Cueing the Picture: Contexts and Strategies in Translating Dialect Poetry from the Carnic Alps

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1. Introduction

According to Danila Seleskovich everything that can be expressed in one culture can be expressed in any other comparably developed culture (quoted in Newmark 1988: 6), whereas according to Eugene Nida (1964: 159) reader response can never be identical to the original due to different historical, cultural and environmental contexts. As I have argued elsewhere (Katan 1999a: 7-15), both statements are equally valid. However, neither refers to the translation of poetry. Two interrelated factors become more important when translating poetry. First, "the what can be expressed", the text meaning is less cut and dried, while it is text feeling that the reader will be responding to; and secondly, the loss of the original text form would suggest that, as Robert Frost said, the "Poetry is what gets lost in translation".

The object of this paper is to analyse how these two factors have been accounted for. I will use my own translation of a Friulano poet to exemplify both the problems and the solutions.

2. Dialect poetry

When we talk of translating dialect poetry, there are two further points a translator will have to take into account: identity and place. The use of dialect itself is a strong sign (as much so today as ever) of an expression of choice. Leo Zanier, for example, is bilingual, but writes his poems exclusively in Friulian, a language which is only now beginning to emerge with a written grammar and a way of writing. This choice has an almost unmeasurable effect on the reader.

2.1. Identity

Dialect is the language of the mother, the language through which core values and beliefs were transmitted. The official language, learned at school or heard on TV, belongs to others or to the community as a whole, but to no one physical
place. The dialect, especially if threatened, serves as a strong sign of geographical and group identity:

The psychological significance of this goes far beyond the association of particular languages with nationalities, political entities, or smaller social groups... The extraordinary importance of minute linguistic differences for the symbolization of psychologically real as contrasted with politically or sociologically official groups is intuitively felt by most people. 'He talks like us' is equivalent to saying 'He is one of us'. (Sapir 1956: 17).

The focus on 'identity' is intensified in this particular case as the collection of poems has the identity of a threatened people as its *lietmotiv*. The first poem (Zanier: 1995), in fact, is entitled "Dedica/Dedication". The dedication identifies family members, individuals who represent ordinary local people:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a chei ch'a no tornaran plui</th>
<th>To those who will not be back again</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A gno pari</td>
<td>To my father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A me mari</td>
<td>To my mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A vuaitis amis ducj</td>
<td>To you my friends all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A ti Aldo...</td>
<td>To you Aldo...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Silvio e a vuaitis...</td>
<td>To Silvio and to you all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Luciano...</td>
<td>To Luciano...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even more striking is the identification with the characteristics of the people:

| e a nò cajargnei:         | and to us Carnicans             |
| "fuarts                 | "strong                         |
| onejce                  | honest                          |
| lavoradòrs"...          | labourers"...                   |
| a nò...                 | to us...                        |
| e stà a vai cidins      | weeping in silence              |
| su las nestas disgracias| over our wretchedness            |

This takes us to the second point regarding dialect poetry.

2.2. Sense of place

The use of dialect ties the poems firmly to the place where it is spoken; in this case, to a tiny mountainous area of northern Italy: Carnia. A hundred years ago, closed within 1000 km², the population counted 41,921 inhabitants and 93 priests. Yet, there were 4 distinct varieties of Friulano spoken in Carnia. The type used by Zanier is type 2: "spoken in the lower part of the Degano Valley as
far as Comegians and in the Valcalda (Ravascletto)” (Marinelli 1906: 14), which means two valleys and a small village of 1786 people in 1906. Now, as Nereo Perini points out in his "Introduction" to the poems, these villages are "deserted and impoverished" (1995: 7).

This focus on the local environment is made particularly clear from the many explicit references to Carnia in the text itself. At times it is given sterile and oppressive connotations. In the poem entitled "Crets cença jerba/Rock without grass", the monotony of arid rocks is seen from a coach window. Another poem laments being born: "tra un cil cussi strent/under such a narrow sky". The narrow sky is a reference to the narrow valleys, which also limit the local people's vision.

However, another poem is actually dedicated to "The Beauty of Carnia":

La bieleça da Cjargna
Cuant ch'a a no plóf
e i oms son a cjasa
e su las monts lús la nèf
e i peçs lontans
l'àn zà scjassada
e las cjamanas
rivin puartadas
dal coton dal'aria
a è biel la Cjargna

The Beauty of Carnia
When it's not raining
and the men are at home
and the snow on the mountain
sparkles
and the distant firs
have shaken off their snows
and you can hear bells
carried
on the cottony air
Carnia is beautiful

The strongest cohesive link in this collection of poems, further strengthening the choice of Carnic Friulian, is the moving description of a tightly-woven community torn apart through enforced emigration. This description closely corresponds to the reality of those times. A tourist guide book to the area, published in 1906, begins the section on "Customs and Traditions" with the following stark reality: "The men, built for hard work, emigrate during the summer, so the women have to work on the land as well as in the house" (Marinelli 1906: 16). In fact, that year 8004 men, 14% of the population, left Carnia to work abroad. Significantly the guide states: "Emigration abroad is a vital phenomenon for Carnia". Hence the title of the collection "Licers... di
sceigně lā/Free... To Have To Leave". The vast majority of the poem titles relate directly to one or another aspect of the leaving, for example:

Las valis di un emigrant  An emigrant's bags
"Nient'altro da dichiare?"  "Nothing else to declare?"
Stagionali  Seasonals
Un jet a mil chilometros da ĉjasa  A bed a thousand kilometres from home

At every level (the setting, behaviour, personality and lot in life) the poems mirror their Carniceness.

3. Text/Context

There are two aspects a translator has to take account of: the visible text itself, which here is taken to include all three of Halliday's (1989) functions of language, and the cognitive environment that the text is placed in. We have already noted that the text is highly culture-bound through the use of dialect. However, the real problem lies not in the text form, but rather in how to take account of the text environment: the physical place, setting, and the roots anchoring the text.

A Carnic reader will share what Sperber and Wilson (1986: 42) call "mutual manifestation". Those sharing the same cognitive environment will tend to perceive and interpret cues at the same level and with the same type of cognitive effect as that of the author; and in reading the poem, readers will make inferences which will take them straight to those situations (sights, sounds and feelings) Zanier had in mind. Clearly, the further removed the reader is from the Carnic environment, the less likely he or she is to relate the text to the Carnic situation.

To further complicate life for the translator, there are two levels of 'situation'. Halliday is concerned with the immediate context of the text within a single frame of culture. Hall's context (1983: 59-77; [1976] 1989: 85-128; Katan 1999a: 177-209), though, is explicitly both the context of situation and the context of culture (Malinowski 1935), i.e. it includes the beliefs and values that determine the behaviour to be interpreted.

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4 We have already discussed the textual function. The other two are 'ideational', the language used to explain the writer's understanding of reality, and the 'interpersonal', the language used to express attitudes and relationships.
Sperber and Wilson (1986: 15) also understand 'context' in terms of beliefs, or rather assumptions, rather than visible 'situation'. Context is, they suggest: "a psychological construct, a subset of the hearer's assumptions about the world. It is these assumptions, of course, rather than the actual state of the world, that affect the interpretation of an utterance". Problems in understanding, through translation or otherwise, arise from the fact that the assumptions about the world differ.

As in the tradition of poetry, these poems are, to use Hall's term, very high context. The very definition of a poetic text implies that the reader has to interpret the implicatures (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 35-37) rather than the propositions themselves to achieve the 'poetic' levels of cognitive effect. Moreover, Blakemore (1992: 164) explains, in her discussion of Shakespeare, that what might seem like an "ordinary act of communication ... triggers the discovery of a whole array of implicatures". Though she limited her comments to Shakespeare, all human communication is open to implicature. Zanier's theme, in fact, is the everyday communication of individuals living the effects of enforced emigration. At a surface level, the routine nature of the words can make the message sound trite—especially in translation, as we shall see later.

4. Minimal language

The Friulian language appears at first sight (or hearing) a very basic, minimal and essential language, in line with the isolated mountainous culture which was based around the essential aspects of living and sustenance. Moreover, in stark contrast to Italian, expressions of emotion, feelings or attitudes are downtoned. The orientation of the Friulian people is towards internalisation of feelings, as the following extract clearly illustrates:

\[
\begin{align*}
e & \quad \text{a nò cjaragnei:...} \\
c' & \quad \text{dizin}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
si & \quad \text{sir si sior paron} \\
e & \quad \text{i pensin...} \\
\text{Parè} & \quad \text{ch'i vin poura}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{and to us Carnicans...} \\
\text{who mutter}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{yes sir master sir} \\
\text{but sotto voce mutter...} \\
\text{because it's fear we have got}
\end{align*}
\]

Also, life itself is, or rather was, very basic according to Zanier:

\[
\begin{align*}
da & \quad \text{nò}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{no'nd è ce fà} \\
\text{ma la int}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
nas \\
distes
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{up here}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{there's nothing to do} \\
\text{but people}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{get born} \\
\text{anyhow}
\end{align*}
\]
4.1. Minimal cues

Zanier has exploited this basic and minimalist language to further the high-context nature of the poems. Discussions with him revealed a number of allusions, or implicatures, which the poet believed would be 'clear' to any Carnic reader. The cues are minimal, he explained, because the context is shared by his reader, and thus the reader would be able to access the frames of reference, and the internal emotions attached to those frames.

In *Coming back old*, for example, we have the following lines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friulano</th>
<th>literal translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E nons ch'a i àn det</td>
<td>names they told him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>di vorèlas cença mans</td>
<td>of ears without hands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The *ears without hands* is, in fact, a reference to God, who is all hearing, but *without hands*. The implicature from the basic physical descriptions of *hands* is that "He" does not intervene to help. The poem, like all the poems, underlines the impotence of the Carnic people. They are always, according to the title of the collection, obliged by others. They are "Libars... di scavì la /Free ... To Have To Leave". A Friulian reader, imbued in the traditions of Catholicism which influenced if not dictated all aspects of life, would have less of a problem in interpreting these implicatures than readers without this background. In exactly the same way, Sperber and Wilson (1986: 379) explain the importance of a shared cognitive environment:

... in most cases, ... the context does more than filter out inappropriate interpretations: it provides premises without which the implicature cannot be inferred at all.

The onus on interpretation clearly lies with the reader. The writer can provide more or less explicit premises; but it is the reader who is expected to make the connections by him or herself, using the cues available.

The translator's main task must be, then, to provide the reader with these "premises", bearing in mind, though, that there are other factors which also have to be taken into account. In fact, as I have argued elsewhere (Katan 1999a), the task of the translator is to mediate between all the elements involved in the production, publishing and reading of the text.

5. Factors in the translation

5.1. The poet and his text

The original text producer, Zanier, was very keen that his words be respected. He was particularly worried that he would be, as it were, misquoted in translation.
He expected a mirroring in the target text at the level of both form and function. Surprisingly, as it turns out, Zanier is not the only writer with these expectations. Milan Kundera, too, "assumes that the meaning of the foreign text can avoid change in translation, that the foreign writer's intention can travel unadulterated across a linguistic and cultural divide" (Venuti 1998: 5). As the author of *The Art of Translating Poetry*, Burton Raffel (1988: 51), notes:

Those who have not reflected on the translation process, [...] frequently think of it as essentially the moving of *words* from one language to another. The notion of literal translation, plainly, is founded on some such conception. If all language were simply a matter of words arranged in strings, then of course it would be relatively easy – given acknowledged differences in available vocabulary – to transpose the language strings of another. Alas, translation is nothing like that easy.

Two points need to be stressed here. First, Zanier began to modify his position, or rather, to let go of his text, as he began to realise some of the aspects of the translation process. Second, he took an interest in the cadence; and asked for the translations to be recorded and sent to him so that he could actually hear them as poems.

Clearly, this direct dialogue with the original author was an unusual opportunity to learn more about his intentions when choosing particular words. Many days in his company, and many prosaic faxes with questions (fully answered) on the meaning and interpretation of many of his poems resulted in an immeasurable improvement in the production of the target text, which leads us to consider the translator.

5.2. The translator

The translator him or herself, is not only a disassociated mediator, taking the third position (Katan 1999b), but s/he is also a decisive factor in the translation of affective language. According to Raffel (1988: VII): "the translator is (or should be) a literary person in the old-fashioned sense. The translator of poetry *must* be himself a poet, ...". It is difficult to disagree with the assertion that a wordsmith is more likely to create that happy sequence of words creating both sense and sentiment through a pleasing arrangement of phonemes. The choice of words, though, has more to do with an appreciation of genre than with a string of self-penned publications.

Any translator of any text must be capable of producing language (style and register) appropriate to the genre being translated, whether it be a company balance sheet, a memorandum of articles, a software application manual or a
brochure. In none of these cases would a translator be expected to be an accountant, a lawyer, a computer programmer or publicity designer. At the same time, it would be useful for the translator to have a working knowledge of the sector, and in all cases, as in poetry translation, the translator must be a wordsmith. There does not seem to be any obvious necessity, though, for the translator of poetry to be a professional poet.

However, and more importantly, no wordsmith can create a good poetry translation if s/he is not first and foremost able to fully associate with the text to be translated. It is not enough, as Raffel goes on to say, that a translator be "something of a scholar" (ibid.: VII) though this is also necessary. S/he will also need something more than awareness of "literary and cultural history" (ibid.: VIII), though this too must be part of a translator's cognitive environment. The translator needs to enter the author's world, take cognisance of it and then make it his or her own – before considering how to create the target text.

A dialect poem, as I have mentioned, is crafted in the intimacy of the mother-tongue, and can often be a short lightening rod to intense feelings. In the case of Zanier, it is the sense of place and the profound effects on the individual, the family and the community as a whole, that a translator has to understand: visceral participation rather than a scholarly awareness of Carnia's literary and cultural history. Interestingly, though Raffel continues to underline the importance of the academic and the working-poet in the translator, he does speak of his personal experience as participator at this more visceral level: "...awareness of the danger of being swallowed, of being engulfed, perhaps even consumed by the powerful writers a translator must necessarily confront ... What happens to the writer's own growth if he lives too long in another writer's universe? It can be, let me assure you, a fearsome experience." (ibid: 185-186, emphasis added). The experience might well be fearsome for the writer or professional poet, but it is more than attractive for the translator – and is possibly a good reason why a working poet should not translate.

The translator, rather than the poet, can say with pride: "This poetry is mine too". The same point was made by Imre Bama (1993: 31) regarding his translation into Hungarian of "Il nome della rosa" in the presence of Umberto Eco: "[...] ho scritto qualcosa di bello ... Ho scritto un romanzo di successo mondiale, e ne sono fiero".5

5 [...] I have written something which is really fine ... I have written an international best-seller, and I'm proud of it.
5.3. The Publisher

The publisher can often add limitations in terms of layout and space. With regard to poetry this can be an important factor. In this particular case, the publisher's brief was to produce a trilingual edition of the book: Friulano and English parallel texts, with Italian at the back. This meant that the translator would have to be careful to match poem lengths exactly. In theory, there would be a direct line-by-line comparison between Friulano and English, which is what Zanier also wanted. This clearly places great restrictions on the translator, not only in terms of lexical choice, as we have already mentioned, but more importantly in terms of syntactic needs and theme and rhyme.

For example, the following V O S Italian construction contains an unmarked theme. According to Greenbaum and Quirk (1990: 397), the first content word in any sentence such as nàssin/born from the extract below "can be seen informally as announcing that the starting point of the message is established and agreed". In Italian, also, "the subject generally precedes the verb" (Dardano and Trifone 1995: 98). However, the subject can also be quite simply omitted "in a number of circumstances" (ibid.) or be placed in non-thematic position, as below:

e nàssin sot i peçs
las primulas

The English version should, following the line-by-line parallel text approach, be translated as follows:

and are born under the firs
the primulas.

This flouts the generally accepted subject-verb order in English. The unmarked theme in English coincides with the subject, whether it be a noun or pronoun. In this case, the subject being in rheme position, we have added dramatic focus to the primulas, and marked the theme. However, there is no drama or inherent reason to emphasise the primulas, so the result would be a distortion of the original emphasis, and bad poetry in English; which leads us to a further factor in the translation process: the model or assumed readers, and their needs.

5.4. The Reader

There are two readerships: that of the source text and that of the target. Rarely do literary authors publicly talk about their model reader (though the publisher will

6 Personal translation
have thought about potential readers before accepting the manuscript). Umberto Eco (1985: 13) believes that writing means a dialogue with a model or ideal reader. In this case, Zanier is clearly talking to his compatriots: "the reader will find the strong determination of a poet to rally his people from the now deserted and impoverished villages of Carnia ..." (Perini 1995: 7):

According to both Zanier and the publisher, the 'ideal' readers of the translation would "predominantly [be] in the communities of Friulian emigrants living in English speaking countries, to whom the English text will offer a path leading them to their origins" (ibid.: 8). These readers would feel Friulian in culture, but would not speak the language; nor would they have suffered the silent years of emigration.

The ideal cognitive effect would be in terms of the readers' understanding of the Friulian culture: the people, their habits, their enforced emigration and their feelings; and finally, cognisance of what it meant to be Friulian at the time when "the men...emigrate during the summer" (Marinelli 1906: 14).

Clearly then, the translator should create a target text capable of cueing the emotions associated with being "Free...to Have to Leave" while, at the same time, introducing the reader to the cognitive environment of Carnia in the early 20th century. However, as we have noted, this cannot be done through a faithful reflection of the original. Susan Bassnett (1991: xvii) explains the problem in terms of Lefevre's term, "refraction": "A reflection involves a mirroring, a copy of an original; a refraction involves changes of perception, and [this is] what happens when a text crosses from one culture to another".

6. Translation theory

It is the recent interest in the reader of a literary text which has led to the questioning of mirroring and an acceptance of refraction, due partly to Derrida's assertion that the translation creates 'an original text', and partly to the work accomplished in "Translation Studies".

Hence, over the past 25 years there has been a move away from the focus on the original text form and author, to that of the reader and interpretation. The belief that a good translation depends principally on a linguistic analysis of the source and target text is giving way to focus on contexts, skopos (motivation) and, importantly, reader interpretation.

For example, Venuti (1992: 8) states that a translation "releases [the target text] from its subordination to the [original] foreign text and makes possible the

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7 "Translation Studies" is the title of a book originally written by Susan Bassnett in 1980 (revised 1991). In the revised edition she traces the rise of the discipline, known today as Translation Studies.
development of a hermeneutic that reads the translation as a text in its own right, ...". In short, as Arrojo (1997: 23) notes, "the reader begins to be recognized as an active producer of meaning whose interference is not merely tolerable but inevitable".

I have now outlined briefly the contexts in which the original poems and the proposed translation were conceived. We can now move on to a number of practical examples of actual translations.

6.1. Translation strategies

A translation strategy is understood here as a general guiding principle adopted throughout the text to be translated. The meta-strategy for a translator as mediator will always be the conscious decision that each particular translation strategy should be the result of a negotiated mediation between the four parties involved: translator, poet, publisher and reader - satisfactory to all sides, though biased towards the readers' needs (see Katan: 1999b).

6.2. Translating dialect

The text form of the original poems is not written in the national variety, but in a regional variation (or, according to many locally, "a language of the region"). The translator can either translate into a standard or regional variety of the target language. In theory, an English rural dialect would compensate for much of the pithiness of the original. Also, in terms of cueing the feelings, it would be possible to use the variety of the more isolated and poverty-stricken communities with a history of depopulation, such as the crofting communities in Scotland. However, the braes and lochs would take the reader immediately (assuming the reader's acquaintance with the terms) to the upland areas and lakes of Scotland, which is not the goal of this particular translation.

So, in general, the language chosen has been standard English, with an eye to the medium (written to be spoken) and the function (poetic, persuasive).

However, it has been possible to remind the reader of the basic, minimal and essential language of the original not through working with regional variety but rather with social variety. By lowering the register to the colloquial or the uneducated, at times the poems can approach the minimal cueing of the original. An example is the translation of la femina as literally "the female". Most references relate to the speaker's wife, left behind with the children to work on the land. In Friulano, the word "wife/moglie" does not exist as a separate entity.
All women are *femine*, and men, whether husbands or not, are *oms*. This basic division has generally been respected in the translation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{E la femina in pits} & \quad \text{While the woman standing} \\
\text{ch'a lu cjala} & \quad \text{watches him} \\
\text{buimanot om} & \quad \text{goodnight my man}
\end{align*}
\]

However, there were also occasions where "the woman" would have connoted a pejorative picture, and hence I opted for "wife", but kept the definite article, thus making it sound like a regional or social variation. Also *i fruts*, rather than becoming standard English "children", become more colloquial "kids":

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{bussà} & \quad \text{kiss} \\
\text{la femina} & \quad \text{the wife} \\
\text{i fruts} & \quad \text{the kids} \\
\text{e la femina?} & \quad \text{and the wife?} \\
\text{si à di ranjà} & \quad \text{she'll have to fend for herself}
\end{align*}
\]

6.3. Manipulation

The translator was, as we have seen, given little formal freedom in translating; so the question uppermost in my mind as I translated was very much: "What text can I produce (within the confines laid down) which will cue the pictures, the sounds and the feelings of Zanier's world?" This type of question implies the ready acceptance of text manipulation (Bassnett 1991: XII; Katan 1999a: 139-140).

As an example of the type of text manipulation employed, we can return to the *ears without hands*. As we have noticed, Zanier did not use capital letters. The same is true for other religious references in other poems:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Friulian} & \quad \text{Literal translation} \\
\text{I frutins a i cròdin} & \quad \text{the children believe in him} \\
\text{las feminas lu prèn} & \quad \text{the women pray to him}
\end{align*}
\]

According to Zanier, there is a more direct relationship with God through the Friulian language/dialect, and hence there is no need for capital letters. Raffel (1988: 109-110, emphasis added) notes the same relationship expressed in Dante's works: "[...] medieval man felt God, saw God everywhere [...]". Raffel, however, understandably disagrees with the strategy used by Ciardi, which was to transform the high context:

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8 The *Vocabolario della lingua friulana* (Barbina, Maria Tore 1991) also includes the word *muir* for the Italian *moglie*, and *marit* for *marito*, but neither term is used either in the poems or in everyday conversation.
dirò de l'altra cose ch'è v'ho scorte I will speak of the other things that I saw there into a clear explication of the meaning:

I will recount all that I found revealed there by God's grace

Deciding to what extent to manipulate, is, of course, difficult to define. In this case, though, it is clear that: "[...] Dante does not speak of revelation, he does not speak of God's grace. [...]" (ibid). Hence there is a difference between manipulation of the words and distortion of the message. The translator should allow the implicatures to be cued through the text rather than explicated within it. My strategy was to limit the manipulation to the minimum by simply adding capital letters throughout. This small manipulation of the text allowed the poet's and the publisher's lexical wishes to be respected, while at the same time pointing the reader's attention to the religious allusion, particularly in the case of ears without hands, which now act as a signal for the reader to read the words as relating to particular Ears and Hands:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friulian</th>
<th>Literal translation</th>
<th>Final translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nons ch'a i àn det</td>
<td>names they told him</td>
<td>names he'd been told about of ears without hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>di vorèlas cença mans</td>
<td>of ears without hands</td>
<td>of the Ears without Hands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This clarification also normalises the writing for the Anglo-American reader, who would expect the capitalisation convention with regard to the highest gods regardless of religion.9 I should also point out that Zanier's poetic flouting of all other capitalisation and punctuation conventions is mirrored in the translation, as for example from the following poem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Literal translation</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I frutins a i cròdin</td>
<td>The children believe in him</td>
<td>The children believe in Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i frutins a i cròdin</td>
<td>the children believe in him</td>
<td>the children believe in Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>las feminas lu prein</td>
<td>the women pray to him</td>
<td>the women pray to Him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>[...]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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9 There are, naturally, a number of notable exceptions. e.g. cummings (as he liked to be known) did not use any capitalisation at all in his poems. This minoritizing process, as Venuti (1999: 20) calls it, would be an excellent case for foreignising the target text. However, I felt that the target reader would simply fail to register any diversity, and would not react to the challenge of an alternative way of addressing God.
The use of the capital letter in translation not only guides the reader to a religious frame of interpretation, but also helps to do justice to certain abstract concepts which otherwise would sound banal in English, such as 'good' in the sense of 'Good and Evil'. The frame remains religious so the manipulation remains coherent, as for example in *Me I cannot pray*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friulian</th>
<th>Literal</th>
<th>Final translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>[...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a volè ben</td>
<td>to want good</td>
<td>to want Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e i crodevin tal ben</td>
<td>and we believed in good</td>
<td>and we believed in Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lu volevin</td>
<td>it's what we wanted</td>
<td>it's what we wanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>[...]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.4. Culture-bound lexis

In my opinion, one particular key concept in need of something more than "text mirroring" and hence in need of manipulation, was the translation of *gei*, more commonly known in Italian as *gerla*, and unknown in any "developed" part of the world. The standard bilingual dictionary translation for *gerla* is *pan(n)ier*.  

When translating unknown, or culture-bound, concepts outside a translator's own bilingual lexicon it is always useful to check monolingual dictionary definitions. These will give the most frequent denotations of headword entries, which will normally be equivalent to the most relevant frames associated with the word. In fact, the definitions for the headword *pannier* are far removed from the monolingual *gerla* entries:

- **PANNIER** "1. A large basket esp. one of a pair slung over a beast of burden. 2. One of a pair of bags slung either side of the back wheel of a motorcycle, bicycle, etc. [...] (Collins English Dictionary 1991)

- **GERLA** "A truncated-cone shaped basket strapped to a person's shoulders with rope or a belt. It is made from woven vegetable fibres and is traditional in mountain areas". (Il Nuovo Zingarelli 1984, personal translation)

The Italian dictionary gives us the denotative, or reference, meaning and can help in visualising the object in question. As we build a more detailed picture of the *gerla* and *pannier* we realise that another translation is called for, and also that "basket" is far too generic. This is the first step in the "virtual translation" process (Katan 1999a: 124-5).

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There is, however, a very strong connotative meaning, which monolingual dictionaries traditionally do not give.\textsuperscript{11} The \textit{gei} is much more than a basket; it is a symbol of Carnia, and is, in fact, described in detail in the \textit{Guida della Carnia} (Marinelli 1906: 16, emphasis added):\textsuperscript{12}

All agricultural work is carried out by the women, from the preparation of the soil to the harvest of the products. They use the \textit{gerla} on their shoulders to carry the manure, fuel, and all other goods. \textit{It is truly incredible how they put up with this inhuman labour, which cannot but adversely affect their physical constitution.}

This connotation of the \textit{gerla} will be lost on most target-culture readers; and the feelings associated with it cannot easily be reproduced with "basket". The connotative meaning, in this case, is strictly culture-bound. The cognitive frames the term \textit{gei} cues for those who have worn the heavy basket, dragged it up and down hillsides for an entire life, can only be hinted at; and it is a very powerful metaphor for the life the people led.

Indeed, at a conference to launch the translation I was asked: "How could an English reader understand the meaning of \textit{il gei}?" The question revolves around the interpretation of "understand". The speaker who asked the question had not personally carried a \textit{gei}, nor had the poet himself. In fact, this wicker basket, except for some extremely remote parts of Carnia, has now been relegated to folk museums. The "understanding" lies in their shared collective memory, one step removed from actual experience, related to the direct suffering of others (parents, grandparents), and the effect this collective memory has had on shaping their own lives.

Some form of explanation strategy will be necessary to render this particular context of culture. A number of strategies are possible, most of which were discarded by Zanier.

\textbf{6.4.1. Extra-textual explanation}

My first suggestion was to leave the poem text as implicit as the original but to supply a line drawing of a heavy basket on a suitably bent woman's back to give the reader a clear idea of both the tenor, the literal aspect (basket, woman), and the metaphor (load, suffering). A second possibility was a footnote. I had already used footnotes in the translation of Friulano folk songs (Rossi 1988: 63):

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{11} Over the past ten years learner English Dictionaries, \textit{The Longman English Language and Culture Dictionary}, for example, have begun to add connotational meanings to the definitions.
\item \textbf{12} Personal translation.
\end{itemize}
Il cuc
...
Prin che ti vegni gole
prin che tu cjapis fac,
no lassi mame sole:
se t'us ... tu vegnis cuc".

The cuckoo
...
Before getting tempted,
before getting inflamed,
I won't leave my mother all alone.
If you want... come to my nest cuckoo.

To which I added the note: "Cuckoo' in Friulano has the double meaning of bird and husband who goes to live with his wife in 'her' family home. It is not a sign of manliness".

In general, footnotes are not approved of in translation. Thomson (1982: 30), for example, states: "Information essential to the success of conversational implicatures should be included in the text [...] not in footnotes." Zanier agreed with this principle. Thomson, however, was not talking about poetry; and information cannot simply be "included in the text" of a poem. This clearly created problems regarding the tissue of the text.

According to standard literary translation theory, key words such as gei should always be translated the same way. Dodds' (1994: 205) test of a good translation includes the following question: "Have all the key words and phrases been kept and if not why not?" The strategy advocated is full lexical repetition of the key word to cohere the text and to signal the fact that the term is, indeed, a leitmotiv (Dodds 1994: 44-45).

I have, instead, translated il gei in three different, though strictly related, ways, depending on what I judged to be the principal image sought by Zanier in each poem. Again, my translation strategy centred around the frames (pictures, sounds and feelings) cued in the target text by a TL reader.

This, in essence, is also the answer I gave to the speaker at the conference. The gei has indeed become a culture-bound icon (Katan 1999a: 161-163), but the feelings associated with it are in no way culture-bound. Hence, it was necessary to ensure that whatever words were used to translate the gei, they would direct the reader not so much to a technical understanding of the construction as to a deeper participation in the feelings associated, such as burden, weight, toil, repetition and oppression.

I did not want to cue an old British or American equivalent, one that would have led, as I mentioned before, to the crofters in the Highlands of Scotland. I needed an expression which was neutral with regard to place but strong in connotation. Serendipity led to "burden basket", the technical name for any basket with back or head straps used for carrying loads.13 "Burden" on its own

13 This term was not found in any of the standard bilingual or monolingual dictionaries. It was found in the Encyclopaedia Britannica in an article on tea-picking in Sri Lanka. The tea leaves are put in a similar type of basket.
conveys perfectly the connotations attached to *il gei*. Again, a monolingual dictionary can help in illustrating the primary frames cued:

**burden n.** 1. something that is carried: load. 2. Something that is exacting, oppressive, or difficult to bear: *the burden of responsibility* [...]  
**vb.** ... to weigh down; oppress: *the old woman was burdened with cares.* (Collins English Dictionary 1991)

However, "burden basket" is not formally equivalent to the Friulian minimalist and one-syllable word. We now have two words and four syllables. In compensation, the double name renders well through the alliteration b/ + b/ and the symmetry of the syllables. Also the added length combined with the double plosive b/ both contribute to the idea of "weight" or "burden", which is a key implicature. Thus, the full expression could be effectively adopted for the poem entitled *Un gei cu la bocja in jù* /A burden basket face down.

The disadvantage of such a compound in poetry is, of course, its length. Constant repetition in this and other poems would have hindered the flow — the second major factor in translating poetry. The solution was an alternation of "basket", "burden" and "burden basket". Whenever it was felt that the reader needed to be directed more towards the weight or to other related concepts, such as toil and hard labour, then "burden basket" was used. When, instead, it seemed that *gei* was being used more descriptively (but remaining cohesively tied to "burden" in the text) *gei* was translated simply as "basket", for example as below:

*Un gei cu la bocja in jù*  
[...] un gei  
lè il simbül da Čjargna  
e da só furtnuna  
ub gei  
cjessüt cun patsientsa d’invier  
un gei  
screenas paviugnas  
font bracedorias  
ch’ân fruiât i vues  
a gneratjons di feministas  
un gei  
[...]  

*A burden basket face down*  
[...] it’s a basket  
the symbol of Carnia  
and its destiny  
a burden basket  
woven with winter’s patience  
a basket:  
wicker frame  
base straps  
that wore the bones  
of generations of women  
a burden basket  
[...]

The same strategy was adopted for any other occurrence of *gei*, as for example in the following two poems:
La bieleça da Cjargna
 e il cil 'l è blu
 e las ostarias vueitas
 e i geis montín las ribas
 sot un grumut di vues
 [...] 

An nòf ... vita vecja
 [...] 
 e la femina?
 [...] 
 è di restà sot il gei?

The beauty of Carnia
 and when the sky is blue
 and the bars are empty
 and burden baskets climb the slopes
 on little heaps of bones
 [...] 

New year ... same old life
 [...] 
 and the wife
 [...] 
 will she have to stay bearing her
 burden?

The same type of strategy has been used to translate other culture-bound lexis, such as "la femina", "uomini", "osteria", "polenta" and "panettone" (see Katan 1995: 132-134).

6.4. Cadence

What makes poetry is the cadence. And it is often this which gets lost in translation. In poetry translation, then, the sound and the rhythm must have the same priority as the implicatures. The translator must look for that pleasing arrangement of phonemes that can recreate both the sense and the sentiment inherent in "Free ... To Have To Leave".

In terms of pleasing arrangement, Italian has a head start on English, as Dodds (1994: 146) points out. "[Italian] is such a vocalic language, a great deal of rhyme and alliteration exists naturally, in other words much of it is quite casual". The same is true in Friulian.

The theory behind the term "casual" and its antithesis "non-casual" is simply that if the words chosen by the author are part of expected or normal language for the particular genre in question, the form does not need to be accounted for in translation. However, in this particular case, the form of the "normal language" has been used non-casually; and also, the natural casual phonological equivalence has been used to great effect by Zanier to create onomatopoeic sense in sound.

The following is an example from "The Beauty of Carnia", where sound and music are also the theme. If we return to the problem of culture-bound lexis again, readers will note an over-translation of cjant as "anthem". The reasons for this were similar to those for the religious references. Un cjant in Carnia was a traditional song firmly rooted in the spirit of the place. Cjants would be sung by the farmers and other labourers to lift their spirits. In English "a song" loses this significance. A song may be heard on the radio, may be recorded and might be
popular. It is less likely, however, to be sung by a group of people as a means of uniting them. A song is less likely to focus their attention on a common theme or to lift their spirits, whereas a hymn or anthem does just that.¹⁴

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Literal translation</th>
<th>Final translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E apena tas vals</td>
<td>and just in the valleys</td>
<td>and in the valleys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>si s'int las côts</td>
<td>you can hear the whetstones</td>
<td>as soon as you can hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e las batadoras</td>
<td>and the anvils</td>
<td>the scythes sharpening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e il sgrifignà das forcejás</td>
<td>and the scratching of forks</td>
<td>and the anvils hammering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>su una vecja crosta di cjera</td>
<td>on an old crust of earth pushed by knees</td>
<td>and the spades scratching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ch'a non an plui</td>
<td>that have no more a man's back to squeeze</td>
<td>on an old clod pushed by knees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na schena di om da strengi</td>
<td>it is almost a song the beauty of Carnia</td>
<td>that no longer have a man's back to squeeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'l è cuasit un cjayt</td>
<td></td>
<td>it's almost an anthem the beauty of Carnia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la bieleça da Cjargna</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other conscious manipulations relate to the words in bold. The onomatopoeic sound of *las batadoras* is closer to the reality of battering or hammering than the more prosaic-sounding 'anvil', which, if kept, would have cued pictures of blacksmiths and horseshoes, rather than mountain pastures. Another important difference between *batadoras* and 'anvil' is that the former has only one function: to sharpen scythes. Nowhere in the poem does the poet talk about scythes, yet it will be manifest to the source-culture reader that the mountain slopes will be dotted with people who have stopped work to hammer and sharpen their scythes.

As I stated above, the most important criterion was based on how best to cue the dynamic filmic sequence, the original pictures, sounds and feelings, through a pattern of words in English within the limits imposed. In this particular case, as music was a key theme, and explicitly the focal point in the last stanza, the task for the translator was to carefully manipulate the target text so as to provide the reader with enough cues to participate in this lifting of spirits - a rare moment in this collection of sad if not bitter or angry poems.

¹⁴ It is also true, however, that rereading the poem and the original, eight years after the translation, I note an addition of passion in English which I suspect has as much to do with a younger translator's imagination as with the reality. Translations, of course, are not only "works in progress", but as the translator's own view of the world changes, so inevitably does the interpretation of a text, and with that a shifting arrangement of the *mots justes*. 
Hence, I concentrated on the music through sound cohesion or cadence. The main descriptive sounds revolve around the whetstones (sharpening the scythes), anvils (hammering out the scythe blades), and digging with the fork (scratching on stony soil). What I looked for was repetition of key sounds (alliteration and assonance), and clearly the strident s reminiscent of the sound of metal on stone was one of the most useful. "Sharpening" is the description of what is actually happening in the fields. The explication of "scythes" can be excused due to its semantic and phonetic coherence with "sharpening", thus allowing the reader to hear and see the action in the fields.

However, having set up this two-stressed line rhythm, it became clear that the poetry would suffer if the cadence were not allowed to continue. Hence, I opted to continue the "X-ing" formation, where "X" was the implement and ing the sense in sound action. To continue the assonance and the syllable gradation, "hammering" was added to the "anvils", and "forks" were replaced by the functionally related "spades":

\[
\begin{align*}
1 & 1-2 & 1-2-3 \\
\text{the scythes sharpening} \\
1 & 1 & 1-2 & 1-2-3 \\
\text{and the anvils hammering} \\
1 & 1 & 1-2 & 1-2-3 \\
\text{and the spades scratching} [...]
\end{align*}
\]

This example represents a synthesis of the maxim: maximum cognitive effect for minimum text manipulation.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, the poems have been translated with a constant eye to the differences in the cognitive environments, and to the importance that dialect poetry has in anchoring the poems to a specific area. The cues are often minimal, the use of dialect itself being high-context communication. The task of the translator was to create a new set of poems capable of involving the reader and directing reader-response to a deeper and more visceral awareness of the pictures, the sounds and the feelings associated with being "Free ...to have to Leave".
Bibliography


