

La main de Thôt

ISSN : 2272-2653

Éditeur : Carole Filière

12 | 2024

Traduction et résistances

Looking the other way in via Fani: Reframing Resistance in the Translation of Barbara Balzerani's *Compagna luna*

Dr Matt Holden

 <http://interfas.univ-tlse2.fr/lamaindethot/1299>

Référence électronique

Dr Matt Holden, « Looking the other way in via Fani: Reframing Resistance in the Translation of Barbara Balzerani's *Compagna luna* », *La main de Thôt* [En ligne], 12 | 2024, mis en ligne le 05 décembre 2024, consulté le 08 janvier 2025. URL : <http://interfas.univ-tlse2.fr/lamaindethot/1299>

Looking the other way in via Fani: Reframing Resistance in the Translation of Barbara Balzerani's *Compagna luna*

Dr Matt Holden

PLAN

Introduction

Social Narrativity and Framing in *Compagna luna*

Framing and Silences in *Compagna luna*

Judge Sossi and the Prosecutor Francesco Coco

Via Fracchia

Sand for the Cuffs of Moro's Trousers

Balzerani's Refusal of Silence

Discussion: Translation as Reframing

TEXTE

Introduction

- In her 1998 book *Compagna luna* (1998/2013), Barbara Balzerani reflects on her experiences as a member of the Red Brigades, a left-wing militant group that fought *la Lotta armata per il comunismo* (the Armed Struggle for Communism) in Italy from 1972 to the early 1980s. Balzerani took part in the group's most high-profile action, the kidnapping of the Christian Democrat leader and former Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978. Moro's driver and four bodyguards were killed by the Red Brigades during the kidnapping, and Moro was held for 55 days while the Red Brigades subjected him to a people's trial and engaged in widely publicised negotiations with the Italian state for his release. When those negotiations failed, the Red Brigades executed Moro and left his body in the back of a car in central Rome on May 9, 1978. The case was one of the most sensational of the events of Italy's *anni di piombo* (Years of Lead), the period of left-wing, right-wing, and state violence that struck Italy from the late 1960s to the early 1980s.

- 2 As a militant in the Red Brigades, Balzerani lived a clandestine life for many years. She was eventually arrested in 1985 and served more than 20 years in prison for her role in the Moro kidnapping and other Red Brigades actions. She was paroled in 2006 and completed her sentence in 2011. Balzerani died in March 2024 after a long illness. Her first book, *Compagna luna*, written while she was still serving her sentence, is not a conventional autobiography or a true crime-style account of the Red Brigades. Nor is it, as Balzerani herself writes, the history of the Red Brigades, but “solo una parte di quanto ho vissuto e di come” (BALZERANI, 1998, 6) – “only a part of the life I have lived and of how I have lived it.” The book explores her choice to join the Armed Struggle and its effects on her. Her text attempts to set out the political motivation for the Red Brigades’ actions, offering a resistant counter-narrative to the narratives of delinquency and criminality that she argues are promoted by many mainstream accounts of left-wing armed militancy in Italy.
- 3 *Compagna luna* is one of numerous books by former members of the Red Brigades and other armed left-wing organisations that were written and published in Italy in the 1990s and early 2000s, a period in which former members of these groups were given a voice and considerable cultural prominence as part of a process of social and political reconciliation after the fall of the first republic in 1992. This sub-genre of writing has been described as post-terrorist narration, and it includes autobiographical writings such as Balzerani’s, long-form interviews with former members of militant groups, and novels and collections of short fiction (GLYNN, 2013, 99-102).
- 4 Texts such as Balzerani’s contest mainstream narratives about terrorism and the Armed Struggle, and as such we can consider them texts of resistance that present interesting problems for a translator.

Social Narrativity and Framing in *Compagna luna*

- 5 The concept of social narrativity was central to my understanding of *Compagna luna* as I approached translating it. Mona Baker (2006) characterises narrative as the primary way by which humans make sense of the world and our place in it. She develops a typology of nar-

rative that has been useful in analysing the function of social narrative (as opposed to narrative storytelling) in *Compagna luna* and understanding how I would approach translating the text's resistant representations of history.

- 6 Drawing on the work of Margaret Somers (1997) and others, Baker outlines several categories of social narrative. In this paper I draw on three categories – ontological narratives, what I term collective narratives, and public narratives – and on Baker's and other thinkers' discussion of framing and how framing can be enacted in translation to produce different meanings from a source text.
- 7 In this typology, ontological narratives are stories we tell ourselves and about ourselves and our place in the world; they are “the stories that social actors use to make sense of – indeed, to act in – their lives” (SOMERS, 1997, 84). Ontological narratives help us to define who we are and allow us to make sense of our lives as more than a series of unrelated events. They embed us in social existence, and we act in the world partly depending on how we understand our place in a range of narratives, even if such narratives are partial and at times even contradictory. Ontological narratives allow us to understand that the self is something we constantly become through storytelling (SOMERS, 84). They are constructed over time, through interactions with other people and the world we inhabit. We adjust our stories to fit reality and adjust ‘reality’ to fit our narratives. Somers calls the “webs of interaction” within which we articulate our ontological narratives “public narratives”; she also uses the terms “cultural narratives” and “institutional narratives” to describe them. These narratives are “attached to [...] structural formations larger than the single individual, to intersubjective networks and institutions, local or grand, macro or micro” (SOMERS, 1997, 85).
- 8 In developing her discussion of public or institutional narratives, Baker also uses the term “collective narratives”; she writes that these “refer vaguely to any type of narrative that has currency in a given community” (BAKER, 2019, 33). Hermans refers to these as “socially shared narratives”, noting that they cover a spectrum from in-group narratives to institutional and metanarratives (HERMANS, 2022, 17-18). While Baker uses the terms “collective narratives” and “public narratives” interchangeably, in this paper I use the term ‘collective

narratives' to mean something like in-group narrative, to describe narratives that arise outside of dominant social institutions, such as the family, the media or organs of civil society: in my typology, 'collective narratives' often oppose the dominant public narratives in a society and can be thought of as a form of resistance.¹ This clarification of Baker's typology creates a framework within which the political nature of the narratives articulated in a text can be more clearly analysed, and so more effectively translated.

- 9 Using this refinement of the typology, I characterise the shared narratives about the Armed Struggle and Italian politics and society that were current in the non-institutional left in Italy in the 1970s as collective narratives. These collective narratives contested the public narratives about this period elaborated by the state, political parties, the police, the church, the media, and other institutions. Using this refinement of Baker's typology, I understand *Compagna luna* as an ontological narrative that is articulated with a complex of collective narratives that resist the public narratives about the experience of the Red Brigades, the Armed Struggle, and this turbulent period in Italian history. Baker writes that narrative "provides a basis for shared language and values, thus enabling the mobilization of numerous individuals with very different backgrounds and attributes around specific political, humanitarian, or social issues" (2010, 23). Balzerani invokes this sense of values shared with her imagined readers through shared collective narratives when she writes in the first chapter that she is addressing her text to certain readers and not others: she lists eight categories of people to whom *Compagna luna* is not addressed. Instead, she writes, her text addresses:

...tutte le altre e gli altri. Che pure non conosco, che non mi conoscono ma che, come me, fanno del disagio di un mondo di rappresentazioni che sempre meno significano la memoria e l'esperienza di ciascuno.

(BALZERANI, 1998, 10, italics in original)

...all the other women and men, even those I don't know and who don't know me, but who, like me, feel out of place in a world whose representations less and less signify our memories and experiences.

(My translation)

- 10 In writing this, Balzerani proposes her text as a representation that resists the mainstream representations of her and others' experiences. She elaborates a series of narratives that frame the Red Brigades' Armed Struggle, and her decision to join it, as a necessary political response to the situation in Italy in the early 1970s.
- 11 This places my translation of *Compagna luna* firmly among translations that are, as Maria Tymoczko puts it, "records of cultural contestations and struggles rather than [...] simple linguistic transpositions or creative literary endeavours" (TYMOCZKO, 2010, 3). This type of translation is both an ethical and a political act, as Tymoczko notes, and the strategies I adopted in translating *Compagna luna*'s collective narratives were developed from an ethics of foregrounding its political nature as an oppositional account of this period in Italian history. And while I established some of this context in my translator's introduction, as I discuss below, I also sought translation strategies that would amplify these narratives in the text in the hope of making this text's political resistance clearer to readers in English who may lack the political and historical context that Balzerani assumed her Italian readers would have. I hoped to make these narrative framings available without using other paratextual elements such as explanatory footnotes or endnotes, which I used in my translation of Nanni Balestrini's *Vogliamo tutto*, published in English as *Vogliamo tutto* (BALESTRINI, 2014) and *We Want Everything* (BALESTRINI, 2016). Such paratextual elements can be seen as markers of a translator's presence in a text; they may go some way to countering the translator's invisibility or at least to highlighting a text's status as a translation (VENUTI, 2018): they interrupt its fluency with editorial interpolations. This can be seen as an ethical translation strategy, making the translator's interpretations more visible to a reader. In this paper, I explore the ethics and politics of my choice not to use such a strategy in my translation of *Compagna luna*.
- 12 Theo Hermans also points out that translation is a renarration and a reframing. A text exists in a web of narratives and translating it means inserting it into a different web of narratives: "Put simply, translation means retelling a text in new surroundings" (2022, 18). In translating *Compagna luna* into English in the 2020s, I was conscious that I was translating a text by an author who could be considered a terrorist into the web of narratives about terrorism/political violence

that have arisen since the attacks of September 11, 2001. This made my desire to translate the text's resistant representations of the Red Brigades more problematic, as I was translating it into a narrative web that could easily dismiss it as the self-justificatory musings of a former terrorist who refuses to take responsibility for the violence she has wrought in remaining silent about the impact of some of her choices and actions, a narrative that is also present in the text's Italian context.

Framing and Silences in *Compagna luna*

- 13 *Compagna luna* can be read as a text addressed to those who know the history of the period that Balzerani is writing about. She addresses those who, like her, are “uncomfortable” in the world of mainstream representations of Italian history; in her text she alludes to numerous events in the Armed Struggle that many of these target readers of the first edition of *Compagna luna* in 1998, veterans of the extra-parliamentary left of the 1960s and 1970s, would likely have been familiar with. Balzerani draws on a series of collective narratives about Italy in the 1960s and 1970s that contest the mainstream public narratives. She frames her experiences and the experiences of other militants within these narratives in ways that enable some readings of the story of this period and discourage (without rendering impossible) others. These framings constitute part of the text's resistance, and so in translating *Compagna luna* as a resistant text I have sought to translate these framings, too.
- 14 Mona Baker defines framing as “an active strategy that implies agency and by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality” (2019, 106). To frame in creating a text is to select some aspects of a “perceived reality” and make them more “salient” – more noticeable or meaningful to the reader. Salience depends on how information is placed in a text, its repetition and its association with the writer's and the readers' cultural contexts (ENTMAN, 1993, 52). Frames help produce meaning by directing attention to some aspects of reality and steering attention away from others.

- 15 The salience of information within a textual frame depends not just on the author's communicative intent, but on the reader's existing "schemata" – the clusters of ideas that help people make sense of information (ENTMAN, 1993, 53; BAKER, 2019, 105). For the Italian readers of *Compagna luna* who Balzerani addresses in her introduction, these schemata might include their knowledge of the historical events the text recounts and the ideological framework and ontological, collective and public narratives through which they construct and understand reality. Importantly, while Italian readers of *Compagna luna* may share some of Balzerani's schemata, other ideological and cultural schemata may lead some to make different readings of her text. Baker refers to this as "frame ambiguity" (2006, 107).
- 16 Framing is also enacted by leaving some aspects of a perceived reality out: to frame is both to include and to exclude information from a text, to make some things seem more salient and others less salient or not salient at all (ENTMAN, 1993). Part of Balzerani's framing of events in *Compagna luna* consists in leaving out some of the details of the events she narrates. Such details could have considerable salience and encourage different understandings of these events had they been included. But their omission can also be seen to have salience – in refusing to speak of aspects of events that could be part of the schemata through which many of her readers make sense of the world, Balzerani is encouraging her readers to make certain meanings out of her text, and not others. These omissions can be thought of as a series of silences in *Compagna luna* that at least some of Balzerani's Italian readers would have been able to 'hear', but which might remain inaudible to contemporary English-language readers who bring different schemata to their reading of the text. One of the translation problems presented by this text is of translating its framings in ways that respect those framings while still making them available to the translation's readers. It is a problem of translating what Balzerani has left out in her construction of reality without distorting its salience in the Italian text.
- 17 In narrating herself as a victim of the Armed Struggle as well as a protagonist, Balzerani omits important historical details of some of the events she recounts. She mentions few of the people who were killed or wounded in Red Brigades shootings or traumatised by kidnappings, nor their families, friends and colleagues. She seeks to pro-

duce certain meanings (and resist the production of others) through the framing of the events she recounts and alludes to. These framings encourage the reader to make positive moral judgments of the Red Brigades and Balzerani's actions by highlighting the salience of certain details and excluding others that might contribute to negative moral judgements. Although her text is sometimes cryptic even for Italian readers, much of what she omits would have been part of the schemata that allowed her target Italian audience to make sense of her framings and to 'hear' her silences.

- 18 The most obvious example of Balzerani's framing strategy, and one that would perhaps be evident even to readers of an English translation in 2024, is her account of the kidnapping of Aldo Moro in the sixth chapter of *Compagna luna*, "Aldo Moro" (BALZERANI, 2013, 69-79). It is also the only chapter where we see Balzerani in action in the Armed Struggle:

Ci siamo. Vedo la nostra macchina scendere su via Fani con dietro le altre due. Mi preparo a prendere posto in mezzo all'incrocio e, al primo sparo, tiro fuori la mia arma. Debbo bloccare il flusso delle macchine per tenere la strada libera alla nostra via di fuga e impedire qualsiasi intervento indesiderato. Guardo in un'altra direzione e perciò non vedo cosa sta succedendo a pochi passi di me.
(BALZERANI, 2013, 73; italics in original text)

We're ready. I see our car coming down via Fani with the other two cars following. I take up my position in the middle of the intersection and, at the sound of the first shot, I raise my gun. My job is to block the traffic, keep the street clear for our escape, stop any unexpected interventions. I'm looking the other way, so I don't see what is happening just a few steps away from me.
(my translation)

- 19 What Balzerani does not see, but what most Italian readers of the first edition would know, is that the other members of the Red Brigades command opened fire on Moro's two-car convoy, killing his driver and four police bodyguards. The images of the bullet-riddled cars and one officer's body spread on the road were broadcast widely on Italian TV and published in newspapers, and it is safe to say they form part of the country's collective memory. While Balzerani ac-

knowledges the death of the men later in the chapter, her framing at this point is firmly on the effect of the attack on her:

Unico elemento dinamico nell'irrealtà ferma di quei momenti, l'assordante fragore delle armi. Non mi abituerò mai all'estraneità del loro sgradevole timbro meccanico.

Come se ogni volta mi sorprendesse.

Certo, è la politica a guidare il fucile, ma colpo dopo colpo ci lascio un pezzo di me.

(BALZERANI, 2013, 73. Italics in original)

The only dynamic element in the stilled unreality of those moments is the deafening rattle of the guns. I will never get used to their strange, ugly clatter.

It's as if I'm taken by surprise every time.

Yes, politics points the gun, but with each shot I leave a piece of myself behind.

(my translation)

- 20 For a reader familiar with the events Balzerani recounts, her silences can be as meaningful as what she does say. They alert the reader that this text speaks of Balzerani's trauma but does not speak of the trauma of the victims of the Red Brigades' actions, and that this not speaking is a form of resistance to mainstream public narratives about the Armed Struggle that focus on its victims.
- 21 But readers of an English translation in 2024 who lack the Italian readers' schemata might be poorly placed to 'hear' her silences and make judgements about them. These schemata include knowledge of historical events in Italy in this period, the ideological positioning of someone who was part of the non-institutional left in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s, and awareness of collective and public narratives about Italian politics at this time. For readers with different schemata, a translation that does not make the omissions apparent might fail to communicate in the same way as the Italian text. Thinking about framing in a text and the schemata that make framings available to an audience highlights one way in which elements of a text may or may not be thought of as 'translatable'.

- 22 In the following sections I examine three significant omissions that are part of the broader frame of some of the events recounted in Balzerani's text: the killing of the prosecutor Francesco Coco by the Red Brigades in 1976; the kidnapping and murder of Roberto Peci, brother of the *pentito* Patrizio Peci, in 1981; and Balzerani's vote in favour of executing Moro when the Red Brigades executive committee met shortly before Moro was killed in May 1978. I contrast these silences by omission with Balzerani's insistence on being heard and discuss the practicality and ethics of making these silences 'audible' to readers of the translation who might otherwise not be aware of them.

Judge Sossi and the Prosecutor Francesco Coco

- 23 In chapter four, "Il Giudice Sossi" ("Judge Sossi", 2013, 51-58), Balzerani narrates aspects of the kidnapping of the judge Mario Sossi in Genoa on April 18, 1974. The chapter is introduced by an account of Balzerani and several of her fellow militants crossing paths with a demonstration by young activists outside the embassy of a US client state in Rome. Balzerani and her colleagues were "studiando un obiettivo di colpire" ("studying a target we wanted to hit") (BALZERANI, 2013, 51); the young militants threw a Molotov cocktail at the door to the courtyard of the embassy, and one of them was killed by police gunfire. This anecdote evokes a collective narrative of the political situation in Italy at that moment: the broader left resorting to futile gestures of resistance, the authorities replying with excessive force. In Balzerani's framing, the Red Brigades' choice of armed struggle had already become unavoidable.
- 24 Balzerani's text marks the Sossi kidnapping and its political context as the moment she chose to enter the Red Brigades. In her framing, Sossi was kidnapped because of his role in the prosecution and sentencing of a small group of armed militants who became known as the Gruppo XXII Ottobre (22 October group). They were convicted over the killing of a clerk in a robbery, and as prosecutor, Sossi had requested "secoli di carcere" (hundreds of years in prison) (BOCCA, 1978, 59). Balzerani depicts Sossi in unflattering terms:

Nel processo contro i compagni della XXII ottobre, nei panni dell'accusa, aveva magistralmente rappresentato la ferocia, l'arroganza e l'ottusità di una borghesia che difendeva sé stessa dal suo peggior nemico, colpendolo con una durezza esemplare nel momento stesso in cui ne distruggeva l'identità politica.
(BALZERANI, 2013, 54)

In the role of prosecutor during the trial of the October 22 comrades, he gave a masterclass in the brutality, the arrogance and the stubbornness of the bourgeoisie as it defended itself from its worst enemy, attacking that enemy with exemplary severity, denying its political identity.
(My translation)

- 25 She then narrates a sunny Sunday afternoon in a kitchen in a working-class apartment building in Rome where, over lunch, irregular members and supporters of the Red Brigades discussed what should be done with the kidnapped judge Sossi; comradely neighbours passing on the landing outside offer their opinion,

delegando a quei compagni tutto quello che pensavano andasse fatto, sulla stessa strada che poi molti avrebbero percorso in quella sorta di esteso consenso alle organizzazioni armate che oggi solo i più onesti sono disposti ad ammettere.
(BALZERANI, 2013, 52).

delegating to the comrades to do what they thought should be done, taking a line in broad agreement with the armed groups that only the most honest are prepared to admit to having taken now.
(My translation)

- 26 Balzerani frames a scene of broad support for the Red Brigades in the Italian working class and the non-institutional left, support that she says many later denied offering.
- 27 The Sossi kidnapping brought the Red Brigades notoriety in Italy and led to increased recruitment to armed groups (GINSBORG, 1998, 363). Sossi was released by the Red Brigades after 35 days; negotiations for a prisoner swap were blocked by Genoa's public prosecutor, Francesco Coco. The Red Brigades ceded when they realised no third

country would offer asylum to any militants who were released (BOCCA, 1978, 62), and Sossi was freed unharmed.

- 28 The journalist and historian Giorgio Bocca has framed the public reaction to the kidnapping quite differently from Balzerani's depiction of the "tribunale del popolo" (people's tribunal) (BALZERANI, 2013, 52) deliberating over the prisoner-judge's fate. He writes:

la stragrande maggioranza dei democratici e dei lavoratori, compresi i portuali comunisti, pensano a una provocazione ordita dalla destra per agevolare la vittoria del blocco moderato e del suo duce Fanfani.

(BOCCA, 1978, 59-60)

the overwhelming majority of democrats and workers, including the communist dock workers, thought of it as a right-wing provocation to facilitate the victory of the moderate block and its patron, Fanfani.
(My translation)

- 29 Bocca notes that in kidnapping Sossi, the Red Brigades succeeded in arousing sympathy for a man who had been considered a neo-Fascist by many. He writes that the Red Brigades should have understood this from the strike that paralysed Genoa in protest at the kidnapping (BOCCA, 1978, 59-60). Bocca's framing and representation of these events contrasts markedly with Balzerani's. She remains silent on the strike, even though she claims wide support for the kidnapping, choosing instead to give salience to the support offered by sympathetic passersby on the apartment landing, and representing this as indicative of broader working-class agreement with the Red Brigades. Bocca's representation of the kidnapping as arousing sympathy for a man who had been hated on the left is also at odds with Balzerani's characterisation of Sossi. In contrast with Balzerani's claims of broad sympathy, Bocca's framing indicates a growing isolation of the Red Brigades from the broader left. An (Italian) reader such as Bocca whose schemata includes knowledge of the broader context of the Sossi kidnapping can make a more critical assessment of Balzerani's text because they know what she is leaving out. A contemporary reader of an English translation, 50 years after the events, may lack these schemata, and so not know what Balzerani has chosen to omit in her framing of this event. These omissions would have, consequently, less salience.

- 30 Other silences in the text are constituted by Balzerani's framing through omission, such as her description of the resolution of the Sossi kidnapping:

*Le Brigate rosse trattarono.
Il giudice prigioniero fu rilasciato e, subito dopo il Procuratore
Francesco Coco, che si era impegnato pubblicamente, con fare risoluto,
si rimangiò la parola.
Finì con i compagni sepolti da condanne secolare, la lotta rivoluzion-
aria trattata alla stregua di fenomeno delinquente ed uno scontro
armato fortemente sbilanciato sul terreno militare.*
(BALZERANI, 2013, 55)

The Red Brigades negotiated.
The prisoner-judge was released and, straight after, the public pro-
secutor Francesco Coco, who had promised publicly, firmly, went
back on his word.
It ended with the comrades buried under endless prison sentences,
the revolutionary struggle judged by the same criteria as a manifest-
ation of delinquency, and a terribly one-sided armed conflict on the
military terrain.
(My translation)

- 31 There are two striking historical resonances in this passage for read-
ers who possess the schemata of the non-institutional left in this
period. One is Balzerani's claim that the Ottobre XXII comrades' ac-
tions were part of the revolutionary struggle and not a manifestation
of delinquency. They were convicted over the killing of a clerk in a
robbery that was carried out to finance subversive activities, and al-
though the Red Brigades carried out numerous armed robberies to
finance their activities, shooting dead a zealous clerk could be seen
as going too far even by the standards of committed communist mil-
itants.
- 32 The reference to the public prosecutor Francesco Coco represents an
even darker silence. Coco and two police officers who were escorting
him were ambushed and killed by a Red Brigades command in Genoa
in June 1976, two years after the Sossi kidnapping. An Italian reader in
1998 when the first edition was published would likely have known
that Coco was murdered by the Red Brigades, and Balzerani would be

aware of this: there was no need to remind the reader of the end Coco met, or to discuss its morality or strategic value. His death is denied salience by Balzerani's framing of him as dishonest and someone who negotiated in bad faith by going back on his word. A contemporary reader of the English translation who doesn't know what later happened to Coco will not be able to 'hear' this silence and will remain unaware of Balzerani's framing, which effectively hides several murders.

- 33 One way for a translator to convey this information to a contemporary reader of an English translation – to make the contemporary reader aware of what Balzerani has omitted – would be to include explanatory endnotes or footnotes. Another way would be to explicate in the text of the translation. For example, when Balzerani writes:

Il giudice prigioniero fu rilasciato e, subito dopo, il Procuratore Francesco Coco, che si era impegnato pubblicamente, con fare risoluto, si rimangiò la parola.
(BALZERANI, 2013, 55)

- 34 I could add text to the translation to make the reader aware of Coco's fate:

The judge-prisoner was released and, straight after, the public prosecutor Francesco Coco, who had promised publicly, firmly, **and who the Red Brigades later assassinated**, went back on his word.
(Bold indicates explicating text that is **not** in my translation.)

- 35 But explicating Coco's fate in the translation to make what Balzerani doesn't say about him 'audible' would run counter to her framing, making salient a detail that doesn't figure in the text's representation of Coco. Making this silence audible in the translation would, perhaps paradoxically, annul its effect.
- 36 This kind of deep context for a text that speaks of historical events in personal terms but that also seeks to contest certain understandings of events and promote others makes considerable ethical demands of a translator. The translator is engaged in the translation of what Tymoczko terms "opposition to ...social constructs" (TYMOCZKO, 2018, 229), so while I sought to amplify some of the schemata that

supports Balzerani's framings of history, I have also engaged in a political non-translation of other schemata, as this example shows. This positions me not as a passive transmitter of textual meanings but an active agent in the construction of social and political interpretations. It highlights my agency as translator in possibly unsuspected ways.

Via Fracchia

- 37 Balzerani's omissions rest on associations between events, people and places connected to her story – Theo Hermans' "web of existing narratives" (HERMANS, 2022, 18); a reader who can make these associations will be aware of the omissions and be able to interpret them as part of Balzerani's framing: what she omits can be read as heightening the salience of what she includes. In the eighth chapter, "L'amerikano" (The Amerikan, BALZERANI 2013, 81-93), in which Balzerani discusses the Red Brigades' kidnapping of the US Army General James Dozier in December 1981, the text makes three references to "via Fracchia":

La mattanza di via Fracchia con i suoi effetti devastanti da ultima spiaggia era servita da dura lezione per non cadere nella trappola del colpo su colpo e per riprendere l'iniziativa autonomamente.
(BALZERANI, 2013, 82)

The massacre in via Fracchia, with its devastating effects of a last stand, had been a tough lesson about not falling back on reacting to the enemy, of the need to take the initiative autonomously.
(My gloss)

Quel pidocchio sull'albero sano che era costato i compagni massacrati a via Fracchia...
(BALZERANI, 2013, 86)

That parasite on the healthy tree that had cost the lives of the comrades massacred in via Fracchia...
(My gloss)

Ma è stata tutta la responsabilità di chi si era armato se si è accettato lo scippo violento della parola di quanti avrebbero dovuto opporsi, per esempio, a che soliti cittadini al di sopra di ogni sospetto potessero impunemente dire che a via Fracchia c'era stata una sparatoria?
(BALZERANI, 2013, 89)

But were those who had taken up arms really to blame for the violent assault on language, which many should have opposed, by which the usual citizens above all suspicion could say openly that there had been a shootout in via Fracchia?
(My gloss)

- 38 “Via Fracchia” refers to an incident on March 28, 1980, when officers of the Carabinieri, then under the command of General Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa, raided an apartment in via Fracchia, Genoa, and shot and killed four Red Brigades militants. The official account of the incident is that the militants were killed in a shootout with the Carabinieri (the “sparatoria” referred to in Balzerani’s text), although the exact circumstances of the raid remain unclear; some commentators have claimed that the militants were unarmed, that the weapons found in the apartment had not been fired, and that they were shot in the back while trying to flee the Carabinieri. This raises the possibility that the killings were deliberate, part of a strategy pursued by Dalla Chiesa of taking the fight to the Red Brigades and defeating them militarily as well as legally and politically (BOCCA, 1978). In describing the “violent mugging of language” and writing that “the usual citizens above all suspicion could say openly that there had been a shootout in via Fracchia”, Balzerani frames the mainstream media accounts of the raid as untruthful and part of a deliberate strategy of misrepresentation of the Armed Struggle.
- 39 To make this framing more apparent to the contemporary reader of an English translation, I made two additions to my English translation that are not in the Italian text (marked here in bold):

The massacre **of four Red Brigades militants** in via Fracchia **by the Carabinieri, which destroyed the Genoa column**, had been a tough lesson about not falling back on reacting to the enemy, of the need to take the initiative autonomously.

But were those who had taken up arms really to blame for the violent assault on language, which many should have opposed, by which the usual '**citizens above all suspicion**' could say openly that there had been a shootout, **not a massacre**, in via Fracchia?

- 40 In this case, I argue that adding text and placing “citizens above all suspicion” in quotation marks reinforces Balzerani’s framing of the event by explaining something of the context to a contemporary reader of the translation, and so is part of a useful translation strategy that keeps faith with her framing in the Italian.
- 41 However, a silence surrounds the circumstances that lead to the raid and the consequences of those circumstances. The location of the apartment in via Fracchia and its use as a Red Brigades safe house was disclosed to the Carabinieri by Patrizio Peci, a former member of the Red Brigades who was the first *pentito* (ORSINI, 2011, 46). *Pentiti* were convicted militants who were offered reductions in their sentences in return for cooperating with the authorities by providing information.
- 42 Peci is the person Balzerani is referring to when she writes “quel pidocchio sull’albero sano” (that parasite on the healthy tree). In one of the darkest episodes in the story of the Red Brigades, Peci’s younger brother, Roberto, was kidnapped by a Red Brigades command on June 10, 1981, held for 54 days and executed with a burst of machine-gun fire on August 3, 1981. The murder was an apparent act of revenge for Patrizio Peci’s cooperation with the authorities (ORSINI, 2011, 46) and a warning to others about the consequences of cooperating. Although Balzerani does not name Peci, part of the salience for informed readers of the phrase “via Fracchia” may be its association with the story of Peci and his brother.
- 43 This information could be added to the translation in an unobtrusive way in an unmarked endnote, a strategy I used in my translation of *Vogliamo tutto* (see above). The English translator of Andrea Camilleri’s Inspector Montalbano novels, Stephen Sartarelli, uses endnotes to explain the political context of numerous references in Camilleri’s text that would be clear to Italian readers, but not, perhaps, to his Anglophone audience. For example, in *The Shape of Water* (CAMILLERI, 2002), Sartarelli includes a detailed endnote explaining Op-

erazione mani pulite (Operation Clean Hands), the investigation by Milan judges into political corruption that led to the disintegration of Italy's post-war political order (CAMILLERI, 2002, 222). This is alluded to in Camilleri's text in a way that Italian readers would immediately recognise: it would be part of their schemata for understanding Italian politics in this period. But while Sartarelli's endnote increases the salience of a textual framing for Anglophone readers in a way that accords with the Italian text's framings, adding a detailed endnote to a translation of *Compagna luna* to unravel the complexities of via Fracchia could be seen as distorting Balzerani's framing by giving salience to information that she has deliberately left out.

Sand for the Cuffs of Moro's Trousers

- 44 The Red Brigades held Moro in a makeshift cell hidden behind a bookcase in an apartment in Rome, where he was subjected to a people's trial for his role as leader of *la Democrazia cristiana* (the Christian Democrats) in collaborating with US imperial capitalism (Bocca 1978, 130). Moro was interrogated by Mario Moretti, sentenced to death, and the sentence was announced in the Red Brigades sixth communique of April 15, 1978 (Sciascia 2013, 11). On May 5, 1978, the Red Brigades' ninth communique announced: "Concludiamo quindi la battaglia iniziata il 16 marzo, eseguendo la sentenza a cui Aldo Moro è stato condannato" ("We conclude the battle started on March the 16th, executing the sentence to which Aldo Moro was condemned") (SCIASCIA, 2013, 12). On May 9, 1978, after a telephone tip-off, police found Moro's body in the back of a red Renault parked in via Caetani in central Rome.
- 45 Balzerani writes that she went to a nearby beach to collect sand in the days before Moro was killed, which the Red Brigades planned to leave in the cuffs of Moro's trousers and on the soles of his shoes to throw investigators off the track when his body was found. Despite the impending murder of another human, Balzerani's focus is on her own distress:

Nel viaggio di andata verso la spiaggia più vicina mi muovevo come un automa. Cosa stava facendo? Ah, sì, sotto le scarpe e nei risvolti dei

pantaloni. Lo stomaco stretto e la voglia di essere in qualunque altro posto che non fosse quello.

(BALZERANI, 2013, 77, italics in original)

On my way to the nearest beach, I moved like an automaton. What was I doing? Oh yes, on the soles of his shoes and in the cuffs of his trousers. My stomach tight, wanting to be anywhere but here.

(My translation)

46 While some Christian Democrat politicians close to Moro may have been prepared to do whatever was possible to save his life, the leadership of *il Partito comunista italiana* (the Italian Communist Party) remained opposed to negotiating with the Red Brigades, arguing that negotiation would afford the Red Brigades a political recognition they did not deserve. This *linea della fermezza* (hard line) left the Christian Democrat prime minister, Giulio Andreotti, in the position where he could not be seen to cede political recognition to the Red Brigades and so appear weaker than the Italian Communist Party in confronting leftist terrorism (Ginsborg 1990, 384). (Although some might argue, in the spirit of *dietrologia*, that Andreotti and his faction were not unhappy to sacrifice Moro's life for other reasons.) Former members of the Red Brigades who took part in the kidnapping have written that a minimal gesture of political recognition from the Christian Democrats would have been enough to save Moro's life (MORETTI, 1994; MORUCCI, 2004).

47 In her framing of the Moro case, Balzerani attributes responsibility for his death to the parties of the *linea della fermezza* and their refusal to negotiate with the Red Brigades, also claiming that such a gesture of political recognition would have sufficed. She writes that by the time she was going to collect sand for the cuffs of Moro's trousers and the soles of his shoes, only a "miraculous return to reason" by the Christian Democrat leadership could have saved Moro's life, and that she herself wished she had known how to pray for such a miracle.

Ormai solo un miracolo di estremo rinsavimento dei responsabili del partito democristiano poteva modificare la nostra decisione e a mio modo avrei volute sapere pregare perché accadesse.

(BALZERANI, 2013, 77, italics in original)

By now only a miraculous return to reason by the Christian Democrat leadership could change our decision. In my own way, I wished I knew how to pray for that to happen.
(My translation)

- 48 Balzerani's framing here is noteworthy. While she represents the decision to execute Moro as "our decision", both Valerio Morucci and Adriana Faranda argued against killing Moro (MORUCCI, 2004). Ruth Glynn (2013) notes that Balzerani voted in favour of carrying out the sentence. A scene in the fourth episode of the television drama *Esterno notte* (BELLOCCHIO, 2022) depicts Morucci and Faranda arguing against carrying out the sentence with two other militants who are in favour; these two can be identified from other details in the series as Mario Moretti and Barbara Balzerani. In the popular imagination as well as the historical and legal record, Balzerani bears direct responsibility for Moro's death. Yet, in excluding the deliberations of the Red Brigades' executive committee from her narrative, in attributing Moro's death to the unwillingness of the DC and the PCI to negotiate, and in focussing on the moral anguish she felt, she frames the execution as beyond her control and remains silent about her personal responsibility.

Balzerani's Refusal of Silence

- 49 Balzerani's silence on these and other aspects of the events narrated in *Compagna luna* can paradoxically be seen as part of her insistence on her right to speak for herself and for her speech to be heard. In the "Nota dell'autrice alla nuova edizione" ("Author's note to the new edition", BALZERANI, 2013, 5-11) she writes:

Come pena accessoria per i vinti, la parola negata. Condanna non scritta a una galera impenetrabile. È capace di rimanere in gola a strozzare quella parola, dopo aver trovato alimento in ogni goccia di sangue, in ogni piega di carne. E può succedere che irrompa, trovando la via, per cercare contatto epidermico con chi subisce la stessa distorsione di senso e la stessa imposizione al silenzio.
(BALZERANI, 2013, 6)

Speech is denied to the defeated as a supplementary punishment, an unwritten sentence to an impenetrable prison. It lodges in the throat, strangling that speech, after feeding on every drop of blood and every fold of flesh. And sometimes it erupts, searching for epidermal contact with whoever has suffered from the same distortion of sense and the same enforced silence.
(My translation)

- 50 The speech Balzerani insists on is the speech of those who would tell a different story from the story told by the victors in a social and political struggle that had turned military. In refusing to be silenced, she resists allowing the dominant public narratives about these events to be the only narratives that are heard. She insists on framing the Armed Struggle as a military and political contest between the Red Brigades and the state, not as a manifestation of criminality. She proposes a counter-narrative, a different framing of history with all the different inclusions and exclusions, the different degrees of salience, that such a counter-narrative requires. In this sense, Balzerani's silence on some aspects of her own story and the story of the Red Brigades is deliberate and strategic, a silence that is meant to speak as loudly as her words. Her silence can be interpreted as a form of resistance, like her insistence on the right to speak. The problem this presents for the translator is clear: is it possible to translate the silences in a way that enables the counter-narrative reading of Balzerani's text? Can a translator allow the translation to speak of what Balzerani deliberately refuses to speak of while also honouring both her assertion of a voice and her deliberate silence on some matters? It becomes a question of translating Balzerani's resistance through silence as well as through speech, and of somehow making that silence heard. Clearly, a reader who lacks the schemata that Balzerani relies on cannot know what Balzerani has remained silent about and what she has spoken of, and what the translator has chosen to translate and not translate in keeping faith with this.

Discussion: Translation as Re-framing

- 51 How can the translator justify translating what is not in a text? One way is by positioning oneself as a reader who is aware of Balzerani's silences and who interprets them as deliberate and as a form of resistance, and as a translator who chooses to translate this resistance-through-silence. As translator, I am both accepting Balzerani's framing of events and making it clear to readers of the translation that her framing deliberately excludes certain details as an act of resistance.
- 52 In this view, a translation is a reframing as well as a representation, as Hermans has noted (HERMANS, 2022). Translators, like historians, choose what to include and what to leave out when they make translation choices in reconstructing narratives. Translation choices can heighten the salience of details in the translated text by enlarging the text's frame. In the following example from the chapter "Aldo Moro", I have included extra information about two place names in the Italian text in my translation:

Nulla avvenne e il 9 maggio Aldo Moro fu fatto ritrovare cadavere a mezza strada tra piazza del Gesù e via delle Botteghe Oscure. Curiosamente tanto contigue.
(BALZERANI, 2013, 77)

But nothing happened and on May 9, Aldo Moro's body was left between piazza del Gesù and via delle Botteghe Oscure in Rome: **between the headquarters of the Christian Democrats and the headquarters of the Italian Communist Party.** Curiously so close to each other.
(My translation, extra information in bold)

- 53 By adding a clause to explain that piazza del Gesù and via delle Botteghe Oscure refer to, respectively, the headquarters of the Christian Democrats and the headquarters of the Italian Communist Party, I am attempting to translate the heightened salience of these two place names into English by enlarging the frame through which the event can be viewed, as this information would likely be part of the target Italian readers' schemata.

- 54 This reframing and heightening of salience are grounded in my acceptance of Balzerani's claim that the Red Brigades were making a symbolic gesture when they left Moro's body half-way between the headquarters of the two institutions that they held responsible for his death. My translation accords with the text's framing of this interpretation ("Curiously so close to each other") and the salience of these two place names for Italian readers. Importantly, these interpretations of the meaning and salience of piazza del Gesù and via delle Botteghe Oscure are consistent with the way Balzerani's text frames these events. I think of this as an ethical intervention in the text because it furthers the text's resistant representations through framing. Adopting a similar translation strategy for some of Balzerani's other silences would have a different effect, heightening the salience of details that would produce an interpretation that is at odds with Balzerani's representation of the Armed Struggle.
- 55 When Balzerani writes of the massacre in via Fracchia in the chapter "L'amerikano" (BALZERANI, 2013, 81-93), a similar intervention in the text would be required to give the reference to via Fracchia the potential salience it has in the Italian text, with its echoes of Patrizio Peci's collaboration with the authorities and his brother Roberto's revenge kidnapping and murder:

Quel pidocchio sull'albero sano che era costato i compagni massacrati a via Fracchia...

(BALZERANI, 2013, 86)

The parasite on the healthy tree, **the pentito Patrizio Peci**, who had cost us the lives of the comrades in via Fracchia **and ultimately his own brother's life in exchange ...**

(My translation, with bold text showing extra context that I didn't add)

- 56 Such an intervention would make clearer to an English-language reader what Balzerani is not saying at this point in the text, and so betray her framing of these events, with its tight focus on the effects of via Fracchia on the Red Brigades' morale, by switching the focus to other aspects of the event. As translator, I would introduce details into the frame that Balzerani has deliberately left out in a way that changes the text's representations.

57 Theo Hermans writes:

Stories don't tell themselves. Someone is doing the telling, which means there is always a teller in the tale. One reason why this matters is that the teller necessarily takes up a certain position with regard to the story being told.
(HERMANS, 2022, 10)

58 He writes this in the context of a discussion of narrative and history. He notes that if nothing else, a narrator of past events takes up a position in time in relation to the events and can shape the retelling of events with the benefit of knowledge of what came after – what they may have (or may not have, depending on interpretation) lead to. One consequence of this, Hermans explains, is that different interpretations can give rise to different narratives: “A particular historical narrative is then only one story; it is neither the whole story nor the only possible story” (HERMANS, 2022, 11).

59 As translator of this text, I have also been able to take up a position after the events Balzerani narrates, after her own narrative act and, of course, outside the text of her work. I was also aware of Balzerani's own declaration:

Questa non è la storia delle Brigate rosse. Non potrei essere io a farla. È Solo una parte di quanto ho vissuto e come.
(BALZERANI, 2013, 23)

This is not the history of the Red Brigades. I couldn't be the one to write it. It's only a part of the life I have lived and of how I have lived it.
(My translation)

60 In writing this, Balzerani makes clear that she is telling her story, not history, announcing that this teller takes up a position from which to tell the tale. In translating *Compagna luna*, I become the reteller of Balzerani's tale in English. As an informed reteller, I was aware of the Italian text's framings, its allusions and silences, and I sought to make this framing available to English readers where possible. I also experienced an ethical tension: would intervening in the text in ways that made the silences in Balzerani's telling audible in the translation be a betrayal of her resistance?

61 The details of events that Balzerani is silent about are excluded from the frame of her text but are included in the wider frame of the history of this period in Italy, and it is in this sense that I consider them available to Italian readers of the text, especially readers who lived through this period. Such readers can make ethical judgements about Balzerani's framings. In attempting to translate the silences for English-language readers today, I chose to make the wider historical frame available in a translator's introduction, including some of the historical details that, in my interpretation of the text, Balzerani remains silent about. In the translator's introduction I argue for the deliberate and resistant nature of Balzerani's silences and explain the purpose of this frame outside the textual frame of the translation. I argue that this strategy maintains the textual tension between what Balzerani speaks of and does not speak of in the translation, and what is known or potentially known to the readers she is addressing. It is faithful to Balzerani's text and to her framing strategy of including certain details and excluding others. It also inscribes in the text my positionality as a reader who is aware of Balzerani's silences and seeks to make them audible to English-language readers, without necessarily contesting them or passing moral judgement on them. Those judgments can be left for readers of the translation to make themselves. In my translation I was guided by an ethics of fidelity not to the text but to the author and her representations of herself and her place in the world. This allowed me the freedom to amplify and add to the text, as I have described in this paper. This freedom is a mark of my agency as translator and renarrator of *Compagna luna*.

BIBLIOGRAPHIE

BAKER, Mona, "Translation and Activism: Emerging Patterns of Narrative Community", in Tymoczko, Maria (ed.), *Translation, Resistance, Activism*, 2010, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, p 23-41.

BAKER, Mona, 2019, *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*, London and New York, Routledge.

BALESTRINI, Nanni, 2014, *Vogliamo tutto*, Melbourne, Telephone Publishing, translation of Matt Holden.

BALESTRINI, Nanni, 2016, *We Want Everything*, London, Verso, translation of Matt Holden.

BALZERANI, Barbara, 1998, *Compagna luna*, Milano, Feltrinelli.

- BALZERANI, Barbara, 2013, *Compagna luna*, Roma, Derive Approdi.
- BELLOCCHIO, Marco, 2022, *Esterno Notte*, Netflix.
- BOCCA, Giorgio, 1978, *Il terrorismo italiano 1970/1978*, Milano, Rizzoli Editore.
- CAMILLERI, Andrea, 2002, *The Shape of Water*, London, Viking, translation of Stephen Sartarelli.
- ENTMAN, Robert M, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm" in *Journal of Communication*, 1993, 43(4), 51-58.
- GINSBORG, Paul, 1990, *A History of Contemporary Italy: 1943-1980*, London, Penguin Books.
- GLYNN, Ruth, 2013, *Women, Terrorism, and Trauma in Italian Culture*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan.
- HERMANS, Theo, 2022, *Translation and History: A Textbook*, London, Routledge.
- HOLDEN, Matt, "Re-narrating the Red Brigades in Translation: questions for translator ethics", *Cultus*, 2022, 15, 76-93. https://www.cultusjournal.com/files/Archives/05_Holden_Cultus_15.pdf
- HOLDEN, Matt, 2023, "Comrade M. Re-Narrating the Red Brigades in Translation", Melbourne, Monash University, thesis. <https://doi.org/10.26180/24760257.v1>
- MORETTI, Mario, 1994, *Brigate rosse: una storia italiana. Intervista di Carla Mosca e Rossana Rossanda*, Milano, Anabasi.
- MORUCCI, Valerio, 2004, *La Peggio Gioventù: una vita nella lotta armata*, Milano, Rizzoli.
- ORSINI, Alessandro, 2011, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mindset of Modern Terror*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, translation of S. J. Nodes.
- SCIASCIA, Leonardo, 2013, *The Moro Affair*, London, Granta, translation of S. Rabinovitch.
- SOMERS, Margaret R, "Deconstructing and Reconstructing Class Formation Theory: Narrativity, Relational Analysis, and Social Theory", in Hall, J. R, (ed.), 1997, *Reworking Class*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, p 73-106. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctv5rdv2f.8>
- SOMERS, Margaret R., & Gibson, Gloria D, "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity", in Calhoun, Craig (ed.), 1998, *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*. Oxford, Blackwell, p 37-99.
- TYMOCZKO, Maria, "Translation, Resistance, Activism: An Overview", in Tymoczko, Maria (ed), *Translation, Resistance, Activism*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, p 1-22.
- VENUTI, Lawrence, 2018, *The Translator's Invisibility*, London, Routledge.

NOTES

- ¹ A useful current example of a collective narrative that has arisen outside institutional social settings is the narrative invoked by the phrase 'Black Lives Matter'.

RÉSUMÉS

English

Compagna luna (Feltrinelli 1998/Derive Approdi 2013) is a complex text in which Barbara Balzerani meditates on her role in the Armed Struggle fought by the Red Brigades in Italy from 1972 to 1984 and the effect this and her subsequent imprisonment had on her. Balzerani elaborates a series of narratives that construct the Armed Struggle as a necessary political and military response to the situation in Italy in the early 1970s. Her framing of the events she recounts deliberately excludes details that would have been known to many of her target readers in 1998. In translating this text, the author of this paper understands these framings-by-exclusion as 'silences' that resist the public representations of the Armed Struggle in Italian society. This paper explores how these resistant silences might be made 'audible' to readers of an English translation in a way that reinforces rather than undermines Balzerani's resistant representations of history.

Italiano

Compagna luna (Balzerani 1998/2013) è un testo complesso in cui Barbara Balzerani medita sul suo ruolo nella Lotta Armata combattuta dalle Brigate Rosse in Italia dal 1972 al 1984 e sull'effetto che questa e la sua successiva incarcerazione hanno avuto su di lei. Balzerani elabora una serie di narrazioni che costruiscono la lotta armata come una necessaria risposta politica e militare alla situazione dell'Italia dei primi anni Settanta. L'inquadramento degli eventi raccontati esclude deliberatamente dettagli che sarebbero stati noti a molti dei suoi lettori di riferimento nel 1998. Nel tradurre questo testo, l'autore del presente lavoro intende queste esclusioni come 'silenzi' che resistono alle rappresentazioni pubbliche della lotta armata nella società italiana. Questo articolo esplora come questi silenzi resistenti possano essere resi 'udibili' ai lettori di una traduzione inglese in modo da rafforzare piuttosto che minare le rappresentazioni resistenti della storia di Balzerani.

INDEX

Mots-clés

narrativité sociale, encadrement, Les Brigades Rouges, Barbara Balzerani, La Lutte armée

Keywords

social narrative, framing, the Red Brigades, Barbara Balzerani, the Armed Struggle

Looking the other way in via Fani: Reframing Resistance in the Translation of Barbara Balzerani's
Compagna luna

AUTEUR

Dr Matt Holden

University of Melbourne matthew.holden@unimelb.edu.au