

# Oral Sources in Translation: 19<sup>th</sup>-Century and Contemporary Perspectives on Translating Orality

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## ABSTRACT

Two widely used reference points in Translation Studies are the notions of source and target, indicating a point of departure and a point of arrival in the translating process. The present thesis takes the notion of source as a starting point and observes what happens when one introduces a variation in the early stages of the process. Specifically, it argues that by modifying the *perception* of the source, i.e. the way one sees and considers the source, the resulting translation changes as well.

The framework chosen to verify this hypothesis is the translation of orality into different media, i.e. paper, magnetic, electronic or digital media. Translation is here not merely intended as the act of transferring material from one language into another, but has been expanded to include the intralingual passage from oral to a different form. The source, intended as oral source (narrators), is examined from two different perspectives. The former, located in 19<sup>th</sup> century England and Italy, identifies it in a collective entity (the “folk”). The latter, drawing inspiration from performance-oriented approaches to orality, focuses on individuals and their personal performances. Taking into account linguistic, historical, political, social and economic factors, the thesis argues that these two perspectives have affected the translations of oral material, giving space alternatively to the voice of a collectivity or that of an individual. Translating orality thus emerges as a process influenced by the attitude of translators, whose “perceptions” underscore their decision-making role.

**KEYWORDS:** collectivity – individuality, folklore – performance-oriented approaches, intralingual translation, orality.

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