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What's so "proper" about translation? Or interlingual translation and interpretative semiotics

Abstract: Jakobson's famous classification of three types of translation is the point of departure for a discussion of "translation proper," or translation from one natural historical language to another. Eco's comparison of the terms interpretation and translation show that they overlap but are not synonymous as there is a limit to translation that does not hold for interpretation. A translation strategy that aims for equivalent effect is guided by the intentio operis as well as by the regulative hypothesis of the encyclopedia, which takes into account the inferential and pragmatic conditions of communication that are implied but not explicit in the text. The paper compares insights from what has been called the "cultural turn" in Translation Studies with Eco's regulative hypothesis of the Encyclopedia as a dynamic interpretative strategy.

Keywords: Eco, interlingual translation, intentio operis, encyclopedia, cultural turn

1 Introduction

Many discussions on translation begin with reference to Roman Jakobson's (1959) division of translation into three types, *intralinguistic* or rewriting, *interlinguistic* or translation proper, and *intersemiotic* or transmutation presented in his essay "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." With reference to Jakobson's classification this paper will be discussing the case of interlingual translation, or "translation proper." The descriptor "proper" refers to the type of translation that most commonly comes to mind when we encounter the word "translation," that is a transferring of sense from one natural language to another, and it shall be used in that sense throughout this paper.

Eco's views on translation are derived from his earlier work on cooperative reading (1979b), on the distinction between dictionary and encyclopedia (1984a), interpretation and its limits (1990, 1992a), on the search for the perfect language

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(1993b), on inference (1999a), and on Peirce's theories of abduction and inter-pretation. However, it is specifically in *Experiences in Translation* (2001b), *Mouse or Rat: Translation as Negotiation* (2003b), and the Italian *Dire quasi la stessa cosa* (2003a) that Eco focuses exclusively on the topic of interlingual translation. He draws on his experience of having been translated, on his first-hand knowl-edge of the practical tribulations involved in translating and, as a scholar of translation, on the theoretical and the historical issues that define the activity. This combination ensures a broad personal range of experience that provides him with a multitude of examples taken from the translations of his novels and other works into many and various languages, some of which he is familiar with, and some not.

As is often the case with Eco's work as it appears in English and in Italian, these three volumes do not fully correspond and any reader assuming direct translation from one volume to the other will be confounded and confused. The first volume, *Experiences in Translation*, was published in 2001 in English. The Italian *Dire quasi la stessa cosa* is an amplified version of the 2001 volume, and *Mouse or Rat?* Carries many of the sections that were added to the Italian volume, such as the chapters on "Losses and Gains" and "Source versus Target," which are topics typical to Translation Studies publications.

1.1 Translation and interpretation: Jakobson and Eco

Umberto Eco, in the second part of *Experiences in Translation* (2001b) entitled "Translation and Interpretation"[1] does more than use Jakobson as an introduc-tion to the topic or as a peg on which to hang a discussion about translation. Eco challenges the manner in which Jakobson used the term "translation" stating that in Jakobson's famous 1959 tripartite distinction the term "translation" is used in a figurative and not in a technical sense. This use parallels one of Peirce's most frequently cited phrases where he speaks of interpretation as "the translation of a sign into another system of signs" (*CP 4.127*). Peirce makes use of the word "translation" metaphorically, and not synonymously, argues Eco (Eco 2001b: 71), and since Jakobson was heavily influenced by Peirce's writings, the metaphorical use was extended. Eco and Jakobson both express respect for Peirce's work. They share Peirce's definition of meaning and their own views of interpretation are derived specifically from Peirce's notion that "a sign is something by knowing which we know something more" (Eco

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1 Also discussed in *Mouse or Rat?* (2003b: 123–144), in the chapter "From Rewording to Translating Substance."

1984a: 2), which implies the process of semiosis in that meaning is communicated through other signs, other words, *ad infinitum*.

Jakobson's "fascination"[2] with Peirce's description of meaning as "translating" a sign into another system of signs, led him to draw a parallel between interpretation and translation that *seemed* as though he were treating them as synonyms and thereby ascribing the same operation of understanding to each.[3] Not coincidentally, the definitions that Jakobson gives of the three types of "translation" all depend on "interpretation" in their explanations. This ambiguity between the two terms leads Eco to ask: "If all three types of translation are interpretations, did Jakobson not mean that the three types of translation are three types of interpretation, and that therefore translation is a species of the genus *interpretation*?" (Eco 2001b: 68).

Eco's next step is to demonstrate that, logically, interpretation does not always imply translation. He provides the following argument:

> there is a limit to translation, when we are confronted with 'diversity in the purport of expression'. Having identified this limit, we are forced to say that, *at least in one case*, there are forms of interpretation that are not wholly comparable to translation between natural languages. (Eco 2001b: 73)[4]

This disambiguation of terms has relevant consequences. Not only is interpretation the genus of which translation is a species, and therefore not co-extensive with it, but interpretation also precedes translation in that every act of reading and understanding presupposes an interpretation, and only after that is the decision to translate or not to translate into another system, in this case another language, taken.[5]

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2 Eco claims that "Peirce's synecdoche fascinated Jakobson" (Eco 2001b: 70).

3 It is possible that the tendency to view the two terms as synonymous also has its roots in the Latin use of the word *interpres*. It was used to refer to both translator and interpreter – however, "interpreter" referred to the simultaneous vocal translation (and not the act of interpretation as understanding, as implied by Peirce) as in *Caesar propter interpres alloquit Gallos* [Caesar spoke to the Gallus by means of an interpreter] and "translation" referred to written translation as in the example *interpres huis libris nomen habet Alcuinus* [Alcuin is the translator of this book].

4 In *Experiences in Translation* Eco makes use of a footnote at this point to draw attention to the different translations of Hjelmslev's term. The 1943 version of Hjelmslev, that is "purport" is followed here, but in other texts by Eco, such as *Mouse or Rat*, the term "matter" is used.

5 The dynamic notion of understanding as interpretation derived from Peirce and shared by Eco and Jakobson, is not universally held. Michael Dummett (1989: 464), in his discussion on Davidson's use of the term "interpretation" in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" (1989), and on Ian Hacking's criticism of it in "The Parody of Conversation" (1989), posits Wittgenstein's distinction between *Auffassung* [way of grasping] and *Deutung* [interpretation], which only allows for the notion of interpretation in what can be described as difficult or conscious acts of making sense, whereas when one "grasps," one does so unconsciously or automatically, and

Eco does more than question Jakobson's tripartite distinction. In *Experiences in Translation* (2001b: 98) he proposes an alternative classification of forms of interpretation. His division is also tripartite, but the distinctions are between Interpretation by transcription, Intrasystemic interpretation, and Intersystemic interpretation, where "translation proper" falls into the third category. In addition, this classification expands considerably Jakobson's first category of intralingual translation or rewording which, according to Eco "covers an immense variety of types of interpretation" (Eco 2001b: 68) that are not made apparent in Jakobson's classification.

1.2 The lector and the interpres

Just as interpretation and translation have much in common, but are not the same, so do the reader and the translator have much in common but they, also, are not the same. The "reading" or interpretation that the translator provides is, by definition, written, fixed in a new set of signs, in a different language, and it becomes a new text with a particular relationship to the source or original text.[6] There is yet another important distinction between the interpretative activities of the reader and the translator: the reader's understanding of the text in hand is, certainly, given in other signs, as Peirce insisted, but those other signs tend to be in the same language and are therefore instances of rewriting or intralingual translation, whereas the translator "rewrites" in a different language. This is a highly relevant distinction according to both Jakobson and Eco, but less so according to Steiner who uses the same term "translation" for both cases of interlingual and intralingual translation.[7]

Neither the reader's nor the translator's interpretations are identical, in an obvious sense, to the source text, as Derrida reminds us that in a translation "the letter is mourned to save the sense" (Derrida 2004), and in so doing the sense is embodied in a different letter. Despite this mournful loss, Eco argues that rewriting in

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is not considered to be a case of interpretation. This description does not take Peirce's notion of "habit" into account or the idea that even automatic interpretations are based on previous interpretations that become habits.

6 The "particular relationship" between the original and the translated text is described by Ernst-August Gutt (1998: 48) with reference to Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory as "the core relation between the translation and the original is one of interpretative resemblance... the sharing of explicatures and implicatures between the two texts."

7 See Steiner's (1975: ch. 1) "Understanding as Translation" where he uses the word "translate" for intralingual interpretation, especially for reading works from the past, for example, "When we hear any language-statement from the past, be it Leviticus or last year's best-seller, we translate" (1975: 28).

the same language actually moves the text further from the source meaning than interlingual translation does. In the case of rewriting "[t]he substance of the expression also changes" as for instance, the word "cat" does not connote the same as *Felis Catus*, to keep to Eco's example and consequently, "two substances of the expression are produced' (Eco 2001b: 84). Dictionary definitions, paraphrases, explanations, commentaries, encyclopedic entries are all examples of rewriting in the same language and they are all examples that change the substance of the expression.[8] In the case of translation, on the other hand, the substance of the expression, or the sameness or identity of words in Derrida's terms, is certainly changed, but the substance of the content, or the sense, is the same[9] (or close):

> we can turn enunciations in one language into enunciations in another language because, even if synonyms do not exist at the lexical level, two different enunciations can nevertheless express *the same proposition*. (Eco 2003a: 345, author's italics, my translation)[10]

In order to amplify this argument, Eco (2001b: 85) provides the following example:
  (i)   Go home
  (ii)   Please go back to where you habitually dwell.
  (iii) Torna a casa.

where (i) and (iii) encompass the same content and would ring identical to a bilingual speaker, whereas (ii), although within the same language, says something more, much more, than the original phrase.

    These issues are particularly pertinent to the translator who (usually) does not want to say "something more" in the target text. The notion of equivalent effect[11] has its roots in the observation that the textual surface of a source and a

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8 See Eco (2001b: 84–88) for a full discussion of the difference in substance between rewording and translating.

9 Gottlob Frege's observation that "the same sense has different expressions in different languages or even in the same language" (1980 [1892]: 58), leaves the door open to the possibility of producing the same sense within the same language in a different expression and therefore supports the case for synonymy.

10 Original text: "Bisognerebbe pensare che si possono volgere gli enunciati espressi in una lingua negli enunciati espressi in un'altra lingua perché, anche se a livello lessicale non esistono sinonimi, due diversi enunciati possano tuttavia esprimere *la stessa proposizione*" (Eco 2003a: 345, author's italics). This passage does not correspond to the paragraph in *Mouse or Rat* (2003b) where it is replaced with a more direct reference to the idea of perfect languages in thinking about translation.

11 In *Mouse or Rat* (2003b: 56) Eco amplifies this point stating, with reference to his own notion of the *intention operis* as the final arbiter of textual meanings, "the aim of a translation, more than producing any literal 'equivalence', is to create the same effect in the mind of the reader (obviously according to the translator's interpretation) as the original text wanted to create."

target text can be extremely different yet the deep meaning can be the same. Ironically and perhaps even dangerously, the translator's traditional tool is that of the dictionary, which, based as it is on definition, has the tendency to say more than the source word or phrase communicates. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the sections below.

2 What's so "proper" about translation?

Perhaps by way of a inferential walk, or a minor detour through an interpretative wood guided by a dictionary, we can follow the tracks of the word "proper" and the manner in which it reverberates through the notion of interlingual translation. The origin of the word in English dates back to Middle English and is derived from the Old French *proper*, which in turn is derived from the Latin *proprius*, referring to "one's own," that is, to the notion of ownership. In addition, the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the meaning of "proper" as:

1. truly what something is said or regarded to be; genuine;
2. strictly so called; in its true form;
3. of the required type; suitable or appropriate;
4. according to what is correct or prescribed for a particular situation or thing;
5. according to, or respecting recognized social standards or conventions; respectable, excessively so.[12]

This list is not exhaustive but it highlights two highly relevant associations of meaning: the root meaning from Latin, which emphasizes the individual in terms of ownership, and, on the other hand, the "social standards or conventions," which recognize and emphasize the collective nature and social norms of what is or is not considered "proper." It brings to mind Stanley Fish's "interpretative community" as collective adjudicator of what is or is not acceptable.[13]

Our constant acts of making sense, or interpreting, are situated between the binary opposition of individual experience, memory, knowledge and the idiosyncratic collection of events and data that make of us singular and unrepeatable human beings, together with the necessarily shared nature of language, knowledge, and expectations involved in making sense of information. In

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12 The definition is taken from the *New Oxford English Dictionary of English* (1998). The definition of the word "proper" is only partially reproduced above.
13 Fish (1980: 147–174) introduced the term "interpretative communities" in an essay titled "Interpreting the *Variorum*" to argue that the readings of a text are culturally constructed within a community of readers and speakers.

addition, such shared knowledge also imparts a predictive ability through the Peircian notion of abductive hypotheses, "which depends on our hope, sooner or later, to guess at the conditions under which a given kind of phenomenon will present itself" (CP 8.384–8.388; see Eco and Sebeok 1983e: 2).

In addition, Jakobson's inspired choice of the word "proper" also seems to point squarely towards the parameters of what an acceptable translation is. It is expected to be "true" or "genuine" in that the reader of the translation (not the case for adaptations) expects a "true," that is, a very close correspondence between the original and the translated text, and this correspondence may seek to go beyond the expectation of presenting the same content of the expression as "[v]ery often, in the passage from language to language, attempts are made also to conserve the same form of the content" (Eco 2001b: 87). This is especially true, but not exclusively so, in the case of literary translation.

The term "proper," with its associations of "correctness," "suitability," "conformity to social norms," and "truthfulness," seems to lay down the contractual terms that a translator is expected to deliver of a text that is defined as a translation and that a reader of a translated text should reasonably expect to have delivered. It is a fiduciary contractual relationship since, by definition, the target reader does not have access to the original text to be able to check for accuracy and general "truthfulness" to the intentions of the original text. That this relationship of trust has often been compromised for myriad reasons, ranging from deliberate ideological manipulation, adaptations that pose as translations, texts that have been abridged without the reader being made aware of the changes (incomplete translation), and also, by the sheer incompetence of some translators who may believe they have better language fluency than they actually possess, and finally (in this non-exhaustive list)[14] those translators who intend to be truthful by keeping as close to a source text as possible and who, in their intentions to achieve equivalence, produce literal renderings that may look like the original, but that are littered with false friends and strange syntax that are frequently the result of keeping too close to the surface of the text instead of aiming for deep-level effects – in other words, to return to the definition of "proper" one last time, those translations that do properly follow the text, but "excessively so."

2.1 The encyclopedia as regulative hypothesis

The cooperative behavior of the reader that Eco describes in *The Role of the Reader* (1979b) is the same as that of the translator inasmuch as it is focused on

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14 For a detailed discussion of these and other obstacles in literary translation, see Lefevere (1992).

working out and building up the *intentio operis*.[15] It is precisely the *intentio operis* to which the translator is to be truthful. There is, arguably, a difference of degree between the cooperative readings of a "normal" empirical reader and a reading by a translator. The translator is a very specific kind of reader whose mode of reading is more careful and nuanced, often described in intimate terms such as the translator "caresses" and "cajoles" the text in drawing out its details and subtle meanings. In addition, the translator is not only a special kind of reader but also a particular kind of writer. Edith Grossman, in her compelling discussion of translation, describes the translator's mode of reading in this way:

> In the process of translating, we endeavor to hear the first version of the work as profoundly and completely as possible, struggling to discover the linguistic charge, the structural rhythms, the subtle implications, the complexities of meaning and suggestion in vocabulary and phrasing, and the ambient, cultural inferences and conclusions these tonalities allow us to extrapolate. This is a kind of reading as deep as any encounter with a literary text can be. (Grossman 2010: 9)

Grossman describes the process as "hearing" the implications and complexities of the work. This contact with the text, this "deep ... encounte," this profound knowledge of the work is not translation itself but the reading that precedes it. All encounters, whether they are ephemeral, instantaneous, and subconscious, or long, deep, and very consciously undertaken, are instances of inferential processes. Eco demonstrates that to interpret a sign is not merely to recognize equivalence, but always requires a dynamic act of inference. He maintains that "inferential processes (mainly under the form of Peircean *abduction*) stand at the basis of every semiotic phenomenon" (Eco 1984a: 8). The inferential act precedes all others, as Eco explains in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*: "we deal with both with language and with every other kind of sign by

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15 The process of reader cooperation and interpretation is succinctly described by Eco in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation*:

> A text is a device conceived in order to produce its model reader. I repeat that this reader is not the one who makes the "only right" conjecture. A text can foresee a model reader entitled to try infinite conjectures. The empirical reader is only an actor who makes conjectures about the kind of model reader postulated by the text. Since the intention of the text is basically to produce a model reader able to make conjectures about it, the initiative of the reader consists in figuring out a model author that is not the empirical one and that, in the end, coincides with the intention of the text. Thus, more than a parameter to use in order to validate the interpretation, the text is an object that the interpretation builds up in the course of the circular effort of validating itself on the basis of what it makes up as a result. I am not ashamed to admit that I am so defining the old and still valid "hermeneutic circle." (Eco 1992a: 65)

implementing inferential processes. These processes can be defined as interpretative processes. The understanding of signs is not a mere matter of recognition (of a stable equivalence); it is a matter of *interpretation*" (Eco 1984a: 43).

The close and detailed interpretation that a translator applies follows the same rules as other regular readings except that the translator tends to be more aware since the reading is a preamble to the translation task ahead. There are certainly degrees of awareness since the more familiar an instance of a word or an action, the more automatic our response becomes to the extent that we may become unaware of the inferential process taking place – just like driving a car takes up all our attention when we begin, but becomes almost automatic over the years. Giampaolo Proni (this volume) amplifies this point when he states that "interpretation is always an inferential act, what changes is only the degree of automatism and the certainty of conclusion." In the case of the translator the intention is that of producing a new text that will, in ideal circumstances, evoke the identical inferential processes as those of the source text. Eco describes this in *Experiences in Translation*:

> Interpreting means making a bet on the sense of a text, among other things. This sense that a translator must find – and preserve, or recreate – is not hidden in any pure language, neither a divine *reine Sprache* nor any Mentalese. It is just the outcome of an interpretative reference that can or cannot be shared by other readers. In this sense, a translator makes a *textual abduction*. (Eco 2001b: 17)

"Textual abduction," in Peirce's sense, is based on habit making which becomes an automatic response to a text (or other stimulus) as a consequence of the familiar experience of reading. The reader's knowledge of other texts, or lack of such knowledge, provides the pragmatic context within which interpretation takes place. This background knowledge determines individual responses and interpretations, as well as the collective or social responses. The passage just referred to above, describing the translator's interpretative action, continues in this way: "Of course, the whole history of culture assists the translator in making relatively safe bets, in the same way as the whole theory of probability assists the gambler at the roulette table" (Eco 2001b: 17).

The "safe bets" or abductions depend on the pragmatics of contextual knowledge. To return for a moment to the notion of the "proper" in translation, we recall that the definition brought both the individual ownership of, in this case, the mental process of inference, and also the collective sense according to which a "proper" act, in this case of translation, "respect[s] recognized social standards or conventions." In *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (1992a) Eco describes the fact that a text can sustain multiple readings and that the singular interpretation that the author may provide is only one among many that the

intentio operis determines to be acceptable. The shared nature of knowledge, effectively described in Stanley Fish's term the "interpretative community," underlines the collective nature of meaning and the social practice of language which establishes the shared, social nature of interpretation. The readers bring their cultural expectations to the text however, unlike Fish, Eco insists that the validation, the limits and the parameters of textual interpretation are to be found within the text itself, and not within the community. Eco writes that:

> when a text is produced not for a single addressee but for a community of readers – the author knows that he or she will be interpreted not according to his or her intentions but according to a complex strategy of interactions which also involves the readers, along with their competence in language as a social treasury. I mean by social treasury not only a given language as a set of grammatical rules, but also the whole encyclopedia that the performances of the language have implemented, namely the cultural conventions that the language has produced and the very history of the previous interpretations of many texts, comprehending the text that the reader is in the course of reading. (Eco 1992a: 67–68)

The postulate of "a social treasury" or an "encyclopedia" that holds "the cultural conventions" as well as the "history of previous interpretations" and other relevant knowledge, becomes part of the interpretation, of the sense-making process of reading. The notion of encyclopedia is a key notion in Eco's interpretative semiotics. It is to be understood as a regulative theoretical hypothesis and not as a lexical model.[16] Eco describes it as no less than "the global semantic competence of a given culture" (Eco 1984a: 68), and in the Italian version of *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, as the "book of books, and library of libraries," a sort of key to culture of the kind his character Casaubon in dreamed of *Foucault's Pendulum*.[17]

3 Translation studies: an ancient art and a new discipline

Interlingual translation is an ancient activity and speculation on what occurs during translation, on what makes for the best type of translation, how meaning

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16 See Violi (this volume), as well as Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, in both the English and the Italian versions, for a detailed discussion of Encyclopedia.

17 Donald Davidson, in "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" (1989, 443), argues that, "things previously learned were essential to arriving at the passing theory" (that is the context within which an interpreter makes sense of a speaker's utterance), the idea, therefore, that "things" as well as language form part of the competence of the interpreter is compatible with Eco's more comprehensive notion of the Encyclopedia as regulative hypothesis in interpretation.

is conveyed, transplanted, and perhaps transformed during translation has been around, presumably, for as long as natural languages have existed. This post-Babelian phenomenon is a constant and inevitable aspect of our lives, anchored as they are in the interpretation and communication of linguistic and non-linguistic signs which surround us.

There are a number of themes and topics in the discussion of translation that emerge and re-emerge under a different focus at different historical moments. The first is about method. Volumes have been written and translators have been burned at the stake over whether word-for-word, literal, sense-for-sense, or free translation is the method to be preferred. When the text to be translated is a sacred one, traditionally believed to have been dictated directly by God, then the question of method, of whether liberties can be taken to best express the sense in the target language which might not replicate the word order in the source, takes on immense, even dangerous, proportions.

Related to the phenomenon of the translation of sacred texts is the notion of the primacy of the original. The translation is always going to be perceived as a weak copy, a necessary evil, a means to an end when the original author is no less than God Himself. This superior positioning of the source text in relation to its translation has bestowed an elevated status upon the original which has been extended to the author of the work, thereby emphasizing the subordinate and derivative position of the translator, destined to always come after the main event of literary creation.[18] However, the position of the assumed superiority of the "original" is investigated in some contemporary translation theories influenced by deconstructionist thinking, which challenges notions of superiority and hegemony established through culturally formed hierarchical oppositions. Any examination of an "original" will show it to have been derived from earlier texts, and so on *ad infinitum*.

On the other hand, contemporary debate also echoes the ancients, particularly on issues of method. Cicero's argument, for instance, urges free translation *ut orator* (like an orator) and against a slavish word-for-word rendering from the Greek, *ut interpres* (like a translator), since educated Romans such as himself could read the original Greek anyway. Horace in *Ars Poetica* (c.10 BC) similarly warned of the dangers of word-for-word rendering *Nec verbum verbo curabis redder fidus interpres* (and you will not render word-for-word like a faithful translator) as well as of the dangers of over-faithful and literal translation.

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18 See Chamberlain (1988: 454–472). She demonstrates that over many years there has been a trend towards the use of metaphors to describe the act of translation as derivative and tending towards a feminization of the activity, whereas the original or source text tends to be aligned with potent and masculine images and associations.

Augustine and Jerome in the fourth century also had their say, and their disagreements, on what constituted good translation practice. Jerome introduced the criterion of *veritas* (truth) as a critical notion in his justification of method in the translation of the Old Testament known to us as the *Vulgate* (Baker 1998: 497).

In the twentieth century the Western translation tradition again moved from a preference for surface resemblance and equivalence towards a more radical cultural view of translation activity. In the 1950s and up until the 1970s and early 1980s, translation was perceived as a predominantly linguistic activity that focused on the surface level of the word and on a range of norms in translation practice. This method is reflected in one the most influential works of this period, J. C. Catford's *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* published in 1965, which focuses on translation shifts and translation equivalence, and is predominantly concerned with rank-bound translation strategies. The study of translation at this time fell squarely under the auspices of applied linguistics and, to some extent, philology, comparative literature and philosophy. Mona Baker describes the situation in this way: "In the early 1950s and throughout the 1960s, translation studies was largely treated as a branch of applied linguistics, and indeed linguistics in general was seen as the main discipline which is capable of informing the study of translation" (Baker 1998: 279).

Lawrence Venuti, in the Introduction to his highly influential anthology on translation studies, also comments on the dominance of linguistics in translation in the mid-twentieth century: "modern approaches that are based on linguistics … tend to assume a scientific and value-free treatment of language … During the 1960s and 1970s, linguistics-oriented theorists emphasized the description and analysis of translation operations, producing typologies of equivalence that act as normative principles to guide translator training" (Venuti 2004: 5).

The assumption implied in the linguistics-based approach is that it is reasonable to expect linguistic equivalence in translation, and that it is to be located at the level of the word. Cultural difference, extra-textual elements and the reader's baggage were not considered part of the equation, despite the fact that translation is not an entirely linguistic form of activity. It is semantic, cultural, pragmatic, interpretative, manipulative, transformative and, in Bassnett's words, "although translation has a central core of linguistic activity, it belongs most properly to *semiotics*" (Bassnett 2002 [1980]: 21). The debate about the dominance of language over culture or *vice versa* in matters of translation continued to be an important theme that continued to be discussed into the twenty-first century. Bassnett summarizes the issue in terms reminiscent of a cautionary insight:

But separating language from culture is like the old debate about which came first – the chicken or the egg. Language is embedded in culture, linguistic acts take place in a context and texts are created in a continuum not in a vacuum. A writer is a product of a particular time and a particular context, just as a translator is a product of another time and another context. Translation is about language, but translation is also about culture, for the two are inseparable. (Bassnett 2007: 23)

The notion that language and culture are not separable is, of course, a central tenet in Eco's encyclopedic model of interpretation and his position is very close to Bassnett's. Crucially he maintains that: "Translation is always a shift, not between two languages but between two cultures – or two encyclopedias. A translator must take into account rules that are not strictly speaking linguistics but, broadly speaking, cultural" (Eco 2003b: 82).

3.1 The cultural turn: semiotics and translation

The turning point for the study of translation, not yet called Translation Studies, was the 1976 conference in Leuven, Belgium. The self-reflective nature of the conference led to the redefinition of the study of translation as an independent discipline, emphasizing its many points of contact with cultural, political, and literary areas of study that bring into relevance the role of cross-cultural influence through translation, histories of textual manipulation, as well as of intertextual influences and intersemiotic factors, in addition to traditional linguistics.

By the 1980s there was much discussion on the nature of translation. Much of the previous scholarship on translation had centered on notions of the impossibility of translation, with poetry as the primary example of impossibility at the formal level, as well as on various issues of equivalence, which prompted Bassnett (2002 [1980]) to comment that "equivalence" must be the most overused term in the study of translation. These concerns were no longer of central interest to the study of translation which, by the 1990s, came to see translation within a broader context, as highlighted by the oft-repeated phrase "the cultural turn in Translation Studies," a term that was rapidly adopted and that opened up new vistas for exploration, vistas that were always present but not fully perceived. The cultural turn in translation studies was part of a paradigmatic shift that took place in the study of various disciplines in the humanities in the late 1980s and early 1990s and, as Bassnett points out, "has altered the shape of many traditional subjects" (2007: 16), which inevitably include the study of translation.

Questions to do with textual difference, so pressing in the 1980s and early 1990s, have now been supplanted by questions to do with cultural difference, including racial, ethnic, gender or sexual difference. This is because questions that are now asked by theory no

> longer have to do with a priori conditions of translatability, but with a posteriori ideolo-
> gical and cultural factors that affect, not just translation, but also the translator.
> (Kuhiwczak and Littau 2007: 5)

The relevant context is not only that of the two texts, but also that within which
the translator operates. The opening up of translation to issues of culture and
the "shared global knowledge" coincides with seeing translation within an
encyclopedic structure, as Siri Nergaard and Umberto Eco point out when
describing semiotic approaches to translation: "Translation therefore does not
simply involve substituting single terms with their alleged synonyms, nor does it
involve comparing sign-systems *per se*. Instead, it involves confronting textual
situations against a background of different (partial) encyclopedias, that is, of
specific forms of socially and culturally shared knowledge set in different
historical situations (Baker 1998: 219).

The cultural and the linguistic relationship between the two texts is not the
only factor of interest in the study of translation, but the manner in which
translators are influenced and formed within particular cultural and historical
moments, their particular encyclopedias, also play a dynamic role in the inter-
pretation and translation of texts. The relationship is a triadic one, with the
newly produced text as yet another sign, or interpretant, to be further analyzed
in due course. There is no final or ultimate or perfect translation. Each transla-
tion of a text, such as the many translations into English of *La Divina Commedia*
for instance, showing themselves to be products of their own age forging a
dynamic relationship with Dante's original.

The translator has the rather strange job of having to translating what is *not
there*. The pragmatic spaces in the text which are the unwritten assumptions of a
common cultural reality shared by the Model Author and the Model Reader through
the textual fabric of the *intentio operis.* The empirical reader changes over time, and
the unspoken context also changes in that it becomes increasingly *un*familiar and a
visible obstacle to understanding, which often prompts translator to make use of
additional notes to fill in those elements that the modern reader would no longer
share with the Model Reader as created in the fifteenth century. The context of
production and that of reception move further away from one other as time passes,
so those semantic and pragmatic elements of the context of production become
more visible as they become as more impenetrable. The past is another culture and
the interpreter who works with older texts must be competent in the historical,
cultural and intertextual encyclopedia of daily life in the past, as well as its
language. Temporal distance and cultural distance function in a similar manner.

In addition, the translated text also reveals features that place it within its
moment of construction, the habits and norms of translation practice which

date the translation. These features in the target text also become more apparent as time goes by.

3.2 Equivalent effect

Eco's discussion of equivalent effects in translation parallels the cultural turn in translation theory: the move away from linguistic notions of equivalence while highlighting aspect of the encyclopedic model of interpretation. The emphasis is not on equivalence as substitution, as in the dictionary model, but of equivalent effect in the translated text which aims to produce the same "inferential walks" for the reader of the translated text as the reader of the source text would encounter. The intention is usually, though not exclusively (since texts, even translations of texts, can be put to many uses) to say no more or less than the source but to produce the same cognitive, cultural and intertextual effects in the mind of the reader of the new text. The result is that the two texts might seem very different to one another at the surface level, but be more similar in the less obvious, deep-level effects created in the reader. Eco argued that "the concept of the sign must be disentangled from its trivial identification of coded equivalence and identity," and therefore from the dictionary model, since "the semiosic process of interpretation is present at the very core of the concept of sign" (Eco 1984a: 1). In *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, Eco elaborates on the distinction between the dictionary model, which he presents as "a bidimensional tree," and the encyclopedic model, which is "able to represent the global semantic competence of a given culture." He goes on to describe it further, stating that, "Such a global representation is only a semiotic postulate, a regulative idea, and takes the format of a multidimensional network that has been described as the Model Q" (Eco 1984c: 68).[19] And finally, he collapses the very model of the dictionary into that of the encyclopedia:

> The tree of genera and species, the tree of substances, blows up in a dust of differentiae, in a turmoil of infinite accidents, in a nonhierarchical network of *qualia*. The dictionary is dissolved into a potentially unordered and unrestricted galaxy of pieces of world knowledge. The dictionary thus becomes an encyclopedia, because it was in fact *a disguised encyclopedia*. (Eco 1984c: 68)

Any expectation of synonymy or bidimensional correspondence or substitution is effectively blown apart.

In *Experiences in Translation* as well as in *Mouse or Rat?*, Eco provides a range of examples taken from his own novels, which amplify the point of

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19 The description of Model Q is outlined in Eco in *A Theory of Semiotics* (1975a: 2.12).

equivalent effect rather than literal equivalence. In describing the various solutions used by his translators Eco explains that: "In all these examples I invited the translators to disregard the literal sense of my text in order to preserve what I considered to be the "deep" one, or the effect it had to produce" (2003b: 70–71).

In *The Name of the Rose* (1980a), for instance, the frequent use of Latin, which was intended to provide the aura of the medieval church, was effectively translated into old ecclesiastic Slavonic to convey the cultural religious equivalent for Russian readers who, belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church do not associate Latin with the Church (2003b: 98–99). In *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988b) a literary reference to a line from Giacomo Leopardi's *L'Infinito*, the famous *al di là della siepe*, was substituted by William Weaver with the line "Like Darien, Diolallevi remarked ..." alluding to John Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" – which, incidentally is a poem about the effect of a text in translation – which, not only preserves the poetic reference and the idiosyncratic tendency of the characters to pepper their conversations with literary references, but Leopardi and Keats were also contemporaries and carry equal literary stature in both cultures (2003b: 67). In *The Island of the Day Before* (1994d) the colors of fish and other natural phenomena are conveyed in Eco's original in lists containing many terms for colors following the decision, on Eco's part, to avoid repetition of any of the terms within each single description. The translators were told that they could change the colors as long as they preserved the notion of variety as the intended effect; i.e., that of a multitude of hues and not of precise colors or precise numbers of shades of those colors (2003b: 68). Clearly, equivalence is not dependent on surface resemblance but rather on an interpretation of the intention that the text conveys, and of the Model Reader's similar experiences in the reading of the original and the translated version.

A semiotic approach to translation, based as it is on the encyclopedia as regulative hypothesis and on the intention of the text as a parameter for acceptability of interpretation and translation, is, in its method, close to the sense-for-sense type of translation technique. This is the type of translation solution, which allows for substantial changes at the surface level in order to provide the reader with equivalent effects in the form of similar abductive processes as the reader of the original, or source text, will have experienced.

One of the greatest difficulties in translation is to avoid that which comes naturally through the principle of interpretation, according to Peirce's, which states that "a sign is something by knowing which we know something more" (Eco 1984a: 2), since there are so many ways in which a translator may say something more than the source text. In *Mouse or Rat?* Eco argues that it is through the process of negotiation that the translator manages the balance of

sometimes saying more and sometimes less than the source text. A translator has to accept that losses will be sustained at some level, but with careful balancing of effects, the translator can also gain in other places. A translated text is a negotiated one that, ideally, provides its new readers with an understanding of the experience of reading the source text.

3.3 Shakespeare's implants

Eco begins both his books on translation, *Experiences in Translation*, *Mouse or Rat*,? and *Dire la stessa cosa*, with a discussion based on long examples of machine translation. They are amusing, as the title of the opening chapter of *Mouse or Rat?*, "The Plants of Shakespeare," indicates. The translations bear a reasonable level of resemblance to the original but they require an added effort of interpretation by the reader to understand that the homonym "works" was translated by the computer software with reference to one context, the use of the term as in "public works" and not in a literary context as in Shakespeare's *oeuvre*. The selection of context, which is the result of the immediate cultural and historical association of the name Shakespeare with the writer of the 1623 Folio edition of the collected dramatic texts, immediately puts the reader right – but the corpus of digitized information that the computer program has access to, and through which it selects words, clearly did not provide enough examples of this collocation to make the pragmatic choice evident to the translation software.

The blatant error, the slightly comic outcome based on the knowledge of the various underlying contexts, the understanding that any half-competent culturally socialized person would not make such a mistake, and would, if faced with the two options of *impianti* and *opere* in a dictionary, have absolutely no problem in selecting the right word in this context, that any negotiation between the two options was immediate and evident – these considerations highlight the encyclopedic knowledge that a person, consciously or unconsciously, brings to the specific act of translation. Such negotiated moves are an integral part of the act of interpretation. A reader is likely to be unconscious of the selections being performed since competent, efficient, and economic readers will have internalized responses based on the habits of numerous previous textual encounters to guide them. The more experienced the reader, the more detailed the nuances of the particular token of the type will become evident. A scholar of English sixteenth century dramatic texts will be far more aware, and will easily pick up intertextual references, textual anomalies, customary phrases, and the occasional fake, than the casual reader who will have to put more conscious effort into reading.

The reader of the badly translated text who might find the *impianti* error amusing will have interpreted the error by working backwards in order to recognize that the semantic area covered by the homonym "works" in English is covered by two terms in Italian. The act of disambiguation on the part of the reader is likely to be immediate and unconscious, the dual contexts apparent, and the sentence, as Eco intended, will elicit a slight reaction of amusement on the part of the reader.

This reaction kills two theoretical birds with one stone. The first is Eco's argument that the underlying cultural encyclopedia is essential to successful translation and the related point that a dictionary model will not provide the pertinent information to disambiguate the terms (unless, of course, as all modern dictionaries do, the term is embedded within a sentence in order to provide a minimal encyclopedic context). And second, it brings to mind the conscious negotiation that is an integral part of translation activity since, as terms do not have equivalent and corresponding synonyms in all natural languages, choices have to be made and losses and gains endured in the imperfect act that translation will always be. Furthermore, translation shares with interpretation the fact that despite the multiplicity of acceptable variants in the translation of any given text, such a thing as a bad or unacceptable translation does exist. The involuntary smile at Shakespeare's "implants" confirms this.

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