EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

PICTUREBOOKS AND GRAPHIC NARRATIVES AS A NEXUS FOR TRANSLATION RESEARCH

Picturebooks and graphic narratives, as profoundly multimodal forms of literature, have been raising challenges for translators since long before multimodality became the buzzword that it is today. Both have been around for a long time – since at least the end of the nineteenth century (Alderson, 1986; Bader, 1976; Kaindl, 1999, Kukkonen, 2014; Zanettin, 2008) – and have been amply translated. Indeed, it was translation that enabled them to spread around across the world to become the global phenomena they are today.[1] But, as translator training has, till very recently, been resolutely centred on the verbal, translators have often lacked the kind of visual literacy that would enable them to do justice to the various dimensions at play in these kinds of texts; and as a consequence, many of the translations of picturebooks in circulation have received damning quality critiques.

The first translation-related studies of picturebooks came out the early 2000s, with Riita Oittinen emerging as a pioneer in the field. Drawing on her earlier work about the translation of children's literature more generally, she argued in a series of articles (2001, 2003, 2006) that a complex set of skills is needed to decode illustrations[2] and that this cannot be taken for granted in translator training. Picturebooks are 'iconotexts', she says, "unities formed by words, images and effects, which have a language of their own" and in which "there is interaction between two semiotic systems, one verbal and the other visual" (2001, pp. 109-110).[3] That is to say, the visuals might support the verbal narrative, paralleling or expanding on what is said in words, or they might deviate from it, providing a kind of counterpoint or ironic commentary; they might even take the story off in a whole different direction, by stressing certain aspects of the verbal narrative at the expense of others (Ibid, pp. 114-15). If the translator is not attentive to these relationships, there may be incongruence between the two modes in the resulting translation (for examples of this, see Quesada Padrón and Woźniak in this issue).

Oittinen (2006, pp. 92-93; 2018, pp. 69-72) also highlights the importance of the auditory dimension, since picturebooks are very often read aloud (that is, 'performed') by adults. This aspect relies quite heavily on the way the verbal text is constructed, and as such affects the work of the translator directly. Sentence length and rhythm, repetitions and parallelisms, the presence of rhymes, alliteration, or other forms of sound patterning,

[1] In the case of comics, specifically, Kaindl (1999) and Zanettin (2008) distinguish between exporting countries, such as the US, France, Belgium and Japan, which sell comics to other countries to be translated, and importers, like Scandinavia, Germany and Austria which have no domestic tradition of their own and have mostly translated.

[2] Quoting Spink (1990, pp. 60-62), she points out that the visual code is governed by conventions that are not necessarily intuitive to someone approaching such works for the first time. These include ''indicating three-dimensional objects in a two-dimensional medium, indicating colour in monochrome, stylized indication of mental processes and mental states, frozen action (indicating motion), and a part implying the whole'.

[3] Or alternatively: 'a picture book is a text, a totality or iconotext, where the verbal and the visual are woven into one entity' (Oittinen, 2003, p. 130).

and of course punctuation (which indicates to the aloud-reader when to pause or stop or take a breath) – all of these will ideally be considered by the translator in the construction of the target text. But in picturebooks, even the visual appearance of the letters on the page will affect the way that the text may be read: the use of capital or small letters, font size and type, graphic emphasis like bold or italics (Oittinen 2003, p. 132; Oittinen et al., 2018, pp. 65-67). If the translator fails to take such features into account, readability – a fundamental feature of the genre – will be compromised.

In more recent picturebooks ('sophisticated' or 'postmodern' picturebooks, as they are termed in Oittinen et al. 2018, pp. 24-25), the borders between the verbal and the visual are becoming increasingly blurred. Authors and illustrators use various techniques to challenge readers' expectations, including disrespecting the layout conventions or physical limits of the page; and books may also acquire a tactile[4] or interactive[5] dimension. Meanwhile, on the level of the story, many picturebooks now deliberately avoid linear narratives and straightforward chronological orders, eschew a single narrative voice, or blur the boundaries between the real and the fantasy worlds (Oittinen et al., 2018, p. 22). All of these bring new challenges for the translator, in addition to those mentioned above.

As for graphic narratives (which are often now considered alongside picturebooks in recognition of the many similarities they share), the field was dominated in the early years by Klaus Kaindl (1999, 2004) and Federico Zanettin (2008), whose studies of comics in translation provided the framework for the many others that came later. The term 'graphic narrative' is of course an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of subgenres and formats: it includes not only traditional American comics, such as the humorous strips published in newspapers or children's periodicals, or the more sophisticated 'graphic novels' that appeared in the 1980s to signal "grown-up status" (Zanettin, 2008, p. 4), but also non-Anglophone variants, like the small-format black-and-white 'Bonelli' popular in Italy, the large full-colour albums published in France, through to Japanese manga in all its diversity.[6] The graphic narrative format is also increasingly used for non-fiction, often for educational purposes (see Jüngst 2008, 2010) or to transmit technical information (see Yu, 2015, reviewed here by Oliveira) and even in legal contracts (see Pitkäsalo and Kalliomaa-Puha, 2019). There is also an emerging genre known as the poetry comic, which, despite its name, has very serious artistic pretensions: an example of this is given here in the Epigraph section and discussed by Liu in the article that follows.

The technical problems raised by graphic narratives for translation have much in common not only with picturebooks but also with audiovisual translation (as pointed out by Zanettin, 2008, p. 9). In addition to the constraints on space in speech bubbles, there is the need to ensure congruence between the verbal and visual modes, complicated by the

[4] Particularly in picturebooks for preschoolers, there may be 'pages to be opened, holes to look through, as well as buttons to be pushed or sounds to hear' (Oittinen et al., 2018, p. 24).

[5] This is particularly evident in digitized picturebooks, of course, in which parts of the visual or verbal text are programmed to respond to a mouse click or mouseover with sound, animation or both (Oittinen et al. 2018, p. 40).

[6] See Yu (2015, pp. 23-44) and Zanettin (2008, pp. 1-8) for a historical survey of the different subgenres.

fact that translators are rarely in a position to be able to alter the visuals at all. As with picturebooks, cross-cultural visual literacy is also required to avoid misunderstandings and cultural gaffes;[7] and in the more sophisticated texts, there may be issues of performativity to grapple with, such as the curious translation problem related by Guilherme Braga in his article in this issue.

But the interest of picturebooks and graphic narratives for Translation Studies is not limited to overcoming such technical challenges. The many translational processes involved in the actual production of these works, even before conventional interlingual translation is contemplated, make them an obvious object for translation research under the so-called 'outward turn' (Bassnett and Johnston, 2019), according to which the methods and theoretical frameworks developed for use with interlingual transits are increasingly being applied to other forms of information transfer in the wider world.[8] We might start with illustration, which has often been understood as a form of translation (Oittinen, 2006, p. 95; Pereira, 2008). As Joseph Schwarcz (1982, p. 104) puts it:

> The illustrator, consciously or unconsciously, tastefully or crudely, interprets. The illustrator of children's books, like any artist, suggests meaning which he recognizes in the text and wishes to communicate through the content and style of his work.

Then there is the process of adaptation (theorized most famously by Hutcheon, 2013), according to which a work that has first been presented verbally is reworked into (in this case) a graphic narrative or picturebook format in order to serve a new function in a different sector of the market. Such transformative processes have fallen under the remit of translation studies since Roman Jakobson (1959) first coined the term 'intersemiotic translation' to denote the 'interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs belonging to non-verbal systems' (Jakobson, 2000, p. 114). However, they have in recent years acquired a whole new complexity, as stories are increasingly told across a variety of media platforms and formats, enabling "parallel storylines, episodes and backstories to be accessed through different media" and creating "multiple points of entry into the narrative" (Kérchy and Sundmark, 2020, p. 1). 'Transmediation', as this is called in a new book by Kérchy and Sundmark (2020), reviewed here by Sohár, can be "spontaneous and unsychronized, as in fan responses to a narrative", but can also be part of a "conscious, synchronized marketing strategy" (Ibid, p. 2). In the sense that it involves a "transition between semiotic systems" on the basis of a "reinterpretation" (Ibid), it can most certainly be understood as a form of translation.

[7] The potential for such infelicities arises particularly when works are domesticated to fulfil target-culture expectations. See, for example, the famous case of the 'left-handed samurai' – an unfortunate consequence of an attempt to Westernize manga by inverting the direction of the writing (Barbieri 2004, cit Rota 2008, p. 94 and Borodo 2015, p. 26).

[8] Similar expansions of the field have been heralded by other scholars under different names. See for example Blumcynzki's 'ubiquitous translation' (2016), Robinson's 'translationality' (2017), Gentzler's 'post-translation studies' (2017), or Marais's 'translation beyond translation studies' (2021).

Picturebooks and graphic narratives are also subject to processes of intertextuality and interpictoriality, as works already circulating in the cultural system are recycled in the form of quotations or references, whether explicit or implicit, ironic or 'straight' (Oittinen et al., 2018, pp. 25-27). While such allusions may raise technical issues for the translator, who needs to be able to recognise them and ensure their transmissibility in the target text, they may also be approached as theoretical problems using concepts and tools from Translation Studies.

Finally, the development of the genre as whole across time, through successive reworkings and adaptations to new media and technologies, is a kind of 'translationality', as Robinson calls it in his 2017 book of the same name. Defined as "transformationality: the constant emergingness of everything through embodied, situated, performative interactions" (Robinson, 2017, p. x), this is one of the richest concepts to animate Translation Studies in recent years, offering tremendous potential for the expansion of our discipline. By embracing change as inevitable and doing away definitively with the notion of the semantic invariant, it enables historical processes to be viewed as translational phenomena, opening up the way for the diachronic study of transformation. As such, the gradual evolution of those illustrated stories and comic strips that animated late nineteenth century cultural life into the complex transmedial creations that circulate today may itself become an object of study for a translation scholar.

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This special issue on Picturebooks and Graphic Narratives provides insights into many of these complex topics. The **Epigraph** sets the tone by featuring a translation of three sonnets by Romantic poet Mary Robinson into verbal-visual format by artist and translation scholar **Chunwei Liu**. *Sappho and Phaon* (1796) is a sonnet cycle depicting the tragic end of the ancient Greek poet Sappho, who commits suicide in despair at unrequited love. As Liu explains in the article that accompanies this work, the verbal text has both a narrative dimension (in the sense that the sonnet sequence as a whole describes the chronological process of falling in love, being forsaken and pursuing the beloved in vain before ultimately giving up on life) and an abstract/philosophical one (as Sappho's feelings and thoughts are encoded in a rich symbolic language depicting the struggle between sense and sensibility); and it is this duality that allows the work to be transferred so successfully into poetry-comic format. These panels are beautiful, artistic renditions in which the verbal and the visual form a unified whole; and as such, they are perfect examples of the multimodality that is such an important feature of this emerging genre.

As for the articles, the first five of these explore some of the theoretical issues and practical difficulties raised by the interlingual translation of picturebooks for children. **Maria Cristina Quesada Padrón** focuses on the Spanish versions of works by Babette Cole, who has acquired a widespread following – and some notoriety – by producing books on subjects usually considered off-limits for young children, such as sex, death, divorce or

teenage pregnancy. These works play with different levels of perception, often using the visual mode to comment ironically on the words given in the text, and this is one of the aspects that can raise problems for translation into Spanish, where the dominant method used for children's books is domestication. Quesada Padrón discusses a series of cases in which the decision to adapt the verbal text to the target culture ultimately creates incongruencies with the visual dimension, and ends by recommending that a more foreignizing strategy should be adopted in future in the interests of verbal-visual coherence.

The next article, by **Katrin Pieper**, looks at a children's picturebook that has been translated from German to Portuguese and asks if it is possible to judge the quality of a multimodal text by applying one of the translation quality assessment models developed for use with more straightforward verbal documents. The picturebook in question (Nadje Budde's *Eins Zwei Drei Tier*) seems to defy translation even more than Babette Cole's books do. The verbal text is made up of a series of single words or short phrases with no syntactic structure, but which have a curious coherence amongst themselves, created on the basis of phonological and semantic criteria, as well as being humorously related to the pictures. In this case, the translation challenge arises from the need to preserve this coherence while at the same time maintaining visual legibility. Pieper systematically applies (a modified version of) Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast's translation criticism model (1994, 1997, 1998) to the picturebook, assessing its credibility as a stand-alone work in the target language as well as its fidelity to the source text. She concludes not only that the Portuguese translation is broadly successful but also that Gerzymisch-Arbogast's model may productively be applied to multimodal texts, even though certain aspects (such as image-text coherence, performative and ideological dimensions and of course the effect on the listener) are difficult to measure in this way.

Imren Gökce's article, which follows, presents a case study of three picturebooks by the Portuguese Nobel-Prize winning author José Saramago in Turkish. Particularly interesting is the fact that only one of the three was designed to be a children's book; the other two were extracted from texts originally aimed at an adult readership and repurposed (by a Spanish publisher), in part through the addition of pictures. Although in these cases the verbal texts are logically and chronologically prior to the visuals, Gökce argues that the composite works deserve to be considered as multimodal texts (i.e. picturebooks proper) because of the way that the verbal text is effectively modified by the visuals, acquiring a whole new level of signification. Her article focuses on how readers' responses are conditioned by this repackaging, which operates not only on the material level but also verbally through the publisher's categorization systems and marketing strategies and assesses real reader responses using data culled from a variety of different sources, such as social media sites and online reader platforms.

With **Silvia Masi**'s article, we move away from the domain of fiction to look at non-fiction picturebooks produced for educational purposes. This kind of picturebook is

effectively a form of epistemic translation,[9] in that it repackages specialised scientific knowledge into a form that youngsters can appreciate. But this is not Masi's main focus. She is more concerned with what happens when picturebooks originally produced in English are translated into Italian for consumption there. With a small parallel corpus of non-fiction picturebooks for children of different age groups, she seeks to determine the role of multimodality in the intralingual and interlingual mediation of geographical knowledge. Drawing on Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar and Kress and Van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics, she analyses the verbal and visual codes used in these works in order to observe, in a first stage, the intralingual mediation taking place across age groups and degree of intermodal convergence or divergence existing in them, and second, the interlingual mediation involved, focusing on asymmetries between the versions. She concludes that the Italian target texts were generally less direct and less expressive than their English counterparts, and that the translation process had altered the word-image relations on the interpersonal/interactive level, so that the interactivity that had been an important feature of the source texts was now guaranteed almost exclusively by the visuals.

Monika Woźniak's article continues the non-fiction theme with a focus on a Polish picturebook designed to teach small children about environmental protection – Emilia Dziubak's *Draka Ekonieboraka*. The study is framed by a historical account of the development of the Polish picturebook publishing industry and its rapid rise to prominence after the winning of several prestigious international awards. The attention then shifts to Italian publishers and their attitude to picturebook translation. By comparing the Polish and Italian versions of Dziubak's book, Woźniak establishes that significant changes have been made to both the verbal and visual components, with the Italian edition taking liberties not only with the content and register, but also with the graphic layout and illustrations. The work thus loses its sharp creative edge, becoming something much more conventional and didactic.

One of the most exciting and innovative contributions to this special issue is **Esa Hartmann**'s article, which moves us into the world of multilingual picturebooks. Multilingualism is of course a very topical subject at the moment. Provoked by waves of migration, the effects of new technologies, and a resistance to linguistic assimilation and/or marginalization on ideological or identity grounds, forms of linguistic hybridity that would have been considered unthinkable just a few decades ago are now sanctioned in both real-world and literary contexts as evidence of cultural malleability and creative thinking. The two multilingual picturebooks presented here share a similar theme (the moon) but differ in the way that the languages relate to each other within the work. The first is a trilingual edition (*s'Mondmannele*, 2014) of Tomi Ungerer's picturebook *Moon Man* (1966), which

[9] The term 'interepistemic translation' was coined by Robinson (2017, p. 200) to refer to the translation of knowledge between different epistemological paradigms. Reformulated as 'epistemic translation', this is the subject of a research project (*EPISTRAN – Textual Transits between Paradigms of Knowledge*), to be launched by the Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies (CETAPS) in September 2022.

brings together three different translations of an English source text in German, French, and Alsatian. Designed with a political objective in mind (revitalising the endangered Alsatian language and affirming Alsatian identity), the three languages are presented separately and in parallel, but with a visual foregrounding of Alsatian. The second work (*Lunes… eine mondlose Nach,* 2017, based on a French text by Mélanie Vialaneix and partially translated into German by Sybille Maurer), is more properly *trans*lingual, in that its two languages are alternated and mixed throughout the narration. Hartmann informs us that translingual picturebooks – which after all are not so rare – are usually produced by a bilingual author, who draws on his or her multilingual repertoire to integrate two or more languages into the literary creation (a process now known as 'translanguaging'). This work, however, is not a case of this; instead, it is the result of a partial and *a posteriori* translation into German of certain passages from a monolingual French text to provide an immersive initiation into German for a francophone reader. Some interesting patterns are generated between the two languages as regards how they are alternated and the way that they are graphically presented on the page; but Hartmann is at pains to point out that, despite producing some intriguing poetic effects on both the visual and phonological levels, the result does not correspond to the natural speaking practice of the translanguaging French-German bilingual. Her ultimate aim in this fascinating article is to investigate the translational processes that gave birth to these multi-/interlingual creations. Thus, she not only attempts to track the "coming-into-being" of the multilingual text in its temporal and spatial dimensions using a genetic approach, but also identifies and analyses a number of other translational dimensions, ranging from the pictures (as intersemiotic renditions) to the performative experience of reading aloud.

The final two articles in the issue offer a practitioner's perspective on some of the problems raised by translation in the domain of graphic narratives. **Guilherme Braga** is a Brazilian literary translator who, among other things, has translated Alan Moore's and Jacen Burrows's comic book series *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* into Portuguese; and in this paper, he offers a fascinating account of a very particular translational problem he encountered in one of the stories and the ingenious solution that he found to resolve it. This particular comic book series is indebted to the fantastical world and made-up language of H.P. Lovecraft (the Cthulhu Mythos), and there are so many intertextual references to that author's work that the whole thing is described by one of the characters as 'almost like some big literary in-joke'. But intertextuality is just one of the constraints operating on the translator. A more pressing one is a covert performativity that lurks beneath the 'veil of speech', barely perceptible to any but the most attentive and dedicated reader. I am not going to spoil Braga's punchline by revealing it here: suffice it to say that the secret is hidden within the representation of a speech defect – something notoriously difficult to reproduce in translation – which means that any solution will necessarily have to take into account the phonological particularities of the target language, as well as the cultural properties of the invocation itself.

The final article, by **Chunwei Liu**, describes the process of verbal-to-visual translation involved in the creation of the poetry comic *Sappho and Phaon,* of which three panels are given in the Epigraph. Liu takes us step by step through the process, from the initial segmentation of the source text, through the framing and layout design, to the decision about which precise elements of the poem can be represented visually in each panel and how. One of the main aims of the research was to determine whether current theories of visual linguistics and narratology could be used to orient verbal-to-visual translation, and judging by the results of this particular creative exercise, it would seem that the answer is a resounding 'yes'.

Yet another practitioner perspective is provided in the interview that follows these eight articles, in which the Brazilian comic-book translator Érico Assis speaks to **Guilherme Braga** about the specificities of translating graphic narratives and his own personal experiences in the field. Amongst other things, his account contains an interesting analysis of the way in which meaning is constructed in a graphic narrative, as well as providing insight into the workflow and interventions of various agents in the production process.

The issue closes with reviews (by **Anikó Sohár** and **Bárbara Oliveira** respectively) of two very relevant recent books, both mentioned above (Anna Kérchy and Björn Sundmark's edited volume *Translating and Transmediating Children's Literature* and Han Yu's monograph *The Other Kind of Funnies: Comics in Technical Communication*), which provide some hints as to the directions in which the scholarship is heading. Indeed, all the various contributions that make up this special issue – the articles, interview, epigraph and book reviews – together serve to illustrate just how rich and vibrant this field is. With stakes in so many emergent areas (from multilingualism and epistemic translation to translationality and transmediation), picturebooks and graphic narratives are thus revealed to be a privileged nexus for translation research.

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