FOREWORD

It is with much pleasure that we introduce volume 7 of Cultus, which is aimed at capturing the role of the translator in an era where new trends in the market, the use of technologies and machine translation, seem to blur the edges between both professionals and amateurs involved in the field. The circulation of buzzwords such as transcreation and its semantic siblings (marketization, multilingual copywriting, transliteration to name but a few) reflect this confusion and uncertainty about the future of translation as a discipline and as a profession.

This year’s issue focusses on transcreation in particular, a term which is primarily today related to the computer and video game industry, and seems to be more frequently used in sectors such as advertising and sales which deal with the conveyance of emotions. If transcreation is not a straightforward localization process what does it then imply? Does it imply that word-for-word translation is not enough to render affective language one culture into another? At the other end of the creative spectrum, what are the problems and opportunities raised by the use of technologies in translation? These and many others are the issues discussed in the opening conversation between the two scholars Yves Gambier and Jeremy Munday.

Translation technology tools are the main topic of Cristophe’s Declercq’s study as well, which looks at these as an essential added value in training courses for professional translators even though, as he himself underlines, IT still remains a peripheral topic in academic discussion on the world of translation.

By analysing statements from transcreation providers, Daniel Pedersen’s contribution offers an overview of the definitions of transcreation mainly seen as adaptation of a message from one language by recreating it in another language. The paper shows that this process is used almost exclusively in advertising and marketing where texts require large amounts of creativity. He notes that translation proper is perceived as transferring words from one language to another, while transcreation implies something more. As he puts it, transcreation transfers brands and messages from one culture to another.

This added value of creativity, seen an intrinsic factor in transcreation, is shown in the following paper. The authors, Jing Fang and Zhongwei Song illustrate the commercial case of Australian health product brands
translated into Chinese. By investigating particular lexicogrammatical choices made by the translator the authors show that the Chinese version conveys “a toned-up impression of the products” with respect to the English source text. This study further confirms the efficiency of the functional grammar approach to comparative studies of translation in that it accounts for the reasons behind those ‘transcreating’ choices.

With the next two papers we move into the field of dubbing. Branding is still the theme of the paper written by José Dávila-Montes and Pilar Otero. They studied audio-description and decision-making strategies when branded objects are involved in cinematic scenes, especially objects that go beyond their mere physical or narrative function. Taking semiotics as their starting point they note how much is lost when ‘translating’ the text for the blind, given the importance of the branded objects in the context. The second point they note revolves around the moral dilemma a transcreator would have foregrounding (and hence further promoting) brand names. Serenella Zanotti’s contribution to dubbing lies in the discussion of a case study - Young Frankenstein – to highlight issues of agency and creativity. She notes that once the original film script was translated, it underwent a large number of further revisions, transcreations, during the recording process with the specific aim of increasing the humorous effect of the translated dialogues.

The last two papers shed light on transcreation in the realm of media translation. Denise Filmer concentrates on interviews with correspondents for Italy who work for British newspapers, pursuing the objective of uncovering journalists’ translation practices in the British press. Interviews are mingled with discussions of Berlusconi’s taboo language. Her results clearly show that it is the untrained ‘journalator’, to use her term, who is often responsible for the translation of highly important political language, which the reader then takes on trust. Yet, the journalists interviewed were not ‘translators’ nor did they use any professionals. To what extent the journalator effectively transcreates is a moot point.

Cristina Caimotto’s overview of the case of the Italian comedian Daniele Luttazzi, who plagiarized the works of some famous American comedians, contributes to the debate on copywriting, while also discussing cultural and political implications in the target culture of the use of satire. Caimotto clearly shows how the jokes were transcreated from the American culture to make them highly relevant and affective for the Italian audience.
We hope that the insights gleaned and the reflections inspired by the variety of contributions in this issue will be relevant for all students, practitioners, researchers and translators and invite them not to disregard ‘transcreation’, which has been around and has been both more affective and effective for more than we thought.

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