Creative, Social and Transnational Perspectives on Translation

THE EXPERIENCE OF TRANSLATION

MATERIALITY AND PLAY IN EXPERIENTIAL TRANSLATION

Edited by
Madeleine Campbell and Ricarda Vidal

The Experience of Translation

Campbell, Vidal and their contributors expand the notion of translation beyond linguistic, modal and medial borders to embrace posthumanist perspectives through a holistic experiential epistemology which envisions translation as engaged, situated social practice.

The first of two volumes, this book focuses on questions of materiality and play. Drawing together contributions on theory, methodology and practice from translators, scholars and practitioners working in the creative and performing arts, this book explores how contemporary, experiential acts of interpretation, mediation and negotiation can serve to bridge social and cultural discontinuities across time and space. These range from ancestral past to digital present, from rural to urban environments across the globe. Experiential translation applies a transdisciplinary lens to problematize views of translation and untranslatability traditionally bound by structuralist frames of reference and the reserve of professional linguistic translation. The chapters in this book apply this experiential lens to understand a pluriverse of creative translation practices where the translator's subject position in relation to the 'original' is transformed by the role of experimentation, creativity and play.

This book and its companion volume *The Translation of Experience: Cultural Artefacts in Experiential Translation* will be of particular interest to translators and arts practitioners, scholars and researchers in the transdisciplinary field of humanities.

Madeleine Campbell teaches at Edinburgh University. Her transdisciplinary publications span arts-informed language education, experiential translation and creativity, including *Translating across Sensory and Linguistic Borders* (2019) and 'The multimodal translation workshop as a method of creative inquiry—acousmatic sound, affective perception and experiential literacy' (forthcoming in *Target*). She is Co-Investigator of the AHRC-funded Experiential Translation Network (ETN).

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Funding: This work was supported by UKRI under AHRC Grant AH/V008234/1, awarded to Ricarda Vidal, King's College London (Principal Investigator) and Madeleine Campbell, University of Edinburgh (Co-Investigator).

Creative, Social and Transnational Perspectives on Translation
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Mridula Nath Chakraborty, *Monash University, Australia*
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This series turns the spotlight on translation as an intrinsic and ubiquitous part of transnational social and cultural practices. The series is committed to bringing together two approaches to translation—the linguistic and the cultural—by commissioning books that examine how linguistic and cultural forms of translation inform each other. The recent move within translation studies towards studying languages and linguistic practices within wider social, cultural and political contexts is an important shift and can fruitfully inform wider cultural studies scholarship. This may range from large conceptual frameworks that define particular historical periods or societies to the minutiae that may have transformed the everyday.

This series counters the vision of translation as a static or instrumentalist activity that takes place only between languages or translators. Instead, it aims to place translation centre and front as the active, agentic and ineluctable integer in a mobile and malleable space of society. It recognises the site of translation as an exceptionally creative one that operates between any number of known and unknown quantities to make sense of the fast-transforming world around us, to understand the continuation of the past in our present and how historical moments inform the contemporary. These acts of interpretation, mediation and negotiation constantly take place across cultures through visual, vocal, aural, written, analogue and digital technologies.

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Edited by
Madeleine Campbell and Ricarda Vidal

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2024
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 9781032612010 (hbk)
ISBN: 9781032612058 (pbk)
ISBN: 9781003462538 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538

Typeset in Galliard
by codeMantra

‘Untitled’, Harriet Carter. Acrylic, oil, and chalk on canvas, 80 × 40 cm.

Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

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Series foreword

Mridula Nath CHAKRABORTY
Hephzibah ISRAEL

This book series aims to turn the spotlight on translation as an intrinsic and ubiquitous part of transnational social and cultural practices. It is committed to bringing together two approaches to translation—the linguistic and cultural—by commissioning books that examine how linguistic and cultural forms of translation inform each other. The research presented in this series offers a range of critical responses to the transformative role of translation that pervades human communication: from the travel of large conceptual frameworks that define particular historical periods or societies to the minutiae that may transform the everyday.

In a global world of unprecedented movements of peoples, mobilities of cultures and migration of worldviews, the need for translation has increased rather than diminished. However, translation is often understood only as a targeted or professional activity for those who call themselves 'translators' or are 'in need' of translation; it is seldom conceived of as a constant, creative, transformative and ubiquitous act that permeates every space, time and thought in our everyday lives.

This series aims to counter the vision of translation as a static or instrumentalist activity that takes place only between languages or translators. Instead, it aims to place translation centre and front as the active, agentic and ineluctable integer in a mobile and malleable space of society. It recognises the site of translation as an exceptionally creative one that operates between any number of known and unknown quantities to make sense of the fast-transforming world around us, to understand the continuation of the past in our present and how historical moments inform the contemporary. These acts of interpretation, mediation and negotiation constantly take place across cultures through visual, vocal, aural, written, analogue and digital technologies.

Translation acts become key to hot-button issues like migration and social cohesion, identity phenomena, the movement of heterogenous peoples into spaces perceived as homogenous, evoking challenges for ideas of nationalism, multiculturalism, secularism and globality, and suggesting contingent responses to the same. These are the sites in which translation intervenes to

foster communication, comprehension and creativity. Yet, translation can also be an exclusive process: decisions about what is translated, how and for whom, have far-reaching implications for the inclusion and exclusion of certain communities and/or stakeholders, simultaneously empowering some and disempowering others. Viewing translation as a tool of inclusion or exclusion raises a number of critical issues for exploration in this series. These issues come to bear on translation across a number of written, spoken and artistic genres.

Some of the defining questions that animate this series are: How do concepts travel in translation? How does the language in which we may conceive a particular idea expand or retract in response to encounters with the new? How do cultures in the global south experience change? How do we study observable everyday patterns of human behaviour and construction across diverse cultures—architectural styles, jewellery, textiles, foods, music, scripts, technologies of production, transportation, communication, or for that matter, preservation? The series aims to make these acts visible in localised and globalised contexts, in public and private spheres, in historical and geo-political sites, in philosophical and practical questions.

Introduction

Materiality and play as affective and embodied means of (un)knowing

Madeleine Campbell and Ricarda Vidal

Context

In the context of Susan Bassnett and David Johnston's "outward turn", the scope of what we understand translation to be has undergone a paradigm shift beyond the linguistic to encompass multimodal, intermedial and embodied interpretation, mediation and negotiation of text as world. Transdisciplinary perspectives on translation have been explored in relation to contemporary art (Vidal Claramonte, 2022), creativity (Malmkjær, 2020) and experimentation (Lee, 2022; Grass, 2023), decolonization and valorization of the translation of indigenous and minoritized languages (Bhanot and Tiang, 2022) and eco-translation (Cronin, 2017), to name a few. An integral feature of transdisciplinarity involves challenging epistemic boundaries, for example in examining the demarcation between the sociolinguistic, multimodal, in-the-moment notion of translanguaging and the product-oriented notion of equivalence in professional linguistic translation (Baynham and Lee, 2019). Developments in the understanding of intersemiotic translation have also been addressed through first-person accounts in a reflexive manner by arts and translation practitioners (Campbell and Vidal, 2019). These developments, coupled with an ever-changing geopolitical landscape driven by post-truth economic imperatives and climate change crises on a global scale, increasingly point to the need to understand how the embodied, co-creational intersemiotic process of experiential translation can contribute to glocal understanding and communication through socially-situated practice.

Several contributors to the present book are members of the AHRC-funded Experiential Translation Network (www.experientialtranslation.net). In their first collaborative project, the Network addressed the place of intersemiotic translation in art-making, translator training and, more widely, in contemporary society. In summer 2022, the Experiential Translation Network held an international conference and exhibition, "Performative & Experiential Translation: Meaning-Making through Language, Art and Media" at King's College London and Somerset House. Some of the papers given at that conference have recently been published as part of a special edition on experiential translation of the journal *Translation Matters* (2023), edited by Karen Bennett.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-1
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The Experience of Translation: Materiality and Play in Experiential Translation and its forthcoming companion volume *The Translation of Experience: Cultural Artefacts in Experiential Translation* take the research conducted under the auspices of the Network as a departure point. Combining submissions invited via an open call for proposals, these two volumes draw together a wide range of voices from within translation studies and practice, art practice and cultural studies to critically examine and expand traditional perceptions of translation. Taking the outward and cultural turns within translation studies as a springboard, they offer a vision of translation as a socially-engaged practice with a contingent impact beyond the confines of the discipline.

Expanding from the editors' initial focus on intersemiotic translation (Campbell and Vidal, 2019), both volumes aim to explore the nature of translation in contemporary society and ask what role experiential translation can play in addressing the "untranslatable residue that reveals unbridgeable cultural differences" (Kramsch and Zhu, 2020, p. 10). Where cultural translation aims to "make untranslatable experiences translatable across cultural boundaries" (ibid, p. 9), experiential translation aims to make experiences translatable across the linguistic and sensory boundaries and media that together serve to generate, maintain or challenge cultural hegemonies. In a conflicted world, we ask how experiential translation can contribute to growing calls to employ "different strategies … to resist traditional perceptions of translation and the translator" (Bhanot and Tiang, 2022, p. 11).

A preview of the forthcoming companion volume's focus on contemporary cultural artefacts as the object of translation can be found in the Afterword to the current volume. In *The Experience of Translation*, the translator's subject position in relation to the semios and materiality of the 'original' is transformed by the role of experimentation, creativity and play where, as Lee explains in his book *Translation as Experimentation*: "Instead of discarding … idiosyncrasies and epiphanies as irrelevant to the work of translation, a ludic perspective embraces them and actively considers how they can be co-opted to add value to the original work in unexpected ways" (2022, p. 46). At the same time, the notion of ('original') text as world comprising not just words but all modalities of communication, including the human beings that produce them and the natural and technological environment within which humans operate, explodes the outward turn in translation studies to encompass translation as a transdisciplinary, pluriversal phenomenon.

Here, we also take into account that there is no such thing as '*an* original'. Rather, we embrace Emmerich's understanding of the "original" or "source" as "a volatile compound that experiences continual textual reconfigurations" (Emmerich, 2017, p. 2). Writing about literature and commenting on the fact that a work usually exists in multiple forms (e.g., manuscript, print and digital), Emmerich writes of "instability of the text at the 'source'" (ibid, pp. 1–36). The plurality of the source is mirrored in the plurality of translation, which can be seen as "a form of translingual editing" (ibid, p. 2), or as a contribution to the infinite process of textual reconfigurations (also see Vidal Claramonte

(2024) on "(un)original literature"). This resonates with Delphine Grass's description of "[a] text as a participative endeavour" (2023, p. 22) not just with respect to the hermeneutics of the text but also with respect to its embodied and material aspects. Grass makes a comparison to the "ouvroir (a workroom, a sewing room): a creative space that is openly and self-consciously collaborative and co-creative", where text is conceived as a "form of writing which acknowledges its material entanglements and co-dependence on a wide network of actors and factors" (ibid, p. 22).

Experiential translation embraces the visibility of the translator and eschews semiotic erasures imposed by the norms and expectations of source **and** target cultures. As such, it aims to undo acquired knowledge and give voice not only to the sensory and affective, but to endow the natural world with the status of 'text' (Taivalkoski-Shilov and Poncharal, 2020). Experiential translation views translation as a holistic, co-creative process of discovery and renewal in a dynamic ecological context where Western anthropocentric discourse is displaced by a pluriverse of local and global, analogue and digital, (dis)embodied voices.

This book and its companion volume investigate how translation can be understood as an experiential process that performs a situated and engaged social function. As such, every chapter analyses processes of translation either in a reflexive manner in relation to the author's own practice, or applies their analysis to the translation of cultural artefacts or events. In doing so, the authors theorize how experiential translation can be understood as a holistic, in-the-moment, often shared and plural process which operates in the translation of culture, community, voices of nature, place and environments. Envisaging the practice of translation as a contemporary and performative form of art or meaning-making that challenges authority and hegemonic values, the arguments presented problematize reductionist approaches in (mono) linguistic translation and interrogate how and whether experiential translation can account for the plurality of experiences represented to confer greater agency on participants in translation events. The nature of materiality and the role of experimentation and creativity are foregrounded in this process, whether focusing on the gaps and errors that arise through the use of technology in translation or the formation of fragmentary, incomplete textual creation in experiential performance. The possibility of transfer or representation of meaning is further questioned in favour of the materialities of the text, whether mediated by humans, non-human agents, the natural environment or machines.

Experiential translation and the fluency/domestication *vs* resistance/foreignization debate

In the introduction to the 2018 edition of *The Translator's Invisibility*, Lawrence Venuti challenges reductionist interpretations of the dual constructs of domestication and foreignization he had elaborated in 1995 and 1998, building on Antoine Berman's ethics of translation and Schleiermacher's

predilection for "sending the reader abroad" (Venuti, 2018, p. 15). At the same time, Venuti reminds translators and critics that domestication and ethnocentrism are inevitable consequences of the act of translation: "Any sense of foreignness in a translation is always already domesticated, even if differential" (ibid, p. xiii). While maintaining the stance that all translation is interpretation, Venuti's central thesis is that the same text can be analysed as both domesticating and foreignizing to different degrees and in different ways (ibid, pp. xii-xv; also see Bouton-Kelly's Chapter 5 in this volume). Translation into minor languages, for instance, can respond to protectionist barriers to variation within the translating language which lead to "domestication", while at the same time "foreignizing" certain aspects in a manner which both challenges such barriers and infuses the target language with linguistic innovation (ibid, p. xi):

> [T]he terms "domestication" and "foreignization" do not establish a neat binary opposition that can simply be superimposed on "fluent" or "resistant" discursive strategies .... The terms "domestication" and "foreignization" indicate fundamentally ethical attitudes towards a foreign text and culture, ethical effects produced by the choice of a text for translation and by the strategy devised to translate it, whereas terms like "fluency" and "resistancy" indicate fundamentally discursive features of translation strategies in relation to the reader's cognitive processing. Both sets of terms demarcate a spectrum of textual and cultural effects that depend for their description and evaluation on the relation between a translation project and the hierarchical arrangement of values in the receiving situation at a particular historical moment (Venuti, 2018, p. 19).

Such values, argues Venuti, are always reconstructed and contingent acts of interpretation which vary in response to prevailing cultural traditions and critical approaches. Consequently, what is considered foreignizing in one translated text may not be considered so in another which adopts what appear on the surface to be similar approaches. Venuti's premise in re-explaining these constructs, based as they are on ethical stances expressed in linguistic terms on the fluency-resistancy spectrum, is principally concerned with their socio-political and ideological (as opposed to aesthetic and affective) implications, whether aiming to maintain or challenge the status quo:

> Foreignization does not offer unmediated access to the foreign—no translation can do that—but rather constructs a certain image of the foreign that is informed by the receiving situation but aims to question it by drawing on materials that are not currently dominant [in the target culture], namely the marginal and the nonstandard, the residual and the emergent (Venuti, 2018, pp. 19–20).

Venuti subsequently published his polemic on instrumentalism, advocating instead a hermeneutics that draws "its key concepts from semiotics and

poststructuralism" (2019, p. 3). Instrumentalism in translation he conceived as "the reproduction or transfer of an invariant that is contained in or caused by the source text, an invariant form, meaning, or effect" (ibid, p. 1). In contrast, Venuti's hermeneutic model of translation relies on the transmission of interpretants. When he states: "The application of interpretants guarantees that a translation is relatively autonomous from its source text even while establishing a variety of interpretive relations to that text" (ibid, p. 2), he acknowledges the relational dimension of translation but appears to be silent on the conduit metaphor fallacy (Reddy, 1979) whereby elements of meaning-making (semantic, thematic and contextual) are somehow contained in the source text, whether invariant or not. In Venuti's (2019) account, these elements of meaning are by implication carried across, albeit transformed by the application of interpretants, into the translating language. Taking the example of Heidegger's translation of the "Anaximander Fragment" (1947), Venuti eschews the latter's insistence on a "semantic invariant" (Venuti, 2019, p. 4), which he attributes, along with Hans-Georg Gadamer, to a type of philosophical hermeneutics. At the same time, however, Venuti advocates instead the variety of "potential meanings" (ibid, p. 5) of the source text, thereby arguably investing the text per se with semantic content upon which diverse interpretants may be brought to bear, a premise that Haapaniemi challenges in Chapter 1 of this volume.

While Venuti takes exception with the notion of invariance (whether formal or semantic), he does not appear to question the fundamental premise that form and meaning are the matter of translation and interpretation, however 'variant' the meaning 'contained' in the source text: "any correspondence or approximation [with the source text] thus coincides with a radical transformation" (Venuti, 2019, p. 3). A focus on the translatory *experience* of both translator and receiver, however, enables the contingency of this transformation in its immediate relation with the world to be understood as a perhaps more material, temporally conditioned and subjective encounter than has hitherto been allowed for in translation research. The experiential approach adopted in many of the chapters in this book places emphasis on the agency of the embodied, affective participant who enters into a dynamic, in-the-moment relation with the generative elements that constitute the source text (where both translator and receiver are embodied perceiving agents). For example in Chapter 2, drawing on the Futurists' proclamation of "the need to destroy syntax" and to create "Words-in-Freedom" by "cutting words from the incarceration of sentences", John London argues that allowing the spectator's imagination to provide the context is a "much more active way of experiencing language" (p. 43). Experiential translation is concerned with the process of experiencing the source text as 'the thing itself' in relation to the world, as well as performing a more self-aware semiotic act as 'interpretant' of its semantic and formal instantiation. As Marais and Kull remind us, for all living beings, "[h]istorically and ontologically, the thing … can be prior to semiosis" (2016, p. 183).

Materiality, embodiment and form

The material turn in translation, ushered in by Gumbrecht and Pfeiffer (1994) and Gumbrecht's work on the "materialities of communication" (2004), was put on the map in 2016 by Karin Littau for an eponymous *Translation Studies* Forum. The fact that many scholars responded, including A.E.B. Coldiron, Guyda Armstrong, Norbert Bachleitner and Susan Bassnett (vol. 9.1), Rebecca Kosick, Alison Burkette and Minako O'Hagan (vol. 9.3), is testimony to the centrality of materiality in contemporary thinking on translation. Piotr Blumczynski recently published a volume on *Experiencing Translationality: Materiality and Metaphorical Journeys*, where he advocates moving away from a narrow language-focused definition of translation and instead embracing translation as "a profoundly experiential" event that is grounded in ancient and mediaeval embodied and material culture and practised in religious ritual: "Ancient and medieval translations could be seen, heard, smelled and felt as genuine (or not), and this sensory experience is still at the core of translationality" (2023, p. 4).

Blumczynski (2023) and others define materiality in terms of its embodied, sensual encounter. Littau, for example, tends to apply the terms materiality and mediality interchangeably: "we need to be attentive to materiality and its cognates, mediality and technicity" (2016, p. 84). Her conceptualization of media here can be understood to designate the plural of 'medium', including corporeal and technological ecology, i.e. "the media bodies and machines" (ibid, p. 86) through which communication and ultimately culture are made manifest. Human embodiment and technology mediate Littau's understanding of communication, "namely all those materialities – or medialities – from the human body to exosomatic medial carriers, from human memory to the memory chip, that house and give shape to the products of spirit, mind, consciousness" (ibid, p. 83). At the same time, Littau (ibid) and Bennett (2022) lean towards a conflation of mediality with form in their account of the implications of materiality in translation. Littau (2016), citing, for example, Coldiron in relation to the foreignizing *mise-en-page* and typography of French source texts by Renaissance printers, highlights how translation is embedded in the material form of books, whether oral, printed or electronic. Such form can include "practices of writing and reading [which] varied historically in accordance with the material carriers (human body, tablet, roll, codex, book, computer) and their hardware (voice, clay, wax, papyrus, parchment, paper, screen) available for the storage and retrieval of information" (ibid, p. 90). Littau argues that medial form impacts directly not just on how we perceive the world and communicate but also on how we translate.

Similarly, Bennett (2022), analysing Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in the context of the material turn, writes:

> For if the "meaning" of a text or utterance is expressly bound up with the form in which it presents itself—whether the paper/papyrus/stone slab on which it is inscribed, the typefaces of the printed document, the

> prosody and facial expressions accompanying the spoken utterance, or (most importantly) the auditory or visual shape of the words as they appear to the ear or eye—then it becomes impossible to extract it cleanly from that medium and transport it wholesale to another environment (p. 51).

In this extract, materiality comprises physical (paper, papyrus, stone) and aesthetic form (typeface, prosody) as well as embodied expression (facial expression, spoken utterance) and perception (the shape of words as they appear to the ear or eye). Bennett argues convincingly, on the basis of this example, for the inseparability of meaning from its physical instantiation. One can, however, distinguish two meanings of form in discourses on materiality: the distinction lies between the form of the medium (physical carrier, modes and channels) and the crafted form of the artefact, as expressed in its formal aesthetic qualities. In the latter sense, for example, the aesthetic form of concrete poetry plays with medium, typeface and shape as much as with words and sounds; a Shakespearean 14-line rhyming sonnet, usually in iambic pentameter, differs in aesthetic form, for example, cadence, from a villanelle, where alternate recurrence of the first and third lines of a stanza is the norm for the first four stanzas, followed by a quatrain where these same lines constitute the closing couplet.

In reviewing the contribution of materiality to translation, Tong King Lee further remarks on the fluidity of the construct, citing sources that conflate materiality with both (aesthetic) form and embodiment:

> Materiality is a multi-faceted concept; it includes anything that pertains to the physical constitution of the text, ranging from image configuration (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006), visual perception (Gordon 1997), typography (van Leeuwen 2005, 2006; Nørgaard 2009) to modes of inscription (Huang 2010) (Lee, 2014, p. 347).

As discussed in several chapters in this volume, in translation as in the arts, of course, material form impacts aesthetic form and hence its translatability. Littau (2011) speculates, along with Venuti (2000), that historically the evolution from scribing word-for-word to the adoption of printing may have influenced the telos of translation to progress beyond the literal towards fluency in tandem with innovations in the printing press. Bennett (2022), in contrast, sees adherence to literal translation as a means of performing fidelity to the sacred, ritual quality of oral delivery in the translation of early Hebrew and, later, Christian scriptures, citing, for example, Jerome's exceptional embrace of the literal when translating the Bible (pp. 56–57). The return to the materiality of sound in the present age, she argues, is occasioned in part by the revival of analogue over digital means of distribution of sound and music, and the growth of multimodality in literature and the arts (2022; this volume, Chapter 8; see also Campbell, this volume, Chapter 3). Indeed, as others have suggested,

the multimedia artefact offers a renewed emphasis on performativity and synaesthesia, in that it is “a form of creative production that is dynamic, productive and generative, unlike the print text, which remains identical with itself on a material level even if it is composed of differences at the level of content and style” (Smith, 2009, p. 17).

While in the foregoing, performativity is inextricably linked with both embodiment and the materiality of signs, Tong King Lee offers a helpful distinction between embodiment and materiality as follows:

> Embodiment, a central concept in cognitive linguistics, is the nexus that ties linguistic structures to the daily interaction between our bodies and the physical world. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) have posited that the conventional metaphorical expressions we use in talking about everyday reality, as for instance, *He’s in high spirits*, are experientially based on conceptual structures deriving from our physical association of verticality with quantity. The body, and its interaction with its immediate environment, eventually determines how we perceive reality, which in turn is realized in the linguistic structures we employ to express that perceived reality. In multimodal experimental literature, the body, of a text and of the reader, is intimately involved in the construction and enactment of literary experience. Through the process of embodiment, the body of the reader participant interacts with the materiality of the text in performing the act of meaning production (2014, p. 348; author’s emphasis).

Any attempt to disambiguate terminologies, let alone taxonomies in transdisciplinary discourse, runs the risk of enshrining distinctions and artificial borders. While attempting to communicate the complexity of interrelated constructs, let us first acknowledge the porous, entangled and dynamic schemata, linked together by invisible threads, rhizoids, neurones, mycelium, digital networks or dark matter, which together conspire to assemble and dissemble meaning in the spatio-temporal sphere that is perceptible to humans. For the purposes of the present discussion, however, a working distinction between materiality and form might read as follows: if materiality is taken to refer to the physical properties and affordances of an object in the world, whether animate or inanimate, form is understood to be the aesthetic and cognitive quality of that object as perceived and/or manipulated by an agent. Embodiment, in turn, is the corporeal experience of perception, cognition and affect, a temporally contingent event experienced in the moment an agent encounters and interacts with the materiality of an object. Further, it may be helpful when exploring elements of experiential translation, to distinguish embodiment as it pertains to the human or non-human living body, from the ‘body of a text’, taking text as world, in terms of the latter’s physical, material form. The relevance of such a distinction is elaborated further in Chapter 3, where Campbell applies a multi-layered experiential lens to human beings’ embodied entanglement with the materiality of sound as a means of translating “our” world.

Play and experimentation in experiential translation: translation as a way of (un)knowing

Lee's ludic approach (2022) offers a fruitful framework within which to examine the material, formal and embodied aspects of experiential translation explored above. Lee developed his theory (and practice) of ludic translation in response to the quandary of the untranslatability of experimental literature, and in particular the translation of Chinese concrete poetry into English. Instrumental to ludic translation is the theory of memesis, whereby Lee draws on Varis and Blommaert's 2015 study on internet memes and Dawkins' 1976 notion of the meme as a unit of cultural transmission which operates much in the same way as the gene in biology. The memetic approach within ludic translation involves the thorough analysis of the original artefact in an attempt to understand how it works, how it is constructed and how it produces its particular effect on the reader/viewer, here considering all aspects of encounter, whether material, formal or embodied. The aim is then not to imitate the original artefact in the new medium but rather to (re)create its effect on the reader/viewer by whatever means are necessary in order to "perform the original in memesis and not in mimesis" (Lee, 2022, p. 27).

Thus, in ludic translation, untranslatability presents a rich source of creativity, an invitation to become immersed in the thinking processes and mechanisms that make a text or artefact tick and that also entails an immersion into the environment that has produced them (and the one that will receive them). With respect to the close reading and analysis and the eventual memic recreation involved in ludic translation, there are many parallels to transcreation as practised by Haroldo de Campos. Just as Lee embraces untranslatability, for de Campos, the more difficult a text and hence the more apparently untranslatable, the more seductive and open to recreation it appeared. In transcreation, he wrote:

> one does not translate only the meaning, one translates the sign itself, that is, its physicality, its materiality (sonorous properties, visual images, in sum, everything that makes up … the iconicity of the esthetic sign).… The meaning, the semantic parameter is only and no more than the ballast that demarcates the field of the re-creative effort (de Campos translated by and cited in Jackson, 2020, pp. 98–99).

Transcreation brings out the materiality and three-dimensionality of language, which is also at the centre of ludic translation. However, where transcreation focuses on interlingual translation, ludic translation invites an intersemiotic approach that is structured via the framework of memesis. Lee characterizes ludic translation as a gradual, multi-layered (and often collaborative) process of trials and errors that can eventually be described as "a value-adding intervention that augments a source text through the investment of resources across different repertoires and media" (2022, p. 15).

Further, Lee writes:

> Ludic translation opens up a work to differential pathways or lines of flight (à la Deleuze and Guattari 1987), enabling a work to develop rhizomatically across languages, modes, and media. It subverts the top-down relation between original and translation, renders irrelevant traditional assumptions about fidelity, and challenges outcome-based thinking around the question of untranslatability (Lee, 2022, p. 3).

As the emphasis is on process rather than outcome, even failure can be seen as productive. With a view to researching the experience of translation, contributors to the present volume have found ludic translation an illuminating construct to account for translation between diverse forms of expression (see Chapter 4 in relation to asemic writing and sound, or Chapter 8 in relation to music, poetry and visual art) as well as within more conventional translation contexts (see, for example, Chapter 9 on legal translation).

Drawing on Rafael's 2016 study on Tagalog slang, Lee discusses the political potential of ludic translation in a postcolonial context. By foregrounding the materiality of language, in particular sound, ludic translation "can be understood as a mechanism in 'democratizing expression' as part of postcolonial language insurgencies" (Lee, 2022, p. 7). This is further discussed in Ludivine Bouton-Kelly's contribution to the present volume (Chapter 5) in her ethical considerations regarding the translation of a poem from Jamaican Patois to French and her eventual solution of employing visual and aural means alongside the written text, which also included a selective use of neologisms. Here, ludic translation allows the translator to draw out the experiential aspects of poetry generally, and of Patois in particular. The result is an artefact that can be experienced on multiple levels, adding to and amplifying the 'original' rather than merely recreating it within a new context, while also respecting the richness of Jamaican Patois as a language in its own right rather than as a subaltern derivative of English.

Ludic translation builds on research into translation as a creative endeavour (Scott, 2012; Malmkjær, 2020; also see Grass, 2023). Drawing on Scott, Lee describes translation as "a 'creative motion' (Scott, 2012, p. 14), that dwells vertically within the liminal zone of experiential contact between translator and text" (Lee, 2022, p. 10). This resonates with Vidal Claramonte, who draws on Borges to argue that "translation completes the original, multiplies its meanings and brings to light what the text hides in its interstices" (2024, p. 3). With a view towards the dynamic, changeable and productive encounter of reader/translator and text and building on his notion of the interdependence of language and experience, Scott describes translation as "relational becoming" and as "begetting knowledge, not meaning" (Scott, 2018, p. 63). Here, translation manifests as an act of discovery, as a pathway to the acquisition, dissemination and, importantly, the production of knowledge. The function of translation is here no longer perceived as conveying meaning but rather

as a form of investigation or research and of embracing the unknown, with the potential to open up the space between words and indeed to access that which escapes language.

As such, it features in Delphine Grass's recent book *Translation as Creative-Critical Practice* (2023). She writes, "translation not only operates between spaces, but creates, transforms and performs new spaces and contexts in the performative act of translating" (Grass, 2023, p. 5). Within the context of experiential translation, this performative act must be understood as material and embodied, including but also going beyond the linguistic aspects of language (see also Campbell and Vidal, 2023). Knowing through experiential translation entails knowing through embodiment. Indeed, in her examination of autotheory and the translator's memoir, Grass describes "the material and sensorial dimension of translation as a form of thinking" (Grass, 2023, p. 13). She refers to Kate Briggs's reflections on translating Roland Barthes, on taking on someone else's language and "pushing it through your own body" (Briggs and LaRue, 2017, n.p.). Briggs compares this process to learning to dance or doing aerobics by following the movements of an instructor and eventually making those moves one's own:

> Now I'm taking them on, and testing what happens when I try them .… This seems to me a way of getting at the experimentalism I think is inherent in every act of translation: what it is to re-do something ourselves, to re-make some gesture, re-write some sentence, without knowing—without having any real way of knowing in advance—what will happen when we do (Briggs and LaRue, 2017, n.p.).

Crucially, while Briggs refers to 're-writing' and 're-doing', imitation or mimesis is only an initial step before the actual translation comes into being as a new text channelled through the translator's body, a process that has invariably left its mark on it. Similar to Lee's notion of ludic translation, in Briggs' account of her experience of translation, the focus is on the process, the journey, the knowledge that is acquired and passed on, while the outcome is uncertain. Her description of translation as "an occasion for living", "[f]or learning" (Briggs and LaRue, 2017, n.p.) recalls the writings of art critics and artists. Indeed, the knowledge Briggs suggests we gain through the experience of translation (and that is also referred to by Lee, Scott and de Campos above) is akin to the knowledge Sontag suggests we gain through art, namely "an experience of the form or style of knowing something, rather than a knowledge of something (like a fact or a moral judgment) in itself" (1965, p. 22). In particular Briggs' visceral reference to the physical experience of translatory production as 'pushing it through the body' resonates with the writings of Paul Klee (1961) who explored the role of embodiment and materiality in his reflections on making art. Or we could think of Juhani Pallasmaa who writes of "the eyes of the skin" (2012) or "the thinking hand" (2009) in his eponymous books on architectural practice, or indeed with Henri Michaux's simple, but

potent statement: "[g]rasp: translate" (translated by R. Siburth and cited in Schwenger, 2019, p. 31). Just as 're-writing' is an integral part of the art of translation, adopting a gesture, re-tracing, emulating or copying are all forms of practice within the fine arts which enable the hand, the body, to learn to think and make. This parallel between the practice/experience of art and the practice/experience of translation is explored in detail by Vidal and Carter in Chapter 4, by Bennett in Chapter 8 and by Martín Ruano in Chapter 9. As Lacasta Millera shows in Chapter 7, it also informed the work of John Cage (and those who attempt to translate it) with respect to his many collaborations across diverse art forms.

Ludic translation, transcreation or Briggs's experiential account of translation all demonstrate translation's potential to become a way of approaching and perceiving the world, even if fully understanding it may remain out of reach. While revealing the materiality of language and text, they expose its looseness, the porosity of signs and the productive possibilities this entails for translation as a creative process.

Chapters' overview

In compiling this volume, we have aimed for a balance of theoretical/methodological and empirical perspectives. While all chapters engage with a theoretical framework in their analysis of experiential translation, some elaborate or apply theory to the analysis of a particular translation event or environment, and some examine the process and outcomes of creative and/or translation training workshops.

Divided into three parts, each section offers a different but complementary lens on the creative relation between 'source' and 'target' and the dynamic role of intervention, participation or collaboration in the process.

Material exchanges

The chapters in this section probe the epistemological implications of a renewed emphasis on experientiality in translation and, building on current shifts in translation studies, seek alternative accounts of translation that challenge the notion of meaning invariance. Considering problems of transfer and representation, textuality and materiality in meaning construction, the authors propose complementary explanatory frameworks from different perspectives. If we start from the premise of textual instability, is it possible to transfer or represent meaning at all and if so how might a communication process predicated on (un)knowing be envisaged in a more holistic manner?

Noting the recent paradigm shifts in translation studies towards experientiality, performativity and materiality, Riku Haapaniemi (Chapter 1) examines their implications for accounts of communication in translation where meaning is seen as constructed afresh in the translational moment. Adopting a Peircean perspective on textual communication, Haapaniemi argues that transfer entails

the "distribution of material forms recognisable as signs" (this volume, p. 26). Representation then "occurs when the recipient of a verbal text identifies words from the text's material features, or engages semiotically with specific textual elements" (ibid, p. 30). Meaning itself is thus not transferred or represented in this process, explains Haapaniemi, but the constraints of shared semiotic conventions create the illusion that such transfer or representation has occurred in its (re)construction. He therefore posits an understanding of transfer and representation at the linguistic level as "experiential meaning construction within a process of material text distribution" and proposes that the same processes of meaning construction can be extended to multimodal texts (ibid).

Acknowledging the "modernist instability" of the source text, John London (Chapter 2) asks how theatrical performance can illuminate the question of what it is that is being translated, and proposes an experiential approach that is dependent on the subjective translation of "incomplete textual creation" by every individual member of an audience (this volume, p. 37). London reviews how this process operates in Futurist, surrealist and performative texts to examine how meaning is constructed in the play *Another Time This Time* he co-wrote with Kit Danowski and co-directed with Karen Morash. Here, the experience of COVID is translated with words isolated from syntax through fragmentary acts of composition, rehearsal and workshop by performers and members of the audience. Through the lens of *Another Time this Time*, London reframes theatrical performance as experiential translation processes experienced by the writers, directors, stage designers, actors and workshop members which develop into "a performance for public consumption" (ibid, p. 38). Individual audience members "can be said to be concerned with their own translation" of the "latent and visible experiences" they witness (ibid). In London's account, collaborative and dynamic, syntax-free composition of the play could be said to provide the "crafted form of the artefact, as expressed in its formal aesthetic qualities" (see p. 7 above) at the textual level, while the interactive encounter with the audience enacts an affective, embodied translation.

Adding affect and embodiment to prior functional and semiotic accounts of meaning-making, Madeleine Campbell proposes in Chapter 3 a holistic model for analysing the transfer and (re)construction of (unstable) meaning in translation, which allows for the simultaneous experience of material, textual, interactional and semiotic layers. In particular, she analyses how early and contemporary human beings translate 'our world' by exploring the constructs of domestication and foreignization as they might be applied to the translation of sound. With a focus on the materiality of expression in the human and non-human animal, she likens domestication to anthropomorphism in relation to the natural world and foreignization to aesthetization by the translating subject. The role of pre- or non-verbal cognition or "proto-semiosic" cognition (Marais and Kull, 2016, p. 181) is foregrounded as a primary semiotic driver in the materiality of iconic representation, from early human vocalization to the translation of birdsong or the binding of the sign with its oral expression

in sacred chant. Making a distinction between the physical materiality of the 'source' text and its aesthetization through the translator's act of foreignization, she proposes a multi-layered experiential account of material transfer and semiotic representation in the sonic artwork *Earthquake Mass Re-Imagined: 2022* by ecoartist Kathy Hinde.

Acts and breakages

The three chapters in this section are all concerned with uncertainty, the looseness of signs and the potential for creativity that arises from questioning or breaking the conventions of communication. Vidal and Carter focus on asemic writing (writing without alphabet) as a form of enquiry into how we perceive and represent the world around us to ourselves and to others. Discussing the process and outputs of two interactive workshops which explored the creation and eventual translation of asemic texts via a combination of collaborative hands-on exercises drawn from fine art and translation practice, they investigate the role of the body in mark-making and the potential for pushing language to its borderland where uncertainty is discovered to be central to meaning-making. Many of the asemic texts that were produced during Vidal and Carter's workshops and which they use to illustrate their argument reveal the process of making, which involved writing, tracing, overwriting and re-writing, resulting in a multi-layered palimpsest. Discussing the materiality and multimodality of the experience of reading and writing as essential elements of translation, Vidal and Carter argue that the memic approach of ludic translation (Lee, 2022) enables asemic writing to be translated, however unreadable this form of communication may appear on first encounter.

Materiality, three-dimensionality and multimodality as well as the palimpsest are also important elements in Bouton-Kelly's chapter, which discusses her translation of Una Marson's poem "The Stone Breakers" from Jamaican Patois. Questioning older assessments of Patois as "a broken language" (McFarlane, as cited in Jarrett-Macauley, 2010, p. 125), Bouton-Kelly addresses the ethical challenges of translating "The Stone Breakers" as an act of breaking her authorial position. In a manner akin to that proposed for asemic writing, ludic translation allows Bouton-Kelly to give voice to the experience of the stone breakers in a more three-dimensional and multimodal manner. This is enacted in the form of an audiovisual work, which is constructed as a palimpsest of languages and voices where Patois and French, written and spoken word, appear simultaneously as parallel text as well as in a continuous process of overwriting. The experience of translation is discussed as a searching for form which is characterized by ephemerality and mutability.

In their contribution, Regnauld and Tremblay-Gaudette discuss the complexities of translating an early digital novel from English into French: published in 1987, Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story* is one of the first experimental novels to make creative and abundant use of the possibilities of hyperlinks resulting in a text that breaks with all conventions of reading, rewriting itself

with every click of the mouse. As the authors discuss, Joyce set out to create a reading experience which emulated his process of writing, rewriting and overwriting, in which all parts of the story develop simultaneously rather than in a linear order. Joyce here embraces a "vision of electronic hypertextuality as a device closer to the workings of the human mind" (Chapter 6, p. 118). While a text in which clicking on individual words in a paragraph can radically change their context already constitutes an enormous translational challenge (see Regnauld and Vanderhaeghe, 2014, 2018; Regnauld, 2018, 2019), Regnauld and Tremblay-Gaudette were faced with the additional problem of technology. Before they could begin with the linguistic part of the translation, they needed to migrate the dense network of hyperlinks from the 1980s authoring system Storyspace to the twenty-first-century software Twine. In their chapter, they discuss the intricacies of mapping Joyce's story and the semantic, technological, aesthetic and pseudo-topological challenges of recreating a readerly experience that would emulate the process of composition as a palimpsestic web of ideas.

Ateliers

The final section of the book comprises three chapters which explore the collaborative and pedagogical aspects of experiential translation by focusing on practitioners' accounts of workshops, experiments and training programmes.

In Chapter 7, Lacasta Millera gives an overview of the cross-disciplinary work of John Cage, discussing his many collaborations with other artists, musicians, choreographers or dancers, and the complexities of translating between media and forms of expression/performance. Cage's work offers Lacasta Millera an opportunity to explore the instability and multiplicity of the source text and the creative possibilities arising from this for intersemiotic and experiential translation. She discusses the translational processes inherent to the creation of the works themselves, the notion of distributed authorship and Cage's versatility as an artist. Further, she explores the challenges of translating Cage's visual poems and mesostics into Spanish and here offers her own versions discussing them alongside those of others. Her chapter highlights the collaborative aspects of creation (including translation) and resonates with Grass's description of "text as participative endeavour" (2023, p. 22, also see above).

This notion of text as co-created and the focus on the discursive and material nature of meaning-making also informs Bennett's contribution. Her chapter describes a short online course on translation from music, where analogies between how music and other art forms (poetry, dance, photography/video art and drawing/painting) construe meaning provided both theoretical insights and creative outcomes. Participants engaged in guided discussions about the experience of diverse art forms and the making and production of meaning therein. At the end, they produced collaborative and/or individual intersemiotic translations from music into a medium of their choice. The workshop format of the course "stimulate[d] a collective brainstorm with people from

different artistic backgrounds" (this volume, p. 161), which allowed Bennett to revisit and expand earlier research she had undertaken on intersemiotic translation between ballet and the theatre play. Her chapter presents the work created during the course and offers speculative thought on the similarities between translating from music into other art forms and translating between verbal languages.

In the final chapter of this section, Martín Ruano gives an account of her experiential pedagogical approach with trainees in specialized legal translation through experimentation, creativity and play. Her chapter problematizes traditional views of specialized translation and challenges values which have often involved asymmetrical dynamics between languages, cultures and legal traditions. Giving an account of an experimental programme she developed at the University of Salamanca, Martín Ruano shares her methodological and pedagogical insights to transform training in legal translation as an experiential, ludic and socially-situated practice. Through a series of playful exercises, which encourage the physical experience of language, the programme reveals the performative and material aspects of legal language. Only once these are understood and internalized, Martín Ruano argues, will legal translators be able to produce culturally sensitive translations that fulfil the same functions in different linguistic environments.

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Section 1

Material exchanges

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1 Experientiality of meaning in interlingual translation

The impossibility of representation and the illusion of transfer

Riku Haapaniemi

Introduction

For much of its history as an academic field, translation studies has involved the push-and-pull of two seemingly opposed theoretical inclinations already identified by Steiner a half-century ago: the desire to conceive of translation as a "hermeneutically oriented" model of "*all* meaningful exchanges" (original emphasis), and the wish to focus on probing the intricacies of "interlingual exchanges" and therefore defining translation as a subsection of the former, more general model (Steiner, 1975, p. 279). This debate is as alive today as ever; Venuti (2019, pp. 1–6), for example, has emphatically advocated a hermeneutic and semiotics-based approach in opposition to "instrumentalist" thinking he sees ingrained in many traditional language-focused approaches, founded on the supposed invariance or stability of the meaningful effects of linguistic expressions. Recent theoretical explorations of non-lingual aspects of translation – such as materiality (Littau, 2016), performativity (Bennett, 2018) and, indeed, experientiality (Campbell and Vidal, 2019; Susam-Saraeva, 2021) – likewise tend to promote a situated, and therefore variant and unstable, conceptualization of meaning. These developments indicate a need for translation studies to orient towards the kind of non-linguacentric, generalized approach suggested by Steiner (1975). This move would also be in line with ongoing philosophical projects that seek to expand the reach of translation theory not just beyond language but beyond human culture in general (Cronin, 2017; Marais, 2019).

By placing focus on experiential concerns, this book and its companion volume do their part in foregrounding the relationship between personal experience and meaning in translation. Discussing that relationship requires a conceptualization of translation that can grapple with things like embodiment, corporeality, physicality, positionality and subjectivity in meaning construction. A conceptualization like this must engage with variance and instability, and therefore cannot be founded on the invariance-focused 'instrumentalist' tradition identified by Venuti (2019); further, it cannot be focused solely on interlingual concerns because of the wealth of relevant non-lingual aspects introduced by the material nature of embodied experience. At the same time,

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-3
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however, the traditional kind of interlingual translation must remain – as also noted by Steiner (1975) – a recognized subset of any non-linguacentric conceptualization and an obviously influential subset at that. Even if translation studies continue to expand their theoretical horizons and encompass translational phenomena and meaningful exchanges that are not adequately accounted for by a strictly language-focused understanding of translation, it is still unlikely that the textual and lingual products of human culture would lose their status as the field's central object of study any time soon. Steiner (1975), and many scholars after him, have decried the focus on linguistic exchanges as restrictive, but this focus has nevertheless helped provide translation studies with a defined identity, clarity of purpose and practical applicability (see e.g. Pym, 2010, pp. 19–20). While developing their theoretical foundations, radical reconceptualizations of translation as a model for "*all* meaningful exchanges" (Steiner, 1975, p. 279) might therefore have a lot to gain if they can also keep one eye on linguistic concerns, strive to understand why other perspectives might see benefits in retaining a focus on them, and work to define exactly where and how interlingual exchanges fit in the new framework.

The general implications of what a non-linguacentric understanding of meaning would entail for the conceptualization of translation have been discussed elsewhere (Bennett, 2019, 2022; Marais, 2023; Haapaniemi, 2024), but there is also a need for more focused studies tackling specific established ways of thinking about interlingual translation phenomena and situating those phenomena within a non-linguacentric framework. This chapter seeks to contribute to this discourse by discussing two specific translation-theoretical concepts in detail: 'transfer' and 'representation'. In the following sections, I explore how these concepts have been utilized in the study of interlingual communication, what they have contributed to these efforts, and why they are problematic from a non-linguacentric, experiential perspective. I then utilize some 'hermeneutically-oriented' or non-instrumentalist semiotic and textual theories to investigate if instances of transfer and representation can be identified from this perspective and whether these phenomena can be defined in experiential terms. These discussions serve to further elucidate how a non-linguacentric translation-theoretical framework, which strives to set the non-lingual aspects of communication on a philosophically equal footing with the lingual, can incorporate connections to established ways of studying interlingual translation phenomena without undermining its grounding in an experiential conceptualization of meaning construction. Further, it is shown how a textual perspective can help in this by illuminating the relationship between the material aspects of communication and the construction of meaning in communication. In fact, a detailed understanding of how language and other aspects of meaning construction interface in textual communication benefits the study of both kinds of phenomena and serves to highlight their substantial shared conceptual basis instead of their historical opposition.

How experientiality challenges traditional approaches to interlingual translation

'Transfer' and 'representation' as metaphors in translation theory

As discussed by scholars like Seidman (2006), Martín de León (2008), and Venuti (2019), translation studies as a field has historically had something of a vested interest in concepts like 'transfer' and 'representation' that offer convenient models for how meaning functions in the kinds of transformative textual phenomena that characterize translation (Venuti, 2019, pp. 1, 127). Martín de León (2008, pp. 6–9) notes that the use of 'transfer' as a metaphor for these phenomena has led to an understanding of meaning as something contained within a linguistic vessel. It follows that translation is seen as a process of creating a new linguistic vessel which allows existing meaning to be transferred from the original vessel to the target recipient. The concept of 'representation' follows a similar logic in that it suggests meaning to be something separate and separable from linguistic form. The notion is perhaps most obviously exemplified in Saussurean semiology and the idea that words are essentially arbitrary signifiers whose connection to a referent meaning is established through convention (Saussure, 1959, pp. 65–70) – although, as discussed by Bennett (2018), the historical roots of this notion go even deeper and wider. Here, too, meaning becomes understood as something that exists on its own apart from the linguistic form that conveys it – specific instances of meaning can be accessed through specific instances of language by way of their representational relationships. Combined with the idea of transfer, representation essentially becomes the mechanism by which meaning is contained within linguistic vessels, making it a cornerstone of much established translation theory (Bennett, 2018, pp. 93–96; see also Seidman, 2006, p. 17). In this *transfer/representation paradigm*, translation becomes a matter of identifying the meanings represented by the source text and producing a target text which also represents those meanings, thereby transferring the meanings to the target audience (Martín de León, 2008, p. 7). As Martín de León (ibid, p. 9) points out, this conceptualization is structurally very close to how translation is understood in classic theories of natural equivalence (as described in Pym, 2010, pp. 6–9).

Broadly speaking, these conceptualizations of 'transfer' and 'representation' – as well as the notion of natural equivalence – are of a piece with what Venuti (2019) calls instrumentalist thinking in translation studies: the assumption that translation involves "the reproduction or transfer of an invariant that is contained in or caused by the source text, an invariant form, meaning, or effect" (p. 1). Though seldom outright expressed, this assumption has been identified as informing a number of established and contemporary research and training approaches in the field of translation (ibid, p. 127; see also e.g. Martín de León, 2008; Bennett, 2018, 2022). That this paradigm has become so dominant is, perhaps, no surprise: "it is an extremely convenient and

common-sense explanation for how linguistic expressions and the meanings derived from them relate to each other in translation, and it is supported by decades – centuries, really – of intellectual habit" (Venuti, 2019, pp. 1–6, 176–177). Indeed, it has been noted that the influence of the transfer/representation paradigm can remain even in places where it is nominally rejected. For example, Martín de León (2008, pp. 6–9) identifies the conflation of translation and transfer of meaning as a feature in some of the central works of functional translation theories (in Holz-Mänttäri, 1984; Reiß and Vermeer, [1984] 2013). This is despite the fact that functional translation theories in general tend to reject the notion that meaning can be transferred directly through texts and instead point to the role of the social circumstances of textual reception as the key element in how meaning is derived from texts (as discussed in Nord, 2012). Martín de León (2008) notes that while these works explicitly criticize other theories' over-emphasis on linguistic representationality and seek to also account for other types of meaning, they are still based on that preceding intellectual tradition and reflect its structures, for instance, translation theories predicated on the transfer of meaning are rejected, but the models of textual communication utilized by those theories are retained even though they also reflect that same notion of transfer (pp. 6–9). As a result, even as functionalist theories were constructing a paradigm that sought to overcome the simplifications of earlier linguistic models, this construction took place on a conceptually shaky foundation, at least in part due to the reliance on the concept of transfer (ibid, p. 9). The very same criticisms could be directed towards the concept of representationality in conceptualizations of how language and meaning relate to each other in translation (as discussed in Bennett, 2018); despite this, representationality informs much of established translation theory (Seidman, 2006) because, again, it provides an immediately understandable and approachable model for how meaning functions in translation.

Ultimately, transfer and representation as concepts are, in many ways, of a piece: both require an instrumentalist conceptualization of meaning as an invariant that is separate from the linguistic forms that supposedly represent it and through which it is transferred. This is the presupposition that non-instrumentalist approaches – experiential conceptualizations among them – by definition wholly reject; at the same time, as discussed above, this idea is also at the heart of many classic translation theories and concepts. One of the most obvious ones is the concept of natural equivalence (Pym, 2010, pp. 6–23), which is part of what functionalist theories and other subsequent approaches now facing criticism from non-instrumentalist perspectives were in their own ways reacting against. This parallel is noteworthy because, as noted by Pym (ibid, pp. 9–11), equivalence theories were themselves a linguistics-based response to the complications brought about by Saussurean structuralist views that considered expressions only to be meaningful in relation to their respective language systems and therefore left interlingual translation theorization very little conceptual ground to stand on. Non-instrumentalist approaches swing the pendulum back the other way, as the exploration of experientiality

in translation seems to require a conceptualization of meaning founded on situatedness and subjectivity, not so much on stable intersystemic relationships. Therefore, in order to avoid reinstating the same old oppositions and repeating the same cycle of arguments, it is perhaps worthwhile to attempt to use experiential terms to address some of the concerns of equivalence theories and other approaches falling under the umbrella of instrumentalism, and to see if interlingual exchanges can be explained without assuming invariance in meaning.

Language and meaning in terms of the experiential

As discussed, concerns of experientiality align themselves with a host of like-minded approaches to translation theory: approaches concerned with materiality (Littau, 2016, 2022), performativity (Bennett, 2018, 2019, 2022), hermeneutics (Venuti, 2019), semiotics and biosemiotics (Marais, 2019) and notions of eco-translation (Cronin, 2017) and translationality (Robinson, 2017), to name a few. This is not a uniform movement but rather a diverse set of perspectives and motivations, but what they all share is a desire to devise theoretical concepts that acknowledge the range of meaningful phenomena that exist outside linguistically defined representation and, in doing so, extend the scope and reach of translation theory beyond its traditional confines. For the purposes of this discussion, I will refer to this line of development as the *experiential paradigm*. Materiality, performativity and experientiality along with it, gain newfound importance in this paradigm, as the mechanics of meaning construction in communicational and translational activities are no longer based just in linguistic convention but also on the subjective experience of the communicators and on the material nature of the media utilized in the process. Bennett (2022) says of this paradigm shift:

> [It] is a revolution of the greatest magnitude, bringing profound implications for all branches of our field. For if the "meaning" of a text or utterance is expressly bound up with the form in which it presents itself … then it becomes impossible to extract it cleanly from that medium and transport it wholesale to another environment. The semiotic conditions upon which translation is ordinarily based – the arbitrariness of the sign (Saussure 1959, 67 to 70) and separation of sign and referent (Frege [1892] 2011, 103–140) – collapse and we move into the realm of iconicity and performativity, where language is being used for functions other than communication (Bennett, 2022, p. 51).

As an alternative to these 'semiotic conditions' so entrenched in traditional translation theory – as exemplified by the historical back-and-forth on structuralist notions discussed above – but so thoroughly incompatible with this new conceptualization of what meaning is and how it comes about, translation theory could look not to the Saussurean tradition but to the semiotics of C.S. Peirce (as explored from a translation studies perspective in Gorlée, 1994;

Hartama-Heinonen, 2012; Robinson, 2016b; Marais, 2019). The Peircean semiotic tradition makes no dualistic distinction between the arbitrary sign and its conventionally determined conceptual referent. Instead, a sign can be anything that "stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" and is therefore "in a conjoint relation to the thing denoted and to the mind" (Peirce et al., 1994, pp. 2.228, 3.360). This makes a sign a triadic and relational entity: it only exists in relation to that 'something' which it stands for and that 'somebody' in whose mind it stands for something – which means that, strictly speaking, a sign is only a sign when there is somebody to treat it as a sign, to connect it to something outside itself and thereby derive meaning from it. And if a sign necessarily involves subjective experience, so must meaning, since meaning is constructed from signs. A Peircean perspective on textual communication – the distribution of material forms recognizable as signs for communicative purposes – places emphasis on the text's recipient's perspective and experience, as well as on two important related factors: the material form of the sign (as this affects how it is perceived and experienced, as discussed in Haapaniemi, 2024) and the social context in which meaning construction takes place (as this determines what sorts of 'somethings' signs can conceivably stand for and what 'respect or capacity' of the sign is likely to be seen as standing for something, as discussed in Robinson, 2016a, pp. 6–9; Robinson, 2016b, pp. 83, 113–118, 194–201). This perspective effectively circumvents the need for assuming invariance in meaning, instead conceptualizing the construction of meaning as a constant process that can be guided and constrained for communicative purposes (Marais, 2019, pp. 122–133).

When discussing translation as textual communication from a material and semiotic perspective – especially translation taking place in natural language and human culture – adopting a conceptualization of texts as multi-ontological clusters has been seen as especially fruitful (Haapaniemi, 2024, pp. 27–30). This cluster conception (Pettersson, 2017) allows a useful distinction to be made between the material form of the text, the semiotic channels and sign-complexes identified in the text by its recipient and the cognitive meaning constructed from the text by the recipient. However, these ontological categories should not be thought of as essential or innate, but as degrees of relational complexity. The material text – a book, say – exists in material reality, whether it is being read or not; when a reader opens it and identifies the material forms of black ink on white paper as letters and words, they bring into play the shared set of linguistic elements utilized in their (and, presumably, the author's) community for communicational purposes; and when the reader constructs meaning from the text, they filter the intersubjective perspective of their community's communicational conventions through their own subjective position and experience. The words in the book and the meaning constructed from them – what is formulated in language and inscribed on paper, and what that string of language is taken to mean (cf. expression and content; Hjelmslev, 1969, pp. 47–60) – do not inhabit reality in the same way, because they come about through different kinds of relations. At the same time, they do not inhabit different realities or exist separate from each other (as implied

in the transfer/representation paradigm), because the relations through which they come about both involve the other. As noted by Deleuze and Guattari (1987, pp. 50–51), the distinction between expression and content is real, but that distinction does not pre-exist the two.

Meaning, then, must be constructed by a specific semiotic agent, employing a specific perspective, utilizing a specific set of personal and shared semiotic tools and concepts, and – for the purposes of conceptualizing interlingual translation in these terms – within the confines of a specific instance of textual communication. Meaning in textual communication is constructed through the experiencing of material forms, including multiple semiotic channels (multiple channels are necessarily involved, because language cannot exist in material reality on its own without a medium, and the material aspects of that medium are conducive to semiosis outside the linguistic forms it conveys); meaning is actively performed and experienced in material reality. In contrast, by this definition, meaning cannot be passively transferred through language or represented by linguistic signs. Meaning cannot be transferred or represented because, in this conceptualization, there is nothing to represent or to transfer: meaning enjoys no stable existence of its own decoupled from those constructing it and the signs from which it is constructed.

In this view, meaning is subjective, personal, and cognitive; therefore it cannot be directly shared, represented, or transferred through physical or social means. Obviously, this does not mean that communication – conducted, as it is, through physical and social means – is inherently impossible. What this means is that the subjective construction of meaning can be affected, guided, and tempered – *constrained* – through physical and social means (as discussed in Marais, 2019, pp. 120–181). When an author writes a book, they can rest reasonably assured that the material shapes on the book's pages are read as the intended letters and words and that the reader's linguistic and cultural background guides their meaning construction to something that more or less corresponds with what the author wanted to express. These "materially instantiated … patterns of constraints" (Marais, 2023, p. 7) are key in translation too. Marais (ibid) argues that, more than anything, it is these patterns that are actually being translated:

> When we translate the word *dog* into *Hund* in German or *ntja* in Sesotho, we do not translate the material (the ink and atoms of which it consists or the shape of the letter "o"). Rather, we use the constraints that have been imposed on the ink and the atoms, through shapes and the contrast with the white background to infer meaning, which we then translate by imposing German-convention or Sesotho-convention constraints on other ink and other pages (p. 14).

Authors, translators, and readers "recognize and interpret form based on the material constraints that create the form" (Marais, 2023, p. 7) and thereby construct their own subjective, personal, and cognitive meanings, which are not the same but which end up being comparable enough for the purposes

of this specific instance of communication under the pressures of the relevant socio-cultural constraints. In how linguistic expressions and meanings relate to one another, and in how two separate instances of meaning relate to each other, there is "isomorphism of forms but no correspondence" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 53); no direct representationality and no straightforward transfer, but comparable results of separate meaning construction processes.

From this perspective, the central issue of the transfer/representation paradigm, and the concepts of 'transfer' and 'representation' as they have been traditionally utilized in translation theory, is that they *reify* meaning to a philosophically unjustifiable extent. They reflect the assumption that meaning exists, or can exist, separately from the signs from which it is constructed, the circumstances in which it is constructed, and the semiotic agent by whom it is constructed. Despite this, the transfer/representation paradigm may well function in practice to some extent when it is applied to the communication of semantic meanings in human linguistic communication; as exemplified by the common-sense conceptualization of translation, wherein expressions in different languages are taken to represent the same fundamental pre-existing meanings, and in translation the source-language representatives of these meanings are replaced with their natural target-language equivalents (as discussed in Pym, 2010, pp. 6, 18–19). At the same time, however, there is a wealth of meanings for which this paradigm is very ill-suited, such as performative or ritual experience, embodied or corporeal knowledge, and other highly personal types of meaning (as discussed in Bennett, 2018; Susam-Saraeva, 2021; Haapaniemi, 2024), and in general it seems that analyses of its central concepts from non-instrumentalist perspectives lead to theoretical dead-ends (as argued in Martín de León, 2008, on transfer; in Bennett, 2018, on representation; and in Venuti, 2019, on instrumentalism in general).

If translation research wishes to account for translational and communicational activities beyond a strictly limited set of interlingual phenomena, it must incorporate a more nuanced and all-inclusive conceptualization of meaning construction that encompasses phenomena that do not fit in the transfer/representation paradigm. Conversely, if the experiential paradigm wishes to be applicable to all translation phenomena, including the traditional kinds of interlingual phenomena typically studied from perspectives informed by the transfer/representation paradigm, it must provide a framework for how these phenomena fit in this new paradigm – and, perhaps most importantly, offer clear incentives for incorporating this new perspective and make efforts to bridge the conceptual gaps between established conceptualizations and the new paradigm, which may not be as immediately intuitive. In fact, the concepts of 'transfer' and 'representation' provide an opportunity to interrogate some of the practical benefits they have in the context of the traditional language-centred scope of translation studies and see if these aspects can in some ways be replicated within the framework of the experiential paradigm.

Utilizing concepts of 'transfer' and 'representation' to apply the experiential paradigm to interlingual translation

'Transfer' and 'representation' in textual distribution

So, to reiterate: if we see meaning as being constructed in-the-moment from material forms identified as signs through sensory experience by a semiotic agent – printed graphemes in a book identified as letters, words, and phrases by a reader, for example – then meaning is inextricably bound up in the specific experience of that particular reader, and not something that can be simply 'transferred' or 'represented' by the words in the book; at the very least, that cannot be the whole story. Consequently, translating that book to a reader in another language must involve something besides or beyond uncovering the 'sense' represented by the source-language words and transferring that sense to the target-language reader by producing target-language words that represent the same sense. If meaning is predominantly or even partially experiential, communication or translation cannot be wholly explained by the mechanics of transfer and representation.

But if no transfer of meaning can be said to take place during translation, and if no representationality can be said to exist between word and sense – or, indeed, source and target – where does that leave translation theory in general, and interlingual translation theory in particular? Naturally, the experiential paradigm cannot just reject existing explanations; it also has to have something to offer in their stead. Experientiality suggests that meaning cannot be transferred or represented, but something roughly akin to that may well be taking place – otherwise, that assumption would not have gained traction in the first place. Clearly, there is something in the relationship between a source text and a target text which makes the transfer/representation paradigm attractive; something that creates an *illusion* of transfer or representation, the appearance of correspondence where there can only be isomorphism. Perhaps a more detailed interrogation of experientiality could explain exactly what kind of relationship is built between the source text and the target text in the translation process, and perhaps this explanation could help incorporate the established concerns of interlingual translation into the experiential framework for mutual benefit.

One way to start constructing such an explanation would be to take a closer look at the concepts of 'transfer' and 'representation' and see if instances of such phenomena can be identified within the experiential conceptualization of meaning construction, even if it is acknowledged that meaning cannot by definition be directly conveyed by either. I would suggest that both of these concepts do have a place in detailing the journey from a source text to a target text, even if we remain committed to the philosophical implications of experientiality and materiality. In fact, it is in the realm of materiality that instances of both can be identified.

For one, some form of 'transfer' undoubtedly takes place in the process of getting the material form of the text in contact with the sensory apparatuses its

recipients utilize in their meaning construction processes. Pym (1992, 2004, pp. 11, 87–88) has long advocated for a conceptualization of (interlingual) translation as material text distribution, where attention must be paid not only to the production of translated language-strings but also to the particularities of transferring a text from its original source context to its intended target context, which may have significant effects on the form and content of the language-strings. This conceptualization is congruous with a wider emphasis on materiality as "the precondition of reception" in textual communication (Littau, 2022, p. 131): meaning cannot be constructed from linguistic components if they are not represented by material forms that can be perceived and thereby received – in other words, if they are not transferred via a material medium in a textual form. And here we encounter that other operative word, 'representation'. The recipient of a verbal text identifies words from the text's material features or engages semiotically with specific textual elements (Pettersson, 2017, pp. 31–44). In order for the recipient to be able to treat these forms as linguistic elements, the "auditory or visual shape" of these forms "as they appear to the ear or eye" (Bennett, 2022, p. 51) must be recognizable as words. In a Peircean sense, this relationship between the features of the material text that enable semiotic possibilities and the linguistic elements the text's recipient treats them as could be described as *iconic* – meaningful through likeness (Peirce et al., 1994, pp. 2.247, 2.274–282; Short, 2007, pp. 215–218) or, in the specific case of speech or writing, auditory or visual representationality.

It should be emphasized again that what distinguishes these instances of transfer and representation from the transfer/representation paradigm discussed in the previous section is that, unlike what is implied by instrumentalist usage of these concepts, meaning is not directly involved in either phenomenon. Meaning is not and cannot be straightforwardly transferred or represented, because it is constructed through sensory and embodied experience. However, the material text from which meaning is constructed through experience *is* transferred; and the relationship between the material forms identified as meaningful and the linguistic elements they are treated as in this experiential meaning construction process *is* a form of representation. Simply put, meaning is not transferred or represented in or through language, but the construction of meaning from a linguistic text does involve the transfer of material forms and the representation of linguistic elements in these material forms. In principle, these are the same semiotic mechanics that are involved in meaning construction from non-linguistic or multimodal texts, too.

'Transfer' and 'representation' in interlingual translation defined as experiential meaning construction within a process of material text distribution

As noted, if we look for instances of transfer and representation within the experiential paradigm, we can find them in the material aspects of textual

communication. Conversely, materiality – the material form of the text, such as speech or writing; its mediation or material distribution from its sender to its recipient; and all the non-lingual material aspects of the distribution process involved (Littau, 2016, pp. 83–88; Gumbrecht, 2004, p. 8) – can be seen as the aspect of textual communication where language engages with transfer and representation. Materiality is the aspect of textuality that determines how linguistic forms are communicated from sender to recipient. We proceed from materiality to the realm of experientiality – and, consequently, of meaning – only when the perspective of the recipient is introduced: when there is someone to recognize the forms *as* linguistic forms, and construct meaning from the forms through their experience of the communication event as a whole. The experience of the textual recipient – the semiotic agent who perceives the signs – is what allows the material to be treated as semiotic, for meaning to be constructed from material forms.

The experiential paradigm is therefore applicable to instances of textual communication, and translation – interlingual translation most obviously – is a form of textual communication. It follows that the experiential conceptualization of meaning construction is compatible with a definition of translation as a process of material text distribution (Pym, 2004). But how exactly do transfer and representation as communicational concepts function in this material conceptualization of the translation process, and can they be useful in applying this framework to the study of interlingual translation?

Framed in the terms used by Merrell (2000), interlingual translation as a meaning construction process can be seen as a combination of two subprocesses. The first is *meaning-taking*, which involves the reception of a material text by the translator and the construction of meaning from it. The second is *meaning-making*, which involves the compiling of language-strings that the translator expects to give rise to the intended kinds of meaning in the target audience (Merrell, 2000, p. 48; see also Marais, 2019, p. 5.). However, language-strings are signs like any other, and signs only come about when there is someone to interpret them as signs; without someone to treat them as letters and words, the language-strings are just ink on paper or soundwaves in aether – material forms. Any textual communication process must therefore involve not only the compilation of language-strings but also the presentation and distribution of material forms that are recognizable by the text's recipient as these language-strings. Once again: strings of language are *represented* by material forms (graphemes, vocal patterns, etc.) which are *transferred* via material media (writing, speech, etc.) to be perceived, received and interpreted. In meaning-taking, the translator identifies what language-strings the source text's material forms represent and considers this as part of their meaning construction experience; in meaning-making, the translator compiles suitable target-language-strings, which are then represented by material forms in the target text; and in the process of perceiving and receiving the material target text, the text's recipient undergoes their own meaning-taking process (Haapaniemi, 2024, pp. 24–27, 30–33).

It should be emphasized that language and other signs are by nature relational (Short, 2007, pp. 18–19), as are texts (Pettersson, 2017, p. 13): they only function as such in relation to other things or come about through the relations of other things. The visual or auditory form of a word or phrase is a linguistic sign only when it is treated as such when it is experienced by a semiotic agent capable of treating it as a sign – there must be an observant mind for the sign to be in a conjoint relation with (Peirce et al., 1994, p. 3.360). In a similar vein, a text can be thought of not as a single unitary thing but as a relational cluster entity which comprises its material form, the sign-complexes this form is treated as, and the meaning constructed from it (Pettersson, 2017, pp. 13, 31–49). One of the major criticisms against the transfer/representation paradigm identified earlier was that it reifies meaning either by treating it as something that can be contained within linguistic form and thereby transferred through it or by implying it exists separate from linguistic form, which allows access to meaning through representationality (Martín de León, 2008, p. 7; Pym, 2010, pp. 18–19; Bennett, 2018, p. 92). Relational thinking rectifies this. Meaning does not need to be captured in matter for transfer, or chained to it by representation; meaning comes about when semiotic agents experience instances of matter as meaningful – when they treat them as signs.

What is especially relevant for studying linguistic communication and interlingual translation in terms of the experiential is that even though the experience of the recipient is in a key role, this experience is clearly not absolutely singular or arbitrary – at least, not so arbitrary that communication becomes impossible. Transfer or representation of meaning does not and cannot take place as far as the experiential paradigm is concerned, but since the transfer/representation paradigm has historically been useful in studying interlingual translation phenomena, it must be that, for the purposes of studying these phenomena, something reasonably close to transfer or representation must be taking place. As noted, this suggests that the construction of meaning from signs must be constrained, so that the communicator compiling signs and distributing them in textual form can reasonably expect the recipient to construct from them the sorts of meanings that were intended – or, at least, meanings that serve such a purpose well enough in the communication instance at hand, meanings that are isomorphic enough to function as if they corresponded.

At least two interconnected factors affect how the meaning construction process is constrained: the nature of the sign-system utilized, and the communicational conventions concerning that sign-system in the recipient's community or culture. Language is a highly conventionalized sign-system that communicators are accustomed to using in very specific ways (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 60–61), and as such it enables the sender of a text to constrain the text's recipient's meaning construction relatively reliably and accurately. When an author uses the word 'dog' in their book, they can reasonably assume that it calls to mind a dog for their prospective reader. This does not necessitate that the concept of 'dog' exists on its own in a non-subjective space outside the author and the reader where both of them can access it through the use of the

word 'dog'. Instead, it can be taken to mean that the reader's construction of meaning from the word 'dog' is constrained by the pressures of the linguistic and cultural environment they inhabit; that those pressures guide the reader to assign a specific meaning to the word 'dog'; and that this meaning is specific enough for the author to be able to use the word 'dog' in the assurance that this is more or less the meaning the reader will probably construct from it. These guiding pressures on meaning construction, the "great socio-affective ecologies of culture", serve as the "cultural cradle" for semiosis in communication (Robinson, 2016b, pp. 83, 113; see also Robinson, 2016a). It follows that translation is not about identifying what meanings the source text represents and producing a target text that represents those same meanings, but about producing a target text that constrains the target readers' meaning construction in their linguistic and cultural context in ways comparable to how the source text constrains its readers' meaning construction. From a non-instrumentalist perspective, no representation or transfer of meaning can take place in translation or any textual communication, but it seems that in translation it is possible – and expected – to create an illusion of that kind of transfer having taken place.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to define how experientiality and materiality might function as the cornerstone of a conceptualization of translation that accounts for "*all* meaningful exchanges" (Steiner, 1975, p. 279) while also being mindful of the "interlingual exchanges" (ibid) that make for a substantial subsection of the more general model. 'Transfer' and 'representation' are identified as core concepts that have tended to enjoy a pivotal role in theoretical approaches centred on the latter, language-focused model. A move towards a generalized (semiotic or hermeneutic) model grounded in experientiality and materiality complicates the centrality of these concepts but does not quite require their complete rejection.

Historically, what is here called the 'transfer/representation paradigm' – the implication that meaning exists in a stable and invariant state which can be represented by language and transferred through translation – is aligned with translation theories based on the concept of natural equivalence (Pym, 2010, pp. 6–23) and an attitude that Venuti calls 'instrumentalism' (Venuti, 2019, pp. 1–6). As evidenced by the discussions above, I must agree with Venuti's assessment that this paradigm is philosophically unfruitful and even damaging (ibid, pp. 173–177), but I also find value in Pym's notion that this framing is "close to what many translators, clients, and translation users believe about translation" and that therefore it should be "appreciated in all its complexity" (Pym, 2010, p. 6). Indeed, even from an experiential perspective, there are things to appreciate about 'transfer' and 'representation' as concepts, and they may even be helpful in creating stronger links between language-focused translation approaches and those more general models of translational

phenomena – models that seek to account for the multimodal and the non-linguistic on the same terms as the linguistic.

From the viewpoint of the experiential paradigm, where theories grounded in the transfer/representation paradigm go wrong is in assuming these concepts can be applied directly to meaning; they cannot, but this does not mean these conceptual babies must be thrown out with the paradigmatic bathwater. Under the experiential paradigm, meaning cannot be transferred or represented, but the process by which a material text is distributed from one communicator to another can be seen as a form of transfer, and the process by which signs are identified from the text can be seen as a form of representation. Further, by discussing in detail how the material and the semiotic relate to each other and what the role of community or context is in constraining meaning construction processes, it is possible to arrive at non-instrumentalist explanations for phenomena that have otherwise been treated as 'transfer of meaning' or 'representation of meaning'. Utilizing new theoretical frameworks to discuss established concepts is worthwhile – even, or perhaps especially, when those frameworks and concepts could be considered to represent opposing views on some fundamental issues – because discussions like this bring added nuance to existing discourse and strengthen the connection between new perspectives and the established intellectual tradition of the field, which may also make the new paradigm more approachable to scholars working on more traditional issues.

Here, too, the experience of the text's recipient remains absolutely central in meaning construction and textual communication, even if the primary focus is momentarily placed on concepts typically associated with interlingual translation and a language-focused approach to translation theory. In this light, 'transfer' and 'representation' must not be thought to single-handedly explain what happens in interlingual translation because on their own they do not allow sufficient focus on that experience, but they do have a place in constructing such an explanation – even when doing so from an experiential, performative, and/or material perspective. In fact, these concepts help provide a space for discussing 'traditional' translation phenomena within the context of an experiential conceptualization of meaning construction. This only goes to show that it is not always necessary to make an either/or choice between 'traditional' and 'alternative' translation approaches since sometimes the phenomena central to the traditional can be explained in terms of the alternative. As seen here, rather than being lost among the throng of non-lingual semiotic channels, the textual mechanics of interlingual translation can still be foregrounded when warranted under the experiential paradigm. This flexibility is enabled by the very principles that also widen the scope of translation inquiry to non-lingual or multimodal phenomena: the centrality of subjective experience in meaning construction, the effects of the social and material circumstances in which textual distribution takes place, and the general applicability of the same fundamental semiotic mechanics to lingual and non-lingual textual phenomena alike. Indeed, having this ability to shift focus wherever it is needed to be – on language or on other aspects of textual communication – is beneficial both to the study of interlingual translation and to the study of experientiality in translation.

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2 Experiencing performance and performing experience

Translation, fragmentation and composition on stage, in theory and in practice

John London

Introduction: a different way of approaching performance

If a written play is considered as source text and the staging its translation, then the experience of those involved is crucial: authors, actors, directors and stage designers. Their experiences meet each other, then encounter the audience, who become translators of what they have experienced.

Following an analysis of the idea of audience participation in relation to mainstream styles and well-known avant-garde art, this chapter proposes a different way of approaching performance. By drawing on the innovations of Futurism, Roland Topor and Annie Zadek, I examine the potential for fragmentary, incomplete textual creation in which the need to communicate meaning through performance is nevertheless paramount. By discovering words isolated from existing syntax, the reader/performer has to develop new ways of understanding, supplying through their own experience the meaning not directly conveyed by the text.

I provide an account of a practical investigation into these processes, drawing on the composition, rehearsals, workshops and performances of a text (*Another Time This Time*) I wrote with Kit Danowski (London and Danowski, 2022). (The public workshops and professional performances of this play took place in Ledbury on 10 July 2022 and King's College London four days later.) The communicational task is defined, indeed urgent: to convey the experience of COVID through current and past evocations of plague and contagion. However, the challenge lies in meeting actors and audiences half-way and thus leaving gaps to be filled. Five notions of translation are enacted, each one of them open to experiential interpretation. I suggest that these translations can stimulate a different theatrical experience in which ludic elements combine with the necessity of communication to involve the audience in multiple ways.

The experiential translations of theatre

What differentiates theatre translation from other forms of textual translation? The usual answer is that the idea or fact of performance should be a central concern (Anderman, 1998, p. 71; Johnston, 2004, p. 25), so

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-4
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that this form of translation is from one language to another and from page to stage. There is indeed a parallel between linguistic translation and staging a play (Laera, 2020, pp. 18–19). But if you do not consider the potential or actual theatrical production when you translate drama for the stage, then you might as well be translating a novel. Beyond this premise, if you start from the end product, there is a rich potential in reframing theatrical performance within the notion of experiential translation (much richer than the immediate context of written prose). Even if a written play is still considered the source text and the staging its translation (which is not always the case), then the experience of those involved is central to the process: authors, actors, directors and stage designers (to list just the principal named participants in a production). While individual creators draw on their own resources, the collaboration forms a community whose shared experience—besides its own performance in preparation—develops into a performance for public consumption. This experience then meets that of the members of the audience, each of whom can be said to be concerned with their own translation of what they are witnessing. (This discussion does not include the relatively recent intervention of broadcasting technology, livestreaming and digital performance which would admittedly complicate the model further as an analysis of these phenomena implies (Liedke, 2023).)

Given the amount of these latent and visible experiences, it is surprising that theatrical analysis rarely attempts to combine them from a translational perspective, beyond incursions into the study of intercultural exchange (Pavis, 1992, pp. 183–216). Take the author's role, for instance. For a writer such as Steven Berkoff, whose work has included popular adaptations of Kafka and Poe, translating his own experience onto the stage nevertheless becomes predominant in his own plays. "Everything in *East*", he confesses of his initial conception, "had to be personal and observed, every incident in my life had to be in there" (Berkoff, 1996, p. 48). Even when plays are not what an author calls their own texts, namely "living embodiments of my life" (Berkoff, 1996, p. 391), the autobiographical writing of directors can be mined for evidence of transposition and conversion. In a telling phrase, Peter Brook explained that, for his company in the 1970s, there "was, above all, a need for transparency, contact, and clarity in our work that derived in part from our direct and shared experiences" (1998, p. 173).

Actors are more explicitly engaged in experiential translation in the sense that they are caught between the two approaches identified by Diderot in the 1770s: acting directly as an experience (crying from the heart) or acting out by imitation of actual experience (pretending to be angry when they are not) (Diderot, 2001, pp. 81, 150). A possible reconciliation of these two attitudes comes in Stanislavski's concept of "emotion memory", which "can bring back feelings you have already experienced" (1980, p. 168). The translator's lexicon of "adaptation" is also prominent in Stanislavski's ideas (1980, pp. 224, 238–241).

These examples appear familiar and thus could be said to constitute merely a way of relabelling memoirs or well-known styles as the source for the translation of certain real or invented experiences. On the other hand, different elements of theatrical composition emerge in a new light when studied as forms of experiential translation. What about the role of the linguistic translator of a play? As Berkoff's interests in adaptation imply, rather than being just the instrument to transfer words into another verbal language (albeit reconsidered for the stage), there is room here for what Peter Bush calls a "translatorly reading", where the translator's experience of language (where, when and how they have learned, heard, read or used it) comes into contact with the source text (Bush, 2006) and, we could add, if possible, their experience of theatre comes into contact with the source production. Moreover, it is the synthesis of all these experiences which provides material for probably the most significant translation of all, when the audience becomes part of the whole.

Yet, this ultimate translation is also the most complex because of the number of possible audience reactions and the challenges involved in tracing these variegated experiences. Maybe this is not just a development of early modern Western theatre. The idea that Athenian religious festivals constituted a "common act of devotion" in which stage, orchestra and auditorium formed a "single unit" (Walcot, 1976, p. 5) should not simplify an awareness of the audience experience of drama. Contrary to anthropological misconceptions, Greek tragedy was not a ritual in which spectators followed established myths with shared reactions, but was made up of distinct plays provoking diverse responses (Taplin, 1978, pp. 161–165). Indeed, when we try and trace audience reactions in more recent theatre history, we may well be in a similar quandary in ascertaining their authenticity.

Of course, we have the comments of newspaper critics and essayists to help us capture the experience of live professional Western theatre of the past two hundred years at least. The problem is that the best and most influential reviewers are most attractive because of their personal style and opinion rather than any objective view. To explore the reasons why a given critic may appreciate or detest a particular show is to delve into another form of social and psychological analysis in which their own experiences respond to those on stage. And, in order to gauge the intricacies of this process, there are very few accounts of the lives and minds of critics along the searing lines of the biography of Kenneth Tynan by his wife (Tynan, 1987). Besides, even in less personally defined accounts of theatrical performance, the reviewer is just one voice, necessarily concerned with conveying (translating) what is occurring on stage (usually only on the press night), and thereby implying that this is the same experience for the audience. And they are sometimes bound by the editorial restrictions of the publication for which they write. A well-known US critic comments on the tendency of Broadway reviewers to ignore audience response and generalizes for outside New York that "even in the theatres of more sedate American cities, an audience's reactions are rarely reflected in reviews" (Brustein, 1989, p. 194).

Meanwhile, when it comes to scholarly research, consideration tends to concentrate on how dramatists and directors are un/successful and/or upset expectations in the stalls, as well as the potential for widening and galvanizing audiences (Bennett, 1997). A personal, yet scholarly approach can illuminate individual theatrical experiences, simultaneously giving a sense of audience reactions (Skantze, 2013). For the purposes of theatre history, the extensive collation and analysis of press reviews can be painted as a portrayal of audience reception. There is the argument that newspaper critics represent wider segments of the population—and thus audiences—in that they do not want to alienate readers of a particular publication (London, 1997, pp. 24–25).

Demographic studies of the 1960s reveal US commercial theatres to be overwhelmingly the realm of the well off, highly educated and professional classes (Baumol and Bowen, 1966). Detailed surveys and interviews of a different nature among ushers as well as spectators provide insight into what is being translated via group psychology and audience behaviour in the twenty-first century (Heim, 2016). Yet, there is still a good deal of valuable anecdotal material in the reminiscences of directors and actors who specify the reception of their performances. Eleanor Elder's account of the Arts League of Service Travelling Theatre in the 1920s and 1930s is fascinating in this regard, full of instances of how plays translated into different experiences for different audiences: how onstage characters inadvertently alluded to local village personalities; how miners and ironworkers reacted in Cumberland; what dock labourers and milkmen thought; how the company was accused of Catholic propaganda in Perthshire. And these reactions obviously affected the performances by actors' perceptions of the audiences' receptivity (what could be termed the actors' translation of the audiences' translation) (Elder, 1939, pp. 93–119).

Participation, dilution of meaning and the power of modernist words

What emerges, therefore, from a recategorization of the processes of theatre—from author to audience—is the difficulty of defining both what has been translated and how experience relates to those translations. (Even for the linguistic translation of drama it is a challenge to be precise about how and why changes occur (London, 2010).) Faced by the uncertainty as to the nature of what is happening—the experiences being translated and the experience of that translation—it is no coincidence that theatrical modernism should exploit such doubts. It is in this context that Luigi Pirandello (in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, 1921) asks if you need to translate reality in order to put it on stage and subsequently expands the question by directly involving the audience (in *Tonight we Improvise*, 1930). Brecht, in contrast, reacted by attempting to combat uncertainty and guide audiences to determine their translations at one remove from the action.

A culmination of audience involvement, embracing modernist instability, would explicitly tilt the performative model in the direction of the viewer or

spectator as the creator of the work. Meaning (or lack of meaning) thus derives from what the audience does (not just what it observes or concludes) in real, experiential time. Three sorts of outcome are worth mentioning here. The first has a place in the history of empty art works (Foulc, 2018), where we fill in the absences: Joan Brossa's *Deaf-Mute* (1947) consists merely of a whitish room, a pause and the lowering of the curtain (Brossa, 1973), thereby anticipating John Cage's silent *4′33″* (1952). The second is typified by Happenings where the line between art and life should, as a progenitor of the movement stated, "be kept as fluid, and perhaps indistinct, as possible" (Kaprow, 1966, pp. 188–189) so we, as non-professional performers, become engaged in (often banal) activities and observe other people doing the same and not acting for us; hence, Kaprow's *Eat* involved doing precisely that in different environments (Kirby, 1965). The third outcome pushes the concept of the audience as the creator of the work to its limit by challenging the necessity of their incidental presence: in Robert Filliou's *No-Play* (1964) "nobody must come, or there is no play" (Filliou, 1967, p. 14).

In all three of these options everything tends to be left with those anonymous individuals present to constitute the spectacle (or lack of it). But the trouble with these experiments in translational terms is that it is usually not clear what is being translated, beyond a reflection on the artistic genre itself (or the idea that 'this is art/theatre'): the performance just *is* instead of *conveying something else*. There is also the danger that upsetting the actor-performs-in-front-of-audience model becomes anathema to the experiential liberation it purports. As Robert Brustein commented at the time on the paradoxically coercive ventures of the Living Theatre in the 1960s: "To extend a theatrical action into the audience is not to annihilate the performance, it is to annihilate the audience" (Brustein, 1970, p. xvi). Similar arguments can be made about the bogus nature of so-called 'immersive' experiences (Twitchin, 2019). What is more, if the transmission of text, sound or movement is largely abandoned, then any need for the communication of specific experience appears a distant prospect, especially when faced by aleatory forms.

Even some mainstream theatre practitioners had declared the death of the text on stage by the mid-twentieth century. Assessing the rise of film and promoting his own art, the famous American set designer Robert Edmond Jones declared: "Today we are more picture-minded than word-minded" (Jones, 1941, p. 140). This belief in spectacle finds incidental support in a deeply entrenched prejudice in theatre studies that locates the actor/performer as "the primary constituent of an entity called performance, which in its purest sense will be divested of the imposed literary burden of the script" (Ley, 2009, p. 203). Such an interpretation entails ignoring the actual history of theatre, fashioned by discursive embodiment and constantly nourished by textual adaptations and innovations (Ley, 2009).

How, then, can textual elements be included in the theatrical construct without lapsing into the traditional format of a written play, prone (in performance) to the unarticulated—only covertly experiential—translation by the

audience (of the sort scholars later attempt to disentangle)? How can we retain the notion that performance should constitute a meeting place where audiences should actively experience translation (and experience the experience of translating) rather than passively receiving a show as a finished entity hardly requiring their presence (even when that show is the product of translation and adaptation)?

At first sight, it may well appear that experimentation in the visual arts would be a good starting point. If you use what is taken as a form designed for viewing and transform it into a form for textual reading, then you have created a different kind of audience, one overtly attuned to at least two cognitive processes in a space (inside or outside a gallery) within which people move, contemplate and discuss (in other words, translate it according to their own experience). The appeal to individual experience is also greater than that of a regimented theatre audience. So when artists such as Barbara Kruger or Petar Pavlov employ words, there should be a strong translational element, in the sense that some meaning is being conveyed (Heller and Ilić, 2012, pp. 105–107, 116). However, the tendency is to leave little experiential space to the reader/spectator: Kruger's words tend to be as explicit as the accompanying images ("All violence is the illustration of a pathetic stereotype" (1991)); Pavlov's pieces are brilliantly self-illustrative, and self-defined (block letters spelling "F A L L" (undated) some of which are themselves falling). Robert Indiana's isolated sculpture-words verge on the decorative, but provide no context in which a fruitful translation might occur (Figure 2.1). An opportunity may be work such as Daniel Patrick Helmstetter's word-painted walls for a potentially

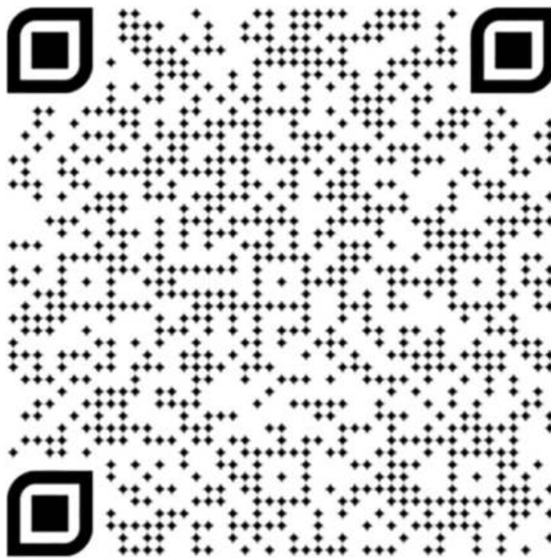

Figure 2.1 Robert Indiana's *Love red/blue* (1970/1990). Is this sculpture translating anything?

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active venue—*Danny's Continental Cocktail Lounge* (2010)—although the risk is that the abundance of words becomes an overwhelming image instead of a stimulus to interpretation (Figure 2.2).

If a verbal cul-de-sac is in the avant-garde, then the avant-garde can also provide the means to escape this translational blind-alley. In 1821, Shelley was convinced that "a single word even may be a spark of inextinguishable thought" and spoke of the "electric life which burns within [the] words" of his most celebrated contemporaries (1891, pp. 11, 46). Nearly one hundred years later, Marinetti—stimulated, among other things, by industrial electricity and by the perceived consequential necessity of rendering language as rapid as modern life—proclaimed, in his *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature* (1912), the need to destroy syntax and thus created "Words-in-Freedom", cutting words from the incarceration of sentences and encouraging their dismantling, remaking and extending, diversifying both spelling and typography (Marinetti, 1998, pp. 46, 80; 2006, pp. 107, 131). It was not distant from the assertions of Kruchenykh and Khlebnikov in explaining that "a poem could consist of *a single word*" and its skilful variation (1913, p. 55).

These innovations ended for a poet such as Isidore Isou with a desire to do away with the word itself, judged inadequate as a receptacle for the transmission of anything. In his terms: "No word can contain the impulses we

Figure 2.2 *Danny's Continental Cocktail Lounge* (2010), by Daniel Patrick Helmstetter. The painted word becomes the space, but to what extent does it make the viewer active?

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want to send with it" (1947, p. 12). A performative embodiment of this critique comes (in 1950) with the collapse of dialogue into incoherent noises and letters at the end of Ionesco's *The Bald Prima Donna* (1954, pp. 54–56). But there are still ways of combatting the repudiation of the translational capacity of words by stimulating—rather than dictating—readers' responses. For instance, Roland Topor's novel *Erika* (of 1969) provides one possibility by recounting a love story by means of one disconnected word on each page: "silky", "goes down", "lukewarm", "stuck" (2019, pp. 44–47). Our broader imagination supplies the context for reading. This is a much more active way of experiencing language than the words rendered iconic in the visual art of Pavlov and Indiana.

Writing a performance text from and for experiential translation

The challenge, though, is to provoke an experiential translation in performance and, at the same time, try to ensure that relevant experience is somehow being communicated. There are certainly precedents here which extend well beyond the status of art-for-art (or performance-for-performance) in much experimentalism. Part of Marinetti's intention was to communicate the experiential immediacy of mechanical modernity, especially speed and military conflict. But there is a wider existential predicament in a contemporary Western view of language: we are caught in the trap between Hofmannsthal's Lord Chandos—who (in 1902) saw words disintegrate in relation to reality—and our own daily use of those very words, often to convey essential, urgent experience, including our struggle for meaning.

Death is always a focal point for this urgency, latently undermined by wordless ineffability, especially when a religious framework has decomposed. In Pat Barker's novel *The Ghost Road*, the First World War gives the soldier-narrator cause for reflection on the senselessness of destruction, on how "words didn't mean anything anymore" (1995, p. 257). Although perhaps he means sentences because, seconds later, he salvages individual terms:

> Only the names meant anything. Mons, Loos, the Somme, Arras, Verdun, Ypres.… I realize there's another group of words that still mean something. Little words that trip through sentences unregarded: us, them, we, they, here, there. These are the words of power, and long after we're gone, they'll lie about in the language, like the unexploded grenades in these fields, and any one of them'll take your hand off (Barker, 1995, p. 257).

Is it possible to incarnate, rather than explain this binary view of words within a critical situation, to make language fail, then use it to blow the hands off an audience? A central section of Esther Salmona's *Amenées* (*Brought Along*) contains lists of everyday items from a home, each separate catalogue preceded by a date. We realize that the relentless enumeration of this prose poem conveys

the loss of the inhabitant who has died (Salmona, 2017, unpaginated). A more performative text by Annie Zadek lists what appear to be quotations from other sources and becomes, as an acknowledged published source reveals, a series of allusions to the Holocaust: "'disaster' / 'catastrophe' / 'annihilation' / 'destruction'" (2009, p. 51).

Within these considerations of the simultaneous debility and power of words I wanted to test if translational strategies could be employed to constitute a text that would provoke a reaction which would rely on intense, common experience and, at the same time, create an active, self-consciously translational experience in performance. The Coronavirus provided a suitable reference because it supplied a shared and extreme actuality, more immediate than war or distant disaster (which usually happens to somebody else). COVID also produced—in all countries where the virus was acknowledged—a pandemic of quickly recognizable, yet previously hidden words, some lifted from obscurity into daily use ('furlough', 'lockdown', 'PPE'), and others given a new, exclusive context ('self-isolation', 'shielding', 'social distancing', 'face masks'). These words, on their own, had such power that their mere mention set off a chain of precise associations. One of the lighter results of this power was *We Do Lockdown*, a vicious parody of the Ladybird books series relabelled "The Dung Beetle New Words Reading Scheme", in which a mother and her children do one activity per two-page spread: recto a picture, verso the dialogue. Sealing the house, shutting playgrounds, washing hands: all accompany simple, exclamatory, absurd dialogue, with three "new words" at the bottom of each page to summarize what has been learnt. So buying extra supplies of toilet paper becomes: "**bog roll apocalypse**" (Elia, 2020, p. 18).

When I proposed co-writing a performance text to the playwright Kit Danowski it was not so much to spark these associations directly, but to send production participants and audiences on a translational journey where personal experiences could find a wider context. I wanted to develop the idea of the verbal fragment and evoke a historical perspective. The title—*Another Time This Time*—was part of this ploy. Therefore, at my suggestion, we each chose a book from a more distant past in which a contagious plague was prominent: Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722), a collated account of the Great Plague of 1665, and Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), relating the destruction of mankind by a plague. I extracted a page of (usually) between twenty and thirty single words from the start of Defoe's narrative and sent them to Kit, who added a list of words from *The Last Man*. So it went on until we had finished our readings. The words we chose were the ones which stood out for us because of their interest, strangeness and vigour, above all assessed from our experience of the pandemic then current. I later supplied other words, on separate pages, some without sources, others culled from the Hebrew parts (the ten plagues) of the Passover Haggadah (*c.* 1000 CE) and, as a nod to two French innovators in the field of single words, from Topor's *Erika* (1969) and Zadek's *"Souffrir mille morts"* (*Endure a Thousand Deaths*) (2004). (All sources are indicated at the end of the play, but page numbers are not cited for what can

be conceived of as quoted words.) We indicated no settings and no characters. There were no stage directions. To underline the links between language, death and the need to go on, I prefaced the text with the only syntactically coherent lines in the whole play, a translation from a Catalan poem by Joan Brossa:

> I'd like to survive
> with just one word (Brossa, 2000, p. 131).

We kept to another rule I imposed at the beginning: never were we to use the word 'pandemic' or any term—such as those cited above—immediately relating the text to COVID. After I had edited the entire play, we added images, subsequently augmented by the director and cast. A typical page from the script would include quoted words and sometimes an image (Figure 2.3).

I was conscious during the composition that we had chosen texts which centred on the memory—if sometimes invented—of trauma and that, like interlingual translation, the extraction of words from other texts was a perilous form of remembering. As Brownlie puts it:

> Even if a translation can also be conceived as forgetting the source text in the sense of effacing it through the act of replacement or reproducing it selectively, a translation maintains at the same time the role of perpetuating memory of its source text (2016, p. 77).

Our deliberate incoherence was a strategy to avoid the standardizations and reformulations used in translation as ways of understanding memories of trauma at the expense of experiencing original depictions (Towers, 2022, p. 62). Moreover, there is a logic in noting down words from another book, as a way of remembering, but also as a reminder, in the tradition of Montaigne, that we cannot remember everything we read: "Reading is not only finding out, it is also—perhaps above all—forgetting" (Bayard, 2007, p. 62).

The intense use of place names and numbers was a good part of the challenge to actors and audience in relation to memory and coherence. How could elements apparently so essential be so difficult to remember (for performance) and how could features so precise as to guarantee accurate reference end up losing their significance? Most of the numbers cited were body counts, totals of those who had died from the 1665 plague in different parishes. The implicit comparisons were with the daily government COVID broadcasts (in 2020–2021) of the numbers of hospital admissions and deceased. But I let them stand in isolation as lists, hinting at how the excess of figures had the potential to become meaningless. This circumvented the problems faced by trying to represent numbers scenographically which, for example, proved such a difficulty for Tadeusz Różewicz when he was trying to write a play entitled *Birth Rate* from statistics about the living (1968, pp. 272–273).

After seeing the second performance of *Another Time This Time*, a friend reminded me of *Right*, a play I had written over twenty years before, much of which comprised a tense, single-word dialogue between an argumentative

"remove"

"hurry"

"Order"

"punish'd"

"Bread"

"shut"

"St. *Brides*"

"*Aldersgate*"

"*Stepney*, *White-Chapel*"

"92", "104", "Walls","205", "1,889"

"open"

"walking"

"*Southwark*"

"shut"

"716", "623", "1,493", "1,636", "6,060"

"616", "346", "1,268", "1,390", "4,900"

"95", "48", "372", "4,328"

"Posterity"

"promiscuously"

"of the Air"

"Supernaturals"

"Evidence"

Figure 2.3 A page from *Another Time This Time*, by John London and Kit Danowski.
© John London and Kit Danowski.

couple (London, 2003, pp. 1–13). The comparison made me realize how long I had been interested in the dramatic potential of individual words and it took me back, as well, to a play I had composed consisting merely of numbers (London, 1993). But it also forced me to understand the difference with the current project, since I had framed *Another Time This Time* within the context of translation. Rather than just employing isolated words for communicative dialogue I was, with my co-writer, manipulating the incantatory nature of words and numbers, and drawing attention to that manipulation. Tim Parks provides a useful gloss when translation enters the whole, since "if our language is a form of enchantment, that must also mean that the translation, while at once a disenchantment, is also a re-enchantment" (2008, p. 92). And because so much within *Another Time This Time* appears untranslatable—particularly the place names and numbers—the text evokes the ancient, pre-translational, performative (incantatory) status of language according to which words do not represent, but simply are (Bennett, 2018).

Yet our objective in composing *Another Time This Time* was nevertheless to translate experience and stimulate further translational experience. In broad terms, expanding slightly the concepts outlined in my introductory paragraph, the project involved five notions of translation:

1 Translation of one verbal language (French, Catalan or Hebrew) into another (English).
2 Translation of verbal language out of sentences into individuated forms.
3 Translation of experience over time.
4 Translation of texts, images and sounds into performance (incorporating the writers', performers', director's and workshop participants' translation of their own experience).
5 The audience translation of that performance.

Essential to the process was the attempt to open up possibilities rather than dictate a unique approach. It was almost a question of "the intention" being "enough in great endeavours" in Propertius's dictum (2007, p. 51), although we did not want to fail at having something ready for public performance at the end of the project. Neither did I want multi-linguistic competence to be an overwhelming criterion among collaborators because it would, as ethnographic researchers have found, "mask" too much: not knowing in verbal terms could lead to heightened perception of the non-verbal languages of image and body so important for performance (Phipps, 2013, pp. 330, 339). This kind of perception would be necessary for bringing personal experience into the whole. From a theoretical perspective the project coincided with many of the principles of experimental, "ludic" translation in that it relied on transtextual solutions, drew on non-linguistic resources (through images, sound and action), added performative value to source texts, and was apt to thrive on a level of indeterminacy (Lee, 2022, pp. 63–64).

Another Time This Time: from devising to public workshops and performance

I thought Karen Morash would be interested in directing the play because of her specialist knowledge of devising performance in relation to writing (Morash, 2016) and her experience as playwright, dramaturg and director. The actors—Philip Magee and Johanna Jacobi—were chosen, not simply on the grounds of their competence, but also because of their openness to experimentation.

As depicted in her account of the rehearsal-creative process (Morash, forthcoming), the director recognized that Kit and I had written a text which resisted obvious connections between words and, therefore, avoided narrative. Morash thought the text needed a translation (more demanding than the usual dialogue for performance), but that the actors would be as active in the business of translation as she was in facilitating a bridge between word and stage. There is a sense in which writers, director and performers were thrown into a realm where translation is defined as “an extreme environment for language, a space where words are pulled out of their ‘natural habitat’ and exposed to conditions that test the limits of textual vitality, viability and translatability” (Jacobs, 2019, p. 156). This was a potential answer to arguments about the possible demise of the theatrical text (Danan, 2018), because the words were always present as a performative basis. All the collaborators in the production were adopting the redefined role of translator as “mediator in an experiential process” (Campbell and Vidal, 2019, p. xxvi).

The rehearsals ran just over monthly from September 2021 until June 2022, although they would be better labelled meetings or sessions in which the shape of the performance evolved. At the start (17 September 2021), both actors defined what translation meant to them. Jacobi was dissatisfied with dictionary definitions of meaning: “nothing ever equals a translation.” Magee had a more hopeful view, suited for performance: “I think of translation as sharing.” Jacobi is a native German speaker, with a near-perfect English accent. Morash exploited this facility and had her translate some words into German, then Magee tried to imitate the German in performance, as if learning the language through translation. It was a brief fragment of what others have achieved in longer form, namely breaking monolingual discourses in theatre (French, 2021).

We talked about our experiences of lockdown and COVID (it was hard not to), but Morash urged the actors to translate those experiences into movements and think about possible gestures in relation to the text. One of the most memorable improvisations which survived into the production was the embodiment they enacted of numbers. Jacobi drew circles on the ground with her finger while saying them and had graceful, almost mystical gestures (perhaps deriving from her skill as a dancer). Magee treated numbers as reasons for argument, pretending to be on a mobile phone, hanging on the next amount, maybe for a business deal (Figure 2.4). There was also work on movement as a way of conveying the experience of being alone. The team studied broadcasts

Figure 2.4 Johanna Jacobi and Philip Magee perform the same numbers through movement and speech. *Another Time This Time*, by John London and Kit Danowski; Auditorium, Bush House, King's College London, 14 July 2022. The Youtube recording shows this section in more detail: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgEi5-WQaug

Photograph © John London.

from 2020 to see how the measures taken to try and contain the pandemic were accompanied not simply by statistics (numbers again), but by the specific gestures of scientists and politicians.

Since I had included maps of London as images within the text, there was discussion about seventeenth- and twentieth-century maps as representations, potentially accurate symbols and simultaneously translational impositions on our imaginations which may or may not correspond to our experience. (Along with the other images, the maps would be projected on the back wall during performance; Figure 2.5.) This kind of conversation formed part of a strategy to avoid anything immediately comprehensible as a sequence. Place names were repeated, then shouted as apparently oppositional, although there was no idea why this should be the case. An improvisation led to a story told by each of the actors—vaguely stimulated by the text—which started with specific details, then became incomprehensible by illogical juxtapositions. Later, Jules Deering added a sound track to be played throughout the performance, derived from our recorded voices and the ringing of bells. (During the recording Morash made me shout the Hebrew word דם [dam] into the microphone, making it sound like Dadaist nonsense or manic swearing, when in fact it is the first of the ten plagues, meaning 'blood'.)

There were two actions which physically encroached on the auditorium. At the end of the production the actors read from A4 sheets and continued this reading down the aisles of the stalls. They gave the sheets away to the audience, as if returning the words they had been spouting for the last thirty

Figure 2.5 A map of London is just visible on a back wall projection during the performance. Johanna Jacobi and Philip Magee in *Another Time This Time*, by John London and Kit Danowski; Auditorium, Bush House, King's College London, 14 July 2022.

Photograph © John London.

minutes. I added an element of participation for the second performance: at a certain point, after making quite distinct gestures on stage, Magee and Jacobi went into the audience and urged individuals to imitate one particular gesture, which they did and then received applause.

There was another way of urging the audience to become part of the translational experience. On the same day of both performances (10 July 2022 in Ledbury and 14 July 2022 in London), we ran a workshop a few hours before the performance. The format of the two workshops, lasting 45–60 minutes each, varied slightly in each case, but followed more or less the same pattern:

1 Introduction to the project.
2 The actors read two pages of the script.

3 Workshop participants or actors pick one word from each reading which stands out for them and discuss what it evokes (sounds, images, textures).
4 The actors prepare a movement-based performance of or related to a few words which have been selected, while the participants compose a short piece of writing (poetry or prose) about their experiences of COVID and lockdown. (It could be stipulated that this writing include at least one number.)
5 The actors perform their movement-based performance.
6 Each of the participants reads out their piece of writing, while the group notes down the words they found most salient (one word for each participant). As we discuss these salient words, the workshop leader (Karen Morash or John London) notes them down.
7 The workshop leader selects a few of the participants' words from what has been noted down and the actors improvise on the spot movements and perhaps sounds suggested by each word. Comments are welcomed on what the actors have done.
8 If there is any time left, the participants can write something more, stimulated by their experiences of the workshop.

The exploratory nature of these workshops made them heuristic rather than one-sided or hierarchical. Our aim was to make participants think about the most important words as a form of composition and interpretation. The format could easily be adapted for schoolchildren. Regarded from the pedagogical standpoint of "multiliteracies", it could still be seen as analytical in that it urged participants to see how impact and meaning are created, not just from words, but from sound, image and movement (Cazden et al., 1996, pp. 80–83). The exercises also extended into a more challenging realm the theatrical practice of experimenting with translated texts in rehearsal by staging action rather than words (Eaton, 2014, p. 180). (What, for instance, could be the movement for a place name?) The nature of each workshop obviously depended on the COVID experiences of the participants. When the workshop was announced for the Ledbury Poetry Festival, a local historian (Celia Kellett) wrote to me with details of the fourteenth- and sixteenth-century plagues which had come to the region. (A summary of this information was distributed to the workshop participants for the Ledbury session, hence providing more historical context.)

What dominated the written contributions to both sessions were impressions of solitude and stillness in contrast to some of the wilder terms in the playscript. It was thus all the more fitting that an essential feature of the workshops was a link to the performance on each day: the workshop leader selected words from steps 6 and 7 which would be read out as part of the performance by the actors later in the day, thereby incorporating some of the participants' words—and a fragmentary portrayal of their experience—into stage presence. Striking examples from the participants incorporated into the second performance included: "cat", "heart", "being", "plus", "Zoom".

Audience translation

The extent to which *Another Time This Time* was successfully translated into the public sphere (if it managed to blow the hands off audiences) was dependent, not only on individual experiences but, more particularly, on the functioning of the presentational elements which framed the performance. As well as the workshop, there was a recorded powerpoint about the ideas behind the production (in effect, a kind of explanatory trailer) available to be seen in an exhibition before and (in London) after the performance (London, 2022). And a public discussion took place immediately after the actors had finished their on-stage work. All this supplementary material would seem to diminish spontaneous audience reactions (or personal translations) and constitute crutches to support the main event. But perhaps it was not so different from T.S. Eliot's notes accompanying *The Waste Land*, verbal signage in an art museum, the plot summary of an opera (maybe sung in a different language), or detailed notes in a theatre programme. Perhaps we need some indication of a context for words and non-verbal signs so that their isolation from that detailed context can become part of our experience. Besides, if this entire project is "more interested in the process than the product of intersemiotic translation" (Campbell and Vidal, 2019, p. xxviii), then these framing elements could be considered part of that process, along with the devising which preceded them. Moreover, the translations by audiences could not be considered as fixed entities, any more than the reality to which the process alluded.

The composite nature of the process means that it does not lend itself to the usual audience questionnaires or press reviews in order to judge success. Perhaps an invitation to tweet or text could be a partial solution. Yet the workshop and after-show discussion fulfilled some of the role of evaluation through extended public participation. So the problems of tracing audience reception (enumerated at the start of this study) stray into the translation to which the most active spectators have contributed. While the workshops involved the experiential contribution of participants, the discussions in both venues tended to question why features were present. (Audiences asked why German was used, why certain projections were shown, what the bells signified.) The creative team offered a translation of the audience translation in these discussions. There is a danger that any additional demanded response will end up inquiring—directly or indirectly—if elements, techniques or images were understood or recognized (as if there were a uniquely correct interpretation), while the point of *Another Time This Time* is for a translation to take place on a personal level within a broad historical context of pandemics. This contrasts with the assessment of the success of much participatory art, judged for its "shared social engagement" (Bishop, 2012, p. 275). If Rancière views emancipated spectators as playing "the role of active interpreters, who work out their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' ['l'histoire'] and make it their own story" (2008, p. 29), this production urges audiences to make up their own story from

what is already an admitted translation. Current studies on audience impact could well illuminate how such cognitive and sensory operations can occur (Snyder-Young and Omasta, 2022). What may initially appear incoherent could actually evolve into a theatrical presence more potent than normative conceptions of dramatic language.

Acknowledgements

The production of *Another Time This Time* was made possible through the financial support of the Arts & Humanities Research Council (for the AHRC project Experiential Translation: Meaning-making, Engagement and Agency across Media in a Multimodal World), the SLLF Catalyst Fund at Queen Mary University of London and the Society for Theatre Research. The project received approval from the Queen Mary Ethics of Research Committee (ref: QMERC22.225). My thanks go to all those who collaborated for months of experimentation, especially Kit Danowski, Jules Deering, Johanna Jacobi, Philip Magee and Karen Morash.

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3 Translating ‘our’ world through sound

Domestication, anthropomorphism, incantation

Madeleine Campbell

Introduction

The strategies of domestication and foreignization have been much debated in linguistic translation (Venuti [1995] 2018, 2019), while expanded notions of translation have analysed the shifts that manifest when translating ‘our’ world as embodied, multimodal text. Taivalkoski-Shilov and Poncharal (2020), for example, analysed anthropomorphic shifts when translating the sounds of nature and non-human animals in *Translating the Voices of Nature*. The phenomenon of anthropomorphism is remarkably akin to domestication in its attempt to reformulate the voices of nature, or source text, for human consumption—thereby arguably robbing nature of its otherness, agency and personhood, much as detractors of domestication critique its lack of respect for the ‘otherness’ of the source language and culture. Experiential translation has a significant role to play in tuning our senses to perceive, as far as the limits of our technologically enhanced antennae allow, the auditory, but also visual, olfactory or kinaesthetic signs necessary to read this world, of which we are a part. As Braidotti’s posthuman perspective (2013) ushered in research on ecoliteracy, semiotranslation (Marais and Kull, 2016) and eco-translation (Cronin, 2017), artists, musicians and translators have incorporated these perspectives in their practice.

With a focus on sound as an elemental component of expression and communication, this chapter analyses how early and contemporary human beings have translated ‘our’ world by examining the materiality and semiotization of vocalization from inarticulate expression to comprehensible sound. Moving through ‘thresholds of semiosis’ from human perception of birdsong to speech and from ancestral chant to a modern-day electronic rendering of ‘the voice as instrument’ (Kelkar, 2019), I examine how the limits of anthropomorphism have shaped human translations of the world around us. Following the review in the Introduction to this volume of Venuti’s (2018) ethical conceptualizations of domestication and foreignization, fluency and resistance and of his later polemic on instrumentalism vs hermeneutics (2019), I explore, drawing on Koskinen (2020), an aesthetic conception of foreignization as *ostranenie*. This chapter further builds on the implications for meaning making of the

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-5
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materiality of the medium of communication (Littau, 2016; Bennett, 2022; Bennett, Chapter 8, this volume; Introduction, this volume) to distinguish different means of material transfer (Haapaniemi, Chapter 1, this volume; 2023) and semiotic representation employed in the translation of sound. Disambiguating prior accounts of the materiality of a textual object in terms of its aesthetic form in contrast with its embodied encounter, I propose a multi-layered frame of reference for analysing the experience of translation. I then utilize this model to interpret the sonic artwork *Earthquake Mass Re-Imagined: 2022* by ecoartist Kathy Hinde. Through this model, meaning making is found to be constructed simultaneously on multiple levels from material, pre-verbal cognition to the more conceptual semiotic domains of indexicality, iconicity and symbolic representation.

Foreignization as *ostranenie*

In a paper investigating the function of affect in the translation of written language (and its concomitant acts of reading and thinking) "in our interaction with each other and the world", Koskinen offers a lateral leap from the construct of foreignization to *ostranenie*, variously translated as estrangement or defamiliarization (2020, p. 45). She puts forward this construct in her discussion of the role affect plays in the reception of translated texts, in particular in "managing [emotional] affinity and familiarity" (ibid, p. 62)

> Venuti's (1995, 1998) …. concept of foreignizing closely resembles *ostranenie*, or defamiliarization, an intentional alienation effect used as an artistic device (Koskinen 2000: 52) …. As Venuti's terminology has gained currency in translation studies, the approach has become somewhat reduced, and foreignizing and domesticating are often used to mean simplified strategies of source versus target orientation in the translated text. As a result, the concepts have lost much of their connection to the idea of relational aesthetic qualities and of negotiating the degrees of familiarity between particular translation solutions and a distinct audience (Koskinen, 2020, p. 63).

Koskinen (2020) discusses this concept principally in the context of linguistic translation and re-translation to emphasize the tendency in translation scholarship to evaluate target texts in terms of both "textual similarity to the source text and affective affinity to the intended readership", which, she argues, is the result of both aesthetic and affective work (pp. 65–66). Giving the example of Antoine Berman's (1984) ethical and aesthetic preference for "l'étrangeté de l'œuvre étrangère" (the foreignness of the foreign œuvre; my translation; cited in ibid, p. 66), Koskinen remarks that "aesthetics, the encounter of the sensual work and the sensate body, is all about affect (Highmore, 2010, p. 121)" (ibid).

Alexandra Berlina (2018) offers insights into the cultural valence of the politically loaded notion of *ostranenie*, rummaging through the writings of Viktor Shklovsky to revitalize the aesthetic import with which he later imbued

the concept. Poring over the many iterations in Shklovsky's explanations of this concept over 70 years, Berlina concludes that:

> Shklovsky … was …, and remained, interested in how literature complicates perception—often by presenting the seemingly known as if it were unknown—and in how the complication of perception can further cognition …. making real what has become unreal through repetition (2018, p. 23).

For the purposes of examining how humans translate 'our world', I propose to envisage Koskinen's expanded notion of foreignization as an affective and aesthetic endeavour on the part of the translator, which is not to deny Venuti's ethical orientation. Rather, the aim is to shift the focus to the dimensions of foreignization which lend themselves to a more subjective, affective and corporeal examination of the experience of translation, and in particular the translation of sound.

Further, I propose to adopt Berlina's functional interpretation of Shklovsky's *ostranenie* in considering how a foreignizing translation of literature, and by extension of cultural artefacts as well as the natural world, can "complicat[e] perception [to] further cognition … making real what has become unreal" (p. 23). At the same time, as argued by Riku Haapaniemi in Chapter 1 (this volume), meaning does not somehow 'reside' in the source text but is constructed afresh by translator and recipient through a process of material transfer and semiotic representation. In this respect Venuti's assertion that "foreignizing translation can construct only an image of the foreign, never communicating the foreign itself" reflects the impossibility of communicating an intangible qualitative 'otherness' as it is communicated in the source text (2018, p. xix). Switching the emphasis from communication to experience, however, highlights the central role of materiality in meaning making, and I propose a view of representation, which may be more performative and/or iconic than symbolic. The embodied, sensorial and affective perception and expression of experience, in turn, require a re-examination of these processes through a transdisciplinary lens, if only to subsequently re-build a more comprehensive epistemology of the act of translation. For this purpose it is helpful to isolate, as far as possible, one aspect of materiality—in our case the medium of sound – in order to facilitate analysis and offer potential premises for further extrapolation. Not only is sound a key, and arguably originary, component of language, but it is also the 'basic' medium of music (in the sense first elaborated by Elleström 2010 – see section 'Layers of Translation' below). Whether manifested in the natural world (as human cry or birdsong) or the technological world (e.g. the sound of digitally translated seismic waves), the perception of sound plays an important pre-verbal role in both human and animal cognition in the experiential construction of meaning:

> [S]ound, in particular, is extremely important in the shift from emotion to affect because sound (in general) is a flux of sensations, even more

> than words. Words, in contrast, always bear the burden of a referentiality that partly interrupts and fixes the flux and point to concrete situations in which pure sensation is dampened, objectified and solidified (Smith, 2009, p. 19).

There inevitably lies in referentiality to an object in the world a distortion of the subjective perception of that object, and of the affect associated with it, a distortion which carries elements of both domestication and foreignization. In the following section, I draw a parallel between domestication and anthropomorphism as the (artificially polarized) corollaries of foreignization. I then explore how non-referential sound, as a pre-symbolic or non-symbolic form of communication, might offer premises for understanding some of the processes underlying experiential translation.

Domestication, anthropomorphism and the boundary between human and non-human

Venuti has linked domestication in translation with ethnocentrism and advocates foreignization as a means to "restrain the violence of translation" (2018, p. 16). Contemporary examples of this form of resistance are documented, for example, in Bhanot and Tiang's edited book *Violent Phenomena* (2022), in which poignant indictments of mistranslation and appropriation are denounced as continuing acts of oppression and colonization. Even Venuti's apparently progressive stance is questioned by these editors as "fetishizing and othering" because it infers a normative centre against which to evaluate distance from the source text (ibid, p. 11). While ethnocentrism is regrettably present in acts of linguistic translation as denounced by Venuti, Bhanot and Tiang and the broader critical apparatus of translation studies, this othering tendency may also be perceived more generally in translations of the natural world, where ethnocentrism morphs seamlessly into anthropomorphism.

Michael Cronin (2017), for example, argues for the adoption of Braidotti's (2013) posthumanist perspective to extend an ethics of translation that encompasses the non-human. In his chapter 'Translating Animals', Cronin invites translators to consider ways of moving away from a "foundational anthropocentrism" and to reach a "different notion of the relationship between the human and animal or between the human and the non-human" (2017, p. 67; p. 69). Lamenting the dearth of research on animal-to-animal and human <-> animal communication through the lens of translation, he advocates that examining "interspecies relatedness" stands to offer more insights into intra- and interspecies communication than attempts to define differences between interlocutors from ostensibly different biosemiotic realms (ibid, p. 75). Cronin concludes that the "anthropocentric fixation on human language and those who produce it should not be allowed to prevent scholars from pursuing intersemiotic translation between radically different forms of species communication" (2017, p. 82).

The distinction between non-human animal sentience and non-human but human-made cognition has been eroded in light of rapid advances in communication technologies and media, in particular that of artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics. The 'non-human' is increasingly taken to encompass the technological products of the human mind, and in particular AI, insofar as they call into question, as do animals in the natural world, humans' hitherto presumed monopoly on sentience and consciousness in Western thought. Such an ontological perspective displaces a human-centric worldview to place both the human and the non-human, including animate and inanimate materiality, on a flat plane of existence. As expounded in Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (2005) and revised in Latour's *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (2012, 2013), in such a world any object becomes an actor when it enters into relation with one or more other objects. Actor-Network Theory thus leads to an epistemological approach that "consists not in representing reality such as it is in the tissue of human symbolisms, but creating apparatuses of translation that let us *make non-humans speak* …. [where] 'translational' Being is never wholly given: it is processural" (Maniglier, 2014, p. 39; emphases in source text). This translational metaphor, where translating the world is seen as a pre-symbolic or non-symbolic process, is apposite in the context of experiential translation. The foreignization/domestication/anthropomorphism spectrum, Latour's Actor-Network Theory, and 4EA cognition,[1] each to varying degrees decentre self-bounded means of knowing and afford porosity with, and agency to, the object(s) of translational inquiry. Against this backdrop, the experiential translator plays their role as embedded and embodied actor in a flat network of human and non-human objects devoid of hierarchies. An aesthetic, affective act of foreignization in translation could then be said to recognize both the inescapable subjectivity of the translator's encounter and the unknowability of the encountered at the symbolic level, but to acknowledge the possibility of an experiential and contingent knowing of the encountered. At the same time a pre-symbolic, or non-symbolic epistemological approach to translation invites an exploration of what this experience can be surmised to entail at the material level. The following section, therefore, examines the materiality of sound, as well as its perception and expression, by the embodied actor or translator.

Materiality and the modes of signification of sound: language and birdsong

Following the renewed emphasis on materiality in translation (for a review see Introduction and Chapter 1, this volume), it is important to consider how this paradigm shift may reposition the locus of the act of translation from a referential, representational stance to an iconic and performative stance, where translation comes into being in its instantiated moment (as argued, for example, by Bennett, this volume, Chapter 8). This notion arguably lends itself particularly well to an examination of sound, given its contingent relation to time and space and the haptic, material nature of the perception of sound waves as they

'touch' the ear drum. The manner in which sound resonates and reverberates is determined by the materiality of the object from which it emanates as well as the objects it encounters, together with the spatial configuration in which it manifests as a finite and ephemeral event. Further, in the realm of human vocalization, the corresponding gestural, oral, aural and synaesthetic qualities of speech, together with their role in meaning making, merit special scrutiny.

In her response to Littau (2016), Rebecca Kosick isolates the materiality of language from Littau's relational approach to language as integral to culture. Instead, Kosick argues that language as "the printed (or spoken, or scrawled) word" offers resistance as well as the relational quality inherent in its capacity as a (human) medium of communication (2016, p. 315). Human speech has a materiality of its own, as Lee points out when analysing a passage on the aesthetics of the cinema, where Roland Barthes appealed to the sensuous qualities emanating from the sounds of speech:

> In describing the qualities of speech, and applying them to literature in other writings, Barthes' approach is clearly synesthetic and sympathetic: the "materiality" of speech involves not only the auditory ("it crackles") but, for the most part, the tactile ("the fleshiness of the lips," "supple, lubricated, delicately granular and vibrant"). The climax or "bliss" deriving from sound (the erotic entity) culminates through a series of touch sensations and bodily movement: "it granulates … it caresses, it grates, it cuts, it comes" (Lee, 2014, p. 346).

The question of the materiality of speech in translation, however, has not always been confined to the human voice. In his interpretation of Line 499 of Chaucer's *The Parliament of Fowls,* "So cryede, 'kek, kek!' 'kukkow!' 'quek, quek!' hye,"[2] Michael J. Warren (2016) highlights the arresting and self-conscious nature of this verse, drawing as it does simultaneous attention to the untranslatabililty of birdsong and to its iconic semiotization. As Warren reminds us, "mediaeval grammarians and music theorists were the scholars who most fully confronted birdsong in tackling the tricky category of voice" [or mediaeval *vox*] (2016, p. 153). At once foreignizing and domesticating – in this verse aesthetic form is achieved through onomatopoeia, while domestication is achieved through phonemic resemblance to human sounds – inter-species translation is achieved through the materialization of the bird calls into transcribable sounds: "Chaucer's phonetics reveal a familiar paradox of translation. Whilst aiming to familiarise, they equally alienate by denoting difference from human language" (ibid, p. 161). The semantic significance of line 499 and that of its source text in the world of birds, are opaque to us. Chaucer's verse nevertheless serves to underline the role of materiality in (proto) meaning-making in cross-species communication, as well as in pre-noetic (non-linguistic) intra-species communication. This communication can be said to arise "above the lower semiosic threshold" because it carries an element of pre-conscious or subconscious comprehensibility, which nevertheless remains semantically

inarticulated (Marais and Kull, 2016, pp. 179–181). As Lee argues, "incomprehensibility at the semantic level—an impasse in signification—forces the reader to come to terms with the materiality of the signifier" (2014, pp. 351–352).

A blurring of the symbolic boundary between sound, human/non-human voice and music recognizes different 'semiosic thresholds' and acknowledges the possibilities of transfer (as defined by Haapaniemi, Chapter 1, this volume) at the material level: "'kek kek', and other such onomatopoeic transcriptions, enact this blurring by producing an unorthodox instance of *vox*: a writeable sound (*literata*) which is *inarticulata* to humans, but *articulata* [meaningful] to birds (or some birds, at least)" (Warren, 2016, p. 162; emphasis in source text). Warren underlines the premise that, in mediaeval times, grammarians recognized the possibility that sounds such as bird calls which may hold no readable meaning for humans nonetheless "could be meaningful in their own terms" (ibid, p. 163).

An evolutionary perspective on how 'inarticulate' expression grew to become 'articulate and meaningful' may be found in Aryani et al. (2020), who surmised that the affective system may have played a role in grounding linguistic signs, thereby providing an essential building block for communication that can be learned and therefore retained through the cultural evolution of language. They postulated such a mechanism as follows: firstly, it has been shown that the vocalizations of humans and other vertebrates can be interpreted by humans in terms of their level of arousal. Secondly, early human expression may have reflected emotional arousal through the medium of the vocal tract. And thirdly, such affective expressions may have come to be used to refer to objects associated with similar experiences (for example, sharp rocks became associated with high-arousal vocalizations). This evolutionary perspective understands the development of human speech as starting with 'inarticulate' vocalization, progressively moving through the 'semiosic threshold' from pre-verbal expression of arousal as a proto-expression of affect, through iconicity and indexicality to the ultimate semiotization of sound in the symbolism of the spoken word (see Campbell and Vidal, 2024 for a more detailed exploration of psychological research on the association between sound and affect).

Complementary to research on the pre-symbolic relation between vocalization and affect, is the association between visual or gestural representation and sound. Tejaswinee Kelkar researched human representations of melodic contours, such as "an arch, a rainbow, a zigzag line, a circle", arguing that these contours tend to be associated in a predictable but non-symbolic manner with visual shapes created through tracings and human movement (2019, p. 1). In order to investigate this association, Kelkar further subdivides (human) sound on a spectrum from speech to musical melody. Figure 3.1 shows how the melodic contours of sound develop along a continuum, which Kelkar elaborated on the basis of formal elements of rhythmicity and prosody. For example, on the formality spectrum after speech there is poetry or chant, which follows rules for syllable timing and/or pronunciation, each with discernible but non-formal melodic contours. Next we find recitative operatic dialogue,

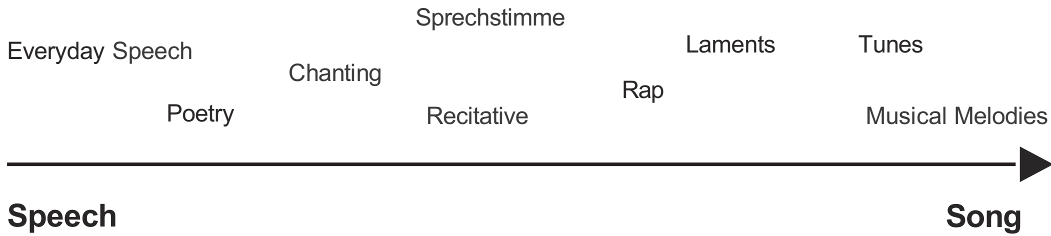

Figure 3.1 Speech-song spectrum.

Credit: Kelkar, 2019, p. 13.

as well as Schoenberg's *Sprechstimme*, a vocal style of spoken/sung delivery marked for both rhythm and relative, as opposed to absolute, pitch (see Smith, 2016 for a review of the co-evolution of this style and its notation). Melodic contours become more prescriptive as we move along the continuum to rap, which according to Kelkar follows both rhythmic and melodic rules of form, then to the formal style of some laments, which involve complex pitch combinations, before reaching tunes and musical melodies, which no longer involve human speech but "use the voice idiomatically as a musical instrument" (Kelkar, 2019, p. 13).

Interestingly, research by Kelkar and Jensenius (2018) and Kelkar (2019) on gesture and sound, analysing the tracing and retrievability of melodic contours along this continuum, found that "the performed tracings are not iconic or symbolic, but spontaneous" (Kelkar, 2019, p. 94). For instance, "it is interesting to note that [the extreme periphery] region around our bodies is reserved for the very highest notes, and some participants also reach beyond this region by extending their toes" (ibid, p. 95). Kelkar's finding would lend support to the surmise by Aryani et al. (2020) that the evolution of meaning through sound is rooted first in spontaneous, embodied, expressions of affective arousal. As suggested by Kelkar (2019, pp. 43–47), this spontaneous expression is a form of non-verbal cognition, or as Marais and Kull might put it, 'proto-semiosic' cognition (2016, p. 181). Pre-verbal human vocalization can then be surmised as a primordial instance of translating 'our' world through sound. In this view human engagement with the materiality of sound as a 'basic' medium, given its fundamental role in affective, embodied cognition below the 'semiosic threshold', plays a fundamental role in the early translation of 'our world', first through spontaneous expression, and later as an iconic or perhaps indexical tool for communication ultimately encoded symbolically in the signs of speech.

Translating sound into speech and back again: chant and incantation

Upstream from the more formal aestheticization of vocalization through melody, lies a whole range of sounds from vibration to inarticulate noise to symbolic speech, and human traditions have explored the link between these two extremes through embodied means, often in relation to the sacred.

Piotr Blumczynski, for example, recently published a volume on *Experiencing Translationality: Materiality and Metaphorical Journeys*, where he notes the multisensory materiality of relics:

> [M]aterial experience was mediated by the senses: by the sumptuousness of reliquaries; by powerful choral chants (special hymns were composed for the occasion of relic translations); by the smell of incense (relics were often authenticated by their reportedly "sweet scent"); by the haptic contact with the sacred objects themselves (2023, p. 178).

Bennett charts the detachment of the sign from its materiality in oral chant as a "gap … between form and content, signifier and signified" developed in early antiquity (2022, p. 56). In Western culture, the schism from the "*signum eficiens*", where a "sign creates what it signifies" (Kelly, 1979, as cited in ibid, p. 56) can be traced as far back as the fourth century BCE, a product of the initial encounter between Judaic and Hellenic cultures. In parallel with the cultural shift from an iconic to a symbolic specificity of the sign and "from *mythos* to *logos*" (p. 53), Bennett tracks a shift in Western cultures from the performativity of oral delivery to representation over two millennia. In contrast, Gerety (2020) argues that Indian religions have long developed a rich and sustained metalanguage to account for the oral and aural materiality of sound as an epistemological tool. Yoga techniques, for example, teach both sounding and listening approaches to pursue meditative goals, and the sound may be voiced or unvoiced as a silent vibration, "connecting the outside phenomenal world with the innermost recesses of the body" (ibid, p. 504). Mantras of the Vedic and Hindu traditions are a form of chant based on "phonemes, words and language" that privilege the manifestation of *vāc*, the "goddess Speech" (Gerety, 2009, p. 505). Gerety further comments on the Sanskrit term *aksara*, which identifies the syllable as both a basic morphological constituent of language and the cosmological ontology of all sound and speech (ibid).

The material form of language has also been transferred in the tradition of Tibetan spelling chant (TSC) where, "unlike language, it is not meaning, but structure that is being moved [in translation], from one domain—language—into another, music" (Rose, 2009, p. 145). Here we can see a parallel with the ancient Hebraic chant traditions reported by Bennett, who stresses the non-representational role of chanted speech and interprets "speech sounds or written letters … as opaque instruments that act upon the world …. language as *energeia …. sounds full of energy*" (2022, p. 54; emphasis in source text). In TSC, "novice monks are taught to spell by chanting the spelling of individual syllables …. The primary significance of TSC, however, is that creating *verbal energy* in this way is considered a virtuous act, thus benefiting chanter and listener(s)" (Rose, 2020, p. 146; my emphasis).

Through these ancient forms of chant sound is re-united with signified as an embodied form of meaning-making that engages both the sensorial and the affective, allowing human beings to reconnect at the pre-noetic level

with the developmental origins of speech discussed earlier. The physiological dimension implied by scholars' discourse on chant as engaging 'the innermost recesses of the body', '*energeia*', or 'verbal energy', is the subject of renewed focus in understanding embodied communication today (Beer, 2014; Risku and Rogl, 2020). Its importance has also been foregrounded in translation studies, where "[d]ifferentiated theories of what translation implies in the age of the Anthropocene must naturally look to the physiological structures of perception and cognition in humans and non-humans" (Cronin, 2017, p. 82).

Layers of translation: a frame of reference for analysing experiential translation

The foregoing review of the material role of sound in expression and communication, from 'inarticulate' sound to chant to symbolic speech, suggests additional granularity is needed to account for the embodied experience of translation, material transfer and semiotic representation. At the same time notions of materiality and (proto)semiosis suggest that a layered approach separating physical from aesthetic form, as argued in the Introduction to this volume and further expanded in the present chapter by interpreting foreignization in terms of Shklovsky's *ostranenie*, might offer a framework through which to analyse the processes of translating 'our' world. While the present exploration has focussed principally on sound, the frame of reference proposed in this section is intended to be applicable to multimodal texts involving not just oral/aural but visual, olfactory and kinaesthetic translation.

Starting from the Material layer of a medium as distinct from both its embodied encounter and its aesthetic form, then, we can conceive of several further layers of meaning making in translation that mirror layers of language and other modes of communication. Bringing together constructs from systemic functional linguistics, multimodality and intermediality (see Campbell and Vidal, 2019, 2024 for a more detailed examination of the role of these constructs in developing a holistic account of translation), we might schematically distinguish four layers as follows, bearing in mind the porosity and entangled quality of their phenomenal nature:

- Material (modality, 'basic' mediality)
- Textual (compositionality, 'qualified' mediality)
- Interactional (inter'personal', affective, embodied)
- Semiotic (ideational; performative; indexical, iconic, representational)

One can discern in this composite schema Halliday's (1978) linguistic conception of the metafunctions of language: his textual, interpersonal and ideational constructs can be found in the Textual, Interactional and Semiotic layers, respectively. Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2021) multimodal expansion of these functions beyond language to reflect the affordances of different modes of communication may be found in the Material layer (modality). Modifications to metafunctions, brought by Painter et al. (2013) to encompass affect, relate to the interactional layer (inter'personal', affective, and 'embodied' as

elaborated in the present chapter to include sensorial, kinaesthetic and physiological dimensions). The interactional component, in line with Latour's Actor-Network Theory, includes any interaction with animate or inanimate objects in the world, as well as the possibility that the inter'personal' function may occur between any living being, whether human or not. In turn, the sense in which affect plays a role in translation in the interactional layer can be gleaned from Hokkanen and Koskinen (2016) and Koskinen (2020) in linguistic translation, and Campbell and Vidal (2024) in intersemiotic translations.

Elleström's (2010, 2021) insights on the modes of signification of media are included in the Material, Textual and Semiotic layers as follows. Elleström's (2010) concept of 'qualified' mediality can be distinguished from the 'basic' mediality of the Material layer in its cultural and aesthetic combination of the individual ('basic') modalities of sound or visual communication, where 'basic media' can be said to refer to individual media in their raw and unmixed form. Elleström (2021, p. 233, Fig. 7.4), elaborating on his 2010 model, elucidates this distinction with the example of the 'basic' modality of the digitized voice of a conversational agent where the sound wave is the material layer, while the 'qualified' medium relates to its sociocultural and historical development in a cultural context – much as voice recordings on a gramophone opened up the possibility for jazz to flourish as a sociocultural phenomenon in the 1920s, mediated by the affordances of analogue technology and distribution through radio channels. 'Qualified' media can then be seen as the result of a process of enculturation of the 'basic' medium. As such the aesthetic continuum from domestication to foreignization or *ostranenie* may be considered to operate at the Textual layer, where the textual is understood as composed by agent(s) using any combination of media, while the 'physical' dimension of form operates at the Material level. Finally, the Semiotic layer builds on Elleström's indexical, iconic and symbolic modes of signification, and is comparable to Halliday's (1978) 'ideational' function of language as one that is concerned with abstract cognition. In this layer, however, meaning is constructed in a performative manner, which is not necessarily restricted to language.

This four-layered schema offers a potential frame of reference for analysing the translation of 'our' world through cultural artefacts, and in the final section of this chapter such an analysis is proposed in relation to an artwork, the 'basic' medium of which is sound.

Across these layers of 'the thing itself', the dimension of its spatiotemporal becoming is what makes translation translation. It is helpful in relation to experiential translation to adopt Marais and Kull's (2016) perspective on the role of time and space in semiotranslation. In their account, the contingent, "natural-temporal" process of signification complements Pierce's conception of meaning-making as the logical relation between object, sign or representamen, and interpretant (ibid, p. 179). Along with Pierce, they recognize that these components are mutable in a signifying chain but argue that in addition to logical relations "the study of semiosis could include … a focus on the historical-material processes of semiosis, the relationships-processes between semiosic phenomena in real time and space, the way in which semiosis entails a process that creates and develops meaning (Robinson, 2011)" (ibid). In

this view the relationships between referent, sign and interpretant are not restricted to analytical inferences but are understood as living, embodied processes of meaning-making within a spatio-temporal frame.

Applying the 'frame of reference for experiential translation' to a sound-based translation: Kathy Hinde's *earthquake mass re-imagined: 2022*

Arguing that contemporary artworks such as John Cage's *4′3″* "can be understood as translations because they are texts that rewrite the real …. which present an image of the world as a textual sign", Vidal Claramonte (2022, p. 86) positions (contemporary) art as a pivotal manifestation of Bassnett and Johnston's (2019) 'outward turn' in translation, and of Gentzler's 'post-translation' (2017). I apply the frame of reference elaborated in the previous section in an attempt to understand how a predominantly sonic work 'rewrite[s] the real' in the work of Kathy Hinde.

Hinde's caption for *Earthquake Mass Re-Imagined : 2022* reads:

> Twelve modified turntables play vinyl pressings of a 15th century choral mass, in response to seismic data. Antoine Brumel's 'Earthquake' Mass (c.1497) is a stunningly intricate work of Renaissance-age choral music for twelve voices.

I analyse Kathy Hinde's installation as a translation of 'our' world through sound by interpreting the audio-visual and written paratexts that constitute its online manifestation. Although Hinde's original artwork is immersive and the spatial configuration of the physical installation portrayed in the artwork's online video allow visitors to move around and perceive it from different locations, the primary 'basic' medium of this installation is sound. The written paratext of the artwork is cited in fira code 10 font to distinguish its material presence on the web from that of my own description and analysis.

The material layer (modality, 'basic' mediality)

> The vocals have been cut to vinyl to play back on adapted turntables with additional motors to control the lift and drop the needle onto the record.
>
> Seismic data … shapes the behaviour and playback of the record players. As seismicity rises, the vocals become more fragmented and shift in density. As the earth re-settles, the voices are reconfigured in a new way, yet remain disjointed.

Although the reader of this chapter cannot witness the installation in person, its materiality can nevertheless be inferred via the digital presence of the website for the purposes of this analysis. A 1′46″ soundtrack is offered on the webpage as part of the video of the same length, which opens with a wide-angle shot of the installation housed inside a generous space with ancient beams and worn floorboards that sweep away from the viewer. The high ceiling is traversed by 4 steel pillars, whose blotchy surfaces suggest different hues of bark and lichen. The room is lit by several arched windows on two sides. The 12 turntables are arranged, probably chest-high, in a circle atop metal stands. Successive short-length close-ups of 12-inch vinyls show the needle lifting from the record at irregular intervals. The dominant colours are those of mottled bark, faded wood and black vinyl, modulated by the play of light and shadow afforded by the spinning of the records, which appear to be revolving at a standard 33 rpm. In the close-ups the red casing of the needle is clearly reflected in the vinyl's surface, along with its mechanical arm-lifting apparatus. At times the angle of the shot emphasizes the undulating motion of the vinyl, which echoes the wave-like motion of the choral sounds.

The haptic presence of carbon, wood, metal and vinyl, together with the aural medium of human song, whose acoustic waves are transmitted by diamonds, afford an organic quality which is accessible and sustained despite the digital interface of the web. In this sense the materiality of the artwork can be said to lie on the domesticating end of Venuti's (2018, 2019) continuum, narrowing the distance between viewer/listener and artwork. This webpage offers an intimate digital audio-visual encounter of a physical installation that uses analogue technology, the workings of which are clearly visible and readily apprehended by the viewer.

The textual layer (compositionality, 'qualified' mediality)

In terms of compositionality, the artist's intervention, through both the choral mass and the rendition of seismic waves formulates the installation's distinctive aesthetic form, which achieves 'qualified' mediality by transmitting, combining and fragmenting animate and inanimate sound waves.

> The artwork is centred around the twelve individual vocal parts of Brumel's Agnus Dei recorded by Mexican Choir 'Staccato'.
>
> The final movement Agnus Dei was discovered rotting away, partly consumed by organic processes, as if returning to the earth.

Rather than compensating for the gaps in the Agnus Dei folios by performing an analogous score (as did Tallis Scholars in 2022[3]), Hinde's rendition, true to the material condition of the folios, allowed her recording by Staccato Choir to reflect the "holes in the voice-parts" of the rotted folios (Philips, 2022, n.p.). The presence of the holes, translated as gaps in the recording, are informed instead by the Earth's geological processes. Choosing to record the choral voices "in locations with significant historical seismic activity" and translating them by "re-recording them travelling through the earth", Kathy Hinde creates a distancing effect, or *ostranenie*, by making the familiar (human voices, Renaissance polyphony) strange.

> The untreated vocals on the record players are accompanied by a textural, spatialised soundscape created from processes inspired by seismological research. Hinde resonated the vocal recordings in locations with significant historical seismic activity in Mexico, including 16th century monasteries that sustained damage from the 2017 earthquake. She further displaced the recordings by re-recording them travelling through the earth at relevant locations in Mexico.
>
> Hinde consulted with Mexico's top seismologists to inform the artwork. Seismic data from the earthquake that shook Mexico on 19th September 2017 shapes the behaviour and playback of the record players.

The traditional building blocks of musical meaning (tempo, rhythm, pitch, volume and timbre, see Bennett, 2002, pp. 26–47; and Chapter 8, this volume) are thus foreignized by applying telluric *resistance* to the Mass' "colossal harmonic pillars" (Philips, 2022, n.p.). However, this foreignizing element is also tempered or anthropomorphized to make Hinde's translation accessible: "[s]eismic data has also been directly translated into sound within human hearing range".

Spatio-temporal narrative is embedded in the location of Hinde's recordings of the Renaissance score of Agnus Dei at the sites of recent earthquakes by distorting these recordings in their subsequent passage through the earth, and by interrupting the playback through lifting the needle at times dictated by seismic data. A further intimation of deep geological and cosmological time (past and future) might be afforded by the numbers: 12 turntables for 12 choral parts, echoing perhaps the inexorable passage of time in the 12 stations of an analogue clock face and the 12 lunar cycles of the moon which constitute approximately one planetary year on earth.

The interactional layer (inter'personal', affective, embodied)

> Playing on both the title of Brumel's work and Mexico's seismic instabilities, Hinde presents a work that ties the emotional power of Brumel's composition to the ruptures of the world we inhabit 500 years later.

Human interaction with the installation may appear at first limited to the auditory and visual senses, reducing the viewer/listener to the role of impotent spectator, much as one is powerless in the face of the devastating and destructive power of tectonic plates sliding past each other. The undulating motion of the surface of the discs might induce a kinaesthetic sense of instability in the viewer, or even a physiological response akin to the nauseating feeling reported by some when they experience the tremors associated with an earthquake. At the same time the regular spin of the disc may also provide a meditative visual continuity despite the interruptions in sound occasioned by the lifting of the needle.

The trauma caused by earthquakes to human and non-human beings is affectively conveyed in the spectator's embodied perception of an ancient musical composition fractured by telluric and mechanical means and superimposed with the sounds of seismic activity. The affective impact of Brumel's composition is also testament to human endurance as it perdures synchronically and asynchronically, despite the interruptions and fragmentation: hearing a performance of the partial score for Agnus Dei, "discovered rotting away, partly consumed by organic processes, as if returning to the earth" carries a very present intimation and affective connection with a past human life, while the choral identity of the soundscape is unmistakeably human.

The semiotic layer (ideational; performative; iconic, indexical, iconic, representational)

> The physical soundwaves of human voices engraved into a surface creates a metaphor for the movements of the earth, as tectonic plates shift on geological timescales, creating seismic waves of extremely low frequency.

This analysis of the artworks' entangled modes of signification within the framework of the material, textual and interactional layers primarily articulates the spectator's experiential translation of this artwork, while one can

also infer elements of the artist's translation, aided by the work's descriptive notes. The artwork's "metaphor for the movements of the earth" is conveyed through iconicity and indexicality rather than representation, which are often suggested to be the more plausible vehicles for meaning-making for music and sound, as they are less constrained by the symbolic limits of language representation. The artwork's descriptive discourse, coupled with the iconicity of the sound waves and seismic waves and the indexicality of their interruptions, which point to the occurrence of erratic seismic events, enable the viewer to experience a contingent, embodied, affective and ideational representation of this metaphor.

Foreignization and domestication or anthropomorphism occur to varying degrees in each layer of the frame of reference. Speaking to both animate and inanimate matter, Kathy Hinde's contemporary "partnership between nature and technology" (n.p.) translates geological and human time by allowing seismic data to interrupt vinyl recordings of choral voices: the artist thereby gives voice to the tectonic 'other' while anthropomorphizing it to make it accessible to human ears, and revives a forgotten score while foreignizing its human voices.

Conclusion

This chapter, taking sound as its focus, has offered a transdisciplinary exploration of the experience of translating 'our' world by expanding constructs from translation studies, principally Venuti's ([1995] 2018) domestication and foreignization continuum, qualified by Koskinen's (2020) interpretation of foreignization as *ostranenie* and Marais and Kull's (2016) 'semiosic thresholds'. Drawing on studies in comparative literature, psychology and musicology, I have examined the materiality of sound in human perception and expression, from inarticulate vocalization to semiotization and melodic aestheticization. By combining theoretical constructs regarding the functions of language, multimodality and intermediality, a multi-layered frame of reference was proposed as a means of analysing the experience of the viewer/translator/artist in the translation of a sonic, immersive cultural artefact.

This exploration of sound has offered a means of analysing intersemiotic translation as an essentially experiential phenomenon in which symbolic representation plays a lesser role than in purely linguistic approaches to translation. Instead, a spatio-temporally contingent and holistic model involving materiality, textuality and an interactional layer is proposed to examine how semiosis, or meaning construction, is mediated in the translatory moment. Rooted in the developmental origins of embodied human expression and communication, this transdisciplinary perspective on translating 'our world' through sound can be extended to cover other sensory domains and corresponding medialities, including the visual, olfactory, kinaesthetic and physiological.

Notes

1 Elaborated in the fields of psychology and neuroscience as well as linguistics and philosophy and encompassing the affordances of digital technology, 4E stands for extended, embedded, embodied and enactive cognition, while A stands for affect (O'Regan and Noë, 2001, 2002; Noë, 2004). The relevance of 4EA as a framework to understand the interactive nature of the translation process is beyond the scope of this chapter and has been explored in Risku and Rogl (2020), Muñoz Martín and Martín de León (2020) and Campbell and Vidal (2024).

2 "The goos, the cokkow, and the doke also/So cryden, 'kek, kek!' 'kukkow!' 'quek, quek!' hye,/That thorgh myn eres the noyse wente tho" (Chaucer (1342–1400). *The Parliament of Fowls*, lines 498–500. http://www.librarius.com/parliamentfs.htm [Accessed 20 July 2023].

3 The relative untraceability of the source text adds to the fragmented nature of its interpretation. A score for Brumel's *Agnus Dei* can be found at the following source, though it is unclear how much of this is reconstituted: Brumel, A., 1974. 50. Agnus Dei. A. Brumel, comp., 1460–1513 (1550). In B. Bellingham, ed., *Sixteenth Century Bicinia*. Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, Inc., 3 pages. www.alexanderstreet.com

A performance of what may have been a reconstitution of the damaged original score of Brumel's Agnus Dei was recorded by Tallis Scholars, conducted by Peter Phillips; produced by Steve C. Smith and Peter Phillips; performed by Tallis Scholars (Gimell Records, 2001), 1 hour 13 mins. www.alexanderstreet.com

However, the Program Notes for a more recent performance of Brumel's Missa: Et ecce terrae motus [And lo, the Earth moved] by the same Tallis Scholars state that: "Unfortunately, the last folios [of Brumel's Earthquake Mass], which contain the Agnus Dei, have rotted, leaving holes in the voice-parts. Since this is not performable as it stands, we decided to replace it with the third Agnus from Nicolas Gombert's Missa Tempore Paschalis, which is based on the same chant notes as the Brumel, and uses exactly the same twelve voice-parts" (Philips, 5 May 2022, n.p.). see https://live.stanford.edu/blog/may-2022/program-notes-tallis-scholars

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Section 2

Acts and breakages

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4 The productive embrace of uncertainty

Asemic writing, drawing, translation

Ricarda Vidal and Harriet Carter

Introduction

This chapter begins with a challenge to read:

The quote above is taken from Michael Jacobson's visual novella *The Giant's Fence* ([2005] 2012, p. 6) which is entirely composed of asemic writing, i.e. writing without alphabet. Asemic writing looks like writing, but isn't, at least not in the conventional sense. Asemic texts draw the reader in, only to alienate them. 'Almost' words, paragraphs, books, lure the viewer until, upon closer inspection, recognition fades as the normative elements of a written language slip away from comprehension. Asemic writing produces uncertainty and inspires curiosity to look at familiar things with a fresh perspective in an exercise to estrange the familiar. As such it is a provocation to thought, an open-ended wondering about the nature of writing itself (Schwenger, 2019).

Despite its overt illegibility, we shall argue that asemic writing can nonetheless be read and translated and constitutes a rich form of communication. Exploring an asemic text requires the 'reader' or 'experiencer' to embrace incomprehension and move into the realm of sensual encounter.

In this chapter, we will discuss two workshops[1] which focused on the creation and translation of asemic hand-writing to examine the everyday speculative engagement with our surroundings and communication beyond linguistic constraints. We focused on hand-writing in particular as this foregrounds physical gesture and sensual experience. As we move through the world, we are naturally driven to make sense of things, to try and understand the environment we are embedded in. We 'read' our environment (including written texts like the above, or the one you are reading now) according to cultural, social and/or semiotic conventions. Reading is here understood as a multimodal process which involves all the senses (the oral, olfactory, tactile and visual) which we usually only become aware of when the conventions are broken, as in the example above where writing refuses to be read. Paying attention

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-7
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to our polysensory, physical encounter with and experience of things in the world, we set out to examine how an increased awareness of non-linguistic meaning-making processes affects communication across languages and/or cultures.

As a form of mark-making, asemic writing is situated between creative writing and the visual arts, having particular affinities with drawing. Artist Paul Klee's (1961, p. 105) notebook drawings and musings that "a line goes out for a walk, so to speak, aimlessly, for the sake of the walk" provide a two-fold rationale for our enquiry. Firstly, Klee's astute drawn observations highlight the rich territory of a complex polysensory world. Secondly, they highlight the potential for mark-making to be distant from us, elusive and evasive of meaning. Here, we will explore the importance of gesture, and the physical movement of the hand at its core, as well as the role of materiality in mark-making and navigating meaning-making.

As the line takes Klee for a walk, it involves a letting-go on the side of the artist, a rendition of control to the whimsicalness of the drawing tool in its communion with the drawing hand and the paper. As we shall explore with reference to theories of "material thinking" (Bolt, 2010, p. 30), a similar rendition of control is involved in the creation of asemic writing. This also extends to the writer's control over how the text may be encountered. While all writing is open to interpretation and communication does not necessarily happen primarily through the conventional meaning of words, the conventions of alphabetical writing do limit how a text may be understood by its readers.

Drawing on Lee Yearley (2010) and in relation to the interpretation of literary writing, Natalya Sukhonos (2018, p. 143) speaks of an "ethics of bewilderment" which is aware of the style, the form, the aesthetics of a text beyond the semiotic meaning of words. At the heart of this is an embrace of uncertainty and fluidity, a turning away from a search for answers in order "to lengthen the resonance of bewildering questions" (Sukhonos, 2018, p. 143). As we shall show, an "ethics of bewilderment" constitutes a suitable approach to asemic writing.

In many ways, the effect the encounter with the asemic has on our experience of the everyday, i.e. the estrangement of things we thought of as familiar, is akin to the experience of linguistic translation. The certainty of comprehension one might experience as a reader of a text in one language evaporates as soon as one attempts to translate it into another and is confronted with a myriad of possible versions. Drawing on Johnston, Vidal Claramonte argues that translation should be understood much in the same way as Klee's wandering line:

> When a translator takes a walk to that point through languages and cultures, what emerges is … a kind of provisional mapping of that complex issue that is living. Thus, in the beginning was the word, but then translation took it for a walk. (Johnston 2017, p. 11, cited in Vidal Claramonte, 2022, p. 24)

However, in the case of asemic writing, the beginning comes some time before the word. Translating it entails moving away from the pre-eminence of words, instead focusing on the experiential aspects of meaning-making, i.e. the aesthetic, embodied experience of form and materiality described above. Translation is "interpreting" argues Vidal Claramonte (2022, p. 25)), and as such, is "an inevitable process" of making sense of the world, one that we're subconsciously engaged in throughout life and which, we shall argue, comes before words. Our research aims to make us aware of, and engage actively with, the experiential aspects of translation in meaning-making.

We are concerned with process over final presentation, not-knowing, and embodied experience as facets within translation. Tong King Lee's (2022) theory of memesis and ludic translation with its focus on the material manifestation of text provides a framework for our research alongside Clive Scott's (2010, 2019) notion of translation as centrifugal.

This chapter is split into three sections: we begin by introducing the theoretical concepts that underpin our research. This is followed by an explanation of our practice-based research methodology of two public workshops. The final section analyses the asemic texts and translations produced during the workshops.

Drawing, writing, reading (and) the asemic

The gesture of drawing: a material epistemological place

Gesture occupies the overlapping space between drawing and writing, made manifest in mark-making. In relation to asemic hand-writing, Schwenger (2014, p. 197) states, "[g]estural artifacts convey information that is not safely bounded in convention, that is open to a multitude of movements within the mind".

To explore the essence of gesture we must explore the point of view of the one who draws, considering how – and if, or what – meaning comes into being in the very moment of drawing. Thinking via material handling, or as Barbara Bolt (2010, p. 30) has it, *material thinking,* is to work in conjunction with the intelligence of materials and processes in practice, where material "takes an active role in the creation of its own form" (Si Qin, 2017, n.p.). In physical mark-making, Klee's wandering line tells us that we intend to draw a line on a piece of paper (for example), but the chance moments of enacting the gesture come up against this intention. For instance, as we draw across the page, the tools draw back. A graphite stick is affected by the substrate grain, guided on – or perhaps jarred off-course by the weight of the paper. The feel of moving the graphite across the surface in this way fosters a spontaneous response during the mark-making. We may become spurred on by the rough sounds of the implement on the surface, or the feel of the tool gliding smoothly across the page. As marks appear as an effect of this process, we become informed by them. Perhaps the marks move away from our intention,

and we seek to correct them, or alternatively, we instinctively respond to them without thinking about the next action.

In his reflections on Jacobson's *The Giant's Fence,* Schwenger (2019, p. 121) argues that a drawn line extends itself between meaning and non-meaning and considers the asemic text as hovering between the will of an artist conscious of his influences and intentions and the linear associations of the graphic doodles. Jacobson (2014, n.p.) observes that it is equally hard to write a gesture completely devoid of, or entirely filled with, meaning. As we shall discuss later, it requires dedication and concentration to write asemically and avoid falling into the patterns and conventions of alphabetic writing (see Vidal and Carter, 2021, n.p.). For Schwenger (2019, p. 80), "both intention and meaning take on new aspects" in asemic writing, whereby the intention is to make something that evokes writing, often consciously referencing a particular type of writing. Conventional alphabetical writing gives structure, form and meaning to thought. Though asemic writing likewise offers structure and form, it closes itself off against any simple readings of meaning, drawing attention instead to the processes within the construction and making of meaning. As such, the meaning of the nature of the drawn gesture resides in the moment of making the mark and then, in a different way, when encountering the mark during attempts to read an asemic text.

The act of a mark-making gesture is enfolded in a moment of 'material perception', "perceiving an embodied encounter through mark-making" (Carter, 2022, p. 21). Drawing provides an opportunity to come-to-know something about the nature of drawing itself. As for the nature of what is being drawn, Jean-Luc Nancy (2013, p. 10) observes

> drawing is [...] the Idea – it is the true form of the thing. Or more exactly, it is the gesture that proceeds from the desire to show this form and to trace it so as to show the form – but not to trace in order to reveal it as a form already received.

The marks on the page are the material traces of this process of discovery. They are the physical residue of the "formative force" (Nancy, 2013, pp. 10–13) that brings the drawing into being via the encounter of pencil and paper and which – at least partially – bypasses conscious thought.

Tamarind Norwood (2020, pp. 179–197) has applied Nancy's description of drawing to writing in an attempt to "write drawingly", to follow the line on its journey taking note of the unexpected associations called forth by the marks appearing on the paper. While Norwood writes conventionally, the process she describes also captures the process of asemic writing, the distancing from meaning or overt representation and the invitation to deviate, which leads to a multiplication of forms: "the visible forms marked in pencil on the page and the invisible forms of the processes that had created those pencil marks" (Norwood, 2020, p. 185). And here we can recall Yearley's "ethics of bewilderment", the search for the resonance of questions rather than answers. Because the act of mark-making entails the coming together of intention

versus chance via material thinking, it is always at a certain point removed from us, creating a place where we are unable to comprehend or make sense of it. 'Coming-to-know' is something of a paradox, where understanding of meaning is distanced.

At its core, a drawn mark does not mean anything other than its existence as a drawn mark (Carter, 2022, p. 203).[2] This is particularly obvious in asemic writing, which, as Schwenger observes (2019, p. 7), "does not attempt to communicate any message other than its own nature as writing". Here we can take the word 'meaning' as referencing the gesture within the context of a responsive writing practice that is embedded in distancing from language. The meaning is 'other' to our language and thus, distanced from our comprehension. For Parveen Adams (1996, pp. 113–114), "'otherness' is that which has remained outside the signifying chain, desired and only dimly seen by the artist", resonating with Norwood's evocation of invisible forms and Jacobson's description of his creative process, which entails a deliberate embrace of otherness. Indeed, Jacobson (2014, n.p.) refers to automatic writing or snatching "a shape from the surrounding environment" as a starting point for his asemic work; as the marks go through several generations of abstraction, all trace of their origin is gradually lost, until it is obscure even to the artist himself.

Tension between intention and material is bound by chance when the act of mark-making works with a material. An 'otherness' can only be approached "with the help of 'accidents' and 'chance' interventions" (Adams, 1996, pp. 113–114). The act of creating gesture in the making of asemic writing and attempted 'reading' of asemic texts creates a material epistemological place residing on the borderland of language. Removed from the happenstance that asemic writing and texts look like writing but aren't, the borderland of language refers to working in dialogue with the 'other' language of materiality, offering the tantalising possibility of accessing thought that cannot be verbalised.

Encountering the asemic: a playful pursuit in translation

In this section we will explore how asemic writing can be 'read' in preparation for translation. Preoccupation with the term 'reading' in our research comes from the notion that to read is to comprehend something. Anne-Marie Smith describes Kristevan thought about reading – or 'literary activity' – as concerning the awakening sensibilisation of a reader, where "sensory experience can be slowly processed and understood" (2003, p. 134). As we have indicated, sensory experience is an integral element in creating gesture and by extension asemic writing. However, when encountering asemic texts, a paradox emerges at the juncture of sensibilisation, at the point when it is distanced from our understanding and comprehension does not emerge. Approaching asemic texts becomes a struggle between illegible marks and the urge to read, like entering into a dance where you are not privy to the steps to take, so must produce your own steps based on how the dance unfolds.

Much like arriving to drawing with intention and being met with chance via material thinking, an asemic text needs to be met through the encounter *with* the material. Reading always entails material encounter with the letters, the words on the page, the form in which the text is presented (Bennett, 2022, p. 51); but in asemic writing this is foregrounded. And so it seems natural that, in the preface to *The Giant's Fence*, Jacobson (2012, n.p.) extends an invitation to read aesthetically, i.e. to focus on the materiality of gesture, form and shape over content. The material – rather than linguistic – aspects of reading invite us to focus our "translator's gaze" (Campbell and Vidal, 2019, pp. 1–36), to sharpen our senses to the materiality of gesture and make sense of strangely familiar writings. Reading an asemic text becomes possible if we look at text as tangible form and analyse its physical presence. Asemic writing forces us to do what Susan Sontag (1964, p. 10) advocated for the cultural critic in the 1960s:

> not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less to squeeze more content out of the work than is already there. Our task is to cut back content so that we can see the thing at all.

Lee (2014, p. 348) explores Sontag's focus on the materiality of text in relation to multimodal experimental literature and argues for an intimate relationship between the body of the text and reader: "Through the process of embodiment, the body of the reader participant interacts with the materiality of the text in performing the act of meaning production". As we shall discuss below, the material encounter between text and reader, the moving spatio-temporal material process, became a central element of our workshops both in the construction and in the translation of asemic texts.

In his recent book *Translation as Experimentalism* (2022), Lee builds on his earlier ideas around materiality and embodiment to develop the concept of ludic translation. Thriving on creative indeterminacy, Lee (2022, pp. 63–64) describes ludic translation as:

> contingent on all the material and non-material circumstances surrounding a translation event … taking us away from outcome-based thinking that focuses on a single, clearcut, definitive solution to any given translation problem. Indeed, ludic translation embraces untranslatability itself as integral to the process of translating.

Ludic translation requires us to focus on perception and process, to think through embodied encounter where the body of the participant "interacts with the materiality of the text" where meaning production becomes a "performing act" (Lee, 2014, p. 348). Just as material thinking is essential to mark-making in the creation of an asemic text, the encounter with the materiality of the text is central to any attempt at reading and ultimately performing it.

As Schwenger (2019, p. 146) argues, attempting to read asemic writing entails resisting "the pull of words, the voices in the head that continually

translate into words what we experience". Instead, the reader is required to pay attention to detail, to focus on the emotional effect of the mark on the page and their physical reaction to it. As we argued above for the creation of asemic texts, in reading, too, the asemic offers a way to bypass verbalised thought. Schwenger (2019, p. 146) quotes Rosaire Appel's recommendation for reading Jacobson's *The Giant's Fence*, namely that, in order to facilitate the embodied and affective encounter with the text and thus avoid the readerly temptation to look for concepts rather than focus on individual marks, a reader should trace the asemic marks on a separate sheet of paper. Reading is then enabled through the re-performance of writing and knowledge is acquired through the hand. Reading here requires the active participation of the reader in the text (Scott, 2010, p. 162). Tracing the original marks, physically rewriting them in a different hand in a different place entails appropriation. As such it can be seen as a step towards the kind of translation advocated by Scott in his reflections on translating for a polyglot reader with a focus not on meaning, but on "readerly consciousness and the *experience* of language" (2019, p. 88, author's emphasis). In this case, it is above all the physical experience of the writing/drawing/tracing hand.

Translating the asemic: a memic approach

In his practice, Clive Scott (2010, 2019) has explored the creative aspects of translation for the polyglot reader and creative user of language. Here, the main purpose of translation is "to capture the dynamic of the reader's encounter with [the Source Text]", which focuses on the sensual experience of the text and is "persistently indeterminate" (2019, p. 88). For Scott, the reader's encounter with the text is marked by the inability to reach complete comprehension. There is a looseness in reading, which should be embraced. Scott writes:

> A reader might indeed ask what a text means, but it is not the purpose of reading to find that particular answer; the function of reading is to generate a fruitful participation in the text, out of which senses ramify and develop, emerge and drop from view, such that the translation is, by nature, both expanding and self-multiplying (2019, p. 88).

Translation then is "not a test of comprehension" but it attests to "the fruitfulness of our inability to comprehend" (Scott, 2019, p. 88). The fruitfulness of incomprehension perfectly describes the encounter with an asemic text. Here the question of meaning is thwarted from the beginning – the asemic text cannot be subdued and made accessible. It cannot be resolved but the dynamic, sensual encounter between 'reader' and text is as rich as that between Scott's polyglot reader and the literary text. Like Scott, Sukhonos (2018, p. 133) argues for a focus on "the sensory details" that comprise an artwork or literary text in order to arrive at an embodied understanding, which is "embedded

in [the] concrete nuances, techniques, and gestures that constitute aesthetic experience".

Focusing on sensory details, on structure, form and motif, is also at the heart of Lee's (2022) guidelines for ludic translation: building on Varis and Blommaert's (2015) work on internet memes, Lee adopts Richard Dawkins' (1976) concept of the meme (a 'cultural unit of transmission') as a central element of ludic translation, in which memes come to replace words as units of transmission. Lee demonstrates the effectiveness of a memic approach in the translation of concrete poetry (that also tests the boundaries of language) from Chinese into English. The identification of the meme, i.e. asking what the poem does through its visual form, structure and motif and how it does it, results in a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the text which allows the translator to depart from a purely verbal translation (which is bound to fail given the difference between the sign systems) and recreate the effect of the Chinese poem within the affordances of the English language.

As asemic writing resides on the borderlands of language, memesis appears an appropriate way to approach it. Building on Scott's (2010) notion of translation as centrifugal practice, Lee (2022, p. 19) writes:

> To read-and-translate poetry in terms of memes as opposed to signs (words, phrases, expressions) is to circumvent the specificity of linguistic form […] It is to fully acknowledge the potential of translation and translators to innovate, to add value to a piece of literary communication by re-articulating or elaborating upon it in a non-linear, centrifugal fashion.

Translating the asemic entails re-contextualising the in-articulable context of the materiality of the asemic text itself. The meeting place between intention and chance in asemic writing, is echoed in translation where we are faced with potential pathways to take (Lee, 2022, p. 20). As we shall explore below, a ludic approach with its focus on memes, form and materiality which takes the experiential aspects of writing and reading into account, lends itself to translating the asemic. Asking the text what it does and how it does it through its material presence, enables translation to take place.

Method: interactive, collaborative workshops

To investigate meaning-making in asemic writing and from there, draw conclusions as to the role of experiential translation in meaning-making per se, we needed to adopt the positions of asemic writer, 'reader' and translator. As we see asemic writing as a form of communication, we decided to invite others to join us on our research journey. Following a practice-based methodological framework, we devised a series of collaborative workshops, which we would lead and also participate in. The workshops employed playful, artistic and translatorial creative methods and resulted in the creation of new works, which formed the

basis of further works/ translations. Practice-based research appeared congenial to our enquiry as it points "towards what we do not yet know and … invite[s] us to un-finished thinking" (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 204). Furthermore, as already indicated above, art practice activates a different kind of knowing, an embodied, tacit knowledge (Barrett, 2010, p. 2, also Sontag, 1965). As we argued above, embodiment is central to the encounter with the asemic. Hence, we posit that what Premjish Achari (2022, p. 13) writes about artworks, can also be applied to asemic texts, namely that they "reveal thinking, and the task is to understand what this thinking can mean through the practice of art [and asemic creation]". Exploring artworks in this way aligns with the nature of transformative research, where knowledge is changed as new experiences 'talk back', framing, encountering, critiquing, and creating new knowledge "as insight is revealed and communicated" (Sullivan, 2010, p. 110). The interdisciplinary nature of our workshops, crossing borders between translation and arts research, attracting a broad range of participants, provided rich ground for such transformative research to take place. We documented the development and experience of the workshops in a series of dialogic blog posts which can be accessed here: https://experientialtranslation.net/tag/asemic-research-phase-1/

Workshop one

Co-organised with the Ledbury Poetry Festival, the first workshop took place over two sessions on 4th and 25th November 2021 in the Barrett Browning Institute in Ledbury.[3] There were eleven participants: poets, text-makers, visual and performance artists and an art therapist. English was everyone's first language with the exception of Ricarda.

The first session focused on the embodied experience of material perception and gesture and the creation of asemic texts. Timed drawing exercises were used to warm up to the notion of thinking through embodied encounter, by exploring our 'being-ness' in space and time and responding to how we might experience this through mark-making. The purpose was to distance one's preconceived subjective agenda and focus instead on the very act of drawing whereby the onus was on process, not outcome. To assist with this, we added tight time restraints that left little room for thinking. The exercises successively removed the certainty of vision placing increasing weight on the other senses, stressing the connection between embodied, material aspects of drawing, of the hand holding the drawing tool scratching the surface of the paper

1. Draw an object in the room, a concrete thing that can be looked at and transcribed. Complete in (a) 60 seconds, (b) 30 seconds, (c) 10 seconds.
2. Draw something in the room in a continuous line (60 seconds).
3. Draw only objects residing in your peripheral vision (60 seconds).
4. Make a 360° drawing of the room paying attention to the polysensory encounter – sight, smell, touch, sound – (60 seconds).
5. Combine the different restraints to make a drawing (5 minutes).

We then asked everyone to create an asemic text in small groups on the basis of their 5-minute drawings. The aim was to generate a text without overt meaning, using the basis of drawing spontaneously and at distance from determination we had practised in the warm-up exercises. The challenge here was to find a way to obscure the original inspiration for the marks, i.e. the sounds, the surroundings, the periphery, and be led by the marks to produce writing without any meaning other than itself.

The second session focused on translation, beginning with two translation exercises that required close looking and listening. Like the drawing exercises, the translation tasks entailed a gradual moving away from certainty. For the first task, we asked participants to translate *A Balade of Complaint* (c. fourteenth century, attributed to Geoffrey Chaucer) from Middle English to contemporary English. For the group of native English speakers this entailed a confrontation with a text that appeared familiar at first glance but became increasingly opaque as they attempted to translate it. The second exercise focused on a homophonic translation of a recorded performance by Roger Blin of Henri Michaux's poem 'Le mal, c'est le rhythme des autres' (1949).[4] The choice fell on this particular poem because of Blin's evocative performance,[5] which brings its particular three-dimensional, rhythmic and haptic qualities to the fore, thus providing ample material for a homophonic translation. The aim of the two exercises was to first get into the headspace of translation, to focus our 'translator's gaze' and then to move away from the translation of verbal content in a bid to open the senses to the different qualities of poetry. We encouraged participants to not only sharpen their ears to the sounds of the poem but also to consider the effect of intense listening on their other senses.

Thus prepared, we exchanged the asemic texts we had produced during session one. The task was to study these texts in small groups and produce a collaborative translation in any medium. This involved close reading and thick description of the text in order to identify the formal and material aspects of the text (the memes) which would enable translation.

Workshop two

Workshop two was held at the Maison pour Tous Marie Curie in Celleneuve (Montpellier) in conjunction with the conference "Traduction et Matérialité (What's the Matter in Translation?)" hosted by the Université Paul Valéry on 9 June 2022.[6] We were joined by fifteen participants. Eight were multilingual conference delegates with fluency in French and/or English. The remaining participants were part of the migrant community of Celleneuve taking part in a French beginner's class. They were all multilingual but spoke little French with first languages of Berber, Spanish, Georgian, and Arabic and little or no knowledge of English. They were assisted by their French tutor, who was also an Arabic student. We led the workshop in English which was translated at regular intervals first into French and then into other languages.

The structure brought together both sessions of workshop one (exploring gesture through the drawing exercises and creating and translating asemic texts) and included a homophonic translation of Blin's performance of Michaux's poem into English from workshop one as a source text.

Analysis: material performativity and the fruitful participation of the reader

As we set out above, asemic writing is conducted by distancing from language. By focusing on the nature of gesture, the asemic becomes a site of potential where material is encountered in an embodied, polysensory way through attempting to write, read, and translate. Foregrounding the physical experience and moving away from meaning-making and determination allowed participants to approach asemic writing as a form of mark-making where the performativity of material gesture moves multimodally across asemic texts and translations. Adopting Lee's memic approach to ludic translation we will now look more closely into material performativity as a meme.

Material performativity in homophonic translation

Our first example is the homophonic translation exercise of Roger Blin's performance. In workshop one, participants were automatically distanced from the language, due to both the complex nature of Blin's performance and limited knowledge of French. While Blin's performance cannot be described as asemic, for a non-French speaker the experience of listening to it could be compared to the sensation of intriguing incomprehension inherent to the encounter with asemic writing.

Starting with a jumble of chaotic but melodic drums, Blin's voice rises above, and then entirely replaces the drumbeat, growing increasingly frantic. It is an evocative performance stimulating not only the aural but also the visual and haptic senses – participants reported feeling the voice in the room, seeing the colours and movement of rhythm and sound. In order to arrive at a homophonic translation of the performance, this aural experience needed to be interpreted. Through sharing the experience of listening to the performance, analysing the pitch, pace and tone of voice, the rhythm, the sound of the words, inclusion of background noises and quality of the recording, the group identified the following meme to determine its material performativity: 'wild, passionate, strange, powerful accentuation, staccato rhythm, movement towards climax'.

We shall use the translation made by performance poet Lorraine Munn in Ledbury as an example for the kind of translations produced by participants.[7] Like Blin's, Munn's performance begins with a drumbeat, which is replaced by the poet's voice. Here, too, the voice swells, the rhythm gets faster and more frantic before reaching climax. The formal elements of Blin's performance have all been translated into this new language, which uses English words that are

not literary translations of French, but rather (re)produce the rhythm, sound and overall effect of the source text. To draw on Lee's (2022, p. 18) description of memesis, Munn's performance "calls out to [its] sources through [its] intertextual, substrate recognizeability", but at the same time it can be seen as an original itself that "generates further memic (translated) versions". We treated it as such when we took it to Montpellier and asked workshop participants to translate it homophonically.

In workshop two, while the linguistic content of Michaux' poem all but disappeared, the meme we had identified above was carried through to varying degrees as participants in Montpellier worked together to analyse Munn's text in preparation for memic translation. In one group, the meme was distilled to the vocal mimicking of the drumbeat accompanied by hand gestures and the repetition of a single line from the poem in recognisable words ("May the singer play the harp"). Another group's translation was performed by simultaneously reading out individual written words and phrases in Arabic, Spanish, German, French and English to capture the rhythm and the strangeness of the poem. The movement towards climax is identifiable but the anger and passion are absent from this interpretation. You can listen to this improvised performance here: https://experientialtranslation.files.wordpress.com/2022/01/rh-text-2.mp3

Another group conducted a multimodal approach, voicing phrases in their different languages (English, French, Georgian, Berber, Portuguese), using an app that translated spoken words. They mimicked the angry tone they identified in Lorraine's wording whilst holding up drawings of things they heard that were not necessarily illustrations of what was spoken, adding another layer of complexity.

The multiple possible pathways the translations took was guided by the material and non-material circumstances in which the translators found themselves (Lee, 2022, p. 20). These circumstances, crucial to the material "re-entextualisation" and "resemiotisation" (Varis and Blommaert, 2015, p. 8) of the meme, were vastly different between the two workshops (see Figure 4.1). Each of the different iterations of the meme worked with different modal affordances, producing different affective outcomes for both the performers and observers.

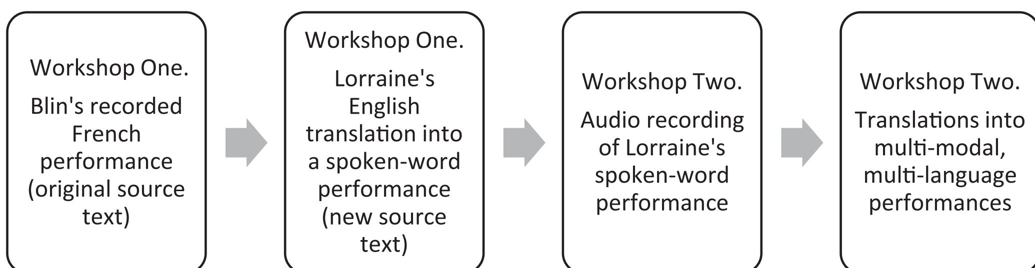

Figure 4.1 The resemiotised and re-entextualised versions of the meme.

Extracting the meme from its original context during the Ledbury workshop was also informed by the cohesion of the group (all shared a language and similar culture) as well as the circumstances of a grey cold November day and the uneasiness that accompanied in-person meetings at a time when Covid rules (masks and social distancing) were still in place. When it was later extracted from Munn's performance and re-entextualised in Montpellier, Covid-rules had been lifted, the greyness of November had given way to the heat (and extreme winds) of a Mediterranean summer and the shared language which had kept the first group together was replaced by reliance on gesture, close listening, and facial expression to overcome language barriers. In Montpellier the resources available to the translators were at once multiplied (many different languages in the group) and curtailed (no common language). We shall discuss these resources further in the next section.

Material performativity in asemic writing and translation

Our second example for a memic approach focuses on the asemic texts created in both workshops. To reiterate, the challenge was to use the 5-minute drawings made during the warm-up exercises as a point of departure to create an asemic text while not interpreting the drawings but regarding them as meaningless building blocks instead.

In the first workshop we, Harriet and Ricarda, worked together for this exercise. In a bid to embrace chance and productive uncertainty, we made a stencil which could be applied randomly to our two 5-minute drawings to decide on the individual elements that were to form the basis of our asemic text. Inviting serendipity to participate in the creative thinking process (Lee, 2022, p. 40), this allowed us to translate formal elements of our drawings into an asemic text while erasing the traces of polysensory features (things, sounds, smells, sensations) which had first given form to the drawings (see Figure 4.2). In this sense, ludic translation played a fundamental role in the creation of the text.

Harriet further adopted a similar approach to Jacobson's creative process of overwriting and gradual obfuscation of meaning (insofar as the original inspiration can be seen as meaning). This approach was also taken by Jeanette, Caroline and Ruth, who used erasure and overwriting to construct multi-layered, abstract but structured asemic texts from the basis of their 5-minute drawings (see Figure 4.3). The palimpsestic nature of their texts recalls the multiplication of the visible and invisible described by Norwood earlier and is evocative of the way ludic translation creates "a semiotic excess or aesthetic remainder" (Lee, 2022, p. 21).

Contrastingly, in workshop two, linguistic constraints between participants meant they used gesture and objects to develop their texts in both unimodal and multimodal methods. One group decided to create the text by adapting the method undertaken during the warm-up drawing exercises by all writing on the same paper simultaneously, rotating the page every time marks were added. This emulates Norwood's approach to writing drawingly but is expanded by

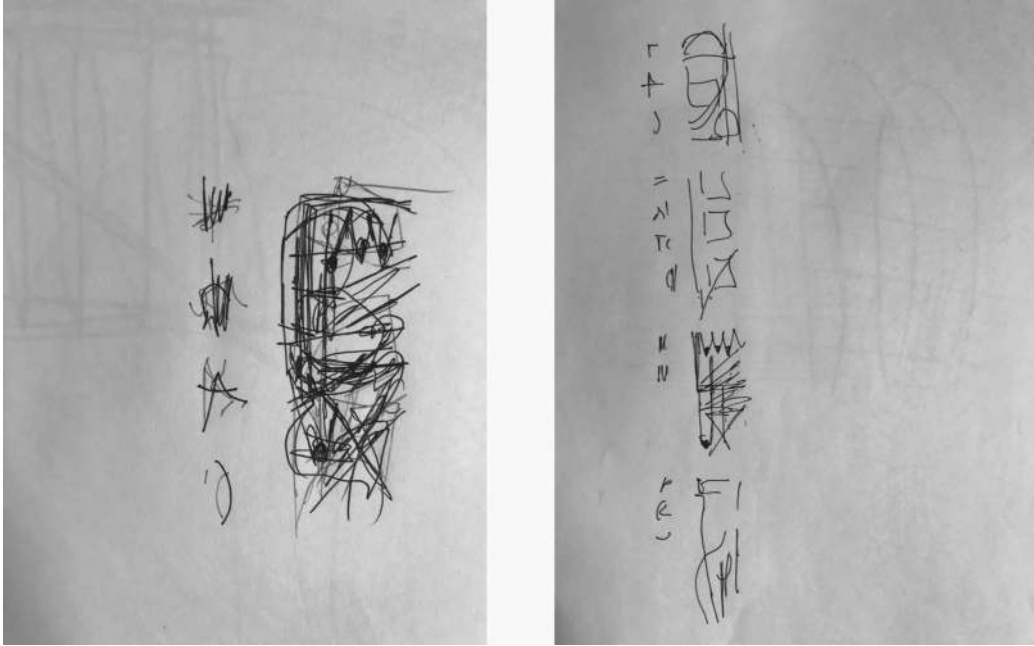

Figure 4.2 Asemic texts created by Harriet (left) and Ricarda (right).

Figure 4.3 Three asemic texts created collaboratively by Caroline, Jeanette and Ruth.

using multiple perspectives and languages of several contributors. While the resulting text was semic (words were written in alphabetic languages) it still closed itself off to any easy or straight-forward readability. Words were scribbled on top of each other, in different languages and sign systems, from left to right or right to left, facing up or down. Participants aptly described their process as 'une bataille de crayons' (a battle of pens).

When thinking about how to construct their asemic text, another group explained their thoughts each using their mother tongue. Non-Arabic-speaking participants discovered a rhythm in one participant's Arabic intonation, which they felt was evocative of their experiences, and so they began drawing to the rhythm of the spoken Arabic as if capturing language through notation rather than through writing words. Here again the serendipity of this playful strategy brought about means to find a way to navigate random marks. This ludic approach to *creating* asemic texts (which already entails translation) proved an interesting point of departure to explore the (im)possibility of translation.

In all the asemic works produced during the workshops the process of making was visible; all had a haptic material presence. Hence, in our attempt to translate them, the focus, once again, needed to be on their material performativity, on form and structure rather than on a search for meaning. We shall explore this with the example of our (Harriet and Ricarda's) translation of the first of Jeanette, Caroline and Ruth's texts (see Figure 4.3) from workshop one.

We identified the meme for performative material as follows: 'A palimpsestic, rhythmic, performative, repetitive structure that grows horizontally and vertically as well as three-dimensionally and disappears. There is a conflict between order and chaos'.

The structure of the text and elements that looked like musical notation led us to translate it into a vocal performance. Our performed translation, which we titled *Signatures and Ghosts* can be accessed here: https://experiential-translation.files.wordpress.com/2022/01/rh-text-2.mp3

We used noise and words to emulate the weight and shape of the sounds (e.g. the deep, rounded sounds of 'rumble' to represent the weighty colour blocks, and the sharper, higher-pitched 'twittering' to represent the scribbles).[8] The performance gets louder and faster towards the middle before ebbing away. In order to embody the conflict between order and chaos and the layered nature of the text, we talked over, on top of, and sometimes against, each other, but always adhering to the same rhythm. The notated gesture was performed, re-entextualised and resemiotised through multimodal means, by haptically sounding, voicing and moving in simultaneous, rhythmic response to speculation of the forms.

Conclusion: uncertainty, (and) the universal borderland of language

The asemic is all about distancing, about obscuring the original inspiration of the text. Its hallmark is the uncertainty of provenance. What matters for the translation of the asemic is the reader, who they are and in what circumstances they encounter the text and attempt to translate it. Hence, the exercises in our workshops encouraged active exploration of the reader's sensory experience. With exercises that embraced and actively courted uncertainty, our workshops encouraged a ludic approach to translation. After all, to be playful is to be open to possibilities, to change, to learn and engage. In this context, workshop two with its multilingual participants who did not share a common language of proficiency, offered a particularly productive environment for playful collaboration and a joint exploration of the asemic and its overt illegibility. This was further enhanced by the palpable circumstances of wind and weather. The workshop took place outdoors on a very windy hot day. During the drawing warm-up, participants took in the polysensory nature of our surroundings (sound, atmosphere, sight, aroma), encountering the turbulence of the wind, delicacy of birdsong, roar of passing traffic, brightness of the light. Earlier, we described the chances and accidents of drawing as pen meets paper and the

materials 'draw back'. On this occasion, the wind took centre stage, blowing over cups, spilling coffee and tea over papers and notebooks, making its own distinct writerly marks. The ragged coffee-stained pieces of paper, which participants readily identified as wind writing, served as an eloquent example of the role and work of the reader in the spatio-temporal moment of translating any asemic text. After all, it is the reader who transforms marks into writing.

Here let us return to Scott's (2019, p. 88) definition of reading as "fruitful participation in the text" which multiplies and expands the text, opening it up to new interpretations rather than tying it to a fixed intrinsic meaning. Through playful interactions with the performativities of the unknown and translation via multimodal material, asemic gesture became a suitable evocation of our aim to explore the productive participation of the reader. Much like Scott's polyglot translator, the multilingual participants of the Montpellier workshop embraced the productive joy of incomprehension. The absence of a shared language liberated worries about misunderstanding things, allowing for a joyful reaching for experiences of not-knowing. Collaboratively looking at mark-making through the memic lens of form and structure resulted in what one participant called 'a universal language', which emerged from the sensual and material experiences of people from diverse cultural and language backgrounds.

Attending to themes of embodiment and materialities in the performativity of attempting to write and translate the asemic, the chapter has explored experiential processes therein. It has questioned the potential for pushing language to its borderlands, exploring the experience of navigating through ungraspable moments of written, drawn, and performed communication. Gesture presented itself as an important facet in these methods and appeared multimodally across mark-making and translation. Our workshops found that encountering the asemic takes on the meaning of a universal in-between, between, above, across, and beyond language where material gesture is expanded to become encapsulated in sound and movement. It is above all uncertainty, the hallmark of the asemic, which is central to meaning-making per se.

And now perhaps, you would like to return to our initial challenge to read and start translating.

Notes

1 See our workshop blog posts for a detailed description: https://experientialtranslation.net/category/reflections/asemic-writing/
2 Drawing is distanced from symbolism. Meaning is later applied when articulating material thinking processes. See Carter (2022, p. 203) for an in-depth exploration.
3 Blog posts for workshop one: Session 1: https://experientialtranslation.net/2021/12/07/asemic-writing-and-drawing/; Session 2: https://experientialtranslation.net/2022/01/08/translating-the-asemic/
4 As Michaux's oeuvre includes concrete poetry and asemic writing we felt he would have been sympathetic to our cause.
5 Listen to Roger Blin's performance: https://youtu.be/OBvfpSYHtF4

6 Read our blog post about the workshop: https://experientialtranslation.net/2022/06/27/how-to-translate-the-unknown/
7 Listen to a recording of Munn's performance: https://experientialtranslation.files.wordpress.com/
8 See Campbell and Vidal (2024) for a discussion on cognitive connections between sounds and shapes. Also see Campbell's chapter in this volume on the role of sound in the experiential construction of meaning.

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5 Translating 'The Stone Breakers' by Una Marson

A bridging linguistic experience

Ludivine Bouton-Kelly

Introduction

Translating can easily be defined as a linguistic experience in between languages but translating poetry always entails a type of linguistic experience that requires unsuspected creativity, renewed resources to either respect or transgress prosodic rules and transpose the specificities and sinuosities of a given language. Poetry, of all literary genres, is probably that which most likely resists translation, since it exacerbates the intrinsic qualities and the idiosyncrasy of the language the poet has chosen to write in. This resistance, which has been widely commented on—most beautifully by the French poet Yves Bonnefoy (2013, p. 164)—usually emerges from the impossibility to find a satisfactory corresponding form conveying meaningful sounds in the target language one may translate a poem into. Still, when translating a poem, the translator might also face other challenges, such as political issues related to their own position and the status of the language the poem is written in. Indeed, translation may stand for a relevant literary tool when considering the various interpretations and new readings it leads or gives rise to, but it can also exacerbate the existing tensions between languages—in a colonial context for example—and fail to render the original texture of the poetic material it aims to transpose. As a matter of fact, languages such as Creoles or Pidgins are particularly difficult to translate since the status they were (and are still) granted tends to undermine their poetic force. In translation, counteracting the opacity of poetic language may be challenging but it is all the more difficult when facing the historical dominating features of one language over another.

'The Stone Breakers', a poem by Una Marson written in Jamaican Patois and published in 1937, stands as an excellent example of untranslatable poetic material for it is both aesthetically and ethically extremely difficult, if not impossible, to displace and replace such a linguistic experience into any other language. Even though the poetic quality of Marson's poem is unquestionable, the poem itself was never appreciated at its true value for the very reason that it was not written in English. Patois, or Jamaican Creole, is the term usually

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-8
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used to describe Caribbean speech. Considered as a pidgin or a dialect by the early linguists of the nineteenth century, Patois, like French Creoles, was very much undermined as a minor language, a solely oral language, socially stigmatized. From a linguistic point of view, it was commonly acknowledged that Patois was so much influenced by European lexifiers that it was not a language as such. From a political point of view, since it was mainly spoken by Black people and was often referred to as the language enslaved people spoke, Patois was never studied as a language that had evolved as any European language. Consequently, it was always implied that it could not support the same political or literary force. Adriana Williams states:

> Some linguists argue that [Jamaican] Patois is not a language because of its creolized origins. Within the discipline of linguistics, *Creoles* refer to a speech form that is comprised of two base languages. In fact, the word creole is synonymous with pidgins and dialects, forms of speech that are not languages. Nevertheless, recent investigations have led linguists to confirm that Patois has systemized components, thus separating it from standard English (Williams, 2020, p. 72).

Yet, today, a lot of Patois speakers still deny the fact that their language stands for an actual language and not for a dialect—as if the historical legacy of social linguistics had determined the status of their language for them. Salikoko S. Mufwene, a linguist specialized in creolistics, testifies that Jamaican Creole speakers state they speak English, denying the force of Patois in so doing (Mufwene, 2007, p. 63).

This chapter will explain how I came to terms with translating Patois, in spite of my early reticence, due to the precarious linguistic and political status granted to Patois up to this day. I will explore the issues related to such a translatory enterprise and take Marson's poem 'The Stone Breakers' as an anchor to exemplify my contention. But before I delve into the intellectual and creative process which led me to translate this poem, I will present Una Marson's work in the light of my experiential translation project that is as an act of resistance in itself.

Una Marson, a 'Caribbean voice' in the making

As a Jamaican poetess born in 1905, Una Marson remains almost unheard of outside the UK. She is usually, if ever, remembered for her unfailing activism and her work as a radio broadcaster for the BBC (a film about Una Marson called *Una Marson: Our Lost Caribbean Voice*, was broadcast on the BBC for the first time in the UK in October 2022). She was a very prominent figure in post-war London though and she played a crucial role in the promotion of Caribbean poetry. The programme she ran from 1943 to 1946, 'Caribbean Voices', proved to be a wonderful springboard for

many authors, such as George Lamming, Sam Selvon or Kamau Brathwaite. She worked tirelessly to make these Caribbean voices heard and she also had to cope with very strong resistance due to the sexist and racist views at the time.

Although she did not truly realize how racist the world was until she left Jamaica and arrived in London in 1932—only to read signs saying "No Irish, no Blacks, no Dogs", she knew from an early age that she had to adopt the White canon to succeed as a poet. Brought up by her father, Solomon Marson, a Baptist minister, her mother Ada and her grandmother Rosalind Mullings, she grew up in a rather privileged environment with four servants and three other, adopted children. While attending Hampton Girls' School, she discovered English literature, which enchanted and inspired her throughout her life. She was a great reader, particularly fond of poetry, and studied, like all the students of her generation, Francis Palgrave's anthology, *Golden Treasury*. She saw William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley as absolute masters and she embraced English literary culture, whose codes she mastered perfectly.

Very early on, however, she became aware of her physical appearance and what it reflected, since she was much blacker than her sisters and suffered from it from her early childhood in a country where skin colour was a sign of hierarchical social ties. As her biographer Delia Jarrett-Macauley explains, Una Marson was soon confronted with two issues, the women's question and the race question, which would fuel her work and her struggles throughout her life:

> All her life Una's physical appearance was a source of conflict and pain. She was conscious of her dark skin even after she found, in adult life, that there was beauty in blackness. In Jamaica fair skin was and is associated with beauty, charm and womanliness. It is only a small step from this notion to the idea that black also equates with dullness, stupidity and likely failure (Jarrett-Macauley, 2010, p. 8).

It was not until she left her native island, though, that she truly understood the stakes of the anti-colonial and pan-African politics that would forge her political consciousness and her writing.

In 1928, she founded a monthly magazine, *The Cosmopolitan* ("*a monthly magazine for the business youth of Jamaica and the official organ of the Stenographer's Association*"), in which she intended to transform the Jamaican literary scene by infusing it with feminist, cultural and societal issues, as had never been done before. She wrote: "This is the age of woman. What man has done, women may do" (Marson, 1928, cited in Jarrett-Macauley, 2010, p. 30). Contrary to its title, *The Cosmopolitan* was less cosmopolitan than Jamaican, but Una Marson's struggle at the time was still primarily about the status of women. In August 1929, in the column "Gentlemen: No

Admittance—Ladies Only", she published a poem entitled 'To Wed or not to Wed', a pastiche of Hamlet's monologue:

TO WED OR NOT TO WED

To wed, or not to wed: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The fret and loneliness of spinsterhood
Or to take arms against the single state
And by marrying end it? To wed; to match,
No more; yet by this match to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To wed, to match;
To match, perchance mismatch; aye, there's the rub;

[…]
(*With apologies to Shakespeare.*) (Marson, 2011, p. 63)

This form of imitation was for Marson a promising tool allowing her to move from tradition to creation, and to express her indignation, even though she still needed Shakespeare's literary support to prove her worthiness.

Pastiche: resisting the canon

Indeed, Marson found in pastiche a wonderful compromise which revealed her talent as much as her humour and her taste for linguistic creativity. The poem 'To Wed or Not to Wed' may seem very traditional in its structure, and there is no trace of dialect, or 'nation language' as the Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite (1984) would call it. The author's apology to Shakespeare at the end of the poem may also make one smile, but the poem does illustrate Una Marson's early talent. Moreover, what might have looked like a very tame literary production stands today as a daring and relevant endeavour, at a time when women, let alone Black women, had a very hard time making themselves recognized as writers.

In October 1929, she published another poem in *The Cosmopolitan*, 'If', a reference to Rudyard Kipling's famous and canonical poem. This pastiche by Marson is all the more interesting when one knows that the following year, in 1930, Kipling welcomed the publication of an anthology of Jamaican poetry, *Voices from Summerland*, edited by Clare McFarlane in London. Kipling's public acknowledgement of this publication gave it a lot more importance and weight (Jarrett-Macauley, 2010, p. 33). Here is an excerpt of Marson's rewriting of the poem "If" (Marson, 2011, pp. 64–65)

IF
If you can keep him true when all about you
the girls are making eyes and being kind,

> If you can make him spend the evenings with you
> When fifty Jims and Jacks are on his mind;
> If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
> Or when he comes at one, be calm and sleep,
> And do not oversleep, but early waking
> Smile o'er the tea cups, and ne'er think to weep.
> If you can love and not make love your master,
> If you can serve yet do not be his slave.
> If you can hear bright tales and quit them faster,
> And, for your peace of mind, think him no knave;
> If you can bear to hear the truth you tell him
> Twisted around to make you seem a fool,
> Or see the Capstan on your bureau burning
> And move the noxious weed, and still keep cool.
> …

Marson's reinterpretation of the last lines of Kipling's poem is quite delightful. The final lines in Kipling's poem:

> Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
> And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!

become, with Marson:

> Yours is the world and everything that's in it,
> And what is more, you'll be a wife worth while.
> (*With apologies to Kipling.*)

Thus, Una Marson addresses women's issues using pastiche, which allows her to articulate a liberating thought within a conventional form. As an imitative form, pastiche enables her to pay tribute to the English authors she truly admires while finding her own path. Very much like translation, it gives Marson the opportunity to write *in between* two different types of writing. In integrating Shakespeare's famous lines or in miming Kipling's iconic poem into her own poetry, she proves her great command of English writing while treating it as literary material that can be altered and reinterpreted to her own intentions.

Writing in Jamaican Patois, the 'nation language'

One could argue that writing pastiche is a way of disguising herself that echoes what Kamau Brathwaite says in his essay 'History of the Voice' (1984) about 'nation language', in particular in the passage where he refers to Édouard Glissant's article (published in the journal *Alcheringa* in 1976), 'Free and Forced Poetics'. According to Kamau Brathwaite, Glissant states in this article that

'nation language' can be defined as the language of enslaved people and that for him, 'nation language' is a strategy:

> [T]he slave is forced to use a certain kind of language in order to disguise himself, to disguise his personality and to retain his culture. And he [Glissant] defines that language as a 'forced poetics' because it is a kind of prison language, if you want to call it that (ibid, p. 16).

But most of all, Brathwaite underlines the fact that 'nation language' must be heard, that it loses its meaning if it is not literally heard in the tradition of the spoken word:

> Now I'd like to describe for you some of the characteristics of our nation language. First of all, it is from, as I've said, an oral tradition. The poetry, the culture itself, exists not in a dictionary but in the tradition of the spoken word. It is based as much on sound as it is on song. That is to say, the noise that it makes is part of the meaning, and if you ignore the noise (or what you would *think* of as noise, shall I say) then you lose part of the meaning. When it is written, you lose the sound or the noise, and therefore you lose part of the meaning. Which is, again, why I have to have a tape recorder for this presentation. I want you to get the sound of it, rather than the sight of it (ibid, p. 16).

This is what convinced me of the importance of giving an audio translation of Marson's poem 'The Stone Breakers' as well as a visual one. The reader of the poem should experience the sound of the language even if they do not understand it. This is also a way to emphasize Marson's strong standpoint to use Patois as literary material for her poetry back in 1937. One should remember how Patois was stigmatized and one might also think here of Frantz Fanon's *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952, p. 18) in which he explains that the use of Creole was first and foremost a social marker. So Marson probably found it very challenging to write in Patois at the time even though she had started addressing the women's question, the race question and the language question after living in London in the Moodys' household, and after meeting the African king Sir Nana Ofori Atta Omanhene of Akyem Abuakwa in London in July 1934 (Jarrett-Macauley, 2010, pp. 46, 68).

Indeed, Marson does not resort to a particular language, in the sense of 'nation language', or Patois, in her first two collections of poems: *Tropic Reveries*, which includes the two pastiches just mentioned, published in 1930; and *Heights and Depths*, published in 1931. That said, she makes an interesting linguistic diversion by daring to pastiche authors such as Shakespeare and Rudyard Kipling, and her early poems cannot be relegated to early works that have sometimes been dismissed as 'un-Caribbean' and therefore uninteresting, for the single reason that they deal with nature and love in a sustained and sometimes outdated language. These two collections, both self-published and

printed by Gleaner Co. Ltd. in Kingston, were followed in 1932 by the production of a play *At What a Price*, staged at Kingston's Ward Theatre, and so it was a very promising literary debut that invited Una Marson to think bigger and move that year to London, where she lived for four years and worked for various associations—such as the League of Coloured Peoples, the Women's Freedom League, the Women's Peace Crusade, the Women's International Alliance or the British Commonwealth League. Hence, it is possible to read Marson's early poems, including the two we mentioned above, as tentative works which would lead her to more personal and experimental writing.

'The Stone Breakers': a poetic achievement

In her collection *The Moth and the Star*, published in 1937, Marson reaches new goals by addressing both racial and linguistic issues. Indeed, in London, she suffered from the hostile gaze of others and, as she grew aware of racial oppression, she resisted, defended women's rights, refused to straighten her hair (Jarrett-Macauley, 2010, p. 48) and wrote increasingly poignant poems such as 'Black Burden' (Marson, 2011, p. 146) or 'The Stone Breakers':

THE STONE BREAKERS
"Liza me chile, I's really tired
Fe broke dem stone,
Me han' hat me,
Me back hat me,
Me foot hat me,
An' Lard, de sun a blin' me."
"No so, Cousin Mary, an' den
De big backra car dem
A lik up de dus' in a we face.
Me Massa Jesus knows it,
I's weary of dis wol' —
"But whey fe do, Cousin Mary,
Me haf fe buy frack fe de pickney dem,
Ebry day dem hab fe feed.
Dem wot'less pupa tan roun' de bar
A trow dice all de day —
De groun' is dat dry,
Not a ting will grow —
Massy Lard, dis life is hard
An' so — dough de work is hard
I will has to work fe pittance
Till de good Lard call me."
"Liza me chile, I's really tired
But wha fe do — we mus' brok de stone
Dough me han' dem hat me

> Me back it hat me,
> Me foot dem hat me
> And de sun it blin' me —
> Well — de good Lard knows
> All about we sorrows."
> In *The Moth and the Star* (Marson, 2011, p. 125)

With 'The Stone Breakers', Marson achieves combining a new theme in a new form. Here, Marson does not use pastiche; she has moved away from her literary models and writes in her own language, her 'nation language', or rather *a* language that suits her purpose, in adherence to her political convictions. If the title of Marson's third collection alludes to Shelley's poem 'To the Moth and the Star', the poems gathered in this book put forward new perspectives and a poem like 'Black Burden' does not so much refer to romantic poetry as it brings to mind Langston Hughes' 1934 collection of short stories, *The Ways of White Folks. The Moth and the Star* is probably Marson's most accomplished collection, although she did publish a final work, *Towards the Stars*, in 1945, which, like the rest of her work, was not fully appreciated. According to Marson's biographer, Delia Jarrett-Macauley:

> *The Moth and the Star* was an admirable book. It was the result of years of experimentation and hard work. Una, following the examples of Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and James Weldon Johnson, was infusing her poetry with black musical notes: the blues and jazz-style song. These were among her most vital and perceptive poems: in the sad dry notes of the blues poems and in the inventive use of irony in her 'social' poems Una revealed her particular strengths (2010, pp. 122–123).

Yet, Herbert George de Lisser, a Jamaican journalist and author, welcomes *The Moth and the Star* as "genuinely good work" (*Daily Gleaner*, 27th September 1937) but also points out:

> The peril with so much free verse is that it tends to be more prose than poetry; and though one may mention Walt Whitman in contradiction of this view, one must remember that Whitman was a giant…While some of Miss Marson's verses in dialect are excellent we do not profess to think that she achieves her best in dialect any more than Claude McKay has done. As a matter-of-fact, as an educated woman, she does not think in dialect; her normal medium of expression is cultured English and some of her best poems are therefore in a language that is so perfectly and inevitably natural to her (*Daily Gleaner*, 1937, cited in Jarrett-Macauley, 2010, p. 125).

In fact, Marson had to fight against aesthetic prejudices reflected in Lisser's own narrow, colonialist, sexist and condescending vision, which was unfortunately quite widespread at the time. For example, Clare McFarlane, also a

poet and a Jamaican, criticizes Marson's collection and in particular her poem 'The Stone Breakers' in the following terms:

> Beauty in the artistic sense is rarely possible in a broken language; this is because the words, the materials with which the artist is building, are blurred in outline and unshapely. The materials themselves are indifferently mixed from dissimilar elements which do not always blend harmoniously. There is in the language itself something ludicrous which, while it heightens humour, often lends a farcical appearance to tragedy and makes burlesque of pathos. This is why an audience will laugh at 'Stonebreakers' when it ought to feel compassion (McFarlane, as cited in Jarrett-Macauley, 2010, p. 125).

This perfectly acerbic and out of place comment fails to consider the aesthetic quality of the poem at its face value. Jamaican Patois is not a broken language… even though it is tempting to argue that a broken language would be perfectly suitable to describe stone breakers! But of course, what is at stake here is the failure to give Marson's language a proper status and to acknowledge the formidable power of writing in Patois. When Marson decides to write 'The Stone Breakers' in Patois, she is no more irreverent towards dialect or 'nation language'—to use Brathwaite's term—than she was, when writing her pastiches, towards what might be called an official language. Why did MacFarlane think that Marson's enterprise was 'farcical'? Surely because he could not see the 'outline' or the 'shape' of a poem like 'The Stone Breakers', considering Patois as a mix of undefined materials only able to convey simple messages and certainly unable to support poetry. But Marson actually manages to articulate linguistic material (Patois) with historical matter (women breaking stones), hence producing with 'The Stone Breakers' a very convincing poem, breaking off with conventional poetic expectations. Just like the photograph 'The Stone-Breakers' published in Nancy Cunard's *Negro Anthology* (Cunard, 2018, p. 454) shows Jamaican women breaking stones with great authenticity, Marson's poem stands not only as a historical piece but as an artistic production of great value since the medium she uses serves a political purpose.

Translating Patois, forcing poetics

Hence, it is very hard to do justice to such a text as Marson' s poem, 'The Stone Breakers'. Indeed, the poem, written in Patois, 'forces poetics', inasmuch as "[f]orced poetics exist where a need for expression confronts an inability to achieve expression. It can happen that this confrontation is fixed in an opposition between the content to be expressed and the language suggested or imposed", according to Édouard Glissant (1989, p. 120). The tension between the 'need for expression' and the 'inability to achieve expression' explains the dilemma Marson experienced as a Jamaican poet writing in English and occasionally in Patois. As an educated woman, she was expected to write

in English, but as a Jamaican poet, and what is more, as a woman giving voice to the 'Stone Breakers' in Jamaica, she was torn between the authentic quality of Jamaican Patois and its lack of autonomy in the context of 'poetics'. The poem's reception in 1937 reveals the weight of prejudice upon a language that was still considered as a 'broken language'.

Translating Patois today can be viewed as a rehabilitating enterprise, as a literary endeavour to restore Patois's long denied importance in Jamaican literature. But for such a translating enterprise to be successful, it needs to value Patois's own poetic and political force. So translating Marson's poem into French was a task I thought I could never undertake, in the knowledge that translating Jamaican Patois into French was only acceptable if considered as a decolonizing enterprise, as an attempt to experiment with the porosity between the two languages, in order to examine them as 'equal' languages. As such, the translation of 'The Stone Breakers' into French had to offer new perspectives, only to be found in a creative form. My aim was to offer a bilingual reading of the poem using both audio and video streaming—a multisensory experience based on a text literally flowing before the reader's eyes. The video my translation turned into allows the audience to both read and hear the poem at the same time. Indeed, as I have argued above, only an auditory *and* visual form of the poem's translation could render the texture of Marson's poetic language and its political force. Only such a creative form could convey meaning beyond the meaning of the poem in itself: in fact, hearing the poem in Patois *is* meaningful. As a result, even though my translation does not quite meet the definition of an intersemiotic translation—since it is based on language and language mainly, be it heard or read—the video which supports my translation achieves to exacerbate the oral quality of the text, hence reinforcing, hopefully, its political force. As a translation on screen, dealing with sound, colours and typography, it does come close to a "multimodal affair" to borrow Tong-King Lee's terms: "Literary writing and translation are and always have been a material and multimodal affair—the kinesthetics involved in writing, the words on a page or screen complete with color and typography, vocal sound in the case of oral interpreting" (Lee, 2014, p. 347). Perceiving Patois through a synchronized auditory and visual experience is also a way for the reader to interpret this experience as an engaging form of translation.

This leads me to address another aspect of my project. While translating the poem itself, I was hoping that a creative translatory form of Marson's poem could stand as the result of a theoretical reflection about the translation of works in Patois, "to advocate for a form of theory open to experimentation and critical engagement through creative-critical forms of autotheoretical reflection" (Grass, 2023, p. 12). Indeed, as a translator, I wanted to explore the translation of this poem in Patois as a possible way to extend meaning-making, that is as a means to offer another view of Patois as an authentic language and as literary material. This is the reason why I did not want the sound of Patois to be imaginary, I wanted it to be materialized and part of my translation. So, even though, as I said earlier, my translation is not strictly intersemiotic,

it is not strictly literary either, according to Madeleine Campbell and Ricarda Vidal: "While in literary translation the onus tends to lie principally on the translator to convey the sense of the source artefact, intersemiotic translation involves a creative step in which the translator (artist or performer) offers its embodiment in a different medium" (Campbell and Vidal, 2019, p. xxv). In taking this 'creative step', I hope my translation manages to expand meaning-making towards a more holistic conception of meaning which encompasses senses as well as language.

When 'The Stone Breakers' become 'Les cassœurs de pierre': a linguistic *and* political endeavour

Indeed, as a translator, I was anxious to make Una Marson's voice heard, and I wanted to render the grain of her writing in translation, its materiality. As Tiphaine Samoyault states in *Traduction et Violence*, the materiality of the text addresses meaning before referring to *a* meaning, and translation should transfer this materiality, that is the colours, the sonorities of a text which might seem, to some theorists, untranslatable but which are precisely what needs to be translated. (Samoyault, 2020, pp. 183–184) So the translator cannot undermine what the linguistic material of a text carries, since it is this very material which supports all the meanings anchored in a particular determining historical, political and social context that have to be transposed. The material of a poem such as 'The Stone Breakers' relies on the singularity of Jamaican Patois's sonorities, and, obviously, on its relevance and its power in relation to the voice of the 'Stone Breakers'. These women breaking stones are not only depicted by Marson, they are also recorded in their own language, remembered as 'voices'. Reading 'The Stone Breakers' should be, in that respect, an auditory experience, and this is the reason why my experiential translation of the poem needed to focus on its auditory interpretation as much as its written translation. In Marson's poem, Patois constitutes a linguistic material which is not only a form but a 'mode of intention' to use the words of Walter Benjamin in 'The Translator's Task' (Benjamin, 1997, p 156). However, this 'mode of intention' is still somewhat minoritized in the current linguistic context, due to Patois's lower visibility (it does not appear as a translating language proposed by automatic translation processes, for instance) and to the fact that Creoles and Pidgins are generally given the status of 'dialect'—not to mention the fact that Creoles represent only 150 languages out of the 6,000 or 7,000 spoken in the world, which makes them, according to some people, minor languages among others.

I was tempted myself to treat the voice of the stone breakers in Marson's poem as a 'minoritized' one, that of Jamaican women slaving in a colonial context in general. But the poem carries, through its musicality, a very strong lamenting tone which should not be reduced to any categorization, be it that of a 'minority'. I knew I meant well in my intention to make the voice of Marson's stone breakers heard, but paradoxically, I was ready to refer to

Patois as a 'linguistic minority' while thinking it should never have been considered as such. Consequently, I had to treat Patois as a 'language' if I wanted to feel legitimate to translate it from my position—that of a European translator and academic. Otherwise, I was risking to perceive it, wrongly and in spite of myself, as a mere ornament. Indeed, considering Patois as a 'minor language' can stand for a matter-of-fact statement (for it is true that Patois does not have the same status as English) but it can also stand for a disturbing political assertion (which could rightly trigger great animosity). Thus, I turned away from any references claiming to rehabilitate 'linguistic minorities' while maintaining them in a lower status by labelling them as 'minorities'. In order to be rid of certain widespread linguistic prejudices about Creoles and Pidgins, I needed to take full account of the Patois's force, both poetic and political.

This is why I found great interest in the works of Salikoko S. Mufwene, a linguist who sheds light on linguistics, and more precisely on creolistics, including Jamaican Creole, or Patois, particularly in his book *Créoles, écologie sociale, évolution linguistique*, a printed version of the lectures he gave at the Collège de France in 2003. Indeed, Mufwene redefines Creole vernaculars and Pidgins, thus revisiting common misconceptions in creolistics. First of all, he demonstrates that the emergence of Creoles is part of the evolutionary development of Indo-European languages and that Creoles are in no way productions that would only have links with European languages from a lexical point of view. Moreover, he explains that the development of Creole languages, like European languages such as English, French or Spanish, was based on non-standardized languages, on very heterogeneous dialects that cannot be readily gathered in a single group. Thus, Creoles are not language exceptions and they help us to understand better the evolution of languages in general. Mufwene states:

> Most of the hypotheses about what Creoles and Pidgins are and how they have evolved still bear the legacy of conjectures of philologists in the late nineteenth century. Little of what has been learned from especially theories of language learning has led creolists to question some assumptions that underlie the competing hypotheses on their emergence and how they differ from non-Creole languages. Increasing knowledge of the history of the colonization of the world by Europeans since the fifteenth century has led us to re-examine the social interactions that produced Creoles and Pidgins. What we have learned questions not only assumptions traditionally associated with their uniqueness but also those associated with the normalcy of the evolution of non-Creole languages. Genetic creolistics appears to be, after all, a part and parcel of genetic linguistics; practitioners in both research areas will undoubtedly benefit from talking across their professional boundaries. (2020, p. 137)

Creoles are therefore no more 'irregular' or defective than European languages:

> Since the late nineteenth century, Pidgins have been assumed to be defective, abnormal languages. Their putative expansion into expanded Pidgins, in which case they continue to coexist with their substrate languages in the same territories, can thus be considered as a naturalization process enabled by their respective communities of practice that use them as vernaculars. (ibid, p. 301)

However, it is this notion of 'irregularity' that has sometimes led to an erroneous view of Creoles as 'imperfect' hybrid products, even though the European languages from which these Creoles originate are products just as hybrid and imperfect. They themselves have undergone and are still undergoing changes through contact with other languages and within their own language, which Mufwene calls the internal and external ecology of languages. The contours of European languages are therefore no less blurred or less porous than those of Creoles, contrary to what automatic translation processes or spellcheckers would lead us to believe with their falsely hermetic categorization of languages suggested in their drop-down menus.

According to Mufwene, Creole languages are therefore, very much like any European languages, full of European linguistic substrates such as Old English, Proto-Germanic, Old French or Latin. Thus, the affinities of Creole languages with European languages, as well as their comparable structural evolution, invited me to revisit my perspective to translate 'The Stone Breakers' by aligning three languages, Patois, English and French (the latter being my native language and that I usually translate into). I wanted to consider them as equal—as much as I could, since Jamaican Creole obviously still suffers from the derogatory treatment colonial history has inflicted on it. I wished I could address Patois, no longer as belonging to a pseudo-historical hierarchy but rather standing as tangible material, showing recognizable linguistic traces of English, and other European languages.

From a theoretical point of view, therefore, it is thanks to Salikoko Mufwene's (2020) clarification of the biases that still surround linguistic studies in creolistics that I was able to contemplate the translation of Una Marson's poem 'The Stone Breakers' as a very creative, stimulating, and above all, possible language experience. His analyses of Creoles and his questioning of a very dated view of the evolution of languages—and of the constitution of Creoles in particular—helped me find a way to translate Marson's poem, which at first seemed untranslatable. I relied on the idea—founded on Mufwene's theses—that I was actually able to remodel Marson's poetic material provided I would use my own linguistic resources in French to render a satisfactory translation of 'The Stone Breakers'. If, at the beginning, Patois was partly an obstacle to my reading of the poem—not so much from a poetic point of view as from a purely semantic one—it subsequently and paradoxically opened up

new avenues in which I was able to engage in order to translate this poem into French, without the risk, I hope, of constructing an overly artificial language.

A vocal translation

My project, which consisted in making Una Marson's poetic voice heard in Patois, turned out to be a translation enterprise allowing readers to experience a visual and auditory reading of 'The Stone Breakers'. Indeed, the video that supports my translation (https://vimeo.com/846889356) makes it possible for the reader to listen to the original poem in Patois while reading the translation of it in French almost at the same time. My intention was literally to make it possible for the reader to hear Patois and experience its musicality—in an attempt to make 'audible' a language that colonial history has neglected. The video starts, as expected, with the title of the poem and the credits. Then, the first line of the original poem 'The Stone Breakers' appears on the screen in white letters, and is read at the same time by Tamika Phillip, the voice-over—a Caribbean Londoner who studied Performing Arts and agreed to read this poem as a reading performance. This first line is quickly followed by its French translation in turquoise letters. The two lines then break off in individual letters, creating a visual scattering of letters which gradually leave room for the next line to appear on the screen. The whole poem unrolls gradually, always in the same fashion and the reader is guided through the reading of the poem by the voice-over, by the letters which appear in different places on the screen and by the digital audio signals in dark blue, which sustain a sort of continuity through this breakage experience. What breaks on the screen is not the language *per se*. The letters breaking off illustrate the experience of the 'Stone Breakers' as well as the experience of translation—breaking one language into another. What I hope all readers actually experience is a type of translation which flows between Patois and French and renders the consistency of Marson's poetic language.

As for the French translation in itself, I tried to play with language as much as I could—relying on the plasticity of Patois, on its English roots and its unique reception in French. In the title, I translated "breakers" by "cassœurs", adding the letter 'o' to "casseurs", the literal translation of "breakers", to integrate the word 'sœurs', 'sisters' in French. This way, the reader (who understands French) realizes the people breaking stones are women when reading the 'o' in the middle of the word. They can then hear a woman's voice, be it that of the poet or that of the stone breaker. I also tried to render the rich sonorities of Patois by mingling loose syntax ("tant que fi", "rien qu'à faute au soleil") and old French ("adonc", "hui") or by inventing words ("cassœurs", "endolore"), which aimed to echo the singularity and the poetic quality of Patois. My translation goes as follows:

Les cassœurs de pierre
« Liza mon enfant, je m'en fatigue
De casser les pierres tant que fi,

Ma main s'endolore,
Mon dos s'endolore,
Mes pieds s'endolorent,
Et Seigneur, je n'y vois plus, rien qu'à faute au soleil. »
« Et puis, Cousine Mary,
Le grand backras en voiture
Y nous largue la poussière au visage.
Mon Maître Jésus est au fait de la chose
Je me lasse du monde ci -
« Et qu'en dire, Cousine Mary,
Il faut bien aux enfants des habits,
Chaque jour leur faire le manger.
Ces pères de pacotille debout au bar
Qui jouent aux dés tout le jour long –
Sèche comme est la terre,
Rien n'y va pousser –
Et aussi dur le travail
Seigneur Jésus la vie ci-bas est dure
Je besogne en force pour des broquilles
Jusqu'au jour où le Bon Dieu me rappellera à lui.
« Liza mon enfant, je fatigue tant
Mais qu'y faire – sinon pour nous casser la pierre
Même que les mains m'endolorent
Le dos m'endolore,
Les pieds m'endolorent
Et j'y vois rien faute au soleil –
Adonc – mon bon Seigneur le sait
Tout ce que hui disent nos pleurs. »

Hence, my experiential translation of 'The Stone Breakers' is the result of a long reflexive procedure. It does not aim to resolve the issues raised by an enterprise as ambitious as translating Patois into French; it is only a loyal attempt to engage respectfully in the recognition of any poetry that was relegated as minor on the pretence that the language it is written in is supposedly 'minor'. By offering a new creative form to 'The Stone Breakers', rather than a literal translation, I am hoping that Marson could be considered as a major poet, an author who counts, not only as a spokeswoman for Caribbean writers but as a true 'Caribbean Voice'.

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6 Collaborative translation of a multilayered work of electronic literature

Synthetizing Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story*

Arnaud Regnauld and Gabriel Tremblay-Gaudette

A synthetic *afternoon*

Acclaimed as a pioneering work of electronic literature, *afternoon, a story* (hereafter simply referred to as "*afternoon*") is a fictional hypertext by Michael Joyce, the first version of which appeared—or rather was distributed on floppy disks—as part of the inaugural conference of the Association for Computing Machinery in 1987, a sign, if ever, that this work was present at the very beginning of the literary counterpart to the computer revolution that was gathering momentum at the time. It was produced using the Storyspace software developed by Joyce and Jay David Bolter, a pioneer in the theorization of hypertext. According to Dene Grigar's exhaustive research (2020), *afternoon* has been edited 18 times since its initial publication, resulting in 15 separate versions—the most recent included in Grigar's count being a translation into French we are currently working on. Before going any further, we should specify that this translation endeavour can be broken down into successive (and sometimes overlapping) steps: a linguistic translation of the textual components themselves, a technical translation from one software environment to another, and an intersemiotic translation involving multiple visual interfaces. In the following pages, we will mainly discuss aspects of the technical translation, namely the production of a necessary but aberrant mapping of the work, which will remain invisible in the final product, but which is nevertheless at the core of our experiential relationship with the collaborative translation process required to achieve our project.

Several iterations of the same *afternoon*

Joyce's work is difficult to summarize because of its multiple versions—in more than one sense of the word. Firstly, as a fictional hypertext, its narrative structure is non-linear; several parallel plots overlap, intertwine and contradict each other around the same premise—a man stumbles upon the scene of a car accident that may have claimed the lives of his son and ex-wife. Given the

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-9
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interactive nature of the reading of the work, the progression of the story unfolds in a wide variety of narrative configurations, with this seminal event becoming entirely secondary in the course of one of the reading experiences offered by the work. As Joyce himself explained:

> What I really wanted to do, I discovered, was not merely to move a paragraph from page 265 to page 7 but to do so almost endlessly. I wanted, quite simply, to write a novel that would change in successive readings and to make those changing versions according to the connections that I had for some time naturally discovered in the process of writing and that I wanted my readers to share (1998, p. 31).

However, if, as stated by Tröger, "the text is a virtuality that effectively exists only in the reading that actualizes its meanings" (2004, p. 761; our translation unless specified otherwise) and if "the translator must—and can only—translate these meanings" (ibid, p. 761), the intrinsic variability of *afternoon* only exacerbates the virtual dimension of any text to be translated. And all the more so as the text undergoes multiple instantiations according to each reading experience, and not just the interpretations that can be made of it.

Furthermore, each edition of the work has its own peculiarities in terms of the programming language used (PASCAL, C, Java, Javascript, HTML, C++, Tinderbox, Twine), the distribution medium (floppy disk, CD-ROM, website, downloadable file, USB key), the distribution platform (Macintosh only, or Mac and Windows), not to mention the fact that the number of lexias[1] and hyperlinks between them have increased slightly from one version to the next, stabilizing at 539 lexias and 951 links, and that each transcoding involves variations that affect the visual appearance of the work's interface as well as the number of navigation functionalities available.

Given the proliferation of existing versions of *afternoon*, producing a new version—and an original French translation at that—is as much a puzzle as an act of bricolage: not only do we have to assemble the various pieces of the work, but we also have to find heuristic solutions to new problems that arise along the way. The approach required to bring such a project to fruition is therefore based on a series of operations that go beyond 'simple' cross-linguistic translation, in that the technological considerations carried out by one group of contributors often interfered with the translation of semantic content, which was handled by another group.[2] The first definition of the word synthesis in *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* reads as follows:

A the assembling or combining of parts or elements to form a whole.
B the preparation of a substance by combining chemical elements, groups, or simpler compounds, or by decomposing a complex compound.
C the combination of often different ideas into a coherent whole. Also: the complex so formed (2023).

And a synthesis is precisely what is required to successfully complete the collaborative translation of *afternoon* into French.

The challenges of translating hyperfiction

By insisting on the materiality of its medium, due to its display interface (disconcerting for its first generation of readers and still difficult to grasp today), *afternoon* acutely raises the question of technology in its relationship to knowledge, that is, to science, insofar as it tends towards a form of truth, and to imagination, which escapes the conceptualization proper to calculating reason. Technology creates a tension between its openness to meaning, insofar as it unveils the world, and its closure to an a priori fixed utility. However, electronic hypertext is part of an imaginary representation of technology as a vector of freedom, and it is preferable not to indulge in the emancipatory fantasies that may have accompanied the advent of hypertext, which became a form of poetic and political utopia for its inventor, Ted Nelson (1981, 1987), or certain literary critics such as George Landow (1992) and Jay David Bolter (1990).

The very form of digital hyperfiction is based both on a programmatic, binary and semantic logic that treats content as manipulable data, and on a poetics of the work that aims to thwart any calculability by saturating the possible, at least for human memory: while the computer tool is memory in the sense that it allows us to repeat the past (Bachimont, 2010, p. 37), anyone who has the experience of reading *afternoon* is quickly confronted with cognitive overload, and it becomes impossible for the translator—as well as the reader, incidentally—to hold all the narrative threads simultaneously. This reading process is truly heuristic, that is to say that we, the translators, have tried to problem-solve by trial-and-error methods, placing ourselves in the dual and flickering position of (blind) readers to remain as close as possible to the actual reading experience of the work, and (literally) argus-eyed metareaders with access to an overview of the work.

Translating *afternoon* is not a question of following a more or less convergent string, but of allowing the virtual coexistence of a multiplicity of potential resonances. The main difficulty lies in what the hypertextual device does to language and narrative structure, given that Aristotelian logic would have us believe a narrative should break down into a beginning, a middle and an end according to an immutable linearity, something that *afternoon* is determined to deny its readers. As Joyce points out in the preface to his work: "Closure is, as in any fiction, a suspect quality, although here it is made manifest. When the story no longer progresses, or when it cycles, or when you tire of the paths, the experience of reading it ends" (Joyce, [1992] 2001, "work in progress", n.p.). This further complicates the aim of achieving some kind of stability in the translation of such a work, because, as Tröger puts it:

> If the text is a network of possible meanings, i.e. multiple meanings, conditioned by the text's material framework, or rather the *dispositio* specific to the singular text and by the particular syntax of the language, then the text as a particular network can never be fully translated, since this *dispositio* would have to be restored — in particular, its possibilities of meaning not yet actualized, and which, moreover, may never be! Thus,

> there is no ultimate translation, because there is no ultimate understanding either (2004, p. 757).

Furthermore, if, following Bachimont, "an apparatus [*dispositif*] corresponds to a spatial organization of elements in such a way that the configuration determines a temporal unfolding" (2010, p. 22), the temporality of *afternoon* remains in flux. It is a post-cinematographic work that constantly recomposes narrative flows using a topological rather than chronological editing technique, even if it means producing aberrant false connections by generating new distributions between points on the narrative continuum with each reading. This means each point has a relative and shifting position in the work as opposed to the two-dimensional geometric computation of spatial distances. As Adrian Miles analyses: "The comprehension of discursive structure in hypertext is volatile to the extent that it is pragmatically, not grammatically, determined, and so remains outside of normative prediction and pattern" (2001, n.p.). Not only is there no pre-established narrative grammar, but the emergence of meaning operates according to a recursive logic that depends on the context of a given reading experience, which remains variable. Each lexia remains autonomous, possesses its own internal coherence and can participate in one or more narrative sequences, depending on the reading path. Indeed, the same lexias may reappear in different narrative sequences, blurring the referential purpose of deictics, pronouns and even first names, and interweaving potentially divergent isotopic chains.

According to Miles, however, the paradigmatic dimension depends less on the choice between different units or lexias than on the disjunctions or convergences between the different narrative sequences, or "episodes", in Rosenberg's terminology (1996, pp. 22–30), which form these autonomous syntagmatic chains and which constitute the "paradigmatic continuum by which we judge or interpret hypertextual sequences" (Miles, 2001, n.p.). The hyperlinking of two lexias is not necessarily meaningful in itself, at least not semantically, and thwarts any anticipated syntactic interpretation (Pajares Tosca, 2000). Meaning always depends on the narrative context, as well as on the reader, and even on the narrative context created by the reader's own journey—a journey that develops in the course of a blind exploration, more akin to wandering than to an oriented, signposted traversal of a circuit. Joyce's work is largely based on the performative unveiling of meaning induced by the interactivity that presides over the choice of "words that yield" (see Figure 6.1), thanks to a new technological dimension, namely the introduction of conditional hyperlinks.

Thus, the multilinearity inherent in hyperfiction signals the failure of any attempt to map space and time in Euclidean space or on a single timeline. For this reason, the translation of *afternoon* should not be approached according to a topographical logic involving fixed positions and unvarying connections represented on a two-dimensional map, but rather a diagrammatic one, in the sense that "the diagram is the set of transformations of the continuum,

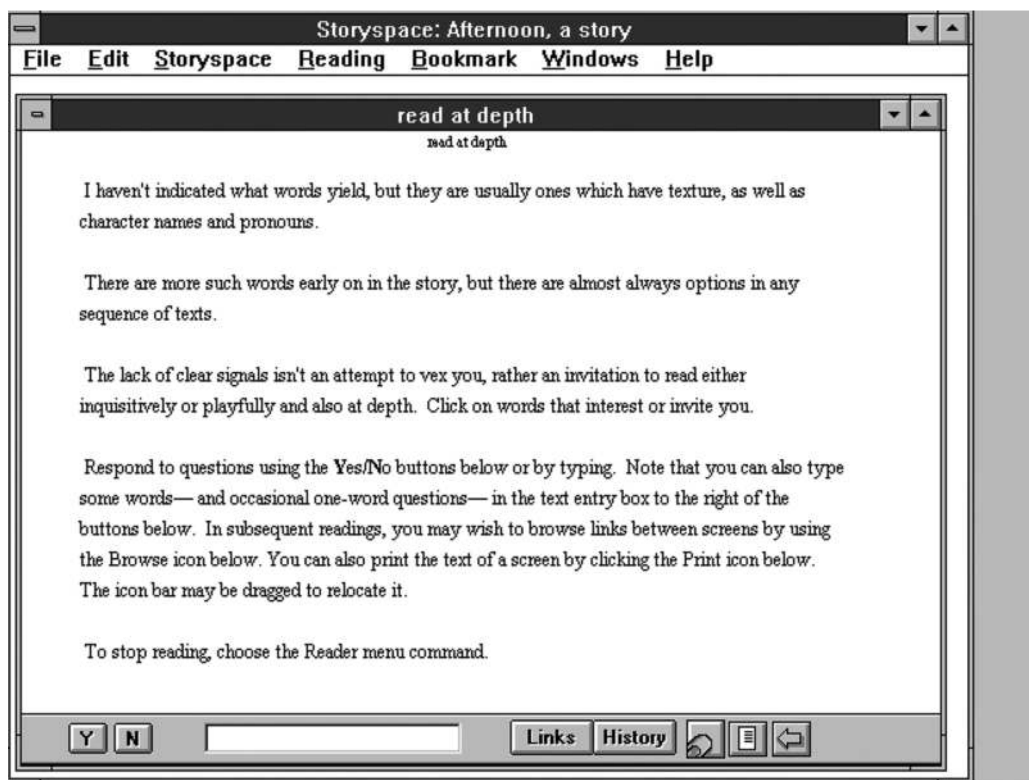

Figure 6.1 Screen capture of the lexia "Read at depth" in Joyce's 1995 version of *afternoon*.

the piling up of strata or the superimposing of coexistent sheets [of past]" (Deleuze, [1985] 1989, p. 121).[3] Furthermore, Joyce insists on the need to approach his work from an intuitive reading, based on a haptic relationship with the text. This is illustrated by the metaphor of the texture of words, which can be understood as the way in which the paradigmatic axis thwarts syntagmatic logic by opening up to different metaphorical threads that break the linearity of the sentence and traverse different layers of the narrative. In fact, no hyperlink is visually signalled in the original work: readers grope their way forward, never knowing whether they have clicked on an active link or not, except that the narrative continues, and access to certain links is 'protected' by 'guard fields' or conditional links, components that operate according to Boolean logic[4] and that can be added to lexias to make them accessible only when certain conditions are met in order to limit the possibilities of circulation within the work's hypertextual network. We should also mention that some versions of *afternoon* include functionalities that allow the reader to retrace the history of the lexias visited (a kind of breadcrumb trail built into the work itself) or to write notes that remain attached to the lexias; there is thus a kind of invitation to manually appropriate the text of the work as one reads it over and over again.

As Belinda Barnet (2012) has noted, the scholarly and cultural context in which *afternoon* was conceived is indicative of a certain vision of electronic

hypertextuality as a device closer to the workings of the human mind and, in Bolter's case, memory:

> The computer … offers us a "new dimension" in the representation of information. In building such structures, computer memory is associative rather than linear. It allows us to follow networks of association in our data, as indeed human memory does. This fact was particularly appreciated in the oral culture of Greece and Rome (1984, p. 163).

This comes after Vannevar Bush's seminal article 'As We May Think' (1945) that aptly reflected the concerns of the time. However, the scientific community working on the question of electronic hypertextuality was already resolutely committed to the path of artificial intelligence (Barnet, 2013), a subject which, incidentally, was addressed in *afternoon* by a double reference to the LISP programming language (see Figure 6.2). It is therefore tempting to draw an analogy between the distribution of points on the continuum and the latent space on which recursive neural networks are based. The idea is to map the closeness and distance between words to build sequences based on a probabilistic calculation. Although latent space cannot be represented in phenomenological space as it can be grasped by a human being, it nevertheless defines regions in which words and expressions are grouped by similarity in a vectorial

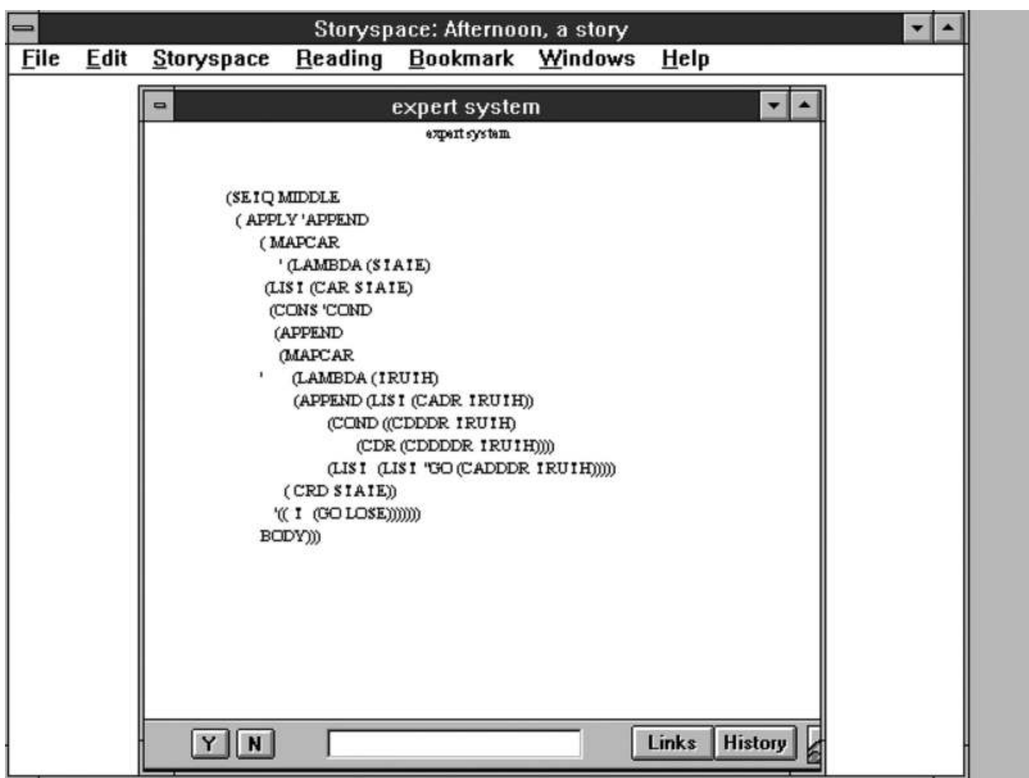

Figure 6.2 Screen capture of the lexia "expert system", from Joyce's *afternoon, a story*, is written in LISP programming language.

space: this is relational (rather than topographical) cartography, in which each object is defined in relation to the other objects in a database.

However, just as it is not possible to map one language onto another without changing the distribution of points in latent space, it is not possible to imagine a perfect syntagmatic articulation of *afternoon*'s lexias when the work itself tends to thwart the linearity of the narrative by multiplying branches, repetitions and also breaks in order to maintain a form of narrative instability that requires a heuristic reading by trial and error based on a performative approach. As the poet Jim Rosenberg puts it so well: "The structure of the episode is what the user makes of it given the available tools of the gathering interface. [In the absence of] an explicit formal gathering interface, the main tool used in structuring the episode is simply the user's memory" (1996, p. 27). Rosenberg defines the episode as the combination of several "actemes" (ibid, p. 22), that is, a reading gesture such as clicking on an invisible link. In other words, in the absence of a map, the narrative structure of the work emerges from the reader's own reading experience, which is limited by her own memory capacity.

Incidentally, the notion of latent space used in AI systems is reminiscent of the language system described by Saussure in his *Cours de linguistique générale*: "Within the same language, all words expressing similar ideas are mutually limited ... language is a system in which all terms are interdependent and in which the value of one term results only from the simultaneous presence of the others" (1978, p. 160). Now, a computer database does not encompass language ['*la langue*' which is independent of and pre-exists any speaker as opposed to '*le langage*', i.e individual utterances] that every human speaker touches upon without ever exhausting it. Such a database is certainly incommensurable with human memory, but it does not contain all the virtualities of language, even as it evolves over time, diachrony being one of the essential dimensions in the formation of meaning. This is also what Joyce refers to in one of the lexias that serve as a kind of paratextual tutorial for *afternoon* (Figure 6.3).

The genesis of an inescapable cartography

Tremblay-Gaudette's involvement as technical production manager for *afternoon*'s French translation project began after the linguistic translation of all the lexias had been completed.[5] At this stage, a number of decisions had to be made before the technical side of the project could begin. It is important to retrace them in order to explain how we came to produce a cartography of *afternoon* that runs counter to the conception of our experiential relationship to the work, based on singular (yet plural) and shifting readings of the work.

The first production decision was to choose the version of *afternoon* that would serve as the starting point for our translation. As mentioned above, Grigar (2020) lists 18 editions and 15 versions of the work, but these were not necessarily available to us. At the start of the project, Tremblay-Gaudette

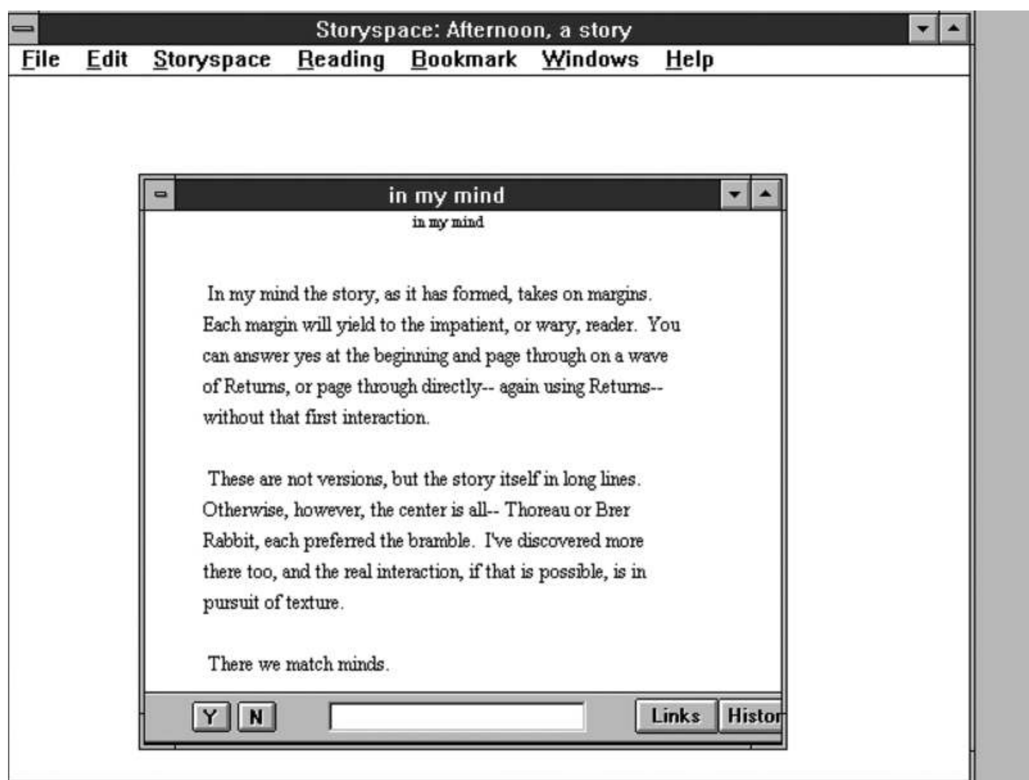

Figure 6.3 Screen capture of the lexia "in my mind" in Joyce's 1995 version of *afternoon*.

had access to a version of the work on CD-ROM for Windows 3.1, available at the Laboratoire NT2 of the Université du Québec à Montréal, which had the advantage of being accessible through an emulator of Microsoft's operating system. The backward compatibility of this version was also a key feature, as several people could access the same software (in other words, the same source code) throughout the project. In short, it was not a conscious decision to choose Grigar's '13th edition/version 10.0'[6] as the source from among all possible choices, but rather a contingency related to its availability.

Tremblay-Gaudette's task of producing a translation of *afternoon* was largely based on his knowledge of a then-colleague from the NT2 Laboratory's attempt to 'flatten' Joyce's hypertext. Gauthier's initial motive (2012) was to provide a visual representation to somehow clarify the question of *afternoon's* narrative complexity, which, in his opinion, had been the subject of a disproportionate critical attention in its reception.

To do so, Gauthier set out to reproduce the hypertextual structure of Joyce's 1992/2001 edition of the work by accessing a section of *afternoon*'s navigation interface which, according to Storyspace's specific programming logic, displays the (otherwise invisible) hyperlinks present in a lexia (see Figure 6.4—'paths' corresponding roughly to the hyperlinked text segments in each lexia, then "destination" matching the title of the lexia to which the path gives access, and finally 'guard fields'). Gauthier systematically transcribed

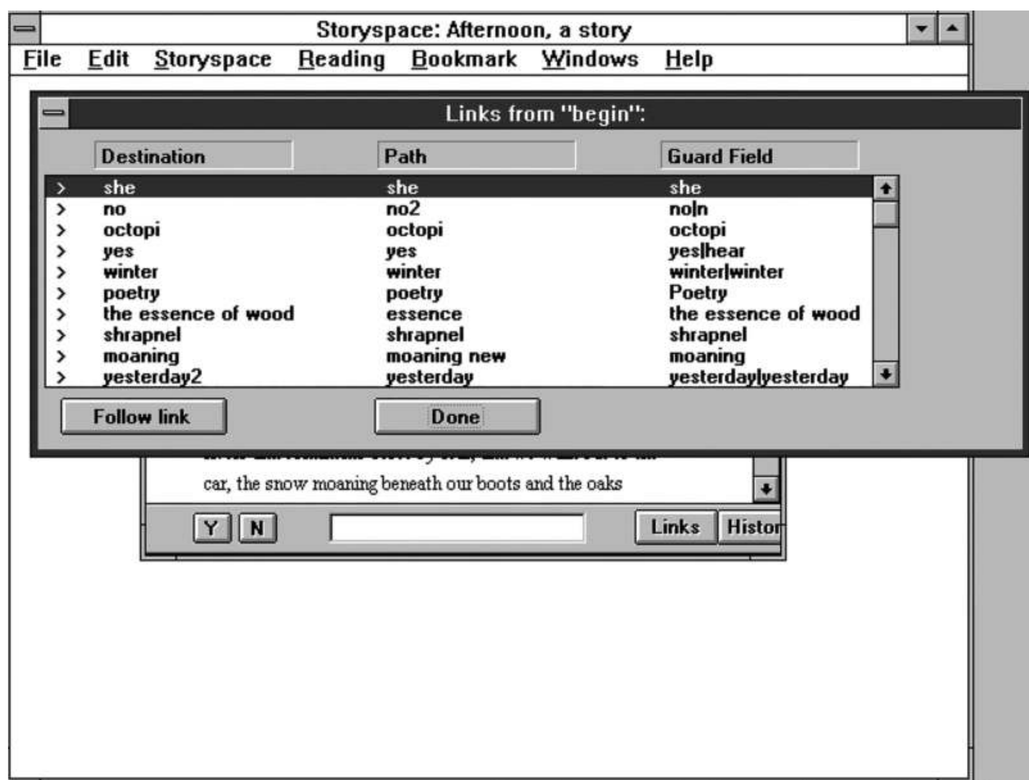

Figure 6.4 Screen capture of the "links" navigation interface menu from the lexia "begin" in Joyce's 1995 version of *afternoon*.

this information into a grid which, in theory, indexed all existing lexias as well as the hyperlinks interlinking them to one another.[7] This data extraction exercise was carried out on the CD-ROM version available in the NT2 laboratory and reinforced our decision to use it as a starting point for the technical side of the translation of *afternoon* into French.

However, the result of Gauthier's operation was far from perfect. First of all, the input software chosen to store the result of this extraction was Microsoft Excel. The form taken by this work follows logically from the spreadsheet system in which the information was deposited: it is a rigid table, with rows and columns, whose deployment follows a predominantly linear logic from the 'beginning' (the lexia 'Begin' finds its place in the top left corner of the table) and whose somewhat mechanical production does not do justice to the narrative meanderings generated by the multiplication of the networks of circulation that Joyce arranged in his work. Gauthier's work made it possible to present the sum total of *afternoon*'s lexias in a synoptic visual representation that could be grasped at a glance, but the contracted form of this representation was more an inventory than a proper mapping. Despite its fixed form, this exhaustive inventory of *afternoon*'s content was an almost indispensable starting point before embarking on the project of (re)creating *afternoon* using new software, better suited to handling a hypertextual

narrative than an Excel spreadsheet, and more accessible than a new version of the work created in Storyspace.

The next decision was to choose the software in which we would reconstruct *afternoon*. Another question immediately arose: did the software interface constitute the 'letter' of the text, as Berman defines it, in that it fully participates in the meaningfulness [*signifiance*] of the work? According to the philosopher, "the letter is all the dimensions attacked by the system of deformation", which can be understood as "the destruction of the letter in favor of meaning" (Berman, 1999, p. 67). Among the deforming tendencies he identified stands the rationalization that "violently reduces the original arborescence to linearity" (ibid, p. 53), a deformation all the more acute in a work whose entire structure is arborescent, reproducing at the lexical level what happens syntactically at the level of the sentence. These deformations include "repetitions, cascading relative and participle proliferations, insertions, long phrases, verbless sentences, etc." (ibid), all of which are analogous to the way in which the syntagmatic chains formed by the episodes are structured. On the basis of the figures identified by Bernstein (1998, p. 22), we could mention, for example, the "Rashomon pattern",[8] which consists in the temporary interruption of what he defines as a "cycle",[9] and which comes under the heading of an insertion or digression, as well as verbless lexias, sometimes reduced to a single word or even a letter, which in *afternoon* constitute figures of elision bordering on nonsense.

However, Storyspace, which was used to produce ⅔ of the existing versions of *afternoon*, seemed unsuitable for a number of reasons, not least that it is only available for Mac computers. Leveau-Vallier prepared a review of possible software, and a consensus was reached on Twine, an open-source program dedicated to the creation of 'interactive fiction', with which Tremblay-Gaudette was already somewhat familiar. In addition to offering a visual interface that allowed Gauthier's visual inventory to be reproduced in a software environment capable of producing hypertext, and thus providing a framework for reconstituting the work in a new software environment, Twine provided a certain flexibility in terms of the layout and graphic appearance of the document resulting from our work, through the manipulation of the CSS code.

Above all, Twine could easily accommodate one of the most significant features of Joyce's work, namely the presence of 'guard fields'. As Barnet notes:

> The reader's experience is thus literally as well as metaphorically shaped by the path already taken, enabling Joyce to repeat terms and nodes throughout the work and have them reappear in new contexts. Conversely, they enable Joyce to ensure that readers don't access key nodes until they have seen or visited others; although the narrative seems to be following a path that may have been followed before, it changes slightly at the next turn (Barnet, 2012, n.p.).

The use of a different software environment also raises the issue of transcoding as a destruction of the original, an operation far more radical than

cross-linguistic translation. However, Berman defines the ethics of translation as a form of welcoming the otherness of language as other, which leads him to define translation as "seeking-and-finding the unnormed of the mother tongue in order to introduce the foreign language and its expression" (1999, p. 131). The question of the non-normative arises in an almost paradoxical way in programming a language that postulates its own universality on the basis of a normative system. However, there are still degrees of freedom that only an experienced programmer can explore, hence the greater or lesser elegance of a sequence of lines of code. Since we cannot intervene at this level of granularity, this aspect remains a blind spot in our work and the articulation between the underlying code and natural language (in a linguistic sense) remains to be discussed.

Reproducing the structure of the work by copying Gauthier's inventory spreadsheet in Twine allowed Tremblay-Gaudette to insert translations of the texts of the lexias into French and then to add direct and conditional hyperlinks between the lexias, this time relying on the navigational information available on the interface provided for this purpose in the source version of the work, and manually testing each word in each lexia to identify those that 'yielded'. From an inventory of lexias and their texts, the cartography produced in Twine had gained additional density through the establishment of the connections of this vast hypertextual network. However, since the links between lexias were visually signalled by lines and arrows connecting the boxes representing each lexia in the visual interface, we could see that the result of this operation produced a particularly dense and confused jumble (see Figure 6.5).

Tremblay-Gaudette attempted to 'unravel' this map, to make it less visually compact, to better observe the trajectories and circulations between the lexias, to find out if it was possible to identify significant pathways or even *desire paths.* The reorganization of the lexias that followed was also intended to construct reading orientations based on clusters of meaning, which could eventually serve as a guide for the post-editing work (see Figure 6.6).

However, it soon proved impossible to produce a version of *afternoon*'s cartography that could be laid out in a neat and orderly fashion. Certain narrative trajectories could be laid out by placing the lexias end-to-end, for those whose hyperlinks 'naturally' form a relatively linear begetting. Still, there were too many parallel trajectories and cross-paths branching off between these different lines for the result of this reorientation operation to really achieve a form that would be satisfactory and effective in terms of visual cartography. Even if one produces a result that breaks away from the logic of the inventory proposed by Gauthier, that aspires more to something like a road map or the presentation of a subway system with its branches and connections, the entanglement of *afternoon*'s hypertextual network resists, even refuses, such a classification operation.

It should be noted at this point that there are still a number of operations to be carried out before we can complete (or at least bring to a satisfactory state) our translation project, including the addition of certain navigational

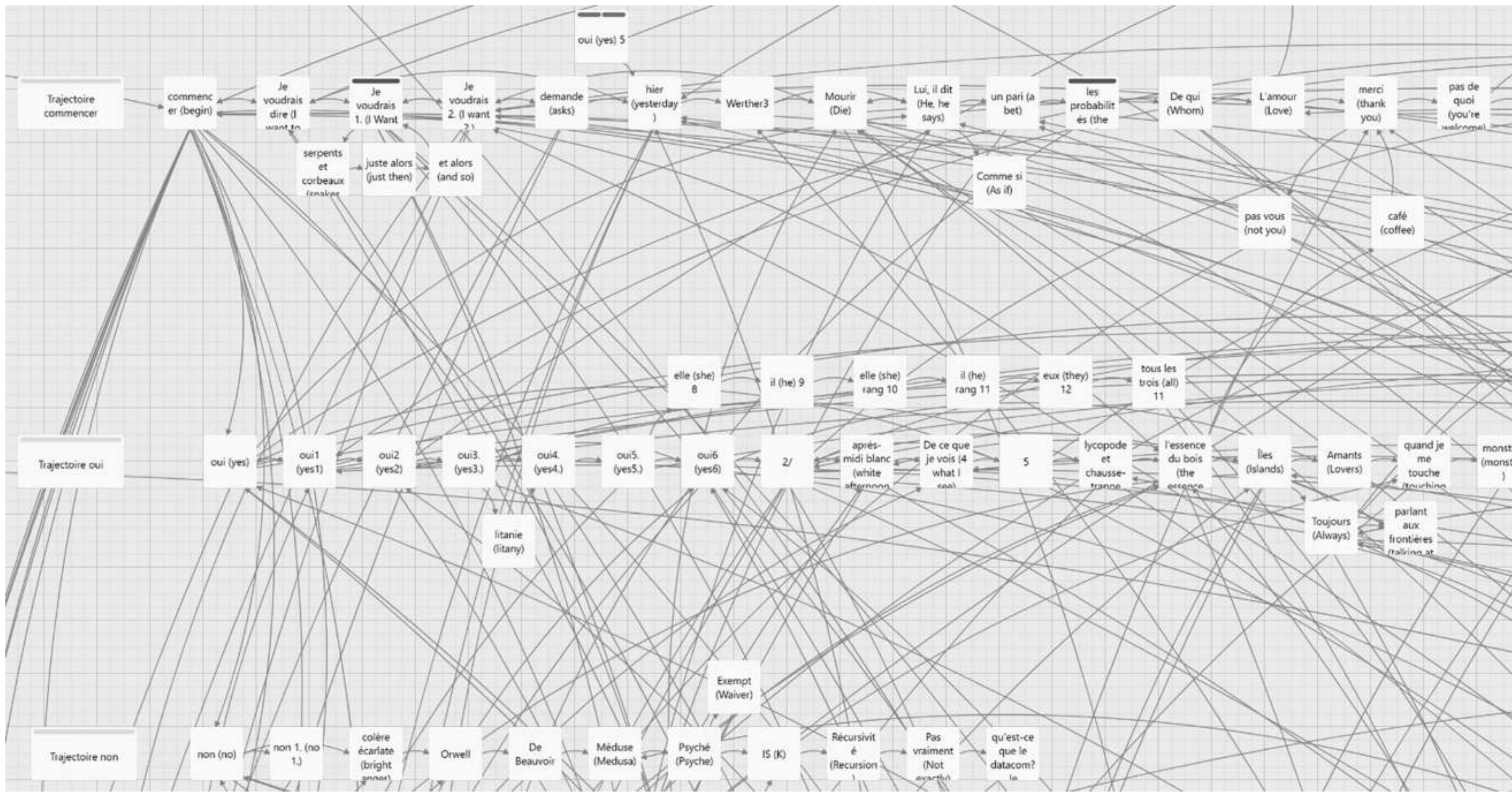

Figure 6.5 Partial screen capture of the initial narrative structure, following Gauthier's work, of *afternoon* in Twine.

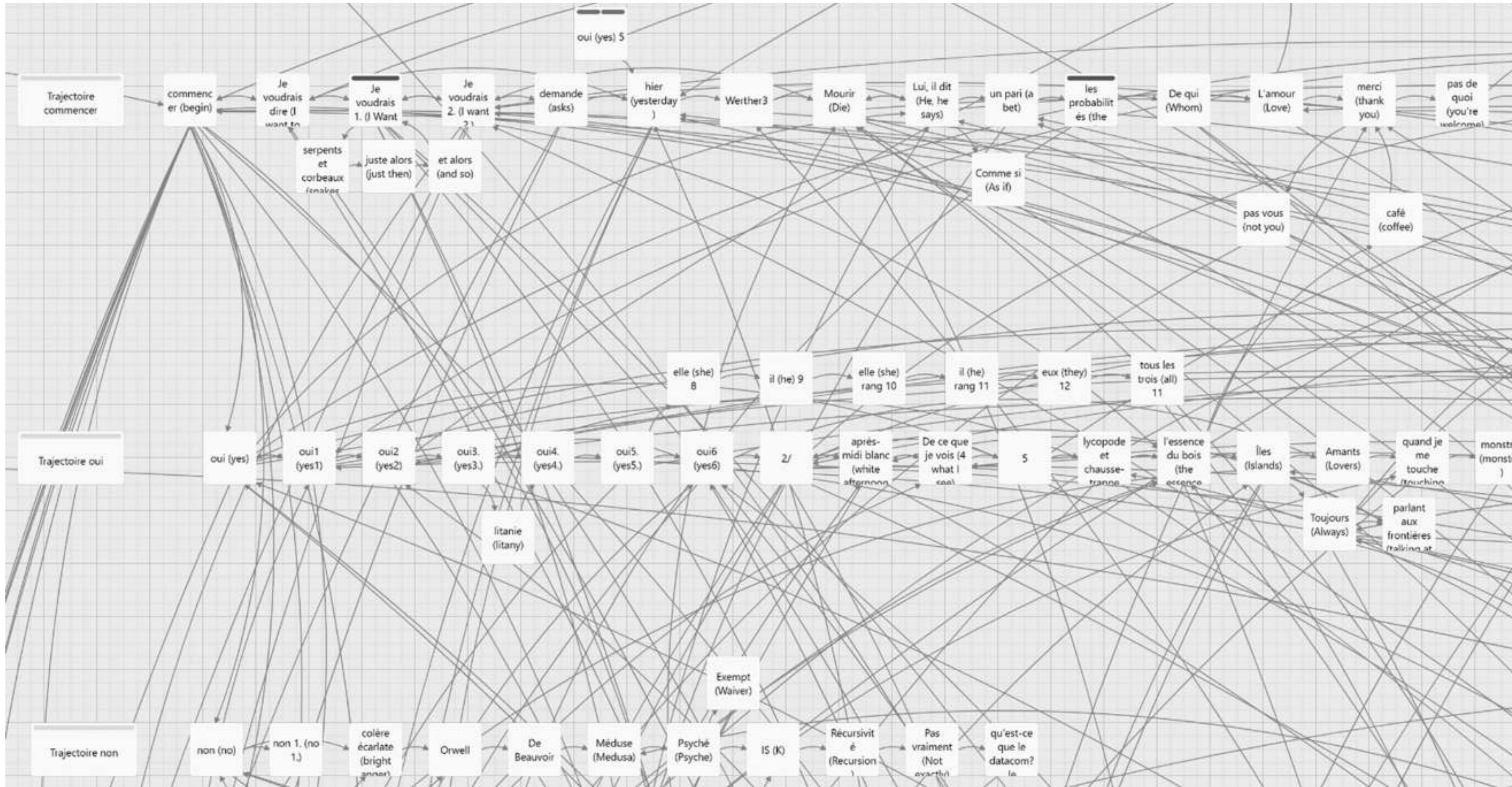

Figure 6.6 Partial screen capture of the reorganization of the narrative structure of *afternoon* in Twine.

functionalities (present in the original work) within our version in Twine, the (re)creation of a visual interface for our version which could constitute a kind of synthetic take on the previous versions, a linguistic harmonization of the texts inserted and rearranged in their respective lexias, a rigorous beta-testing of as many of the work's reading trajectories as possible, and so on. However, the operation of producing a cartography of *afternoon*'s hypertextual network, necessary to proceed with our project, raised enough conceptual questions for us to pause for a moment, which will be an integral part of our experiential relationship to the translation of this work.

Rejecting an aberrant cartography

Our collective approach to the translation of *afternoon* is a way of traversing different layers blindly and asynchronously, the main difficulty being to produce a synthesis with the maximum degree of openness so as not to limit in any way the combinatorial potential of the work. This is why the final version of our approach cannot be mechanical, it can only be collective, because it is not a question of producing a middle path induced by linking probabilities or by a cartographic configuration in a software program that allows the visualization of *afternoon*'s hypertextual network: the logic of the text is adverse to such devices, and this is one of the reasons why Michael Joyce has chosen not to offer a cartography of the work to facilitate navigation—all the more so since he himself composed *afternoon* largely from scattered notes, working directly in the software space of Storyspace, as he indicated in an interview with Belinda Barnet (Barnet, 2012).

Twine's modelling is closer to a chart than a map, in that it introduces a synoptic vision of time and a predictability of possible combinatorial arrangements (Bachimont, 2010, p. 165) that blind navigation, or reading by trial and error, has been precisely designed to thwart. But—and here comes the almost insurmountable tension of any attempt to translate this work—the flattening of the work is made impossible by the aforementioned topological-rather-than-chronological narrative structure, which is not limited to a single computationally determined path, i.e. the "geometric determination of temporal positions" (ibid, p. 77), but potentially articulates several layers of time in a non-Euclidean space. While the structure of *afternoon* is not strictly rhizomatic, or at least pseudo-rhizomatic, being a finite work, Bachimont's insightful analysis applies quite aptly to our case study:

> The network is to computational reason what the table is to graphic reason. While the table provides structure and systematicity between the contents distributed among the cells of the table, the network provides a mode of communication and distribution among the cells of the table. It is a dynamic table.... The network, which eludes spatial synopsis because of its complexity, is a labyrinth in which one loses oneself. It is

> a figure of the irrational, not a way of thinking about the world (2010, pp. 169–170).

It is precisely because the network is a figure of the irrational that it resists calculating reason and thwarts the fantasy of a technological unveiling of the text, and thus of language becoming transparent to itself, as has recently been expected from advances in neural linguistic translation (Regnauld, 2023). In the end, such a translation would be the ultimate example of objectified collective translation, based on large-scale language models that predict syntagmatic sequences according to a probabilistic logic used in machine translation. Should we draw an analogy between the human translator's memory and the dataset involved in the machine learning process, this would require that we train our memory through repeated readings to understand the internal logic of the work, assuming that the various narrative threads unfold in a perfectly coherent manner. But such an analogy is tantamount to confusing intuition with calculation (Leveau-Vallier, 2023). Translation is based on an experiential relationship with language ('la langue') to which we all have access without being able to circumscribe it, unlike utterance, that is, its concrete manifestation.

The translation of *afternoon*, like that of any literary text, cannot be separated from the field of experience. In other words, the process of translating this work cannot emancipate itself from an inductive relationship based on the subjective experience of the text and its visual interface, which place it in a very specific historical context and require the manipulation of digital objects that, in the first versions of *afternoon*, recall the windows of the graphical interface developed by Apple in the 1990s. Translation is above all experience, as opposed to any form of computation designed to "append 'translation processes'" (Berman, 1999, p. 17), or in Heidegger's words,

> To undergo an experience with something—be it a thing, a person, or a god—means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us. When we talk of "undergoing" an experience, we mean specifically that the experience is not of our own making; to undergo here means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it. It is this something itself that comes about, comes to pass, happens (1971, p. 57).

Our relationship to the translation of *afternoon* must therefore articulate semantic, technological, aesthetic and pseudo-topological perspectives in order to preserve the holistic experiential relationship inherent in the work.

Collective translation by a group of human translators does not neutralize subjectivity but introduces a continuous variation of embodied points of view in both translator/reader and in the materiality of the hypertext. They carry the cultural memory of the beginnings of the personal computer, without falling into the error of perspectivism without perspective, i.e. producing a

median point of view from nowhere, non-situated (or at least hazily so for lack of transparency re: the datasets), and supposedly objectified that would be that of the machine. According to Regnauld and Vanderhaeghe:

> Translation no longer produces a fixed outcome, but rather an object that can generate countless variations in the target language. The process of translation not only creates continuous variation but also operates from a flexible framework where the "truth" of the translation is not determined by the translator's perspective. Instead, it is generated by the movement of variation, which is experienced collectively, encompassing digital networks, layers of code, and sets of machines (2014, n.p.).

The recourse to the collective maintains a disjunction of perspectives inherent in the otherness of the other, as s/he is radically other, and the difficulty lies less in harmonizing the text, which would be tantamount to proposing a median version of it, like a stochastic parrot, than in keeping the text open to the possibility of an experiential poetic event, which by definition is incalculable and unpredictable. As Jean Clément puts it:

> Hypertext enacts the same upheaval at the level of narrative syntax as the poem at the level of the sentence syntax. Similarly to the way poetry unbinds words from the fettering linearity of the syntagmatic axis to project them into a network of thematic, phonetic, metaphoric etc. correspondences which delineate a pluri-isotopic configuration, hypertext frees narrative sequences from the yoke of traditional narrative grammar to usher them into the multidimensional space of an entirely new and open structure (1994, n.p.).

This is undoubtedly the stumbling block we have encountered in this translation project: as soon as we try to carry out a cartographic 'reduction' of the text in order to compensate for the failure of human memory, by immobilizing an experienced journey with a fixed representation of its hypothetical potentials, we deviate from the uncertain and open exploration that is the work's essence.

Conclusion: hidden, and yet felt

Producing a visualization of the hypertextual structure was a gesture that went against the will of the author of the original work, who boasted of having produced his impressive and dizzying network of lexias 'blindfolded'. In developing his hypertextual work out of Storyspace, Joyce relied on a technical approach of deploying reading trajectories through 'reading paths', connections organized on the basis of semantic rather than spatial identification. In a way, it was akin to groping for telluric spaces, relying on touch rather than visual information.

We could have chosen to proceed in the same way, using the 1992 version of *afternoon*, which gave us access to the 'reading paths' of the original work. This would have been tantamount to recreating Joyce's telluric space with a more 'faithful' approach, and would have required us to go through similar gestures imposed by the blinding features of a software with limited functionalities. From the moment we decided to rely on Gauthier's cataloguing exercise, we radically changed our approach; by superimposing on the original work a spatio-visual representation that was imperfect but that gave us a starting canvas that accelerated many processes of migration from Storyspace to Twine, we embarked on a path that could only and significantly alter our relationship with our translation; an approach that could be considered sacrilegious.

It should be stressed, however, that this 'transgressive' approach was more a matter of necessity than deliberate heresy: the complexity of the work involved the need for collaborative tools—a choice that became clear as soon as we collectively decided to translate the content into French—and our limited technical skills led us to choose Twine as the digital workspace for this project.

The first steps of our work (reproducing the rigid cartography of *afternoon* produced in an Excel spreadsheet in a Twine document, inserting lexical translations and arranging direct and conditional hyperlinks) were a mechanical operation requiring very little creativity. When it came to unravelling the rigid structure that had served as a template for the initial version of the project in Twine (see endnote 5), important editorial decisions were made. Giving shape to reading trajectories that, in Tremblay-Gaudette's opinion, deserved to be read in sequences that were as grouped as possible, creating clusters of lexias that, through their spatial proximity in the presentation of the narrative structure, could restore the semantic isotopias used in the texts of consecutive and adjacent lexias (as seen in Figure 6.1), was an editorial gesture in which a real work of appropriation of the text had begun.

Paradoxically, this deliberate act of imposing reading trajectories on *afternoon* through the spatial rearrangement of its lexias cannot help but condition the linguistic attuning yet to be achieved, yet will remain potentially inaccessible to the reader when reading the final version of this translation. Unless someone makes the non-trivial effort to download *afternoon*'s French HTML file and open it in Twine to view its spatio-narrative structure, the important—indeed crucial—rearrangement work that will have been central to the production of this translation will not be explicitly captured in the reading experience. Although the methods used to manipulate the hypertextuality of *afternoon* were radically different between the moment of its initial creation (a blind, semantic approach to a telluric foraging) and its re-creation for translation (an overlooking, cartographic perspective), the actual result will be the same: the reader will be placed in the presence of a text whose subterranean architecture will remain invisible.

Moreover, the deformation brought about by rationalization is linked to a tendency to homogenize a heterogeneous work, a tendency that "consists

in unifying the fabric of the original at all levels, whereas the latter is originally heterogeneous, [leading] to the destruction of the underlying signifying networks" (Berman, 1999, pp. 60–61) (or isotopias). However, mapping *afternoon* is a rationalizing operation that tends to flatten the poetic layers of the work by linearizing it. In fact, the reading paths are not only multiple, but also inscribed in the depths of a liquid time (Regnauld, 2019) (that of reading as well as that of narration), laminated by every synoptic visualization insofar as it tends to freeze the referential fluctuations proper to the poetics of the work. In other words, the map, present in other canonical works developed under Storyspace, offers another mode of reading, or a commentary on the original work.

To experience reading from the map is to add yet another layer to the technical mediation of the software device, a little like approaching the maze of a museum through the prism of a camera, which Agamben incidentally associates with the "destruction of experience"[10] (2000, p. 27), i.e. of the possibility to weave a narrative based on an unmediated approach, and ensuing in that of the aura of any work. Regnauld suggests, however, "a redefinition of aura in the digital age as an aspect of the work revealed and possibly destroyed in the very act of translation: the absolute singularity of aura as defined by Benjamin would paradoxically lie in the iteration pertaining to the archival nature of such digital works placed under the translator's authority as the one who ensures the texts' afterlife" (Regnauld, 2018, n.p.). However, this might not be as clear-cut in the case of a work that has always already been mediated by its technical apparatus, a work that demands an empirical approach emancipated from any form of methodology that would fall under experimentation (i.e. experience disciplined by the scientific method), to which the spontaneity of (ordinary) experience, critiqued by Francis Bacon (quoted by Agamben, 2000, p. 31), is still downgraded in favour of (calculating) reason. We believe we have found an acceptable compromise to our dilemma posed by the necessary and yet anomalous map, by first producing it and then hiding it under the reading surface that will be offered to the reader when our collective translation of *afternoon* is eventually released; from the cartography that never existed in Joyce's case, we have moved on to a map that will have been no more than an ingredient in our alchemical synthesis, and which will find itself dissolved in our final version, a remnant of our own experience that we will remain reluctant to share.

Notes

1 In the field of hypertextual studies, the term 'lexia' is used to designate a portion of text found in a distinct part of a hypertextual network. It is used in homage to Roland Barthes, introduced in his 1970 essay *S/Z* to designate a minimal unit of text deemed sufficient to produce meaning.

2 Most of *afternoon*'s textual content was translated by Arnaud Regnauld, Stéphane Vanderhaeghe and Anne-Laure Tissut; Émilie Barbier was hired to translate a few missing lexias, and Gabriel Tremblay-Gaudette also translated previously

undiscovered lexias in the course of the technical production. Most of the technical development of the translation was carried out by Tremblay-Gaudette; additional help was provided by Jean-René Boucher to access via an emulator the original version of *afternoon* on which our work was based, Alban Leveau-Vallier for guard fields insertion, and Carlos Isaac for additional technical support.

3 "sheets of past" is the literal (and official) translation of Deleuze's metaphor. It is also the title of Chapter 5: 'Peaks of present and sheets of past: fourth commentary on Bergson'. This metaphor would probably be clearer had the translator used the term 'strata' or 'layers'. In the preface to *Cinema 2*, Deleuze writes, "It is, for example, a coexistence of distinct durations, or of levels of duration; a single event can belong to several levels: the sheets of past coexist in a non-chronological order".

4 Boolean logic is an application of Boolean algebra to computer programming, in which only the values true and false (or 0 and 1) are used and whose operators are logical (the conjunction and, the disjunction or and the negation not) instead of arithmetic (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division).

5 *afternoon*'s linguistic translation was discussed in Regnauld and Vanderhaeghe 2014, 2018 and in Regnauld 2018, 2019; the technical process was discussed in Tremblay-Gaudette, 2021.

6 Although Grigar lists this 13th version as published in 2001, the title screen of the work accessed via a Windows 3.1 emulator indicates 1992 as the year of publication of this version.

7 The document can be accessed at this URL: https://nt2.uqam.ca/fr/images/tableau-des-lexies-dafternoon-story. [Accessed 19 July 2023].

8 "The **Rashomon** pattern embeds a split-join within a cycle. The split/join effectively breaks the cycle, as readers explore different splits during each recurrent exploration, yet the cycle remains a prominent frame that provides context for each strand" (Bernstein, 1998, p.22).

9 "In the **Cycle**, the reader returns to a previously-visited node and eventually departs along a new path. Cycles create recurrence and so express the presence of structure" (Bernstein, 1998, p.22).

10 The English translation of the book's title is *INFANCY AND HISTORY—An Essay on the Destruction of Experience*, [1978] 1993. L. Heron, transl. London: Verso.

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7 Experimentation and experience

The artistic translation of a myriad of languages

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First drafts – an Introduction

The epistemological evolution of the twentieth century following political, economic and social changes brought with it a revision of pre-established values from a philosophical point of view. In this new context, concepts such as identity, reality and truth were called into question, causing society to undergo a structural change, often represented through various artistic manifestations.

Hence, and via words, sounds, movements and forms, art seeks the representation of a new, fragmented paradigm in constant change, where there is room for an open, innovative and interdisciplinary creation. The search for a break with previous values offers the possibility of experimenting with form and content. Notwithstanding the fact that this experimentation took different paths depending on the context and the authors, this study focuses on John Cage, a key figure in twentieth-century artistic composition and philosophy. His thinking about silence or noise, as well as the use of everyday objects for musical ends, brought about an unprecedented renewal of musical composition, both on a theoretical and practical level. Similarly, and much less known, his literary creation represents a play with language in all its dimensions. The various texts published in the form of diaries, correspondence, poems and even recipes are not only significant primary sources for understanding the author's creative path, but also a literary production of incalculable value.

Recent theories in Translation Studies (Gentzler, 2015; Campbell and Vidal, 2019; Ott and Weber, 2019; Gambier and van Doorslaer, 2016, 2021) invite us to understand the text as a cultural product in which meaning is constructed through different semiotic systems, which the translator needs to take into account. Hence, the interlinguistic translation of Cage's literary work, some of which has not been translated into Spanish to date, requires a new interdisciplinary and multimodal approach in which parallel productions in the realms of music, dance or even painting and sculpture are taken into consideration. The study of these works invites the following reflection on translating practice:

> "Does it communicate the 'meaning' of its source material, even though a shift from writing to music has occurred? Is it acceptable to refer to the

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-11
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> music as a ‘text’ and, if so, does that include a performance/recording of the piece, or only the written score—or all of these?” (Boria et al., 2019, p.3).

This chapter will analyse the emergence of a new kind of writing in the mid-twentieth century, especially under the paradigm of visual and concrete poetry, and then delve into the creative translation, both interlinguistic and intersemiotic, of a sample of John Cage’s work. Recent publications, such as the compendium *John Cage: A Research and Information Guide* (Haefeli, 2018), show that there is still much to discover about the work of the composer and writer, some of whose most experimental literary proposals have not been translated into Spanish to date. The selection of this corpus includes works whose compositional procedure takes place between the linguistic, the musical, the choreographic and the artistic. (Re)presentations, and thus translations, such as *How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run* (1965), *Reunion* (1968), *Roaratorio, an Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake (published as ____, __ ______ circus on _________)* (1979) or *Variations* (1958–1978), among other examples, are open, experiential and interdisciplinary works in which Cage plays with visual, sound and pictorial language to create a plural and material work in which meanings, far from diffusing into chaos, complement each other like nothing and everything, like silence and noise.

These translations are grouped on two levels: on the one hand, we present the interlinguistic translations of some of Cage’s literary works from English into Spanish; on the other hand, we include the intersemiotic and multimodal translations made by Cage himself with contemporary artists who collaborated with him by reinterpreting his works in disciplines such as music, dance or painting. The first of these sections also includes the translation by the author of this study of a selection of Cage’s mesostics. The formal complexity of the works presented here in general, and literary works in particular, required a more exhaustive analysis that went beyond the theoretical to delve into the practical. Such an approach allowed us to apprehend the specificities of the text and to reflect first-hand on the process of creation and composition of this experimental visual poetry through translation.

A new writing medium: the (re)presentation and (re)interpretation of visual poetry through translation

The present study takes literary creation as its point of departure in order to delve into its (re)presentations and (re)interpretations on the intersemiotic plane. In this sense, postmodern experimental writing, like the other disciplines that will be presented below, challenged the pre-established parameters, reflecting on concepts such as authorship, and on the linearity of the message, the form of transmission of meaning and the materiality of the written work, which from that moment onwards “[d]oes not reproduce the real, but constructs an object … in order to intervene in the world, not to reflect but

to change reality" (Ulmer, 2002, p. 97). This phenomenon raised numerous questions about the relationship between language and creativity: "[H]ow is creativity appreciated and valued? … Can definitions of 'creativity' be the sole province of creative individuals, or do definitions need to include all of the co-participants in creative outputs and receptions?" (Carter, 2016, p. xi). And if so, is the experience of the co-participants, viewers or listeners in the creative expression and reception of the artwork what makes such experimental writing a process of experiential translation?

The emergence of experimental movements during the twentieth century, such as the *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets*, the *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle* or even *Fluxus,* showed that writing can become an instrument for offering various representations of reality, a game with interpretation, ultimately "a vehicle for transmitting a set of experiences that self-evidently precede it" (Lee, 2012, p. 86). Hence, in this new experiential conception of the creative process, "[a] signifier always produces meaning through an intertextual operation and interweaving of differences through the text and its context; in other words, a signifier does not refer to something within itself […]" (Lee, 2015, p. 26). Experimental post-modernist literary works in general, and visual and sound texts in particular, insist on the need to cross semiotic boundaries in order to interpret and translate a multilevel text. The interdisciplinary journey present in works such as those discussed in this study makes it clear that "translation is not subservient to a source text in a vertical hierarchy but articulates the latter sideways to develop a more expansive intertextual network [with] the potential … to transgress and transcend the source text" (Lee, 2022, p. 2). Text is understood as any work that conveys meaning, regardless of the semiotic system in which it is produced.

This almost philosophical complexity in the transmission of meaning from one culture to another, from one language to another, or even from one artistic manifestation to another, makes it clear that "communication happens on many levels" and that the process of translation between them must be performed "not just with the eyes but with all other senses" (Campbell and Vidal, 2019, pp. xxv-xxix). This perspective invites an approach to translation as an experiential and creative act in which "there will never be sameness of meaning" (Malmkjær, 2020, p. 56), especially since, as Perloff concludes, "you can't repeat anything exactly—even yourself!" (1989, p. 203). At this point, notions of authorship, originality, unity or identity are called into question, which inevitably makes it complex, if not impossible, to establish the origin of the translational process. Translation is no longer an independent, unidirectional process, but rather a "privileged exploratory space in which many voices converge and reshape each other" (Loffredo and Perteghella, 2006, p. 7). The translator is now also a writer who has "to value both being and becoming. What one writes in any given language typically remains as is, but translation pushes it to become otherwise" (Lahiri, 2022, p. 8). During this process of transformation in which multiple agents come into play, not only interlinguistic but also intersemiotic, the translator cannot but respond "to the

stimulus offered by the source text" (Lee, 2022, p. 11). This conception of the source text as plural and heterogeneous product brings with it the idea that infinite experiential translations are possible depending on each reading and interpretation.

In line with this idea, this study claims that this aperturist process of translation blurs the concept of the original, especially in the case of experimental literature, where "([u]n)creative writers reject a definitive origin, …" (Vidal Claramonte, 2023, p. 94). Each translation will mould, reshape and complete the work that precedes it, fleeing from the concept of univocity and correspondence, since it follows that "translators have to deal with more than just words which may or may not have dictionary equivalents" (Bassnett, 2022, p. vii). In fact, the aim is to go beyond these assumptions, having in mind that the previous conception of the original is now in itself a translation, or in other words "an incomplete process of translating a signifying chain into a univocal signified, and this process is both displayed and further complicated when it is translated by another signifying chain in a different language" (Venuti, 1992, p. 7).

Consequently, "Cage's reader is forced to reconcile this relationship between the repeated and the unique, the moving and the static, what is written in ink and what Cage's work endeavours to place in flux" (Spinosa, 2016, p. 34), especially in those cases where the source work, whatever its nature, "offers visual space and silence into which the source text can be recalled and from which the next translations may be imagined" (Capildeo, 2019, p. 113). Bearing in mind this last consideration and the importance of the visual effect of these experimental works, the following section is accompanied by some examples of texts that play with content and form in a manner which openly invites the translatory experience of recall and imagination.

Invitation to a creative and experimental translation based on intersemiotic experience: a selection of John Cage's texts

The complexity of interdisciplinary experimental works of the twentieth century cannot be apprehended without analysing the environment in which they were composed. In the case of John Cage, his perception of reality through an artistic prism, as well as his conception of reception and interpretation, meant a commitment to the experimental in both the musical and the literary. The variety of textual typology of his writings includes improvised lectures, personal diaries, theoretical essays, narrated anecdotes, acrostics and mesostics, among others. The edition of these variations in random monographs, arranged chronologically, offers the possibility of enjoying visual writings in the form of sound paintings. The analogies between both compositional procedures ("It has been my habit for some years to write texts in a way analogous to the way I write music", Cage as cited in Kostelanetz, 1988, p. 133) allow us to study his creation as a holistic product.

Hence, the literary works discussed below will be approached by taking into account some key aspects of their overall artistic composition: on the one

hand, the influence of contemporary artists and writers who had a great impact on Cage's work, such as James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp and Merce Cunningham, among others; on the other hand, such characteristic elements of his work as silence, chance and counterintuitive elements, so that the analysis focuses more on what is not explicitly said, what is not quickly seen and what is not directly heard; and finally, the idea of process as continuous creation over time, translating the same idea into successive interdisciplinary manifestations. Consequently, the works presented complete a choreographic suite of compositions. Literature, music, painting and dance are called upon in order to apprehend the complexity of the translation process inherent in Cage's works, both at the interlinguistic and intersemiotic level.

How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run (1965)

Premiered in November 1965 at the Harper Theatre in Chicago, Cage composed the musical accompaniment for Merce Cunningham's choreography. During the 23-minute staging, the dancers remained constantly in motion along the stage, where there was a simultaneity of actions at all times. Of particular note is Carolyn Brown's description of the work, as part of Cunningham's company's cast of dancers:

> As the title [*How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run*] implies, it has the high-energy leaps and jumps, runs and falls one sees in sports activities, but without any literal reference to a particular sport. It was 'dance-y,' with interesting groupings, changes in dynamics, rhythmic variety. Chance procedures were used to chart entrances and exits, paths in space, speed, levels, numbers of dancers—the usual gamut of possibilities Merce tended to employ for group dancers, but the phrasing, the inner rhythms, were not dictated. Much of the time, we could discover these for ourselves. What felt so different from previous dances constructed with chance procedures was the sense of liberation, which allowed exuberance, joyfulness, and pure fun. Even tenderness! (Brown, 2007, p. 461)

Dressed in tights and sweatshirts of their own choosing, the dancers moved through the space as Cage recited a series of personal and professional anecdotes previously noted. Following the procedure of the work *Indeterminacy: New Aspect of Form in Instrumental and Electronic Music* (1958–1959), Cage narrates these stories in an oral and natural manner on one condition only: regardless of their content, they must be one minute long. Beyond the sound and choreographic performance, these anecdotes were published as written texts in *Silence* (1961) and *A Year from Monday* (1967) and have been translated interlingually by several authors. The following are, by way of example, four interlinguistic translations of one of these poems. In this sense, it is worth highlighting both the content of this short statement, cited below and

included in the original work *How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run* (1965), and the way in which it was written and translated.

Isabel Fraire published her translation *Del lunes en un año* in 1974, Carmen Pardo followed suit in the book *Escritos al oído* in 1999, and Matías Battistón's translation appeared in *Ritmo Etc.* in 2016. The translation by Patricio Grinberg (*Indeterminación*, 2013) is presented in Figure 7.1, given its not only textual but also visual dimension. It is published in a bilingual edition with the original wording of the selected excerpts on the left-hand side (Cage, 1967, p. 134):

In the comparative analysis of these four versions, it is worth highlighting two distinctive aspects: the visual form and the conceptual content. As regards the first of these parameters, Fraire's (appx a), Pardo's (appx b) and Battistón's (appx c) versions respect the original layout of anecdotes in columns, as in *A Year from Monday* (1967). In Grinberg's translation, however, the translator plays with form, following a procedure used by Cage in other literary works. As Grinberg explains in the foreword to his translation (2013), it was based on Eddie Kohler's edition of *Indeterminacy* (1997, available at *https://johncage.org/beta/indeterminacy.html*). The stories, selected from the first ninety anecdotes composed by Cage, were taken from the recorded version *Indeterminacy: New Aspect of Form in Instrumental and Electronic Music* (1958–1959) and numbered according to the order of the disc, while the later one hundred appeared originally in *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (1961) and *A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings* (1967) and were numbered according to the translator's own criteria. In this bilingual and visual

5

One evening I was walking along Hollywood
Boulevard, nothing much to
do. I stopped and
looked in the window of a stationery
shop. A mechanized pen
was suspended in space in such a
way that, as a mechanized roll of paper
passed by it, the pen went
through the motions of the same
penmanship exercises I had learned
as a child in the third grade.
Centrally placed in the
window was an advertisement explaining
the mechanical reasons for the
perfection of the operation of
the suspended mechanical pen.
I was fascinated,
for everything was going wrong.
The pen was
tearing the paper to shreds and
splattering ink all over the window
and on the advertisement,
which,
nevertheless, remained legible.

5

Una noche estaba caminando por Hollywood
Boulevard, sin mucho que
hacer. Me detuve a
mirar la vidriera de una papelería.
Había una lapicera mecánica
suspendida en el espacio de tal
manera que, mientras un rodillo mecánico de papel
pasaba por debajo, la lapicera realizaba
los movimientos de los mismos
ejercicios de caligrafía que yo había aprendido
cuando estaba en tercer grado.
Colocado en el centro de la
ventana había un cartel explicando
las razones mecánicas de la
perfección de la operación de
la lapicera mecánica suspendida.
Me fascinó,
porque todo funcionaba mal.
La lapicera estaba
rompiendo el papel en pedazos y
salpicando tinta por toda la ventana
y sobre el cartel,
que,
sin embargo, se mantenía legible.

Figure 7.1 Original text and translation by Grinberg of poem 5, 2013. Quoted as a text in the final list of bibliographical references (Grinberg, 2013. *Indeterminación*. Buenos Aires: Zindo & Gafuri).

translation, the distribution of the text across the page is eye-catching. These gaps between one word and another, which "articulate a noisy silence" (Spinosa, 2016, p. 23), are an intersemiotic translation of the original version in the written picture, a sort of visual mirror reflection of the experience of the oral pauses produced in Cage's reading in order to maintain the duration in all of them of one minute. This explicit restriction, in the style of the Oulipian constraint, has also been taken into account by Grinberg in the translation presented above. As far as the conceptual content is concerned, and beyond the stylistic differences of each translator, the lexical selection is striking. Each adapted to their respective purpose, these translations offer versions of the same story, in which dialectal variants also stand out.

All these creations show, as explained above, that the quest for unambiguous translation is a chimera of the past. Multiple interpretations, reproductions and translations are possible as long as they are playing with the original message through various semiotic systems of representation. Just as in the translation of a theatre play, the subsequent staging of the text must be taken into consideration, on this occasion the translator must also take into account the performativity of the text in terms of duration, rhythm and silence. The content is relegated to the background in favour of a visual arrangement that, like a score, allows the reader to experience the cadence sought in the original. Although some of the translators respond from a more creative perspective to the demands of the original text, the truth is that listening to any of the versions presented in this study has a certain sonic analogy with Cage's work.

Reunion (1968)

In the case presented below, chess will be taken as the axis around which the various interlinguistic and intersemiotic translations to be analysed orbit. In a nod to the idea of "ludic translation" (Lee, 2015, 2022), the *Reunion* (1968) board game invites to a visual and musical performance of varied interpretations. On 5th March 1968, John Cage, Marcel Duchamp and his wife Teeny, David Behrman, Gordon Mumma, David Tudor and Lowell Cross, who designed the electronic board that would enable such a play, met at the Ryerson Theatre in Toronto. The encounter was photographed by Shigeko Kubota, who eventually recreated the scene in a 28:27-minute video, exhibited at MOMA.

This performance, far from being an improvised concert, became a well-orchestrated theatrical work in which each character had a role with more or less prominence, highlighted by the use of the stage and lighting:

> He and Duchamp would play chess at center stage, and the moves of the game would result in the selection of sound sources and their spatial distribution around the audience. [...]. All the while, Cage's composer-collaborators Behrman, Mumma, Tudor and I would provide the electronic and electroacoustical sounds of the concert experience. Clearly, Reunion was to be a public celebration of Cage's delight in living everyday life as an art form (Cross, 1999, p. 37).

The idea of *reuniting* artists and friends with whom he had previously worked was drawn through the aforementioned search of indeterminacy. The use of *I Ching* as a totally random methodology led to a chess game that sought a "purposeful purposelessness or a purposeless play [...], an affirmation of life" (Cage, 1961, p. 12). Following this idea of experimentation with chance, but with a methodological control of the composition, Cage created a literary work dedicated to the protagonists of this encounter: *36 Mesostics Re and Not Re Duchamp, for Shigeko Kubota* (*M Writings '67-'72*, 1969).

Cage's mesostics are a series of experimental compositions in which the poem can be read, observed and even listened to both horizontally and vertically. These visuals, reminiscent of the falling leaves in e. e. cummings' '*l(a...-(a-leaf-falls-on-loneliness)*' (1958), conceal a message by linking the central letters of each verse, as is the case with the beginning of the acrostics. In most cases, Cage uses this composition as a nod to some of his closest references, both personally and professionally. In addition to the formal and visual structure so characteristic of this type of writing, it is worth noting some of the constraints that the author, and therefore the translator, follows and must follow in each (re)creation of the text presented below: between two letters that make up the word axis of the original, the second letter cannot appear at any time (Figure 7.2).

36 MESOSTICS RE AND NOT RE DUCHAMP

For Shigeko Kubota

a utility aMong
swAllows
is theiR
musiC.
thEy produce it mid-air
to avoid coLliding.

there is no Difference between life and death.
(sUzuki.)
it is Consistent
to say deatH is the most
importAnt thing one day and the next day
to say life is the Most
imPortant thing.

Figure 7.2 Original text *36 Mesostics Re and Not Re Duchamp*. Quoted as text in the final list of bibliographical references (Cage, J., 1969. *M Writings '67-'72*. New England, Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.).

As the examples given here are intended to demonstrate, the theoretical study of John Cage's literary work shows the need to play with an experimental translatological practice in which a variety of possibilities have a place, even within the interlinguistic translation itself. On this occasion, two of my own translations of the first two mesostics of *36 Mesostics Re and not Re Duchamp* are presented. In this first example (Figure 7.3), I delve into the importance of the poem as a visual and conceptual work, so the translation allows for a freer and more creative approach. The result represents a quite idiomatic translation in the target language, with a strong literary character and a visual effect very close to the original text, especially as far as the vertical word is concerned.

For a second translation (Figure 7.4), and after having studied Cage's work in depth, as well as the translatological study by Matías Battistón (Translator's Note, 2016, pp. 213–216), the translational procedure was more complex from a formal point of view. Given that Cage based many of his decisions on randomness through the *I Ching*, in the translation I decided to follow to the

como la calMa entre

lAs golondrinas

se pResenta su

músiCa.

sE produce en pleno vuelo

para evitar coLisionar.

no hay Diferencia entre vida y muerte.

(sUzuki.)

es lógiCo

decir que la muerte Ha sido lo más

importAnte un día y al día siguiente

decir que la vida es lo Más

imPortante.

Figure 7.3 First translation by Sofía Lacasta Millera.

un Movimiento entre

Aves

pResenta su

músiCa.

sE produce en viajes aéreos

para no coLisionar.

casi no hay Diferencia entre vida y óbito

(sUzuki.)

sí es raCional

decir que el Hecho de morir

es lo esenciAl un día y al siguiente

decir que la vida es Más

imPortante aún.

Figure 7.4 Second translation by Sofía Lacasta Millera.

letter the restrictions that he himself had self-imposed in the original creation, trying to reproduce the effect by reproducing the purpose (Battistón, 2016, p. 213). In this sense, each of the words in the original work corresponds to a word in the translated work, counting as two words in Spanish hyphenated English words (by way of example, *mid-air* becomes *pleno vuelo* and *viajes aéreos*, respectively). Furthermore, I strictly respect the condition whereby the second letter cannot appear between two of the letters that make up the vertical word. Finally, and as a personal challenge through his methodological procedures, I also decided to square the total number of letters and orthotypographic characters, including punctuation marks, of the poems that make up the whole name between the original and the translation (Marcel Duchamp). The result is a less idiomatic translation than the example presented above, but much more faithful to the compositional procedure followed in the first place.

This play with language shows that infinite versions can be possible once one begins to mould language.

Last but not least, it is worth noting that the leitmotif of chess also served as inspiration for the creation of other pictorial compositions by Cage, such as *Chess Pieces* (1943) and *Not Wanting to Say Anything about Marcel* (1969), and films, such as *Chessfilmnoise* (1988). The first of these compositions was originally conceived as an ink-and-gouache on masonite painting, which was later discovered as a coherent composition through a solo for piano score; the second composition is made of a wooden base holding four plexigrams, each of them made of eight sheets of plexiglass silkscreened with letters, numbers and images; the last of these, *Chessfilmnoise* (1988) is the first experimental short film directed by Cage, produced by Frank Scheffer. Although this study does not go deeper into these compositions, other examples of Cage's artistic development in the visual arts will follow.

Roaratorio, an Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake (published as ____, __ ______ circus on ________) (1979)

As previously mentioned, there were many personal and, above all, professional influences that made their mark in Cage's creative process. James Joyce was, undoubtedly, one of his most special literary references:

> For me Joyce is another story. [...] As with Duchamp's work, so with Joyce's. And this goes for Dubliners and Ulysses too. I don't understand any of it. [...]. When I was in Ireland for a month last summer ('79) with John and Monika Fullemann collecting sounds for *Roaratorio* many Irishmen told me they couldn't understand *Finnegans Wake* and so didn't read it. I asked them if they understood their own dreams. They confessed they didn't. I have the feeling some of them may now be reading Joyce or at least dreaming they're reading Joyce (Cage, 1983, p. 54).

Finnegans Wake (1939) has been considered by readers, theorists and translators as one of the most experimental works of modernist English literature. Its extreme complexity on a stylistic and conceptual level through a symbolic and infinite circularity, a varied syntax and lexicon with dialectal twists and constant references to other artistic works make it a real challenge of cross-linguistic translation. In fact, despite several prior attempts, it was not until 2016 that, thanks to the work of Marcelo Zabaloy, an Argentine translator who had previously tackled *Ulises* (2015), it was possible to read an unabridged translation of *Finnegans Wake* in Spanish.

As in other of his compositions, and basing creativity on a random procedure, Cage opened the pages of Joyce's work and began to write visual poems in the form of mesostics. On this occasion, the letters that made up the vertical word paid direct homage to the Irish writer. Cage expanded this creation until he published *Writing for the Second Time Through Finnegans Wake*,

where he added a methodological condition: "the syllable 'just' could be used twice, once for the J of James and once for the J of Joyce, since it has neither A nor O after the J. But it could not be used again" (1981, pp. 135–136). This new reading or (re)interpretation of Joyce's work was the germ from which the intersemiotic translation *Roaratorio, an Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake* (1979) sprang. This musical work was composed in the late 1970s, when Klaus Schöning proposed to set these texts to music. On a formal level, the work is constituted by an amalgam of the spaces and sounds mentioned in the literary work described above:

> *Roaratorio* (1979) is then composed by 4 groups of sounds: the first group is mentioned in *Finnegans Wake* and is listed by Cage himself; the one with the ambient sounds, which corresponds to the places also mentioned in the book, is listed by Louis Mink; another one has Irish traditional music; and the final one includes the reading of the mesostics by John Cage himself. In these group recordings there are various kinds of music, instrumental and vocal, various kinds of humanly produced noises, shouts, laughter, tears, various birds and animals, sounds of nature, water, wind, thunder, and many other sounds like explosions, bells, or breaking glass, and, of course, Joyce's words (Valdeira, 2015, p. 96).

Hence, the connections among different semiotic discourses, namely words and sound, are enhanced, once again highlighting the similarities between the two compositional procedures in Cage's musical and literary works. In fact, he also included some fragments in his works *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs* (1942) and *Nowth upon Nacht* (1984). The first of these, the starting point for the compositions derived from the Irish writer's literary work, is a composition for voice and piano. For its creation, Cage chose a textual passage and turned it into a vocal line through three tones. In keeping with his performative spirit, Cage chose to keep the piano closed throughout the performance. The pianist plays the instrument producing a series of percussive sounds on the lid. Almost four decades later, Cage composed *Nowth upon Nacht*, a work for voice and piano based on another textual passage from *Finnegans Wake* and intended to be played right at the end of *The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs*. On this occasion, the vocal line is emphatic and the pianist does not play the keyboard, but keeps the pedal depressed and the sounds and noises derive from the opening and closing of the lid three times, providing a performative and rhythmic nuance.

Synchronous with the appearance of *Nowth upon Nacht* (1984), Cage published the last two parts that complement the work, which in fact had been written earlier: *Writing for the Fourth Time Through Finnegans Wake* (1983) and *Muoyce (Writing for the Fifth Time Through Finnegans Wake)* (1983). This idea of 'writing through *Finnegan's Wake'* perfectly reflects the author's intention to delve into Joyce's work and deepen its interpretations, playing with it through different semiotic systems. In the first of these examples, Cage (1983, p. I) explains that a critique by Louis Mink about the creation of an impure

mesostic gave him pause for thought and he set out to write a third work, in which a given letter of the mesostic would not appear between the previous and the following one. The fourth, the beginning of which is presented below as an example (Figure 7.5), "follows the same rule, like the second does not permit the reappearance of a given syllable for a given letter of the name" (1983, p. I).

I

wroth with twone nathandJoe
A
Malt
jhEm
Shen

pftJschute
Of finnegan
that the humptYhillhead of humself
is at the knoCk out
in thE park

Jiccup
the fAther
My shining
thE
Soft

Judges
Or helviticus
sternelY
watsCh
futurE of his

Figure 7.5 Original text *Writing for the Fourth Time through Finnegans Wake*. Quoted as text in the final list of bibliographical references (Cage, J., 1983. *X Writings '79-'82*. New England, Hanover: Wesleyan University Press).

I

rufthandlingconsummation tinyRuddyNew-
permienting *hi* himself then pass ahs c
e *i* u flundered e w myself s ct making
Hummels ct life's She to east time the
thesion br is thosen *southsates* i over
thg the he an ndby fluther's sees e as
brown ou a as m her i i *The Vortex*glad
soil for he's hisBut at milkidmass and
nightfallen useawhile under the puden-
dascope heartbreakingly i town eau And
onedimbeofforan furrow follower width-
Non plus ulstra to get enough for any-
onea prodigal heart would h be u'a m a
oebelt p t l ofder wraugh e ai farmo i
north e eve jest to h *i* ntand sllyc ch
mizFu zie showed ti em *ae* n *I*shook s e
bite msh The Hon l *Ultimogeniture* when
strengly forebidden ryno worse*nooselst*
tondststrayedline*havenots*ouin his hor-
rorscup it forth perfidly morelasslike
hearing for the*annias* spuds *Solvitur*or
and V.B.D. tillBump skreek madre's re-
surrectAntiannthesackclothedhis behav-
ing hauntsheldthecainapple

and reinehercy his whiteStuttutistics-
yourto*Cuddle*leaving PennyfairhimDyb of
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Figure 7.6 Original text *Muoyce (Writing for the Fifth Time through Finnegans Wake)*. Quoted as text in the final list of bibliographical references (Cage, J., 1983. *X Writings '79-'82*. New England, Hanover: Wesleyan University Press).

In the second example (Figure 7.6), whose title 'Muoyce' plays between "Music" and "Joyce", there are no sentences, only words, syllables and letters, in a columnar structure, designed for its publication in Japan by Yasunari Takahashi. As shown in the excerpt selected from the beginning of the play and presented below, "following the ten thunderclaps, the rumblings, the portmanteau words, etc., of Finnegans Wake, punctuation is entirely omitted and space between words is frequently with the aid of chance operations eliminated" (Cage, 1983, p. 173):

Finally, it is worth mentioning that Cage's musical translation, *Roaratorio, an Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake* (1979), was itself the basis for a new interpretation choreographed by Merce Cunningham, who incorporated conceptual elements from *Finnegans Wake* into his work *Roaratorio*, first performed in 1983. On this occasion, Cunningham proposed, through dance, an experimental and improvised recreation of a time and space through the reading of Joyce's work. Each of these multimodal representations and intersemiotic translations brings with it a myriad of meanings that are determined not only by the context in which they appear, but also by the experience of the performer. On this occasion, the overlapping creation through different artistic manifestations turns Cage's literary work into a multimodal multidisciplinary product that can only be understood taking into account the co-creation and reinterpretation of all these complementary translations.

Variations (1958–1978, for the musical compositions; 1982, for the literary publication)

In an intersemiotic journey similar to that presented in the translations of the previous composition, this study will briefly focus on another work in which Cage travelled between literature, music, visual arts and dance to create, in collaboration with other contemporary artists, a plural composition, under the suggestive title of *Variations*, in which the message evolves over time through successive multimodal representations. Despite the formal compositional differences between the different creations presented below, they all start from a common concept: their creation and interpretation does not follow the usual path. The book is not written only to be read, but listened to at a specific rhythm; the musical score is not composed to be interpreted in a single way, but each receiver has the capacity to mould it; the pictorial and sculptural works cannot be perceived from a single angle, but the superimposition of unexpected materials must be apprehended; and the choreography does not follow the rhythm of the music, but its free interpretation is subject to other parameters. In all these creations, Cage starts from an idea and transforms it into variations that recall the origin from which they were born, but which will never be the same. The clearly experiential nature of Cage's composition, which also invites to an experiential approach to its translation, has been previously presented in the other case studies. On this occasion, however, the compositional thread is interwoven with a greater number of manifestations. In order to make the common background clearer, the analysis starts from

the musical and literary compositions to later apprehend other fields such as painting or dance through divergent works that start from a common element.

From the literary point of view, Cage published *Themes and Variations* in 1982. It is composed of fifteen themes, each based on the name of an important personal and professional influence on Cage, followed by four sections consisting of variations of these themes. These poems, written in the form of the mesostic, are dedicated to creators such as James Joyce (JJy), Merce Cunningham (MC), Mark Tobey (MT), Marcel Duchamp (MD) and Erik Satie (ES). Beyond the anarchic pursuit of writing, Cage follows a highly complex procedure on this occasion:

> He selects one hundred and ten words or statements of his own choice from five of his books: *The Works of Virgil Thomson* (with Kathleen O'Donnell Hoover), *Silence, A Year From Monday, M,* and *Empty Words.* The choices become the basic source material for his writing. Through *I Ching* chance operations, each of the fifteen names is then assigned a group of words and statements taken from the basic source material. Cage incorporates the groups into his own writing of three to five prose-poems for every name. The next step is to use the prose-poems written on a given name in order to compose a new text or "theme" on the same name (Radano, 1982, pp. 417–418).

Through the prism of experiential translation, and in an attempt to draw an analogy between literature and music, it seems a nice metaphor to consider these *Variations* as translations of the original *leitmotif*, which it not only modifies, but complements. In this sense, Cage's instructions on the reading of each sentence in a single breathing movement constitutes another clear example of the search for a performative structure in terms of rhythm. This idea demonstrates that "the true spirit of *Themes and Variations* only comes alive in a performance by the composer" (Radano, 1982, p. 422).

In the musical field, this chapter focuses on *Variations I* (1958) and *Variations III* (1963), but Cage's musical creation also includes the following works: *Variations II* (1961), *Variations IV* (1963), *Variations V* (1965), *Variations VI* (1966), *Variations VII* (1966) and *Variations VIII* (1978). The score of the first of the above-mentioned works, dedicated to David Tudor, is made up of six combined transparent squares. The visual representation of this notation is based on dots connected by lines of different lengths, depending on sound indications such as frequency and pitch. The piece is conceived for any type of instrument and any number of players. In the second of the selected examples, a performative element is added. The score, which makes no reference to musical elements, consists of two sheets of transparent plastic, one of which contains forty-two identical circles. Once the circles have been cut out, they are randomly dropped onto a sheet of paper. Once selected, they must be played according to the indications included in the original score. The actions are not specified, so the result will depend, as in other performances such as *4′33″*

(1952), on the environment and the moment in which it is performed. Some of these creations continue to be interpreted today, making use of new compositional elements such as those resulting from computer advances, giving rise to innovative and unique pieces designed to be experienced in the moment.

As far as visual artistic representation is concerned, and following the same compositional line under the idea of interdisciplinary variations through different semiotic materials, there is a wide variety of artworks. For this occasion, the paintings *Variations II* (1991) and *Variations III 55* (1992) have been selected. Both proposals play with the same range of tones, a combination of abstract shapes and, above all, with textures on the surface of the paper. On an ochre tone in the first case and beige in the second, stains appear as if caused by smoke. The paper, of a special grammage in both cases, appears to be burnt. Cage plays with light and arrangement, including fragments of other materials, such as newspaper, in the second of the examples mentioned. From a conceptual perspective, and with a clear visual reminiscence of Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* (1951), both examples offer a painting that leads to multiple interpretations. Through the use of original materials, unexpected and open-ended strokes, and colours from a basic chromatic range, Cage once again highlights the relevance of the creative process and subsequent interpretation, rather than the work as a finished product in itself. Hence, it is this open nature of the creation that leaves room for the viewer's and reader's subjective experience of the composition. It is worth noting that some of these visual creations have been used as the cover of certain subsequent editions of Cage's literary work, such as *Composition in Retrospect* (Exact Change, 1993).

Finally, Merce Cunningham composed in collaboration with John Cage and premiered in New York in 1965 the piece *Variations V*. Again, breaking with linearity and emphasising the idea of process rather than authorship, the score of *Variations V* was designed after a haphazard operation through, once again, the *I Ching* and after its first performance, with descriptive annotations derived from the latter. In a new paradigm shift, it is not the music that guides the dance, but the dance that generates a soundtrack and the images that determine the rhythm of the dance action. On stage, sound generators such as photoelectric cells, radio antennas and tape recorders shape a random sound space through the movements of the dancers thanks to the system developed with Tudor. The dancers, dressed in simple costumes, interact with the scenographic elements in an abstract way, generating acoustic reactions. Behind all this staging, at the back of the stage, children's artwork, advertising and documentary material edited by Stan VanDerBeek and Nam June Paik are projected on the screens. This performance is accompanied by an hour-long film version directed by Arne Arnborn (1966) and produced by Norddeutscher Rundfunk and Sverige Radio Television, in which the superimposition of semiotic elements on the stage can be observed.

Although Cage's work tends to cross the boundaries between artistic disciplines in search of multimodality in most cases, the works discussed in this section offer perhaps the most representative example of a pluralistic work

through a multi-voice composition. Each intersemiotic representation or translation conveys the expression through other signs to complete the original version. The re-creation in each of these cases allows the work to be interpreted from a variety of strongly characterised prisms, not only linguistically, but also culturally, through other elements loaded with meaning and nuances such as tonality, silence, colour, shape, symbols, texture, body language or even kinesic expressiveness.

Inconclusive conclusions

The open-minded nature of the period analysed, of the works studied and of the theoretical basis in terms of translation proposed here can only offer inconclusive conclusions. The exploration of an intersemiotic and multimodal representation implies approaching translation from a double prism, rooted in the words of the source texts, but also in its creative dimensions, through all those orthotypographic elements that accompany the written expression, such as its layout, colour, shape or size, as well as the rest of the semiotic systems involved in the process.

The translations presented in this study, regardless of the semiotic system through which they have been represented, demonstrate that, as with *Variations*, they do not usually "operate in the traditional sense of the word. Instead they succeed the theme as […] more composite realizations of the original prose-poems. Thus the variations do not necessarily bear a resemblance to the original theme" (Radano, 1983, p. 418). This perspective, and by way of a circular conclusion, highlights once again the relevance of the creative and performative act, be it through an intralinguistic, interlinguistic or intersemiotic translation. This journey through irreverent poems, choreographed musical notes, choreographed movements, chess games and unfinished paintings represents a path that the translator has to traverse in the process of (co-)creation. "[L]ike any form of representation, art is inevitably engaged with what came before it, and that engagement is an active reworking. Hence, the work performed by later images obliterates the older images as they were before that intervention and creates new versions of old images instead" (Bal, 1999, p. 1), making infinite translations not only possible but also complementary.

In the works of John Cage discussed in this study, the translational process involves going beyond the medium to play and experiment with multiple semiotic characters, reinterpreting them across disciplines, languages and cultures. Translation becomes a dynamic and constantly evolving process in which an infinite number of versions have a place. As Vidal Claramonte states,

> [b]y taking visual literature, dance, painting, and music as new territories where translation is defined, we set off on a journey through disciplines which do not contradict each other but improve on one another by crossing thresholds. Thus, in these new texts, translating is a concept

that not only travels between the lines, from words to paintings as in ekphrasis, but also between sounds, colors, or dancing bodies (2022, pp. 9–10).

Thus, and taking into account the experiential and playful dimension of both the original work and the innovative translational procedure, the audience is invited to participate in reading and listening to a new product in which nothing is definitive, following Lee's conception of *exploring play in poetics* (2022).

Throughout this study, a series of translations of John Cage's work has been presented through a double prism: on the one hand, those intersemiotic and multimodal translations made by the artist himself and his contemporaries in those musical, choreographic and pictorial versions derived from one of his literary compositions (Merce Cunningham, Marcel Duchamp and James Joyce, among others); on the other hand, those interlinguistic translations of a literary work, in this case into Spanish (Matías Battistón, Patricio Grinberg, Carmen Pardo or Isabel Fraire, and Sofía Lacasta Millera, for example). In both cases, the creations offer a reinterpretation of content and form through other languages and semiotic systems, showing that the translation completes "the mix of voices that is the source text and addresses the target reader not only through the added voice, but also through the composite of all of the resulting voices" (Robinson, 2016, pp. 281–282). Choreographing a work through sports movements, playing a game of chess with unusual pieces, getting to know a culture through its sound space and composing through the chromatic variations of the brush force us to rethink the materiality of processes such as creation, reception and interpretation. In the same way, this paradigm shift also invites us to revisit translation, especially in relation to literature, where now, as Friedman's score title states, *The Distance from the Sentence to your Eye is my Sculpture* (1971), and where the translators are invited to experiment equipped with their internal and external previous experience.

Appendix

a Translation by Fraire:

Una noche iba yo caminando por Hollywood Boulevard, sin tener nada que hacer. Me detuve a mirar el aparador de una papelería. Había una pluma mecánica suspendida en el espacio de tal manera que, al pasar bajo ella un rollo de papel que se deslizaba automáticamente, la pluma describía los mismos movimientos de los ejercicios de caligrafía que había tenido que aprender yo en tercer año. Al centro del aparador había un anuncio que explicaba los motivos mecánicos para que la operación de la pluma suspendida en el aire fuera perfecta. Yo estaba fascinado, porque todo marchaba mal. La pluma estaba desgarrando el papel y salpicando tinta por todo el aparador y sobre el anuncio que, a pesar de todo, permanecía legible (1974, p. 170).

b Translation by Pardo:

"Una tarde estaba paseando por Hollywood Boulevard, sin nada que hacer. Me detuve a mirar el escaparate de una tienda. Una pluma mecánica estaba suspendida en el espacio de modo que, cuando un rollo de papel automático pasaba por debajo, la pluma debía trazar los mismos ejercicios de caligrafía que tuve que aprender cuando niño, en el tercer curso. En el centro del escaparate había un cartel que explicaba las razones mecánicas de la perfección de la operación de la pluma mecánica suspendida. Yo estaba fascinado, porque todo andaba mal. La pluma estaba rasgando el papel a tiras y salpicando de tinta todo el escaparate y el cartel, que, a pesar de todo, seguía siendo legible" (1999, pp. 92–93).

c Translation by Battistón:

"Una tarde, estaba paseando por Hollywood Boulevard sin nada que hacer. Me detuve para mirar la vidriera de una papelería. Había una pluma mecánica suspendida en el espacio, con un rollo que le acercaba papel automáticamente. La pluma repetía entonces todos los ejercicios de caligrafía que yo había aprendido de niño, en tercer grado. En un lugar central de la vidriera, un cartel publicitario explicaba las razones técnicas por las cuales la lapicera mecánica funcionaba con tanta perfección. Me quedé fascinado: todo estaba saliendo mal. La lapicera estaba destrozando el papel y salpicando tinta a diestra y siniestra, manchando toda la vidriera y el cartel que, sin embargo, todavía alcanzaba a leerse" (2016, p. 146).

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8 Translating from music

The *Soundscapes* course and its theoretical and practical outcomes

Karen Bennett

Introduction

This paper describes the aims, procedures and outcomes of a short experimental course entitled *Soundscapes – Translating from Music*, held online in the Spring of 2022, under the auspices of the Experiential Translation network and the Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies (CETAPS) of Nova University in Lisbon. Designed to explore the meaning-making potential of music, the course ran for six two-hour sessions and involved participants from a range of different backgrounds. Through a series of listening exercises and discussions, the participants were encouraged to reflect analytically about the semiotic potential inherent in the Western musical tradition, before mobilising this knowledge in the production of a new creative work.

This paper reports on some of the insights produced during these very lively debates and analyses some of the intersemiotic translations that resulted from the exercise. The approach is exploratory, seeking to discuss and evaluate some of the proposals, theoretical and practical, that emerged from the experience.

Theoretical framework: translating music

The idea that translation could take place between sign systems other than the verbal was first mooted in 1959 by Roman Jakobson in his notion of 'intersemiotic translation'. Defined as an "interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs belonging to non-verbal systems" (Jakobson, [1959] 2000, p. 114), this was a limited concept, not only because of its stipulated directionality, but also because, in the structuralist climate of the time, in which equivalence between verbal languages was taken for granted, it was difficult to argue that the non-linguistic arts had the resources to transmit a message with the same accuracy and precision. Given their belief in the arbitrariness of the sign (Saussure, [1916] 1959) and the separation of sign and referent (Frege, [1892] 2011), the structuralists generally posited full translatability between verbal languages; indeed, Jakobson himself claimed that "all cognitive

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-12
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experience and its classification is conveyable in any existing language" (2000, pp. 115–116), something that was difficult to extend to non-verbal sign systems. Music was particularly susceptible to such scepticism. Igor Stravinsky (1935) famously claimed that music was, "by its nature, incapable of expressing anything, whether a feeling, an attitude, a psychological state, a natural phenomenon etc", an attitude that proved so pervasive that it persisted in mainstream musicological circles well into the twenty-first century.

The advent of cultural studies (Hall, 1980, 1997) and social semiotics (Hodge and Kress, 1988; Kress, 2010; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001) did much to change this perception. Meaning-making was now understood to be a multimodal social practice embedded in cultural contexts and, as a result, music began to be analysed as a form of signification alongside others. Proponents of the 'new musicology', like Lawrence Kramer (1990, 2002, 2019), Susan McClary (1991, 2000) and Richard Leppert (1988, 1993), argued persuasively that musical forms not only reproduced the values and beliefs of the culture in which they were embedded but also themselves contributed actively to the development of sociocultural formations. For example, McClary's essay 'What was tonality?', first delivered as one of the Bloch Lectures at Berkeley in 1991 and reproduced in her book *Conventional Wisdom: The Content of Musical Form* (2000, pp. 63–108), shows how the system that we know as Western tonality, which developed in the context of the Enlightenment, "constructed musical analogs to such emergent ideals as rationality, individualism, progress, and centred subjectivity" through a practice of troping (pp. 65–66), with reference to features such as form (the emergence of the ABA structure), narrative linearity, division of labour (self/group interactions), and the need for closure.

Music now became susceptible to the kind of semiotic analysis that was already being carried out on other forms of cultural phenomena. In 1999, the social semiotician, Theo Van Leeuwen, published a little book entitled *Speech, Music, Sound*, which emphasised the common ground shared not only by the three auditory modes of his title, but also between music and visual arts such as painting and photography. In it, he proposed that musical meaning is derived ultimately from the human body and the social conventions that have developed to mediate humans' relations with each other. For example, musical tempo is based upon human walking pace, known in Italian as *andante*; the division of measured time into phrases is regulated by the cycle of breathing, and rhythmic patterns take their cue from human speech (Van Leeuwen, 1999, pp. 39–51). As for musical perspective (according to which certain voices are presented in the foreground of the soundscape with others taking a backing role), this has analogies in visual perspective in painting, with both developing in a social context when the individual was beginning to be distinguished from the collectivity (ibid, pp. 13–23; see also McClary, 2000, pp. 81–85). Van Leeuwen (1999, pp. 9–11) also introduced a methodology for the semiotic analysis of sound phenomena, which involved, firstly, identifying and describing the semiotic resources available to a particular mode; then, explaining how

they are used in particular instances, and finally exploring how they can be expanded "so as to allow more options, more tools for the production and interpretation of meaningful action".

In the wake of such developments, it is not surprising that interest should have revived in the intersections of music with translation. Since the turn of the millennium, there has appeared a number of books and special issues on the subject, and although many focus on conventional interlingual processes within musical settings (Gorlée, 2005; Susam-Saraeva, 2008, 2015; Apter and Herman, 2016; Rędzioch-Korkuz, 2016; Low, 2017), others have attempted to go beyond this to consider other kinds of translational mechanisms. Desblache (2019), for example, uses a systems approach to explore how musical forms and genres are translated between centres and peripheries in the global context, while Minors (2021) looks broadly at "how meaning is transferred, shared, constructed, changed and interpreted" within "necessarily intercultural, multi-style, multimodal, collaborative" (musical) contexts (p. 166) and investigates various ramifications of the relationships between music and text (2013) and music and dance (2023).

As for intersemiotic translation specifically, my own MA thesis on Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* as an intersemiotic translation of Shakespeare's play (Bennett, 2002), and the various articles spawned by it (Bennett, 2003, 2007, 2008), were early pioneers in this field, while a more recent study (Bennett, 2019) looks at Richard Strauss's opera *Salome* as an intersemiotic translation of Oscar Wilde's play. Since then, other accounts of intersemiotic translations between music and various arts have appeared, such as the chapters by Minors, Stones and Moss in Helen Minors' anthology *Music, Text and Translation* (2013), and those by Ng, Takebee and Vidal in Şerban and Chan's *Opera in Translation* (2020).

The *Soundscapes* course drew on all the above, but particularly upon the analytical framework that I had developed during my own research (Bennett, 2002, pp. 26–47), which identifies five building blocks of musical meaning (tempo, rhythm, pitch, volume and timbre) that combine into the composite systems of harmony and melody, with additional layers of cultural significance acquired through use in different contexts.[1] The course was designed not only to transmit the knowledge I had acquired in my own research, but also to stimulate a collective brainstorm with people from different artistic backgrounds in order to activate the specialist knowledges that they might bring to bear. I was particularly interested in exploring further how musical meaning is construed and the analogies that might exist between its semiotic resources and those of verbal language, and other art forms such as dance, painting or photography.

I also wished to explore the extent to which the process of intersemiotic translation from music is similar to or different from the process of translating between verbal languages. I had noticed that even some of the more recent works on intersemiotic translation continued to be reticent on the subject of meaning transfer, and claims for translatability were still carefully hedged or

even denied outright. For example, Alan Stones (2013, p. 121), discussing John Cage's *Roaratorio, An Irish Circus on Finnegan's Wake,*[2] writes

> The use of the word translation is rather unusual in this case. Used most frequently to indicate a movement across languages and dialects (intra and interlingual translation), here it is used to denote a movement across art forms (intersemiotic) relating to a shared aesthetic. Rather than other terms which might more usually be applied in a musical context … here translate, which can be defined as "the expression or rendering of something in another form or medium" (OED, 1989) has the sense of a clear and direct movement of content from one art form, the literary text, to another, the musical or literary performance. As will be seen, the straightforward sense expressed through the use of this word fits the close relationship and consistency of approach between the arts that Cage developed in his work better than any other, more distancing, terms, and underlines the unique nature of Cage's work across and between art forms.

Moss (2013, p. 136), discussing *LamenTate* (2002), a piece for piano and large orchestra by Arvo Pärt in response to the installation *Marsyas* (2002) by sculptor Anish Kapoor, goes even further

> Transference between visual art and music presents an additional problem. The seemingly abstract nature of both media, in that neither employs semantic language, and the audio-visual contrast, prevents any kind of direct quotation and certainly evades inter- or intralingual translation.

However, it seemed to me that this rejection of translatability might be due to an unrealistic understanding of what 'conventional' interlingual translation entailed. As a translation scholar, I was aware that the concept of 'equivalence' which had underpinned translation theory throughout the structuralist period, had long been abandoned in all but the most technical contexts,[3] in recognition of the fact that 'meaning' is not in fact univocal and transcendent, but multifaceted and complex, deeply embedded in the structure of the language, and dependent upon interpretation. Thus, if literary translation is now more commonly approached as a process of meaning negotiation within a specific sociocultural context—one which inevitably involves a degree of semantic loss or change, offset by judiciously used compensation mechanisms (Lewis 1985; Steiner 1975)—then, I reasoned, maybe intersemiotic translation was not qualitatively different after all.

The course

The starting point of the course was the assumption that anyone living in Western culture would have an unconscious understanding of the language of tonal

music, even if they had never had a formal musical education. Surrounded as we are by pop music, jingles, ring tones and soundtracks, we have grown up inside tonality, feeling and experiencing it, and 'knowing' its rules instinctively, in much the same way as we know the grammar of our mother tongue, even if we are unable to explain it. The course, therefore, aimed to make this intuitive knowledge conscious, and then to use that heightened awareness to reflect upon the potential music holds to refer to things beyond itself and the extent to which this can be transferred to a new semiotic environment.

The response to the call was gratifying. A total of 21 people signed up for the course from a variety of different backgrounds, including translation/interarts scholars, literary translators, musicologists, choreographers and visual artists, as well as people with an amateur interest in music and other arts; and although not all of them completed the programme, the diversity was productive in terms of the discussions that were generated.

The participants were informed in the first session that the course was more exploratory than didactic. They agreed to their discussions being reported in the form of conference papers and articles, and for their output to be published on the course website (https://soundscapestranslatingfrommusic.wordpress.com/). Then, they were divided into two online classes, mostly on the basis of timetable preferences, and each class was then subdivided into groups in accordance with members' artistic interests (poetry/writing; drawing/painting; photography/videoart; dance/choreography). During the sessions, breakout rooms were used to enable the participants to discuss certain issues in relation to their chosen art form, and to consider how particular musical passages could be reproduced in that medium.

As regards the structure of the course, most of the sessions involved both a discussion of questions given in advance, and a listening exercise, designed to raise awareness and provoke debate. The first session (*Introduction*) sought to explore the participants' preconceptions about the kind of meanings that music might be able to transmit. They were asked whether music was able to express emotion, tell a narrative, depict character, make ideological statements and/or depict abstract ideas or states, and to consider whether those meanings were universal (i.e. intelligible to all humanity), culturally construed (and therefore accessible only to members of that culture) or purely subjective (in the mind of each individual listener). The listening exercise which followed built on this debate by encouraging the participants to focus on meanings transmitted by a series of short musical extracts, which had to be matched to their titles (for this exercise, pieces were chosen that were intentionally descriptive and had especially evocative titles). All the materials used are available on the *Soundscapes* website: https://soundscapestranslatingfrommusic.wordpress.com/materials/.

Session 2 focused on the *Building Blocks of Musical Meaning* (tempo, rhythm, pitch, volume and timbre, see Bennett, 2002, pp. 26–47) which, it was hypothesised, draw much of their semiotic potential from the human body. In each case, the participants were invited to find analogies with physiological

processes (such as breathing or heartbeat), locomotion, and phonological aspects of human speech (e.g. stress, pitch, volume and intonation) and to consider the extent to which these might form the template for musical expressivity.[4] As regards the listening exercise for this session, extracts were chosen that showcased one or another of the individual building blocks so that the participants could discuss what meanings were being transmitted by each. Then, in a second stage, they considered how these qualities might be translated into their chosen art form (ideally, without the mediation of the titles).

Session 3 explored the semiotic potential of *Harmony and Melody*, and for this, participants that did not have a formal musical background were directed to key websites to familiarise themselves with the main concepts in advance. In the preliminary task, they were asked to reflect upon how harmony and melody could be used to build meaning in music and whether they had any counterpart in their other art forms. The listening exercise focused on pieces in which the role of each was particularly clear-cut: António Carlos Jobim's *One Note Samba*, whose refrain has a static melody line but varies harmonically, contrasting with a very dynamic melody line in the verse; and the opening of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* with the famous 'Tristan chord', to introduce the notion of harmonic resolution. The Beatles' song *Here comes the Sun* was also used in two different versions, one major, one minor, in order to introduce the two modes and their respective associations. The participants then met in their breakout groups to discuss how each of these features/extracts could be recreated in their particular art forms.

In Session 4, the attention turned to the *Cultural Aspects of Music*, with the preliminary discussion focusing on the expectations set up by genre labelling (e.g. march, waltz, madrigal blues) or by associations with a particular setting (e.g. church, military or folk contexts, late night bar). As regards the listening exercise, pieces were chosen that had connotations with a particular context, but which had also acquired additional layers through being used in films or advertisements. The participants were asked, first, to analyse the effects created by the music alone, before being reminded of the cultural overlay through images.

Session 5 (*Preparing to Translate*) focused exclusively on the intersemiotic act of translation. A piece of music was chosen for analysis that was expressive to the point of caricature, and the participants were asked to analyse how all the aspects covered in previous sessions (i.e. the five building blocks; harmony and melody; and cultural dimensions) contributed to the construction of that meaning. Then, they were placed in their breakout rooms to discuss if and how these same features could be reproduced in their particular media, and how they could use the semiotic resources available to that medium to compensate for elements that might otherwise be lost.

The sixth and final session was devoted to the presentation of the participants' final assignment, which they prepared individually or in pairs in the intervening week. Their task was to produce an intersemiotic translation in their chosen medium of one of the pieces of music analysed on the course, or a different piece of their choice. The idea was to try to reproduce particular features

of the musical source text as accurately as possible in the other medium, rather than use the preceding source text only for inspiration for a purely subjective response. In other words, I hoped to be able to establish some fairly consensual criteria for identifying strands of meaning in a particular musical source text and for reproducing them in the other medium.

Outcomes

As might be expected from participants that had voluntarily chosen to follow a course such as *Soundscapes*, no one actually doubted the capacity of music to transmit meaning. However, there were some disagreements about the nature of that meaning. A couple of the participants insisted that musical meaning was entirely subjective (in the 'ear of the beholder', as it were), and were quite resistant to arguments about shared layers of signification. This ultimately influenced their response to the final assignment, as I describe below.

The other participants all felt that there were dimensions of musical meaning that went beyond the merely subjective, and that these could eventually be transmitted into other media through translational processes. Those with formal musical training tended to emphasise the cultural aspect, pointing out that Western tonality is an elaborate formal code, collaboratively constructed over the course of centuries, and containing features that are not found in non-Western musical traditions. However, most people agreed that there may also be aspects that are universal, either because of analogies with the physiological processes of the human body or resulting from the physical properties underpinning musical acoustics. In fact, one of the most interesting parts of the discussion in Session 1 had to do with the question of harmony and the extent to which this existed naturally in the universe, with participants making reference to Pythagorean ratios, equal temperament and the 'music of the spheres' (see James, 2006; Pesic, 2014).

Another valuable outcome of the course was the theoretical reflection that it provoked about the analogies between music and the other art forms as regards the way each of them construes meaning, and some of these observations were then incorporated into the intersemiotic translations created at the end of the course. For example, it became clear in the group debates that art forms that unfolded in time (such as dance, videoart or oral poetry) could transmit features such as tempo and rhythm in a fairly unproblematic way. We have examples[5] of this in Ricarda Vidal's videoart version of Rimsky-Korsakoff's 'Flight of the Bumblebee', which uses animated colour effects to reproduce the rapid semiquavers of the music; Delfina Spratt and Margarita Savchenkova's use of stop-motion video (one frame per second) to set the pace of Inti Illimani's 'Tonada Triste'; and Guilherme Braga's evocation of the lumbering pace of Saint-Saëns' 'Tortues' through the mapping of his own poem 'Tyrtle Tyrtle' (see Figure 8.1) onto the rhythm of William Blake's 'Tyger Tyger', slowed down through alliterations and heavy assonances ("lumbering low", "laggingly and ponderously plough").

The Tyrtle

Tyrtle, tyrtle, lumbering low,
While you laggingly and ponderously plough;
What a burly-esque tableau,
Seeing that you run late to the can-can show!

Figure 8.1 ‘The Tyrtle’ by Guilherme Braga, a translation of Camille Saint-Saëns’ *Tortues.*

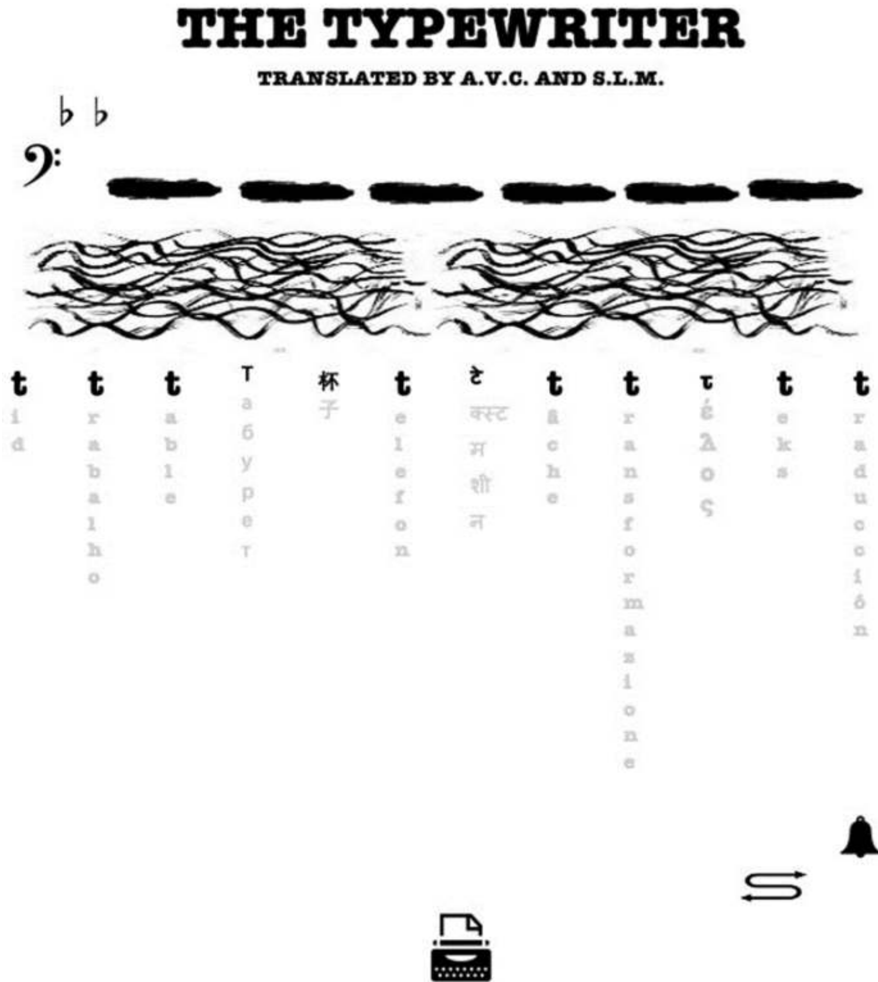

Figure 8.2 ‘Typewriter’ by África Vidal Claramonte and Sofía Lacasta Millera, a translation of Leroy Anderson’s eponymous musical piece.

In contrast, the static arts (painting, photography, written texts) had to use spatial devices to achieve the same effect, for example, by the reproduction of motifs at carefully placed intervals in the case of visual art or by using graphic devices or ‘concrete-poetry’ techniques in the case of writing. África Vidal and Sofía Lacasta Millera’s visual poem ‘The Typewriter’ (see Figure 8.2), which translates Leroy Anderson’s musical piece of the same name, is an example of this.

It was also observed that pitch and volume have direct analogies in the spoken voice, and that these can often be reproduced using graphic means in poetry. Both Filipa Cruz and Cláudia Fischer, in their poetry translations of, respectively, Sergei Prokofiev's 'Fugitive Visions', n°1 op. 22 and Debussy's 'Images: n°2. Iberia. Les parfums de la nuit' used direct questions to replicate the querulous rising pitch patterns in the musical phrasing, for example. In visual and kinaesthetic media, however, these features would have to be reproduced using height or intensity. As for timbre, this can, in many cases, be evoked using texture. Vidal and Lacasta Millera's visual translation of Leroy Anderson's 'The Typewriter' uses the traditional font of the old mechanical typewriter and the insistent repetition of the plosive letter 't' to conjure up the sound and texture of the clacking keys, complemented by strikethroughs, line drawings, punctuation marks and visual icons.

As for the composite resources of melody and harmony, the former, it was suggested, often operates like a narrative that unfolds through time (moving out of its comfort zone in its tonal home or base before returning to it at the end), while the patterns of consonance and dissonance implicit in harmonic progressions reflect hierarchies that had their source in the social order. Fátima Fernandes da Silva uses both in her bilingual prose translation of Mário Laginho's 'Between Two Worlds' (see Figure 8.3), interpreting the contrast between the smooth jazz piano line and the clattering percussion in the background in terms of a restaurant scene in which the serenity of the dining room contrasts with the bustle of the kitchen, a bustle that gradually subsides as the evening draws to a close.

In other arts, analogies can sometimes be found in the use of colour, shape and movement, and again, we can see this in some of the intersemiotic translations produced: Spratt and Savchenkova represent the melody line of 'Tonada Triste' using a red yarn, which moves and interacts with yarns of other colours, forming increasingly complex braids; while dancer Tricia Anderson, in the choreography she created with Gaia del Negro to translate 'Akal Ki' by Aukai, replicates the central melodic motif of the music with the rise and fall of hand movements, which gradually increase in intensity to involve the whole body, before subsiding again.

Another focus of debate concerned the question of whether the process of intersemiotic translation is essentially the same as or qualitatively different from that of conventional interlingual translation. The hypothesis was put forward by one of the literary translators on the course that, in both domains, translation essentially involves, firstly, the analysis of the source text in order to understand how the various strands of meaning are generated by the specific use of its semiotic resources in a particular context of reception, followed by the selection of *some* of those strands for transfer into the new medium in the light of the semiotic resources available in the new language or medium, the constraints of the new context of reception, and the artist/translator's own interpretive agenda. To a large extent, this was borne out by the exercises undertaken during the course. However, there were significant divergences in opinion, particularly from members of the choreography/dance group,

Restaurante	*Restaurant*
Dão-se os últimos retoques nas mesas, alinham-se as colheres de servir. É hora. Abrem-se as portas de par em par, a sala enche-se rapidamente e começam a suceder-se os pedidos: bebidas, entradas, pratos… Na cozinha a azáfama começa de repente, gritam-se os pedidos e cada cozinheiro faz acrobacias para concluir a sua parte o mais depressa possível, mas ao mesmo tempo em sintonia com os colegas. Cada prato tem de estar pronto rapidamente e ser finalizado em harmonia. Agitam-se os cocktails: tchac, tchac, tchac. Saem os pratinhos com rissóis e croquetes. Bate-se a maionese: bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz. Voltam-se as tortillas na frigideira: iap, iap, iap. Nos tachos que se levantam, as amêijoas chocalham entre si. Raspa-se o queijo e a noz moscada sobre o puré: ras, ras, ras. Abrem-se e fecham-se as portas dos frigoríficos e dos fornos. Às vezes há atropelos que se evitam no último segundo. Trincham-se as carnes. Escorrem-se os legumes: tchu, tchu, tchu. Corta-se mais pão: a faca serrada vence a resistência crocante: ruc, ruc, ruc. De vez em quando ouve-se um sino a avisar que a comida está pronta. Chegam os pedidos de sobremesa. O vermelho dos morangos floresce. Batem-se as claras em castelo. Queima-se o leite creme. Apita a cafeteira. Não se ouve o abrir e fechar da porta que separa a cozinha da sala, onde o ambiente é calmo. Em cada mesa, o tilintar dos talheres sobre os pratos, as rolhas que saltam, ploc, ploc, ploc, as conversas, alguns risos. Sons que se adivinham, que são quase só silêncio, sob o clamor da cozinha, mesmo ao lado. Aos poucos os clientes vão pagando a conta, saindo. Há cada vez menos pedidos, o ritmo vai abrandando. No final, resta o ruído dos últimos talheres arrumados, e da tigela que cai ao chão. Dois mundos, que quase não se encontram.	The finishing touches are put in the tables, serving spoons are aligned. It's time. Doors wide open, the room quickly gets full and requests multiply: drinks, hors d'oeuvre, main dishes … In the kitchen the bustle suddenly starts, orders are shouted and each cook does acrobatics in order to finish his part as fast as possible, but at the same time in tune with his colleagues. Each dish must be ready quickly and harmonically finalized. Cocktails get agitated: tchac, tchac, tchac. Little plates go out full of rissóis and croquetes. Mayonnaise is beaten: bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz. Tortillas get turned up in the frying pan: iap, iap, iap. In the pots that are lifted, clams rattle between them. Cheese and nutmeg are scraped on top of the mashed potatoes: ras, ras, ras. Fridges and ovens doors are opened and closed. Sometimes there are run overs, some avoided in the last second. Meats are carved. Legumes are dripped: tchu, tchu, tchu. More bread is cut: the serrated knife wins the crispy resistance: ruc, ruc, ruc. Once in a while a bell is heard, warning the food is ready. Dessert orders arrive. The red of the strawberries flourishes. Egg whites are beaten. Crema catalana is burnt. The kettle whistles. You can't hear the opening and closing of the door that separates the kitchen from the restaurant room, where the atmosphere is calm. On each table, the clinking of cutlery on the plates, corks that pop, ploc, ploc, ploc, conversations, some laughter. Sounds you can guess, that are almost only silence, under the clamor of the kitchen, right beside. Gradually clients pay the bill, leave. There are less and less orders, the rhythm gets slower. In the end, nothing but the noise of the last tableware being arranged, and of the bowl that falls to the floor. Two worlds, that hardly meet.

Figure 8.3 'Restaurante' by Fátima Fernandes da Silva – Portuguese original with Fátima's translation into English.

who felt that the artist-translator's interpretive agenda should override other considerations (this can be seen in the rather looser nature of the source-target bond in the choreography 'Akal Ki', mentioned above). We also saw the persistence, amongst some participants, of the belief that 'translation', by definition, involves the pursuit of 'equivalence'; and despite attempts by the translation scholars and literary translators in the group to persuade these colleagues otherwise, some continued to insist that intersemiotic transfers, particularly from music, could never achieve more than a vague approximation based on a subjective response.

The debates provoked by this disagreement were very productive, since they allowed us, as a class, to identify certain key principles applicable to both interlingual (literary) and intersemiotic translation. By the end of the course, most of the participants were more-or-less convinced of the following:

- Outside of technical contexts, translation is *never* about extracting a kernel of transcendental meaning from a text and transferring it unchanged to a new language or medium. On the contrary, a large part of the semantic content will be embedded in the materiality of the sign vehicle and therefore undetachable from it, or even iconic/performative (in the sense that it only comes into being upon instantiation).
- Meaning is not simple and univocal, but multidimensional and subject to interpretation.
- There are so many layers of possible meaning identifiable in any given source text that it is *never* possible to capture all of them in a translation; hence, the translator, whether interlingual or intersemiotic, has to select which strands s/he will give priority to, in accordance with his/her purpose.
- Translation takes place in a cultural context and (usually) with a particular public in mind, and these factors will influence *what aspects* of the ST meaning are translated and *how* they are translated.
- Working within the constraints of a new medium or language means sometimes having to occult meanings that are explicit in the source text, or, on the contrary, having to express things in the target text that the source text left unsaid. As Ortega and Gasset ([1937] 2000, p. 57) put it: "Each language is a different equation of statements and silences. All peoples silence some things in order to be able to say others. Otherwise, everything would be unsayable. From this we deduce the enormous difficulty of translation: in it one tries to say in a language precisely what that language tends to silence".

However, it was also pointed out that, while readers that do not know the language of a literary work will often resort to a translation on the assumption that it will give them a reasonably faithful idea of what that text is about, this would not be possible with an intersemiotic translation—or at least, with the kinds of intersemiotic translations that were produced on the course, though sign language may offer a more accurate resource for translation from music, particularly artistic song-signing, which often goes beyond the words to offer some idea of the rhythms, pitch variations and dynamics as well (Maler, 2013).

Although translation history abounds with cases of literary texts that were dramatically modified to suit the values and ideologies of the target culture (to the point of effectively 'misleading' an expectant public about the nature of that source text),[6] most of the participants felt that something that is labelled as a 'translation' (as opposed to an 'adaptation' or 'imitation') continues to generate expectations of equivalence amongst the general public. Despite being difficult to justify theoretically today, this still needs to be taken into account by practitioners.

Conclusion

The course served its primary purpose in that it shed light on the potential offered by intersemiotic translation for interpreting music, as well as enabling the production of some new works. However, the big question that remained unresolved at the end of it concerned the labels that we should use to describe what we were actually doing. Is it legitimate to use the term 'translation' about these outputs, when so few of them would actually serve to reconstruct its source text for an audience that does not know it?

Of course, the question of labelling is one that has dogged translation theory since the days of Cicero and Jerome, and many different fashions have come and gone. However, there are signs that we may now finally be moving away from the 'transfer of meaning' model that has dominated Western translation theory and practice for so long. In addition to the Experiential Translation project, which served as the inspiration for the *Soundscapes* course, and the publications resulting from it,[7] recent works by Robert-Foley (2020, 2023), Lee (2022) and Lukes (2023) all conceptualise translation more as a creative improvisation upon a theme provided by an earlier work. Whether that improvisation takes place interlingually, intralingually or intersemiotically—and, in the latter case, in the form of poetry, visual art, dance or music—is starting to seem increasingly irrelevant.

Notes

1. Slightly more complex models can be found in Desblache (2019, p. 36), which includes dynamics, articulation and texture in addition to my five; or to Van Leeuwen (1999) who lists six: sound perspective; sound time and rhythm; the interaction of 'voices' (for instance by taking turns or speaking, singing, playing or sounding together in different ways); melody; voice quality and timbre; and modality.
2. See also Lacasta Millera, Chapter 7, this volume.
3. See Baker (2004) for an overview of the main arguments against equivalence.
4. After the brainstorm session, participants were directed towards works which make this case in more detail, such as Van Leeuwen (1999), Bennett (2002, pp. 26–38) and also Levitin (2006), which looks at how the mind processes music from the perspective of neuroscience.
5. All the intersemiotic translations described here can be viewed on the Soundscapes Gallery, together with clips of the musical pieces that served as their source texts: https://soundscapestranslatingfrommusic.wordpress.com/gallery/.

6 The French Neoclassicists famously altered Homer so much (in the sense of removing anything that offended their idea of good taste) that when Leconte de Lisle produced a much more faithful version some hundred and fifty years later, he was accused of having mutilated the original "when he was in fact restoring it" (Lefevere, 1985, p. 226). Other examples might include the translations of Shakespeare produced in the Soviet era, which went as far as to give some of the tragedies a happy ending (cf. Shurbanov and Sokolova, 2001).
7 In addition to this volume, see also a special issue of the journal *Translation Matters* on the subject of Experiential Translation, 5 (1) Spring (2023).

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9 (Re)discovering (legal) translation through the experiential

Towards empowering intersemiotic pedagogies based on experimentation, creativity and play

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Confronting legal translation: a surprisingly varied and challenging activity

Legal translation has often been defined as a 'specialised' and 'special' type of translation differing from other translational activities by reason of its particularities, the nature of its challenges, and its complexity. Interdisciplinary perspectives that apply and call for 'multi-perspective', 'mixed-method' approaches – integrating theories and models which cross boundaries between different fields (Biel, 2017; Scott, 2017; Engberg, 2020; Biel et al., 2019) – have both demystified its alleged specificities (Harvey, 2000) and advanced our understanding of what legal translation implies. Recent research conceptualises this activity as a complex, multi-level negotiation involved in the cross-cultural mediation of specialised knowledge (Engberg, 2021) and identity formation processes (Martín Ruano, 2016) that take place within often asymmetrical dynamics between languages, cultures, legal traditions and groups (Vidal Claramonte, 2013; Martín Ruano, 2019) and within specific professional and institutional environments (see Martín Ruano, 2020, for an overview). Legal translators are frequently required to relocate interdisciplinary, and thematically complex content that is rooted within a specific legal system across languages, cultures, media, codes and formats – all in line with the rules and requirements of a specific market or institutional setting. Accordingly, it has been claimed that legal translators must combine thematic rigour, deontological integrity, professionalism, communicative efficiency and cross-cultural sensibility in their work.

Given the importance of legal translation and the unprecedented challenges it faces within the superdiverse societies of our interconnected world, equipping future professionals with the appropriate theoretical and methodological tools to effectively contribute to communication and understanding between cultures is crucial. Furthermore, at a time when workflows are becoming increasingly automated and are incorporating machine translation at and as the foundation of professional activity, it is urgent that trainees develop strategies

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-13
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for engaging in a reflective and self-reflexive practice which may overcome the limitations of models based on, and ultimately fostering, linearity, convergence and uniformity. This contribution will explain and illustrate a didactic approach to legal translation put into practice in courses on legal translation both at undergraduate and master's degree levels at the University of Salamanca, Spain, and in other training environments. This approach makes use of experiential learning methods and the affordances of intersemiotic translation in order to encourage the skills and critical capacities mentioned above among students. As a first step, trainees are exposed, in an experiential way, to the limitations of the concept of legal translation that they may take for granted; a concept which is also demanded and expected in society and in institutional settings.

Confronting legal translation in the classroom: (students' accounts of) a paradoxical experience

In this pedagogical approach to legal translation as an ideologically loaded activity, learning starts with an invitation to *unlearn,* i.e., to break down the certainties about a field seemingly governed by unquestionable norms. The responses to an initial questionnaire answered by more than 150 students enrolled in an introductory course on legal translation at BA level over the last three years enable a reliable map to be drawn of the assumptions with which trainees begin their specialisation path in this thematic domain. When asked about their "reaction to the prospect of receiving legal translation assignments", along with many responses explicitly declaring "curiosity" (58), "interest" (45), "motivation" (8) and "excitement" (8), expressions of "fear" (26), "respect" (23), "nervousness" (18), "concern" (7) and "insecurity" (4) were also reported. The cause of these not completely unsubstantiated feelings of discomfort might be linked to the students' perceptions about "existing expectations on legal translation". Students were asked "what [they considered] legal translation should be like". The most recurring adjectives in their replies reveal a conceptualisation of legal translation as a "precise" (38), "faithful" (24), "accurate" (20), "objective" (20) and "correct" rendition of a source text. They often expected these translated legal texts to be "formal" (28) and "clear" (21), while few actually placed their focus on them ultimately being "understandable" (2). The explicitly identified "complexity" (4) of legal translation was overwhelmingly linked to problems related to "terminology" (72), "technicisms" (11), and "specialised" or "specific" "vocabulary" (13) and "lexis" (7). Potential difficulties related to "cultural" issues (20), "style" (5), "fixed expressions" (5) and "formulae" (4) were anticipated only in a minority of cases.

In *Contra Instrumentalism*, Venuti (2019) opposes 'instrumental' and 'hermeneutic' views of language and translation, ultimately advocating a 'hermeneutic' approach. Focusing specifically on the legal field, Engberg (2002, pp. 378, 380) also distinguishes two fundamental ways of approaching legal

texts, either as "an imperative" (the meaning of which would need to be 'found') or as "raw material" whose meaning needs to be established through interpretation in context. Both in quantitative and qualitative terms, the students' answers demonstrate the overwhelming influence of the instrumentalist paradigm in shaping their ideas and expectations. These coincide with the preconceptions with which legal translation is consistently associated in society as well as in many professional and institutional discourses with prescriptive value, such as codes of ethics. The principles these evoke ('accuracy', 'precision', 'impartiality' and 'equivalence') have been problematised for a long time in Translation Studies in general, and have been critically interrogated in recent times in Legal Translation Studies in particular (see Martín Ruano, 2015; Lambert, 2018). This is seen as especially important in didactic contexts, as the uncritical acceptance of such values might prevent future practitioners from understanding what specialised (legal) translation actually entails and from realising the consequences of their work. From post-structuralist and post-positivistic perspectives (see Martín Ruano, 2019), any (legal) translation invariably has ethical and ideological implications.

In contrast, the students' responses show a confidence in and an idealisation of language as a medium that enables the transmission of unambiguous meanings with referential accuracy and the correct restitution of presumably univocal terms. In their vision, language and translation are tools or instruments for the universal understanding of 'correct' (hence 'apprehensible') meanings by professionals whose assumed mission is to search for 'exactness'. As preconceptions decisively shape professionals' translatory behaviour and pre-figure its outcome, training can specifically target these imaginaries, foster reflection on their limitations and contribute to questioning, enriching and reimagining them (Bezari et al., 2019).

The items in the initial survey referred to earlier brought to light the contradictions and shortcomings of the set of representations of legal translation among students by opposing them to the stakes of translation as experienced in reality. Within this survey, conducted in a computer classroom with full Internet access, students also faced the manageable challenge of translating into Spanish a fragment of a legal text related to a familiar subject (See Figure 9.1).

After this *real* legal translation experience, most students reported no problems with understanding the content of the text but admitted having difficulties with its re-expression in their mother tongue. Only the adjective "libelous" (127), the adverb "hereinafter" (63), and certain additional words were seen as complicated: "rendition" (38), "suit" (28), "to undertake" (10), "objectionable" (18). As can be seen from a search on portals such as www.onelook.com, all these words are included in general dictionaries, and only rarely recorded in specialised 'legal dictionaries'. The difficulties perceived after this experience involved changes from those previously identified: certain "expressions" (26) and "formulae" (7), the "long constructions" or "sentences" of the text (10), its "formality" (14) and "cultivated" tenor (6), its "order" (8) and "structure" (7), the "fashion" in which it was written (5), its "style" (3) and "tone" (2), and aspects such as the use of "capital letters" (7) were

Model Contract

Contract of agreement made this date [date] between [translator's name], hereinafter called the Translator, and [publisher's name], hereinafter called the Publisher.

1. The Translator undertakes to translate [*name of work and author*] from [*original language*] into English. The Translator agrees to deliver to the Publisher within [*number specified*] months of receipt of the initial payment for the translation one clear, double-spaced copy of the completed translation of the work, satisfactory for publication in the world market.

2. The translation should be a faithful rendition of the work into English; it shall neither omit anything from the original text nor add anything to it other than such verbal changes as are necessary in translating [*original language*] into English. No changes shall be effected by the Publisher in the translation, including its title, without the explicit written approval of the Translator.

3. The Translator guarantees to the Publisher that no material of an objectionable or libelous character not present in the original work will be introduced into the translation. The Publisher in return will undertake to hold the Translator of the work harmless from all suits and all manner of claims and proceedings or expenses that may be taken against or incurred by them, on the grounds that the translation contains nothing objectionable or libelous which is not contained in the original work.

Figure 9.1 'Model translation contract' formerly available on PEN America webpage.

seen as problematic. As was summarised in one revealing reply, many of these elements pertain to "form" rather than to "content".

Other elements cited as particularly challenging also expose the paradoxical nature of some challenges in legal translation: the fact that a community of future translators repeatedly identified the noun "rendition" in the noun phrase "a faithful rendition of the work" (which DeepL translates as "una reproducción fiel de la obra" and Google Translate as "fiel interpretación de la obra") as a difficulty is as perplexing as it is telling – perhaps as much as the quantitatively under-representative (5) but qualitatively relevant cases of students who confessed having trouble with the adjective "clear" in the expression "one clear, double-spaced copy". Rather than being anecdotal or insignificant, these examples suggest that language, as in 'hermeneutic' models, is rife with polysemy, ambiguity and indeterminacy, and can thus be experienced as a place of estrangement and a site of conflict. From this viewpoint, translation becomes a complex act of decision-making where meaning has to be constructed and negotiated by individuals who take positions both vis-à-vis lexical items and pre-existing ideas, larger ongoing debates, and dilemmas of a practical or a more existential sort. Indeed, many students seemingly experienced hesitation when having to determine what is a "faithful rendition" when referring to "translation". Is it "reproducción", "interpretación" or none of these? Can a "translation" be "faithful" and an "interpretation" at the same time? Does it need to "reproduce" to be faithful? What does "clear", and even "copy", mean

beyond the paradoxically meaningless "copia clara" suggested by DeepL and Google Translate? What do or can they mean in Spanish? What do or can they mean in the publishing industry, in the digital era of the twenty-first century?

Students reported to have used "dictionaries", free online bilingual concordancers like "Linguee", online terminology banks and databases like "IATE", "machine translation services" and "parallel texts" – extremely useful resources which, nevertheless, offer little guidance for some of the problems identified above. Many of the students observed that they would need more exhaustive "documentation" and a deeper "research process", as well as an increased "knowledge of this [thematic] field". However, confirming the influence of deeply ingrained imaginaries, these processes were often explicitly identified as means through which to guarantee "precision", "accuracy", "adequateness", "faithfulness" and the "reproduction of meaning". Inasmuch as the resources and methodological aids suggested do not seem helpful enough to overcome these basic difficulties and to meet the challenges of legal translation, the next section will present the advantages of confronting them with complementary, even contradictory, views of language and (legal) translation. These can serve as alternative scaffolding tools for professional practice even in highly constrained institutional environments.

Using vignettes of the post-positivistic training approach followed, it will be shown that applying the concept of intersemiotic translation (Campbell and Vidal, 2019) in the teaching and learning process offers considerable affordances for discovering (legal) translation as a complex, ideologically loaded, but potentially ludic (Lee, 2022) meaning-making process, as well as for acquiring a solid basis from which to respond to the unprecedented challenges that legal translation poses in professional settings in our superdiverse world.

(Re)envisioning legal translation

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a collection of images may multiply its value. In the experiential and intersemiotic approach described here, students are presented with a slideshow of professional briefs which might come under the umbrella of 'legal translation'. This enables them to verify that, in contrast to the stereotypical mental *image* of two or more visually identical versions of a treaty or a legislative instrument – one actually provided on screen through a search of the EUR-Lex online database –, 'legal translation' assignments can take on a multiplicity of forms: a John Grisham legal thriller; a recognisable scene from *The Juror*, or other audiovisual products replete with legal language to be dubbed, subtitled or audiodescribed in demanding briefs with an extraordinary motivational factor for students (Way, 2017); different types of contracts, wills, judgments and other legal documents that are as varied as their geographical origin (not to mention full of letterheads, logos, seals, typefaces, signatures and other intersemiotic elements which, lest one incurs documentary forgery, cannot be reproduced faithfully but which need to be transcribed or described – i.e., negotiated intersemiotically); certificates

and notifications from all types of official bodies as well as, in general, any document (an invoice, a medical report, a letter or a handwritten note, an audio full of insults, etc.) that may have evidentiary value, for example, in transnational legal proceedings or in cases involving persons who do not speak the language of the court.

This *visual* review reveals the heterogeneity and interdisciplinarity of legal translation, as well as the multiplicity of functions that source artefacts fulfil in the original context and the variety of purposes they may be assigned in the reception pole(s), for which they may need to undergo different types of translational, inter- or intra-systemic textual or intersemiotic processing. Through such a slideshow, students quickly grasp that professional legal translators do not merely produce 'faithful renditions'; they create 'fit-for-purpose' products catering for the needs of diverse audiences with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, either linked to a specific context or a diffuse global audience, and handle the relocation of very different types of messages, materials and content across different media, codes and formats in varied translation situations. Legal translation may assume different (from purely informative to legally binding) objectives and/or cause different (legal) effects, whether equifunctional or heterofunctional with respect to the original message. Additionally, by institutional mandate, and deliberately or inadvertently, it may embrace values and take on agendas and commitments irrespective of the ones assumed by the source artefact. These can include harmonising the output with a particular translation policy or a given institutional convention or standard, ensuring its intelligibility within a linguistic or cultural tradition or its suitability for a given audience, using clear or inclusive language or achieving enhanced levels of readability or accessibility.

Confirming the potential of the *visual* for learning and unlearning, the *graphic* contrast of different translation approaches can also be enlightening. For example, the comparison of the multilingual display of documents in EUR-Lex with the official versions which are common currency in the Canadian context proves to be both disconcerting and illuminating (See Figure 9.2).

Institutional legal translation in the Canadian context takes the form of a compromise that simultaneously respects legal concordance, the genius of

I, ... do solemly swear that I will faithfully, truly and to the best of my judgment, skill and ability, execute and perform the duties required of me as director (officer or employee as the case may be) of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and which properly relate to any office or position in the Corporation held by me.	Je, ..., jure de bien et fidèlement remplir les fonctions, attachées à l'emploi (ou au poste) que j'occupe à la Société canadienne d'hypothèques et de logement.

Figure 9.2 Example of the bold translation methods used in Canada (quoted from Šarčević, [1997] 2000, p. 184).

each official language, and the idiosyncrasies of the epistemological traditions with which they are associated (Gémar, 2013). The vision of this "revolutionary" translation behaviour – one that is in fact more widespread in history than we think (Dullion, 2022, p. 2) and aims at enhancing intelligibility as well as avoiding hierarchical relationships of subordination between the co-official languages – sparks interesting questions as to what a declaredly equivalent legal translation is or can be.

(Re)discovering legal texts as language games

If such visual tasting can transform the students' experiential basis for undertaking legal translation, it can be inspiring to explore Law and the fundamental raw material of legal texts, legal language, from post-structuralist and post-positivistic perspectives which also highlight the intersemiotic dimension. (Legal) language is thus discovered by students not merely as a conduit of indisputable meanings but, to use Bourdieu's definition, as undecidable "signs of authority aimed at being believed and obeyed" (Vidal Claramonte, 2005, p. 261). Legal texts emerge not only as ones that perform functions, but also as texts to be performed (Balkin and Levinson, 1999; Stone Peters, 2022). As such, their significance lies not only with the message they convey, but also with their credibility and verisimilitude as utterances pronounced or issued by a power figure serving as '*la bouche de la loi*' (the mouthpiece of the law; author's translation). At least in many contexts and/or cultures, in addition to the presupposed unequivocal rigour and technicality, Law is associated with a solemn formality or 'writtenness', and with a loftiness not immune to affectation, mannerism, and obscurity (Mattila, 2018). As students are reminded, these particular 'poetics' require poetic ability, literary skills and sensibility to a peculiar musicality.

For instance, in various European languages, prototypical legal texts are made of long sentences full of subordinates, in which the nature and order of the elements are not random or accidental. On the contrary, it conforms to or reinstates familiar metrical combinations and cadences, for example, rhythmical clause endings which follow or activate patterns engraved in an intertextual memory as a recognisable beat. They are full of formulaic expressions with a 'catchy' sound (including doublets and triplets full of rhythm, rhyme and alliteration, for example, 'of sound mind and memory' or 'the rest, residue and remainder of my estate', found in English last wills and testaments). Conventional collocations ('file a lawsuit', 'true and lawful attorney') function as grupettos whose notes cannot be changed nor split, some of which do not carry conceptual charge but enhance resonance and significance, similar to that achieved through ornaments such as mordents, thrills and turns in a particular tune. Elements such as archaisms or Latinisms place the melody in a given mode, and certain verb tenses or modals ('shall') imbue the composition with gravity and/or grandeur.

The word *composition* is not casual. Through this intersemiotic approach, legal texts are discovered as *constructed*, authored by text-makers who, frequently less in a structured manner than in a gradual, experiential way, learn how to construct them. Colours may be used to enhance the capacity of students to identify such building materials (Figure 9.3).

Other activities can be designed for the purpose of discovering the constructed nature of legal discourse. A group of master's students were challenged to 'make a complaint' based on an outlandish sequence of events invented (ch)orally in class. Trainees had to 'fabricate' an episode featuring a typical Spanish *tuno*, a student in a university musical group, interrupting the session with threatening, potentially criminal behaviour, as a formal written complaint lodged with the police. This exercise of intralinguistic, intergeneric

Figure 9.3 Spotting features of legal language through "Hues and Cues" in the Spanish Constitution. Training material developed by the author.

and intersemiotic translation (the transfer of the fragmented script woven through the students' spontaneous verbalisations into the formal, technical language of a written legal text) prompted them to carry out extensive research of parallel texts and many other intersemiotic resources in order to adequately (re)encode the imagined events. They thus experienced the importance of masterfully combining elements such as a conventional and recognisable macrostructure and appropriate progression of information, a formal tone and register, correct use of specialised terms and conventional collocations, an adequate selection of lexis and phraseology, fixed expression and formulae typical of *legalese*. They also became familiar with techniques and "devices" with which agents build "factuality" and plausible representations of "reality" through language in accordance with the expectations generated by a particular discursive community (Potter, 1996, p. 150).

Such an assignment invites students to *live* textual production in the field of Law, as in Bourdieu's theory of 'field' (Inghilleri, 2020), as an incursion in a social space where, like in a game, agents (players) occupy positions and interact, acquiring 'capital' by using different strategies in accordance with the applicable rules. The chosen genre also makes it possible for future legal translators who may not have formal legal training to realise that they are not the only professionals who carry out what could be called a (legitimate and necessary) 'imposture intellectuelle' (Sokal and Bricmont, 1997) – the usurpation of the discursive identity of an expert community, an act of ventriloquism performed by an outsider. A 'complaint' – a 'legal' text often requiring translation (Scott, 2019, p. 46) – is, in many legal systems, the result of a similar polytranslational process: a report to a (non-lawyer) officer who transforms the perhaps nervous, disorganised statement by the declarant into a very specific format and discursive style. This experiential approach to so-called 'original texts' predisposes students to a richer reading: the first-hand process of creating a 'legal text' reveals that it is the result of a struggle, a combat, with language which ends with a score of appropriate findings and successful choices but also of doubts, hesitations, and dissatisfactions. The "translator's gaze" (Campbell and Vidal, 2019) afforded by such an experience becomes sharper, (better) trained to capture the meaning emanating not only from words, but also from silences, omissions, erased changes, modifications, and even potential alternatives that can now be grasped more intuitively.

Indeed, professional legal translators must often handle what is unwritten yet sensed. Tasks like the one proposed above facilitate the necessarily critical, and even suspicious, approach to source texts which remains hidden or even expressly proscribed in the dominant discourse on legal translation but which becomes second-nature for seasoned translators who are, for instance, accustomed to dealing with poorly written source texts (Mossop, 1995). Far from being messages engraved in stone, legal texts emerge as human creations with an ever-perfectible finish, made under not necessarily favourable circumstances by more or less skilled or inspired authors who may be attempting to speak in the name of the Law, but who do not necessarily succeed. This is a relevant

lesson even for demanding and presumably straitjacketed contexts, such as international organisations. As Wagner et al. (2014, pp. 69–71) explain with graphic examples, translators working for the EU institutions routinely deal with collectively drafted texts which contain as much political compromise, intended ambiguity and sought consensus as involuntary slips, often made by non-native authors with limited foreign language skills, and most frequently due to tight schedules and haste. These authors challenge the obligation to reproduce texts unaltered, even repeating errors because of the alleged translators' inability to pronounce on the meaning of the text, and call for 'detective' translators who actively contribute to the quality of the different language versions, for instance by pointing out the weaknesses of 'original' institutional messages. Far from being stable, these experience multiple transformations simultaneously with, and thanks to translation.

Acquainting students with the workings of legal translation through other embodied practices such as first-person talks by or meetings with professionals who have a face, a voice, a background and a life can reveal this activity as one that is experientially learnt. Specialisation often involves a guided socialisation process into the profoundly intersemiotic working methods of a particular institution. As explained to students by translators from international organisations participating in the Seminars on Legal and Institutional Translation in their dual capacity as CPD trainees and workshop presenters throughout its various editions (Biel and Martín Ruano, 2022, p. 163), translating at institutions today implies much more than 'translating' in the conventional sense of the word. Furthermore, although it is often stressed that institutional translation requires renouncing one's voice in favour of the collective institutional voice, translating in such contexts in fact also involves constantly using one's individual voice, for instance in paratextual comments, to reference the resources consulted, to justify why a particular rendering proposed by the institutional machine translation system has been validated or why the translation has departed from such predetermined solutions.

Such an approach makes it possible to emphasise that becoming a professional translator does not merely entail gaining knowledge on a distinct subject matter or developing specific textual and cross-cultural skills, but also demands acquiring profoundly intersemiotic and experiential expertise – Bourdieusian *habitus*: "embodied dispositions acquired through individuals' social and historical trajectories and continually shaped and negotiated vis-à-vis fields" (Inghilleri, 2020, p. 195; see also Vidal Claramonte, 2005). It also enables a rethinking of the elusive concept of 'equivalence'. In line with critical perspectives on legal translation, beyond a relation between texts, equivalence can be thought of not only as an enunciative (see Martín Ruano, 2015, p. 147) but also as an intersemiotic and experiential event external to the translator. It can be experienced as a telling silence by the client, receiver or commissioner which means the acceptance by default of a proposed translation; a pact or compromise whereby two texts are declared identical despite the differences that are intrinsic to translation or despite other obvious differences that are minimised

in order to safeguard certain (common) interests; or, in cases of conflict, a statement or declaration by the competent authority as to the actual meaning or true intent of the text. Bringing the intersemiotic and experiential to the forefront helps to shed light on the many factors that (may) impinge on legal translation as an activity conditioned by power relations, cross-cultural and interpersonal dynamics, and institutional, sociocultural and professional norms within which translators must interact with other players; as a field which, "like a game, [...] has rules for how to play, stakes or forms of value (i.e. capital), and strategies for playing the game" (Bathmaker, 2015, p. 66).

Learning to play cross-culturally

Combining the experiential, the intersemiotic and the playful in the classroom can also be helpful for developing suitable strategies for the challenging re-verbalisation or production stage of the translation. By adopting an intercultural perspective to (specialised) language as a "construction workshop" or a "toolbox" (Potter, 1996; Galán Rodríguez and Montero Melchor, 2000), students can be encouraged to identify the parts and pieces – as if language(s) were Lego construction sets – and the tactics used – as in strategic board games like Stratego – with which, in each of the languages involved, actors in the legal field (re)construct 'authoritative' (i.e. compelling, credible) texts. Language(s) can thus be presented as 'castles' or 'fortresses' where rights are safeguarded and certain rules apply. However, as can be suggested with evocative images, the materials and the building techniques with which Law is erected, enacted, and expressed differ across countries and within institutional contexts. Certain cultures and organisations tend to draft quasi-Mediaeval texts, made of a type of *legalese* built with heavy and sober materials and adorned with weighty decorative elements, reminiscent of the stone-like, turreted castles created with the plastic pieces of a vintage castle building set. Other cultures, for instance, those that have moved towards plain language in legal writing, prefer minimalist constructions, such as those which can be assembled with a natural wood castle kit of clean and simple design. On occasion, legal texts can or may need to display particular features to appeal or conform to the sensibilities and expectations of a particular audience, like a colourful castle construction set of building blocks for toddlers.

Aided by such intersemiotic evocations, students become aware of the cross-cultural differences in writing style and even in argumentation patterns. (Legal) translation thus emerges as a challenging strategy game which requires identifying the pieces of the source context and assembling a new message with the parts available in a new one. New pieces may even need to be created to represent an unknown reality, as with a clay moulding set. In the course of this negotiation process, certain rules will need to be obeyed, and different types of dangers avoided – for example, certain words may be proscribed, as in a Taboo round – and the stakes, challenges and hazards applying to the specific translation context will need to be measured and adequately managed.

Supported by pictures that convey a sense of fun and excitement, legal translation can be presented as an activity in which grasping and conveying 'meaning' is only part of the game. Legal translation can be imagined less as the mission of keeping a precious asset intact and of transporting it unchanged, as in an egg and spoon race, and more as a multi-level competition which requires being an expert player. Legal translation involves playing with words, like in the classic Scrabble game; acquiring symbolic capital, like in a Monopoly evening; making the most of negotiation in a landscape which, like that navigated by players of Catan, is never the same; managing risks, as in the eponymous game, and making progress through networks of specialised knowledge (Engberg, 2021) that have to be reconstructed when moving forward in the new context, as in a high ropes course in an adventure or fun park.

Like the 'guess the movie quiz', students are invited to imagine the larger picture in which the legal text or the artefact to be translated is inscribed in order to select the macro-strategy that best achieves the goal in a particular institutional or multilingual setting (see Šarčević, 2010, p. 43). Learning to do so is vital in a field with a growing trend towards outsourcing and where a detailed translation brief is unusual (Scott, 2019). Intersemiotic prompts may also help to visualise specific challenges at micro-logical level as well as to foster a more resourceful approach to cross-cultural transfer. Reconciling the differences as regards writing style or genre conventions between discordant traditions – for example, between a "centrifugal" language like English and a "centripetal" one like French (Gémar, 2021, p. 892) – in a field where expectations about equivalence are predominantly associated with repetition and mirroring requires both virtuosity and craft. An intersemiotic reimagining of legal translation can help understand the benefits of the concept of 'textual fit' (Biel, 2014) for striking delicate balances between the various and conflictual obligations that legal translators are tasked with honouring simultaneously. Even in cases where it is important to maintain a high degree of correspondence and linearity between the translated text and the original text, the dosed introduction of features from the receiving intertextual grid can help to ensure both the adequacy between ST and TT and TT acceptability. With evocative pictures, students may understand that a 'textual fit' that is 'divergent' to the receiving culture, for instance because it is too close to the form of the original, can cause strangeness and even rejection in a new context, just as creatures such as hybrid horsesharks might be found alien or monstrous outside their natural habitat. On the contrary, they can realise that other translations manage both to convey the gist of the message and to produce a 'convergent textual fit' by dexterously and smoothly 'handling' the resources available in a new context to evoke meaningful and familiar shapes, like skilled performers in a hand shadow theatre.

Further intersemiotic comparisons can act as an aid when facing other contemporary challenges of legal translation. Equivalence has been defined as a "fiction" (Gémar, 2021, p. 905, my translation) that enables "to put the two texts on a functional footing of apparent legal and linguistic equality". At a time

when the global dominance of English is eroding the singularities of other legal cultures, trainee legal translators may be encouraged to become proficient in the technique and art of *trompe-l'oeil*, both as a way of preserving these specificities in the global dialogue of epistemic traditions and of guaranteeing enhanced levels of intelligibility. Far from the flat, homogeneous and potentially alienating texts of a formal identicalness that is at odds with the diversity of our societies, the skilled combination of perspective and *chiaroscuro* can produce texts which need to resemble their sources and, at the same time, the larger textual tradition in the receiving context vis-à-vis which receivers assess quality and even grant meaning to translated texts.

With an intersemiotic approach, students can also activate a wider range of effective strategies for the tricky cross-cultural processing of specialised knowledge and concepts. In line with instrumental views of language, the management of specialised terminology is often addressed as a quest for precision, unambiguity and uniformity. However, while terminological standardisation and non-variability stand as quality parameters in certain contexts, uncritically extrapolating this view to every translation situation is limiting and counterproductive. An intersemiotic comparison may help to see 'specialised terms' as chameleons which change colours and the mood they communicate when blending with their surroundings. For example, a term such as 'claim' can activate different associations and therefore require different translations over the course of a single text: it can be the 'document' or 'form' submitted by the claimant; the 'statement' in which a right is asserted or a 'demand' for something rightfully or allegedly due; a 'legal action' understood as a 'court litigation process' or some 'extrajudicial dispute settlement procedure'; the actual 'sum of money' demanded or the 'relief' or 'remedy' sought; it can be either 'accepted' and 'admitted' (by the defendant or the judge), or 'dismissed' (by the claimants themselves or by the judge, with different consequences). In line with theories of translation as knowledge mediation (Engberg, 2021), students can approach (legal) terms as words included in broader 'frames' and 'scripts' which need to be effectively represented in other settings or stages, for different audiences with different backgrounds, and inevitably using different means.

By exploiting and promoting experimentation, creativity and play, (legal) concepts may be presented as mere 'stills or frames from a film' in which the actors off screen are to be sensed and the larger plot reconstructed based on documentation – possibly to make certain features of the legal process more explicit for readers who may not be familiar with such a culture. For example, in a translation assignment, students were asked to give different and contextually pertinent solutions for the various occurrences of the term 'plea bargaining' in a text as a way of overcoming the reductiveness of equivalents offered in reliable dictionaries and databanks. IATE's solutions ("sentencia de conformidad" [conformity judgment] or "sentencia acordada" [agreed judgment]) for the "practice of negotiating an agreement between the prosecution and the defense whereby the defendant pleads guilty to a lesser offense … in exchange for more lenient sentencing" (Meyer, 2023, n.p.) may not be pertinent

when the term refers to moments in the process that differ from the outcome. Inspired by definitions of texts as "canvases where words are transformed into visual events" (Vidal Claramonte, 2023, p. 5), students can discover legal texts as "quotational" (i.e., connected to a larger universe of patterned and regulated interactions). They can also be encouraged to 'see' beyond words and give relevant clues about the entire sequence of events in which they make sense. Research has pointed to a direct correlation between the tendency to explicitation and translation expertise (Vesterager, 2019). This way, students experientially learn to acquire *professional* work methodologies and develop enhanced, intersemiotic capacities and resources to engage in legal translation as "bridge building" (Engberg, 2021) – a vital competence in a world characterised by differences and asymmetries.

Coda: playing with legal translation and playing it with new instruments

Legal translation is as challenging as it is fascinating. Dominant ideas and expectations shape this practice as a quest for objectivity and neutrality – a mission that, from post-structuralist perspectives, is bound to fail, which perhaps explains the feelings of fear and unease that it provokes. However, it can also be conceptualised as a multifaceted practice that requires both skilled and *creative* professionals (Šarčević, [1997] 2000; Pommer, 2008), an "artist" or a "painter" (Engberg, 2002, p. 387) with sufficient competence, self-confidence and audacity to juggle with words, concepts, meanings and intelligibilities across various types of boundaries, and to efficiently conciliate conflicting loyalties at many different levels (Mayoral Asensio, 1999). An experiential and intersemiotic approach can be a powerful and empowering tool to help students develop both *creative* and responsible interpretations of those scores that are texts and artefacts subject to legal translation. Demonstrating that a "ludic lens" (Lee, 2022, p. 20) can be "applied to translating texts with instrumental value", the approach described proposes and encourages a (self-) reflexive practice based on hermeneutic and sociological perspectives capable of overcoming the rigidities and limitations of models that restrict meaning to the verbal plane. A focus on the intersemiotic takes stock of certain experimentalism to better grasp such elusive concepts as 'meaning' and to contribute to meaning-making in a more resourceful way. It also helps develop a sense of smell trained to sense dangers and an educated sight to detect which red lines cannot be crossed in particular contexts. For "[d]espite the traditional constraints imposed by mandatory standardization, skilled legal translators know exactly when and where they can be creative" (Šarčević, [1997] 2000, p. 117).

Legal translators will sometimes have to play as one more musician in an orchestra, in which they will need to humbly contribute to the polyphonic sound of the larger ensemble following the conductor's directions. At other times, they will find themselves performing as soloists, and will have to act while directing their own interpretation, one that will always be subject to the scrutiny

and evaluation of the audience. These musical compositions that are legal texts and the ways of interpreting them are socio-culturally determined, and historically and contextually conditioned. Certainly, interpreters themselves, through their performance, can modify musical trends and tastes. In a digital era in which a clear promotion of a certain type of canned, piped, pre-recorded, homogeneous music created through machine translation and artificial intelligence can be observed within the industry and institutions, legal translators can, and definitely should, make a difference without renouncing the advantages of technological progress. Given that "the future of multilingualism cannot solely rely on machines without dreams" (Bezari et al., 2018, p. 9), they can make (intersemiotic) efforts to put their talent and professional skills at the service of communication across a chorus of geographically dispersed and linguistically, culturally and epistemologically diverse voices, and to amplify the sound and impact of such meaningful melodies for the rich palette of senses and sensibilities of the human community.

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Afterword

The experience of translation, the translation of experience

Madeleine Campbell and Ricarda Vidal

The Experience of Translation has sought to reposition materiality and play as core protagonists in challenging received notions of transfer and representation and as means of knowing in their own right. Charting a path through epistemological inquiry, ludic exploration and collaborative practice, the three sections of the book have proposed holistic experiential accounts of communication and translation from a postmodern and increasingly post-human perspective that embraces the uncertainty of knowing as a fundamental existential premise.

Expanding the notion of translation beyond linguistic, modal and medial borders, its authors have adopted a pluridimensional, embodied and creative approach to translation which aims to challenge ethnocentric and anthropomorphic boundaries between translatable and untranslatable, 'source' and 'target', self and other, text and world. Experiential translation applies a transdisciplinary lens to problematize views of translation and untranslatability traditionally bound by structuralist frames of reference and the reserve of professional linguistic translation.

The chapters in this book have applied this experiential lens to understand a pluriverse of creative translation practices through lingual, visual, oral/aural, kinaesthetic performative and/or media-rich participatory events. Experimentation, creativity and play allow the authors to probe the boundaries and question the perceived stability of the (multimodal) text, whether 'source' or 'target', of the translator themselves and of the environment in which they operate. Experiential translation acknowledges and reveals the role of the body and materiality in meaning-making. Whether through the theatrical performer (Chapter 2), the mark-making hand (Chapter 4), the dancer performing sound (Chapter 8) or the student translator taking part in role play (Chapter 9), translation is explored as situated, multimodal and entangled with the environment in which it takes place. By focusing on the experience of translation, whether through the example of particular texts or events, or through the exploration of theoretical concepts (as, for example, in the Introduction and Chapters 1, 3 and 4), the authors offer insight into how we relate to the world around us.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003462538-14

This book's companion volume *The Translation of Experience: Cultural Artefacts in Experiential Translation* (forthcoming) will shift the focus from translation as a way of (un)knowing the world to the object of translation, where this object manifests as a dynamic, lived cultural phenomenon. Under the holistic conceptual framework of experiential translation elaborated in the present volume, *The Translation of Experience* will further problematize traditional views of linguistic translation through the lens of art, artivism, reflexivity or experimentalism by examining and theorizing linguistic, embodied, multimodal and intermedial translation as situated social practice. Gathering translators and contributors working in, or with, the creative and performing arts, the forthcoming volume will explore how contemporary, collective experiential acts of interpretation, mediation and negotiation embedded in cultural artefacts can serve to bridge social and cultural discontinuities across time and space, from ancestral past to digital present, from rural to urban environments across the globe.

Mirroring the structure of the present volume, *The Translation of Experience* comprises three sections. These explore topics around the body and time, belonging and locality, and sites and sounds. Some of the themes which were central to *The Experience of Translation* – e.g., materiality, embodiment and performativity – will be revisited, with a focus on the cultural artefact at the heart of the translation. Feminism and the female perspective, migration (economic as well as forced) and cultural memory are other themes explored through an experiential lens by several contributors.

The chapters in the forthcoming volume will focus on artefacts from diverse parts of the world and different time periods. Cindy Sherman and Dina Goldstein's rewriting of fairytales through photographs of their own bodies is examined as experiential translations, where the female body is the text to be translated in a feminist challenge to the male gaze (África Vidal Claramonte). Sarah Aldawood analyses the works of Manal Al-Dowayan and Maha Malluh, two contemporary Saudi artists, as translations of the artists' experiences of Saudi womanhood that convey shared emotions at the heart of their (in)visibility and changing status.

Joanna Kosmalska examines the interdependencies between the experience of migration and the practice of translation in the creative works of Polish migrants to the UK and Ireland, from poems to theatre performance, where translation is a source of creativity and a mode of communication in multicultural societies. Drawing attention to moments of translation across creative disciplines, languages and the lived experiences of female refugees, artist Kate McMillan, composer Cat Hope and percussionist Louise Devenish discuss their collaboration for McMillan's installation *Never at Sea* (2023).

Muskan Dhandhi and Suman Sigroha present their ethnographic study of oral, visual and performative elements of the North Indian indigenous Sanjhi festival as a collective act of translation which defies linguistic barriers and mobilizes indigenous communities through their cultural and social knowledge systems. Francesca Mirabile's translation into short stories of *Sanctuary*,

produced by Artichoke Trust in Bedworth (UK) in 2022 as a community countermonument to grief and loss, is presented as a means of translating art's social function. Looking at Ulrike Almut Sandig's *In die Natur*, a multidimensional translation of Emma McGordon's poem "MAGNETIC", as an act of ecotranslation, Delphine Grass re-examines conventional notions of place and belonging from the perspective of planetary care by using embodied, multidimensional translation.

Mary Wardle examines the public space of the National Covid Memorial Wall in London as an instance of Sherry Simon's 'Translation Sites', where grief is translated into a dynamic textual reality with a strong sense of situatedness. Ayse Ayhan looks through the lens of urban translation and counter translation to discuss the theatre project *Museum of Monologues* in Balat, Istanbul, which puts the diverse histories of this multicultural quarter in conversation with each other and with the experiences of present residents in the form of a multilingual, cacophonic performance. The crossing of cultural and national boundaries is also facilitated through technology, as discussed by Giuseppe Sofo, who proposes a performative reading of the city of Venice through digital translation exposing the (often erratic) processes of machine translation and the unsuspected possibilities of 'creativity' in the machine.

Envisaging the practice of translation as a contemporary and performative form of art or meaning-making that challenges boundaries and hegemonies, the arguments presented in this forthcoming companion volume will cross-fertilize and mesh with the concepts elaborated in the present book to offer alternative means of being, knowing and communicating in the world.

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