

THE TRANS-REGENERATION OF *GEORDIE* INTO ALBANIAN A case study¹

THOMAS CHRISTIANSEN¹, LAVDOSH MALAJ²
¹UNIVERSITY OF SALENTO, ²UNIVERSITETI I VLORËS “ISMAIL QEMALI”

Abstract – In this article, we will introduce the concept of trans-regeneration: the way in which a traditional discourse (in this case a folk ballad) may be manifested as different texts as the story that it contains is told and retold both over time and over space. Our aim is to illustrate this process with the example of a well-known English-language ballad *Geordie* (of uncertain origins), and how, in its lifespan, it has undergone numerous changes in content both in the various English and non-English versions as it has been appropriated and performed by artists in many other languages. We will argue that, because of its distinct nature, it is useful to describe such a process with a distinct term, *trans-regeneration*, which differently to terms like *transcreation*, takes into account the important artistic considerations underlying the choices made by the various rewriters and performers. Finally, we will describe a case study where Albanian-speaking students participated in a workshop analysing the various trans-regenerations of *Geordie* based on Christiansen (2022) and were invited to produce their own version in Albanian, thereby becoming themselves not just spectators but also actors in this process.

Keywords: translation; text linguistics; adaptation; ballad; transadaptation; transcreation; trans-regeneration.

1. Introduction

In this article, we will look at the phenomena of translation and transcreation in the context of single discourses that are manifested as different texts both within the same language and in different languages (something that is covered generally by the term *translation*).

First of all (§2), we will give some background to the ballad of *Geordie*. Next, we will discuss the concepts of *discourse* and *text* (§3), providing a definition that will inform almost every aspect of our discussion, and thus will require exposition. After that, we shall discuss *translation* as general concept (the re-coding of one text in one language into another language) differentiating between its various forms (so-called more literal and freer) to adaptations (the way that discourses may, through the addition of various degrees of creativity, be manifested in different ways, both in the same language and in others).

We will then introduce the concept of *trans-regeneration* (§4), which we apply to the specific context of folk ballads and traditional culture. In these genres, “works” exist not as fixed texts associated with a specific author / writer but rather are more fluid artefacts, the shared property of each community where they have been accommodated into the culture. Such texts may be changed and adapted as times and circumstances change, and at the whim of individual performers; something amply illustrated in the continuing evolution of the popular ballad that we here refer to as *Geordie*.

¹ The authors have contributed equally to the overall drafting of this paper. Christiansen is responsible for Sections 1-4 and Section 6; Malaj for Section 5 and all of its subsections.

To illustrate such fluidity and evolution, in Section 5, we will report on a workshop held with Albanian-speaker university students, who were asked to analyse various versions in English and other languages of the traditional English-language ballad *Geordie* and to produce their own ballad based on it in Albanian.

2. A brief history of *Geordie*

The ballad of *Geordie* was first recorded in 17th century England.² It is listed as number 209 in Francis Child's *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*.³ About 129 distinct versions are listed in the Roud Folk Song Index⁴ – of which 52 are from the USA, 40 from England, 27 from Scotland, eight from Canada, and two from Ireland. Its modern incarnation can be associated principally with the American folk singer Joan Baez, who in 1962 recorded a live version that was to prove a commercial success. Prior to this, there is an extract recorded in 1957 by the folk musician Paul Clayton (another American, but who seems to be working after a BBC recording of a Somerset folk singer, Louisa “Louie” Hooper). Other notable later versions in English examined in Christiansen (2022) are those by Sandy Denny (1967) and the Collins Sisters (1970). The Baez version was an international success and French (Claude François 1965), Italian (Fabrizio De André 1966) and eventually Danish versions (Gasolin' 1971) followed. All of these are discussed and analysed in Christiansen (2022).⁵

Ballads are an ancient genre. As Christiansen (2010, p. 268) notes speaking about the origins of Australian Bush Ballads:

Originally ballads were a form of oral poetry or poetry handed down by word of mouth or written to be recited out loud to an audience, not necessarily sung, although some like “Waltzing Matilda” were composed with a specific melody in mind.

The basic story in the traditional English versions of *Geordie* is told by a first-person narrator who comes into a town, usually London, where they encounter a young woman crying for her husband / sweetheart (*Geordie/Georgy* or some variation of that name). He is going to be hanged for having stolen or poached royal deer. He is usually some kind of nobleman but, even if the judge is moved by the lady's pleas, he cannot commute the sentence and can only accord *Geordie* the special privilege of being hanged with a golden thread or chain.

² The earliest known publication of the English version is a London black-letter broadside entitled *The Life and Death of George of Oxford* (between about 1672 and 1696). Earlier examples do exist which are similar in style and theme, including what appears to be a separate tradition from Scotland.

³ Child (1890).

⁴ This can now be found online on the Vaughan Williams Memorial Library website: www.vwml.org.

⁵ Christiansen (2022) does not attempt to present an exhaustive list of every version of *Geordie* recorded in any language. Rather the sample is chosen for the differing treatments of each version. Among other notable non-English versions are a recent one (2018) in Catalan (*Jordi*) by Roger Mas and Núria Graham, a version that seems to draw mostly on the very well-known De André version in Italian.

3. Text and Discourse

Despite the fact that *text* and *discourse* are familiar terms, there is much room for confusion between them, not least because some notable scholars in important works have treated the two terms as synonymous (Halliday, Hasan 1976). Among non-experts, it has long been conventional wisdom to use *text* for examples of written language and *discourse* for the spoken. However, for linguistics the distinction cannot be reduced to one of medium (i.e. the specific type of language, written or spoken) and channel (i.e. the conduit for communication, e.g. marks on a surface or phonic signals).⁶ Instead, Widdowson (1975, p. 6), states that text is an exemplification of the language system, whereas discourse is “how linguistic elements combine to create messages”. Similarly, Brown and Yule (1983) argue that discourse is the process where text is the product, a view echoed by Widdowson (1984, p. 100), who provides a neat definition:

Discourse is a communicative process by means of interaction. Its situational outcome is a change in a state of affairs. Its linguistic product is text.

In a similar vein, Christiansen (2011, p. 34) sums up the distinction as one of form and content:

[...] the text can be seen as the physical manifestation (e.g. sound, marks on some surface) of the discourse (the set of ideas that the addressor wants to communicate).

The distinction between text and discourse is particularly important in our discussion in this article as it sheds light on the ways that discourse is manifested as text, and the ways that texts can engender or activate new discourse: a process of paramount relevance to interpretation, and also to translation, Christiansen (2011, pp. 35-36):

[...] one can typify the process of interpretation as one where a discourse in the addressors’ mind is encoded linguistically as well as semiotically⁷ into a text from which, in the mind of the addressee, a discourse (Discourse 1b) is reconstructed, ideally in a more or less equivalent version to the original (Discourse 1a).⁸ In this way, text can be seen as a portal between two or more discourses depending on the number of addressees [Figure 1 – *Figure 2 in the original*]:

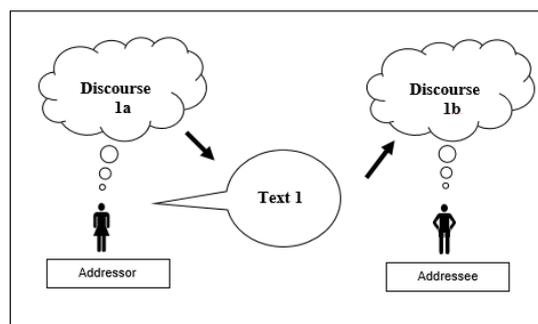


Figure 1
The concepts of text and discourse in the process of interpretation.

⁶ See J. Lyons (1981: 18).

⁷ That is, with signs and symbols of various kinds which complement/supplement natural language (itself a semiotic phenomenon: see Morris (1971)).

⁸ In essence, this process mirrors that which happens in translation; Steiner (1975, p. 235): “inside or between languages, human communication equals translation.”

Figure [1] represents interpretation as a one-way process with fixed roles of addressor and addressee. In reality, the situation may be considerably more complex: the roles of addressor and addressee may be interchanged and the text constructed jointly (but not necessarily equally⁹) by two or more participants, each constructing their own discourse out of the resultant text.

There is therefore ample room for variant interpretations, which are partly due to differences between individuals (attributable to personal background, psychological factors, and also to culture¹⁰ [...]), and also to what is mutually manifest (i.e. shared knowledge), as Widdowson (1984: 100) notes:

The extent to which recovery of discourse from textual evidence is possible will depend on how far the situational features which complement the recorded utterances are known to the receiver.

In this perspective, neither text nor discourse is fixed or rigid. The literary scholar John Bryant (2002: 1) identifies such fluidity as a feature of all written texts, and thoughts (the latter concept which may equate with our description of discourse):

Simply put, a fluid text is any literary work that exists in more than one version. It is "fluid" because the versions flow from one to another. Truth be told, all works — because of the nature of texts and creativity — are fluid texts. Not only is this fluidity the inherent condition of any written document; it is inherent in the phenomenon of writing itself. That is, writing is fundamentally an arbitrary hence unstable hence variable approximation of thought. Moreover, we revise words to make them more closely approximate our thoughts, which in turn evolve as we write. And this condition and phenomenon of textual fluidity is not a theoretical supposition; it is fact.

Bryant is here talking principally about literature and the way that individual authors may draft and redraft a work, as result of their interaction with wider society, as well as the way in which the same works may be adapted for different media, such as cinema, but his conceptualisation of fluidity is in line with our comments here about the relationship between text and discourse and their respective dynamic natures.

The distinction between text and discourse is therefore not only important for studies into phenomena like cohesion and cohesive devices (the context about which Christiansen 2011 was writing), it also has major implications for translation and helps explain the differences between different kinds of, and approaches to, translation.

⁹ Because of this inherent asymmetry, Sperber and Wilson (1986) use the analogy of ballroom-dancing partners, where one leads and the other follows, to describe the process of communication.

¹⁰ Spanning the psychological and the cultural are the conceptual metaphors that underlie thought processes, language and communication in general (Lakoff, Johnson 1980), constituting the way in which people perceive, and hence talk, about the world.

4. Translation, transcreation, and trans-regeneration

Translation is something which most people will be familiar with but which it is difficult to provide a clear unambiguous definition for. Put simply, translation involves the reproduction of a text, as a composite of distinct linguistic elements, using different linguistic elements, or as Catford (1965, p. 20) states:

Translation may be defined as follows: the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) [source language] by equivalent textual material in another language (TL) [target language].

Commonly, people associate translation only with the reproduction of texts in different languages but, as Jakobson (1959) in an influential article points out, there are parallels between what he calls “translation proper” (inter-lingual translation) and rewording or paraphrase (intralingual translation), where the new linguistic elements are from the same language, and between the latter and transmutation, when texts in one medium¹¹ are reproduced in another, such as a written sign “translated” into a pictorial representation¹² (intersemiotic translation). These different archetypes are shown below looking at translations of the phrase “No Smoking”, omitting the corresponding relations that exist between the various alternatives, Figure 2:

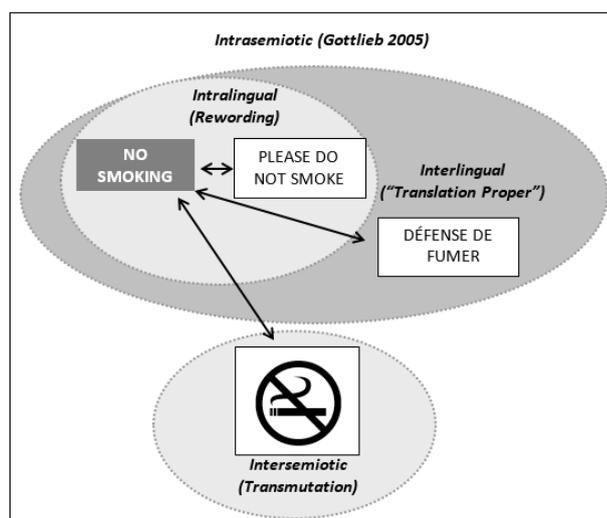


Figure 2
Jakobson's (1959) categorisation of translation.

Within the general categories identified by Jakobson as outlined on Figure 2, there is scope for further classification. Gottlieb (2005) distinguishes between four subcategories of intralingual translation, all of which are relevant in the context of the ballad *Geordie*: *diachronic* translation (between different historical stages of the same language); *dialectal* translation (between different regional or social varieties); *diamesic* translation (between language modes, e.g. from speech to writing); and *transliteration* (which involves a change in alphabet). Some of these may also be applicable to interlingual translation, for

¹¹ In semiotics, the term ‘text’ is used not only for linguistic terms but also for signs in general.

¹² In line with the latter use, the term translation is used now in such diverse fields as biology and computer science in the sense of convert.

example in translation from Old English to Contemporary German, or for example a translation from Contemporary English to Contemporary Russian, which would involve transliteration from the Roman to the Cyrillic alphabet.

As noted by Steiner (1975), the process of interpretation described in Figure 1 (§3) is essentially the same as happens in translation. Such a situation can be represented in an elaboration of Figure 1 as Figure 3:

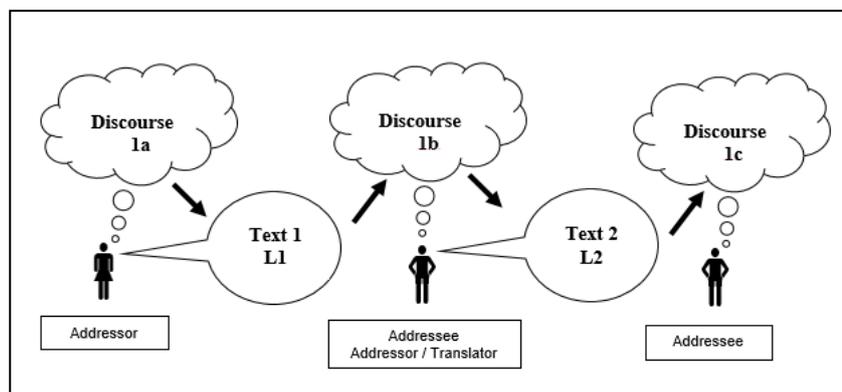


Figure 3

Translation and the concepts of text and discourse in the process of interpretation.

As Figure 3 shows, what are traditionally known as source and target texts can be seen as both physical manifestations, in different languages, of the same basic discourse or message. However, the target text in the first language (L1) has accessed the original discourse (1a) via the so-called source text in the second language (L2). There is consequently no direct link between the target text (Text 2) and the original discourse (Discourse 1a). Text 2 is a manifestation of Discourse 1b: itself a reconstruction of Discourse 1a by means of Text 1. From this, one sees the rationale for the traditional association of translation with interpretation, because they are indeed closely intertwined processes: interpretation concerning how discourses are reconstructed out of texts, translation relating to the re-encoding of texts.

However while the text can be defined as the physical manifestation of discourse, no such simple definition of discourse exists. While text is something concrete and tangible, discourse is anything but. For Cornish, while text is “a typical instance of language *cum* other semiotic devices in use – i.e. in some context and with the intention on the part of the user of achieving some purpose or goal thereby. The term *text* designates the connected sequence of verbal signs and non-verbal signs, vocal as well as non-vocal (i.e. visual, auditory, etc.) signals produced within the context of some utterance act” (1999: 33). By contrast, *discourse* “designates the hierarchically structured, mentally represented sequences of utterance and indexical acts which the participants are engaging in as the communication unfolds” (1999, p. 34).

For one thing, each time a discourse is activated or recalled, it may be done in different ways. The same thing has been shown to be true of other cognitive

representations, even such fundamental processes as the act of remembering.¹³ This simple fact contributes significantly to what Bryant (2002) calls the “fluid text” (see §3).

The idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce (1908) argues that each text (and it should be pointed out that he is using *text* in a general way that does not distinguish between *text* and *discourse* in the way that we do here) is a unique, unrepeatable, speech event in which meaning is inextricable from the specific context of use.¹⁴ For Croce, meaning and form are inseparable, the latter contributing to the former. This is a very subtle point, and there is a parallel with artefacts of all kinds, whether pictures, sculptures, or everyday objects etc., whose material or medium adds to their essence, and thus how they are received and perceived (compare, for example, a zircon ring with a diamond one). The precise words and structures into which a message is encoded will inevitably affect the way that it is interpreted, and the discourse reconstructed. In Figure 2, “No Smoking” and “Please Do Not Smoke” have different connotations and associations. They also differ on a pragmatic level as the one is more impersonal, the other more polite. This is a reflection of the fact that the identities of the addressor and of the addressee will also affect the way a discourse is encoded and received. Such features correspond to Halliday’s metafunctions of language (the field, mode and tenor)¹⁵ and are also an intrinsic part of any message, and thus discourse.

Very much the same considerations can be made when considering a piece of music or a melody. As Christiansen (2022) details in his analysis of the various recorded versions of the song *Geordie* that he studies, the performance, instrumentation, and arrangement of the music has a huge effect on how the song is received and interpreted, from Baez’s mournful live version to François’s slick vocals and sophisticated production, De André’s jaunty almost tongue in cheek rendition, or Gasolin’s dark mournful rock ballad.

Any form of translation as outlined in Figure 2 thus leads to changes also in the text, and thus how the discourse is re-constructed in the mind of the addressee. The hierarchy of mental structured sequences of utterance and indexical acts, as well as their content, undergo modification. The discourse is different in certain aspects each time it is returned to. One may question then whether it is in fact “the same” at all, and whether it is not *regenerated* (a concept we shall return to in §5) each time, with all the changes that this might imply. Here, the largely subjective matter of semblance comes into play: of how far two or more things must resemble each other in some way or sense to be considered the “same”, “similar” or “different” (and all the various subcategories that one might identify between these broad labels).

Such considerations are seen clearly in the origins and different versions of the ballad *Geordie* as discussed in Christiansen (2022), and indeed generally in the genres of folk music and folk tales. Such works are typically not the creations of one identifiable author but rather the product of many years of re-composition as they are passed down long lines of tellers and performers, each typically not slavishly reproducing some “original” version but rather modifying, adding, or taking away elements based on their

¹³ In judicial circles, the fallibility of memory has long been a central concern especially as regards witness statements. Such phenomena as misremembering and memory illusions are well documented (Howe, Knott 2015).

¹⁴ Croce (1908, p. 23) “Ogni espressione è espressione unica” [every expression is a unique expression].

¹⁵ I.e. how language changes according to: what is being talked about (*field*); what the channel of communication is (*mode*); and who the participants in the exchange are (*tenor*). See: Halliday, MacIntosh and Strevens (1964); Halliday (1978).

own interpretation of the text (not necessarily Text 1 on Figure 3 but also Text 2 etc.) and also on their own experience, cultural background and imagination.

Speaking specifically about *Geordie*, Christiansen (2022, pp. 53-54) states:

In the various versions of *Geordie*, old and modern, in English or in other languages, it is possible to identify some common elements and features but hard to draw up a list of factors which are shared by all the various examples that we have analysed. For example, the character Geordie / Georgy is present in all the versions examined here, except that by Gasolin'; similarly, the element of the horse is present in all except those by the Collins and Gasolin'. The act of stealing is also a feature of all versions except in that by Francois. What we have then are not as such different versions that share a common core of features and differ only in less central aspects, but a set of texts that resemble each other to various degrees and in various aspects. Such a situational is difficult to accommodate within the classic Aristotelian theory of categories. The philosopher Wittgenstein (1953) uses the analogy of *family resemblances* as an alternative in such cases. Adopting this perspective, one may look at different versions like the ones we have examined here not as source and target texts (as is still conventional in much of translation theory), but rather as related, but distinct, manifestations of the same discourse (or sets of discourses), in the same way that siblings may be seen as products of different mixes from the pool of DNA handed down from their various progenitors.

The kind of changes that we are discussing here are partly covered in translation theory by the term *transcreation*. This is particularly applicable in the context of folk traditions where, as we say above, texts are not typically the work of a single identifiable author or set of authors. In songbooks, for example, songs or pieces of music are often marked merely "trad." or "traditional". In such a context, something exists akin to what on the internet is called a *wiki*: a site or online resource whose content users can collaborate to create and modify. Indeed, the idea of wiki, despite its exotic name,¹⁶ has been common practice in the area of popular traditions and folklore literally since time immemorial.

According to Pedersen (2019), the term *transcreation*¹⁷ originated in Brazil and India in the 1960s, initially in marketing and advertising and other areas of business. Transcreation is associated mainly with popular culture¹⁸ and genres like fansubbing where aficionados may not merely recode the text in another language but also contribute to the work by giving their own imagination and creativity free reign by adding, deleting or modifying elements. Timko (2021) observes that there is nothing new about such phenomena now referred to as *localization*, *transcreation*, and *transculturation*. They are features of translation that practitioners and theorists have long been aware of, but whose profile has been raised with the advent of internet and greater and more rapid diffusion of cultural products from all parts of the world (e.g. video games, memes, cartoons, pop music, *manga*, *anime*, gifs, podcasts, and NFT).¹⁹ Indeed, Katan (2016, p. 377) notes that *transcreation* has been discounted by some scholars as a mere "rebranding" of what a good translation should be, namely the recreation of any inherently creative work (e.g. a literary text or an advertisement) in another code.²⁰

However, notwithstanding this, *transcreation* as a term has become closely associated with contemporary popular culture, and this differs in key ways from traditional

¹⁶ From the Hawaiian language word *wikiwiki* meaning "fast".

¹⁷ Or alternatively, in its milder forms, *transadaptation* (Gambier 2014).

¹⁸ See: Gaballo (2012); Bernal Merino (2015), Chaume (2016), Díaz Pérez (2017), Iaia (2019).

¹⁹ Iaia (2019).

²⁰ For an interesting and in depth study of this debate, mostly in the context of AVT, see Spinzi and Rizzo (2018)

culture and folklore. Mainly, the former tends to extoll the inventive, innovative and the unconventional, while the latter of course is more conservative and convention bound. The term *transcreation* has perhaps then the wrong set of connotations when applied to a traditional ballad like *Geordie* and its more modern incarnations, except perhaps the Danish version *Langrebro* which, of the various versions Christiansen (2022) looks at, departs most not only in terms of content but also in those of form (i.e. its structure both lyrical and musical, are more typical of a modern day rock song than a traditional ballad).

Transcreation is still a valuable concept in that it allows one to recognise how fundamentally limiting is the traditional cline of free and literal translations as a way of describing the almost infinite variety of “translations” that may exist. The ideas encapsulated in the term *transcreation* are also a reflection of the fact that it is of course common practice in the Arts for one artist to be inspired by the work of another, and to appropriate it and to draw and to build on it by incorporating it into their own pieces either through explicit homage or through more subtle allusion. In the Arts and in literature, it is thus recognised that a work may be *appropriated* by another artist or author, and this has obvious implications for the notion of originality. As Rowe (2011) notes:

Appropriation refers to the act of borrowing or reusing existing elements within a new work. Post-modern appropriation artists, including Barbara Kruger, are keen to deny the notion of ‘originality’.[Van Camp 2007: 247] They believe that in borrowing existing imagery or elements of imagery, they are re-contextualising or appropriating the original imagery, allowing the viewer to renegotiate the meaning of the original in a different, more relevant, or more current context.

Appropriation focuses on what the author does to their text and how it becomes also their property, part of their own œuvre. Such a perspective is not the most relevant in the case of traditional culture and folklore. Here, as we have said, no one “owns” anything so-to-speak and works are seen as common property. If there is appropriation, it is rather at the level of the whole community of users, not that of the individual “artist”.

In the context of traditional culture, a more useful way of looking at this process is to take the perspective of what happens at the discourse level, not that of the text (Figures 1 and 3), not least of course because traditionally many works would have been handed down, at least initially, orally (as spoken texts).²¹ Such texts are of course transitory and, even if diligently committed to memory, are more apt to change and modification over time, something to which a written text, as a non-transitory physical artefact, is not susceptible (unless edited and reproduced). Furthermore, as Figure 1 shows, a discourse contains many more elements than a text can ever feature. A text is then at best a much-simplified version of a discourse. As Christiansen (2011, p. 352) states:

Text can only be produced one word/phrase/ structure at a time, and thus is manifested in a linear manner; discourse, one might suppose, consisting of concepts, ideas, relations in the mind, is free from the constraints of production and may exist rather as multidimensional networks of relations between concepts and/or representations.²²

²¹ See Fox (2000) or Rosenburg (1987), who introduces the term: *oralature* to contrast with literature.

²² According to the *Representational Theory of Mind* (Field 1978; Fodor 1987; Fodor, Pylyshyn 1988) there must exist a so-called *Language of Thought* a.k.a. *Mentalese*. Such a language would presumably constitute a symbolic system of atomic particles (basic ideas) that have semantic and syntactic properties that combine in a computational system to form a potentially infinite variety of structures.

It follows then even if it were possible for the same discourse to be reactivated, then the textual manifestations may not take the same form (as we state above) nor necessarily contain the same information, nor represent the exact same state of affairs (see also Bryant 2002). This is true without even considering the inescapable facts that the discourses in the minds of the individual participants will never be identical (see Figure 1) and that, as the discourse is returned to over time, even by the same speaker, elements of it will inevitably change as the mental representations and connections that constitute the message themselves, rather than simply being re-accessed in their original state, will be re-generated afresh. Each re-generation may imply changes: not only additions, deletions or modifications, but also changes in focus and the relative salience of various features. To highlight this aspect of translation, in all its forms as illustrated on Figure 2, we propose to use the term *trans-regeneration*, which we will explain further in §5.

5. *Geordie* in Albanian

To sensitise students of translation to the issues of both transcreation and trans-generation a workshop was set up within an Erasmus KA107-2019 Staff Mobility Project between the Universities of Salento (Italy) and the “Ismail Qemali” University of Vlorë (Albania).

The students first participated in a seminar in which the analyses later published by Christiansen (2022) were presented. The students were given the opportunity to hear and examine several different modern versions of *Geordie* in English, French, Italian and Danish (the latter three with English literal translations provided). The versions used were, in the following order: Paul Clayton (1957), Joan Baez (1962), Sandy Denny (1967), the Collins Sisters (1970), Claude François (1965), Fabrizio De André (1966), Gasolin’ “Langebro” (1971).

At the end of this seminar, students were asked to identify the version that they preferred and to explain how it differed from the others. Students were encouraged not to think of the texts in terms of source and target, as is conventional in translation studies, but rather to view them all as different manifestations of a single fluid discourse.

To help them see the rationale behind this radically new way of seeing related texts, we employed an analogy from popular culture, namely the science fiction character Dr Who from the long-running BBC TV series of the same name. Luckily, this character was familiar to all the students. Since its inception in 1963, this role has been played by thirteen very different male actors,²³ and most recently, in a momentous break with tradition, by one female. These were all White Britons, but in 2023 the Black British actor Mizero Ncuti Gatwa, who is Rwandan-Scottish, will play the fifteenth incarnation of the Doctor. The writers of this series have found a simple yet elegant solution to the problem of changing the star every few years: they have the character, a “Time Lord” from the distant planet of Gallifrey, undergo “regeneration” (more or less reincarnate in a different physical form, but as a fully-fledged adult). This allows the series to continue with a new lead character who retains the memories and some of the characteristics of their predecessors but who may also display a striking difference in age, in physical appearance, and also in personality (and dress sense), yet still satisfy the programme’s legion of fans

²³ This run is about to be broken. David Tennant (originally the 10th Doctor, 2005-2010 and 2013) will in 2023 play the Doctor again as their 14th incarnation for a short series.

that it is, despite all appearances to the contrary, somehow, in essence, still the same old Dr Who.²⁴

Similarly, students were told, trans-regeneration is about giving a work an alternative life, related but not identical to its preceding ones. Something comparable happens with jokes: if a joke has a ‘plastic’ enough base, it may be trans-regenerated into another language to work within another socio-cultural context, and within another tradition of humour, just as songs may be trans-regenerated into different languages, and in various musical styles.²⁵

The rest of the workshop was dedicated to the students working in groups to produce their own versions in Albanian of the ballad *Geordie*. Emphasis was put on the fact that the versions should be written to be sung,²⁶ and indeed those students who had the confidence were asked to produce recordings. This emphasis on the final product (the song or recording) was intended to encourage students not to concentrate on slavishly trying to reproduce as closely as possible some “original”. Given that Albanian is so different from any other Indo-European language, it existing on a separate branch of that set of language tree all by itself (and has a highly complex syntax and morphology), it can be assumed that any faithful translation from English, French, Italian or Danish would be unlikely to work on any aesthetic level as either a song or a ballad in Albanian. In the next three subsections (5.1-5.3), we will analyse three of the texts produced.

5.1. Albanian Version No. 1.

On the left of Figure 4, is the text produced by the students, a manifestation of their interpretation of the discourse regarding *Geordie*; on the right, we give a literal translation in English to give a non-Albanian speaker an idea of the content:

Një herë e një kohë	Once upon a time
Një ditë ku dielli mungonte	A day where the sun was missing
Nje grua shoh me lot dhimbje e dashurie	A woman I see with tears the pain of love
Teksa të birin Xhordin kërkonte	As her son Geordie searched
Oh Xhordi im do varet nesër në agim	Oh my Geordie will hang tomorrow at dawn
Do varet nga nje zinxhir flori	He will hang on a golden chain
Do vdesi, sepse dashuroi	He will die because he loved
Dashuroi të bijen e një mbreti	He fell in love with the daughter of a king
Shumë netë e ditë mu desh të ecja	Many nights and days I had to walk
Sa shumë ditë, nuk mundem ti kujtoj	How many days, I cannot remember
Drejt sallës së Gjyqit në Londër të vrapoj	To the Courtroom in London to run
E lutje për jetën e Xhordit të kërkoj	I pray for the life of Geordie to ask

²⁴ By contrast, with James Bond, which as a film franchise is slightly older than Dr. Who, the same problem exists but has been completely ignored by producers and directors. They have never directly addressed the issue of why the same character can continue to exist over so many years while the actor playing him has changed repeatedly.

²⁵ I thank our colleague Pietro Iaia for these two points (p.c.).

²⁶ Some of these texts contain linguistic and typographical inconsistencies, but in line with general practice in linguistics, we here present the data as we find it. What may be considered as linguistic inaccuracies may, among other things, be due to some lack of diligence on the students’ part, which is understandable given their age (early twenties). As regards the non-use of some special Albanian characters like ‘ë’, the reason may be the simple fact that Albanian-language keyboards are not readily available for most computers and laptops. There is, therefore, an increasing tendency especially among the young to replace special Albanian characters with the general characters of the device being used.

Oh Xhordi im as nuk grabiti as nuk vrau njeri
 Është i ri, është thjesht një fëmë
 Ma merrni mua jetën jam pleqëri
 Po ma shpëtoni Xhordin

Keqardhje ndiej o e mira grua; tha gjyqtari i
 shqetësuar për fatin e të birit
 Largohuni e mira grua pasi zgjidhje nuk kam
 per t'ju ofruar

Oh Xhordi im do varet nesër në agim
 Do varet nga nje zinxhir flori
 Do vdesi ,sepse dashuroi
 Dashuroi të bijen e një mbreti

Oh my Geordie neither robbed nor killed anyone
 He is young, he is just a child
 Take my life I am old-aged
 But save my Geordie

"I feel sorry, good woman," said the judge, worried
 about her son's fate
 Leave good woman as I have no solution to offer
 you

Oh my Geordie will hang tomorrow at dawn
 He will hang on a golden chain
 He will die because he loved
 He loved the daughter of a king

Figure 4
 Albanian Version 1 of *Geordie*.

This version is strongly influenced by the Claude François one as it repeats the fact that Geordie is the son (not husband / sweetheart) of the woman. His “crime” is of having loved the daughter of a king, not theft. The subtext then is of Geordie as the victim of arbitrary authority, not the perpetrator of a specific crime (theft). He has incurred the wrath of a king, who takes brutal revenge outside the context of any due legal process.

One of the reasons that the students are so influenced by the François version may be because they find it the most pleasing from a purely aesthetic point of view with its elaborate orchestration and François’s silky crooner voice.²⁷ Another factor may be the cultural resonance of the story found in the François version in an Albanian context. The issue of arbitrary and cruel authority may strike a chord in a country which only 30 years ago (happily, before these students were born, but a period that still casts a shadow over popular memory) was ruled by a brutal totalitarian regime under Enver Hoxha (1908-1985). During this period, the whole country was in effect a prison where everyone was under constant surveillance.²⁸ As is typical of such regimes, the “justice” system was just another instrument of oppression. Even law-abiding honest people were kept in a constant state of fear as they could be accused at any time of the most trivial misdemeanour, and punished in an arbitrary and disproportionately severe manner without any hope of recourse.

Furthermore, another point of relevance of the François version in an Albanian context may regard the special bond between a mother and her child. Christiansen (2022) speculates that there may be Catholic Marian undertones in the François version. These are not necessarily present in Albanian Version 1, but a mother-son link represents a family or “blood” relation,²⁹ rather than a romantic one (as it does in virtually every other

²⁷ As Christiansen (2022, p.45) states: “The music is correspondingly varied with different instruments being used at different stages: a classical guitar, where each note is plucked like a harp (*arpeggio*), providing the song with the basic chords and rhythm while other instruments, such as percussion and an electric organ, fade in reaching a crescendo towards the middle before fading out. Overall, the arrangement is multi-layered and much more complex than the Baez version. Unlike in a traditional ballad, the lyric is not in itself the primary focus of attention but rather just another element in a complex composition. The overall sound of the singer’s voice, its nuances, and mutations are as important as the words actually sung.”

²⁸ Which is not to say that real prisons and internment camps did not exist. In these, those designated as criminals or enemies of the state (including religious leaders, intellectuals or any who did not pay rigorous lip service to the party line), and often their families, could be sent to live (or try to) in the most inhumane conditions.

²⁹ On the significance of blood as a metaphor in traditional North Albanian culture, see Christiansen (2013).

version of *Geordie*). Again, in an Albanian context, a country which for centuries was subject to harsh and sometimes unpredictable rule by various authority figures, both local and foreign,³⁰ family ties, close and extended in the form of clans and blood lines, took on special significance and represented an important part of the social structure.³¹

Looking specifically at the Albanian text, certain features emerge. Generally speaking, the translation from the François version is fairly literal, however, in lines 10-12 (verse 3) there is a clever rhyming of the final verbs and their inflections: ‘mungonte’ (“was missing”) and ‘kërkonte’ (“searched”). The same thing is true of verse 4, with a repetition of the verb inflections ‘oj’ (‘kujtoj’, ‘vrapoj’ and ‘kërkoj’ – “remember”, “run”, “ask”). This technique is also found in verse 4, but with more adaption, where, in lines 14-15, we find ‘njeri’, ‘fëmi’ and ‘pleqëri’ (“anyone”, “child”, “old-aged”). The last of these, ‘pleqëri’, is the most sophisticated because it is originally an abstract noun derived via the suffix *-ëri* from the plural form of *plak* “old-aged”. It is deliberately used to create the rhyme with the first two items. In fact, a more literal translation of the original French (see Christiansen 2022) would have been “plak” (old-person).

An interesting point is that although the setting remains as London (as it does in the François version), *Geordie* the name has undergone localisation, and been replaced with an Albanian equivalent *Xhordi*: something that is not attempted in the François version (e.g. *Jordy*).

5.2. Albanian Version No. 2.

Again on the right, we provide a literal translation in English:

Kohë më parë një periudhë e mbretërve ekzistonte, E në Londër një mëngjes i ftohtë mbizotëronte, Në një urë të vjetër një grua e moshuar vajtonte, Për fatin e birit të saj Geordie mëndonte.	Long ago a period of kings existed, And in London a cold morning prevailed, On an old bridge an old woman was mourning, About the fate of her son Geordie, she was thinking
Geordie im nesër në agim do te varet	Geordie tomorrow at dawn will hang

³⁰ For most of its recorded history, Albania has been under foreign or authoritarian rule. As *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states (www.britannica.com): “[Albania] was under Roman rule by the 1st century BCE; after 395 CE it became part of the Byzantine Empire. Turkish invasion began in the 14th century and continued into the 15th; though the national hero, Skanderbeg, was able to resist them for a time. After his death (1468) the Turks consolidated their rule. The country achieved independence in 1912 and was admitted into the League of Nations in 1920. It was briefly a republic (1925–28), then became a monarchy under Zog I, whose initial alliance with Italy deteriorated into that country’s invasion of Albania in 1939. After the war a socialist government under Enver Hoxha was installed, and gradually Albania cut itself off from the nonsocialist international community and eventually from all other countries, including China, its last political ally. By 1990 economic hardship had fomented antigovernment demonstrations that led to the election of a noncommunist government in 1992 and the end of Albania’s international isolation.”

³¹ Here one is reminded of the five *kanuns*, the best known of which in the north of Albania (an area with many cultural differences to the south). “The Albanian word *kanun* which traces back to the Byzantine Greek *κανών* ‘rule, measure’ through Turkish mediation, is a common term to define the customary laws of Albania, which regulated both the public and the private life of the communities living in specific parts of Albania, especially in the so-called Northern Alps. The norms were passed on from generation to generation via oral tradition and were decreed by the council of elders” (Genesin 2020, p. 57).

Me një zinxhir të artë do të kapet Sepse ka dashuruar ,do të vdesë Dashuria për vajzën e mbretit nuk do të mbesë.	With a golden chain will be caught Because he loved, he will die Love for the king's daughter will not remain.
Për netë e për ditë, për një kohë të gjatë kam ecur, Në sa shumë ditë që nuk i kujtoj kam ngecur, Që në gjykatën e Londrës të gjendëm, Dhe për ceshtjen e Geordinë të lutem.	For nights and days, for a long time I walked, In how many days, I do not remember, I stumbled, To be at the court of London, And for Geordie's case to plead.
Geordin im, as nuk vidhte e as nuk vriste Ai ishte fëmije e rininë kishte Merr jetën time, të kesaj gruaje plak Por jetën e Geordinë tim tutje mos e flak.	My Geordie, neither stole nor killed He was a child and he had youth. Take my life, this old woman But my Geordie's life do not throw away.

Figure 5
Albanian Version 2 of *Geordie*.

Like Albanian Version 1 and presumably for the same reasons (see §4.1), Version 2 follows the model of the François version of *Geordie*. The setting is similarly still London and no attempt has been made to re-set the story in Albania or elsewhere.

As regards the language of the Albanian text, as in Version 1, we find extensive use of rhyme of verb inflections (e.g. verse 1, lines 1-4: 'ekzistonte' [sic];³² 'mbizotëronte'; 'vajtonte'; 'mëndonte' ("existed", "prevailed", "was mourning", "was thinking about"). In the final verse (lines 13-16), we find a different rhyme scheme 'vryste' (line 13) with 'kishte' (line 14) ("killed", "youth"), and 'plak' (line 15) with 'flak' (line 16) ("old woman", "throw away").

It is interesting to note that, unlike Albanian Version 1, *Geordie* as a name is retained. This is not an unproblematic choice, because the 'e' ending in Albanian is normally considered a marker of female gender, and could thus lead to confusion as it seems to do when this form is declined as an Albanian name would be according to the cases used in Albanian: *Geordinë* [sic]³³ (genitive: possessor, female), line 12, and again *Geordinë* (possessum, female), line 16. One may compare these to the corresponding forms of *Xhordi* in Albanian Version 1 (Figure 5). In particular, in the last line there are grammatical inconsistencies because the form *Geordinë*, as well as being accusative when it should have been genitive, is coupled with the possessive *tim*, which is marked for male gender. The students, therefore, by choosing to retain the original name, *Geordie*, which sounds in Albanian like a female name, have unwittingly created a trap for themselves, which they have not been careful enough to avoid.

5.3. Albanian Version No. 3

Ndërsa ecja nën urën e Londrës, Një mëngjes të mjegullt shpejt, Seç dëgjoj një grua të mjerë,	As I walked under the London Bridge, A foggy morning early, As I hear a wretched woman,
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³² Conventionally, this should be 'ekzistonte'.

³³ In fact, the conventional genitive form is *Geordisë*. It would seem that the students, perhaps out of haste, have employed an accusative where a genitive form would normally be used.

<p>Tek vajtonte Xhordin e saj.</p> <p>Do të varet në zinxhir ari, Një zinxhir shumë i veçantë, Vodhi gjashtëmbëdhjetë drerë t' mbretit, Dhe i shiti n'Boeni.</p> <p>Xhordi nuk lëndoi njeri, Asnjë nuk lëndoi ai, Vodhi gjashtëmbëdhjetë drerë t' mbretit, Dhe i shiti n'Boeni.</p> <p>Dy fëmijë t'bukur kam le, Tjetri shtrihet n'trupin tim, Do ndaja me ta çdokënd, Nëse e falni Xhordin tim.</p> <p>Xhordi nuk lëndoi njeri, Asnjë nuk lëndoi ai, Vodhi gjashtëmbëdhjetë drerë t' mbretit, Dhe i shiti n'Boeni</p>	<p>She was mourning her Geordie.</p> <p>He will hang on a golden chain, A very special chain, He stole sixteen of the king's deer, And sold them in Boeny.</p> <p>Geordie did not hurt anyone, And no one did hurt he, He stole the king's sixteen deer, And sold them in Boeny.</p> <p>I have two beautiful children, The other lies in my body, I would give anyone of them, If you would forgive my Geordie.</p> <p>Geordie did not hurt anyone, And no one did hurt he, He stole the king's twelve deer, And sold them in Boeny.</p>
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Figure 6
Albanian Version 3 of *Geordie*.

In contrast to Albanian versions 1 and 2, Version 3 takes its inspiration from those in English (i.e. Baez, Clayton, Denny and the Collins). The focus is on the romantic; the narrator is Geordie's wife/sweetheart, not his mother. As with Version 1, although the setting is still London (line 1), the name *Geordie* is replaced by the Albanian equivalent *Xhordi*. Similarly, the place *Boeny*³⁴ in the English text is domesticated as *Boeni*.

Another interesting feature of this version in Albanian emerges when listening to the (very beautiful and well executed) *a capella* recording made by the two students. As we mention in §3, citing Croce, the material or medium of an artefact adds to its essence. The arrangement and other elements affecting the “sound” of a piece of music or song are yet more parameters to take into consideration when considering how a text in a wide semiotic sense is reproduced or regenerated.

While Versions 1 and 2 reproduce the same general melody as those of the English, French, Italian and Danish versions, in Version 3, the students have substituted it with one taken from an ever-popular song, *Lule borë* (literally “snow flower”), written in 1946 by the Albanian composer Simon Gjoni (with the original lyrics by the poet Zef Pali). The modification of tune of course represents a major change on one level. However, the substituted melody retains the plaintive air of most of the versions of *Geordie* (Clayton, Baez, Denny, and to a degree also Gasolin' – but the latter with a darker, angrier blues/rock undertone). The chorus of this recording of Version 3 contains also some elements of polyphonic singing (the simultaneous combination of multiple independent tones or melodic lines) which is traditional in many parts of the Balkans and, in the form of so-called iso-polyphony, is also a distinctive feature of folk music in certain parts of Albania, in particular in the south, in the same area as Vlorë. The change in melody is thus more than just an act of whimsy. It also makes sense within the wider cultural context, and

³⁴ The exact place designated by this name has never been conclusively identified. Perhaps the best theory is that it is a variant or corruption of “Bohemia” (Christiansen 2022).

can be seen as a way of giving the song a definite Albanian feel even though the story is still set in London.

In this way, fittingly, the distinctly Albanian melody serves, in line with a polyphonic rationale, to function as a counterpoint to the Englishness of the text with its talk of London Bridge, kings³⁵ and their deer, which one must not kill. The overall effect then is of two separate discourses coexisting and contaminating each other.

As regards the language of the Albanian text, rhymes are less of a feature. There is however, some clever word reordering, see for example in the chorus (Verses 3 and 5): “Xhordi nuk lëndoi njer / Asnjë nuk lëndoi ai,” (“Geordie did not hurt anyone, And no one did he hurt”), which skilfully avoids repetition of ‘njeri’ (“anyone”) and allows for an alternative rhyme ‘njeri’ (“anyone”) and ‘ai’ (“he”).

6. Conclusions

In this article, we have introduced the concept of trans-regeneration: the way in which a traditional discourse (in this case a *Geordie* the well-known ballad) may be manifested as different texts as the story behind it is told and retold over time, and in different social-cultural contexts. The conventional distinction between source and target text is difficult to maintain in such a context because such works often lack clear histories. It is typically very difficult to identify anything definitively as the “original”. Rather, such texts seem to be the products of a collaborative process whereby different artists and performers each take the same song, or basic story, and elaborate upon it in thus contributing to the underlying discourse, from which successive generations of writers and musicians produce their own texts.

In this perspective, the text is not fixed or rigid. It is not something to be slavishly adhered to or reproduced. Rather, as we say in §1 and §3, it is something which is fluid. This is abundantly clear in a cultural artefact like *Geordie*, a ballad handed down through numerous generations and in different social contexts. This is because, as is true of so much in traditional folklore, and also contemporary popular culture, the underlying discourse is, to use a metaphor, a well from which water cannot only be drawn but which can also be topped up and replenished from new springs. The discourse, and by extension, the texts which manifest it physically, is then a repository of ideas, concepts, themes, scenarios etc., to which new ideas, concepts, themes, scenarios, etc. can always be added. Furthermore, as seen in the different language versions of *Geordie* discussed in Christiansen (2022), each text may select and highlight different elements of the discourse. In such a way, no text is complete or exhaustive as a manifestation of the discourse, even if the latter were itself stable and unchanging, which it is not (see §3).

It is in capturing such complex and obscure notions that the concept of trans-regeneration proves useful, not at least at a didactic level, because it highlights the fact that a discourse can be regenerated into many different texts both intra- and inter-linguistically, as well of course as intersemiotically (see Figure 2).

Most importantly, it points out to students that they themselves may contribute to the discourse, not only as translators in the conventional sense, but also as interpreters in an artistic sense: someone who may express their own ideas about a discourse’s meaning,

³⁵ In a medieval Ottoman context, one would talk of *Pasha* and the like.

and, to return to our previous metaphor, who may also add water to the well from their own spring.

Bionotes: Thomas Christiansen is an associate professor in English Language and Translation at the Università del Salento (Italy) and Director of the University Language Centre. He has taught in various positions at various universities in Apulia (Italy), the UK, and Poland. He completed his PhD in textual linguistics at Salford (UK). He has researched into various areas of linguistics including systemic linguistics and functional grammar, varieties of English, ELF, teaching English, language testing, and analysis of different corpora, including spoken discourse. He is a qualified teacher trainer and has also worked as an expert consultant for Cambridge Assessment English for many years.

Lavdosh Malaj is a full-time lecturer in the Department of Foreign Languages at the University of Vlora (Albania). He has a Ph.D. from the University of Tirana (Albania) in the field of Language/Didactics of English Language Teaching with a thesis entitled “Summary of the Literary Text in English.” He also has a master’s degree from the University of Tirana specialising in the impact of literary texts on second language acquisition. He has published articles in Albania, Italy and Poland, and spoken at national and international conferences in Albania, Italy, Germany, Romania and Montenegro.

Authors’ addresses: thomas.christiansen@unisalento.it; lavdosh.malaj@univlora.edu.al

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