Introduction: Intersemiotic Translation as Adaptation

In Memoriam of Laurence Raw

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'Intersemiotic translation' was a term coined by Roman Jakobson, as early as 1959, while he was investigating the complexities of transferring linguistic and cultural elements in translation. Influenced by Peircean semiotics at the time, he claimed that there are three ways one can interpret the verbal sign; 'it can be translated into other signs of the same language, into another language, or into another, nonverbal system of symbols' (114). He called them respectively intralingual translation or *rewording*, interlingual translation or *translation proper*, and intersemiotic translation or *transmutation* (ibid.). Since the focus of his article lied elsewhere, he did not linger any further on intersemiotic translation, but the term has been quoted heavily ever since across disciplines (see Sütiste), not least because it is quite straightforward. It has been generally understood to mean the transfer of verbal texts into other systems of signification, such as visual, oral, aural, gestural, or kinesic. Obvious cases would be the rendering of literary texts into paintings, ballets, symphonies, theatrical stagings, or cinematic screenings.

Although intermedia adaptations may seem like a very modern practice of our digital age, they actually have a long history. Theatre translation, where a number of semiotic systems are involved in the transfer of a dramatic text from page to stage, is probably the oldest form of transferring a story from one medium to another. Other early forms include the medieval miracle plays, which were based on themes from the Bible, the rendering of literature into paintings, musical scores, the opera or ballet, and *tableaux vivants*. The advent of the radio and the cinema in the mid- and late nineteenth century, respectively, brought with them new means of intermedia transfer in the form of radio drama and, of course, cinematic adaptations of classic literature.

This area can and has been investigated by at least three rather distinct fields of academic inquiry, namely Adaptation Studies, Translation Studies, and Semiotics, which nevertheless have had minimal contact among them up to quite recently and even less so on the topic of intersemiotic translation. Adaptation Studies started its life by exhibiting an almost exclusive interest in cinematic or stage renderings of literary texts. Translation Studies in turn had for most of its past investigated interlingual translation to the detriment of intralingual or intersemiotic translation. Semiotics, on the other hand, by default has a much broader understanding of text; it perceives verbal language as only one among many systems of signification, which renders it particularly

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useful for the study of intersemiotic translation or adaptation, and it is intrinsically interdisciplinary (see Thomas A. Sebeok in Peter Pericles Trifonas 30). The semiotics of translation in particular has been a relatively lively subfield, which seems to be gaining momentum (see Kourdis for an overview). Nevertheless, Evangelos Kourdis (317) laments the fact that much of it remains purely theoretical and would like to see more applied work on the topic. Interdisciplinary work with adaptation and translation studies could offer ample material for such work.

The advent of the digital age has brought about dramatic changes, with a big bang of new media, platforms, and practices. This changing reality has opened up a meta-discussion within Translation Studies and Adaptation Studies in relation to the present and the future of these fields and the respective practices. In Adaptation Studies, scholars have been voicing the need for the field to expand beyond its literature-to-film roots. Linda Hutcheon offers us an expanded understanding of adaptation, which she describes as being 'broad enough to allow [her] to treat not just films and stage productions, but also musical arrangements and song covers, visual art revisitations of prior works and comic book versions of history, poems put to music and remakes of films, and videogames and interactive art' (9). In the introduction to the inaugural issue of *Adaptation* in 2008, Deborah Cartmell, Timothy Corrigan, and Imelda Whelehan explicitly describe the journal as 'devoted to the academic study of literature on screen in the broadest terms', which implied the inclusion of digitalizations, computer games, and other media. In the editorial to the inaugural issue of The *Journal of Adaptation in Film and Performance*, Richard Hand and Katja Krebs state the proximity of the practices of translation and adaptation and declare that they are 'keen that the performance media is explored as widely as possible to encompass film, theatre, opera, music, dance, television, radio, games, and graphic narratives' (4). Thomas Leitch also claims that 'because non-narrative sources or adaptations, or both, have been the norm for most of human history, the current prejudice in favour of a literary narrative-to-cinematic narrative model of adaptation is arbitrary and parochial' (259) and he includes among 'post-literary adaptation' genres such as adaptations of video and computer games, and graphic novels. Despite these declared intentions by leading scholars in the field, though, most of the work published within Adaptation Studies had until recently remained focused on literature-to-film or theatre adaptation.

In the recent years, Adaptation Studies seems to be steadily moving beyond its literature-to-film roots. In the second edition of her seminal book, Hutcheon includes an Epilogue by Siobhan O'Flynn to cater for the dramatic proliferation of new media and platforms that had taken place within the eight years from the first edition of the book. In their introduction to the entry 'Adaptation' (2014) in *Oxford Bibliographies*, Leitch and Kyle Meikle present an overview of Adaptation Studies which seems to have evolved to a degree that allows them to speak of a different phase. According to them, as a result of the rise of the digital media that establishes every reader as a potential writer, we are witnessing a fourth phase after the turn of the millennium, 'a leading tendency [of which] has been to use methodologies developed for literature-to-film adaptation to analyze adaptations that range far outside literature and cinema'.

This time, we are witnessing a change not only in the theoretical meta-discussion, but also in the actual research taking place. *Adaptation* has published articles on topics such

as comics adaptations, adaptations of photographs, transmedia storytelling, franchise adaptations, screen to theatre, and hidden object games, as well as a special issue on participatory culture (6:2). The *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance* has published articles on subtitling and fansubbing, film musical scores, musicals, dance, and opera, comics and graphic narratives, photography, and transmedia.

Translation Studies, on the other hand, which had established itself much earlier than Adaptation Studies as a discipline, has by now expanded to include a wide array of subfields. Not all Translation Studies scholars would agree that intersemiotic translation is actually translation. Jakobson himself seems to have used the term metaphorically, as he reserved the alias *translation proper* only for interlingual translation. Nevertheless, the fields of research that Translation Studies engages in today go well beyond the narrow limits of interlingual translation and by default cross media boundaries and systems of signification. Audiovisual translation is a blooming subfield of Translation Studies, that includes research areas on practices such as subtitling, dubbing, along with new practices such as fansubbing and crowdsourcing, as well as concerns in accessibility with forms that include subtitling for the deaf and the hard of hearing, and audio description for the blind and the visually impaired. Other areas that cross semiotic systems include the translation of multimodal texts in children's books, comics and graphic novels, video games, advertising, and localization (see Chesterman, 2018, this issue; Milton). A smaller niche also investigates orality in translation traditions (see special issue of Translation Studies 8:2, 2015.) as well as the new area of crisis translation in which images are used to aid people who do not have access to the local language under conditions in which there may be no access to electronic media. These changes in the scope of research are reflected in the meta-discussion taking place in the field today, which is reconsidering its boundaries and future perspectives (see Brems and Maylaerts; Gambier and van Doorslaer; van Dam et al.).

The need for interdisciplinary work has been a common denominator in all three disciplines, although sadly at times accompanied by a tendency to ascertain one's own disciplinary superiority, which is counterproductive for constructive interdisciplinary collaboration.

Intersemiotic translation is an interesting interstice area of research, which can serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, it can broaden the semantic range of the terms 'adaptation' and 'translation' to include wider forms of intersemiotic transfer beyond literature-to-film or interlingual translation, respectively. Scholars do not agree on the definitions of adaptation or translation, but here is an area that might problematize clear-cut categorizations even further. If the line between adaptation and translation has generally proven to be porous (Krebs 43, also Aboluwade, 2019, in this issue), in the case of intersemiotic translation, it might even be indiscernible. On the other hand, precisely because these phenomena are too complex for one field to be able to fully cover, they invite theoretical insights from across disciplinary boundaries.

Intersemiotic translation, under whatever name and guise, since new terms are being suggested daily, has been gaining renewed momentum and it can be seen in a new light as a bridge concept between translation, adaptation, and by default semiotics. The term 'bridge concept' was suggested by Andrew Chesterman to describe those concepts that might 'capture overlaps between other notions, and thus enable us to cross borders and set up new viewpoints' (2007, 172). This is indeed an area where translation and

adaptation overlap and which can help draw closer fields that in one way or another deal with intermedia transfers without privileging any of them, thus rendering any turf wars irrelevant. One can conceptualize the practice *as* translation or *as* adaptation depending on their background and/or research question (see Chesterman, 2018, this issue) or even in a more general light *as* transfers (Göpferich), *as* refractions (Lefevere), *as* recontextualizations (Greenall and Løfaldi, 2019, this issue) or *as* a subarea of inter-textual or influence studies (Cattrysse, 2018, in this issue) among other conceptual categories. What is most important, though, is that we may all profit from the mutual interdisciplinary osmosis since scholars from the respective fields are bound to bring with them their own theoretical arsenal helping the fields expand fruitfully.

Back in 1997, José Lambert wondered

Who is going to plan and organize interdisciplinary research in our contem-porary academic world where interdisciplinarity is constantly promoted in prin-ciple but hardly ever put into practice? (Lambert 145 in Delabastita *et al.*, 2006, 145, D'hulst, and Meylaerts)

Three decades later, Luc Van Doorslaer and Raw (2016, 197) still find that 'the interest in starting a dialogue with Adaptation Studies is limited in Translation Studies', and Laurence Raw notes that 'there is considerable scope for collaborative research projects designed to reflect on the relationship between the two disciplines' (ibid., 199). Reality is urging us to promote this interdisciplinary dialogue. This special issue attempts to do just that: bring theoretical tools from three disciplines to better investigate the phenom-enon of intersemiotic translation. Chesterman (2018, this issue) notes that 'whether we lump interlingual and intralingual translation together into a single category, or pro-pose a split into two categories, depends entirely on the purpose(s) we envisage for such a categorization'. Our lumping of intersemiotic translation or adaptation along with the other kinds of translation suggested by Jakobson serves the purpose of widening the scope of the respective disciplines and offering us the opportunity to tap onto the respective theoretical tools to enrich our theoretical arsenal in order to deal with the phenomena at hand and by extension to enrich our disciplines in general.

In 2017, a conference was hosted by the Department of English Studies, University of Cyprus, titled 'Intersemiotic Translation, Adaptation, Transposition: saying almost the same thing?'. The conference attempted to bring together scholars from the three aforementioned disciplines to promote mutual understanding, cross-fertilization, and interdisciplinary osmosis. Giving equal footing to the three disciplines with one keynote speaker from each of them was indicative of the intention to promote interdisciplinary work without privileging any particular field. The culmination of that discussion is this special issue.

All the articles included in this issue have an expanded understanding of translation and adaptation. Written by scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds, they all use interdisciplinary theoretical tools and methodologies from Semiotics, Adaptation Studies, and Translation Studies. They look into areas as varied as TV series, films, fanfiction, theatrical plays, paintings, conceptual artworks, and theatrical dance. It is not coincidental that three out of the seven articles are by more than one author, which is indicative of the fact that the area invites collaborative work.

More specifically, Patrick Cattrysse discusses the complexities of defining translation and adaptation and suggests that interdisciplinary work might prove more useful than attempts to trace disciplinary boundaries between the two. He uses insights from the emerging discipline of Interdisciplinarity Studies to support his claim.

Dusi (2019, this issue) discusses the various adaptation strategies that take place when moving across media based on the case of the screening of Roberto Saviano's novel *Gomorrah* into a film and a TV series. He attempts to trace continuities (guided by translation isotopies) across media and discontinuities in transmedia representations in the latter's attempt to construct meaning independently.

Based on Per Linell's concept of recontextualization, Annjo Greenall and Eli Løfaldi suggest five fuzzy types of recontextualization, namely medial, generic, cultural, ideological, and linguistic, as potential categories for the study of adaptations and translations and suggest that it is important to include in an analysis questions that have traditionally been posed by Translation Studies with those posed by Adaptation Studies; 'all these elements work in unison, sometimes in harmony and sometimes not, but separating them inevitably means creating an artificial boundary and losing out of the fuller picture'.

Ifeoluwa Aboluwade attempts to challenge strict categorizations of translation and adaptation, as well as criteria such as the shift in medium or fidelity to the source text. With a case study from Nigerian theatre, she claims with Gérard Genette that texts are informed not only by prior texts, but also by parallel ones and finds Susan Arndt's concept of (transliterarity) helpful for dealing with media beyond written literature. She also sees Gunther Kress's social semiotic notions of (transduction) and (transformation) as particularly useful concepts for the convergence between translation and adaptation.

Andrew Chesterman sets out to investigate whether Translation Studies, Adaptation Studies, and Semiotics are indeed saying 'almost the same thing'. He discusses the concept of categories, only to conclude that categories are tools to be used according to whether or not they are useful for some purpose. Based on the case of the rhythm of a painting and its title, he suggests the term 'semiotransadaptation' as a portmanteau term indicative of the potential overlaps among the three fields.

Calfoglou (2019, this issue) and Spiros Polimeris look into the interplay between the visual and the verbal text in the framework of conceptual artworks. The authors investigate the role played by the verbal texts that accompany visual artworks and find that their relationship is rather complex in that the verbal text cannot simply be seen as hermeneutic or subsequent to the visual. They claim that the conceptual artwork is held together by the performative function of the visual and the verbal text and that it is rather the synergy created by the two semiotic systems, along with the viewer as text, which open up the potential for constant rereadings, retranslations, and adaptations of the artwork.

Finally, Queiroz and Pedro (2019, this issue) see intersemiotic translations as cognitive artefacts and predictive tools for new semiotic patterns. They suggest that cognition is situated outside the brain through the use of non-biological cognitive artefacts, including language. Their use of Peirce's triadic system of semiosis instead of the usual binary of source and target adds a third context-dependent parameter for the study of intersemiotic translation. They discuss issues of creativity and use

intersemiotic translation as an anticipatory and generative tool in the particular context of theatrical dance.

All in all, what this special issue attempts to do is to draw attention to intersemiotic translation as an area that can widen our understanding of the concepts of 'adaptation' and 'translation' and potentially bring Adaptation Studies and Translation Studies closer, encouraging interdisciplinary approaches for their study. Provided we approach the other fields with a genuine interest to shed more prismatic light on our topics of investigation, this area offers rich potential for future research.

The topics included in this special issue are only the tip of a huge intermedia iceberg. The interdisciplinary dialogue that takes place in it can only be seen as a small sample of the potential work that can be done on this fascinating subfield. It should be stressed that the inclusion of the particular three disciplines can by no means be seen as exclusive; other fields, such as media and intermedia studies, could and in fact should also join in the dialogue.

Imelda Whelehan, agreeing with Ecart Voigts-Virchow, notes that 'distinctions between intermediality and adaptation studies are not just about differing or incompatible theoretical roots, but also about intellectual traditions, the boundaries between scholarly disciplines in different cultures, contradictory university policies and even the differing habits of academic and journal publishers across the globe' and wonders whether translation theory could 'help us communicate more effectively across language, culture, and academic discursive formation' (17–18). Translation Studies can arguably enrich research on adaptations with its rich background in interlingual and intercultural transfers (see Greenall and Løfaldi, 2019, this issue for an example). Quoting Laurence Raw, to whose memory this special issue is dedicated, 'interdisciplinary discussion about research, teaching, and learning […] is fundamental to the future of both disciplines' (18).

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