

A NEW APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF TRANSLATION: FROM STAGE TO SCREEN¹

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Abstract

Using the concept of translation, proposed by André Lefevere, as a bidirectional process, the article discusses concepts such as originality, fidelity, equivalence and interpretant to approach film adaptation as a kind of intersemiotic and cultural translation. It poses a question to faithful translation and suggests that any translation, besides taking the label of cultural, can also be praised for becoming a transformation, which aims at modifying the work of art for ideological and poetological purposes.

Keywords: intersemiotic translation, cultural translation, transluciferation, transcreation, film adaptation.

Translation is not just a “window open on another world”, or some such pious platitude. Rather translation is a channel opened, often not without a certain reluctance, through which foreign influences can penetrate the native culture, challenge it, and even contribute to subverting it.

André Lefevere, (1992b):2

Translation studies have been the focus of attention for various contemporary scholars, including those of Comparative Literature. I shall attempt here to define translation in the modern sense of the term, which considers it a transformation, a concept in which the Peircean idea of signifying—translating from one semiotic system to another—and of reading—to construct a text—are both implicit.

Regarded as an effect of the contact between different languages and cultures, translation has shown itself to be a necessity, from the moment when two peoples need to communicate. Before the invention and diffusion of writing, translation was oral and immediate; interpreters performed the job. In literate communities, translation came to be the conversion of a written text in one language to another, although the rise of simultaneous translation in international conferences has preserved the oral form. The more or less obvious notion of translation, here summed up, gives rise, however, to diverse questions, and involves problems that are evident in any less superficial reflection. An attempt to respond to these questions underlies the entire effort of conceptualizing translation, changing its focus from mimetic reproduction to transformation. The traditional condemnation — “the translator is a traitor” — now has the status of a requirement. André Lefevere claims that the translator *must* be a traitor, a manipulator.

1. Definition of translation

As a practice, translation has occurred since ancient Roman times, and was evaluated for a long time in rather rigid terms, as right or wrong, faithful or free, literal or creative. This happened because institutions intended for the translations of famous books, like the Bible and the classics, pillars of the dominant culture, to be regarded as trustworthy. On the other hand, little attention was given in the past to translation as the process through which the real performance of the translator takes place. This type of study, which is fairly recent, seeks to analyze the linguistic performance of the translator and reconstruct the translation strategies underlying it that form a mental process.² As a product, however, translation continues to be studied, criticized, and even judged according to the same traditional criteria of fidelity that guided its practice until very recently. With post-structuralism and postmodernism, the param-

eters have been changed. Today, translation is regarded as a transformation. It is even granted the status of creation, as can be seen in the Haroldo de Campos' term **transcreation**. Translation studies now have as their object the factors that have brought about this transformation.

According to the dictionary, the term **translation**, from the Latin *translatus* means the act of conveying or transferring, and, by extension, the process of converting one language into another. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, it is the transmission of what is expressed in one language or set of symbols into another language or set of symbols. What these traditional definitions have in common is the presupposition of the existence of something inherent in the text, the meaning, which may be transported to another text. Translation, so conceptualized, implies a one-directional flow, from the original culture to the translated one. And yet, when one keeps in mind the theories of reading, which raise questions about the reader as constructor of the text and the existence of the text only insofar as it is read, we see that it is impossible for there to be a finished text in a language, full of meanings that we will uncover and then transport to the text in another language. The task of the translator begins to be seen also as an activity of reading—of one who constructs meaning—and not only of writing. The text, as a product of translation, implies the whole history of its reading, in its turn subordinated to the cultural context.³ One may therefore define the text as a set of reactivations of reading, and translation as one of these. Starting from the idea that translation involves everything that surrounds the text, including the context of its production, and that meaning is created by reading, the notion that what is transported from one text to another is the meaning is abandoned.

2. The Concepts of Originality and Fidelity

An old story is told that translations of the Old Testament, produced by seventy translators working simultaneously but in separate locales, miraculously resulted in identical texts, which served as the basis for later translations. According to André Lefevere (1992a: 114-115), this story suggests the categories that should be used to analyze the role that translations play in a culture. The first is knowledge of the trade. If all translations result in similar texts, it is because the translators were all masters of their trade. In second place comes credibility. Readers who are not familiar with the original need to believe that translation is its representation and to trust therefore in the translators and those who hire them. Here, we have a third category, which is sponsorship. In this category, what is important is to know who ordered the translation, in whose interest it is, and what need is being fulfilled with its execution. In the case of the translation of the Old Testament, the Jewish people who had immigrated to Egypt could, because of it, once again have access to the Bible. The translating activity can then be undertaken by three different agents. Initially, we have the sponsors, those who commission the translation, who select the texts to be translated and dictate the way they will be done. Next come the cultures of origin, who also may exercise power over the translations, especially when they are considered to have greater prestige. Finally, there are some texts that may exercise authority, when the culture derives its power from them. The Bible, the Koran, some classical literary texts are examples of authoritative texts.

To these three categories that go beyond the text, indicated as the basis for the analysis of any translation—knowledge of the trade, credibility, and authority—we may yet add two more: the image of a text, author or culture that the translator, consciously or unconsciously, wants to project, and the audience, that is to say, the reading public, the group of readers for whom the translation is intended and who want the translation for different reasons (Lefevere, 1992a).

This is not, however, the traditional concept that has dominated the practice of translation. The traditional underlying notions are those of the fidelity of the translation and the originality of the text to be translated. Faithfulness has been given priority in practice and in traditional evaluations of translation even to the detriment of quality, when it is a question of central or authoritative texts, public access to which is deemed desirable.⁴ In other less central and authoritative texts, a less faithful translation is tolerated, but occasionally better developed. And here enters the question of the perfecting of the language by the receiving culture, insofar as the correspondence to the original is not being judged.

The Bible and *The Communist Manifesto*, among others, are considered to be authoritative texts to which certain cultures connect their authority. And although these cultures tend to guard these texts with vigilance, the latter cannot but help be affected by translation. Scant freedom is therefore accorded the translators of these texts, and so-called fidelity in translation becomes almost obligatory. As they are presented in a certain way as un-touchable, the aura surrounding these works restricts the interpretive action of anyone who wants to approach them. Roger Manvell (1971:143) sees Shakespeare as an authoritative text and therefore states that perhaps making films based on Shakespeare is not so different from making other films, except in one important aspect: the author has such status that is not a case of only respecting his name and fame, but of the undeniable fact that in most cases one can add nothing to his work, one can only hope to interpret it as completely as possible.

Although the notion of fidelity to the original as unique, sacred, and immutable still troubles the translator of today, translations have been more and more seen not as products derived from the original, but as resulting from diverse readings (Bennett, 1982). These readings come to be regarded as iconic signs of one another.⁵ In this sense, translation is a semiotic activity, with a guaranteed right to greater freedom and creativity.

3. Intersemiotic Translation and the Concept of Equivalence

As a product resulting from a process, translation is a text alluding to another text (or texts), which maintains a certain relation to it or which still represents it in some way. It is this mode by which one text represents another, it is this type of relation existing between one and another that is the object of translation studies from the semiotic point-of-view.

In the last twenty years, semiotics has been active in analyzing visual texts, exploring the ramifications of the Peircean distinction between index, icon, and symbol in visual terms, or even discussing the nature of representation. Evidently, semiotics has not detained itself in traditional studies. It has added to the structuralist model both a concern with the social status and the working of the sign, and the definition and role of the spectator/reader in relation to the text. It has, in short, become a battlefield for competing theories, giving priority now to the social, now to the psychoanalytic, now to the descriptive (O'Toole, 1990: 185). Michael Halliday (1990) has emphasized the need to take into account the social role and predisposition of the sender in every descriptive study of language texts. On using language, we produce meaning, but we can also signify through other acts, such as, for example, through movements we make with our bodies, or when we wave flags, or put signs on roads, or build buildings, make films, write novels, poems or plays, paint, sculpt, model or embroider. Each of these semiotic activities has its own system of meaning. They do not appear only as languages in their means of expression, but are procedures that allow one to specify their processes and distinctive semiotic practices.

The theatre and the cinema are semiotic activities, for they exist to signify. To understand the artistic nature of each—theatre or cinema—we need to become familiar with specific aspects of each approach, that is, what type of sign they use and how these signs

are organized. Before two texts, a theatrical and a cinematic, which appear as iconic signs of each other, signs in the same semiotic chain, each can be considered a transformation, or translation, of the other. To translate, then, from the theatre to the cinema, or vice-versa, means to pass from one semiotic system to the other.

Intersemiotic translation⁶, however, takes place from the moment when a dramatic text is transformed into a performance, that is, when it is staged. The staged or theatrical text is already, in itself, an intersemiotic translation. The difficulties in staging a text is surmounted through the new directions theatre has taken, using codes of other systems, and arguing that the performances have the power to activate the imagination, in a different though not more efficient way, than the written text. Filmmakers explore the resources of cinema and the theatre, without, however, diminishing the role of the spectator's imagination, knowing that the cinema is able to show realistic images, but its success does not lie in the degree of realism it may obtain, but in the exploitation of the cinematographic resources and the use of these resources to create the context of action.

Jack J. Jorgens (1977: 251) thinks that there is a lot of defensive propaganda against the differences between theatre, literature, and cinema, and that it is about time to explore the creative possibilities of each medium within their limits. Many film theorists have already done their best to tear down the barriers between cinema and theatre. The film critics, according to him, should widen their vision and reaffirm the relations between cinema and other narrative forms, besides the fact that, in this era of films centred on the actor and the director, there are implications that all fiction films are at the same time performance, interpretation, and adaptation of scripts. He emphasizes also a "complete triangulation of film, script, and life".

The twentieth century has shown itself to be rich in productions that seek a greater integration of the arts. One sample of this wealth underlies the interest in the study of the interrelations among them.

In this context, intersemiotic translation — from text to stage or from theatre to cinema, for example — in any situation, would consist of looking for **equivalence** between the systems⁷. This means that element X occupying a certain place in a certain sign system, (or performing a certain function) the theatre, for example, would be substituted, in translation, by another element X, which has the same function (or occupy the same place) but in another sign system — the cinema, in our case. It is not “a question of whether the two texts are equivalent (from a certain aspect) but what type ... of translation equivalence they reveal” (Baker 1998: 80).

Erika Fisher-Lichte (1987), in her article on translating from dramatic to theatrical texts, argues

... that equivalence cannot be defined as identity of meaning, neither of the meaning that the text brings forth nor that of their elements or subtexts. ... Thus, a judgment of equivalence does not mean an existing relationship which can be perceived and stated by anybody, but rather is the result of a hermeneutic process in which the reading of script becomes related to the “reading” of performance with reference to meanings that are brought forth by both (211).

The same can be said in relation to theatrical texts and film texts. In this sense, two texts regarded as the translation of one another, a film and a play, are entirely independent works, *sui generis*, but at the same time intimately related. As a result of the transformational process, a totally new structure emerges. And the text has to be seen as an autonomous work that cannot be adequately understood and judged if taken merely as a transformation of the other. It cannot be denied, however, that it is intimately connected to the other, since it functions as its **interpretant**.⁸

The idea of equivalence comes from the fact that all language has a basic ordering, that is, the signs do not pile up but exist as systems that are semantically and syntactically organized. Accord-

ing to Popovic (1976), there are four types of equivalence: linguistic, paradigmatic, stylistic, and textual. In the first two types, the process takes place at the level of word and grammar, respectively. Stylistic equivalence, however, points to elements with equivalent functions. This is the level of intersemiotic translation. Thus, equivalence is not a question of seeking equality—that cannot be found even within the same language—but of process. Popovic's discussion offers a point of departure for the perception of equivalence as a dialectic between the signs of the texts in question. The aim of translation is to clarify the question of equivalence and examine what constitutes meaning within this process. Nowhere is this question normative, however. Translation is defined as a process of the transformation of one text, constructed through a certain semiotic system, into another text, of another semiotic system. This implies that, when one decodifies information given in one language and codifies it through another semiotic system, it becomes necessary to modify it, even if only slightly, since every semiotic system is characterized by its own qualities and restrictions, and no content exists independently of the medium that embodies it. This content cannot, for this reason, be transmitted, or translated, or transposed, independently of its semiotic system.

We posit intersemiotic translation as a “way of greater inner access to the kernel of translation”, translation as a critical-creative practice in the historicity of the means of production and reproduction, as reading, as meta-creation, as an action upon structures or events, as a dialogue of signs, as a synthesis and rewriting of history (Barbosa, 1979: 90)⁹, as thought in signs, transit of the senses, transcreation of forms in historicity (Plaza, 1987: 14). All this applies to the translator, we might add. If s/he has the spectator with all his/her social conditioners in view, the creator of the interpretant, also undergoes the influence of this same conditioning. What can also be observed in translation, therefore, is situated at the intersection, at the crossroads of this social condition shared by the sender and the receiver of the new sign created by transla-

tion. The latter, as an effective part in the signifying process, for whom something is in the place of something else, will add to what s/he sees, feels, perceives, and hears, what s/he knows: ideas socially controlled and established about an objective world, its neutral objects and procedures (Uexküll, 1984: 191). In any analysis of translation, we cannot, I repeat, restrict ourselves to systems as producers of signs — of which both the cinema and the theatre are capable — and their equivalence. It is necessary to take into account as well the aspects that, in both systems, shape their equivalence and the experience of the spectator. It becomes necessary, then, to study the conditions that make possible the transformation from one text to another, that is, the conditions that permit translation.

The studies in the field cannot, therefore, limit themselves to the description of similarities and differences between source-texts and target-texts. They need to try to show the mechanisms of canonization, integration, and exclusion which, underlying the production of the translated text, continuously operate in it at several levels. To reach this objective, these mechanisms become much broader than mere linguistic studies, and they no longer dissociate themselves from literary and cultural studies. This explains the emphasis given to the cultural element and to the evaluation of translation as an eminently transcultural phenomenon.

4. The Concept of Interpretant and the Cultural Translation

The concept of **interpretant** comes to be a very useful notion in translation studies. Some scholars have been working with the idea that to translate is to create interpretant signs¹⁰. This concept has sometimes been confused with the notion of interpreter, but actually, according to Peirce, it means a mental representation taken from the sign, or a mediated representation, and in this sense is distinguished from the signified. According to the semiotician, a

sign puts something in the place of the idea that it produces or modifies. That which it substitutes is the object; what it puts in its place is the signified and the idea that it causes to come into being, the **interpretant**. The **interpretant** is, then, a sign that in some way translates, explains or develops a previous sign and so on continuously, in a process of infinite semiosis (Sebeok, 1986: 385).

In contemporary semiotics, the interpretant can be a synonym in the same language, a definition expressed in formal or natural language, a corresponding sign in another semiotic system, the exhibition of the object to which the term applies, a behavioural habit acquired by the approach to the sign or the entire series of inferences sustained by the sign. The interpretant is not a platonic entity or metalinguistic construct but a testable product of the semiotic activity of human culture (Sebeok, 1986: 386).

The interpretant can be associated with the equally semiotic notions of **Umwelt**, **Innenwelt**, and **Lebenswelt**. The **Umwelt** is the biological *objective world*¹. The **Innenwelt** is the cognitive map that the individual develops, and the **Lebenswelt** the world of culture (Jeha, 1994). The latter may be indicated as one of the determinants of what is called in semiotics a modelling system, that is, that which models *reality*¹² for the human being, using the reductive tools of culture.

The concept of culture proposed by Lotman and Uspensky, as a system of signs that organizes the social life of man in terms of inherited memory of the community which express in a system of restrictions and prescriptions (Lotman & Uspensky, 1986: 410), can be conciliated with Clifford Geertz's definition: Culture

denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about attitudes toward life (Geertz, 1993: 89).

This definition of culture, centred on the signified, is fundamental for our study. As “the models of culture...attribute objective meaning...to a social and psychological reality, molding themselves to this reality but also molding it in relation to themselves,” we have an indication of how the structures of meaning relating to a certain concept are seen to be crucial in the translation of one text to another.

The concept of culture developed from the historical peculiarity according to which each culture follows its own paths as a function of the historical events it has confronted. Culture is thus defined as a cumulative process, a result of every historical experience of previous generations, which limits or stimulates the creative action of the individual. Many of the transformations that happen during a translation process illustrate, in addition to the connection between translation and cultural contexts, the connection between translation and history.

Within these conceptions of culture, aspects related to the phenomenon of translation, previously neglected, are now taken into account. If translation is one **interpretant**, it encompasses the cultural, which has not taken into consideration in the traditional approaches. Translation, therefore, never occurs in a vacuum where it is presupposed that languages meet, but in the context of the tradition of all literatures, at the meeting point between translators and writers, which is cultural. The translators are therefore seen as the mediators between the literary traditions, between cultures, not with the intention of bringing the original to the surface in a neutral and objective way, but to make it accessible in its own terms. The terms of the translator, on the other hand, are limited by the context in which s/he lives and may even not take shape in something intrinsically his/her own. Translation, then, is not produced in perfect laboratory conditions, sterilized and neutral, but in the in-between place of various traditions, cultures, and norms. Every translation is therefore a cultural translation.

Some scholars, mainly those of the Tel-Aviv school,¹³ without referring to translation as cultural, deal with the theory of **polysystems**, which considers the semiotic phenomena not as a conglomerate of elements, but as parts of a dynamic system. The term “polysystem emphasizes the idea of a multiplicity of relations in the heterogeneity of culture” (Vieira, 1996: 125). In addition, **polysystems** also come back to reception, considering translation an empirical phenomenon that acquires identity from the position it occupies within the receptive literary system (128). They do not refer explicitly to translation as a cultural phenomenon, but refer to reception and to literature as a system, which implies this idea.

A theory of translation should therefore be concerned with the demands of a world in constant change, where not only language but also culture, history, and ideology are mixed and pass from one text to another. In fact, recent studies focus on the interrelation between texts, their rewritings, and the context of their production. They also emphasize what is considered a cultural phenomenon, that is, the text as a concrete entity with respect to the reader, enriched by the accumulated history of its readers. As Tony Bennett says, there is no text behind or beyond the forms in which it is produced, the social relations in which it is written, the interpretive horizons in which it is incorporated (Bennett, 1982: 131). This implies the non-existence of an independent, isolated text. Any text is an effort that suggests and regulates the interpretive and analytic options to be adopted by the reader. The way the text was presented for consumption and how it reached its audience come into its history, as well as other factors. In short, translation studies, within the cultural perspective, do not neglect textual analysis, with its intervention in the politics of reading and activation of the text, but aim at inscribing it within ideological, social, and cultural relations. Nor do they discard contextual criticism, with the reinsertion of the text in the original conditions of production and consumption. Yet, they go beyond both and profess as an object of study the “living history of the text,” or the real history of its activation¹⁴.

This objective is related to the ideas of Walter Benjamin on the techniques of mass reproduction derived from the politicization of the artistic consciousness, which, according to him, will not kill creation but, on the contrary, remake the “ways-of-forming” it, from which new, challenging shapes will emerge.¹⁵ According to him, this development has distanced the work of art from the aura once attributed to it, in virtue of its unique existence, and radically altered its condition of existence, conferring on it the possibility of repetition or reduplication, such that its meaning cannot be specified *a priori*, before it is known, which is impossible, the contexts in which the work will be inserted in the future. The consequence, Bennett says, is a harmony between the work and its activations (rewritings, translations, commentaries, critiques, etc.) in a mobile system of circulating signifiers. What will be known, or produced, is not the text in itself, but the activated text, the only concrete social entity (Bennett, 1982: 139).

5. Translation as Transformation

At a time when translation is not regarded as mimesis, a copy of the original, but as an activity reverting to the conditions of production and reception, translation comes to be seen as a transformation. This can occur starting from the receiving culture, which becomes the focus of attention and distances itself from the culture of origin, but it may occur on a two-way street, starting simultaneously from the two cultures, the receiving and the producing. Among the theorists who make use of this concept, we may cite Haroldo de Campos, who analyzes transformation by starting from the receiving culture, and recreates by starting from the local (Brazilian) tradition, and André Lefevere, who is concerned with the transformation starting from the two poles, origin and receiver, and suggests that the creative process occurs in a back-and-forth movement, undergoing trans-

formations and pressures both from the producing and receiving cultures.

Haroldo de Campos, an excellent translator in practice, has contributed much to the theory of translation as transformation, with concepts like that of **plagiotropism** and **transcreation** (or **transluciferation**) or **transtextualization**. For him, **plagiotropism** means translation of the tradition. According to Vieira, it is “a neo-linear transformation of texts through history...a reactivation of parody...where the intertext is not translated by the insertion of translators [of the work], but by the appropriation of the literary tradition [of the receiving culture]” (Vieira, 1999: 107).

For Campos, **transcreation** “is a radical translating operation...[which] does not try to reproduce the form of the original understood as sound pattern, but seeks to appropriate from the best poetry contemporary to the translation and use the extant local tradition” (Vieira, 1999: 110). To transcreate is therefore to nourish oneself from local sources. As **transcreation** or **transtextualization**, translation demystifies the ideology of fidelity, abolishing the superiority of the source and giving value to the translation and receiving culture.

In Plaza’s words, Haroldo de Campos proposes that “while original and translation are different as language, their aesthetic information will be connected to one another by a relation of isomorphy...In short, it is a question of translating under the sign of invention” (Plaza, 1978: 28).

According to Campos himself,

...the translation of creative texts will always be **re-creation** or **parallel creation**, autonomous but reciprocal. The more difficulties there are in the text, the more re-creatable it is, the more seductive as a possibility open to re-creation. In a translation of this kind, not only the signified but the *sign itself* is translated, that is, its physicality, its materiality (properties of sound, visual imagery), everything, according to

Charles Morris, that forms the iconicity of the aesthetic sign (Campos, 1992: 35).

Translation also means

...to retrace the shaping course of the poetic function, recognizing it in the source text and re-inscribing it as an engendering textual device in the translator's language, to arrive at the transcreated poem as an isomorphic re-project of the original poem (Campos, 1981: 151).

These quotations are examples of Haroldo de Campos' work on poetic translation, and the criterion for his concept of translation of form. Translation as a total *demonic* transformation, or **transluciferation**, besides connecting us to a text, stimulates us to look at the source text in a never before imagined way, which fully justifies the presence of the voice of the translator as well as distortions and omissions. As the new text does not intend to be a substitute for the original one, there is no loss. Normally, this type of translation is intended for readers who are familiar with the original and have the pleasure of comparing the texts as an intellectual exercise. The freedoms taken by the translator emphasize the subtext, frequently sacrificing fidelity in favour of a stylistic equivalence. The resulting text is only regarded as a translation in the widest sense of the term. As the theory of contemporary translation emphasizes the functional instead of the normative, the strategy to be adopted will depend on the role that the new text must play (Clüver, 1989: 75).

To better define creative translation, one may quote Campos himself:

Blazing with the flaming tail of its instigating angel, creative translation, possessed with demonism, is neither merciful nor

memorial: it intends, at the limit, the erasure of origin: the obliteration of the original. This parricidal lack of memorial I shall call **transluciferation** (Campos, 1981: 209).

Campos therefore gives priority to the effect of the receiving culture over the translation. In the words of Susan Bassnett (1993: 154) his “work deliberately erases the borders between sources and target systems”. For her, the brothers Campos “use translation as a way of affirming their rights as Brazilian readers, to re-read and repossess canonical European literature” (157), inserting here a political proposal.

Another contemporary theorist who also considers translation as transformation is André Lefevere. He even goes beyond Campos when he considers transformation as occurring at the poles of both production and reception. According to Vieira (1996: 138), besides inverting the unidirectional vision of the role of translation as a shaping force, he emphasizes the “role of the receiving context in the creation of images of foreign texts, writers, and cultures and the role of translation in the creation of a translinguistic and transcultural canon”. She also explains its bidirectional nature, that is, “the translations produced within the ideological and poetological limits of the receiving culture create images of the source but also have a transcultural effect of retroversion by creating canons, thus their bi-directionality”.

In his writings, Lefevere works with important concepts like those of rewriting and system. He gives emphasis to the role played by translations, which refer to, or represent other texts in the evolution and interaction of literatures and cultures. He is also concerned with the influence that translations (and other types of rewriting) have on how literatures and cultures are received and the way literature is taught. He considers the study of translation important because it reveals the mechanisms of canonization, integration, exclusion, and conditioning, which operate subliminally in literature and society. He tries to establish the role of translation as

a shaping force of culture and raises some important questions: the creation of images through translation, the need for and responsibility of representing a text in another culture (translation). He also points to the responsibility of the translator in the selection of the texts to be represented/translated and discusses the factors involved in this selection. Lefevere deals with the power of sponsorship, poetics, the universe of discourse, and also with the translator as mediator, one who modifies the work of art for ideological and poetological ends¹⁵.

What we try to emphasize is not translation procedures derived from the cultural conditions of production and reception, having in mind that what is translated is not the language but the culture, the ease or difficulty in the translation depending on the degree of proximity (mutual similarity) of the cultures in question (Casagrande, 1954: 335-340).

Then, we must see in a text to be translated not the irrelevant struggles of a past, but the lived realities of the present, not the fossil of an ideal, but the interests and sentiments of our own time. Each translator needs to find in the text what is relevant to him/herself, for only there the variety and multiple dimensions of the work of art can achieve meaning .

6. Film Adaptation as Translation

The study of adaptation as translation, a phenomenon as old as the cinema itself, did not offer any coherent method that would allow the study of film adaptation in a systematic manner until the work of Patrick Catrysse (1992), which is based on the Polysystemic Theory of Translation, the research which has been conducted by Gideon Toury, Theo Hermans, and Itamar Even-Zohar. I consider the use of these theories as appropriate support for the study of film adaptation because both translation and film adaptation studies are concerned with the transformation of the source-text, under condi-

tions of **invariance**, “a term used to denote the concept of immutability of elements of the source text in the translation process” (Shuttleworth 1997), that is, those conditions in which the nucleus is retained while a relation is established between the initial and resulting entities. The **invariant** represents features common to source and target texts. A nucleus is retained during the process of transformation from one semiotic entity to another functional entity and which is made up of a potential element of another secondary cultural system (Catrysse, 1992: 54).

The term film adaptation indicates both the process of adaptation and the product, but the study of adaptation also consists of verifying the way an adaptation (as finished film) works within the context. Can every adaptation be presented to the spectators as an adaptation/translation of a previous text? What is the function of film adaptation? Does it function as adaptation? Is it considered an adaptation by the public and the critics? Is it evaluated for its value as a film, or for its being adapted from a certain work?

According to Catrysse, film adaptation can have two kinds of functions: one that is innovative and another conservative. The adaptation has an innovative function when the stability of the film’s genre is in danger, but it will have a conservative function when the genre that is being imported has a successful and stable position. The function, whether conservative or innovative, seems to determine the politics of selection as well as the mode of adapting the source-text.

The same author states that film adaptations are not limited merely to one source, for example, the literary work in question (cited or regarded as the source), as many other practices serve at the same time as models for the production process of the work (film), at different levels. One example is **film-noir**, a film genre in which the literary works serve as a model (source) not only at the diagetic level, but at the photographic level as well, since the genre was inspired by German Expressionist photography of 1920, as well as by the contemporary drawing and painting. The films

said to be adapted from literary works do limit themselves therefore to adapting merely the literary source. Other elements, which are not at the diegetic level, may as well serve as a translation model. For this reason, every film must be studied as a set of elements of discursive (or communicative, or semiotic) practices, whose production was determined by other, previous discursive practices and by the general historical context. The study of adaptation consists, then, of finding and explaining the relations between the discursive practices and their respective contexts (sociocultural, political, economic); in discovering which transfer practices have, or have not, worked as adaptation, translation, parody; and, finally, in explaining why all this has happened the way it has happened.

Even if translation (and adaptation) studies share with comparative literature and theories of intertextuality the method and field of work, the historical definition of the object of study still indicates the relative specificity of the discipline. Thus, the concept of adaptation is limited to texts that function as adaptation/translation, and their field of study joins discursive practices and situational contexts. The objective is the systematic study of the intersemiotic relations between these discursive practices and their contexts. Analytical tools of intertextuality studies can be used as long as the pre-texts and hypo-texts are not considered source material but models that determine the production of the target text, and as long as the text is conceived as an identifiable semiotic entity (text, fragment of text, a group of texts or special discursive practices). The concept of intertextual will be substituted by that of intersemiotic, that is, the relation not between texts but between discursive or communicative practices.

The task of the researcher, therefore, will be to start from the discursive practices of the film and then turn to contextual practices or situations that function as models. Finally, it is to look for markers that indicate intertextual and intersemiotic relations. The markers may appear as implicit or explicit. They are implicit when the re-writing does not reveal itself to be based on a model. They

are explicit when the film mentions the name of the literary work or its author. In this case, the spectators can check the relations. Yet, even the films that use explicit markers, make explicit only part of the material that has regulated its production. An example would be a film whose credits cite the name of the work and the author, but do not mention the adaptation of Expressionist photography—as, for example, in the **films-noirs** mentioned above—or the adaptation of conventions and films prior to the author.

7. Conclusion

Translation (and by extension film adaptation), as we have seen, is a sign, that which is in the place of something...for someone...at a certain moment or point in the semiotic chain. It is no longer, as traditionally defined, the carrier, whether from one language or system to another or others. It becomes a complex procedure that involves cultures, artists, their socio-historical contexts, readers/spectators, traditions, ideology, the experience of the past and the expectations of the future. It involves the use of conventions, of former or contemporary techniques, of styles and genres. To translate also means to perpetuate or contest, to accept or challenge. From the same point-of-view, it involves, above all, a transcultural reading. In the words of Alfredo Bosi, to translate is also to acculturate.

Notes

1. This article is an English version, slightly modified, of the Introduction of my doctoral thesis “Os Enleios de Lear: da semiótica à tradução cultural”.

2. I refer here to the studies of Bell (1991) and Lörscher (1991). See Bibliography.
3. Reading theoreticians, like Halliday, Kress, and Fairclough emphasize the role of the productive and receptive contexts of the text.
4. A central text is that which is considered to incorporate the essential values of a culture. Its translations will be minutely evaluated so as not to become unacceptable and, consequently, seen as subversive of that culture. This term is widely used by André Lefevere (Lefevere, 1992a: 120-122).
5. According to Peirce, the icon is defined as a sign which refers to an object it denotes simply by its own characteristics. To be an icon, it has to be similar to the object to be used as its sign (Sebeock, 1986: 328).
6. The term intersemiotic translation (or transmutation) was coined by Jakobson to refer to one of the three types of translation (the others being interlingual translation and intralingual system). Intersemiotic translation can be defined as an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems.
7. "Theorists who maintain that translation is predicated upon some kind of equivalence have, for the most part, concentrated on developing typologies of equivalent, focusing on the rank (word, sentence or text level) at which equivalence is said to obtain" (Baker 1998:77).
8. Briefly, interpretant is the mental representation taken from the sign (Sebeok, 1986: 385).
9. The translation of this quotation is the author's responsibility, as well as all other translations from sources in Portuguese.
10. I refer here to the work of Julio C. M. Pinto and Else R.P. Vieira (see bibliography).
11. The term objective is being used here in the semiotic sense, as that which exists only as an object of experience, that which is perceived by the observer, as a member of a species.

12. Reality here too refers to the objective world, the world as an object of experience.

13. Gideon Toury and Itamar Even-Zohar are the main references for translation studies in Israel.

14. I here use the concept of activation of the text, as described by Tony Bennett, consisting of everything that is related to the cultural phenomenon, and which has to do with the text, from adapted films, interviews with authors and actors, advertising during the appearance and other “activations” both dominant and marginal. This concept contains the same idea as rewriting, used by André Lefevere. Translation is a form of rewriting and therefore a form of text activation.

15. Benjamin reflects on alterations that have occurred in the artistic superstructure, imposed by the capitalist mode of production. In the past, works had an aura and an authority, and they exercised a ritual function, contemplated at a distance. But the uniqueness of the work was overcome by contemporary masses, who began to accept a mechanical reproduction as its equivalent, the work no longer venerated as a cult object but regarded as a consumer good, sold on the market. This work, instead of absorbing its owner, is absorbed by him. Reactions to these objects are completely determined by the audience to which the individual is subordinate.

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