Intersemiotic transcreation:
the life and afterlife of Giuseppe Verdi's *Macbeth*

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Abstract

Macbeth was a nobleman, a king, a supporter of Christianity in Scotland, but most of all he was, and still is, the protagonist of countless adventures, told through music, singing, verse, prose, fiction, film. And translated into an infinite array of languages. The stories of Macbeth, all together and seen one at a time, embody the very essence of translation, in creative ways. This essay sets forth the notion of intersemiotic transcreation precisely with reference to the story of Macbeth, by reconstructing its evolution and by focusing especially on Giuseppe Verdi's worldwide famous opera named after the Scottish king. A detailed analysis is also offered of two contemporary English versions of Giuseppe Verdi's *Macbeth*, in an attempt to understand where translation finishes, if it does, and where intersemiotic transcreation starts. Both types of translation examined (interlingual surtitles and singing translation) recall processes of transmutation, change, (re)creation and transcreation, and bear witness to the creativity which goes hand in hand with writing and translating, over the centuries and across codes of communication.

Keywords: Translation Studies, surtitles, singing translation, intersemiotic translation, transcreation.

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1. The authors discussed and conceived this essay together. In particular, Elena Di Giovanni is responsible for sections 1 and 2, Francesca Raffi for sections 3 and 4.

1. Introduction

Macbeth is the name of a Scottish Nobleman, the son of Findláech of Moray, who was born in 1005 A.D. and in 1040 became the king of Alba (later named Scotland) after killing the ruling king Duncan. He remained king until 1054 and most historical accounts report on him as a fair and efficient monarch, supported by its people, but also a great promoter of Christianity. Nonetheless, Macbeth is today better known as a tormented usurper and murderer, as he was portrayed by William Shakespeare and other authors before and after him.

Like few others, the figure of Macbeth has inspired endless forms of writings and rewritings: in literature, for the stage, in music, for singing, for dancing, and many more. Since the 16th century, even before William Shakespeare wrote his epic five-act tragedy, Macbeth has been at the core of stories told in different formats, partially and intersemiotically translated from previous accounts.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was written in 1606-07, mainly inspired by the chronicles of Raphael Holinshed: in particular, Shakespeare resorted to Holinshed's *Chronicles* in their second edition (published posthumous, in 1587) as a total or partial source for many of his works, including *King Lear, Richard III* and *Macbeth*. The latter was only published in 1623 in the First Folio – i.e. the collected works of William Shakespeare – and in this printed, posthumous edition some parts of the original texts were corrupted or missing.[2] A very prolific writer, Shakespeare from Holinshed drew an account of Scotland's history, and Macbeth's in particular, that was in turn based on the *Scotorum Historiae*, written in 1527 by Hector Boece. An-

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2. https://www.britannica.com/topic/First-Folio (accessed 23 October 2021).

other main source for *Macbeth* was the *Daemonologie of King James*, published in 1597 and including a section on Scotland (Clark and Mason 2015).

The first version of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* supposedly had its premiere in front of King James I in the same year of its composition, whereas the published version, more than 15 years later, may have contained several changes made after the staging of *Macbeth,* some of these changes directly suggested by the actors (*ibid.*).

Shakespeare's tragedy, with its great success, has since inspired numerous rewritings (adaptations? translations?) of the story of this Scottish king. Among them, theatre plays, musical or symphonic versions and lyrical dramas, such as those by Matthew Locke (1672), Jean-François Ducis (1784), Carl David Stegmann (1784), Giuseppe Rastrelli (1817 and 1827), Thomas de Quincey (1823), Richard Strauss (1890) and Ernest Bloch (1910), without listing the more recent and equally numerous adaptations for cinema and television. Within this prolific strand of new textual forms for Macbeth, we also find Giuseppe Verdi's opera, first written and performed in 1847, then staged in St. Petersburg (1855) with a different title, i.e., *Sivardo il sassone*, finally modified and performed again as *Macbeth* in 1865. Giuseppe Verdi's *Macbeth* has an Italian libretto that was based on the original Shakespearian tragedy, mainly through its Italian translations. In the past decades, the frequent stagings of Verdi's *Macbeth* for non-Italian audiences worldwide have been accompanied by the translation into English (and many other languages) of the original Italian libretto. Such translations have had different purposes: for singing on stage, for a publication that accompanies every new pro-

duction, for the surtitles that aim to make the libretto accessible to speakers of languages other than Italian and/or to deaf patrons.

After tracing the textual history of the Scottish king, this paper focuses on the major intersemiotic transfers that can be traced from William Shakespeare's tragedy to Giuseppe Verdi's opera, and from Verdi's opera libretto to some of its transpositions for today's performances and audiences. To this purpose, the concept of intersemiotic transcreation is here introduced and discussed (Section 2), by referencing to the many polysemiotic texts that the figure of Macbeth has inspired over time. There follows a detailed analysis of two contemporary English versions of Verdi's *Macbeth* (Section 3), whose differences are revealing of the array of possibilities offered by transcreative processes, but also of the variety of functions such texts are called to perform today. Finally, some conclusions are drawn (Section 4).

2. The many stories of Verdi's *Macbeth*

As Lucile Desblache states in her book on music and translation (2019: 67) "searches for contemporary definitions of translation have been as interesting and troublesome, if not more, as those for music". Indeed, both music and translation cover an extremely wide span of text types, across codes and channels of communication, to such an extent that the very word 'text' is here best taken in its widest possible sense. The same width is recommended in our search for the most appropriate definition of translation when looking at *Macbeth*'s mutations from Shakespeare to Verdi and beyond.

For Jean Boase-Beier (2007: 47-56), for instance, that of translation is a "mother concept", an umbrella term to be concep-

tualized metaphorically as the image of a mutant world or
"as an aid to creativity". Speaking mainly about literary texts,
Boase-Beier nonetheless points to the overarching concept of
translation as a metaphorical site for mutation. The author also
refers to creativity as part and parcel of the translation process,
a statement that might not apply to all forms of translation,
but that is all the more relevant for the transfer processes here
at stake.

Indeed, although the discipline concerned specifically with
the study of translation was officially established no more than
50 years ago (Holmes 1972), translational activities have been
performed, observed and discussed for centuries, with a relent-
less dynamism that can be said to reflect societal and cultural
changes at large.

Crossing paths with other disciplines soon after its establish-
ment, translation studies and its core notion – translation –
have come to be increasingly hybridized. The so-called cultur-
al turn in translation studies, for instance, brought with itself
many a re-definition of translation: as an act of domestication
(Venuti 1992, 1995), as rewriting (Lefevere 1990), as canni-
balization (De Campos 1992; Trivedi 1996), as adaptation
(Gengshen 2003). All of these *de facto* add nuances to the large
domain of translation, to the width of its wings.

One incredibly fruitful, tripartite definition of translation
was provided by Roman Jakobson (1951[2012]): as is widely
known, translation for Jakobson can be intralingual, interlin-
gual or intersemiotic. Although such definitions are based on
essentially linguistic notions, differently from what Desblache
says (2019), they can certainly encompass issues of cultural and
narrative equivalence between two or more texts. In particular,

the definition of intersemiotic translation seems to be useful for an analysis of transmutations such as those generated over the centuries in relation to the story of Macbeth. Intersemiotic translation involves a passage from one or more codes of communications to one or more different codes and modes: when a novel becomes a film and that film is transformed into a musical, intersemiotic translation is at work, in creative ways. As has been already mentioned, another recurrently used by-name for translation is adaptation. In Lucile Deblache's (2019: 69) words, "adaptation, for instance, can be understood as a translation strategy or as transfer across a range of different media, from literature to film for instance". However, differently from the concept of intersemiotic translation, that of adaptation seems to be looser, more difficult to define: to what extent can a passage from one medium, or one communicative code to another, be called adaptation? Where do we draw the line between translation and adaptation, for instance, and what terms do we use when a transfer appears to be more extreme than what the notion of adaptation can hold?

With reference to the passage from Shakespeare's tragedy to Verdi's opera, for instance, the concept of adaptation seems to be inappropriate: Verdi was inspired by Shakespeare, but he did not adapt his work directly from Shakespeare's tragedy. As historical accounts tell us, Verdi had read Shakespeare when he was young. Several years later, he was captivated by the story of this king and decided to write his own music for an opera whose libretto was commissioned to famous Italian librettist Francesco Maria Piave, who was in effect Verdi's literary amanuensis (Baldini 1983). In those same years, Verdi was acquainted with Andrea Maffei, one of the best-known

Italian translators of Shakespeare, who seems to have helped Verdi to modify Francesco Maria Piave's libretto, taking inspiration from his own Italian translation of Shakespeare's work. Giuseppe Verdi understood that synthesising and making proper lexical choices could make the difference in dramatic terms and emphasised the importance of writing "few words... few, but meaningful" (Melchiori 2006: 101; our translation).[3] One more aspect to consider, in relation to the genesis of Verdi's work, is that Shakespeare was very little known in Italy for almost two centuries, only to be revived and highlighted with the advent of Romanticism. Thus, virtually no Italian translation produced at the time of Shakespeare's own creation was available. The libretto for Verdi's *Macbeth* has an especially Italian flavour, with some of the main characters' names being Italianized, starting from the very protagonist, called Macbetto in Verdi's opera.

All this considered, it seems unlikely that the word adaptation can be used with reference to the multiple, partial, occasionally radical passages from Shakespeare to Verdi. However, since all these passages imply creativity, besides one or more shifts of codes of communication, we would like to suggest here the notion of *intersemiotic transcreation* to refer to the transfers that the story of Macbeth have undergone, from Shakespeare to Verdi and from Verdi's opera into several forms of translation for various purposes.

As stated elsewhere, "the origins of the term 'transcreation' have to be sought in a long-gone past, at the time of the first translation of Indian sacred texts" (Di Giovanni 2008: 33). The word seems to have been coined with reference to the very

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3. "poche parole... poche, poche ma significanti" (Melchiori 2006: 101).

old practice of creative translation from Sanskrit, which aimed to bring the Vedic truths close to the hearts and minds of laypeople across India (Gopinathan 2006). This process allowed for a number of occasionally radical changes to the original texts, thus surpassing the traditional notion of translation: the transcreated text had to be fluent, and most significantly, it had to be fully understandable for its target audience, resorting to creativity for a better appreciation. In more recent days, the term transcreation has been applied to literature, to animation and to videogames, with the nuance of creativity always in the foreground.

In the case of our texts and transfers, intersemiotic translation can be identified in the move from Shakespeare to Verdi, both the first and the second version of *Macbeth*, where among other things Lady Macbeth becomes more prominent than in Shakespeare's work. As Michele Girardi (2018) recalls, Verdi distanced himself from Shakespeare in the wish to recount not so much a historical and political sequence of facts, but a fantastic story. The first version of his libretto was therefore inspired by Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and the second one, for which Verdi chose Paris for its premiere, implied yet another transcreative effort, with a revision carried out with the help of Italian translator Andrea Maffei. *Macbeth* has been translated into several languages to be published and studied (the diachronic shifts between source and target texts are not to be disregarded), to be sung and performed, to be projected onto small screens in the form of surtitles.

Being "stylistically marked" (Freddi and Luraghi 2011: 59) because of its text-in-music nature, the verbal text of a libretto poses several challenges to translators when dealing with

forms of intersemiotic translation. The following sections will focus precisely on two of these intersemiotic transcreations of Verdi's *Macbeth*: surtitles (Section 3.1) and singable translation (Section 3.2). Surtitles consist of a written transposition of the libretto (either in the same language of the audience or produced for audiences unfamiliar with the source language) projected simultaneously with the singing of the performers and the action on stage. Singable translation is the translation of the original text (the opera libretto), which is sung with the same music as the source text.

3. Music translation(s) of Verdi's *Macbeth*

In order to better understand how intersemiotic transcreation works in the context of opera translation, the English surtitles (target text) produced for the Macerata Opera Festival (MOF) 2019, specifically for the staging of Verdi's *Macbeth*, are here compared with Francesco Maria Piave's libretto (source text). The analysis focuses on instances of text compression or expansion/explicitation (at word and sentence levels), which bring to light a process of translation that goes beyond the fidelity/freedom impasse (Katan 2018). In fact, the ultimate function of surtitles is to facilitate comprehension of the drama without interfering with the opera on stage (Mateo 2012: 118). Therefore, surtitles should be "simply comprehensible", constitute "sense blocks", compose a "logical unity", and not "give the impression of nervousness" (Dewolf 2001: 181).

To further exemplify the possible transfers that an opera libretto can undergo, and to shed light on the role of translators as agents of transcreational change, the singing translation of Ver-

di's *Macbeth* by Jeremy Sams[4] (based, like the English surtitles, on the Italian libretto by Francesco Maria Piave) is also taken into account. This translation, which was first commissioned by the English National Opera[5] in 1990 (then used by various theatres outside the UK, such as the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, in the USA), encompasses a dynamic conceptualisation of the translation process that goes beyond the dichotomy of the source text and the target text, to embrace the notion of intersemiotic transcreation.

For reasons of space, in this paper, we have limited our analysis to some examples from the third and fourth scenes of the first act of *Macbeth*, which is vital to the understanding of the opera since the audience is introduced to all the major characters.

3.1. From the Italian libretto (back) to English surtitles

The opera opens in a Scottish wood beside a battlefield, where three groups of witches appear, one after the other, amid a thunderstorm (Scene 1). They welcome Macbeth and Banquo, two generals in King Duncan's army, hailing Macbeth as Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland, and Banquo, son of the current King, as the father of future kings (Scene 2). In the first part of Scene 3, the King's messengers inform Macbeth of the Thane of Cawdor's death:

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4. Jeremy Sams is also a theatre director, lyricist, composer, orchestrator and musical director. His knowledge of opera mechanisms obviously influenced his translation choices.
5. Based at the London Coliseum, this opera company only stages performances in English (Desblache 2008: 166).

Table 1. Scene 3, first part.

ITALIAN LIBRETTO	Example	ENGLISH SURTITLES
Pro' Macbetto! Il tuo signore sir t'elesse di Caudore.	1	Brave Macbeth! Your lord has made you Lord of Cawdor.
Ma quel sire ancor vi regge.	2	But that Lord is still living.
No. Percosso dalla legge sotto il ceppo egli spirò.	3	No. Struck by the law, he died on the block.
L'inferno il ver parlò.	4	The witches spoke the truth.
(Due vaticini compiuti or sono. Mi si promette dal terzo un trono.	5	(Two prophecies are now fulfilled. The third promises me a crown.)
Ma perché sento rizzarsi il crine? Pensier di sangue, donde sei nato?	6	(Why do I feel my hair standing on end? Where has this thought of blood come from?)
Alla corona che m'offre il fato la man rapace non alzerò).[6]	7	(Fate offers me a crown, I won't stretch my hand to snatch it.)

The translator as a creative agent has intervened in order to favour immediate comprehension (Katan 2018: 28; Griesel 2009), thanks to the integration of more frequent lexical choices, the use of a simpler language (Burton 2009: 62) and syntax (Darancet 2020: 177).

More specifically, Example 2 shows an instance of simplification at word level. The English surtitler, instead of employing the verb 'rules' or even 'reigns' (two valid alternatives), acts as a creative agent by making a more functional choice ('is still living') in line with the nature of surtitles, whose main purpose is to facilitate comprehension.

In Example 4, the original sentence ('L'inferno il ver parlò') has been made more closely tied to the performance (Ladouceur 2015: 245) by substituting 'l'inferno' (i.e. 'the hell') with 'the witches', who have just performed the action on stage (i.e.

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6. In surtitling, brackets are used to signal words spoken by a character which other people (on the stage) are not supposed to hear (Burton and Holden 2005: 4). For example, when a character talks to himself/herself.

see into the future). Therefore, the translator acts as an interpreter of different signs and how these shape the narrative on stage. This is particularly pertinent in this context, in which the interplay between different semiotic codes is pivotal and represents a primary source of meaning and emotions.

In Example 6, while in the Italian text Macbeth addresses directly to the 'thought of blood' ('Pensier di sangue, donde sei nato?', i.e. 'Thought of blood, where did you come from?'), the translator performs a transformative operation in the English surtitle by using an indirect sentence ('Where has this thought of blood come from'), thus more strongly linking the surtitles with what is visible (or *not* visible, in this case) on stage.

Finally, in Example 7, the verb 'to snatch' has been used instead of the adjective 'rapace' (i.e. 'rapacious') to describe Macbeth's hand gesture. This choice perhaps has the effect of representing more clearly and explicitly what is happening on stage: Macbeth is trying to take hold of something in front of him suddenly and roughly.

In the second part of Scene 3, Banquo is talking to himself:

Table 2. Scene 3, second part.

ITALIAN LIBRETTO	Example	ENGLISH SURTITLES
(Oh, come s'empie costui d'orgoglio, nella speranza d'un regio soglio!	1	(The hope of a kingdom fills him with pride!)
Ma spesso l'empio spirto d'averno parla, e c'inganna, veraci detti	2	(But often the wicked spirit of hell tells us truths, then betrays us,)
e ne abbandona poi maledetti su quell'abisso che ci scavò.	3	(leaving us abandoned above that pit dug out for us.)
Perché sì freddo n'udì Macbetto? Perché l'aspetto non serenò?)	4	(Why hasn't Macbeth taken this news well? Why is he not happy?)

In Example 1, transcreation can be seen as a form of simplification at the sentence level, with a change of subject. The original text employs Macbeth as an implicit subject ('s'empie costui d'orgoglio'/'he is full of pride') while in the translation the 'hope of a kingdom' acts as the subject and the original subject becomes a direct object ('him'), which ensures a faster reception (Griesel 2009: 124).

Example 2 shows evidence of the translator's active participation in the interpretative process. In the English surtitle, the temporal order of events is made more explicit (the first emphasis is on the wicked spirit of hell telling truths, then comes the betrayal), thus bringing out more "transparency" (Dewolf 2001: 183). Since the translated text appears and disappears in the blink of an eye, this also makes the surtitles easier to process for the audience.

In Example 3, the direct object of the first part of the sentence, 'e *ne* abbandona poi maledetti', remains implicit in Italian, while in the English surtitle it is made explicit ('leaving *us* abandoned'). This choice more strongly links the surtitles with the characters on stage and with the source text, here intended as a complex semiotic whole. This makes the surtitler not just a translator but, rather, a creative semiotic translator.

In Example 4, we find an additional instance of text explicitation. While in Italian the object 'news' is implicit, the English text makes a transparent and explanatory link between the surtitle and the previous scene, when the King's messengers informed Macbeth of the Thane of Cawdor's death.

Let us move to Scene 4; the witches (who disappeared in the second part of Scene 2) are now visible to the audience:

Table 3. Scene 4.

ITALIAN LIBRETTO	Example	ENGLISH SURTITLES
S'allontanarono. N'accozzeremo quando di fulmini lo scroscio udremo.	1	They have gone. We'll reunite when we hear the crash of thunder.
Fuggiam! S'attenda le sorti a compiere nella tregenda.	2	Let's go! We await destiny's fulfillment during the witches' sabbath.
Macbetto riedere vedrem colà e il nostro oracolo gli parlerà. Fuggiam, fuggiam!	3	We will see Macbeth again and our oracle will speak to him.

In Example 1 and 2, we find two instances of text explicitation. In the Italian text, the particle 'si' (in its contracted form, 's' + apostrophe) is used as an indefinite subject, but in the translation, Macbeth and Banquo (denoted by 'they') and then the witches (denoted by 'we') are the agents who perform the action (i.e. leaving and awaiting destiny's fulfilment, respectively). These choices more strongly link the surtitles with the characters on stage, by clarifying details of the actions that might not be immediately clear to a watching audience (Burton 2009: 63).

In Example 3, the verb 'riedere' (i.e. 'come back') and the adverb 'colà' (i.e. 'there') have been omitted. Similarly, the repetition 'Fuggiam, fuggiam!' (i.e. 'Let's go, let's go!') has been eliminated. The omissions follow the principle of not transposing unnecessary elements or repetitions which can be reconstructed by means of the non-verbal context, i.e. the singing and spectacle (Dewolf 2001; Low 2002; Desblache 2008; Burton 2009). Therefore, by concentrating on the essential verbal contents, the surtitles "leave the audience more time for interpreting the signs other symbolic modes create" (Virkkunen 2004: 94).

3.2 From the Italian libretto (back) to the English singing translation

While surtitles ignore phonetic considerations (Low 2002: 100), singable translation involves adapting the source libretto to the target language by finding a balance between Low's (2017: 79) "pentathlon of elements": singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme.

The Italian source text of the English translation below is the same as that on which the English surtitles are based, namely Francesco Maria Piave's libretto.

Table 4. Scene 3 and Scene 4.

ITALIAN LIBRETTO	Line	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Pro' Macbetto! Il tuo signore sir t'elesse di	1	Hail, Macbeth! Your great royal master has
Caudore.	2	proclaimed you Thane of Cawdor.
Ma quel sire ancor vi regge.	3	The Thane of Cawdor is still alive!
No. Percosso dalla legge	4	No! The traitor, he has paid the price of treason
sotto il ceppo egli spirò.	5	with his head.
L'inferno il ver parlò.	6	God protect me! The witches spoke the truth!
(Due vaticini compiuti or sono.	7	A double prophecy comes to fruition
Mi si promette dal terzo un trono.	8	and feeds the fire of my fierce ambition...
Ma perché sento rizzarsi il crine?	9	Why do I suffer with secret yearning?
Pensier di sangue, donde sei nato?	10	My brain is teeming with thoughts of murder...
Alla corona che m'offre il fato	11	Though fate has shown me the crown I long for,
la man rapace non alzerò).	12	I cannot grasp it in my hand.
(Oh, come s'empie costui d'orgoglio,	13	How they delight him, these mystic voices.
nella speranza d'un regio soglio!	14	He dreams of power and his heart rejoices.
Ma spesso l'empio spirto d'averno parla,	15	You must be wary of evil spirits.

e c'inganna, veraci detti	16	Their honeyed words are designed to deceive
e ne abbandona poi maledetti	17	you. Fort hey will curse you and they will leave
su quell'abisso che ci scavò.	18	you, doomed to the burning fires of Hell.
Perché sì freddo n'udì Macbetto?	19	He seems unhappy to hear these tidings.
Perché l'aspetto non serenò?)	20	Why is mistrust written on his face?
S'allontanarono.	21	Now they are leaving us!
N'accozzeremo quando di fulmini lo	22	We'll meet again, when we hear the dreadful roar of
scroscio udremo.	23	thunder.
Fuggiam!	24	Now they are leaving us, now we must fly!
S'attenda le sorti a compiere	25	Their fate will be known at the next witches'
nella tregenda.	26	sabbath.
Macbetto riedere vedrem colà	27	Now we await the return of Macbeth.
e il nostro oracolo gli parlerà.	28	He'll learn the secrets of life and of death.
Fuggiam, fuggiam!	29	We fly, we fly!

From a translational point of view, the overall approach adopted is what Newmark (1981: 23) names communicative translation, whose aim is an "equivalent effect" regardless of word choices. As also Desblache (2004: 28) points out, when equivalent effect is sought, "faithfulness is not desirable" in terms of semantic accuracy – or "sense", using Low's (2017: 79) terminology – and priority is given to phonetic and stylistic faithfulness. However, as further discussed below, this is not always possible because every language has its own "rhythmic and melodic flavour" (Palmer 2013: 23).

In terms of lexis and syntax, several words and even entire sentences are often added. The English translation is in fact more wordy and ornate than both the English surtitles (see tables 1, 2, and 3) and the Italian libretto, from which it is translated. There are two main reasons for this transcreative approach.

Firstly, the need to reproduce the original rhyme encourages verbiage (e.g. the repetition of 'Thane of Cawdor' in lines 2 and 3, 'now' in lines 21, 24, 27; the rhyming couplet 'fruition/ambition' in lines 7-8, 'voices/rejoices' in lines 13-14, 'deceive you/leave you' in lines 16, 17, and 18, and 'Macbeth/death' in lines 27-28). Secondly, the English language has a characteristic preference for clear consonants, such that lines sung in English can "interrupt the flow of the melodic line" (Palmer 2013: 23). Jeremy Sams's opera translation makes use of a number of well-chosen words to provide the singers with suitable vowels for high notes and long notes while avoiding awkward clusters of consonants.[7] Therefore, active and transcreative translation decisions have been taken to create a performable text that is "easy to pronounce" (Espasa 2013: 320).

In addition to phonetic factors (Herman and Apter 1991; Mateo 2012: 115), another type of constraint in singing translation is the need to produce a text that favours immediate comprehension (Espasa 2013: 320), which can lead again to expansion and explicitation. Therefore, a certain amount of freedom, artistic licence, and poetic creativity is inevitable (Weaver 2010), as is the case with the English translation provided by Jeremy Sams. Signposting language is introduced to clarify logical connections, for example, the addition of 'Though' in line 11, and several reformulations (among others, from line 13 to 17; lines 19-20; and lines 25-26) help capture the spirit of the text, making it more explicit and facilitating access to the opera when performed (Orero and Matamala 2007: 263).

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7. In the case of the text cited above, 242 vowels can be counted, compared to 206 in the Italian libretto on which Sams's text is based.

The subtext of the Italian original is more effectively conveyed also through more explicit lexical choices, such as 'the traitor' instead of 'he' (line 4), 'yearnings' instead of 'hair' (line 9), 'thoughts of murder' instead of 'thought of blood' (line 10), 'unhappy' instead of 'cold' (line 19), and 'secrets of life and of death' instead of 'oracle' (line 28). Therefore, through a re-conceptualization of the source text material, the target text is able to "forget the source words" (Desblache 2004: 29-30) and capture the spirit of the original, highlighting the role of the translator as an intersemiotic creative agent.

4. Conclusion

The many stories of Macbeth, whose life and afterlife have been ensured by a complex series of intersemiotic transcreations, bear witness to the creativity which goes hand in hand with writing and translating, over the centuries and across codes of communication.

Focusing on Shakespeare and Verdi as main authors, but also on surtitles and singing translations as contemporary instances of transcreation, we have here tried to emphasize some of the strategies which have been employed in recent years to revive the story of Macbeth and make it singable on stage and also understandable by audiences speaking different languages. Our analysis has brought to the fore the functional nature of any process of translation (and transcreation): as Susan Bassnett said (1998), translation never happens in a vacuum, but in a continuum. Linguistic and intersemiotic transfers are often interconnected, they tell us stories of passages, but also of the times when those passages have occurred. Moreover, transla-tions (and transcreations) are carried out for specific purpos-

es: beyond the stereotyped view of functional approaches to translation as limited to business-like settings, one cannot but see a specific purpose beyond virtually all translational activities, including the very creative ones. And this purpose determines choices, it shapes the final format of the target texts and, indeed, it has an impact on the audiences.

Both types of translation here examined (singing translation and surtitles) recall processes of transmutation, change, (re)creation and transcreation: from Shakespeare's tragedy to Verdi's opera and Francesco Maria Piave's libretto, from the Italian libretto (back) to English, thanks to the work of the MOF's surtitlers and translator Jeremy Sams. As is the case with subtitling, strategies for text compression can be applied in surtitling both at word and sentence levels, that is word selection and sentence organisation. This means omitting lexical items or entire sentences which are not vital to the comprehension of the message, and/or reformulating what is relevant in a more concise form. However, as shown in Section 3.1, surtitlers may resort to the opposite strategy, that is text expansion or explicitation which leads the target text to state source text information in a more explicit form than the original. Certain words may be added or made more transparent (word level), or the surtitler may decide to expand details of the action.

Similarly, as for the translation of singable texts, translators should communicate the same meaning as the original (sense) and provide a natural text (naturalness), which means making sure that the result will not read as a translation. The target text has also to maintain the same rhythmical characteristics of the original text: not only in terms of melody (rhythm), but also as

a text (rhyme). Therefore, the translator should find a balance between all the five factors mentioned above. However, as discussed in Section 3.2, compromises are likely to be necessary and the translator generally chooses which elements are to be considered more important than others.

The theoretical framework here designed with reference to the worlds and words of Shakespeare, as well as the analytical tools employed for the analysis, may hopefully lend themselves to replication with other stories and their intersemiotic transcreations. As a matter of fact, as Indian writer and translator Sujit Mukherjee (himself a master of transcreative processes) has stated several times, the afterlife of most texts is largely ensured by retellings and transformations of those same texts, for new audiences and purposes.

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