

# Translation Matters

Special Issue: Picturebooks and Graphic  
Narratives

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# TRANSLATION MATTERS

Volume 3, Issue 2, Autumn 2021  
Special Issue: Picturebooks and Graphic Narratives

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## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup> 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).<sup>3</sup> 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,

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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'.

<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>4</sup> or interactive<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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 Kallioma-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

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<sup>4</sup> 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).

<sup>5</sup> 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).

<sup>6</sup> 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;<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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 unsynchronized, 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.

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<sup>7</sup> 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).

<sup>8</sup> Similar expansions of the field have been heralded by other scholars under different names. See for example Blumczynski'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 interpictureality, 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.

\* \* \*

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,<sup>9</sup> 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'Mondmannelle*, 2014) of Tomi Ungerer's picturebook *Moon Man* (1966), which

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<sup>9</sup> 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 Nacht*, 2017, based on a French text by Mélanie Vialaneix and partially translated into German by Sybille Maurer), is more properly *translingual*, 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.

**Karen Bennett**

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## EPIGRAPH

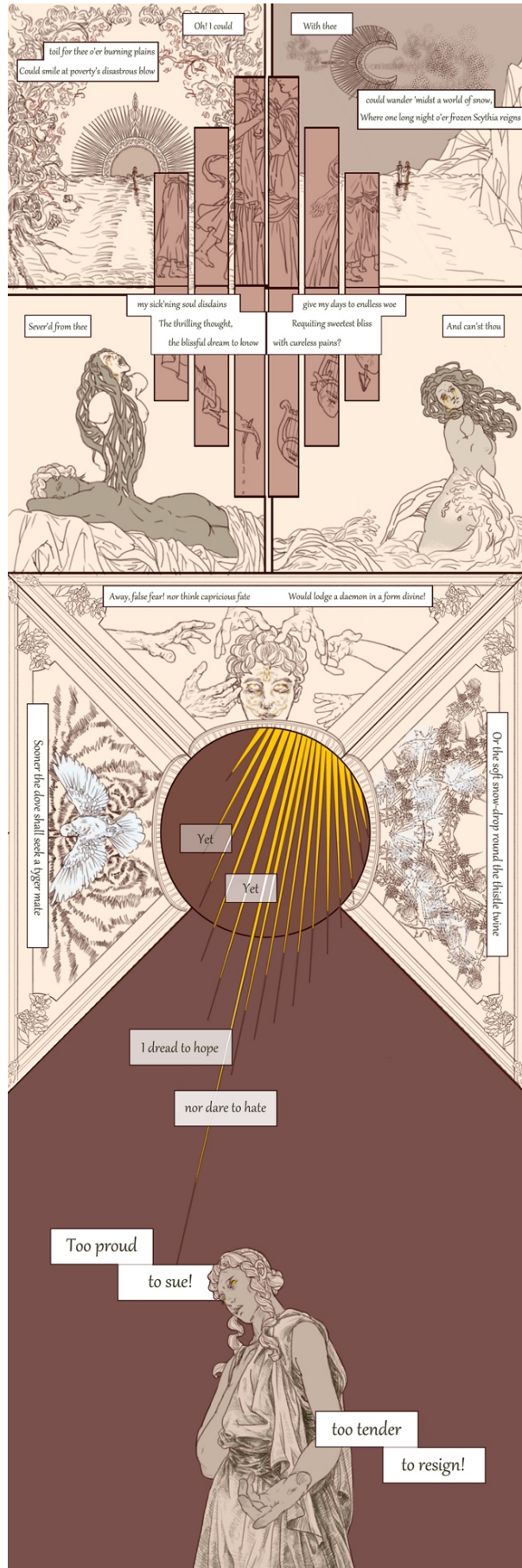
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Sonnet cycle by Mary Robinson (1796)

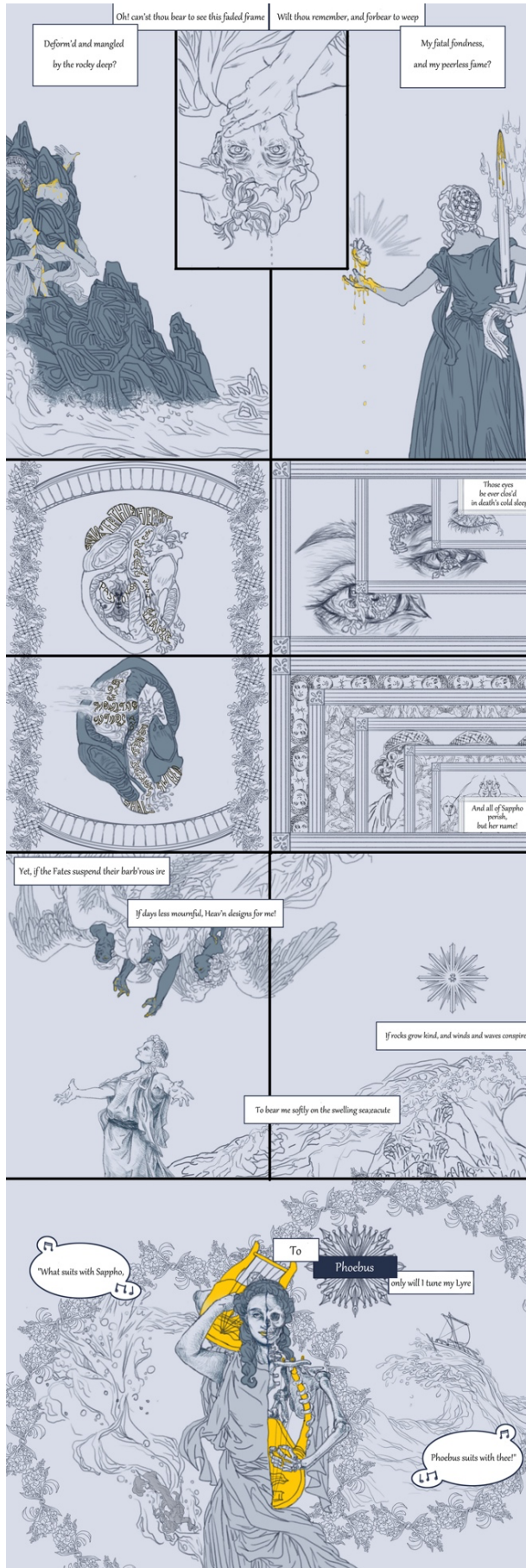
Visual translations by Chunwei Liu [[https://doi.org/10.21747/21844585/tm3\\_2epi](https://doi.org/10.21747/21844585/tm3_2epi)]



Sonnet IV



Sonnet XX



Sonnet XLII

**TOOTH FAIRIES AND LITTLE MICE: CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AND WORDPLAY IN THE  
TRANSLATIONS OF *MUMMY NEVER TOLD ME* AND OTHER PICTUREBOOKS  
BY BABETTE COLE**

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**ABSTRACT:** Foreign children’s literature has had a significant presence in Spain for some decades. Many picturebooks on the Spanish market today are written and illustrated by authors and artists from different countries. This includes many of the picturebooks by Babette Cole, which have been published in translation since the early 1990s. When observing the translations of Cole’s picturebooks, it is possible to find different methods used by translators in order to adapt the stories to the culture of the target country, which sometimes can lead to incoherence between word and image. In this article I will present an analysis of the Spanish translations of Babette Cole’s picturebooks, while having a look at some translations published in other languages such as French or Italian. This analysis will be developed by marking the techniques and challenges translators face regarding cultural differences and wordplay.

**KEYWORDS:** Picturebooks, Picturebook Translation, Translating Children’s Books, Translating Cultural References, Translating Wordplay

### **1. Introduction**

Foreign children’s literature has had a significant presence in Spain for some decades, especially from English-speaking countries such as the United Kingdom or the United States. This predominance is even more noticeable when it comes to picturebooks, and even today, many picturebooks on the Spanish market are created by authors and artists from different countries. One example are the works of Babette Cole, which have been published in translation in Spain since the early 1990s. This is actually quite remarkable considering how transgressive – sometimes even obscene – her books are. At a time when Spain was still recovering from the censorship of the Franco era, addressing such taboo subjects in children's books would have been considered scandalous by many, and thus very challenging to translate (Aparicio et al., 2019, p. 8).

Spanish translations<sup>1</sup> of foreign children's books, especially those written for younger children and published between the 1960s and '80s, tend to adapt the original text to the target culture. This often implies changing names of places, characters, foods, etc (Gómez Pato, 2010, p. 59), so that, for example, “Snow White” is known in Spanish as “Blancanieves” and “Cinderella” as “Cenicienta”. The phenomenon is not restricted to meaningful names, as even names with no meaning are translated. Most of the time, equivalents are found in Spanish, so in the Spanish edition of *Le Petit Nicolas* (Goscinnny and Sempé, 1959a; 1959b), the main character is called “Nicolás” (with an accent on the “a”), the main character of Richmal Crompton's *William* books (1922-1970) is “Guillermo” and Lewis Carroll’s famous heroine ([1865a] 2014, [1865b] 2017) is “Alicia”. In all the Spanish

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<sup>1</sup> This article will focus on Spanish translations published in Spain. Translations published in other Spanish-speaking countries will only be mentioned - and specified - on a few occasions.

editions of the Alice books, the name of the land is also translated to “el país de las maravillas”.

Babette Cole's picturebooks have also been subject to such adaptation methods, which has sometimes led to incoherence between word and image, and other problems. In this article, I will identify some of the challenges faced by translators when rendering her picturebooks into Spanish, and report on the techniques they have used. Translations into other languages, such as French and Italian, will also be taken into consideration.

## **2. The consequences of domestication: verbal/visual incongruence**

The first book that will be analyzed is *Mummy Never Told Me* (Cole, 2003a), the one that inspired the title of this article. This picturebook addresses several topics that children are curious about, such as how babies are born, the biological differences between boys and girls, and – our main focus here – the physical appearance of the Tooth Fairy.

As mentioned before, Cole's picturebooks are known for being very challenging to translate, not only because they address delicate subjects in a very natural and practically uncensored way (Aparicio et al, 2019, p. 8),<sup>2</sup> but also because of the complementary relationship that exists between the words and images. For example, in the verbal narrative of *Mummy Never Told Me* (Cole, 2003a), the protagonist wonders why he needs to go to school when his mum was expelled from hers, but it is the accompanying illustration that reveals that she was obliged to leave her religious school (we see her being sent away by a nun) because she is pregnant. Similarly, when the narrator wonders what the Tooth Fairy looks like, the reader can see a very funny illustration of a male Tooth Fairy that looks like a dentist but retains some fairy features. This is unexpected, as it does not correspond to the traditional image of the Tooth Fairy as represented in other children's books.<sup>3</sup>

Another translation problem is raised by the fact that, although the figure of the Tooth Fairy is traditional in United Kingdom and the United States, this is not the case for many other countries. In Spain and other hispanic cultures, when children lose a milk tooth, they receive a nighttime visit from a little mouse known as “El Ratoncito Pérez” [Pérez the Little Mouse] or “El Ratón Pérez” [Pérez de Mouse].<sup>4</sup> This mouse traditionally leaves some money or candy under the pillow while the children are sleeping and, in exchange, takes the tooth that the child has placed there. The Tooth Fairy and El Ratoncito Pérez thus have similar functions and star in many children's books in their respective cultures.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, titles such as *Mummy Laid an Egg: Or Where Do Babies Come From?* (Cole, 1993a), *Hair in Funny Places* (Cole, 1999a), or *The Un-Wedding* (Cole, 1997a)

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, *Arthur Tricks the Tooth Fairy* (Brown, 1997); *How to Trick the Tooth Fairy* (Russell and Hansen Rolli, 2018) or *What does the Tooth Fairy do to our Teeth* (Barry and Boerger, 2014), where, despite some physical differences, tooth fairies are portrayed as delicate female figures with stereotypically feminine features and pastel-coloured dresses.

<sup>4</sup> In some Latin American countries, the character is known as “El Ratón de los Dientes” [The Tooth Mouse], while in France, it is “La Petite Souris” [The Little Mouse] and in some parts of Italy, “Topolino” [Little Mouse].

<sup>5</sup> Regarding Pérez, some picturebooks that can be mentioned are: *La asombrosa y verdadera historia de un ratón llamado Pérez* [The amazing and real story of a mouse called Pérez] (Herreros and Lópiz, 2010); *La*

However, despite their similarities, the Tooth Fairy and Pérez obviously look very different. It is therefore interesting to observe how the figure of the Tooth Fairy has been translated in the Spanish edition of *Mummy Never Told Me* (Cole, 2003a). The illustrations remain the same, but instead of using the foreign concept of the Tooth Fairy, which in Spanish is “El Hada de los Dientes”,<sup>6</sup> the translator replaced the figure with El Ratoncito Pérez and changed the whole text on that page to fit the illustrations.<sup>7</sup> Thus, instead of saying “What does the Tooth Fairy look like?” (which in Spanish could be rendered as “¿Cómo es el Hada de los Dientes?”, as in the original text), the narrator wonders: “El Ratoncito Pérez... ¿se parece a mi dentista?” [Pérez the Little Mouse... does he look like my dentist?]. Though the words have in this way been related to the illustration, this translation is still problematic, because even though he looks like a dentist in the illustration, he is still a fairy with no features that might suggest a mouse, such as a tail, big teeth or mouse ears. Furthermore, while in the original edition the portrayal of the Tooth Fairy as a dentist is only noticed by the reader through the illustration, in the Spanish edition this detail is already made explicit in the text, thus removing some of the image’s autonomy as an essential component of the narration.

This technique is a form of ‘domestication’<sup>8</sup> (Lorenzo, 2014, p. 42), since the translator omits the British cultural reference and changes it for one deemed more suitable in Spanish culture. As a strategy, it can be observed in many translated children’s books. For example, in a text of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, [1865a] 2014), the word “oatmeal-porridge”, which is a dish that is not traditionally eaten in Spain, is replaced by “natillas de chocolate” [chocolate custard], as Isabel Pascua Febles (2005) points out. However, the difference between this domestication and the one performed in Cole’s picturebook is that in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1865a), the name of the dish does not really affect the narrative, whereas in *Mummy Never Told Me* (Cole, 2003a), it creates a problem because the text changes, but the illustration does not.

A similar domestication can be found in the Spanish edition of *Horrid Henry Tricks the Tooth Fairy* (Simon & Ross, 1997a), where the Tooth Fairy is also changed to Pérez (Simon & Ross, 1997b). However, in this case, the strategy does not affect the narrative. This is because, first, because the book is not a picturebook, but a chapter book, with far fewer illustrations, which do not play an essential role in the narration; and second, because even though there is one illustration in the original edition that features a note written by the Tooth Fairy, in the translated edition this illustration has also been changed and appears to

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*mágica historia del Ratoncito Pérez* [The magical story of Pérez the Little Mouse] (Del Castillo and Pierola Poveda, 1996), or *Chloé et la dent de lait* [Chloé and the milk tooth] (Pistinier, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> This is, in fact, also used in several translated children’s books, such as *El Cuento del Hada de los Dientes* [The Tale of the Tooth Fairy] (Williams, 2018) or *El Hada de los Dientes* (Dann, 2012)

<sup>7</sup> This could be considered as a form of ‘explanatory paternalism’ (Lorenzo, 2014, p. 38), because the translator considers that the Spanish children would not understand the original reference and replaces it with a figure considered to be better known.

<sup>8</sup> Venuti (2008, p. 15) defines domestication as “an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to receiving cultural values, bringing the author back home”.

be signed by El Ratón Pérez. Indeed, modifying the illustration is a technique used in other books, and, as Lourdes Lorenzo (2014) mentions regarding the specific case of *Mummy never told me* (Cole, 2003a), it would have been possible here. That is to say, the dentist-looking Tooth Fairy could have been replaced by an illustration of a dentist-looking Pérez Mouse in order to resolve the incongruity.

The first edition of this translation dates from 2005, which probably explains why the reference of the Tooth Fairy was adapted. As Lorenzo (2014) points out, though the Tooth Fairy does not belong to the traditional Hispanic imaginary, today many children would know it from their exposure to American cartoons, films and tv-shows, or from other books from English-speaking countries.

Another incoherence between word and image resulting from translation can be seen in *The Smelly Book* (Cole, 1988a) published in Spanish as *El Libro Apestoso* (Cole, 1988b). This picturebook is challenging to translate because, as in many other children's books, the text is in the form of verse that rhymes. In this case, the Spanish translation is published by the group Fondo de Cultura Económica, which edits books in Spanish for publication not only in Spain but also in other hispanic countries from Latin America. Although the language is the same for those countries, there are several words that have different meanings, which can sometimes be problematic. Thus, when the narrator of *The Smelly Book* (Cole, 1988a; 1988b) says “I think I would do a bunk if I saw a smelly skunk!”, in Spanish, to maintain the rhyme, it is translated as “Salto como un cervatillo cuando me encuentro un zorrillo” [I jump like a musk deer when I see a skunk]. The problem is that the word used in Spanish to designate the skunk is “zorrillo”, which is a variant used only in Latin American countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, or El Salvador; in the Spanish spoken in Spain, “zorrillo” means “little fox”. Not only does this remove the odorous connotation, it also creates visual/verbal incongruence: when a Spanish reader looks at the text, they are expecting to see a little fox in the illustrations, but what they actually see is a skunk (a “mofeta” in their language variety).

*Mummy Laid an Egg: Or Where Do Babies Come From?* (Cole, 1993a) is a picturebook about the fictional stories that two parents think up in their attempts to tell their children how babies are born. These include being delivered by dinosaurs and growing from seeds, but the one they hit upon in the end is that their mummy laid an egg which exploded, allowing the children to emerge. However, there is a plot twist at the end of the story: the children find their parents' account amusing, and thus decide to explain to them what really happens when a baby is born.

In this picturebook, the translational problem derives from the fact that in Spanish, a different word is used for “egg” depending on whether it refers to a bird’s egg (*huevo*) or a human one (*óvulo*). The title, as we have seen, is translated fairly literally as *¡Mamá Puso un Huevo!* (Cole, [1993b] 1998), with the illustration, in both versions, showing a giant chicken’s egg on a sofa. But, later on, when one of the children says “Mummy does have eggs. They are inside her body”, the decision to use “huevos” (“Mamá tiene huevos. Los tiene dentro de su barriga” [Mummy has eggs. She has them inside her tummy]) is a little

incongruous, rendered even more so by the illustration, which shows the daughter pointing at the stomach on a drawing representing the body of the mother. (On the other hand, as these are just two children lecturing about where babies come from in a simple comprehensible way, the incongruity is not as serious as it might have been had the situation been different).

Something similar happens in the French translation since, like Spanish, this is a romance language that evolved from Latin. In French, the word “ovule” is used more than the word “oeuf” when referring to “ovum”. There are two French editions of this book (Cole, 1993c, [1993d] 2012), but neither completely follows the original title. Instead of “Mummy laid an egg”, the title is more inspired by the subtitle of the original work (*Comment on Fait les Bébés!* [How babies are made!] Cole, 1993c, [1993d] 2012), which not only loses the humor, but also breaks the relationship between the title and the cover image. It will certainly be for this reason that one of the French editions (Cole, [1993d] 2012) has opted to feature a different cover that shows one of the children starting to make their presentation about how babies are born, thereby anticipating the final plot twist.

### 3. The domestication of proper names and titles

The decision to domesticate proper names brings different results in different contexts. An interesting case can be found in the Spanish translation of *Lady Lupin's Book of Etiquette* (Cole, 2001a), in which the name of the protagonist (who is an aristocratic deerhound) remains the same, but an “a” is added at the end to make it sound more Spanish (*El Libro de Etiqueta de Lady Lupina*, Cole, 2001b).<sup>9</sup> Curiously, both this and the name Lobelia (Lady Lupin’s naughty puppy daughter), which remains unchanged, may actually become more transparent in Spanish than in English, since the Spanish word for “wolf” is “lobo”, and the adjective “lupino/a” is much less remote and technical than its English cognate.

In some cases, the decision to translate the names of places and characters may result in semantic loss. In *Dr. Dog* (Cole, 1994a), the family surname is “Gumboyle”, an invented name created to add humor, since everyone in the family is sick and Dr. Dog needs to help them. In the Spanish edition ([1994b] 1998), this is translated as “Palomares”, a word that evokes “pigeon” and has no relation to the original wordplay or to the story itself, resulting in the loss of comic detail. As for the canine protagonist, the Spanish translator opted for the onomatopoeic term commonly used for a dog’s bark (the Spanish equivalent to “woof”) and called the main character Doctor Guau (Cole, [1994b] 1998). In French, on the other hand, the translator created a wordplay by mixing the term “médecin de famille” (“family doctor”) and “chien” (“dog”) to form *Medechien de famille* (Cole, 1994c), a wordplay which could be back-translated into English as “Family dogtor”. Furthermore, Dr. Dog now has his own name and surname, and is sometimes referred to as “Hippocrate Cabot” (a clear

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<sup>9</sup> The title “Lady”, which, following other translating tendencies, could have been substituted by the Spanish equivalent “señora”, is not changed because in Spanish, the English title “Lady”, is also used to refer to higher class British women.

tribute to the Greek doctor Hippocrates of Kos) and at other times as “Doctor Cabot” (the equivalent of Dr Dog in the original, as “cabot” is a familiar term for “dog”).

Other first names in this story have been translated in a more random way in the Spanish edition. In the English version, the children are called Gerty, Kev and Fiona, which do not have obvious equivalents. However, here the translator has opted to give them common Spanish names (“Javi”, “Pepe” and “Luisita” respectively), which do not raise any major problems. Another name that can be mentioned here is from one of Babette Cole’s most popular picturebooks, *Princess Smartypants* (Cole, 1986a). In Spanish, the title is translated as *La Princesa Listilla* (Cole, [1986b] 1998), using an equivalent adjective in the target language, while in the German edition, *Prinzessin Pfiffigunde* (Cole, [1986d] 2005), the translator uses the invented adjective “Pfiffigunde”, which contains the word “pfiffi”, which in German means “smart”, “witty” or “clever”. The French edition, *Princesse Finemouche* (Cole, 1986e), uses the word “finemouche”, which has a similar meaning to the word used in the German edition. The Italian edition, on the other hand, removes the connotation of the princess being smart or witty and instead uses the term “independent” (*Una principessa indipendente* [Cole, 1986c]) to describe the self-sufficient and feminist personality of the main character, who decides that she does not need a prince in her life and can do everything by herself. Even more different is the Catalan translation, *La princesa enjogassada* [the playful princess] (Cole, [1986f] 1990), which refers to how the princess tricks the princes in the story. That is to say, each of these translations has highlighted a different characteristic of the main protagonist.

The name of the main character in *Prince Cinders* (Cole, 1987a) also changes in the different editions. It is clearly meant to evoke the fairy tale *Cinderella*, which in Spanish is “Cenicienta”, as we have already seen. Thus, the Spanish translator takes advantage of the fact that the gender can be easily changed into the masculine by simply substituting the final “a” with an “o”, producing *El Príncipe Ceniciento* (Cole, [1987b] 1998). In other translations of this book, the name changes completely and is not related to Cinderella at all. For example, in the French edition, *Prince Gringalet* (Cole, 1987c), the translator mobilizes the adjective “gringalet”, which means “weakling” or “wimp”, to refer to the main character’s physical appearance. Therefore, although the story remains the same and the reader can understand that it alludes to *Cinderella*, the wordplay in the title and protagonist’s name are lost.

As regards the titles of different works in different countries, in some cases, there is an attempt to reproduce the humorous flavor by choosing similar idioms in the target language. For example, the picturebook *Drop Dead* (Cole, 1996a) is published in Spanish as *Estirar la Pata* (Cole, 1996b), and in French as *Raides Morts* (Cole, 1996c), both light-hearted death-related expressions. Another important detail is that many of the Spanish

translations carry a subtitle. Although subtitles are present in some of the original English editions,<sup>10</sup> others are apparent only in the Spanish translations, as with:

- *Hair in Funny Places* (Cole, 1999a), translated as *Pelos por todas partes: o la hormona alborotada* [Hair all over the places: or the messy hormone] (Cole, 1999b).
- *Drop Dead* (Cole, 1996a), translated as *Estirar la pata: o cómo envejecemos* [Kick the bucket: or how we age] (Cole, 1996b).
- *The Unwedding* (Cole, 1997a) (also called *Two of Everything*), translated as *Todo doble: o cómo divorciarse con buen humor* [Two of everything: or how to divorce in a good mood] (Cole, 1997b).
- *Dr. Dog* (Cole, 1994a), translated *El Doctor Guau y otros consejos para tu salud* [Dr. Woof and other advice for your health] (Cole, [1994b] 1998)

Upon observation, it would appear that the addition of the subtitle seems to be a device used when picturebooks have rather controversial titles: the subtitles seem to be designed to soften or clarify it. This may have been a decision of the publisher, since all the Spanish editions of the picturebooks mentioned above (Cole, 1999b, 1996b, 1997b, [1994b] 1998) are published in Spain by the same publisher, although translated by different professionals.

Some of the Spanish subtitles do not always make as much sense as those used in the original works. In the previously mentioned *Sprog owner's manual: (or how kids work)* (2004a), the subtitle in brackets has the purpose of clarifying the main title, while also playing with the implication that a “sprog” might be some kind of mechanical device (perhaps by analogy with “cog”). However, in the Spanish version, *Niños: manual de usuario (o cómo funcionan los niños)* (Cole, 2004b), the translator does not use a colloquial term in the main title (such as “retoño”) but instead repeats the generic word “niños” [children] twice. There are also now two subtitles, with “Manual de usuario” [User's manual] coming first and “(o cómo funcionan los niños)” [or how children work] coming second.

#### 4. Visual effects: fonts

Let us finish by looking at some cases of how the visual effect of the book, particularly the choice of font, is affected by the transition to another linguaculture. Some Spanish editions simply transfer the fonts used in the original editions: this is the policy followed in works like *The smelly book* (Cole, 1988a; 1988b), *Mummy never told me* (Cole, 2003a, [2003b] 2004), or *Tarzanna* (Cole, 1991a, [1991b] 1993). However, it is not the case for several of the others. Many of the fonts used in Babette Cole's titles emulate handwriting, as in the case of *Princess Smartypants* (Cole, 1986a), *Prince Cinders* (Cole, 1987a), *The Un-wedding* (Cole, 1997a), *Lady Lupin's Book of Etiquette* (2001a) or *The Trouble With...* series, with titles such as *The trouble with Mum* (Cole, 1983a) or *The Trouble with Dad* (Cole, 1985a),

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<sup>10</sup> For example, *Mummy laid an egg: or where do babies come from* (Cole, 1993a); *The sprog owner's manual: (or how kids work)* (Cole, 2004a); or *Bad habits! or, the taming of lucrezia crum* (Cole, 1998a).

but in the Spanish editions (Cole, [1986b] 1998, [1987b] 1998, 1997b; 2001b; [1983b] 1992, [1985b] 1991), the fonts used for the titles on the covers have been replaced by a standard typed-style one, thereby removing an important part of the aesthetic that characterizes the original editions. There are other books in which the font is used in more creative ways: for example, in the title on the cover of *Dr. Dog* (Cole, 1994a), it imitates the brown and white fur of the dog, while *The Hairy Book* (Cole, 1984a), includes hairy letters. These visual elements are not found in the Spanish editions (Cole, [1994b] 1998, [1984b] 1991).

As for the French editions, these do tend to follow the original playfulness of the fonts, with the exception of *J'ai un problème avec ma mère* [The trouble with mum] (Cole, [1983c] 2010). The cover of this particular picturebook follows the same design as the Spanish edition (Cole, [1983b] 1992), since they are both edited under the same collection, published in France by Gallimard and in Spain by Altea. Although these two publishing houses have produced many picturebooks, they tend to edit them in a pocket format that makes them cheaper and, therefore, accessible to a wider audience. According to González Martín (1989), when Altea started publishing these titles (all works that had been published before by Gallimard), some people pointed out that the original editions were more visually striking. However, the publisher had to choose between making the editions affordable, and therefore, accessible to more people, or raising the price, which would restrict the audience. By choosing the first option, some of the visual features of the original would inevitably be changed.

## 5. Conclusion

This article has focused on the Spanish translations of picturebooks by Babette Cole, an author and illustrator that challenges the reader in multiple ways. As we have seen, her books are very different from the kind of children's literature that was being published in Spain during the 80s and the 90s, when the country was still recovering from the Franco dictatorship. Consequently, some of the translational decisions seem designed to soften or neutralize some of the more outrageous features.

One of the most common techniques used for dealing with culturally specific material is domestication, which involves adapting it to the norms of the target culture, making it more familiar. However, when the work in question is a picturebook, this strategy can produce some strange incongruencies. As it is not always possible to modify the illustrations to fit the domesticated text, the translator and publisher should perhaps consider if such domestication techniques are truly necessary, or if a foreignization strategy (i.e. translating the source-text elements more literally) might not be more appropriate. Indeed, it might be worth reflecting more broadly on whether the domestication technique is so systematically applied because the readers of the target language will not understand the original reference, or if it is merely to comply with the cultural tradition in the target culture

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## TRANSLATION CRITICISM MEETS MULTIMODALITY: EVALUATING THE TRANSLATION OF A PICTUREBOOK – AN EXPERIMENT

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**ABSTRACT:** The German picturebook *Eins Zwei Drei Tier* (one, two, three, animal) (1999), written and illustrated by Nadia Budde for children aged three years and over, contains a total of 98 words, 64 humorous illustrations of people and animals, 18 pages and 17 rhymes. At first sight, it seems untranslatable, yet it has been published in many languages, one of which is Portuguese. A picturebook is usually read to and by children, which means that its message is transmitted through the auditory and visual channels, and sometimes also through the tactile one too. Given these multimodal characteristics, how can the translation be evaluated? Translation criticism theories from the 1990s have usually focused on the text-level, and Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast's translation criticism model (1994, 1997, 1998) is no exception. This paper conducts the experiment to apply her model to a picturebook.

**KEYWORDS:** Multimodality, Picturebooks, Translation Criticism

### 1. Introduction

When I came across the Portuguese version of the German children's picturebook *Eins Zwei Drei Tier* (one, two, three, animal), entitled *Um Dois Três Maltês*, the first question that came into mind was: how was it possible to translate this? The book only has 111 words, which do not appear in the form of sentences or any other syntactic structure. Some rhyme, others do not, and they are organised according to a certain logic that is very particular to this work. I read the Portuguese version and tried to guess the original German text. With the help of the illustrations and rhyme scheme, I could imagine large parts of it. My interest was aroused!

A translator of such a picturebook needs to consider not only the verbal text but also the information transmitted by the images, the sounds of the words, and the influence of the target culture. How did the translator rise to the challenge in this case? Was it actually possible to render the meaning and effect of the words, which are so closely related to the images? And how might this text be analysed? Would it be possible to apply a traditional analytical model to evaluate the translation of a work that is so heavily multimodal?

Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast's (1994, 1997, 1998) translation criticism model is a methodical and structured approach to evaluating the quality of a translation. The model stipulates that the target text (TT) is assessed first, focusing on possible obstacles to comprehension and inconsistencies; only afterwards does the attention shift to the source text (ST), comparing it with the TT. This procedure theoretically retraces what happened when I first had the Portuguese version in my hands and then searched for the original *Eins Zwei Drei Tier*. Let us see what results from this experiment in bringing together a

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multimodal picturebook and Gerzymisch-Arbogast's linguistic model of translation criticism.

## 2. Heidrun Gerzymisch-Arbogast's translation criticism

In contrast to many other critics,<sup>1</sup> Gerzymisch-Arbogast<sup>2</sup> first analyses the TT and identifies salient translation units: words or phrases that, in a positive or negative sense, stand out from the rest of the text. The first parameters of the analytical matrix are formulated on the basis of these aspects. Only then does Gerzymisch-Arbogast turn to the ST and compare it with the translation, where other salient features that were not noticed in the TT may be found and added to the matrix. In the next step, she widens the angle and looks at the text as a whole, in order to identify general aspects and difficulties. In this way, a matrix of aspects is worked out: it is the ST and TT themselves, rather than any predefined parameters, which determine the analytical criteria for systematic translation criticism (Atayan, 2010, p. 21ff).

In practice, before starting the analysis, the text is divided into segments, each given a number and inserted in the left column of a table. The first line of the table contains the designations of relevant aspects and variants (sub-aspects) which are to be analysed. In the course of the analysis and comparison of the translation with the original, the matrix is filled with the respective assessments. At the end, the percentage of discrepancies and correspondences is calculated and the translation is evaluated as *good* (90-100%), *tendentially good* (80-90%), *tendentially bad* (60-80%) or *bad* (0-60%) (ibid, p. 82, my translation).

Gerzymisch-Arbogast includes single-language (*einzel sprachlich*) and contrastive (*kontrastiv*) aspects. Single-language features are characteristics of only one of the (ST or TT) languages and may be compared. Contrastive aspects already imply a comparison. Furthermore, these aspects may be observable on a micro- or macro-structural level (adapted from Atayan 2010, p. 23f and Gerzymisch-Arbogast, 1994, pp. 39f, 75ff and 181):

### Contrastive aspects:

- Microstructure
  - Quantity of information (*Informationsmenge*): additions and omissions
  - Denotative differences (*Denotatdifferenz*): lexical and syntactic level (relations within a sentence)
- Differentiation of culture systems (*Differenzierung der Kultursysteme*): over- or underdifferentiation (transmission of too much or too little cultural information)
- Macrostructure
  - Differences in theme/theme structure (*Differenzen Thema-Rhema-Gliederung*): word order within a sentence, connectors, modus, emphasis

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Juliane House's pragmatic-linguistic model (1977, 1997), Justa Holz-Mänttari's concept of translational action (1984), and Radegundis Stolze's hermeneutic approach (1992), to name but a few. See Sommerfeld (2016) for an overview.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to stress that Gerzymisch-Arbogast's theories include many other, partly interlinked models; that is to say, the aspects described here form only a small part of her approach. The following application of it is entirely the result of my own interpretation. See Atayan (2010) for an overview.

**Single-language aspects:**

- Microstructure
  - Connotative degree (*Konnotationsgehalt*): historical and others
  - Alienation effects (*Verfremdungseffekte*): phonetic, lexical, syntactical, and graphemic
  - Onomatopoeic effects (*lautmalerische Effekte*): non-lexical elements and descriptive verbs
  - Idiomatic violations (*Idiomatik-Verstöße*), lexical and syntactic level, collocations, phraseologisms
  - Register (*Sprachebene*): unmarked, poetic, regional, technical
- Macrostructure
  - Narrative perspective (*Erzählperspektive*): (iconic) form of presentation, perspective of viewer, external or internal perspective of narrator, static-local or directional perspective
  - Textual coherence and reference (*Textkohärenz und Referenz*): ‘island’, multiple pro-form or lexical references, unclear syntactic or definite reference

**3. Analysis**

Before we apply Gerzymisch-Arbogast’s translation quality assessment model to the case study in hand, mention needs to be made of the multimodal aspects that are such an important part of the picturebook experience. The following table organises and classifies the modes that all together constitute the meaning of a picturebook (adapted from Pieper, 2019). It also takes into account the fact that picturebooks may be read or recited aloud by a performer, although in this analysis, the focus will be on the book itself (as shown in bold).

SENSORIAL CHANNEL	AUDITORY		VISUAL		TACTILE	
CORE MODES	Voice (performer)	Tones (book and other objects)	Body (performer)	<b>Object (book)</b>	Body (performer)	<b>Object (book)</b>
MODES	Personal traits <b>Speech</b> Vocal sound		Personal traits Sign language Movements	<b>Material/appearance</b> <b>Dimensions</b> <b>Image</b>	Personal traits Tactile signing Movements	<b>Material / surface</b> <b>Dimensions</b> <b>Weight</b>

Table 1: classification of modes for picturebooks

In what follows, after a brief consideration of the contextual and multimodal aspects of the texts under analysis, Gerzymisch-Arbogast’s approach will be put into practice: segmenting, identifying salient aspects, and completing and evaluating the matrix, step by step.

**3.1 The target text (TT)**

*3.1.1 Contextual and multimodal aspects*

The Portuguese version with the title *Um Dois Três Maltês* was translated from German into Portuguese by Pedro Campos. It was published in 2002 by the publishing house A Cobra Laranja, based in Montemor-o-Novo, Portugal.

### ***Auditory channel – voice (performer)***

#### *Speech (linguistic aspects)*

There are no sentences in the book. Between one and five words designate or characterise one or a group of figures in the illustration, without any syntactic connection between them. The words do not have a regular rhythm, yet those associated with the last two figures usually rhyme. For example: *leve* | *médio* | *pesado* | *zangado*.

### ***Visual channel – object (book)***

#### *Material/appearance:*

The background of the cover image is monochrome yellow and only the lower part of the image appears in turquoise. The front and back covers are paperback, the pages inside the book are a bit thinner.

#### *Dimensions:*

The book is six millimetres thick, 22 centimetres long and 17 centimetres wide, with a horizontal orientation. It has 20 pages, including the front and back covers.

#### *Image (writing, illustration, layout):*

On the cover, the four-word title appears as if handwritten in capital letters, without commas. Each word is situated in relation to the drawing of one, two or three people (there are six in total): only the fourth word appears above the head of an animal of undefined species. The figures are drawn in thick lines, simplifying and abstracting the shape and areas of colour. The facial expression is shown in the round eyes, with the gaze directed towards the fourth figure, and the mouths, some grinning, others smiling.



Figure 1: *Um Dois Três Maltês* (Budde 2001, front cover)

Inside the book, the second page is empty, except for the turquoise ground, which continues along the bottom. On the third page, the title is repeated, but without the illustrations. The text of the book begins (or rather, continues) on the fourth page with the

three people from the cover. The pages are not numbered. The font remains in capital letters and looks handwritten, yet the characters are repeated, so it is actually a digitalised font. The illustrations maintain an aesthetic similar to that of the cover, but vary in terms of words, figures, background colour and ground colour. Each page forms a unit: there are three figures (or groups of figures) of the same kind (but with an individual physical appearance or accessories) and a fourth figure of another kind (usually without special features), while the words are always positioned above them. The fourth figure usually has no accessory or special features, but functions as a 'prototype' that connects to the next unit, which continues with the same species. Apart from some glances, there is no interaction between them. Some figures look as if they are striking a pose, sometimes smiling, for the readers.



Figure 2: *Um Dois Três Maltês* (Budde 2001, page 9)



Figure 3: *Um Dois Três Maltês* (Budde 2001, page 10)

The six people shown on the cover of the book appear again on pages 17, 18 and 19. On page 17, these people are shown without accessories; on pages 18 and 19 (a double-page

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spread) they are next to, on top of or inside an animal. However, the fourth element is missing: only the word *tu* can be seen.



Figure 4: *Um Dois Três Maltês* (Budde 2001, pages 18 and 19)

On the back cover of the book, another break in the scheme can be observed. Instead of three figures, there is a house, a moon, two exotic figures and once again the same group of six people from the cover. Publication information appears at the bottom.



Figure 5: *Um Dois Três Maltês* (Budde 2001, back cover)

### **Tactile channel – object (book)**

#### **Material/surface:**

The pages are flexible, plain and glossy, with no multi-dimensional elements or surfaces.

#### **Dimensions:**

See above (visual channel).

#### **Weight:**

The book is not heavy and can easily be held by a child.

### **3.1.2 Segmentation and salient aspects**

The Portuguese text has 111 words in total. One unit corresponds to one page in the book, except for Unit 16 which spans two pages. The units do not correspond to the number of the pages in the book, since page 2 has no text and page 3 repeats the title, and therefore are not listed below. Every unit is divided into four elements, with one to six words each:

Unit	Element 1	Element 2	Element 3	Element 4
1	UM	DOIS	TRÊS	MALTÊS
2	NUNO	BRUNO	JOÃO	LOBÃO
3	GRANDE	MÉDIO	PEQUENINO	PORQUINHO
4	LISO	ENCARACOLADO	CRISPADO	RATO
5	COM CHAPÉU	COM MÁSCARA	COM CARA DE MAU	MIAU
6	CANSADO	DOENTE	MALANDRÃO	CÃO
7	COM GRAVATA	COM ESTOLA	COM MOSQUITO	CABRITO
8	COM BARBA	COM ÓCULOS	COM BALÃO	PUXÃO
9	COM CICATRIZ	DE RASPÃO	COM GALO	MOCHO GONÇALO
10	NA CAMA	À JANELA	À MESA SENTADO	LINGUADO
11	COM A LÚCIA	COM A CLARA	RITA COM O ATUM	ZUM ZUM
12	LOURA	PRETA	CARECA	OLÁ, BONECA!
13	PARA A ESQUERDA	PARA A DIREITA	PINO	CAVALINHO
14	LEVE	MÉDIO	PESADO	ZANGADO
15	AQUI	ACOLÁ	ALI	OLÁ!
16	COM TOUPEIRA	EM CIMA DO LAGARTO	NO CANGURU	TU
17	EM CASA	LÁ FORA	COM O MATIAS E O BERIMBAU	TCHAU!

Table 2: *Um Dois Três Maltês*, segmentation

### Aspect 1: Punctuation

The four elements are visually separated by a space between the words and by the fact that they each refer to a particular figure (or group of figures) in the illustration. That is to say, there is very little punctuation. In fact, throughout the book as a whole, there is only one comma and three exclamation marks.

### Aspect 2: Rhyme

In almost all units, the third and fourth elements rhyme. Unit 6 stands out from the others, because here, the last word rhymes with the second rather than the third element. In Portuguese poetics, a distinction is made between perfect rhymes (when both the vowels and consonants of the stressed syllable correspond) and imperfect rhymes (which only partially correspond). Imperfect rhymes can be subdivided into *assonante* (only the vowels are the same) and *aliterante* (only the consonants are the same) (Motta, undated). For example, *João* and *lobão* in Unit 2 is a perfect rhyme, while *pequenino* and *porquinho* (Unit 2) is an imperfect, assonant rhyme. There are 13 perfect rhymes and three imperfect, assonant rhymes. The only exception is Unit 15, in which Element 4 rhymes with Element 2, instead of Element 3.

### *Aspect 3: Word class*

The pattern of three similar figures and one of another species is also mirrored in the word class. For example, in Unit 4 there are three adjectives (*liso* | *encaracolado* | *crispado*) and one noun (*rato*). In Unit 10, a preposition with an article and noun (*na cama* | *à janela*) appears twice, but the third element consists of a preposition, a noun and a participle (*à mesa sentado*).

### *Aspect 4: Coherence within the unit*

As the book does not contain sentences, there is no coherence in a semantic sense. However, there is another relationship, a logical coherence, which goes beyond grammatical categories. For instance, Units 10 and 11, both include fish, but there is a change, not only in the type of fish (*linguado* | *atum*), but also in perspective. In the first two elements of Unit 11, the fish is the subject that is with someone (*com Lúcia* | *com Clara*), and in the third element, the person is the subject that is with the fish (*Rita com o atum*). In Unit 7, the first two elements describe clothing items (*gravata* | *estola*), but the third element designates an insect (*mosquito*) which is not an accessory used by the respective dog, but held on a leash, whereas the dog wears a bow tie (see Figure 8). This kind of phenomenon can be categorised as coherence within one unit.

### *Aspect 5: Animal names*

In the illustrations, apart from Units 1 and 14-17, different kinds of animal are portrayed. In seven units, the verbal text designates the respective animal (e.g. Unit 6: *cão*), which is referred to by onomatopoeias in two cases (Unit 5: *miau*, Unit 11: *zum zum*). The title seems to be the exception: *maltês* can be a simple adjective or a person from the island of Malta, or can refer to a small dog breed with white fur. Here, however, it is an implicit reference to the Maltese cat (a cat with grey or blueish fur) which features in a famous Portuguese nursery rhyme.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, some names are in a diminutive or augmentative form (*lobão*, *porquinho*, *cavalinho*), even though the illustration does not show particularly big or small animals. In Unit 9, the owl is given a name (*Gonçalo*), probably to rhyme with the third element, *galo*.

### *Aspect 6: Coherence between units*

The fourth element establishes the link with the next unit. It graphically introduces the species which is presented on the following page with accessories and individual characteristics. This function is also reflected in the verbal text. The word(s) of the last element of a unit can be read as if they were the first element of the following unit. Units 4 and 5 (*rato* | *com chapéu* | *com máscara* | *com cara de mau*), for example, work well in this respect, but not Unit 15, which ends with *olá!*, while Unit 16 continues with *com toupeira* | *em cima do lagarto* | *no canguru*.

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<sup>3</sup> This begins: *Era uma vez / Um gato maltês / Tocava piano / E falava francês [...]*

### *Aspect 7: Image-text coherence*

The verbal elements describe the figures or relate to an accessory they use. This coherence between image and word does not always seem to be very successful. For example, the first animal below does not seem very angry (*zangado*), and not everyone may associate the second one with a rascal (*malandrão*).

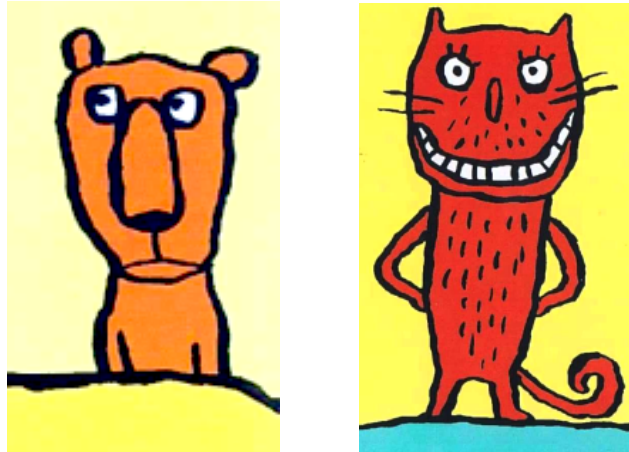


Figure 8: *zangado* (Unit 14), *malandrão* (Unit 6) (Budde 2001, pp.5 and 13)

## **3.2 The source text (ST)**

The following sections will focus on the original German book. Again, some multimodal issues will be mentioned, without repeating observations that have already been made regarding the Portuguese version. After this, the aspects that were determined for the TT will be compared with the corresponding aspects in the ST. Finally, the ST will be examined as a whole.

### *3.2.1 Contextual and multimodal aspects*

The German original with the title *Eins Zwei Drei Tier* is written and illustrated by Nadia Budde. The book was published in 1999 by the German publishing house Peter Hammer Verlag in Wuppertal, Germany. The German version is 18 pages long. Compared to the Portuguese book, the two empty pages are missing (which were probably introduced in the Portuguese version for technical typographical reasons). It is a hardback edition, more robust and heavier than the Portuguese version. The book is one and a half centimetres thick, 22 centimetres long and 17,6 centimetres wide, also with a horizontal orientation. The text appears as if handwritten but the letters are not repeated as in the Portuguese version (where they apparently were copied from the original). The illustrations are identical to the Portuguese version.

### *3.2.2 Salient aspects*

The German text has 98 words (13 fewer than the Portuguese). The segmentation is as follows:

Unit	Element 1	Element 2	Element 3	Element 4
1	EINS	ZWEI	DREI	TIER
2	BENNO	EDDI	ROLF	WOLF
3	GROß	MITTEL	KLEIN	SCHWEIN
4	GLATT	LOCKIG	KRAUS	MAUS
5	MIT HUT	MIT MASKE	MIT FRATZE	KATZE
6	MÜDE	KRANK	GESUND	UND HUND
7	MIT SCHLIPS	MIT KRAGEN	MIT FLIEGE	ZIEGE
8	MIT VOLLBART	MIT BRILLE	MIT BLASE	HASE
9	MIT NARBE	MIT SCHRAMME	MIT BEULE	EULE
10	IM BETT	AM FENSTER	AM TISCH	FISCH
11	MIT KLARA	MIT LUZI	MIT TRINE	BIENE
12	BLOND	SCHWARZ	KAHL	SCHAKAL
13	NACH LINKS	NACH RECHTS	VERKEHRT	PFERD
14	LEICHT	MITTEL	SCHWER	BÄR
15	DA	DORT	HIER	WIR
16	BEIM MAULWURF	AUF DER EIDECHSE	IM KÄNGURUH	DU
17	ZU HAUSE?	AUSWÄRTS?	MIT HINZ UND KUNZ?	MIT UNS!

Table 3: *Eins Zwei Drei Tier*, segmentation

### Aspect 1: Punctuation

In the ST, there are three question marks and one exclamation mark (Unit 17) – in the TT, as mentioned above, there is one comma and three exclamation marks. Consequently, the variants comma, question mark and exclamation mark are included in the matrix.

### Aspect 2: Rhyme

In German poetics, rhymes may be classified as *rein* (pure) or *unrein* (not pure) when the pronunciation is identical or partially different (the spelling may vary, e.g. *kahl* and *Schakal* are pronounced in the same way), corresponding to the terms ‘perfect’ and ‘imperfect’ in the Portuguese classification. The term *Halbreim* (or *Assonanz*) describes identical vowels but different consonants (Wortwuchs, not dated). In Portuguese, the term *assonante* describes this phenomenon. This means that in both Portuguese and German poetics the same phenomena can be described, so they are comparable and can be specified as variants of the aspect ‘rhyme’ in the matrix. In the ST, the third and fourth elements rhyme as in the TT; two of the rhymes are assonant (Unit 13: *verkehrt* | *Pferd* – upside down | horse, and Unit 17: *mit Hinz und Kunz* | *mit uns!* – with Hinz and Kunz | with us!). The first unit (the title) is the only one that evades the scheme. The word *Tier* (animal) does not rhyme with the third element (*drei* – three). But there is another pun: *Tier* rhymes with *vier* (four), hence the number expected after three. So even though it does not rhyme, it is an appropriate wordplay.

### Aspect 3: Word class

There is only one exception in the ST to the pattern of the three first elements sharing the same word class: an added conjunction (*und* – and) in Unit 6 leads to a triple rhyme that

has not been realised in the translation. In total, the following word classes can be found in the ST and TT: names, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, participles, prepositions, numerals, conjunctions, onomatopoeias, interjections and pronouns. In the TT, some nouns are augmentatives or diminutives, which is quite common in the Portuguese language, but not in German. All these variants are therefore included in the matrix.

#### *Aspect 4: Coherence within the unit*

The weak coherence in Unit 11 of the TT (sole and tuna, change of perspective) is not observable in the ST. In the German version, the hypernym *Fisch* (fish) is related to the three elements of the following unit without changing the perspective. In German, *Fliege* has a double meaning: it can mean both 'fly' and 'bow tie' (Unit 7), and this has been expressed in the illustration: the dog has a fly on a leash and wears a bow tie. The Portuguese version (*mosquito*) therefore only translates one of these meanings (the fly).

#### *Aspect 5: Animal names*

In the German version, the title is also an exception to the rest of the text: the word *Tier* (animal) is not the name of an animal, but the hypernym (also indicating the content of the book). In the German text, almost all the elements in position four are names of animals. There are no onomatopoeias, diminutives or augmentatives.

#### *Aspect 6: Coherence of Element 4 with next unit*

The connection to the page which follows also applies to the ST: for example, *Maus | | mit Hut | mit Maske | mit Fratze* (mouse | | with hat | with mask | with grimace), in Units 4 and 5, comes close to a complete and syntactically correct sentence, just as the Portuguese version does. Unit 15, which ends with *olá!* in the TT, breaking the pattern, works out well in the German version: *wir | | beim Maulwurf | auf der Eidechse | im Känguruh* (we | | with the mole | on the lizard | in the kangaroo).

#### *Aspect 7: Image-text coherence*

The animal characterised in the TT as angry (*zangado*, Unit 14) is designated a bear (*Bär*) in the ST. The cat that is a rascal (*malandrão*, Unit 6) in the TT, is healthy (*gesund*) in the ST. In fact, looking at the images in isolation, also in the German version, the bear may not be recognised as such (but he definitely does not seem angry, as the Portuguese version suggests) and the cat may not be associated with good health. It therefore seems useful to make this assessment in gradations.

### *3.2.3 General aspects*

The German text, in general, seems to be more homogeneous.<sup>4</sup> The fourth element systematically designates an animal, except in Unit 15, where there is a reference to the group that is also seen on the cover and with which performers or listeners of the book can identify: *wir* (us). In Unit 16, the fourth element appeals even more directly to the performer/listener: *du* (you). Transferred to Unit 17 which follows, this *du* can be interpreted as part of the question: '[where are] you? At home? Out? With Hinz and Kunz (a German metaphor for 'anyone')?' and to which the fourth element gives the answer: *mit uns!* (with us!). These are three appeals to the performer/listener who is thus encouraged to feel part of the group, a facet that does not feature much in the Portuguese version.

Literalness and rhythm are two further aspects that could have been included in the matrix. One argument against 'literalness' is that the picture is such a strong constraint that the translator has no other option than to move away from the verbal text of the original (that is to say, a solution that fits well with the image is preferable to a literal translation). As for rhythm, the ST also does not follow a regular rhythm, so this was deemed irrelevant.

#### 4. The aspect matrix

All these aspects combined result now in the matrix below, modelled on Gerzymisch-Arbogast's model, which includes an assessment of the translation's quality. The following abbreviations were used:

**Punctuation:**

- c = comma
- qm = question mark
- em = exclamation mark

**Rhyme:**

- p = perfect
- imp = imperfect (ass = assonant)
- nr = no rhyme

**Word class:**

- name
- n = noun (dim = diminutive, aug = augmentative)
- adj = adjective
- adv = adverb
- par = participle
- pre = preposition
- num = numeral
- con = conjunction
- ono = onomatopoeia
- int = interjection
- pron = pronouns

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<sup>4</sup> In fact, Nadia Budde is both the author and illustrator of this word-image text, meaning that the verbal text and the graphics emerged from the same mind.

**Coherence within unit:**

- x, y, z P same letters = coherent elements

**Animal name Element 4:**

- des = designation
- ono = onomatopoeia

**Coherence of Element 4 with next unit:**

- coe = coherent
- inc = incoherent

**Image/text coherence:**

- + = very coherent
- +- = neutral
- - = not very coherent
- 0 = aspect does not apply (e.g. because the figure is given a name)

Aspect \ Unit			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
			Punctuation c, qm, em					Designation animal element 4 des, ono	Coherence element 4 with next unit coe, inc
1	PT	UM / DOIS / TRÊS / MALTÊS	-				des	inc	+ / + / + / -
	DE	EINS / ZWEI / DREI / TIER	-				des	inc	+ / + / + / +
2	PT	NUNO / BRUNO / JOÃO / LOBÃO	-				des	coe	o / o / o / +
	DE	BENNO / EDDI / ROLF / WOLF	-				des	coe	o / o / o / +
3	PT	GRANDE / MÉDIO / PEQUENINO / PORQUINHO	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +
	DE	GROß / MITTEL / KLEIN / SCHWEIN	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +
4	PT	LISO / ENCARACOLADO / CRISPADO / RATO	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +

	DE	GLATT / LOCKIG / KRAUS / MAUS	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +
5	PT	COM CHAPÉU / COM MÁSCARA / COM CARA DE MAU / MIAU	-				ono	coe (ono)	+ / + / + / +
	DE	MIT HUT / MIT MASKE / MIT FRATZE / KATZE	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +
6	PT	CANSADO / DOENTE / MALANDRÃO / CÃO	-				des	coe	+ / + / + - / +
	DE	MÜDE / KRANK / GESUND UND HUND	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +
7	PT	COM GRAVATA / COM ESTOLA / COM MOSQUITO / CABRITO	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / + -
	DE	MIT SCHLIPS / MIT KRAGEN / MIT FLIEGE / ZIEGE	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +
8	PT	COM BARBA / COM ÓCULOS/ COM BALÃO / PUXÃO	-				-	inc	+ / + / + / -
	DE	MIT VOLLBART / MIT BRILLE / MIT BLASE / HASE	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +
9	PT	COM CICATRIZ / DE RASPÃO / COM GALO / MOCHO GONÇALO	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +
	DE	MIT NARBE / MIT SCHRAMME / MIT BEULE / EULE	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +

10	PT	NA CAMA / À JANELA / À MESA SENTADO / LINGUADO	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / + -
	DE	IM BETT / AM FENSTER / AM TISCH / FISCH	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +
11	PT	COM A LÚCIA / COM A CLARA / RITA COM O ATUM / ZUM ZUM	-				ono	coe (ono)	+ / + / + - / +
	DE	MIT KLARA / MIT LUZI / MIT TRINE / BIENE	-				des	coe	+ / + / + / +
12	PT	LOURA / PRETA / CARECA / OLÁ, BONECA!	c, em				-	inc	+ / + / + -
	DE	BLOND / SCHWARZ / KAHL / SCHAKAL	-	p	adj/adj/adj/n	xxx/y	des	coe	+ / + / + / +
13	PT	PARA A ESQUERDA / PARA A DIREITA / PINO / CAVALINHO	-	imp (ass)	[pre+n/pre+n]/n /n (dim)	xx/y/z	des	coe	+ / + / + - / +
	DE	NACH LINKS / NACH RECHTS / VERKEHRT / PFERD	-	imp (ass)	pre+adv/pre+adv /adv/n	Rhyme element 3 and 4  p, imp (ass)	Word class (without articles)	Co- heren- ce within one unit  x, y, z	+ / + / + / +
14	PT	LEVE / MÉDIO / PESADO / ZANGADO	-	p	adj/adj/adj/adj	p	num/nu m/num/ adj	xxx/y	+ / + / + -

	DE	LEICHT / MITTEL / SCHWER / BÄR	-	p	adj/adj/adj/n	nr	num/num/num/n	xxx/y	+/+//+
15	PT	AQUI / ACOLÁ / ALI / OLÁ!	em	nr	adv/adv/adv/int	p	na/na/na/n (aug)	xxx/y	+/+//o
	DE	DA / DORT / HIER / WIR	-	p	adv/adv/adv/pro n	p	na/na/na/n	xxx/y	+/+//+
16	PT	COM TOUPEIRA / EM CIMA DO LAGARTO / NO CANGURU / TU	-	p	pre+n/pre[+adv+pre]+n/pre+n/pron	imp (ass)	adj/adj/adj/n (dim)	xxx/y	+/+//+
	DE	BEIM MAULWURF / AUF DER EIDECHSE / IM KÄNGURUH / DU	-	p	pre+n/pre+n/pre+n/ pron	p	adj/adj/adj/n	xxx/y	+/+//+
17	PT	EM CASA / LÁ FORA / COM MATIAS E O BERIMBAU / TCHAU!	-/-/-/em	p	[pre+n]/adv+adv/pre+na+con+na/int	imp (ass)	adj/adj/adj/n	xxx/y	+/+//o
	DE	ZU HAUSE? / AUSWÄRTS? / MIT HINZ UND KUNZ? / MIT UNS!	qm/qm / qm/em	imp (ass)	pre+adv/adv/pre+na+con+na/pre+pron	p	adj/adj/adj/n	xxx/y	+/+//+
<b>Total elements</b>			<b>68</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Discrepancies</b>			<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Correspondence</b>			<b>91%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>84%</b>
<b>Result</b>			<b>80.6% = tendentially good (80-90%)</b>						

Table 4: the matrix

Remarks:

1. Brackets: observations that have not been counted because they are not very relevant, e.g. Aspect 3: diminutives and augmentatives – what is relevant is the fact that they are nouns.
2. Square brackets: aspects that were not counted because the discrepancy exists due to the language structure, e.g. Unit 13, Aspect 4: ‘to the left’, is expressed in Portuguese by a preposition, article and noun (*para a esquerda*), whereas in German the same meaning is expressed with a preposition and adverb (*nach links*).
3. Aspect 5: onomatopoeia was accepted as a designation of an animal – and also because it was already counted in Aspect 3, as a change of word class.

4. Unit 7, Aspect 7: the '+-' evaluation for *cabrito* is due to the fact that we see an older goat, yet *cabrito* designates a young one.

## 5. Conclusions

Generally speaking, it can be concluded that Gerzymisch-Arbogast's methodology is indeed applicable to a text with a high level of multimodality, due to the fact that the choice of aspects depends on each text, meaning that the contents of the matrix can be individually adapted. It even enables issues concerning the word-image relationship to be included<sup>5</sup>. This approach allows for a detailed analysis, examining the text with keen eyes and reflecting on whether certain observations are worth including in the matrix and thus whether they are relevant or not. However, even if one tries to 'think multimodally', the integration of multimodal aspects is not what first comes to mind (maybe a better trained user of the matrix would have found more relevant aspects). On the other hand, although the tactile channel was basically curtailed, at least the auditory channel, namely the voice of the performer, is partially represented by the 'rhyme' aspect<sup>6</sup>.

The sober and mathematical result seems far removed from the aesthetics, pleasure, fun and fantasy that a picturebook may inspire and the sensory experience that it offers. In order to analyse further relevant issues, including the effect of the translation on the listener, the tactility (the German book is more robust and resistant), performative aspects (the ST may be easier to memorise and thus to perform by listeners), and the possible interaction between performer and listener, other approaches might be more adequate. The same holds for ideological issues (the machismo present in the words allocated to the jackal: *olá, boneca* – hello doll!), didactic questions (does the Portuguese version help children to learn the names of animals?), cultural matters (would Portuguese children not find it strange that a sole looks almost the same as a tuna fish?) or functionality (if the function of the book is to stimulate children to perform the last words on each page, do Portuguese children respond to this stimulation?).

The result, according to Gerzymisch-Arbogast's translation criticism model, is that the translation, with 80.6% correspondence, is 'tendentially good'. However, aspects such as image/word coherence are hardly measurable. At least in some cases, the assessment of whether a figure is well or badly designated in the verbal text is based on personal impressions (such as whether the figure labelled *malandrão* looks like a rascal or not).

In addition, there is no distinction between important and less important aspects (e.g. the punctuation aspect seems less important than the cohesion between the verbal text and the illustrations). Furthermore, if one little cog in the wheel is altered, the result may change to 'tendentially bad' (80.6% is close to the limit). Another question is whether a translation of a picturebook would ever be able to achieve 100% correspondence. It would

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<sup>5</sup> Gerzymisch-Arbogast herself includes aspects such as "Rolle der Musik" (the role of music) or "Christliches Kulturgut" (Christian cultural asset) in her analysis of a milk advertisement (Gerzymisch-Arbogast/Mudersbach, 1998, p. 102f).

<sup>6</sup> Given that rhyme concerns the verbal sign system, it may be expressed by visual and auditory modes.

seem that if the translator had accomplished one aspect perfectly (e.g. image/word cohesion), the percentage for another aspect (e.g. rhyme) would have been lower.

The fact is that the TT is not able to follow the visual scheme of the ST consistently. The main problem is the constraint imposed by the image, meaning that the translator had to adapt the verbal text to it. In addition, maintaining the rhyme scheme was also quite a difficult obstacle to overcome and required some creativity. However, there is a solution for both aspects which has actually been carried out in practice – in a new version of the book produced for the British market with the title *One Two Three Me* (Budde and Fitzkee, 2003). Although this may perhaps be better labelled an adaptation than a translation,<sup>7</sup> it is actually the better “translation”:

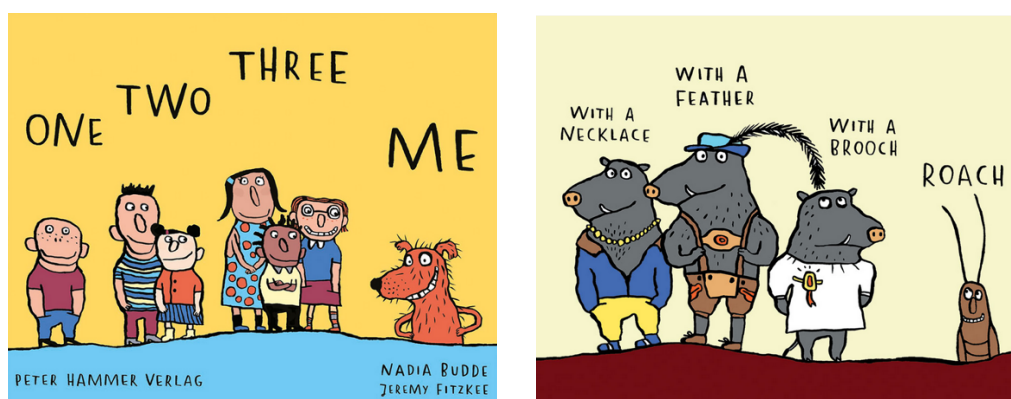


Figure 11: the British version *One Two Three Me* (Budde and Fitzkee, 2003)

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<sup>7</sup> George Louis Bastin notes that “[s]ome scholars prefer not to use the term ‘adaptation’ at all, believing that the concept of translation can be stretched to cover all types of transformation as long as the main function of the activity is preserved. Others view the two concepts as representing essentially different practices” (Bastin, 1998, p. 8).

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## JOSÉ SARAMAGO'S CROSSOVER PICTUREBOOKS AND THEIR RECEPTION IN TURKISH<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** The article presents a case study of three picturebooks – *A Maior Flor do Mundo* (2001), *El Silencio del Agua* (2011), and *O Lagarto* (2016) – by Portuguese author José Saramago in Turkish translation. It first looks at the implied readers of the books through paratextual analysis, and then assesses the influence of paratextual choices on the responses of real Turkish readers using data culled from social media, online reader platforms and a specially constructed reader group session. The findings demonstrate that the implied crossover reader has disappeared in Turkish, which causes these works to be received as children's storybooks. This in turn influences real readers' reactions, depending on who they have bought the books for – children or themselves.

**KEYWORDS:** José Saramago, Crossover Picturebooks, Translation, Reception, Reader Response

### 1. Introduction

The Portuguese Nobel-prize-winning author José Saramago (1922 – 2010) is usually thought of more as a novelist for adults than as a children's writer. In fact, he wrote only one story addressed to child readers, *A Maior Flor do Mundo* (2001), although two more picturebooks bearing his name, *El Silencio del Agua* (2011) and *O Lagarto* (2016), were published after his death. These two books were created by adding artistic illustrations to texts that had originally been conceived as parts of longer books aimed at adults. Consequently, through this process, these last two works gained a new readership. All three of these picturebooks were subsequently translated and published in Turkey where Saramago has a considerable fan following.

When picturebooks are translated into another language, the question of the target reader acquires a new relevance. We tend to assume that picturebooks are always directed at children, and that like all children's literature they will therefore have a dual audience of both children and the adults that read to them (Shavit, 1986; Alvstad, 2010; O'Sullivan, 1993; Oittinen, 2018; Oittinen et. al., 2018). However, there also exists another category known as "crossover picturebooks", which targets readers of all ages, "challenging adults as well as children, promoting decoding skills and encouraging critical thinking in both readerships" (Beckett, 2018, p. 211). Zöher (2018) suggests that works of world literature that have originally been written by canonical authors in the adult literary system but are repackaged as picturebooks may continue to attract adult readers and are therefore eligible to be considered as crossover picturebooks.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the hypothesis that the paratextual choices made in the Turkish translations of these works have caused the loss of the implied

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crossover reader that exists in the source editions, and that this has influenced the reception of the books in Turkey. Therefore, in the first part of the study, the paratextual elements are analyzed to discover the *implied* readers of the source and target versions.<sup>2</sup> The second part looks at the *real* readers and assesses their reaction based on data culled from social media, online reader platforms and a specially constructed reader group.

## 2. The implied reader of Saramago's picturebooks

Crossover picturebooks differ from conventional ones because of their “complex nature of the text-image relationship and the innovative narrative and discursive devices” (Beckett, 2018, p. 212). They are for readers from all ages, offering “different forms of reading, depending on the age and experience of the reader” (Beckett, 2012, p. 16 cited in Sezzi, 2020, p. 215).

In most studies of picturebook translation, adults are usually treated merely as aloud-readers (see Oittinen, 2018; Oittinen et. al., 2018; Sezzi, 2020). However, in the case of crossover picturebooks, adults are not merely the buyers and / or aloud-readers of these books for child readers, but may also be appreciators of the work themselves. This is especially true when the author is as well known and widely read as José Saramago.

In this reception study, the paratexts are analysed for two distinct purposes. The first aim is to uncover the implied reader, who, as Beckett (2018, p. 212) points out, is usually announced somewhere in the subtitle, blurb, or on the dustjacket. The second objective is to determine how these features may have influenced the real readers' response in the target context. Prior studies have shown how blurbs and other para- and peritextual components may “lead the audience reception in specific directions” (Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer, 2013, p. 106 cited in Pantaleo, 2018, pp. 39-40), attract the reader's attention to the story (Short et al., 2014), and / or introduce the characters or the narrative (Bjorvand, 2014), and how illustrated endpapers can have meaning-making potential (Duran and Bosch, 2011) (all cited in Pantaleo, 2018, pp. 39).

In the following sub-sections, three picturebooks – *A Maior Flor do Mundo*, *El Silencio del Agua*, and *O Lagarto* – and their Turkish translations are analysed in detail. The analysis focuses on para- and peritextual elements such as covers, blurbs, endpapers, title- and half-title pages, and copyright pages, as well as webpages allocated to each book on their publisher's websites.

### 2.1. *A Maior Flor do Mundo* – *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği*

*A Maior Flor do Mundo* is the first and only story that was actually written by José Saramago for children. At the beginning of his story, Saramago actually apologizes to child readers for not knowing how to write children's stories, and for using difficult words. It is a story of a boy who, wandering out of his village, finds a withered flower. The boy saves the flower by

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<sup>2</sup> In this study, the concepts implied reader and real reader are understood, respectively, as “the notional reader who can be constructed from the text” and “who borrows books from a library or purchases them at a bookstore” (Chan, 2010, p. 171).

bringing water in his hands. The flower grows enormously tall and the tired boy falls asleep under it. His worried parents together with other villagers find and bring him back home, and people acclaim him for having done something heroic. At the end of the tale, child readers are urged by the author, still sitting at his desk, to write the narrative again in their own words.

Although Saramago originally wrote it in the early 1970s, the story only really caught the attention of readers when it was published as a picturebook in 2001 by Editorial Caminho with illustrations by João Caetano. Porto Editora started to publish this book in 2014 and continues to do so, with its most recent reprint coming out in November 2021. In addition to this, Porto Editora has also produced two new versions of the story with illustrations by André Letria (2013) and Inês Oliveira (2016) respectively, which means there are currently three versions existing on the market. This study, however, will consider only the Porto Editora's edition<sup>3</sup> since it is Caetano's illustrations that feature in the Turkish version, published in December 2014 with the title *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği* (The biggest flower of the world) by the publisher Kırmızı Kedi.<sup>4</sup> The translator Emrah İmre has translated some other books by Saramago from Portuguese into Turkish as well.

When the Portuguese and Turkish versions are compared, the first visible difference lies in the overall format. The Portuguese version is an A4 size book with a hard cover while the Turkish version is slightly smaller and in paperback. The front cover of the Portuguese edition displays the emblem of the Portuguese national reading plan (LER+) in a prominent position, and the author's name is centralized at the top, with the title beneath it, and below that, a little further down, the name of the illustrator (J. Caetano). To the right of the title, we see the stem of the flower together with a ruler that extends through it, while in the bottom left, a boy is looking upwards at the flower. The most interesting thing about the presentation of the work is that the font used in the lettering in the Portuguese version looks like a child's handwriting. This choice may be related to the possible intention of the illustrator and / or editor to give the impression that the story is told by a child, or maybe even that it could be a story of Saramago as a child. Indeed, in the first three spreads, the reader sees the author Saramago at his desk thinking and writing the story, and in the story, the image of the boy actually has some of the author's facial features. Adult readers familiar with Saramago's childhood (or who have read *As Pequenas Memórias*<sup>5</sup>) would also remember how he liked to wander in the fields near the village of Azinhaga, where he was born, and where he would return to spend the summers at his grandparents' house after moving to Lisbon; thus, they could make such connection seeing this paratextual element.

This font has disappeared from the Turkish version, though the illustration has been kept, so such connections cannot be made by Turkish readers. The title is now placed vertically on the right-hand side of the cover together with the emblem of the children's

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<sup>3</sup> The 2019 reprint is used in this study for comparison due to availability. The images of the first edition, by Caminho, found on the internet, prove that all paratextual and textual features are the same in two publisher's editions, except the national reading plan emblem (LER +) added in the latter edition.

<sup>4</sup> The sixth edition of the Turkish translation published in February 2020 is used for comparison in this study.

<sup>5</sup> The author's autobiography about his childhood years was published in 2006 (see below).

branch of the publisher. The translator's name is also printed on the bottom. The round stamp on the cover announces that this edition is the sixth reprint.<sup>6</sup> This information demonstrates that the book was reprinted every year since its first publication in Turkey, which can be interpreted as a sign of ongoing interest in this book amongst Turkish readers.

As for the back cover, both versions show two houses in the bottom left and a long road winding up from the bottom right to the top left, merging in places with two paths that go through yellow and green patches that evoke fields and a forest. In the Portuguese version (2019), beneath the road, we read:

E se as histórias para crianças passassem a ser de leitura obrigatória para os adultos? Seriam eles capazes de aprender realmente o que há tanto tempo têm andado a ensinar?

The back cover of the translation, despite using the same illustration, does not ask the same questions but features a blurb that includes a quote from the book and an introductory text recounting the plot of the story together with the following sentence:

This warm story that José Saramago, the skillful Nobel Prize winner, penned for children tells in the most beautiful way how everything can be overcome with hope and sacrifice.<sup>7</sup> (My translation)

The endpapers of the Portuguese book consist of a collage made up of images like paths, leaves, and flowers, followed by a blank page on the left and a title page on the right. As Pantaleo (2018, p. 47) suggests, this kind of visual art can be chosen in the paratexts for various reasons including "the creation of a particular mood or atmosphere" and "rousing aesthetic appreciation". On the right-hand page of the following spread is the half-title page with a close image of the boy looking sadly at and touching the withered flower, a scene from the narrative. This picture, together with the one on the cover, foreshadows the story, implying that the boy is going to do something to help the flower. An important detail is that all the words on these pages are written in the same font as the writing on the cover. The Turkish version, however, does not include the endpapers with the collage or the title page, thus stripping the book of from the artistic features the original possesses, and starts directly with the half-title page for which a different picture where the boy is looking out of the window is chosen from the narrative. This picture takes place on the spread where the author begins to introduce his story. Here, we see that the boy is looking out at the fields depicted in the form of a world map together with a big flower image and a hand pointing to the next page, foreshadowing the adventures recounted in the rest of the book. However, the image on the title page does not include the piece with the fields,

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<sup>6</sup> The seventh edition was released in November 2021, which also announces the reprinting number. The analysis of the publisher's other products on its website, as well as of the two other picturebooks in this study, makes it safe to say that the Turkish publisher announces new editions as a marketing strategy to signal the success of the books to potential readers.

<sup>7</sup> Turkish original: "Nobel ödüllü usta yazar José Saramago'nun çocuklar için kaleme aldığı bu sıcak öykü, umut ve özveriyle her şeyin üstesinden gelinebileceğini en güzel şekilde anlatıyor."

flower and hand, but only the boy looking out of the window. Thus, it is not possible for the Turkish reader to make a connection between the images on the outer and inner covers or between the image and the title.

When the page allocated for this book is visited on the website of Porto Editora,<sup>8</sup> information about the book's format and about the target reader is found. It mentions that it is listed as recommended reading within the Portuguese National Reading Plan for 4th grade students of 9-11 years of age. The Turkish publisher<sup>9</sup> provides similar information about format, alongside the names of the translator and illustrator, and lists the book within the children's books category but does not indicate any specific age group.

In sum, the findings suggest the Portuguese edition targets both children of elementary school age and adult readers. The paratexts in this version have elements (such as the font choice in the titles), which cue it is a child's story, images that assist the reader to make connections with the story, and the endpapers with collages that prepare readers for the artistic visual narrative inside, as well as the appeal to the adult reader on the back cover. The sophisticated look and feel of this book can appeal to both child and adult readers. However, almost all of these features have been eliminated in the Turkish edition. The softcover and the lack of endpapers now make it look more like a children's storybook, and indeed the blurb is designed to appeal to child readers.

## **2.2. *El Silencio del Agua – Suların Sessizliği***

*El Silencio del Agua* (The Silence of the Water) was published by the Spanish publisher Libros del Zorro Rojo in 2011, a year after Saramago's death. The story in the book is a childhood memory of the author taken from his book *As Pequenas Memórias* (2006), which was translated into Spanish in 2007 as *Las Pequeñas Memorias*: that is to say, the Spanish publisher extracted the text directly from this Spanish translation and repurposed it as a picturebook by bringing it together with illustrations by Manuel Estrada. This picturebook was published in Turkey in 2012 by the publisher Kırmızı Kedi (the same one that published *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği*) under the title *Suların Sessizliği* (The silence of waters). Although *As Pequenas Memórias* had also been translated into Turkish with the title *Küçük Anılar* (little memories) in 2008 (that is to say long before the picturebook appeared), the publisher chose to retranslate the text from the Spanish picturebook instead of using the existing translation in *Küçük Anılar*.<sup>10</sup>

The picturebook describes a day when Saramago as a boy goes fishing in the river in the village where his grandparents lived. A fish tears off the hook and line, which upsets him, so he decides to go back home to mend the rod. When he returns to the riverside, the

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<sup>8</sup> Available at: <https://www.portoeditora.pt/produtos/ficha/a-maior-flor-do-mundo/15870206> (Accessed: 17 December 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://www.kirmiziked.com/kitap/urun/6c0f3d2f819341728b139598eed2423f> (Accessed: 11 December 2021).

<sup>10</sup> *Küçük Anılar* was translated from Portuguese into Turkish by İnci Kut. On the intricate relationship between these source and target texts, see Carvalho (2021).

fish has gone. He waits for a long time, but the fish does not come back. Disappointed, he consoles himself saying the fish had his mark on it because of the hook, hence it is his fish.

The most obvious difference between the Spanish and Turkish picturebooks is again the format: while the Spanish version is published in A4 size with a hard cover, the Turkish version is in a similar format to *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği*, as if part of a series.<sup>11</sup> The cover designs share the same feature in both books while in the case of the Turkish one, we again see the emblem of the children's literature branch of the publisher on both front and back covers. The front cover also informs the reader that this print (2017) is the third reprint of the book.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, there are considerable differences as regards the back cover. The Spanish blurb contains a quote from the text and informs the reader about the source of the text: "From a childhood memory, José Saramago wrote this universal fable that shines with his wisdom"<sup>13</sup> (my translation). This classification as a 'universal fable' abstracts the narrative from the concrete real-life context in which the incident is embedded in Saramago's autobiography, *As Pequenas Memórias*, and effectively repurposes it.<sup>14</sup> This information, and the quotation, have been translated into Turkish, but with the addition of 'the great Nobel laureate author'. Additionally, the Turkish blurb features the following sentence: "Suların Sessizliği offers children that have recently started to read the opportunity to meet the pleasant world of literature"<sup>15</sup> (my translation), which means that the book is explicitly targeting a certain age group (the copyright page also indicates that the book is listed in the publisher's children and youth category).

Finally, the website of the Spanish publisher<sup>16</sup> features only the technical information about the format along with the information given in the blurb on the back of the book,

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<sup>11</sup> The same kind of cover layout has only been found in the children's literature catalogue of the Turkish publisher in one other work: the translation of the picturebook *Bir Yıldıza Övgü (Oda a una estrella)* by Pablo Neruda, published in Turkey in 2012, which was also originally published by Libros del Zorro Rojo. Apparently, the Turkish publisher used the original Spanish covers for these books and later decided to continue with the same layout in the translation of *A Maior Flor do Mundo*, thus creating a series. However, they have obviously not continued this idea as is seen in the case of *O Lagarto* in the following section.

<sup>12</sup> The fourth reprint published in May 2019 is currently available in Turkey (the information on the edition number is also visible on the cover of this book.) The third edition has been used in this study since it was this edition that was accessible to the researcher at the time of the study.

<sup>13</sup> Spanish original: "A partir de un recuerdo de infancia, José Saramago compone una fábula universal que brilla por su sabiduría"

<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the origin of the text is indicated in the fineprint on the copyright page that stands before the back endpaper of the source book. It reads "*El silencio del agua es un fragmento publicado originalmente en el libro Las pequeñas memorias (Alfaguara, 2017)*" [*El silencio del agua is a fragment originally published in the book Las pequeñas memorias*] (my translation). Admitting the text was taken from the Spanish translation, this information fails to refer to the Portuguese original of the mentioned book. Curiously, reference to the original is made in the copyright page of the Turkish version as "*Bu metin yazarın As pequenas memórias adlı yapıtından alınmıştır*" [This text has been taken from the author's work *As pequenas memórias*] (my translation) although the picturebook was translated from the Spanish version. Nevertheless, an attentive reader who cares to read the copyright page would not know that the mentioned book has a translation (*Küçük Anılar*) available for Turkish readers.

<sup>15</sup> Turkish original: "Suların Sessizliği, okumaya yeni başlayan çocuklara edebiyatın keyifli dünyasıyla tanışma fırsatı sunuyor."

<sup>16</sup> Available at: <https://librosdelzorrojo.com/catalogo/el-silencio-del-agua/> (Accessed: 10 December 2021).

with no explicit reference to the target reader. However, a search in the publisher's catalogues reveals that the book is listed in the children's section. The Turkish publisher also provides technical information about the book and indicates the source language as Spanish<sup>17</sup> (that is to say, none of these publishers refer to *As Pequenas Memórias* as ultimate source of the text) on their websites. The book is listed here in the romance / story branch of the children's books category.

As a result, it can be inferred from this analysis that this book is presented, again in the paratexts, as a book targeting young children in the target context.<sup>18</sup> The Turkish publisher seems to have interpreted the words and letters sprinkled through the book (apart from the textual story) as an encouragement to reading and literacy. However, repurposed from a real childhood memory published originally for adult readership, this picturebook has the characteristics of crossover picturebooks with its visual and verbal narrative in both Spanish and Turkish versions even if the latter does not look so on the outside.

### **2.3. *O Lagarto – Kertenkele***

The tale *O Lagarto* (The lizard) is originally one of the chronicles in the book *A Bagagem do Viajante* (1973) which brought together a collection of chronicles previously published in newspapers in Portugal.<sup>19</sup> With the collaboration of José Saramago Foundation in Portugal, the editor Alejandro García Schnetzer, who also created *El Silencio del Agua*, invited renowned Brazilian artist J. Borges to illustrate this text in Portuguese with wood print illustrations, and the resulting picturebook was published simultaneously in Brazil and Portugal in 2016 by Companhia das Letrinhas and Porto Editora respectively. In this sense, this tale was repurposed just like *El Silencio del Agua* to become a crossover picturebook.

*O Lagarto* tells of how a big green lizard appears in the middle of Chiado (a shopping district in central Lisbon) causing fear and panic. The armed forces are called in to restore order, and prepare to attack the animal; however, before they can do so, it turns first into a red rose, and then into a white dove and flies away. This suggests an allegory, which can yield various readings depending on the reader's experience of Saramago's works and knowledge of his views on subjects such as people's participation in public and political life, distrust, authority and power (Nogueira, 2016, p. 243), particularly under the Estado Novo dictatorship regime that was in power when the original chronicles were written. In the picturebook, Borges's wood prints in black, brown, green, red and blue narrate the story in movement by representing the lizard in different colours, its metamorphosis, and the reaction of people.

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<sup>17</sup> Available at: <https://www.kirmizikedi.com/kitap/urun/e71028d9ef3745b5b2a925ed96987024> (Accessed: 10 December 2021).

<sup>18</sup> In Turkey, the age to start school is between 5 and 7, and it is usually when they gain literacy skills.

<sup>19</sup> The book *A Bagagem do Viajante* gives the information that the chronicles in the book were first published in the daily newspaper *Capital* in 1969 and in the weekly newspaper *Jornal do Fundão* in 1971-2. However, neither the book nor existing studies on the tale *O Lagarto* give information about which newspaper first published it or if it was published in both of them.

This picturebook was translated from Portuguese into Turkish by the translator Emrah İmre, who also translated *A Maior Flor do Mundo*, and was published in Turkey by the same publisher, Kırmızı Kedi, with the title *Kertenkele* (The lizard) in 2019. In this study, the first edition by Porto Editora and by Kırmızı Kedi are analyzed as source and target texts respectively.<sup>20</sup>

The Portuguese and Turkish versions share the same hardback cover and illustrations. Both back covers feature the first paragraph of the ultimate source text (the text in the *A Bagagem do Viajante*) as the blurb. However, the Turkish version differs from the Portuguese edition greatly in terms of the book size; while the Portuguese version is A4 size, the translation is A5. There is no reference to the targeted reader on the covers of either version, but on the copyright page of the translation, the book is shown as listed in the publisher's children and youth category. As for the translator's name, it is printed in capital letters on the back cover of the Turkish version.

Finally, the publisher of *O Lagarto*, Porto Editora,<sup>21</sup> mentions in the website synopsis that the story is included in *A Bagagem do Viajante* and claims that the fable can captivate readers of all ages; indeed, the book is classified not as a children's book but under *books > books in Portuguese > literature > stories*. The Turkish publisher, on the other hand, does not present any explicit information about the intended readership.<sup>22</sup> The paragraph on the blurb is used to explain the book's content, and the details about the book include information about the book's format, the names of the translator, illustrator, and editors, and the original language of the source book as Portuguese. Here the book is listed in two categories: Children's Books / Stories, and Literature / Youth Literature. Finally, the Turkish publisher does not mention *A Bagagem do Viajante* as the ultimate source of the tale.

To sum up, the analysis of *O Lagarto* and its Turkish translation shows that it was intended for a crossover readership in the source context (the publisher explicitly states it is for all ages), while the Turkish editor seems to have wanted to make this book look less like a children's book by shrinking the book and font size. The only indication that the book can be read by various ages (though still only child and young readers, rather than adults) is in the technical details on the website. This suggests to Turkish readers that this picturebook was also written by the author for a juvenile readership.

Based on this analysis, it can be deduced that all the source editions in this study feature the characteristics of crossover picturebooks, in that they can appeal to both child and adult readers. However, the paratexts create a different reception in the Turkish context, giving the idea that Saramago wrote all these books for children (in the case of *A*

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<sup>20</sup> This book has only two editions in Turkish. This second edition also announces this fact on the front cover with a "2. Basım" (second print) stamp. Available at: <https://www.kirmizikedi.com/kitap/urun/0318fe8cc2374969b580f940171b9667> (Accessed: 11 December 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Available at: <https://www.portoeditora.pt/produtos/ficha/o-lagarto/18442001> (Accessed: 10 December 2021).

<sup>22</sup> Available at: <https://www.kirmizikedi.com/kitap/urun/0318fe8cc2374969b580f940171b9667> (Accessed: 11 December 2021).

*Maior Flor do Mundo* and *El Silencio del Agua*), or for young readers more broadly (in the case of *O Lagarto*). The omission of the appeal to the adult reader in the translation of *A Maior Flor do Mundo*, and the statement that the book is for emergent readers on the back cover of the translation of *El Silencio del Agua* look suspiciously like attempts to erase the crossover nature of the books on the outside.

The following section looks at the real readers of these picturebooks in Turkey and how their responses to them have been influenced by the findings demonstrated here.

### 3. Turkish reader responses

In this section, the reactions of Turkish readers to these books are analysed using a range of different data sources: social media sites (*Facebook* and *Instagram*), special online reader platforms, and an online reader-group session set up for the purpose. Such methods have been successfully employed by other scholars.<sup>23</sup>

#### 3.1 Social media

For this part of the study, reader reviews and posts about these picturebooks were sought on Instagram and Facebook. Instagram yielded 20 posts published by 19 public accounts: 12 for *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği*, 7 for *Suların Sessizliği*, and one about *Kertenkele* (*O Lagarto*). Eight of these accounts can be described as mother-accounts, that is, they belong to mothers who publish comments about the books they read with their children along with other snippets relating to their children's lives and experiences. Of the others, 3 accounts belong to teachers who suggest reading alternatives for their pupils; another 3 belong to children's literature publishers / booksellers; one is an account that specialises in sharing posts about picturebooks for children, while 4 belong to readers who have apparently bought the book for themselves.

As for the content of the comments, one post dealing with *Kertenkele* does not mention that it might suit child or younger readers but recommends the book as a piece of adult literature, which is interesting. Five mothers commenting on *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği* claim they enjoyed reading the book with their children, although one says it was a bit too long. One teacher commenting on the same book criticizes Saramago's ability to write children's books, and another teacher complains about the length of the sentences, mentioning that the pictures are better than the text. The remaining comments, including 2 by adults who had bought the book for themselves, are all quite positive. Of the comments referring to a certain age group, most indicate that the book is for children over 6, or for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students, though one mother recommends it for younger children (5-year-olds). The 7 comments about *Suların Sessizliği* are all posted on accounts related to children (i.e. by mothers or teachers, or on accounts commenting on children's literature), and although they are generally positive (and they suggest parents should include this book in their children's reading list), one mother who read the book with her two children

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Arnold, 2016; D'Egidio, 2015; Işıklar Koçak, 2017; Procter & Benwell, 2015; Tekgül, 2017.

criticises it because of the inverted, difficult-to-read sentences, and the traumatic message given at the end. Most commentators recommend this picturebook for first-year elementary school students and children over 6.

Facebook proved less fruitful, as few posts about these books were located, although there are many about Saramago's other works. In fact, I found only 7 posts, all suggesting the book as recommended reading for children. Three of these posts belong to the children's branch of the Turkish publisher, Kırmızı Kedi Çocuk, with 586 followers: in two of them, *Dünyanın En büyük Çiçeği* is suggested for children over 5 years of age and in the third (the most recent), all three books are recommended for child readers.

Overall, then, reader reactions on social media demonstrate the paratexts have been influential in the reception of these books by these readers / buyers in that most of the commentators have bought these picturebooks for child readers and evaluated them as children's literature, but the omission of crossover reader in the paratexts resulted in a disappointing reading experience for some. On the other hand, the single Instagram post treating *Kertenkele* as a piece of adult literature also reflects that the editorial choices in the book format to attract older readership has been effective.

### 3.2 Online reader platforms

The websites chosen to collect reader comments are *1000kitap.com* (an online book reader platform where Turkish readers create reading diaries, record and / or analyse the books they read, and write quotes from the books) and *kitapyurdu.com* (an online bookstore where buyers are invited to comment after purchase). As for the users of these platforms, on *1000kitap.com*, the users' profiles can be checked revealing that they are all adults; and although this type of information is not available for *kitapyurdu.com*, the commentators are also assumed to be adults based on what they write and on the fact that they are the buyers of the books.

On *1000kitap.com*, 3 commentators writing about *Kertenkele* mention how much they enjoyed the book and its illustrations, and 2 of them specifically mention that they bought the book for themselves. Seventy-five people marked this book as "read" on their records, and 34 rated it with an average score of 8.9 out of 10. As for *Suların Sessizliği*, though 4 people said they liked the book, 3 commentators doubted whether the content of the story and chosen words would be comprehensible to child readers, despite being physically packaged as a children's book. In this case, the statistics show that 60 people read the book and 25 awarded it with an average of 9.2 points out of 10. Finally, there is only 1 comment on *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği* (an appreciative comment by a Saramago fan) although the book is marked as "read" by 63 readers and rated with an average of 9.5 score by 26.

The second platform studied here belongs to the online bookseller *kitapyurdu.com*, which encourages buyers to rate the books with stars from 1 to 5, and comment on them. Out of 24 comments on *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği*, there are 8 with a 5-star rating and 7 with 4-star rating, which shows that most readers enjoyed their reading experience. The

comments also support this perception. Five of these buyers mention that they bought the book for a child reader. On the other hand, lower ratings and more negative comments were made by adults who had bought the book for themselves: in general, they criticised the book for being too long, or too short, or being too concerned with transmitting a moral message.

Of the 17 comments on this platform written by people buying *Suların Sessizliği*, 12 rate the book with 5-stars, 3 with 4-stars and 1 gives a 3-star rating (one buyer has not rated it at all). There are only 2 comments referring to the reading experience of a child reader. One of them is from a mother who writes that she also enjoyed the book while reading it with her daughter, and the other one is from the person that did not give any stars, but who claims to have bought the book for a niece / nephew and that the child complained about not being able to read foreign words.<sup>24</sup> Most of the remaining commentators indicate they bought the book because of the name of the author, which indicates that the marketing strategy of highlighting Saramago's Nobel Prize served its purpose.

Finally, *Kertenkele* was evaluated by only 7 buyers on this platform, yielding four 5-star reviews, one 4-star, one 3-star and one 2-star. None of the comments refer to any child reader, and although some reviewers had already stated that they read whatever Saramago writes, others were more negative, expressing disappointment at the length and / or plot of the story.

Overall, the comments collected from these online platforms mostly targeting adult readers / buyers demonstrate that Saramago's name was influential in their choices to buy and read these books for themselves in most cases. However, they bought / read the books thinking they were children's books written by the author. It is clear in the comments referring to the child reader's experience that the adult readers / buyers question the adequacy of the content of these picturebooks for the age group implied by the publishers.

### 3.3 Online reader-group session

Since May 2021, I have been running a series of online reader-group sessions called José Saramago'yu Türkçe Okumak (Reading José Saramago in Turkish)<sup>25</sup> in order to collect reader response data for my doctoral research project on the reception of the author's works in Turkey. These activities are disseminated through an Instagram account and closed Facebook group page, as well as through other social media platforms. The first of these sessions took place on May 27 2021 with 6 participants, all female, to discuss the above-mentioned books published in Turkey. The sessions were recorded with the permission of all participants on the condition that the recordings would not be shared on any platforms but used only for note-taking purposes. After explaining the scope of my research in general

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<sup>24</sup> Although it is not stated in the comment, I infer that these foreign words are those in the illustrations, considering the only foreign words in the story are the names of the rivers "Almonda" and "Tejo", and they are not phonetically difficult to read for Turkish readers.

<sup>25</sup> Available at: <https://www.cetaps.com/teals-translationality/> (Accessed: 10 December 2021).

sense to the participants, I made a brief presentation and read each book aloud showing them the books,<sup>26</sup> then I opened the floor for discussions separately for each book, and in the end, I asked for a final evaluation. The recording of this session lasts about 130 minutes (02:09:28 exactly).

Of the 6 participants participating in this session, 2 live in Portugal and 4 in Turkey.<sup>27</sup> As for their educational background, half of them are currently students of a bachelor's degree in primary school education, and the other half have an undergraduate degree (at least).

I stimulated the discussion by asking questions about their opinions on the books: if they liked them, who they thought they were addressed to, and so on. All participants said they had enjoyed the books, but that they had bought them in the first place as children's books (in a couple of cases for their children years ago). They agreed that especially these two books look like children's storybooks because of the font size, covers and blurbs. However, they generally felt that the sentences were too long and that they contained words difficult for children, though the illustrations could help child readers form their own interpretations or make the reading more appealing for them. Nevertheless, they thought that children would not get the main idea of the stories (especially in *Suların Sessizliği* and *Kertenkele*) since they are allegorical and complicated even for adult readers, and so the children would need adult help to understand the text.

Throughout the session, the participants engaged in lively conversations especially about the written text, focusing particularly on what Saramago was trying to tell readers in the books. I concluded that they were trying to work out what message that he might have wanted to transmit to children, on the assumption that Saramago wrote all three texts for child readers. When they were told at the end of the session that this was not the case and that the works (except *A Maior Flor do Mundo*) were written for adult readers, they felt that the complexity of the narrative had now made more sense, and that the publishers should have warned the readers about this somewhere on the covers.

In short, the participants of the online session had initially responded to these picturebooks based on their format and appearance and the information provided on the covers. However, they encountered what seemed to be a mismatch between this information and the complexity of the visual and verbal texts. Similarly, their speculations about the possible (moral) message that Saramago might have been trying to transmit (based on their opinion that a children's book should teach something to children) show that the works did not fit their expectations of children's picturebooks and caused them to discuss the adequacy of the works for child readers.

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<sup>26</sup> I decided to read the books aloud and show the illustrations before starting discussion on each book because either the participants had not read all three books, or they read them long ago and had difficulty to remember the details.

<sup>27</sup> All participants are native Turkish speakers and none of them speak Portuguese or Spanish.

#### 4. Conclusions

This study has departed from the hypothesis that these three picturebooks of José Saramago are crossover picturebooks that target readers of all ages in the source context, but that they have mostly lost this crossover status in the translations as a result of the paratextual choices. This hypothesis has been confirmed through the analysis of covers, endpapers, blurbs, title and half-title pages, and product pages of the publishers' websites as paratexts.

Therefore, it is shown that two of the picturebooks, *El Silencio del Agua* and *O Lagarto* were originally written as texts for an adult readership, and were repurposed as crossover picturebooks through the reinterpretations by Manuel Estrada and J. Borges with their illustrations. Even though Saramago wrote *A Maior Flor do Mundo* for children, there are various factors which allow it to be placed in the same category as the others: his confession at the outset that he does not write like a children's author, the chosen book material, João Caetano's artistic and interpretative illustrations, the endpapers, and the appeal to the adult reader in the blurb (also written by Saramago).

However, the analysis of the translations indicates that they are received differently in Turkey. As a result of the paratextual choices such as the explicit implication of children as target readers and the omission of any appeal to adults, *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği* (*A Maior Flor do Mundo*) and *Suların Sessizliği* (*El Silencio del Agua*) are perceived as picturebooks for children by Turkish readers. The cover material chosen for the translations also makes these books appear to be simpler, more like the storybooks published for small children in Turkey. In contrast, the smaller size of the Turkish version of *O Lagarto*, *Kertenkele* makes it look more like a crossover picturebook in Turkish than it actually does in Portuguese, although this book is categorised in the publisher's child and youth literature section.

The influence of these paratextual choices is reflected in the findings of the reader response to these picturebooks in Turkey based on the analysis of the data gathered through social media and two websites, and an online reader group session. It is seen that the adults buying these books for their children base their decision to do so on the paratextual information implying a child reader as targeted readership. Besides, the negative or doubtful comments about the adequacy of these books for children also result from the paratextual elements eliminating the crossover nature of the books on the surface, thus causing false expectations. This aspect of the investigation, that is studying the reaction of adults buying the books for child readers, has actually led to an interesting outcome regarding the taken-for-granted opinion about the picturebooks that they are meant to be read aloud by adults. At the end of the online session, when I explained that the books' crossover nature in the source system, one participant – other participants also agreed with her view – made me think that maybe this inference does not reflect the reality, especially for the books targeting children at early school-age. Her comment was as follows:

I don't have to read all the books with my child, I don't always have time for that. But these books are not like such books that you can give to your child and tell them to read. If they put a warning or a sentence on the book saying these books (talking especially about *Suların Sessizliği* here) are to be read with an adult, that would be better, then we would know.

This statement, along with other negative comments about these three picturebooks, indicates that it may be actually better for editors and publishers to consider keeping implications to the crossover audience and refrain from referring to any specific age group in crossover picturebook translation. It is clear from the data, especially from the blurbs of *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği* and *Suların Sessizliği*, that these paratextual choices had the objective of introducing a Nobel Prize winning author, known for his works for adult readership, to a younger audience. However, crossover picturebooks ostensibly packaged for children but surreptitiously appealing to adults by foregrounding the author's high-literature status may produce an unintended setback, even for the books of canonized authors.

Moreover, along with the lack of this reference to the adult readers in the paratexts, the omission of artistic aspects like illustrated endpapers, the use of softcovers instead of hard, and the reduction of the book size (as in the example of the translation of *O Lagarto*) seemed to cause some negative reactions among a significant number of adult readers of Saramago's books in Turkey. Maintaining the paratextual features of the originals in translation might have resulted in the reception of these books as artistic endeavours instead of just storybooks and increased the satisfaction of the authors' fans, who like to keep the books on their bookshelves.

Therefore, it can be concluded that paratextual elements have a significant influence on the reception of crossover picturebooks, and that avoiding simplifying these elements, and treating them as art works, may prevent unintended negative feedback and improve adult readers' satisfaction.

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# TRANSLATING NON-FICTION PICTUREBOOKS FOR CHILDREN ACROSS AGE GROUPS AND LANGUAGES: THE CASE OF INFORMATIVE BOOKS ON GEOGRAPHY IN ENGLISH AND ITALIAN

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study explores the role of multimodality in the intralingual and interlingual mediation of a small parallel English-Italian corpus of non-fictional picturebooks on geography addressed to children of different age groups. It proposes a qualitative analysis that builds on preceding research on travel guidebooks for children (Cappelli and Masi, 2019), and integrates different approaches, viz. Painter et al. (2013), Moya-Guijarro (2014), and Goga (2020). The intralingual investigation showed that verbal and visual strategies were co-deployed differently depending on the age of the target readership, while the analysis of the Italian translations confirmed the main findings of previous research, e.g. the preference for a less direct verbal address, a more formal style, a higher degree of specification in the lexical choices, along with other linguistic strategies and trends that inevitably altered the word-image configuration of the original source texts. The ultimate goal of the article is indeed to contribute to the development of an intersemiotic analytical framework to raise awareness of subtleties in these and similar types of ever more popular and highly multimodal non-fiction for children, to be applied in pedagogy and in pre-translational text analysis.

**KEYWORDS:** Translation, Non-fiction Picturebooks for Children, Multimodality, Mediation

## 1. Introduction

The present study explores non-fiction picturebooks, a recent editorial success as resulting from the “pictorial turn” (Von Merveldt, 2018) in children’s literature since 2010, probably stimulated by the influence of the international market, and the Anglo-Saxon one in particular, via globalisation. This is a phenomenon which, however, has received little attention from the academic world so far (Grilli, 2020). Non-fiction for children is a quite heterogenous area, difficult to make generalisations about, highly hybrid in terms of style, format, activities and approaches, which can be innovative, creative, even subversive at times, demonstrating that different forms of learning about the world are indeed possible. The books under analysis deal with geography and typically focus upon the most curious, dangerous or awesome aspects of the spatial locations in question, which are described verbally and accompanied by striking visuals. Thus, words and images prominently “make different aspects and layers of the world [...] graspable by both hemispheres of our brain” (Grilli, 2020).

More precisely, the books under consideration can be viewed as a form of popular science, or expert-to-nonexpert communication, designed to make specialised knowledge more accessible for a lay audience (Calsamiglia and Van Dijk, 2004; Gotti, 1996, 2013; Myers, 2003). The books are also examples of informative literature for children (see Mallet, 2004), comprising non-compulsory, extra-curricular materials chosen and read for pleasure. Children, of course, have less experience and lower cognitive and literacy skills

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than adults (on popularisation addressed to children, see Sezzi, 2017; Cappelli and Masi, 2019, Diani and Sezzi, 2019; Bruti and Manca, 2019).

The present study builds on preceding research into travel guidebooks across age groups, approached from a contrastive and translational (English-Italian), but largely verbal, perspective (Cappelli and Masi, 2019). Among the relevant findings that emerged from that work are: the acknowledgement of different accessibility requirements depending on target age group and lingua-culture background; the English texts tended to be more humorous and interactive than the Italian ones; Italian texts tended to be more formal and less direct, also displaying a variety of translation strategies such as explanations through additions, substitutions of culture-specific references and compensation of wordplay, and omissions of metalinguistic information or replacements of familiar subjects to the Italian target audience. Questions still remain as to the validity of such findings for other types of books, and the consequence of linguistic changes in translation for the overall word-image relations of the target texts.

This study then proposes a qualitative analysis of a small sample of parallel-print picturebooks on geography in English and Italian addressed to target audiences of different ages, as part of a work in progress that focuses on multimodality, popularisation and engagement in non-fiction for children, to provide an answer to the questions above and also to the following:

- Do geography picturebooks for children share similar strategies with travel guidebooks?
- What is the role of visuals and of word-image relations across age groups and lingua-cultures?

Some reflections will also be offered about the relations between the trends, on the linguistic and visual levels, and on more general rhetorical preferences in the lingua-cultural systems of English and Italian (in line with what already emerged in Cappelli and Masi, 2019).

As a matter of fact, the need to redefine literacy in the contemporary age of highly multimodal texts entails the development of analytical tools and of “a metalanguage that will facilitate metatextual awareness of image/text relations” (Unsworth, 2006: 71). This is particularly true for multimodal texts in translation, as the transposition of (typically) the verbal code into another language may bring unexpected results within the target multimodal ensemble.<sup>1</sup> The ultimate goal of the present study is indeed to contribute to the development of a multimodal analytical framework and correlated metalanguage, which could be used for the study of different types of non-fiction for children designed to be used for teaching purposes and/or in pre-translational text analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> For the promotion of a joint semiotic/translation research agenda that takes care of the expressiveness of different semiotic resources and of their consequences for translation needs and practices see Adami and Ramos Pinto (2020).

## 2. Theoretical framework and methodology

The main theoretical references are Painter et al. (2013) and Moya-Guijarro (2014). Both of them base their approaches on the main tenets of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)<sup>2</sup> and Kress and Van Leeuwen's Visual Social Semiotics (VSS),<sup>3</sup> with their three metafunctions as dimensions of analysis (and correlated meaning-making resources), viz. ideational/representational, textual/compositional and interpersonal/interactive.

Painter et al. (2013) is especially interesting as it proposes a quite extended categorization of interactive resources in fictional picturebooks, while Moya-Guijarro (2014) takes the age factor as the determinant of different types of verbal and visual interactions, once again in fictional picturebooks, by making reference to Piagetian developmental psychology.

Another relevant study was Goga's (2020), the first, to my knowledge, to focus on non-fiction picturebooks. In fact, her tripartite analytical categories of "knowledge presentation", "knowledge organization" and "reader conceptualization" appear to be in line with the three metafunctions of SFG and VSS, so that I decided to integrate these different frameworks as a toolkit for my analysis.

As for the methodology, I carried out a manual analysis of both verbal and visual codes in the various books. This centered first on intralingual mediation across age groups, considering text types and popularisation strategies at the verbal level, before going on to tackle both word and visual levels and intermodal convergence vs. divergence on the basis of the metafunctions mentioned above. Here are the sub-categories of meaning-making resources that were given attention as they were especially relevant in the data under investigation:

- processes, characters, and setting for the ideational/representational metafunction, with correlated degree of intermodal concurrence and/or complementarity;
- framing, layout, and arrangement for the textual/compositional metafunction, with intermodal extent of synchrony;
- focalization, pathos, power, social distance, involvement (for affiliation), and ambience, affect, and graduation (for feeling), in the case of the interpersonal/interactive metafunction and correlated intermodal degree of resonance or congruence.

The same rationale was then applied to the interlingual mediation, but with a special focus on asymmetries in translation. A fine-grained presentation of findings will be proposed in the sections on the actual analysis of data, after the presentation of the corpus under investigation.

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<sup>2</sup> Halliday (1978, 1979), Halliday and Matthiessen (2009).

<sup>3</sup> Kress and van Leeuwen (2006).

### 3. The corpus

The parallel corpus comprised:

1) a lift-the-flap book (*Look Inside Usborne, Our World – Libri animati Usborne, Il nostro mondo*), addressed to pre-schoolers, roughly 3 to 5 years of age (children in the pre-operational stage of the Piagetian classification),

2) an atlas (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World, National Geographic Kids – Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo, National Geographic Kids*), addressed to junior readers and middle grade readers, roughly from 6 to 8 years of age (concrete operations stage I), and

3) a more comprehensive reference work (*The Travel Book, Lonely Planet Kids – Il libro dei viaggi, Lonely Planet Kids*) addressed to middle grade readers and pre-teens – 9-12 years old (concrete operations stage II).

Such books are examples of semiotically symmetrical or complementary picturebooks, in which the visuals often add details to the verbal message, and where the most prominent text type is the expository one. Compared to typical travel guidebooks, they are less instructional in type, less hybrid in the disciplinary perspectives touched upon, but more varied in terms of spatial settings covered. They can also be located outside the ideal “tourist cycle”(Cappelli, 2006), as they are likely to be the kind of reading experience that may inspire the idea of a journey, rather than one that precedes or “accompanies” the reader during an actual trip.

### 4. Data analysis I: Intralingual mediation

As might be expected, the intralingual analysis of the three books revealed the increased prominence of words in those addressed to older children, with the visual code also becoming richer and more diversified in its nuances. At the same time, it also showed similar results across books as far as text types and verbal strategies of popularisation were concerned. They were mainly descriptive-expository in type, displaying definitions, descriptions, denominations and analogies. Visual analogies were also used, reinforcing verbal ones.

**On the ideational/representational dimension:** in all the three cases there was a majority of existential and relational/identifying processes on the verbal level, with a varied display of conceptual images, though also images featuring behavioural processes. In more detail:

1) the lift-the-flap book showed landscape views of a small selection of cartoon-like images of natural settings swarming with little animals, people, buildings, and other elements as distant characters, the actual protagonists being the settings themselves.

2) The atlas for junior-to-middle grade explorers was organised by continent and contained maps and photos of real landscapes, people(s), animals, and sights. It contained some brief narratives too, about ancient people and explorers, also alternating informative sections (as *Fact-Boxes* and *Pop-up-Facts*) to more instructional ones (cf. sections with *Questions*, engaging ones entitled *Let's go* also occasionally including more dynamic images, and *Parent Tips*).

3) The *Travel Book* proposed a round-the-world journey for older children, and was verbally much richer, with a strong evaluative component, as well as an eclectic iconic apparatus (typical for the audience of this target group, see Cappelli and Masi, 2019) featuring place details, people(s), animals and objects, and some game-like activities more instructional in type.

Intermodally, the three books displayed overall ideational concurrence via instantiation, with occasional complementarity, as the significance of details and their reciprocal relations were magnified on a more holistic visual level. For example, in the lift-the-flap book, the various stages of the water cycle are presented both verbally and visually, while in the atlas, the significance of the items identified on the maps is strengthened by their being positioned side by side on the page.

**On the textual/compositional dimension:**

1) the lift-the-flap book consisted of double-page spreads with unframed images presupposing an involved reader/viewer, and in which images tended to have more semantic weight than words. Words and images tended to be integrated, as words were often on flaps and subsumed into the images themselves, sometimes separated out into their own experiential space (e.g. a leaf in the forest). The arrangement of elements followed an organic organisation, in that it iconically reflected entities in natural settings.

2) In the atlas addressed to juniors and middle-grade readers, there was an alternation of unframed images (at the beginning of each major section) and framed ones, correlating with different presuppositions of the reader/viewer as “involved explorer” and more “detached observer”, respectively. Each introductory section included an initial double-page spread with a large unframed photo (with the page edge as the only limit in the upper part). The unframed image seemed to mesh with the viewer’s world, setting the stage for the experience of the virtual journey to come. The following pages then showed sections as colourfully framed circles and squares and framed photos of different size, as delimited windows for a “curious observer”, with some of them occasionally breaching the margins between pages. Images tended to be privileged, especially on the recto page. Words and images were integrated and often reinstated, i.e. words were presented within framed coloured blocks – as a visual element in their own right. The arrangement of elements was varied and scattered.

3) In the reference work addressed to older children, both unframed and framed images were present. They had an integrated layout and a scattered arrangement.

Intermodally, the three books displayed word-image synchrony, with each flap and/or image being accompanied by the corresponding captions. Some recurrent items within books, in terms of shape and position (e.g. *Pop-up-Facts* in the lift-the-flap book or *Country Cards* in the more comprehensive reference work for older children), appeared to contribute to visual cohesion on a more global level.

**For the category of affiliation of the interpersonal/interactive dimension:**

1) the lift-the-flap book sometimes used focalisation by means of inclusive “we” and questions on the verbal level, while a direct gaze of characters towards the viewer was difficult to ascertain because of their small size, being depicted as socially distant through

very long shots. Because of that, other variables such as power or orientation appeared as less relevant than others. As for pathos, the minimalist style used presupposed the viewer as a detached observer of characters as types, rather than as individuals. The category of feeling was mainly conveyed a) via ambience – through varied colours, b) via affect – through some evaluative lexis and jocularity in alliterative titles rather than hardly perceivable participants' face expressions, and c) via graduation or upscaled qualification – e.g. through the relatively large quantity of leaves constituting the flaps that unexpectedly led into the forest in the forest section, or the surprisingly large proportion of blue space in the progressively more open flaps of the watery world.

2) In the atlas, interpersonal/interactive meaning was especially conveyed by visuals. As for affiliation, the book occasionally used forms of direct address and questions on the verbal level, along with frequent images involving direct visual address as a demand for reaction and empathy from the viewer, rather than a simple offer of information. Some cases of mediated focalization were also found, e.g. in the *Let's go* section where a photo portrays the hands of a participant as a potential metonymic representation of those of the viewer's, involved in a more "hands-on" type of activity as a "co-creator". The numerous real photos foregrounded a naturalistic style which contributed to the engagement with characters as individuals, as if they were evidence that invites a more mature response from the reader/viewer. Eye-level angle for identification, close-ups or mid-shots for proximity, and frontal perspectives for involvement (with and of the viewer) were often used, too, representing the categories of power, social distance and orientation, respectively. As for the category of feeling, the colours of images tended to be bright, intense, awe-inspiring and conveyed excitement and vitality, with a high degree of differentiation that enhanced their familiarity. Affective components were occasionally expressed through facial expressions of characters, while upscaled qualification also played a role (e.g. the extensive variety of colours and shapes constituting the coral reef).

3) The reference work addressed to older children offered a variety of patterns and configurations on the dimension of interpersonal/interactive meaning. Affiliation was displayed through frequent direct verbal and visual address, with both minimalist and naturalistic styles of images, which often featured an eye-level angle and a frontal perspective, in close-ups or mid-shots. Images in a naturalistic style also showed a high level of differentiation. Expectedly, the verbal code played a more prominent role there than in the preceding cases, both for description and evaluation (cf. esp. positive modifiers, e.g. *incredible, amazing, crazy, beautiful, remarkable, paradise-perfect, powerful, awesome, great*, as in *nature's greatest spectacles*, or *cool*, as in *coolest extreme sports*, or *tasty, delicious* or *scrumptious* food), with a consequent higher extent of intermodal resonance as far as the expression of feeling through affect was concerned.

## 5. Data analysis II: Interlingual mediation

The interlingual analysis identified fewer instances of verbal markers of direct engagement such as the pronoun "you", questions and inclusive "we"/ "us" in all the Italian target texts,

in which they were replaced by passive or impersonal structures, as shown by the examples below:

1) The weather can be very different depending on where you are in the world (*Our World*, p. 1)

1a) Il clima della Terra cambia a seconda della zona (*Il nostro mondo*, p.1)

1b) (Approximate backtranslation: The climate of the Earth changes according to the zone)

2) Where is the world's largest island? It's icy Greenland to the northeast of Canada (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 12)

2a) In questo continente si passa dai ghiacci della Groenlandia [...] (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 12)

2b) (Approximate backtranslation: In this continent one moves from the icy areas of Greenland [...])

3) What About Us? (which is the title of section n. 10 in *Our World*, p. 10)

3a) Risorse Naturali (*Il nostro mondo*, p.10)

3b) (Approximate backtranslation: Natural Resources)

4) It's home to the ancient ruins of Rome, and has brought us some of the greatest thinkers, artists and explorers that have ever lived. Italy – *grazie mille!* (*The Travel Book*, p. 82)

4a) Ospita le rovine dell'Antica Roma e ha dato i natali a pensatori, artisti ed esploratori tra i più grandi che il mondo abbia mai visto! (*Il libro dei viaggi*, p. 82)

4b) (Approximate backtranslation: It's home to the ruins of Ancient Rome and has given birth to some of the greatest thinkers, artists and explorers that the world has ever seen!)

Example 4a displays another trend of these target texts, namely their occasional use of more precise and formal lexis (cf. *Antica Roma* for *Rome* and *ha dato i natali* for *it's home to*), along with the deletion of items that may be regarded as obvious or superfluous for the target audience (cf. *grazie mille* in the source text).

Another instance of the latter strategy can be found below, where the omission causes a redistribution of information (notice the lower number of sentences in 5a):

5) Carsten Peter wears a heatproof suit. He follows scientists into the mouth of Mount Etna. It's one of the world's most active volcanoes. Mount Etna is on the Island of Sicily, in Italy (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 56)

5a) Carsten indossa una tuta a prova di calore. Si reca con gli scienziati all'interno dell'Etna, uno dei vulcani più attivi al mondo (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 56)

5b) (Approximate backtranslation: Carsten wears a heatproof suit. He goes with scientists inside Etna, one of the most active volcanoes of the world)

More specialised terminology can also be found in translation, as shown by the following (esp. consider the verbs “orbita” in 6a for “moving around” and “miete” in 7a for “cut down”):

6) Earth has a smaller, rocky ball moving around it, called the Moon (*Our World*, p. 1)

6a) Attorno alla Terra orbita una sfera di roccia più piccola: la Luna (*Il nostro mondo*, p.1)

6b) (Approximate backtranslation: A smaller rocky sphere orbits around the Earth: the Moon)

7) Wheat is grown on farms. It’s cut down by big machines...( *Our World*, p. 11)

7a) Quand’ è maturo, il grano si miete (cioè si taglia)... (*Il nostro mondo*, p. 11)

7b) (Approximate backtranslation: When it is ripe, one harvests/reaps wheat (that is, one cuts it down).

Example 7a shows the strategy of added explanation (in between parentheses), too, which is at work in several instances in the texts under analysis. Below is another case in point, in which the English source text relies more on the deictic function of “this”, pointing to the corresponding image, while the translation verbally explains the notion in question (through a longer and more complex sentence):

8) It’s hottest around the middle of the Earth. This is the Equator (*Our World*, p. 1)

8a) Il clima più caldo si trova in corrispondenza dell’Equatore, una linea immaginaria che divide la Terra in due emisferi (*Il nostro mondo*, p.1)

8b) (Approximate backtranslation: The hottest climate is in the area that coincides with the Equator, an imaginary line that divides the Earth into two hemispheres)

In other cases, substitutions of culture-specific elements were found, cf.

9) ... where it’s [flour] made into bread, cookies and cakes (*Our World*, p. 11)

9a) ... e usata per produrre pane, biscotti e pasta (*Il nostro mondo*, p.11)

9b) (Approximate backtranslation: ... and used to make bread, cookies and *pasta*)

Replacements often adapted reference points in analogies anchoring new information to a given and more familiar scenario:

10) [Burj Khalifa]...It’s the world’s tallest skyscraper. It’s as tall as nine Statues of Liberty stacked on top of each other (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 73)

10a) ...è il grattacielo più alto del mondo. Misura quasi quanto quindici torri di Pisa messe l’una sopra l’altra (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 73)

10b) (Approximate backtranslation: It’s the world’s tallest skyscraper. It’s almost like fifteen towers of Pisa stacked on top of each other).

11) [Costa Rica] ...this beautiful country has more than 1,200km (745mi) of coastline – roughly the same length as Britain! (*The Travel Book*, p. 14)

11a) ... questo bellissimo paese ha oltre 1200 km di costa, più o meno la lunghezza (in linea retta) dell'Italia! (*Il libro dei viaggi*, p. 14)

11b) (Approximate backtranslation: ...this very beautiful country has more than 1,200 km of coastline, more or less the same length (in a straight line) as Italy!)

Another remarkable trend concerned the translation of titles of sections or of paragraphs, whose expressive potential was often downplayed in the passage from source to target texts, thus proving to be less jocular and less potentially involving. Almost all the titles of the different content sections of *Our World*, for example, contained alliteration and some included evaluative adjectives (e.g. *Running Rivers*, *Fascinating Forests*, *Watery World*, *Extraordinary Earth*), while their translations did not maintain such features to the same extent (only one instance of alliteration was kept, i.e. *Il mondo marino*, and no evaluative adjectives were retained). However, loss of expressivity especially affected the translation of *The Travel Book*, for older children, where the original titles were quite rich in allusions to intertextual references and wordplay. Only some of the many cases available are reported below as examples:

12) *Big Friendly Giant* (p. 156), reminiscent of the BFG by R. Dahl, translated as Gigante Buono instead of *Il Grande Gigante Gentile* or GGG, which is the official Italian translation of the famous book for children;

13) *Oil Be Rich!* (p. 153), pun on “I’ll be rich”, translated with a fixed expression as *Petrolio a Fiumi* (approximately “rivers of oil”);

14) *Falling for Niagara!* (p. 6), replaced by *Non Cascate nel Niagara* (“do not fall into Niagara”), with a pun based on the polysemy of the word *cascate*, which can refer to “falls” as plural noun or “to fall” as verb, here indeed used in the imperative form;

15) *See you soon, Monsoon* (p. 175), quite evocative on a phonological level thanks to alliteration, assonance and consonance, translated literally as *A Presto, Monsone*.

Titles were sporadically changed altogether by describing the content of the verbal segment they announced:

16) *Water Good Idea* (p. 177), pun on “What a good idea”, translated in a more objective style, by identifying explicitly what the relevant verbal segment is about, as *Mercati Sull’Acqua* (“Markets on water”);

17) *Big Feast* (p. 153), translated as *Una Matrioska di Carne* (“a meat matrioska”).

Furthermore, the translation of the open-the-flap book for pre-schoolers and of the atlas for juniors and middle grade readers, in particular, showed frequent fronting of spatial information (see e.g. 18a) and a lower number of longer and more complex sentences than their respective source texts (see esp. 19a and 20a):

18) It's very cold at the top and bottom of the Earth (*Our World*, p. 1)

18a) Al Polo Sud e al Polo Nord fa molto freddo (*Il nostro mondo*, p. 1)

18b) (Approximate backtranslation: In the South Pole and in the North Pole it's very cold)

19) It's hot and rainy in the northern half of South America. The Amazon rain forest is here. Parts of the forest get up to nine feet (2.7 m) of rain a year (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 33)

19a) Nella parte settentrionale del Sud America il clima è caldo e piovoso. Qui si estende la Foresta Amazzonica, dove possono cadere fino a 2,7 metri di pioggia all'anno (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 33)

19b) (Approximate backtranslation: In the northern part of South America the climate is hot and rainy. Here lies the Amazon rain forest, where it can rain up to 2.7 metres a year)

20) The southern tip of South America is very cold. That's because it's so far away from the Equator. Giant ice sheets cover some parts of the land there (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 33)

20a) La parte meridionale del continente è invece fredda perché è molto lontana dall'Equatore. Giganteschi strati di ghiaccio ricoprono il terreno (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 33)

20b) (Approximate backtranslation: The southern part of the continent is instead cold because it is far away from the Equator. Giant ice sheets cover the land).

The excerpt in example 20 (which soon follows the paragraph in 19) highlights another preference in the Italian text, i.e. a connective (*invece - instead*) is added to make coherence within the slightly longer passage more explicit. The following display similar cases of added connectives (see *tuttavia – however* and *infatti – indeed*) for more explicit coherence,

21) Aboriginals first came to Australia from Asia about 40,000 years ago. They have one of the world's oldest cultures. Storytelling, painting, and dance are all important parts of their lives. [...] Today, most Australians are related to settlers from Europe who first arrived about 200 years ago (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 102)

21a) Gli aborigeni arrivarono in Australia dall'Asia circa 40.000 anni fa. Custodiscono una delle culture più antiche del mondo, Raccontare storie, dipingere e ballare sono aspetti

fondamentali della loro vita. [...] Tuttavia oggi la maggior parte degli australiani discende dai colonizzatori europei, che arrivarono nel continente circa 200 anni fa (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 102)

21b) (Approximate backtranslation: Aboriginals first came to Australia from Asia about 40,000 years ago. They guard one of the world's oldest cultures. Storytelling, painting, and dance are important aspects of their lives. [...] However, today most Australians descend from European settlers who arrived on the continent about 200 years ago)

22) In the coral reefs of the Great Barrier Reef, crown-of-thorns sea stars have become a problem. They hurt the underwater environment by eating corals (*Little Kids First Big Book of the World*, p. 105)

22a) Lungo la Grande Barriera Corallina la stella marina corona di spine è diventata un problema. Queste stelle marine, infatti, danneggiano l'ecosistema sottomarino mangiando i coralli (*Il Primo Grande Libro del Mondo*, p. 105)

22b) (Approximate backtranslation: Along the Great Barrier Reef, the crown-of-thorns sea star has become a problem. Such sea stars, indeed, hurt the underwater ecosystem by eating corals).

Last but not least, a few Italian translations took their cue from the images to present a different or more accurate rendering. Both the following examples were found in the lift-the-flap book:

23) The Sun is a massive ball of incredibly hot gases. It gives Earth all its light and heat (superimposed on the bright yellow and orange image of the Sun) (*Our World*, p. 1)

23a) Il sole è una gigantesca sfera di gas incandescenti. Fornisce alla Terra luce e calore (*Il nostro mondo*, p. 1)

23b) (Approximate backtranslation: The Sun is a giant sphere of incandescent gases. It supplies the Earth with light and heat)

24) Camels live in the desert (under the small image of two camels with one hump) (*Our World*, p. 13)

24a) I dromedari vivono nel deserto (*Il nostro mondo*, p.13)

24b) (Approximate backtranslation: Dromedaries live in the desert)

In 23a the adjective *incandescenti* (*incandescent*) was used instead of *incredibly hot* to emphasise the colour rather than the temperature of the gases, probably inspired by the bright image in question. In 24a a more precise rendering is given, in line with what is proposed on the visual level.

## 6. Conclusion

Overall, the intralingual analysis highlighted different types of interaction between semiotic codes depending on the age of the target readership of the books in question, in line with

Moya-Guijarro (2014). The books addressed to older children displayed a more prominent role played by the verbal component and wordplay, the presence of framed images, naturalistic and eclectic styles, a correlated higher degree of intermodal resonance on the interactional/interactive level. At the same time, the interlingual investigation confirmed several of the translation strategies emerged from previous research on travel guidebooks for children. Such strategies brought about a number of consequences both from intercultural and multimodal points of view.

The Italian target texts tended to be less direct, less involving and expressive than the original English texts, more specific in terminology, more formal and accurate in their verbiage, especially the ones addressed to pre-schoolers and middle grade readers. As communicative strategies are here believed to be influenced by cultural orientations, the majority of the preferences above appear both to depend on and to confirm the association of Italian with a High Context Culture as opposed to the English association with a Low Context one<sup>4</sup>. From a multimodal perspective, the reduced use of verbal markers of engagement in translation inevitably brought about an alteration of word-image relations on the interpersonal/interactive level, with a lower degree of intermodal resonance in the target texts, in which interactivity was guaranteed almost only by visuals.

Furthermore, the frequent fronting of spatial information at sentence level – in the book for junior and middle grade readers in particular – reinforced the familiarity of the setting, which was indeed the main topic of the book. Such a trend complies with the higher flexibility of Italian as far as word order is concerned (Pierini, 2012), which allows for the thematization of circumstantial information by proposing it as “given” at sentence level.<sup>5</sup> This, however, brought about the alteration of the word-image interface of the English source text, where the setting was more often thematised primarily via images.

More work on data from different texts is required to make stronger generalisations, also covering comparable corpora comprising authentic English and authentic Italian texts, and from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Despite its limitations, the present account has nevertheless shown the subtle consequences of intralingual and interlingual mediation for the books under observation, due to linguistic and cultural preferences of various types. Furthermore, target multimodal texts may assume a different and partly unexpected profile via translation, as the translated verbal resources establish new multimodal configurations in the target context. This is something which we need to be aware of and to keep under control in the attempt to develop an analytical framework that

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<sup>4</sup> In high-context cultures, where in-group dynamics carry a lot of weight, non-verbal aspects of communication, such as facial expressions, body language and tone, are particularly important for the communication of the message. This contrasts with the more individualistic low-context cultures, where people verbalise in a more direct explicit way (see Hall 1990; Hofstede 1991, 2001; Katan 2006; Manca 2012, 2017). Also, in a high-context culture, the form in which the message is given is as important as the message itself. Hence, texts tend to present information in large chunks and long sentences, with a formal and indirect style. By contrast, in low-context cultures, the information encoded tends to be more important than the form used to encode it, texts tend to be shorter and simpler, and communication tends to be direct and rather informal (Cappelli and Masi, 2019, p. 127).

<sup>5</sup> On the frequent fronting of temporal information in Italian sentences, see Faini (2004, p. 61).

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is more sensitive 1) to intersemiotic mediation, i.e. the negotiation of all the relevant semiotic resources involved and their reciprocal relations across lingua-cultural systems, and 2) to the correlated final impact of texts on reception, while also complying with the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the target system. Such an intersemiotic framework can hopefully be of greater use in pedagogy and in the pre-translation text analysis of diverse products, with their multimodal features, in a way that is appropriate to the multimedia world of 21<sup>st</sup> century children.

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**ECOLITERACY IN TRANSLATION:  
VERBAL AND VISUAL TRANSFER IN THE ITALIAN VERSION OF EMILIA DZIUBAK'S  
PICTUREBOOK *DRAKA EKONIEBORAKA***

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**ABSTRACT:** In the last decade there has been a surge of interest in Polish picturebooks in Italy, prompted by the international success of Aleksandra and Daniel Mizieliński's *Maps*. This article examines the attitude of Italian publishers towards the strategies used for picturebook translation, taking as a case study Emilia Dziubak's *Draka Ekonieboraka* (in Italian *Piccola guida per ecoschiappe*), a book which tries to introduce small children to the topic of environmental protection. A close comparison between two versions shows that the changes involve both the verbal and in the visual components of the picturebook. In fact, the Italian edition not only takes many liberties with the contents and the register of the text, but it also heavily modifies the original graphic layout and illustrations. I examine both the motives and the effects of this shift.

**KEYWORDS:** Ecoliteracy, Polish Picturebooks, Translation, Emilia Dziubak, Polish Children's Literature in Italy

### **1. Introduction**

Since the beginning of the new millennium, picturebooks have been experiencing a period of almost exponential growth. Today the array of available picturebooks is truly dazzling and caters to audiences of all ages, covers virtually any genre or topic and displays an astonishing variety of artistic styles. Furthermore, there has been a progressive blurring of boundaries between picturebooks and other book formats, revealing a growing interaction with digital media and the increasing influence of genres like comics, manga and video games. Equally important have been the changes in the mechanisms used for the marketing and distribution of picturebooks. The advent of Web 2.0 tools made it far easier for the publishing houses to scout for new talent and titles, and for artists to showcase their work using Internet platforms such as Behance or Dribbble, among many others. In the globalised world of virtual communication, nationality or geographical distance are no longer the hindrance they used to be. A couple of years ago Bettina Kümmerring-Meibauer pointed out that the European picturebook market is still dominated by English-language works:

Picturebooks from countries such as Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, or the Eastern European countries are hardly known outside their respective national borders, although the artistic quality of many of these picturebooks is impressive. (2015, p. 250).

However, while international publishers may have been a bit slow to change their long-established editorial routines, they did begin to take notice of the picturebooks coming from certain previously overlooked countries, like Poland.

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## 2. Polish picturebooks today and once upon a time

After the disastrous 1980s, when the political and economic crisis of the communist regime brought the Polish children's book market to the brink of disaster, and then the chaotic transition of the 1990s, marked by the massive import of cheap, colourful low-quality coprints, the publishing industry in Poland began to find its feet at the beginning of the new millennium. The first decade saw the proliferation of small, independent publishing houses, the so-called "lilliputians" (Biernacka-Licznar et al., 2018), which focused specifically on offering innovative, avant-garde picturebooks for very young children. Between 2000 to 2006 publishing houses like Ezop (2000), Muchomor (2002), Hokus-Pokus (2003), Fro9 (2004), Dwie Siostry and Wytwórnia (2005) and Format (2006) entered the field. Initially they relied mostly on translations and reprints of classics of Polish illustrated books, but before long became very active in promoting the work of a new generation of Polish artists (e.g. Jan Bajtlik, Katarzyna Bogucka, Agata Dudek, Emilia Dziubak, Małgorzata Gurowska, Marta Ignerska, Aleksandra and Daniel Mizieliński and Anna Niemierko). The books they published soon earned the appreciation of readers and critics alike, and started winning awards, including international ones like the Bologna Ragazzi Award and Bratislava Biennial Illustration Awards. The success of these independent publishers revitalised the Polish children's book market, not least because it also prompted big publishing houses to re-orient their printing policies toward quality books for children.

The buzz generated by prestigious awards made picturebooks from Poland into one of the most publicised Polish export products on the book market, successfully attracting the interest of foreign publishers. Translation contracts started to appear around the end of the first decade of the century, and since then, their flow has steadily intensified. So far, the biggest international success was obtained by Aleksandra and Daniel Mizieliński's *Maps*<sup>1</sup> (2012), translated in 36 languages and printed in over 3 million copies. The talented duo of young illustrators (both were born in 1982) produced more award-winning books in international circulation, the most recent of these (*Which way to Yellowstone?*) received a special mention at the 2021 Bologna Ragazzi Award and has already been translated into 11 languages.<sup>2</sup>

Other young Polish artists also launched their international careers in this period. Marta Ignerska, born in 1978, had by 2012 seen her illustrations appearing in thirty-one countries<sup>3</sup>; Emilia Dziubak, born in 1982, saw her very first work, a cookbook for children *Gratka dla małego niejadka* (*A treat for a little fussy eater*, 2011) included in the list of 100 most beautiful books of the world at the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the South Korea Picture Books Awards, after which her career has skyrocketed; Jan Bajtlik, born in 1989, was catapulted onto the international scene with his first book *Alphadoodler: The Activity Book That Brings Letters to Life*, which won the Bologna Ragazzi Award in 2015. There are also some artists

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<sup>1</sup> The titles of the Polish picturebooks translated into English are given in that language; otherwise, they are indicated in Polish with my translation in brackets.

<sup>2</sup> <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/16nkTlyxoO1aIGU4kYoaRUDC7cc7RXjIBJ6cDV3M-Vbl/edit#gid=0>

<sup>3</sup> <https://culture.pl/en/artist/marta-ignerska> (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

of the previous generation who penetrated international markets, such as Iwona Chmielewska (born in 1960), who won the main Bologna Ragazzi Award (2011, 2013 and 2020) three times and is massively popular in South Korea; and Piotr Socha (born in 1966), awarded the prize for best scientific book in the 'children's book' category at *Wissenschaftsbuch des Jahres 2017* in Vienna for his book *Bees*, rapidly translated in numerous languages, including Hungarian, Greek and Icelandic.

The fact that illustrators belonging to different generations attracted international attention roughly at the same time shows that the success of a given artist or picturebook is determined not so much by their effective quality or originality as by a series of extratextual factors related to the mechanisms of promotion and distribution on the global children's book market. This becomes even more evident when we consider that the current wave of bold experimental picturebooks is not a novelty in the Polish context, as the tradition of avant-garde books for children but actually goes back as far as the 1930s in this country, flourishing especially from the late 1950s to the late 1970s, when the so-called Polish School of Illustration developed. Strong state patronage combined with an impressive number of talented artists interested in creating beautiful illustrations and experimenting with typography, modern visual language and new modes of expression meant that many picturebooks appeared on the market that even today can surprise with their originality (Cackowska et al., 2016). Starting at the end of 1950s, Polish artists such as Bohdan Butenko, Janusz Grabiański, Józef Wilkoń and others won awards and distinctions at notable international competitions (Biennial of Illustration in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia; International Book Exhibition IBA in Leipzig, Germany; Triennial of Applied Arts in Milan, Italy; The Most Beautiful Books of the World in Frankfurt, Germany, and many others).

Despite this, picturebooks from Poland never found their way to foreign publishers, except in Soviet Bloc countries. The only Polish illustrator who managed to make a truly international career at that time was Janusz Grabiański (1929-1976), who in 1958 began to collaborate with Austrian Ueberreuter Publishing House, which opened the door to other foreign markets. Grabiański won recognition throughout the world for his striking and delicate watercolour images, which were paired mainly with classic texts for children such as those by Perrault, Andersen or the brothers Grimm. From that point of view, his artwork was close to the traditional idea of children's illustration. This may be why he was so successful in the then rather conservative world of international children's book publishing, while his more avant-garde oriented colleagues were not.

### **3. Polish illustrators and picturebooks in Italy**

Grabiański's illustrations were also known in Italy, although they arrived there indirectly through Austrian, American and French coprints. Generally, however, throughout the whole of the twentieth century, the import of Polish youth literature in Italy was very slim. In the 1960s and 1970s, Italian publishers, looking for new titles to offer as school reading for younger teenagers, became fleetingly interested in Polish youth novels (Woźniak, 2020, p. 23), almost always in indirect translation; but this trend dried up in the 1980s. Only

towards the first decade of the new century did Italian publishers again become interested in Polish children's books, and when they did, their attention was attracted almost exclusively to picturebooks<sup>4</sup>. The new trend started around 2008 when the Bologna Ragazzi Award for Children's Poetry was given to the Polish picturebook *Tuwim. Wiersze dla dzieci* (Tuwim. Poems for children), but it gained speed in the second decade of the century. In just ten years, between 2010 and 2021, thirty Polish picturebooks were released in Italy, which is more than the total number of Italian translations of youth literature from Poland in the whole twentieth century.

Polish picturebooks have appeared on the catalogues of both big and small Italian publishing houses, although there are some differences in the titles chosen for translation. Influential publishers, such as Mondadori Electa, have invested in bestsellers, starting in 2012 with Mizieliński's *Maps*. In truth, three Mizieliński's picturebooks<sup>5</sup> appeared in Italy even earlier (2010), but as they were published by a small publishing house (Comma 22), they failed to attract the audience's attention. When they were released by Mondadori Electa, on the other hand, they became very popular, and the publishing house went on to release an enlarged edition of the atlas (66 countries versus the initial 44) and other titles by the same authors, such as *Under Water, Under Earth* (2015) and *Tu jesteśmy!* (as *Voi siete qui!* 2016). In 2016 and 2018, respectively, Mondadori also published two of Piotr Socha's internationally acclaimed educational picturebooks, *Bees: a Honeyed History* and *Trees: A Rooted History*, though these did not match the popularity of Mizieliński's books. Smaller publishers' choices seem more random, encouraged chiefly by the easily obtainable grants from the Polish Book Institute<sup>6</sup> and by accolades received at the Bologna Ragazzi Award. However, once they begin a collaboration with a given author, they tend to stick to them rather than look for new openings: for example, TopiPittori<sup>7</sup> has specialised in books illustrated by Joanna Concejo, while Macro Edizioni in 2018 and 2019 published four of Marcin Brykczyński's educational picturebooks. The Rome-based Sinnos<sup>8</sup>, founded in 1990 and which specialises exclusively in books for children, with a special eye for intercultural topics, has so far published six translations of Polish picturebooks, all illustrated by the same artist, Emilia Dziubak. Scrolling down the list of translations, it is also evident that Italian

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<sup>4</sup>This new-found interest coincides with the general tendency of the Italian book market, where books for children, especially pre-schoolers, always become the more important product of the publishing industry. Between 1991 and 2013, the proportion of picturebooks on the Italian children's book market rose from 19% to 25% (Garavini, 2017, pp. 90-91)

<sup>5</sup>*C.A.S.E, D.E.S.I.G.N e Scovalo!*

<sup>6</sup>The Polish Book Institute, established in 2004, launched ©POLAND Translation Program, which supports foreign publishers who want to translate Polish books. Not all the requests are granted, but youth literature is given priority in the distribution of funds. In fact, almost all the Italian translations of children's books from Poland that appeared in the last decade were published with the financial help of the Institute.

<sup>7</sup>TopiPittori, established in 2004, publishes around 15 new titles annually (<https://www.milkbook.it/case-editrici-topipittori/>) (Accessed: 16 December 2021)

<sup>8</sup>Sinnos publishes around 23-25 books annually (see <https://www.milkbook.it/intervista-alla-casa-editrice-sinnos/>) which puts it, in fact, in the category of the medium publishers, given that the small publishers in Italy are considered those who publish less than ten books a year (Garavini, 2017, p.89).

publishers have a clear preference for nonfiction picturebooks, avoiding poetry and narrative stories<sup>9</sup>.

#### 4. Case study: *Draka ekonieboraka* by Emilia Dziubak

Emilia Dziubak's *Draka ekonieboraka* (the title could be roughly translated as “Eco-Dummy’s tribulations”), first published in Poland in 2012 and in Italy in 2015 as *Piccola guida per ecoschiappe* (Figure 1), is perfect material for a case study in translation for at least two reasons. Firstly, it belongs to the category of nonfiction educational picturebooks, which are preferred by Italian publishers when it comes to translating Polish texts for children. Secondly, it represents a typical example of how visual and verbal transfer in picturebooks is approached by small and medium Italian publishers, who are in the majority when it comes to the translations from Polish. Finally, although the visual component of *Draka Ekonieboraka* is undoubtedly the book’s primary asset, the text is also important and nuanced, intertwined with the illustrations in a very organic way, which means that the challenge for translation is somewhat more demanding than it would be in less wordy picturebooks.

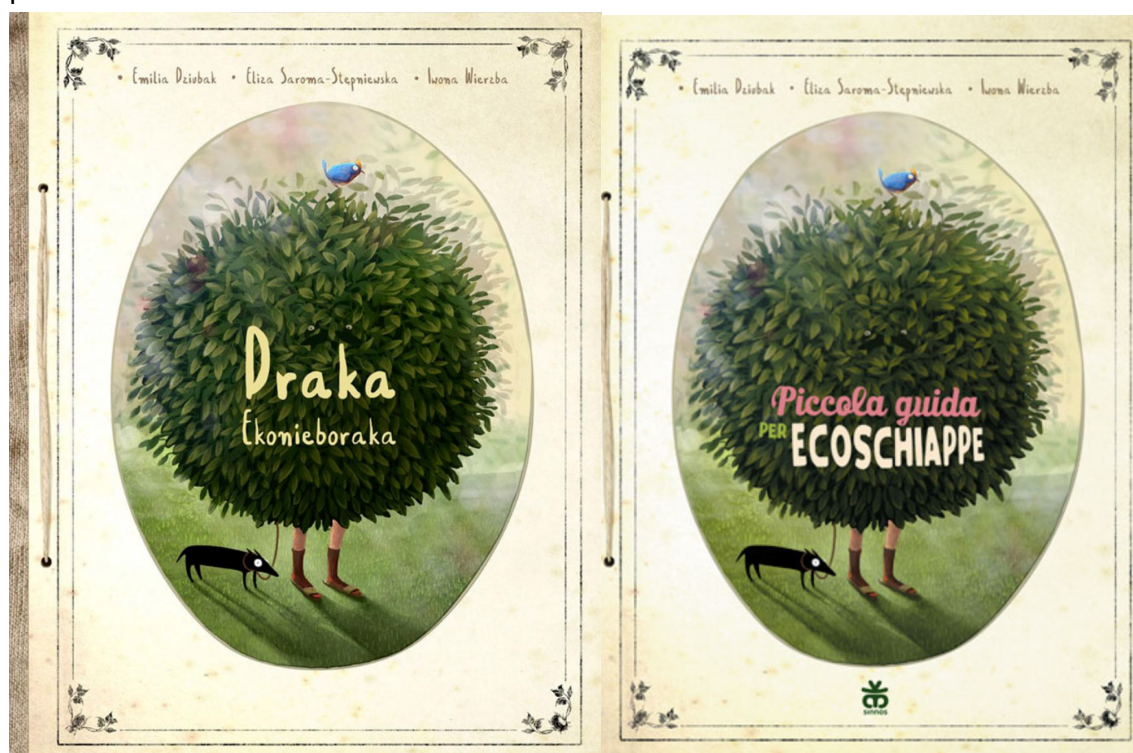


Figure 1 The covers of the Polish and Italian versions of Emilia Dziubak's *Draka Ekonieboraka*

*Draka Ekonieboraka* deals with the very up-to-date topic of environmental education or “ecoliteracy”. Probably best appreciated by children in the over-5 age group, the book tasks itself with explaining fundamental concepts of environmental protection and encouraging

<sup>9</sup> There are, of course (rare) exceptions, such as *Tuwim per tutti*, a volume of nursery rhymes by the most famous Polish poet for children, published by Orecchio Acerbo in 2012, or Renata Piątkowska's *All my mums*, a tale about Irena Sendler, who saved more than 2000 kids from the Warsaw ghetto during World War II (Giuntina, 2019).

its young audience to develop ecological attitudes. To achieve this goal, the text combines two layers of narrative, written by two separate authors, Eliza Saroma-Stępniewska and Iwona Wierzba.

The title *Ekonieborak* (Eco-Dummy) comes to life in a series of scenes that show the main character's blatant disregard for the environment. Each of them is followed by some information and data given by *Profesor Sumienie* (Professor Conscience). All the situations depicted in the book are related to details of everyday life that will be familiar to children in any industrialised country. Eco-Dummy squanders water in the bathroom, puts the washing machine on with only a few items inside, buys too many products in the supermarket and then just throws them away. He does not recycle trash and uses far too much electricity. In the street, he does not clean up after his dog and does not use waste bins. He drives a four-by-four in town and takes the car even if he only needs a newspaper from the nearby shop. In all, nine short scenes illustrate the protagonist's deplorable attitudes, which predictably land him in trouble: the water stops running when he is in the middle of the bath; he sits on the grass just where his dog left its poop; the food in the refrigerator goes bad.

It is important to point out that the Eco-Dummy is an adult, depicted in Emilia Dziubak's illustrations as a middle-aged male with a rather prominent beer-belly, dressed shabbily in a T-shirt, shorts and sandals (in two images worn with socks – a classic fashion faux-pax often seen in Poland), and with facial hair that vaguely evokes Lech Wałęsa<sup>10</sup>. In short, he is a typical Polish man whom many children might associate with their own daddy (Figure 2). His actions speak for themselves, as do the mishaps caused by his mindlessness. There are few explicit pedagogical comments thorough the text, disguised mostly as direct advice to the protagonist, who responds with contempt ("To segregate trash? Boring!"), but it is left mainly to the readers (Bell, 2001, p.141) to understand why his behaviour is wrong. Information and advice given by the Professor Conscience contextualises environmental problems, presenting some statistics in a clear and easy-to-grasp way, made more suggestive by the accompanying illustrations. For example, the data about the quantity of trash produced in a year by an average European family (about one tonne) is associated with the image of a family standing on an elephant (also weighing on average about one tonne) (il. 3).

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<sup>10</sup> Leader of the Solidarity movement in the 1980s and first democratically elect president of Poland in the post-Soviet era.



Figure 2 (left) Emilia's Dziubak title *Ekonieborak*

Figure 3 (right) Visual illustration of the amount of trash produced annually by an average European family

The book's ending shows the transformation of Eco-Dummy, who recognises his errors and, in the "Ecologist's Song", declares his newfound maturity and environmental awareness. The last page shows Eco-Dummy looking in the mirror and seeing in it the reflection of Professor Conscience. The image comes with an appeal: "The world around you is full of problems? Don't wait, act now! What can you do to change the world? Ask your own conscience!". Of course, the message is directed towards the readers, but as it is also cleverly correlated with the image, it does not sound patronising.

The didactic intent of the book is spelt out more clearly in two mini-introductions that precede the text. The first one, placed before the title page, entices the reader with the question, "who is *Ekonieborak*?" (Who is Eco-Dummy?)<sup>11</sup> (the neologism is a bit ambiguous, and its meaning will not necessarily be immediately obvious to a child) and suggests that everyone has met someone like him already. The second foreword ("Dear Adults and Dear Children"), set after the title page, is more explicit. It recognises the dual audience of children (as the prime addressees) and adults (as readers or mediators). It points out that eco-dummies live among us, indeed could be our cousins or neighbours, and that we too might have some ecological shortcomings on our conscience. Expressing their hope that the book will become an inspiration for a pro-environmental attitude, the authors exhort: "Let us laugh at ourselves. Let our children laugh at the adults!".

Judging by the unanimously positive online reviews written by parents and critics, the ecological message of *Draka Ekonieboraka* clearly resonates with both adults and

<sup>11</sup> All quotes from the book in my translation, M.W.

children. “One of my 5-year-old daughter’s favourite books”; “both my sons love it”; “we all laugh out loud reading it”; “This book stole my heart”; “Even if I am almost thirty, I learnt a lot from this book”: these and similar statements abound in the reviews, which call the book “excellent”, “phenomenal” or even “genius”. Many parents point out that their children felt inspired to embrace pro-ecological behaviour by *Draka Ekonieboraka*, and that some even began to display a critical attitude towards their parents, calling them *Ekonieborak* when they were guilty of some ecological misdemeanour. All considering, Dziubak’s picturebook successfully fosters at least the first three of the four key aspects of ecoliteracy listed by Muthukrishnan (2019, p. 20), namely cognition (the ability to envision the long-term effects of current environmental action), emotion (a connection with and empathy toward living creatures) and action (behaviour directed towards preserving the environment)<sup>12</sup>.

## **5. Translating ecoliteracy: from *Ekonieborak* to *Echoschiappa***

### **5.1 A picturebook in translation**

All scholars agree that the specificity of the picturebook lies in its composite nature and the interaction between the visuals (illustrations and graphic layout) and the text (Kümmerling, 2018, p.3). Picturebooks have been called a polyphonic form of art in which verbal, visual and aural modes meet (Oittinen, 2017, p. 463). In that, they differ from illustrated books where the images enrich the text and interact with it in different ways but are not an integral part of it, to the extent that new editions may come with a different set of illustrations. The compound word picturebook, on the other hand, presupposes the interdependence of visual and verbal, which naturally raises challenges for translation.

Some of the issues faced by translators of picturebooks are similar to those encountered in the translation of any book for children, such as the rendition of culturally specific items. However, in the case of picturebooks, the translator has also to consider the visual context and layout. The translator should be able to understand and interpret the meaning of the book’s nonverbal elements to appropriately recreate the interplay between word and image and avoid discrepancies between the two dimensions. Moreover, since the visual assets of the picturebook takes precedence over its verbal content, there are a number of technical constraints operating on the translation. In what follows, I will examine the translation challenges presented by *Draka Ekonieboraka* and describe how they have been dealt with in its Italian translation.

### **5.2 Translating the text**

As the topic of environmental education is universal, we might expect that would be relatively easy to translate into other languages and cultures. However, the Polish authors wanted to depict Eco-Dummy’s misadventures as realistically as possible, which means that some of the everyday details inserted into the descriptions are bound to be culturally

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<sup>12</sup> The fourth is spiritual connection (awe and admiration for the natural world).

specific. For example, when Eco-Dummy goes shopping, he predictably chooses products such as *kajzerka* (a typical small roll of bread) or *wędlina* (cold cuts). He lives in a *blok* (block of flats of recent construction), buys his food in a *warzywniak* (small greengrocer), and his dog is called *Azor*. The specificity of this kind of items lies not so much in the things themselves as in the associations they conjure in the mind of Polish audience: *blok* is a defining element of the urban landscape in Polish cities; sandwiches with butter and ham are part of the everyday diet; *Azor* is the traditional name for a dog in Polish primers. Some specific expressions also appear, such as *kajet* (an old word for an exercise-book, likely to be remembered by the parents) or *basior* (male wolf). Visually, there are some allusions to the Polish context: in one of the images there appears a mermaid, the symbol of the Polish capital, Warsaw; and in Eco-Dummy's bathroom, there is a postcard with the name *Bałtyk* (Baltic Sea) written on it. One could argue that the landscapes and interiors portrayed in the book have a vaguely Polish look, as well. And then there is the protagonist himself, who, as already mentioned, has the appearance of an average middle-aged Polish male.

Nevertheless, none of these elements are essential to the central theme of environmental protection, and the culturally specific items could easily be replaced with equivalent expressions in the target language. For example, when we see Eco-Dummy taking his dog for a walk, with the suggestion that it is a sunny spring day after the snow has melted (not a circumstance that children from milder climates would relate to), a little adjustment to the text could take care of the problem. As for the visual component, Emilia Dziubak's illustrations are funny and colourful enough to be universally entertaining, and their cultural connotations are not pronounced enough to become a hindrance in the transfer to another national context.

A more significant challenge lies in the style and format of the narration about Eco-Dummy's mishaps. They are all told in rhyme, a dominant form in all Polish books for small children, whatever their topic. The language also has a colloquial flavour, with numerous diminutives (*nocka*, *kropelka*, *wiaterek*, *spacerek*, *śnieżek*, *trawka*, *serek*, *chlebek*, *karteczka*, *domek* and others) and familiar expressions (like *warzywniak* instead of *sklep warzywny* for greengrocer; *terenówka* instead of *samochód terenowy* for four-by-four, or *kumpel* instead of *kolega* for friend) typical of Polish oral speech. There are also numerous interjections (such as *Myk!* *Rryms!* *Hop!* *Retry!*) which all makes for a very pleasant narrative when read aloud; indeed, several parents pointed out in their web reviews that even their three- or four-year-olds, who were not able to comprehend statistics and data presented in the informative parts of the book, were charmed with the story told in verse. Finally, there is also the problem of the protagonist's name. The *nieborak* of the neologism *Ekonieborak* does not translate easily. It does not indicate an evil or stupid person, but rather someone too naïve or foolish for their own good, a bit like a "poor soul". At the same time, given that the word is not used very widely, it is probable that a child won't know it, thus rendering the neologism more intriguing.

*Draka Ekonieboraka*, published in Italy in 2015, was the second of six Emilia Dziubak's books to be released by Sinnos publisher from Rome<sup>13</sup>. It was translated by the Polish native speaker Marta Szuba (her only foray into translation for children). The title chosen for the Italian edition is *Piccola guida per ecoschiappe* (A small guide to eco-dummies), which looks like an obvious attempt to capitalize on the success of the *Diary of Wimpy Kid*, which was published in Italy as *Diario di una Schiappa*<sup>14</sup>. The idea of naming *Ekonieborak* an *ecoschiappa* is inspired, because it conveys the same vibe of helplessness and playful commiseration evoked by the Polish word. However, the same cannot be said of the title as a whole. While the Polish book's didactic content is subtle and amusing, poking fun at the adults and making the children feel that they can be smarter than they are, *Draka Ekonieboraka* is much more heavy-handed. The title not only makes the didactic intent explicit, but also suggests that the eco-dummies are the addressees (the children) themselves. This is reinforced by the blurb on the back cover (absent from the Polish edition):

Are you eco-dummies? If so, this book is for you. Among washing machines, socks and jars, you will learn everything you need to know about waste, consumption, things to do and not to do so that you will transform yourself in eco heroes.

Of the two forewords in the Polish edition, the second one, crucial to the book's message, has been eliminated. The first one was retained, but whereas the Polish text simply invites the reader to open the book and discover who is the mysterious *Ekonieborak*, the Italian version somehow manages to transform the text into a warning – “Browse this book but beware: eco-dummies are contagious” – which makes it sound more like advice against reading it than encouragement to open it.

As far as the text is concerned, Professor Conscience's information and data have been translated without significant alterations, though this does not mean that the translation is scrupulous. One might have expected certain changes due to the need to fit the verbal message into the visual context (the Italian language needs more words to express the same content, which means a longer text). However, such considerations did not seem to bother the translator, who did not hesitate to add more lines in translation, even if it meant using a smaller font or putting the text very close to the image. The data relating to the Polish context was not adapted to the Italian context but replaced with generic information or simply eliminated. For example, the Polish version informs us that the penalty for not picking up dog poop is 200 zloty but in the Italian book, we are told only that there is a “hefty fine”. The information that the people in Poland use 1.3 million plastic bags a year has disappeared utterly, although looking closely at the Italian edition, it is possible to discern a vague trace of the speech bubble on the illustration where it was

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<sup>13</sup> Others are: *Chi vuole un abbraccio?* 2014, 2018; *Sorridi!* 2015; *Io sono drago*, 2016; *Per sempre amici*, Roma 2019; *Amore di mamma* 2020.

<sup>14</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that in Italian, *schiazza* does not really evoke the English term ‘wimpy’, but rather someone clumsy or blundering, a klutz.

placed in the original. On the other hand, the Italian text adds some didactic interjections aimed directly at the young addressees. The simple advice “take a shower rather than a bath” in the Italian version was rendered as “Instead of taking a bath (and squandering hundreds of litres of water to fill the bath tub) take a shower”. While the Polish text recommends: “learn the colours of the recycling bins”, the Italian version pontificates: “do you remember the colours of the recycling bins or, just like mister Eco-Dummy, would you prefer to have a single purple bin?” (there are no purple bins in Italy nor any purple bins in Emilia Dziubak’s illustrations, so the suggestion is a bit puzzling).

However, while the translator took many liberties in the rendition of the informative part of the book, it is the narrative about Eco-Dummy that suffered the most radical transformation (or deformation). First of all, there is no rhyme. The text has been changed into a diary of *Mister Ecoschiappa*’s typical day, organised according to the hourly schedule (Figure 4). For reading-aloud purposes, the Italian text is still readable, but the rhythm has gone, as has much of the performative quality of the Polish version.



Figure 4 The layout of the text in the Polish and in the Italian versions of the book

The contents superficially match the Polish narrative, but the Italian text is essentially a free rewriting of the original one. The translator has modified, replaced or simply omitted all the elements that are for some reason considered inappropriate for the Italian audience. In some cases, these are motivated by the need to domesticate some of the culturally specific features mentioned above. Eco-Dummy’s dog has become Rambo; the products in his shopping trolley were replaced with items more compatible with Italian eating habits (*ricotta*, *panini all’olio*); references to the Polish climate and housing have been eliminated. Other modifications, however, seem to have been introduced at a whim, and reflect the somewhat conservative idea of the children’s book that still dominates in the Italian publishing industry. This is most evident in the numerous insertions of overtly didactic

comments, such as “Eco-dummies don’t care about the amount of electricity consumed by home appliances”; “When eco-dummies have an idea it is impossible to make them change their mind”; “Eco-dummies are lazy and never want to do anything” - none of which exist in the Polish text. Dialogic elements and Eco-Dummy’s direct enunciations have been reduced in favour of third-person narration. Finally, Eco-Dummy’s song has, in Italian, become a serious monologue accompanied by a solemn admonition: “if you become ECO as well, it will be possible to live a long, healthy and beautiful life. And with so little it is really possible to save the Earth”. The last page of the book is particularly revealing. It starts with a literal translation of the sentence *Świat wokół was jest pełen wad?* (*Is the world around you full of flaws?*) which in Italian becomes *Il mondo è pieno di sbagli?* (*Is the world full of mistakes?*). It finishes with the exhortation: "Don't wait any longer! Transform yourselves into eco heroes!", dropping, therefore, the correlation with the image in which we see the Eco-Dummy looking in the mirror and seeing in the reflection the face of Professor Conscience.

To sum up, the translation takes shortcuts in resolving cultural and linguistic challenges, does not care much about text and image interaction, and modifies or simply erases some parts of the text. It does not pay attention to the aural aspect of the book, transforming rhymed and dialogic parts of text into a flat third-person narrative. Above all, it ignores its innovative approach to the topic of ecoliteracy, steering it towards a more conventional, patronising didactic message.

### **5.3 Translating the visual layout**

As noted before, one particular challenge for the translator of picturebooks concerns the capacity to read and interpret visual and verbal information and reproduce this in the target culture. However, for many, the act of translation still applies only to the verbal component of books. Some scholars have acknowledged that sometimes changes of letter fonts or the replacement of typographic elements in the images can also happen (Oittinen et al., 2018, pp.85-86), but it is generally taken for granted that the visual concept of the picturebook will not be modified.

However, a brief inspection of the Italian version of *Draka Ekonieboraka* is sufficient to understand that this is not always the case. There are numerous visual modifications in *Piccola guida per ecoschiappe* and regard both the graphic layout and the illustrations. In the first case, they include changes to fonts, letter size and colour, the use of bold and other forms of emphasis, text flow, margin size and the proportion of space occupied by text and image. Changes to the visual aspect include typographic components, visual components, formatting, integrity of the illustrations and use of colour.

The graphic layout of this book, which in the Polish version had been carefully created to form an organic part of the book’s visual concept, has been virtually demolished in the Italian version. All page layout designs have been modified to some degree, and all the fonts and most of the colours have been changed. More challenging typographic combinations have been simplified and the complex game played with the letter size has

been simplified and reduced. A good example of these changes is the spread of pages 8-9 (Figures 5a and 5b).



Figure 5a. The spread of pages 8-9 in the Polish version



Figure 5b. The spread of pages 8-9 in the Italian version

Comparing the Polish and the Italian version feels almost like an exercise in "Spot the Difference". The left page header, "From the archives of Professor Conscience", which, in the original, is made to look like a collage of letters cut out of different newspapers, creating an effect of three-dimensionality, has been transformed into simple flat writing in the translation. Small circles that emphasise the quantity of water needed to take a bath in the segment *Prysznic czy wanna?* (Shower or bathtub?) have disappeared. In the segment *We Francji* (In France), the line below the header, which in the Polish version logically starts with a small letter (In France... is beginning of the sentence) in the Italian edition is written with a capital letter. The segment has also been pushed down the page, and the colour of

the segment below is paler than in the original. Both modifications have erased any trace of the three-dimensional effect present in the Polish version. In the digital image reproduced in Figure 5b, there is no change of colours, though in the paper edition, the colours used in the midsection *Ile wody marnujesz?* (How much water do you waste?) and image of the toothbrush are paler than in the original. The same observation can be made about the block of text below, which replaces the imitation of handwriting in capitals with a thinner and more regular font. The emphasis in purple letters is barely visible against the pale green of the other letters.

The right page at first glance seems to adhere more closely to the original, but the impression wanes upon close inspection. The top and bottom margins are smaller (the head of Professor Conscience in the upper part and the captions under the illustrations in the bottom almost touch the border of the page). The page header *Profesor radzi* (Bits of Advice from the Professor) has changed as regards its font, colour, size and placement (in the original version, it is aligned with the right border of the picture below). On the other hand, the captions under the illustrations below are more extensive than the images. The frame around the page has been cut, leaving only one reddish line on the left. The colours, again, are less sharp than in the Polish version, and the professor's clothes have become brownish.

The problem of colour is present in all the illustrations and is due mainly to the print quality (or rather lack of it). However, we cannot use the same excuse for the reformatting that has caused most of the images to suffer minor cuts on one side, or for the approximative rendition of other elements of graphic design, which has impoverished the aesthetic and semiotic<sup>15</sup> output of the book.. This kind of sloppiness is also detectable in the way the typographic elements present in the images have been dealt with. Verbal information embedded in pictures is one of the features that is most often changed in translation, especially when the general strategy is domestication, or when they are essential for the child to understand the meaning of the image (Oitinnen et al., 2018, pp. 85-86), though it can also be left unchanged when the intention is to introduce the young audience to a culture other than their own. The Italian version of *Draka Ekonieboraka* has chosen neither option. The graphic designer has used a strategy that could be defined as "anything goes". Some typographic elements have been translated: for example, the warning *Nie deptać* (don't step on the grass) has become *Non calpestare*. Others, such as the postcard with the writing *Bałyk*, were not modified. Some have been simply eliminated: in the illustration that shows Eco-Dummy sitting on his washing machine, surrounded by washed clothes and detergents, typographic elements as *proszek*, *ekstra and biel* have been erased from the boxes of soap powder. And finally, in the illustration of Eco-Dummy in a supermarket, two of the strategies mentioned above come together: the words *Wielka promocja* and *Promocja* have been translated as *Super offerta!* and

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<sup>15</sup> On the importance of ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings communicated through typographic elements in original and translated picturebooks, see Unsworth (2014).

*Promozio...* (the end of the word has been cut out of the frame), while others, such as *ser*, *baton*, *opis produktu*, remain unchanged.

## 6. Conclusion

To sum up, the transformation of *Draka Ekonieboraka* into *Piccola guida per ecoschiappe* is like a riches-to-rags story. This does not mean that all Italian publishers show so little respect to the picturebooks in translation. However, this kind of attitude seems to be a rule rather than an exception. When analysing Italian versions of Mauri Kunnas's picturebooks, Melissa Garavini noticed that "Italian translations are characterised by a very high number of abridgement and deletion cases followed by a smaller number of explanation, adaptation, and substitution instances." (Oittinen et al., 2018, p. 35). She believes that "the phenomenon of abridgements and deletions is specifically relevant to the transfer of culture-specific items" (p. 37). However, as the example examined here shows, the changes do not stop at the practices enumerated by this scholar but may extend into the visual component of the original work. This kind of editorial carelessness especially affects small and medium publishing houses in Italy but it is also not unheard of even among big publishers. It is undoubtedly a dominating practice at Sinnos. The other picturebooks by Emilia Dziubak released by it underwent the same treatment as *Draka Nebraska*, and the author herself in an interview confessed that Italian editions of her books gave her "a headache" (Frąckiewicz, 2017, p. 35).

While the translator could be blamed for some of the more unfortunate stylistic and lexical choices, the responsibility for the final product lies with the publisher. First of all, it was clearly a mistake to commission the work from a Polish native speaker with no experience in translation for children (other Dziubak's picturebooks were translated for Sinnos by Aneta Kobyłańska, also a Polish native-speaker and employee at the publishing house). Secondly, there was an evident lack of proper copy-editing, which would have helped to eliminate some stylistic and linguistic infelicities, such as the unfortunate rendering of *zużyte baterie* (discharged batteries) as *batterie esauste* instead of the more correct *batterie scariche*. It is more difficult to guess whether the decision to transform the original text into a much more conventional and didactic discourse was dictated by the translator's preferences or was influenced by the publisher, but the latter seems much more probable. Equally, the poor job made by the Italian graphic designer is an obvious consequence of the policies of the publisher, who either commissioned the work from a poorly-qualified person or simply did not care much about the aesthetic quality of the book. In a way, *Piccola guida per ecoschiappe* bears witness to the dismissive attitude towards the translation of children's books still prevailing within the Italian publishing industry. Comparing the dire reality with the high bar of expectations set for the translators of picturebooks in the recent volume *Translating Picturebooks. Revoicing the Verbal, the Visual and the Aural for a Child Audience* (Oittinen et al., 2018) can lead to a rather depressive reflection on the wide gap between the theory and practice. However, as long as the Italian audience has no awareness or interest in investigating the translations'

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editorial quality, there is little chance of galvanising the publishers into a change of attitude. In fact, *Piccola guida per ecoschiappe* had very positive reviews in Italy and received a lot of praise for “beautiful illustrations” from the critics and parents who could not know that they had been offered only a vapid simulacrum of the original book.

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# LUNAR JOURNEYS: INVESTIGATING TRANSLATION IN MULTILINGUAL PICTUREBOOKS

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**ABSTRACT:** Studying the translation process behind multilingual picturebooks represents a fascinating field of research for translation studies. This paper presents two case studies that examine translation in multilingual picturebooks: a trilingual edition (2014) of Tomi Ungerer's *Moon Man* (1966) uniting translations in French, German, and Alsatian, as well as the translingual picturebook *Lunes... eine mondlose Nacht* (Vialaneix, 2017), alternating and mixing French and German along the story. The translational analysis of the two picturebooks is guided by the following research questions: What translation strategies are developed to interpret and recreate the semiotic and semantic interplay between the visual and the textual elements of the story in multilingual picturebooks? What stylistic elements of the target language are employed to convey meaning acoustically? What translation strategies are used in translingual picturebooks? What are the principles and effects of language alternation and language mixing within a translingual picturebook story?

**KEYWORDS:** Multilingual Picturebooks, Translingual Picturebooks, Translation Studies, Indirect Translation, Translanguaging.

## 1. Introduction

Modern picturebooks can be described as all-embracing works of art that lead to an aesthetic experience appealing to all our senses. Combining textual, visual, aural, and tactile elements, picturebooks crystallise a multimedial art form, based on “the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning of the page.” (Bader, 1976, p. 1)

The concept of *multimodality* has established itself for this sophisticated interplay of images and text in picturebooks (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1996), where pictures assume a visual-narrative function by representing, supplementing, counterpointing, or differing from the information provided by the text (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001). Hence, the multiple tensions between verbal and visual meaning give this multimodal art form a high literary complexity that challenges picturebook readings (Lewis, 2001, Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001, Sipe and Pantaleo, 2008) as much as translation work (O’Sullivan, 2006).

Multilingual picturebooks embody a particularly interesting variant of this literary genre, adding yet another dimension to this already complex mode of representation and meaning-making. In fact, by combining and/or confronting two or more linguistic systems and forms,<sup>1</sup> multilingual picturebooks enact the intercultural encounter and generate an experience of alterity in the receiving audience (Hélot, Sneddon and Daly, 2014, Daly and Limbrick, 2018). As we will see in the two case studies presented here, multilingual picturebooks can adopt quite different forms and constellations.

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, two different writing systems and/or two different visual cultures may meet in a bilingual picturebook (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013).

The translation of picturebooks is very challenging, as a number of scholars have pointed out (Oittinen, Ketola and Garavini, 2018, O’Sullivan 2010)<sup>2</sup>, but these challenges are multiplied when the picturebooks in question are multilingual. In addition to issues arising from the target audience and function of the work, the translator’s choices will also be constrained by its artistic, literary, and pedagogical perspectives, and of course by its layout – the spacing, fonts, and importance given to each language on the page (the “linguistic landscape” [Daly, 2019]). In this complex process, the translator becomes a co-author proper and a full-fledged re-creator.

Despite all these fascinating features and challenges, the translation of multilingual picturebooks is still an under-researched field in translation studies. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the translation process behind two different types of multilingual picturebooks, focusing on the following questions: what translation strategies are developed to interpret and recreate the semiotic and semantic interplay between the visual and the textual elements of the story? What stylistic elements of the target language are employed to convey meaning acoustically? What translation strategies are used? What are the principles and effects of code-switching and -mixing within a translingual picturebook story?

The two case studies presented here share a similar theme: the moon. The first is a trilingual edition (*s’Mondmannele*, 2014) of Tomi Ungerer’s picturebook *Moon Man* (1966), which brings together three translations in German, French, and Alsatian. The second is a translingual picturebook, *Lunes... eine mondlose Nacht* [Moons... a moonless night (my translation)] by Mélanie Vialaneix (2017), which alternates and mixes French and German throughout the narration.

First, I will present a short typology of multilingual picturebooks and explain the different roles that translation plays in them. Then, I will discuss the case studies, analysing the translation processes used in them, as well as the translator’s choices and strategies. Finally, the findings will be discussed in the light of a poetics of translation that may be considered characteristic of multilingual picturebooks.

## **2. The role of translation in multilingual picturebooks**

Multilingual picturebooks can adopt different forms and functions. Generally, we can distinguish between dual language picturebooks (classic bilingual picturebooks, which present two linguistic versions of the story) and translingual picturebooks, which alternate and / or mix two or more languages throughout.

### **2.1 Dual language picturebooks**

Dual language picturebooks or classic bilingual picturebooks present the original text and its translation according to the mirror principle. The original text is accompanied by a

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<sup>2</sup> It involves not only understanding and reproducing the precise relationship between the visual and the verbal, but also being attentive to the acoustic and dramatic dimension of a picturebook that is designed to be read aloud, as well as the intercultural dimension present in any translation exercise.

complete translation that runs parallel to it and attempts to reproduce its lexical, syntactic and stylistic characteristics. Dual language picturebooks usually involve a collaboration between three artists: the author of the original text, the illustrator (who may or may not be the author) and the translator. In most cases, the bilingual edition is a reedition of the original (monolingual) picturebook with the new language version added. As a result, dual language books would not exist without the translator's intervention.

This kind of multilingual picturebook operates according to a binary principle, based on a monolingual vision of each language version. The translation accompanying the original text is usually intended for a monolingual audience, rather than expressing or appealing to a bilingual identity. Thus, the two languages of the bilingual picturebook do not mix but work as two autonomous and separate systems (Sneddon, 2009).

## 2.2 Translingual picturebooks

An alternative is offered by bilingual picturebooks that perform translanguaging,<sup>3</sup> that is to say, that use two or more languages concomitantly at either the discursive (in the character's speeches) and / or the narrative level (on the level of the story's diegesis). These may be considered *translingual* or *interlingual picturebooks* (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013, p. 63). In most cases, the published translingual text is not the result of a translation, but of translingual writing by a bilingual author, who draws on his or her multilingual repertoire to integrate two or more languages into the literary creation process.

Translanguaging in picturebooks often corresponds to the actual speech practices of bilingual or multilingual speech communities and conveys a multilingual experience. The identity value of such picturebooks cannot be neglected, therefore, as the work is often addressed to a bi- or multilingual community.<sup>4</sup>

Instead of reflecting a multilingual social experience, translingual picturebooks may have a purely pedagogical purpose. In this case, language alternation is often artificially imposed, whether in dialogues between characters that each speak different languages, or in accordance with a principle of recurrence shaping the narrative units of the story.<sup>5</sup> The pedagogical aim of this kind of translingual picturebook lies in the concomitant acquisition of reading skills in two languages; indeed, this kind of language alternation is understood to be an ideal way of training the cognitive flexibility of the multilingual brain and fostering its creative performance (Kharkhurin, 2012).

In this kind of translingual picturebook, language alternation can be created by four different auctorial constellations. The work may be written by (1) a bilingual author who alternates languages in the course of the writing process (simultaneous bilingual genesis); (2) a bilingual author who practices self-translation by first writing the whole story in one

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<sup>3</sup> Translanguaging (Garcia and Wei, 2014) involves language alternation and / or mixing, also called code-switching and code-mixing.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the translingual picturebook *Subway Sparrow* by Leyla Torres (1993), which alternates English, Spanish and Polish (Kümmerling-Meibauer, 2013, pp. 63-65).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the translingual picturebook *Sag mal, comment on fait les animaux* by Suzy Vergez and Barbara Hyvert (2018), alternating French and German (Hartmann, 2020, pp. 201-203).

language, before translating parts of it into another language (consecutive bilingual genesis); (3) a collaboration between an author and a translator with the latter only translating parts of the story (monolingual genesis and partial translation); (4) two co-authors, each of whom writes a narrative unit in his or her first language (collaborative bilingual genesis based on two alternating monolingual genesis).

### 3. Investigating translation in multilingual picturebooks

Investigating translation in multilingual picturebooks also means exploring the translation process that gave birth to this interlingual creation. The genetic approach allows us to research the coming-into-being of the translation in its temporal and spatial dimensions, by directing our gaze towards the translator's workshop. This usually involves the study of the translator's drafts and manuscripts, also called *avant-textes*.<sup>6</sup>

In what follows, I will partially adopt a genetic perspective in order to investigate the translation process within the analysis of two multilingual picturebooks.<sup>7</sup>

#### 3.1 *S'Mondmannelle (2014)*: a trilingual picturebook with three translations

Tomi Ungerer's *Moon Man* tells the story of the Moon Man's long-awaited visit to Earth. But when he finally reaches his dream destination, thanks to a comet that happens to fly by, he is taken prisoner because of his otherness. Thrown into a cell and cannonballed, he happily enters his "third phase", shrinking so that he can escape through the bars of the prison window. Taking advantage of his new-found freedom, the Moon Man wonders at the beauty of the natural world and finally realizes his dream of dancing at a costume ball at a garden party. But his joy does not last long: the police arrive, and the Moon Man flees into the forest and finds refuge in the hidden castle of scientist Doktor Bunsen van der Dunkel, who shows him the space rocket he invented. When the Moon Man shrinks again into his third phase, he says goodbye to his benefactor, gets on the rocket and flies home, where he stays happily ever after in the silver moon.

*Moon Man* was written by Tomi Ungerer, an Alsatian writer and illustrator who grew up speaking the three languages of Alsace (French, Alsatian, and German), and was originally published in English in 1966. In the same year, the work was translated into German (*Der Mondmann*) by Elisabeth Schnack; and three years later (1969) into French (*Jean de la Lune*) by Adolphe Chagot. The trilingual edition *s'Mondmannelle* [The little Moon Man (in Alsatian)] was published in 2014 and presents an Alsatian version by Bénédicte Keck, accompanied by the French and German translations.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Hartmann and Hersant (2019). On the genetic approach within translation studies (also called genetic translation studies) see, for example, Nunes, Moura, and Pacheco Pinto, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> In the case of the translation process behind the trilingual edition of Tomi Ungerer's *Moon Man*, the translator Bénédicte Keck stated in a phone interview that she did not keep any previous versions of the final Alsatian text, though gave me an insight into her translational choices, thus enabling a genetic perspective to be adopted.

The purpose of this trilingual edition is to revitalize the endangered Alsatian language and reaffirm Alsatian identity. As stated in the foreword by the President of the Alsatian Language Office:

Reading a picturebook by the world-famous Alsatian author-illustrator Tomi Ungerer is always a pleasure – and even more so when this book is written in Alsatian. In fact, being French, Alemannic, and European at the same time, Alsatians all feel a bit different, like the Moon Man. In this sense, Alsatians are sometimes Moon Men too! [my translation]

This foreword thus aims to identify the hero of the picturebook story with the target audience, based on their shared experience of otherness. This evocation of an Alsatian identity embodied both by the Alsatian author-illustrator Tomi Ungerer and the Moon Man as the hero of the story justifies the language choice and its distribution throughout the work.

If we look at the spatial configuration of the three languages on the page, we can see that the Alsatian text is written in large characters, while the French and German texts are very small. The German text is in italics, the French text in normal type; both texts are displayed as parallel texts like in a dual language book, under the much larger Alsatian text. Hence, the layout of this multilingual picturebook is carried by a specific language policy that seeks to promote the Alsatian variety as a language of literature. That is to say, the linguistic landscape (Daly, 2019) of this trilingual edition of *Moon Man* ranks Alsatian – a minority language – higher than the two majority languages, French and German. By inverting the sociolinguistic power relationship between national and regional language (or between standard language and regional variety), this trilingual edition aims to empower the endangered minority language by giving it a dominant literary status within this work. The Alsatian translation is thus given the status of an alleged “source text”, while the French and the German translations are intended to serve as mediation.

The Alsatian translation was elaborated from two different source texts (the German and French versions) that were used simultaneously. In fact, the translation process is made explicit in the peritext that introduces the edition,<sup>8</sup> which is quite a unique editorial practice. Since neither of these source texts – the German or the French – is the original work by the author-illustrator Tomi Ungerer, the Alsatian translation has to be qualified as an *indirect translation*.

The beginning of the story gives a good insight into the special character of the Alsatian translation. In the passages analysed below, I present the original English (1966) text before the three translations that appear in the trilingual picturebook:

On clear, starry nights the Moon Man can be seen curled up in his shimmering seat in space.

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<sup>8</sup> This is stated in Alsatian on the title page. It was also confirmed by the translator, Bénédicte Keck, in private conversation. Unfortunately, Keck did not keep any translation drafts that might have enabled the genesis of the Alsatian translation to be reconstituted more precisely.

The expression "shimmering seat in space" describes the shining moon in the picture, while the expression "curled up" suggests a feeling of cosiness and transforms the moon disc into a living space. Moreover, the verb *to see* in the expression "the Moon Man can be seen" explicitly alludes to the picture that accompanies the text: hence, the descriptive function that predominates here invites the reader to contemplate the pictures that play the leading part in this story. This means that the multimodal reading mode, which combines text and images, is set from the start: the picture conveys the main information of the story; the verbal relates to the visual.

Following the chronological order of the subsequent translations, let us consider now the German translation (1966):

In sternklaren Nächten kann man den Mondmann am Himmel droben sehen, wie er zusammengekauert in seiner silbernen Wohnung sitzt.

The German version comes very close to the original English text: "starry nights" is rendered poetically as "sternklaren Nächten", while the moon as a metaphorical living space is expressed by "Wohnung", i.e. "home" or "house". The adjective "silber", i.e. "silver" for "shimmering", gives the moon a coloration, but diminishes its shiny effect.

The French version (1969), on the other hand, does not follow the English source text particularly closely:

Avez-vous vu Jean de la Lune, là-haut dans le ciel? Pelotonné dans sa boule argentée, il vous fait signe amicalement. Il attend que vous lui rendiez sa visite, une visite que tout le monde ici à oubliée, et que je vais vous conter.

[My translation: Have you seen the Moon Man up there in the sky? Curled up in his silver ball, he is waving to you in a friendly way. He is waiting for you to return his visit, a visit that everyone here has forgotten, and that I will tell you now.]

By comparing the French and German texts, we can observe that the French translation is not the equivalent of the English source text or its German mirror-image but rather describes the scene given in the picture. The information about the moon man's friendly mode of communication comes from the picture: "he is waving to you in a friendly way" (my translation). In this case, the French text is not an interlingual translation, but an *intersemiotic translation*, because it translates the image and not the English text.

Another important feature of the French translation is the setting-up of the communication situation. In French, the beginning of the story not only has a descriptive function, but also a communicative one, since it directly interpellates the reader (or, in a read-aloud performance, the listening child). The narrator asks: "Have you seen the Moon Man up there in the sky?" (My translation) Thus, the child who is listening and watching is involved in the act of storytelling, as is the storyteller who is identified by the pronoun *I* ("that I will tell you now"). A model of interaction stems from the pronouns employed in the French text, the *I* of the storyteller and the *you* of the audience, transforming the reading into a read-aloud performance, or even a storytelling performance. This interaction

between the storyteller and the audience is doubled by the relationship between the main character, the Moon Man, and the audience. Speaking about the Moon Man, the French texts says: “he waves to you in a friendly manner. He is waiting for you to return his visit.” (My translation) The interaction between the Moon Man and the audience allows the latter to engage actively in the representation of the story: the audience is invited to enter the narrative universe, to travel to the moon in their imagination, and to participate in the action of the story.

In this passage, the Alsatian translation draws mainly on the French text (*Source Text 1*), reproducing the aural character of the storytelling performance, the audience’s involvement in the storytelling process, and the narrative addition of the moon waiting for a return visit from the children listening to the story.

On the other hand, intersemiotic translation is used in the Alsatian text to describe the moon, depicted in the illustration with a gentle, smiling face and waving hand. This is rendered in Alsatian by “He waves to you with a gentle smile” (my translation), a passage entirely absent from the German and the French texts. In this sense, the reader cannot refer to the German text to understand the Alsatian version that offers here a semantic and narrative supplement due to intersemiotic translation referring to the picture. Consequently, the three translations of the trilingual picturebook cannot be considered parallel versions.

Interestingly, there is another translation strategy two pages later that combines three different procedures. The first sentence of the Alsatian text is a translation from the German text. Accordingly, the German text becomes *Source Text 2* of the Alsatian translation.

English: One night a shooting star [a comet] flashed by.

German: Eines Nachts sauste ein Komet an ihm vorbei.

Alsatian: Einmal in de Naacht isch e Komet an’ m verbi gsüst.

The principal change we can detect between the German and Alsatian texts consists in the verb tense. The simple past or preterite (a verb tense used primarily in written texts in German) that appears in the German translation is replaced in the Alsatian version by the present perfect tense (tense used in oral speech). In this passage, the present perfect tense is simulating the ongoing storytelling process: “sauste (vorbei)” (preterit / simple past) vs “isch (an’ m verbi) gsüst” [ist (an ihm vorbei) gesaust] (present perfect) for *flashed (by)*.

The second sentence in the Alsatian text shows a translation from the French text that is missing from the English and German versions:

French: Jean de la Lune (Moon Man) ne manqua pas l’occasion.

Alsatian: S’ Mondmannele het die Gelajeheet nit welle verpasse!

(My translation: The Moon Man didn’t want to miss the opportunity!)

Taking some liberty with regards to the French source text, the Alsatian translation incorporates a dramatic element and tone, adding an exclamation mark to hint at how it should be said when reading aloud.

The third sentence of the Alsatian translation returns to the German source text, even though the first part of the sentence is left out, as in the French version:

English: The Moon Man leaped just in time to catch the fiery tail of the comet.

German: Der Mondmann sprang gerade noch rechtzeitig hoch und erwischte den Kometen bei seinem feurigen Schweif.

Alsatian: Es het the Komet grad noch in de Zitte an sinem fiiriche Waddel geschnappt un het sich mitschleppe lon.

The final part of the sentence in Alsatian “un het sich mitschleppe lon”, which could be translated into “he let himself be dragged along” (my translation), uses intersemiotic translation: at this point, the Alsatian text describes the dynamic and forceful picture. Hence, as seen above with the description of the Moon Man’s facial expression, the *picture* becomes *Source Text 3* of the Alsatian translation.

The last example illustrates the Alsatian humour that enhances the gentle irony present in Tomi Ungerer’s story. This example also demonstrates the linguistic characteristics of Alsatian as a Germanic language that has had intensive language contact with French. In this passage, the text is found in a footnote marked by an asterisk above the picture of a pink ice-cream seller. The asterisk-discourse is situated at the metanarrative level, which gives voice to the narrator commenting the picture. Consequently, this footnote procedure works like a humorous wink that creates a bond between narrator and reader.

English: The ice cream man hurried to set up his stand for the spectators.

German: Der Eisbudenmann wollte einen Verkaufsstand für die Neugierigen aufschlagen.

French: Un marchand de glace courageux – qui espérait faire de bonnes affaires – les précédait.

Here, the Alsatian text is totally freed from the German and French source texts, creating its own humorous aside:

Mit denne ganze Wunderfitzle het s’ kuraschierte Glace-Mannele glich s’gute Gschaft gschmeckt.

[My translation: With all the curious onlookers, the courageous ice-cream seller immediately suspected (tasted) good business.]

We see here that the Alsatian version makes witty use of two stylistic figures: two alliterations (**G**lace – **g**lich / **G**schaft – **g**schmeckt), as well as an ingenious gustatory metaphor that fits very well into the ice-cream context. Indeed, “s’gute Gschaft gschmeckt” [das gute Geschäft schmecken] literally means that the ice-cream seller “tasted good business” (my translation).

Finally, we can detect the linguistic results of language contact between German and French within the Alsatian variety, illustrated by the word “Glace-Mannele” for *ice cream seller*, which shows an interesting combination of the French “glace” (ice cream), and the word “Mannele” that stands for “little man” in many German dialects. The composite word “Glace-Mannele” could thus be interpreted as an example of Alsatian translanguaging.

### **3.2 *Lunes... eine mondlose Nacht* (2017): a translingual picturebook with partial translation**

As its title reveals, *Lunes... eine mondlose Nacht* [Moons (French)... a moonless night (German)] is a translingual picturebook that alternates and mixes two languages – French and German. However, *Lunes... eine mondlose Nacht* is not the creation of a bilingual author practising French-German translanguaging in its written form, but the result of a partial translation into German of certain text passages. This partial translation was carried out *a posteriori* by Sybille Maurer, who converted the monolingual French text, written and illustrated by Mélanie Vialaneix, into a translingual text. The work is therefore the result of a consecutive collaboration between an author writing in French and a translator working into German, who only translates parts of the story – in short, of a monolingual genesis and a partial translation.

The main text of *Lunes... eine mondlose Nacht* is accompanied by two complete monolingual versions in French and German, inserted as an appendix at the end of the picturebook. This enables the story to be read entirely in French or in German,<sup>9</sup> and also allows vocabulary items to be checked against another language.

*Lunes... eine mondlose Nacht* tells the tale of a journey through the night, a quest for the hidden moon. Two sisters, Magda and Lilo, are fascinated by the moon. One evening, however, the moon does not appear in the sky, so Magda, the older sister, sets out to look for it. This becomes a voyage of initiation, punctuated by fascinating encounters and discoveries of unknown landscapes, until the moon finally appears in front of her.

Magda’s journey follows the well-known narrative scheme of the medieval initiation story, as exemplified by the Arthurian romance *Perceval or the Story of the Holy Grail* (Chrétien de Troyes, 1190). The quest for the moon is placed at the centre of the story, reminding the reader of the quest for the Holy Grail. Magda must overcome three trials before meeting the moon: diving into the ocean, crossing a desert, and climbing a mountain. The aquatic and nocturnal elements represent “threshold” moments, which Magda must cross in order to reach another state of consciousness and gain new

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<sup>9</sup> From a translational point of view, the complete German translation raises several grammatical and lexical questions, which we do not have the space to discuss here.

knowledge. This new stage is symbolised by the final encounter with the moon. Revealing the secret of life dominated by eternal return, the Moon explains to Magda: “I have travelled, just like you. I come and go. I help the ocean on its migrations and the plants to flourish. Nature is constantly changing” (my translation). Magda’s final return to her sister Lilo at the end of the story, symbolizes her reintegration into the diurnal world. Visually, the work is enchanting, with its beautiful illustrations dominated by a *chiaroscuro* effect that creates a dazzling contrast between the nocturnal darkness and the clarity of the lunar rays.

Magda’s initiation journey also symbolizes a gradual initiation into German for a francophone reader, since this translingual picturebook devotes increasing amounts of text to the German language. The first part up to Magda’s departure is written entirely in French, as is the beginning of her adventure, in which she goes out into the nocturnal garden to start her search for the moon. In this translingual picturebook, each language corresponds to a particular colour: the German passages are written in black letters, while the French text is shown in grey. On pages that feature a black or dark blue background depicting the darkness of the night or the depths of the ocean, the German text appears in white, while the French text is written in light grey. With this artistic effect, the text fits perfectly into the illustration and participates in it through its chromatic dimension.

The German text appears for the first time when Magda meets with a great grey owl in the garden. This first change of language occurs in a *dialogical alternation*, because the owl speaks German and Magda speaks French<sup>10</sup>:

Ce sont les yeux ronds d’un grand hibou! [French: These are the round eyes of a big owl]

Bonsoir, je suis à la recherche de la lune; l’avez-vous vue? [French (Magda): Good evening, I am looking for the moon; have you seen it?]

Entschuldige, wonach suchst du? [German (owl): Sorry, what are you looking for?]

The encounter between Magda and the owl enacts a real intercomprehension situation. Additionally, communication between the two monolingual speakers is facilitated by a non-verbal body language allowing an *intersemiotic translation*: the French text accompanying the dialogue between Magda and the owl describes the girl’s gesture of drawing a moon with her arms. This gesture facilitates the recognition of the referent (the moon): “Magda [...] dessine un grand cercle de ses bras, et pointe son doigt vers le ciel étoilé” [French: Magda [...] draws a large circle with her arms and points her finger to the starry sky]. The owl’s understanding is accentuated by an exclamation: “Oh, der Mond!” [German: Oh, the moon!]

Entschuldige, wonach suchst du? [German (owl): Sorry, what are you looking for?]

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<sup>10</sup> Please note that all translations in the given examples and inside squared brackets are back translations.

La lune! [French (Magda): The moon!]

Répond Magda qui dessine un grand cercle de ses bras, et pointe son doigt vers le ciel étoilé.  
[French: answers Magda who draws a large circle with her arms and points her finger to the starry sky.]

Oh, der Mond! [German (owl): Oh, the moon!]

Vielleicht ist er im Wald hinter dem Garten? [German (owl): Maybe he is in the woods behind the garden?]

Hulule le hibou. [French: hoots the owl]

In the next translingual passage, the direct speech appears in German, while the narration continues in French. Thus, in this case, the code-switching is motivated by a *discursive change* (direct speech vs narration). As the direct speech shows, Magda and the white plastic buoy, which she encounters floating in the ocean, both speak German. This does not seem to make sense, since Magda only spoke French in her previous conversation with the owl. On the other hand, mastery of the German language is perhaps one of the wonderful new acquisitions obtained at the end of her journey. Yet Magda is only halfway there...

Hallo, ich bin auf der Suche nach dem Mond! [German: Hello, I am looking for the moon!]

Crie Magda à la bouée, en dessinant un croissant de ses doigts. [French: Martha shouts at the buoy, drawing a crescent with her fingers.]

Hm, der Mond? Vielleicht befindet er sich in der Nähe des Ozeans? Komm, ich bring dich dahin! [German: Hum, the moon? Maybe it is near the ocean? Come on, I will take you there!]

Glougloute la bouée. [French: the buoy gurgles.]

Au milieu de la vaste étendue d'eau, il fait noir et un peu froid... [French: In the middle of the expanse of water, it is dark and a little cold...]

Ich kann den Mond nirgendwo sehen... [German: I cannot see the moon anywhere...]

Warte, schau doch mal näher hin, dit la bouée. [German: Wait, take a closer look] [French: says the buoy.]

Once again, Magda's gesture ("drawing a crescent with her fingers") uses non-verbal body language (or intersemiotic mediation) to make her request understandable.

The third type of code-switching corresponds to a discursive differentiation between free indirect speech (expressing Magda's thoughts) and narration.

Des milliers de petits points phosphorescents [French: Thousands of small phosphorescent dots] apparaissent et se mettent à danser autour d'elle. [French: appear and begin to dance around her.]

Winzige Lebewesen! [German: Tiny creatures!]

Oooohhh, [exclamation in French or German] s'écrit Magda émerveillée. [French: exclaims Magda in wonder.]

The German exclamation “Winzige Lebewesen!” [Tiny creatures!] could be interpreted as free indirect speech, integrating into the syntactic continuity of the narration in French and expressing Magda’s thoughts at the semantic level. This discursive change is marked by language alternation.

So far, we have distinguished three different principles that cause language alternation in this translingual picturebook:

- (1) Dialogical alternation in direct speech (Magda / the owl).
- (2) Discursive alternation between direct speech and narration (Magda and the buoy / narration).
- (3) Discursive alternation between free indirect speech and narration (Magda’s thoughts / narration).

From the middle of the story, we can also observe language mixing, before the text ends exclusively in German. The first intrasentential occurrence takes place at the level of narration: the sentence is split into two octosyllabic halves – the first in German, and the second in French – linked by an ongoing assonance in [a], which highlights the mystery of the nocturnal aquatic spectacle. The sentence marks a break within an ongoing movement:

Une lueur balaye alors [French: A glow then sweeps across]

die Oberfläche des Wassers. [German: the surface of the water.]

Although this code-switching in the middle of the sentence seems to produce a poetic effect (a rhythmic equilibrium created by the succession of two octosyllabic unities, as well as the presence of a suggestive assonance), this effect is not clearly motivated at the semantic or narrative level. Possibly, the creation of a mysterious melody produced by language mixing announces Magda’s entrance into the “underwater kingdom”. At a socio-cultural level, however, this phenomenon does not correspond to the natural speaking practice of a bilingual, since in French-German translanguaging, one would rather say: “Une lueur balaye alors la Oberfläche de l’eau” or “Une leur balaye alors la Wasseroberfläche”.

In the following two pages, code-switching continues to occur at the narration level: intersentential language alternation is followed by intrasentential language mixing, which becomes increasingly arbitrary.

Un gigantesque phare se tient sur un rocher [French: A gigantic lighthouse stands on a rock]  
qui surplombe l’océan. [French: that overlooks the ocean]

Sein mächtiges Leuchtfener erstrahlt die Wellen [German: Its mighty beacon shines on the waves]  
genauso glänzend wie das Mondlicht. [German: just as shiny / glittering as the moonlight.]

The use of the verb “erstrahlt” in the German translation is grammatically questionable, since “erstrahlen” [to shine] is an intransitive verb with no transitive use. The transitive verb “bestrahlen” [to shine on something] would therefore seem more appropriate in this context. If we consult the complete French source text reproduced in the appendix of the translingual picturebook, we can also discuss the German translation of the comparison “genauso glänzend wie das Mondlicht” [German: just as shiny as the moonlight]. The French source text reads as follows:

Sa grande lanterne balaye les vagues *aussi brillantes qu’un clair de lune*.

[French: Its large lantern sweeps the waves as brilliant as moonlight.]

The comparison “aussi brillantes qu’un clair de lune” [French: as brilliant as moonlight] forms around the adjective “brillantes” [brilliant] that qualifies the noun “vagues” [waves] and is placed in an appositive position. The adjectival qualification of the waves cannot be rendered by the adjective “glänzend” [glittering / shiny] in German, because, in its appositive position, the adjective “glänzend” adopts the status of an *adverb*, qualifying the verb “bestrahlt” / “balaye” [shines on]. I would therefore suggest the following translation, which keeps the impression of glittering waves:

Sein mächtiges Leuchtfeuer bestrahlt die Wellen, die wie der Mond schimmern / glänzen.

[German: Its mighty beacon illuminates the waves that shimmer / shine like the moon.]

If we abandon the comparison in favour of a less prosaic rhythm and a physical explanation of the luminescent phenomenon, we could propose:

Sein mächtiges Leuchtfeuer bestrahlt die Wellen, die im Mondschein schimmern.  
[German: Its mighty beacon illuminates the waves that shimmer in the moonlight.]

or:

Sein mächtiges Leuchtfeuer bestrahlt die im Mondschein schimmernden Wellen.  
[Its mighty beacon illuminates the waves shimmering in the moonlight.]

The following sentence presents intrasentential code-mixing between the nominal group “la petite porte rouge” [French: the little red door] and its determinative complement in the genitive case “des Leuchtturms” [German: of the lighthouse].

Magda s’en approche et frappe à la petite porte rouge [French: Magda comes over and knocks on the little red door]

des Leuchtturms. Keine Antwort. [German: of the lighthouse. No answer.]  
Elle frappe encore et attend. [French: She knocks again and waits.]

Although this phenomenon is interesting, it does not correspond to the natural linguistic habit, speaking practice, or “feeling for language” of a bilingual speaker, who would borrow the German word “Leuchtturm” (lighthouse) while leaving the article in French:

Magda s’en approche et frappe à la petite porte rouge du Leuchtturm. Keine Antwort.

This more natural French-German translanguaging version, which enables the bilingual speaker to draw from a single bilingual repertoire, retains a French syntax, in which the borrowed noun “Leuchtturm” [lighthouse] is embedded. Such a configuration would not require a visual change of colour or line, because the two languages would truly merge within a single translingual idiom, imitating a natural bilingual discourse.

The following page presents a final example of intrasentential code-mixing, before the text continues exclusively in German.

Magda marche vers le désert. [French: Magda walks towards the desert.]  
Plus elle s’éloigne de la lumière du phare, plus elle réalise que [French: The further she moves away from the light of the lighthouse, the more she realizes that]

die Nacht nicht mehr so dunkel ist wie vorher. [German: the night is no longer as dark as it was before.]

The location of the code-switch in this sentence not only seems unnatural, but also syntactically illogical. We are indeed in the presence of a main clause “elle réalise” [French: she realizes] and a subordinate clause (complement clause) “que die Nacht nicht mehr so dunkel ist wie vorher” [(French) that (German) the night is no longer as dark as it was before]. Subordinate clauses in German adopt a particular structure, since the verb is always placed at the end. In the speaker’s mind, however, this particular construction (i.e. the placing of the verb at the end of the subordinate clause) can only be anticipated if the subordinating conjunction “dass” [that] is expressed, so that the placement of the verb at the end of the subordinate clause can be triggered. At the level of grammatical accuracy in German, it would therefore be necessary that the subordinating conjunction “dass” [that] be expressed in German and that the code-switching occur between the main clause and the subordinate clause, according to a syntactical logic.

Plus elle s’éloigne de la lumière du phare, plus elle réalise, [French: The further she moves away from the light of the lighthouse, the more she realizes]

*dass* die Nacht nicht mehr so dunkel ist wie vorher. [German: that the night is no longer as dark as it was before.]

Still, this suggested constellation is not natural for a bilingual speaker either. We therefore propose another version, formed by the juxtaposition of two independent clauses that are connected by a colon:

Plus elle s’éloigne de la lumière du phare, plus elle réalise: [French: The further she moves away from the light of the lighthouse, the more she realizes:]

Die Nacht *ist* nicht mehr so dunkel wie vorher ! [German: the night is no longer as dark as it was before!]

This version would have the advantage of presenting the linguistic alternation at the discursive level (narration vs free indirect speech revealing Magda's thoughts), a change that would be coherent with the principles of code-switching observed in this picturebook.

As several researchers have observed, language mixing (translanguaging) has a certain grammatical logic. For example, Timm (1975) identified the constraints of Spanish-English code-switching, distinguishing between sentences that bilingual speakers consider well-formed (e.g. The students *habian visto la pelicula italiana*) from those that sound unnatural (e.g. The student had *visto la pelicula italiana*). Researchers who followed these discoveries (Poplack, 1980, Myers-Scotton, 1993, MacSwan, 2000) have convincingly demonstrated that code-switching, like all linguistic behaviour, is governed by specific constants and rules. Consequently, creating a translingual picturebook by using partial translation can prove to be quite a challenge, since every instance of code-switching must be evaluated grammatically, discursively, and poetically.

#### **4. Towards a poetics of translation in multilingual picturebooks**

Multilingual picturebooks can disclose various translational and editorial strategies. The two case studies presented here reveal that translation strategies in the trilingual picturebook *s'Mondmannele* are quite different from those observed in the translingual picturebook *Lunes... eine mondlose Nacht*. They also allow the examination and analysis of different types of language distribution, alternation, and mixing, which create different literary effects in the two picturebook stories.

##### **4.1 Translation strategies in the trilingual picturebook *s'Mondmannele***

What can we learn from our investigation of the translation process that leads to the Alsatian version in this trilingual picturebook? First, translating picturebooks always means shifting between the verbal and the visual, combining both *interlingual* and *intersemiotic translation*. In the case of the Alsatian translation, we have seen that intersemiotic translation (used for example to describe the friendly facial expression of the Moon Man) is as important as interlingual translation (which is carried out simultaneously from two source texts, German and French). This rather rare phenomenon could be qualified as *double indirect translation*.

Second, not only the verbal and the visual, but also the aural dimension of the story is taken into account within the translation process. In fact, as the picturebook is also meant to be read aloud by an adult, the Alsatian text adopts an aural storytelling style, by directly addressing the audience and soliciting their involvement in the story, and by creating sound repetition such as alliterations. Taken all together, the combination of the verbal, visual, and aural, transforms both the translation process and reading-aloud performance into a holistic aesthetic experience.

Third, translating picturebooks also implies a level of cultural mediation that is conditioned by the cultural background of the audience and the medium of the target language. In the case of the Alsatian translation, we have seen that the translator engages with the audience by using humour (for example through the insertion of the gustatory metaphor). Another important stylistic feature of the Alsatian text would be orality (as shows, for example, the use of the present perfect tense) and translanguaging for expressions emerging from language contact (e.g. “Glace-mannele”).

Overall, the translation process underpinning this trilingual edition can be considered as a multimodal mediation process.

#### **4.2 Translation strategies in the translingual picturebook *Lunes... eine mondlose Nacht***

How can we describe the translation strategies at work in the translingual picturebook *Lunes... eine mondlose Nacht*? First, partial translation is used to create language alternation in the form of intersentential code-switching and intrasentential code-mixing. These phenomena always have a poetical and narrative effect. That is to say, code-switching creates an estrangement effect that underlines the experience of otherness and corresponds poetically to the nocturnal universe of the story. As a narrative strategy, it can emphasize discursive shifts between dialogue and narration (discursive alternation), or between the speech styles of the different characters (dialogic alternation).

Intrasentential code-mixing, however, is more of a challenge. I personally feel that the translation should be modelled on a natural translanguaging practice, rather than creating an artificial language mix that jeopardizes grammatical accuracy in one or another language. Moreover, it should ideally be not only semantically and narratively motivated but should also respect the syntactic order and rhythm of each language in order to achieve a literary effect and enhance the overall aesthetic impression. Nevertheless, code-switching and mixing based on partial translation can be an excellent form of language play, designed to develop linguistic flexibility. In this particular case, the initiation into a new language is felicitously combined with the initiatory quest to the moon.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The translation of multilingual picturebooks is a multimodal mediation practice, which involves both interlingual and intersemiotic translation. As we have seen, a range of different strategies may be used: indirect translation, orality and humour, the interpellation or involvement of the target reader, the creation of phonetic and stylistic effects that colour the read-aloud performance. In addition, partial translation creates a translingual text, which enriches the poetic value of the picturebook story and introduces the reader to a bilingual universe.

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**BENEATH THE VEIL OF SPEECH:  
ON TRANSLATING ALAN MOORE'S *THE COURTYARD* AND *NEONOMICON***

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**ABSTRACT:** This article is a case-study of a rather unique translation problem faced during the translation of Alan Moore's and Jacen Burrows's comic book series *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* from English into Brazilian Portuguese. After a brief exposition of the intertextual aspects relating to Moore's countless references to Lovecraft in these series, the exploration of language as a major stylistic device is established with reference to Lovecraft's pseudo-mythology. There follows an in-depth discussion of the translation problems elicited by Moore's remarkable use of language and meta-language as a plot device. Hofstadter's concepts of pressure and slippability are introduced and contextualized as a viable approach to the practice of creative translation as defined by Kußmaul (2007). The published translation is presented and analyzed, and a conclusion is drawn with regard to the general practice of literary translation and creative literary translation in particular.

**KEYWORDS:** Alan Moore, Howard Phillips Lovecraft, Literary Translation, Creative Translation, Graphic Narratives.

### **1. Introduction**

This article is a retrospective case-study of a rather unique translation problem faced during the translation of Alan Moore's and Jacen Burrows's comic book series *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* from English into Brazilian Portuguese, which I completed in the year 2012.

At the time, having already organized, translated and prefaced several volumes of H. P. Lovecraft's fiction – an inspiration so constant and so present in every page of *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* that it would be all but impossible to discuss Moore's and Burrows's creations without making almost ceaseless references to Lovecraft and his work – I was commissioned to translate and write a short introduction for a single-volume trade paperback that would collect both series to be published in Brazil under the name *Neonomicon*. It was this commission that led me to the remarkable translation problem discussed in this article.

I will be the first one to acknowledge the limitations of this attempt to piece together the complex and opaque cognitive processes which resulted in a creative translation finished almost a decade ago. However, I am also confident that the highly unusual character of the translation problem, the compound layers of pressures to be overcome in this particular case and the central position occupied by the problem in the overarching structure of the narrative have all concurred to make a lasting impression. As a result, the account offered here should be at least sufficiently accurate to be of interest. Even if that were not the case, translator practitioners know from experience that a perfectly literal presentation of things is often far less interesting and far less relevant than a purpose-driven re-presentation of those same things. It is in this spirit that I trust the following

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behind-the-curtain look into the reconstructed mental process of approaching and solving the translation problem at the heart of both *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* might illustrate one of several possible ways to approach broad-ranging, plot-related explorations of language in creative translation.

## **2. Lovecraft and Moore, Cthulhu and *fhtagh***

This article does not purport to be a presentation of either H. P. Lovecraft or Alan Moore: it would not be possible to present the work of these authors in a few short paragraphs, particularly because of the complex intertextual aspects of Moore's *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* discussed below. Given the breadth and the sheer number of direct and indirect references to Lovecraft, these comic book series call for a reader with significant previous knowledge of Lovecraft in order to be fully appreciated. Nonetheless, it appears convenient to offer at least a cursory survey of the relevant details in order to make the translation-related aspects at least intelligible to those who might not be familiar with these authors and their work.

Howard Philips Lovecraft (1890-1937) was an American writer of weird fiction who is best remembered for classic horror and early science-fiction stories such as "The Call of Cthulhu" and *At the Mountains of Madness*, among several others. Having been mostly ignored by the prevailing literary movement during his lifetime, Lovecraft was nonetheless able to find an avid and loyal readership in cheap, mass-produced magazines during the golden era of American pulp fiction (1920s-1940s). Over time, he became one of the most iconic figures in the history of horror and sci-fi literature and currently enjoys cult status – not least because of the countless adaptations, references and homages inspired by his work, among which are Moore's *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon*.

Alan Moore (born in 1953) is a British writer and ranks among the most important creators in the history of comic books. Moore was responsible for ground-breaking original works such as *Watchmen* (first serialized in 1986-1987) and *V for Vendetta* (1982-1988) as well as for invaluable contributions to preexisting comic book characters such as DC Comics' Swamp Thing. His work often features a masterly use of language as well as an intricate web of intertextual references – so that even the simplest attempt to explain *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* requires a certain degree of intertextuality, since Moore has in fact produced not one but two works entitled *The Courtyard*. The first was a short story published in 1994, based on Lovecraft's poem of the same name (poem IX from the sonnet-cycle *Fungi From Yuggoth*). Moore's second *The Courtyard* came out in 2003 – this time as a comic book with a sequential adaptation by Antony Johnston and artwork by Jacen Burrows, published in two 24-page issues. In 2010 this serial adaptation was followed by *Neonomicon*, originally written by Moore in the comic book format as a direct continuation of the events presented in *The Courtyard* and published in four 25-page issues, once again with artwork by Jacen Burrows. In both of these works, references to Lovecraft are so prevalent and so frequent that even the characters describe the in-story references as "almost like some big literary in-joke".

In view of the aforementioned space constraints, it also becomes rather challenging to properly convey the sense of pervasive horror which several of Lovecraft's stories associate with Cthulhu – the central figure in a pseudo-mythology initially developed by Lovecraft and mentioned by name in one of his most often quoted passages:

*Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.*

The in-story translation – which reads “In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming” – hints at the imminent rising of Cthulhu, a cosmic creature which slumbers on the bottom of the ocean and whose awakening is vaguely associated with humanity's ultimate demise:

Cthulhu still lives, too, I suppose, again in that chasm of stone which has shielded him since the sun was young. His accursed city is sunken once more (...); but his ministers on earth still bellow and prance and slay around idol-capped monoliths in lonely places. He must have been trapped by the sinking whilst within his black abyss, or else the world would by now be screaming with fright and frenzy. Who knows the end? What has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise. Loathsomeness waits and dreams in the deep, and decay spreads over the tottering cities of men. (Lovecraft, 2005)

For the purposes of this article, the infamous line from “The Call of Cthulhu” also serves as a piece of textual evidence which fittingly depicts Lovecraft's fictional use of pseudo-language as an important stylistic device. In addition to original pseudo-language creations – of which “Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn” is only the most notorious example – Lovecraft also borrowed cryptic words from other writers of the uncanny such as Edgar Allan Poe, whose bizarre coinage “tekeli-li” (from *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*) reappears at key moments in Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness*, and Arthur Machen, whose mysterious and unexplained coinage “Aklo” (from “The White People”) is cursorily mentioned in Lovecraft's *The Dunwich Horror* before it assumes a central role in the plot of *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* as a sort of archaic transcendental language.

The text on the pages which brings *The Courtyard* to a close is a telling example of the extent to which this strange use of language – or rather, this use of a strange pseudo-language – permeates the universe in which Moore's characters move:

**Panel 1.** [Aldo Sax is in front of a window with blood on his arms.]

Aldo Sax (in narrative boxes): N'GAIL FHTAGN E'HUCUNECHH R'LYEH. IA, G-HARNE EP YGG RHAN TEGOTH N'THYLEII YR GNH'GUA? / SHAGGAI, HUMUK DHO-HNA, G'YLL-GNAIL YGG YR NHHNGR SHOGGOTH, HRR YLL'NGNGR NYARLATHOTEP. GH'LL MHHG-GTHAA TEKELI-LI Y'GOLONAC RRRTHNAA. / H'RRNAI CTHULHU. H'RRNAI CTHULHU NNG'GTEP...

The fact that the two final pages of a short, two-issue comic series are used to present the very end of the story in mostly incomprehensible<sup>1</sup> text is, without a doubt, proof of the importance given to language in both *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* – and these outré warpings become even more entrenched further on.

### 3. Johnny Carcosa's speech problem

In *The Courtyard*, as part of the ongoing investigation by the FBI, undercover agent Aldo Sax meets the strange Johnny Carcosa in an attempt to get Aklo – believed at this point of the narrative to be a sort of drug. Right at the beginning of the exchange between these two characters, the text in Carcosa's speech bubbles enacts a speech problem:

**Panel 2.** [Aldo Sax is standing in front of Johnny Carcosa at the Club Zothique. Carcosa has a yellow bandana covering his nose and mouth.]

Aldo Sax: "SORRY TO ITCH YOU, MAN. JOEY FACE SAID I SHOULD TALK TO YOU IF I WAS LOOKING FOR ANYTHING."

Johnny Carcosa: "JOEY FATHE ITH AN ATH-HOLE WHO TAKTH TOO MUCH ECTHTATHY."

Aldo Sax: "WATCHU WANN', ANYWAYTH?"

Aldo Sax (in a narrative box): WHEN HE SPEAKS, THOUGH YOU CAN'T SEE HIS LIPS, A FAINT RIPPLE OF BREATH STIRS THE SHEER LEMON FILM OF HIS VEIL.

Though at this point in the narrative Carcosa's lisp is not referred to in other way aside from the spelling of *s* as *th* exemplified above, it is important to note that the character's lisp is enacted in all of his speech bubbles at all times. However, a later scene in which Aldo Sax arranges to meet Johnny Carcosa at his place in order to receive the Aklo offers the reader a direct insight into the FBI agent's impression of Carcosa's speech problem by means of a narrative box:

**Panel 3.** [Johnny Carcosa is standing in a hallway, looking back. He has a yellow bandana covering his nose and mouth.]

Aldo Sax (in a narrative box): IT OCCURS TO ME MAYBE HE HAS A HARE LIP OR SOME SIMILAR ORAL COMPLAINT, THUS EXPLAINING BOTH CARCOSA'S FAGGOTY LISP AND HIS YELLOW, CONCEALING BANDANA.

Both Carcosa's lisp and the uncertain nature of Sax's impression as to the reason for this speech problem – together with the fact that Carcosa uses a "yellow, concealing bandana"

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<sup>1</sup> When read in context within the frame of reference established by Lovecraft's writings and Moore's appropriation, the quoted passage does in fact have a performative meaning, even if it cannot be translated so as to yield a complete and coherent linguistic meaning.

in all of his appearances – are important aspects of both the translation problem and the solution to the translation problem discussed below.<sup>2</sup>

#### 4. A language barrier in translation

The apparently trivial fact that Johnny Carcosa has a lisp and that his speech bubbles graphically enact this speech problem by employing *th* to represent /θ/ whenever there should normally be an *s* to represent /s/ constitutes a significant translation problem for a translator working into Brazilian Portuguese.

Even though there are Brazilian speakers of Portuguese who speak with a lisp, the noun “ceceio” (lisp) and the verb “cecear” (to lisp) are quite specialized words whose frequency in Portuguese is statistically so much lower than that of their English counterparts<sup>3</sup> that simply using them would feel rather unnatural, even if the reader happens to know what the words mean. There are hardly any other ways of even referring to the problem without long circumlocutions or downright imitation of the problem – at least in informal language, as is the case here. Even more significantly, the sound /θ/ does not exist at all in standard Portuguese pronunciation, so that the mere existence of this sound in speech already implies a speech problem. As a result, there is no way to represent a lisp by means of *ad hoc* or non-standard spelling in Portuguese either.

At this point, I would like to refer to two concepts presented by Douglas R. Hofstadter in *The Search for Essence ‘twixt Medium and Message* (1997) – respectively, *pressure* and *slippability*. While discussing the various aspects of a text that make up its very core – the whole *point of the text* to be reenacted in translation, one might say, be it formal, performative or otherwise – Hofstadter (1997, p. 199) writes:

None of these comes close to providing a recipe for what to do; each one only constitutes a guideline, or **pressure**, as I like to put it... One might very well ask whether a reasonable translator would ever – or should ever – feel compelled to go this far in dissecting a passage to be transported to another language. How much can one expect from a translator? Well, let me remind readers that although on its surface this article is largely about translation, it is more deeply about *essence*, and so the question as first stated is perhaps not quite on the mark. My primary purpose here is not to castigate or to praise anyone; it is simply to point out how sharply the act of translation cuts to the core of a written passage. (Emphasis in the original)

In the dilemma posed by Johnny Carcosa’s speech, both the lack of an everyday Portuguese word for “lisp” and the impossibility of even representing a lisp (which might otherwise

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<sup>2</sup> The prejudice evidenced by Sax’s use of the adjective “faggoty” to refer to Carcosa lies beyond the scope of this article, but the use of hate speech as an in-story treatment of Lovecraft’s stances (both in fiction as well as in personal writings) could be discussed at length in an article devoted to this particular aspect of the text.

<sup>3</sup> As of the writing of this article, a Google search returns 20,600 and 13,000 matches for “he lisps” and “she lisps” against only 303 and 5 for “ele ceceia” and “ela ceceia”. When the noun is used, the difference in frequency becomes even more striking: “he has a lisp” and “she has a lisp” return 83,400 and 287,000 results, whereas “ele tem ceceio” and “ela tem ceceio” return the single-digit figures of 5 and 3, respectively.

have been a viable solution even if it were never referred to by name) constitute concomitant pressures.

With regard to *slippability*, Hofstadter (1997, p. 202) defines it as:

(...) the degree of mutability of some aspect of a passage to be translated. Something is slippable provided its disappearance will not seriously threaten the essence of the structure it has heretofore belonged to. Another way of describing it is to say that a highly slippable item is an expendable item, one that will be among the first to go when times get tough. It is the “fat in the budget” – even when you think there is *no* fat in the budget.

In short, the concept of *pressure* refers to each one of the cumulative layers of translation problems elicited by a set of salient characteristics of the original text, whereas *slippability* is a descriptor for the aspects of the text which can be changed or discarded in order to allow for the *essence* (in Hofstadter’s words) or the *point of the text* (as I have called it above) to be preserved or reenacted in translation.

Needless to say, the *point of the text* is very often not the literal meaning of the text, and this is particularly true in texts where words are not only informative, but also performative, such as expressive texts. As we shall see later on, this is precisely the case with the speech problem at hand: Carcosa’s lisp is all but contingent – it is in fact used as a core stylistic device with large-scale impact on the entire narrative, as detailed in the next section.

## 5. The plot sickens

Apart from the lack of a usable word to refer to a lisp in Portuguese and the lack of a way to represent it in translation in the context of *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon*, Moore’s text contains a third pressure with all-encompassing consequences for the entire *point of the text* considered as a cohesive whole. The story plot is far too convoluted and contains far too many Lovecraftian references to be presented in detail,<sup>4</sup> but the important aspects which account for the resulting *pressure* are the following: at a certain point in *Neonomicon*, FBI agent Merrill Brears is raped by a Deep One – a monstrous sea-creature taken straight from Lovecraft’s novelette *The Shadow over Innsmouth*. During the rape scene, Brears enters a delirium-like state in which she speaks to Johnny Carcosa in a strange unknown place:<sup>5</sup>

**Panel 4.** [Johnny Carcosa and Merrill Brears are standing on a rocky landscape with strange carvings. Carcosa has a yellow bandana covering his nose and mouth, and Brears is completely naked.]

Johnny Carcosa: “ATH FOR YOUR REAL THITUATION, THITH FUCK YOU’RE HAVING, IT’TH A DEEP ONE.” / “WHAT THITH ITH, ITH YOU’RE A NUN, THEE, ATHIAN MERRY?”

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<sup>4</sup> As a character in *Neonomicon* #2 (2010) aptly puts it, “I’m saying that somehow, every element in this case is connected to the writings of H. P. Lovecraft”.

<sup>5</sup> Afterwards revealed to be the sunken city of R’lyeh – yet another reference to Lovecraft.

Merril Brears: "I... I'M NOT ASIAN. AND NOBODY CALLED ME 'MERRY' SINCE I WAS AT SCHOOL." / "WH-WHAT IS THIS PLACE?"

Since Brears knows Carcosa has a lisp, she makes a justified attempt to reconstruct his confusing speech, and in doing so interprets "athian" as "Asian". The result – even in the in-story context – is a complete non sequitur: at no point has Brears said or implied that she is Asian, and as such there is no reason for the reader or any of the story characters to expect that sort of comment, nor any available means to make sense of Carcosa's utterance. The fact that Brears is also nonsensically called a "nun" and "Merry" / "merry"<sup>6</sup> reinforces the non sequitur, given that in the larger in-story context she is recovering from a sex addiction, while in this particular scene she is being violently raped by the Deep One<sup>7</sup> even as she speaks to Carcosa in the delirium-like sequence. As for Carcosa, he is not at all close enough to Brears to be justified in calling her "Merry". Brears' state of utter bewilderment is made complete by the unknown scenario, which makes her ask: "Wh-what is this place?"

As it turns out, at this exact point in the delirium-sequence – unbeknownst to both Brears and the reader – Carcosa has just foretold the ominous end of the entire story, though the revelation is obscured by language and remains opaque to Brears (and likely to the reader, too).

On a later scene, during a visit to a now incarcerated Sax towards the end of the series, Brears tells him that she "had to repeat [Carcosa's words] to [herself] a few times before [she] got it", and finally adds: "Then I understood everything".

**Panel 5.** [Merril Brears is face to face with Aldo Sax during a prison visit.]

Merril Brears: "...FOR NYARLATHOTEP. YEAH. YEAH, I KNOW. AND NYARLATHOTEP, HE'S LIKE THOTH OR HERMES, RIGHT? HE'S THE MESSENGER." / "IN MY DREAMS, HE SPEAKS THIS PHRASE: 'WHAT THIS IS, IS YOU'RE A NUN, SEE, ASIAN MERRY?'" / "I HAD TO REPEAT IT TO MYSELF A FEW TIMES BEFORE I GOT IT. / THEN I UNDERSTOOD EVERYTHING."

Here, in what for all practical purposes acts as a fourth pressure on the translator, Brears offers an interpretative key by letting the reader know that the meaning of those words can possibly be grasped if one repeats them to oneself enough times – not a trifling cue by any means, since the intended meaning is never made explicit at any point in the original text. As I wrote in the introduction to the Brazilian edition (2012, p. 5):

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<sup>6</sup> Again, this part is made even more opaque thanks to the standard use of upper case for the entire text in the speech bubbles. It is not possible to decide whether, if written in normal sentence case, the text should be rendered as "Merry" (personal noun – a nickname of "Merril", Brears' first name) or "merry" (adjective – as in "She is a merry child"). The fact that this passage is a non sequitur and that later on its in-story meaning will be shown to have nothing to do with either "merry" or "Merry" makes it difficult to further speculate about Brears's (mis)interpretation of Carcosa's speech.

<sup>7</sup> The graphic depiction of the rape scene led a librarian in Greenville, South Carolina, to ban the series from library's shelves. During the printing process for the Brazilian market, I was also informed that at least one overseas printing press refused to print the comic book, and that a new supplier had to be found.

Whereas Lovecraft is famous for his ornate and convoluted style, here – thanks to the painstaking treatment of language which is one of Moore’s trademarks – the characters experience a return to the “huge old grammatical structures” of an “ur-syntax” where “a vortex of marvellous coinage” reigns (...) In these pages, language itself becomes an essential key to reading, and there is no doubt that some of the most critical passages in the story never reveal themselves explicitly to the reader. (My translation)

Once the reader sees the image of a starry galaxy on the opening page of *Neonomicon* re-signified on the last page of the series as the walls of Brear’s womb seen from the inside by the unearthly creature growing there,<sup>8</sup> the above lisp-free – but still nonsensical – interpretation “What this is, is you’re a nun, see, Asian Merry/merry?” can be accordingly re-signified as a declarative sentence: “What this is is your annunciation, Mary”. In other words, during the delirium-sequence Carcosa was telling Brears that she had become pregnant by the Deep One and was about to bring Cthulhu into the world – a dark re-enactment of Mary’s begetting of Jesus.

The aspects mentioned above have an interesting effect on the reader: by reaching the end of the story, understanding what happened in purely narrative terms and reconstructing Carcosa’s revelation, one has the impression of having missed the entire *point of the text* even when it was literally spelled out – with a lisp and some commas – right under one’s nose.

The question then becomes how to reenact *the point of the text* in a translation to Portuguese by means of various translation strategies and slippability. As mentioned in the introduction, this is a rather strange and unique translation problem, so that no previous strategy was available: an original approach to the problem would have to be provided. This is a scenario which corresponds rather closely to Kußmaul’s (2007, p. 17) definition of a creative undertaking:

A creative undertaking originates from dissatisfaction with a given situation. The old is no longer sufficient: something **new** is created out of necessity (...) The new does not originate out of nothing (...) but rather out the **recognition of the existence of a problem**. (My translation. Emphasis in the original)

In translation, these problems “typically arise whenever a literal translation is not possible for any reason”,<sup>9</sup> as in the case at hand.

Regardless of how difficult things may get, while engaging in creative translation the translator is of course tasked with finding a way out of any and all problems posed by the original text. As Susan Bassnett (2002, p. 44) puts it:

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<sup>8</sup> Except for the use of quotation marks, the text on the first and the last page of *Neonomicon* is also completely identical: “IT’S THE END, AND THE BEGINNING.” / “HE’S BENEATH THE WATERS NOW, BUT SOON, IN ONLY A FEW MONTHS, HE WILL COME FORTH.” / “AND UNTIL THEN HE SLEEPS.” / “AND DREAMS.”

<sup>9</sup> Kußmaul, 2007, p. 30, my translation.

It is clearly the task of the translator to find a solution to even the most daunting of problems. Such solutions may vary enormously; the translator's decisions as to what constitutes invariant information with respect to a given system of reference is in itself a creative act.

In practical terms, this amounts to successfully negotiating a transformative plan between original and translation in order to be able to contextually account for any changes in literal meaning that the exclusion or the radical transformation of expendable parts in the original might undergo in translation.

In the case of *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon*, it would seem logical to present two different but complementary sets – one containing the *pressures* exerted by the source text, which bind the translator to interlocked layers of problem-solving, and one containing the *slippable* components of the text, which (at least partly) relieve the translator from the bindings imposed by said pressures. These sets might look like the following:

*Pressures:*

- The character Johnny Carcosa must have a believable speech problem
- Carcosa's speech problem must be convincingly manifested in writing
- The graphic representation of Carcosa's speech problem must work in a way that obfuscates the foretold ending of the story during Brears's delirium-sequence
- The foretold ending of the story must reference the fact that Brears is portrayed as a sort of "dark Mary" who is about to bring evil into the world

Even though a list like the above might seem daunting as a set of proposed rules to solve a specific translation problem, it is also worth mentioning that the rules proposed themselves can – and often do – offer a glimpse into their own slippable components if one simply changes *must* for *might* and makes a couple of other minor adjustments, so that a list of slippabilities might look like the following:

*Slippabilities:*

- The character Johnny Carcosa might have any believable speech problem
- Carcosa's speech problem might be convincingly manifested any way in writing
- The graphic representation of Carcosa's speech problem might work in any way as long as it obfuscates the foretold ending of the story
- The foretold ending of the story might in any way reference the fact that Brears is presented as a sort of "dark Mary" who is about to bring evil into the world

I have already mentioned the fact that there is neither a colloquial name nor a practical way of graphically representing a lisp in Portuguese. By checking the entire text for slippable components, even though Carcosa's speech problem does not seem to be a likely candidate, specifically the lisp itself might be: any other speech problem might serve the same purpose as long as it meets the pressure requirements. An in-text justification for this approach has already been presented above without additional comments, in the panel

where Aldo Sax conjectures that “maybe [Carcosa] has a hare lip or some similar oral complaint, thus explaining both (...) [his] lisp and his yellow, concealing bandana”.

While searching for slippable components, a phrase like “...or some other similar...” comes as a boon for the translator: it works as a plausible validation for the unspecificity or even wrongness of the character’s own in-text interpretation. In the quoted passage, Aldo Sax is doing little more than speculating about Carcosa’s problem, and in cases such as this there is no reason for the translator to refrain from taking full advantage of as ample leeway as the text might plausibly afford. As a result, I eventually decided that Carcosa’s lisp (though not his speech problem) was slippable precisely *because* the Brazilian Portuguese translation was unslippable. Then I moved on to work on a solution by playing with a believable speech problem which, when read in translation, could fit the aforementioned criteria – namely, making creative use of language while employing a graphic presentation which could simultaneously obfuscate Carcosa’s foreshadowing as well as be deciphered by the reader through Brears’s repetition method.

The process by which a creative solution is arrived at remains at all times inaccessible to the conscious mind as a sort of black box: Kußmaul divides the creative process into four different phases (preparation, incubation, illumination and evaluation<sup>10</sup>), of which the two most decisive ones – incubation and illumination – are respectively defined as “combinations and reorganizations of knowledge” which “take place largely by associative and unconscious means”<sup>11</sup> (incubation) and “good ideas created by intuition”<sup>12</sup> (illumination). As such, there is no way to reconstruct the mental processes involved in coming up with a creative solution – but once the process is complete it may be subjected to the final stage of evaluation, like any other translation.

In the resulting solution I opted for graphically representing “língua presa” – a popular way of referring to a speech problem which consists in the realization of the voiced alveolar tap /r/ as the voiced velar plosive /g/, so that a word such as /bra'ziw/ is pronounced as /bga'ziw/ instead. In short, the overall translation procedure for Carcosa’s speech problem in the Brazilian Portuguese translation was:

English text: /s/ → /θ/ (graphically represented by “th”)

Brazilian Portuguese text: /r/ → /g/ (graphically represented by “g” or “gu” as per standard spelling conventions)

This speech problem was uniformly represented in all of Carcosa’s speech bubbles in the two issues of *The Courtyard* and the four issues of *Neonomicon*, and the panel in which Carcosa foretells the end of the story to Brears was eventually printed in Brazil as below:

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<sup>10</sup> Kußmaul, 2007, p. 58, my translation.

<sup>11</sup> Kußmaul, 2007, pp. 70-71, my translation.

<sup>12</sup> Kußmaul, 2007, p. 77, my translation.

**Panel 7.** [Johnny Carcosa and Merrill Brears are standing on a rocky landscape with strange carvings. Carcosa has a yellow bandana covering his nose and mouth, and Brears is completely naked.]

Johnny Carcosa: “NA VEGDADE, VOCÊ ESTÁ TGUEPANDO COM UMA CGUIATUGA ABISSAL.”  
/ “HEH. HUMANOS E AÇÃO DE MÁ GUIA.”

Merril Brears: “QUALQUER UM SERIA MAU GUIA POR AQUI.” / “Q-QUE LUGAR É ESSE?”

Here, the manifest changes in spelling responsible for enacting Carcosa’s speech problem appear in “vegdade”, “tguepando” and “cguiatuga” – respectively “verdade”, “trepando” and “criatura” as per standard spelling conventions. A literal back-translation of the above panel into standard English spelling would thus read:

Carcosa: “ACTUALLY, YOU’RE FUCKING A DEEP ONE.” / “HEH. HUMANS AND LOUSY GUIDE ACTION.”

Brears: “ANYONE WOULD BE A LOUSY GUIDE AROUND HERE.” / “W-WHAT IS THIS PLACE?”

Instead of having this critical non sequitur originate in Carcosa’s misunderstood comment to the effect that Brears was an “Asian nun” whom he referred to as “Merry”/“merry” as in the original English text, the misunderstanding which underpins the Brazilian Portuguese translation draws on Brears’s sense of being lost in an unknown, unearthly-looking place: she misunderstands Carcosa’s revelation as “Humans and lousy guide action” and in turn replies, “Anyone would be a lousy guide here” – a comment further emphasized by the immediately following question, “W-what is this place?”

Far more important than making sense in the passing context of a scene which takes place during Brears’s delirium-like state – which by definition would allow for all sorts of unexpected, even seemingly absurd solutions – is the fact that Carcosa’s misunderstood revelation can actually be reconstrued in translation as per Brears’s method of “repeating it to oneself” until one “understands everything”. Apart from the three intentionally misspelled words pointed out above, at first glance the published text does not appear to include additional transformations of /r/ into /g/ because all the remaining words are entirely written in standard spelling – but in fact “Humanos e ação de má guia” (back-translated above as “Humans and lousy guide action”) was arrived at by drawing on a semi-literal translation of Carcosa’s never-stated “What this is is your Annunciation, Mary” as “Uma anunciação de Maria” (whose meaning would be close to “A Mary-like annunciation”, though this particular construction sounds far more natural in Portuguese). Just as in the original, the translation diverts the reader’s attention by focusing on what is literally written on the page by means of Brear’s mistaken interpretation (“Anyone would be a lousy guide here”), whereas the unstated interpretation of “Humanos e ação de má guia” as “Uma anunciação de Maria” remains obscured by Carcosa’s speech problem – thus recreating the entire *point of the text* in the passage.

This particular solution was deemed capable of addressing all the previously mentioned pressures:

- Johnny Carcosa has a speech problem
- The speech problem is graphically enacted in writing
- The graphic enacting of the speech problem allows the obfuscation of Carcosa's foretelling of the end of the story
- When appropriately reconstructed by following the in-text cues, Carcosa's apparent non sequitur can be reinterpreted as a revelation of Brears as a sort of "dark Mary"

## 6. Conclusion

In the above sections I have discussed a unique translation problem faced while dealing with Alan Moore's inventive use of language in the comic series *The Courtyard* and *Neonomicon* at significant length. This translation problem reaches a critical point in a panel in *Neonomicon*, which disconcertingly foreshadows the end of the entire series while simultaneously providing the reader with an important but largely unintelligible key to reading the story as a whole: this key is explicitly described by one of the protagonists as being instrumental in allowing her to "understand everything". The markedness of the passage in question and the in-story meta-comment it originates were interpreted as in-text evidence that this was an essential aspect to be preserved in translation. As a result, finding a creative way of retaining these aspects in Brazilian Portuguese was treated as a significant part of the whole point of the text.

Nevertheless, in view of the level of detail to which a single passage of the comics series is subjected, one might reasonably ask whether such an undertaking can be expected to be carried out under real-world conditions by a professional translator. This is a question which, as the translator responsible for producing the translation discussed herein, I feel sufficiently qualified to answer in the affirmative. There seems to be no plausible reason to doubt the aesthetic and literary aspirations of Moore's textual experimentation, which very closely match Mary Snell-Hornby's (1995, p. 51) definition of literary language:

Literary – and in particular poetic – language is concerned with the *exploitation of the entire capacity of a language system* (...) and involves – not merely deviance from a static and prescriptive norm – but the *creative extension* of the language norm.

This sort of creative extension found in literary texts can also be described as a potentially enhanced meaning whose rewards to the reader are commensurate with the cognitive effort put into the act of reading:

This is then the test of a literary text, the existence of a potentially enhanced meaning, whereby more cognitive effect can be obtained in return for more cognitive effort (...) According to Gotti (2005, pp. 146-148) the potential to reveal more is the only key difference between literary and purely technical writing. (Katan, 2015, p. 12)

In these cases, the translator is tasked not only with making the necessary cognitive effort in order to get at the text's potentially enhanced meaning, as a dedicated reader would,

but also with finding a suitably creative treatment to be adopted in the target-language – as a dedicated creator would. In cases such as this, translating with no recourse to creative extensions and enhanced meanings would produce no more than a “purely technical” target-language rendition from a source whose entire point revolves around the use of literary devices and literary explorations of language.

This approach to creative translation practice has of course nothing to do with adaptation of the source material: rather, it is the very definition of literary translation taken to its logical (if at times extreme) conclusion. When even the process of using context-bound, unrepeatable and non-deducible translations in non-literary contexts has already been properly described as a legitimate and duly categorized translation technique,<sup>13</sup> there would seem to be little point in challenging its suitability in the context of literary translation, where creative approaches and active translator intervention (in a neutral sense) are the norm. With regard to these limit-cases, David Katan (2015, p. 25) argues:

This is neither foreignisation nor domestication but transcreation, whereby the translator intervenes to create something clearly based on the original, but not directly inferable from the original text. Crucially, transcreation is capable of counteracting the universal features of translation, which flatten and standardise the reading, and hence reduce the possibility of (re)producing lasting artistic merit.

In a pragmatic statement to similar effect, Hofstadter claims that “every translator has to take risks, and has to attempt reconstructions of some things at times” (Hofstadter, p. 200). My intention with this article was – to the extent that it might be a feasible enterprise – to offer a glimpse into the inner workings of the mechanism by looking beneath the veil of speech.

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<sup>13</sup> Molina and Albir call this technique “discursive creation” as define it as “an operation in the cognitive process of translating by which a non-lexical equivalence is established that only works in context” while simultaneously being “totally unpredictable out of context”. See Molina and Albir, pp. 505 and 510.

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## VERBAL-TO-VISUAL TRANSLATION BASED ON LINGUISTIC AND NARRATOLOGICAL MODELS: A POETRY-COMIC TRANSLATION OF *SAPPHO AND PHAON*

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**ABSTRACT:** Poetry comic translation typically involves a verbal poem as the source text and a verbal-visual poetry comic as the target text. This innovative type of multi-modal translation is a typical example to study inter-semiotic conversion. Although scholarly attempts have been made to create linguistic-based verbal-visual translations, there is still a gap in discussing whether visual linguistic and narratological theories can be applied to build a practical translation model. To rationalise the translation from words to images, it is necessary to divide the process of comic translation based on standard comic writing processes. After looking for possible analytical linguistic models accordingly and critically incorporating them, the model I propose is mainly consisted of the academic achievements of Neil Cohn, Chris Gavaler, Will Eisner, Scott McCloud, Thierry Groensteen, J. A. Bateman and J. Wildfeuer, aiming to deal with the procedures in poem-comic translation such as text segmentation, layout design, narrative perspectives, and word-image conversion. Based on theoretical discussions and a translation practise of *Sappho and Phaon* (Mary Robinson, 1796), it is argued that an incorporation of current comic linguistic theories is feasible to overcome the challenges brought not solely by the discrepancies between verbal and visual language systems but also by the multi-modal nature of TT to a large extent.

**KEYWORDS:** Verbal-to-visual translation; Poetry comics; Visual language grammar; Visual narratology; *Sappho and Phaon*

### 1. Introduction

In a lecture given at the University of Edinburgh on March 5th, 2021, Paul Karasik, an experienced cartoonist, editor and educator, described and evaluated his practical experience of verbal-to-visual translation. The title of this lecture, “Gained in translation” suggests not only that Karasik has a clear awareness of the translational nature of his novel-based comic *City of Glass*, but also that the adaptation from verbal texts to visual or visual/verbal format has moved beyond the rarefied domain of the art and is now considered a valid subject for translation studies.

Poetry comics, an emerging artistic practice, is “an inextricable combination of both comics and poetry” (Chrissy Williams, cited in Daniel Elkin, 2016). In other words, the term refers to multimodal poetic creations that are either produced in or translated into visual-verbal language. In practice, artists have been experimenting with transforming poetry into the comic format since the 1960s, producing a wide range of poetry comics and even founding a non-profit translation project supported by Poetry Foundation, an independent literary organisation based in Chicago<sup>1</sup>.

As a visual art form that involves transfer or conversion between verbal and visual elements, poetry comics have naturally begun to attract the attention of scholars working in the field of multimodality and translation. Derik Robertson, for example, has noted the

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<sup>1</sup> Poetry Foundation’s official website: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/>

similarity between the lines of a poem and the panels of a comic, arguing that both forms share an inherent segmentivity that offers great potential for the transfer of information between the two (2015, pp.1-2). He also differentiates between poetry comics and illustrated poems, on the grounds that the former requires a combination of words and images to transmit the necessary information (Robertson, 2015, pp. 2-4). This makes sense to anyone working with word-to-image conversion: the target text (TT) is aiming to be multimodal and so its language has to “force” the readers to interpret both verbal and visual elements together.

Another article, written by Brian Bates, further identifies poetry comics’ unique contribution to specifying the meaning and chronological/spatial information in the source text (ST), by presenting a comparative study of two visual versions of *La Belle Dame sans Merci* (2016). It illustrates how visual language can specify the abstract concept of time and space in the narration of poems. These two articles thus cover many of the aspects that a comic artist has to consider in the production of poetry comics, including scriptwriting, the representation of time and space, and ways of delivering information. However, when applied to actual translation practice, they do little to help the artist avoid ineffective arbitrary adaptations and make rational translation decisions. To fill in this gap, I thus propose the following research questions:

1. Can linguistic and narratological analysis be used to guide the translation of poetry comics?
2. Are the current theories sufficient to help the translator deliver certain features of the ST, such as rhythm and verb tense?
3. Can the mutual influence between verbal and visual representations be rationalised using visual linguistics or linguistic-related theories?

The issues that interest a translation studies scholar are not limited to analysing the final product. Rather, the entire span of the translation process is important, from the pre-translation (preparation) and in-translation (translation decisions) phases through to the post-translation (the reception or impact of a target text). However, the above-mentioned research questions are obviously much more closely related to the translator’s preparation and strategies than to the reception and impact of translation products.

Considering that most poetry comic practitioners are not self-aware translators, I propose in this paper to take advantage of my own experience as a visual translator to extend the theoretical discussion to translation practice. That is to say, I aim to use one of my own experimental translation projects as research material for the construction of a multimodal translation model that can rationalise and orient translation from verbal poems into verbal-visual poetry comics. The work concerned is a visual translation of a sonnet cycle entitled *Sappho and Phaon*, which was specifically carried out for this purpose.<sup>2</sup> The translation of three of these sonnets is presented in the epigraph to this special issue.

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<sup>2</sup> This ongoing research project is being carried out under the joint auspices of the Universities of Glasgow and Nankai.

Written by Mary Robinson and originally published in 1796, *Sappho and Phaon* is a series of romantic sonnets that depict the tragic love life of the ancient Greek poet Sappho (Craciun, A. and McLane, 2008). By choosing the first-person perspective, Robinson explores Sappho's sensitive yet passionate mind, discussing her psychological status before she committed suicide in despair at the unresponsiveness of Phaon, the man she loved (Robinson, 2008). This sonnet collection is arranged in a chronological order that traces a broad narrative line (falling in love—being forsaken—chasing love—failing—giving up on life). On the other hand, the content within each sonnet follows the protagonist's flow of thoughts and is thus non-narrative and even abstract in nature. Robinson intentionally uses ambiguous syntax and symbolic language to code Sappho's feelings, thoughts, and struggles, especially the almost philosophical struggle between sense and sensibility. In short, translating *Sappho and Phaon* into poetry comic format involves both narrative and non-narrative elements. The ST's complex poetic language poses various challenges to the translator, making it an appropriate material for poetry comic studies.

The first section of this article provides a method of segmenting the ST, taking into account the differences between narrative and non-narrative connections. In this process, the ST becomes a script that determines the number of panels and their contents based on the visual language grammar and the studies of cohesion in abstract comics, which will of course be subject to further revision in the next step. The second section, framing, is centred on deciding the layout design of each frame and how this can be used to recreate the ST's time duration and rhythm. Finally, the third stage makes the leap from words to images, deciding what elements of the ST can be visualised with semantic discourse representations. The whole translation procedure in this article is illustrated with extracts from *Sappho and Phaon*, and the argument is made that visual linguistic and narratological theories may be productively applied to regulate verbal-to-visual translation through processes of analysis and alignment.

## **2. Segmentation and transitions between panels**

The first step of writing a comic or a manga, as agreed by most of the major drawing guidebooks, is to decide on a script that not only depicts the overall storyline but also assigns the contents to different panels (Hirohisa, 2013, p. 8; Lee and Buscema, 2010, pp. 116-120). Indeed, I believe that the primary task of poetry comic translation lies not with converting specific words into individual images but with finding an appropriate method of segmenting the ST. As Robertson (2015, pp. 1-2) notes, it is not sufficient to merely take the lines of a poem as natural panels, though he provides little guidance as to how it could be done.

For practitioners, the standard for ST segmentation tends to vary from one case to another. For instance, R. Kikuo Johnson uses the line breaks in the original poems as a rough guide, with one panel translating each line; Paul Hornschemeier emphasises the grammar of the ST rather than its layout, and Diane Wakoski segments the verses based on an interpretation of sense-groups (Johnson & Stallings, 2020; Hornschemeier and Ted Kooser,

2020; Wakoski, 2020)<sup>3</sup>. Thus, to theorise ST segmentation, it is necessary to identify a pattern that avoids both over- and under-segmentation.

In this section, the primary segmentation will follow the practice of traditional comics, which usually depict only a single movement in each panel (McCloud 1994, p. 110). Neil Cohn’s theory of visual grammar (2013, 2018) will then be applied to identify movements. Based on contemporary construction grammar, visual language grammar uses traditional panels (and thus movements) as basic units of the visual language of the sequential arts, providing a possible inter-semiotic tool to translate between words and images at the panel level (Cohn, 2012, p.5; Cohn, 2018, p.7). Structured in accordance with the narrative functions of pragmatic linguistics, it assigns distinct roles to panels in order to fulfil functions such as scene-setting, initiation, prolongation, peak or culmination, and release (Cohn 2013, pp.413-452; 2018, pp.2-3). The syntax of visual language allows three types of inter-panel relationships, including canonical narrative schema (main clause), conjunction schema (conjunction), and head-modifier schema (adverbial modifier) (Cohn, 2018, pp.2-7). The schemas are arranged in a hierarchical tree structure, which allows complex verbal sentences (involving parenthesis, embedding, subordination, compounding etc) to be recreated visually (Figure 1).

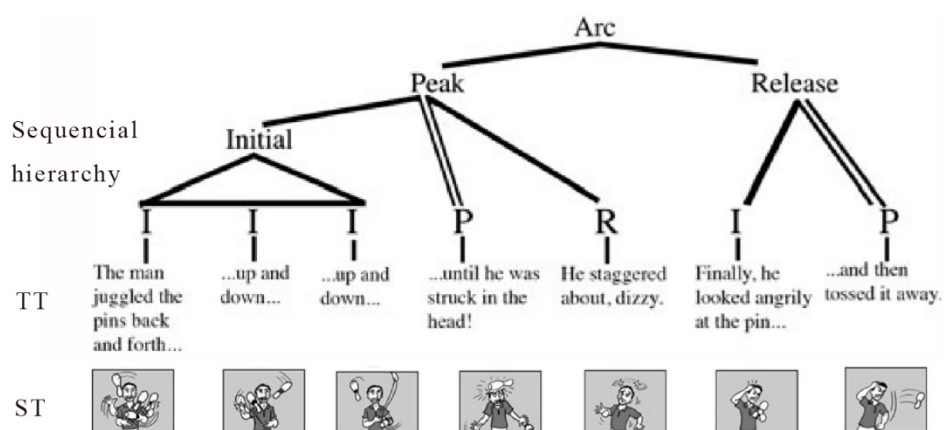


Figure 1 The conversion between visual and verbal language with visual language grammar

However, while Cohn’s model is a feasible way of achieving alignment between verses and panels in narrative texts, the fact that visual language grammar is based on narratology suggests it is unsuitable for non-narrative texts or “illogical scrambled sequences”, as he calls them (Cohn et al, 2012, p. 8). This means that it is not in itself enough to guide the translation process as it cannot describe the differences between sequential abstract comics proposed by Molotiu (i.e. the content of a comic is abstract, but its panels are arranged in a specific sequence), or the non-sequential “wallpaper effect” suggested by

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, Hornschemeier and Wakoski are poetry comic artists who have published their visual translations of verbal poems on *Poetry Foundation*. Please check the references for further details.

Thierry Groensteen (i.e. the panels in a comic are arranged together without an obvious sequence, creating an effect similar to a collage or wallpaper) (Molotiu, 2012, p. 89; Groensteen, 2013, p. 17). A recent study of abstract comics by Gavalier (2017, pp. 19-23) identifies six types of comics based on panel transitions and the visual elements within panels. These are:

1. *Representational narrative*: the most commonly accepted comic form in which the images are to some extent realistically portrayed and are linked together in order to narrate a plot.
2. *Abstract narrative*: abstract images that are juxtaposed in a certain order, forming a narration in the broader sense.
3. *Representational arrangement*: representational images that are arranged in an unordered but related manner.
4. *Abstract arrangement*: abstract images that are arranged in an unordered but related manner.
5. *Representational non sequitur*: juxtaposed representational images that are neither sequential nor logically related.
6. *Abstract non sequitur*: juxtaposed abstract images that are neither sequential nor logically related (Gavalier, 2017, pp. 19-23).

As the content of each panel is not the key priority in this section, Cohn's model can cover the first two types of narrative comics. On the other hand, the last four non-narrative categories achieve coherence by the juxtaposition of panels and repetition of visual elements. Thus, for non-narrative texts, segmentation should be placed between repetitions in the ST; the differences between narrative and non-narrative texts can also be identified with the categories of narratives and arrangements/non-sequitur.

By combining Gavalier's categories and Cohn's visual language grammar, the gap between a continual verbal text and segmented panels can be bridged with segmentation points noted as narrative + narrative (**NN**), narrative + non-narrative (**NNn**), non-narrative + narrative (**NnN**), non-narrative + non-narrative (**NnNn**) and embedded narrative or non-narrative language (**NN**, **NnN**, **NNn**, **NnNn**). In the following illustrations, segmented lines are regarded as sections and assigned into isometric squares rather than actual panels with artistic or rhetorical designs, which would require further supports to develop. **NN** is the most common transition between sections, and in Sonnet IV of *Sappho and Phaon*, lines 9-14 can serve as a typical example of a series of narrations (Figure 2):

9. Now, on a bank of Cypress let me rest; (**NN**)
10. Come, tuneful maids, ye pupils of my care, (**NN**)
11. Come, with your dulcet numbers soothe my breast; (**NN**)
12. And, as the soft vibrations float on air, (**NN**)
13. Let pity waft my spirit to the blest, (**NN**)

14. *To mock the barb'rous triumphs of despair!* (Robinson, 2008, p. 14)

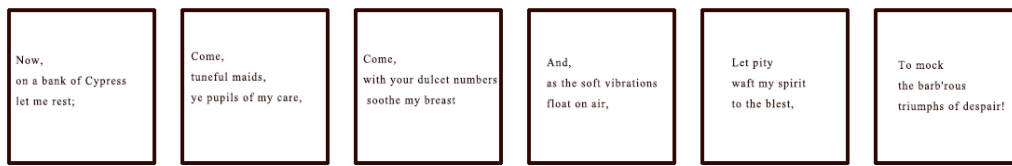


Figure 2 Segmentation of Sonnet IV Lines 9-14 into sections

In these lines, each line represents an action: “Sappho rests on a bank”, “maids come to Sappho”, “maids comfort Sappho with music and dance”, “music floats”, “pity passes Sappho’s spirit into the air”, and “mocking despair”. Sonnet IV lines 9-14 thus contains six narrative segments, which are placed in separate boxes and will become the foundation of the frame design.

**NnNn** combines two juxtaposed phrases or clauses that cannot form a story arc, while **NNn** and **NnN** refer to the situation where a non-narrative section is segmented from its narrative neighbours. These combinations are usually identified in fragmented poetic languages with ambiguous grammars and juxtaposed nouns or adjectives. For example, **NnNn** can be found within the last lines of Sonnets XX and XLII:

XX.14. Too proud to sue! (**NnNn**) too tender to resign!

XLII 14. "What suits with Sappho, **NnNn** Phoebus suits with thee!"

Even though the grammatical structures are not exactly parallel for each section, these two lines are segmented: the potential repetitions can be a tricky element to depict in a single panel but can serve as a mechanism to achieve coherence if separated into different panels. In Sonnet XX line 14, a repetition occurs in both non-narrative phrases, with “Proud” and “tender” being two static descriptions of Sappho’s thoughts. As love-related sentiments of the same person in a non-narrative roll, the two sections of XX 14 can be translated into different panels coherently, so at this stage, they are separated into two segments. As for Sonnet XLII line 14, this shares a similar situation where Phaon is seen to be equal to and suitable for both Sappho and Phoebus, which is also a descriptive comment, with the second-person reference to Phaon (“thee”) repeated. Thus, these two lines both belong to the **NnNn** category.

A typical example of **NNn** and **NnN** can be found in Sonnet IV, lines 4-9 (Figure 3):

4. And my chill'd breast in throbbing tumults rise? (**NNn**)
5. Mute, on the ground my Lyre neglected lies,
6. The Muse forgot, and lost the melting lay; (**NnN**)
7. My down-cast looks, my faltering lips betray,
8. That stung by hopeless passion, (**NN**)—Sappho dies! (**NN**)

9. Now, on a bank of Cypress let me rest; (Robinson, 2008, p. 14)

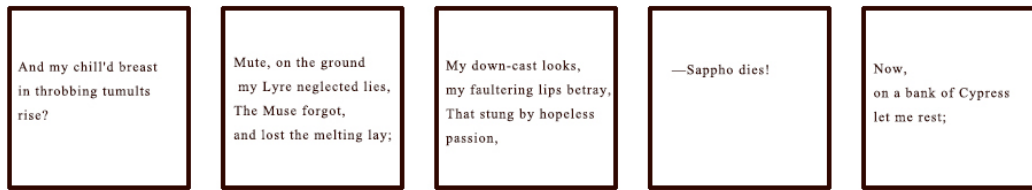


Figure 3 Segmentation of Sonnet IV Lines 4-9 as sections

Line 4 is segmented from line 5 as a divide between narration and non-narration. Line 4 contains a motion, “breast rising”, while Line 5 can be categorised as a static description because it notices the status of Sappho’s lyre as a variation of a “there-be” sentence. Line 6 lists two nouns: a forgotten Muse and a lost lay. As there is no direct imagery repetition in a goddess, a song, and a lyre, they are temporarily not separated into different sections. In lines 7 and 8, there is a narrative clause that contains only one movement “betray”, so the segmentation is put between passion and the next movement “Sappho dies”. To be more specific, “[m]y down-cast looks” is a parallel subject to “my faltering lips”, and “[t]hat stung by hopeless passion” is the object of “betray”.

These examples suggest that the first four categories of segmentation tend to keep integrated clauses (and sense-groups in fragmented sentences) in each panel regardless of the ST’s layout. However, the fifth category – embedded narration/non-narrative phrases – may break the grammatical structure of the ST. In Sonnet XX, Lines 1-6 contain three embedded non-narrative sections (Figure 4):

1. Oh! I could toil for thee o’er burning plains; (**NNnN**)
2. Could smile at poverty’s disastrous blow; (**NN**)
3. With thee, could wander ’midst a world of snow, (**NNnN**)
4. Where one long night o’er frozen Scythia reigns. (**NN**)
5. Sever’d from thee, my sick’ning soul disdains
6. The thrilling thought, the blissful dream to know, (**N<sup>N</sup>N**)



Figure 4 Segmentation of Sonnet XX Lines 1-6 as sections

In this section, although the embedded narrative elements are not individual clauses or even meaning groups, they contain parallel repetitions and thus should be put in sub-sections. Apart from the narrations in lines 1, 3, and 5-6, namely “toiling”, “wandering” and “disdaining”, Phaon repetitively appears in adverbial phrases as “for thee”, “with thee” and “sever’d from thee”. On the one hand, as a parallel structure in lines 1 and 3, the repetitions

to the addressee indicate two possible non-narrative segments. In line 5, “sever’d” is a notional verb in its past participle form, suggesting a turn from non-narration to narration and should be separated from the former non-narrative section.

On the other hand, these three sub-sections can form an independent narrative arc independent of their main clauses. In Line 1, Sappho wishes she could walk over plains in pursuit of Phaon, and in the following lines, describes the psychological process of being with him before being soon separated from him. This is a typical narrative structure, as it can be described as initiation (perusing Phaon as in “for thee”), peak (being with Pahon as in “with thee”), and release (breaking up as in “sever’d from thee”) (Figure 4). Thus, it is more adequate to treat them as sub-sections so they will not be overshadowed by the major sections, which can also imply that they happen in Sappho’s spiritual world without confusing the reader by mixing them up with the main panels.

In stage 1, Gavaler’s categories and Cohn’s visual language grammar are thus combined to segment the ST and fit the results into sections and subsections. These sections will develop into the panels of the future TT. Narrative/non-narrative analysis is applied as a criterion for text segmentation, ensuring that each (ideally static) section only contains one element or one action to avoid unintentional over- or under-translation.

### **3. Framing and layout design**

Unlike inter-panel transitions, layout design in comics has almost never been theorised in the language of the sequential arts, although it is commonly agreed that the topic should be covered by “visual language” in the broad sense (Xue, 2007, pp. 156-157). Textbooks for comic artists tend to describe the rules of layout design from a practical perspective, suggesting they should be “eye-catching” or “easier to edit” (Manhua Jifa Yanjiuhui, 2006, p. 46), and sequenced from left to right and top to bottom, with the first panel at the top left corner of each page (Idem). They also usually recommend that sizes and shapes of panels should vary to enhance the composition of frames and express emphasis (Xue, 2007, pp. 156-158, Manhua Jifa Yanjiuhui, 2006, pp. 46-47). Developed from practitioners’ experience, these suggestions cannot provide a valid standard to define the characteristics of panels and thus are not specific enough to be regarded as secure guidelines for comic poetry translators. However, they do suggest that layout designs have the potential to recreate the ST’s verbal features, as a unidirectional sequence of reading and rhetoric-like effects.

Will Eisner has studied the importance of comic frame design for expressing the concept of “time”, arguing that “a comic becomes ‘real’ when time and timing is factored into creation” (2008, p. 26). Compared with traditional comics, modern comics allow multiple motions and a durable timespan to be expressed in a single panel, and the translator may merge sections from the first step in accordance with the need to present sequence, rhetoric and rhythms. Although comics are commonly expressed as static visual elements, readers can interpret motion and timespans from specific layout designs of panels and frames (Eisner, 2008, p. 28). For example, the comic artist may cancel the

gutters between multiple panels and enclose many static “slices” from a string of movements into one panel to “record a continued flow of experience” (Eisner, 2008, p. 39). McCloud (1994, pp. 110-115) identifies eight types of visual expressions that can capture time duration in comics: multiple panels in sequence, onomatopoeias, speech balloons, motion lines, multiple images, streaking effect, blurring effect, and subjective motions. The first category refers to the typical comic method in which a string of motions is visualised through multiple panels that contain a single action in each. The other seven are techniques for portraying multiple movements in the same panel, suggesting that the segments in the first stage are under-provisioned and can be revised and merged if necessary.

for thee subS1		Could smile at poverty's disastrous blow;	Oh! I could toil o'er burning plains; Could smile at poverty's disastrous blow;	P1m subP1 for thee	P2m could wander 'midst a world of snow, Where one long night With thee, o'er frozen Scythia reigns.	subP2
Oh! I could toil o'er burning plains S1m		S2				
With thee, subS3	S3m	Where one long night o'er frozen Scythia reigns.	S4	P3m my sick'ning soul disdains The thrilling thought, the blissful dream to know,	Sever'd from thee, subP3	
could wander 'midst a world of snow,						
Sever'd from thee, subS5	S5m					
my sick'ning soul disdains The thrilling thought, the blissful dream to know,						

Figure 5 Comparison between the frame layouts of provisional segments and suggested panel design of Sonnet XX Lines 1-6

Eisner and McCloud’s theories are particularly useful when the reading sequence is not in line with segmentation—especially with embedded sub-segments. As we have seen, the readers of comics are “trained” to read in a “left to right, top to bottom” direction (Eisner, 2008, p. 41); however, taking Sonnet XX lines 1-6 as an example, if a top-to-bottom sequence is applied, the four sub-sections will be too distant from one another (Figure 5), which could pose challenges for readers’ comprehension. Closure (a cognitive effect that facilitates the understanding that a string of panels is a cohesive whole instead of individual images) only works when images are closely juxtaposed to each other (McCloud, 1994, pp. 62-68). Thus, it is likely that the sub-segments in this TT may not be perceived as a cohesive story arc and will therefore have to be juxtaposed in the revision stage. In order to do this,

the major provisional segments given in Figure 5 (S1m and S2) can be merged as a revised panel (P1m), and provisional segments S3m and S4 become panel P2m. This revision can narrow down the space between sub-sections Sub1 and Sub3, which thus achieves cohesion between these imbedded sub-sections. In this case, the sub-sections are brought together to form a narrative structure and the major segments remain to follow the conventional sequence flow, so this layout design is more understandable than the original one. To translate the rhythmic language in the ST, frame structures can be adjusted to create a sense of rhythm; indeed, current studies suggest that both narrative and non-narrative comics can deliver a sense of rhythm with layout designs. In narrative comics, rhythm is usually presented as a variation in the time duration of motions and plots; while in non-narrative comics, rhythm is used more to create a poetic or musical effect (Groensteen, 2013, pp. 134-135).

On the one hand, panel shapes can influence time and rhythm (Eisner, 2008, p. 29). For narrative comics, Eisner presents various types of panel shapes which are commonly used to indicate tense (although these types are merely popular practice rather than established norms). For example, a straight-line box is usually interpreted as referring to the present tense, while a wavy box represents the past (*idem*). As the rhythm of narrative comics is built on the pace of time, panel shapes can be manipulated to influence the time flow and thus the rhythm of the TT. For narrative and non-narrative comics alike, a wavy, bubble-like panel usually indicates thoughts, while a star-shaped box suggests elements related to sounds or emotions (Eisner, 2008, p. 44). Non-standard panel borders and shapes might also be able to influence the rhythm directly. For example, the absence of borders can deliver a sense of time stretching on infinitely, and borderlines can create “a sense of heightened significance within the narrative structure” (Eisner, 2008, p. 45-49). Thus, even though Eisner’s corpus cannot define quantitative qualities of panel shapes, his theory can provide a range of panel shapes for the translator to choose from in order to visualise pace, a timespan, or other features related to rhythm in the ST.

On the other hand, panels and multi-frames collectively function as the comics’ beat or pulse. According to Groensteen (2013, p. 136), readers process a frame as both a totality and a collection, encompassing a group of panels. Thus, readers notice rhythms by comparing the spatial relationships between panels both as individual frames and as collections of panels (*Idem*). The more panels one frame contains, the higher the density of the whole page and thus the faster is the beat, and vice versa (*Idem*). Groensteen’s argument illustrates that, to imitate the rhythm of the ST, the translator can alter the layout designs by selectively combining several segments to achieve a slow relaxed pace, which would make the rest of the TT comparatively faster and tenser.

For the translation of sonnets, which have a special rhythmic pattern, it is particularly important to manipulate the rhythm of the visual TT accordingly. A typical sonnet is composed of two parts: a thought or problem is proposed in the first eight lines and, after a turning point called *volta* (not a line but a structural feature), the issue is either addressed or challenged in the last six lines of resolution (Hurley and O’Neill, 2012, p. 76). As the first

section contains more lines, the first half of the TT will have more panels, which suggests a faster rhythm than the second section; this is in keeping with the practical experience that it is preferable to arrange smaller and tighter panels at the beginning of each frame (Groensteen, 2013, p. 136; Manhua Jifa Yanjiuhui, 2006, pp. 46-47).

For example, the volta in Sonnet XLII between lines 4-8 and lines 9-12 can be visualised with a change in panel size to mark a changing rhythm. The revised segments and the final panel design are illustrated in the form of comic strips below (Figure 6). The segments form a uniform pace from the top to S7-8, leaving a disproportionately large space for lines 13-

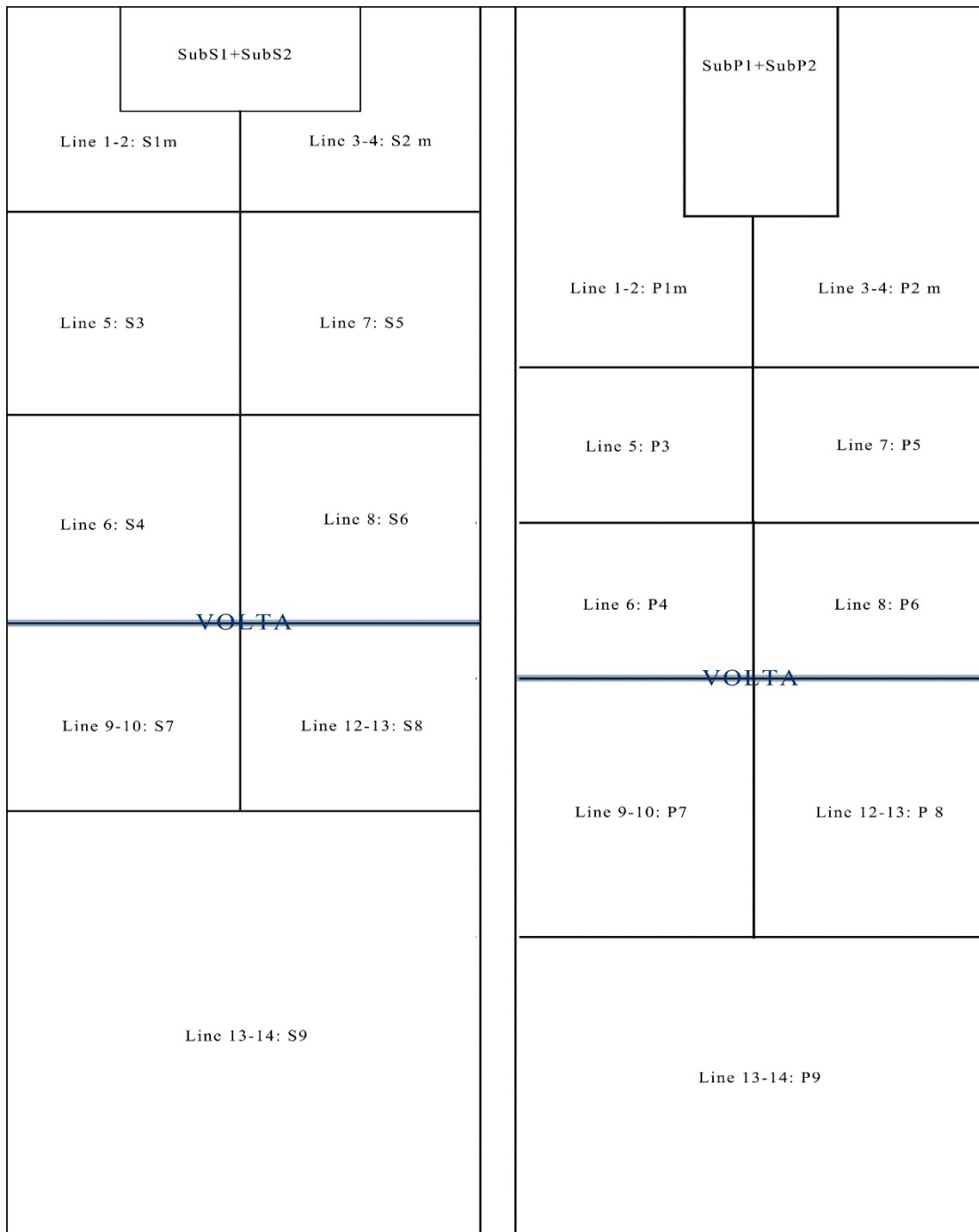


Figure 6 Comparison between the frame layouts of revised segments and suggested panel design of Sonnet XLII

14, which is not in keeping with the rhythm of the ST. What is more, the segments cannot mark the volta unless we introduce other visual elements such as thicker borderlines, which would divide the poetry comic into two frames instead of an integrated one. Thus, the size of S3-6 is cut down in an attempt to achieve a progressively slower pace with growing panel sizes, and the second part uses relatively larger panel sizes, marking the ST's volta and imitating the emphasis in ST with a change in the density of panels (Figure 6).

In Stage 2, the TT's layout design is used as a tool to transmit three of the ST's verbal language-based features: motion, time and rhythm. Theoretical segmentations from the first stage should be revised to adjust the arrangement and density of panels, achieving a durable timespan for the narrative coherence of subsections and the turn of volta. To conclude, the TT can imitate the ST's rhythm by adjusting panel sizes.

#### **4. Word-image conversion**

Just like verbal narrative texts, narrative comics also use narration perspectives to present storylines. According to Groensteen (2013, pp. 79-86), narrative devices in comics can be categorised into three types:

1. *Narrator*: the entity that controls the story.
2. *Reciter*: the character that provides the actual perspective to observe the story, who may be:
  - "In the background" (presenting the story from a silent point of view) vs "interventionist" (with specified narrations).
  - "Neutral" (i.e. unbiased) vs "involved" (implicated in the story).
  - "Reliable" vs "unreliable" in his/her presentation of the facts of the story.
3. *Monstrator*: the graphic character who performs the function of narration

This taxonomy of roles can help the translator to analyse what perspective the TT should apply to be in line with the ST, which is relevant not only to the overall story arc in the TT but to what items are depicted and how. For example, the whole collection of *Sappho and Phaon* is written from Sappho's first-person perspective, so overall the ST has a clear stance that marks Sappho as an autobiographic reciter, in Groensteen's terms. An autobiographic reciter, or I-as-character, is a self-representation of the first-perspective narrator that carries the narrative function (Groensteen, 2013, p. 98). In the ST, Sappho is a visible, interventionist and involved reciter, who directly refers to herself as "I" or "Sappho" and is actively implicated in the narration. To recreate this pattern, the TT not only draws on her first-person perspective but can also adopt the enunciation of a reciter. With narrative enunciation, the reciter's presence can be foregrounded and may be present in both the visual and the verbal text (Groensteen, 2013, p. 102). Thus, in this translation project, the TT is narrated from the first-person perspective, with Sappho's presence as both a narrator and a character in the verbal and visual modes.

The last step of the third stage is the conversion from words to images. To theorise the actual process of transferring verbal information into visual representations, this translation model makes use of Bateman and Wildfeuer's 2014 model of semantic

discourse representations. Semantic discourse representation theory is a verbal-linguistic system that examines how the “logic of discourse” is constructed by analysing semantic representations of meaning-making elements (Asher and Lascarides, 2003). Based on this theory, Bateman and Wildfeuer introduce visual representations into Asher and Lascarides’ box-shaped model as elements that function as semantic representations in the same way as verbal texts (Figure 7). In this example, the first line of the box is the interpretation of the image, and the following two sections are graphic elements and action lines that contribute to the meaning construction (Bateman & Wildfeuer, 2014, pp. 189-193). The last section evaluates which representations would influence the meaning construction. By analysing verbal and visual elements as influential factors, this model can decrease the influence of subjective interpretation and narrow the gap between the vocabularies of the two semiotic systems, facilitating the conversion from words to images and helping to check the correspondence between verbal and visual texts in the TT.

Representation analysis works very effectively for concrete nouns and comparatively simple grammatical structures. For example, Line 5 of Sonnet XLII contains the information listed below (Figure 8). Line 5 is a description of a state of a heart (“warm”) and is therefore

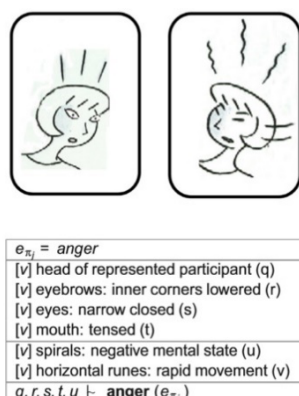


Figure 7 Discourse representation analysis of two consecutive panels  
 (Bateman, and Wildfeuer, pp. 191-192)

considered to be a non-narrative section. There are three major sense groups: “passions’ flame”, “heart” and “warm”. The first two nouns are the two entities noted as x and y in Figure 8, and “warm” is the effect that x has on y. Thus, in the meaning construction of the ST, all three factors have contributed to the equation, “Y=warm”, which represents the discourse meaning of Line 5. X and Y are both concrete nouns, so it is easy to convert them into pictorial vocabularies by referring to real-life objects.

In the analytical box of the TT’ meaning, the overall connotation delivered in the TT is referred as  $\kappa\pi i'$  in Figure 8. Consisting of  $\kappa\pi i'$ , factors X’ and Y’, which refer to the textual elements that contribute to a connotation, are combined and narrow down the range of possible effects—it should be a state of objects that is related to flame and can be applied to a heart, but it is not enough to deduce the exact connotation this visual expression

represents (the verbal text's connotation is referred in Figure 8 as  $\epsilon\tau\iota'$ ). Its effect can be either positive, such as warm, or negative as burning, so verbal texts are necessary for the construction of meanings in this case. After adding the verbal translations of "passion's flame", "heart" and "warm" as meaning-making factors  $X'$ ,  $Y'$ , and the meaning of visual elements as  $\epsilon\pi\iota'$  into the TT, the combination of verbal and visual factors in the multimodal TT are listed in the TT's connotation box ( $\kappa\tau\iota'$ ). In this version, the effect of the TT is explicitly presented by the verbal expression "[warm]". Combined together, the visual elements, including the icons of a heart and flames ( $X'$ ,  $Y'$ ) and the three verbal phrases compensate each other and deliver the meaning of "passion's fire warms the heart", which conforms to the semantic meaning of the ST.

In certain situations, this model can even facilitate the inter-semiotic and inter-lingual translation of culturally specific items. For example, Phoebus, the god of the sun, in Sonnet XLII, Line 13 is translated as a stylised sun with a written name tag, so the two factors that influence the connotation of Phoebus (name, religious representation) are combined as a whole to fully deliver the ST without omission, expansion or footnotes. In the final stage, the verbal contents assigned to each panel are converted into the multimodal TT. It illustrates that Groensteen's research on comic narratology can thus guide the analysis of the perspective of narrating and drawing the TT, while Bateman & Wildfeuer's model for semantic discourse representation can analyse the influential factors in the meaning construction process of both verbal ST and multimodal TT, bridging the gap between the two semiotic systems.

## 5. Conclusion

I have argued, based on my project of translating *Sappho and Phaon* into poetry comic form, that insights from visual linguistics and narratology can be applied to build a translational model that facilitates verbal-to-visual translation, to a large extent overcoming the challenges brought about by the discrepancies between verbal and visual language systems and the multimodal nature of the TT. The overall theoretical framework is a synthesis of the theories put forward by McCloud, Eisner, Groensteen and Gavalier to describe the units, characteristics and sequencing of the visual units, and two visual linguistic models developed by Cohn and Bateman & Wildfeuer respectively. These theories, originally designed to validate the analysis of images with verbal language, are applied here to first analyse the verbal ST and then convert it into a multimodal text. Thus, it can be argued that the alignment of the verbal ST and the verbal-visual TT in poetry comic translation can be achieved using visual linguistic models and categories borrowed from visual narratology, valid for both narrative and non-narrative aspects of the ST.

Given the potential of this translation model for use with different semiotic modes, I hope that it may inspire further multimodal translation studies. In future research, more genres of verbal texts and graphic literature could be involved in order to broaden the range of research materials. It would also be interesting to test whether this framework can function in the opposite direction: translating from visual to verbal.

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**About the author:** Chunwei "Harold" Liu is a first year PhD student at the University of Glasgow, specializing in Modern Language and Culture. After graduating in Translation Studies, as part of the Glasgow-Nankai University double-degree, Harold developed a strong interest in the study of graphic literatures and inter-semiotic translation. Their PhD thesis focuses on Feministic and Queer Studies in verbal-visual texts and popular cultures, especially in superhero narratives and their secondary writings and arts. As a practitioner, they work in translation, interpretation, second-language education and digital illustration.

**ENTREVISTA:  
ÉRICO ASSIS, TRADUTOR DE QUADRINHOS**

**Guilherme da Silva Braga**  
CETAPS/Nova

Érico Assis<sup>1</sup> é tradutor, jornalista e pesquisador brasileiro. Como tradutor de quadrinhos e literatura, trabalha a partir do inglês e do francês e colabora com as editoras Companhia das Letras, Panini, Darkside e outras. Como jornalista, é crítico de HQ (história em quadrinhos) na *Folha de S. Paulo*, em *O Globo* e na revista *451* e colunista nos *websites Omelete* e *Blog da Companhia*. Além disso, mantém o *podcast Notas dos Tradutores* junto com Mario Luiz C. Barroso e Carlos Rutz e, esporadicamente, o *website A Pilha*. É doutor em Estudos da Tradução pela Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina e autor do livro *Balões de pensamento*.

**Érico, de que forma começou a sua relação com os quadrinhos, e como você passou de leitor a tradutor?**

Leio quadrinhos desde antes de saber ler. Tenho gibis na minha mão desde que eu tenho memórias. Comecei pelos super-heróis – Homem-Aranha, Super-Homem, Hulk, Capitão América – e pulei a Turma da Mônica e os personagens da Disney, que são os quadrinhos tradicionais para crianças no Brasil. Por algum motivo, meus pais quiseram criar o filho com os super-heróis, mesmo que não fossem leitores de nenhum tipo de HQ.

Eu lia todos os quadrinhos desse gênero quando criança. Na adolescência, descobri quadrinhos adultos, com propostas mais sérias ou sofisticadas (*Watchmen*, *Sandman*, *Moonshadow*), anos depois do lançamento original no Brasil. *Desvendando os Quadrinhos*, de Scott McCloud, teve um impacto muito forte sobre mim, porque apresentava uma forma de pensar a linguagem dos quadrinhos em si como algo autônomo e repleto de possibilidades. Li por volta dos meus 15 anos. Foi esse o livro que também me fez pensar sobre o que é uma teoria, o que é comunicação, e que acabou me colocando na rota da faculdade de Comunicação Social. Me formei em Publicidade & Propaganda e Jornalismo, com uma breve passagem (não concluída) por Design Gráfico.

Durante a faculdade, fiz minhas primeiras incursões no jornalismo como *freelancer*. Participei da criação de um *website* de cultura *pop*, o *Omelete*, no qual eu escrevia notícias e resenhas de quadrinhos. O envolvimento como repórter do *website* levou ao contato com editoras e convites para consultorias. E no fim transformei esses convites em testes para tradução e virei tradutor.

**Como o trabalho que você faz como tradutor de quadrinhos influencia a sua relação de leitor com esses mesmos quadrinhos?**

Tem um aspecto curioso e que percebo, de uns anos para cá, que é o de que eu presto pouca atenção às imagens quando estou apenas lendo. A tradução de quadrinhos é a

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ericcoassis.com.br](http://www.ericcoassis.com.br)

tradução das ocorrências de texto – balões, recordatórios, onomatopeias –, por isso meu olho fica pulando de ocorrência em ocorrência e passa por cima das imagens.

É evidente que, na tradução, eu preciso observar a relação entre textos e imagens, mas o olho está mais focado em procurar (e traduzir) essas ocorrências de texto. Quando traduzo, faço revisões – ou seja, mais leituras –, e essa relação fica mais clara a cada leitura. Quando estou apenas lendo, *não* para traduzir, acabo focado em pular de um balão a outro. Em resumo: não dou a devida atenção à narrativa visual e leio a HQ mais rápido do que devia.

Como sigo trabalhando como jornalista da área de quadrinhos, também leio muito para fins profissionais, no mínimo para ficar por dentro do que se passa nos principais mercados de HQ. Essas leituras também me auxiliam a descobrir projetos que posso recomendar a editoras, dos quais eventualmente viro tradutor. Ou seja: há um lado comercial na minha quantidade de leitura.

Ainda tenho gosto genuíno por ler quadrinhos, e por ler em quantidade: tento enveredar por gêneros variados, procedências variadas, vários tipos de quadrinhos, pois acho que posso encontrar a qualidade em qualquer lugar.

### **Além de quadrinhos, você traduz literatura. Em relação às especificidades da tradução literária e da tradução de quadrinhos, no que se assemelham? No que diferem?**

Bom, você sabe que esta resposta daria um livro. Eu já escrevi um artigo sobre esse tema chamado “Especificidades da Tradução de Histórias em Quadrinhos” em 2017. Boa parte do que eu escrevi se mantém, mesmo depois de anos a mais de experiência. Mas há aspectos específicos a cada mídia, a começar pela leitura de cada uma. A literatura pode usar vários recursos, até eventualmente a ilustração, mas é centrada na palavra escrita. Os quadrinhos também podem usar vários recursos, e frequentemente usam a palavra escrita, mas se baseiam na narrativa gráfica, imagética, pictórica, desenhada ou como você quiser chamar.

(Sou contra dizer que os quadrinhos têm ilustrações, pois os desenhos nos quadrinhos não ilustram, e sim narram; em outras palavras, as imagens não estão subordinadas ao texto, e sim o texto está subordinado às imagens. Na literatura ilustrada, o texto é central e as imagens subordinam-se ao texto.)

Na literatura, o personagem entra numa sala de estar e a prosa descreve o tecido das cortinas, a cor do sofá e cada objeto em cima da mesa de centro. Nos quadrinhos, cortinas, sofá e objetos em cima da mesa estão descritos em desenho. O tradutor de HQ não tem ingerência sobre essa descrição se ela não estiver na narração – e geralmente não está, pois não há necessidade de ser redundante com o desenho. O tradutor de HQ, com raríssimas exceções, não tem ingerência alguma sobre o desenho.

A segunda diferença está na decupagem ou “quebras de texto”. O texto em geral tem um fluxo constante na prosa, definido por pontuação e mudança de parágrafos. Nos quadrinhos, o texto é mais fragmentado. Balões e recordatórios tendem a ser curtos, separam os textos em pequenos *strings* que, junto com a decupagem das imagens,

imprimem um ritmo à narrativa. A mesma frase de um personagem pode ser espalhada por vários balões ou por vários quadros, assim como há pausas na narração que têm efeito de sentido. Entender e respeitar esses efeitos faz parte do processo de tradução.

Há outros pontos, como a tendência dos quadrinhos a ter mais diálogos e, portanto, mais coloquialismo do que a literatura. Além disso, também há o que eu já chamei de “indissolubilidade de mancha gráfica”, que é a tendência a respeitar a formatação da página entre HQ de chegada e de partida. E também a importância do *letreirista* no processo de tradução, que costuma ser mais exigido do que um diagramador na literatura.

Em função dessas especificidades, surge ainda outra, fundamental, que é o fato de o tradutor não entregar o fluxo de texto que entrega na literatura, em geral muito similar ao livro que será publicado. O tradutor de HQ entrega uma espécie de roteiro em que elenca traduções de balões, recordatórios, onomatopeias, inscrições de cenário, sendo que tudo isso será aplicado posteriormente à página de HQ pelo letreirista. A tradução da HQ só se concretiza no trabalho conjunto do tradutor somado ao do letreirista (sem esquecer revisores, preparadores, editores e outros que podem se envolver no processo de tradução).

### **Quais são as dificuldades específicas da tradução de quadrinhos, e o que você diria sobre as características de um bom tradutor de quadrinhos?**

Além das dificuldades comuns à literatura – tom, nível de fluidez, caracterização, figuras de linguagem, marcas de estilo etc. –, acredito que as dificuldades específicas estejam no domínio das especificidades mencionadas acima. Quando vejo quadrinhos traduzidos por tradutores acostumados à literatura, não percebo dificuldade em se adequar à decupagem, mas vejo alguma dificuldade em se adequar ao fluxo de diálogos e ao coloquialismo mais frequente dos quadrinhos.

Assim como acredito que um bom tradutor de literatura deve ser um ótimo leitor/intérprete e, se possível, escritor de literatura, um bom tradutor de quadrinhos deve ser um ótimo leitor/intérprete de quadrinhos e, se possível, quadrinista – ou seja, uma pessoa que tenha exercido ou experimentado alguma função nos quadrinhos, seja no roteiro ou nos desenhos. Considero a prática da escrita fundamental, por isso sugiro que o bom tradutor, de qualquer mídia, deve ter colocado a mão na massa na criação de originais, não apenas de traduções. No mais, acho a prática da tradução indispensável para pensar a teoria da tradução.

### **Na sua produção sobre tradução de quadrinhos, você se ocupa bastante com o papel do letreiramento do texto na língua-alvo. De onde surgiu esse interesse, e que papel ele desempenha no seu trabalho?**

Surgiu de uma situação muito pragmática. No começo de carreira, eu era coeditor de um *website* de quadrinhos e, de uma hora para outra, ficamos sem o letreirista que estava no projeto desde o início. Achei que seria fácil substituí-lo, pois pensei que bastava encontrar alguém com domínio dos *softwares* gráficos para aplicar o texto dentro dos balões. Ledo

engano. O letreirista precisa de um conhecimento estético apurado, que envolve conhecimento da linguagem dos quadrinhos, além do domínio do *software* gráfico. Ou seja: é um profissional no mínimo tão especializado, ou quem sabe até mais, que aquele que chamamos de tradutor.

O letreirista faz uma espécie de “tradução visual”, que tem a ver com escolha de fontes – às vezes *criação* de fontes – e disposição do texto nos balões, recordatórios e outras ocorrências linguísticas, sempre atento a como isso se dá na HQ de partida. Enquanto o tradutor tem que conhecer os dois idiomas, o letreirista tem que entender da configuração visual desses idiomas.

Há muitas HQs, como as tradicionais de super-heróis, em que o profissional de letreiramento não é tão exigido – assim como o tradutor não é tão exigido diante de um texto simples –, mas há várias outras em que a estética tipográfica e a composição visual têm uma importância que precisa ser respeitada na tradução, e isso exige adaptações gráficas evidentes no momento em que as letras à disposição – na passagem de um idioma a outro – são outras. Como a tradução de uma HQ não se concretiza sem o letreiramento, escrevi minha tese defendendo a ideia de que o letreirista também é tradutor.

No meu trabalho efetivo, não faço letreiramento e tenho raros contatos com letreiristas. Mas tenho a preocupação de produzir textos que se adequem, principalmente em questão de espaço, ao tamanho dos balões, recordatórios etc. que o letreirista terá para trabalhar. Caso exista alguma composição gráfica específica com as letras, também explico na própria tradução como essa composição pode ser feita com o texto traduzido.

**Depois de reunir escritos sobre quadrinhos publicados avulsamente no livro *Balões de pensamento*, um tempo atrás você afirmou ter planos de escrever um livro sobre tradução de quadrinhos. Como anda esse projeto?**

Na verdade o livro já foi escrito. Você inclusive colaborou com um texto! Mas eu escrevi o livro e depois me desencantei com o que tinha escrito. Um dia eu quero abrir esse arquivo de novo e refazer. Falta tempo.

**Ultimamente, o que tem ocupado a sua cabeça no que diz respeito à tradução de quadrinhos?**

Encontrar o tom. Para mim, essa é a meta de qualquer tradução. É mais ou menos como ser ator, o que confirmei com um amigo ator (e também tradutor): cada livro ou HQ tem sua voz, às vezes várias vozes, e dar o caráter a essa voz ou vozes, sempre de olho no caráter que elas têm na língua de partida, devia ser a meta do tradutor – como um ator que busca encontrar a voz do personagem da vez.

Há algum tempo recebi o comentário de um leitor que disse acompanhar minhas traduções e ter encontrado cacoetes meus, como palavras marcantes e repetidas que ele viu em mais de um quadrinho que eu traduzi. Não sei se o comentário foi um elogio ou não, mas eu entendi de forma negativa. Se minhas traduções de autores diferentes estão soando parecidas, eu não estou respeitando o tom de cada autor. Ou estou sendo um ator

que faz a mesma cara para personagens diferentes. É claro que atores têm sempre a mesma cara fazendo o mocinho ou o bandido, e o tradutor que trabalha num livro de ciência política ou numa HQ de ficção científica tem o mesmo léxico. Mas, tal como o ator, eu devia me empenhar para não parecer a mesma pessoa.

Fora isso, o que ocupa a cabeça é pensar o longo prazo da carreira de tradução. Como autônomos, somos mal pagos em relação a outras carreiras e, fundamentalmente, falta perspectiva de ganhos futuros como *royalties*, por mínimos que pudessem ser, ou garantia de continuidade de trabalhos entre uma editora e um profissional. Um sindicato mais forte talvez colaborasse para tradutores ficarem mais tranquilos quanto ao longo prazo da carreira.

**E que percepção você tem hoje sobre o papel que desempenha como tradutor de quadrinhos nesse tipo de situação profissional?**

Eu me tornei tradutor porque gosto de ler, e a leitura profunda que a tradução exige é o que eu chamo de leitura privilegiada. Metade do que recebo por uma tradução é, na prática, para ler, e ser pago para ler é um privilégio. Mas não acredito naquele ditado “trabalhe no que gosta para nunca mais ter que trabalhar”. Faço o que gosto e é trabalho, sim, com tudo o que você pode associar de negativo a trabalhar. Mas ainda fico muito contente de poder me envolver com qualquer livro, especificamente em dois momentos: aquele em que recebo a proposta de tradução e quando ela está pronta, com meu nome nos créditos. Entre esses dois pontos, não se tem alegria nem tristeza: tem trabalho.

**Sobre o autor:** Guilherme da Silva Braga é doutor e mestre em Estudos de Literatura pela Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (Brasil) e concluiu com distinção um pós-doutoramento na área de tradução literária na Universidade de Coimbra (Portugal). Desde 2005 dedica-se à tradução literária, e nesse período traduziu mais de sessenta volumes de obras clássicas e modernas a partir do inglês, do sueco e do norueguês para as mais prestigiosas editoras brasileiras, assim como dezenas de volumes de histórias em quadrinhos. Em 2016 foi indicado ao Prêmio Jabuti de melhor tradução literária publicada no Brasil.

## BOOK REVIEW

### NOTHING IS WRITTEN IN STONE

Anikó Sohár\*

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**Translating and Transmediating Children’s Literature**, edited by Anna Kérchy and Björn Sundmark, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, 337pp, 117,69–€ (hardcover) ISBN 978-3-030-52526-2, 93,08€ (e-book) ISBN 978-3-030-52527-9.

#### **Introduction**

As the editors tell us in their *Introduction*, this research anthology focuses on “inter- and intra-cultural transformations, media transitions, iconotextual interactions, metapictorial potentialities, and intergenerational transmissions, which interact throughout the complex conjoint enterprise of adapting, translating, and transmediating children’s literature.” These themes, however, appear to be of unequal importance as *Translating and Transmediating Children’s Literature* consists of five parts of variable length (50-70 pages) which have a variable number of chapters (2-4, altogether 17), so these may have been adjusted to the importance of the topic under discussion, and possibly, to the editors’ preferences (just as my review reflects my preferences). The authors of the chapters come from European as well as North and South American universities—with one token independent scholar, apparently to show that research is still done outside academia. They “deal with translations into/from a variety of languages (including Brazilian Portuguese, French, German, Italian, Swedish, Swiss, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Serbian, Korean, Greek, and Latin).” (9) In the sections below, I shall address each of the five parts and then summarise my impressions.

#### **“Inter-/Intra-Cultural Transformations”**

The first chapter, “Translated into British: European children’s literature, (in)difference and *écart* in the age of Brexit” by Clémentine Beauvais (University of York), deals with translated children’s literature in the UK which reflects the “British people’s relationships to Europe and to other languages” (p. 31). She discusses (in)difference in relation to the book market and language learning in post-Brexit UK, and borrows the term *écart* from a French sinologist, Francois Jullien (2012), for what Anthony Pym calls intercultural space (1998). She suggests that translation should convey the sense of this in-betweenness instead of

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difference, as evidenced in Sarah Ardizzone's translation of Timothée de Fombelle's *Toby Alone*.

"Picturebooks in a minority language setting: intra-cultural transformations" by Hannah Felce (Cardiff University), discusses a Swiss case of multilingual publishing when an illustrated tale for children was released in two languages and multiple dialects and analyses the language ideology behind the translations.

"Mixing moralizing with enfreakment: Polish-language rewritings of Heinrich Hoffmann's classic *Struwelpeter* (1845)" by Joanna Dybiec-Gajer (Pedagogical University of Krakow) reports on the history of Hoffmann's tale in Poland and describes the three controversial retellings and their illustrations. "Translating place and space: the Soviet Union in North Korean children's literature" by Dafna Zur (Stanford University) deals with translations of two new genres, travel essays and science fiction for children, in the 1950s, and shows how deeply translation practice is embedded in historical times and influenced by ideology.

### "Image-textual Interactions"

"How farflung is your fokloire?": Foreignizing domestications and drawing bridges in James Joyce's *The Cat and the Devil* and its French illustrations" by Aneesh Barai (University of Sheffield) writes about the fascinating problem of translating foreign-language inserts in a source text into that foreign language (in this case, French into French), which is a source of endless headaches for literary translators, and the two French illustrators' rather different approaches to move the target text closer to the audience.

As I have talked about the book covers of Tolkien works as intersemiotic translations in different cultures at different times, I was very curious about the chapter entitled "The Translation and Visualization of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* into Swedish, the aesthetics of fantasy, and Tove Jansson's illustrations". Written by one of the editors, Björn Sundmark (Malmö University), this chapter first sums up the history of the illustrated translations of *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* in the author's lifetime, then presents Jansson's pictures and their reception. This is a very well-presented case study, although I disagree with the claim that "[t]he mere presence of illustrations" is always "an established marker of childishness in literature," as science fiction also used to be illustrated in the seventies.

"The (im)possibilities of translating literary nonsense: attempts at taming iconotextual monstrosity in Hungarian domestications of Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky'" by Anna Kérchy (University of Szeged) touches upon the age-long question of untranslatability in the context of illustrated nonsense poetry, and introduces four Hungarian translations of Carroll's "Jabberwocky" in detail. She claims that Jónai's use of the word 'Vartarjú' for "Jabberwocky" in his 2011 version puns on the word "crow" (*varjú*) by breaking it up in two syllables and inserting the word "bald" or "barren" (*tar*) in between; this invests the name with ominous implications given that the first syllable means "scar" (*var*). However, I am not sure about this; I think it is just as likely that Jónai has swapped two syllables of "tarvarjú" (Geronticus eremita) in order to create his monster. This essay clearly

demonstrates the author's comprehensive knowledge and love of the Alice books and translations.

### **“Metapictorial Potentialities”**

My favourite intersemiotic translation theme is the relationship between the images on front covers and the content of books, so I anticipated reading “Translated book covers as peritextual thresholds: Comparing covers of Greek translations to covers of source texts” by Petros Panaou (University of Georgia) and Tasoula Tsilimeni (University of Thessaly) with pleasure. Indeed, I was not disappointed. The chapter is a very interesting and thorough presentation of many covers of translated books, though perhaps the object of study is addressed more from the perspective of Children's Literature Studies and Comparative Literature than from Translation Studies. It could have benefited from a reference to Brian Mossop and Marco Sonzogni's works on translated book covers, Gisèle Sapiro's (2008, 2010, 2015) on translation flow, and possibly also Kathryn Batchelor's (2018) on paratexts.

“Translating Tenniel: Discovering the traces of Tenniel's wonderland in Olga Siemaszko's vision of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*” by Karolina Rybicka-Tomala (Jagiellonian University) scrutinizes not verbal but visual transfer (Tenniel's images into Siemaszko's images) and the development of these pictorial translations through time. I am certainly looking forward to reading her doctoral dissertation on “the relationships between Carroll's illustrations and the evolution of Tenniel's redrawings” (p. 193).

### **“Digital Media Transitions”**

“Grammars of new media: Interactive trans-sensory storytelling and empathic reading praxis in Jessica Anthony's and Rodrigo Corral's *Chopsticks*” by Cheryl Cowdy (York University) is the odd one out, as it deals with interactivity, multimodal and multisensory entertainment experience for children through a multimedia novel entitled *Chopsticks*, and does not even mention translation proper in the Jakobsonian sense.

In the next chapter in this section, Dana Cocargeanu, an independent scholar, examines the online Romanian translations of Beatrix Potter's tales and compares them to their print versions. She concludes that “the online environment and digital technology have allowed the Romanian translators liberties which authors of print translations can seldom afford” (p. 237), and that the transmediation process affects both the visual and verbal elements.

“Between light and dark: brazilian translations of linguistically marked ethical issues in *Star Wars* transmedia narratives for children” by Domingos Soares and Cybelle Saffa Soares (Federal University of Santa Catarina) focuses on ethical and didactic considerations—teaching about morals in familiar dualistic terms, light/dark, good/evil, right/wrong—in translated space opera.

### “Intergenerational Transmissions”

“*A Thousand and One Voices of Where the Wild Things Are: Translations and transmediations*” by Annalisa Sezzi (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia) is another case study which examines the two Italian versions of Sendak’s work published almost 50 years apart.

“Translating ambiguity: The translation of dual address in children’s fantasy during the 1950s and 1960s” by Agnes Blümer (University of Cologne) looks at the West German tradition of translating children’s fantasy from English and French within a small but varied corpus.

“*Maxima debetur puero reverential*”: The histories and metamorphoses of Latin translation in children’s literature” by Carl F. Miller (Palm Beach Atlantic University) does exactly what the chapter title promises to do and asks an important question: if children’s literature is translated for adults does it cease to be children’s literature?

Lastly, “Newtonian and quantum physics for babies: a quirky gimmick for adults or pre-science for toddlers?” by Casey D. Gailey (Vanderbilt University in Nashville) discusses the use of science board books for arousing children’s interest in the so-called STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects.

### Closing remarks

It seems to me that this research anthology mixes mainly Comparative Literature with Translation Studies, adding occasional borrowings from other disciplines (for example, Adaptation, Media or Visual Studies). Most chapters have a similar theoretical basis (Genette, Lathey, Nikolajeva, Oittinen, O’Sullivan, Venuti), usually combined with a succinct historical background (of which I heartily approve), but the investigative methods cover a broad spectrum from mixed methods to close reading, from online searches to content analysis, from interviews to Multimodal Ensemble Analytical Instrument. The case studies are always well-contextualised and thought-provoking, even for those whose research field happens to be quite removed from Translation Studies. It is praiseworthy that some literary works (for example, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Hobbit*,) and some illustrators (for example, Tenniel or Jansson) are mentioned in several chapters from a different angle, thus creating intertextual dialogues. The text quality is a credit to the authors, editors and copy-editors,<sup>1</sup> although the chapter headings, which try to be descriptive as well as attractive and/or witty, result in rather longish titles, certainly not beneficial to future referencing. If there is anything to criticise, it is the fact that not all chapters have illustrations, which in such a book would have been helpful and illuminating.

All in all, the volume offers a broad though somewhat imbalanced range of studies about translated and transmediated children’s literature, most of which, like a teaser, leave

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<sup>1</sup> There is a typo (“A close-reading of Polish-language editions reveals that **non** fail to make the narrator’s voice “more audible” than in the original, with the aim to convert the unconventionally ambivalent, absurd, and abject text into a more familiar didactic exercise.” p. 13), an incorrect hyphenation in a Hungarian name (Tamás Szecskó, p. 150), an absolutely forgivable offence, and a surplus comma on page 192, etc.

the reader wishing for more and feeling sorry that the chapter has ended. I am sure that anybody interested in this topic will find a chapter—or more—to their liking and edification.

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## BOOK REVIEW

### TECHNICAL FUNNIES

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**The Other Kind of Funnies: Comics in Technical Communication**, Han Yu, Oxon & New York, Routledge, 2017, 280pp, £120,00 (hardcover) ISBN 978-0-89503-839-5 £59,99 (e-book) ISBN 978-1-31523-126-6

Han Yu's *The Other Kind of Funnies: Comics in Technical Communication* is the perfect introduction to the many uses and potentialities of comics in the field of technical communication. It is also a very useful book for those interested in intersemiotic translation, especially within (but not limited to) the field of technical communication. Han Yu is a professor at Kansas State University, where she teaches technical and visual communication. She is also a researcher in the field of popular science communication, intercultural technical communication, information design and visual rhetoric. A successful author, she has published a number of books and articles on these subjects.


The first of its kind, this book explores and dissects the theory and applications of comics as a multimodal medium, rich in potential to engage, educate, communicate, and persuade. Her comprehensive theoretical framework draws on visual rhetoric and multimodal studies, theories of language and text-based literacy, as well as intercultural technical communication theories. This framework is presented in a clear and accessible manner, allowing the reader to quickly catch up on the main theories surrounding comics and their use in technical communication. In addition, Yu analyses a large number of examples in detail, which further helps the reader to solidify the theory as well as to understand the real-world applications of the concepts in question. Central to this book is the idea that comics are not an inferior medium or something for children only, but an extremely rich multimodal medium that is well suited to the purposes of technical communication.

The first four chapters cover the general theoretical concepts around comics and their use in technical communication. The first chapter focuses on the definitions, types and multimodal nature of comics. It outlines the basics of comics as an art form and a rich communication medium, resorting to Scott McCloud's and Will Eisner's definitions of comics and sequential art, Marshall McLuhan's concept of hot and cool mediums (comics being considered a cool medium that invites the reader to actively participate and "fill in the gaps"), and Dale Jacobs' theory of multimodality (comics include multiple modes of

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communication, with a linguistic, audio, visual, gestural and spatial mode). The second chapter, entitled “Brief history of comics”, provides the reader with a succinct history of comics in different parts of the world. It focuses mostly on the history of comics in the U.S., Japan, France and Belgium, explaining how these three regions developed such different relationships to the comic industry, before moving on to Africa, other Asian countries and Latin America. This historical overview is indeed brief, especially in regions where there is greater regional cultural variance, such as Africa and Asia, and it serves more as a quick introduction to the most important aspects of the history of comics, which will prove useful in later chapters.

Chapters three and four are the most important chapters in the book, especially for translators. Chapter three gives a detailed description of all the factors that make comics so relevant in technical communication. Yu explores how certain elements, such as entertainment value, participatory reading, reader identification, dialogic discourses, covert persuasion, multimodality and cross-cultural appeal, lead to greater reader engagement and thus better assimilation and comprehension of the information. This chapter also addresses translation and localization, and recognises that even pictorial representations are not universal and need to be translated in order to be correctly interpreted in the target culture. For example, Yu explains that, “Icons have meanings only when an observer understands the association between the icon and the object it denotes. While most people will recognize a cartoony representation of a human being, some may not recognize that the  icon means mail, e-mail, or contact information if they use other styles of mailboxes in their environments” (p. 62).

Chapter four addresses the challenges and limitations of using comics in technical communication and how to overcome these. A whole range of factors need to be considered in order to create more effective comics; some of these are, for instance, target audience, type of document use (is it a book to be read from beginning to end or a manual where readers just look up what they need?), design (what is the best way to create an efficient word-picture balance?), the balance between fantasy and reality, safety (how to include safety warnings clearly?), the emotional facet that comics bring into technical communication (as opposed to the tradition in technical communication to only include “objective, emotion-free graphics”), and distasteful stereotypes. This last one is especially important when we think about the history of comics and their caricatural potential as an art form. Yu addresses the issues of stereotypes, racism, sexism and ethics in comics, and urges artists and technical communicators to continuously and actively “educate themselves, their colleagues and their readers” (p. 91) on these issues.

Chapters five, six, seven and eight, focus on the more specialised types of comics: instructional comics, development comics, educational comics and propaganda comics. Each of these chapters reviews the relevant theory and analyses several examples of each type and sub-type of comics, as well as the problems and challenges that are specific to each type. The fact that information is repeated in these chapters makes it easier for the

reader to understand better each chapter without having to go back and look up certain concepts.

Chapter nine, entitled “Where do we go from here?” reads more like Yu’s personal address to the reader. She highlights the value of comics and argues against the suspicious and often condescending attitudes that many people have towards this medium. She reminds us of their many qualities and of how important they can be when used in technical communication:

All these merits make comics an appropriate, useful, and one might even say, ideal, medium for technical communication. Technical communicators are, or should be, concerned with diverse mass audiences: what they need and want; what engages them; what helps them follow instructions, make decisions, and learn new information; and what persuades them to follow advice. It is also an ethical and social responsibility for technical communicators to be concerned with those groups and communities that are hitherto marginalized: those who are foreign, poor, young, old, semiliterate, illiterate, unhealthy—those who are “different.” For these audiences, the conventional technical communication discourses—the white papers, formal studies, websites, government forms, and medical explanations—are too often unavailable, inaccessible, or alienating. Comics offer a viable bridge to reach these audiences precisely because they are designed for the masses—for everyone regardless of their “differences (p. 251).

However, Yu also recognises that using comics in technical communication may come at a cost:

[it] complicate[s] the process of technical communication production, whether it is in added steps, added personnel (not all technical communicators will be adept sequential artists), added consultation and collaboration, added page counts, added deliberation on appropriate visual choices—and bottom line, added cost. None of these, I suspect, is particularly appealing to project clients and managers” (p. 252).

And yet, she argues, just as other aspects of technical communication were not particularly “appealing” at first, but their value and effectiveness made them worth the extra effort (and cost), so the use of comics in the appropriate contexts will ultimately prevail. She also acknowledges that not all comics are suitable for all types and audiences of technical communication. The choice of including comics and how to include them needs to be assessed based on the audience, the purpose of the communication piece and the context in which it is created.

Like Han Yu, I believe that we haven’t yet even begun to scratch the surface of the potential that comics have in a myriad of areas and settings, but especially in technical communication. A great example of the use of comics in this field is the “comic contract”, a concept introduced by Robert de Rooy, where a legally binding contract (in this case an employment contract) is created in the form of a comic strip. This allows readers to sign a

document that they fully understand.<sup>1</sup> But this may be just the beginning. Comics allow information to be processed in different ways, which makes it easier for those who are illiterate or semi-literate, have cognitive disabilities or reading difficulties, to understand information. It is also important to consider that, as Yu puts it, “today's audience, especially young audiences who are raised on multimodal communication (from the more traditional TV and film to online videos and social media), increasingly expect similar representations in technical communication” (p. 8). Thus, it is essential that we, as translators, take this factor into account and aim to educate ourselves, our colleagues and our readers in the potential and uses of comics in technical translation.

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<sup>1</sup> On this subject, see ‘Democratizing access to justice: The comic contract as intersemiotic translation’, Eliisa Pitkäsalo and Laura Kallioma-Puha, *Translation Matters* 1/2, pp. 30-42.