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The "Matrix of Culture"—
George Steiner's *After Babel*
and the Outlines of a Semiotics
of Translation and Adaptation

**Engaging with Translation.
New Readings of
George Steiner's *After Babel***

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The "Matrix of Culture"— George Steiner's *After Babel* and the Outlines of a Semiotics of Translation and Adaptation

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Abstract: The present article aims to draw attention to the fact that George Steiner, in *After Babel*, a book now more than forty-five years old, makes statements that are still valid today not only with regard to translation in the narrow sense (*translation proper*), but also concerning the genesis and intercultural transfer of non-verbal or polysemiotic artifacts. In contrast to what has been done so far, Steiner can be considered a pioneer of a comprehensive semiotics of translation, along with Roman Jakobson and others. The following remarks pursue this idea primarily on the basis of Steiner's sixth chapter, entitled "Topologies of Culture", and show that there are still points there that can be taken up today and in the future.

Keywords: George Steiner, *After Babel*, Semiotics, Polysemioticity, Intersemiotic Translation, Language and Music.

1 Introduction

If it is true that *After Babel*, as George Woodcock suggests, is to be appreciated more "for the fertility of its suggestions rather than for

the finality of its conclusions" (Woodcock 1975: 328), this may apply not only to statements about translation in the conventional sense, but also to other transferential phenomena, namely intralingual and especially intersemiotic translation—operations that one does not immediately suspect might be implied if one considers the subtitle of the original edition, namely "Aspects of language and translation" (Steiner 1975/1992). Meaning and translation phenomena in the broad sense are not only to be found in the (inter)linguistic sphere, but potentially also in all other forms of human expression (cf. Steiner 1975/1992: 436). Yet Steiner expresses this conviction in several passages of *After Babel*, thus providing insights into a theory of translation on semiotic grounds—a theory for which we tend to credit Jakobson for having laid the cornerstone. Such a theory aims to explore and describe meaning-making processes in the linguistic and extra-linguistic domains which, according to Steiner, constitute "the matrix of culture" (ibid.: 437).

These processes have only recently become the focus of scholarly activity and, more specifically, entered into the field of enquiry that we presently call translation studies. The following remarks are intended to assess Steiner's contribution to the discussion concerning the diversity and categorizability of translation processes from a semiotic perspective and to show that, despite the somewhat eclectic, and indeed kaleidoscopic tendencies of *After Babel*, that book also profiles a more systematic approach which we can consider useful even today. I begin with Steiner's notion of translation as it is described in all its (semiotic) richness of facets in order to then examine his inclusion of the non-linguistic in his conception of translation in the following subsections.

2   On the status of translation in the context of communication studies

George Steiner was one of the first in translation theory to adopt and further develop the somewhat rudementary classification of translation phenomena which Roman Jakobson proffered from a

linguistic-semiotic perspective in his concise article "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" (1959). From the very first chapters of *After Babel*, Steiner discusses and complements the now popular distinction in translation theory between the three types of translation, namely 'intralingual', 'interlingual', and 'intersemiotic translation', from a wide variety of perspectives.

Steiner places a special emphasis on intralingual or 'internal' translation. It occurs precisely in the context of supposedly equal[1] language bases (Jakobson 1959: 233 speaks of "rewording"). For Steiner, "[t]he concept of a normal or standard idiom is a statistically-based fiction" (Steiner 1975/1992: 47): knowledge barriers separate people across times and spaces, they impede communication between professionals and laypeople (cf. ibid.: 25f.), children and adults (cf. ibid.: 35–39), men and women (cf. ibid.: 39–47). Yet the "language-worlds" (ibid.: 23, 39) of which Steiner speaks are not only the abode of whole collectives, but always comprise the language-world of each individual as well (cf. ibid.: 23, 47f.). According to Steiner, the very individual understanding of information coming in from the outside, whether or not it is linguistically constituted, has the structure of a translation process: he who understands, translates. All this envisages translation as an interpersonal understanding between possible radically different worlds, and in that case, translation would be a ubiquitous phenomenon. As the author of *After Babel* posits, in interlingual translation, i. e.,

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1   Using diatopic varieties as an example, Steiner answers the question of whether intralingual translation really involves the same language as follows: "There is a centrifugal impulse in language. […] Indeed, in many important languages, differences of dialect have polarized to the degree that we are almost dealing with distinct tongues […]. In all these cases comprehension demands translation along lines closer and closer to those of inter-lingual transfer" (Steiner 1975/1992: 32). Schreiber also also states: "Since the functional language always changes with the change into another dialect, sociolect or linguistic style, these types of (synchronic) intralingual translation can be summarized as 'transformations of a text into another functional language'. It follows that all translations, including intralingual translations, are interlingual in the way that the 'language' in the broadest sense (i. e., the single language, the language level, or the functional language) changes" (Schreiber 1993: 28f.; trans.: M. A.).

translation that transcends the boundary between two different languages, that kind of translation impells the desire for a striking explicitness which is actually already inherent in every inner-linguistic exchange—that is, in the everyday activities of understanding and communicating with oneself and others:

> The fundamental epistemological and linguistic problems implicit in interlingual translation are fundamental just because they are already implicit in all intralingual discourse. What Jakobson calls 'rewording'—an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs in the same language—in fact raises issues of the same order as translation proper. (Steiner 1975/1992: 436)

Interlingual translation, called *translation proper* by Jakobson (1959: 233), and deemed that which enables "process[es] of 'life between languages'" (Steiner 1975/1992: 251),[2] is for Steiner the best-known form, but precisely only "a special, heightened case" (ibid.: 436) of human transferential activity. After a periodization of thinking about translation (cf. ibid.: 248ff.), Steiner engages with the discussion concerning translatability (cf. ibid.: 251ff.), a discussion which oscillates between the "poles of argument" (ibid.: 77) of the possibility and impossibility of this undertaking. The feeling of helplessness in the face of a text that refuses to be transferred (cf. ibid.: 250ff.) is matched against the practical, and renewed efforts to translate texts (cf. ibid.: 256ff.). The possibility of translating is asserted repeatedly, but much depends on the sensitive appreciation of time, place, text types, and so forth. The reception of certain texts from other times and cultures does not open up to every generation. Since both the original and any translation which derives from it are determined by their historicity, the retrospective interpretive reenactment, logically, never ends. Over the course of history, different types of translating have been distinguished over and over again: (1) "strict literalism", which for Steiner is the most difficult method, (2) "faithful but autonomous restatement", and (3) re-creative imitation ("imitation, recreation, variation, interpretative parallel") (cf. ibid.: 270).

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2   This expression evokes the notions of *Lebenswelt* ('lifeworld') and *Lebensform* ('life-form') in Husserl and Wittgenstein (cf. González-Castán 2015).

In *After Babel*, Steiner also attempts an essayistic, although theoretically grounded foundation for intersemiotic translation (or what Jakobson 1959: 233 calls "transmutation"[3]), a transfer procedure that has only slowly become the focus of translation studies since the turn of the millennium. If 'translation' denotes the practice of transferring meaning, then inevitably the areas of human communication in which verbalia and nonverbalia complement or replace each other must also be considered, since, language, according to Steiner, is merely one of many forms of expression (see below in more detail). Although talk of intersemiotic translation mostly amounts to a metaphorical notion of translation (cf. Agnetta 2019: 253), there is nothing to prevent us from approaching such (often artistic) transfer processes *sub specie translationis*, i. e., by deploying the terminological and methodological tools of translation studies.

If one admits that elements other than linguistic ones are capable of signifying and making meaning, then an approach to such elements from the perspective of communication theory—and for Steiner this always also means: translation theory—is unavoidable because "[t]o study the status of meaning is to study the substance and limits of translation" (Steiner 1975/1992: 436). In his book, therefore, Steiner always emphasizes the essence of what connects all three types of translation as well: the human endeavour to achieve mutual understanding. In this way, Steiner, in this respect ahead of his time (as so often), anticipated statements that would cause enthusiasts of scientific turns to proclaim the "translation turn" only some decades later (Bassnett 1990, Bachmann-Medick 2006/2009: 238f.). Admittedly, some humanities scholars find Steiner's use of the notion of translation too expansive.[4] But it can be

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3   Jakobson's term always refers to the transfer of linguistic signs into other means of expression. According to today's broader understanding, translation processes work in all directions, and also between non-verbal forms of expression without 'detours' via language (e. g. of a music into a ballet). These are to be regarded as instances of 'transmutation' or 'intersemiotic translation', too.

4   Criticizing Paul Ricœur, the French language and translation researcher Henri Meschonnic, for example, writes: "No, to understand is to understand, or to believe that one understands. Translating implies understanding, but that's

considered a merit insofar as Steiner engages in what at the time of the writing of *After Babel* could certainly be called the thought experiment which consists in conceiving understanding and communicating as an exercise in translating. Although this was made explicit by Steiner himself, all of his statements on translation, which have heretofore been too frequently limited by commentators on Steiner to interlingual transmission, thus also apply to the other forms of translation mentioned above. It would be very desirable, for example, to apply Steiner's remarks on the "The Hermeneutic Motion" (Steiner 1975/1992: 312–435) systematically and with the help of current research to intralingual and intersemiotic translation. Some of the essays published in the present volume attempt to do just that, but evidently, this is a matter for much further study. The starting point for the following remarks, in any case, is above all the sixth chapter of *After Babel* entitled "Topological Aspects of Culture." It is a chapter which has garnered far less attention, but which—so the present essay seeks to demonstrate—is more fundamental, at least from a semiotic point of view, since it is here where Steiner explicitly refers to communication that is not just linguistic action.

3   Translation as transformation of meaning

In this chapter, elements of Steiner's theory of human communicating via language and other "media of expression" (Steiner 1975/1992: 488) are discussed. One has to say that such a theory is only partially elaborated in detail, since in other aspects it is somewhat rudimentary and scantly sketched out. In the following two sections (3.1 and 3.2), the interrelations between language and music take center stage, while Steiner's theory of cultural *topoi* is the subject of the last section (3.3).

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something else entirely. Elementary, Dr. Common Sense" (Meschonnic 2007: 8; trans.: M. A.).

3.1 On the Equality of Human Systems of Expression

The following section at the beginning of the chapter of *After Babel* that is of interest here gives very precise information concerning Steiner's views on the place of semiotics, translation and language:

> The current discipline, if it is that, of semiology addresses itself to every conceivable medium and system of signs. Language, it asserts, is only one among a multitude of graphic, acoustic, olfactory, tactile, symbolic mechanisms of communication. Indeed, urge the semiologist and the student of animal communication ('zoo-semiotics'), it is in many respects a restrictive specialization, an evolutionary twist which has assured man's domination over the natural world but which has also insulated him from a much wider spectrum of somatic–semiotic awareness. In this perspective translation is, as we have seen, a constant of organic survival. The life of the individual and of the species depends on the rapid and/or accurate reading and interpretation of a web of vital information. There is a vocabulary, a grammar, possibly a semantic of colours, sounds, odours, textures, and gestures as multiple as that of language, and there may be dilemmas of decipherment and translation as resistant as any we have met. (Steiner 1975/1992: 436f.)

Regardless of its status as an institutionalized discipline, semiotics is a field of research that deals with all conceivable systems of expression. Language, while famously the most prominent, is nevertheless only one of many human systems of expression.[5] It may be that "man is only man through language" ("Der Mensch ist nur Mensch durch Sprache"), as Humboldt (1820/1905: 15) puts it. But it is not only language that makes man as such; it is not only verbal activity that is able to arouse our fascination for what is possible for man. This is also achieved by other forms of expression such as the fine arts, music, dance, and many others. Hierarchies based on the ontology of each system of expression are detrimental

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5   We prefer this term to 'media', 'sign systems' and—more recently—'modes' for different reasons. What is arranged in systems are not whole signs, but the knowledge about these signs. Most often, when speaking of the 'sign', one merely refers to the signifier ('signifiant', à la Saussure) or the expression ('Ausdruck', à la Hjelmslev). 'Media' and 'modes', on the other hand, focus on the transitivity of expression, which is inappropriate to the artistic use of these very expressions. The term 'mode', moreover, is reserved for other phenomena in the two disciplines of interest here: in linguistics it denotes the attitude to what is said, and in music it denotes the church keys.

to the exploration of semiosis in general and to the translation processes relating different forms of expression to each other. To put it bluntly: What raises a Rilke poem to a higher level than a Bruckner symphony or an athlete's performance? The (statistical) supremacy of language in the system of human ways of expression cannot be denied. Accordingly, linguistics is a leading discipline in semiotics. However, the place of language in the structure of communication through signs is controversial. While some semioticians, especially linguists, hold to the hegemonic position of language, other researchers express doubts that language is in every respect the most sophisticated communicative instrument imaginable. The barest side glance at animal as well as plant sensory and communication systems enables us to situate the matter of language in a much larger spectrum.

In certain contexts, as Steiner writes, the use of language may even equate to a "restrictive specialization" (Steiner 1975/1992: 436) such that, while it has enabled humans to subdue flora and fauna, it also insulates them "from a much wider spectrum of somatic-semiotic awareness" (ibid.: 437).[6] Does the development of language end up being the reason for the atrophy of other receptive and cognitive abilities in humans? One may not want to go that far; in any case, what is important is that humans do not live in a space where communication is carried out through language(s) alone, but rather in an environment characterised, today, as more complex than ever, by a diversity of sensory, somatic, and semiotic impressions. In the plant, animal and human world, however, these are always the result of processes of reception and interpretation—in short, processes of translation. Thus, Steiner arrives at the succinct statement: "translation is […] a constant of organic survival" (ibid.: 437).

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6   Steiner (1975/1992: 49f.) similarly remarks: „It meant also that the 'bright buzz' of non-verbal articulate codes, the sensory modes of smell, gesture, and pure tone developed by animals, and perhaps extra-sensory forms of communication […] all but vanished from the human repertoire. Speech would be an immensely profitable but also reductive, partially narrowing evolutionary selection from a wider spectrum of semiotic possibilities".

Not only is language merely one of many forms of expression, it is, according to Steiner, not capable of completely representing the abundance of these above-mentioned impressions—neither of representing them, nor of describing and paraphrasing them either: The author of *After Babel* comments on this as follows: "Though it is polysemic, speech cannot identify, let alone paraphrase, even a fraction of the sensory data which man, blunted in certain of his senses and language-bound as he has become, can still register" (Steiner 1975/1992: 437). The fact that words are often only the limping messenger of something experienced or thought is a theorem that Steiner also takes up in other of his books, for example in his essay *Ten (Possible) Reasons for the Sadness of Thought* (2005). There, the fact that many of the human contents of consciousness and thought cannot even "'break through' to complete articulation" (2005: 19) in language[7] triggers the *tristitia* of the thinker mentioned in Steiner's title. It is also the reason for imponderables of intersemiotic translation or for "the problem of what Jakobson labels 'transmutation', the interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs in non-verbal sign systems" (Steiner 1975/1992: 437). Simply because language is not able to reproduce the abundance of possible impressions, it also seems to be a poor starting point for non-linguistic further transformations.

Behind each of the indicated "mechanisms of communication" (ibid.: 436)—whether graphic, acoustic, olfactory, and tactile, whether it is about colours, sounds, smells, tactile sensations, movements and gestures—Steiner assumes a division into elements, rules of their combinability and "possibly" also "a semantics" (ibid.: 437). Using linguistic metaphors, he talks about the "vocabulary" and the "grammar" of systems of expression (ibid.). Here, Steiner, anticipates the explicitly formulated conviction in multimodality research that sign systems (or 'modes') obey the rules of a grammar, which has to be completely reconstructed by the discipline researching them. Stöckl (2004: 11), for instance, writes:

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7   Ortega y Gasset, in *The Misery and Splendour of Translation* (1956/1983: 37–39) also speaks of the "illusion" of thinking that man can express in words what he thinks and feels without loss.

"Along with 'mode' comes the notion of a 'grammar', i. e. signs belonging to one mode are seen to be governed by a common set of rules that state how these signs can be combined to make meaning in particular situations".[8]

Like language, the system of music, that of colours, etc., seem to consist in discrete elements (or, under certain circumstances, elements which are interpreted as discrete) that are conventionally implemented and combined in certain ways. This addresses the first of the three subdivisions of semiotics which constitute semiotic research according to Charles Morris, namely syntactics. Steiner's scattered statements are also convincing with regard to the other two subdivisions of sign theory, semantics and pragmatics.

And yet music is something other than language. Talking about music 'as a language' has its limits, like any metaphor:

> Yet though the parallels are crucial and in certain respects homologous, they shade quickly into metaphor. Music *is* a language, but in saying so we use 'language' in a peculiarly unstable sense. We may be using it either at the most technical semiotic level (both are 'sequential rule-governed sign systems obeying certain constraints') or in a sense almost too large for proper definition (both can 'communicate human emotions and articulate state of mind'). Most likely our reference to 'the language of music' points to the special and the general sense simultaneously and in varying proportion. (Steiner 1975/1992: 445f.)

It is this insisted-upon difference between the two systems of expression that leads to the fact that mediation, or rather 'translation', can occur—and do so with profit. For, like conventional textual translations, intersemiotic transfer phenomena open up a wider catchment area compared to their original, whether it consists only of verbal elements, or nonverbal elements, or indeed a combination of verbal and nonverbal elements. The artefact resulting from an intersemiotic translational performance joins and enriches the original and other translations and adaptations of it (see chap. 3.3).

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8   For a (non-exhaustive) list of grammars created in the vein of multimodality research, see Stöckl (2004: 28, endnote 4).

3.2 Setting to Music as Translation

Steiner's observations on the forms of interaction or—to take up his own formulation mentioned above—on the "processes of life" (Steiner 1975/1992: 251) between the different human 'worlds of expression' are not exhausted by intersemiotic translation, namely whereby one form of expression replaces another one completely. These forms of interaction aim at a much wider range of possible intermedial references, targetting the very extensive field of "partial transformations" (Steiner 1975/1992: 437)[9] which includes "paraphrase, graphic illustration, pastiche, imitation, thematic variation, parody, citation in a supporting or undermining context, false attribution (accidental or deliberate), plagiarism, collage, and many others" (ibid.). Steiner points here to many different ways in which one text or artifact refers to another. But he is also interested in interpretive and transfer performances that build on one another, in which one form of expression joins another and something new emerges from this fusion. This is a phenomenon that has only recently been investigated, and described in terms that are both concrete, but also unhappily ambiguous: we now speak of *intermediality*[10] or *multimediality* (in literary and cultural studies), and of *multimodality* or *polysemioticity* (in linguistics and translation studies). I prefer the term polysemioticity here because it can be brought into line with traditional semiotic terminology (cf. also Note 5) and because it has already found application in pertinent translatological studies (Gottlieb 1997, 2005; Agnetta 2019).

Using the example of the musical setting of poetry (Steiner 1975/1992: 438–446), which justifies the dedication of *After Babel* to the "scholars of [...] the arts and of music" (cf. ibid.: xviii), Steiner maps the parallels between the composer and the translator:

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9   The related term „partial translation" can be found in later semiotic studies of phenomena close to intersemiotic translation, for instance in Benecke's dissertation *Audiodeskription als partielle Translation. Modell und Methode* (2014).

10   Within intermediality research, the term 'media combination' best describes the phenomenon of interest here (cf. Rajewsky 2002: 15f.).

> The composer who sets a text to music is engaged in the same sequence of intuitive and technical motions which obtain in translation proper. His initial trust in the significance of the verbal sign system is followed by interpretative appropriation, a 'transfer into' the musical matrix and, finally, the establishment of a new whole which neither devalues nor eclipses its linguistic source. The test of critical intelligence, of psychological responsiveness to which the composer submits himself when choosing and setting his lyric, is at all points concordant with that of the translator. In both cases we ask: 'has he understood the argument, the emotional tone, the formal particularities, the historical conventions, the potential ambiguities in the original? Has he found a medium in which to represent fully and to elucidate these elements?' […] The basic tensions are closely analogous. (Steiner 1975/1992: 438)

In the first paragraph of the quoted passage, Steiner refers more by paraphrase than by explicit reference to the fifth chapter of his book which only the German-language edition actually gives an explicit reference to "interlingual translation" (Steiner 1975/2014: 311). He thus opens his reader up the possibility of considering the composer's activity as a "hermeneutic motion" as well, with the stages of trust, aggression, incorporation, and reciprocity that he described earlier (cf. 1975/1992: 312ff.). The text to be set to music thereby assumes the status of the source text, and the setting is awarded the role of the target text or target artifact. Like the translator, the composer approaches the text with the "belief […] in the meaningfulness" (ibid.: 312) of his original (for a critical discussion, cf. O'Keeffe in the present volume).[11] One may add that this faith does not just apply to the source text in its linguistic constitution. This is probably what Steiner means when he speaks of the "signif-

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11   This belief can be explained only in semiotic terms, as Steiner himself writes: "It is an operative convention which derives from a sequence of phenomenological assumptions about the coherence of the world, about the presence of meaning in very different, perhaps formally antithetical semantic systems, about the validity of analogy and parallel. The radical generosity of the translator […] concentrates to a philosophically dramatic degree the human bias towards seeing the world as symbolic, as constituted of relations in which 'this' can stand for 'that', and must in fact be able to do so if there are to be meanings and structures" (Steiner 1975/1992: 312). The classical definition of the symbolic, *aliquid stat pro aliquo*, as well as its ubiquity are determining in this statement.

icance of the verbal sign system" (ibid.: 438).[12] This trust is directed just as much to the means of expression of the target artifact. This specification can be insisted on especially in the case of intersemiotic translation, since the means of expression used in the target artifact now quite explicitly differ from those of the source artifact.[13] The confidence in the meaningfulness of the composer's own means matures in his person into a veritable knowledge and is constantly developed further by him. As for what those means are, Steiner names these quite precisely: "key, register, tempo, rhythm, instrumentation, mode" (1975/1992: 438). To these could be added the progression of harmonies and of volumes, the type of voice combination (homophonic/polyphonic), the word-tone relationship (melismatic/syllabic), the choice of musical genre, etc.

Like translating, setting to music can be seen as a kind of problem-solving process, a weighing, a negotiation, and finally a selection of the available means. The modern concept of style as applied to translation by Gerzymisch-Arbogast (2001) can be transferred to musical setting with only slight modifications. According to Steiner, the activity of the translator and that of the composer setting a textual basis to music are "closely analogous" (1975/1992: 438) in nature. This applies not only to the composer who sets a text to music, but also to the one who transforms a text into a purely instrumental piece of music. Goethe's poems *Meeresstille* and *Glückliche Fahrt*, for example, were formed into a (sung) cantata by Beethoven (op. 112), and into a (purely instrumental) concert overture by Mendelssohn (op. 27). In both cases the concept of translation in Steiner's sense could apply.

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12   As in many other studies on polysemioticity (mentioned in Agnetta 2019: 89), Steiner's statements on transfer *qua* parole act and those on the various sign systems get mixed up. See e. g.: "Each of these compositions is an act of interpretative restatement in which the verbal sign system is critically illuminated or, as the case might be, misconstructed by a nonverbal sign system with its own highly formal syntax" (Steiner 1975/1992: 442).

13   Nevertheless, there are also many passages in Steiner's book in which the asymmetry of linguistic means is also addressed (regarding the respective language pair). Consequently, this presupposes the translator's confidence in his own target means in the linguistic field as well.

Steiner (1975/1992: 438) also emphasizes in the quoted passage that the musical setting is "a new whole which neither devalues nor eclipses its linguistic source". The words that form the basis of the setting are presented, as it were, "inside a new formal aggregate" (ibid.: 447). In the *Kunstlied*, for instance, text and music are merged into a now inseparable unity. They form a whole in the sense of *gestalt* theory (in relation to opera, cf. Kaindl 1995). According to Steiner, musical settings exhibit a "structure whose centre is neither that of the verbal sign system nor that of the musical notation" (ibid.: 446). As in conventional translation, setting to music opens up a productive space between the different systems of expression: "The contrastive tonalities, the differing idiomatic habits, the distinct associative contexts which generate resistance and affinity between two different languages are intensified and complicated in the interpenetration of language with music" (ibid.: 445). Such statements lend themselves to what Steiner has to say about the linguistic realm since even in conventional translation, this interstice, the so-called 'inter-lingua' (ibid.: 73) arises.[14] 'Intersemioticity' thus refers not only to the substitution of elements of one system of expression for those of another, but also to the space that such a transition creates. In the case of setting to music, for instance, a space is created in which the elements are no longer 'just' language, but also music and *vice versa*. But this seems to be neglected by authors who, even in recent studies, still propagate the notion of a separate reception of the elements of a combined artifact, e. g. when Kvam (2014: 118, 131) raises this very thing to the extent it becomes the definitional criterion of "intersemiotic texts"[15]). After

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14   To cite just two passages explicitly: "A translation from language A into language B will make tangible the implication of a third, active presence. […] Certain of Luther's versions of the Psalms, Hölderlin's recasting of Pindar's Third Pythian ode, point by their strangeness of evocatory inference to the reality of an *Ur-Sprache* in which German and Hebrew or German and ancient Greek are somehow fused" (Steiner 1975/1992: 67). "In practice, though not in theory, such symbiotic translations tend towards a special interlingua for translators, a transfer-idiom or hybrid" (ibid.: 280).

15   Kvam's (2019: 185) definition is: "An intersemiotic text consists of two separate units, one of which is a (verbal) text, the other a communicative unit

the setting to music, a new genre has emerged. Neither the text nor the music separately admits the same inferences as the entire poly-semiotic artifact. "[A] metamorphosis into an integral but interme-diary genre for which we lack a defining term" (Steiner 1975/1992: 446) has taken place. With the above-mentioned terms, e. g., that of polysemioticity, this terminological deficiency is remedied.

In polysemiotic artifacts such as an art song, however, the re-lationship between word and music is unstable, according to Stei-ner, because true parity between text and music is rarely found; rather, one of the two components is always subordinate to the other. In these cases, the music does not match the preceding tex-tual basis, which therefore functions as an authority. Thus Steiner also agrees with those voices that claim that only a poet can provide or supervise a setting of his poem[16]:

> The dynamics of preserved identity and temporary fusion […] are so com-plex as to be very fragile. Thus coexistence on a level of genuine parity and interaction tends to be brief. […] And even here, we have seen, completion is rare. All too often there is cause for Nerval's dictum that only the poet himself can set his own song […]. But the identical motives for rejection apply to much of translation proper. And where the transmutation is accom-plished, the two principal grammars of human feeling fuse. (Steiner 1975/1992: 446).[17]

As was already indicated above, all of this presupposes, of course, that music is seen as capable of creating meaning and that it is ac-cepted that composers use it to formulate their own interpretative

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whose meaning is carried by non-verbal signs. These two communicative units can in principle occur alone: that is, they are fundamentally indepen-dent communicative units that are joined together for specific purposes" (trans.: M. A.; cf. also Kvam 2014: 118).

16 With Umberto Eco, however, it could be countered that the author should withdraw after the completion of his work in order not to hinder the inter-pretations (and thus the translations—also the intersemiotic ones) of the same: "Once the work is done, a dialogue develops between the finished text and its readers (in which the author is not allowed to intervene)" (Eco 1983/1986: 55; trans.: M. A.).

17 Various metaphors characterising the relationship between language and music are collected by Bernhart (2015: 369–379).

and argumentative positions. In addition to language, music is able to create an entirely new world of meaning by providing "commentaries" (Steiner 1975/1992: 439), and by "critically illuminat[ing] or, as the case may be, misconstrue[ing]" (ibid.: 442), "illustrat[ing]," "exploring," and "rhetorically intensif[ying]" (ibid.: 443) the source material. In concrete musical pieces, language and music are able to "perform an action of reciprocal clarification and enrichment" (ibid.: 446). These activity verbs already describe those possibilities of synsemantic relatedness that will increasingly interest polysemioticity (and intermediality and multimodality) research after the turn of the millennium (cf. Agnetta 2019: 213–218). Once constituted in a polysemiotic communicative context, musical signs may also acquire autonomy in future, purely musical production. How many musical motifs, for instance, have been semanticised over the centuries in songs, oratorios, and operas as interpretations of certain lexemes and facts occurring in the text, and then found use as 'musical rhetoric' in purely instrumental works as well (the upward semitone as an expression of longing, chromaticism as a symbol of difficulty and suffering, the tritone as a sign of the diabolical, etc.)? As in the interlingual realm, intersemiotic translational processes are also capable of altering the system of expression into which translation takes place, or, as Steiner puts it: "No language, no traditional symbolic set or cultural ensemble imports without risk of being transformed" (Steiner 1975/1992: 315). 'Risk', despite its negative connotations, can also be interpreted positively. That is: the aforementioned semanticisations of musical phenomena can be seen as extensions of the possibilities and potentials of the musical expression system *in toto*. However, this in turn means that perhaps a naive or unbiased reception of the same (musical) phenomena is irretrievably lost for certain individuals and collectives.

Steiner takes seriously the reference of the musical setting to the textual basis motivating it and describes it—this is how every metaphor works—*as if it were* a translational phenomenon in the narrower sense (translation proper). Such a transfer allows for an interrelation of language and music which corresponds to that of source text and target text. The most obvious difference to con-

ventional translation is that in setting to music (and in comparable transfer processes) the original and the translation coexist to a certain extent. Together they form a new whole, but the original can be reconstructed (again, to a certain extent) from the setting, provided that the composer has set the text to music in its entirety and has been very sparing with modifications (such as erasure or all too frequent repetition of textual elements).

Steiner thereby opens up the full spectrum of translatological terms and methods to the description of intersemiotic transfer phenomena. If, for example, he places multiple translation and multiple musical setting as "exactly comparable" (Steiner 1975/1992: 438), if for him the "the problems of mutual awareness and critique are exactly those posed by multiple translation" (ibid.), then the one who deals with the latter can draw from the knowledge gained by comparing different translations of an original. The same is true *vice versa*. Multiple musical settings are in this respect equivalent to "divergent commentaries on a […] text" (ibid.: 439). New settings are then to be equated with an "interpretation" (ibid.: 444), or, more precisely, with "an act of interpretative restatement" (ibid.: 442) or an "enactment" (ibid.: 438). Like translation, setting adds something to the original which, according to Steiner (ibid.: 401), "was already there" (ibid.: 446). In great musical settings, one can observe how the words are "more than themselves and thus entirely themselves" (ibid.). And, as with translations, there are also "misreadings" (ibid.: 439) of the original textual basis in musical settings. To illustrate his argumentation, Steiner draws on settings of the Gretchen-Lied from Goethe's *Faust* "Es war ein König in Thule" by Zelter, Schubert, Schumann, and Liszt, the French translation of the poem by Nerval, and its settings to music by Gounod and Berlioz (cf. ibid.: 440–446), all of which condense into a network of intermedial references.

All this makes it clear that the parallels between interlingual and intersemiotic translation are not just theoretical in nature (or even theoretically constructed in the first place). They are also to be assumed in the critical discourse on the respective artifacts—a discourse which is by no means exclusive to experts. As with conven-

tional translations, critics can apostrophize any kind of interventions (erasures, insertions, repetitions) in musical settings as (supposed) improvements or else as desecrations of the original.[18] Just as Paul Celan transcends his original (cf. Cercel in the present volume), Franz Schubert is able to "transfigure the feeble poems of Wilhelm Müller" (ibid.: 440). Despite the noble intention, however, "transfiguration" is and remains—both in translation and in setting to music—always a "betrayal" (ibid.) as well. The discussion of whether Steiner is right in his judgments or whether they can also be (partially) invalidated must be left to other studies. But, if Steiner's assessment is true, then the largely independent discourses of translation criticism and musical criticism on setting practice would thus have to show striking parallels. However, the similarity of the two discourses has not yet been investigated in detailed historical-systematic studies.

The difficulties of investigating polysemiotic communication have to do with finding a terminology that is genuinely tailored to this area of investigation and that distances itself from a one-sided linguocentric view. Steiner also notes this when, after his remarks on setting to music *qua* translation, he sums up: "It is, therefore, not astonishing that we lack an adequate critical vocabulary in which to analyse or even paraphrase rigorously the phenomenology of interaction between the language of the word and that of the music" (Steiner 1975/1992: 445f.). This shortcoming could be remedied by semiotics as a "method of methods" (Peirce CP 7.59), "metascience" (Morris 1946/1973: 280), or "superscience" (Wilss 1980: 10), since it strives—more than the individual semiotics of linguistics, musicology, and visual studies—for convergences in the consideration of different systems of expression and, consequently,

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18   Steiner is not sparing with such value judgments either, for example when he ascribes to Schubert an indifference to Heine's biting irony (cf. Steiner 1975/1992: 439) or when he writes that Schumann had "little grasp" (ibid.: 442) for certain dimensions inherent in the text in his Goethe setting. His comments on the musical settings of Goethe's "Es war ein König in Thule" culminate in the terse statement: „So far as I am able to judge, none of these six transformations is really satisfactory" (ibid.: 445).

for a uniform terminology. In this way, Steiner anticipates what, two years after the publication of *After Babel,* Roland Posner formulates as a research desideratum of semiotics: "Thus far we can neither state exactly what is lost when information is transposed from one medium to another, nor formulate precisely how the various media interact in the formation of a unified communication" (Posner 1977: 110; trans.: M. A.). In his book, Steiner had undertaken a well-founded semio-translatological approach to the phenomena of intersemioticity and polysemioticity addressed here. Nevertheless, he has hardly entered the academic consciousness as an explorer of semiotically complex[19] communication processes—not even in that of translatologists, let alone in that of other humanities scholars. In the synopsis of pioneers in the field of polysemioticity and translation (cf. Kaindl 2013: 257–259; Thome 2018: 44–47), Steiner is not even mentioned. Yet it is he who, long before the proclamation of the 'intermedial' or 'multimodal turn' in translation studies, draws attention to the fact that the production of polysemiotic artifacts and intersemiotic transfer products follows the same logic as translation.

3.3 On the Transmediality of cultural *Topoi*

In the chapter which concludes *After Babel*, "Topologies of Culture," Steiner raises the discourse of translation theory to a new level insofar as it concerns the humanities as a whole. He is concerned with the "larger question of inherited meaning and culture": "To what extent is culture the translation and rewording of previous meaning?" (Steiner 1975/1992: 437) The possible answers to this question clearly encompass more phenomena than conventional translation:

> But as we move outward from examples of direct transposition and translation, we find innumerable formal possibilities and shadings of change. These extend, as we have noted, from the closest echo to the most remote, often

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19 The expression "semiotic complexity" used here follows a formulation by Bernd Spillner (1980: 74), which means precisely the involvement of heterogeneous signs in a communicative situation.

unconscious reference, embedded resonance, or allusion. They range from an interlinear translation of Homer to the Homeric contours in Joyce. But indistinctly and crucially they extend to concentric spaces of recognition far beyond the manifest dependence of *Ulysses* on the *Odyssey*. (Steiner 1975/1992: 447)[20]

The variety of possible techniques of 'processing' a given original is almost impossible to survey. It ranges from the most faithful copy to the vaguest allusion. It traverses the whole space of implicit and explicit references of one work to another, to a genre or to a semiotic system. This has been described by Genette (1982), for example, and it has also been investigated in the context of inter-mediality research (cf. Rajewsky 2002: 16f., 22ff.). But it is also devoted to the transition from translation in the narrower sense to (interlingual) adaptation—among others, Schreiber (1993) has illuminated such matters in translation studies. Steiner is hence concerned with all kinds of complete and partial intralingual, interlingual as well as intersemiotic translation and adaptation processes. In his view, they determine "much of our sensibility and literacy"; they are "quite simply, the matrix of culture" (Steiner 1975/1992: 437). All these techniques are arranged in a continuum and this is made possible only in the comparison of artifacts referring to each other. Steiner posits the following: "We could in some measure, at least, come closer to a verifiable gradation of the sequence of techniques and aims which leads from literal translation through paraphrase, mimesis, and pastiche to thematic variation" (ibid.: 459). The continuum between different kinds of intermedial reference and reworking is not linear, however. Steiner depicts it as concentric spheres that grow ever larger and ever more diffuse (cf. ibid.: 447), each of which finds its common core in the original, but which always takes its own distance from it. This image underlines the multidimensionality of translational phenomena.

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20 Steiner also lists at other points in the chapter the various phenomena that fall within this field of inquiry: "this class extends, as we have seen, from most literal translation to parody and oblique, even unconscious echo or allusion" (Steiner 1975/1992: 476); "this degree can vary from immediate reduplication to tangential allusion and change" (ibid.: 485).

The constants or 'invariants' which can be identified in artifacts that refer to one another and that are carried on from generation to generation are currently best described by intermediality scholars as "transmediality" (Rajewsky 2002: 12). Drawing on a mathematical term, George Steiner, for his part, calls them 'topoi'[21]: These manifold transformations and reorderings of relation between an initial verbal event and subsequent reappearances of this event in other verbal or non-verbal forms might best be seen as *topological*" (Steiner 1975/1992: 448). Similar to Jakobson in his conception of *transmutation*, Steiner, as this formulation shows, thus also seeks the starting point, the "initial [...] event" (ibid.) for the aforementioned transmission processes in the verbal. If *topoi* can be "specifically verbal," but also, as Steiner writes, "thematic" and "formal" (ibid.), they need not necessarily have linguistic antecedents. For themes, motifs, and memorized (metaphorical) structures are known to be found not only in the linguistic realm, since they also motivate non-verbal or combined artifacts. The Orpheus myth, for example, is echoed in countless paintings, sculptures, and musical as well as music-theatrical pieces. Cave paintings and hieroglyphs are replete with whole narratives. (New) words are added to traditional musical tunes. Translation processes connect any kind of source artifact to the newly created target artifact.

Steiner ties his remarks on *topoi* back to his notion of the equality of all human means of expression by explicitly stating several times that "[t]ransformations can proceed from linguistic to metalinguistic and non-linguistic codes" (Steiner 1975/1992: 447). Indeed, in his view, there is a "constancy of general human traits and, consequently, of expressive forms whether in speech or the plastic arts" (ibid.: 452) and, we may add, in other forms of expression. Every artist has the innate right to take a theme or motif and transform it into his own art. In naming his source, however, there

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21   In mathematics, as Steiner himself states, the term means those features of a *gestalt* which remain invariant despite distortion (cf. Steiner 1975/1992: 448). "Similarly, there are invariants and constants underlying the manifold shapes of expression in our culture. It is these which make it possible and, I think, useful to consider the fabric of culture as 'topological'" (ibid.).

are noteworthy differences to written translations (and adaptations, cf. Schreiber 1993: 107):

> But the painter, sculptor, or choreographer need not to cite his source-text. He can image, reflect, or enact it with greater or lesser fidelity. He can treat it in a limitless variety of perspectives ranging from 'photographic' mimesis to parody, satiric distortion or the faintest, most arcane of allusions. It is up to us to recognize and reconstruct the particular force of relation. (Steiner 1975/1992: 447)

Speaking of the constants or, more generally, of the 'invariance' of certain thematic elements across generations, as in conventional translation, can only be adequately understood if there is a simultaneous consideration of the complementary concept of 'variance'.[22] Accordingly, in comparative literature, stylistics, and art history (each of which has, as their common ancestral metier, the synopsis of related works), it is not just the "recurrence" of *topoi* that is of importance, but equally their "transformations" (Steiner 1975/1992: 448): "Great mutations of feeling, of cognitive and perceptual frameworks, do occur" (ibid.: 488). These are quite natural, for individuals and collectives, inasmuch as it is a case of choosing the *topoi* to which they pay attention, and assigning to each of them its own significance. They choose, use, and change them according to their own needs. "The history of the *topos*, of the archetype, of the motif, of the genre" (ibid.: 448)—with Gadamer one could speak of their 'effective history'—is accordingly a complex interplay of adoptions and changes. Steiner himself, for example, in *Antigones* (1984), has masterfully sketched the survival of the ancient Sophoclean material into the literature, politics, and philosophy of the 20th century. Whether it be variance and invariance, both are thus in the service of the appropriation of traditional meaning by the respective receiving individual or collective.

The genuine (translational) hermeneutic idea that every text, every translation is "the linguistic objectification of a historically,

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22 This equation is established by Steiner himself: "The relations of 'invariance within transformation' are, to a more or less immediate degree, those of *translation*" (Steiner 1975/1992: 448f.). The relationship between variance and invariance has been detailed by Schreiber (1993).

socially, and subjectively determined understanding of a text" (Apel 1983: 27; trans.: M. A.; cf. on this also Cercel 2013: 71ff.) can thus be explicitly broadened if we follow Steiner and also applied to non-verbal and combined artifacts. More important for him, however, is a subsequent aspect: for Steiner, the historicity of sense units exhibits a radically diachronic dimension. He clearly emphasises this:

> What I am suggesting, however, is that they be recognized as part of a topological process. […] Defined 'topologically', a culture is a sequence of translations and transformations of constants ('translation' always tends towards 'transformation'). When we have seen this to be the case, we will arrive at a clearer understanding of the linguistic-semantic motor of culture and of that which keeps different languages and their 'topological fields' distinct from each other. (Steiner 1975/1992: 448f.)

Statements about the cultural history of humans can only be made if we refer to the artifacts created by them. In this respect, intellectual works—texts, images, compositions, etc.—exhibit a "family tree structure" (Steiner 1975/1992: 479). They are to be regarded as "a continuation […] of an unbroken series" (ibid.: 478), as links in an infinite chain. Each link in this chain is determined by the preceding ones. In contemporary intermediality research, the image of "genetic relationship" (Rajewsky 2002: 16) is used for this purpose. This image was already formative for Steiner as well when he writes: "It is this process, and the continuum of reciprocal transformation and decipherment which it ensures, that determine the code of inheritance in our civilization" (ibid.: 485).

Often, people return again and again to their ancient themes and myths. The world of myths is still able to fascinate people today. According to the illustrious personalities cited by Steiner as authorities (Milton, Winckelmann, Marx, Nietzsche), the themes most frequently invoked are usually of Hellenistic origin (cf. 486f.). But regardless of which models are involved, the reference back to what has already existed, according to Steiner, is, in a sense, inescapable:

> Western art is, more often than not, about preceding art; literature about literature. That word 'about' points to the crucial ontological dependence to the fact that a previous work or body of work is, in some degree, the *raison d'être* of the work in hand. We have seen that this degree can vary from im-

mediate reduplication to tangential allusion and change almost beyond re-
cognition. But the dependence is there, and its structure is that of translation.
(Steiner 1975/1992: 485)

Or:

But in philosophic discourse and the arts, where novelty of content is at best
a problematic notion, the impulse to repetition, to organization via backward
reference, is sovereign. (Ibid.: 487)

And again:

The man who has something really new to say, whose linguistic innovation
is not merely one of *saying* but of *meaning*—to poach on H. P. Grice's distinc-
tion—is exceptional. Culture and syntax, the cultural matrix which syntax
maps, hold us in place. (Ibid.: 489)

Due to numerous conservative forces, the reference to what pre-
ceded an artifact is inevitably always there, whether one wants it or
not, whether one experiences it as a "source of strength or of suf-
focation" (ibid.: 485). The recourse to something already existing
can even be a strategy of the creator—the "maker", as Steiner says,
probably referring to the core meaning of *poiesis* and with regard to
the creator of both verbal and nonverbal artifacts (ibid.: 452, 477)
—in order to overcome the emptiness and loneliness that accom-
panies the creative process: "The new beginning draws on prece-
dent, on canonic models so as to reduce the menacing emptiness
which surrounds novelty" (ibid.: 477). But this does not at all mean
stagnation (cf. ibid.: 488). It does not (or does not necessarily) mean
that nothing but a life and work of epigonism remains for the con-
temporary artist. Rather, looking back is the enabling moment for
one's own creativity in the first place. The new author, architect,
musician etc. is always a reconstructor or recreator. He can

imitate originally. His translations from past models are at once faithful and
new. They are in the full sense—a sense whose contradiction whose para-
doxicality escapes us unless we pause to look hard at the word—*re-creations*.
The neo-classical maker assumes that both the original which he is transpos-
ing and a straightforward, possibly literal translation or reproduction of this
original are readily present to the audience. The implicit availability defines
the extent of thematic variation in his own product. Formal variation gener-
ated by, playing against an implicit constant is a central mode of Western art
and letters. (Steiner 1975/1992: 452)

If Steiner is to be believed, then contemporary narratives revert again and again to a small, finite inventory of formulas. The author of *After Babel* also speaks of an "stock of echoes," meaning those "formulaic building-blocks with which the recreator goes to work" (Steiner 1975/1992: 456). However, it is possible to draw endlessly from this limited inventory. And this drawing and reshaping is what Steiner wants to be understood as 'translation' in the final chapter of his book. Referring to terms drawn from generative grammar, he writes:

> It is on this 'indefinite expansion' of a fairly limited set of 'formulas' that our culture, our capacities for verifiable recollection and response appear to depend almost completely. Translation, in the wider senses which we are now considering, is the primary instrument of formulaic expansion. It transforms the 'deep structures' of inheritance—verbal, thematic, iconographic—into the 'surface structures' of social reference and currency. (Steiner 1975/1992: 451f.)

> But the central point is that all of these metamorphic relations have as their underlying deep structure a process of translation. (Ibid.: 484)

Cultural history, viewed from this perspective, can be considered as a succession of re-translations of a very reduced inventory of original themes and motifs deeply inscribed in man. Hence the cultural history of human beings adheres to the structure of a very productive formative principle, be it in art or, and especially in music, namely that of theme and variations. This is also a metaphor that can be found in several places in Steiner's book, as we can read here, for instance:

> A great part of Western art and literature is a set of variations on definitive themes. (Steiner 1975/1992: 24)

> The themes of which so much of our philosophy, art, literature are a sequence of variations, the gestures through which we articulate fundamental meanings and values are, if we consider them closely, quite restricted. the initial 'set' has generated an incommensurable series of local variants and figures (our 'topologies'), but in itself it seems to have contained only a limited number of units. […] Great art, poetry that pierces, are *déjà-vue*, lighting for recognition places immemorial, innately familiar to our racial, historical recollection. (Ibid.: 486)

Steiner, a self-confessed music lover, not only alludes to musical terminology in his designation of *topoi* as themes and variations (cf. ibid.: 487, 490), but also refers us back to what he had already expressed as a "recapitulation" (ibid.: 490). In the musical arts, this means a modification, sometimes greatly, sometimes less so, of what has already been heard. The cultural history of man is considered here as a sonata movement comprising exposition, development and recapitulation—a striking thought, one which is certainly worth thinking about in translation studies.

Also essential is the function Steiner ascribes to the comparison of texts and artifacts referring to each other when he writes: "We could advance substantive hypotheses about the extent to which the recreative merits and defects of a later version reflect back on the source. How are our readings of Euripides now lit or obscured by our knowledge of Seneca and, particularly, of Racine?" (Steiner 1975/1992: 459) Here Steiner takes up Hans-Georg Gadamer's fundamental idea that it is "the temporal distance" which allows "the true meaning that lies in a thing to emerge fully" (1960: 282; trans.: M. A.) and applies it to translation (in the broad sense). Any artifact that refers to another does not leave the latter untouched; rather, it retroactively affects it, thus changing our view of it. As in anamorphosis, the perspective of the observer *vis-à-vis* an original is changed by a translation in a lasting way (cf. Agnetta 2021). So not only does the original lead to the translation, but the translation leads, as it were, to a 'truer' image of the original.[23] Or, to take up the above image again: in the chain of human artifacts, a link, i. e., the understanding of an individual work, is determined not only by the preceding links, but rather by the links that follow. The implications of this conviction for the consideration of translation are alluded to by Jorge Luis Borges in his short story *Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote* (cf. Gil 2007).

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23   This bidirectional contingency also comes to bear in the following, certainly somewhat exaggerated statement by Steiner: "If, as Whitehead pronounced, Western philosophy is a footnote to Plato, our epic tradition, verse theatre, odes, elegies, and pastoral are mainly a footnote to Homer, Pindar, and the Greek tragedians" (Steiner 1975/1992: 479).

It is by dint of such passages that Steiner manifests his proximity to (current) translational hermeneutic concerns. To designate this particular relationship between a preceding artifact and the work that refers to it, Steiner borrows the term "interanimation" from a poem by John Donne ("The Ecstasy"):

> 'Interanimation' signifies a process of totally attentive interpretation. It tells of a dialectic of fusion in which identity survives altered but also strengthened and redefined by virtue of reciprocity. There is annihilation of self in the other consciousness and recognition of self in a mirroring motion. Principally, there results a multiplication of resource, of affirmed being. 'Interanimated', two presences, two formal structures, two bodies of utterance assume a dimension, an energy of meaning far beyond that which either could generate in isolation or in mere sequence. The operation is, literally, one of raising to a higher power.

> If we consider these attributes, it will be immediately apparent that they reproduce the terms proposed throughout this study to define and characterize translation itself. Intensely focused penetration, the establishment of mutual identity through conjunction, the heightening of a work's existence when it is confronted and re-enacted by alternate versions of itself—these are the structural features of translation proper. Even where it relates works remote from another in language, formal convention, and cultural context, 'interanimation' will show itself to be one further derivate from, one further metamorphic analogue of translation. If this has not always be obvious, the reason may be that the area of relations covered by this rubric is so immediate to and so ubiquitous in our culture. (Steiner 1975/1992: 476f.)

Between two works related to each other there is a 'reciprocal relationship' that strengthens and changes their respective identities—one would almost like to say *completely* independent of their chronological sequence. Connected to each other in reflection, an "energy of meaning" emerges between them that they would never have unfolded on their own, an energy that remains unavailable to the one who does not perform this connection. It almost goes without saying that this intimate relationship of 'interanimation' is also a facet, a potential of translation as conceived by Steiner. After all, translation is always the objectivation of an original experienced by both the body and the mind, one which is then transferred into our present living reality.

4 Conclusion

In *After Babel*, George Steiner shows that heterogeneous human activities such as understanding and interpreting, translating in a narrow sense, and artistic transformations and reshapings of existing models or subjects are all based on the principle of personal and also collective appropriations and further transmissions. Thus, intralingual, interlingual, and intersemiotic translation are not *per se* categories alien to each other; rather, they are entirely personal and always situated processes of appropriation.

While in academic translation studies of the 1970s the introduction and extension of terms such as equivalence and adequacy were discussed and the ambition was to clearly define the boundaries of translation, it was really Steiner who threw the gates between translation and (intermedial) adaptation wide open. From the outset, he advocates for a continuum between these poles and maintains the importance of all these transformative practices for the preservation and further development of 'culture' (in the sense of 'high culture' and 'identity-creation'). Translation, understood as work on and indeed with passed-down meaning, represents the 'matrix of culture'. And it does not stop at processes of semiosis which apparently only take place in and through language. On the contrary: according to Steiner, the creation of meaning by means of non-verbal expressions or in combined, polysemiotic artifacts cannot be understood in any way other than in terms of translation. Translation in the narrow and in the broad sense thus becomes the fulcrum of research in the humanities. Hence, the question posed (once again) by Kaindl in 2013, namely whether translation studies should "continue concentrating on language transfer as a subject or should it—as can rudimentarily be seen in the last few years—start to move away from a monomodal perspective and develop towards a multimodal discipline?" (Kaindl 2013: 257), seems somewhat anachronistic, since Steiner had answered that question quite clearly almost four decades earlier. It accordingly remains the task of present and future translation studies to follow up on the many fruitful and far-sighted "suggestions" in Steiner's work mentioned by

Woodcock in order to help them gain new validity. This would involve, not least by clearly turning away from the subjective value judgments offered by Steiner, and instead linking his ideas and proposals to our current descriptive discourses.

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