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Translation and Translatability in Intersemiotic Space

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Sequences and scenes of transposition of an unshareable experience.
A semiotically released prison.

ABSTRACT

As part of the international and traveling exhibition *Prison*, coproduced by the International Red Cross Museum (Geneva, Switzerland), the Musée des Confluences (Lyon, France), and the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum (Dresden, Germany), a discourse on prison environment in Western societies questions public opinion about an existential space that is mostly discussed in fictional form. With a view both to inform and affect the audience, a narrative framework is woven by a diversity of mediations that nonetheless tries to escape the double reductionist fate to which prison space is subjected: 'spectral' trivialization (tacit invisibility) or spectacular mythification (smug ostentation). This paper deals with the (un)shareable dimension of the prison experience. One key question addressed is how to build, preserve, or restore the bridges between prisons' inner life and the external social environment surrounding them. Adopting a pragmatic perspective, we will examine how this exhibition achieves, semiotically, releasing prisons, and prisoners from their incarceration and their mediatic banishment. Video recordings of interactions during guided tours allow us to examine how the experiences of prison life are transposed into exhibitions, the exhibitions into the guides' discourses, the institutional discourses into public enjoyment, public enjoyment into scientific appropriation.

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> Translation has been mystified for so long as a set of technical transfer processes performed on texts, on words and phrases, that the veritable explosion of socially attuned translation theory has felt like a release from prison, a liberation of theory to explore the fullest implication of translation, without fear of transgressing some taboo. (Robinson 1997: 25)[1]

1. Translation as a release from the culture-prison

In this contribution, we want to explore peripheral aspects of translation with the hope of highlighting values that are at the center of its semiotic operating system: (i) intra- or intercultural translation, which always imposes itself as the background of translation between languages or between languages; (ii) the mediating role of intermedia and inter-discursive translations that support the life forms of cultural objects; (iii) the continuous transposition of meaning between experience and discourse and vice versa that informs the experience of the subjects' life forms.

These three themes are explored in a way that pushes translatological reflection towards even more marginal frontiers: prison culture, the kinds of discourse that socialize it, and the textual testimonies that attest to what it means to program, to administer, and, above all, to experience imprisonment. The challenge is to attest to a non-metaphorical use of the notion of translation and enrich its general semiotic scope, in a tradition opened up by authors such as André Lefevere and Yuri Lotman. Indeed, rather than developing a branch of *translation studies* linked to the roles of interpreters in prisons (Fowler et al. 2013), we want to think about (i) what it means to leave the *Prison-House of Language*[2] (Jameson 1972) and enter another *koine*; (ii) how institutions (a museum, a prison) manage to transpose their discourse and their spaces; (iii) why "experiences in translation" (Eco 2001) are both "'translated experiences" and "experienced translations".[3] The operation of substituting a plane of expression, a textual medium, a space of enjoyment, or even a world of reference, differs in size, but not in principle. Once translated, the smallest detail can resonate with an entire host cultural universe by ensuring a new sensitivity to the appreciation of what detaches from the sensible to make itself meaningful.

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[1] The quotation refers to the remarkable contribution of André Lefevere (1992).

[2] If we do not share Jameson's idea that "Structuralism remains a prison," it is because he has not been able to construct a theory of translation.

[3] In *Open Work*, Umberto Eco says: "I am supposed to judge both the work in relation to my experience of it, and my experience of it in relation to the work. I might even have to try to locate the reasons for my reaction to the work in the particular ways the work has been realized" (Eco 1989: 100). There is a kind of circularity between discourse and experience that shows an experimental attitude, an adherence to phenomenology, to the prose of the world that never allows discourse to proliferate in its self-indulgent rhetoric.

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In an empirical approach to interactive museum experiences, our paper aims to problematize the different phases of the constitution of a discourse on prisons in the museum. By focusing on the discourse of prison practices in the museum, we will study the limits of translating confinement experience through images and words addressed to the public. Among our objectives is to study how the semiotization of prisons operated through the exhibition, and how the guided tours reduced and questioned the boundaries between inside and outside prison spaces. Combining corpus-based research and theoretical reflection, our work aims to problematize the prison experience's unshareable dimension.

We often speak of the paradoxical task of translating the untranslatable, which is indeed the case with imprisonment. While it is evident that prison has been the genetic locus of numerous cultural productions, the discursive transposition of the prison experience is never an 'eye-to-eye' translation, but a later facet of a cultural sculpture of a 'punishment' that accepts the strangeness of the contribution. This is why we have named our project *PrisM (Prisons and Museums)*:[4] translating, several times and in several languages, means seeing through a prism: each facet is no less fascinating than the previous ones, and the 'spectrum' of reality becomes less and less transparent and more and more consistent and iridescent.

Through the international and traveling exhibition *Prison*, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum in Geneva (Switzerland), the Musée des Confluences in Lyon (France), and the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum in Dresden (Germany) develop a complex system of semiotic mediations on prison practices in contemporary western societies for the benefit of a broad audience. For these institutions and the exhibition curator, it is a question of managing the knowledge and sensibilities of the audiences they address, through the constitution of an exhibition itinerary, based on a narrative framework woven by a diversity of mediations (e.g., objects of detained persons, photographs, paintings, video documentaries) and texts (e.g., a note of intent, descriptive inserts). The interlinking of these mediations implies the management of an ethical complexity (in particular by instituting a dynamic of social and political debate) and a discursive complexity (in particular by determining a level of granularity at which to situate the subject on prison spaces) to be dealt with, according to plans of dialogical convergence. If "the elementary mechanism of translating is dialogue" (Lotman 1990: 143), the connivance between different sources and different discourses in the same museum system requires translation regimes that can be updated to allow the public to have an integrated, joined experience, albeit potentially heartrending.

[4] We would like to thank the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum in Geneva (Switzerland), the Musée des Confluences in Lyon (France), and the Mémorial national de la prison Montluc in Lyon (France) for the authorization to make audiovisual recordings of the visits and the LabEx ASLAN for its financial support.

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The scientific stakes of our research project, given its interdisciplinary approach (a dialogue between language sciences and other social sciences) and its epistemological point of view, concern the transpositions made between several levels of pertinence (Fontanille 2008) and entail a 're-entry' of the *translative reason* into the theoretical space. Furthermore, we appeal to the general principle of *living semiotics* (Basso Fossali 2008; 2017), the one that conceives meaning as an ecology of meaning that takes advantage of the continuous translations between discursive meaning and experience. It seems to us that this *living* semiotics is the precondition for building a constructive dialogue between semiotics, conversation analysis (Mondada 2008), and discourse analysis (Rabatel 2017), starting from what participants utter from their experiences, studying their perceptions, interpretations, and utterances that participate in the establishment of the interactional scene, during guided tours.

2. Translation, discourse, and experience: prison, beyond the walls

Through the exhibition *Prison*, we question the museum space's ability to provide a bridge between a sensitive experience of places of confinement and the elaboration of an encyclopedic and critical discourse on the living conditions of these places, both at the individual and collective level. Thus, this international exhibition produced from the Red Cross Museum initiative in Geneva tests the museum's role as an interface between institutional actors and social agents and as an environment for enjoyment and interrogation in public. A museum is a place inhabited by discourses, but also by objects and different cultural worlds. Intercultural translation imposes additional problems (Torop 2002) because sometimes the museum has to attest to the knowledge that leads to the discovery of the object which is already 'intertranslatable'.[5] Sometimes, the views it adopts (scientific, artistic, pedagogical, etc.) can only construct different 'worlds,'[6] which requires an *ad hoc* translation, or at least not available in advance. Missing translations catalyze knowledge as a prismatic dynamism, where each search for equivalence is at the same time a non-substitutable acquisition. Each translation is neither servile nor phagocytic.

[5] "We may say the two versions deal with the same facts if we mean by this that they not only speak of the same objects but are also routinely translatable each into the other" (Goodman 1978: 93).

[6] "For instance, the physical and perceptual versions of motion […] do not evidently deal with all the same objects, and the relationship if any that constitutes license for saying that the two versions describe the same facts or the same world is no ready intertranslatability. The physical and perceptual world versions mentioned are but two of the vast variety in the several sciences, in the arts, in perception, and in daily discourse" (Goodman 1978: 93-94).

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2.1. Museum implementation and guided tours: a chain of respects

We can apprehend this prismatic dynamic through the role of the museum as (i) a space for the implementation (Goodman, 1984) of the discourse designed by museum institutions and (ii) a negotiated environment during the visiting experience.[7] If the exhibition route is constituted through a narrative framework, the prisons' discourse in the museum is based on a complex textualization, articulated in several sequences that leave the field of utterance open each time. A first dynamic in the development of the exhibition's theme can, therefore, be noted. This emerged from a diversity of materials selected and organized by the Red Cross Museum in Geneva (prisoners' objects). Working in concert, the three partner museums included and articulated to this museum collection some additional objects. This re-location of objects from the prisoners' everyday life to artistic and documentary context obliges the museum to reconcile the practices at the origin of the materials, through an informed interpretation and respectful (*proper*) reappropriation. But the implemented museum discourse does not only consist of a descriptive meta-discourse of these documents. In translation, it assumes them and reframes them by arranging them together, while relying on (i) the visitors' *transduction*[8] capability (they grasp the significance and relevance of each object by analogy and difference with other items, co-present in the exhibition or the background) and on (ii) their curiosity to pursue research on these initiating gestures (they take note of what they have come across along the way and nourish their desire to know through complementary readings and experiences).

This first discursive articulation is embedded in the second dynamic of reappropriation. Through the mediation with audiences, the guides negotiate their discursive positioning in relation to the institutional voice they embody and represent. In the interaction with the public, the guides' discourse is implicated with the conciliation and differentiation between their personal voice and that of the museum they represent (these two being sometimes superimposed and intertwined). The communication and translation of the museum's speech through the guides then involve not only questions of tone but, above all, questions of *ethos*. Willy-nilly, the image negotiated in discourse by the person interacting with the public does not directly coincide with the image that the museum builds of itself as an institutional actor: the interactions during the guided tours contribute to an adjustment between these images, to a negotiation of reciprocal respect between the museum's speech (as agent for the actors whose voices it translates;

[7] When Nelson Goodman theorized the museum's role as space for implementation, it was a question of grasping the permeabilities between an aesthetic and a political dimension of practices. Indeed, the museum "cannot instantly supply the needed experience and competence but must find ways of fostering their acquisition. Audience development is not finished when lines form at the door" (Goodman 1984: 181).

[8] With this term, we indicate an intersemiotic translation that operates strategically from analogical resonances that have as a starting point the equivalence between planes of expression with different material or spatio-temporal anchors.

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as principal for the guides) and the guides' speech (as agent for the museum; as principal for the public).

Between the dialogical movement that characterizes the exchanges between participants (actions and words between the actors of the scene) and the dialogical dynamics of points of view in discourse (games and articulation between one's speech and another speech), guided tours constitute a fertile field for studying the reappropriation of implemented discourse, in action. Here, we will explore the interactional and discursive modalities through which a group negotiates the articulations between sequences of the visit (the spaces that make up the route) and manages the interlocking of disjointed spaces (the prisons and the museum) in the course of this situated experience. To account for the narrative framework's performances during each visit, we study the semiotic modalities through which the mediators channel the museum itinerary and its potential for immersion. The latter is one of the ambitions displayed on the Confluence Museum website, by inviting visitors to reflect upon the current prison system inherited from the eighteenth century through the stories told by former inmates and representations of our collective imagination. The exhibition's immersive design stresses prisons' paradoxical nature as they isolate individuals - to punish them and protect society - while striving towards their social reintegration. An alternate visitor trail explores the daily lives of inmates through drama.[9]

By studying the articulations operated *in situ,* we characterize the semiotic challenge of the exhibition, representing prisons 'beyond the walls', as the insert in the exhibition's title at the Musée des Confluences points out. There is a double meaning of this expression here. Representing prisons beyond the walls means not only focusing on their architectural dimension: we are interested in incarceration beyond the fact of finding oneself between four walls by thematizing its psychological and emotional, political, and symbolic dimensions. Representing prisons beyond the walls also means to make prison spaces permeable through a constant dialogue between:

- the inside and outside of places of confinement within the urban fabric, in terms of space;
- the period before imprisonment, life in the prison environment, and life after reintegration or recidivism, in terms of time;
- the prisoner's deprivation of liberty and the social agent's freedom of movement and action, in terms of social role.

[9] See the musée des Confluences website.

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2.2. To share or not to share: a semiotic issue between ethics and esthetics

One of the dynamics that structures this exhibition and seems relevant for the intersemiotic relations between prison space and museum space is the intelligible and sensitive conditions of the idea and experience of confinement through the scenography and the exhibited objects. This mobilization of various mediations aims to plunge visitors into a voluntarily fictitious prison environment and to bring out a reflection on the practices of confinement, to build bridges between different actors of society, to share what it means to be in prison - and correlatively to be responsible for lives in prison. These practical questions, relating to the sharing of the prison experience, stem from a semiotic problem on the crest between an ethic of practices (the search for agreement on a political issue in action, going beyond axiological and moral values) and aesthetics of experience (the expression of a point of view to be perceived and an experience to be felt).

Indeed, this sharing is fundamentally part of an ethics of social practices, as theorized by the philosopher John Dewey (1927). Here this ethics concerns the collectivization of social, political, and cultural issues of a society that has to deal with the eminently personal and private dimension of experience – that is to say (i) having a particular value from one's point of view and (ii) only partially available to others. Paradoxically, the ethical implication involves the empowerment of an 'I' who must understand others' positions within himself. The ethical experience does not accept a common code as a starting point. It thus exposes itself to the difficulties of translating from a monological, but responsible, 'version' that lets others' voices resonate (translated/untranslatable). Appropriation is achieved through this 'privatization' of the experience by preserving the fabric of testimonies and public knowledge constructed by the museum. The latter is not like the cinema. It is enough to raise one's eyes and meet the gaze of another visitor, or to find oneself confronted with a new object, to be immediately solicited to an escape from our interpretative space, to open up to an interpretative garden of alternative intentions and doubts.

Thus, on the other side of semiotic practices, namely the aesthetic dimension of museum discourse, we see that interpretative engagement is pursued employing sensitive solicitations and transpositions. Despite the linear way of the visit, the ethical attitude cannot ensure continuity in the face of a diversity of instances, discourses, and dramas. It is the intersemiotic translation between informative panels, objects, staging, acoustic devices, and the internal intermodality of discourses that make an aesthetic adventure of a visit that offers a great range of discoveries and interrogations.

The exhibition elaborates the question of sharing or not a vision of the world and a representation of prisons both at a personal level (a biography and an intimate experience that one seeks to express or question, but in any case to respect) and at the level of collective imaginations (an interrogation that seeks to distinguish between

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images in memory and received ideas, by breaking down mythical images that structure our representations and sometimes distort them). The exhibition aesthetically articulates the passage between one room and the other in a way that enables the spectator to distinguish the correspondences between biographical traces and the public clues of an imaginary that remains *weakly* moralized.

The articulations made by the members of a group between an encyclopedic background (values stabilized and sedimented in a social space) and a horizon of the collective tour (what the visit tends towards on the phenomenological, epistemic, and affective levels) draw a kind of prosody of the visit where heritage and discovery, coding and improvisation, ethical position and aesthetic inflection can continue to exchange their issues of meaning. The purpose of observing the dynamics at work during a guided tour, between the participants and the museum environment, as well as between the participants themselves, is to study how they define and operate passages between different planes of immanence (the one of the exhibition and the one outside the exhibition), by situating themselves at varying levels of pertinence (signs, texts, discourse, objects, practices and life forms). The issue here is to examine how the construction of the exhibition discourse by the museum, and its reappropriation by visitors in an episemiotic dynamic, constitute the democratic exercise of an exchange and negotiation of knowledge and affects, concerning the (re)definition of confinement practices, i.e., Who is punishing? Who is punished? How do we punish? What are the alternatives to the rules and practices in force? This problematization of the public dimension of social practices (the visit in relation to those outside the museum; confinement in relation to other kinds of punishment) is linked to what cannot be shared between people who are co-present in the same environment. Part of the museum's mission is to hold together a past and a future perspective, in the present, by fully assuming the performative dimension of its discourse. With the Prison exhibition (but not only this one), the museums both advance a discursive program aimed at shedding light on a problematic, even embarrassing, legacy of prison practices, and propose themselves as a favorable environment for exchanging perspectives (judges, guards, prisoners, prisoners' relatives, 'free' citizens) and considering alternative ways of dealing with crimes and offenses.

Articulating scientific research based on archival material with a democratic practice of interlocution and interaction on detention/retention conditions, the museum seeks to operate as an interface between political institutions and social agents, as an arena for negotiation and redefinition of life in society. As we will see in the next section, the *Prison* exhibition also includes an experimental dimension, without claiming to reproduce the prison environment exactly. The shared dimension of the experience of prisons in the museum, ephemeral and fleeting, is less the attempt to create something common at all costs (which would be a form of normativization positively valued) than

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to catalyze reflection in each of the 'organisms' that make up a social body (by raising awareness and infusing a critical perspective of society on itself, one tries to transform it). From a pragmatist perspective, we will now examine how this exhibition achieves, semiotically, releasing prison spaces and prisoners from their incarceration and their mediatic banishment.

3. The transposition of spaces and the resonance of images and sounds

Based on two video excerpts from a visit that took place at the Red Cross Museum in Geneva on July 2, 2019, during a web radio workshop,[10] we focus on a passage of the exhibition that will allow us not only to give an account of the complementarities and articulations between the sequences of the journey but also to grasp how the museum space translates the prison space.

The mediator begins the 45 minutes-long tour with the sequence 'Why punish?', by leading the children to question the decision-making mechanisms involved in the act of punishing and sentencing people. Through the representativeness, the mandate of a power attributed to judges and the vote for actors in the political arena who would have one or the other bill adopted for one or the other prison system, each member of society participates in the attribution of sentences. Then, the mediator suggested moving towards a work representing "the protagonists of a crime scene: the victim, on the ground; his family; the presumed culprit, surrounded by gendarmes; the judges; in the background, a gathering crowd," as can be read in *situ* on the insert about the painting by Alexandre Bonnin de Fraysseix entitled *Justice at work* [Une descente de justice] (1884). This opening towards this 'image' aims to exemplify this representation of the social actors and the embodiment of judges' judicial power. After taking an interest in this scene, they moved on to a series of photographs that captured the different types of prison architecture that were imposed in Europe from the 19th century onwards, thus highlighting the philosophical and ideological conceptions underlying these models (Jeremy Bentham's panopticons, high-security prisons, and open prisons).

[10] In our project, we made audiovisual recordings of guided tours for school and non-school audiences, as well as web radio workshops entitled 'Reporter au musée,' led by mediators of the Musée des Confluences in Lyon, on July 2 and 4, 2019. As part of the 'Passeport Vacances' program of activities set up by the City of Geneva, aimed at pre-adolescents (between 10 and 15 years old), these web radio workshops aim to raise their awareness of information and communication media practices. The anchoring of the museum space is twofold. On the one hand, the museum is a space where participants investigate the exhibition Prison's content through several themes, in five groups, each made up of two or three people. On the other hand, the museum is a mediatic theatre in which an attempt is made to draw up a meta-semiotic perspective, familiarize participants with the practices and terms that are sometimes specific to this professional environment, and sometimes share with others artistic and cultural fields.

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Inside the second sequence of the exhibition entitled 'Maid prisoner' (Détenu), there is a first orange room that aims to reproduce a prison atmosphere. Spatially, its dimensions are roughly the same as a cell to convey prison life's deprivations. On the acoustic level, a sound documentary produced by the radio station France Culture is broadcast to transcribe the environmental conditions of the prison environment.[11] This room is followed by a much larger cell, where objects presented on metal grids deal with daily life issues in prison. As announced in the exhibition catalog, "always transparent, with a sometimes crude design, the exhibition's architecture plays on the perspectives between inside and outside. Curiosity, voyeurism, and uneasiness are mixed in this evocation of the prison experience" (Mayou 2019: 10) – our translation.

The transcription[12] of the first video excerpt we study will allow us to focus on the interactions between a mediator and the visitors in this orange room, just after they have looked at the architectural photographs. The second will allow us to report on the modalities of visual transpositions of the cell's atmosphere through documentary pictures taken in prison.

3.1. **To be ready to listen to what sounds have to show us**

To grasp this excerpt's thematic progression, let's retrace the different phases that structure the exchanges between the participants. The mediator briefly introduces the device and invites the group to take place in the orange room (lines 1 to 14). He then carries out a discursive work that leads the group members to express their feelings and perceptions of the room and focus everyone's attention on the sound dimension of the museum representation (lines 15 to 32). Then, he accompanies the kids to find interpreters of the sounds listened to, to identify what these sounds correspond to (lines 33 to 48), and suggests that they qualify and characterize sounds of the prison as euphoric or dysphoric, compared to the sounds of the forest environment (lines 49 to 52). Finally, he transitions from what was just perceived and stated to what is about to come, by inviting the children to move to the next larger cell, behind bars (lines 52 to 56).

For our study of the (in)translatable dimension of the prison experience, we can then look at the linguistic and semiotic modalities through which this work of mediation raises awareness of the prison environment. By focusing on the attention given to the museum environment and the orientation of bodies, looks, and gestures, we seek to grasp, in the sequentiality of the interaction, when and how the participants seek to

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[11] This documentary is titled *Prison's sounds* [Sons de prison]. Sources: Jean-Baptiste Fribourg and Emission La Série Documentaire – Utopia by Camille Juza (2017/12/27) – © France culture. Editing: France culture 2018.

[12] For the transcripts, we adopt the conventions developed in interaction analysis by the ICOR group, here.
In the transcript, the symbol #1 locates image 1, etc.
GU1 refers to the mediator and VE1, VE2, VE3 to the visitors annotated on image 1 below.

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```
     Clip 1 « Ambiance prison »
     PRISM_GEN_190702_Ate_V1 / 00:26:15 - 00:28:03

     (00:26:15)
 1   GU1     maintenant ce qu'on va faire c'est qu'on va rentrer un peu plus dans
 2           l'exposition et vous allez voir qu'on va pénétrer à l'intérieur de la
 3           prison (0.3) la scénographie c'est-à-dire la manière dont les choses sont
 4           agencées ici hein/ sont nous- elles nous sont présentées (0.3) bah elle va
 5           nous faire passer par un espace un peu particulier #1 et on va en parler
 6           juste après (0.3) vous êtes prêts/ (1.0) on y va\
 7           (0.7) ((GU1 ouvre la porte de l'espace en question et les enfants
 8           s'avancent))
 9   GU1     entrez
10           (12.0) ((les participants entrent ; quelques enfants s'avancent au fond de
11           la pièce et regardent à travers le hublot d'une deuxième porte))
12   GU1     on va rester juste un peu là avant
13   VE3     (est-ce que c'est les xxx)
14           (0.7)
15   GU1     alors ce qu- est-ce qu'on [nous pré-]
16   VE3                               [ ça c'est] pour surveiller les prisonniers
17   GU1     ouais sûrement #2 où est-ce que est-ce que c'est un espace où nous
18           présente des objets ici
19   VE3     nan
20   VE?     nan
21   GU1     nan hein y a rien hein/ (.) qu'est-ce qu'il y a alors
22   VE2     ((désigne une des enceintes d'un geste de la tête))
23   VE?     [xx xx xxx       ]
24   VE3     [il a des images/]
25           (1.5)
26   GU1     nan mais ici/ [dans] cet espace-là
27   VE3                   [ah  ]
28   VE3     bah y a rien
29   GU1     il y a rien du tout
30   VE1     bah ouais il y a des
31   GU1     ((pointe son oreille de son index en regardant VE1))
32   VE3     ah/ il y a du bruit/
33   GU1     oui ((rire)) il y a du bruit (.) et effectivement les bruits que vous
34           entendez ce sont les bruits d'une prison (0.3) alors qu'est-ce qu'on
35           entend comme bruit/
36   VE3     euh: des des des gens qui tapent sur des barreaux
37   GU1     peut-être ouais
38   VE2     des gens qui ouvrent les cellules
39   GU1     oui (0.9) [on a entendu ça  ]
40   VE3               [et puis il y a eu] des prisonniers qui crient
41   GU1     prisonniers qui crient (.) les clés vous les avez entendues là/
42   VE1     ouais
43   GU1     les portes qui se ferment
44   VE3     des gens qui rentrent des chaînes
45   GU1     des chaînes oui beaucoup de bruits #3 métalliques vous êtes d'accord avec
46           ça hein/
47           (1.3)
48   GU1     à votre avis c'est plus sympathique euh des bruits de prison ou les bruits
49           de la forêt:/
50   VE1     euh les [bruits de la] forêt
51   VE3             [    la forêt]
52   GU1     ouais hein/ c'est plus agréable effectivement alors l'idée ici c'est de vous
53           mettre un peu dans l'ambiance justement d'une prison (.) et maintenant qu'on
54           est dans l'ambiance d'une prison et bah on va rentrer dans une cellule hein
55           (0.3) et là (0.3) regardez hop/ (1.1) on arrive à l'intérieur/ (0.4) alors
56           on va tous se mettre devant ces photos-là/
     (00:28:03)
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Clip 1. "Ambiance Prison"

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realize continuities between the different sequences of the museum space, on the one hand, and between the museum space and the prison space, on the other.

Initially, in terms of museum mediation, we move from a diversity of architectural models presented through photographs and texts (line 5; image 1 below) to the polysemiotic, spatial, visual, and acoustic representation of a specific occurrence. The orange room inside which they are about to enter is the representative of a Western prison in a closed environment whose stereotypes are neutralized as much as possible at the scenographic level.

Figure 1 / image 1.

Figure 1 / image 2.

As they entered the room, not all of the children immediately grasped that what was to be perceived there were primarily sounds. Indeed, as the mediator suggests them enter, some go to the back and look through a porthole that opens onto the next sequence (line 17; figure 1 /image 2).

This porthole is then assimilated to the eyecup through which prison guards can control what happens inside the cell. It seems interesting to us that visual perception is, as it were, activated by default, almost automatically, and the mediator seeks to accompany the device's suggestion: to expose the walls and listen to what the sounds have to show us. By asking "is it a space where objects are shown to us?" (line 17) and then "no, there's nothing here" (line 21), the mediator accentuates the space's emptiness

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not only to urge the members of the group to focus on their auditory perception but above all to put their imagination to work. In the tours we have documented, we observe that some of the guides' speeches block the sensitive experience and do not leave much of the participants' imagination. These speeches placate direct representations and function as symbols that do not invite the visitors to go through a series of idiosyncratic interpretant, to appeal to their point of view. In such a configuration, the figurativization carried out by the guides, and the imaginative depth of the visitors are saturated by the discourse itself. On the contrary, in the excerpt we study here, the mediator problematizes the strictly sensitive part of the visitors' experience, while orienting them in the attentional modalities of the shared environment. In a multimodal manner, accompanying his questions with a hand gesture, GU1 tries to make visitors feel the texture of the sound and enables them to explore the imaginative depth of this discourse, without explicitly thematizing it (line 45; figure 1 /image 3).

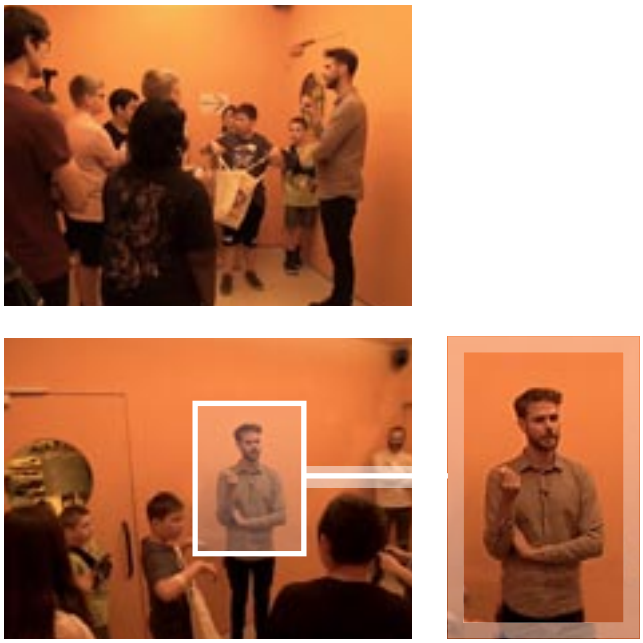

Figure 1 / image 3. Screenshots of excerpt 1 'ambiance prison'

In an *a priori* very light and banal way (the adults look at each other and smile), he then opens the discourse towards what lies out of the scope of direct perception, from these prison noises to the sounds of the forest. This movement seeks, on the one hand, to protect children from overexposure to the prison environment noises (the opening of the aesthetic field favors an emotional distancing) and, on the other hand, to respect the visitors' individual cognitive posture without trying to build at all costs a collective that shares the same knowledge (by opening their imaginary, he lets them convert their experience into speech and pushes them to make up their image of life in prison or the open air). The mediator thus finds himself in an intermediary position that he fully appropriates, negotiating both his position vis-à-vis the institutions and the public at several levels

- *From impersonal discourse to collective discourse*, in terms of discursive formations, he appropriates himself a thematic, encyclopedic, and axiological heritage supported by institutions, and he must try to transform it into collective content, shareable *in vivo*, taking advantage of *both* the exhibition *and* the more or less spontaneous exchanges between the participants;

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- *from complementary discourse to critical discourse*, in terms of social roles, he manages the tensions between the enhancement of the exhibition and the museum, the addition of a complementary discourse, and the management of a direct relationship with the people he faces, by taking into account their interests and their sensitivities; in this sense, the efficiency of the function exercised is evaluated according to specific parameters internal to the museum organization that are not superimposable to the efficiency appreciated by the public, which gives to (re)mediation a critical dimension
- *from legitimized (elective) discourse to inclusive (egalitarian) discourse,* in terms of symbolic relationships, the mediator embodies identity and expressive models of a cultural environment that surrounds and informs the museum system as an organization. However, the mediator must often present 'other' cultural models, from other civilizations and eras, and other collectives (subcultures). In this sense, the exhibition *Prison* emphasizes the guide's role, as he must mediate access to identity and expressive models that have not been accepted but remain voices to be heard, respected, and followed in their contextual re-elaboration: the prisons.

Such a transposition of museum mediation (instituted in the exhibition itinerary) into the discursive practice of the guide (carried out in interaction) allows us to think of this orange room as a device aimed at creating a valid atmosphere to amplify the content of the discourse on prisons, elaborated beforehand. This orange room is then a catalyst for a progressive grasp on representations, an airlock where representations from the outside ('Why punish?' sequence), and representations from the inside ('Maid prisoner' sequence) are placed in tension. Then, in the interaction, GU1 invites the group to follow the direction indicated by a black arrow on a white A4 sheet of paper, pointing towards the next large cell.

In the next excerpt, we will focus on the resonance of the sound atmosphere and the multimodal discourse (verbal and gestural) in this orange room with a photographic material that brings the visitors inside a cell.

3.2. **Two-way transposition and amplification**

This passage inside cell life, from an empty room (where visitors are placed in the skin of the inmates) to one full of visual representations, is initially made with the thematization of the issue of prison overcrowding. Focusing on the painting *Four in a Cell* (2018), by former prisoner Didier Chamizo (fig.6), the mediator addresses the issue of cell overcrowding. If one "often thinks that one is alone in a cell," this idea "is not the actual truth," this painting represents "four people who do not seem to have any space." He then moves on to the photographs that lead directly out of the orange room door.

In this second excerpt, the mediator extends in a first stage the highlighting of the exhibition's framework of prison overcrowding by linking the spectator place to the

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```
Clip 2 « Surpopulation et violence »
PRISM_GEN_190702_Ate_V1 / 00:29:32 - 00:31:41

(00:29:32)
GU1     allez\ juste j' voulais qu'on reste un peu ici\ parce que j'trouve que
        c'est un espace regardez comment il est fait\ justement peut-être euh:
        approchez-vous ((fait un geste des deux mains aux participants pour les
        inviter à se rapprocher de lui et des photos)) c'est que quand vous entrez
        vous faites face très rapidement\ (.) vous voyez\ à des photos qui
        représentent quoi/
VE2     euh des gens en cellule/
VE?     ouais:
GU1     des gens en cellule\ vous avez vu qu' cet espace il est tout petit (.) hein
        donc effectivement on est dans un- tous serrés les uns par rapport aux autres
        et que qu'est-ce qu'on voit dans ces: photos-là/
VE3     des lits\ #1
GU1     des lits:\ alors déjà est-ce qu'ils sont seuls dans leurs cellule
VE      nan
GU1     nan ici ils sont plusieurs hein effectivement\ on voit des lits donc c'est
        l'endroit où ils dorment qu'est-ce qu'on voit d'autre comme objet/
VE3     euh::/ des toilettes/
GU1     des toilettes/ donc c'est aussi euh l'endroit où euh sûrement eh bah ils
        font pipi et caca (0.5) hein\
VE3     [inaud.]
GU1     [est-ce que c'est évident] d' faire pipi et caca quand i' y a trois personnes
        en: dans la même cellule/
VE      nan
GU1     est-ce que vous ça vous arrive souVENT (0.3) de faire pa- pipi et caca devant
        des autres gens/
VE      non
GU1     non hein effectivement c'est un peu dur
        (0.8)
GU1     qu'est-ce qu'on voit d'autre/
VE3     euh là: on voit qu'il écrit
GU1     exactement/ alors il écrit sur quoi/
VE3     [sur un tabouret]
VE?     [sur un papier  ]
GU1     sur un tabouret c'est son bureau/ (.) en fait\ vous avez vu la taille du
        bureau (.) il est petit quand même hein (0.3) vous êtes d'accords/
VE3     là on voit des chaussures/ ((pointe une partie de la photo))
GU1     ouais on voit des chaussures
VE3     [et là aussi    ] ((pointe une autre partie de la photo))
GU1     [parce que c'est] une personne tu vois regarde combien i's sont dans la
        cellule là/
VE      cinq
GU1     ils sont cinq hein dans une toute petite cellule effectivement
        (1.1)
GU1     okay\ alors là on va vous parler un petit peu des conditions de détention:\
        (.) ici vous pourrez venir le voir tout seuls si vous voulez\ ça parle
        justement euh euh de certaines femmes/ qui sont enfermées depuis plus ou
        moins longtemps/ #2 et de comment elles REssentent justement le fait d'être
        enfermées euh:\ et puis comment ça fonctionne aussi dans une prison\ les
        rapports entre les personnes euh:\ notamment .tsk ces rapports et c'est
        souvent des rapports un peu violENTS (.) hein (.) ici on parle notamment des
        questions des pouvoirs regardez ici vous avez un grand cartel vous le voyez
        qui présente la partie j' vous laisserai #3 l' lire sur les rapports de
        pouvoir et notamment la violence qui est extrêmement présente à l'intérieur
        des prisons\ parce que les gens i's ont p- est-ce qu'ils ont envie d'être
        enfermés à votre avis
VE3     non
VE2     non
GU1     non hein donc il faut les contraindre à être enfermés\ #4 d'où le rôle de ce
        fameux guide euh:\ ce fameux gardiens de prison qui sont là/ mais aussi entre
        les prisonniers hein il y a beaucoup de jeux de pouVOIR/ qui et et et qui va
        s' manifester par de la violence
(00:31:41)
```

Clip 2. "Surpopulation et Violence"

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spaces represented by Lloyd DeGrane's photographs *Cook County Jail*, *Chicago* (2010), *Interior of a cell* (2013) by Grégoire Korganow and *Poggioreale Prison* (2015) by Valerio Bispuri (lines 1 to 10). The scenography forces the visitors' bodies to be brought closer to each other, as in a cell. He then invites the participants to a collective interpretation of the three photographs, considering the different elements co-present in the cells to account for the practices of living in this cramped space (lines 11 to 44).

When the guide uses photographs to describe a cell's life from an internal prison perspective, it first reports on the overall environmental conditions and then focuses on more specific elements. By asking what is seen in these photographs (line 14), it uses the same mechanism of tracking down clues to exemplify the social problem-focused by the exhibition to (re)mediate it in discourse. The presence of several beds in a narrow space, even smaller than the orange room they have just passed through, is inevitably a conclusive indication of cramped cohabitation (line 12; figure 2 /image 1).

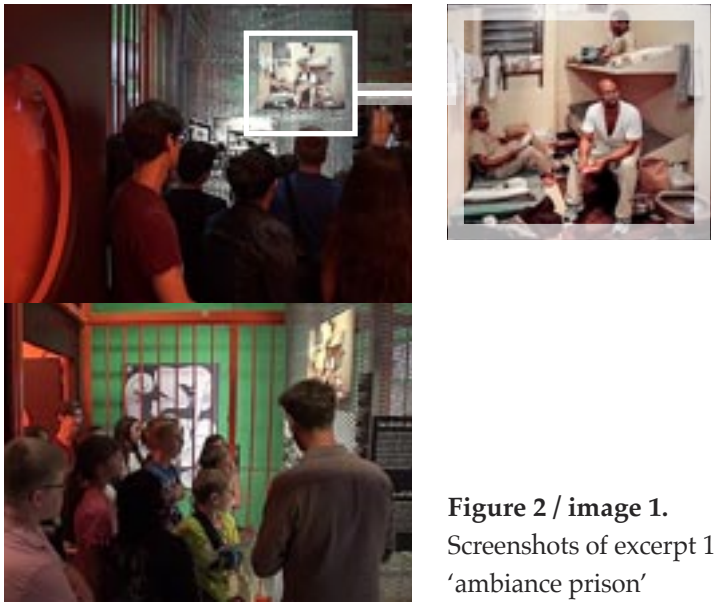

Figure 2 / image 1.
Screenshots of excerpt 1 'ambiance prison'

In addition to the three beds in the same cell, inmates must relieve themselves in a toilet in the room. By asking the children how often they find themselves in the situation of having to relieve themselves in front of other people (lines 21-22), the mediator highlights the discomfort resulting from such living conditions by confronting the photographs' biographical background. This inevitably triggers a critical interpretative process. In closing the topic about the prisoners' daily life's precariousness, the guide seeks to bring out another way of practicing everyday space that also structures children's life: writing (lines 29 to 35). Even if they are unable to put themselves in the place of the people in the pictures, looking at these photographic narratives obliges them to reflect ethically on the intimate experience that these people have had of these places and to reconsider their living conditions. In a pivotal position with the other steps in this sequence of the exhibition, the conditions of life in detention represent a synthesis that allows the convergence of different perspectives and categories of judgment.

Indeed, the discourse on the conditions of confinement is first approached from the health point of view. Then it crosses the socio-affective level of interpersonal relations (lines 45 to 50) and is expressed in terms of violence and power and force relations

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(lines 50 to 61). In the sequence 'Maid prisoner,' the artistic installation *Carceroscope III* (2018), created by Marion Lachaise with women in prison, puts their testimonies in images of their faces projected onto objects they sculpted themselves with a sound animation (line 47; figure 2 /image 2).

Figure 2 / image 2.

Figure 2 / image 3.

Then, the mediator proposes that the group move to another corner of the cell, introducing power relationships that structure the interactions between inmates and between inmates and guards. In passing, he points out the presence of a cartel that formulates a discourse on prison conditions through the prism of 'The law of the jungle'[13] (line 52; figure 2 /image 3).

Physical violence is used against prisoners (lines 54 to 58) both by the guards that require them to comply with the rules (line 59) and by coprisoners (line 60). Echoing the metallic noises of people banging on the bars – the sound premise of this violence –, the drawings *Violent Wardens* (2016) by Laurent Jacqua, author of the first 'pirate' blog written in prison in 2006, and *Solitary Confinement* (2018) by Günther Finneisen,

[13] It is written: "Interaction on a daily basis is determined by hierarchies and mistrust – between inmates and in their relation with prison staff. The tough call the shots. The nature of the offence also determines the level of respect. Aggression is the order of the day in such a male-dominated environment, often aggravated by prison overcrowding. For all the constant surveillance, protection against violence is often inadequate."

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Figure 2 / image 4. Screenshots of excerpt 2 'Overcrowding and violence'

who spent sixteen years in solitary confinement, seem like imaginary escapes from this violence (line 59; figure 2 / image 4).

By studying these passages between the photographs of architectural models, the orange room, and then the cell, we can account for the semiotic complexity underlying the visitors' immersion in the museum's prison space. In this intersemiotic transposition, the photographs are more than a condensed illustration or visual commentary of the sound environment. The exhibition of this visual material, just after the simulation of a cell's interior, aims to amplify the bodily and acoustic experience. This search for complementarity between perceptive channels (various modalities of attention) and semiotic mediations (multiple objects, documentary and artistic practices) develops progressively in stages, relying on the visitors' living memory. The exposition directly and unequivocally poses a problem to the public, causing a social shock ('We're the ones who punish') in correspondence with the imprisonment shock. Visitors are gradually immersed in an experience that progresses through elaborating a sensitive and embodied projection of the atmosphere of a cell (orange room). Then visitors move on to testimonies from inside the prison by amplifying the atmosphere of the prison environment. In the tour's back-and-forth movement, the objects encountered respond and complement each other in an integrated scene that can not be directly understood in its existential density and depth.

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The immersive design of this orange room, present in Geneva and Lyon, finds a specific resonance and re-appropriation in an exhibition device at the Musée des Confluences. In collaboration with Joris Matthieu, the director of the Théâtre Nouvelle Génération, a complementary tool is offered to the public. In an immersive environment where incarceration is conceived "at the boundary between theatre and imagination," three joined rooms recreate spaces of prison daily life and give substance to the prisoners' testimonies: "from the daily life in a prison cell to face-to-face contact in the visiting room, come and experience a singular form of virtual theatre." This virtual theatre consists of a video projection on a glass plate, giving the impression of an actor's presence through a hologram.

In the first space, there is a staging of dramatic texts, where several actors play different inmates in the same cell. Visitors sit in front of the virtual actors and carry headphones to listen to the enacted texts.

Figure 3. Observing life in a cell – reading and embodying dramatic texts

Figure 4. Face-to-face in the visiting room

A second space uses the same listening device, but not the same methods of staging or visualization. In the reconstruction of a parlor with a separation device (a glass window), each visitor can position himself on different chairs facing which the actors' stories are projected.

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Figure 5, image 1.

Figure 5, image 2. Mirror games between being an observer and being observed

A third space mobilizes an even more complex device, playing on the lighting and sound system of two mirrored scenes, composed of the same objects and sets. There is a scene where holograms of a similar size to those of the first space are projected (figure 3) and another one where the museum visitor is physically present: a bench on which to sit, a sink, and a lighted table. Initially, in full light, the potential of the device has not yet been exploited. We see characters projected in front of us, but the two spaces respond equally.

This 'augmented' immersion is activated as soon as the light dims and then goes out, and you can hear the sounds of the objects. You are in the room as if you were in your cell, hearing drops of water falling into the sink, with no one to talk to in front of you.

The mirror game is reversed, and the visitors move from a person's position to the position of a spectator observing several people in the same cell, facing them.

Through the orange room and this virtual theatre, which explores the boundaries between the figurative power of the staging and the visitors' imaginative depth, the overlap between museum discourse on prison and the imaginative experience of confinement finally finds an effective and vivid synergy. This dynamic of museum production, between artistic experimentation and scientific discourse, offers a critical analysis of the shareable and translatable dimensions of prison experience in the museum. Whether in the immersive device

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or the figurative but inescapably rhetorical discourse, a level of coherence seems to emerge, crossing and structuring the itinerary from beginning to end. The *Prison* exhibition aims to make visitors confront the limits of their knowledge and their reflection. But the exhibition not only questions the nature of information, whether it is the fruit of encyclopedic research or personal experience, it also shows the limits of what it means to be a society: how can we continue to participate in a penal system that is running on empty? What alternative solutions should be implemented to reduce violence and restore decent living conditions?

Based on the analysis of our audiovisual corpus of visits, we will now discuss the epistemological challenges of our research. Specifically, we want to explore in a more careful and theoretically explicit way (i) the intersemioticity and polysemioticity at work in museum discourse and (ii) the translatability and communicability of the prison experience museum.

4. The exhibition Prison, its intersemiotic spaces and dialogical transpositions

4.1. **The problematization of relations between institutional spaces**

The museum space must be translated into a prison environment and, at the same time, the latter must consider its 'native' cultural traces as relevant for an exhibition space. The tensions of translation are pronounced and start from the different conceptions of space used. The oppositions are evident: space of socialization (museum) vs. space of confinement (prison), exhibition space vs. concealment space, space of connections vs. space of separations, modular space vs. immutable space, space of representation vs. space of effectiveness. The list could go on. There are many facets of untranslatability that invoke a problem of commensurability, and hence, the need for dialogical transposition. Taking the last of these oppositions (representation vs. efficiency), we immediately realize how it germinates powerful *interpretants* and oblique, or somewhat problematic, interpretation paths. The prisoner is practically the only social actor who loses the right to delegate: he cannot ask anyone to take his place. He also loses part of his political rights, the active suffrage. The prison space is an insurmountable reality, and the effectiveness of the punishment does not admit rhetoric - the latter is at best left to sporadic moments, the punctual meetings with a lawyer.

The prison is perhaps the only space that can be identified with a 'text,' with a notational score of executable signs. It appears as a coherent space that erases the different biographies and destinies to propose a residual agency, standardized monochrome, sterile. These margins of action and life are falsely justified. In particular, what society fails

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to recognize explicitly is that it tacitly considers that part of the punishment consists of being confined among similar people, i.e., other criminals. After all, what is expected of prison is that it should function as a magical place, where the maximum concentration of criminality should give rise to a spirit of redemption and a desire of reintegration into a social space characterized by a rarefied or qualitatively tolerated crime.

Exhibitions such as those in Geneva, Lyon, and Dresden inevitably question the prison status as an inclusive institutional space representing our sense of law or as an exclusive institutional space qualifying the 'outside' of outlaws. The ambiguity remains enormous as if the prison were a kind of colonial space, a protectorate over a population that remains, in part, 'wild.' The museum's exhibition can only inherit this ambiguity by having to think of the signs or objects transported/translated in its space as clues of a justice that only imposes itself with a greater ontological force on problematic lives, or as the fetishes of a community that inhabits another space – the prison – whose keys to interpretation remain unavailable.

Of course, translations between social spaces begin long before the intervention of museum institutions. The signs of prison life can even create cultural trends, such as the massive use of tattoos. And conversely, prison can adapt to lifestyles beyond the cell bars and invent cooperatives and even clothing production brands – we think of the experiences 'Made in prison' and the 'Sartoria San Vittore' (Lunghi 2012) in Italy.

The forms of exhibition proposed by the museums that took up the task of communicating the prison environment are diversified into fairly specific subspaces, each bearing a more or less adequate version of confinement. They know that this adequacy can be valued for what has been found or, on the contrary, for what has been lost in translation: the equivalence of *source* and *target* is a value at least as much as the realization of their intraductability, of a resistant *otherness*.[14] The forms of equivalence used by the exposition are as follows:

(i) intersensorial translation spaces with an immersive vocation;
(ii) spaces for questioning with an argumentative purpose, sometimes with provocative nods;
(iii) spaces of representation with a descriptive or expository purpose;
(iv) illusionist theatrical spaces, with dialogical simulations (cell and visiting room);
(v) interactive spaces with a cognitive purpose, focusing on missing or misleading knowledge about prison reality.

The detailed investigation of all these different spaces' semiotic functioning and their synergy exceeds this article's tasks. Still, a first typology is useful, not only to define the limits of the analyses presented above, but also to help us understand how the di-

[14] Indeed, new translation software only serves to underline that professional translators will be increasingly qualified as untranslatability experts.

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versification of the museum devices is the result of a richness or refinement of the choices made and, above all, of the cognitive 'battle' imposed by the object of study – the prison. To illustrate this crucial point, it suffices to say that the Lyon exhibition's theatrical device was inserted in a nocturnal setting, where each prisoner, represented by audiovisual projections or holograms, finds himself before the spectator in his intimate life (sleeping, shaving, sitting alone). Compared to the classic opposition between public and private space, does the prison environment reproduce this categorization within itself or decompose it, demonstrate its decline? Is, perhaps, the prison space a 'third' instance, that looks upon this opposition from the outside, implicitly blaming those who resist it?

4.2. Translation between discursive genres and the delicate management of meaning effects

The translation between genres of discourse is also a translation between their host social spaces since they inherit their paradoxes, gaps, and heterogeneity. But the opposite is also true: the impossible translation between the different sensory modalities and their almost constant connivance (multisensoriality), to which can be linked the spaces of cultural experience, are at the same time an example of the need for different languages and their cohabitation. The solidarity between discourses and intersemiotic spaces indicates that it is in their critical tension that the meaning effects are produced. These effects become significant for a specific form of cultural life because they foster belonging to a collectivity and, simultaneously, build up personal emancipation. Therefore, it is not in the banal representation of a prison cell in a small, cramped museum room that the translatability of an experience, or the construction of a discourse certifying a biography, can be resolved. The larger the size of the semiotic configurations than we must translate, the more slavishly direct or mimetic equivalence proves to be misleading and, in any case, unproductive in terms of meaning.

In the corpus examined here, a particular space, already analyzed (see above), can best show us this question. A tiny room painted entirely in orange and empty, the only one that requires a door to be opened by a handle, houses a sound installation that breaks through spatial barriers to give us a vast, confused, almost limitless acoustic environment populated by voices, recognizable sounds, and indeterminate noises. As we've already noticed, the small room may reproduce the dimensions of a cell, but the chromatic saturation and nakedness of the space are not mimetic; the visible translates the prisoner's 'identity skin,' his orange suit, while the acoustic world appears saturated with scary sounds, like clues to an unsustainable daily micro violence, precisely because they are indecipherable, remaining *offscreen*. The museum space reinvents the prison environment before being able to present itself as a mediator of experiences. Our audiovisual recordings show that people rarely resist for more than a few minutes in this room; the museum accepts to be aesthetically repulsive to find an uncomfortable fidelity to the existential

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example to be reported. It speaks a different, violent 'language' that the guides can manage at the cost of increasing the dose, further exaggerating the dramatic nature of the experience: the evocation of suicides in prison, racial conflicts, or others. A translation is the continuation of a discourse that recovers the 'others'. It traces a dialogical path: the fact of quickly following the arrow to get out of this orange room is like leaving a text, leaving the voices that transmitted the signs from hand to hand, from mouth to mouth.

Looking at a museum, one understands that each textual configuration is composed of modalizations that guide its interpretation. Each text is programmatic, but it could not prescribe a 'prison,' a rigid procedure; thus, there are moments of 'actantial coagulation,' where the discourse seems to be a space full of constrictive channelings that prevent alternative paths; others of fluidification, where one realizes that there's room for play, for a free conditional 'navigation.' A text has its own ecology as a habitable semiotic space; in transparency, the text gives us a glimpse of semiotic antidotes at play against any prison project. But where can we find a form of textuality capable of inscribing the prisoner's history in the spaces of a prison? The exhibition *Prison* also attempts to answer this question. As you leave the orange room, you enter a much larger room, full of niches offering stops around photos, objects, or artifacts made by the prisoners. The orange bars and metal grids act at the same time as perceptual supports and filters. Visitors glimpse a depth but pass, almost by chance, through a testimony, a personality. Once again, the exhibition seeks a way to translate a rather peculiar experience: to promote mutual recognition, to attribute a singular biography despite the bodies crammed together in a crowded space, promiscuity immediately denounced by a visible picture, just out of the orange room (excerpt 2).

5. Conclusion: Translating and inoculating the traces of confinement in the museum

Are the testimonies or even the artworks we find in the exhibition *Prison* individual translations of the detention institutionally imposed on people supposed to have committed crimes? Or are they translations of prison life to make it interpretable outside in a new institutional space, the museum? Prison walls are the negation of any dialectic. Yet, we cannot avoid bilateral implications ('We're the ones who punish'

Figure 6. *Four in a Cell* [Quatre en cellule], painting by Didier Chamizo, 2018

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can only bring into paradigmatic resonance the phrase 'We're the ones responsible for the crimes,' and thus associate *crimes* and *punishments*[15]). Translation is a constitutive critique of the compartments of meaning, showing our institutions, with their founding and operational discourses, as 'museums' of translative debts.[16] Performatives in front of a foreign speaker are both in a state of failure and a state of grace because there are no real linguistic walls once the art of translation is accepted in its protention towards listening to otherness (a power to be reformulated is no longer a unilateral power). The whole culture is a system of symbolic debts. Still, translation has belatedly been recognized as the restorative process, the instance of patching up languages and semiotic systems in their constant deprivation in the face of an unassimilable otherness but, at the same time, a treasure trove of *alternatives of being*.

The walls, the uniform, the attempt to make the days conform to standards, nothing manages to block the translating drama, the tragedy of the crimes committed, and the punishments suffered. The interpellation of a *semioethics* - to use the term promoted by Susan Petrilli - resonates everywhere as a *speech addressed* and *possible transference*. The idea of thinking of translation as a 'semiotic tunnel' that remains open once excavated, as a 'bilateral transference'[17] that allows us to escape from cultures whose common destiny is incompleteness without the contribution of otherness, is the most appropriate way to live in a world 'without walls' and with non-self-referential institutions. These must be able to present themselves as true agencies of conversion of values that help us weigh up collective choices without closed doors. In the pages of James Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, the same one where Peirce wrote almost 200 entries, Lady Victoria Welby gives us a definition of 'translation':

> the transference of a given line of argument from one sphere to another, using one set of facts to describe another set, e.g., an essay in physics or physiology, maybe experimentally 'translated' into aesthetics or ethics, a statement of biology into economics. (Welby 1902: 712)

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[15] *On Crimes and Punishment* is Cesare Beccaria's famous work published in 1764, a founding text of modern prison policy.

[16] In a visit to Geneva on June 21, 2019, a guide presented this exhibition as a 'home' exhibition that focuses on prisons 'from home,' as opposed to other collectives ('you' / 'them') that remain implicit. The organization of the exhibition and the setting of the discourse on prisons are realized through positioning in an international space, where a co-reference of European member countries is established on a global scale. Also, the idea of a 'home' exhibition would translate the reception of visitors in a particular space (a distinction with other museums) with which the guide maintains an almost metonymic link in terms of actorial identity: she positions herself as a discursive instance that inhabits the 'home' (the country) where the exhibition is presented.

[17] The feeling of equivalence between the source and target text is achieved through the gradual familiarization of a transference (Basso Fossali, 2020). In translation, there would be a kind of discursive experience (a re-entry of experience into the realm of discourse), a type of deterritorialization of discourse, an appreciation of a foundation of meaning that interconnects a produced text (the original) and a text in perspective, in projection (the target). The Italian neologism transferenza was conceived from the English word transference, in particular as a transfer still in evaluation; that is, translation pass the baton to activate a phase of transition and reciprocal distancing, to operate a progressive modal transfer (a transfer of authority, of legitimation, etc.) and possibly reversible (counter-transference).

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As Susan Petrilli (2013: 132) has shown, this conceptual extension of translation has been available for a long time, with a beneficial reversal of the common view that interpretation is one form of the larger class of translations. It is a translation that shows us that interpretation always needs to interconnect different spaces, that we need to construct passages and assure bilateral 'transferences.' Without a translator's reworking, the open 'tunnel' remains in darkness, leaving on either side interpretations that are already irrelevant to the present and deaf to promises and agreements to fit in better and differently. If we can distinguish passages by interpreters from interpretation as the practical finalization of a meaning to be patrimonialized, the same applies to the distinction between a *transference* that shows the internal heterogeneity of semiosis and *translation* as an institutionalized practice.

The translation is textualized, but not the translation experience, and the transference needs, for example, a bilingual edition with the facing text of the original to reproduce itself and to become an enacted experience, even if imperfect, of a *fading in* and a *fading out*, a kind of crossfading between the source text and the target text. The temporary rightness of translation is a reciprocal familiarization of conversions of meaning, which sometimes explores and reveals the languages' potentialities and discourses involved in the translation process. This familiarized transference then becomes a 'link,' a reciprocal 'commitment' between languages, between discourses, a shared semantic holding, even though we know well that the aging of two texts is rarely symmetrical.

Language is an institution whose foundation no one can claim. Arbitrariness and local semiosis seem to pose themselves as immediate antidotes to any form of initial prejudice against the speaking subject's communicative intentionality. However, language is the only institution that cannot claim to be a third party or impartial. The translation takes up this modest vocation of the language and its ideological promiscuity. There was no third meaning, metalinguistic or mental content devoid of linguistic manifestation, to guarantee the accuracy of a translating equivalence: no judge validates the translation. But then, once the weight of intentionality has been reduced on the open negotiation of linguistic meaning (the confrontation between reasons for hearing and for wanting), translation also becomes a revealing activity, and the wager of transposition can be transformed into dialogue under the banner of hospitality.

The third party is the translator himself, so he should play an ethical role. But what are his/her instruments of impartial mediation, if there is not a linguistic third party that can be a *Thirdness* in relation to other third parties? One prepares a *salto mortale* – a somersault, according to Jean-René Ladmiral (2005) – by bathing again in the sea of iconicity (Firstness as a negotiating environment between languages). The risk of analogies solely at the level of the signifier is obvious. Therefore, this bath must reproduce the necessity of the difference between the languages listened to simultaneously.

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Intercultural translation inherits this 'reconstructive' humility. By comparing foreign semiotic configurations that nevertheless seek to dialogue, the absence of a third-party text, of a translation manual as a touchstone pushes the translators to finally seek "equivalence without identity," under a "regime of correspondences without adequacy" (Ricœur 2004: 49).

We discover our language through the translational resistances of (or to) the foreign language. To entrust our idiom to translation means having "the ambition to deprovincialize the mother language" (Ricœur 2004: 17). Ricœur's observation is quite remarkable.

Without a guardian metalanguage, mediations in translation bend in search of themselves among themselves. The problem is not to say the same thing; one could say that it is already opening up the hiatus between *sameness* and *selfhood* (Ricœur 1992: 32), but it is already too much and too little at the same time. There is no recursivity of mediations; there are mediations that are confronted with the fact that they prove to be unsubstitutable by substituting themselves. They are found – they find themselves – in translation (*found in translation*).

In 'economic' equivalence, there is the 'spectral' emergence of what remains,[18] of the irreducible mediator, of what cannot be exchanged. It is a form of locating in translation, in comparison. Baudrillard, in his book *Impossible exchange,* thus refers to the notion of *love* in Lacan's work; the argumentative link is subtle but precious: "Love is giving what one does not have; namely that one is" (Baudrillard 2001: 123). The being that one offers emerges only through the symbolic exchanges that love foresees. Still, in the resistance to the exchange, a spectral, unmanageable gift appears a negative inherence that can guarantee neither a discursive continuation nor a monitoring. In translation, one finds the same thing: one works with an unchangeable original version, which is not available to take root in another language, but which can only be given as such: there is not a meaning to transpose, one has a meaning that can be germinated elsewhere.

Yet this vision still risks presenting an ontology, unshareable, predetermined. At the same time, the *transference* reveals that this being is not an identity of meaning, but a generative pivot, a floating buoy in the sea of meaning discovered through its versions in other waters, in other semiotic seas.

The signal buoy must travel, deprovincialize itself in other seas to finally be repatriated to the original language culture. Translation teaches that heritage is constructed through exile, which alone can guarantee the value of repatriation (homeland and heritage refer to *pater*, *patrius*, therefore paternal, but the translation shows the asphyxiation of a cultural genealogy without breaking roots).

[18] On the notion of 'specter,' see Derrida (1994), Basso Fossali (2017: 535-556).

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At the end of his last book in Italian, *Cercare la strada* (Looking for the road), Lotman describes knowledge as if it were under the spell of a hopeless dream: "the idea hastily joins itself" to complete the self-descriptive loop (Lotman 1994: 106). On the other hand, culture is full of asynchronism, staggered processes, slowdowns, and moments of high acceleration, caused by the reception of an external element that fills an empty interstice in the host culture. Multilingual dialogue is based on social systems' dynamism, and the importation/translation has explosive effects, with repercussions on the future and memory (*ibid.*: 38). For Lotman, translation is the real catalyst that shows the impact of extra semiotic space on the cultural object (Lotman 1985: p. 60). Paradoxically, it is on the periphery of a culture where self-descriptions are rarer, that we find an acceleration of change (*ibid.*: 64). At the periphery, semiotic formations are more fragmentary, and foreign fragments function – says Lotman explicitly – as 'catalysts' (Basso Fossali 2016). Lotman's pre-eminent question then becomes: "What are the conditions and situations that explain why a foreign text becomes necessary?" (*ibid.*: 116). These conditions are not the search for significant stability, but rather the increase of internal indeterminacy (*ibid.*: 128). We leave it to the reader to judge whether prison can be a cultural otherness that belongs to us, and that shows we can only continue to translate even what we would like to part with. One last thing: the prison teaches us that if we translate the semiotic spaces of culture, we discover, in the translation itself, that the right to mutual *alterity* does not allow for either *alteration* of what is in the other field or absence of involvement in the fate of the latter.

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