

Aba-Carina P. (2019) *Intersemiotic Translation Literary and Linguistic Multimodality*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG. 80 pp. ISBN 978-3-030-16765-3

Review

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This review examines Aba-Carina Pârlog's volume on the theoretical and practical aspects of intersemiotic translation, with a purposeful focus on multimodality at its core. While somewhat compressed in length, at 80 pages in total, the book draws on the wealth of semiotic and translational literature and presents its main points effortlessly and with a precision sometimes lacking in drawn-out academic treatises on related topical issues. The author explores and illustrates each of their themes in an approachable and thorough manner, building their arguments on practical examples for each theoretical question.

The introductory chapter lays out the main themes of each of the following chapters, providing a brief discussion of its theoretical framework and salient points, which is repeated in the conclusion of the book. Considering that each chapter is likewise preceded by an abstract, and relevant keywords and rounded off with a list of pertinent references, such a structure seems to indicate that the book might have been originally envisaged as a collection of essays unified by a single conceptual framework. However, this could also make it particularly useful for students of translation and related fields who may find its meticulous bibliographic lists and the succinct presentation of specific subtopics helpful as a reference point for deeper introduction to those topics.

The second chapter deals with the interrelationship between intersemiotic translation and multimodality as the two substantial concepts of the volume. Drawing on the work of Umberto Eco, Roland Posner and Gunther R. Kress, as well as the conceptual metaphor theory, Pârlog discusses the notion that since the Renaissance times, literary discourse has been imagined as an

“articulate structure” whose functions mirror the human anatomical structure, with various organs being transformed into symbols and enshrined in cultural expressions such as idioms. This idea will be further reiterated in the following chapters, each of them mentioning a subset of idioms dealing with body parts and even positing the concept of body language as an area of intersemiotic translation. The second chapter finds its central image in that of the human heart, echoing Doueïhi’s (1997:3-4) claim that the heart is “both an organ with outstanding intelligence – and as such the source and principle of life – and an archaic model for organization in general, fulfilling the functions of centering and structuring theoretical discourses devoted to the analysis of the variety of manifestations of life in a series of domains, from the biological, mythological, political and the physiological”. Pârlog adds the linguistic domain, both at the verbal and the phraseological level, by discussing various idioms related to heart and soul in English, French and Romanian, finally coming to the conclusion that the symbolism of the heart depends upon culture, especially when it comes to language-specific expressions.

The third chapter continues this line of thought, weaving together a narrative consisting of multiple strands of philosophy related to the visual, verbal and notional ekphrasis. Originally, ekphrastic experience involved the transposition of a visual image into verbal or written text, subsequently leading to the creation of a mental image built on this text. However, this concept has been greatly expanded in the modern times to include any description of any medium by another (Mills, 2015:2), and the author makes great use of this, illustrating her point by once again using metaphorical ekphrastic expressions utilizing body parts, in this instance the head, face or feet. For her, metaphors enrich the text from the point of view of their vividness and enable the translator to decode meaning at all levels of linguistic expression and thus preserve the same message and the same stylistic elements which are present in the original. This notion, reverberating through the ages from the Classical Antiquity and its conceptualization of ekphrasis as a tool for eliciting the reader’s emotional reaction through the concept of *enargeia* or vividness (cf. Plett, 2012) is then coupled with the idea of body language as an act of intersemiotic translation in itself. Written depictions of body language are thus evoked in the reader’s mind and its non-verbal use in digital photography, marketing or even CCTV images in public spaces is mediated by interpreting the message encoded in bodily posture, gestures or facial expressions.

The fourth chapter focuses on the visual and verbal code translation, examining social, textual and interpretative codes as vehicles used to

intersemiotically translate external reality for the reader's understanding and represent the ideology of trends which can be used to explain ways of thinking, acting and manipulating people through ideology and propaganda. As such, the process of translation covers a wide variety of intersemiotic transfers, whereby the signs used in the target text must correspond to the exact context and purpose of the original. The issues of fidelity are given particular prominence in the final two chapters. In the fifth chapter, the author explains the positive and negative aspects of dealing with intralingual translation. Using examples of individual excerpts of works by William Shakespeare, John Milton and Lewis Carroll and their French or Romanian translations, the author develops the argument that the rewriting of texts must be done through the choice of lexical elements which will evoke the same message and fulfil the same aim as the source text.

The final chapter once again focuses on the blending of verbal and visual, this time seen through the machine translation and neural machine translation lens, and the author again turns to the renditions of English and French idioms into Romanian to highlight the problems of transforming sense inaccurately in the target language. Following Italo Calvino's notion of a book being the written equivalent of an unwritten imaginary world, the author claims that the translation of this writing ought to be a representation of the same unwritten world using different kind of signs. This assertion is further extrapolated by describing several instances where the Romanian translation of Tracy Chevalier's *The Lady and the Unicorn* diluted the original meaning through mistranslations and misinterpretations of the source language. While not explicitly espousing foreignization, Pârlog sees target language-focused translation methods as something that leads to the creation of texts whose correct grammar and natural language are misleading with regard to the source text. The book then comes full circle in defining the text as a living organism whose homeostasis depends on the writer's choice of topic, aim, idiolect and personality, and the process of interlingual translation as a transposition of all these aspects so that a similar homeostasis can be established between the elements of the target text.

The conclusion reiterates the main points of each previous chapter, finalizing its overview with the key role played by signs and symbols as embedded in different systems of meaning, whose knowledge and comprehension enable successful communication which is the aim of all multimodality forms.

To conclude, the volume offers a varied and interesting snapshot of different concepts related to intersemiotic translation, multimodality, ekphrasis and metaphorical phraseology it discusses. While its greatest strengths lie in the simplified and coherent presentation of those issues, which could prove particularly useful to students and those not fully versed in them, it is by no means beneath notice for scholars whose work is deeply ingrained in the field. It posits several interesting questions and raises a few important issues, particularly in relation to body language and its interpretation. In an era of an increased interest in the issues related to bodily autonomy and the digital re-imagining of what constitutes an art form, its discussion of intersemiotic translation as the central tool at a researcher's disposal seems both timely and significant.

#### *References*

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