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Translation and Translatability in Intersemiotic Space

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Introduction:
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Our firm belief is that the broad notion of the text has mainly come about thanks to semiotics. This crucial move by semiotics resulted, among others, in bringing translation studies closer to semiotics. The implications of general sign studies for translation theory and practice have helped translation studies to move away from the verbocentric dogmatism of the sixties and seventies when only systems ruled by double articulation were acknowledged to have the dignity of *language* (Eco 1976). As Peeter Torop (2004: 59) argues, "the text is what we understand in culture, and it is through the text that we understand something of the culture."

A crucial contribution to translatability studies is given by the concept of modeling, as thematized by Thomas A. Sebeok, a proponent of that biosemiotics trend that leads to "global semiotics" (Sebeok 2001; see also Petrilli 2012: 71-92). Moreover, taking global semiotics as the cast, and developing its implications in terms of translational processes, leads to the possibility of thematizing "global translation." The human "primary modeling system" or "language" – as also designated by Sebeok because of its *syntactic* capacity (Sebeok 1991: 49-58; see also Sebeok & Danesi 2000: 1-43) – conditions communication and translation through the great diversity of different verbal and nonverbal "languages" with which human beings enter into contact with each other, signify, interpret, and respond to each other. In fact, based on primary modeling, of "language as modeling", both signification and understanding in culture occur through texts of the semiotic order, verbal and nonverbal texts, multimodal texts, in the unending chain of responses between texts, engendered in the relations among

speakers and listeners, readers and writers. Texts are created, interpreted, and re-created in dialogic relations among participants in communication. Their sense and meaning are modeled, developed and amplified through the processes of transmutation ensuing from and at once promoting the cultural spaces of encounter. In his article "Interse-miotic Transmutations. A Genre of Hybrid Jokes" (with pictorial translations by Luciano Ponzio), Sebeok offers an early example of "transmutation", referring to Jakobson's no-tion of "intersemiotic translation." Sebeok investigates a particular narrative form he calls "hybrid jokes," where humor, differently from "jokes" that rely mainly on verbal language, is climaxed thanks to the effect of nonverbal visual signs, in this particular case of gestural signs (Sebeok 2001: 115-119).

Torop (2004: 62) argues that "the text is [located in] a wide intersemiotic space, and the analysis of it demands complex inspection of its creation, construction, and re-ception. Thus, a text is a process in intersemiotic space". Given Kobus Marais' (2018) argument that all socio-cultural phenomena have a translation dimension, it is difficult to disagree with Edwin Gentzler's (2001) observation that translation theory can quickly enmesh the researcher in the entire intersemiotic network of language and cul-ture, which implicates all disciplines and discourses. Nor could it be otherwise, if we consider that the material of language and culture consists of signs, while the sign itself is in constant translation. In other words, to be this sign here, the sign must be other; to be this text here the text must be other. The signifying specificity of a text develops through translational processes among signs and interpretants, utterers and listeners, writers and readers, across semiosic spheres and disciplines, across intersemiotic or transemiotic spaces in the signifying universe, verbal and nonverbal.

The notion of text has evolved thanks to contributions from the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics and the French School, with important implications for translat-ability as a fundamental property of all semiotic systems; as stated above, the "sign is in translation." It follows that translatability subtends the semantic process (Greimas & Courtés 1993). With Charles Morris (1938), as interpreted by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi (1953, 1954, 1975, 1992), we know that meaning concerns not only the semantic but also the syntactic and pragmatic dimensions of semiosis. Concerning interlingual trans-lation, translatability indicates an open relationship between a text and its translations (Petrilli 2003). In Punctum's special issue, we investigate this open relationship through articles that examine cultural transposition, intermediality, subtitling, adaptation, lit-erary translation, multimodality, and all those interconnected cultural phenomena that comprise the actual intersemiotic network of cultural texts.

More precisely, **Sara Amadori,** in her article "Translating the Book App's icono-letter," proposes a qualitative analysis of two Book Apps, recently published by two French pure players in bilingual (French and English) versions. Amadori shows that the phenomenon of Book Apps is an invitation to rethink the relationship between

Source Text and Target Text, and defines the genre formed by these new products based on theories developed by French Discourse Analysis. Textual examples from two Book Apps of the available corpus offer useful evidence of the difficulties involved in translating this new genre, a challenging task. Ogre doux's analysis confirms that if the design aspires to consider translation, linguistic, cultural, and semiotic transfer problems will be easier to solve. The difficulties highlighted in the English version of Maes' *Bleu de Toi* reveal that if we do not consider the translation right from the beginning, many plurisemiotic text features will be untranslatable. Also, the effect produced by the TT on the reader will be substantially different and probably inadequate.

Pierluigi Basso Fossali and **Julien Thiburce**, in their article "Sequences and scenes of transposition of an unshareable experience. A semiotically released prison", examine the uniqueness of prison experience and, specifically, the question of how to build, preserve or restore the bridges between the life of prison and the external social environment. They investigate how the international traveling exhibition *Prison* negotiates semiotically the release of prisons and prisoners from their incarceration and their mediatic banishment.

Nicola Dusi, in his contribution "*The Name of the Rose*: Novel, Film, TV Series between Intermediality and Transmediality," considers the diverse strategies of adaptation employed in the case of Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose* (1980) by examining the complicated passage from Eco's novel to Jean Jacques Annaud's film (*The Name of the Rose,* 1986) and the new Italian TV series (*The Name of the Rose,* 2019 - on air). Based on a socio-semiotic methodology, the analysis focuses on translational continuities from one medium to another, and the differences and discontinuities among transmedia reinterpretations of the source materials.

Bonnie Geerinck and **Gert Vercauteren**, in their article, "Audio describing the mental dimension of narrative characters. Insights from a Flemish case study", study three episodes of different Dutch-language TV series aiming to explore the strategies audio describers use to express mental states and their position on the objective-subjective continuum. The results show that, contrary to what the guidelines recommend, the audio descriptions are situated nearer to the continuum's subjective side than the objective side. Consequently, when translating visual elements into a verbal form, audio describers tend to look beyond what they see on the screen and infer the implicit underlying meaning.

Kobus Marais, in his article "Translating Time: Modeling the (Re)Processing of Emerging Meaning," argues that translation is not only the process of changing a stable text into another stable text but the very process that drives meaning in the first place. For Marais, translation is the virtual metabolism that relates the organism's metabolism to its environment, whereas a text is a process constrained materially to be relatively stable, but the stability is not original; it is the effect of semiotic work, i.e., of translation.

Marais focuses on the semiotic work involved in constraining the semiotic process into some form of stability and how we can perceive or understand these constraints. He argues that suggested semiotic models are primitive because they cannot account for constraints, initial conditions, and boundary conditions.

Aleksandr Fadeev, in his article "Acquisition of artistic literacy via intersemiotic translation in multimodal learning," develops a theoretical framework for the methodology of acquiring artistic literacy. He aims to formulate the concept of artistic literacy, which he frames in terms of contemporary educational skills and competences, and analyzes the process of acquiring artistic literacy based on mediation in learning, representation of texts, artistic work, and educational assessment. The analysis proceeds in terms of the Tartu-Moscow semiotic school framework and Lev Vygotsky's theory with specific reference to the use of artistic work in education.

In her article "Illustrated Translations Longing for the Middle Ages," **Hilla Karas** investigates the productivity of a medieval model by examining a variety of visual components inserted into modern French translations in print, based on the unadorned manuscript of the thirteenth-century work *Aucassin et Nicolette*. His analysis addresses these added elements and their characteristics, their relation to the model, the increased determinacy they create, and the reading they seem to encourage. For Karas, the narration levels, together with the performative aspect of the text, may be affected by the new, intersemiotic nature of this ancient text through the integration of other modalities into its translations.

In her article "Humor and intersemiosis in films: Subtitling Asterix and Obelix," **Loukia Kostopoulou** examines selected humorous scenes from the French film *Astérix aux Jeux Olympiques* (2008) and its subtitled version in Greek. Based on her analysis of specific sequences, Kostopoulou observes that verbally expressed humor is rendered in the target text by recreating the humorous effect. In this particular case, words from the original French are replaced with words that rhyme in Greek. What emerges is the synergy of semiotic codes, namely gestures, sound, cinematography, and the verbal code, all of which contribute to enhancing the comic effect.

Pierre-Alexis Mével, in his article "Accessible paratext: actively engaging (with) D/deaf audiences," examines the importance of the paratext – theoretically and practically – in getting D/deaf audiences to engage with theatrical performances. Building on Genette's definition of paratext (1987), as well as on Batchelor's recent seminal monograph (2018), Mével investigates the notion of 'threshold' from the perspective of accessibility. He demonstrates the importance of accessible paratext and how paratexts are designed, with particular reference to paratextual material built with Red Earth Theatre. The aim is to promote integrated captions to a variety of audiences. Mével underlines the necessity of a blended approach – that combines semiotic and aesthetic terms and integrated inclusiveness in paratextual material design.

Camille Migeon-Lambert, in her article "Translations, adaptations, quotations from Baudelaire's poetry into metal music: an anti-alchemy?" analyses how heavy metal musicians appropriate Baudelaire's poetry, one of the favorite sources of intersemiosis as performed by metal lyrics. She examines several levels of intersemiosis, from reference to literal quotation, including the musical artwork inspired by Baudelaire's life. Migeon-Lambert shows that, irrespective of how they are translated and 'deterritorialized,' surrounded by an album's strangeness and the violence of voices and music, Baudelaire's poems always come through sublimated by the process. The author concludes that the translatability of Baudelaire's poetry into heavy metal rests on a level of alchemy.

Vasiliki Misiou, in her article "Navigating a Multisemiotic Labyrinth: Reflections on the Translation of Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves", focuses on the Greek translation of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* from the perspective of the intersection between semiotics and translation studies. Misiou explores the new practices and forms of literary translation and how the use of semiotic resources as meaning-making tools impact translation decisions and the translator's role. Misiou suggests that literary translators should learn to work with texts in which the written medium is but one of the media used. She highlights how important it is for translators to become familiar with new forms of literacy, thus with new literary conventions and new kinds of visual literacy, all of which influence the literary semiotic ensemble's interpretation.

Peeter Torop explores "The chronotopical aspect of translatability in intersemiotic space." Torop argues that, from the semiotic perspective of translation, chronotopical analysis enables a shift from Jakobson's (1959) tripartite typology (intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translation) to the realization that non-verbal systems are relevant even when we translate verbal texts. In Torop's account, we can distinguish different translatability levels, whether we are translating a single text or analyzing the transmedial translation process. The chronotopical dimension adds flexibility to the analysis of translating culture and draws researchers nearer to the possibility of a systematic comparison of different translations.

In her testimonial article, "La traduction franco-russe d' un point de vue sémiotique," **Inna Merkoulova** begins by recounting her personal experience of translating Algirdas Julien Greimas' and Jacques Fontanille's book *The Semiotics of Passions. From States of Affairs to States of Feelings*, from French into Russian. Possible translative variations of semiotic terms relating to the passions, such as 'phoria' or 'umbrage,' with no exact analog in Russian, were discussed with Jacques Fontanille. Merkoulova proceeds to explore aspects of the French translation of such concepts as 'unpredictability' and 'semiotic window' (J. Lotman, "Culture and explosion," Limoges, 2004, French translation by I. Merkoulova) as well as the issue of consecutive oral translation and the

unique scoring system, developed for the use of translators, in the 1960s, by the Russian translator R.K. Miniar-Beloroutchev (author of *Consecutive translation*, Moscow, 1969).

All these studies demonstrate that intersemiotic translation boundaries as a research area are much broader than conceived by Roman Jakobson. Although Jakobson approached the phenomenon of intersemiosis as translational, in the time, this research area was not autonomous, but still depended on linguistics. Today, interest in intersemiosis is no longer limited exclusively to the translational dimension. As a communication phenomenon and by serving cultural communication, intersemiosis is studied in the context of other research fields, including audiovisual studies, pictorial arts and music, sign language, and digital humanities, to mention but a few. This finding confirms our *research suspicion* that the translation dimension is involved in most cultural practices and productions, reaffirming Jurij Lotman's (1990) position that translation is the fundamental instrument of semiotic research.

Our editorial project, "Translation and Translatability in Intersemiotic Space," owes a lot to Victoria Lady Welby's pioneering work on "significs." This mention is not intended as a conclusion, but only for the sake of signaling other research itineraries and further possibilities of development in studies on translation. Significs aims to account in semantic terms for the question we all ask in front of any linguistic-verbal and sign formulation whatsoever, "What does it signify?". We cannot restrict meaning, in this case, to a dual relationship, one of equalizing reciprocity between *signifi*er and *signified* (Saussure 1916). In this sense, Victoria Welby took a critical standpoint against Michel Bréal's (1897) semantics, which she considered reductive as concerns both the sphere of signhood in general and of verbal meaning in particular.

Welby believed that translation was of vital significance for meaning, language, and, generally, communication. To verify the validity of an utterance with a claim to scientificness, she indicated that we should try to translate it into another historical-natural language or even into another particular or sectorial language within the same language (Welby 1905-1911). Welby perceives translation as constitutive of sign activity, concerning both the human and the entire living world. Translation is vital for life and its evolution, in all aspects. She also recognizes the centrality of translation in the interpretive process and the generation of significance across different languages and cultures. Welby does not limit the problem of translation to shifting from one historical-natural language to another but theorizes translational process across diverse universes of discourse and types of sign systems, verbal and non-verbal, fully recognizing differentiation processes, specialization, and the enhancement of the signifying function.

Welby's work, whose importance is now at last acknowledged in the sphere of sign and language studies – first of all and most significantly by Sebeok himself (see "Women in Semiotics", in Sebeok 2001: 145-153) –, was developed in a book that was destined to enjoy instant success. I allude here to *The Meaning of Meaning*, authored by

her regular interlocutor Charles K. Ogden with Ivor A. Richards, initially published in 1923. We named Thomas A. Sebeok at the beginning of this introduction. With regards to his intellectual formation, Sebeok makes special mention to Charles Morris and to Ogden and Richards' book. Their conception of meaning is summed up and simplified visually in their famous triangle (Ogden and Richards's 'meaning triangle') (Ogden & Richards 1923: 11). What are generally considered as the main actors of the sign, that is, the 'symbol' and the 'referent' are situated at the two extremes of the base. But Ogden and Richards place another actor at the apex of the triangle, 'thought' or 'reference', in other words, interpretation. This corresponds to Charles S. Peirce's 'interpretant'. The so-called 'interpretant' indicates the work of translation into another sign and evidences the particular orientation, context or sense of the relationship established between the two ends at the base of the triangle. Unlike the other two sides of the triangle, the line joining the two ends at the bottom is dotted. The intention is to indicate that this path cannot be followed: it is not possible to pass directly from the 'sign' (in Ogden and Richard's terminology the 'symbol') to what the sign stands for, the 'referent'. In order to identify the precise referent at play at each specific occurrence, it will be necessary to take a longer trajectory, that passes through the apex of the triangle, that is to say, through the work of interpretation, of translation.

This book by Ogden and Richards contains two supplements. The one which concerns our present project is signed by social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and is titled "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages". Malinowski declares to be wholly in accord with Ogden and Richards's configuration of the meaning of meaning. In his essay, Malinowski verifies and validates their position through a study on the problem of understanding meaning in native languages with particular reference to the Trobriand Islands, North Eastern New Guinea. In his essay Malinowski engages in demonstrating "how helpless one is in attempting to open up the meaning of a statement by mere linguistic means", and without being able "to realize what sort of additional knowledge, besides verbal equivalence, is necessary in order to make the utterance significant" (in Ogden and Richards 1923: 300).

Another consideration by Malinowski is appropriately reported here as a way of ending this presentation: "Instead of translating, of inserting simply an English word, for a native one, we are dealing a long and not altogether simple process of describing the fields of custom, of social psychology and of tribal organization which corresponds to one term or another. We see that linguistic analysis inevitably leads us into the study of all the subjects covered by Ethnographic field-work" (*ibid.*: 301-302).

Through semiotics we can give reason to the fact, as well as justify in scientific terms, that translation, whether 'intralingual', 'interlingual' or 'intersemiotic' (to refer simply to Jakobson's renowned schema), can never be engaged with only two sign systems, the 'initial' system and the 'additional' system, to evoke Rossi-Landi's (1961, 1992)

distinction between "initial" and "additional meaning". And if translation concerns the verbal order, the systems involved will definitely not be only verbal systems.

Sebeok conceives the human being as the animal that is capable of articulation, of writing *ante litteram* we might add. The hominid is already endowed from this point of view, even before becoming *homo habilis*, and much earlier than becoming *sapiens*, and thereafter *sapiens sapiens*. By contrast with the Tartu-Moscow School, from which he draws, nonetheless, the important notion of 'modeling', Sebeok reveals in detail and throughout his writings that primary modeling is not a historical-natural language. Primary modeling is what he designates 'language', that is, the capacity for articulation, deconstruction and reconstruction, and this with a finite number of elements. We propose the expression 'writing *ante litteram*' as corresponding to 'human primary modeling'. Instead, historical natural language involves secondary modeling based on primary modeling. And there exist numerous historical-natural languages, numerous special languages, because the human being, endowed with 'language as modeling' much earlier than becoming *homo loquens*, is capable of constructing and deconstructing, of inventing 'new worlds'. But there is also a third type of modeling, and this is culture. These three types of modeling not only come into play in translation, but they are what actually makes translation possible, the condition of possibility, precisely. Deconstruction, reconstruction and translation mutually imply each other.

All this was implicit in the title selected for our project and in the idea that inspired it. That it has been possible not only to bring about this editorial project on the question of translation viewed from a semiotic perspective, but also carry it through to publication with the participation of various authors and experimentation in unexpected directions, we believe is one of its major merits.

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