7 The Transfer of Signs between Heterogeneous Systems: Incongruent Equivalences

7.1 Introduction

‘The relationship between a word and what it stands for is like the relationship between a flea and a dog. If the dog is healthy, so is the flea. If the dog dies, so does the flea – unless it’s able to find another dog’ (Metcalf, 2002: 162)

It may have been the word in the beginning, but what the divine word represented we do not know for sure. God created the universe with the help of a language. Were there only words or also other kinds of signs? What kind of language could have been involved in the process of pronouncing and creating at the same time? Our language has lost this impact and we can notice that technology weakened even more the seductive capacity of our language. In order to arrest people’s attention, we resort more and more to a mixture of text and image.

With the advent of Translation Studies as a distinct discipline, it seems that additional emphasis is put on the conditions and implications of the process of translation. The problems of transfer and equivalence make progressively room for the in-betweenness. As the interlingual transfer cannot be set free of the implications of power and hegemony, some theorists consider that ‘all translation may be said to be indirect speech, in as much as it does not repeat the ST, but reformulates it’ (Hervey, 2000). They refer especially to the gist translation taking place in intralingual contexts. The gist translation would interpret the message and can be seen as the compressed form of the exegetic translation. In both cases, we have a process of rephrasing, which involves both translation for the gist and exegetic translation.

7.2 The Ever-surprising Intersemiotic Translation

As we know, the saga of intersemiotic translation, involving an almost infinite semiosis, began with Roman Jakobson’s seminal essay from 1959, On linguistic aspects of translation. Intersemiotic translation is a way of bypassing the semiotic system of language. The Russian–American linguist defines this less common type of translation as a translation of a verbal sign into a non-verbal sign. In the same paper, he postulated that only interlingual translation is ‘translation proper’ (Hatim & Munday, 2004). In the meantime, Translation Studies has evolved dramatically, including nowadays audio-visual translations with their sub-strata: sign language, intralingual subtitles, lip synchronization for dubbing and interlingual subtitles. There is no barrier left between linguistic signs and non-linguistic signs. Thus, the semiotic system of pure
language becomes almost outdated. In today’s global culture, a system of semiosis with mixed registers of communication is becoming the dominant approach.

Translations include nowadays pictorial and iconic-linguistic registers. In 1994, W. J. T. Mitchell (Picture Theory: Essays on Visual and Verbal Representation) analysed terms like iconicity and image text. The accent fell on the participatory intermediality, able to open infinite possibilities for the condition of translatability, owing to the fluency of mirrored and intertwined iconicity. But, the prejudiced views took advantage of the consecrated definitions of a sign. So, what entities would qualify for the status of a sign? Petrilli (2003) considered a few distinctions:

\[T\]rans-, inter-, dia- are prepositions and prefixes that specify the modality of being of the sign, the sign process, semiosis […] Semiosis is a transsign process, an intersign process. Something that is not capable of relating to something else that signifies it, utters it, translates it, interprets it, responds to it, is not a sign.

In order words, are pictures, paintings, gestures, and sounds signs? Can they be the subject matter of translation theorizing? Taking a further step onward, Torop (2004) asserted the idea of a ‘partial overlap of signs and languages or sign systems of different arts’. Transfer, transmission and exchange are understood now on a larger scale than ever, and Roman Jakobson, in spite of the subordinating intersemiotic translation to the ‘proper’ translation between languages (interlanguage translation, implying texts) has an undisputable merit for having recognized the possibility of translating non-verbal messages: ‘Intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems’ (Venuti, 2004). He also provided examples of transmutation paradigms from verbal art to dance, cinema, music or painting. This overlapping equated to transmutation is the mark of incongruity and heterogeneity. So far, the transfer of signs has been admitted only between homogeneous systems. Once the linguistic stage of Translation Studies got dated, intersemiotic translation raised the challenge of translating not only verbal signs into non-verbal signs, but also categories of non-verbal signs into other categories of non-verbal signs. Already Greimas (1966) perceived the emerging dynamics of intersemiotic translation: ‘every signifying totality [ensemble] which is by nature different [has a different character] than natural language can be translated, more or less accurately, in any given natural language’. The problem of accuracy looms ominously in the background, but we have to embrace a permissive attitude towards a nascent modality of universal communication. Umberto Eco (2001) also assented to such a tolerant approach when he considered translation a metaphor, a transference or an adaptation.
7.3 Media Literacy and the Visual Fluency of Messages

If texts proved to be in strict relation with their cultures of provenance, media theory admitted to multimedia signs being determined by the screen they appear on. Actually, as our society re-turns towards an image-informed way of communication, it is more and more difficult to practise an abrupt differentiation between a text and image. Communication seems to maintain its fluency even when it is realized with non-linguistic means. Media literacy tends to become more attractive than linguistic literacy. In these conditions, intersemiotic translation acquires strategic importance. Signs and images conjure each other into an amalgamated perceptual medium. Monosemiotic texts are a reality of the past in terms of impact force. In order to get behind the struggle between words and pictorial signs, and in this way to enhance the strength of the communicative function of translation, we should be open to the synergy resulted from the combination of different semiotic systems. This type of intersemiosis was called multimodality by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001). The new perspective upon Translation Studies engages the acceptance of a multi-levelled reality with transdisciplinary openings.

In advertising, for instance, the verbal message can be used as an iconic system. This is what Guillaume Apollinaire did in *Calligrammes* (1913), wherein, among other *pattern* poems, he included a poem in the shape of the Eiffel Tower. The layout of words, in such a case, is more important than their innermost meaning and advertisers of a later date speculated on this experiment.

![Image of Guillaume Apollinaire's poem on Eiffel Tower](https://wordsandeggs.files.wordpress.com/2008/10/250px-guillaume_apollinaire_calligramme-1.jpg)

*Figure 7.1:* Guillaume Apollinaire’s poem on Eiffel Tower.
In other cases, the Eiffel Tower is represented like an adorned Christmas tree, which, using the rhetoric switch of metonymy, symbolizes the charm of Paris during winter holidays. This approach proves that the devices applicable to texts achieve the same function in the realm of images. The overarching principle is that of intertextuality: ‘the notion of intertextuality refers to close relationships of content and/or form between texts. No text stands on its own. It is always linked to other texts’ (Martin & Ringham, 2006). By assuming the principle of intertextuality, intersemiotic translation resorts to transmutation engineerings which are highly creative and even critical. In the case of poetry translation, the intertextual awareness is compulsory, as the translator will decode and re-encode cultural-bound concepts, besides prosodic subtleties.

If the ideal transposition and rephrasing were impossible even in the first half of the 20th century, the less likely will they be in the multimedia communication epoch. Inside environments that make use of sensory words, vision, audition, and touch, all texts become ‘polysemiotic multi-signs’ (Gambier and Gottlieb, 2001). Multimedia translation is about drafts and screen translation, which include transitory, non-finite content. Additionally, the interconnection of the media relies on flexibility and teamwork. In drama translation, for instance, the text is preserved in a fluid and negotiable state, which can be modified at every rehearsal. Besides, in this field, translators have to cope with incessant revision. The stages of a negotiable translation, wherein translators are supposed to collaborate with other specialists, can be traced with the help of contrastive analysis and contrastive stylistics. This is the procedure of parallel texts or comparable texts (William & Chesterman, 2002). As Translation Studies has arrived to be ‘informed by a babel of theories’ (Kuhiwczak & Littan, 2007), we no longer should remain limited to the predominance of the linguistic code. The importance of signs transfers between verbal and non-verbal codes, through the mediation of hybrids like iconotexts, is increased by the upheaval of technological innovations. In these conditions, we are bound to accept that communication through translation is realized with the help of complex cultural scaffoldings. The illusion of transparency in a perfectly achieved translation, as Lawrence Venuti appraised it at the end of the 20th century, depended on fluency and it discarded ‘translates’, ‘translationese’, ‘translatoreshape’, ‘jargonisation’, slang, pidgin, Britishisms in American translations, and Americanisms in British translations (when it comes to English, of course). A fluid translation would avoid a ‘doughy’ or idiomatic syntax, whereas it would conserve the rhythmic sense and an expressive closure (not a ‘dull thud’) (Venuti, 2004). The point was to attain a naturalness of the transferred message as if it had never been displaced from its original context. Obviously, this approach referred to literary translations, as in technical texts, what matters is not the stylistic factor, but the accuracy of the context renderings. The freight trains analogy resists the passing of time: it is not the order of the cars that matters, but the intactness of the cargo (Landers, 2001).
7.4 Culturemes and Program Music

There are always situations and contexts in translation and nobody could be so lofty as to provide an all-encompassing-all-solving approach. We may oscillate between domestication and foreignization, between dynamic and semantic equivalences, between the skopos theory and the theory of translational action and finally to become supporters of the functional anthropophagic (or ‘cannibalistic’) approach in Brazil or of the *Neuorientierung* in Germany.

If the meaning of a sentence is always dependent on and connected to the syntactic net that surrounds it, then the meaning is an occasional creation. Translation too is circumstantial, which means that objectivity varies in function of certain parameters. Objectivity borrows subjective traits, whereas subjectivity tends to objectivity in order to legitimize itself. This situation becomes poignant when the translator has to deal with *culturemes*, defined as a phenomenon existent in ‘culture X but not present (in the same way) in culture Y’ (Gambier, 2001).

Intersemiotic translations are less culture-proof than interlingual translations, as they resort to a larger range of signs. Let’s think of *program music*, which is instrumental music carrying an extra musical meaning. With the help of sounds, composers translate ideas, legends, and literary plots of the subjects of paintings. This is exactly why purist musicians underrate this genre of music as being impure. In their opinion, only abstract or absolute music would transmit the genuine musical feeling. The program music at its best soared in the Romantic era, from Beethoven to Richard Strauss. But absolute music is utopia. In fact, every score reflects some extra musical ‘content’: series of images, moods and states of mind. The symbolic and evocative substance of music can be detected in a *siciliana*, for instance, which is a composition built on the rhythm of an Italian dance and which triggers associations of tranquillity. Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 6 (Pastoral)* contains examples of literal ‘tone painting’ (a bird call in the second movement). Descriptive elements are found in Japanese *samisen* music, with stylized sounds of falling rain and snow. Georg Friedrich Händel evoked the ravaging effects of plague in his oratorio *Israel in Egypt* (1739). It was Beethoven who unified the movements of a symphony or sonata into a psychological whole. In his *Symphony No. 3 (Eroica)*, he contrasted states of mind and explored the transition between them. The unification of tendencies was practiced by Robert Schumann, who conjoined opposite phrases in *Carnaval*; the same method was applied in overtures by Beethoven (*Leonore No. 3*) and Felix Mendelssohn (*The Hebrides*). Carl Maria von Weber’s *Konzertstück* (1821) and Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* (1830) were both accompanied by a printed synopsis of the ‘plots’ at concerts, this gesture disclosing an overt programmatic attitude. This trend continued all along the 20th century with experimental composers like Alban Berg, Gustav Hols, Mike Oldfield or Vangelis. Apart from making use of leitmotifs, these composers – be they classical or popular – involved various programmatic elements in their compositions, like art rock, ambient music, space music, surf rock, jazz fusion,
progressive rock, and new age. Thus, music acquires the ability to transmit conceptual and narrative messages in combination with sound effects. If ‘pure’ music engenders sensations and feelings, program music stimulates recognition and interpretation as mental operations specific to the translation process too.

### 7.5 The Intersemiosis of Concrete Poetry

Another situation of intersemiotic transfer and interpretation is that of concrete poetry, sometimes called ‘shape poetry’. Its visual appearance is supposed to match its topic. Consequently, the words are disposed in shapes that illustrate the poem's subject both as a picture and through its literal meaning.

‘The Mouse’s Tale’ from Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland is a pun on the words tale/tail and its words flow along a slithering line that gets thinner and thinner down to an ending point, imitating the shape of a tail or a snake. Indeed, the poem is rather snaky as it relates in a humorous tonality about dictatorial and murderous instincts. The translator, in this case, has to stay double-focussed: on the one hand, the layout requires flexibility in lexical selection, and on the other hand, the meaning must preserve its contradiction to the jocose shape of the poem. To the complexity of the operation, we have to add the exact reproduction of some rhymes like ‘jury’ – ‘fury’.

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The Mouse's Tale

Fury said to a mouse,
That he met in the house, 'Let us both go to law;
I will prosecute you.-- Come, I'll take no denial;
We must have a trial: For really this morning I've nothing to do.'

Said the mouse to the cur,
'Such a trial, dear Sir, With no jury or judge, would be wasting our breath.'

'I'll be judge, I'll be jury.',
Said cunning old Fury:
'I'll try the whole cause, and condemn you to death.'

(http://sparkleteaching.blogspot.ro/2011/05/free-form-poem-mouses-tale.html)

Figure 7.2: ‘The Mouse’s Tale’ from Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland.
The Brazilian poets of *Noigandres* group issued a manifesto in 1950, stating that concrete poetry is characterized by the congruence between its structure and content. This type of intimate reflection is achievable in various ways, one of them being the filling up of an outline shape related to the topic of the poem, as is the case with *snowman*:

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It's
cold outside.
I don't want to go
outdoors and play.
But mum says
I have to
anyway.

It's starting to snow.
and I'm going to freeze.

brrrr...

and I hate playing outside on days like these.

brrrr...

But wait a sec, I've had the
most amazing, brilliant idea!

I'll cover myself up
with snow and I'll
hide in here!
```

Figure 7.3: Snowman poem.

The outline can be gradually re-arranged during composition in order to obtain the desired image. This strategy anticipated the effects that can be created in some computer programs, like *Flash*. Consequently, the ‘manufacturing’ of concrete poetry consists of using the lines of a poem to make the blueprint of a drawing. The representation of the phenomenon of a growing picture looks like this:

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tall

very tall

I'm taller than taller than tall

small

but now
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Figure 7.4: Concrete poetry.
Again, during the draft stage, we can make our writing bigger or smaller to get it all fit. In the end, we simply erase the drawing lines and are left with just the words in the poem to create the desired image.

Among the ancestors of concrete poetry, we find altar poetry. This type dates back to the ancient cultures of Persia and Greece and was lost until the 16th century when it reappeared in Europe. Altar poetry has the ambition to reflect the textual meaning through its arrangement on the page. The metaphysical poet George Herbert (1593–1633) replicated a wing in Easter Wings and created the sensation of flight ‘on the back’ of a lark, which, in its turn, symbolized the fervent, religious soul. The poem reinforces its meaning of rise and fall with the help of a suggestive, shape which is not only a mimicking reflection of the content, but also an extension of undertones:

*Lord, who createdest man in wealth and store,*  
*Though foolishly he lost the same,*  
*Decaying more and more,*  
*Till he became*  
*Most poore:*  
*With thee*  
*O let me rise*  
*As larks, harmoniously,*  
*And sing this day thy victories,*  
*Then shall the fall further the flight in me.*

(http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173626)  
**Figure 7.5:** George Herbert’s Easter Wings poem.

Later on, poets like E. E. Cummings (1894-1962) or Dylan Thomas (1914-1953) practised the geometric poetry. Although they enlarged the range of their inspiration, they observed the principles of altar poetry. Here, it is a poem representing an hourglass from *Vision and Prayer* by Dylan Thomas. In accordance with its layout, the poem showcases the fragility of birth and the exhaustion of death. The geometry of such a poem adds to the inner meaning and when a translator renders it into another language, s/he has to recreate the allusions related to content and shape, actually a double-range set of allusions.
Who
Are you
Who is born
In the next room
So loud to my own
That I can hear the womb
Opening and the dark run
Over the ghost and the dropped son
Behind the wall thin as a wren’s bone?
In the birth bloody room unknown
To the burn and turn of time
And the heart print of man
Bows no baptism
But dark alone
Blessing on
The wild

(http://www.webexhibits.org/poetry/explore_21_visual_examples.html)

Figure 7.6: Dylan Thomas’s poem – Vision and Prayer.

**Dracula: Ballet and Intersemiotic Translation**

The mirroring and recreation of one language into another one, part of a different system, is noticeable in the ballet Dracula. In 1999, David Nixon created the choreographed version of Bram Stoker’s novel for Ballet Met and recreated it for Northern Ballet in 2005. Nixon kept the women characters alive *en pointe*, whereas those of the other world danced in flat shoes to suggest they need earth to survive. The director based his ballet on the novel, but the narrative substance is disposed in contrasts. There is a continuous play with light and shadows, indicative of the fact that living and dead need each other. The *pas de deux* between Dracula and Mina discloses the sensitivity of the vampire and maybe it is on account of this emotional quality that Mina forces him to bite her and make her the same as him: immortal, but monstrous.

The sets and costumes place the ballet in the romantic gothic style of the Victorian epoch. This historical distance would allow the public to focus on the exploration of human nature rather than on the bizarreness of details. The designer of the set was Ali Allen, who had already collaborated with Nixon on several intersemiotic productions, including *Wuthering Heights*. Thus, the set design provides a gothic backdrop for the ballet, which is often minimal, resorting to pieces of furniture to locate the scene.
In Act I, Dracula appears climbing down the side of a building as if a lizard, which reaffirms his dual nature: half man, half beast. The serial changes in the colour of the set reveal emotions and states of mind. In Act I, when the backdrop of pillars creates a screen that is coloured from neutral to blood red, we understand that Lucy has fallen under Dracula’s spell.

Tim Mitchells was responsible for the lighting design. He also had worked on David Nixon’s Hamlet ballet version. The contrast of light and shadows was created through the use of blocks of light, side lighting, and colour.

In terms of localizing the translation, the minimalism of the set helped to place the scene in a certain place by the simple use of lighting. In the scenes taking place in the Sanatorium, the lighting creates the effect of bars on the floor. In Act II, block lighting frames spaces such as Lucy’s coffin and Mina’s bed.
Figure 7.9: The Sanatorium.

The costume design suggested the suppression and morality specific to the Victorian society. The contrast between masculinity and femininity, between humankind and vampires, was reinforced through costumes. Dracula’s costumes were tailored from heavy fabrics, such as velvet, to highlight his status. His large black cloak was a part of the choreography and created the effect of wings as he turned and sliced through the air. Lucy’s initial costume changed from the innocent pink to ever deeper tones of red to suggest her altered state and her slipping under Dracula’s spell.

Figure 7.10: Dracula’s costume.

The music is a compilation realized by Mikhail Popov. The score includes movements, among others, from Alfred Schnittke’s *Faust Cantata, Concerto Grosso no. 1, (K) ein Sommernachtsstraum*, from Arvo Pärt’s *Spiegel im Spiegel*, and from Michael Daugherty’s *Red Cape Tango* (the 5th movement of Metropolis Symphony). Schnittke’s compositions juxtapose a variety of styles, creating a mix of tonal and melodic compositions in a method known as polystylism.
The music of the ballet proposes an obvious melody and then distorts it to reflect the twisted world of Dracula. The heterogeneity of the general score is counterbalanced by some effects that work like refrains. The sonority of bells and solo violin pieces permeate the major pieces of music in Dracula and they support the perpetuation of an overarching theme.

The choreography displays various rhythms in accordance with the intensity of the events. In Act I, while lawyer Jonathan gazes at his beloved Mina’s photograph, he gets invaded by the Brides of Dracula, a situation that triggers a stormy, sensuous and lethal dance. Another dynamic movement is created by Dracula skittering among his fellow bats. People hunting Dracula and the post-mortem vampire Lucy at night form a gruesome and spectacular scene.

As we can see, this intersemiotic translation of Bram Stoker’s Dracula created a much more spectacular and aesthetically valid version than the novel itself. There are other ballet versions of famous literary works. Northern Ballet, for instance, staged The Great Gatsby, Peter Pan, Hamlet and Beauty & the Beast. Not only did many of these transmutations create exquisite shows, but they proved to be resourceful in terms of reinventing and advertising – through their syncretism – notorious, but less and less frequented artistic pieces.

7.6 Fingerspelling and Non-Verbal Communication

Another type of intersemiotic translation is the use of the American Sign Language (ASL). In this type of language, signs are produced by moving the hands in combination with facial expressions and postures of the body. This is the primary language of
deaf or hard-of-hearing people. This is not a universal language, as the signs used are different in various countries. For example, British Sign Language (BSL) contains other signs than ASL and is reported to be less rich in 'alphabet' signs.

Figure 7.12: American Sign Language (ASL).

Figure 7.13: British Sign Language (BSL).

The beginnings of ASL are cloudy, but it is known that more than 200 years ago it arose from the intermixing of local sign languages and French Sign Language (LSF, or Langue des Signes Française).
In spite of containing all the fundamental features of a language (its own rules for pronunciation, word order, and structured grammar), ASL is a language completely distinct from English. One could identify similarities in the conversational behaviour: if English speakers ask a question by raising the pitch of their voice, ASL users raise their eyebrows, widen their eyes and tilt their bodies forward in the same situation.

Just as any other language, ASL has regional versions and dialects, but also regional variations in the rhythm of signing, form, and pronunciation.

One salient difference between an ASL system and BSL one is that the latter uses two hands to interpret each letter instead of ASL’s one. By using two hands, the degree of translatability of signs increases as this makes the hand sign look more like the letter it is representing.

But, BSL has a more intricate way of representing gender, since mom/dad/sister/brother signs are associated with different parts of the body, whereas ASL signs for females are mostly around the mouth and those for males are around the forehead area.

How relevant and necessary is this sign language or fingerspelling? Suffice it to say that there are job openings for sign language interpreters. Such interpreters are used in schools, hospitals or government agencies. One of the requirements is to possess strong skills in English and communication. The U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics (BLS) reported that in May 2013, the median yearly salary for interpreters specialising in sign language was $42,420.

### 7.7 Tattoos and their Overlapped Meanings

Another cultural field with intersemiotic implications is that of tattoos. There are plenty of models for them and they are supposed to be translated in accordance with rigorous descriptions. Thus, the ‘strength tattoos’ are used as amulets, talismans or touchstones for personal virtue. The *koi fish*, for example, swims up the waterfall to become a dragon. Star tattoos, then, conjure celebrity. The symbolism of a star depends on the number of points it has and on their orientation. Stars suggest truth, hope, whereas their nocturnal appearance represents the struggle against the forces of the unknown and of darkness. The most famous stars are the Pentagram, the Nautical Star (five-pointed), and the Hexagram or the Star of David.

The *Tribal/Maori* tattoos use Polynesian patterns derived from straight-line geometric model, but also with spirals. These tattoos were realized by cutting the skin, not only engraving it with ink, and signalled different stages of self-fulfilment, like entering the adult age. Nowadays, they are engraved only for the sake of look, in disregard with their former role and position on the body (especially, on the face). So, we could infer that their translation in the modern world mainly equates to a vulgar and a disenchanted approach.
Oppositely, we have Crosses symbolizing faith, hope, and commemoration of the deceased. The vertical and horizontal lines of the cross may represent Father and Mother Nature. The cross tattoos appear in various shapes with different significations: ankh or tau, swastika or Thor’s Hammer, crux ansata or cross with a handle (Coptic cross), denoting power over material nature. Ankh tattoos are related to the ancient Egyptian symbol for life. They consist of a looped cross in which, the ellipse at the top suggests the ascendancy of spirit into the nether world over the cross of matter (this world).

Angel wings evoke God’s protection, but when wings are associated with fairies, butterflies, dragonflies, griffins and the winged-horse Pegasus; they contain the alchemical and magical transformation through which an individual gains access to a superior position in the universal hierarchy.

There are tattoos that come more naturally to women, as it is the case with butterflies, which work as emblems of nobility and spiritual renaissance. The ancient Greeks also imagined Psyche (soul) with butterfly wings.

Sun tattoos make reference to the life-giving deity worshipped in the pantheon of ancient peoples. In many cultures, there are myths detailing an apocalypse during
which the sun is destroyed or devoured. But, the sun rises again in a cycle of life and
dark, regeneration and reincarnation.

There are also more difficult to translate symbols. Acorn tattoos resume ancient
beliefs that this fruit warded off evil spirits. Old English folklore sustained that those
women who carried acorns kept wrinkles at bay.

Alligator tattoos are manly as they invoke the supremacy on the food chain of this
amphibious animal.

Ambigram tattoos are graphical figures that spell out words in a twisted manner.

(http://pixshark.com/ambigram-tattoo.htm)

Figure 7.16: Ambigram tattoo.

Anamorphosis tattoos are also a form of art that does not reflect hidden meanings, but
creates impressive visual effects. Such a technique generates optical illusions able to
trick the eye.

(http://www.viralsaurus.com/2014/02/girl-leg-fascinating-latest-craze-body-art/)

Figure 7.17: Anamorphosis tattoo.
There may be pictures that conceal messages or images within a design. The hidden elements can be distinguished only if the observer shifts position and finds the proper perspective. In these cases, translation is the equivalent of a discovery and it necessitates investigating abilities. But, there may be also illusionary effects created by a 3D perspective, as in a text illustrated by life-like reproductions.

*Anemone Flower* tattoos are associated with death and sleep. In the myth of Aphrodite mourning the death of Adonis, the flower sprung from her tears and that is why they are preferred by women.

![Anemone Flower tattoo](http://fc01.deviantart.net/fs71/i/2012/052/a/9/stargazer_lilly___s_and_anemone_flowers_by_phantomphreaq-d4qip3j.jpg)

*Figure 7.18: Anemone Flower tattoo.*

Among the tattoos specific to one of the genders or attached to some parts of the body, we have *ankle* tattoos. A tattoo of this kind is the apple, a fruit having long symbolized fertility, love, sensuality, sin and temptation. But also, it may recall the promise of sweetness as it turns from green to red in the rays of the sun.

*Barcode* tattoos are meant to be ironical and to warn about the extinction of culture and people becoming serialized products.

There are many tattoos related to the Buddhist faith and maybe, they represent the most complex category in this field. Their initial religious message has slipped towards an all-encompassing spiritual perspective, more suitable to a postindustrial, entertainment based society.

*Buddha’s eyes* tattoos look like a pair of giant eyes symbolizing Buddha’s omniscience and encouraging compassion towards all living creatures.
Buddha’s Footprint indicates that the god was initially a mortal who walked the earth. We are reminded by this imprint that our spiritual life should conserve the contact with the material plan of existence so that, it would not fall into the trap of loftiness.

The Buddhist Golden Fish tattoos – usually figures as a pair – symbolize the state of temerity while afloat on a sea of suffering (the sea of samsara). The golden fish persisted as a sign of happiness and emancipation, the result of the liberation experienced when the initiate takes Buddha’s teachings to heart.
The Buddhist Knot tattoos, or the Endless Knot, resemble the Celtic Knot, and look like an unbroken weaving of geometric lines.
This knot is one of the *Eight Auspicious Symbols* in Buddhism and is referred to as the ‘Mystic Dragon’. It also symbolizes Buddha’s infinite wisdom and compassion for every being.

*Buddhist Victory Banner* tattoo, another of the Eight Auspicious Symbols of this spiritual movement, signifies Buddha’s enlightenment through his conquering of lust, pride, passion and fear of death. These are considered the four pitfalls or ‘Maras’, which hinder the final liberation, Nirvana.

![Figure 7.23: Buddhist Victory Banner tattoo.](http://orgs.usd.edu/nmm/Tibet/Symbols/TibetanAuspiciousSymbol7VictoryBanner.jpg)

*Eye of Horus* tattoos are the symbol of the Egyptian Falcon Sky God. The eye was a symbol of indestructible royal power and rebirth. Freemasonry also adopted this symbol as the Eye of Providence, and in this capacity, it appears on the recto of the Great Seal of the United States.

![Figure 7.24: Eye of Horus tattoo.](http://www.tiptopsigns.com/Eye-of-Horus-Egyptian-Decal-Sticker-p-4788.html)
There are, then, *Family Crest* tattoos:

![Family Crest tattoos](http://www.redlegger.com/apps/photos/photo?photoid=102726170)

**Figure 7.25: Family Crest tattoos.**

*Coat of Arms* tattoos:

![Coat of Arms tattoos](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/493918284106358218/)

**Figure 7.26: Coat of Arms tattoos.**

*Clan* tattoos and *Heraldry* tattoos for celebrating family ties and heritage. The message to be translated from their representations is respectability, affiliation and historicity in terms of lineage.
Flaming tattoos are the status symbol for trailer park residents throughout America. The flamingo is the unofficial landmark of Florida and of travel to tropical destinations and leisure.

Ganesh tattoos represent the deity with the head of an elephant and the body of a human. Ganesh was the Asian Lord of Success and Destroyer of obstacles, but also the god of Everyman. Salman Rushdie, in The Satanic Verses, plays upon the symbolism
of this deity by basing the sexual success of a Bollywood actor on his constant acting as Ganesh in Indian cinematographic super-productions. All the women who make love to him do not want to see his real visage, so he is forced to put on the elephant-like mask of Ganesh even during intimate moments. The trunk also has the role of enflaming the sexual symbolism.

![Ganesh tattoo](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/558446422519283472/)

**Figure 7.29: Ganesh tattoo.**

Closer to the ‘classical’ semiosis are the *alphabet* tattoos, wherein letters represent various aspirations or reminders. All in all, in our globalized and corporatist world, tattoos represent more often than not an instance of ignorance or incomplete knowledge, at least. This practice is a case in point of mistranslation of ancient symbols within the context of a linguistically and anthropologically impoverished world.

### 7.8 Conclusions

The transfer of signs between heterogeneous systems respects, in a certain degree, the algorithm of the ATRIA model as it implies launching themes with known information (IT) and interpreting them with the help of rhemes, which carry new information (THERE). The themes of the text make up a holon, i.e., ‘a system which is a whole in itself as well as part of a larger system’ (Dejica, 2008). Such holons can be specific to certain cultural systems of the source or target languages. It results that the various methods of translation are perfectly applicable in the case of incongruous systems of signs. Whether we translate texts into other texts or images into texts, sounds into images, films into texts and so on, the principles of translation are the same. Intersemiotic translations can be simple or complex – depending on the difficulty of
the process of decoding the messages involved, but the expertise of translators must be, in these situations, more comprehensive, as the range of signs is broader. The conclusion is that all translators should be open-minded and ready to accept new professional challenges.

References


Webography