"At Trieste, in 1872, in a palace with damp statues and deficient hygienic facilities..." : translation and the construction of identities in a context of language plurality and cultural diversity

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Introduction

1   "At Trieste, in 1872, in a palace with damp statues and deficient hygienic facilities" : this is the opening scene in which Jorge Luis Borges sets his essays dedicated to the translators of the *Thousand and One Nights*. The city of Trieste, in 1872, here appears to be nothing more than a chance reference, a neutral setting where translation takes place. Yet the city was proverbially a context of language plurality and cultural diversity, with an array of translation activities, agents, products.

2   In this article I wish to take up Borges's *en passant* mention and follow it through by placing the role and function of translation within this context, with the complex plethora of its manifestations. Not by chance, Sherry Simon has recently highlighted the role of urban spaces in a possible redefinition of translation practices and history, referring specifically to the case of Trieste. Translation will be considered here not merely in its textual aspects but mainly as a performative act and a culturally charged action (in the terms proposed by Tymoczko 295-296), as a spectrum through which agencies and agents, identity and otherness, representations and constructions are conveyed.

3   I will take into account a time period ranging from the 1840s, when the first reflections on the plural identity of the town started to be elaborated, to the 1920s, when after the fall of the Habsburg Empire (1918), the Fascist regime consolidated its power and violently imposed a nationalist purification in view of a process of Italinianization. Since the intertwining of diverse languages, cultures and dynamic identities can be represented and read in a variety of ways and can acquire very different implications and consequences, my assumption is that in the complex construction of this context, in terms of a multilingual setting and of a diversely asserted plurality where the boundaries between identity and otherness are in a constant process of definition, translation can act as a tool for constructing the identity of what is inside and what is outside a given definition. In this light, I will address the question of how the introduction of translation can challenge traditional paradigms of representation of cultural and literary contextual identities. I will try, in other words, to test the hypothesis that, given the variety of languages and cultures to translate from and into, where the definition of binary oppositions between source and target languages are linked to ever shifting definitions of cultural and political borders, the function attributed to translation, always coexisting with non translation, is to trace boundaries (as proposed by Pym 105), establish otherwise vague and ambiguous limits, yet, at the same time, perform the contradictions that underlie the identities constructed in such a context.

4   Furthermore, the problem of strictly identifying and equating culture with a definite location and space will be addressed through the consideration of discourses and doxas of translation, constructed in relation to the plurality of languages in question which calls for a re-articulation of the context itself. The case of Trieste is paradigmatic in this regard, as nowadays an idealization of what looks like a cultural “microcosm” (Magris *Microcosmi*) is often taken for granted, a hybrid individuality which is considered as highly representative of wider hybrid contexts. However plural and multiple this context can be conceived, it is seen as a circumscribed and isolated whole, rooted in a place and somehow self-sufficient. To this effect, I will discuss whether translation can be taken, in this sense, as a challenge to fixed, unquestioned definitions of contexts and as an interrogation of relations that imply agencies, effectiveness and modalities of articulation (Grossberg) as a way to avoid models of interpretation framed within a strict localism.

5   A further preliminary remark: considering these questions means first of all trying to bring to light neglected instances and individual or collective experiences and agencies which have somehow been forgotten in traditional historical reconstructions, or contextualized differently. Different traditions of study of the context of Trieste have showed a general lack of interest in the problems of translation: indeed, to my knowledge, there is no research specifically investigating the panorama of translation, or better yet of the articulation of translation and non-translation, in this environment of multilingualism and plurality. This is of course not without consequence from a historical perspective and has its contingent reasons: it implies that sources and archives regarding translation have a problematic status and evidence is always to be reconstructed in an indirect way. Records can and have to be found elsewhere than traditional reconstructions and archives. Or, the same source or document can and have to be read with different purposes. However, no attempt at historical research can afford to lose sight of the fact that records, sources, evidence clearly represent only fragments of a context of the past whose reconstruction can never aspire to grasp totality but only be a negotiation between the limitations of documentary evidence, the role of cultural

representations and the researcher's subjectivity (in the sense that I have tried to point out in Adamo "Microhistory…").

6   It is on the grounds of these considerations that I will now try to give, first of all, an overview of the way the context of Trieste has been constructed and represented, and of the different perspectives (not only linguistic, but also ethnic, political or religious, for instance) through which its particular plurality has been articulated.

1.

7   On the extreme North-Eastern border of the Italian peninsula, on the Adriatic sea, the city of Trieste was for almost two centuries the most important port of the multinational Habsburg Empire, a kind of "common town for all the peoples of the Austrian monarchy" (Ara and Magris 43). But not only : already at the end of the 18th century, Ian Potocki, visiting the town, was struck by the fact that in Trieste out of 31,000 inhabitants, 2,000 were German, 3,000 Italian, 5,000 Greek, 2,000 Dalmatian, 1,000 Jewish, and the rest were "Triestini" or people from the surrounding area, to which almost 2,000 "foreigners" could be added, among them Turks and Albanians (Adamo *Ritratti*: 35-36). This can be traced back to the 1719 declaration of the status of the city as a free port which had attracted a range of people from different places and backgrounds who lived side by side maintaining their traditions, religions, habits or costumes. The perception of a particular identity of this urban setting started to be stated by some intellectuals of Trieste when, at the beginning of the 19th century, the consolidation of financial and economic activities somehow triggered the idea of a self-sufficient national identity in view of a possible economic and political autonomy (Negrelli 1343-1348). In the years indicated by Borges, the city started witnessing not only a significant increase in its economic and commercial development but also the rise of a series of highly heterogeneous intellectual experiences and productions. They lived on the many contributions coming from diverse and dynamic cultural identities and took literary communication as the central means for the elaboration of such a problematic identity. Here names such as Italo Svevo, James Joyce, Umberto Saba or Scipio Slataper, still reflect the significance of this cultural context produced between the 1840s and the 1920s. Naturally, during this long period of time, the situation was very complex, variegated and mobile, and changing constantly. Yet it can generally be affirmed that indeed an Italian cultural identity cohabited with Germanic culture and with that of the bordering Slav world, Slovenia, in particular, but also Croatia and Serbia, for example. Moreover, the city was also home to Greek, Armenian, Turkish, Albanian, Hungarian and Jewish communities and cultures. Not to mention the many French, Spanish, and British citizens who happened to be living in the area, such as, among the most famous, Stendhal, Joyce or Richard Burton, the British consul, captain and translator, author of works collected in 72 volumes, "who dreamed in seventeen languages and claimed to have mastered thirty-five" (98), to whom Borges's essays refer.

8   To each of the different cultures corresponded one or, more often, several languages that coexisted with the Triestino dialect, a kind of *lingua franca* of the Adriatic sea, a pragmatic language grounded on the needs of commercial and financial relations, only later converted into a fully recognized literary language. German, Italian and Slovene were the languages of the three main national groups. German was not, in fact, the only institutionally dominating language, the language of power officially imposed on the others, but occupied a secondary space as the language of an isolated elite minority. It

was flanked, in administrative and political uses, by Italian, which went on to acquire a position of hegemony and aspired to the role of a unifying cultural identity. On the contrary, Slovene remained confined to the national group, often ostracized and silenced outside the Slovene community. When, after 1850, the city acquired an administrative status of autonomy, which recognized its specificity as a large urban centre and a free port, the government of the town officially sanctioned that the language of public education had to be Italian. However, a significant part of the administration, the loyalist party, pledging allegiance to and dependence on the Habsburg monarchy, explicitly stated that for practical and pragmatic reasons (the town's geographical position and the activities of the port), German and even Slovene had to remain important and unavoidable (as the *Verbali del consiglio della città di Trieste* from 1861 and 1862 report— see Millo 186).

9   Nevertheless, beyond administrative dispositions, the liveliness of this pluringual environment is evidenced by the coexistence of different journals, newspapers, cultural associations, theatres, and even schools in different languages. There were periodical publications in German, from the first journal ever published in Trieste, *Triester Weltkorrespondent*, which started its publications in 1781, to the typical bourgeois monthly publication *Illustrirtes Familenbuch des österreichischen Lloyd*, founded in 1850, or the government organ *Adria*, for example. The first Slovene journals and newspapers, such as *Slavjanski rodoljub*, *Ilirski Primorjan*, *Tržaški ljudomil*, to name a few, started appearing in 1849. Then, in opposition to the Italian Nationalist League (Lega nazionale italiana), the association *Edinost'* was set up alongside a newspaper of the same name which became the only Slovene newspaper in Trieste between 1898 and 1928. The *Osservatore triestino*, the first official Italian periodical, was founded in 1784 and was later followed by journals such as *La favilla* (1836-1846), to which I will return later, or by more or less nationalist newspapers such as *L'indipendente* (starting in 1877) or *Il Piccolo* (starting in 1881). The Jewish community, which constituted a particular transversal body where different identities were articulated, also had its own newspaper, in Italian, called *Corriere Israelitico*, starting in 1862. As did the Greek and the Serbian community with, respectively, *Nea Emera* and *Naša Sloga*.

10   In 1848 the Slavjansko bralno društvo (Slovene reading society) was founded, and in 1861 the first ever Slovene reading room (čitalnica) was inaugurated in Trieste. A few years later, in 1888, the first school with Slovene as the teaching language was opened, followed by a drama society (Dramatično društvo v Trstu) and a Slovene cultural centre. The German school (elementary and secondary) was founded in 1775, and it was soon flanked by many cultural associations, such as a very popular musical society, the Schillerverein, and an intense theatrical activity. At the same time, there was a vast array of highly active Italian cultural associations, ranging from reading societies, libraries, museums, theatrical activities to politically inclined initiatives supporting the development of Italian educational institutions in Trieste and in the surrounding areas (on this, see Guagnini 958-979).

11   Although multilingualism was the founding cultural token of this world, reflecting diverse influences and connotations, the context rather resembled an arena where complex dynamics of identity construction took place through the emergence of tensions, contradictions, more or less open confrontations and conflicts, especially with the consolidation of Italian nationalist vindications, after 1848 (Ara and Magris 43-45). This has been described by Ara and Magris in the following terms :

> Together with a mutual routine exchange and a daily contact, the different groups lived also in mutual and distrustful ignorance : the Italian ignored the Slovene as long as the latter did not Italianize him/herself by moving from the condition of rural worker to bourgeois, and the Slovene did not enter Italian cultural environments ; Germans, who were not assimilated to Italians, had, for social reasons, many more occasions of getting in contact with the latter, but constituted a circumscribed and closed cultural corpus (16, my translation).

12 Language plurality and cultural diversity were often presented as a deficiency to be overcome through unification under a single identity, particularly by the Italian side. The complete Italianization of the city was undertaken by the Fascist regime. Whereas the German cultural setting gradually faded away and disappeared almost naturally, leaving only what has been called a mythical remembrance in the historiography of the city, Slovene culture was violently silenced.

13 Therefore, the context can by no means be described as a harmonious set of differences peacefully living together and melting into one another, as has often been postulated in what has today become a kind of cultural mythology of the town, still very much present and often acritically reproduced (Negrelli ; Magris "Un mito al quadrato"). While the picture painted by many travellers visiting the town at the end of the 18th century was that of an idealization of cosmopolitism and tolerance (especially religious) based on trading as a form of contact and exchange between human beings (Adamo *Ritratti*), during the first half of the 19th century, a conflict gradually arose between the idea of an autonomous local body based on the coexistence of various nationalities, and the vindication of ethnic and linguistic particularities in opposition to one another (Negrelli 1348-1349).

14 Indeed, a whole tradition of historical reconstructions of the cultural context of Trieste has focused, from different perspectives, on issues of hybridity, heteroglossia, language plurality, multiculturalism, interculturality, making it a kind of exemplary playground for the discussion of these problems, yet, significantly, neglecting translation. The mainstream cultural historiography of the city, along with its acritical reproductions and political recycling, has mainly focused on defining a highly idealized multicultural setting where different threads (more or less) harmoniously intertwined or even blended together, without trying to fully bring to the fore the role of conflict, heterogeneity and confrontation. Even when these aspects have been highlighted, a mono-national perspective has traditionally been adopted, trying to grasp the situation of the conflicts of cultures yet at the same time reporting it to the vantage point of observation of a single national perspective (see de Lugnani, Košuta *Scritture parallele* and "La letteratura...", Guagnini, for instance).

15 The one aspect that has been traditionally overlooked is the function of translation in the definition of a problematic identity and how it contributed to the construction of different positions towards the challenges posed by the many contradictions of this heterogeneity.

16 Thus, to give a first answer to the initial questions, instead of seeing the context as a mere scene of either confrontation or harmonization of fixed positions and identities, projecting translation against this background, considering its role and its function in such a context, can be the tool for highlighting not only the way dynamic constructions of identity and intercultural intertwining take place, but also how the context is articulated and rearticulated to this regard. It would probably be redundant, after

deconstruction, to recall the observation that binary oppositions such as identity/ otherness, sameness/diversity, original/translation but also multilingualism/ monolingualism, and even source/target, are culturally constructed issues, organizing hierarchies of power relations and can never be taken for granted. Yet the variety of ways in which these binary oppositions are organized and represented remains a highly fraught object of investigation. If the focus of interest is on the cultural dynamics and processes that construct and reconstruct identities, translation is a revelatory tool of investigation which cannot be overlooked by simply avoiding the consideration of its presence and function.

17   It is particularly in Postcolonial Studies, usually referring to multilingual settings, that it has been pointed out how in those contexts, "translation becomes a significant site for raising questions of representation, power, historicity" since the scene is that of "contesting and contested stories attempting to account for, to recount, the asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages" (Niranjana 1). It is certainly tempting to try to apply this model to the context I am considering. Yet notwithstanding recent enthusiastic adoptions of the postcolonial paradigm for the study of the cultures of the Habsburg Empire (see Ruthner, for example, who has seen it as a way of intervening against appropriations of the idea of Central Europe as an essentialized space of harmonic multiculturalism in view of a glorification of nostalgia for the Habsburg past), the case still resists any generalization of this kind. It is not, in fact, a matter of engaging with attempts to account for and recount given asymmetries and inequalities, as in the paradigm of Postcolonial Studies, but a differently complex question of articulating ongoing constructions and performances of identity beyond fixed hierarchies and clear patterns of power and domination (on this point see, for instance, Reisenleitner).

18   The consideration of translation will now allow me to clarify this point.

2.

19   Indeed, in the context I have tried to delineate, not only are there no prefixed or overtly explicit hierarchies of power, but also there are no source and target cultures that can *a priori* be recognized as such. It is in fact the recourse to translation that establishes the terms of the source/target dichotomy and invents the tradition to which every identity refers. Translation, in the context of the plural culture of Trieste, becomes the means through which different identities are put in relation with one another in order to establish definitions, to trace boundaries, to fix the positions from where one speaks. What is translated becomes part of the invention of a specific tradition. The starting points are ambivalent and plural, yet the result of translation tends to be a monolingual outcome that has chosen to incorporate, but hide, multifarious, plurilingual and heteroglossic elements.

20   I will single out a few fragments of a certainly much larger whole, nevertheless aware of the arbitrariness of a choice which focuses on complex experiences of translation involving different agents and different constructions of the context, with a particular reference to the literary dimension.

21   Literature acquired a central role as a dominating discourse in the processes of identity construction in this context. This point has been often made in relation to Trieste. Ara and Magris expressed it as follows:

> Everyone lived not in nature or in reality but in the idea of him/herself, in literature, which thus acquired a founding existential value. Italian identity, both the idea of itself and the struggle for this idea, became a culture. Germans looked for a German cultural unity in their reading circles and in the meetings of their musical associations. Slovenes, just coming out of centuries of obscurity of nations without history and out of a rural world (who had grown up in a position of subordination to the dominant Germans and were not always aware of their own identity, lived but not explicitly expressed) found in their emerging literature the discovery, the formation and the defense of their national image. Members of other groups, who were minorities both in number and from a political point of view, lived even more sharply the binomial closeness/distance, diversity/integration" (17).

22   The rhetorical emphasis of this description can of course be discussed, challenged and criticized, in particular with regard to certain assumptions of an essence of national identities (as regards the Slovenes, for example). Yet it gives an idea both of the shaping force of literary expressions and of the persisting paradigms through which the environment has been perceived and represented (for an analysis of these issues see Pizzi). And they range from the proposal of a specificity of a whole generation of writers who, according to the critic Pietro Pancrazi, shared the same "family air", to the rejection of the image of the melting pot in favor of that of the resonance box (Bazlen). These images try to account for a panorama of intense literary activity where for the many writers in Italian, German, Slovene and other languages, it was impossible not to live their writing experience as a choice in terms of identity, linguistic options and self-representation.

23   Yet, if these experiences have stimulated attempts to identify common grounds and unifying all-inclusive labels, translation has remained out of the picture.

24   It is true that the presence of translation in the culture of Trieste was, to a large extent, a matter of individual initiative. I mentioned Burton at the beginning of this article : his experience translating *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* is typical evidence of how the idealized multiculturalism or harmonious melting pot was actually a juxtaposition of different positions and perspectives, that tended to remain isolated and self-sufficient. Burton carried out his foreignizing, exoticizing and ethnocentric translation (Shamma) in the isolation of his "palace with damp statues" addressing specifically British culture and establishing a dialogue with his predecessors. This isolation and exclusive reference to an external cultural context was also the case of a number of German intellectuals who lived in Trieste for a certain time, such as Robert Hamerling (1830-1889), for example, who translated from the Italian more or less contemporary authors such as the regional novelist Domenico Ciampoli (*Sylvanus*), or Leopardi (*Leopardi's Gedichte*), or Carducci, De Amicis, Stecchetti, Farina (in an anthology called *Esperysche Früchte*). On the one hand, these works seem to fit into the pattern of exoticization of the Italian other described by Michaela Wolf for the translations from Italian in the Habsburg monarchy ; on the other, it is interesting to note that in the last two cases the selection work carried out by Hamerling resulted in him being attributed the status of author of the publications recognizing the importance of his mediation and the process of appropriation. A different kind of mediation and appropriation was that

carried out within the frame of Slovene culture, where we can find single translations from German into Slovene (the poet and journalist Fran Cegnar (1826-1892) translated Schiller, for example – Košuta "La letteratura…" 1189) or from Slovene into Italian (with translations of the Slovene classic Ivan Cankar by intellectuals such as Ivan Regent (1884-1967) who published the highly Italianized *Il servo Bortolo e il suo diritto*).

25   At the same time, it is significant that translation activity in Trieste, from the 1840s to the 1920s, did not have any particular connection with organized publishing projects and enterprises. The only important publishing house that was active in Trieste in the 19th century was the Tipografia del Lloyd austriaco, the artistic and literary section of the insurance and navigation society which saw in its cultural activity a prestigious, but also economically fruitful, sideline. It is true that this publishing house, maybe one of the biggest and most active publishing houses in the whole of Central Europe in the mid 19th century (Quazzolo), issued journals not in only in German and in Italian, but also in Slovene, Greek, French and Hebrew, for example. Yet, to this pluringuistic specialization corresponded no interest in translation. The most important series, published between 1856 and 1859, called "Biblioteca classica italiana" included a canon of the Italian literary tradition with a strictly monolingual connotation. Therefore, different national traditions found room in the activity of the Tipografia, but the idea of their possible intertwining, through translation, was completely neglected.

26   In light of these observations, one first impulse would be to take note of a fundamental absence of translation or of the occasionality of its manifestations. At first sight the multilingual context would seem to not require translations: as if everyone understood each other, everyone could read texts in every other language and a dialogue could always be established transparently. Yet focusing on translation does not mean losing sight of the fact that it always coexists with non-translation. In fact, the presence of translation is evidence of the complexity of the context and the interrelations it implied, it calls for a paradigm of investigation able to come to terms with the existence of networks of intercultural agents and heterogeneous intellectual experiences where translation was a key moment. These networks can be seen as separated, isolated bodies within a larger panorama where translation was perceived as superfluous. Yet they can also be projected against the background of shared common concerns about identity construction in terms of a multicultural and multilingual belonging constantly referring to something which is outside the context. In other words: translation experiences carried out in relation to the context of Trieste served the function of constructing and performing the identity of those who were involved in them, who aspired to define their cultural belonging as an ever-shifting intertwining of plurality on the one hand and univocal definitions on the other. In the investigation of this articulation, the local context of the city reveals itself a constant reference which, at the same time, always needs to be overcome, the starting point from where diverse processes of identity construction are activated but by no means a univocal and self-sufficient point of arrival.

27   Before discussing these issues, here are the experiences I propose to focus on:

28   i. A first significant translational activity took place in relation to an Italian journal, *La favilla*, in the years 1836-1846, at the time when the most important economic and financial enterprises (such as the Lloyd austriaco) were starting to be set up. In many ways, *La favilla* is merely a seminal experience with regard to translation in this context, with its own particularities. Yet I'd like to take it as our starting place, because here it is easy to see how translation functioned as a means for giving shape to a process of identity

construction that selected its references and invented its tradition. The experience of the journal *La favilla* was clearly aimed at establishing a distinctive Italian cultural tradition for the emerging middle classes of Trieste which, nevertheless, was not to be confused with an Italian identity *tout court* but maintained a specific individuality. As the historian Elio Apih has written, the journal represented well the processes through which the economic liberalism and cosmopolitism which characterized the context of Trieste until that moment were transformed into political liberalism and aspiration to a national democratic, but autonomous, body. The main editors and translators of *La favilla* were Italian intellectuals, such as Francesco Dall'Ongaro (1808-1873) and Pacifico Valussi (1813-1893), who had emigrated to Trieste from Istria or other surrounding areas after having studied at Italian universities, and had decided to settle in the port city as a starting point for elaborating an alternative cultural politics that suited the sense of displacement on which their experiences were based. The body they tried to construct was grounded on the one hand on the construction of "origins" of a particular national Italian identity bordering the Slav world, with deep connotations of Romantic primitivism, and on the other on a constant dialogue with contemporary European culture. The past represented by the ancestral culture of the Slav peoples and the present of Western European literatures constituted the two axes on which a discussion of the identity of the context of Trieste was constantly pursued. Indeed, the translations that appeared in various forms in *La Favilla* can be divided into two categories: instances of French, English and German literature, such as poems, short stories, various kinds of reports, on the one hand; a whole corpus of so called Southern Slav popular anonymous poetry, of which samples of translations were offered, on the other (for the summaries of the journal see Carrer). The names of the writers here translated represent a typical canon of Romantic European literature: Hugo was repeatedly translated, as was Byron, but there were also instances of translation from Lamartine, Schiller, and other late 18th century authors, who had some influence on the Romantic movement, such as Herder and Wieland. In 1845, together with an increased interest in social issues and a new attention to realist writing, the journal published one of the first translations of Dickens into Italian, *La scampanata del Capodanno*. The translations of Slav popular poetry were undoubtedly less frequent, usually from anonymous traditions, but were flanked by a number of articles and essays that introduced them to the Triestine audience, delineating a sort of cultural context where the Slav tradition, in its Mediterranean concretizations, could become part of the dominant Italian identity setting. These translations explicitly appropriated what was seen as an ancestral primitive tradition of popular pre-artistic expression in order to reuse it in the construction of a modern national identity. The Slav peoples had to be discovered, and this could and had to be made from the vantage point of Trieste, the "Italian town surrounded by populations of Slav ethnic origin", as it was described in *La favilla* ("Agli associati..."). This presence was a necessary element from the perspective of a cultural context whose identity and belonging was never a finished result, a never-ending search that had to negotiate national paradigms and local peculiarities. The articulation of this process of negotiation can be better seen in the declarations of the chief editors of *La Favilla*. One of them, for example, Pacifico Valussi, emphasised the role of contemporary European literatures in this regard, writing in 1843 that "the task of every literature, while aiming at making itself perfect in relation to the language, traditions, character and needs of those to whom it speaks, is that of establishing a harmonious relation with foreign literatures, in order to give them and to receive from them sustenance [...]". Another, Francesco Dall'Ongaro, writing in December

1846, in the last issue of the journal, explicitly recognised that the aim of making Trieste a wholly Italian town, with Italian cultural institutions and with a fully Italianized scholastic system, had been achieved. The role played by translation was by no means minor in all this, since it was precisely through translation that the questions of the articulation of identity and difference and the construction of a variegated set of cultural references were delineated and approached. After all, Dall'Ongaro and Valussi themselves were immigrants trying to define their positions in an environment to which they wanted to give shape. After *La favilla* ceased publishing, they left Trieste and continued their intellectual experiences elsewhere in the Italian peninsula. The context of the city was not the only frame of reference of their activity, it simply remained the dimension where experiments with identity and otherness could be intensely carried out.

29 ii. I'd like to highlight a further significant set of translation experiences that took place in Trieste during the 19th century, bearing witness even more sharply to the importance of drawing attention to sets of references larger than the city and, at the same time, revealing the complexity of the articulation between identity and otherness.

30 An entire group of women, with diverse and sometimes even divergent intellectual experiences, nevertheless showed a common interest in translation, hailing from similar social backgrounds (well-off educated middle class, often Jews) and with a similar education with languages as a central subject of study. Only in the last decade has research shed light on the intense literary activity carried out by women in a context of a highly studied canonical Triestine literature where only men's voices seem to have the right to speak in literary history (Curci and Ziani). Nevertheless the place occupied by translation in the experience of these women has yet to be investigated. The most interesting aspect is the way translation helped create a kind of community, a set of interrelations as a common ground for sharing the particularity of their intellectual and personal experiences in the context of plurality in which they lived and worked, or to which they referred. Translation could even be seen as the means to establish or confirm these relationships and the legitimacy of women's intellectual activity always shifting between the private sphere and public, official recognition. It was in this intermediate dimension that women's identity as intellectuals had to be constructed. An exemplary case is that of Emma Conti Luzzato (1850-1918), an author of short stories whose main theme is death, often suicide, and who translated Heine and Paul Heyse into Italian. Both translations were published in Trieste. Yet the first, *Il mare del Nord*, prepared for the wedding of two friends, had Luzzato's name on the cover and presented a long introduction in which the translator herself dedicated her work as an homage to the bride with a very personal tone and explained her choices and motivations; whereas the second, of Heyse, addressed to a larger public, was presented under a pseudonym, Doris, and described as an "authorized version" in order to establish the neutral correctness of the translation and the translator, also through the adoption of an overtly purist Italian language, the Italianization of names or the choice of a highly refined vocabulary.

31 This was the double pattern through which these women constructed and performed their identities: as public intellectuals following the standards of cultural habits, on the one hand, as women who defined themselves in relation to other women, on the other. There were translators who worked for the most important Italian publishing houses, such as the writer Willy Dias (1872-1956), who translated Werfel, or Luisa Gervasio (1865-1936), who, under the male pseudonym of Luigi di San Giusto translated into Italian Goethe, Mommsen, Arthur Pfungst, Arthur Schmid and the *Nibelungenlied* from German,

and published a number of rewritings from Spanish (*Don Quixote*), French (*Paul et Virginie*) and English (*Uncle Tom's Cabin* and some works by James Fenimore Cooper). Yet there were also translators whose works remained unpublished, such as Clelia Gioseffi Trampus, who translated German writers such as Lenau, Chamisso, Platen and the very popular Heine (Curci and Ziani 206). As in the case of Emma Luzzato, translation in general was explicitly seen as a means for establishing relationships and affinities that defined these women's identities. For instance, Carolina Luzzato (1837-1919), a nationalist Italian patriot, chief editor of a number of newspapers in that political area, took on the translation of an Austrian writer, Maria Schmitzhausen de Egger, adopting in her turn the pseudonym Paul Maria Lacroma, in order to establish a link between two women intellectuals that went beyond political belonging. Or, to give another example, Estella Wondrich's (1883-1907) decision to translate into German the poems of Giovanni Pascoli was motivated by the search for a poetic affinity that lasted all her brief life (the translation was published only posthumously) and was built through a direct contact with the poet (Frizzi). On a different note, Amalia Popper (1891-1967), who had been James Joyce's pupil and had developed a personal relation with the writer, translated into Italian five stories from *Dubliners*, under the title *Araby*, with an introduction full of detailed investigations about Joyce's past and previews of his ongoing future projects.

32   Translation and not simply literary writing is the most specific token that identifies the public and private persona of these intellectuals: the multilingual context they referred to imposed that they define themselves in relation to translation towards the different context to which their experiences were directed. As noted, these translators did not share a fixed source or target language with which they decided to work nor were they in contact with the same cultural environments outside Trieste. Nevertheless their attitudes towards translation help identify the particularity of their experiences in a constant shift between the elaboration of identity and the opening towards different kinds of otherness.

33   iii. Another group of women engaged itself more or less directly with translation, linking the construction of a national identity to the dimension of gender in a complex way. They were the promoters of a Slovene women's journal called *Slovenka* (The Slovene woman), published in Trieste between 1897 and 1902 as a weekly (and then monthly) supplement to the Slovene newspaper *Edinost*. In Trieste, Slovene culture had found an important place of development. The increase in the population of the city from about 5,000 inhabitants in 1719 to 219,533 in 1910 was in large part due to the Slovene immigration of workers or entrepreneurs. The community that took shape started to express a demand for culture, for a national identity that could identify itself in this culture. And again, translation was the first means through which this was fostered. It took place mainly through a combination of religious and educational interests. Already in the first half of the 19th century, the archbishop Matevž Ravnikar translated and edited stories from the Bible for children (*Zgobe svetiga pisma za mlade ljudi* 1815-1817). Working at a similar level, the churchman Mihael Verne also produced translations. The Italian nationalist vindications of 1848 gave rise to a strong reaction from the Slovene side, so indeed the motto that was used on that occasion made explicit the program already outlined through the translation activity: "Kultura in prosveta, to naša bo osveta!" (Culture and education will be our revenge!) (Košuta "La letteratura...").

34   In this environment, the journal *Slovenka* constituted an important cultural experience not only because it was actually the first ever Slovene female newspaper, but also for the innovative and ideological positions it took, mainly from a feminist perspective,

addressing issues of women's education, emancipation, identity construction, political rights, associationism, with specific articles on questions such as divorce, abortion, and prostitution, to name a few. At the time, the kind of interests and issues the journal brought to the fore was met with a certain suspiciousness and hostility, both from the part of the Catholic Church and from that of official Slovene cultural institutions (Cibic). This was the main reason why the journal had to interrupt its publication after only five years, notwithstanding an increasing audience and the interest it managed to arouse. From the point of view of intercultural relations and translations, *Slovenka* came to play a major role in the construction and definition of a Slav cultural dimension. Translation was the means through which this dimension was addressed and delineated, somehow created, from a women's perspective. However, besides this main attention to Slav cultures, the spectrum of interests the journal managed to draw also included Western European cultures such as Italian, first of all, but also French and German. It aimed to create a set of cultural references that could make up a Slovene's woman identity, thus giving rise to a particular interplay between the construction of a gendered national identity and the intertwining of cultural references this had to include. The journal actually opened its first issue, on January 2nd 1897, with the publication of a poem entitled "Slovenka", both an invocation to Slovene women to take up an awareness of their identity and the guidelines as to how this identity had to be constructed, what their founding elements were. It was not until its eleventh issue, on May, 11th 1887, that a translation appeared, with the translation from Russian of a woman's letter by N. Luchmanova, in which the ideal connotation of female identity was described. To a woman author corresponded a male translator, Adolf Pahar. The same pattern was repeated with a subsequent translation from Russian, "Prva sreča" whose author was M. Krestovska and translator, again, Pahar. Yet in the following issues, translations from other languages, such as German and Italian, started to appear, including both discussions of the ongoing debate on the women's question (see "Besede…" and "O psichologiji..."), poetry (Heine), and two translations ("Skopost…" and "Žalostna idila"). Russian as the source language reappeared at the end of the year with a translation from the famous theatre director Nemirovič Dančenko ("Oblečeni kip"). The presence of translation became greater in the following two years, configuring a Slav-oriented intercultural dimension as the space of construction of an identity in which nationality and gender intersected. Yet, the typology of texts, interests and cultural identities taken into account continued to follow the pattern described for the first year. Russia, and Russian women in particular, remained one of the main focus of interest, with the translation of articles centered around the discussion of women's education and emancipation but also with translations of fictional works by Russian authors (among which, for example, Krylov, Čechov, Lermontov and Puškin, whereas Lev Tolstoj was presented and discussed in detail in a series of articles written in Slovene by Marica, the journal's chief editor). In the years 1898 and 1899, a total of 17 texts translated from Russian (with some of them serialized in several issues) – for 26 annual issues – appeared. But other Slav source languages and cultures were considered, such as Czech, first of all, with 12 texts, followed by Croatian, Serb, Bulgarian, with one text each. The predominance of Russian culture can be explained by a generalized cultural hegemony in the whole of Europe in those years, whereas the strong presence of Czech culture is the sign of a significant link to Trieste, Slovene women in particular with Prague, where some of them had a chance to study and live (such as Zofka Kveder, who found in the Czech capital an escape from what she perceived as the closure of Slovene culture and

exchanged a lengthy correspondence with *Slovenka*, depicting the cultural and social atmosphere she was experiencing there). Yet there were also translations from the most influential Western European languages of the time, German (7 texts) and French (3 texts). Not only for this wide interest for experiences coming from other cultures to be somehow assimilated and incorporated in the process of identity construction, but also for the extremely radical feminist positions the journal expressed (especially in the last two years, 1900 and 1901), *Slovenka* had to interrupt its publications under the attack both of the Catholic church and the Slovene political nationalist establishment who conceived of the Slovene national identity as grounded on an univocal quest for origin, and not as an ongoing construction based upon diverse and multifarious contributions. As the journal took on a more definite political stance, literary translations gradually disappeared in favor of more politically engaged documents or texts. These continued to offer a picture of intercultural dialogue in relation to the debates proposed (as mentioned before: abortion, monogamy and polygamy, social awareness of prostitutes, processes of women's emancipation through education, class divides and feminism, etc.), but mostly because the paper reported correspondence from all around Europe (with the usual predominance of the Eastern European cultural frame). After they had contributed to creating a novel space of intercultural interaction, translations left room for this kind of article, which furthered and expanded the main political interest of the journal but never lost sight of the fundamental role of cultural interchange and dialogue.

35   iv. While the journalists of *Slovenka* participated in the construction of a particular Slovene identity, just a few years later, before World War I, a group of young intellectuals from Trieste conducted a parallel operation with regard to Italian culture. Translation was one of the means that allowed them to both present themselves as mediators between Central European culture, mostly German, and Italian culture, and define their belonging to Italian culture and tradition. Intellectuals such as Scipio Slataper, Giani and Carlo Stuparich, and Biagio Marin, established contact with Florence, in particular with the journal *La voce*, which wanted to renew Italian culture and society (Baroni). Many of them studied at the University of Florence, but, at the same time maintained a privileged relation with Vienna and Prague (where some of them studied). Giani Stuparich, for example, wrote a study in 1915 on the Czech nation (*La nazione ceca*) which constituted a real introduction to Czech culture and history for Italy. Ara and Magris have described these references as an ideal triangle (Vienna-Prague-Florence) with Trieste in the middle as the point of mediation. If Vienna and Prague, with their cultures, were the points of departure, the idealized point of arrival was Florence, seen as the place of origin of the Italian language, the source of authority and legitimacy for a pure language to which the Triestini aspired. In Florence they mainly looked for the tools for mastering, not only from a stylistic point of view, a language which they felt did not completely belong to them (see *Intellettuali di frontiera*). This group constructed its role as an alternative to both official academic Italian culture (the whole project of *La voce* was centered around the idea of a necessary renewal of this culture and society) and to the late-Neoclassic, Romantic canon of German literature that was dominant in Trieste schools, reading circles, and bookshops. Their position was of course different and much more complex than that of those who proclaimed an aproblematic nationalist Italian identity for Trieste, such as Ruggero Timeus, for example. Nevertheless, their main focus of interest was Italy; they were in dialogue with Italian culture and this was their target, the world towards which all their experiences were directed. Apart from the previously cited book by Stuparich, the Slav world remained largely ignored and marginal for them,

notwithstanding a problematic attraction and an ever-vague threatening lure (as the novel *Il mio carso* by Slataper effectively shows).

36   The world they chose to refer to was what they identified as a new trend in German and Nordic literatures, in authors such as Hebbel, Ibsen, Strindberg, but also Weininger and even Freud. As it has been noted, the young Triestine intellectuals did not really pay attention to the Viennese *fin de siècle* atmosphere with which they nevertheless shared many concerns, such as the negativity of thought, the void of language and the crisis of reality that can be identified in the names of Musil or Hoffmansthal, for example. Scipio Slataper developed a particular interest for Ibsen (on whom he wrote his dissertation later, posthumously published as a book) and found a kind of alter ego in Friedrich Hebbel, author, between the 1840s and 1850s, of tragedies with strong ethical stances, an often emphatic style and positions that may be (and have been) aligned with a celebration of a Pangermanic identity (Cusatelli). Together with his friend Marcello Loewy, who apparently was more competent on specific issues of German language (Stuparich 132), he translated Hebbel's *Judith*, an 1841 tragedy with a Biblical subject centered on the limits and the might of the individual's affirmative will in relation to the limits imposed on it by social contexts and cosmic forces (Cusatelli 44). Later he translated parts of Hebbel's journals, while at the same time published several articles on him in *La voce*. Apart from Hebbel, Novalis and Kleist were translated (respectively by Augusto Hermet and "Giancarlo Stuparich"), and published in a series edited by the journal "Cultura dell'anima".

37   Translation may seem to play a minor role in this process of identity construction compared to the large number of articles published in *La voce* and the literary works written by Scipio Slataper, for example. Yet, it was a founding moment because it constituted the very dimension where the identity of this generation of intellectuals as Italian mediators of German culture was constructed. Slataper proceeded, first of all, to deny the existence of any cultural identity to Trieste. "Trieste has no tradition of culture," he proclaimed from the pages of *La voce* in 1909. Naturally, this was nothing but a powerful construction which served the function of canceling the legitimacy of any previous tradition in order to establish a univocal identity for the city. The translation of Hebbel was the second step, the moment when Slataper actually showed what, in the lack of traditions and cultures, the context of Trieste could produce. Considering the whole context would have meant coming to terms with different identities, with plurality, with multiple possibilities for constructing one's identity. Since Slataper had a very clear aim (representing himself and his generation as the Italian mediators of German culture) all this had to be denied, silenced, and reduced to a *tabula rasa* in which the process of reconstruction could start. The fact that it was through translation that the identity of this generation was at stake can be seen also in the publication of a selection of Kleist's correspondence translated by "Giancarlo Stuparich": such a person never existed, it was a fictitious name bringing together brothers Giani and Carlo Stuparich, after the latter's death during World War I. This is a kind of paradigmatic episode that highlights the importance, previously pointed out, of establishing relations of affinity as the ground for translation. Here, the paradigm of brotherhood underlines the construction of this identity also through translation. Slataper, for example, wrote in his journal (August 26th 1910) that he chose to study and translate Hebbel because he felt he was his brother (quoted in Stuparich 131).

38   This brings us now to the realm of discourses and doxas of translation and of what they can tell us about the intersection with the particular context at stake.

3.

39   Can the long list of names, dates, titles and information I have just proposed be considered as a whole and investigated as such or does it simply show that there is no such thing as a separated cultural context characterized by a plurality of languages and multiplicity of cultural identities ?

40   I believe that there is no single definite answer to this question but that both options can be articulated on the grounds of how translation is thought, represented, described, conceived, and performed. Translators and translations cannot be confined to Trieste and its context, they do not simply and mechanically belong to it, yet, at the same time, they are key moments in the definition of its identity, the very dimension where an identity of plurality and mediation is performed.

41   I first wish to consider one example of a discourse on translation that, with reference to a single case, traces the process of identity construction and the multiplication of references I have tried to outline in relation to the experiences described above. Giani Stuparich wrote in 1922 that Slataper was a real "Triestino" precisely because "he made Italy discovering one of its regions that was profoundly ignored and profoundly rich of new life and new values. Because he was a fresh Italian conscience that had grown up in a turbid mixing of races. And he was strong enough to eradicate himself from the margins where his native environment exhausted itself. And without denying this, on the contrary, by accepting it inside himself with full awareness, he was able to live it and make it live in the flux of history" (7, my tr.). In other words, Slataper was deeply aware of the fact that his identity as a "Triestino" meant that he had to perform a complex agency of mediation directed towards Italy and Italian culture. This attention to and emphasis on the target culture can be found, in general, in all the experiences here considered. Translations are very clearly directed towards the construction of an identity that must manage plurality in order to create a product that fits into the receiving culture. Thus, for example, in *Slovenka*, translations are always clearly indicated as such, with a variety of verbs used to describe them, yet among them the most frequent is certainly "poslovenil/a" (made Slovene).

42   The outcome of translation, resulting from the plurality of languages and cultures, has definite connotations, it belongs to the culture it is directed to. Stuparich describes the life in the Habsburg Empire as a constant threat to a fixed identity: "To be born in those countries meant to be born with an unstable identity which had to be propped up moment by moment" (9, my tr.) Therefore, here is how he explains Slataper's intellectual experience:

> among the fellows of *La voce* he felt the need to contribute to the general culture with the part he could understand and explain more honestly and more deeply, because it was closer to his soul. And if at first he had tried to clarify himself on his own and to describe the environment of Trieste to the others, later he realized that it was his task, in the group of *La voce*, to let everyone know about some lively moments of German literature" (129, my tr.).

43   From what is represented by Stuparich as "a turbid mixing of races", Slataper was therefore able to construct his particular "Italian conscience", by positing himself as a

mediator. Stuparich explicitly recognizes this status when he writes that Scipio Slataper had the merit of making Hebbel known to Italian culture (after the writer had been considered for many years only a "tedesconzolo" – a German, with an evident nuance of contempt and irony – not worthy of joining the "great" canonical Italian tradition).

44   This is the first aspect worth considering, something the entire network of discourses on translation related to the experiences I have described show: the role of mediation towards a monolingual culture, the constant reference to the task of making this culture discover new worlds, important novelties, texts, writers, entire traditions otherwise unknown and ignored. The agency of translation is explicitly linked to what is not yet known, to something new that has yet to be introduced. Therefore, on the one hand the focus is on the target culture of the translation, be it Italian, German or Slovenian, on the other the repeated highlighting of the particular characteristics of the source text and culture draws attention to the specific multicultural knowledge and plurilingual competence of the translator, to her/his unavoidable role of mediation which is the ground in which her/his identity takes shape. Many examples of this attitude can be found in prefaces, paratextual declarations or other writings. To mention a few: Willy Dias introduced her translation of Franz Werfel to her Italian readers in 1929, saying that the "writer and dramatist, very famous in German countries […], is still, so to speak, unknown in Italy" (XI, my tr.), while Regent and Sussek stressed in their introduction to *Il servo Bortolo e il suo diritto*, signed as "I traduttori" (the translators), that this novel was the first one among Cankar's works to be presented to an Italian audience and added that "the heritage he [Cankar] left to Slovene literature must not remain hidden to Italians" (I traduttori 5, my tr.). Another example: the translation of Joyce's *Dubliners* published by Amalia Popper (Risolo) is accompanied by an "essential biography" of the writer that reveals the nature of first presentation the translator wanted to give to her work. This was not just a mode to be adopted in the public sphere, but can also be found in more private declarations, such as, for example, the letter Emma Luzzato addressed to her young friend, Olga, to whom she dedicated her translations of Heine in which she affirmed that she had chosen the poems "among the less known in Italy, where very few admired them, because, although luxuriant, they are not among the brightest" (my tr. "Li scelsi fra i meno conosciuti in Italia, ove pochi li hanno ammirati, perche' sebbene rigogliosi non appartengono ai piu' risplendenti, e procurai di non sciuparli del tutto" 10). Or, writing to Giovanni Pascoli, whose early poems she had translated into German, Estella Wondrich expressed her intention to publish her translations together with a critical study of Pascoli's works because she wanted German intellectuals to know and appreciate these works ("Vorrei pubblicare la traduzione insieme ad uno studio sulla sua poesia in un grande giornale tedesco, affinche' le menti intellettuali della Germania possano gustare ed apprezzare l'alta e gentile poesia sua" - letter from Zara dated March 3rd 1902, quoted in Frizzi 440). And five years later, in another letter in which she proposed to the poet the publication of her translations in a volume instead of a journal, Wondrich repeated that her main aim was that of letting the German public know about these poems (Letter from Sanatorio Eggenberg bei Graz dated April 7th 1907, quoted in Frizzi 442). This sense of discovery, of introduction of novelties, is generalized and declined in various ways. Slataper himself, introducing his translation of Hebbel's *Tagebücher*, asserted that his aim was that of letting Italian culture know about them, yet added that those who wanted to actually get to know Hebbel had to read the four volumes in German and not the choice and selection he presented to the Italian public.

Translation, therefore, is represented as the first hint, the first necessary step for approaching the German writer still largely unknown. Yet it is also nothing more than a surrogate, a metonymic presentation of a larger whole.

45   This brings me to the second aspect I wish to highlight. In this context, discourses on translation paint a picture of inadequacy and devaluation, of a necessary secondary nature in relation to the source text. Almost all translators talk about the difficulties they have encountered in their work and give rather negative evaluations of their results. Emma Luzzato, adopting floral metaphors for describing the product of her work, writes that she has tried to not completely spoil Heine's "flowers" and adds: "Yet it is natural that, taken away from their native ground, pulled up from their luxuriant plant, they have partly lost their freshness, their vivid colors, their delicate perfume", so that the result is in any case "rather poor" (10, my tr.). Regent and Sussek affirm that "the translation of the most important representative of Slovene literary naturalism is a highly difficult task" (I traduttori 5, my tr.) Augusto Hermet made a suggestion for his readers that reveals his conception of translation (strictly linked here to interpretation) as a necessary instrumental obstacle to be overcome: "Those who want to approach these poems, first of all, read them, then turn to my interpretation in the introduction and finally go back to the poems, in order to forget my interpretation and my translation" (Novalis 39, my tr.). Willy Dias says that it is highly difficult to "render with full effectiveness in translation" Werfel's style, defined as "personal, nervous, very modern, original, accustomed to a severe synthesis" (XII, my tr.). The stylistic particularities of the source text are often the main motivation for the inevitable failures of the translation. It is on these grounds that Stuparich also qualifies Slataper's *Giuditta* as "not perfect", especially for the many "difficulties" that made the translation "laborious and clumsy" (133, my tr.), and talks about the translation of Hebbel's *Diarii* as "in many parts dull and obscure" (134, my tr.) and even "faulty" (135, my tr.).

46   Interestingly, this is also a way of recognizing the presence of translation, of affirming that the act of translation has taken place and of constructing the identity of the translators themselves. The most common feature of the translations in the context here considered is that they are always recognized as such, always defined in their status as translations, never hidden or assimilated to the non-translated texts they coexist with.

47   The presence of translation, always made explicit, showing a constant reference to an outside and to the heterogeneity of possibilities of cultural belonging, definitely challenges the notion of the localistic autonomy and self-sufficiency of the plurilingual context. Indeed, translation acts as a highly revelatory tool for considering the many articulations that come into being when the "making, unmaking and remaking" (to quote Grossberg's words 168) of cultural relations is at stake.

Conclusion

48   What I have tried to show is how in a context identified in terms of the plurality of languages and multiplicity of cultures, like that of Trieste, translations perform the construction of identities, which are mainly represented as univocal and directed towards references seen as external to the context itself. The plurilingual context is crossed by translation activities that refer to different source and target cultures, or, better yet, that constantly articulate and re-articulate the source/target relation itself. This constant articulation and re-articulation is a feature of the context itself I have taken into account,

which is variously represented in cultural historiography, yet can nevertheless be considered as an arena of confrontation where different voices continuously negotiate their positions of domination or subalternity. In Trieste, different forms of expression, but mainly literary writing in different languages, enabled the possibility to speak for different cultures. Yet it was specifically through translation that the most crucial issue of articulating otherness and identity, plurality and unity could be addressed.

49   Seen from the perspective of a context of plurality and diversity, translation poses to those who engage with it the problem of how to define themselves both in relation to the external univocal identity, which is the chosen paradigm of reference, and the heterogeneity which constitutes the ground for any definition. In the case I have considered, differently composed networks of people confront themselves with what translation puts at stake and provide different solutions in terms of identity construction and definitions of cultural references. We have immigrant intellectuals who find in Trieste the space for experimenting the construction of a particular Italian identity; we also have women, whose education and identity is focused around language plurality, who look in various directions in order to establish their role as intellectuals; moreover, we have other women who put translation at the core of their project for a gendered national Slovene identity; and finally, young anti-academic men intellectuals who posit themselves as mediators in order to acquire a role in view of their inclusion inside the panorama of Italian culture. However variegated and maybe even divergent in their aims and functions, these experiences all share some concerns in relation to translation: first of all, a particular consciousness of the plurality from where their engagements with translation and the possibility of a definition of their identity stem; an explicit intention of introducing novelties which illustrates their orientation towards the target culture they have chosen to refer to; finally an awareness of the role of translation, often almost paradoxically expressed through negative evaluations and judgments.

50   It is this diversely expressed awareness of the role of translation in relation to identity and otherness that challenges representations and systematizations of contexts that simplistically equate culture with a specific local space. In a context of language plurality and cultural diversity translation performs at the same time the univocal definition of boundaries and the always multiple processes of identity construction.

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ABSTRACTS

In this article I place the role and function of translation within the multicultural and plurilingual context, of the city of Trieste, with the complex plethora of its manifestations. Translation will be considered here not merely in its textual aspects but mainly as a performative act and a culturally charged action, as a spectrum through which agencies and agents, identity and otherness, representations and constructions are conveyed.

The problem of strictly identifying and equating culture with a definite location and space will be addressed through the consideration of discourses and doxas of translation, constructed in relation to the plurality of languages in question which calls for a re-articulation of the context itself. The case of Trieste is paradigmatic in this regard, as nowadays an idealization of what looks like a cultural "microcosm" (Magris *Microcosmi*) is often taken for granted, a hybrid individuality which is considered as highly representative of wider hybrid contexts. However plural and multiple this context can be conceived, it is seen as a circumscribed and isolated whole, rooted in a place and somehow self-sufficient. To this effect, I will discuss whether translation can be taken, in this sense, as a challenge to fixed, unquestioned definitions of contexts and an interrogation of relations that imply agencies, effectiveness and modalities of articulation (Grossberg) as a way to avoid models of interpretation framed within a strict localism.

Dans cet article sont analysés le rôle et la fonction de la traduction dans le contexte multiculturel et plurilingue de la ville de Trieste. La traduction est considérée dans ses aspects textuels, mais surtout performatifs et culturels. L'acte traductif devient ainsi le lieu d'un travail des agents pris en charge par la traduction, où l'identité et l'altérité agissent au niveau des représentations et des différentes constructions culturelles prises en charge. La question de l'identification et de l'assimilation d'une culture à un espace défini est analysée à partir de la discussion sur la traduction et en considérant une doxa qui nécessite une ré-articulation du contexte lui-même, laquelle est due à la nécessité de considérer la pluralité des langues en action. La situation de Trieste constitue un exemple paradigmatique d'un « microcosme » culturel (Magris, *Microcosmes*), idée à laquelle on fait très souvent recours pour représenter des espaces plus grands caractérisés par une hybridation similaire. ,Néanmoins la pluralité et la multiplicité qui caractérisent ce contexte peuvent être examinées comme une totalité circonscrite et isolée du fait de leur enracinement dans un espace bien précis et somme toute autosuffisant. Aussi l'hypothèse formulée est-elle que la traduction peut devenir le lieu d'une discussion sur le rôle des agents traductifs et sur l'efficacité des modalités d'articulation (Grossberg) permettant d'éviter l'utilisation de modèles d'interprétations fondés sur un localisme limitatif.

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