The role of the literary translator in the new Europe and the literary translator as role model

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Abstract

Working under the assumption that language and culture are inseparable, a central question arises as to what the role of the translator is in the new Europe of the future. The aspired goal of a single vast network of cultural relations that retains and yet surpasses local identities to create a polyphony rather than a monotone is hardly finite or readily tangible – nor should it be. Yet how do we define this new Europe? How do we define European culture without precise and tangible definitions for either European or culture? The fundamental question the presenters seek to address is what the role of the literary translator is in this network of linguistic-cultural crossings in the still-utopian new Europe of cultural and linguistic union. We consider recent translation theories exemplifying the political, ethical and sociocultural issues raised by Venuti (1995; 1998; 2000) and re-examine traditional translation methods. We suggest that in the new European culture the literary translator can act as a role model for an emerging methodology of transcultural and transliteral formation. We attempt to define and then link the task of the literary translator as transmitter of a European culture by focusing on the bicultural/linguistic overlap in the bilingual or multilingual translator. Questions addressed include: What role will literature play in a fundamental restructuring of what initially will be economic order and political organization? What might ‘Europe’ with the broader sociopolitical and cultural boundaries encompass?

Keywords: translator, literary translation, european culture, european identity

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Introduction

The problems of literary translation in a multilingual environment have attracted increasing attention both inside and outside Europe. The European Union (EU) in particular has been both the source and the sponsor of many such debates because of its intention to empower Europe to speak ‘with one voice but in many languages’ (Tosi, 2003: xi). In this new Europe translation issues, traditionally a matter for academics and language professionals, have entered the political arena. Translation issues have expanded to encompass concerns of power, national, regional, social, and individual identity concerns; concerns that go well beyond matters of purely linguistic nature. Translators must work within the context of technological and economic unification and the constraints of a still extremely culturally diverse Europe. In the (perhaps largely) utopian view of a single European culture emerging from the continuing growth of economic and political union of the EU member states, the issue of cultural shaping through literary translations plays a highly significant role. In this utopian European culture, the various national and regional cultures form a pluralistic arena of exchange, ‘retaining and surpassing local identities and thereby creating a polyphony, not a monotone’ (Reiss, 1993: 14).

But speculation on what this single European culture might be begs the question of whether a single European culture is possible or even desirable. As much as the member states of the EU strive to bring unity, can they and should they overcome the past historic divides that have in many ways been instrumental in shaping national identities, languages, and national literatures? Will Europe remain ‘a pile of little countries thrown together higgledy-piggledy which will always fight tooth and nail for their own national specialities, for their spaghetti, for their Pale Ale, for their Goethe’ (Reiss, 1993: 23). Or will there be a new Europe, one that has forged a distinct European culture, one that will supersede national and regional cultures and interests (Reiss, 1993: 23)?

Moreover, is a distinct European culture feasible without the concomitant loss of national differences? What might the broader sociopolitical and cultural repercussions of a single European culture be upon writers of European national literatures? How can the term ‘Europe’ be accurately characterized if Europe is a place and a concept that is not definitively defined, whether physically, culturally, ideologically or politically? Without a clear conception of what precisely Europe is, can we begin to discuss the formation of a single European culture?

An important consequence of this process of attempting to forge a single European culture has been a re-examination of the role of translators from passive instruments between source and target texts to active communicators
and mediators between cultures represented in the texts (see e.g. Heaney, 1988; Nishizawa, 2002; Stephanides, 2004). The EU, as part of an ambitious project to encourage the conflicting goals of a *lingua franca* and the maintenance of national languages, has promoted debate on these conflicting goals. A fundamental question of these debates is what the role of the literary translator should be in the still-utopian cultural and linguistic union of a new Europe.

In this paper we examine a new role for the literary translator in the new Europe. We consider recent translation theories exemplifying political, ethical and sociocultural issues (Venuti, 1995; 2000) and re-examine traditional translation methods. We conclude by proposing that in the new European culture literary translators, as a result of their translation endeavors, themselves become representatives of new intercultures between the source and target text, and can therefore act as role models for an emerging methodology of transcultural and transliteral formation in the new Europe.

**Literary translators and the ‘new Europe’**

The task of literary translators becomes increasingly complex when we consider the difficulties of defining culture in an age of ‘international culture’ as evidenced by the developments in the EU. Modern European literary translators are the product of sociopolitical and cultural concerns of a still-forming European culture that supersedes yet preserves national and regional cultures and languages. They must examine what role translation plays and should play, as globalization increasingly requires communication among disparate peoples and cultures (Robinson, 1997). Literary translators must examine how differences can be conveyed and how these can differences be bridged without losing the essences of the cultures themselves. Literary translators now act as the overlap where different facets of the new European culture meet and become disseminated. The role of translators is critical; translators must know more than the linguistic differences between the languages; they must be able to understand and convey the cultural similarities and differences between the source and the target languages. To do such translation requires more than technical language skills; it requires the ‘right’ awareness of the role of translation and translation issues as well (Even-Zohar, 1981; Lefevere, 1992). Yet literary translators find themselves caught in the pull between national considerations and influences on one side, and global considerations and influences on the other. They must constantly question where and to what degree their responsibilities, their loyalties, and their interests lie in the process of translating source texts into target language texts (see e.g. Gyasi, 1999, for a similar discussion on translating African literatures into European languages).
In addition, European translators face two equally challenging double binds: the double bind considerations of language and culture, and the double bind considerations of two languages and two political entities – the national and the supranational EU. The task of translators has of necessity changed in response to these new and at times competing challenges. No longer viewed as mere ‘copiers’, amanuenses, or executors of linguistic exchanges, modern translators are regarded as mediators who both understand and take into consideration the differences and similarities of the pertinent cultural and linguistic elements.

Unfortunately, the gap between reality and the ideal remains significant. Van der Eijk-Spaan (2001) in her comparison of an article from the source text, Die Zeit, and its translation into the target text, The Guardian, reveals how the translator’s choices subtly reinforce and perpetuate such common negative British stereotypes of Germans as aggressive and arrogant. She argues that translations such as this illustrate the effect translators’ often inadvertent choices have on the (mis)transfer of authors’ intent. Whether these choices are grammatical, semantic or other, translators, as members of a particular culture and discourse community, continue to work within their own cultural constraints.

**Translation in history**

The role of translators in the new Europe embraces the ancient paradox of the entire history of translation studies in the West: every text is untranslatable and yet translatable (Venuti, 1995). Horace in his first century B.C. *Ars Poetica* expressed the limits of translation when he stated that ‘no one can translate both literally and well’ (Tosi, 2003: 45). In the nineteenth century Goethe restated this fundamental contraposition when he referred to the contradiction between the inherent impossibility and the absolutely necessity of translation’ (Goethe quoted in Tosi, 2003: 46). The formation of a culturally and politically unified Europe that yet maintains national diversity confronts a similar paradox. It is no coincidence that similar geopolitical and issues of translation arose first in Ancient Rome and again in the twentieth century at times when the formation of a united Europe was of central concern.

The history of translation studies in Western civilization traces its roots to Ancient Rome, which attempted to adopt the cultural heritage of the much-admired and emulated Greek culture. The fifth century B.C. historian Herodotes is an early written record we have of the notion of cross-cultural communication, i.e. ‘how people speaking different languages manage to pass ideas on to each other’ (Robinson, 1997: 1). Motivated by ethical and religious reasons, translators such as Cicero, Quintilian, and Horace were constrained by a binary paradigm of rhetorical choices between *fides* ‘loyal faithfulness’ versus *non-fides*, or ‘not loyal faithfulness’ to the original text. Central to this binary
paradigm in translation studies has been the issue of equivalence, that is finding the equivalent or ‘correct’ form between the source and target languages (for contemporary discussions see e.g. Hartmann, 1980; Hatim and Mason, 1990; House, 1997; Hu, 2002; Newmark, 1981; 1998). The main concern of traditional translation studies has been how to translate literally and well.

Paralleling this binary paradigm were two major schools of thought, foreignizing or domesticating. Foreignizing entails translators following an author’s text as closely as possible and moving readers toward the author as much as possible. Domesticating, on the other hand, calls for translators to adapt authors’ texts to the exigencies of the target language and moving the authors’ work toward the readers. Although the terms themselves were not coined until Venuti, the methods themselves were practiced throughout the history of Western translation studies.

Remarkably little was added to the binary paradigm in translation studies for about 1500 years; commentary among translators and theorists differed only along movement from one end of the dichotomy to the other, as debates continued regarding the degree of equivalence without questioning the veracity of this dichotomy. Closely linked to the debates were often issues in the use and role of vernaculars, the growth of the nation state, and national pride. In France, for instance, belles infidels translations reigned supreme. French translators domesticated by translating source texts into ‘eloquent’ French with little or no regard for veracity or conformity to the original source text. Thus, a belles infidels translation is not necessarily an accurate rendering of the author’s intent, but rather an artistic translation into eloquent, elegant and refined French.

On the opposite side of this dichotomy stood the German translator and theorist Friedrich Schleiermacher, the first to actively advocate foreignizing, albeit without using the term. Schleiermacher’s 1813 address before the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin, ‘On the different methods of translation’, became the foundation for much modern discussion and debate on translation (Robinson, 1997). By the 1980s debates on translation had so moved toward a perspective that focused on the translated text as the site of cross-cultural communication and exchange that the field of Translation Studies emerged as a discipline in its own right.

The function of translation

The new emphasis in translation has come to regard translation as not merely a linguistic operation but rather as a process of cultural transfer (Ashcroft et al., 1995; Gentzler, 2001; Rafael, 1998; Venuti, 2000). Translators depend not merely on the surface structure of a ‘sacred’ source text, but also focus
on the function of the translation itself within the larger context of the target culture. The shift in emphasis in debates on translation from concerns with the source text itself to issues of target text function presupposes a belief in translators as holding the power to shape or mold ‘one culture upon another’ (Robinson, 1997: vii). In addition to a recognition of the function translation itself, a recognition of other roles has arisen, for example, such sociopolitical dimensions as power relationships between men and women, between the colonized and the colonizers, and between academics and professionals. From such a perspective translation is a process that includes linguistic elements in addition to revealing or projecting the underlying culture within the original text into the new language. Translation is considered a cognitive process of perceiving cultural alterity, i.e. the difference or ‘otherness’ of different cultures and languages. Translators themselves are crucial to both the source and target texts in that they are both communicators and mediators of these texts (Halliday, 1971; Ruuskanen, 1996; Toury, 1985). Such a shift also eliminates or at the very least, re-focuses the nature of the formerly central issue of equivalence in translation debates since more than one translation is possible (see, e.g. Hu, 2003). In fact, multiple translations are now preferred as providing greater insights into the different possible meanings of language, culture, and translation (Iser, 1974, 1995).

In discussions of translation, structural linguistics and literary translation focuses are often seen as textual polarities (Bassnett, 1993; Cartfod, 1965; Hewson and Martin, 1991; Holmes, et al., 1970). Structural linguistics is seen as concerned primarily with choices in grammatical structures such as relative clause use or verb tense choice, and with underlying theoretical cognitive language issues. Translation studies, on the other hand, is viewed as focusing its efforts on specific texts and their existence within a particular context and embedded in a larger cultural background. In other words, from the point of view of structural linguistics, language is the object of study and research; from the point of view of translation studies, language is the instrument for conveying or transmitting larger sociocultural and sociopolitical meanings. The translated text in the former perspective is the ‘ends’ while in the latter it is the ‘means to an end’. In its extreme form language ‘lies beyond the text or the translation itself’ (Snell-Hornby, 2002). Such an explicit exclusion of language as an essential element of translation by Mary Snell-Hornby, a leading German translationist, has led Zybatow, another leading German translationist, to ironically conclude that the self-evident truth that translation has to do with language is no longer self-evident (Zybatow, 2002: 57).
Foreignizing vs. domesticating

Despite the emphasis upon new approaches to translation, traditional approaches have not been discarded haphazardly. In the new translation culture of the twenty-first century, the polarities of culture and language are artificial binaries that have little place in multidisciplinary translation studies. Many of the early central theses have been maintained in current translation studies. Most influential among theorists has been Walter Benjamin's ([1963] 1969) reappraisal by George Steiner (1975) and his revival of interest in the German Romantics, most notably Friedrich Schleiermacher and his advocacy of foreignizing translation. According to Schleiermacher, translation is a transfer between opposed polarities; translators must be dedicated to the native language since people themselves are the product of their native language. Their culture, their thoughts, their actions are bound up inextricably with their language. Translators, when engaging in any translation that progresses away from the native language to a compromise or to a middle ground between that language and the source language, necessarily compromise themselves and their true national or cultural identity. ‘One country, one language’, said Schleiermacher, ‘[…] or else hang disoriented in the unpleasant middle’ [‘unerfreulicher Mitte’] (Robinson, 2002: 235). Schleiermacher’s main goal in advocating foreignizing was to ‘improve’ the German via the foreign. From his perspective utilizing a foreign text would, under German superiority of mind, improve German literature and bring it to a superior position vis-à-vis other European literatures.

Schleiermacher’s position has most recently been (re-)interpreted by Venuti (1995), an admirer and proponent of Schleiermacher’s preferred foreignizing method of translation. The domesticating translation in Venuti’s typology creates a fluent standard register text by using ‘correct’ target language semantic choices and avoiding slang, archaisms, or jargon. The domesticated text is transparent in that it creates the illusionary effect that the translation is somehow not a translation but the original itself. To Venuti, the domesticated text conceals a reductive process by which the text is made to assume local cultural values. The foreignizing translation, in contrast, emphasizes the alterity or ‘otherness’ of the foreign text by using specific techniques, including the use of deliberate archaisms or anachronisms, unusual vocabulary, slang, and/or extensive footnoting. In order to reveal rather than conceal the foreign, translators may consciously choose less formal, rougher, and less polished forms of the language to the sacrifice of more beautiful, more refined, or more ‘fluid’ forms. A foreignizing translation may make potential readers uncomfortable by defying conventional expectations. In foreignizing, translators themselves become visible in the translating process as it is
they who must make conscious and at times dissonant decisions regarding target language semantic, stylistic, and linguistic options. This is illustrated, for instance, in the ‘fuzzy syntax’ and ‘redundant repetitions’ in the English translation of the passage in Tolstoy’s Anna Karina where Anna is excitedly thinking about her trip to Russia to meet her son from whom she is separated (Galeyeva, 2003: 312).

The translator’s interculture

Another modern translation theorist, Anthony Pym, has challenged Schleiermacher’s adherence to the binary paradigm of foreignizing and domesticating (Pym, 1998). Pym claims that Schleiermacher and his school of thought ignore a hidden middle ground, namely one that is composed of translators as individuals and as products of their languages and cultures. Pym questions the emphasis upon the binary methodological approach that ignores or disregards the central role of the translator as an individual. For Pym, a focus on one or another method rather than on the persona of the translator is the greatest danger in political and cultural chauvinism – it is not methods themselves that must or should be criticized, but the very focus itself is what must change. The new focus must shift to an emphasis on the translating individual. Pym draws parallels between the shortcomings of traditional methodological binary paradigms with cultural chauvinism by suggesting that binary thinking presupposes the possibility of ‘pure’ cultures. The cultural-specific context, rooted in nineteenth century nationalism, takes monocultural positions that assume culture can be defined precisely and definitively and that the ways of communicating between languages and culture ‘gaps’ can be dictated.

Pym’s focus is on the Blendlinge [Schleiermacher’s term], the ‘hybrids’ or translators who are the people in the middle, the intermediaries, who form intercultural communities of one kind or another by virtue of being bilingual and hence bicultural. Pym argues it is essential to take into consideration translators as representatives of a minimal interculture in translation methods; translators are sociolinguistic beings working within an interculture of translation. It is within translators themselves that the cultures of the two languages are merged into a new culture; translators do not bridge gaps between cultures, but combine features of both into a new culture via the perspectives and experiences of their own personal interculture. For Pym, translators are members of their own personal ‘intercultures’, cultures that are bound to the person of the translator, cultures that reflect real experience, not abstract ideas, while simultaneously preserving the alterities or uniqueness of individual translators. It is, after all, the existence of people competent
in more than one language that sets up the very possibility of translation, regardless of method. Interculture itself becomes translators’ only definable culture, a culture of which only the general parameters can be defined. This interculture must logically have open or fluid boundaries that change as translators’ themselves change over time.

**The translator’s interliminal area**

Along similar lines Rose (1997) proposes that translators reside not in one or another language or culture, but rather in an ‘interliminal’ area or middle ground, where any two languages intersect. Translator’s intercultures are more than the overlap of two polarities or two national or linguistic cultures; they are also the result of their identity with various subcultures, ethnic or racial backgrounds, and myriad other factors. It is in this interliminal area where translators interpret, select, sacrifice, and/or add to texts based on their personal idiosyncratic judgments. Only translators experience and understand the similarities and differences between source and target cultures. The intercultural overlaps, that is, the areas where all similarities and differences converge reside in bilingual/bicultural translators as individual beings existing in their interliminal space. In these intercultures both the culture of source texts and the culture of target texts are subsidiaries to newly coated translated texts, the result of the work of hybridized translators and their individual intercultures. In other words, translators, by virtue of inhabiting these intercultures are (ideally) able to stand apart from any national culture and create translated texts within the interculture overlap of two different cultures. Macey (2000) gives us a less idealized and more realistic picture of what it means for a translator to exist in such interliminal area in his description of translation and the reflexive practices and struggles a translator, working towards the ideal of a mediator of culture and language, engages in during every step of the process.

Both Pym and Rose seek to move translation theory away from a focus on the polar extremes of traditional binary approaches and toward a middle ground where there is an intersection of cultures – the source culture, the target culture, and translators’ own personal cultures. Translators do not possess one single ‘target-culture’ identity, but rather possess interculture identities that vary along various gradients of foreign-language competence. The fundamental identity of any given translator presupposes an overlap of at least two cultures in an interculture where translators are competent and comfortable, both linguistically and culturally. Since the very minds of translators contain these overlaps, interculture is tied intimately to individual translators and is bound neither to time nor to physical place, but only to mental space. Pym’s non-binary approach
to translation methods is notably open since the relative belonging and/or knowledge of language and culture by each individual translator excludes the fixed boundaries present in the traditional binary paradigms or models of translation.

**Translators as reader-interpreters**

Rose, following the Benjaminian premise that translation represents a source text, understands translators as reader-interpreters. She suggests that translators are creative readers who are at once literary critics and creative writers, who in those translations become critical interpretations of source texts. The choices made by translators in literary translations must necessarily include cultural considerations, considerations of cultural and linguistic-based meanings such as connotations, allusions and idiomatic meanings, and literary traditions, such as stylistic and formal traditions in the respective languages. Therefore it is crucial that literary translators be bicultural as well as bilingual. Translators face the challenge of not only rendering the contents of the source text, but also the challenge of understanding what deeper elements need to be rendered, elements which often are not readily apparent. But to what degree must or should literary translators be bicultural? Rose claims that many translation failures can be attributed to a failure on the part of translators to clearly understand source texts and their place within their cultural contexts, rather than to a paucity of language and translation skills. If literary translators are unfamiliar with source language cultural contexts and the cultural values within which these source texts have been created, much will be lost in the translation to target texts (Rose quoted in Newmark, 1988: 25).

**Translators and reflection**

In an attempt to address the issue of translators and cultural familiarity, Galeyeva (2003) maintains that translators, as readers and interpreters of source texts must evince a high level of reflection. Artistically written and aesthetically valid texts embody various mental modes that can describe the spiritual space of a person or a culture. The spiritual space of individuals is molded by the culture in which they exist and within which they have been encultured. Although individual differences exist, the culture to which one belongs is paramount in the development of shared mental paradigms. With respect to literary translation, translators must understand the mental paradigms of source texts and target texts, and contrive to maintain the integrity of these paradigms and the spiritual spaces of both languages and cultures. In order to achieve this goal, translators must engage in reflection. Such reflection at every stage of the translation process of literary texts allows translators to reach their own interpretations
or understandings of source texts and allows them to discover the optimal means for translating these texts into the target language. The reproduction of the aesthetic value of the source text is actualized through the translator’s reflection. Embedded in Galeyeva’s notion of translators as readers/interpreters is the idea of translators as cultural mediators. Translators are actors who while performing according to the instructions or directions of the stage director, yet bring their own interpretations to the roles they are enacting.

Koller (2002: 54), however, points out that ‘the Kulturproblem in the translation [must] be neither overestimated nor absolutized nor underestimated.’ He suggests a middle ground in which translation method incorporates a foreignizing method by facilitating the communication of the alterities within the alterity itself. In other words, preserving the differences within the ‘otherness’. Koller believes that translators are charged with the task of opening the doors to cultural differences for readers, and not ignoring or eliminating these differences in the target text translation. To truly understand translated literary texts, it is essential to understand the language and cultural stereotypes of the larger sociocultural context in which these texts are embedded, a central component of Gass’s (1999) discussion of his work in translating the German poet Rilke into English.

Double binds

As the new Europe strives to overcome the darker shadows of its history, the role of EU literary writers takes on new significance. Writers are caught in a double bind to the past and to the present as they confront the challenges of shaping the inner voices of their national (and/or regional) cultures – voices which reflect the cultural present and the future while at the same time preserving the past. The preservation of the past is essential both for forging the national identity and for serving as a reminder to avoid the ‘dark past’, that is the incessant violence and wars, the imperialism and the colonialism that have imbued European personal, social, and cultural relations for centuries (Reiss, 1993: 18). For modern European writers writing in and for a new Europe, Reiss suggests there are three fundamentals: imagination, or the ability of aesthetic creation; memory, the remembrance of the past; and experience, or the awareness of the imaginative effort necessary to comprehend alterities or ‘otherness’ of languages and cultures. Only those writers who have begun to comprehend the complexities of context and to realize that cultural artifacts exist within a given contextual complexity are able to project themselves into another culture, another society, and another mind.

European literary translators also face a double bind – a linguistic and cultural double bind which parallels source writers’ double bind to the past and to
the present. Should translators of literary texts become role models for the paradoxical need and desire of Europeans (however we may define them) to belong to one union while retaining their national identities? European translators, inhabitants of unique European intercultures, act as language and cultural mediators who are highly cognizant of the differences and similarities among the nations of the EU.

These translators are also ‘creative gardeners’, that is, they are obligated to nurture as best they can the thriving and prospering of the source and target languages and cultures (Sandrini, 2002). The ideal European translator as both creative gardener and stage actor can be further expanded to include the aspects of creative writer and truthful reader/interpreter. As such, literary translators necessarily occupy a middle ground between source text writers and target language readers. This middle ground becomes a double-binding overlap or interculture, where, we suggest, a shared awareness of this intercultural space binds the writer’s and the literary translator’s task.

**Translators as role models**

The ideal literary translator, who shares the source text writer’s overlap of experience, memory and imagination, will successfully convey the writer’s awareness of complexity of cultural content and context to readers. The readers themselves are individuals who share the European culture with writers and their translators in nothing more and nothing less than individual liminal intercultures. Translators and the translation process involve the process of mediating and communicating individual persons with individual (liminal) cultural backgrounds that escape monocultural definitions.

There is an overlap of cultures in the space where literary translators work and live, resulting in a third culture or interculture where national identity and a sense of globalness intersect and interact. In this interculture the traditional translation binaries are combined or joined into new perspectives or viewpoints. Translators’ intercultures, themselves double binds, leave the paradox open by including monoculture outsiders into each interculture. The emphasis on literary translators as embodiments of intercultural spaces rather than a focus on a particular paradigm or method links translation to experience rather than to ideological presuppositions or assumptions. Since interculture is as fluid and permeable as individuals, the boundaries of interculture remain open and promote tolerance and receptiveness for alterity. The task of European writers is to bring about awareness of cultural or alterities or ‘otherness’ to their readers; the task of European literary translators is to bring their subjective and objective skills and tools to an extensive awareness
of the complex and dynamic cultural contexts in the shaping of a new Europe in the process of creating ‘new’ translated texts.

This shift in emphasis from text to translator is key. Once literary translators are recognized as being the mediators or transmitters of culture, we can then look to the translator as a role model for the emerging new Europe. Furthermore, by understanding literary translators as existing and working within culture overlaps or intercultures that exist outside of the constraints of time and place, the paradox of inherent polarities in translation methodology can be resolved. A parallel may be drawn between the cyber net, which is changing the traditional relationship of place, time, and space, and a translator’s interculture. Both the cyber net of universal communication and the interculture of a translator are new cultures that exist only in space and which are neither bound by time, nor fixed in physical place or setting. The cyber net and translators’ interculture are both amorphous cultures that constantly change in response to myriad outside influences and the internal characteristics of the individuals involved in either communication process. Thus, the merging of the different cultures within the minds of the literary translators themselves make them the ideal and logical role model for the new Europe as it attempts to forge a transcultural identity.

As inhabitants of an overlap culture and as linguistic innovators, translators must make ‘the voice of Europe both heard and credible – a role that is sometimes misrepresented by the very concept of ‘translator’ (Tosi, 2003: ix). Translators today are confronted with the realization that translation is a process of choosing – a difficult process when the best linguistic choice could have unintended political, legislative, or even wider social consequences (Tosi, 2003: 42). In this new Europe, where the role of translators has gained such increased political and social importance, methods such as foreignizing and domesticating have taken on new political significance. Simultaneously, issues based on linguistic and cultural dichotomies have been challenged and nowhere is the confrontation of subjective and objective textual constraint more hotly debated than in literary translation where texts are by their very nature artistic and aesthetic creations, and often regarded as embodying elements of language, the essence of which is untranslatable as it transcends the actual words of the text.

Conclusion

In sum, European literary translators today are faced with overcoming the paradox of maintaining differences and alterities while simultaneously striving to achieve the common goal of unity, a paradox analogous to the EU political paradox of struggling to form one union and yet wishing to maintain the
separate national identities of member nations. By virtue of their translation endeavors, literary translators are readers, writers, interpreters, mediators, and communicators. Within themselves new intercultures are created, a melding of target texts, source texts, and each individual translator's own cultural experiences. It is precisely the merging of these at times diverse and even competing or conflicting elements, which allows them to become role models for a new Europe with shared but yet different cultures.

References


