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Translation and Translatability in Intersemiotic Space

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Navigating a Multisemiotic Labyrinth: Reflections on the Translation of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*

ABSTRACT

Multimodal literature is not a new phenomenon. However, thanks to today's technological advances, authors are further enabled to orchestrate and blend various available modes and resources to achieve cohesion and coherence within highly complex texts. By looking at the intersection of semiotics and translation studies, this paper focuses on the Greek translation of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. This novel incorporates multimodal and ergodic features that contribute to meaning creation and engage readers physically and mentally. In such a context, a literary translator has to traverse not only linguistic and cultural boundaries, but other modes and media employed for representation and meaning production, as well. Thus, one wonders whether the translator has to adopt new strategies when translating a multisemiotic text. Is the translation part of meaning-making? In an age of a plethora of means and forms of expression, what constitutes writing and reading, and by extension translation, is challenged, and literary texts –now often multimodal semiotic ensembles– invite all parties involved in an interpretive game. Through the prism of multimodal social semiotics, translation, and literary studies, and with a focus on their interaction and interconnectedness, this paper attempts to explore the new practices and forms of literary translation and the impact of the use of semiotic resources as meaning-making tools on the translation decisions made and the role of the translator. Is multimodal literacy just the tip of the iceberg of the changes brought to the field of translation studies?

Introduction

Novel writing and storytelling have dramatically changed over the past three decades with narrative discourse featuring a synthesis of a diversity of interrelated semiotic modes. Experimental multimodal literature challenges readers both in cognitive and physical terms (Gibbons 2012a: 421), inviting readers to participate in complex interpretive games that stimulate their sensory perceptions, engaging them in discursive practices more than ever before.

A fertile area of academic interest, multimodality has engaged considerable attention over the last decades, and several noteworthy studies have enhanced our understanding of key notions and principles. However, little attention has been paid to the challenges facing translators when they handle multimodal literary works and how the translation process is influenced by the relationship of and interplay between the various modes that interact in the production of textual meaning. But translation is not only about words; it partakes in meaning-making, being a space for negotiation, and part of a dialogical interpretation process. After all, as Clare Vassalo (2015: 170-171) underlines, "how meaning is conveyed, transplanted, and perhaps transformed during translation has been around, presumably, for as long as natural languages have existed." In a similar vein, since Roman Jakobson's (1959) classical essay 'On the Linguistic Aspects of Translation' and his definition of intersemiotic translation as "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems" (114), many scholars (Gottlieb 2018; Shober 2010; Petrilli 2001; Basnett 1980) in the fields of semiotics and translation studies have stressed the need for a more comprehensive understanding of translation, having recognized that it is a process inextricably linked to the "interpretation and communication of linguistic and non-linguistic signs" (Vassalo 2015: 171) and occurring across different modes and media.

The verbal component is just one of the many modes[1] employed in texts across and between different media (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001; Elleström 2010). Seen as inherent to texts, multimodality influences translation practices and our very understanding of the process of translation itself (Kaindl 2013; Dicerto 2018; O' Sullivan and Jeffcote 2013). Given that the relationship between literary translation and multimodality has not yet been thoroughly studied, our paper explores Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) and its Greek translation by Athina Dimitriadou (2005). When studying Danielewski's novel's multimodality, we also need to consider the agency it imposes upon readers, which, along with the novel's playfulness of form, allows us to see it as an example of *ergodic* literature.

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[1] Written and spoken language, visual images, sound, music, gesture, etc. are seen as communicative 'modes' of meaning, whereas modality refers to "semiotic resources for expressing as *how true* or *how real* given representations should be given" (Van Leeuwen 2005: 181).

In ergodic literature, as defined by Aarseth (1997: 1), "nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text," and *House of Leaves* is indubitably an interactive novel, similar to hypertext. Hayles (2002a: 795), who adopts the definition of hypertext by Jane Yellowlees Douglas (2000) and others as "a rhetorical form having multiple reading paths, chunked text, and a linking mechanism connecting the chunks," underscores that it "can be instantiated in print as well as electronic media" (2002b: 26). Aarseth (1997: 17-18) also resists any distinction between digital and print media, emphasizing the need for a new understanding of textuality. He sees the text as "a machine for the production of a variety of expression" (ibid.: 3), stressing its semiotic nature and materiality while centering attention on its user.

Both ergodic and multimodal texts allow for a wide range of modes and imply activity, asking readers to invest effort in navigating them. One of Danielewski's aims when writing *House of Leaves* was to spotlight the "enormous possibilities" of books that "have the capacity to intensify informational content and experience all along" (in Cottrell 2000). Taking into account texts like the *I Ching* (ca. 1000 B.C.), Stéphane Mallarmé's Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hazard (1897), and Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* (1918), the potential of print literature that Danielewski wished to demonstrate becomes clear. The conflation of ergodicity and multimodality adds to the novel's denial of definitive interpretation, whereby every re-reading "always yield[s] one more singular experience" (Hansen 2004: 606). In this study, I focus on the text's multimodality, drawing on social semiotics and cognitive poetics to explore the changes brought to literary translation and examine multimodal literary translation potentialities.

Multimodality, Social Semiotics, and Literary Translation

Experimentation, alongside technological advances, has further enhanced the creation of literary texts that employ various semiotic modes to produce meaning. Nearly thirty years after van Peer's statement that "new media require new forms for dealing with language and literature" (1993: 59), we cannot but recognize the increasing number of literary texts in which language is just *"one* mode of communication" and not *the* mode of communication (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 36; their italics). Narrative is also a mode that "can be realized in a range of different media" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 22). Rawle's *Woman's world* (2006), Larsen's *The selected works of T.S. Spivet* (2009), Foer's *Tree of codes* (2010), Thirlwell's *Kapow*! (2012) are among such works. In this spirit, the study of multimodal literary texts, which combine several expressive modes in their narratives, requires applying a transdisciplinary approach. In my study, I will explore the applicability of multimodality, social semiotics, and cognitive poetics to analyze a complex literary narrative that uses several semiotic modes for its meaning-making.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001: 20) define multimodality "as the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined." *House of Leaves* is such a semiotic product. Danielewski employs a plurality of semiotic modes that coexist and continuously interact on the same interface as parts of an intricate web that determines textual meaning production and narrative development. Within this framework, the term *'modes'* refers to the "semiotic resources which allow the simultaneous realization of discourses and types of (inter)action" (ibid.: 21), with *resources* being defined "as the actions and artifacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically … or by means of technologies" (Van Leeuwen, 2005: 3).

Language also functions as a set of resources used within a social context and, according to Halliday (1978: 113), represents a "network of options" known as "meaning potential." In his words, every act of language is an act of meaning and 'to mean is to act semiotically' (Halliday 2013: 16) – that is, language should be seen not just as the expression but as the source of meanings created within a social system, as "the semogenic capacity which is driven by, and drives, the human brain" (32). Thanks, among others, to Halliday's view of language as a resource for constructing meaning (2004: 23), the social semiotic approach emerged as a means to understand communication practices, based on the premise that the social basis of sign systems cannot be ignored (Hodge and Kress 1988: 1). In short, social semiotics studies systems of signs and their use by people in specific social contexts (Van Leeuwen 2005) or, in the words of Jewitt and Henriksen (2016: 145), it is concerned with "meaning-making and meaning makers," drawing on analysis of texts to "examine the production and dissemination of discourses across the variety of social and cultural contexts is made." The interest lies in meaning in all its forms within a social semiotic framework, and signs, which are 'a fusion of meaning and form,' exist in all modes (Kress 2009: 54).

In multimodal literary works, non-verbal meaning-making resources often displace language. Thus, when it comes to the translation of a multimodal novel, we no longer focus only on the challenges and problems that arise concerning the interpretation and translation of verbal signs but also, and equally importantly, on the way the various semiotic modes that comprise the text and create its meaning(s) are used to transfer the latter into a different culture in the form of a new text.

Given the nature of Danielewski's novel, we employ the term *text* as defined by Halliday (1985: 10), that is, "any instance of living language that is playing some part in a context of a situation [that] may be either spoken or written or indeed in any other medium of expression." How a text is read, i.e., "its textuality or textualities, understood as its meaning-structures" (Silverman 1994: 81), is as important as readers are. As Barthes (1977: 162-163) maintains, the text requires that the distance between writing and reading be narrowed through readers' "practical collaboration," by their being joined, along with

the literary work, "in a single signifying practice" (ibid.: 162). In his words, the text is "experienced in an activity of production, in reaction to the sign" (ibid.: 157-158).

If translation, and, in our case, interlingual translation, is defined as the process of replacing the source text (S.T.), with a 'substitute' one (House 2009: 4), the target text (T.T.), Kourdis (2015: 303) is right to claim that "the two terms 'text' and 'substitution' are fundamental … as they allow the translatability / substitution of every semiotic system / text for another," thus opening up the definition of the term. And as seen so far, a text is more than just a string of words. It is an act of communication wherein a complex network of messages is encoded in the form of various modes. Hence, this paper will address questions about the 'relationships across and between modes' (Jewitt 2009: 17) relative to whether they influence the writing / reading process and, by extension, the translation of a text that is more than purely verbal. By exploring whether translators "enter the live dialogue among verbal and nonverbal signs" (Petrilli and Ponzio 2012: 20), this paper will attempt to provide some insight into the way translators influence readers' experience of novels like *House of Leaves* in which verbal language is not the sole meaning carrier.

Multimodal Narratives: The Case of *House of Leaves*

Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves by Zampanò with introduction and notes by Johnny Truant* (2000) is a highly sophisticated novel and a characteristic example of concrete / typographic fiction, deemed to be the most common form of multimodal literature (Gibbons 2012a: 431). The novel, 709 pages long, abounds with typographic diversity and modal plurality, encouraging the reader to move out of the conventional space and form and navigate a maze in which text / page layout, visual designs, white space, and verbal text are interdependent. There are different narrating voices and points of view, various layers of footnotes, different fonts, colored words, all leading to multiple narratives, offering readers alternatively challenging reading paths. Like other multimodal works, *therefore, House of Leaves* invites readers to engage in the reading and meaning process both physically and cognitively, enticing them to decode the novel and at the same time encouraging them to evolve as readers through a literary work that expands[2] its very concept (Hayles 2003: 278).

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[2] *House of Leaves* first appeared online before coming out in print. In the words of Pressman (2006: 107), it is "the central node in a network of multimedia, multi-authored forms: the *House of Leaves* website *The Whalestoe Letters* (an accompanying book by Danielewski containing a section from the novel's Appendix) and the musical album *Haunted* by the author's sister," all published in 2000. As Hayles (2003: 278) underlines, *House of Leaves* "is a perfect example of 'Work as Assemblage,' that is, a cluster of texts around the novel that 'quote, comment upon, amplify, and remediate one another.'"

Through its textual complexity, visual innovations, and diverse range of techniques, *House of Leaves* defies the expectations traditionally held by fiction readers and translators alike. That is, when readers open a book, they usually start at the top, read from left to right, top to bottom, page after page, following a narrative that has a clear beginning, middle, and end. But *House of Leaves* is unlike conventional novels. This novel is about a house that is bigger inside than the outside, and by the end of the novel, readers realize that the novel itself is like a house. Numerous plots twist and intertwine with each other, creating an intricate narrative that is difficult to unravel completely. The deployment and portrayal of characters also do not follow a conventional pattern.

Some of the formal features of multimodal novels encountered in *House of Leaves* are: 'varied typography, unusual textual layouts and page design including the concrete arrangement of text for visual purposes, the inclusion of images (illustrative, diagrammatic, photographic), footnotes, and the use of color' (Gibbons 2012a: 420). The analysis herein will focus on some of the elements mentioned above. Despite its importance, both semiotically and semantically, *color*[3] and the way it is utilized by Danielewski in the novel are not going to be discussed, as the Greek edition is not fully colored. Although in the S.T., the word 'house' appears in blue, the word 'minotaur' and all 'struck passages' in red, and the only struck line in Chapter XXI in purple, in the T.T., there is neither blue nor purple. The translator has used all colors accordingly, but the book came out as a two-color publication. The impact on T.T. readers is entirely different from that achieved on S.T. readers, who can access the full-color edition, as the visual modes' expressive potential to intensify the novel's semantic content and add to verbal meaning(s) (e.g., blue is an active hyperlink's color but it may also refer to cinema's 'blue screen') is de-activated. The same holds for the sketches, polaroids, collages, and the pictorial material included in Appendix III (all in black-and-white in the T.T.), with readers being deprived of both the narratives created and their associated aesthetics.

As Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006: 2) rightfully claim, "what is expressed in language through the choice between different word classes and clause structures, may, in visual communication, be expressed through the choice between different uses of color or different compositional structures. And this will affect meaning." And, although we can give credit to the Greek publishing house (Polis Editions) for the colored cover where the word $\sigma\pi\dot{\iota}\tau\iota$ (spiti) [home] appears in blue and the word $\phi\dot{\upsilon}\lambda\lambda\alpha$ (fylla) [leaves] in red, the absence of Danielewski's full palette in the T.T. denies readers an aspect of the literary narrative that they usually don't notice, but in novels like *House of Leaves*, is of paramount importance since it influences the text-decoding process. Understandably, Dimitriadou[4]

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[3] Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006: 228-238) approach to the communicative function and semiotics of *color* provides us with significant insights into its importance as a semiotic mode.

[4] The translator offered me information during a phone conversation. It is worth noticing that, despite the positive reviews (e.g., Dimitroulia 2006; Katsoularis 2006), expectations on the commercial reception of the T.T. were not met, and the publisher decided to pulp it. Sadly, readers expressed interest in the T.T. after it was destroyed.

had no say in the decision regarding the transfer of the colored and pictorial material. But T.T. readers should be offered the possibility to use 'visual grammar'[5] (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006), analyze the visual elements present and relate them to the textual/verbal elements, and thus participate in the multimodal semiotic game designed by Danielewski. If the collages, polaroids, etc. were colored, T.T. readers would be able to interpret the content, follow the discourse, and engage in the meaning-making process. The question that arises, consequently, is how they experience the novel in its translation.

Multimodal Literary Translation:
House of Leaves Migrating into Greek

Before embarking on answering this question, it's worth remembering the novel's complicated plot at the heart of which lies *The Navidson Record*. A Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist, Will Navidson, decides to produce a film about his family's move to a house on Ash Tree Lane. However, this house is not an ordinary one. Returning from a trip, they realize the house has changed; it is larger on the inside than the outside. As it continues to expand and a door emerges in the bedroom leading to a dim hallway, Navidson calls on his brother Tom and other associates, and they all set out to explore the dark interior of the house. Navidson records their explorations with a video camera and produces a documentary film, the *Navidson Record*. But readers only learn of this film through Zampanò, an old blind man who claims to have analyzed it in the form of an academic manuscript with extensive footnotes and citations. This manuscript is also named *The Navidson Record*, and, when Zampanò is found dead in his apartment, Johnny Truant, a tattoo apprentice, takes possession of it. Truant also appends footnotes and adds his reflections while organizing and editing Zampanò's commentary. Thus, readers are offered three entangled narratives (with a different typeface assigned to each author), which, along with other nested narratives, comprise the narrative of *House of Leaves*.

The analysis herein will focus on extracts from chapter XIX of the *Navidson Record*, where the multimodal spatial arrangement plays a determining role in the narrative development. These extracts will also allow us to examine the challenges spawned by experimental literary texts like *House of Leaves*, which hone the mental processes involved in reading (cognition), inviting and compelling readers and translators alike to reflect upon the act of reading itself. Or, as Stockwell (2002: 2) puts it, it is "not the ar-

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[5] As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 3) stress, visual grammar "describes a social resource of a particular group, its explicit and implicit knowledge about this resource, and its uses in the practices of that group. [I]t is a quite general grammar … an account of the explicit and implicit knowledge and practices around a resource, consisting of the elements and rules underlying a culture-specific form of visual communication."

tifice of the literary text alone or the reader alone, but the more natural process of reading when one is engaged with the other." The plethora of semiotic modes utilized in *House of Leaves*, as in other multimodal novels, "emphasizes the dynamic and embodied nature of reading" (Gibbons 2012b: 102), stressing the interactions present "between the brain, the body, and the physical/cultural world" (Gibbs 2005: 67).

Danielewski constantly asks readers to be mentally and physically engaged in the production of textual meaning. Hence, followed by some theoretical considerations on cognitive literary studies and employing *cognitive poetics*,[6] in particular, this paper explores *House of Leaves* with the emphasis placed on the mental processes involved in the act of reading and understanding literature (Gavins and Steen 2003; Stockwell 2002). The analysis will draw, among others, on the notions of *figure* and *ground*, both regarded as the "basic features of literary stylistic analysis" (Stockwell 2002: 15) and, in narrative fiction, directly linked to visual perception – a *figure* is a prominent entity that draws visual attention against the *ground* of its setting (ibid.: 15). The examples below will provide useful insights into whether S.T. readers follow the relations between *figure* and *ground* and whether T.T. readers are also provided with the opportunity to pursue these relations and engage themselves in a dynamic reading experience. Does the T.T. help them recognize patterns by recreating the *image schemas*,[7] that is, the mental pictures, encountered in the S.T.? These are some of the questions that I will attempt to tackle in my examination of the translation of *House of Leaves* into Greek.

Exploring translation at the heart of a narrative maze

First, I shall focus on certain pages from Exploration #5 recounting the day Navidson embarked on his last exploration of the house's hallways and rooms. Starting from page 426, we read: the "endless corridor he travels [doesn't] remain the same size" but "[s]ometimes the ceiling drops in on him," (427) "getting progressively lower and lower until it begins to graze his head, only to shift a few minutes later,"(428) "rising higher and higher until" (429) "it disappears altogether"(430). The spatial layout of these sentences illustrates the movement of the ceiling precisely.

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[6] The phrase *cognitive poetics* was introduced by Reuven Tsur, in the1970s, in his theory of poetry and perception (Stockwell 2002: 8). It refers to the practice of analyzing and comprehending literary texts and readings in terms of cognitive linguistics and psychology. Cognitive poetics suggests that "reading may be explained with reference to general human principles of linguistic and cognitive processing" (Gavins and Steen 2003: 2).

[7] According to Stockwell (2002: 16), in cognitive linguistics, "locative expressions of place, are understood as image schemas. Image schemas are mental pictures that we use as basic templates for understanding situations that occur commonly."

Figure 1. *House of Leaves* pp. 428-429

As seen in Figure 1, we are given *image schemas* with the ceiling's movement represented through verbs (getting lower, shift, rising) and adverbs (progressively, higher) of direction and place. The reader follows the ceiling's downward movement on page 428 and then watches it rise on page 429 until it disappears (with the sentence centered at the very bottom of a blank, white page). In the Greek translation, Athina Dimitriadou has decoded the non-verbal meaning-making resources in these pages and has offered readers a similar experience with that shared by the T.T. readers by exploiting the spatial, visual, and verbal modes available at her disposal (Figure 2).

Figure 2. *Σπίτι από φύλλα* pp. 462-463

As readers follow Navidson in his exploration of the dark house, they get to watch him find himself in front of a staircase, which leads him after many hours to a 'series of black rungs jutting out of the wall, leading up into an even narrower vertical shaft' (439). And this is the point where readers have to rotate the book as they find themselves in front of words, arranged vertically, and spread across two pages (Figure 3).

Figure 3. *House of Leaves* pp. 440-441
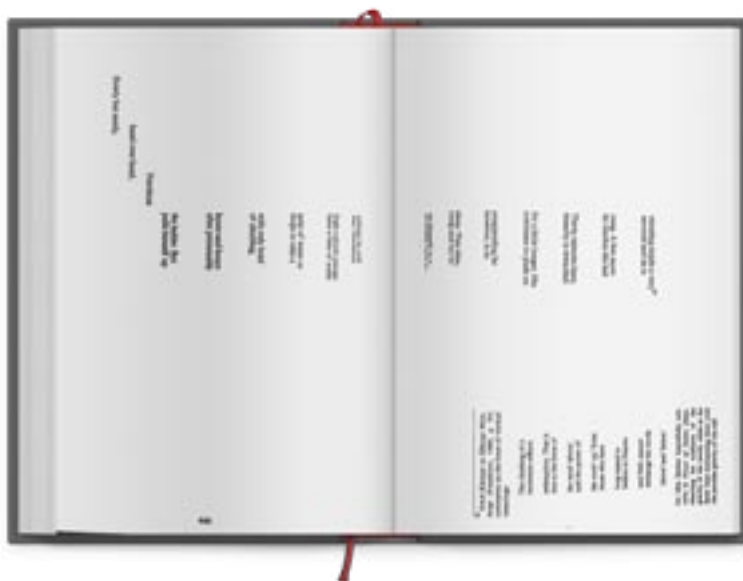
As the narrative unfolds, they witness Navidson's struggle to pull himself up and reach the last step. From the second sentence, readers understand that the emphasis is on Navidson's hands ("hand over hand" 440), and they can picture him climbing his way up. The reading path is a journey upwards, with Navidson's climbing being at the epicenter of Danielewski's *image schema*. Drawing on *cognitive poetics*, Navidson, the moving *figure* in this *image schema* that follows a path above the *ground*, is the *trajectory*, the general element, and the ladder with which he has a grounded relationship is the *landmark* (Stockwell 2002: 16). The perceived relationship between Navidson and the ladder, i.e., between two entities (*figure* against *ground*), is known as *profiling*. It does not have to do only with visual perception but also with our conceptual and language systems (Hamilton in Gavins and Steen 2003: 56).

As for Danielewski's spatial, visual, and verbal modes, each rung of the ladder is formed by and consists of two short lines of words surrounded by white space and positioned as close as possible. The words dominate the blank, white pages and lead readers to the reading path needed to be taken. For, like enjambment in poetry, the meaning runs over from one line to the next, and from one rung to the next without terminal punctuation. This grouping of words, functionally related to each other, reminds us of the concept of *the cluster* in multimodal analysis, as defined by Baldry and

Thibault (2006: 31). Like the words that make up the ladder, the "items in a particular cluster may be visual, verbal and so on and are spatially proximate thereby defining a specific region or subregion of the page as a whole" (ibid.: 31). Thus, in multimodal texts, the reading paths are often more complex than those readers are invited to follow when reading conventional texts. In the excerpt under discussion, meaning-making does not derive only from the typical left-right, top-down processing, as readers visually 'hop' from rung to rung following Navidson in a non-linear path. Taking all these into consideration, we pose the question: can T.T. readers enjoy the same experience? Does the T.T. reconstruct the links created by Danielewski between clusters and the *cluster hopping*[8] (ibid.: 26) that determine the process of reading and viewing in readers' effort to decode the meaning chains of the text?

As seen in Figure 4, the *image schema* is more or less reproduced in the T.T.

Figure 4. *Σπίτι από φύλλα* pp. 474-475

In the T.T., parallel lines of equal length are used to recreate rungs' image and help readers visualize Navidson's ascent. However, it seems that the focus on non-verbal modes has sometimes been at the expense of language. Whereas readers clearly understand that Navidson uses his hands to climb the ladder and that this takes some hours before he reaches the last rung, they miss what happens during the ascent. That is, no meaning can be made upon reading many of the lexical clusters.

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[8] *Cluster hopping* describes the reading process's discontinuity, as overlapping clusters ask readers to hop backward and forwards (Baldry and Thibault 2006: 26).

In the Source Text (S.T.), readers get the following	While in the Target Text (T.T.), readers get this	Back translation into English
Slowly but surely, hand over hand, Navidson pulls himself up the ladder. But after presumably hours and hours of climbing with only brief stops to take a gulp of water or have a bite of some high-caloric energy bar, Navidson admits he will probably have to tie himself to a rung and try to sleep. This idea, however, is so unappealing he continues to push on for a little longer. His tenacity is rewarded. Thirty minutes later, he reaches the last rung. A few more seconds and he is standing inside a very… (2000: 440-441)	Αργά, αλλά σταθερά, το ένα χέρι πάνω στο άλλο, ο Νάβιντσον τανιέται με κόπο τη σκάλα. Όμως μετά από πιθανόν ώρες και ώρες ανάβαση, μόνο σύντομο στέκεται να πιει μια γουλιά νερό ή μια μπουκιά υψηλή θερμιδική αξία πλάκα, ο Νάβιντσον παραδέχεται ότι θα πιθανό να πρέπει να δεθεί σ' ένα σκαλί και προσπαθεί ύπνο. Η σκέψη αυτή αλλά είναι έστω και αβοήθητος να σπρώχνει για λίγο λίγο ακόμη. Συνεχίζει η επιμονή επιβραβεύεται. Ύστερα από τριάντα λεπτά φτάνει στο τελευταίο το σκαλί. Ακόμη λίγα δευτερόλεπτα και αρχίζει που υψώνεται μέσα σ' ένα πολύ… (2005: 474-475)	Slowly, but surely, hand over hand, Navidson stretches up the ladder with effort. [a] But after presumably hours and hours of climbing, only brief[b] he stands to take a gulp of water or [c]a bite high-caloric energy bar, [d]Navidson admits he will probably have to tie himself to a rung and tries to sleep. [e] This thought, but he is even helpless [f] to push on for a little longer. He continues the tenacity is rewarded. Thirty minutes later, he reaches the last step. A few more seconds and he starts [g]that(h) rises [i] inside a very …

When it comes to the translation of the phrase "pulls himself up," the word used in the T.T., *tanietai* (a), meaning to straighten or extend one's body or a part of their body to its full length, along with the prepositional phrase *με κόπο* (me kopo) [with effort], form the image of a rung (see Fig. 4). Although Navidson is trying to move his body, the object *τη σκάλα* (ti skala) [the ladder], which follows the verb *τανιέται*, baffles T.T. readers, as the middle voice of the verb expresses an action that is reflected upon the agent and is not transferred to an object. The definite article *τη* must be a typo, as *στη σκάλα'* (sti skala) [on the ladder] would make sense. There is also a typo in case (b) since the adjective *σύντομο* (syntomo) [brief] can't have been chosen over the adverb *σύντομα* (syntoma) [briefly] as a modifier to the verb *στέκεται* (steketai) [stands]. And then readers encounter the phrase "*μια μπουκιά υψηλή θερμιδική αξία πλάκα*" (c, d), which does not read right due to a) the omission of the verb phrase *να φάει* (na faei) [to eat], that goes hand in hand with the noun *μπουκιά* (boukia) [bite], and b) the choice of the word *πλάκα* (plaka) instead of the most commonly used word *μπάρα* (bara) [bar].

Readers' understanding is further confounded by the phrase προσπαθεί ύπνο (prospathei ypno) [tries sleep], which lacks coherence both in terms of syntax and grammar and is semantically clumsy. Equally incoherent is the phrase (f) that follows suit: *Η σκέψη αυτή αλλά είναι έστω και αβοήθητος* (I skepsi afti alla einai esto kai avoithitos). The equivalent English phrase is unequivocal (*a rather unappealing* idea), and Danielewski does not intend to puzzle readers about its meaning. But TT readers have to handle a grouping of words that are not related in any manner possible and disrupt the intended semantic chain. Similarly, in the last sentences (g-i), the addition of the verb αρχίζει (archizei) [starts], and, at the same time, the use of που (pou) [that] instead of να (na) [to], along with the use of the verb υψώνεται (ypsonetai) [rises] instead of στέκεται (steketai) for *standing*, brings readers to an impasse and leaves them high and dry despite their struggle to follow the reading path. Such choices cannot be easily justified, although they may be related to the focus on the ladder's visual representation. The problem gets worse because this ladder is crucial to the plot's development as it leads readers to the next page to see where Navidson finds himself once he reaches the last rung.

But before they do so, they are asked to follow another ladder situated on the right-hand page of this extract.

Figure 5. *House of Leaves* p. 441   **Figure 6.** *Σπίτι από φύλλα* p. 475

While the previous ladder (Figures 3 and 4) takes readers upwards, this one (Figures 5 and 6) takes them downwards. And to read it, the book has to be rotated again, engaging readers' physical interaction. In this ladder, the words 'up,' 'above' and 'below' are crucial in meaning and communication, both verbally and visually. Readers following this ladder are guided to interpret 'up' and 'above' as better to 'below.' As

Stockwell (2002: 5) stresses, "directional features deriv[e] from an underlying metaphor in which 'good is up" and 'bad is down.'" Thus, verbally readers expect that Navidson will experience something good once he reaches the last rung; they believe the outcome will be positive. But visually, the ladder takes readers and Navidson downwards, leaving the first puzzled as to whether their expectations will be met or not. Anxious enough, readers have to turn the page to find out what will happen. Narratively speaking, this inversion is challenging, and it reflects the effect created by the use of and interaction between different semiotic modes.

When it comes to the Greek translation (Figure 6), Athina Dimitriadou has tried to maintain the ladder *image schema* created by Danielewski through adverbs (*up, above*, and *below*), which motivate conceptual metaphor mappings.[9] These words are closely related to readers' cognitive condition and vital to their interpretation. Thanks to the adequate visual representation of movement, T.T. readers are quite facilitated to follow the offered reading path. However, they may not all easily grasp the paradoxical turn and the deviant structure that emerges. Unlike S.T. readers, T.T. readers cannot fully enjoy the experience offered and have the expectations raised by the divergence between 'up' / 'above' and 'below.' This is because 'up' has been translated into Greek as *ψηλά* (psila) [high] and 'above' as *υπεράνω* (yperano) [be above], frequently used to denote one who is 'above suspicion' or 'morally superior' to others. In general, the interplay of image and word is reproduced in the T.T. Some readers, however, may not be able to perceive the metaphor 'good is up,' because the Greek word chosen typically activates negative connotations. Considering the fact that we employ metaphors to think about and understand concrete and abstract concepts (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), it is vital that the verbal modes in the T.T. directly reflect the association between valence and verticality (Meier and Robinson 2004) suggested by the metaphor 'good is up, bad is down' echoed in the S.T.

As seen, the ladder *image schema* is a recurring structure in the novel, establishing within readers' cognitive process patterns of interpretation and experience that are multimodal, not only visual. In chapter XII, for instance, Navidson and Reston reach the foot of the staircase, but they don't see Tom, who has not come down the Spiral Staircase to meet them. Navidson, disappointed by his brother's stance, says that '[t]his is what Tom does best. He lets you *down*' (277; my emphasis). And then readers have to turn the page only to find a single sentence, at the bottom edge, which reads as follows: 'Which is when the rope slaps *down* on the floor' (278; my emphasis). In the words of Stockwell (2002: 5), "even the completive particles of phrasal verbs," in this case the

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[9] According to Lakoff (1993: 205), "as soon as one gets away from the concrete physical experience and starts talking about abstractions or emotions, metaphorical understanding is the norm." Conceptual metaphors help us comprehend abstract concepts and perform abstract reasoning (ibid.: 244).

adverb *down*, "are essentially bound up in our cognitive condition." The repetition of *down* and the rope's movement, visually represented with placing the sentence at the bottom edge of the page, emphasize the negative meaning of the word *down*, as encoded in the metaphor above. In the T.T., readers miss this word game, as the phrasal verb *let down* has been translated as 'σ' αφήνει στα κρύα του λουτρού' (s' afinei sta krya tou loutrou) and the phrasal verb *'slaps down'* as σκάει (skaei). Since there are no phrasal verbs in the Greek language, it would be impossible to use either 'down' or repetition. If, however, the expression *'σ' αφήνει ξεκρέμαστο'* (s' afinei xekremasto) [leaves you hanging] had been used, which is semantically similar to the one employed, since it translates into 'he leaves you helpless,' the morpheme κρεμώ (kremo), a component of the word ξεκρέμαστος (> ξεκρεμώ > ξε – κρεμώ) which means *hang*, may have provided readers with a semantic link with the word *rope* that appears in the next sentence. Although the Greek verb σκάει means 'to hit something sharply' and it accurately describes the movement of the rope, it does not suffice to intensify the feeling of helplessness aroused in Navidson.

However, a few pages down, equal attention is paid to Danielewski's visual, spatial, and verbal modes. That is, on the third day of the rescue attempt, Navidson, Reston, Wax, and Jed desperately try to reach the top. At some point, Navidson, who "is no longer holding onto the rope" (286), wonders what "could possibly be pulling Reston to the top" (286-287). The word *top*, the only word readers encounter on page 287, is written topsy-turvy, and it is positioned in the upper right-hand corner, thus designating both the top of a stairway and the top of the page itself. But when readers rotate the book to read the word correctly, they find *the top* in the bottom left-hand corner of the page. They are again invited by Danielewski to experience visually, spatially, and verbally a challenging twist on the meanings of 'up' and 'down,' physically moving and cognitively conceptualizing the patterns produced. Greek-speaking readers share the same experience as they also read the word επάνω (epano) [up] at the bottom-left edge of the page (309), wondering whether and how Reston has reached the top since their eye is directed back down. Is the conceptual metaphor of 'good is up, and bad is down' subverted?

And the answer is given in the following pages by Danielewski himself, who writes that "Navidson is sinking.. [*sic*] Or the stairway is stretching expanding," (289) "dropping as it slips," (290) "dragging Reston," (291) "up with it" (292). Once again, movement is represented both verbally and visually, as we see below in Figure 7.

It is interesting how multimodal meaning-making influences both S.T. and T.T. readers' experience of the text, which requires they be actively involved, physically, and cognitively. The stairway and the house within the novel are like language, in that it shifts and changes continuously. T.T. readers navigate this stairway with ease, watching the stairs stretch and drop, but, when they turn the page to find out the direction

Figure 7. *House of Leaves* pp. 291-292

in which Reston is dragged, they encounter the phrase *προς τα επάνω* (pros ta epano) [upwards] with the word *up* being written at the bottom-right edge (Figure 8). In the S.T., however, readers encounter the word *up* at the upper-right edge of the page. That is, readers in both the S.T. and the T.T. follow a downward reading path (along with Reston, who is dragged), but, when they turn the page, the eye of the S.T. readers is fixed upward, whereas that of T.T. readers is still directed downward since they have to read first the words *προς τα* (towards) and then the word *επάνω* (a higher position); thus, the visual emphasis in the T.T. is toned down since the readers' eye keeps moving downward, and this does not allow them to experience the twist and paradox produced in the S.T. The use of another option provided by the Greek language {e.g. *επάνω μαζί της* (epano mazi tis) [up with it]} could have allowed readers to experience the tension created by the divergence between the visual and verbal modes.

Figure 8. *Σπίτι από φύλλα* pp. 313-314

Amidst constant challenges

What also needs to be discussed, and is related to the excerpts above, is Danielewski's use of white space. In the passages explored so far, the scarcity of textual units compared to the excess of white space that dominates the pages is striking. Although mostly blank pages may act as disruptions, they give the reader information about the narrative. However strange such pages may seem, they engage the reader in exploring the house and the characters in their journeys. As White (2005: 21) argues, "[d]isruptions and difficulties at the level of graphic surface which require special negotiation are part of the process of reading." In other words, readers respond "by taking context and metatext into account. Ultimately, the challenge to the reader is always finite and manageable since the coherence of the text […] is guaranteed by the presence of the physical book in the reader's hands" (ibid.: 22). The blank space in *House of Leaves* makes readers reassess their reading habits and, removed from the act of reading, are allowed to analyze the narrative's text and content. Similarly, translators that deal with multimodal literary texts need to reassess priorities, being aware that the choices they make 'activate the meaning-making power of language' (Halliday 2013: 36) and that they have to focus on all essential elements and not solely on verbal / textual content.

Whether the emphasis is given on special layouts, *image schemas*, or other patterns, multimodal literary translation calls for enhanced awareness of the relations between the various semiotic modes and the more conventional fictional narrative features. Language in translation acts as the link in the meaning-making chain, bringing the modes together as a multimodal semiotic ensemble and enhancing the dialogue between verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources. On the other hand, writing practices have definitely changed with technology's advent, greatly influencing both reading practices and cognitive capabilities. As seen through the examples examined herein, *House of Leaves* is a labyrinth found on a typographical landscape dominated by numerous footnotes, appendices, letters, etc., written in different fonts and sideways backwards, or spreading on strikingly blank pages. Both readers and translators are challenged intellectually, and translation becomes "subject to reconceptualization as the re-writing of an already pluralized 'original'" (Littau 1997: 81). Such labyrinths, which are still stories, coherent fictions, allow for multiple reading experiences through the interplay between verbal and non-verbal signifiers.

Barton (2016: 66) stresses that "[v]isualising the text, or to be more specific, textualizing the visual" in *House of Leaves* is very important to Danielewski. Readers must find new ways of approaching narrative, involved in an interpretive adventure that enables them to navigate the puzzle to find and make meaning. The devices employed by the writer "offer a semiotic metalanguage of sorts" (ibid.: 66), and both S.T. readers and T.T. readers should be exposed to it. As Baldry and Thibault (2006: 18) emphasize, the semiotic resources integrated into multimodal texts "are not simply juxtaposed as sep-

arate modes of meaning making but are combined and integrated to form a complex whole which cannot be reduced to, or explained in terms of the mere sum of its separate parts." Consequently, both the practice and theory of translation can be significantly enriched through a more in-depth exchange with multimodality and social semiotics.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has stressed the need to explore literary translation within a framework informed by multimodal social semiotics and cognitive poetics, which provide a fertile space for reflection in the field of (literary) translation studies. As I have tried to show, the study of literary translation with attention placed only on the written medium, the peculiarities inherent in conventional literary texts, and, subsequently, their transfer to a new language and culture is no longer adequate. Our times call for a transdisciplinary synergy between multimodality, social semiotics, literary and translation studies. This synergy can help us shift the translators' focus, among other things, towards skills more appropriate to the translation of experimental, multimodal literary texts.

The latter set new challenges to translators since they have to modify visual and spatial modes to remain consistent with the verbal modes or vice-versa. What translators need to understand is how verbal meaning-making resources relate to and are affected by resources that are non-verbal and are also employed to convey meaning. One cannot help but wonder: does the translation of a multimodal novel differ from conventional novels? Do we understand the translation of multimodal literature in the same way as any other kind of translation? There may be no clear-cut answers to these questions. Still, the definition of translation should be flexible to accommodate the changes brought in the field of literary translation and translation studies in general. As usual, translators are asked to transfer a text from one language to another and help readers, who may sometimes be bewildered, follow the reading paths created by the author of the S.T. In the case of *House of Leaves*, despite the extensive use of topsy-turvy page layouts, unconventional typography, full-color printing, and photographs, among other devices, readers are offered a strong narrative core by Danielewski. Whether the narrative is intelligible or not depends mainly on the visual and spatial modes of the text. And S.T. readers can successfully navigate this maze thanks to Danielewski. T.T. readers rely on the translator's skills to do so.

Thus, if possible, translators should cooperate with all parties involved in the publishing industry (graphic/type designers, book printers, etc.) to ensure that the publication of an experimental novel respects its idiosyncratic form (layout and typographic design) and content. To a large extent, this is the case in the publication of *House of Leaves* in Greek; especially if we consider the types of intentional textual gaps in the

novel –bolded X's and bracketed gaps for holes, text that seems to be erased by 'black crayon or tar,' etc.– are successfully recreated in the T.T. Publishing houses should provide readers with a complete edition and not publish such works, if they are unwilling to ensure its completeness. Readers will understand that this type of undertaking is long and demanding. After all, they are all part of a unique aesthetic experience, shaped through their interaction with the literary work's intricacies. Their textual perception is transformed, and the translator's response to the novel's multimodality plays a determining role in this.

In our study, we paid attention to all semiotic modes present in the novel. However, when the emphasis is on the visual and spatial modes at the verbal/textual modes' expense, readers sometimes find difficulty in making meaning despite their intellectual and physical engagement with the text. This suggests that literary translators should be trained to work with texts in which the written medium is but one of the media used. They need to know how to decode the meanings created by the specific interaction of different modes and the relations shaped if they wish to understand their multimodal meaning-making potential. In an age of rapidly changing technological innovation, it is vital that an analytical methodology be developed that will be able to handle multimodal discourse, since translators, like authors and readers, "will gradually become more skilled producers and consumers of [such] discourse and these competencies may, in turn, lead to different uses of the different modes in literary narratives, or a different division of labor between the different modes" (Nørgaard 2010: 124). Translators' familiarity with new literary conventions and their acquisition of visual literacy will influence their interpretation of the literary semiotic ensemble. Nonetheless, translators need to become not only multimodally literate but also be able to sustain such literacy. It is not only the role of translators that multimodality changes and transforms but also the actual practice of translation, which is about to change even more in the years to come.

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