

Introduction

Translation and Memory Across Cultures and Disciplines. Past and Future Tenses

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0. A preface on the translational internationalization of the humanities

This special volume is the result of a very long, exciting, yet rather difficult struggle, involving translations and self-translations. Who writes here is the “effect” of two people’s endeavors; two people who have come to know each other to some extent across text, screen, and phone line—who, surely, respect and cherish one another, without ever having met. One is American, the other Italian; they have been invited to write for an International Journal in English, a journal that hosts articles that engage, obviously, not only translation, but that are themselves the product of self-translations. This very process has necessarily become part of the volume’s introduction, since one of its authors is not a native speaker. This is a “fact” that nowadays has become routine at least in the Western-Eurocentric worlds, and none dares question it: we must write in English. Otherwise, our international status will be affected, and not only will we go back to being provincial, addressing only a limited audience, but we will be devalued, score lower on all the national evaluations that determine individual and institutional research funding. This seems to be a one-way trajectory that everyone acknowledges, that some occasionally criticize, but is never actually resisted,

since it is the way the global production of knowledge and educational systems work.

One might wonder why we are foregrounding the obvious, when we should be writing about translation and memory. As many of the essays here demonstrate, however, the relationship between translation and memory has very much to do with not only the position of the person who is translating, but also with that of the person who is writing about translation, and thus creating an archive—memory of all the lives a text might have, along with its histories and narratives, its former and new translated meanings. If all critical analysis and meditation on the differences between languages—which includes the memory that sustains them, and the memory-texts in the languages that manage to survive—are but a translation/self-translation, often erasing nuances and disregarding untranslatability, then in which recesses of translation (from and into English and into every other language) and memory does the future of the humanities reside?

1. Memory and translation of past intercourses

Isn't this what a translation does? [. . .] By elevating the signifier to its meaning or value, all the while preserving the mournful and debt-laden memory of the singular body, the first body, the unique body that the translation thus elevates, preserves, and negates [relève]? Since it is a question of a travail—indeed, as we noted, a travail of the negative—this relevance is a travail of mourning, in the most enigmatic sense of this word [. . .] The measure of the relève or relevance, the price of a translation, is always what is called meaning, that is, value, preservation, truth as preservation (Wahrheit, bewahren) or the value of meaning, namely, what, in being freed from the body, is elevated above it, interiorizes it, spiritualizes it, preserves it in memory. A faithful and mournful memory.
(Derrida 2013, 378)

Among the many theoretical perspectives from which one can look at translation, as well as the many objects that can be

considered from the point of view of translation theories and practices, the translation/memory nexus is among the most fraught, precisely because memory is by definition contestatory, and always mediated, and thereby the most complex and difficult to qualify on almost every level. Because of their tight intertwining, one runs the risk of reiterating or echoing what has been said and done already (see, for example, the recent book by one of the author of this volume: Brownlie 2016). Oversaturated, we struggle to find what else could come from further confrontations between these two concepts: how to consider and render truly heuristic an encounter between translation *and* memory *now*, in the *age of posttranslation studies* (Gentzler 2017)?

The quoted passage above from Jacques Derrida dates back many years, and, in the domain of translation theories influenced by poststructuralism, it serves as a milestone in the encounter between translation and memory. In what follows, we would like to go back to what might belong to even older history of memory and translation engagements. If for literary critics and translation specialists this history sounds passé, it is not the case for philosophers or scholars working with language and meaning.

One of the first fields of confrontation and exchange between translation and memory was the study of the “meaning of meaning”—semiotics, philosophy of language—whereby the implications of any act of translation became part of many theories and speculations on the working of meaning between languages and cultures (Nergaard 1995). Should this seem peripheral to the main event, we could point to structuralism, and even to the beginnings of poststructuralism, up to its recent neomaterialist transformations, as a way of rethinking languages, cultures, and their relation with history and the “material” world. There we find the crucial work of translation and memory as perspectives and/or as epistemic positions that have enabled the study of languages and cultures and the effects of different temporalities, politics, subjectivities and bodies—that is, of the transformative character of translation in memorializing act.

As clarification, let us start from some basic assumptions underlining not a post-, but a no-longer-

structuralist, interpretative, and translational conception of how *semiosis* works, looking at the work of Umberto Eco, to whom this issue is dedicated.

Even though his work is recognized as having significantly contributed to the development of Roman Jakobson's three-fold classification of translation (Eco 2001),¹ here we want to mention briefly another concept that he used to explain the workings of *semiosis*, along with that of memory.

The operative first assumption is that every act of interpretation that comprises acts of translation has recourse to an *encyclopedia*, in the semiotic sense that Umberto Eco (1976, 1984) has given to the term—that in its turn refers to semantic and iconic memories that are part not only of every *langue* system, but of every act of *parole*, to go back to Ferdinand de Saussure. In other words, the very idea of how meaning works had already changed in the 1980s, thanks also to Eco's perspective for which the idea of a semiotic universe is

made not so much of signs, but of *cultural units*; entities that absorb and reflect the influence of the culture in which they find themselves, and which are no longer the lemmas [word; term] of a rigid system of content organization (a dictionary), but rather the *nodes of a network* of meanings that can be treaded upon in multiple directions, depending on the inferences and the interpretive connections one chooses: a semiotic universe that takes the shape of an *encyclopedia*. (Lorusso 2015, 81)

In respect to translation processes, this concept is relevant for two different reasons. The first is that, in accepting *semiosis* as operating within encyclopedias, what is most relevant is that every term composing a code is always already interpreted, bringing along the history of its uses and translations; the working of languages moving from its structure to the actual effects and transformations of every signifying practices that define not so much *what is a*

¹ One of the most significant contributions to Jakobson's classification was made by Eco in *Experiences in Translation* (2001), starting from Charles S. Peirce's influence on Jakobson. Even though Eco emphasizes that for Peirce "*meaning*, in its primary sense, is a 'translation of a sign into another system of signs'" (Eco 2001, 69), he also argues that Peirce "uses *translation* in a figurative sense: not like a metaphor, but *pars pro toto* (in the sense that he assumes 'translation' as a synecdoche for 'interpretation')" (Eco 2001, 69).

language, but what concurs to its different kinds of circulation and transmissions, that is, to its translations. As Patrizia Violi summarizes: “The encyclopaedia marks the transformation of the code from a *rule* that defines signification and interpretation, into the idea of a system of possible inferences, in which even a principle of choice and of freedom may find a place” (Violi 1992, 99).

In a culture conceived as an encyclopedia, *the hierarchies fall*, because the priorities and the dependencies change according to circumstances (thus *locally*, and *bodily*). Meaning starts to be thought of as always already constructed and reconstructed, hence translated, in time (and space), within a dialectic between what is already deposited in the encyclopedia and what is historically and culturally negotiated; between consolidated habits² and their possible transformations. And here is the second reason this concept might play a role: collective memories, thought of in their contingent political, social and historical formations, are what is filtered and negotiated and transformed from local, national and cultural encyclopedia. Memory and its processes are what, in different contexts, emerge as different processes of cultural translation.

Every translator, therefore, deals not only with those memories belonging to the cultural and historical contexts in which she operates, and with the different politics of memory surrounding the particular text being translated, but also with the semantic and pragmatic fields (scripts, genres, frames) of which each term, each name, is part. In other words, languages, and not only natural languages but images and sounds as well, are thought of as forms of cultural and historical memory, often capable of directing, but, at least, influencing, what we *now* think of as the fluxes of linguistic traffic that are produced in those border and contact zones—again, temporal and spatial—wherein translation operates.

In other words, whenever we look at the processes of archiving and preserving cultures, we find the *modeling*, and *translating*, nature of memory. Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspensky wrote more than forty years ago that the “implanting

² We refer here to the notion of habit as theorized by Charles S. Peirce (see especially *Collected Papers* V.4000).

of a fact into the collective memory, then, is like a translation from one language into another—in this case, into the “language of culture” (Lotman and Uspensky 1971, 214). And they add—prior to much more recent theorizations of what an “event” is in light of transmedia and current transnational thinking: “*Events* have multilayered interpretations, they are subject to corrections, revisions. The construction of the historical event is nothing but the translation of something into the language of memory” (Lorusso 2015, 101).

A visual example of such influence is the concept of *Pathosformel* by, recently rediscovered and much discussed in memory studies and aesthetic theory. Developed throughout his life, the unfinished project of the atlas of *Mnemosyne*, *Pathosformeln* refers to all those images and forms of pathos (emotions, passions such as fear, awe, and horror) that survive as a cultural heritage imprinted in our collective memory. There are, in other words, antique roots sustaining modern images, their translations—the very way in which their meaning can be reversed—that is at stake whenever we analyze visual cultures.³

2. Memory and translation current transactions

However, even though the intersections and exchanges between memory and translation are undeniable, indisputable, and generative, they do not exclude several critical issues: how can these intersections be truly heuristic? Is any confrontation possible without ironing out the actual differences between the two concepts? That is, on the one hand, to think of translation as a way to construct collective memories, their survival, and on the other hand, of memory as always requiring a transfer of time and space, a recontextualizing of its representations and expressions? And even more so if we think of translation as the transformation of one’s own traditions and identity, in itself a process that implies the fatigue of welcoming and of hospitality, the hard work of transmitting one’s own otherness;

³ In the past few years, there has been an increasing interest in Warburg’s project and his idea of *Pathosformeln* in many fields (visual studies, aesthetics, history) dealing with the construction and circulation of memory images. Amongst the many authors, see the work of Georges Didi-Huberman (2005, 2011).

moreover, as a widening of the very concept of multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2009).

One has to remember all the different practices—individual and collective, linguistic and social—that are at stake in every engagement, to think of practices of translation as both a metaphorical transfer and, as Barbara Godard (see Karpinski, Henderson, Sowton, and Ellenwood 2013) suggests, as metonymical links (see also Tymoczko 1999). In other words, one must not forget the implications of using translation as a metaphor standing in for the encounter with the other that is, also, a transformation of one's own tradition and memory. This is a choice that is always conveyed by the real labor that accompanies welcoming not only another language, but also another future and another possible past into the negotiations between the translator, the texts, the discourses, and the *places*, spaces, and times surrounding them. What happens when translation is “translated,” transferred as an expansion and an extension of memories through the figure of testimony and witnessing? And how does translation function in the dynamics of postmemory, as conceptualized by Marianne Hirsch⁴ and others (see Hirsch 1997, 2012), in the intergenerational passage that structures both filiation and affiliation?

In as much as the concepts and processes of translation and memory are understood to be mutually implicating, if not interpenetrating, in literary critical studies, philosophy, linguistics, distinctions between individual (or autobiographical memory) and collective or cultural memory are often not acknowledged. Even when the topic is traumatic memory, in particular, and the analytic categories are drawn from the familiar models of psychoanalytic theory, memory as a phenomenon and a practice is considered to operate *across* (hence our volume's title) realms and registers.

Likewise, we—as the editors of this volume—are not inclined to privilege either personal or public memory, or engage in debate over the question of priority or precedence. Our essays treat translation in regard to both social and individual memory, reflecting our conviction that, for our

⁴ See the interview with Marianne Hirsch in this issue, in which she revisits the concept of postmemory in its relationship with practices of translation.

interpretive purposes, both draw from the same well. There is analytic force and ethical impact in studying the uses and effects of each, and their interconnectedness, as autobiographical narratives, fiction, as well as other forms of literary and cultural expression demonstrate. However, in the disciplines of psychology and the social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, political science, and history, these distinctions *do* matter, differently; indeed, they are foundational. Having said that, there appears to be a strong drift now in the direction of stressing the effects of the social and the public on personal memory, or an attempt to bridge social science and psychological approaches.

This is the case in cutting-edge empirical research in the neurosciences and cognitive psychology, where arguably the greatest advances in memory studies have recently taken place. “Mnemonic consequences,” or what is otherwise referred to as the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, are attributed to the role of conversation/the impact of silence, the said and the unsaid (Stone et al. 2012); this is also true for studies in the reconstructing of memory, which reached its greatest visibility (and notoriety) in the 1990s. Whereas in psychoanalysis the agent of repression is the unconscious (both singular and collective, though to different effect), recent research in cognitive and neurobiological science finds the suppressing or controlling of unwanted memories to be the product of brain systems similar to the mechanisms that stop reflexive motor responses (Anderson and Levy 2009). In studies that seek to bridge psychology—which is methodologically individually based and functional in its perspective—and the disciplines more generally focused on groups, whether they are nations, tribes, generations, or other units, an important connection is psychology’s recent affirmation that individuals are embedded in complex social networks. Memory, according to neuroscientists, has an epidemiological dimension in the sense of social contagion, which is now exacerbated by social media. Whether mnemonic formations are primarily biological or social in origin, psychology is not interested in the individual *qua* individual, but in general or universal principles or features that can be extracted. In other words, just because the locus is the

individual doesn't mean that the investment is in the subject or subjectivity.

Despite this fundamental difference between the various disciplinary approaches that, nevertheless, needed to be mentioned, what steers much of this work back to literary and cultural perspectives on memory and translation of psychic phenomena is the centrality accorded to narrative and identity.

In this respect, Aleida Assmann's (2015) recent reflections on the working of cultural memory merits mention. Assmann comments not only on neuroscience's and media studies' shared "basis in the constructivist hypothesis that events and experiences have no ontological status but are made and remade over and over again" (Assmann 2015, 42), as Lotman and Uspensky (1978) have also said. Her work is also relevant because of her perspective on cultural memory as a domain that must engage with the role of affects—both individual and collective, along with their intertwining—within a diachronic and transgenerational analytical gaze. What does her "model" suggest? Arguably, a sort of rearticulation of the very notion of postmemory, with the added insights of a constructivist point of view. The latter emphasizes the *synchronic* and embedded quality of a memory fabricated according to actual needs and demands in the present, calls for approaches that focus on the affective dimension of memory in a long-term *diachronic* perspective, both at the individual and at the collective transgenerational transmission levels.

It is probably in this very rearticulation of the relationship between cultural memory and postmemory that processes of translation and rewriting of memories are not only significant because they create an "*afterlife* of repeated transformations, but also a *prehistory*": what is at stake are the ways in which "memory traces interact with previous experiences and cultural patterns; how both of these provide templates that gain a steering function within our mental cosmos" (Assmann 2015, 43).

Resonance is thus a form of "stimulating and strengthening the affective charge in the process of remembering" (44), where

[t]he concept of resonance implies the interaction of two separate entities, one located in the foreground, one in the background. In this case, the element in the foreground does not cover up or elide what exists in the background; on the contrary, the element in the foreground triggers the background and fuses with it. We may also speak of a cooperation, in which the background element nonconsciously or unconsciously guides, forms, shapes the foreground element. My emphasis here is on the hidden correspondence and the tacit agreement between a surface stimulus and its response on a deeper and nonconscious level, which can enlarge our understanding of the nonconscious but not necessarily unconscious, let alone occult, dynamics of memory. (Assmann 2015, 45)

Resonance and a prehistory of memories can be found in the ways in which translation processes, when dealing with the past, are forms of cooperation between background and foreground that might differ, involving both temporalization and spatialization strategies, as our essays and interviews amply demonstrate. As the interview with James Young that we present online (<http://translation.fusp.it>) amply suggests, ongoing interest in the link between language and landscape, memorial sites, ruins, and layered translations points to the manifold ways that translation is instrumentalized for different memorializing ends, whether they be in the service of creation, reclamation, or effacement of a memory or former version (one's own or another's). Arguably, every act of translation displaces a previous one; sometimes, they continue to coexist, even if one of the languages or versions is in the ascendant or dominant position. Translation works in two directions, toward both remembrance/reification and oblivion, along a *continuum* which is, of course, subject to change over time. Although, for example, we witness the erasing and mistranslating of place names in Brian Friel's (1981) famous play *Translations*—in which in 1883 British surveyors are redrawing the map, that is, converting Gaelic names to English ones—in 1922 both Irish and English were made the official languages of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Linguistic appropriation is the primary form of displacement of the other; linguistic imperialism in this form has been one of the great weapons of choice in history. It is important to note, however, that

translation involves reaction and resistance, as well as aggression and enactment. Isabelle Jenin's essay in our volume addresses the replacement of place names in Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*, in which the original Indian names for the American landscape are changed to English and Spanish ones. The text, she argues, shows that the "translated" landscape is in some way fundamentally untranslatable, that the Laguna Pueblo spirits that haunt the European settlers' imprint are exercising their own dominion, keeping their names alive.

Toponymy isn't inherently political, but the history and meaning of place names are dramatically associated with changes of regime, occupation, settlement, and linguistic/cultural imperialism in general; acts of translation—renaming—are complicit with memorializing and monumentalizing efforts that represent symbolic as well as economic capital investments. They shape, even distort, cultural memory and identity by ensuring certain legacies while effacing, sometimes even burying others.

4. Traces of translatability and untranslatability

The working of memory and translation as a kind of urban archaeology has recently been reclaimed and further developed by Sherry Simon (2012). Simon's overarching project deals with those urban spaces that are divided and polyglot, such as Nicosia, Trieste, and Montreal, addressing translation studies in relation to its growing engagement with those cultural, economic, and political disparities and variations that act on each process of "mediation". According to Simon, "[s]uch an enlarged understanding of translation includes acts of mediation which are not language transfers in the conventional sense, but are more broadly practices of writing that take place at the crossroads" (8), and "[t]ranslation is a useful and often neglected entry point into questions of diversity and accommodation, identity and community, and the kinds of durable links that can be established across histories and memories" (156).

Processes of translation are capable of mobilizing and circulating divergent, indeed conflictual, memories. Therefore, if translation can be thought of as an act that contributes to

redefining not only cultural spaces, but also the very spaces where citizenship is identified, it becomes something more than the acknowledgement and the expression of differences.

It is also in this sense that translation become a mode, a *dispositif* in the Foucauldian employment of the term, thanks to which what has passed away, what is apparently past, disappeared, removed, and suppressed, overtakes and exceeds its own predetermined destiny through a rebirth in other contexts, in other times and places, with renewed images.

At the same time, the very nature of a *dispositif* might direct us to reflect again on the status and condition of translatability and untranslatability, whereby speaking of untranslatability does not mean to deny the potentiality of any translation; on the contrary, it means accepting, and always interrogating translation as an actual transformation and interpretation of the memory of cultures or, better yet, of the cultures of memories, their resilience and their resonances.

It means continually interrogating the discontinuities and heterogeneities inhabiting every memory construction and tracing of borders, in regards to which we should always exercise not only the work of comparison but, as Marianne Hirsch expresses in her interview in this volume, an effort to imagine new possible political connections and affiliations, new ways of mobilizing memories and their visual, verbal, and performative translations.

For Simon, it is undeniable that in every context in which there is a strong awareness of the border—of different languages coexisting, along with competing and often conflicting memories—the suspicion of the “other language” prevails, the other language here acquiring another kind of “untranslatability” entailing any deviation from one’s own, or any inclusion of the translated histories and stories of those living across the material or symbolic border that separates them from us. Both acts of inclusion and exclusion are charged with deep ideological valence: how can we translate what we do not want to translate? Most times, the enemy is the one whose story we do not want to hear; that we do not want to recognize and actually translate, since we might *understand* it, thus allowing the other’s memory possibly to haunt us. However, as Simon says, cities crossed by linguistic borders—

more Trieste and Montreal (to mention her examples) than Jerusalem, or Cape Town (to mention *other* examples)—are places in which translation can become a very powerful tool, first by bringing along in its very practice the social force of *distancing*. That is in the confirmation of alterity in the emphasis on social and cultural differences, in the recognition and yielding to religious and national belonging. Second, by calling on the force of *furthering*, that is, in the creation of new links and bonds through deviant and excessive forms of cross-over: interferences, self-translation, rewriting, transmigration, and counter-memorialization. The practice of furthering does not entail a presupposition of sameness; on the contrary, it presumes the integration of memories in conflict or, rather, of their relocation within their own cultural and historical contexts. But is this really possible?

5. Trauma and translation

Many of the essays we present here reflect on the practice of translation as a means of managing not only internal borders and conflicting memories. At the same time they address the challenges any translator faces when converting traumatic memories into diverse contexts and spaces with different or competing Histories, whether of the Shoah, the Native American, or the Armenian genocide.

It is risky to enter here into a multifaceted debate that some may regard as already “old,” or over-utilized as a trope. However, some of the most significant contemporary “thinking [about] trauma’s future” (Rothberg 2014, xii) includes voices that try to understand the ways in which the category of trauma as an interpretive model might still have an impact on our experience of temporality and its structure. One option is to look at trauma along with its implicated concept of *belatedness* (Freud’s idea of *Nachträglichkeit*) This suggests *reading* trauma not in and for itself, but for its possible representations—verbal, visual, spatial—for when it tries to express a *structure of feeling* for a (*no longer unclaimed*) *experience*; it also implies looking at the coming together of different times, whereby the category of trauma does not point to the disruptive nature of experienced time, but to how we write about it, translate it. These are the complexities of

belatedness weaving into the writing, or the (re)calling and the repealing, of past experiences within which trauma is made manifest: questions of narrative and time that are inseparable from ethical and political questions.

A further level of confrontation between “new” trauma theory and translation studies emerges once it has become almost unavoidable for any discourse on trauma to travel elsewhere, geographically and geoculturally, to go beyond a Eurocentric and monocultural orientation, to move to another affect-world, in order to better apprehend its impact (Rothberg 2014); to test its future-tense and its *slow violence* (Kaplan 2015). In so doing, a paradigm in which translation and trauma meet might also start to answer different questions: how do states colonize a disruptive temporality into sovereign chronologies, and how do they translate them; or how is the changing biopolitical horizon in which trauma is both produced and policed affecting its very experience—an example of which is when what is produced and policed regards different people, different places, refugees and exiles; different bodies?

There is no doubt that the contemporary technological versions of subjectivity and identity have moved the idea of trauma through many translations and transmutations. We must contemplate the cultural and historical specificity of the concepts and categories of trauma, thanks to its translations, as Michael Rothberg reminds us: “The category of trauma ought to trouble the historicist gesture of much contemporary criticism as well as its concomitant notions of history and culture” (Rothberg 2014, xv). As much as the category of trauma might enable the political, cultural, and social impact of translation, it involves the dislocation of subjects, histories, and cultures. And even though there could be multiple forms of dislocation, deriving from “punctual” events (a massacre, for example) or from systemic violence or transhistorical structural trauma (LaCapra 2001), there is continuity, nonetheless. The task of “theory” is to find it, to look for connections, overlaps, similitude, and translation across the cultural and historical contexts under scrutiny. We discern connections and similarities in the current climate of *History* and its forms of violence involving different scales of

temporality and modes of subjectivity; these are pertinent to both in trauma and in translation studies, but they have probably not, thus far, been addressed sufficiently.

In sum, the challenge seems to be how to critically engage with classical trauma theory's dominant paradigm by rethinking and rewriting how to connect events of extreme violence, disjunctive structures of subjective and collective experience, and discursive and aesthetic forms of rewriting and translation.

6. Media transmediality and the archive

Yet another question comes to mind: what is specific to the concept and practices of translation when the current mobilizing of memory results in new and different representations of form and content, which are transformed by what is being called *a post-roadcast era* (Hoskins 2011)? What does it mean *today* to move from the unknown to the known, to render something from the past familiar, within the ever-changing forms and formations of contemporary *mediascapes* and *memoryscapes*, or else to accept their untranslatability?

In order to answer these questions in their intertwining with memory, one could engage in dialogue with Media-Specific Analysis, which deals mainly with contemporary examples of how a literary genre, as Hayles states, “mutates and transforms when it is instantiated in different media [. . .] MSA insists that texts must always be embodied to exist in the world. The materiality of these embodiments interacts dynamically with linguistic, rhetorical, and literary practice to create the effects we call ‘literature’” (Hayles 2014, 21).

Or, also, it could confront itself with a more sociologically oriented tendency that maintains that media “functions” have been unhooked from both the tools and the objects with which they have been traditionally associated. To give the most common example, what we once normally thought of as television has now gone beyond the television set itself, its content released from its “container,” from its specific embodiment, its own materiality. In other words, what used to be defined as a media product—even what is labeled as “literature”—is now a transmedia set of translated events and

practices of consumption: programs are seen through streaming or downloaded from the Internet in different countries, fandom providing almost instantaneous subtitles; books and their characters cannot be launched without a YouTube trailer that immediately receives global comments; programs have websites and Facebook pages, their actors living many other lives as characters of a proliferation of narratives produced and archived in fan fiction websites from all over the world, where they become adaptations and local versions of the “original,” of a matrix that is changed through on-going transmedia storytelling (Demaria 2014).

What we have briefly described here is now almost a cliché in Media Studies; it is part of a phenomenon that has been called, and from then on overtly quoted as, a convergent and participative culture, of media *spreadability* (Jenkins, Green, Ford 2013) that endlessly rewrites the return of history and memory through prosthetic tools (Landsberg 2004). The narrative complexity on one hand and the transmedia overflows exemplified by fanfic websites on the other supposedly constitute the evidence of a participatory and spectator-centered culture of *prosumers*, of a diffuse audience whose agency has helped to blur the boundaries between an original “text” (such as, for example, a TV series) and its transformations and *local translations* (how the characters and their stories are transformed and reimagined, and their format readapted in different countries).

Hence, we still need a reflection on *a language of the text* that does not exclude the “materiality” of the screen or the computer, as well as the effects of the notion that content outside its containers might induce the very thinking of new forms of translation. The different media and screens implicated in all studies of contemporary digital transmutations, their specificity but also their *syncreticity*—that is, the simultaneous presence of different languages and their particular intertwining effects and affects (verbal, visual, textual, aural)—can allow us to reflect on the peculiar ways in which content might migrate from one digital space to another. Moreover, different—or else very similar—stories might be told. What might be at stake are the main transformations undergone by narrative imaginations (Montani 2010)—from a

mimetic account of time (as in epic or ancient theatre), to a more productive projection, first helped by the narrative configurations allowed by the novel and cinema, and currently by contemporary media narratives—remediations and translations of all previous forms and genres (the novel, cinema, TV, and so on) and of the memory of all the antique images (*Pathosformeln*), languages, and cultures they involve.

What is the role of translation in those processes of selection and management of what becomes part of an archive as a set of rules and criteria, as a collection, as a process of distribution and delivery of memory?

This problem involves a critical reading of those technologies of memory that are supported by different politics of digital archives, whereby one faces the double and ambivalent dimension of archive as origin and archive as law, *of the authority and authorship of the archive*. It is the case, to quote but one example, of the recent transfer of CIA and other former classified verbal, visual, and audiovisual documents dealing with the US involvement with the Pinochet dictatorship to the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos in Santiago de Chile.⁵ These political documents rest on a techno-ethical paradox: between providing free access to memory as a civil or human right and the opacity of a history preserved as a trace of and a testimony to its very secrecy. More generally speaking, when translation meets the archive, it encounters its possible displacements and various transnational administrations of memory (NGOs, humanitarian agencies that demand to speak and designate, to classify and preserve documents in the name of other people's memories). Hence, how can one analyze such performative acts, this verbal and visual documentality? This refers to the exercises of power that affect subjective and collective investments, the comprehensive power of knowledge-production in relation to the rights and meanings of contemporary archives.

⁵ For more on this project led by Cristián Gomez-Moya on the archive and human rights, see <http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/e-misferica-91/gomezmoya#sthash.g0wBGq8a.dpuf>; and http://www.wordsinspace.net/lib-arch-data/2013-fall/?ai1ec_event=declassifying-the-archive-declassification-documentation-human-rights&instance_id. Accessed July 1, 2016.

In conclusion

The articles that make up this issue of *translation: an interdisciplinary journal* offer indeed a range of meditations on an intriguing set of case studies that bring new perspectives on many of the topics we have raised. Each elaborates, in its own fashion, on the author's respective engagement with the act of translation and transmission as an act that opens up memory's archive and its various resonances.

Instead of individually summarizing the contents of our volume's contributors' articles, we have chosen to continue weaving our shared considerations by incorporating some of their principal insights as an ongoing discussion and highlighting the questions they have provoked us into posing. The essays are bookended by interviews with Marianne Hirsch and James Young, respectively. Their impact on this most consequential field of study, as it engages history, architecture, literature, and art, has been extraordinary. Indeed, the field of Memory Studies as such would not exist without their definitive, groundbreaking work. One regards the role of memory when the author is both a translator and a critic of translational processes, as in Adams Bodomo's essay, in which we find the author's own poems that he himself translates, and Bernard McGuirk's article, where he meditates on his own translation both of Haroldo De Campos's poems and of Brazilian protest songs. Here we find the challenge posed by the echoes, influences, hybridities, and intertexts of contemporary transculturations, whereby the task of the translator involves not abandoning but suspending certain spontaneous choices of literal translation in favor of interaction and indeed transaction. Moreover, underlying all the works, the role translation plays in changing—and even in radically transforming—local, national, and global memories emerges in all its effects, as in the case of the Armenian genocide thanks to the many translations and the cinematic version of Antonia Arslan's 2007 novel *Skylark Farm*, which Sona Haroutyunian analyzes, focusing on the relationship between the historical event and its various kinds of representations.

Along with these questions, what is put under scrutiny is both the role of the writer as the translator of a fading oral

memory (as in Bodomo's, Jenin's, and McGuirk's articles) and of the translator as a witness or a second-degree witness (Deane-Cox); coming into contact with—and sometimes betraying—the memory of the texts and the memory the texts sought to convey. Or else preserving memory by transforming it into a new genre, a new type of storytelling, as Isabelle Jenin shows us in her analysis of Silko's novel.

These questions are raised and further problematized in Brownlie's article, where she addresses the ways in which two autobiographical stories by Katherine Mansfield—"Prelude" and "At the Bay"—reflect in style and structure the processes of autobiographical memory. They are also articulated in David Amezcua Gomez's study of Muñoz Molina's novel *Sefarad*, in which he traces how in multidirectional memory (of the Spanish Civil War, World War II, and post-Civil War Spain) "empathetic connections" are translated into monumental fiction. Or yet into monuments *tout court*, as James Young here (see *infra*) discusses with Bella Brodzki and Siri Nergaard, pointing to how, in order to understand traumatic memories and their translations, topography, literature, diaries, ruins all collapse into a fragmented yet resonant text, of which one element cannot be read without the other.

The problem of accountability and responsibility remains paramount: how much do we really want to translate? And how much can we translate when it comes to postmemories of the Holocaust? Language issues and questions emerging from the translation of first and second generation testimonies are at the core of memory studies, as both Young and Hirsch comment in their interviews, referring both to their own work, and to the influence that a graphic novel such as Art Spiegelman's *Mauss* and a documentary such as Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* had on their own thinking. Moreover: what to give to, or for, the "other"? How is the other constructed as such? How is the other interchangeable with oneself under diasporic conditions; is it a fluid category or status? How is nostalgia translated across these different contexts?

Here we go back to the very ambivalent notion of who is a witness in translation and to what she is a witness of, and for whom, given the complexities of postmemory, and the

consequences of legacy and identification that this category invokes (see the interview, *infra*), since processes of transmission and forms of aesthetic affiliation are both modes of translation.

What emerges from all the contributions is that public, cultural, and national memories (with all the due distinctions) are rewritten every day no matter how previous institutionalized versions have prevailed. The construction of homogeneous cultural and national memories takes place notwithstanding their potential translations, ruins, and ghosts; yet, new translations can affect and determine different politics of memory, changing their archival prospects.

What keeps translation itself alive is the tension between self-referentiality and extrareferentiality; it is simultaneously an open and a closed system. There are countless examples throughout history of the dialectic between preservation and destruction (through neglect as well as abuse), and, as a result, of active struggles for restoration of sites of memory, however contested their value. But memory, given that it projects both forward and backward, provides residual rewards for those who desire the new. For this volume's editors and contributors, the question of how we translate translation—as a *carrying over* and a *covering over* of the past—is the means by which, the gesture towards which, we name and rename until infinity.

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