

SHAPING AN IDENTITY

ADAPTING, REWRITING AND REMAKING ITALIAN LITERATURE

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Marinetti and Buvoli. A Translation Studies Approach to Italian Art and Culture

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In 2009, countless exhibitions and publications around the world marked the centenary of Futurism, the Italian avant-gard movement founded by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. In fact, research into the movement has intensified over the last half-century, leading to a deeper understanding of the nature of Futurism and an increased presence in the canon. In the Sixties, in particular, Mario Schifano, Eugenio Miccini and Lucio Fontana started to re-address formal issues taken up by Futurism, dealing directly with the movement. Contemporary artists have developed this trend, and the Italian, US-based artist Luca Buvoli's engagement with the Futurist legacy is a particularly significant case.

This paper explores the relationship between Marinetti's work and Buvoli's from a translation studies perspective. Through the analysis of Buvoli's adaptation of Marinetti's *Manifesto del Futurismo* (1909) as expressed in his projects *Not-a-Superhero* (1993-1997), *Flying – Practical Training* (1999-2011) and *Meta-Futurism* (2006-2011), which includes *Velocity Zero*, the translational scope of Buvoli's work will be emphasized as a crucial feature of his poetics.

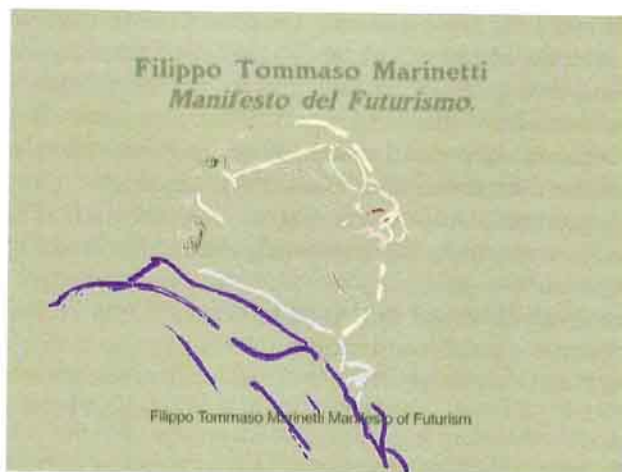


Figure 1. Video still from: Luca Buvoli, *Velocità Zero* (2007)
Courtesy Luca Buvoli

One broad question will be addressed through this investigation: can translation studies offer some critical insights into the history of Italian

art and culture? The chief presupposition, endorsed by recent research by Lawrence Venuti,¹ is that translation theory enables a rigorous critical methodology that can advance thinking about visual culture, transnational art and cultural identity. The relation between source (Marinetti's work) and adaptation (Buvoli's work) is viewed not as a reproduction or transfer, but rather as an interpretation that exposes the cultural and social conditions of both the source and the translation. In turn, the critic applies an interpretant, whether methodological or interpretative, to formulate the hermeneutic relation and its interrogative effects.

From this perspective, one can argue that Buvoli's adaptation of Marinetti's work is not only a phenomenon entailing different media and stimulating various sensory and cognitive reactions, but that it is also a proliferation, which develops a prosthetics of language through the multiplication of intermedial associations.² The present analysis will scrutinize Buvoli's combinatorial use of verbal and visual elements, his use of English and Italian, his English translation of Marinetti's words, and his use of a soundtrack and subtitles.

In recent times, the relations between translation and art have inspired a young and emerging field and a flourishing range of creative and academic experimentations.³ Like these studies, this contribution is aimed at inspiring debate and knowledge about translation as a heuristic and imaginative process, opening a window onto the interdisciplinary encounter between creative processes in the visual arts and translation in theory and practice. The approach utilized is pluralistic and reflects the hybrid nature of the topic, allowing the concept of translation to open a window onto the theme of art (and) translation from two intertwined angles: translation as a hermeneutic process, and translation as prosthetic proliferation. The ultimate purpose is to cast a new light on 'the relations between images and texts so as to allow them the relative autonomy that befits their distinctive forms and practices'.⁴

This argumentation flows through four main parts. The first part introduces Buvoli's meta-Futurist work, that is, his critical reading of

¹ See Venuti 25-43 (2007) and 131-152 (2010).

² This perspective is put forward in Scott 153-170.

³ In this sense, this chapter sits comfortably with other contributions in translation theory (e.g. Torop), visual studies (e.g. Mitchell), semiotics (e.g. Eco; Genette), and art history (e.g. Smith) which engage with this relationship to different degrees. The themes discussed in this paper also refer to recent contributions on cultural translation, such as Emily Apter's discourse on translatability in the global market and Deborah Cherry's current investigation on the ways in which images, genres and visual forms are transformed by exchanges within and between cultures.

⁴ Venuti 149 (2010).

Futurism as expressed in three series of works. The second and the third part contain an analysis of the video installation *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero*. In the conclusion, it is suggested that translation studies can provide an apt methodology not merely to highlight the similarities and the differences between Marinetti's work and Buvoli's, but to interpret their relationship as a phenomenon inherent to the history of Italian civilization.

Luca Buvoli's "Meta-Futurism"

Luca Buvoli (1963-) is an Italian-born artist who lives in New York City.⁵ Since the mid-nineties, he has been working with animated film and video, installation, sculpture, painting and drawing. In recent years, he has explored the tenets of Futurism, the bombastic Italian movement that began with the publication of Marinetti's *Manifesto* on the front cover of the Parisian daily *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909, in the light of later events.

With its heterogeneity of methods, its assortment of art forms and techniques, and its exploration of media and ways of expression, Futurism was one of the driving artistic currents in Italy at the beginning of the last century. A fascination with fearless speed, violence and rupture with the past was the hallmark of the movement. Through his *Manifesto*, Marinetti was hoping to address an elite of intellectuals as well as a mass audience, to announce a break with the past, and to found a more vigorous and militaristic society. His *vis polemica* and flair for branding, as much as his rhetorical prowess and innovative 'parole in libertà' ('words-in-freedom') poetics made him the catalyst behind Futurism, which he considered the caffeine of Europe. Marinetti's literary work soon expanded to include all art forms, and aimed to breach the barrier between art and everyday life, opening the floodgates for politicized art.⁶

A century later, in his multimedia installations Buvoli investigates the themes at the heart of Futurism—dynamism, conflict and change—by engaging with the contradictions of the movement. The relations between Futurism and anarcho-syndacalism, antidemocracy and Italian Fascism, and the clash of its cult of war with the horrors of the First World War, are of particular interest to Buvoli, who identifies in them a relevance to today's society. In an interview with the art historian Christine Poggi, he declared:

My entire "Meta-Futurist" project, since 2003, is based on different tactics that attempt to undo—on a small, intimate scale—the violence

⁵ For a more comprehensive overview of Buvoli's work, see Hirsch, 193-194; Palmieri and Buvoli; Poggi and Buvoli 65-69; and Zampetti.

⁶ See McKeever 66-67.

in the rhetoric of the manifesto, violence that pointed to the unfolding of destructive forces in the 20th century.⁷

Buvoli himself named his post-utopian approach to Futurism “Meta-Futurism”, to avoid generalization and misunderstanding:

By naming my project “Meta-Futurism”, I thought of it etymologically as “Beyond Futurism” as well as “About Futurism”, something that refers to Futurism in an ironic manner. But given my interest in what Pirandello defined “the feeling of the opposite”, I also liked that “meta-futurism” could be seen as the merging of the name of the dynamic avant-garde with the almost concurrent Metaphysical Painting by Giorgio De Chirico, that instead presented anxious and motionless landscapes, perhaps closer to my vision of that specific historical moment.⁸

This ‘feeling of the opposite’ is evident in three series of works that Buvoli produced from the Nineties to the present day: *Not-a-Superhero*, *Flying – Practical Training* and *Meta-Futurism*.⁹

The artist’s books, sculptures, collages, animated films, and installations titled *Not-a-Superhero* (1993-1997) are not directly related to Futurism, yet deal with issues of heroism, idealism and nationalism—themes at the heart of Futurism—by utilizing a comics format. In *Not-a-Superhero*, Buvoli seeks to reroute the construction of virility and national identity in the US myth of the Superhero from the Fifties to the present day. In later works, this topic would develop into Buvoli’s creative attempt to dismantle the rhetoric of masculinity, velocity and violence that dominated in Italy between the two world wars.¹⁰

Begun in 1997, the series of works titled *Flying – Practical Training* (1999-2011) focuses on the themes of war and flight, by merging biographical elements with historical elements. The project, which includes *Beginners* (1999-2003), *Intermediates* (2003-2011) and *Advanced* (2001-), is

⁷ See Poggi and Buvoli 58.

⁸ See Palmieri and Buvoli.

⁹ Works from the *Not-a-Superhero* series were exhibited in 1993 at Galleria Loft in Valdagno (Vicenza, Italy); in 1994 at Food House in Santa Monica, CA and at Galleria Autori Messa in Rome; in 1995 at the Clocktower Gallery / PS 1 Museum, at John Weber Gallery (Project Room) and at the AC Project Room in New York; and in 1997 at Caffé Florian in Venice. The *Flying – Practical Training* series was exhibited in 2000 at the Austin Museum of Art, TX and at the M.I.T. List Visual Arts Center in Cambridge, MA; in 2002 at the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, OR; and in 2003 at the Gassell School of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, TX and at the Devin Borden Hiram Butler Gallery in Houston, TX. The *Meta-Futurism* series was exhibited in 2009 at the Estorick Collection in London and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

¹⁰ See Palmieri and Buvoli.

a multimedia method teaching human unassisted flight, realized within the format of technical diagrams and pseudo-scientific text, referring to aerodynamics books and pilot manuals. The installation also draws on *aeropittura*, the painting of aeroplanes and the earth from above produced by Futurist artists of the post-war period, among whom Gerardo Dottori, Fedele Azari, Filia, and Tullio Crali.

In particular, the video belonging to *Flying – Practical Training for Intermediates* combines clips from an interview that Buvoli conducted with his parents about their memories of the Second World War with hand-drawn and computer-generated animation. As the artist points out during an interview with Jessica Palmieri,¹¹ his parents' recollections produce a verbal chain of free associations and animated sequences that 'reflect their interior turmoil'. In addition, Buvoli mixes the bold colours, imagery, and style borrowed from Italian propaganda and advertising of the thirties and forties, with hesitant language and humble colours.

As Buvoli expanded his knowledge of the Italian history, he developed a special interest in the Futurist rhetoric and, in particular, its fetishization of technology, and started to devise creative ways to disassemble them by evoking a sense of instability and vulnerability. This process led him to produce *Meta-Futurism* (2003-2011), which includes *Velocity Zero* (2006-2009), a series of works composed of animated videos, film, words, and sounds. This synaesthetic composition is based on a meaningful and ironic oxymoron: representing movement ('Velocity') by slowing it down ('Zero').

Excerpts from: Velocity Zero

Buvoli produced two distinct videos for *Velocity Zero*. The first version, *Velocità Zero*, is in Italian with English subtitles, while the second version, *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero*, is in English with Italian subtitles. In both versions, sections of the Futurist *Manifesto* are read out loud by adults with speech difficulties.¹²



Figure 2.
Luca Buvoli, *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* (2007)
Installation view, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 2009
Courtesy Luca Buvoli

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Clips from an Italian-language version of the film were used by the



Figure 3.
Luca Buvoli (second from the left), the logopedist Dr. Marissa Barrera (in the middle) and some of the aphasic people who are featured in *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* Installation view, New York, Museum of Modern Art, 2009
Courtesy Luca Buvoli

For this project, Buvoli collaborated with several speech pathologists and several male and female individuals with aphasia, a condition caused by brain damage that generates language impairments (figure 3). He videotaped a number of people who stutter or have the condition of aphasia reading the Futurist manifesto. Explains Buvoli: “[...] my main concern was to respect, to the highest degree, the persons and their communicative disorders. I wanted to empower them in producing a new reading of the manifesto.”¹³

The effect of the video is powerful. Buvoli utilizes the difficulty in communicating of a group of people with speech disorders so as to symbolically critique the rhetoric of velocity, aggression and violence in today’s society.¹⁴



Figure 4. Luca Buvoli, *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* (2007)
Installation view, Estorick Collection, London, 2009
Courtesy Luca Buvoli

Associazione Italiana Afasici (Italian Aphasia Association) as part of their campaign to highlight the condition. These excerpts were shown as public service announcements on Italian national television channels to promote awareness of the disease.

¹³ See Poggi 59.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Now let us consider *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero*, and analyze its visual and verbal elements. The visual component includes the words appearing on the screen, and the images of the aphasic speakers, while among the verbal elements are the drawn, typed and pronounced words.

First and foremost, the visual elements comprise the typed and drawn words visible on the screen, the figures of the people reading Marinetti's *Manifesto*, and the background. Figure 5 displays the arrangement of these graphic elements in a sample video still:



Figure 5.
Video still from: Luca Buvoli, *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* (2007)
Courtesy Luca Buvoli

As is clear in figure 5, the image of the aphasic reader occupies the central area of the screen. The head is the only visible part of the body of the speaker. His image has been recorded with the aid of a video camera; subsequently, Buvoli has edited the video, erasing all the elements in the background and substituting them with red colour. As a result, the full-coloured background imbues the scene with vividness and a comics-like flair. Noticeably, not only has Buvoli eliminated colours from the face of the speaker, leaving only his profile lines, but also, these lines have been simplified and replaced by animated lines drawn in white and pale grey and slightly trembling on the background. The final effect is of oversimplification, neatness and yet, vulnerability.

The white and pale grey lines defining the profile of the speaker match with the white supertitles and subtitles, which appear in the upper and lower areas of the screen. The supertitles are written in fonts larger and bolder than the subtitles, and are broken into verses, while subtitles are small and thin, and occupy a single line. Given their graphic prominence, the viewer immediately pays more attention to the supertitles, while the subtitles appear as complementary appendices.

Scenes similar to the video still reproduced in figure 5 flow on the screen in a numbered sequence. Each scene corresponds to an individual speaker pronouncing an excerpt from Marinetti's *Manifesto* translated from Italian into English. Another example is visualized in figure 6:



Figure 6.
Video still from:
Luca Buvoli,
Excerpts from:
Velocity Zero (2007)
Courtesy Luca
Buvoli

As is evident by comparing figure 5 with figure 6, the two video stills are similarly structured. Nothing changes in the arrangement of the images on the screen apart from the background colours. In both figures, we can barely distinguish the traits of the speakers, as their profiles are in movement and simplified with the aid of computer-generated lines that resemble an animation film. Another element of continuity between the two images is that we view the speakers from a low perspective—from an unusual angle that arouses feelings of overexposure and estrangement.

The second aspect to be examined is the verbal component. This includes, first of all, the paratexts of the video such as the title, *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero*, and the artist's name, appearing at the beginning. As mentioned above, the title reflects a subversive paradox, and immediately announces the revolutionary nature of the artwork, besides its genesis from a longer version. Secondly, the text of the *Manifesto* appears in the English translation in the top area of the screen, and in its original Italian version in the bottom area, in smaller size. This is the transcription in Times New Roman of the supertitles with the English translation of the *Manifesto* (in plain typeface) and of the subtitles containing the original text (in italics). In the transcription, each paragraph corresponds to a speaker:

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti
Manifesto of Futurism.
Manifesto del Futurismo
Filippo Tommaso Marinetti
Published by the "Figaro" in Paris
20 February 1909
Pubblicato dal "Figaro" di Parigi il 20 febbraio 1909

I WE intend to sing the
love of danger,

the habit of energy and
fearlessness.

Noi vogliamo cantare l'amor del pericolo, l'abitudine all'energia e alla temerità.

4 WE affirm that the
world's magnificence
has been enriched by a new beauty:

Noi affermiamo che la magnificenza del mondo si è arricchita di una bellezza nuova:

the beauty of speed.

A racing car whose
hood is adorned with
great pipes

*la bellezza della velocità. Un [sic] automobile da
corsa col suo cofano adorno di grossi tubi*

like serpents of explosive
breath-

simili a serpenti dall'alito esplosivo...

a roaring car that

seems to ride on

machinegun fire

un [sic] automobile ruggente, che sembra correre sulla mitraglia,

is more beautiful than the Victory
of Samothrace.

è più bello della Vittoria di Samotracia.

7 EXCEPT in struggle
there is no more beauty.

Non v'è più bellezza, se non nella lotta.

No work without an

aggressive character

can be a masterpiece.

Nessuna opera che non abbia un carattere aggressivo può essere un capolavoro.

Poetry must be conceived
as a violent

La poesia dev'essere concepita come un violento

attack on unknown forces,

prostrate them

before man [sic].

assalto contro le forze ignote, per ridurle a prostrarsi davanti all'uomo.

9 WE will glorify war-
the world's only hygiene-

Noi vogliamo glorificare la guerra-sola igiene del mondo-

militarism, patriotism,

the destructive

gesture of anarchists,

il militarismo, il patriottismo, il gesto distruttore dei libertari,

beautiful ideas worth
dying for, and
contempt for woman.

Le belle idee per cui si muore e il disprezzo della donna.



Figure 7. Video still
from: Luca Buvoli,
Excerpts from:
Velocity Zero (2007)
Courtesy Luca
Buvoli

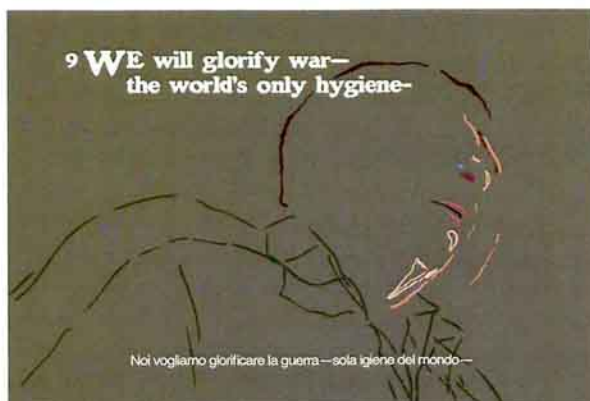


Figure 8. Video still
from: Luca Buvoli,
Excerpts from:
Velocity Zero (2007)
Courtesy Luca
Buvoli

It is crucial to take into account that all the captions appear before the speakers start to pronounce them, and that the readers speak slowly and painfully, taking pauses and making mistakes. Sometimes, they spell the words instead of pronouncing them, other times they utter something different from what appears on the screen. Unlike the subtitles, their words are not white, but colored with hesitation and pain, and with the frustration of the viewers / listeners.

The text of Marinetti's *Manifesto* is gravely solemn, almost religious. In both the Italian version and the English rendition, the lexicon utilized comprises numerous abstract nouns, and the chain of sentences resembles an antiphonic psalm. Moreover, the repetition of the personal pronoun 'WE' ('Noi') at the beginning of the sentence adds severity and intensity, emphasizing the plurality and the universality of the message. By contrast, the insecure voices of the speakers recall

the ideas of void, fragmentation and solitude, and universality is expressed by the combined presence of simplified lines and full-screen colors.

Particularly insistent is Marinetti's emphasis on violence and speed. The poet pushes this emphasis to the extreme through the images of the 'racing car' (*automobile da corsa*), the 'roaring car' (*automobile ruggente*), and the 'machinegun fire' (*mitraglia*). In a few cases, however, the English translation appears to weaken the source, disintegrating the forceful cohesion of the Italian text. For instance, the positive, Latin-rooted noun *temerità* is translated into the negative substantive 'fearlessness', which emphasizes not so much the presence of courage as the absence of fear. Similarly, the active reflexive verb *si è arricchita* is rendered by the passive verb 'has been enriched'. Even the onomatopoeic *mitraglia* is split into a triplet of halves ('machinegun fire'). Finally, the idealist *libertari* has been translated with the more political 'anarchists', a word deprived of any reference to liberty, and whose etymology means "without order / rule".

Besides the lexical shifts, worthy of note is Buvoli's tendency to break Marinetti's sentences into shorter verses. Certainly, this breakage allows him to display the English text in a more prominent and effective array but, more importantly, disintegrates the solidity of the *Manifesto* into painful pieces of sounds. As a result, although the super-titles appear bigger and bolder than the Italian subtitles, the English translation sounds weak and drowsy, not only because of the speakers' reading difficulties, but also due to the graphic alteration that the Italian sentences have undergone.

Another important element that deserves to be noted is the presence of two women amongst the aphasic speakers. Since the text that is read aloud in the video ends with the misogynous expression 'contempt for woman' (*il disprezzo della donna*), Buvoli's choice to include female readers might be considered at first sight as a rebellious mockery. From this perspective, *il disprezzo della donna* should have been translated into the more ambiguous expression 'the despising of women'. In fact, as clarified in a conversation with Buvoli, the women featured in the video would signify Marinetti's attempt to counter the wave of accusations that he received after the publication of the *Manifesto*. The word *donna*, Marinetti claimed in his defense, did not refer to real women, but alluded to the stereotype of femininity.

Subtly, yet evidently, Buvoli utilizes the Futurist communicative strategy in order to dismantle it. Marinetti's celebration of velocity and aggression is almost caricatured by the readers' verbal hesitancy and by Buvoli's hand-drawn animation of the footage, which slows and overlaps images in mimicry of the Futurists' representation of motion. The temporal gap between the average viewer's reading of the super-

title / subtitle and the aphasic readers' performance of the text is meant to create a feeling of writhing and frustration.¹⁶ The effect is a sense of fragmentation and incompleteness mirroring and reciprocating the readers' struggle to pronounce Marinetti's words.

As the analysis of *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* suggests, in Buvoli's video adaptation of the Futurist *Manifesto* the process of foreignization¹⁷ is strikingly strong. First of all, the contrast between Marinetti's famous literary work and the use of the English language, the features and the voices of the American speakers, and their disordered pronunciation, generates an effect of alienation and estrangement. Secondly, the time hiatus between 1909, when the *Manifesto* was published on the *Figaro*, and 2007, when Buvoli's work was produced, is a real emblem of distance and distortion. Thirdly, the synchronic presence of the English supertitles and the Italian subtitles on the screen makes it evident that translation is among the cognitive processes involved in both the production and the fruition of the video. Thus, in *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* translation is not invisible, but literally in our face. Not only is the artist an Italian "translated" to the United States, but also his audience feels instantly foreign because, Buvoli seems to reveal, 'WE' are segregated by language, nationalisms and violence.

Translating from verbal to visual

Having outlined these basic elements of *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* allows us to focus on a crucial aspect of Buvoli's work. In the light of Venuti's recent study of ekphrasis, the relationship between Marinetti's work and Buvoli's will be interpreted in terms of translation.

The starting point is Venuti's definition of ekphrasis as 'the verbal representation of visual representation'.¹⁸ Venuti considers ekphrasis a form of translation—a phenomenon of intercultural communication that communicates one interpretation among different possibilities.¹⁹ From this perspective, Buvoli's *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* could be considered a form of reversed ekphrasis, as it constitutes a visual representation of a verbal representation.

¹⁶ See Poggi 59.

¹⁷ Venuti defines foreignization as 'an ethnodeviant pressure on those values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad'. See Venuti 20 (1995).

¹⁸ See Venuti 132 (2010).

¹⁹ Venuti argues: 'This is not to suggest that no formal or semantic correspondences can exist between the source and translated texts, but rather that any such correspondences are subject to the exigencies of an interpretive labor, that is decisively determined by the translating language and culture.' See Venuti 137 (2010).

According to Venuti, translation enacts an interpretation, first of all, because it is radically decontextualizing. The translator dismantles, rearranges, and displaces the chain of signifiers that make up the source text. In particular, argues the scholar, three source-language contexts are lost in translation: the intratextual context, the intertextual context, and the context of reception:

The first is intratextual and therefore constitutive of the source text, of its linguistic patterns and discursive structures, its verbal texture. The second is intertextual yet equally constitutive, since it comprises the network of linguistic relations that endows the source text with significance for readers who have read widely in the source language. The third, which is also constitutive but both intertextual and intersemiotic, is the context of reception, the various media through which the source text continues to accrue significance when it begins to circulate in its originary culture [...].²⁰

This triple context is constitutive of the source text, as it is necessary for the signifying process, and supports meanings, values, and functions which never survive intact the shift to a different language and culture.

Buvoli's work decontextualizes Marinetti in a particularly extensive and complex way, because of a change not only from Italian into English, but also from a verbal to an 'imagetextual' work, that is, a work where text and image are indissolubly connected.²¹ Aspects of Marinetti's *Manifesto* and of its contexts are omitted or altered, and the "translator" has been highly selective in handling them.

However, as Venuti remarks, in translation the source text is not only decontextualized but also recontextualized. These two processes are simultaneous:

The recontextualizing process entails the creation of another network of intertextual relations established by and within the translation, a receiving intertext, and the process continues in the mergence of another context of reception... [...] When translated, then, the source text undergoes not only various degrees of formal and semantic loss, but also an exorbitant gain: [...] the translator develops an interpretation in the translating language that ultimately proliferates cultural differences so that the translation can signify in the receiving situation.²²

In Buvoli's *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero*, this double process is particularly evident, as source text and translation appear simultaneously on the

²⁰ See Venuti 138 (2010).

²¹ The word 'imagetext', referring to a composite work that merges images and texts, was coined by W. T. J. Mitchell. Its definition is contained in his seminal work *Picture Theory*. (See Mitchell 89).

²² See Venuti 138 (2010).

screen. Visibly, the formal aspects of the *Manifesto*, such as Marinetti's Italian, his heroic style, its affiliations with the literary tradition of artistic manifestos and to the format of *Le Figaro*, are completely transformed into a substantially different signifying process. Buvoli's critique of Futurism and of today's society, his critical view of violence and war, and his ironic attitude towards media power have recontextualized Marinetti's text, transforming it into a poignant portrait of contemporaneity.

The polyphonic dimension of Buvoli's adaptation—a dimension that makes reference to the concept of polyphony formulated by Mikhail Bakhtin in relation to Fedor Dostoevsky's work²³—is the second crucial aspect of his work. This polyphony emerges particularly clearly if we refer to Clive Scott's phenomenological approach to translation, an approach which draws on Futurist theories.

With originality and persuasiveness, Scott argues for translation not only as a phenomenon entailing several media and stimulating different sensory and cognitive reactions, but also as an orchestral proliferation which develops a 'prosthetics' of language—that is, a process of replacement and of addition—through the multiplication of intermedial associations. His analysis suggests practices of literary translation that entail the combinatorial use of verbal and visual elements. Scott maintains that 'we need to develop an onomatopoeia of the other senses. This may involve not only manipulation of words in their accepted forms, but the creation of new diacritical marks to achieve maximal sensory vividness'.²⁴

Scott's assumption is that we perceive the universe with the joint contribution of all our senses, not through their individual activities; and that mind and body, concept and percept are strictly related. As a consequence, intermedial translation

is not primarily to be conceived of as a process of transfer of one medium to another; it is the translation of one medium out of itself into multisensory, or cross-sensory, consciousness; put another way, it is the translation of one medium²⁵ back into whole-body experience. I do not wish to call this translation transmedial of course, nor multi-

²³In literature, polyphony is a feature of narrative, which includes a variety of points of view and voices. The concept of polyphony was introduced by Bakhtin in his essay *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

²⁴See Scott 157.

²⁵Scott's definition of intermedial translation is in conceptual contrast with the definition of 'imagetext' coined by Mitchell. Mitchell not only defines the imagetext as a composite work that combines image and text, but also argues that all texts are imagetexts, as there is no metaphysical distinction between verbal elements and visual realm, at least on a communicative level.

medial, nor intermedial, all of which leave media intact, albeit in intimate dialog. I want to call this translation synesthetic.²⁶

Scott argues that synesthetizations allow a text to fan out into multiple versions of itself: not just interpretations of its meaning, but performances of the reading experience.²⁷ From this perspective, Buvoli's *Velocity Zero* can also be considered a synesthetic rendition of Marinetti's Manifesto, as his video has transformed the source text into a multimedia work and a multisensory experience.

What is striking is that Scott's argument on synesthesia not only refers implicitly to Luigi Russolo's and Wassily Kandinsky's artistic experimentations in painting and sound, but also explicitly draws upon Enrico Prampolini's 1913 manifesto *Chromophony: The Colours of Sound*²⁸ and upon Marinetti's theory of analogy. In particular, according to Marinetti, the artist needs to develop a synesthetic style, in order to create the right environment for the proliferation of analogy. His *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature* reads:

The life of matter can be embraced only by an orchestral style at once polychromatic, polyphonic, and polymorphous, by means of the most extensive analogies.²⁹

In Scott's view, the translator should elaborate what Marinetti calls 'an orchestral style' to exploit the effect of the lines of force, or vibrations, which he/she reads out of, or elicits from, the text to be translated. From this standpoint, Buvoli's adaptation of the *Manifesto* can also be considered as orchestral, as the artist uses written and pronounced words, recorded images, animation, sound, colours, and graphics in order to echo and proliferate the effects of the source. Briefly put, Buvoli activates a serial metamorphosis, which allows every viewer to participate in the work's becoming. *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* is conceived as a cross-sensory journey, in which the lexical is allowed associatively to generate whatever sense-experience it wishes to.

²⁶ See Scott 154.

²⁷ See Scott 154-155.

²⁸ Apollonio 115-17. Quoted in Scott 155. According to Pierpaolo Antonello, Prampolini was more up-to-date and aware of the international artistic scene that Marinetti. As argued by Antonelli, since 1915 Prampolini extensively practiced and theorized polymaterial art, a novelty in the European context of the early twentieth century. See Antonello 315-336.

²⁹ Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature". Rainey, Lawrence (ed.), *Modernism: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, 16. Quoted in Scott 156.

A translation studies approach to Italian cultural history

The research methodology adopted throughout this chapter has aimed not merely at 'seeing in translation', that is, reconstructing the period eye and mind, but also at 'seeing through translation'—at revealing 'the successive discursive constructs that contribute to or constitute an object's cultural biography'.³⁰ From this perspective, Buvoli's meta-Futurist adaptation of Marinetti's work has been interpreted not only as a selective appropriation of the Futurist manifesto, but also as the creative representation of Buvoli's historical conscience and of his view of today's Italy. *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* must be read as an intermedial transposition that expands and renews the source in an original way.

In the light of Venuti's theory, one can better understand that Buvoli's re-writing of the *Manifesto* is a critical transposition, which parodies not only the Futurist celebration of speed, violence and masculinity, but also today's political and media power. Indeed, through a phenomenon of reverse ekphrasis, *Excerpts from: Velocity Zero* decontextualizes and recontextualizes Marinetti's text, by way of the insertion of visual and sonic elements that paradoxically transform the source into a critique of today's political manipulation, media propaganda, exasperated macho-ism, and deification of technology. In this sense, Buvoli's work ought to be read as a literal yet metaphoric attempt to represent and construct the Italian identity from a foreignized point of view, by transforming Marinetti's words into an imagetext performed by aphasic speakers and by reshaping the format of a nationalist *Manifesto* so as to reach a transnational and translinguistic audience.

Moreover, from Scott's perspective, Buvoli's video can be interpreted as a synesthetic rendition that appeals not only to our cognition, but also to all our senses, multiplying and amplifying the source in a polyphonic manner. Such multiplication may well be regarded as a metapoetic act, which utilizes the very principles of the Futurist poetics (namely, analogy and synesthesia) in order to parody them.

In conclusion, a translation studies approach to the link between Marinetti's *Manifesto* and Buvoli's *Meta-Futurism* highlights how the poetics of adaptation has affected the latter's representation and construction of the Italian identity. Using translation as a descriptor of the phenomenon of diffusion, transformation and evolution of art forms stimulates us to view such a representation and construction as a phenomenon inherent not only to the history of art, but also to the history of Italian civilization.

³⁰ See Phillips 196.

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