



Editorial: Special issue “Ideological Manipulation in Audiovisual Translation”

In the presentation of the translation studies journal *Meta* 57(2), a special issue dedicated to “The Manipulation of Audiovisual Translation”, editor Díaz Cintas (2012: 275) noted that “despite the crucial role played by audiovisual media in our society, little has been written on the impact that power, ideology, censorship, and manipulation have when translating these programmes into other languages and cultures”. The volume was a collection of essays dealing with the many facets in which translation and manipulation intertwine when dealing with the transfer of audiovisual products from one language to another. The scholar ended his introduction inviting colleagues to carry out further research in such an exciting field.

Four years later, Jorge Díaz Cintas together with Irene Ranzato and Ilaria Parini present a new collection of essays on the topic of ideology and manipulation in audiovisual translation, with articles from scholars from various parts of the world, dealing with different kinds of audiovisual products and different modes of translation involved.

Given the paramount importance that the socio-cultural dimension has for the topics broached, *Altre Modernità* turns out to be a most pertinent site to publish this special issue, given the interest that the journal has always shown towards culture and modernity in all their manifestations. In particular, the issue especially conforms to the interests of the journal because the articles collected explore the field of ideological manipulation in audiovisual translation in the most disparate countries from all over the world, from Europe (UK, Italy and Spain), to Asia (China and Taiwan), to the Middle East (Egypt and Iran).

THE EDITORIAL BOARD



The Discreet Charm of Manipulation

By Jorge Díaz Cintas, Ilaria Parini and Irene Ranzato

When asked at a press conference in 1988 about his opinion on the Italian adaptation of one of his early films from 1983, *Entre tinieblas* (literally, “in the darkness”), acclaimed film director Pedro Almodóvar commented that his reaction at hearing the title’s translation into Italian was one of embarrassment. He stated that *L’indiscreto fascino del peccato* [*The indiscreet charm of sin*], clearly hinting at Luis Buñuel’s 1972 masterpiece *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* [*The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*], created a parallel he modestly shied away from. For part of the audience at the press conference, the comment was surprising, because the manipulation to which the whole film had been submitted in its dubbing adaptation was so great that it made that of the title seem like a minor issue. Whole parts of the film dialogue had been completely deleted, and contents and tone altered in such a manner that both the characters and the diegesis of the film had been affected. Regardless of whether the Spanish director was aware of the dialogue modifications or not, his focus on the title translation encapsulates in a nutshell the ambiguous and multifarious charm of some manipulating practices: clearly aiming at widening and possibly changing the composition of the ideal target audience of a then obscure film by a still internationally unknown director, the distributors had carried out, with a wink at the cinéphiles, a marketing operation with clear ideological undertones. The risqué but farcical contents of a typical early Almodóvar story had been associated with the Italian word *peccato* [sin] through an allusion to the internationally renowned Spanish director, Luis Buñuel, which would supposedly appeal to the more sophisticated film lovers, but would also, and more importantly, titillate the imagination of a larger audience than that which a small Spanish production by a novel filmmaker



was expected to attract. The 'intellectual' operation carried out on the title served thus the double scope of alluring as large an audience as possible with its promise of sinful pleasures, while at the same time elevating the cinematic status of the new production by establishing distinct parallels with a classical film by a canonised cineaste. Along with these blatant, manipulative practices in search of larger audiences and higher income revenues, subtler forms of manipulation that have a direct impact on the plot and portrayal of the characters in the films also manage to worm their way into our socio-cultural environment.

The act of translating is not, and has never been, an innocent activity in which a set of linguistic items are permuted by their 'dictionary equivalents' in a different language, and the manipulation of (audiovisual) texts has been a constant over the times and continues to be rife, irrespective of the political and cultural regimes that happen to be in power. As active and engaged agents in the transmission of social values and ideas, translators become a dynamic force for cultural and political evolution, a catalyst for deviations or compliance, often triggered by ideological motives and allegiances, that the translation scholar is called to unmask.

The initial studies on audiovisual translation (AVT) tended to focus on technical and linguistic issues, usually from a descriptive perspective, with some rare exceptions of works centred on censorial practices of film translation (Danan 1991) in countries like Germany (Pruys 1997) and Spain (Ávila 1997; Gutiérrez Lanza 1999). More recently, however, academic enquiry in this field has widened greatly in scope by encompassing the socio-cultural and ideological dimensions (De Marco 2012; Díaz Cintas 2012; Zhang 2012; Mereu 2013; Yuan 2016). The aim of this special issue is precisely to build up on these new developments by bringing together a set of contributions with a strong focus on topics relating to censorship and manipulation and, more generally, to any ideological handling—though not necessarily restricted to the political arena—of the translation of audiovisual programmes that are to be distributed through media such as cinema, television and the internet.

The different approaches to the topic of ideological manipulation in AVT taken up by the contributors of this special issue cover a good portion of the vast array of genres pertaining to the audiovisual realm (films, news, TV series, religious programmes, videogames) as well as different translation modes typical of this field (subtitling, dubbing, voiceover), investigating productive intersections with other ideologically charged disciplines such as religion, race, gender, feminism, gay and queer studies, and politics.

The 14 original contributions that make up this special issue can be notionally grouped in six different batches, according to their main research focus. Of these, the first three contributions revolve around politics and policies. In their article entitled "Ideological Manipulation of Controversial Information: The Unusual Case of the Chinese-Subtitled Version of *House of Cards*", Dingkun Wang and Xiaochun Zhang provide an overview of access in China to foreign TV series in which the content does not always comply with the standards enforced by censorship institutions. Their analysis focuses on the political drama *House of Cards*, whose sensitive content they examine especially in relation to characters who may easily lead the audience to draw controversial parallels to corrupt figures of China Communist regime. The scholars



interestingly conclude that the handling of this series translation seem to serve the objectives of the current administration by reinforcing its anti-corruption message and the legitimacy of the regime, thus fulfilling the function of official propaganda.

Continuing with the political discourse, but from a different standpoint, "Did You Really Say That? Voiceover and the (Re)creation of Reality in Berlusconi's 'Shocking' Interview for *Newsnight*", by Denise Filmer, combines approaches from ethnomethodology with critical discourse analysis in order to shed light on various interconnected aspects of a communicative event from a translation studies perspective. The author investigates the possible ideological motives which prompted the editorial decision to allow the broadcast of some highly offensive language as the one used in the television interview between a *Newsnight* journalist and the then Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, by analysing the discursive construction of the event and outlining the intertextual chains it generated.

The topic of political censorship is tackled from a historical perspective by Cristina Gómez Castro in her article "Ideological Manipulation in the Form of Official Censorship: Audiovisual Tie-ins of Bestselling Novels in Spain under Franco", in which she examines the repressive forces at play under Franco's dictatorship in Spain (1939-1975). The massive importation of best-selling North American novels during those four decades nurtured also the introduction of foreign films in the form of tie-ins. Gómez Castro's article examines the effects of the Francoist censoring mechanism on two bestselling novels of the 1970s, which also became blockbuster movies, namely *The Godfather* (Puzo, 1969/Coppola 1972) and *The Exorcist* (Blatty 1971/Friedkin 1973).

The next two papers signal a shift of focus onto the role played by ideology and ethnicity and, in the first of the two contributions, "The Subtitling of Indigenous Values in the Film *Seediq Bale*", Tzu-yi Elaine Lee concentrates on a Taiwanese historical film based on the 1930 Wushe Incident that took place in central Taiwan. The researcher explores how different languages and registers are handled in translation and examines both how the subtitler deals with the various semiotic modes that make up the film and how the indigenous ideologies and Taiwan identity that permeate the movie are eventually manifested in the translator's use of the target language.

Multicultural identities and their ideological implications are also explored by Silvia Monti in her contribution entitled "Reconstructing, Reinterpreting and Renarrating Code-switching in the Italian Dubbed Version of British and American Multilingual Films", in which she looks contrastively at the various strategies activated to deal with the translation of the different types of code-switching that are observed in the Italian dubbed versions of British and US intercultural films. After establishing a specific socio-linguistic and pragmatic framework within which code-switching seems to operate in audiovisual products, the author moves then on to analyse the characters' multicultural identity as it has been rendered in the translation for dubbing for the Italian audience. The comparative analysis of the English original versions and the Italian dubbed versions of the films under scrutiny shows that whereas in the original versions code-switching usually prevails in the spoken exchanges, the Italian dubbing resorts to various translation solutions that occasionally imply processes of manipulation.

The papers by Di Giovanni and Mereu Keating have in common their interest in broaching the role that audiovisual translation has in the shaping of national identity.



Elena Di Giovanni's contribution, "Dubbing and Redubbing Animation: Disney in the Arab World", gives an account of the forceful shift, from Egyptian to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), that is currently taking place in the redubbings of Disney films, unveiling their underlying dynamics. Exploring the implications of the recent licensing deal between Disney and the Arab network Al Jazeera, as well as the role played by the latter in reshaping media communication and translation across the Arab world and beyond, the author attempts to grasp the economic, social, political and ultimately ideological implications that lie beyond the strategies adopted by the two powerful media players. Acts of translation like the dubbing and redubbing of Disney animation into MSA are, according to the author, deeply grounded in today's world order, reflecting the past and aiming to construct an ideology-driven, pan-Arab future.

Also dealing with dubbing and redubbing practices, as well as revoicing and subtitling, Carla Mereu Keating's "The Italian Color': Race, Crime Iconography and Dubbing Conventions in the Italian-language Versions of *Scarface* (1932)" offers a reading of the multiple ideological forces at play in the creation of different versions of the same film. Extensive documentation work was carried out in archives and libraries in Italy and in the United States in order to investigate the implications of daringly exposed social, moral and race issues in H. Hawks's film *Scarface*. The author successfully foregrounds how these issues were confronted in the United States and in Italy with rejection, censorship and manipulative practices which took place at different stages of the film's production. She offers translation examples resulting from a comparative textual analysis of the English and Italian-language versions of *Scarface* (script, redubbing, revoicing, subtitling) in order to detect the various instances in which manipulation was performed.

The impact that ideological manipulation and censorship have in shaping individual and collective identities becomes the thread of the next three contributions. A tentative evaluation is sketched in the paper by Annalisa Sandrelli, which analyses the Italian dubbing of three gay-themed TV series. While only a handful of instances of actual censorship have been detected in the corpus, "The Dubbing of Gay-themed TV Series in Italy: Corpus-based Evidence of Manipulation and Censorship" provides telling evidence of the many cases of subtle manipulation that can be found in the translation of references to sexual orientation, acts and roles.

Tackling yet another speech community, in "Images of Youth on Screen: Manipulative Translation Strategies in the Dubbing of American Teen Films", Serenella Zanotti offers an analysis of the dubbed versions of three mainstream youth films from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, with the aim to investigate whether the strategies adopted in their linguistic transfer were shaped by censorial concerns or by differences in the way juvenile cultures were represented locally, and to examine how Hollywood's longstanding "courtship of the teenage audience" (Doherty 2002: 2) was exported to other countries. The study is based on documentary evidence gleaned from archival research and manuscript analysis and, from the methodological viewpoint, Zanotti's article shows how translators' manuscripts can be useful, primary sources of information for research on ideology and censorship.

The aim of the research project illustrated by María Pérez L. Heredia in "Translating Gender Stereotypes: An Overview on Global Telefiction" is to reconstruct the reality



portrayed by innovative television fiction which, featuring new intersectional main characters (Brufau 2009), incorporates and promotes a series of values, attitudes and models that travel from the US metropolis, via translation, to the new global colony into which the world has been transformed. Having collected and analysed information relative to television series broadcast in Spain, the author is able to look into patterns that can help determine whether the new intersectional elements presented by telefiction manage to challenge the traditional stereotypical image of the white, protestant male that has colonised the Western world in the past. Among her findings, the author emphasises how translation has come to control the global spectator more than ever before and how gender and race asymmetries have been inverted in some of the new TV series, giving birth to a new global product which is the object of a highly interesting intertextual, rather than simply interlingual, translation process.

The next two papers have in common the fact that they both centre on translation processes at the crossroads between religion and politics. Rashid Yahiaoui's "Ideological Constraints in Dubbing *The Simpsons* into Arabic" investigates the dubbing of the globally popular animated sitcom from the US. The author explores, in particular, the role of the translator in filtering both controversial aspects deemed contradictory to Islamic teachings and cultural taboos of the Arab society, providing evidence that despite official patronage the translator has, on occasions, the upper hand when it comes to deciding the message of the source material that will be eventually conveyed to the target audience.

The theme of manipulation in dubbing is also tackled in the article by Mohammad Sadegh Kenevisi, Hasuria Che Omar and Ali Jalalian Daghigh, entitled "Manipulation in Dubbing: The Translation of English-language Films into Persian", in which the scholars look into the dubbing into Persian of eight English-language foreign films selected from different genres in order to investigate the textual and visual manipulation that has taken place. In the course of their analysis, the authors found that the various cases of manipulation have not been solely motivated by the need to bring the source text into line with the ideology of the patronage, but that other factors, namely the ideology and agency of the language service providers and the translators as individuals, also have an impact in the final product.

The role of the translators in the socio-cultural brokering is also the object of study in the last two papers of the collection, which pay special attention to the way in which ideological considerations manifest themselves in professional practice. The first of these two articles, Micòl Beseghi's "WTF! Taboo Language in TV Series: An Analysis of Professional and Amateur Translation", focuses on the rendering in Italian of coarse language, especially when related to taboo subjects. Two contemporary TV series, *Girls* and *Orange is the New Black*, together with their respective Italian dubbed versions and the subtitles made by fansubbers, have been selected for their translation analysis as significant cases of controversial shows that are characterised by an extensive use of strong language and expressions, closely connected with the taboo topics and situations they represent on screen.

The last study in the collection, written by Masood Khoshsaligheh and Saeed Ameri and entitled "Ideological Considerations and Practice in Official Dubbing in Iran", aims at exploring agency in the process of cultural appropriation when officially



dubbing films in contemporary Iran, both in the context of the private and the state-run sectors. The study helps understanding the parts played by the various agents involved in audiovisual translation as well as their role when it comes to ideological appropriations and gate-keeping in official dubbing processes, while also shedding light on the extent and nature of the ideological considerations that end up shaping professional practice.

In its diversity of approaches, this collection shows not only how multifaceted the reality of ideological manipulation in AVT is, but it also foregrounds how deceptive and limiting it is to think of this socio-cultural phenomenon only in terms of losses, deletions, constraints and permutations of words, while neglecting or denying its creative nature and appeal.

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Photo from the film *Garage Olimpo* by Marco Bechis



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