

**PUBLIC SELECTION BASED ON QUALIFICATIONS AND INTERVIEW FOR THE AWARDING OF NO. 1 EXPERIENCED GRANT LASTING 12 MONTHS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH PURSUANT TO ART. 22 OF LAW NO. 240/2010 AT THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, LITERATURES AND CULTURES (SC 10/M1 – GERMANIC LANGUAGES, LITERATURES AND CULTURES - SSD L-LIN/13 - GERMAN LITERATURE) TYPE A  
PICA CODE: 20AR002**

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**RESEARCH PROJECT**

***“Theoretical, methodological and practical developments of literary translation in international German Studies, from the Reunification to the present”***

**Research structure:** Department of Foreign languages, literatures and cultures

**Duration of the grant:** 12 months

**Scientific Area:** 10 - Antiquities, philology, literary studies, art history

**Academic recruitment field:** 10/M1 – Germanic languages, literatures and cultures

**Academic discipline:** L-LIN/13 – German literature

**Scientific Director:** Prof.ssa Elena Agazzi

**1) Objective:**

The aim of the project is to provide a survey and a critical examination of the theoretical, methodological and practical developments of literary translation, as recorded in the last thirty years in German-speaking territories, starting from the Reunification. The German context can usefully serve as a case study to investigate, also for possible qualified teaching purposes, literary translation as a theoretical-practical intersection in which multifarious competences meet to face the new challenges of knowledge and action in the field of the Humanities

**2) Theoretical framework:**

The research project fits into a wide map of international interdisciplinary studies which focus on the complexity of literary writing and translation practices, especially in relation to German-speaking cultures. The resources provided by 'linguistic' competences (including digital ones) are arguably necessary, albeit insufficient, to adequately encounter literary writing and translation practices. Theoretical and practical aspects of literary translation from the viewpoint of German Studies will feature prominently in the research, assuming translation as an “ars” – in the context of Translation and Post-Translation Studies – which requires broad skills: from rhetoric to prosody, from praxeology to literary and cultural history, from the morphology of literary genres to textual hermeneutics, etc. Thus, crossing the boundaries of a vehicular conception of translation as fulfillment of a merely communicative function, the heuristic and creative potentials inherently bound to the translation of literary texts will come to the fore, providing practical skills to be strategically deployed in the field of contemporary Humanities.

**3) Research project description:**

Much has been written on theories, practices and the history of translation over the centuries. Numerous studies have summarized, commented on and scrutinized the main lines of its development (cf. Steiner 1981; Apel/Kopetzki 2003; Albrecht 2006), often for teaching purposes. This is a polyphonic debate, conducted on an international scale, which has emphasized different aspects of a protean and motley subject, depending on the orientations and disciplinary purposes of the researchers implied (Gentzler 2001; Snell-Hornby et al. 2003; Gambier 2010-2013). The proposed project sets out to enquire into the foundations and problems of literary translation and critical practice, surveying the theoretical, methodological and practical developments recorded in the last thirty years in German-speaking territories. While for other contexts (such as the Anglophone and Francophone one) the interest in theories and methodologies of literary translation has proved fruitful and has been constantly nurtured ever since (Bassnett 1998; Scotto 2013), contemporary German debates have not received in-depth

international coverage yet, except perhaps for the interest in "cultural transfers" generated by translation practices (Agazzi 2018; Rossi 2019; Sisto 2013; Lüsebrink 2003). Therefore, the objectives of the project are:

- to single out significant sources of theoretical reflection on literary translation in the German context. Despite the general quest for "universals", the focus here will be upon the "singularity" of texts. Voices of literary translators, writer-translators and poet-translators (eg R. Schrott, J. Laederach, D. Grünbein, P. Handke, etc.) will feature prominently, along with texts and para-texts in which the dichotomy between theory and praxis turns out to be an artificial disjunction;
- to investigate the relationships between the current reflections on German translation and the intellectual heritage of those who gave a fundamental impulse to the theoretical reflection on translation in 20<sup>th</sup>-century "Grand Theory" (among them, W. Benjamin, J. Derrida, G. Spivak and U. Eco) and, above all, in the classical-romantic era (F. Schleiermacher, W. v. Humboldt, Novalis, F. Schlegel and A.W. Schlegel). This period has been recognized as the dawn of modern understandings of translation (Catalano/Scotto 2001) with special attention given to the dialectic between "translatables" and "untranslatables";
- to investigate the renewed interest of current translation theories for "Weltliteratur" (Bassnett 2019; Lopes 2015). The reflection on literary translation in the light of "Weltliteratur" seems to fulfill a double function: on the one hand, it sets out to provide theoretical tools capable of accounting for the literary production of the 21st century in a global perspective; on the other, it provides a laboratory for political thought inspired by the notion of "cosmopolitanism" (de Medeiros 2019) as the key to a vision of civil coexistence to come;
- to survey the main "cultural paradigms" on which translation has thrived. Besides the Neo-Latin vision of translation as "traductio", hence as an activity of "transport", "transfer", "transposition", even space-time "adaptation" (analogously, "Übersetzung" and its derivatives), there is an alternative metaphorology (Blumenberg 2010) which relies on other semantic fields and highlights a different vision of translation practices (for example, "germination", a central paradigm in the German context, starting from the fundamental reflections of JG Herder, recently relaunched; cf. Abrantes 2015; Bassnett 1998). While in some areas this type of approach has already led to results of great interest and innovation (take the case of Ancient Rome studied in Bettini 2012 or the "post-colonial" translation in Tymoczko 2006 and 2007), the German case, understood not least as a "Fortschreibung" of a long tradition, can offer an interesting contribution in this direction.

The research output will be an annotated bibliography (concerning the survey of contemporary debates on literary translation), a "metaphorological" repertoire (presenting major cultural paradigms of translation in German-speaking cultures) and a critical contribution devoted to poet-translators.

**Key-words:** Literary translation; Theory of Translation; German-speaking Countries; Contemporary German Literature; Metaphorology

#### **4) Time:**

The project is structured in three periods:

- First six months: critical survey of current debates on literary translation in the German context, setup of the methodological framework and an annotated bibliography (with special attention given to the dialogue of contemporary theories with romantic and 20<sup>th</sup>-century traditions); identification of literary translation case studies.
- Next three months: metaphorological scrutiny of the contributions identified during the first semester; preparation of a repertoire of the main cultural paradigms encountered.

Concluding three months: preparation of a study on cases of literary translation carried out by German-speaking writers or poets

#### **5) Expected results:**

From a methodological point of view, the presented research differs from the currently more frequent methods in Translation and Post Translation Studies (quantitative-computational, taxonomic-descriptive, historical-philological and comparative), as it enhances the "singularity" of every translation practice. "Singularity" is supposed to indicate here a heuristic category that focuses on the complexity of literary texts both as factual entities (actual features) and virtual ones (interpretative potential), taken as the result of a creative activity ("ars") that requires a plurality of skills. The research will provide encounters with literary texts apt to be implemented in teaching practices at every level of training, and it will foster the knowledge of German-speaking literature from the specific point of view of translation.

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