Media

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"The asymmetries of globalization and the current inequalities in the production of knowledge and information are directly mirrored in translation, and this becomes visible when the directionality of global information flows starts to be questioned. Thus, some accounts of globalization have pointed to the number of book translations from English and into English as an indication of the power distribution in global information flows, where those at the core do the transmission and those at the periphery merely receive it. […] The global dominance of English is expressed in the fact that, in 1981, books originally written in English accounted for 42 per cent of translations worldwide, compared with 13.5 per cent from Russian and 11.4 per cent from French. At the same time, British and American book production is characterized by a low number of translations: 2.4 per cent of books published in 1990 in Britain and 2.96 per cent in the United States […] Global English dominance is expressed, on the one hand, in the sheer volume of English-language information in circulation. Thus, for example, current statistics on languages on the internet reveal the large number of English-speaking users (about one-third of the total), but also the even stronger predominance of English-language internet content (which is estimated at over half of the total). On the other hand, translation, which makes it possible for people to have access to information in their own language, contributes to the global dominance of Anglo-American culture, as we have seen above for the case of book translations, which account for

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only the smallest part of the volume of translation, the bulk of which is in commercial translation, politics and administration and in the mass media.

Nevertheless, global or international English itself needs to be qualified and should be examined more carefully.

[…]

International English, which in this sense can be viewed as a bad translation of itself, is a supraterritorial language that has lost its essential connection to a specific cultural context. It thus expresses in itself the fundamental abstractions derived from disembedding or the lifting out of social relations from their local contexts of interaction.

[…]

Globalization has caused an exponential increase of translation. The global dominance of English has been accompanied by a growing demand for translation, as people's own language continues to be the preferred language for access into informational goods. An area of significant growth in the translation industry in recent decades has been the activity of localization, through which global products are tailored to meet needs of specific local markets (Cronin 2003, Pym 2004). In an informational economy characterized by instantaneous access to information worldwide, the objective of the localization industry becomes simultaneous availability in all the languages of the product's target markets. Translation values and strategies in localization and elocalization (website localization) are not uniform but combine elements of domestication and foreignization to market products that have to appeal to their target buyers but, at the same time, often retain exoticizing connections to the language of technological innovation.

Similarly, translation plays a central role in negotiating cultural difference and in shaping the dialects between homogeneity and diversity in the production of global news. […] [There are] present trends towards the homogenization of global news. However, these need to be examined alongside domesticating translation strategies aimed at a fluid communication with target readers and exoticizing devices through which the discourse of the other is staged in media (in, for example, English translations of Osama Bin Laden's tapes or Saddam Hussein's speeches). (pp. 28-31)

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"Film Adaptation and Translation Theory: Equivalence and Ethics".

The shift in adaptation studies away from the discourse of fidelity toward a discourse of intertextuality continues to raise conceptual problems. Is the emphasis on intertextuality, to formulate one problem, just as essentialist as the concern with fidelity that it seeks to displace by devising film analyses and ideological critiques that assume among all audiences, regardless of their social diversity and historical moment, the same cultural lit-

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eracy and critical competence required to process the different sets of intertextual connections at work in any film adaptation (namely, connections between the film and the adapted material as well as connections between that material and the context where it originated and between the film and its own originary context)? The most pressing problem, however, must be the necessity to reformulate a relation of correspondence between the film and the adapted material that would justify calling a particular film an adaptation, that is to say, a film for which the processing of prior materials, including but in addition to a screenplay, is central to its signifying process. To treat a film as the second-order creation known as an adaptation (as distinct from such other second-order creations as a translation, a dramatic performance, a textual edition, or an anthology), its relationship to the prior material cannot be described simply as intertextual and analyzed as differential or interrogative. The film must also display a recognizable resemblance or similarity to that material so as to share the title, name or label by which it is designated.

   To conceptualize and supply this theoretical lack does not entail a return to the discourse of fidelity. In a previous study that drew on translation theory to give a more nuanced account of the discourse of intertextuality ("Adaptation, Translation, Critique," *Journal of Visual Culture* 6/1 [2007]: 25-43), I constructed a hermeneutic model that treated as fundamentally **interpretive** the relation between second-order creations and the materials they process. This relation should be seen as interpretive because it is contingent, in the first instance, on the forms and practices which are deployed in the translation or adaptation and which differ in language or medium from those deployed in the prior materials (the relation is also contingent on different kinds of reception, on different cultural situations, and on different historical moments). The key category that enables a translation to inscribe an interpretation in the source text is the **interpretant**, usually a

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complicated set of interpretants, which can be either formal or thematic. Formal interpretants include a concept of equivalence, such as a semantic correspondence based on dictionary definitions, or discursive strategy, such as close adherence to the source text, or a concept of style, a lexicon and syntax linked to a specific genre. Thematic interpretants are codes.

They include an interpretation of the source text that has been formulated independently in commentary, a discourse in the sense of a relatively coherent body of concepts, problems, and arguments, or an ensemble of values, beliefs, and representations affiliated with specific social groups. These thematic interpretants can be interrelated: an interpretation of the source text set forth in a work of literary criticism may be used to encode a translation with an ideology, establishing an institutional or political affiliation. Formal and thematic interpretants can also be mutually determining: a concept of equivalence may in a certain cultural situation be reserved for canonical texts, so that when used to render a marginalized text it inscribes a code of canonicity. Similarly, a style or genre can encode a discourse in a translation, while a discourse can lead the translator to cultivate a style or construct a genre when neither existed in the source text.

The hermeneutic model can not only be reformulated to analyze an intersemiotic translation like a film adaptation, but it can be used to reformulate a relation of resemblance or similarity between the film and the adapted materials. In a film adaptation, formal interpretants include a relation of equivalence, such as a structural correspondence between narrative point of view or plot details, a particular style that distinguishes the work of a director or studio, or a concept of genre that necessitates a distinctive treatment of the adapted materials, whether retention or revision, imitation or manipulation. Thematic interpretants may include an interpretation of the adapted materials articulated in commentary, a morality or cultural taste shared by the filmmakers and used to appeal to a particular audience, or a political position that reflects the interests of a specific social group. In a film adaptation, formal and thematic interpretants can be interrelated and mutually determining. An actor's previous roles (an interfilmic connection) might add a layer of meaning to the characterization in an adaptation for the informed spectator. A film genre like noir or the musical might introduce an entire discourse when used to adapt a novel or play composed in a different genre.

The hermeneutic model does not entail a return to the discourse of fidelity because it does not assume that the source text or adapted materials contain an invariant which is reproduced or transferred in the translation or adaptation. On the contrary, the assumption is that a second-order creation transforms what it processes, that the interpretation inscribed by the translation or adaptation varies the form and meaning of the source text or adapted materials by removing them from their originary context and recontextualizing them in a different language and medium in a different cultural situation at a different historical moment. Relations of resemblance simultaneously disclose relations of difference and vice versa. The hermeneutic model also avoids the risk of essentialism in the discourse of intertextuality because no formulation of the interpretants that enable and constrain a second-order creation is possible without the application of **critical interpretants**, that is to say, the critic's or analyst's own set of interpretive categories. To isolate relations of resemblance and difference between the translation or adaptation, on the one hand, and the source text or adapted materials, on the other, the critic must apply a critical

methodology (a formal interpretant, such as the hermeneutic model) or an interpretation of the text or material (a thematic interpretant) so as to fix their form and meaning of the source text or adapted materials and thereby bring to light the interpretants in the translation or adaptation. The promise of the hermeneutic model, then, is not only a more nuanced account of translational and adaptational practices but a greater theoretical self-consciousness on the part of the critic.

The hermeneutic model complicates the issue of value in second-order creations. Every interpretation is fundamentally evaluative insofar as it rests on the implicit judgment that a text is worth interpreting, not only in commentary but through translation or adaptation. Interpretants, moreover, are always already implicated in the hierarchies of value that structure the receiving culture at a particular historical moment, its centers and peripheries, its canons and margins. Yet because a translation or adaptation necessarily transforms the source text or adapted materials, at once detaching them from their originary context and recontextualizing them, neither can be evaluated merely through a comparison to that text or those materials without taking into account the cultural and social conditions of their interpretation. The evaluation must be shifted to a different level that seems to me properly ethical: in inscribing an interpretation, a translation or adaptation can stake out an ethical position and thereby serve an ideological function in relation to competing interpretations.

A second-order creation, more specifically, might be evaluated according to its impact, potential or real, on cultural institutions in the receiving situation, according to whether it challenges the styles, genres, and discourses that have gained institutional authority, according to whether it stimulates innovative thinking, research, and writing. This ethics of translation or adaptation does not treat the bad as "the non-respect of the name of the Other" (Alain Badiou), the move made by such theorists as Henri Meschonnic and Antoine Berman who argued that translation can and ought to respect the differences of foreign texts and cultures through discursive strategies designed to preserve and make manifest those differences. Rather, the bad in translation or adaptation "is much more the desire to name at any price" (Badiou), imposing cultural norms that seek to master cognitively and thereby deny the singularity that stands beyond them, the alternative set of interpretants that enable a different translation or adaptation, a different interpretation. Hence a translation or adaptation should not be faulted for exhibiting features that are commonly called unethical, such as wholesale manipulation of the source text or adapted materials. We should instead examine the cultural and social conditions of the translation or adaptation, considering whether its interpretants initiate an event, creating new values and knowledges by supplying a lack that they reveal in those that are currently dominant in the receiving culture.