into nouns (gemiti; rumore crescente; amanti; odore) or for finding verbs or verbal phrases that reproduce the same effect (stringono, mi fa il solletico, lasciandolo andare). Last, it is worth noticing how the Italian translator chose to retain the borrowing *tadasana* (Sanskrit for 'Mountain Pose', a basic pose in Yoga) without signalling its presence with italics (as for *buba* and *gele* in Table 1). One of the most immediate consequences of this choice is the reception of the two Yoruba words as 'exotic elements', in Italian. On the contrary, the same stress is not given to the Yoga position. The word futon, instead, is used in both the source and the target language as part of the lexicon.

Even though two examples are not sufficient to show to what extent a cooperation between Stylistics and Translation Studies can both facilitate the translation practice and bring to the realization of a more accurate translation product, they have nonetheless offered an insight on how a solid theoretical background knowledge can help a literary translator in the translation practice.

5. Closing remarks

The article has provided a general overview on the role of style in textual analysis, then it has presented what kind of interconnections can be created between Stylistics and Translation Studies and how these interconnections can help translators in the translation practice and in the preliminary work of textual interpretation. Focusing on the translator's agency, intended as an interlinguistic and intercultural mediator, the article has mentioned the role of translators in unveiling and re-purposing the power mechanisms encoded through language. Finally, a case study has shown how a theoretical apparatus, born intertwining the two methodological frameworks of Stylistics and Translation Studies, can be used to approach the translation practice.

Even though literary translation is not considered a specialised kind of translation, the article has highlighted the importance, for a translator, to acquire the right competences to interrogate a source text before trying to re-frame it into another language and social, political and cultural panorama (Federici and Marino 2018). A literary translator needs to be conscious of the fact that the translator her/himself is not a neutral medium/intermediary, but her/his own

interpretations are mediated by their own ideology and point of view (Simpson 1993) and affect her/his work. Stylistics gives translators useful instruments to think about themselves as lenses through which source texts are refracted into target contexts: even though the source image can never be identical to the target one, they are mutually connected.

If studies on Stylistics applied to Translation Studies are relatively recent and scant (Boase-Beier 2006; 2011), delving deeper into this field could be an occasion to improve both Critical Translation Studies and the practice of translation, bridging the gap between theory and practice. Furthermore, developing linguistic models to interrogate ideology and point of view in literary texts (and in literary texts in translation) could also be a way to improve the teaching of translation, combining the accuracy of the linguistic method with the idea of translation as a handicraft activity.

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