Irradiations of the Origin(al): Hermeneutics of Translation and Iconic Resonances

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Abstract: The essay aims to consider side by side, within the hermeneutic paradigm, the trajectories of the philosophy of translation and the post-metaphysical and not-substantialist direction of the hermeneutic theoretical approach, taken as a whole. Particular attention will be given to the philosophies of Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur and Walter Benjamin. The question of translation will be considered not only from the point of view of interlinguistic translation, but also from the perspective of intermedial (or inter-semiotic) translation, i.e. from word to image. This form of translation will be understood, through the aesthetic notion of resonance, as an emblematic example of the process of irradiation of the origin(al).

Keywords: hermeneutics, translation, origin, original, resonance

1. Hermeneutic pathways: Post-metaphysical philosophy of translation

To overcome something, we have to know what it is. The present paper must therefore reconstruct, firstly, what it means to overcome. It aims, initially, to reconstruct a series of prevalent trajectories around the contemporary debates on the "philosophy of translation," by considering the emerging need – across a multiplicity of interpretative lines – to confront the ongoing challenge of overcoming the classical dualistic opposition between "original" and "copy." Once reconstructed, I move on to overcome these prominent accounts in favor of what I propose as a more nuanced, dynamic, polar, *biunivocal* relationship between these elements. This is as important for theory as much as practice. More simply, this overcoming is based on an awareness that any translation gesture – and, therefore, by extension, every translated text – does not just represent a mere linear[1] and mechanical transcription of the same meaning across distinct languages, i.e., into various expressive forms. Rather, overcoming this opposition *constitutively* and *unavoidably* implies an active reconfiguration of meaning – a reconfiguration necessitated not only by the translator's perspective and by the specific determination of the target language, but, specifically, by the metamorphic and extended life of the text itself.

Within this context, translation is understood not as an *imitatio* (imitation) or a transcription, but rather as an act of rewriting, or a trans-creation (though in a non-subjectivist sense, as we will show later). The operation of translation will be examined not only in the classic terms of interlinguistic translation, but also in the form of intermedial (or inter-semiotic) translation, by way of employing the hermeneutic paradigm that has been considered to interpret the "iconic resonances" that emerge from works of visual art which translate written signs. In other words, visual signs with literary origins.

This perspective on translation can be better understood if related in a more in-depth manner to the theoretical acquisitions that part of contemporary philosophy, especially hermeneutics, has achieved (Cercel). Translationological acquisitions – which have been increasingly widespread also in extra-specialist contexts and articulated a special relation to the complex relationship between the

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"original" and the version in a different language – have developed in parallel with the contemporary speculative conquest dealing with the theoretical insufficiency of the relationship through which the conceptual couple original-copy was classically conceived. To the extent that philosophy proposes satisfactory solutions for abandoning the dualism between an original principle that is "true", "real", "self-founded", and its copy-phenomenon, which is "contingent", "illusory", "hetero-determined", even the philosophy of translation can lay itself open to new interpretative itineraries for comprehending the relationship between the "original" and its translated "copy". In our opinion, this change of perspective has developed in harmony with the abandonment (in a more theoretical field) of the classical metaphysical distinction between a transcendent foundation, endowed with an ontological and diachronic primacy, and the appearance of the temporal and contingent phenomenic (the "doctrine of the two natures" of Platonic origin, founded upon the clear-cut distinction between "being" and "becoming").

This post-metaphysical position, developed throughout the twentieth century up to the contemporary situation by means of conceptual and methodological determinations that are often very distant from each other due to their starting points, diverging states of development and differing endpoints, all nonetheless share an essential and widely recognizable root that leads back to a Nietzschean origin. In his visionary perspective, the German philosopher elaborated a deconstruction of the "table of values" of nineteenth-century European civilization, as well as the very notions of "value" and "foundation" themselves, whose intimately contradictory nature he emphasized. The genealogical method, Nietzsche explains in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (7), consists precisely in critically retracing the history of the development and differentiation of moral values so that "the value of these values should itself, for once, be examined", which leads to the discovery of the always derivative, secondary, accessory and contingent character of every principle. Therefore, it is not about simply going through the history of values and theoretical principles to reach their foundation. Actually, it is about integrally questioning the very *notion* of foundation, by showing the a-teleological nature of any principle in an ontological context which, itself extra-moral, always turns out to be determined by a heteronomous factor. Beyond this approach, there is the distinction between origin and current phenomenon: namely, what a certain phenomenon, or entity, currently exists as, is something altogether different and not teleologically bound up with what that phenomenon or entity originated from[2]. Gilles Deleuze (2) explains it well:

> Critical philosophy has two inseparable moments: the referring back of all things and any kind of origin to values, but also the referring back of these values to something which is, as it were, their origin and determines their value. This is Nietzsche's twofold struggle: against those who remove values from criticism, contenting themselves with producing inventories of existing values or with criticizing things in the name of established values […] but also against those who criticize, or respect, values by deriving them from simple facts, from so-called […] 'objective facts'.

Emerging out of this is a reticular and non-accumulative vision of the cognitive endeavor, where the unpredictable succession of exchanges of will to power constantly redefines the structure of reality, appropriated and expressed by multiple forces: genealogy, therefore, means *value* – neither causal nor deterministic, but historical, physiological and psychological – *of the origin* and, in parallel, the *origin of values*.

In this sense, the relationship that classical metaphysics establishes between being and becoming, foundation and derivative, principle and phenomenon, ceases to have meaning. In the same way, if we take seriously a Nietzschean "philosophy of the hammer", then all those metaphysical encrustations scattered throughout the languages of modernity (including philosophical and scientific lexicons) enter into a state of crisis. The very notions of cause and effect are based, according to the German philosopher, on an epistemological scheme of a metaphysical nature, which is similar to the logical scheme upon which the philosophical distinction between "thing-in-itself" and "phenomenon"[3] has been elaborated.

2. Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur – with Benjamin's coda

Fostering a Nietzschean style, the deconstructionist legacy has been aptly integrated with the constructive and prospective stimuli of an ontological refoundation in the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics. This brings up a genealogical line that unites (notwithstanding their significant and sometimes unavoidable divergences) Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. In the specific context of the philosophy of translation,[4] what I want to draw attention to here is the fact that all of these authors converge towards showing how the translation lives in a biunivocal relationship with the original. What does this imply?

There cannot exist any univocal causal determination between the original and the copy. Nor can there be asserted any "ontological primacy" of the former over the latter. Whereas the former radiates from the latter, and progressively redetermines its structures,[5] like different irradiations of the Origin, or the "back-ground" of reality, it redefines and signifies its identity in new directions along more ontological levels. Rather, it is relevant to investigate here not only the established relations between the two poles by redetermining the arrangements of the appearance of the phenomenon-copy (usually considered secondary), but also of the original itself. Thus, to apply such a paradigm onto the field of translation, it is also necessary to recognize the co-implication of the original and the foreign language translation, whose active and performative dimension will come to be considered. The original background of the one that has come into existence, just like the original work, is in fact constantly redetermined in its relationship with the originated (which coincides with the translation, in this metaphor) – every determination lightly touches the essential indeterminacy.

But in what terms, it must now be asked, can this methodological perspective be justified on a theoretical level?

We are met, in respect to this need, with the speculations of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), according to whom "'translating' ['*Übersetzen*'] is not so much a '*trans*-lating' and passing over into a foreign language with the help of one's own. Rather, translation is more of an awakening [*Erweckung*], clarification [*Klärung*], and unfolding of one's own language with the help of an encounter with the foreign language (Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* 65-66). That is: translating does not mean to transfer a content from one language to another, but to appropriate one's own language (thus, the original saying) through the entry of another language.[6] The original, from this perspective as well, manifests itself through its emanations, exactly just as how Being is One, but – as much philosophy asserts – is said in many ways. Every translation is in fact a variation which has been justified by the original, and simultaneously justifies *à rebours* the original by specifying its constitutive determinations.

From Heidegger's perspective, the "making" and "giving" of translation takes place in the practice of dialogue (*Zwiesprache*). This notion, especially dense on a theoretical level, runs through several of his works, emerging as particularly decisive in his writings on Hölderlin, and in the "Note on Translation" included in the 1942's summer semester lectures on *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*.[7] Here, Heidegger specifies that Hölderlin's translation activity – and his translations of Pindar and Sophocles – should not be understood as a *sui generis* activity of a literary author, but as the most abysmal gesture of his poetic saying, in which the establishment of history properly takes place. Heidegger is at pains to emphasize that this is possible only in the one-directional dialogue between original and translation – or, more precisely, between "prototext" and "metatext" (Popovič). As Ginotti excellently explains, according to Heidegger "the historicizing of language will not be able to be originary except for the relationship between the originary nature of one's own and the originary nature of the strange which is put in place in the historical *Zwiesprache*." Only this, he continues, "will make possible the originary transformation, the transition from the strange to one's own, thus the becoming-domestication of oneself" (*Martin Heidegger. Filosofia della traduzione* 103). Translation is not the mere passage of a static meaning into another language through the variation of the signifier, but is instead better described as allowing oneself be transported in relation to the text, the act of coming

and going from one language to another in the movement of Being, always in search of its own perpetually dynamic location (Resta 111-18). By following Heidegger further, and radicalizing his insights, it could be stated that for a text to be reread for its authentic meaning, it needs to radiate into a foreign language:

> translation must aim to be in the first place an *Über*-setzen, a translation of language onto a new shore or into the sphere of a transformed truth; this is the transit of language into the strange[8]. Translation appears as that passage where the foreign is being kept. Such a passage though, when it hits the mark [...] is at the same time a translation of language into its ownmost word; in this sense, it is a becoming-domestic in itself (Giometti 104).

This is a two-fold and simultaneous movement. The same one that, in the flux of existence, manifests itself in the decision by which the being (*Dasein*) projects itself, "ecstatically" comes out of its condition of limitedness,[9] opens itself to transcendence (i.e., to self-overcoming), and opts for one among the multiple possibilities of its own being – a tension that resolves itself at the same time in the discovery (within the reality that surrounds everybody) of the seeds of the call to that overcoming. This is possible only in the encounter between a deciding subjectivity and the objective conditions. Here, in the form of the hermeneutic circle, man finds confirmation of the totality of cross-references and meanings in which reality is structured. He is "thrown into the world," and this primordial grasp of the world has enabled him to project forward his own possibilities, in order to return unceasingly back to the factual situation of his own existence In this passage, translation (*Übersetzung*) reveals itself to be legacy, tradition (*Überlieferung*): not in superficially repeated or reactionary terms, but as the dynamic occurrence of *Leit-Worte*, that is, more specifically, the perpetual transmission of difference in the continuous dislocation of meaning (Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* 97).

In the *Inzwischen* (Heidegger, *Being and Time* 461; Malpas), the temporal unfolding process that articulates the relationship between subject and object, interpreter and interpreted, original and translated text, the praxis of man is realized – this last duality is understood in processual terms, rather than metaphysical or substantialist ones. The "groundless ground" (*Grundlose*) or the "groundless" (*Bodenlose*)[10], that Heidegger highlights, among his other essays, in the *Parmenides* lectures, structures the relationship between the being and one's world, and it articulates, in relational terms, the different irradiations – or emanations – of the Origin(al)[11]. Thus, the Origin reveals itself as "background, as a system of reference," and in such constitutive wandering "this reference to the other, this process of translation finally unveiled is already post-metaphysical thought since it describes, out of metaphysics [...] the secret internal law that governs it" (Resta 175).

Moreover, every translation is for Heidegger a form of *Auslegen*, a form of interpretation, and every interpretation is itself a form of translation[12]. However, this has to be conceived not in a subjectivist sense - as in the most banal interpretation of the famous Nietzschean phrase "there are no facts, only interpretations" (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 267)[13] - but rather, as it became for Heidegger's pupil, Gadamer, in terms of the hermeneutic experience. Gadamer presents the emergence of a perspective always occurring independently from the mere individual will of the interpreters, whereby, just as in authentic dialogue, "the more genuine a conversation is, the less its conduct lies within the will of either partner [...] Rather, it is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it [...] All this shows that a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it – i.e., that it allows something to 'emerge' which henceforth exists" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 401).

A non-relativist or non-subjectivist idea of translation (rooted in the Heideggerian model) is founded on the conviction that the perspective of the interpreting and translating subject is based on a background, the Origin(al) from which multiple versions radiate, which always recalls, in symbolic terms, an original experience of being. From this perspective, the Hölderlinian translation of Ancient Greek texts, arises precisely from the interpretation and translation experience that those works in themselves raise, embody and evoke. A good translation is one that, by interpreting the

sense of the proto-text (its *quid*), radiates into the new context its truth-event by, in turn, shedding some light on a specific dimension of the world: a translation is "faithful to the word [*wortgetreu*]" not when it is literal, but rather when it "pay[s] heed to what in the saying comes to language" (Heidegger, "Anaximander's Saying" 267).[14]

A similar processual, reticular, and non-hierarchical view is proposed by Hans-Georg Gadamer, who would subsequently define translation as a linguistic activity characterized by a primary dimension of connection and mediation between planes of reality; an activity which, in a broader sense, is like the whole hermeneutic process (Figal). More radically still than Heidegger, Gadamer's focus on translation also lives in the disproportion between a very limited direct thematization of the question and, at the same time, the widespread use of the image of "translating" as a metaphor for hermeneutic praxis. According to Gadamer, understanding is, *per se*, a form of translation. Rejecting the subjectivist reduction of interpretation as an arbitrary production of the knowing subject, from the stimulated present in the objective cogency of the word, Gadamer comes to find in translation an effective image of hermeneutic knowledge itself[15].

> If there is any model truly capable of illustrating the tensions inherent in understanding, it is that of translation. Within it, what is foreign will be, as foreign, made our own, i.e., the foreign will not just be left foreign, nor will the foreign be constructed by simply replicating its foreignness in one's own language. Instead, the horizons of the past and present merge in a continuous movement that constitutes the essence of understanding (Gadamer, "*Hermeneutik*" 436).

The human mode of inhabiting the world is based on the model of dialogue and conversation: we are constantly trying to express our experience of things through language, running into victories and mistakes in our attempts to best articulate our sensibility through intersubjective forms. Emblematically, at least, this is what the translator is dedicated toward. Gadamer notes how "The example of translation, then, makes us aware that language as the medium of understanding must be consciously created by an explicit mediation". All knowledge in the hermeneutic perspective, takes place within a process of mediation and interpretation. With interlinguistic translation,[16] there is an extra step, whereby the conversation between two interpreters requires communication into another language: however, *the experiential and cognitive substance of the process does not change.* Gadamer defines the structures of the translation process and the cognitive/dialogical process as first "analogous" and then, in his ascending climax, "identical," arguing that there are recurring forms in both: a willingness of the subjects to recognize the others' opinions; the "exchange of opinions" between interlocutors, leading up to "a common language and a common utterance"; and, finally, the discovery of a language at once proper to the interpreter/translator and adequate to the original[17].

Such a process, moreover, is neither automatic nor taken for granted, but requires constant effort and labor. From this perspective, one can understand why, in a passage from *Truth and Method* (404), Gadamer seems to propose a rather trivial version of the labor of translation when he states (and returns to a dualistic and metaphysical conception of the original-copy relationship): "Every translation that takes its task seriously is at once clearer and flatter than the original". Yet immediately afterwards he returns to a more articulate perspective, where he recognizes that "the translator clearly exemplifies the reciprocal relationship that exists between interpreter and text" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 405). This reciprocity reaches its apex in the "fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*)" that takes place between the differing historical, cultural, and linguistic background of the interpreter and the interpreted (or, we may say, between the "world" of the translator and that of the translated text). This fusion of horizons is the proper form of dialogue, where "we can now see that this is what takes place in conversation, in which something is expressed that is not only mine or my author's, but common" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 406). Thus, for Gadamer, every translation meets with gain (*Gewinn*) and loss (*Verlust*): the meta-text, at a distance from the proto-text, grows in value while reducing its potential in other domains (Gadamer, "Lesen ist wie Übersetzen" 279-81).

According to Gadamer, understanding, interpretation, reading, and translation are, ultimately, four modes of the same hermeneutic process[18]. In this construction, the irradiations of the Origin(al) bear outwards, provoking energy and dynamism in the continuous process of reinterpretation of the authoritative and the contingent. Within this circle, the Origin is given at every point: translation is understood as promoting a metamorphic and processual dimension of reality.

The relationship between original and representation is also explicitly thematized in his analysis of image. In order to briefly address this perspective, it is useful here not only to specify the post-metaphysical and non-dualist philosophical posture he is trying to indicate as the goal of twentieth-century hermeneutics, but also to prepare for that connection between interlinguistic and aesthetic translation, which will be considered in my concluding remarks below. Gadamer defines the image as an emanation of the original[19]: it is other than itself, but, at the same time, it increases its being, as it is stressed in the philosophical tradition of reflection on the notion of *repraesentatio*, which Gadamer deepens and renews in his own hermeneutics. Indeed, the image conceived as representation allows the inversion of the relationship between image and original by emphasizing how it is only through the picture (*Bild*) that "the original (*Urbild*) becomes the original (*Ur-bild*: also, ur-picture) – e.g., it is only by being pictured that a landscape becomes picturesque" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 142)[20]. If we establish a comparison between this ground and the translational question, one could speculate that the original can reveal itself only through the very irradiation that illuminate the translation.

Thus, every act of translation is made possible because of the existence of a common background to the multiplicity of languages and knowledge. This background – whilst never defined in any deterministic and substantialist terms – conjoins the universality of reason with the specific cultural and linguistic tradition, till the expression takes place in a determinate and situated form[21]. In language, this dialectic finds its sublimation: "The hermeneutical experience is the corrective by means of which the thinking reason escapes the prison of language, and it is itself verbally constituted" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 420). The linguistic matrix of human experience represents the background that is, in turn, the horizon of communicative and translational activities. Ultimately, despite the significant differences in the historical, cultural, and linguistic worlds in which humans take up residence, there is one background that unites them all: "As verbally constituted, every such world is of itself always open to every possible insight and hence to every expansion of its own world picture, and is accordingly available to others" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 463).

This matrix was returned to in the 1990s. Paul Ricoeur devoted his efforts toward a genuine "paradigm of translation" that could overcome the dualism between positions, and could even conceive of something larger than untranslatability (as in expressions by Croce and y Gasset), an original language (Benjamin, "The Translator's Task")[22] or an *a priori* common horizon that leads to the equivalence of meaning. Set against such dualisms, Ricoeur suggests, is a search for "fidelity" as a concrete praxis[23], one that is based on the "desire" to translate and its structurally dialogic status (Ricoeur, "The paradigm of translation").[24] This is a hermeneutic phenomenology characterized by anti-nihilist intentions,[25] where we might learn to speak of translation as a matter of linguistic interchange.

Somewhere along the way, the dimension of untranslatability, is for Ricoeur partially superable through the practice of the "construction of comparables": if meaning is not transferable in reproductive terms from one language to another, it is nevertheless possible to construct affinitive or expressive equivalents which, in form (acoustics, style, intervals) and content, can perform similarly to the source language (Ricoeur, "A 'Passage': Translating the Untranslatable"). In a dialectic between proximity and distance, rapprochement and distancing (Ricoeur, *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*), the hermeneutics of the translated text transforms the original through extension and reduction, radicalization and de-potentialization. Here opens that intercultural communicative space where identity and otherness, equality and difference, are two distinct prisms, fruitful yet partial, rich yet lacking. Their task is in understanding the meaning that migrates from the original work into its translation so it can return back enriched. This is why, in translation or communication, there is always 'something of the foreign':

> Granting an explanation in one's own language to the interlocutor in question, presenting him with something he does not understand in any other way, presupposes the implementation of a search for correspondence between the two versions of the same discourse, a correspondence which is also sought by those who communicate in a language other than their own. In this way, every time we speak to another, in the latter, Ricoeur claims, '[...] there is always something of the foreign' (Ricoeur 2001:69) And as the target language brings in the light of day 'the hidden side' of the source language, so the former, thanks to this 'path' through the latter, comes to 'perceive itself as foreign' (Feliziani, 235-36).

The Ricoeurian paradigm, where the metaphor of the text marks out the definition of the challenge of translation – unlike the Gadamerian paradigm, whose theorization centers around the metaphor of the dialogue as the core of the translation – considers the text almost as an autonomous world, which is not dependent on the author (an "absent" author, we might say), inhabited as a cosmos in miniature (Jervolino 22-25). This is a further, radical challenge to the modern primacy of subjectivity.

Finally, we arrive at the renowned position developed by Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) in his seminal *The Translator's Task*. Though it is, admittedly, a much earlier text, it is not incompatible with the hermeneutic works considered so far. On the specific affinities between Gadamer and Benjamin, Giovanni Gurisatti (62) has stressed how "Gadamer and Benjamin[26] agree [...] that the symbolic, portrayalistic and translative dimension of language, which in turn means the truthful dimension of language [...] is an essential, original dimension that is lost early in the historical development of language". Since the dualist paradigm – under which the word should express the thing in mimetic-descriptive terms (establishing the criterion of truth as *adaequatio rei et intellectus*) – has been established in the West, original access to the source of language as a non-objectifying revelation of things has been lost[27]. The occurrence of the poetic word – as well as in the case of the artistic image – still allows the expression of a relationship with being by opening up a previously invisible world. "Active participation in the metamorphosis of the original in history," Gurisatti (72) explains, "is what, according to Benjamin, constitutes the aesthetic essence and ethical dignity of the translation as a form". The translation should "appeal" to the original by asking for hospitality, in order to live in it, and express its allusive power in intimate and dialogical terms. Benjamin notes how translation is situated halfway between becoming and the state of being[28], just as it is likewise situated in an intermediate position between the relevant distance from the proto-text and the close "life relationship" it has with it, with which the author delineates an emanationist (but not hierarchical) relationship: "Just as expressions of life are connected in the most intimate manner with the living being without having any significance for the latter, a translation proceeds from the original. Not indeed so much from its life as from its 'afterlife' or 'survival' [*Überleben*]" (Benjamin, "The Translator's Task" 153).

These "vital manifestations" are precisely the irradiations of the Origin(al) whose motions we are investigating. Here, in the melancholic *Überleben*[29] of the work, the meaning of the Origin(al) reaches its full unfolding, realizing the gain (*Gewinn*) of meaning to which Gadamer earlier alluded[30]. Benjamin observes ("The Translator's Task" 164), in valorizing translation praxis, that the extent to which "a translation can correspond to the essence of this mode is determined objectively by the translatability of the original". More radically, he states that "in its continuing life, which could not be so called if it were not the transformation and renewal of a living thing, the original is changed" ("The Translator's Task" 155). Such a dynamic life of the original does not depend on the subjectivity of the translator, nor can it be reduced to his agency, but it essentially relies on "the inner life of language and its works" (Benjamin, "The Translator's Task" 155)[31]. Maria Teresa Costa specifies this more closely (32):

> It is not a matter for the translator to copy or reproduce a model that is given as original – this would mean limiting himself to the communicative side of language. There are no primary and secondary form of writing, just as each language refers to infinite others. Similarly, each writing contains the trace of other writings that preceded it and anticipates others. Translation is fundamental to the original because it keeps it alive, in the form of survival. Just as languages are in constant becoming, so do they have a posthumous maturity which can only shine through translation.

According to Benjamin (159), the task of the translator aims primarily at reawakening "the echo of the original": such a task is possible because "to some degree all great writings, but above all holy scripture, contain their virtual translation between the lines" (165). Just as in the doctrine of the *logoi spermatikoi* (or *semina verba*), where the roots of divine truth are disseminated and operative throughout the entire historical and natural world, so is it possible to imagine the meaning of the text as disseminated and operative in its Origin within the multiplicity of translation experiences. Namely, its emanations. These latter experiences approach the original back-ground without ever being able to actualize the totality of its possibilities, seeing as "translation ultimately has as its purpose the expression of the most intimate relationships among languages." Consequently, translation "cannot possibly reveal or produce this hidden relationship; however, translation can represent this relationship, insofar as it realizes it seminally or intensively" (Benjamin, "The Translator's Task" 154).

3. Translation as resonance: The symbol of "text-thunder"

Translation can also be defined as a form of resonance: it cultivates the Origin(al) by extending it and glimpsing its *Fortleben*, the "potential" destiny of the text (Benjamin, "The Translator's Task" 153). Every work exerts a resonance in history, and its presence continually regenerates itself through a palingenetic force. Without the constitutive opacity of language ever being completely nullified, the word breaks the silence and lightly touches the irradiations of the Origin in an inexhaustible dialectic between the attainment of meaning and its perceivable detachment from it. There is a "painful negativity" when realizing the impossibility of expressing the totality of the alluded meaning. Yet this is negativity is at the same time an "inexhaustible resource": "Stretched like a rope between light and darkness, the word becomes vibrant" (Caramelli and Cattaneo 12). Untranslatability and the need to translate appear as the *Dioscuri* of translation's task. A good translation, if it cannot exhaust the totality of meaning of the original – just as the original has its own abundance, made up of experience, symbolism, and aesthetic dimension always exceeding the letter of the single translation – can be understood as a resonance of the original. However, in what specific sense is it permissible to employ such an image of resonance?

In the philosophical context, we can conceive the notion of "resonance" as a rhythmic echoing of sensitive, aesthetic experience capable of bringing to light something invisible, which, once visibly manifested, impacts the world by reconfiguring it. According to Hartmut Rosa (*Alienation and Acceleration. Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality*; *Beschleunigen wir die Resonanz!*), resonance is the primary relationship between the world and humans. Strangely, this is something which the social alienation brought on by "acceleration" (processes peculiar to modernity) risk forgetting: a relationship made up of openness and closure, intrinsically qualitative, is still nonetheless capable of mediating between identity and otherness (Rosa, *Alienation and Acceleration. Towards a Critical Theory of Late-Modern Temporality* 100-101). Through resonance, man concretely makes the external world resonate in him, being moved and called by it. In the resonant relationship, subject and world approach and change one another.

Such synchronic vibration constitutes a median dimension, an *Inzwischen*, if we return to the Heideggerian lexicon. Does this not, in the perspective outlined in the preceding pages, express the most authentic core of translation?

Just as the word "cuts" portions of the life-world by appropriating them and returning them, heightened in meaning, at different points along the expressive plane, so does every translation resonate with the aesthetic determination proper to its original. By innovating in it the dialectic between fidelity and betrayal, closeness and distancing, hospitality and estrangement. Translation – with its passage from proto-text to meta-text – is an emblematic case of the relationship between the many and the One:

> The many are such insofar as they are originally disposed to transformation and inversion; this means that the latter are predisposed to reverberate the same sound, thus, to show that they always 'are' really

> that same thing. This is what they all always – and in any case – lead back to themselves, in making them all 'sym-pathetically' reflect one another. Therefore, they never express departure from the starting sound (Donà 69).

In the field of translation, the resonance of the Origin(al) in the irradiations of the many is well captured by Hans-Georg Gadamer, who in *Truth and Method* (388) speaks of "resonances" or "overtones" (*Obertönen*) as those elements that can be lost or gained in translations.

In his essay *Reading is like Translating*, Gadamer returns to the resonances of language, providing a pluralistic phenomenology of expressive tones, which he classifies into three groups: *Nebentöne* (secondary accents), *Obertöne* (harmonic sounds), and *Untertöne* (intonations) (Gadamer, "Lesen ist wie Übersetzen" 279). These notions open up to reflection on the role of sound and the musicality of speech within literary expressiveness – in the original text and in its translation – but more importantly they allow us to reinforce the image of resonance as a metaphor for the translation task in general. According to this perspective, translation is to be conceived neither as a mimetic reproduction of the original nor as an arbitrary creation of the translator's subjectivity, but rather as a transposition – by mean of the "resonance" – of the original into the copy, of the proto-text into the meta-text (and, simultaneously, of the meta-text into the proto-text, that is its original echo).

This process is particularly evident in poetic translation. In this context, according to Gadamer, the best translators are those who simultaneously guard and transcend the "standing apart from the original (*den Abstand zum Original*)", since they operate not only as interpreters, but as "co-creators", as well – ferrymen of meaning "between two languages, like between two riverbanks in a single country" (Gadamer, "Lesen ist wie Übersetzen" 285)[32].

In translational resonance, the sense of the text echoes, while it ties together the historical path the words have traveled. This goal is achieved thanks to the ones who, in a Heideggerian register, listen to the saying and aim to have it echoing in his own expressive rendering, moving his gesture of understanding and translation as a remembering, as recollecting thought (Nardelli 44-45).

We might point out that in Benjaminian terms, the resonance expresses in translation a kinship or "inner affinity" (*Verwandtschaft*), rather than an "outer similarity" (*Ähnlichkeit*) between words. Thus, the language of the translator "can, indeed must free itself from bondage to meaning, in order to allow its own mode of *intentio* to resound, not as the *intentio* to reproduce, but rather as harmony, as a complement to its language in which language communicates itself" (Benjamin, "The Translator's Task" 161). Elsewhere ("Das Passagen-Werk" 510) Benjamin writes, with great lyrical power, "The text is thunder whose resonance rolls long on".

In the final instance, resonance – although subjectively perceived in different terms – is rooted in the elementary givenness of the text-thunder recalled by Benjamin. From this we can derive – following the anti-subjectivist polemic of the eclectic thinker – that "languages are not only more long-lived than man, but they are more malleable and capable of metamorphosis. The mortality of author and reader is opposed by a surplus of life, which precisely takes the name of the survival and destiny of works, together with their languages, to a posthumous and migrating life, beyond the intentions of any one subject. Language persists, but only in perpetual motion. The strength of survival lies precisely in this dialectical interplay between the New and the Everlasting: all changes, all transformations (in the sense of leaning toward the future), all novelties pass through the repetition of something original, which needs to be understood not so much as a model that will later be duplicated and reproduced, but rather in the sense that the term origin (*Ursprung*) has in Benjamin's thought. In the wake of Goethe's *Urphänomen*, it has a historical character and precedes these forms only from a logical, not ontological, point of view. Thus, what in the lexicon of translation theory we call original does not precede the translation from a metaphysical point of view, but it finds thanks to the latter its splendor only in its posthumous life (Costa 33-34). The proto-text and meta-text's boundaries dissolve in the irradiating power of the hyper-text, in its infinite network of cross-references and resonances.

4. From interlinguistic translation to iconic resonance

Resonance is constituted not only through interlinguistic translation, whereby a text resonates in its translation into another language in the play of references highlighted thus far, but also in the passage of narration from one medium to another. The case we intend to consider here – as one example among many possible ones, in order to show the effectiveness of the theoretical paradigm treated so far (in cultural and aesthetic studies in general) – concerns the translation of written text (with particular reference to the poetic/literary sphere) into visual expressive languages, where the notion of "resonance" is already used to define the ability of art to insinuate itself, between folds and interstices, into new dimensions, by imposing itself on the attention of the users (Lavigne 42-43). Such passage from word to image can be understood as a radical case, but not a qualitatively incommensurable one with respect to a "resonant" translation. We have already pointed out that, in the hermeneutic tradition, the comparison between narrations always involves an act of interpretation and translation – that is, the translation of the textual diction into the real life of the interpreter, and its historical determination. Thus, the conversion of text into a new language can also develop within different expressive media, not necessarily written ones.

As Gadamer pointed out, word (*Wort*) and image (*Bild*) both live as ontological planes endowed with a meaning which is distributed within a reality that is, in turn, conceived in a reticular, relational, and processual form. From this perspective – notwithstanding the relevant differences between written and visual expressive structures, which require specific analytical and hermeneutic tools,[33] the analogy between image and word (Davey 31-33) allows us to extend the notion of "translation" (which is already assumed in the broad theoretical sense that we investigated so far) to the phenomenon of the recreation of literary narratives in artworks.

This assumes that artworks can be directly inspired by literary texts – whether the latter are of a narrative or poetic nature – and are not merely or generically forms of contamination of literary production (or elaborations of the latter), but true translations of literary words into images. The notion of resonance turns out to be effective in this regard, because of the fruitfulness of such a path: between the literary and the visual work one can perceive a field of forces that resonate with the Origin(al), which is destined to radiate (in pluralistic and intermedial form) in literature as well as in visual art.

This perspective contributes – along with the attempts of contemporary hermeneutics – to contrast the subjectivist aesthetics of modernist and (neo)Kantian character to a form of dynamic realism applied to the domain of art. The work comes to gain a datum of reality capable of actively operating on the human, whose subjectivity is not a mere arbitrary production but rather a connection with the original Otherness. This paradigm concretely interprets contemporary experiments, for the benefit of art criticism, that are situated between expressive languages: such as the surrealistic mythopoiesis of Salvador Dalí in his *Don Quixote* and *Les Chants de Maldoror*, the canvas translations of the poems of Paul Celan and Ingeborg Bachmann by Anselm Kiefer, the "erasures" of *Divina Commedia* and *I Promessi Sposi* by Emilio Isgrò, to name a few examples. The latter could be read not as mere illustrations of literary classics, arbitrarily determined by the artist, but as concrete resonance of the text-thunder in the form of visual language – as the impulse or the longing for the cosmic background and a combination of images and words that inhabit it to manifest themselves in plural, recursive, inter-medial forms.

This interpretive horizon can be further reinforced on the basis of philosophical hermeneutics: in Gadamer, it is clear how both the word and the image are not conceived as formal illustrations of a content, but rather as means by which what is, is represented and brought to visibility, in so doing integrating its essence. "In his reflection on language [...] the symmetry between the relationship 'image/represented thing' and 'word/thing' is perfect in the sense that, from a hermeneutic perspective, the essence of the image and the essence of the word coincide" (Gurisatti 59).

In contrast to concepts that reduce language to the purely semiotic or instrumental-conventional dimension, and in a form that is distinct from structuralist paradigms, the magic of language cel-

ebrated by Heidegger, Gadamer, and Benjamin theoretically grounds the process of iconic resonance, that is, the resonant movement capable of articulating meaning from the literary to the visual dimension. In fact, as Gurisatti (59-60) points out,

> just as the image is neither a photographically reproductive copy-imitation of the depicted, nor an arbitrarily conventional scheme-code affixed onto it, so the word, in its 'true essence', is neither a mere material mimesis (i.e. onomatopoeic, sonic reproduction of a sound phenomenon) of the thing, nor a pure conventional 'sign' applied to the thing, to which recourse is made in view of a certain use [...], but rather a polar-circular, coexistential medium 'in which I and world are joined, or rather present themselves in their original congeniality' (Gadamer, 1960: 541).

This "congeniality" ultimately shows a *continuum* in the polarity of identity and difference, between the "original" and its "translations," as well as between the Origin and its determinations.

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Notes

[1] "Translation is not a linear process, but one which involves mutuality, which brings about change for both cultures involved: a foreign culture is not simply subsumed under one's own frame of reference; instead the very frame is subjected to alterations in order to accommodate what does not fit" (Iser).

[2] This is "the proposition…that the origin of the emergence of a thing and its ultimate usefulness, its practical application and incorporation into a system of ends, are *toto coelo* separate; that anything in existence, having somehow come about, is continually interpreted anew, requisitioned anew, transformed and redirected to a new purpose by a power superior to it" (Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* 51).

[3] These themes, which run throughout Nietzsche's entire oeuvre, are considered explicitly and polemically in the controversial posthumous fragments known as *The Will to Power*. On this topic, see the sections "Against Causalism" and "Thing in Itself and Appearance", where we read: "The 'thing-in-itself' is nonsensical. If I remove all the relation-ships, all the 'properties,' all the 'activities' of a thing, the thing does not remain over; because thingness has only been invented by us owing to the requirements of logic, thus with the aim of defining, communication (to bind together the multiplicity of relationships, properties, activities)" (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 302).

[4] However, this form of philosophy is not thematized in monographic terms in all three authors, but rather runs through their works in a subterranean form, halfway between theoretical considerations and translation practice. On this note, we can think of the much-discussed Heideggerian translations of Greek philosophers (for a general reconstruction, see Giometti 9-36, and, for a case study, Giacomelli 7-29). Moreover, Caramelli and Cattaneo (2) state: "reflecting on translation also means, for philosophy, reflecting on itself, with which the expression 'philosophy of translation' calls into question a duplicity of the genitive, both objective and subjective, which leads one to suspect the presence of some problematic circularity of the hermeneutic type".

[5] This latter goes along with the *Sprachbewegung*, the ever-dynamic movement of language. In this regard we refer to the now classic Apel.

[6] Just as, from an anthropological point of view, Heidegger points out in *Being and Time* that the destiny of the being, its original "happening" (*Geschehen*) coincides with its transmission – that is, with translation on the plane of the facticity of its multiple possibilities, and in the transmission and communication of them (cf. Heidegger, *Being and Time* 434-39).

[7] On this question, see von Herrmann and Storace.

[8] On the topic of translation as a space where the word exposes itself to the test of the stranger, cf. Berman. Berman's perspective influenced the notion of "linguistic hospitality" elaborated by Paul Ricoeur (*On Translation* xvi): "Linguistic hospitality, therefore, is the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one's own home, one's own dwelling".

[9] To exist is to "ex-ist", namely "to come out of oneself" (Chiodi).

[10] The echoes of Christian mysticism are significant with relation to such orientations – think of Jakob Böhme's famous notion of *Ungrund* ("un-ground") (cf. Muratori). The thinking of being is, for Heidegger, "imageless" (*Bildlos*) precisely because of the ineffable essence of the totality of *Sein*. The thought of being, Franco Toscani explains (27), "does not 'assault' (*Bestürmt*) the truth (as philosophy understood as metaphysics does), but 'comes to the rescue of its essence,'" thinking itself as an event of being.

[11] By means of this expression, we seek to understand the possible overlap – which we attempt to verify herein – between the philosophical-hermeneutical notion of Origin (as a dynamic ontological origin, metamorphic, but not metaphysical-substantialist), and the aesthetic-literary concept of Original, which is also understood, as we shall see, in terms that are not substantialist, but rather "auratic" (Original as the irradiating pole of a cognitive experience).

[12] In this sense, the praxis of *Being and Time*, wherein the translation of the notion of λόγος is essentially configured as an interpretive act (cf. Heidegger, *Being and Time* 55-58), is theoretically illustrated by the considerations in *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"*, in which it is made explicit that "Every translation is interpretation. And all interpreting is a translating" (Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister"* 65). Then, every act of saying and speaking is itself a translation, since in every dialogue thoughts are translated into language – language that is never definite and always open to reformulation, that is, to re-translation.

[13] The entire quotation is: "Against positivism, which halts at phenomena – 'There are only *facts*' – I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact 'in itself': perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing".

[14] Alongside the valorization of the fruitful role of translation, symptoms of pessimism over the possibilities of effectively rendering the rich, saturated words of ancient philosophy appear throughout the Heideggerian oeuvre, in which history as seen as a process of decline bearing symptoms of a "post-Babel condition". This aspect has been considered by Elena Nardelli (47-48). On this subject, see also Resta (126-58). For an extensive review of the "Babel enigma," with special attention to the "assumption of linguistic difference" in positive terms in Ricoeur and Gadamer, see Oliva.

[15] On this topic, see Gentili. That there is a complete identity between thought and expression is a central thesis of any philosophical-hermeneutic approach – a principle that had already been theorized by Friedrich Schleiermacher: thought is itself a linguistic fact.

[16] We refer to the famous tripartition elaborated by Roman Jakobson, who classified forms of translation into "intralinguistic" (the reformulation of a thought in the same language), "interlinguistic" (translation proper, from one language to another) and "intersemiotic" (from one sign system to another – cases where "intermedial" translations fall, such as the passage from poetic to visual language that is under consideration in the present article).

[17] See Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 405. Here again, "The translator's task of re-creation differs only in degree, not in kind, from the general hermeneutical task that any text presents" (*ibid*. 389).

[18] Giovanni Gurisatti has convincingly argued for the possible extension of such a hermeneutic paradigm to portrait practice as well: in the portrait, the face of the Other is translated into the transmutation in a form that transposes its manifestation. See also Davey (120).

[19] Gadamer (*Truth and Method* 141) takes this notion from Neo-Platonic philosophy, which he interprets as an early overcoming of substance ontology.

[20] Between image and thing represented there is a relationship that can then be indicated by the figure of chiasmus (see Boehm 32).

[21] On this topic, the famous Gadamerian notion of the "history of effects" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) (cf. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* 311-18) can also be understood as a theoretical background that functions to renew philosophical perspective on tradition. If every encounter with historical datum takes place in "the experience of a tension between the text and the present" (*ibid.* 317), the translator must operate with the awareness that his activity inevitably brings his own perspectival-cultural datum; likewise, the text does not cease to metamorphically maintain the situation of its own genesis.

[22] For a critical approach to this form of "nostalgia", see Olender.

[23] Mirela Oliva (61-62) correctly observes that the practical and concrete dimension of translation (translation as act and gesture that is prior to theory) was also intuited in the Heideggerian-Gadamerian line through a reevaluation of the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*.

[24] In the Heideggerian and Gadamerian perspective, linguistic universality is sustainable as a plural mode of relationship between man and the world, without having to presuppose a specific original language.

[25] Jervolino offers excellent elucidations on the topic.
[26] But he also refers to relevant differences: think of the centrality of Jewish messianism in the translational remembrance of the immemorial origin thematized by Benjamin, which is quite distant from Gadamer's historical-immanent perspective.
[27] Critical awareness of the reduction of language to a system of signs legitimizes comparing the Benjaminian and Heideggerian visions, as Caterina Resta (152-58) has done.
[28] Likewise, "the poem holds on at the edge of itself; so as to exist, it ceaselessly calls and hauls itself from its Now-no-more back into its Ever-yet" (Celan, 8).
[29] Maria Teresa Costa (28) states that the term *Überleben* in Benjamin delineates "something that goes beyond (*über-geht*), entering another order, a higher realm, announcing the possibility of completion," so that every translation is, de facto, a rescue of the work from oblivion.
[30] In Benjamin, unlike in Gadamer, the focus is not on the communicative dimension proper to translation, but rather on preserving the mystery and ontological power of language.
[31] To the extent that the user benefits from increased knowledge through the comprehension of the meaning of the text, which is conveyed to him in an accessible language, this implies that the translator takes on an ethical responsibility towards others.
[32] The "spatial" image of translation as a passage between *loci* is probably of Heideggerian derivation.
[33] These pathways can be found in literary criticism and visual studies (particularly following the so-called "iconic turn").

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