

# Global Comic Book Heroes: Intra- and Inter-Cultural Translations of Tintin, Asterix, and Paperinik Comics

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[Accepted for publication: 30/11/2021]

## Abstract

COMICS are hybrid visual and verbal texts that in translation cut across intra- and inter-semiotic boundaries. In this article I briefly review semiotic approaches to the study of comics in translation, focusing on those based on Roman Jakobson's and Gunther R. Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen's models. I then discuss examples of the translation in several languages of three of the most translated and reprinted comic series in the world—namely, Tintin, Asterix, and the popular Disney character Paperinik/Donald Duck. The examples show some of the different types of relationships which are established between visual and verbal signs in intra- and inter-cultural translation.

## Introduction

SEVERAL terms have been used to refer to non-verbal (or not-only-verbal) texts such as comics in translation studies—including multimedia, multimodal, multisemiotic and polysemiotic text—, and the translation of comics has been variously classified as part of audiovisual, multidimensional and constrained translation (for an overview, see Kaindl “Multimodality and Translation”). In this article I will briefly review two main semiotic frameworks often invoked in the analysis of translated comics, based on Roman Jakobson (“On Linguistic Aspects”) and Gunther R. Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen, respectively, as well as a number of studies which have adopted these semiotic categories. Then I will discuss the translation into several languages of examples from stories featuring some of the most well-known characters in the history of comics—namely, Tintin, Asterix and Paperinik/Donald Duck. The examples from these stories, which have been continuously reprinted and translated since their first publication, suggest that intra- and inter-semiotic, -systemic, -modal, and -medial aspects of the translation of comics are often combined and intermingled.

### Ways of Interpreting Verbal and Visual Signs

IN an article published in 1959, Jakobson famously postulated a tripartite distinction among three “ways of interpreting a verbal sign” (“On Linguistic Aspects” 233), namely, “Intralingual translation or *rewording*”, defined as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language” (233); “Interlingual translation or *translation proper*”, defined as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language” (233); and “Intersemiotic translation or *transmutation*”, defined as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (233). It should be noted that all three types of translations are defined as one-directional interpretations of verbal signs, so that while a comic book version of the *Odyssey*, for example, would count as an instance of intersemiotic translation—elsewhere Jakobson gives this very example (“Linguistics” 19), suggesting it may seem a ludicrous idea—, in his model, the novelization of a comic book would not count as a translation at all. For Jakobson, translation has to do with how “natural languages” are translated, within and outside of language, and translation between or within nonverbal sign systems is not discussed.

Jakobson’s typology was subsequently elaborated and expanded upon by other scholars, most notably by Gideon Toury and Umberto Eco (*Dire and Experiences*). In an entry on “Translation” for the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, Toury proposed to distinguish, first between intra- and intersemiotic translation, and then, within intrasemiotic translation, between intra- and interlingual translation, as well as between translation within and between other semiotic systems (1114). Eco (*Dire; Experiences*), on the other hand, in developing his extended taxonomy, reminds us that Jakobson’s typology refers to types of interpretation, which include, but are not restricted to, types of translation. Thus, he suggests distinguishing first between interpretation by transcription (i.e., automatic substitution as in the Morse code), intrasystemic interpretation, and intersystemic interpretation. Intrasystemic interpretation includes intralingual translation but also interpretation within other systems, such as visual and auditory sign systems. A third type of intrasystemic interpretation is performance, for example of a musical score. As for intersystemic interpretation, based on Louis Hjelmslev’s structural semiotics, Eco distinguishes between types of interpretation which require variation of the semiotic substance, and those which require mutation in the semiotic continuum. The former category includes “translation proper”, “rewriting”—which aims to convey “not the letter of the original, but its ‘guiding spirit’ (whatever that means)”, and which Eco says, “is translation proper only in part” (Eco, “Experiences” 117)—, and translation between other semiotic systems (pictorial, visual, musical, etc.). Finally, there are two types of intersystemic interpretation which require mutation in the semiotic continuum, that is “parasyonymy” (i.e., when an object is shown in order to interpret a verbal expression that nominates it) and “adaptation or transmutation”, for instance “when a novel is adapted in comic-strip form” (Eco, “Experiences” 118).

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in detail the typologies described, it can be noted that semiotic classifications based on Jakobson's model remain primarily focused on verbal language and posit a clear distinction between intra- and interlingual translation. Though this distinction has been expanded by Toury and Eco to include translation between and within other systems, for example visual system(s), it remains unclear how it can be used to account for the translation of comics, which involves both verbal and visual systems. In fact, comics are only mentioned as involved in a category variously called "intersemiotic translation", "transposition", and "adaptation", which refers to the translation of comics from/into other media/semiotic systems.

### Multimodality and Comic Translation

**T**YPOLOGIES based on Jakobson's model have been more recently flanked by others based on the social semiotic multimodal model (Jewitt et al.; Kress; Kress and Van Leeuwen). The multimodal approach stems from the simple notion that semiotic systems, including verbal language, rarely appear in isolation, but are usually integrated together in the production of meaning.<sup>1</sup> Kress and Van Leeuwen distinguish between modes (e.g., image, speech, gesture, writing), which are defined as socially constructed semiotic "resources" rather than "systems", and media of execution—that is, the material resources used in the production of meaning. The notion of *medium* "comprises the respective form of performance (e.g., opera, theatre, comic) as well as its material communication channels (writing, radio, TV, electronic media, etc.)" (Kaindl, "Multimodality and Translation" 261). Drawing on Kress and Van Leeuwen, Klaus Kaindl ("Multimodality and Translation") proposes to distinguish between, on one level, intra- and intermodal translation and, on the other, between intra- and intermedial translation. The distinction between mode and medium is, however, not always clear-cut and "hybrid forms can develop between the different transfer forms on the mode and medium level" (262).

Comics are an obvious case of multimodality since they are hybrid texts in which meaning is typically created by the interaction of the visual and the verbal mode, though of course wordless comics are unexceptional, and even word-only comics have been created (see Rota). Verbal and visual signs not only co-exist in comics but mix and blend. On the one hand, the verbal text itself has a visual character, since meaning is also expressed through typography (Kaindl, "Multimodality in the Translation" 189–90); on the other hand, images may contain and represent various systems/resources, since "characters do not merely interact and communicate meanings through speech balloons but, equally importantly, through gesture, posture, eye gaze or facial expression" (Borodo 24). Furthermore, in reprints and in foreign editions not only words can be changed, but the size and layout of the

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<sup>1</sup> Though multimodality has always been at the basis of communication, it has become increasingly apparent in "the age of digitization [when] the different modes have technically become the same at some level of representation" (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2).

page or of the panels can also be altered, a comic book can be published in colour rather than in black-and-white or vice versa, and panels and pages can be deleted, added, re-ordered, retouched, and even redrawn (Rota; Zanettin, “Translation” and “Visual Adaptation”; see also the contribution of Lefèvre in this issue). As either or both verbal and visual elements are changed, the relationship between words and images is also bound to change.

Several authors have analyzed comics in translation adopting a multimodal approach. Kaindl (“Multimodality in the Translation”), for instance, illustrates a range of techniques used to translate humour in comics on the basis of whether or not the target text recreates monomodal humor, based only (or primarily) on verbal or visual signs, or multimodal humour, in which the humour is based on the combination or interplay of words and images (e.g., monomodal verbal or visual humour in the source text is replaced by multimodal humour in the target text, or vice versa). Borodo discusses cases in which the relationship between verbal and visual modes is changed as a result of translation, using examples from Polish translations of the French adventure series *Thorgal*. He shows how in some instances the translation of the verbal text, while arguably not accurate in linguistic terms, can be entirely congruent with the images, and even be seen as being more coherent and intelligible than the source. The realization of meaning can be diverted from the verbal and transferred to the visual mode for a number of reasons—for example, because of spatial constraints or “to eliminate instances of incongruence between the two modes” (Borodo 40).

Rachel Weissbrod and Ayelet Kohn propose to discuss as a case of “intrasemiotic” or “intramodal” translation (*intrasystemic interpretation*, in Eco’s terminology) two comic books which were republished more than sixty years after their first publication with the same verbal text but with different sets of drawings by different artists. Silva discusses a case of “intersemiotic translation” involving the translation of images into words in a panel from the Brazilian Portuguese edition of an Asterix story (*intersystemic interpretation with a variation of the semiotic substance*, in Eco’s terminology). The panel depicts Obelix nervously tapping his head with the index finger while complaining about Asterix having been sent on a mission alone. The first utterance in the balloon (in French “Ça va pas, non?”—literally, “This is not ok, right?”) is translated as “Mas vocês ficaram malucos?” (“But have you gone crazy?”), thereby making explicit the meaning of the gesture. Silva argues that in France the meaning of “craziness” is already conveyed by the gesture and does not need to be expressed through words, whereas in Brazil the gesture by itself would not be understood (78).

Other studies have adopted a multimodal approach to the analysis of translated manga, including Huang and Archer, who look at the relation between onomatopoeia and typography in translation, Armour and Takeyama on the translation of typeface in speech, and Chow on the translation of ateji, “the joining of two words into one through a reading gloss, known as furigana, which is inserted above or beside another that gives its pronunciation or reading” (1). Finally, some studies have concerned themselves with what could broadly be labelled as transpo-

sition/adaptation between graphic narratives and other media, such as for instance from and into novels (e.g., Stein), films (e.g., Brumme and Esteruelas), video games (e.g., Gröne), sculpture (e.g., Bukatman), and theatre (e.g., Bremgartner).

In what follows I look at examples from three comic book stories, “Tintin au Congo”, “Astérix légionnaire”, and “Paperinik il diabolico vendicatore”, discussing and comparing several reprints and foreign editions, showing that comic translation can involve transformations both within and between verbal and visual systems/modes. Comics challenge a rigid distinction between verbal and visual languages as discrete sign systems, and the examples discussed below show that the translation of comics cuts across inter- and intrasystemic/-modal boundaries.

### “Tintin au Congo” (1930/31)

THE adventures of Tintin have been translated into over 70 languages, though not all stories into all of these languages, and not the same stories either. Several editions of “Tintin au Congo” have been published (see Farr for an overview and listing of editions up to the end of the twentieth century) since its first publication in installments between 1930 and 1931 in the youth supplement of the Walloon conservative Catholic newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle*. The following year “Tintin au Congo” was printed as a volume by the same publisher, and its commercial success led to six more editions, all published by Casterman. In these editions, in one panel Tintin is posing as a teacher in front of a class of African children, pointing with a stick to a map on the wall and telling the children that their fatherland is Belgium. Still in the 1930s, the story was also published in French in a Swiss magazine, *L'Écho Illustré*, but here Tintin tells the children that their fatherland is Switzerland. In Portugal, on the other hand, in 1939 the story was printed in the boys' magazine *O Papagaio* with the title “Tim-Tim em Angola”, transposing the story from a Belgian to a Portuguese colony and changing the reference to the fatherland to Portugal.

Between 1940 and 1941 the Dutch-language *Het Laatste Nieuws* Belgian newspaper in Antwerp published “Tintin in Kongo” in installments. In this new edition, not only the verbal text was translated into Dutch, but pages and panels were redrawn to update the style of drawing, as by this time several adventures of Tintin had been produced, and Hergé's style had evolved. The *Het Laatste Nieuws* edition was used as a basis for the 1946 French edition, which was, however, also redrawn and coloured. In the panel with Tintin posing as a teacher to the African children Tintin was depicted pointing at a blackboard on which “2+2” is written and telling the children the result of the addition. While a discussion of colonialism, Hergé's cultural attitudes, and ideological positions is beyond the scope of this article (for a critical discussion surrounding these issues, see e.g., Met, Girard, and Filc), it appears that this change was motivated by a desire to update the story to geopolitical developments in the wake of the Second World War, if not by a change of attitude towards the former colonial subjects.

The French edition of 1930/31 contains a sequence in which Tintin kills, among other wild animals, a rhinoceros, by drilling a hole in its back, filling it with a dynamite stick, and detonating it. In the Dutch language version of 1940/41 the page containing this incident has been redrawn. In this new, enlarged edition the middle tier on the page contains three rather than two panels, providing further details of the unfolding action, which has, nevertheless, the same outcome. However, while the Dutch language version was used as a basis for the 1946 French edition in colour (reprinted unchanged several times since then) and contains the same layout and sequence of panels, some foreign language editions are strikingly different when turning to page 56 of the story. For instance, while the 1968 Spanish edition, the 1989 Italian edition, and the 2002 Polish edition are graphically unchanged with respect to the 1946 French edition, in the 1975 Swedish edition, the 1976 German edition, and the 2005 British edition the whole page has been redrawn to provide a different account of the incident. In these editions Tintin does not kill the rhinoceros but rather the animal runs away after having accidentally shot Tintin's rifle. While the first edition of the coloured version was only published in the UK in 2005 by Egmont, a translation of the 1930/31 French-language edition in black-and-white had already been published in the UK in 1991 (by a minor publisher, Sundancer) and in the USA in 2002 (by Casterman/Last Gasp). In the US, in fact, a translation of the first version in black-and-white remains the only version available.

There are two Dutch editions of "Tintin au Congo". The first was published in 1940/41 in Antwerp, and it is on this edition that the French 1946 coloured edition was based. The second, published in 1947 and the first foreign language edition of the coloured version, was called "Kiufje in Congo", but the name was changed into "Kiufje in Afrika" in reprints after 1954. Finally, in 1988 a black-and-white version entitled "Kiufje in Congo" was published. However, this Dutch edition published in the Netherlands is not based on the Dutch language edition published in Belgium in 1940/41 but is a Dutch translation of the first French edition in black-and-white of 1930/31.

As these examples show, visual and verbal translation takes place across space and time, and changes implemented in one edition may reflect on subsequent editions. To use Eco's terminology, both inter- and intrasystemic interpretation may occur when the translation of comics is carried out in both the same and in a different language of publication. They also show that, especially when considered over a longer period of time, translation is not a linear, one-directional activity but can be a messy, recursive affair. Practices related to comic translation may thus go against expectations based on views of translation focusing on the translation of verbal language alone.

### “Astérix légionnaire” (1966)

**A**STÉRIX is perhaps the most translated comics series ever, with editions in more than 100 languages. Table 1 lists the original French names of six of the series’ most well-known characters alongside their equivalents in nine European languages, showing the diversity of strategies employed in translation. In the much-praised English edition the translators Anthea Bell and Derek Hockridge have created most names anew, and like in French these names are based on wordplays. Thus, for instance, the name *Assurancetourix*—a contraction of the French *assurance tous risques* [comprehensive insurance]—was translated as *Cacofonix*, a playful allusion to the fact that the character is tone-deaf and sings and plays badly out of tune. In the Italian translation, instead, all names have remained unchanged, while in Spanish and Portuguese the names of some of the characters have been adapted phono-graphemically.

Language	Name of character					
<b>French</b>	<b>Astérix</b>	<b>Obélix</b>	<b>Idéfix</b>	<b>Panoramix</b>	<b>Abraracourcix</b>	<b>Assurancetourix</b>
English	Asterix	Obelix	Dogmatix	Getafix	Vitalstatistix	Cacofonix
Italian	Asterix	Obelix	Idefix	Panoramix	Abraracourcix	Assurancetourix
German	Asterix	Obelix	Idefix	Miraculix	Majestix	Tutebattix
Spanish	Asterix	Obelix	Idefix	Panoramix	Abraracurcix	Asuranceturix
Latin	Asterix	Obelix	Idefix	Panoramix	Maiestix	Cantorix
Portuguese	Asterix	Obelix	Idefix	Panoramix	Abracurcix	Chatatorix
Dutch	Asterix	Obelix	Idéaifix	Panoramix	Heroïx	Kakofonix
Welsh	Asterix	Obelix	Cenarheibix	Gwyddoniadix	Owyllpendifix	Perganiedix
Greek	Ἀστερίξ	Ὀβελίξ	Ἰντεφιξ	Πανοραμίξ	Μαζεστιξ	Κακοφωνίξ

Table 1. The names of six main characters in Asterix stories in ten European languages.<sup>2</sup>

Several studies have provided examples of the translation of proper names and word plays, dialects, foreign languages, and cultural allusions in the series of Asterix comics (see, e.g., Delesse and Richet for an extensive analysis of the English editions). In this instance, I focus on the analysis of visual and verbal aspects in translations of a single panel from the story “Astérix légionnaire”, which was first published in installments in the magazine *Pilote* in 1966,<sup>3</sup> providing a comparative analysis of translation strategies across nine foreign-language editions.

This panel, part of a recurrent gag narrating the pirates’ unlucky encounters with the two Gauls when attempting to storm a ship, depicts a group of pirates afloat a raft. French readers of the story will probably note at least a couple of visual references which are relevant for the panel’s comprehension and appreciation. The first is the likeness of appearance between the main character depicted in the panel, the pirate captain, and another comic character, Barbe-Rouge, created by Jean-Michel Charlier and Victor Hubinon and whose adventures

<sup>2</sup> In some languages, for instance in Greek, the names of the characters have been translated in different ways in different editions.

<sup>3</sup> The first album edition dates from 1967.

were published since 1959 in the same magazine. This allusion is unlikely to be caught by anyone unfamiliar with this character, and thus perhaps by most foreign readers. More importantly, however, the panel is a citation and a parody, that is, an (intersystemic/intermodal) translation of *Le Radeau de La Méduse* [*The Raft of the Medusa*], an 1819 over-life-size painting by Théodore Géricault exhibited in the Louvre national collection in Paris (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Théodore Géricault. *Le Radeau de La Méduse*. 1819, Louvre. Public domain.

The Asterix panel reproduces the arrangement of characters on the raft, with the pirate captain posing as the person sitting on the left resting his head on his fist.<sup>4</sup> There are two verbal elements in the panel, contained respectively in a box in the top left corner with the caption “Peu après...” [Soon afterwards...], and in a balloon coming out of the pirate captain’s mouth which reads “Je suis médusé!” [I am dumbfounded!].

This is not the first parodistic allusion to the famous painting by Géricault in a French comic book. Hergé used the same visual reference first in a drawing starring Tintin made in 1949 for a campaign against the black market, and in the story “Coke en stock” (1958). Here, Tintin and his companion captain Haddock are shipwrecked on a raft, and when they catch sight of a steamer which might rescue them, Haddock jumps with joy, breaks the raft and falls through it into the water. When he re-emerges spouting sea water he has a jellyfish on his head; Tintin makes a humorous reference to Géricault’s painting, saying “Vous voulez donc à tout prix que ce soit réellement le Radeau de la Méduse ?” [So you really want it

<sup>4</sup> For a reproduction of this panel, see Auntie Muriel ([URL](#)).



to be the Raft of Medusa at all costs?]. In the German edition, instead, Tintin asks Haddock whether he is still thirsty. In this way, “The German translation follows the French original neither in the pictorially based pun nor in the parodistic allusion to Géricault’s painting” (Kaindl, “Multimodality in the Translation” 187), and an instance of multimodal humour is translated as no humour at all.

In the English edition of the Asterix story, the visual appearance of the panel has been altered, since a text box has been added in the bottom right corner, containing a note. The caption is a literal translation of the French (“Soon afterwards...”), while the balloon contains the text “We’ve been framed by Jericho!\*”, with an asterisk linking it to the note, which reads “\*Ancient Gaulish artist”. One of the translators, Anthea Bell, explains how the translation was carried out:

In the French, the pirate captain is exclaiming, “*Je suis médusé!*” = “dumbfounded”—from the Gorgon Medusa whose gaze turned the beholder to stone, but with reference here to the ship called *La Méduse* whose raft and seamen were painted by Géricault. The solution, in English, was to use a pun on Géricault/Jericho (by Jericho!) instead—the pun itself was the idea of a friend of the translators, who then worked it in by pointing up the artistic connotations with a rueful: “We’ve been framed.” To give a further clue to the pun, space in the frame, bottom right, was used to add a footnote: “Ancient Gaulish artist”, which is not present in the French.

In other words, while the text in the balloon does not translate the literal meaning of the French expression, that is, “I’m dumbfounded”, nor the visual pun on the word *méduse*, it manages to create another verbal pun as well as to retain the explicit reference to the painting, thereby recreating the visual pun (Zanettin, “Comics” 22; Auntie Muriel).

The Italian edition resorts to a rather different translation strategy. The Italian text, “Mi hanno medusato! (1)” [They have medused me/jellyfished me! (1)], is a calque from the French. It is also a neologism in Italian, which would probably be interpreted as a reference to the aquatic animal rather than to the mythical being, as in the example from Tintin. The number between parentheses, however, leads to a footnote which explains the meaning of the reference: “Cioè mi hanno ridotto come *La zattera della medusa*, il noto quadro esposto al Louvre” [That is, they made me like *The Raft of the Medusa*, the famous painting exhibited in the Louvre]. This footnote is rather different than the note in the English edition. While there it was included in the space of the narration, here it has been placed in the extradiegetic space at the bottom of the page. By explaining the visual reference to the reader, the translator makes explicit what is otherwise expected to go unnoticed, since the painting is not as well known in Italy as in France. And the metaphorical meaning of *medusé*, “dumbfounded”, is not explained either. The Italian edition does not aim to create a humorous effect, but rather to explain to the Italian reader the visual reference in the French text.

Both the Spanish and the Welsh translations contain a word derived from the French verb, used as part of an exclamation. The Spanish “¡Por Medusa, qué vida

ésta” [By Medusa, what a life!] does not translate the literal meaning of the French expression (“dumbfounded”), but unlike in the Italian and English editions does not contain a note providing an explanation for the lexical reference. That is, the link between the name *Medusa*—which, given the all-caps lettering, can also be read as *medusa*—and the visual reference (Géricault’s painting) is not made, thus opening up the space for other possible interpretations of the word, as in “By the jellyfish”. While, as we have already seen, the Italian translator explains the reason for the lexical choice, telling the reader that it is a reference to a famous painting, in the Spanish edition the visual reference and the pun will only be detected by readers educated in French culture. Similarly, the Welsh edition also contains the exclamation “Myn Mediwsa, am badell ffrio” [By Medusa, for a frying pan], the second part appearing to be a reference to the traditional Welsh nursery rhyme “Fuoch chi erioed yn morio?” [Have you ever been sailing?], a question which is answered in the second line of the ditty with “Wel do mewn padell ffrio” [Well yes, in a frying pan].<sup>5</sup>

In the other foreign editions consulted—namely, Portuguese, Dutch, Greek, German, and Latin—, there is no link between the text in the balloon and the image, since there is no mention of Medusa or of anything that can be associated with the painting. In the Portuguese edition the pirate captain says “Estou arrasado!” [I’m devastated], in the Dutch edition, “Ach, ’t went wel. . .” [Oh, it went well], and in the Greek edition, “Itan ola proschediasmena!” [Everything was planned]. All of these expressions can be understood independently of any awareness of the visual reference to Géricault’s painting. In the Dutch and Greek translations, in particular, the text in the balloon is an ironic comment on the scene depicted in the panel, that is, a group of pirates on a raft, without any reference to the painting. And, of course, none of these translations is a literal translation of the expression used in the French edition. Like the Italian translation they seem to assume that the reader will not recognize the visual reference, and do not bother to supply one.

The last two editions examined, German and Latin, may at first sight appear a bit cryptic, unless we take into account the larger context of the narration and the sequence of which the panel is a part. The text in the balloon, “. . .hen”, is not, in fact, a word, or at least not a full word. It is the second part of the infinitive *fliehen*, “to flee”, whose first part, “Flieh. . .”, appears in a balloon in the previous panel. Similarly, the text in the balloon in the Latin edition (“. . .iendum”) is the second part of the gerund *fugiendum*, whose first part (“fug. . .”) is uttered by the pirate captain in the previous panel, as he attempts to flee from Asterix and Obelix, who are attacking the pirate ship. In the German and Latin editions, the link between text and images is once again different from those seen so far: rather than entering into a dialogue with the image in the panel in which it is contained, the text in the balloon establishes a link with the previous panel (which contains the first part of the word), which becomes the first element of a pair. The length of time between the two panels is changed, as they are read as a very close sequence. Related to the different representation of time depicted in the two

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<sup>5</sup> Personal communication of Dr. Joey Whitfield, Cardiff University. See also Yannucci.

panels is the rendering of the caption in the box in the upper left corner. While all other translations are rather literal correspondents of the French “Peu après...” [Soon afterwards. . .], in the German and Latin editions this is translated with only a coordinating conjunction (“und”/“et” [and]).

The mechanism of the German and Latin translation in this panel replicates what happens in a later panel. The gag of the sinking of the pirate ship is repeated towards the end of the story and the humour in this case derives from an even more elliptical sequence. Here, a panel in which the captain aboard the pirate ship urges his crew to attack the other ship saying “Allons-y garçons!.. Hip hip...” [Follow me, my hearties!.. Hip-hip...] is followed by a panel showing the pirates floating next to their sinking ship, and one of them completing the captain’s cheering expression with “Hou’a” (“Hurray”, with a missing [r] sound). In this instance, however, the panel does not contain a caption. Finally, in the German and Latin editions the text is written in typescript rather than hand lettering. In German this used to be customary, as machine lettering was used to make comic books look more like printed books to increase their social acceptance (Kaindl, “Thump” 272). The Latin edition looks like a secondary translation from the English edition, since the box inserted in the English edition is still visible, though the note has been deleted.

To sum up, in some editions (French, English, Italian), in order to be understood the verbal text presupposes the image to be interpreted as a parody of the painting. In all other editions the image is understood to represent simply a group of pirates on a raft, and the verbal text works under this assumption. In the French edition the interpretation of the image as a parody of the painting is taken for granted, while in the English edition it is explicitly hinted at. In the Italian edition this interpretation of the image is provided in the footnote, based on the assumption that the image would not otherwise be understood in the same way. These examples show that the relationship between verbal and visual mode in translated comics can change depending on the translation strategy used and that the choices made by the translators in rendering the verbal text will vary depending on their assumptions about how the target readers will interpret the images.

### **“Paperinik il diabolico vendicatore” (1969)**

**T**HE emergence of digital transmedia productions has favoured the convergence of narrative worlds across different media, such as films, videogames, and graphic novels, also bearing consequences for comic books published in translation. For instance, as the filmic universe of superheroes started to become overarching since 2004, the traditional names established by comic book translations were supplanted by those of the characters of translated cinematic productions, which address a more general public. Even before digital convergence, however, popular comics have always experienced a fruitful exchange with other media, including cinema and TV, as shown by the following case involving Disney comics.

As is known, Disney comics have not, for the most part, been produced in the United States, but rather, predominantly, in countries like Italy, Denmark, France, etc. (Becattini et al.; Filippelli). Donald Duck is a case in point. Donald Duck, or Paolino Paperino in Italian, first appeared in the Silly Symphonies animated shorts, but he only became a star Disney character after his potential was exploited in stories produced in Italy. The first Paperino story, scripted and drawn by Federico Pedrocchi, appeared in the first issue of *Paperino*, the first magazine ever titled after this character. *Paperino* was published in Italy by Mondadori in 1937, while Al Taliaferro's daily strips started to be syndicated in the US only in 1938. Since licensed Disney stories did not bear the signature of their creators but only Disney's trademark logo, many Disney stories are pseudotranslations, that is, their readers believed them to be translations from English, whereas they were originally written in Italian or other languages. Italian Disney comic authors, perhaps the most productive group in the world, also introduced several characters, sometimes based on popular film or TV actors, who found their way around the world in translation, as an English translation was provided and sent together with the drawings for publication in other languages. The most successful non-American Disney character is probably Donald Duck's alter ego Paperinik, created in 1969 by Elisa Penna, Guido Martina, and Giovan Battista Carpi.<sup>6</sup>

The adventures of Paperinik have been translated and reprinted several times including in a magazine published in Italy between 1996 and 2000, *Paperinik New Adventures* (or PKNA) which featured a refurbished Paperinik, now a science-fiction hero who has to defend the whole Earth.<sup>7</sup> *Paperinik* has been translated into more than thirty languages; table 2 lists different versions of the name.

It can be noted that several versions contain the stem *fantom-* (e.g., Fantomerik, Phantomias, Fantonald), variously combined with *Donald*, *duck*, or their equivalents in other languages, while others contain the prefix *super-* (e.g., Superdonald, Superduck, Superpato). These two patterns of translation point towards two main sources of inspiration: on the one hand, Fantômas, the criminal genius of the widely translated penny dreadful stories created by Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre in 1911, and on the other, US-American superheroes. Donald Duck's alter ego is openly inspired by Fantômas, since in the story he becomes Paperinik after discovering the secret diary of Phantomius, a gentleman thief, under the cushion of an old armchair in the abandoned Villa Rosa. The other source of inspiration, the masked and costumed vigilantes of US comics such as *Batman* (whose logo is also imitated in some stories) became more prominent in later years, as between 1969 and 1980 the stories acquired a darker and gloomier setting.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> A member of the editorial staff working for Mondadori, Elisa Penna was responsible for answering the letters to the magazine of the young readers of *Topolino*. Her idea (though the attribution is disputed, see Vegliante) was developed into a story scripted by Guido Martina and drawn by the artist Giovan Battista Carpi.

<sup>7</sup> The new Paperinik, often abbreviated as *PK* or *Pikappa*, is different from the more classic versions, and his origins are completely rewritten in the third series of the saga.

<sup>8</sup> In these stories Paperinik often makes up for the wrongs suffered by Donald Duck, his actions

Language	Name
Bulgarian	Супердѣк
Chilean Spanish	Patik
Colombian Spanish	Superpato
Croatian	Pato Pašman
Czech	Superkačer, Kačer Donald, Superkváč
Danish	Stålanden
Dutch	Superdonald, Fantomerik
English	Duck Avenger, Superduck
Estonian	Super-Part
Finnish	Taikaviitta
French	Fantomiald, Powerduck
German	Phantomias
Greek	Φάντομ Ντόκ
Icelandic	Stálöndin
Italian	Paperinik
Lithuanian	Superdonaldas
Mandarin Chinese (traditional/simplified)	超人鴨 / 超人鴨
Norwegian (bokmål)	Fantonald
Polish	Superkwek
Portuguese	Superpato
Russian	Железный Дак
Serbian (Cyrillic/Latin)	ФАНТОМ Паја / Fantom Paja
Spanish	Patomas
Swedish	Stål-Kalle

Table 2. Name of comic book hero Paperinik in 24 languages and regional varieties.

However, though Fantômas is the primary model for Paperinik, the French literary character is mediated through two more characters, namely Diabolik and Dorellik. The final *k* in Paperinik comes from Diabolik, the protagonist of the first and most popular of the Italian *fumetti neri* (literally, “black comics”), still published in Italy (and in other countries in translation) since 1962. Yet, the inspiration for Paperinik does not come directly from the Italian anti-hero inspired by the literary French character, but rather it is, in its turn, mediated through the character of Dorellik. The name Dorellik attaches a *-k* to the last name of Johnny

bordering on illegality. In later stories he turns into a sort of masked vigilante, a spotless and fearless defender of the city of Duckburg. More recently Marco Gervasio has produced a new version of the first story, reinventing the origins of the character after fifty years. The remake is an instance of retroactive continuity, common for Marvel superheroes but a novelty for the classic Disney universe, in which established facts are adjusted, ignored, or contradicted thus breaking continuity with the established canon.

Dorelli, an Italian actor, singer, and television host who created a comic sketch as a parody of the comic book series featuring Diabolik. The show was so successful that in 1967 a comedy film directed by Steno was created after it, *Arrriva Dorellik* [sic].<sup>9</sup>

The panel I focus on is taken from “Paperinik il diabolico vendicatore” [Paperinik the diabolical avenger], the first Paperinik story published in Italy in 1969 (Martina and Carpi). The panel depicts Donald Duck, Uncle Scrooge, and Huey, Dewey, and Louie inside a living room having a discussion. In the 1969 edition, Uncle Scrooge reprimands Donald Duck by saying “Questo pelandrone non è capace nemmeno di derubare un sordomuto cieco e paralitico!” [This slouch wouldn’t even be able to steal from a blind-deaf-mute paralytic!], to which Donald Duck replies “Tu credi?” [You think so?], while the three nephews comment together with an “Uhhmm...”.

In the fifty years between 1969 and 2019, the story was reprinted twenty-three times in Italy, four times in 2019 alone. In a 1981 reprint, the text in Uncle Scrooge’s balloon was rewritten, possibly to sanitize it of politically incorrect words such as *blind*, *deaf*, and *paralytic*, and rendered as “Questo pelandrone non è nemmeno capace di derubare un cane randagio del suo osso!” [This slouch wouldn’t even be able to steal a bone from a stray dog!]. In 1993 the text in the balloon was further amended, into “Questo pelandrone non è capace nemmeno di rubare una noce a uno scoiattolo!” [This slouch wouldn’t even be able to steal a walnut from a squirrel!]. There seems to be no apparent rationale for this change, apart from the possible realization that stealing a bone from a stray dog may not, in fact, be such an easy endeavor.<sup>10</sup> Some foreign editions seem to use as their source texts different versions of the dialogue. For instance, a 2015 English edition contains a literal translation of the 1969 text, supposedly the basic working versions for all foreign language editions. However, a 2008 Spanish edition contains what seems to be a literal translation of the 1993 Italian text (“¡Este pelagatos no es capaz siquiera de robar una nuez a una ardilla!”). In a 2015 German edition, the text in the balloon is “Ein Versager wie du weiß doch nicht mal, wie Villa geschrieben wird!” [A loser like you doesn’t even know how Villa is spelt!] (“Villa” being a reference to the place where Donald Duck finds Fantomius’s diary), while a French edition of 2017 has “Ce bon à rien est incapable d’acquérir quoi ce soit!” [This good-for-nothing is incapable of acquiring anything!].

These examples show that the verbal text in Disney comics is continuously edited and updated, both in same-language reprints and in translation. The examples examined focus on Italian reprints of the Paperinik’s story. However, the story was also reprinted several times in translation in each of the other languages over the 50 years that have elapsed since its first appearance.<sup>11</sup> The analysis of the dialogues across reprints and retranslations could thus provide further useful insights into intra- and intercultural translation practices.

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<sup>9</sup> An English version of the film was distributed with the title *How to Kill 400 Duponts*.

<sup>10</sup> These examples are presented in Castagno.

<sup>11</sup> For a list of reprints and translations of “Paperinik il diabolico vendicatore”, see “Paperinik”.

## Conclusion

STORIES that are reprinted both in the original language and in translation may be revised and rewritten at the level of dialogues, as in the case of “Paperinik il diabolico vendicatore”, or even completely redrawn, as in the case of “Tintin au Congo”. Different foreign editions may resort to different translation strategies, both as concerns the names of the characters, as in the case of Asterix and Paperinik, and as concerns the way verbal and visual signs are translated and interpreted in light of each other, as in the Asterix example. Globally popular comic characters like Tintin, Asterix, and Paperinik, whose stories are still reprinted and retranslated many years after their original publication, are constantly updated to suit the perceived (or actual) social and cultural conventions and requirements of the target readership.

Elsewhere (Zanettin, “Comics” and “Visual Adaptation”) I have argued that the production of comics in translation can be investigated within a localization framework since it implies the adaptation of multimodal verbal and visual texts for cultural communities which may differ across space and/or time.<sup>12</sup> While the practice of modifying or redrawing the images may not be favoured as an editorial policy because of the additional costs it implies, it is by no means uncommon in the comic publishing industry, as shown by several examples discussed here and elsewhere in the literature (e.g., Zanettin, *Comics*, “Visual Adaptation”, and “Translating”).

As Kaindl (“Multimodality and Translation”) suggests, the translation of multimodal texts always takes place first and foremost between and within cultures. The examples discussed in this article show that during the localization process categories such as inter- and intra-semiotic / -systemic / -modal / -medial translation are often combined and intertwined, and that text and images, together with their relationship, can change in various ways in translated comics.

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<sup>12</sup> The term *localization* has also been used to refer to the translation of audiovisual products, popular literature, and the news (for an overview, see Zanettin, *News* 39–42).

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