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Introduction

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[...] *wie soll Erklärung auch nur möglich sein, wenn wir
alles erst zum Bilde machen, zu unserem Bilde!*
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*,
Aphorismus no. 112.
“How is explanation to be at all possible when we
first turn everything into a *picture* – our picture!”
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. by
Josephine Nauckoff, aphorism no. 112.

Preliminary Approaches

- 1 At a time when automatic translation is backed up by increasingly powerful software, it becomes all the more evident that literary translation, because of its demanding nature, still requires *human* qualities, that is to say anthropological features that cannot be replaced by algorithms and artificial intelligence. Like literary writing, translation is not just a logical activity, by which every word in one language automatically finds an equivalent in another. Many other parameters occur in the process, some of which are likely to provoke tension or challenge the mind. How can one describe the complex constellation of factors involved in the translation process? How can one account for the depth of interlinguistic relations? The notion of the imaginary helps us to understand the factors that come into play in every process of cultural and linguistic transfer.
- 2 Yves Bonnefoy conceives the imaginary as a diffuse and disparate entity composed of “the imaginations that make literature” (2013: 103)¹. This implies that human beings do not translate solely on the basis of their intellect and that the practice of translation often goes beyond the confines of reason. Looking back at German Romanticism, one can remember Novalis who advanced that literary translation is essentially a poetic activity

that leads the human being to engage in “the art of imagination, the practice of that inventive genius” ([1798] 1975: 374). Thus, the notion of the imaginary is often connected with the irrational, with implicit or explicit cultural references and, above all, with the practice of imagination. In this volume, we draw inspiration from the fields of philosophy, psychology, anthropology (Védrine 1990, Thomas 1998, Mary 2010, Mannoni 2016) but also from literary criticism (Mitterand 2000), in our pursuit to apply the notion of the imaginary in the field of translation studies.

- 3 As a central notion of the international conference that we organised in March 2017², the imaginary can also act as a connecting link between the field of translation studies and the field of comparative literature. By reinforcing the connection between these hybrid fields, we will not only obtain a better understanding of their complexity and heuristic value but we will also reflect on the risks, the specificities and the potentialities that they entail (Spivak 2003, Cassin 2016a). Indeed, as Gillian Lane-Mercier (2009) has argued, comparative literature and translation studies find their common specificity at the same time in the centrifugal, nomadic or ‘cartographic’ aim that animate them, and in their logic of interaction, realignment, and the crossing of borders. It is through such processes that these two disciplines become fields of tension but also of synthesis.
- 4 A systematic study of the imaginary makes it necessary to consider translation not only through the prism of literature but also through the history of knowledge and social practices (Rastier 2011, Guillaume 2014). Based on this premise, we aim to develop new approaches to translation by drawing on the fields of philosophy, poetics, and psychology. This practice will allow us to rethink translation as an art and not as a sub-field of applied linguistics.
- 5 In this issue that we dedicate to the imaginaries of translation, we wish to contribute to the discussion on the theory and practice of translation by introducing comparisons with other fields in the humanities and social sciences. To this end, we will first explain in greater depth the notion of the imaginary in translation practices and we will then propose a series of comparative and cartographic approaches. At a time when the hybridization of knowledge is becoming a scientific necessity, a definition of the imaginary seems all the more essential.

The Imaginary of Translation: Towards a Definition

- 6 To describe and identify all the characteristics of a translation, one needs to consider ideas that may exist beyond the translated text. It is, therefore, tempting to look for the common point that unites recurring notions such as “the translator’s aim,” “the translation project,” “the translation narrative,” “the orientation of the translated text,” and “the translational gesture.” Whether it is an explicit or an implicit translation project, a relation between the translator and his model, a source or a target text, we can easily see that each text constantly interacts with an *external* dimension. It is this dimension that we call the ‘imaginary’ of translation.
- 7 By means of an anthropological approach, Gilbert Durand has defined the imaginary as a space where exchanges occur “between the subjective and assimilative impulses and the objective intimations emanating from the cosmic and social environment” (Durand 1969: 38). From this perspective, we may perceive the imaginary as a “path in which the representation of the object can be assimilated and modelled by the subject’s

imperatives” (Durand 1969: 38). From the perspective of translation studies, we can define the imaginary as the dimension in which the conceptions of translation, the interpretations of the source text and the interlinguistic processes (objects) are shaped by the translator (subject).

- 8 In this context, we can also draw inspiration from Graham Harman’s recent work, which shows that ideological and fictional representations are *facts* or concrete conditions of every human act (Harman 2018). The imaginary can, therefore, be considered as the set of representations that shape the human perception of the world. These representations may be conscious or unconscious; imposed on or chosen; personal or collective; they can be stereotypes, archetypes, influences, metaphors, still or shifting images, etc. Whatever their nature, they constitute the prism through which the human mind apprehends an object, to the point that these representations come to life because of their intrinsic vitality.
- 9 A definition of the imaginary in the field of translation studies, allows us to examine the ways in which such a notion can stimulate or influence the translation process. Therefore, the imaginary can be viewed both as a notion in itself (e.g. conceptions of translation) and as a process (e.g. translation practices). To offer a better understanding of the imaginary and its role in the field of translation, we will distinguish between two fields: the imaginaries of translating and the imaginaries of translators.

The Imaginaries of Translating

- 10 To understand this type of imaginaries, it would be interesting to observe the ways in which they come into play in the “socio-symbolic reworking of translation practices” (Lavieri 2010: 120). Drawing on Lavieri’s premise, we set out to explore the “imaginaries of translating” that exist in a range of metaphors, stereotypes, translation narratives and “myths of translation” (Delabastita and Grutman 2005; Hagedorn 2006; Lavieri 2007, 2010). While Hagedorn has analysed the characteristics of narrative pseudo-translations (from Cervantes to Calvino to Montesquieu, Walpole, Potocki, Wieland and Schmidt), Antonio Lavieri has focused on the “heuristic power” of fiction and on the possibility to extend “the fictional model of modern science to any symbolic system” (Lavieri 2007: 16).
- 11 The imaginaries of translating are thus shaped by the different representations that are included in the translation process and by the symbolic system that derives from them at a specific time and in a given culture. Theoretical texts and/or paratexts can also shape these imaginaries.

The Imaginaries of Translators

- 12 In order to fully understand the importance of the translator’s imaginaries, it is crucial to observe the various ways in which they interact with the collective imagination in order to shape the translation process and impact the linguistic or poetic decisions of translators (Raimondo 2016a, 2016b). In light of this approach to the translator’s imaginaries, studies on translation will broaden their scope and allow us to rethink questions of identity through the prism of a “genetics of translation.” To achieve this objective, we will draw on what Antoine Berman called the “translational horizon,” which is considered as “the set of linguistic, literary, cultural and historical parameters which

‘determine’ the feelings, the actions and the thoughts of the translator” (Berman 1995: 79–83).

- 13 We can thus consider the translator’s imaginaries as an extension of existing theories on “the linguistic imaginary” (e.g. Houdebine 1979, 2002, 2015; Moreau 1998; Glissant 2010; Pot 2018)—a notion which has been elaborated by Anne-Marie Houdebine in her doctoral dissertation (1975–1979). The notion of the imaginary of translation can also be conceived as one of the possible paradigms of the “cultural imaginary,” a concept briefly defined by Anne-Marie Houdebine (1940–2016) as “an outcome of the linguistic imagination,” which can be understood as a “historical and social imaginary” (Houdebine 2015). Houdebine considers translation to be “a privileged place to deal with the linguistic imagination and with the cultural imaginary, given that there are at least two languages and therefore two cultures involved in the process: that of the author, that of the translator, their epochs, their readings, etc.” (2015: 29). If the linguistic imagination can be defined as the relation between subject and language (Moreau 1998: 165–67) or more precisely as “the relation of the subject to his/her intimate language and to the common language” (Houdebine 2015: 18), the imaginary of translators will then refer to all those processes and elements that influence the translated text.
- 14 Finally, this special issue will allow us to develop our reflections on how to grasp and interpret the *psyche* of translators and their ways of approaching a source text. With some caution, we will attempt to draw parallels between the translator’s imaginaries and the “psychology of translation” (Jääskeläinen 2012: 191–97). To this end, we will draw on previous works by theoreticians such as Linda Collinge (2000) and Mathias Verger (2015), who have worked on the notion of the imaginary without paying systematic attention to the intricate nature of the translator’s imaginaries.

Imaginary and Imagination

- 15 The complexity of the imaginary is what makes it so enriching. Situated at the intersection of psychology, literature and linguistics, its transdisciplinarity and hybrid nature forges new pathways towards a better understanding of translation practices.
- 16 To frame these practices, it would be useful to take into consideration what one might call “factual circumstances of imaginary production” (Van Eynde 2005: 9). This means that the act of translation cannot be reduced to a simple grammatical process. Instead, it requires a deeper reflection on the subjectivity of translators, their psychological activities and their *imaginary production*.
- 17 We can easily notice that in a translated text many choices derive from the translator’s creative imagination. Borrowing a Jungian notion, we can speak of the “active imagination” (Jung [1954] 1998: 1046), which is, consciously or unconsciously, present in linguistic and poetic choices. One could also borrow the terms “germinal disposition” of the translator’s imagination (Jung [1956] 1998: 330), which stresses the creative character of translation. Furthermore, the term “imagination” echoes the doctrine of “fantastic universals” (*universali fantastici*) exposed by Giambattista Vico in his work the *Scienza nova* (1725, 1730 and 1744; here 2012). According to Vico, imagination is considered in relation to its connection with the Greek term *poiesis* (gr. ποίησις), which means *the act of creation*. However, for Vico, imagination is also linked to the transformation of knowledge and to the transformation of society.

- 18 As a notion that represents reality and produces knowledge, the imaginary is closely intertwined with the notion of imagination. The imaginary of translators can then be defined as the combination of real and abstract elements that constitute the translator's *psyche* and influence his "translational imagination" (*imagination traductive*).
- 19 What we propose in this volume is not to reinvent a "theory of the imagination" in the way that Paul Ricœur has shown (1986: 237 and *passim*). Instead, we are interested in examining Ricœur's "poetics of will" (237) by observing a number of phenomena and experiences that are situated "at the intersection of theory and practice" (238). A close examination of these notions provides a useful insight into the "mental entity" or "the setting in which we form our abstract ideas and concepts" (241), that is to say, the imagination, and the set of elements which constitute the imaginary. This approach opens up a new field of study that makes it possible to explore the emotions and imaginative activities of translators as well as the conceptions and the imaginaries that they share.
- 20 This conception of the translator's imaginaries, although unusual and pioneering in the field of translation studies, is not a far-fetched experiment. Recent advances in the humanities have brought forth new findings in the field. Olivier Rimbault (2016), for example, has studied the origin of archetypes and ideas based on theories of Carl Gustav Jung ([1950] 1993: 24–27) and Gilbert Durand (1969). Rimbault considers the existence of a structure based both on imaginary and on cultural premises. This structure can be viewed as a "matrix zone" (Jung [1950] 1993: 435), which is at the origin of archetypes and ideas.
- 21 Can we, thus, speak of the "imaginary wombs" of translation in the wake of Jung's "womb of ideas" (1993: 435)? To what extent do cultural (socio-political, religious, spiritual, etc.) imaginaries influence the imaginaries of translation and the imaginaries of translators? To answer these questions, we present the contributions to this volume in thematic order hoping to shed light on different aspects of the translation process.

Contributions

- 22 The two fields that we have described so far (the imaginaries of translation and the imaginaries of translators) are not separate or autonomous. On the contrary, the two overlap and complement each other. To advance new lines of inquiry in the field of the imaginary, we have chosen to classify the contributions to this issue from the most theoretical to the most pragmatic. After introducing our two main fields in this introduction, this issue opens with some reflections on the conceptions of translation, before continuing with more specific case studies. The last two contributions have been made by professional translators, who explain the different ways in which they use the imaginary in their everyday practice.
- 23 The first four contributions address the imaginary in its relation to translation theories. They all show the profundity and versatility of this notion and make an important contribution to the field of translation studies.
- 24 Opening this volume, Christine Lombez reflects on the notion of the imaginary in its relation to translation practices. Aiming to show the impossibility of perceiving translation as a mechanical process, she argues that one always translates *with* the works of the past, taking into account their interpretations and impact on contemporary thought. Based on this premise, Lombez studies the conscious or unconscious choices of

the translator as well as the imaginary dimensions of the translation process, especially in the case of poetry.

- 25 Focusing on the techniques of translation, Paolo Bellomo is interested in exploring a specific practice in the history of translation: the *calque*, also known as a “loan translation,” which aims to trace, copy, or closely imitate the original text. Drawing on theories by Walter Benjamin and Georges Didi-Huberman, he shows that “loan translation” contains underlying values that are contrary to our contemporary sense of faulty fidelity.
- 26 Solange Arber demonstrates the importance of ideological and political imaginaries in the translation process. She pays attention to the translator’s aim for transparency and to the tension that is created between language and the imaginary. In particular, she uses the case of Emil Tophoven as an example to highlight the notion of the imaginary in the process of translation and its relation to the concept of transparency.
- 27 Aude A. Gwendoline follows a similar path. She is interested in the dipole trauma/healing and its role in the translation process. She opposes the idea that translation can be viewed as a violent act and discusses this view with regard to the work of Antonin Artaud, Nancy Huston, Louis Wolfson and Anna O. The tension that is established between the different imaginaries suggests a fruitful crossover between theoretical and practical approaches.
- 28 Following these theoretical approaches, which show the epistemological importance of the imaginary, the next contributions examine the various ways in which this notion can be applied to a specific corpus. Either addressing the imaginaries of translating or the translator’s imaginaries, these studies highlight the influence of the imaginary and its relation to textual analysis. Some common subjects and areas of research are loss or substitution of meaning, resemiotization, conscious linguistic processes and unconscious acts of creativity.
- 29 Focusing on the role of the translator, Marta Alvarez Izquierdo traces the practical implications of the imaginary in the French translations of the Uruguayan novelist Juan Carlos Onetti. The loss of his imaginary in the translated versions stresses the need to incorporate this notion into future translations and critical studies.
- 30 In order to show how the notion of the imaginary is applied to canonical authors, Lilia Androsenko studies the translations of Balzac by the young Dostoevsky. By reflecting on the influence that translations exert on a writer’s fictional practice, this study opens new pathways towards a better understanding of the mechanisms that literary translators make use of in order to grasp the hidden meanings of the source text. By exploring the imaginaries of the authors and the imaginaries of translators, it is possible to trace direct or indirect influences in the later works of Dostoevsky.
- 31 In a reverse perspective, Laude Ngadi Maïssa creates an analytical map through which the different translations of Olivier Rolin’s works are examined. This pragmatic approach draws on editorial statistics and interviews with Rolin’s translators. It testifies to the existence of various linguistic and national imaginaries and prompts us to study translation as another form of reception.
- 32 Louis Watier follows the example of Hagedorn in his effort to study sixteenth-century texts that are claimed to be translations. These texts contributed to the definition of fiction and played a considerable role in the evolution of literary history. From this

perspective, the study of such texts goes beyond the specific imaginaries of a single translator and encourages a wider view of the imaginary and its impact on literature.

- 33 Gloria Branca examines the particularities of migrant literature by focusing on the case of Emil Cioran and the translation of his works into Italian. Though the translation of Cioran's French poses a challenge to his Italian translator Mario Andrea Rigoni, it also reveals a wealth of information on the linguistic imaginaries of both the author and his translator.
- 34 Another plurilingual perspective is developed in El-Shaddai Deva's study of German translations of the Cameroonian novelist Ferdinand Oyono, who mixes different French and native dialects in his novels. This plurality of linguistic imaginaries challenges his German translators, whose variety of strategies and answers points to the different colonial imaginaries set deep within each language.
- 35 In a comparable approach, Marianne Braux offers an overview of the different translations of the novel *Pas pleurer* by Lydie Salvaire. Each of these translations focuses on different aspects of the Spanish language and brings forward a series of socio-political and linguistic imaginaries. This approach shows the importance of the imaginary in emerging studies on heterolinguisism.
- 36 The above-mentioned contributions offer enriching perspectives and advance new lines of inquiry in literary, historical, and cultural studies. The final two contributions, however, are the result of both theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Thus, two female researchers and translators explore the dimensions of the imaginary in the translation process.
- 37 Frances Egan writes about her experience as a translator of the French author and literary critic Alexandre Vialatte. In her contribution, she introduces critical perspectives that serve to highlight the lack of previous scholarship on the role of the imaginary. She thus offers a reflection on what it means to be an Australian translator at the beginning of the twentieth-first century. Through a fascinating mirror game in which the researcher questions the translator, Egan gives us the opportunity to scrutinise the imaginaries of both authors and translators. This innovative contribution elaborates on different strategies and conceptions that shape translation practices.
- 38 Finally, Irene Gayraud's contribution completes our study on the imaginaries of translation by offering an overview of the project Outranspo, which attempts to link translation and potentiality. This innovative project unearths the imaginaries as well as the potentialities of the text by providing theoretical approaches that are bound to change our perception of the translation process in the years to come. Gayraud invites us to visit her translator's workshop and shares her personal experience with different translation practices.
- 39 In the wake of these reflections on the theoretical and practical paths taken by the imaginary in translation, we wish to open this new field of study and examine its future perspectives. Our ambition is to trace the place of the imaginary in the translation process as well as to show that this notion is indispensable, if we are to understand the cultural, socio-political, spiritual, and psychological dimensions that shape and enrich the translated work. To achieve our objective, we propose an interdisciplinary study that draws on various intellectual and methodological approaches while aiming to reveal the underlying mechanisms that influence the translation process.

- 40 The various contributions to this issue set new standards in the field of the imaginary not only because they are based on different linguistic and cultural traditions (e.g. France, Russia, Germany, Romania, Spain, Canada, etc.) but also because they examine the specific strategies that each translator implements individually (e.g. notions of transparency). Hence, the diverse topics that are addressed here will describe the different types of translators (e.g. source or target translator, poet/artist translator, etc.) and will shed light on the many different aspects of the imaginary dimension (e.g. linguistic, cultural, religious, philosophical, psychological, etc.).

Implications of the Imaginary in Translation Theories

- 41 The notion of the imaginary can become a vital element for the development, or even the renewal, of contemporary translation theories.
- 42 First, it offers a reflection on the increasing importance of intercultural communication in a globalised world (Olohan 2000). In acting as a mediator between communities that do not necessarily share the same imaginaries, the translator facilitates co-operation and dialogue across borders. If the reception of the translated text is essentially an implicit act of communication between—at least—two languages and cultures (House and Blum-Kulka 1986: 12), it is through this process of interlinguistic and intercultural interaction that the readers' imaginaries are enriched.
- 43 Nevertheless, translation is not only a way of communicating with others; it is also a *hermeneutical device* (Ricoeur 2016) that helps us understand and decipher reality (Bezari 2018: 276). George Steiner has argued, in this regard, that translation can become an intermediate language that unites the act of communication with the notion of understanding: “to understand is to decipher / to hear significance is to translate” (Steiner 1975: 15). In addition to Steiner, William Frawley has stressed that the translation process can be considered as a language in itself, a “third code” or a “hybrid language” (1984). Drawing on these premises, we argue that the notion of the imaginary can serve as a theoretical and conceptual tool allowing us to explore the depth of translation and its capacity to produce meaning.
- 44 Second, if we consider the existence of matrix imaginaries of translation, we could hypothesize that they constitute *universals of translation*, a notion introduced by Mona Baker in a study of linguistic corpora (1993). This study aims to introduce some universal features that occur in translated texts. Though little-known in the French-speaking world, the *universals of translation* were addressed in France by Daniel Gile (2015) and Sara Laviosa-Braithwaite (1998), who has defined them in the following way:
- Universals of translation are linguistic features which typically occur in translated rather than original texts and are thought to be independent of the influence of the specific language pairs involved in the process of translation. (Laviosa-Braithwaite 1998: 288)
- 45 If, according to Mona Baker, the *universals of translation* concern only the domain of linguistic and textual processes, the imaginaries of translation invite us to study the translinguistic and transtextual dimensions of the translation process. Viewed as a theoretical tool that can enrich the field of translation studies, we wish to highlight potentially fruitful avenues for comparative research between the *universals of translation* and the imaginaries of translation.

- 46 Furthermore, we would like to argue that our understanding of translation practices has evolved and changed through history. The imaginaries of translation can thus offer a broader view of these changes in our perception and can also open the way for the development of new research fields such as the history of translations (Pym 1998), the comparative history of translation (Coldiron 2001), and the comparative translation studies (Tyulenev and Zheng 2017).
- 47 A systematic study of the imaginaries also allows us to connect translation studies with the field of psychology. Given the affinities between the notion of the imaginary and the fields of psychology and anthropology, it would be useful to explore the new possibilities offered by theoreticians who have studied the psychology of translation (e.g. Jääskeläinen 2012), with concepts such as “imagination” and “imaginative thinking,” “creativity,” “personality of the translator,” “translation learning.”
- 48 Finally, to be interested in the imaginaries of translation is a way to work towards a better understanding of one another in a globalised world after Babel, as translators (Cassin 2016a: 30, 2016b), poets (Bonnefoy 2013: 286–88) and novelists (Ménasse 2017) describe it. It is also a way to give readers the theoretical tools enabling them to tame the complexity of the translated text, to question the role of translation in our everyday life, and to understand that the future of multilingualism cannot solely rely on machines without dreams.

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NOTES

1. It is worth noting that Yves Bonnefoy dissociates poetry from literature and its relation to the imaginary. Though in this volume Christine Lombez deals with this specific subject, most contributions focus on other literary genres. We have translated all quotations from French to English.

2. On the 3rd and 4th of March 2017, we organised an international conference at the Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle for which we would like to thank the following institutions: Campus Condorcet, CERLIM, Ghent University, the Pléiade committee and the Research Commission of the University Paris 13, and in particular Bérénice Waty, Sandrine Francisco and Professors Pierre Civil and Jean-Yves Masson.

ABSTRACTS

A translation can not be read only as a clear and unidirectional exchange of signs, where one could automatically replace an other. The idea of imaginaries allows the critic to shed light on translating choices, on the one hand by studying the representations and preconceptions of the very act of translating a text (the imaginaries of translating), on the other hand by delving into every factor—be it explicit or implicit, personal or collective—that have influenced and shaped any translator’s work (the imaginaries of translators). A hybrid concept which draws from social sciences, psychology or aesthetics, the imaginary becomes a new tool among the translation scholar’s toolbox. Moreover, it also constitutes a method that allows to find new paths into intercultural studies, hermeneutics, literary history, so far as to allow to isolate recurring patterns of translation, which may help sketching a mapping of translation phenomena. It is also a way to bind further the comparatist and translation studies approaches of themselves.

Une traduction ne peut se résumer à un échange clair et univoque de signes, qui seraient automatiquement remplaçables l’un par l’autre. La notion d’imaginaire permet d’éclairer les choix traductifs, d’une part en mettant à jour certaines conceptions et représentations du traduire conditionnant celui-ci (les imaginaires du traduire), d’autre part en explorant les nombreuses préconceptions, explicites ou implicites, personnelles ou générales, propres à qui traduit, et qui en influencent et modèlent le travail (les imaginaires des traducteurs et traductrices). Concept hybride, puisant tour à tour dans les sciences sociales, la psychologie ou l’esthétique, l’imaginaire constitue donc un nouvel instrument, utilisable dans toute trousse à outils traductologique, mais également une méthode éclairant d’autres perspectives épistémologiques : interculturalité, herméneutique, histoire littéraire, jusqu’à permettre d’isoler des éléments récurrents, permettant d’esquisser une potentielle cartographie des phénomènes traductifs. Il constitue également une manière de lier davantage l’approche comparatiste et l’étude des traductions.

INDEX

Keywords: translation, translation studies, imaginary, imagination, irrational, poetics, psychology, reception studies

Mots-clés: traduction, traductologie, imaginaire, imagination, irrationnel, poétique, psychologie, réception

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