

A Literary Translation in the Making: An In-depth Investigation into the Process of a Literary Translation from French into Maltese

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ABSTRACT

Literary translation is a growing industry with thousands of texts being published every year. Yet, the work of literary translators still lacks visibility and the process behind the emergence of literary translations remains largely unexplored. In translation studies, literary translation was mostly examined from a product perspective and most process studies involved short non-literary texts.

In view of this, the present study aims to contribute to translation studies by investigating in-depth how a literary translation comes into being, and how an experienced translator, Toni Aquilina, approached the task. It is particularly concerned with the decisions the translator makes during the process, the factors influencing these, and their impact on the final translation. This project places the translator under the spotlight, centring upon his work and the processes leading to it, while at the same time exploring a scantily researched language pair: French to Maltese. It aims to provide further insights into the different phases of the translation process, as well as written alternative translation solutions and self-revisions.

A translation process research framework (e.g. Jakobsen 2002; Englund Dimitrova 2005; Risku 2014) is thus adopted, and particular attention is given to the post-drafting phases of the process as the translator was closely studied while he self-revised an entire literary text. The research applies a multi-method approach by collecting data through think-aloud, ethnographic observations, interviews, draft versions, the ST and the final translation. The data elicited were triangulated and analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. A rich description of the evolution of a literary translation from first draft to publication is subsequently provided. The results show that the translation went through eight phases and nine drafts before it was published, indicating that the translation process may not necessarily be composed of three phases. Amongst other notable findings, results also challenge the deliteralisation hypothesis (Chesterman 2011). The thesis concludes by underscoring the significance of thorough investigations into individual translator behaviour.

KEYWORDS: alternative translation solutions, literary translation, phases of the translation process, self-revision, translation process research, translatorial decisions and choices

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