

## Retranslation, thirty-odd years after Berman

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### Abstract

The introductory chapter to this special issue on retranslation goes back to the beginning, that is, Berman's (1990) seminal paper in the fourth issue of *Palimpsestes*, as well as to Bensimon's introduction to that issue. We look in detail at Berman's argument, and reconstruct the way in which he was misunderstood before being instrumentalised by Chesterman (2000), in his often-quoted "retranslation hypothesis". After a discussion of that still dominant yet problematic paradigm, and the methodological issues involved, of 'closeness' to the source text, historicity and ageing, and the dichotomic homogenisation of languages and contexts, we present an overview of the existing literature, both in terms of inward (i.e., text-comparative) and outward (socio-cultural) perspectives on retranslation. Attempting to go beyond the beaten path, we identify a number of blind spots and call for a transversal, cross-cultural perspective, while suggesting a number of possible avenues for future research, regarding the WHY?, HOW?, WHAT?, WHERE?, WHEN?, and WHO? questions related to retranslation. Another possible and promising inquiry into the phenomenon of retranslation, besides transversal comparisons across contexts, is to study its absence, that is, non-retranslation, by looking into some of the same questions. WHEN and WHY are some works, or parts thereof, *unretranslated*, or even *unretranslatable*? WHAT texts and genres are concerned by this phenomenon? WHERE, i.e., in which translation cultures does it occur? WHO is responsible for that? HOW can it be explained that some texts are *not* retranslated? Finally, we present the papers in this special issue, and the ways in which they address new horizons for retranslation studies. Our objective is not only to bring an overview and show the vitality of retranslation studies, but also, as retranslations do, to uncover earlier shortcomings and to bring new interpretations.

### Keywords

retranslation, literature review, history of translation, retranslation hypothesis, non-retranslation

# 1. The emergence of retranslation as an object of study: How Berman was misunderstood

Retranslation as a phenomenon has existed for centuries (Burton, 2011; Van Poucke & Sanz Gallego, 2019, p. 10), yet became an object of study only some thirty years ago, with the publication of a special issue of *Palimpsestes* (1990) devoted to “*Retraduire*”. Since then, it is common, although not entirely unproblematic, to define retranslations as new translations, in the same language, of a text already translated, in full or in part (Gambier, 1994, p. 413; see, also, Tahir Gürçağlar, 2009, p. 233 and Koskinen & Paloposki, 2010).

On the one hand, to define retranslations as “new” translations remains ambiguous: does “new” refer to a translation *product* that is new, i.e., different as compared to a previous one, presenting an amount of textual changes large enough for that product to be described as new, as opposed to a revision or an adaptation (Gambier, 1994)? Or does “new” refer to a new publication, i.e., a new event in a text’s foreign reception *process*, formed by the appearance, in the target context, of a translation that was produced later than a previous one, without having to be, necessarily, all that different? On the other hand, there is the question of the “same” target language: languages evolve, and so do attitudes with regard to language, including its use in literary texts and the translations of those texts. To what extent can it be said that new translations use “the same language” as previous ones? And even when we are dealing with clearly distinct target languages, we can ask ourselves whether a translation into, for instance, Portuguese might be influenced by a previous translation of the same literary work into Spanish and whether this more recent translation might then be defined as a “retranslation” as well (Alevato do Amaral, 2019).

These two aspects of the most widely used definition of retranslation – that is, difference and time, or difference over time – have been the main objects of debate since the beginning of what we now refer to as “retranslation theory” (Brownlie, 2006) or “retranslation studies” (Berk Albachten & Tahir Gürçağlar, 2019a). The starting point of that debate on retranslations’ difference, along the thin line between retranslation, revision, adaptation, re-use, or even plagiarism, and on the alleged ageing of translations (and target languages) as opposed to originals, or at least canonised originals that reputedly do not age, is Antoine Berman’s seminal paper, “*La retraduction comme espace de la traduction*”, published in the 1990 issue of *Palimpsestes*. Over the past thirty-odd years, Berman (1990) has been, and he remains, one of the most quoted references in retranslation studies, although, astonishingly, no English translation is available. As a result, Berman’s text is often referred to by second hand, and presented as the origin of the ‘retranslation hypothesis’, which in fact it is not. Therefore, one could say that at the beginning of retranslation studies, there was... a translation issue, all the more so because Berman’s thoughts on retranslation were made out to be something they are not. We will go further into that below, but let us first look at what Berman *did* actually write.

In his 1990 seminal paper, Berman presented retranslation as “*espace de la traduction*” (“*espace*”, not “*un espace*”), whereby he further defined “*espace*” [room, space] as “*espace d’accomplissement*” [room of/for fulfilment] (1990, p. 1). In Berman’s view, which is largely inspired by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Walter Benjamin, this “*espace d’accomplissement*” is pervaded by time, more precisely by the relationship between historical time and translation’s “own temporality” (“*une temporalité propre*”, p. 1). Historical time is presented, following Goethe and Benjamin, in terms of triadic, dialectic evolution: thesis, antithesis, synthesis (the latter subsequently becoming the thesis of yet another triadic cycle to follow). Applied to translation, the passing of historical time thus brings a repeated triadic cycle of “epochs of translation”, as described by Goethe in his *West-Eastern Divan* (see also Deane-Cox 2014, p. 3), from word-for-word translation, over free adaptive translation, to what Berman calls “literal” translation. In Berman’s views (1984, 1985), “literal translation” (“*traduction*

*littérale*”) therefore is not word-for-word translation, but a translation that remains “attached to the letter (of works)” (2000, p. 207), i.e., their language, their style, their “*étrangeté*”. It is the opposite of what Berman (1985) calls “*la systématique de la déformation*” [systematics of deformation], which occurs when translators privilege the sole transmission of “meaning” at the expense of “the letter” (of content, at the expense of form, one could say). Rather than resorting to deforming tendencies, such as “clarification” (explicitation), “rationalisation”, “*ennoblissement*” [ennoblement] or destruction of vernacular language (standardisation or normalisation), “literal translation” brings the target language to evolve in response to “the trials of the foreign” (Berman, 1984; Venuti *transl.*, 2000).

Translation’s own temporality, on the other hand, is marked by “*caducité*” [obsolescence or decay], and “*inachèvement*” [incompleteness or unfinishedness]. As no translation can claim to be ‘the’ translation, Berman argues, the need for retranslations – which he defines, with more latitude than Gambier (1994), as “any translation made after the first translation of a work” [“*Toute traduction faite après la première traduction d’une oeuvre*”] (1990, p. 1) – is embedded in the very nature of the act of translating. Translating, put otherwise, is conceptualised by Berman as a repeated triadic series of translation acts taking place in historical time while bringing into play translation’s own temporality marked by obsolescence and incompleteness: “Translation is thus embedded in a relationship with time, with the ephemeral and with history” (Vatain-Corfdir, 2021, p. 1, our translation).

In a dialectic view of history, beginnings are clumsy, hesitant (“*maladroit*”, p. 4; “*aveugle et hésitant*”, p. 5) and “*toute action humaine, pour s’accomplir, a besoin de la répétition*” [all human action, to be fulfilled, needs repetition] (1990, p. 4), as repetition brings improvement. This is why “[l]a retraduction surgit de la nécessité [...] de réduire la défaillance originelle” [retranslation arises out of the need [...] to reduce the initial failing] (1990, p. 5). This *défaillance* (failing, or “shortcomings”, in Deane-Cox’s (2014, p. 3) translation) is not so much the textual description of a first translation (let alone of any first translation) – Berman explicitly states that a first translation can (exceptionally) be a “*grande traduction*”, provided it shows the characteristics of a retranslation. Rather, it is the result of the nature of translation itself as an act of incompleteness being inscribed in a dialectic view of historical time, which, in Goethe’s idealistic envisionment is less about the chronological progression of time than it is an evolution of thought, in a threefold but most of all cyclic movement (Vatain-Corfdir, 2021, p. 5; Berman himself speaks of “phase[s] de la conscience occidentale” [phase[s] of occidental consciousness], 1984, p. 281).

Translations, and retranslations as well, are subject to obsolescence, and coincide with either one of the first two stages of historical fulfilment (“*accomplissement*”). But what Berman then calls “*grandes traductions*” – commonly translated as “great translations”, although “major translations” would be more accurate, as the term points to a translation’s status in the target context, without necessarily implying a quality statement – coincide, in his view, with the third stage of fulfilment, “literal” translation (“*traduction littérale*”), which is the synthesis between (all too) source-oriented (word-for-word) translation and (all too) target-oriented (free, adaptive) translation. Normally, “literal translation” completes a triadic translation cycle, and “pour un temps, suspend la succession des traductions” [temporarily suspends the succession of translations] (p. 5, our emphasis). As “major translations” occur in the third stage of historical fulfilment, they are necessarily retranslations. Retranslations, however, as they can also occur in the second stage of historical development, are not necessarily “major translations”. For his final argument, on the conditions needed for a major translation to happen, Berman goes back to historical time. A major translation only occurs “*au moment favorable*” (p. 6), i.e., at the appropriate moment, the ungraspable *Kairos* of Greek mythology. As this concept “refers to History itself” (“*renvoie à l’Histoire elle-même*”, p. 6) rather than to the process

of translation's *own* temporality, Berman actually refuses to explain the emergence of major translations – “*traductions qui perdurent à l'égal des originaux*”, p. 2 [translations that endure just like the originals] – by an inherently translational logic alone, outside of historical time (i.e., by a translation universal or law). Indeed, “major translations” remain unaffected – “*pour un temps*”, Berman says, i.e., for a given period of historical time, which length depends on the ungraspable contingency of history – by translation's temporality of obsolescence, until “the taboo represented by the retranslation of canonical translations” (Ladmiral 2011, p. 45, our translation) is transgressed, and a new translation becomes necessary (Jianzhong, 2003). In brief, in Jean-René Ladmiral's view (2011, p. 31), which echoes Berman's, “[i]n fact, it is not so much the translation itself that is ageing as our relationship with it, i.e. our reading of it, for many reasons” (our translation) – we will get back to that.

Although translation logic plays its part as major translations (“*grandes traductions*”) are preceded by insufficient ones and could not have come to fruition without these early stages of translation – so that, in Berman's view, first or early translations contribute to retranslations (see also, Gambier, 1994, pp. 414-415) – the emergence of a major translation is determined, not by translation-inherent logic or time, but by contextual, historical contingency – which explains what Deane-Cox (2014, p. 1) called retranslations' “mercurial inconstancy”. This is illustrated by the example Berman gives on the final page of his paper, Pierre Klossowski's 1964 French translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* (1990, p. 7) that he had superbly analysed earlier (Berman, 1985, pp. 127-150). In order to truly understand Berman's argument on retranslation as “literal translation” that dynamises language by the “trials of the foreign” (Berman, 1984) and by a return to the history of translation itself, one should read those pages.

From this “*réflexion*” (Berman's term, 1985, pp. 37-44) on time and the succession of acts of translating, to the retranslation hypothesis as we know it, there is quite a stretch, although that hypothesis is all too often ascribed to Berman. Berman never presented his ideas as a ‘hypothesis’, never claimed that retranslations are by definition ‘closer’ to the source text (he describes Klossowski's “literal” translation as “*un mélange de littérature et de liberté*”, 1985, p. 138, i.e., as a synthesis of the first two stages of historical evolution, that renders what he calls “the letter” of the text); he never wrote that retranslation could be explained by a sole translation-inherent logic, outside of historical time and contextual contingency (Kairos), let alone by a testable hypothesis or translation universal. The ‘retranslation hypothesis’ has taken Berman's argument away from its philosophical level of reflection, to a methodological-procedural one, with which it has but very little affinity.

The ‘retranslation hypothesis’ was formulated ten years after Berman's seminal paper, by Andrew Chesterman (2000). Chesterman referred to Berman, yet his ideas rest mainly on Paul Bensimon's “*Présentation*” in the 1990 *Palimpsestes* issue. In that introduction – which is not available in English either – Bensimon formulates all elements that Chesterman would turn into a hypothesis, without however explicitly relating any of these to Berman's paper, nor presenting these elements as a hypothesis. First translations are “introductions”, Bensimon writes, that “naturalise” the foreign work, reducing alterity to better integrate the work in the target culture by observing “socio-cultural imperatives that privilege the addressee of the translated work” (p. ix, our translation). Arguably, in Berman's “reflection” on retranslation, this actually describes what happens in the *second* stage of historical evolution, which *already concerns retranslations...* As opposed to first translations, Bensimon continues, retranslations are different: retranslators no longer have to introduce the foreign work in the target culture, do not strive to reduce the distance between the two cultures, do not refuse “cultural displacement / disorientation” (“*dépaysement culturel*”) but present a work's “irreducible strangeness” (“*irréductible étrangeté*”). Retranslations are generally more attentive, Bensimon

concludes, to “the letter of the source text, its linguistic and stylistic landscape, its singularity.” (pp. ix-x, our translation).

It is in Bensimon’s introduction, not in Berman’s paper, that we find the constitutive ingredients of what would become Chesterman’s hypothesis, including its binarism of target-oriented first translations *versus* source-oriented retranslations, rightfully described by Ladmiral (2011, p. 45) as “un *trivium* problématique” [a problematic *trivium*]. The key elements found in Bensimon (1990) are also present in Gambier (1994): “Following Berman (1984 and 1990), it can be argued that a first translation always tends to be rather assimilative, to reduce otherness in the name of cultural, editorial imperatives [...]. Retranslation under these conditions would consist of a *return* to the source text.” (1994, p. 414; our translation, Gambier’s italics). This “*retour*” to the source text, Gambier insists, also is a “*détour*”: “If there is a return, it is by the *détour* of the first translation [...] Retranslation unties enslaved forms, restores *signifiance*, opening up to original specificities, while at the same time making the translating language work.” (1994, p. 415; our translation). In presentations of Berman’s thought, such as Gambier’s, however prudent his formulation may be, the triadic nature of translational time has disappeared in favour of binary logic – which is Bensimon’s, not Berman’s. Consequently, the idea of major translations (“*grandes traductions*”) as *third*-stage retranslations, as “literal” translations that make the synthesis of both source-orientedness (attention to the letter of the text, to its *literaturnost*) and target-orientedness (re-actualising the meaning of a classic for its target audience), has also disappeared. Finally, whereas Berman recognises the possibility of exceptions by stating that a first translation can exceptionally be a major translation, Gambier’s formulation is prudent (“it can be argued”), yet also absolute: “that a first translation *always* tends to be rather assimilative” (our italics).

Chesterman (2000) took stock of the 1990 *Palimpsestes* issue to discuss basic models for translation studies research, for which he takes retranslation as a case in point. In other terms, Chesterman laid out a “comprehensive empirical research programme for translation studies” (2000, p. 25), by way of hypotheses to be tested. This is, indeed, quite a stretch for who has carefully read Berman, who stems from another tradition of scholarly work altogether and who would most certainly have been adverse to his work being presented as the prolegomena to an *empirical* research programme (see, for instance, Berman, 1985, p. 37, on his adversity to “methodologising” experimental theory). Chesterman has turned Berman’s “*réflexion*” into the “methodology” he explicitly refused (1985, pp. 37-39, 84), that is, into a “research model” of the causal kind (rather than comparative or process-oriented), based on the assumption that “[a]ny rigorous academic discipline progresses by way of hypotheses.” (p. 21).

In Chesterman’s view, there are four types of hypotheses: interpretive ones (that use comparison as a means of understanding), descriptive ones (that make empirically verifiable claims about the generality of a condition, i.e., whether it is a translation universal or law), explanatory ones (that state why a given phenomenon occurs), or predictive ones (that declare that under given conditions a phenomenon will occur). For each type of hypothesis, Chesterman mentions the example of retranslation, grossly derived from Berman’s and Bensimon’s papers discussed above, while being inscribed in a binary either/or and earlier/later logic. This is what Chesterman writes, as a first example of an interpretative hypothesis: “Goethe’s three phases can be reduced to a dual opposition between ‘freer earlier’ and ‘closer later’” (p. 22). Such a reduction can only be interpreted as a denial of Berman’s key argument on the relationship between historical time and translation’s own temporality, and the idea that “major translations” (“*grandes traductions*”) come in the third stage of “literal” translation, as the combination of source- (stage 1) and target-orientedness (stage 2). This “interpretive hypothesis” informs the three other formulations that follow: “Later translations (same ST,



same TL) tend to be closer to the original than earlier ones” (p. 23) (descriptive hypothesis); “Later translators take a critical stance to the earlier translation, seek to improve on it” (p. 24) (explanatory hypothesis); and “Later translations of a given text will be found to be closer than earlier ones” (p. 25) (predictive hypothesis).

To Chesterman’s defence: he does add that “[m]uch testing obviously remains to be done” (p. 25) and, with respect to the descriptive hypothesis, that “[t]he jury is still out on this one: there seems to be evidence both for and against. Much depends on how ‘closeness’ is to be measured, of course.” (p. 23). Chesterman’s program quickly became a heuristic paradigm in retranslation studies. It would be hard to find even a single article that does not mention the “retranslation hypothesis”, generally in its first pages, too often wrongly ascribing it to Berman and therefore unintentionally reducing the French critic’s stimulating “*réflexion*” on retranslation to Chesterman’s procedural caricature of it.

## 2. The problematic paradigm: the “retranslation hypothesis” no more

Chesterman’s “laconic” hypothesis (Deane-Cox, 2014, p. 4), which has dominated the field of retranslation studies since over two decades, continues to be used as a heuristic tool, despite serious conceptual and methodological problems, that come on top of its caricature of Berman’s thought on retranslation. In addition, about half of the dozens of extant case studies that take the hypothesis as a starting point, claim to validate it, and the other half to invalidate it, which immediately contradicts the potentially “universal” character of the phenomenon. Put otherwise, the retranslation hypothesis creates a tangent perspective on retranslation that really does not say much about it, except that the complexity of a cultural praxis cannot be grasped by a simple “hypothesis” that claims to ‘measure’ this practice in terms of ‘closeness’ to the source text, or a “universal” or general tendency allegedly present in every single translation effort.

The point here is not to know whether the hypothesis holds or not for particular cases; the point is that the hypothesis in itself is insufficient to really say anything about retranslation, and therefore creates a heuristic perspective on retranslation that in itself is invalid. Already in 2003, Kaisa Koskinen and Outi Paloposki formulated the core of this critique: “contrary to what the so-called Retranslation Hypothesis claims, the textual profiles of translations are not determined simply by their chronological order of appearance, but respond to a number of different reasons and settings” (2003, p. 20; see, also, Koskinen & Paloposki, 2004). Put otherwise, “a linear evolution from domesticating towards foreignising translations does not reflect the real complexity of the retranslation process” (Cadera, 2017a, p. 6). In the following paragraphs, we will go into the question why this hypothesis is invalid and insufficient, and look at the methodological issues of this problematic paradigm in more detail, by considering its different components. For this we will refer to its “descriptive” formulation (Chesterman, 2000, p. 23): “Later translations (same ST, same TL) tend to be closer to the original than earlier ones.”

### 2.1. “Closeness” and the textual relationship between original, translation and retranslation

A first issue, and it is a major one, has to do with the textual relationship between original, translation and retranslation, and is more or less admitted to by Chesterman himself: What does it mean to say that a given translation is “closer” to the source text than another translation? Much depends, Chesterman acknowledged, on how ‘closeness’ is to be measured. Yet, “closeness” *cannot* be measured: To decide, in an objective manner, what ‘closeness’ means would be to square the circle. The reason for this, is that “closeness” is a spatial conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), and therefore, as any conceptual metaphor, it is a cultural

given. As a result, the meaning of ‘closeness’ in translation can differ from culture to culture (and even from individual to individual), and can therefore never be an objective basis of comparison. As far as translation is concerned, the spatial metaphors we use rest on Latin etymology (*trans-ducere*, to bring across) and are common, arguably even unavoidable, in translation studies – when translation is presented as a bridge, a prism, a transfer across linguistic and cultural spaces. Yet, in Chesterman’s hypothesis, “closeness” as a spatial metaphor is used to qualify a relationship that is first and foremost a *textual* and a *temporal* (historical) one: “‘freer earlier’ and ‘closer later’” (2000, p. 22). If, indeed, ‘later’ implies ‘closer’, then we should ask ourselves: ‘closer’ to whom? Retranslations are in fact closer to *now*, and therefore closer to *us* (to the individual assessing a translation). Therefore, if we are to say that retranslations are ‘closer’ to the original than first translations (although further removed from it, from a temporal perspective), implicitly this has to mean that they are ‘closer’ to the original *to us* (to that individual). As a result, as translation critics or scholars we may well be, or at least are at the risk of, projecting our own cultural and socio-linguistic conventions, such as our own interpretation of ‘closeness’ today, onto translations of the past (see, also, Brisset, 2004, p. 40 and Massardier-Kenney, 2015).

Put otherwise, any attempt at measuring translations’ “closeness” to the source text, if at all possible, may well be a means of disregarding earlier translations’ historical specificity, or colouring it with today’s glasses. “Closeness”, so to say, is in the eye of the beholder. This is all the more problematic as ‘closeness’ is one of the main *topoi* of publishers’ paratexts when they market new translations (Paloposki & Koskinen, 2010, p. 30; Massardier-Kenney, 2015, p. 73; see, also, Veselica Majhut *et al.*, in the present volume), together with “faithfulness” to, or “respect” for the original’s “true spirit”, set off against the out-datedness of earlier translations. Put otherwise, “closeness” (or “truthfulness”, or “respect”) is a “value” (Venuti, 2004) *allegedly* created by retranslations, according to publishers and retranslators themselves, in the texts that accompany their new translations. All too often, these claims are then blindly repeated by reviewers who judge the (stylistic) result of the translational act on parameters of the target language adverse to Berman’s idea of literal translation (such as stylistic smoothness, idiomaticity and the invisibility of translation), without knowing the source text (or even the source language) well enough to be able to judge a translation’s ‘closeness’ to that source text. We must not forget that such claims of ‘closeness’ by editors and retranslators are made in epideictic discourse, i.e., according to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* (I, 3 and I, 9; Aristotle 2007, pp. 46-51 and 75-83), a discourse of praise (or blame) that puts forward certain values by repeated insistence, so that the target audience is convinced into believing them. Such claims should not be taken for objective descriptions. In fact, any translation philosophy or strategy could fit the metaphor of ‘closeness’: translators and publishers will always claim to be ‘close’ to the source text, as well as ‘close’ to the contemporary target audience, for that matter.

With regard to the supposed ‘closeness’ of retranslations, Chesterman actually leaves the door open, when he hypothetically claims that “retranslations *tend to be* closer to the original than earlier ones” (2000, p. 23, our italics), by means of a “*potential S-universal*” (2004/2017, p. 260, our italics). He only states that “Later translations of a given text *will be found to be* closer than earlier ones” (2000, p. 25) to give an example of a predictive, rather than descriptive hypothesis, not to state that this is, or should be, objectively the case. Many publications, however, have taken Chesterman’s idea, often implicitly, as a predictive and “universal” *statement*. That is an issue, because a hypothesis, when predictive, determines the way in which scholars analyse a phenomenon, in this case retranslation, as if it were the only way to study the historical process of continuous reinterpretation of classical works by repeated translation (see Peeters *et al.*, 2022). The complexity of the textual relationship between retransla-

tion, translation and original cannot be grasped by the formula “tend to be closer”, and cannot be grasped outside of its historicity and its own cultural context. Nor can it be “measured”: when the passing of time is involved, there is no escaping the fundamental epistemological problem of historicity, and how to write that history (Brisset, 2004, p. 61).

## 2.2. “Earlier” and “later” translations: Historicity, ageing and evolution over time

Second, retranslations’ historicity brings us to the question of that textual relationship’s evolution over time. In this respect, Chesterman speaks of ‘earlier’ and ‘later’ translations. Yet, how much earlier or later would the time gap between two translations have to be, for them to qualify for the retranslation hypothesis? Do “passive” retranslations (Pym, 1988) fall out of its scope (as is argued by Deane-Cox, 2014, pp. 12-18), even though they might have been consulted by retranslators working in another language (Alevato do Amaral, 2019)? How can we account for the presence of several “active” retranslations on a given market, in the same place, at the same time (Brisset, 2004, p. 63): Even though they may have been carried out ‘earlier’, translations sometimes stay on the market alongside newer ones, or are re-issued, often when copyright expires, often in cheap paperback editions or e-books by small independent publishing houses. Sometimes retranslations appear at very short intervals as compared to ‘earlier’ or even ‘contemporary’ translations (Susam-Sarajeva, 2003, p. 5; Peeters *et al.*, 2022, pp. 17-18). Finally, in many cases there are several retranslations of a given work in a given language, often three or more, regularly up to ten, exceptionally even far more (see Cadera, 2017b, on the 31 Spanish translations of Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* or Ladmiral, 2011, p. 30, who mentions approximately 100 Corean translations of Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary*!). Surely, in view of such overabundance, the idea of ageing as a motive for retranslation, or the idea that retranslations provide an increase in source-orientedness (whatever that may mean) becomes a caricature that cannot possibly hold for each and every retranslation, as compared to the previous one, or to all the previous ones. Far more decisive factors for the market of literary translations are the economic profitability of competing (re)translations and their re-editions, and the struggle for symbolic capital on the world literature market.

At stake here is the fact that Chesterman’s hypothesis homogenises and de-historicises the notions of “text” and “language” (“same ST, same TL”, 2000, p. 23), and therefore ignores the diversity, including historical diversity, of source and target literary and cultural contexts. For instance, are the 2004 French retranslators of Joyce’s *Ulysses* really translating the ‘same’ text into the ‘same’ target language as the 1926 first translators? Texts, including source texts, evolve and, even more importantly, so does their interpretation in evolving source and target contexts. This evolution of texts and their interpretation brings us to the many possible faces of the concept of “ageing”.

Supposedly, following Berman’s (1990) claim, translations age, while originals do not (although Berman stresses that the idea of ageing is far from evident, even enigmatic), with the exception of what he calls “*grandes traductions*” – “major” rather than “great” translations (see above). As we have seen, “major translations” endure as originals do (“*perdurent* [literally, “continue to last”] à l’égal des originaux”, 1990, p. 2), do not age (“*ne vieillissent pas*”, p. 2), and temporarily suspend the succession of retranslations (“pour un temps, suspend[ent], la succession des retraductions ou diminu[ent] leur nécessité”, p. 5; our emphasis). Berman is not as adamant here as he is sometimes made out to be: even “major” translations *do* age after a given period of time (as do originals by the way, that do not necessarily preserve their canonicity, as argued by Brisset, 2004, p. 52, though, admittedly, perhaps the retranslated ones do). What is at stake here, even if the metaphor of “age” used is a biological one, is not the passing of time as a linear, empirical, mechanical or biological given, nor is it a strictly



translation-inherent and teleological logic that would bring all translations, except the “major” (or “great”) ones, to “die”. Ageing is a socio-cultural, socio-ideological construct, a “cultural representation” (Massardier-Kenney, 2015, p. 76), as Bourdieu (1993) already argued, which, in the case of translations, is determined by all kinds of possible evolutions in the target language and culture (Collombat, 2004; Van Poucke, 2017), and not only the linguistic ones which are the main subject of the majority of literary reviews.

It is this construct that changes over time and brings translations to “age” (see, also, Topia, 1990, pp. 45-47), not the texts or translations *per se*:

The ageing of authors, schools and works is far from being the product of a mechanical, chronological slide into the past; it results from the struggle between those who have made their mark (*fait date*) and who are fighting to persist, and those who cannot make their own mark without pushing into the past those who have an interest in stopping the clock, eternalising the present stage of things. Making one’s mark, initiating a new epoch, means winning recognition, in both senses, of one’s difference from other producers, especially the most consecrated of them; it means, by the same token, creating a new position, ahead of positions already occupied (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 60; see, also, p. 187)

Interestingly, almost all the examples of “major translations” given by Berman (1990, p. 2) are translations by famous *authors*: Jacques Amyot’s translation of Plutarchus, Baudelaire’s Edgar Allen Poe, Hölderlin’s *Antigone*, Chateaubriand’s translation of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Schlegel’s Shakespeare, Tieck’s *Don Quixote*... It makes one wonder whether these “major translations” are “major” because they are retranslations, or – at least partly, perhaps even entirely – because their translators were *authors* endowed with symbolic capital in the target culture (see, also, Brisset, 2004, p. 59).

Perhaps, “major translations” are “major” *despite* being translations, a perhaps provocative yet not entirely incongruous thought, considering that most of these examples Berman gives hardly stand out for their source-orientedness! Even the “greatest” of these “great” translations, by the way, have been retranslated (see, also, Collombat, 2004, p. 6), although sometimes only quite recently and without much effect, although it is too early to evaluate this, on the immortality of Baudelaire’s and Chateaubriand’s versions which, at least for now, continue to dominate the French editorial market: Edgar Allen Poe was retranslated by Christian Garcin and Thierry Gillybœuf (Phébus, 2019); *Paradise Lost* / *Le Paradis perdu* just appeared in a bilingual edition reprinting the annotated 1951 French retranslation by scholars Pierre Messiaen and Jacques Blondel (Belles-Lettres, 2022).

### 2.3. Dichotomy and differentiality

A final problem with Chesterman’s hypothesis, when we look at it as a whole, is that these issues, which are highly complex ones, related to textual relationships between original, translation and retranslation, as well as to contextual evolutions over time that influence these relationships, are tied together in a dichotomic, differential way of conceptualising what goes on in retranslation. The overall reasoning expressed by the retranslation hypothesis, is in terms of *either* this *or* that: source *versus* target, close *versus* distant, earlier *versus* later translations. It is not clear why it would be impossible, for a translation, to be ‘closer’ to the source text as well as ‘closer’ to its target audience, at the same time. Or to be, at the same time, more ‘source-oriented’ for certain aspects (to the eye of whichever beholder, as we saw), while being more ‘target-oriented’ than another translation for other aspects.

To sum up, the retranslation hypothesis does not work, for a number of reasons, and should be dismissed as a whole. Rather than opening a window on the phenomenon of retranslation,

Chesterman's hypothesis has narrowed our views. Rather than providing a theory, it has become a mantra which has caused methodological issues with the way in which, to a certain extent, retranslation studies has evolved. These conceptual and methodological issues concern the very central problems at stake when texts get retranslated, that is, the textual relationship between retranslations, translations, and originals, involving the relationship between different historical time frames (including constructs of ageing and novelty), and different contexts (including linguistic and socio-ideological constructs of self and other, and cultural and translational norms and values related to these constructs). Such complex relationships cannot, and should not, be reduced to a dichotomic, essentialist and homogenising, de-historicising hypothesis. Rather, let us no longer consider retranslations as being more 'source-oriented' or 'closer' to the source text, or not, but as reformulations, across time and in a given language / culture, of *what it means* to be 'close' or 'faithful' to a source text stemming from another given language / culture, at a given time (Peeters *et al.*, 2022).

### 3. Inward and outward perspectives on retranslation

In the 21st Century, retranslation studies evolved in two opposite directions, that is, either following an "inward" perspective focusing on the textual dynamic of retranslation and more or less accepting the rationale of the retranslation hypothesis (at least as a hypothesis or a heuristic model worth of being tested), or subscribing to an "outward" perspective that studies the historical and contextual dynamics of retranslation and the socio-cultural factors involved.

On the one hand, numerous single case studies were conducted that have often taken the retranslation hypothesis as a starting point, either supporting the idea that retranslations are 'closer' to the source text than first or early translations, or, most often, stating that no conclusive evidence was found to support the hypothesis, for the specific texts and languages under study, or that the hypothesis itself does not lead to any conclusive statement regarding the case examined. Overviews of such case studies are discussed in Milton & Torres (2003), Desmidt (2009), Paloposki & Koskinen (2010), Monti & Schnyder (2011), Deane-Cox (2014), and Alvstad & Assis Rosa (2015). In recent years, more case studies based on Chesterman's views were published (e.g., Kaloh Vid, 2016; Bywood, 2019), including in non-European contexts (see Vahid Dastjerdi & Mohammadi, 2013; Feng, 2014; Al-Shaye, 2018; Zhang & Ma, 2018; Alshehri, 2020; Mesić, 2020; Saeedi, 2020; Tan, 2020; Sanatifar & Etemadi, 2021; Pan & Li, 2021; Sharifpour & Sharififar, 2021; Chen, 2022; among others), generally taking the retranslation hypothesis as a starting point, yet most often concluding either that it does not hold, or that it does not provide a sufficient methodological framework.

On the other hand, numerous studies have followed Koskinen & Paloposki's (2003) critique from the outset and have refused the retranslation hypothesis altogether, because "there seems to be no substantial body of evidence in support of or against the retranslation hypothesis" (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2004, p. 27). These studies stress the teleological illusion of translational progress (arguably) embedded in Berman's vision, toward the "original truth" supposedly enshrined in a supposedly stable source text (Brisset, 2004, pp. 39-42) and the importance of socio-cultural context, generally and rightfully criticising the hypothesis by stating that the reasons why retranslations occur, and why they occur in the way they do, are numerous and include ideological, commercial, subjective, and literary motives as well as translational ones (Venuti, 2004; Van Poucke, 2017).

Some of the motives for retranslation mentioned are the appearance of a new edition or interpretation of the source text (Vanderschelden, 2000, pp. 4-6; Tahir Gürçağlar, 2009, p. 235), deficiencies in earlier (direct or indirect) translations (Vanderschelden, 2000, p. 4; Tahir Gürçağlar, 2009, p. 235; Monti, 2011, p. 14; Tegelberg, 2011, p. 462), institutional or ideological

changes in the receiving culture (Vanderschelden, 2000; Monti, 2011; Massardier-Kenney, 2015; Roca Ugorri, 2017), the translator's personal preferences (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2004) or subjectivity (Brisset, 2004; Skibinska, 2007), changing translational norms in line with cultural changes, such as the ambition to free oneself from the principle of strict fidelity when retranslating the Bible (Collombat, 2004, p. 11), or commercial rivalry on the editorial market (Pym, 1998; Venuti, 2004; Ségeral, 2019; Peeters *et al.*, 2022, pp. 17-18).

This second type of multi-faceted, 'outward' approaches that privilege the socio-cultural or social-historical investigation of context has led to a plethora of scholarly work since the beginning of the century. Besides the series of "Retranslation in context"-conferences (Istanbul 2013 and 2015, Ghent 2017, Madrid 2019, Budapest 2022) and the dozens of articles that have appeared in all of the renowned translation studies journals (*Translation Studies*, *Translation Review*, *Meta*, *Perspectives*, *The Translator*, and so on), several special issues were published, namely "Tradução, retradução e adaptação", J. Milton & M.-H. Torres Eds., *Cadernos de Tradução*, 11, 2003; "Pourquoi retraduire?", P. Bensimon & D. Coupaye Eds., *Palimpsestes*, 15, 2004; "Voice in retranslation", C. Alvstad & A. Assis Rosa Eds., *Target*, 27(1), 2015; "Retranslation in context", P. Van Poucke & G. Sanz Gallego Eds., *Cadernos de Tradução*, 39(1), 2019; "Discourses on retranslation", Ş. Tahir Gürçağlar Ed., *TranscUlturAl*, 12(1), 2020; "Retranslation, multidisciplinary and multimodality", Ö. Berk Albachten & Ş. Tahir Gürçağlar Eds., *The Translator*, 26(1), 2020; and "(Re-)traduire les classiques français", M. Koffeman & M. Smeets Eds., *Relief*, 15(1), 2021. To this can be added several edited volumes (Banoun & Henking Eds., 2007; Kahn & Seth Eds., 2010; Monti & Schnyder Eds., 2011; Douglas & Cabaret Eds., 2014; Cadera & Walsh Eds., 2017; Berk Albachten & Tahir Gürçağlar Eds., 2019a and 2019b; Cadera & Walsh Eds., 2022) and monographs (O'Driscoll, 2011; Pokorn, 2012; Courtois, 2014; Deane-Cox, 2014).

Arguably, the socio-cultural focus of these numerous studies, although they have brought academic weight to the topic of retranslation which is now a well-established field of inquiry in translation studies – as is shown by its presence in handbooks and encyclopaedia of translation studies (Tahir Gürçağlar, 2009, 2019; Koskinen & Paloposki, 2010; Koskinen, 2018) – has overshadowed the need for a solid and comprehensive theoretical or conceptual model for retranslation. The contextual complexity of the topic, its "spiral-like and vertiginous pattern" (Susam-Sarajeva, 2003), or "rhizomatic" nature (Brisset, 2004, p. 48; Brownlie, 2006) that requires thorough historical contextualisation, as well as the laboriousness of textual analyses of sometimes very large corpora of retranslations, have refrained retranslation scholars from developing another conceptual model than Chesterman's, that could underpin the extant descriptive approaches by the much needed conceptual grounding, in response to Cadera's (2017a, p. 7) claim that "there has been no significant evolution in Translation Studies on this question [retranslation]". Up to date, despite an almost general agreement on the retranslation hypothesis's insufficiency, there is no conceptual model to replace "an entire critical discourse on retranslations as expressing a default, a deficiency, or decaying of first translations" (Massardier-Kenney, 2015, p. 74). Even if the retranslation hypothesis is continuously criticised, it also is continuously present in the critical discourse on retranslation.

Massardier-Kenney (2015) for instance, tried to invert the "paradigm of lack" connoted by the retranslation hypothesis, by presenting retranslations as actualisations of the potential contained in a literary text, that do not necessarily stem from a weakness, or an inadequacy in previous translations. Peeters (2016), Peeters & Sanz Gallego (2020) and Peeters *et al.* (2022) have developed that argument into a Bakhtin-inspired conceptual model of retranslation as dialogical re-accentuation of a given source text's meaning potential in the target culture at a given time. Other models have been mentioned, though generally as tools for analysis within

a descriptive perspective on retranslation that remains pervaded by the differential paradigm that has been present since the early stages of retranslation studies, rather than conceptualise the phenomenon of retranslation *per se*. Brownlie (2006), Deane-Cox (2014), or Alvstad & Assis Rosa (2015), for instance, make use of narrative theory; Zhang & Ma (2018), Alevato do Amaral (2019) and Niskanen (2021) have proposed intertextual, hypertextual or polyphonic models for retranslation studies, close to the previously mentioned Bakhtinian one; Cadera (2017a) refers to system theory, while Deane-Cox (2014) or Martín González (2021) have used systemic-functional or conceptual linguistics to analyse retranslations.

Besides the need for theoretical development, there are some ‘blind spots’ of retranslation studies. Wardle (2019) and Vassallo (2022) stress the need for an alternative perspective on literary retranslation considering the reader’s role, whereas the main focus has been on the production rather than on the reception side. Second, we have little empirical data on the retranslators’ professional and personal profiles. Third, notwithstanding some examples of the contrary, the focus lies heavily on the subsequent translations of canonical literary works. Beckett, Camus, Cervantes, Dostoevsky, Flaubert, Joyce, Kafka, Lawrence, Lorca, Proust, Sartre, Scott Fitzgerald, Tolstoy, Verne, including the canon of children’s and youth literature (Carroll, Kipling, Milne, Perrault, Saint-Exupéry), those are the stars of retranslation studies. Some notable exceptions are Brisset (2004) on the French translations of Darwin; Siméoni (2000) and Susam-Sarajeva (2003) on the retranslations of literary and cultural theory; Tükel Kanra (2019), Konca (2019) and Uslu (2019) on the Turkish retranslations of Kant’s *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* and Marx’s *Das Kapital* and Marx’s and Engels’ *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*; Pan & Li (2021) and Tao (2020) on the retranslation of Chinese political and historical texts, respectively; Greenall (2015), Mus (2019) and Küven (2019) on song translation; Kim (2018) on the Korean translations of the American historiographer Iris Chang’s *Rape of Nanking*; or Bywood (2019) on audiovisual retranslation.

#### 4. Beyond the beaten path

Finally, the dominant outward perspective on retranslation, as it implies a focus on the importance and diversity of socio-cultural contexts, has resulted in a series of predominantly monocultural accounts of retranslation, into a single given language and target context. Although such cases are interesting and deserve to be analysed, up to date little effort has been made at an encompassing synthesis. As a result, our knowledge of the specificity of retranslation as a phenomenon remains fragmented, and the necessary conceptualisation is still lacking, as was emphasised by Alvstad & Assis Rosa (2015, p. 8): “This endeavor has been only partially embraced by scattered studies that address the relation to previous translations, different source texts, revisions, new editions, reprints, adaptations, back translation or indirect translation, or that consider broad and specific contextual influences and constraints”. When launching our call for papers, we therefore deliberately aimed at original contributions to retranslation studies that develop perspectives on retranslation addressing understudied questions, while exceeding the level of a single case study.

Up to date, at least to our knowledge, the cultural specificity of retranslation, combined with the unavoidably limited knowledge of retranslation scholars in terms of languages they master and source and target contexts they are able to study, has impeded the realisation of transversal studies of retranslation, across languages and cultures. Although “the need to move beyond individual cases” (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2019, p. 25) has recently met general agreement, at the latest manifestation of the “Retranslation in context”-conference series in Budapest (April 2022), the wait is for concrete, large international projects that would bring together retranslation scholars of several target contexts, uniting their efforts in collaboration.

One possible approach to such transversal retranslation projects could be the cross-cultural comparison of retranslations of the ‘same’ work, in a given number of languages and target contexts.

As it now stands, some characteristics of retranslation and some questions related to the phenomenon are still understudied. In general, the majority of studies on retranslation so far have focused their attention, either on the motives for retranslation, trying to answer the WHY? question, or on confirming or denying the retranslation hypothesis for the specific cases studied, thus limiting the HOW? question to a single aspect and a single case. Far less time and energy were spent on other questions related to the HOW?, WHAT?, WHERE?, WHEN?, and WHO? of retranslation. With the current volume, we intended to fill a number of those gaps by taking a closer and more encompassing look at the retranslators and the product of their work – retranslation as a phenomenon, in order to answer the crucial question “what actually happens in retranslating” (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2010, p. 295).

Each of these questions has been touched upon in previous research, but so far the motivation for retranslation “appears to be the most widely studied variable” (see Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015, p. 14; Monti, 2011, pp. 14-18). Two of the possible motives for retranslation have been extensively treated in the previous sections of this article. On the one hand, the retranslation hypothesis argues that retranslations are made with the purpose of bringing the target text ‘closer’ to the source text, while “brushing up” the language of an older (and – allegedly – old-sounding), earlier translation. On the other hand, the ageing of (the) previous translation(s) in itself is also pointed out as an important motive for retranslation. Apart from these two motives, many more possible answers to the WHY? question have been put forward in retranslation studies (for an overview, see, e.g., Vanderschelden, 2000; Monti, 2011; Tegelberg, 2011; Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015; Tahir Gürçağlar, 2019). In section 3. of this article, we referred to earlier research on this subject.

The WHAT? question has attracted less attention in academia, and has been answered in various ways, which illustrates both the terminological quest of early pioneering investigations and the multifaceted nature of the concept of retranslation. In the early years of retranslation studies, a clear distinction had to be made between “retranslation” in its purest form (“a new translation in the same language, of a text already translated, in full or in part”, Gambier, 1994, p. 413), a “translation of a translation” (not necessarily into the same language, which is now more often coined as “indirect translation”), or “back-translation” (into the source language) (Gambier, 1994, p. 413). However, this terminological discussion is not closed yet, as recently, Vitor Alevato do Amaral (2019) fuelled the long-standing debate by calling for a much broader interpretation of the concept than is ordinarily in use. By taking into account previous translations into *different* languages (thus going back to Berman’s somewhat larger definition of retranslation, see section 1. above), and including the “virtually ever-expanding intertextuality made by the original and its translations in different languages” (pp. 254-255) in the analysis, a plethora of new possibilities is created for retranslation research.

Another way of approaching the WHAT? question is by looking at the types of literary texts that are retranslated more often than others. As could be foreseen, there is an obvious, yet complex link between retranslation and canonicity. Here, reference should be made to the concepts of “hot” and “cold” translations. The former term is used for translations which follow the publication of a particular source text at a short time interval, while the latter phenomenon is characterised by a larger time gap between the original and its translation. Cold translations allow for the target culture to assess the literary merits of the author in its own, as well as in other receiving cultures (for a discussion of these concepts see Vanderschelden, 2000, p. 9, who borrowed the terminology from Claude Demanueli). The introduction of a new literary



name into a target culture by means of a “hot” translation includes a certain (symbolic and financial) risk for both the translator and the publisher, but even after studious consideration, miscalculations are made and “lesser names” get translated. Usually, they do not, however, get retranslated. Being retranslated is normally the prerogative of either sacred texts or literary works “endowed with canonical status in either the translated or the translating culture” (Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015, p. 10; see also Venuti, 2004; Brownlie, 2006, p. 146). Canonical status implies what Bourdieu called symbolic capital, which increases economic potential for the publisher. Research has shown how the economic potential of retranslating the canon may lead to unwanted side effects, such as large-scale plagiarism, or an uncontrollable flood of retranslations and reeditions in a very short time span (Şahin *et al.*, 2019), generally shortly after copyright – either of the original, or of an ‘old’ translation re-issued – expires.

This brings us to one of the other W-questions in the discussion, namely the WHEN? of retranslation. An “urban legend” of retranslation states that every generation deserves its own translation, of Shakespeare, Cervantes, Hugo, Goethe or Dostoevsky. Yet, as we saw above, this has more to do with the attraction (both in terms of symbolic and economic capital) of these canonical authors for potential translators and publishers, than with the actual process of ageing, whether of language, or translations. Apart from the fact that not all languages evolve or “age” at the same pace, research in retranslation studies has shown that not every literary genre experiences the same degree of ageing. For sacred and some classical literary texts, it is sometimes taken for granted that translations should not (over)modernise, thus de-historicise the register of the text; instead, historicisms and even archaic language use are more easily tolerated than in other genres (Rodriguez, 1990; Collombat, 2004). Virtually the same goes for the translation of poetry, which arguably has more to do with different possible interpretations than with changes in linguistic or translational norms.

Two important genres are notable exceptions to historicising language use being regarded as acceptable: theatre and children’s literature. Sirkku Aaltonen (2003) investigated the former into great detail and came to the conclusion that the “ageing rate” of theatre translations is determined by the “target” of the translation. When a retranslation is commissioned “for a particular theatrical production”, the “need to update the language” is usually stressed by the commissioner, even if the distance between the two translations is less than a generation (p. 154). Translations of children’s literature are equally often commissioned, and for this genre, the “rule” also seems to apply that retranslations are expected to comply with up-to-date linguistic norms and have to be “adjusted to target language norms more extensively than any other kind of text” (Du-Nour 1995, p. 330), because children are expected to usually be familiar with contemporary language use only.

What about the WHERE? in retranslation studies? As Alvstad & Assis Rosa (2015, p. 13) correctly state, “space can also be considered as geographical space, and as such it may correlate with different linguistic varieties within the same language”. So far, this line of investigation has not yet attracted much scholarly interest, but the analysis of (re)translations into Québécois French in contrast to international French (Brisset, 1996) revealed the promising character of this comparative type of research, which might be applied much more broadly to other pairs of language varieties as well: American *versus* British English, European *versus* Brazilian Portuguese, European *versus* South-American Spanish, among others. While Koskinen & Paloposki (2010) were still in doubt “whether a French translation produced for the Canadian market is a retranslation if a previous translation exists in France” (p. 294), the suggestion by Alevato do Amaral (2019) to open up the debate by interpreting intertextuality in a broader way than we did before, creates lines of research that could help remove the doubt in Koskinen & Paloposki’s question.

Since the emergence of the “personal turn” in translation studies and the correlated shift of attention to ‘translator studies’ (see, e.g., Kaindl *et al.*, 2021), more attention is being attached to the WHO? question as well, which as a matter of fact can be answered in various ways. As attention is shifting from the purely textual analysis of retranslations towards the contextual specificity of the phenomenon, the different agents in the process come to the fore, as for instance the (re)translators themselves, the publishers and editors, but also the readers. In one of the contributions to the current volume, Adrienn Gulyás tries to draw a portrait of the average retranslator in contemporary Hungary, focusing on age, gender, work experience and embeddedness in the publishing and academic circles. However, even the possibility to sketch this portrait can no longer be taken for granted in the fast-paced world of fandubbing and online crowdsourcing (see Gambier, 2011), in which the identities of the (re)translator(s) can no longer be pinpointed, hence blurring issues of responsibility and authorship (*auctoritas*). In the case of self-retranslation (Peng, 2017; Wang & Humblé, 2019), that authorship is unmistakably linked to one individual (or translation team), yet also questions the “definitive” character of any target text.

Finally, the HOW? question is obviously the object of the bulk of articles on retranslation, since traditionally, the majority of contributions in the field somehow dealt with translation strategies or shifts between different versions of one and the same source text. However, Alvstad & Assis Rosa (2015, p. 16) add one more interpretation of the HOW? question to the discussion by looking at how retranslations “are presented to the reader/viewer” and dividing retranslations, as Juliane House (1997, 2010) did for translations, into “overt” and “covert” ones. The latter option is pushed to the limit when plagiarism is involved, but even in less obvious cases, the “line between retranslating and revising” a previous translation is often an extremely fine one (see Paloposki & Koskinen, 2010). After all, the number of possible ways to translate large parts of one and the same source text cannot extend into infinity, as is convincingly demonstrated by Sanz Gallego *et al.* in the current volume.

## 5. Absence of retranslation

In the early years of retranslation research, the – obvious – way to go was an attempt to create an all-embracing analysis of the multiple aspects of the phenomenon itself, including the search for answers to the W- and H-questions, as described in the previous section. Since the start of the third millennium, however, part of the focus has shifted towards a less obvious aspect of retranslation, namely its absence and the reasons for texts not being retranslated. As a matter of fact, the majority of W- and H-questions can also be asked concerning the phenomenon of *non*-retranslation: Why are certain literary texts never retranslated? Why are other texts, even canonical ones, retranslated into some languages, yet not into other languages? Are there cultures and historical circumstances in which retranslation is not a self-evident appearance? Are there limits to retranslation, and, if yes, where are those limits, and what defines them?

For sure, there is a link between the existence of “major translations” (“*grandes traductions*”) and the “survival” of those particular translations over a longer stretch of time, without being challenged by other (re)translations. In such cases, the prestige of the (often well-known) translator and the assumed high quality of the translation (its cultural capital, which can also be the result of a given translator’s status as author) prevent competing attempts (which would entail a reputational and commercial risk). But often, the reasons for non-retranslation go beyond issues of quality and authorial fame. Nike Pokorn (2012) focused on publishing policies for translated children’s literature in former Yugoslavia and found that ideologically manipulated editions from socialist times were still being published in the “deficient” version,

long after the disappearance of the socialist regime in the country. In a similar way, Charlotte Bollaert (2019) investigated how Jean-Paul Sartre's oeuvre was introduced in the USSR in several consecutive stages. At first, only his theatre plays were translated, and even those translations showed a great deal of content-related manipulation. His political and philosophical prose had to wait until the 1990s before it could be translated, but at the same time, the theatre plays were reprinted in the same versions as before, seriously distorting Sartre's image for the Russian post-Soviet reader.

The latter two cases are clearly intertwined with ideology and politics, but apart from attempts to protect the public from unwanted influences through means of manipulation and censorship, a range of other motives for non-retranslation seem to exist and the role of different actors in the process can be discerned. The prestige of previously translated authors or cultures in general may drastically be altered throughout time, as a result of which particular writers and/or literary works no longer stand the test of the canonisation process, either in the source or in the target culture (Van Poucke, 2022). In some cases, only a given part of an author's oeuvre is canonised to the extent of being retranslated into a particular target culture, while other sections are mainly or altogether neglected, leading to non-reception and, as a result, non-retranslation, again producing a distorted picture.

In a curiously contradictory way, non-retranslation may be evidence of a failed reception, yet can also attest, in other circumstances, to successful canonisation. As we argued before, the reputation of a "major translation" may hamper the speed of the retranslation process, and result in non-retranslation for a given period of time, although the availability of a "*grande traduction*" does not stop the process altogether. Even in cases in which the reputation of a translation has no direct connection to the celebrity of the retranslator, or an assumed high quality of the translation, readers can still be unwilling to accept a new translation, as the result of an emotional reaction. Readers tend to cherish the translations in which they discovered, not seldom in their youth, authors that would become important to them – which is why readers' emotional and subjective reactions to new translations are especially relevant in the case of children's literature.

As an illustration of this phenomenon, Monika Woźniak (2014) investigated the unsuccessful reception of the Polish retranslation of Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Despite the retranslation being much more faithful to the source text than the first translation, the changes made by the retranslator – including the admittedly rather drastic decision to rename the Polish Winnie from *Kubuś Puchatek* into *Fredzia Phi-Phi* – were not accepted by Polish readers, who had often read the first translation as a child and had developed an emotional tie with the initial name, regardless of the underlying grounds to retranslate that name. The very fact that a globally renowned writer like Stanisław Lem took the side of the old and allegedly defective translation, proves how retranslation can strike a false note on the readership's emotional chord. A similar reluctance to accept changes in canonical translations, regardless of the (sound) reasoning behind the changes, can be found on other book markets as well. To give but one example, Pasternak's translations of Shakespeare's tragedies date back to the 1940s and although the tragedies have been retranslated repeatedly since then, aiming at a higher accuracy towards the source text, readers and stage directors still consider the Pasternak translations as the standard versions for stage performances.

One of the articles in the current volume illustrates another aspect of non-retranslation. Sanz Gallego *et al.* move forward the concept of "unretranslatability" and suggest an "unretranslatability hypothesis", which refers to the limitation of options for alternative translations in case a first (or other preceding) translation manages to find a suitable translation option, for which the retranslator is unable to find a better solution. This analysis departs from the observation

by Van Poucke (2020) that retranslations in general tend to show an overlap of 50% to 60% of the words, based on the fact that “a translator has only a limited number of ways to translate a source text” (p. 23).

In his 2004 article, Lawrence Venuti related retranslations to the creation of “value”. Under normal circumstances, any attempt at retranslation should have as purpose the creation of some kind of “added value”, whether that be literary, cultural, economic or ideological value. However, in hyperdynamic environments for (re)translations, as described by Şahin *et al.* (2019) for the Turkish publishing market, one could ask the question what added value can possibly be achieved by flooding the market with almost simultaneous retranslations of one and the same canonical work. The absence of added value in this case (or the sole commercial character of that “added value”, with no regard whatsoever for ethical considerations) again questions the alleged yet utopian teleological nature of the retranslation process that was embedded in early discussions of the phenomenon. Perhaps retranslations that are published in a vacuum in-between waves of competing translations should not be studied as retranslations at all, as they lack a characteristic present in ‘real’ retranslations, that is, the reconsideration of – at least – one of the intrinsic features of (the) earlier translation(s)?

## 6. New horizons

When Isabelle Collombat (2004) renamed the twenty first century the “age of retranslation”, she might still have been unaware of the multitude of new directions retranslation research would uncover. If early studies of retranslation almost exclusively focused on literary works, and most contributions of the past thirty years still did (we mentioned some notable exceptions at the end of section 3.), recently other text types have attracted scholars’ attention. A case in point is the recent special issue of *The Translator* on “Retranslation, multidisciplinary and multi-modality”, edited by Berk Albachten and Tahir Gürçağlar (2020), in which “various sign systems within the same text” (p. 2) are included in the traditional lines of retranslation research. With the growing importance of “audiovisual translation (dubbing, subtitling, voiceover, as well as fansubbing and fandubbing), opera and song translation, and game and comic translation” (p. 1), (re)translation studies evidently go with that flow.

Another new avenue of research that definitely broadens our perspective on retranslation, is represented by the recent and rather spectacular increase of articles that study retranslations in non-Western languages and cultures. Apart from the Turkish context that has received quite a bit of attention (see, e.g., the work done by Susam-Sarajeva, Berk Albachten, and Tahir Gürçağlar), more and more papers now address retranslations from or into Chinese, Arabic, or Persian (see section 3. for some examples), seeking new perspectives further away from the traditional spaces of translation studies.

The new horizons that are covered in the current volume constitute yet another endeavor at filling some of the gaps that still exist in retranslation studies. **Adrienn Gulyás’** attempt at profiling retranslators in contemporary Hungary, despite some of the typical methodological difficulties of working with library catalogues, leads to a comprehensive exploration of the agents behind the retranslations. Gulyás’ analysis reveals the portrait of the average Hungarian retranslator from English, French, Russian and German, and uncovers a number of power relations on the international translation market, which appear to be no less relevant in the Hungarian market as well. This raises important questions as to the typical profile of the retranslator in other European cultures, relatively small ones as is the case in Hungary, which could be compared to larger translation cultures, European as well as non-European ones.

One quite particular case in this respect is the Turkish (re)translation market, which, since the turn of the century, is flooded with counterfeit translations, often ascribed to non-existent

retranslators. **Sabri Gürses** and **Mehmet Şahin** continue their research on plagiarism in the Turkish translation market (Şahin *et al.*, 2019) by zooming in on its historical specificity and complexities as evidenced by the translation and reception history of Dostoevsky in Turkish. In particular, the authors stress the influence that government campaigns have had on the translation market, both in positive and in negative ways. Some of the questions raised can be traced back to the still open debates discussed above: How does retranslation relate to revision and plagiarism – i.e., is there a fundamental difference in the relationship between target and source texts, or only a difference in the degree of (un)changed translation solutions? Do retranslations always have added value, and to what extent does retranslation obey a translation-inherent logic, when the influence of socio-ideological context can be so invasive?

**Snježana Veselica Majhut**, **Edin Badić** and **Sandra Ljubas** investigate context as well, by attempting to unravel the complex web of motivations and attitudes of the agents involved in the production of retranslations of children's literature in Croatia. Semi-structured interviews with the retranslators, editors, and publishers of three recent retranslations in Croatian of Tolkien, Lindgren and Kästner reveal a variety of motivations for the retranslation of classics of youth literature, most of which are considerations of the more practical and commercial kind, such as source text copyright and translator copyright, or low stocks of the extant translations. As for the retranslators' position with regard to the earlier translation, most mention both an affective relationship to the first translation read as a child (see, also, the discussion above of Woźniak, 2014), and the topical aesthetic goals often echoed by translation scholars, such as respect for or closeness to the source text's true spirit, a return to the author's intentions, the ambition to correct flaws and omissions in the first translation or to update the outdated language. Paratextual and epitextual data, however, reveals, if (re)translation is mentioned at all, that publishers, as well as retranslators, resort to the source-text-related aesthetic argument of canonicity, while invoking a 'closeness' to the source text so sedulous that it activates the commonplace of translation's transparent invisibility: in the new Croatian translation, so the reader is told, *Pippi Långstrump* can be read as in the original, *The hobbit* even as if Tolkien wrote in Croatian... In the public eye, it seems, retranslations should be as close as possible to an illusion of non-translation.

Yet, non-translation can come to light in other guises as well, as is shown by **Elin Svahn's** contribution on translations in the Swedish context, which continue to be republished over an extended period of time, without ever being retranslated. Answering the call for more transversal retranslation studies at the macro-level (see section 4. above), Svahn investigates a bibliography of Swedish non-retranslations in search for trends and tendencies. Her analysis reveals how certain assumptions about retranslation and its motives from previous research on retranslation are invalid, at least in the Swedish context of the twentieth century. As she correctly points out, the concept of "halted canonisation" (i.e., when the canonisation process of a particular literary work or author starts, but never really takes off) deserves further attention in future transversal analyses of other cultures as well. Another possible line for future research deals with the different approaches to retranslation by major and minor publishing houses, to reveal how they handle the dichotomies of innovation and conservation, and cultural and economic capital.

**Guillermo Sanz Gallego**, **Erika Mihálycsa**, **Monica Paulis**, **Arvi Sepp** and **Jolanta Wawrzycka** explore yet another aspect of non-retranslation, which is observed on the micro-level of individual translated texts, in this case German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish and Spanish translations of Joyce's *Ulysses*, but covers a much broader phenomenon. The authors depart from the observation that even literary translators – despite the seemingly endless possibilities of linguistic variation and imagination – often have only a limited number of ways to translate a



given source text segment, especially if that segment contains “foregrounding devices”, that is, textual patterns or stylistic peculiarities that deviate from ‘standard’ linguistic norms, such as alliterations, ellipses, repetitions, irony, or unconventional syntactic structures. Sanz Gallego *et al.* then take stock of this argument to look for patterns of “unretranslatability”, which occurs when “a forced or imperative coincidence between first translation(s) and retranslation(s)” is at stake, because foregrounding devices have led to a successful earlier translation, thus leaving the retranslator(s) without alternative options. Accordingly, the authors suggest an “unretranslatability hypothesis”, formulated as follows: when “a first translation manages to reproduce a passage with foregrounding devices maintaining the same effect expressed in the source text, then the options for alternative translations are reduced to such an extent that a case of unretranslatability might be provoked”. Here again, a potential “highway” for further research is uncovered, that may lead to new – and transversal – horizons for retranslation studies.

Finally, three different contributions on retranslations in understudied areas and genres complete this volume, bringing novel insights into the retranslation of para- or non-literary genres. **Vivien Féasson** concentrates his attention on the extremely popular, yet rarely investigated genre of fantasy. In contrast to the bulk of retranslated literary works, which appear to belong to the (canonical) classics of highbrow literature, and for which the competition between different versions seems to have beneficial effects on the quality of translations, the problem with many first translations of fantasy literature is that these are of poor translational and even editorial quality. This then influences the “value” attributed to retranslations, which are inevitably compared, not with other high-quality translations, but with imperfect previous versions of the fantasy work. Moreover, Féasson seeks an answer to the question what exactly a “fantasy classic” is, and what are the considerations, made by publishers, behind their retranslation. The research reveals how retranslations of fantasy classics continue to be of inferior quality due to amateurism and suboptimal working conditions.

Retranslations of songs are equally underinvestigated, although attempts have been made before, especially in cases in which the boundary between a “song” and a “poem” is less obvious to draw (see, e.g., the analysis of retranslations of Cohen’s poetry by Mus, 2019). In her contribution to the current volume, **Giulia D’Andrea** researches retranslations of French *chansons* (by Georges Brassens and Jacques Brel) in search of a typology for song (re)translation, considering that a translation to be performed on stage may significantly differ from a *chanson* translation made for reading purposes only. Comparable research was done by Aaltonen (2003) for theatre translations, which led to a similar distinction between translations for the stage and for reading. While distinguishing both lyrics and music as integral parts of a song’s interpretation through translation, and interrogating the boundaries between translation, retranslation, relay translation, and back-translation, D’Andrea argues that song retranslations deserve “specific reflection” as they add yet another interpretation to the already existing “corpus” of versions, which may include covers, parodies and other reissues.

**Gisela Marcelo Wirnitzer**’s research on the retranslation of historical (travel) accounts of the 14th- and 15th-century discovery and conquest of the Canary Islands may well lead to new insights into historical (re)translation practices, and the complexities of working with unstable and/or unreliable source texts and pseudo-originals. Besides its very detailed account of an incredible variety of translational practices and sometimes very complex relations between source and target texts, Marcelo Wirnitzer’s article broadens the notion of “rettranslation” by questioning the traditional list of possible motives for retranslation. The author demonstrates how considerations other than ideological or literary ones have influenced the (re)translation process, which seems to have been the result of mainly contextual circumstances, such as

the “relevance” of the discovery narrative “for the European and Spanish history” and the “extended timeframe” between source and target texts. Even though we are dealing here with a specific and highly complex case of retranslation, which may therefore not be representative for the majority of retranslated texts, future research into the retranslation of historiography could definitely draw on the epistemological reflections offered, most notably with regard to the instability of source texts that can be at the origin of historical narratives.

As we have tried to show in a historical narrative of our own in this introductory article, some thirty-odd years after Berman, much has been done, yet much remains to be done. It is our hope that this volume may bring new ideas and new directions, and may inspire colleagues already working on the intriguing phenomenon of retranslation, as well as new generations of retranslation scholars. It is only through discussion and collaboration, across languages and cultures, and by refusing the easy yet misleading recipes such as the retranslation hypothesis, that our knowledge and understanding of some of the questions discussed above can be taken forward.

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