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Between São Paulo and Stuttgart: Multilingualism, Translation, and Interculturality in Haroldo de Campos's and Vilém Flusser's Work

There are no border-lines. Two phenomena that could be separated by a line do not exist. [...] Let us hope that the drawing of borders will finally be blurred. [...] There are no white and black people, no pure cultures and no pure disciplines.¹

– Vilém Flusser, *Zwiesgespräche*, 1996

The changes in the way we experience the world today, correspond to the fact that in our poems, ideograms, visible-texts, constellations these configurations behave quite effortlessly in a polyglot way.²

– Eugen Gomringer, "Die konkrete poesie als übernationale sprache," 1988

In this chapter, I focus on a significant moment of the intense and prolific contact between the Noigandres Group around Haroldo de Campos and Décio Pignatari and the Stuttgart School of Max Bense and Reinhard Döhl. In this multifaceted and multilingual milieu, texts were exchanged and translated from Portuguese into German and vice versa. Bense traveled several times to São Paulo and De Campos to Stuttgart. Attempts at intercultural exchange on all levels including literature, architecture, and the arts were undertaken. In this specific context, Czech-Brazilian bicontinental philosopher and writer Vilém Flusser translated the third and fourth fragments of Haroldo de Campos's multilingual poem *Galáxias* from Portuguese into German. In March 1966, the translation was published in Stuttgart by Max Bense and Elisabeth Walther-Bense as text 25 of the series *rot*, with a short introduction by De Campos himself.

De Campos's third fragment considers, above all, the process of multilingual writing and the status of the plurilingual text, that is, the relationship of the different (writing) languages to each other. In his view, languages are not separated by clear-cut borders but meet, overlap, and merge with each other on different levels. To express this particular point of view he makes use of a very apt metaphor: the protean, ever-moving sea. De Campos's fragment tells the story of a sea crossing without mentioning departure or arrival. In his text, there are no coastlines to speak of but only the open-ended trip across the water. Both Flusser and

1 Vilém Flusser, *Zwiesgespräche. Interviews 1967–1991* (Göttingen: European Photography, 1996), 97.

2 Eugen Gomringer, "die konkrete poesie als übernationale sprache," in *zur sache der konkreten poesie I*. Ed. Eugen Gomringer (Sankt Gallen: Erker, 1988), 51.

De Campos view translation processes as (re)creative acts. Furthermore, this specific translational move takes place in a multilingual context, which in turn is embedded in a complex, multilayered mesh of intertextual allusions: constellations within constellations.

I first concentrate briefly on some aspects of the intricate transatlantic net of personal relationships that made this translation possible. I then have a closer look at Flusser's translation of the third fragment of De Campos's *Galáxias* – the only literary translation Flusser ever produced – and focus on Haroldo de Campos's and Vilém Flusser's translation theories and the way they influenced their collaboration. Furthermore, I point to the possible relevance of De Campos's experimental text, Flusser's congenial recreation, and their common innovative practice of translation – especially in view of the prevailing paradigm of equivalence, asking for absolute faithfulness to the original – for a possible reevaluation of intercultural exchanges. In fact, the suggestions contained in their literary and linguistic approach might be used as an interpretive model for intercultural relationships.

Transatlantic constellations: cooperation across cultures

Haroldo De Campos and Max Bense got to know each other personally in July 1959, while De Campos was on a trip through Europe. Max Bense had already met Décio Pignatari at Eugen Gomringer's in 1955. Gomringer had awakened Bense's interest in 1953 with the publication of his *Konstellationen* (Constellations). Two years later Bense published in the second issue of the newly founded magazine *Augenblick* Gomringer's manifesto of Concrete Poetry: *vom Vers zur Konstellation* (from verse to constellation).³

The constellation metaphor with its cosmic implications stands for an open-ended, shifting, netlike structure. It is not only a very apt comment on the dynamic network of personal collaborations and friendships linking the different artists and writers across continents and languages for more than three decades – and a very fitting metaphor for intercultural exchanges – but also a recurrent image in both Flusser's and de Campos's work. Gomringer envisaged Concrete Poetry as a transnational polyglot language. In the universe of Concrete Poetry, texts do not follow a strict linear order from left to right and top to bottom but

3 Eugen Gomringer, "vom vers zur konstellation. zweck und form einer neuen dichtung," in *eugen gomringer worte sind schatten, die konstellationen 1951–1968*. Ed. Eugen Gomringer (Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt 1969), 277–288, and "die konkrete poesie als übernationale sprache," in *zur sache der konkreten poesie I*. Ed. Eugen Gomringer (Sankt Gallen: erker, 1988), 9–11.

are multilingual word constellations on the white surface of the page. De Campos's *Galáxias* is no exception to this rule.

In a letter of 5 March 1989 written to Hans-Joachim Lenger, Flusser comments on the term *constellation* and some of its implications for his own work:

Language, politics and Jews: this constellation (in Antiquity one would have said "con-sideration" instead) is a downright challenge for people like me. Perhaps you know that I write everything in five languages [...] and that I do not make any difference between translation and reflection (that is, "con-sideration").⁴

Flusser plays here with the presence of a similar concept within the word in *consideration* – *sidera* from the Latin *sidus*, "orb or celestial body" – and the word *constellation* – from Latin *stella*, "star" – using them subsequently as metaphors for translation and reflection. To translate and to think imply the creation of a flexible three-dimensional stellar configuration analogous to the structure of a crystal in which a set of concepts and languages creatively interact with each other. This specific conception can also be found in Flusser's philosophical essays: From the linear structure of the single lines emerge netlike clusters of concepts. Below the monolingual surface of the finished texts, multilingual meanings carried over from the plural processes of self-translation still reverberate.⁵

An intense series of two-way transatlantic exchanges followed the first encounters in the late 1950s. In February 1961, Bense held a series of lectures on his aesthetic theory, meeting different Brazilian artists and writers. Bense organized a series of exhibitions of works by Brazilian artists in the 1960s and 1970s. In February 1962, text 7 of the series *rot*, dedicated exclusively to the Noigandres Group, was published. De Campos, in turn, translated works by Bense and published reviews of Bense's texts in Brazilian newspapers.

Within the transcontinental constellation of Concrete Poetry, the work of Mira Schendel, to whom Flusser dedicated an essay in his autobiography *Bodenlos*,⁶ played an important role. In January 1967 Max Bense organized in the Studiengalerie der Technischen Hochschule of Stuttgart a first exhibition of her drawings. In February 1975, a second followed. In his essay *Indagações sobre a origem da língua*, published on 29 April 1967, Flusser explores the ambivalent

4 Vilém Flusser, *Jude sein. Essays, Briefe, Fiktionen* (Mannheim: Bollmann Verlag, 1995), 136 (my translation).

5 Rainer Guldin, "Translation, Self-Translation, Retranslation: Exploring Vilém Flusser's Multilingual Writing Practice," in *Das Spiel mit der Übersetzung. Figuren der Mehrsprachigkeit im Werk Vilém Flussers*. Ed. Rainer Guldin (Tübingen: Francke, 2004).

6 Vilém Flusser, *Bodenlos. Eine philosophische Autobiographie* (Düsseldorf und Bensheim: Bollmann Verlag, 1992), 197–206.

nature of Schendel's graphic work, ingeniously suspended halfway between picture and text, the same way Concrete Poetry was. Breaking away from the line structure and the verse as a rhythmic and formal unit, Concrete Poetry aimed at a redefinition of the page as a graphic space. In Schendel's work, there is a similar dialectics to be discovered, a violent tension toward articulation,

an explosive intention. [...] If I could capture the moment of the explosion, that fugitive moment, in which I am not language yet but not inarticulated any more, [...] this critical moment between the chaotic other and the subject that is structured by symbols, I would have captured the origin of language. [...] There is a turmoil of lines, dots, curves and figures that desperately ask for permission to leave the limbo of virtuality to be admitted to the reluctant reign of reality: language.⁷

Haroldo de Campos and Vilém Flusser got to know each other in the early 1960s. Because of personal and aesthetic disagreements, however, this did not lead to any further collaboration or lasting friendship. It was Haroldo de Campos himself who suggested Flusser and Rosenfeld as translators of his first fragments from *Galáxias*. Because Bense already knew Flusser from some publications, he accepted De Campos's proposal.

Translating multilingual texts

In his autobiography *Bodentlos*, Flusser dedicated a chapter to his short-lived and unfortunate friendship with Haroldo de Campos and his attempt to translate two fragments of *Galáxias*, focusing on the main reasons for their intellectual and aesthetic differences. In Haroldo de Campos's work, argues Flusser, everything revolves around the unresolved dialectics of intent and chance, ultimately thwarted by the impossibility of harmonizing political stance and creative activity. For Flusser, any form of politically committed art, as De Campos envisaged it, was out of the question. To illustrate this difference in detail I would like to quote a lengthy passage from Flusser's essay, offering a starting point both for the workings of De Campos's multilingual writing practice and for Flusser's own translating strategies. When De Campos

was invited by Max Bense to publish a part of his *Galáxias* in the book series *rot*, published in Stuttgart, he asked me to translate two paragraphs of this work into German. This project made it possible for me to delve into his work and to actively perform within its borders.

⁷ Vilém Flusser, "Indagações sobre a origem da língua," in *O Estado de São Paulo. Suplemento Literário*, São Paulo, 29 April 1967 (my translation).

Through this, however, the conflict dominating Campos's poetic endeavor became my own concern and thus fully apparent. *Galáxias* consists of a series of variations of a few topics defined by specifically selected words such as *book* or *journey*. These words are modified on three levels: As sounds, they are made to resonate in different ways, as visible forms they are transformed by anagrammatic play, and as significant units of meaning, they are transmuted into a fan of possible connotations. In this way, a grammatically unstructured discourse, an uninterrupted stream of words from different languages and neologisms, is generated, suggestive of the free play of association and stream of consciousness but with a difference: Strict observance of the initially set topic is mandatory. *Galáxias* is composed of circular streams of words, with each of them returning to its original meaning. In this way, the whole text becomes a circular system around which other discourses revolve like satellites. (Hence the title *Galáxias*.) In a certain way, these discourses revolve within the universe of the Portuguese language acting as a foundation, but they keep piercing through this foundation, expanding into other languages and beyond all languages. It could be described as a pulsation during which some new "star-words" condense in certain places, while in others Portuguese words evaporate to become cosmic dust-clouds. The problem does not become apparent when new thematic words are chosen. This is the result of a deliberate choice based on chance. The contradiction between intention and chance, between *dé* and *hasard*, is the very point of departure of the whole work. In this sense, Campos is responding to Mallarmé, and this is not problematic in itself. But then something happens: The word suggested as a subject matter generates a spontaneous stream of variations on all levels, moving in unpredictable directions and developing intensities that threaten to get out of hand. Instead of surrendering to this stream, Campos deliberately intervenes to realign it, with his own political convictions pushing it on from there. The result for the reader is a feeling of unease. If Campos wants to convey an intentional message, the spontaneous flow of variation is not the proper method, and if he attempts a concrete experiment with the Portuguese language, his deliberate interferences distort the results. You cannot eat the cake and have it at the same time. While I was undertaking the translation of two circular discourses of *Galáxias*, this negative dialectics became painfully manifest. One chose a German equivalent for one of Campos's thematic Portuguese terms, and a spontaneous stream of variations arose. This stream was so powerful that it became immediately clear that it had to be curbed. By doing this one realized that "curbing" did not imply changing direction or pushing on but restraining. One had to deal with intuition economically. [...] As I was doing this, the passages where Campos had interfered with the stream became noticeable. The result was the opposite of what Campos had intended. The ideological message looked contrived and therefore sounded phony. The repeated jolts Campos imparted to the stream gave an impression of weakness, not strength. But this had an impact on one's own spontaneity during the process of translation.⁸

In this passage Flusser is referring to Stéphane Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de dés*, which influenced not only Concrete Poetry but also the later conception of the hypertext, with its deliberate use of blank space and careful placement of single

⁸ Vilém Flusser, *Bodentlos. Eine philosophische Autobiographie* (Düsseldorf und Bensheim: Bollmann Verlag, 1992), 151–152 (my translation).

words or word strings on the white surface of the page, allowing multiple non-linear readings of the text. As we shall see, Mallarmé is also an important reference figure indirectly evoked by De Campos in the third fragment. According to Flusser, three major aspects have played a role in De Campos's associative multilingual writing strategy: sound variation, anagrammatical reordering of letters, and creation of secondary meanings. These three aspects, along with the problem signaled by Flusser, would have to be taken into account in comparing the original Portuguese version with its German counterpart.

Galaxias is a book without beginning or end, consisting of 50 single pages without numbering. On each page one stable component has been placed, a word or a concept, around which other more ephemeral and unstable linguistic elements are freely floating. De Campos calls these interchangeable key terms running throughout the text "semantic vertebrae." The linear structure has been consistently and successfully disarranged and the page turned into an open field on which distinct elements are called to interact like points, lines, and geometric figures on a canvas, the way they do in Mira Schendel's paintings. The jagged right margins enhance the idea that each page represents a constellation of its own. The complete absence of punctuation marks and capital letters creates an endless phrase revolving around itself, a flux of signs flowing uninterrupted across the page, as a galactic expansion. Each page, by itself, is an autonomous body, interchangeable with any other page. The image of ever-expanding galaxies has both visual and musical connotations. De Campos works with neologisms, citations, multilingual puns, and heterogeneous juxtapositions and makes frequent use of different languages, very often at the outset of a new page. This is also the case for the third fragment translated by Flusser, which I would like to examine more closely. German, Latin, Greek, Italian, English, French, and Spanish words or sentences are interspersed in the text, sometimes to set a specific geographic or cultural context or to gesture toward a metalinguistic dimension. This creates an all-encompassing web of quotations, including a variety of linguistic registers ranging from everyday language to citations from classical literature. This multilingual metalanguage abolishes all borders between languages and within languages themselves.

Flusser stresses Haroldo de Campos's attempt at combining information theory and ideogrammatic writing, as well as his interest in the study of oriental languages and the work of Marshall McLuhan, whom he met in the United States in 1967.⁹ In the same text Flusser also argues that De Campos broke up the Gu-

tenberg Galaxy – the play on words is intentional here – by introducing nonlinearity in his writing, using oriental ideograms as a model. De Campos was inspired by the presence of the numerous Japanese immigrants in Brazil and the work of Ezra Pound and Ernest Fenollosa, whose influence on the poet are well documented.¹⁰

Text 25 of the editorial series *rot* contains four fragments from Haroldo de Campos's *Galáxias*. Anatol Rosenfeld translated the first and the sixteenth fragments, which Campos completed on 18 November 1963 and on 3 March 1965, respectively. Flusser translated the third and the fourth, finished on 19 November 1963 and on 24 July 1964. The four fragments were the first parts of *Galáxias* to be actually translated. Apart from the fact that these parts were already finished at the time, there must have been other reasons for them being chosen for translation. These reasons can no longer be reconstructed at this point but only guessed at.

In an afterword to the first edition of the complete text of *Galáxias*, written in May 1983, nearly 20 years after the completion of the first fragment, Haroldo de Campos mentioned that some fragments had been translated in the past: "Fragments of *Galáxias* were translated (I prefer to call it 'transcreated') in German, French, Spanish, and English, nearly always with a revision by the author."¹¹ This means that De Campos must have at least examined, if not reviewed and edited, Flusser's translation. Of central importance in this context is also De Campos's use of the concept of *transcriação*, implying re-creation of a poem from the phonetic, morphologic, and semantic conditions of the target language. Did Flusser succeed in transposing the triple creative principle of De Campos's aesthetics into German? And how did he manage to solve the enormous semantic and phonetic difficulties that a translation of such a complex writing strategy entails?

I chose to concentrate on the third fragment, – "multitudinous seas," – because its themes, as I already pointed out, are directly linked to De Campos's conception of language and textual multilingualism. Apart from this, it contains a group of interlinked quotations from four other languages: English, French, Greek, and Latin. Key terms of the third fragment are the sea, the journey, and the book. The (blank page of the) book is like the surface of the sea, and writing is compared to a trip on the ever-moving ocean of intermingling languages. Plurilingualism is not dealt with explicitly but rendered in the comings and goings,

¹⁰ Haroldo De Campos, ed., *Ideograma: Lógica, Poesia, Linguagem* (São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2000).

¹¹ Haroldo De Campos, *Galáxias* (São Paulo: editora34, 2004) (my translation).

⁹ Vilém Flusser, *Bodenlos. Eine philosophische Autobiographie* (Düsseldorf und Bensheim: Boli-mann Verlag, 1992), 156.

the ups and downs of the ocean. Indirectly, the third fragment is also a reflection on the multilingual writing practice and the status of a plurilingual text and the relationship of the different languages to each other.

“Multitudinous seas”: the overlapping and merging of languages and cultures

In this context Alfons Knauth's remarks on a polyglot poetics are particularly revealing. Knauth mentions in his essay *poethik polyglott*, in which he draws a tentative open-ended typology of multilingual texts what he calls the “nautical model.”

The sea is, so to speak, the syntagmatic axis of the Babel paradigm. It separates the languages and unites them at the same time. [...] From a genetic point of view, the sea precedes the mythical construction of the Tower of Babel: It brought about multilingualism and strengthened it. [...] In this way, [...] the internal and external linguistic polyglotism came into being. [...] On one hand, the sea establishes a real contact between the different languages, on the other it embodies a metaphorical analogy for languages [and their relation to each other]: its many-voiced sound is an expression of multilingualism, [...] and its continuous movement an expression of the constant merging or mixing of languages.¹²

Interestingly enough, this – basically linguistic – conception can also be found in Ian Chambers's recently published historical and cultural reflection on the Mediterranean. Chambers translates Knauth's vision of a multilingual sea into a concrete sociohistorical context. The metaphor he makes use of, however, is fundamentally the same. Chambers introduces the notions of diversity and multilateral exchange and reinterprets translational exchanges in an intercultural sense. He stresses both the heterogeneity and unity of the Mediterranean, but this model could ultimately be applied to any form of cross-cultural contact and exchange, highlighting its contradictory nature. By defining the Mediterranean as a closed, circumscribed space, a “complex echo chamber” in which multiple fluxes bounce and rebound, “transforming and transmuting each other,”¹³ he interprets the classical vision of unity against its grain. The very metaphor of unity, the sea shaping the coastlines, is here reinterpreted in a plural, polyglot

sense. Chambers speaks of the “open, creolized complexity”¹⁴ and “the polylinguistic and polycultural composition of a hybrid,”¹⁵ “multiple and mutable Mediterranean.”¹⁶ “The seeming solidity of the lands, languages, and lineages that border and extend outward from its shores here become an accessory of its fluid centrality.”¹⁷ In this ever-shifting liquid world the foreign is already contained within the familiar, the same way the foreign quotations are in De Campos's text. Chambers speaks of Arab elements to be discovered in the very heart of Christianity, as, for instance, in

the Arab letters on Christ's cloak in Giotto's Crocifissione. [...] In this doubling and displacement, the very closure sought by cultural monotheism [...] is sundered and dispersed. The image and what it narrates, is no longer possessed by a single mode of telling. History, the Mediterranean, returns, rewriting and recounting the narrative, freeing it, from the fixed moorings of a unilateral meaning, allowing it to drift into their accounts.¹⁸

It is all about a “floating semantics.”¹⁹ In this metaphorical context borders are successfully blurred. Currents mix and mingle on different levels and in manifold ways:

The tributary histories that flow into the “modern” [...] Mediterranean, also suggest deeper and more dispersive currents. Rather than [...] a logic of barriers to be breached and differences to be bridged [...] overlapping territories and intertwined histories suggest a less rigid, more open comprehension of the making of a multiple Mediterranean.²⁰

Multiplicity and liquidity complement each other. “[B]orders are porous, particularly so in the liquid materiality of the Mediterranean [...] borders are both transitory and zones of transit. They repeatedly draw our attention to the labor of

14 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 55.

15 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 32.

16 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 9.

17 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 2–4.

18 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 131–132.

19 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 79.

20 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 2–5.

12 Alfons H. Knauth, “poethik polyglott,” *Dichtungsring* 20 (1991), 61 (my translation).

13 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 48.

translation."²¹ These metaphors of fluidity and liquidity articulate another history and another space. Chambers speaks of the dangers of a solid, solidified sea: "the solidifying of the Mediterranean transform[s] a site of transit into a mounting barrier."²² "The Mediterranean [...] continually 'betrays' all attempts to freeze its composite components into a homogeneous image." This view of "the sea, as the site of multiple mediations and memories [...] delivers us over to a fluid geography that [...] challenges the very being and becoming European and modern." This fluid geography allows us to discover new connections, an "unexpected cartography" that disrupts "the rigid grids of national geographers."²³ The Mediterranean itself becomes this way a complex metaphor for translation processes and intercultural exchanges:

The sea itself, [is] not so much [...] a frontier or barrier between the North and the South, or the East and the West, as an intricate site of encounters and currents [animated by] the continual sense of historical transformation and cultural translation which makes it a site of perpetual transit.²⁴

Besides the idea of ever-moving and constantly recombining currents, Chambers introduces another spatial metaphor, very much akin to the metaphor of the constellation, to articulate the mutable transitoriness and complex heterogeneity of the sea: the archipelago. In an archipelago the single cultural elements are bound together in a fragmented network of interlinked points, "an unfamiliar constellation"²⁵ without any rigid inner and outer boundaries or any clear-cut hierarchical orientations. The idea of the archipelago is furthermore connected in the book to the intricate pattern of the arabesque, whose cultural origin is highly significant in a Mediterranean context. This "inconclusive figuration"²⁶ recalls Deleuze's concept of the baroque fold, which brings together that which a linear

21 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 5.

22 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 68.

23 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 131.

24 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 32.

25 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 133.

26 Ian Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 18.

Eurocentric vision of history would like to hold apart.²⁷ From this intercultural point of view, De Campos's multilingual fragment assumes a completely new meaning. An aspect that would be worth pursuing is the relationship of the notions of hierarchy, linearity, and border, which both de Campos and Flusser view as a highly problematic theoretical construction.²⁸

Multilingualism and intertextuality

Besides thematizing the plurilingual text in the metaphor of the sea and containing five short interconnected passages in four different languages, the third fragment also introduces six foreign authors and one composer, thematically linked to each other and the main subject: Shakespeare, Homer, Ovid, James Joyce, Pierre Boulez, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Ezra Pound. In *Galáxias* multilingualism is always also an eminently intertextual phenomenon. The fragment begins with a quotation from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (Act 2, Scene 2, 59): "multitudinous seas incarnadine." Macbeth looks at his bloodstained hands and comes to recognize that his guilt can never be washed off, not even by the vast sea. Even Neptune's green immense ocean would end up by being stained by it. "This celebration of the sea-book," writes De Campos, "begins with a verse by Shakespeare, [...] referring to the multitudinous sea that changes from green into red-blood, favorite verse of Ezra Pound and also Borges."²⁹ The initial image of the tainted surface of the ocean, possibly a metaphor for the multilingual text (a sea of Portuguese words dotted by the stains of other languages floating on its surface and dissolving into it) is taken up later on by the image of the sea as the speckled fur of a panther. *Incarnadine* means "pink" and is used as a verb.

The second Greek quotation also thematizes the many colors of the sea as a metaphor of the multilingual text: "Óinopa pónton cor de vinho" (the color of wine) comes from Homer's *Odyssey* and is also used in Joyce's *Ulysses*. In the first chapter of the book Mulligan describes the sea as "snotgreen." The third short Latin quote, "iris nuntia junonis," can be found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (I, 270–271). The full text reads as follows: "Nuntia Junonis varios induta col-

27 Gilles Deleuze, *Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

28 Rainer Guldin, "Ineinandergreifende graue Zonen. Vilém Flussers Bestimmung der Grenze als Ort der Begegnung," in *Topographien der Grenze. Verortungen einer kulturellen, politischen und ästhetischen Kategorie*. Ed. Christoph Kleinschmidt and Christine Hewel (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011a), 39–48.

29 Haroldo De Campos, *Galáxias* (São Paulo: editora34, 2004), 119 (my translation).

ores / Concipit Iris aquas" (Iris, the messenger of Juno, clad in robes of many hues, draws water from the ocean). Iris is the iridescent wind, constantly changing its plumage, feeding water to the clouds – another image of fluid, dissolving borders. The fourth quotation, "pli selon pli" (fold by fold), is a piece of classical music for soprano and orchestra by French composer Pierre Boulez, who worked on it from 1957 to 1962, a piece of work in progress very much like De Campos's *Galáxias*. The composition is in five movements, each based on a poem by Stéphane Mallarmé. The title itself is taken from another poem, *Remémoration d'amis belges*, not used in the piece: "Que se dévêt pli selon pli la pierre veuve" (That fold by fold the widowed stone unrobes itself). Mallarmé describes how the mist covering the city of Bruges gradually dissolves. In the same way through the five movements, a portrait of Mallarmé is slowly revealed. This quotation refers also to the many-layered intertextual form of the multilingual text. Mallarmé, on the other hand is a key figure for the aesthetic conception of *Galáxias*. Flusser refers to Mallarmé's poem *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* in his discussion of the contradictory relationship of intention and chance in De Campos's work.

The last untranslatable Greek word of the fragment, "polúphloisbos," found in Homer's *Iliad* (1.34), onomatopoeically recalls the rolling of the waves and leads the reader back to the beginning of the fragment, the vision of the endlessly moving and transforming ocean. Ezra Pound uses the term to describe the onslaught of the tide onto the shoreline and its subsequent withdrawal.³⁰

All quotations are thematically linked to each other and to the main themes of the fragment. De Campos introduces both horizontal and vertical relations between the different passages – Joyce's *Ulysses* refers to the *Odyssey*, Pierre Boulez's piece of music builds on a textual layer by Mallarmé, and Pound is referring to the *Iliad* – echoing thus the syntagmatic and paradigmatic aspects of languages. The passages consistently stress open-endedness and manifold iridescence, characteristics of the sea but also of the multilingual text. How do these quotations from other languages interact with the Portuguese text? They are not just juxtaposed to the main text and do not behave as a foreign body within the dominant language universe but entertain with each other and the Portuguese text a series of complex and flexible relationships that ultimately question any kind of clear-cut linguistic delimitation. In this way, the content is once more integrated into the formal setting. De Campos's description of the sea is at the same time a metaphorical representation of the relationship of the single languages to each

other. The fine web of intertextual quotations positioned next to each other and within one another mirrors and comments on the fluid relationship of the different languages.

The third fragment, as all others, has neither a clear beginning nor a definitive ending but can be considered as a segment cut out of a flowing, multilayered text-web. To accentuate this impression there are no page numbers, no punctuation, and everything has been written without capital letters. The length of the different verses keeps changing. De Campos uses, above all, enjambements to link one verse with another. In the short introduction to the German translation he describes his writing project, deconstructing the notions of linearity, hierarchy, and border.

envisage a book. of one hundred pages. or nearly. [...] the first and the last one firm. [...] the others detached and *interchangeable* [...] that is, *without beginning nor ending*. [...] the pages *reversible*. *replaceable*. *exchangeable*. the stream of signs. on each page a constant element: the journey or the book. or the travel book. or the book travel. [...] things as they drift past the eye and the ear. in thought. [...] fact and fiction, *without distinction*. that which is gone and that which might have been. that which is. external monologue. without psychology. things. people. visions. contexts. connections. *without origin/middle/end*. *without narration*.³¹

Even if within the fragment itself no clear-cut thematic divisions can be made out, as one thematic strand meshes with the other, a series of interlinked aspects, mixing with each other, are gradually introduced, leading to new linguistic permutations on the phonetical and morphological level. The first image of the speckled sea comes from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, from a fictional, textual second-hand world. A trip on a boat follows, a journey across a multilingual ocean. The bow of the ship – here De Campos introduces the (problematic) sexual metaphor of the sea as a female body to be plowed by a (male) writer. The blood dripping from Macbeth's hands and the violence it implies might be linked to the process of writing and the pulsating vulva of the sea that shimmers and gleams like a rainbow. De Campos compares the sea to the freckled skin of a panther and its unceasing surging and heaving to the orgasmic up and down of a voluptuously squirming (female?) body. About half way through the fragment a new element is introduced, a comparison with the book, whose countless pages and immeasurable contents echo the multifarious multiplicity of the sea. The fragment ends with a view of the stern of the ship, ripping the ocean apart. In the end, thus, the text circles back to the beginning, to the polymorphic, end-

³⁰ Haroldo De Campos, *Metalinguagem* (São Paulo: Vozes, 1976), 29, and *Galáxias* (São Paulo: editora34, 2004), 120.

³¹ Haroldo De Campos, *versuchsbuch galaxien* (Stuttgart: edition rot, 1966) (my translation, emphasis added).

lessly moving surface of the ocean. Thus, De Campos's third fragment is above all a reflection on the unfathomable complexity of a manifold linguistic reality that has neither beginning nor end and that can only be described in a tentative, metaphorical way. The ocean with its horizontal and vertical structure is an apt metaphor both for the workings of a multilingual text and for the inner complexity of single languages. Both juxtaposition and layering, the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic, are described in terms of liquidity.

In his translation, Flusser respected the overall form of the fragment: There is no punctuation, and the whole text is uncapitalized. Unlike in Portuguese, in German this has a very different significance and unquestionably strengthens the visual impact of the text as a flow of words. Flusser left the quotations from other languages in their original form. In a German context, however, these passages assume a very different phonetic and morphologic role. Paradoxically enough, faithfulness to the original leads here to transformation. Flusser changed the length of the single verses drastically, with no apparent reason, doubling the total length of the text and thus altering radically its outer form. The main problem with the Portuguese text with regard to translation is the extremely dense, inextricable web of alliterations, assonances, and internal rhymes. In many instances, Flusser came up with astonishingly imaginative solutions. Most of the time, he had to sacrifice the meaning of the Portuguese original, or at least part of it, to phonetics and morphology. With regard to De Campos's writing strategy based on the threefold variation of phonetics, morphology, and semantics, one could say that apart from single instances the first two levels of the Portuguese original, sounds and letters, have mostly found an adequate German counterpart. Overall meaning has been reproduced in the translation, but many details have been lost or substituted with new ones. Some words or word groups have been omitted, others slightly altered, and sometimes the German words have generated their own fields of variation: Flusser definitely transposed the generative principle of the Portuguese text into his German translation, saving the most innovative aspect of De Campos's multilingual writing. Interestingly enough, many of Flusser's philosophical and essayistic texts also rely heavily on alliteration, assonance, and wordplay.³² Concrete Poetry and probably also the translation of the two fragments from *Galáxias* must have left an imprint on Flusser's style.

In some instances, Flusser developed implicit metaphorical aspects of the source text: At the beginning of the fragment he describes the bow of the ship

ripping the ocean apart in terms of a plow dividing its surface, which has now become a field to be cultivated. In other instances, he has added new imagery, mostly prompted by the generative rule of alliteration and assonance. He calls the ocean a "garstige gargantuasee," literally the "foul gargantuan sea," adding a further, thematically appropriate intertextual connection to the work of another multilingual poet, François Rabelais, who plays a major role in Mikhail Bakhtin's formulation of heteroglossia and dialogicity. Once again, multilingualism, intertextuality, and interculturality meet and merge in a comprehensive constellation. Flusser creates new internal rhymes – "gefälle/welle," "bröckelnden/bröseln" – and discovers homophonies that are possible only in German. He creates neologisms to condense single passages, such as "raubtiergepelzt," literally "predator-furred." However, there are also a few imprecision to be made out. In these instances solutions remaining closer to the original meaning would probably have been better. In the second half of the fragment, furthermore, one can detect a much greater freedom with regard to the original. This tendency grows even stronger toward the end of the text. Flusser's interventions increase drastically. The solutions he finds make sense in the context he has created, but in some cases they lead away from the meaning of the source text. Interestingly enough, this change in translation strategy corresponds to the point where De Campos introduces the new key term "book," that is, they begin at the very juncture where he consciously interferes with the phonetic flow of word associations. Flusser's change of attitude could be a conscious reaction to and implicit criticism of De Campos's intervention in favor of (political?) meaning.

The following significant examples illustrate the extremely fragile and volatile balance of the three interlinked linguistic levels. Flusser translates "mas a escuma mas a espuma mas a espumaescuma do mar" as "aber das schäumen aber das bäumen aber das schäumenbäumen der see." "Bäumen" – from "sich aufbäumen," (to rise up against) – is linked not only homophonically to "schäumen" (to foam, to froth) but also from the point of view of meaning. In other instances, Flusser extended the game of alliteration to whole passages. This way, "no verde várío no aquíário equóreo o verde flore" becomes "im gegliederten grün im geglasten gewässer das grüne gegrase." The Portuguese assonances based on "á" ("vário" and "aquário") and "ó" ("equóreo") have been substituted by the use of "ü" and "ä," whereas the alliterative "v" of the Portuguese text has been substituted by the letter "g," used six times instead of three. The last example shows how Flusser's translation toward the end turns more and more into a recreation dictated by the logic of the target language: "mas o mar reverte mas o mar verte" becomes "aber die see versieht aber die see versiert die verse diverse." The last three words have been added. They are a result of the previous alliter-

32 Rainer Guldin, "Writing Philosophy," in *A Filosofia da ficção de Vilém Flusser*. Ed. Gustavo Bernardo Krause (Rio de Janeiro: Annablume, 2011b), 387–406.

active use of the letters "d" and "v" substituting the letters "m" and "v" in the original.

Translation as recreation

Flusser's extremely creative dealings with the Portuguese original do not contradict De Campos's translation theory. This is probably one of the main reasons why he accepted the publication of the fragments. In fact, in an early essay about translation as a form of creation and criticism, *Da tradução como criação e como crítica*,³³ H. de Campos distinguishes three different forms of information. Whereas documentary and semantic information can be easily translated into other codes and different languages, aesthetic information withstands this process because of its very fragility, that is, because of the impossibility of separating form and content, which are inextricably intertwined. Poetry can be codified only in the way it has been transmitted by the author; in other words, aesthetic codification is always identical to its original codification. It is because of this fundamental untranslatability that aesthetic information can be recreated only by working out isomorphic poetic bodies in different languages. In this way the aesthetic information embedded in the two texts will still be distinct, but the two texts will belong to the same isomorphic system. Haroldo de Campos uses a metaphor to describe this process. The translation creates a sort of delicate crystalline twofold structure recalling the very fragility of the aesthetic information itself. The two texts "will be different as far as language is concerned, as isomorphic bodies, however, they will crystallize within the same system."³⁴ The translation of a poetic text is therefore always recreation, or parallel creation.

This specific conception of the actively creative role of translation processes complies with Flusser's own vision. Flusser did not translate any other poetic texts, apart from the two fragments of De Campos's *Galáxias*. In his own practice of self-translation and his general view of the workings of translation itself – not only when applied to essayistic and philosophic texts but also when considered as a universal principle of transformation and transposition between languages, cultures, and forms of discourse – translation operates as a means of discovering

³³ Haroldo De Campos, "Da tradução como criação e como crítica," in *Metalinguagem e Outras Metas: Ensaios de Teoria e Crítica Literária*. Ed. Haroldo De Campos (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1992), 31–48.

³⁴ Haroldo De Campos, "Da tradução como criação e como crítica," in *Metalinguagem e Outras Metas: Ensaios de Teoria e Crítica Literária*. Ed. Haroldo De Campos (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1992), 34 (my translation).

and deploying hitherto hidden facets of the original, thanks to the very moment of untranslatability.

As the previous considerations have shown, the transatlantic translational route from São Paulo to Stuttgart and back opens up manifold insights into Haroldo de Campos's and Vilém Flusser's work, revealing a series of theoretical, thematic, and stylistic convergences. Moreover, their collaboration sheds an interesting light on the possible relationship of the processes of multilingual writing and translating, the nature of the plurilingual text, and the functioning of intertextual and intercultural interactions in general. The metaphors discussed here – the constellation, the sea, the archipelago, the net, the crystal, the fold – suggest a fundamental conceptual consonance. They form a (meta)constellation of their own, stressing open-endedness, flowing boundaries, and dissolving hierarchies with a strong denial of any form of progressive linearity.

Furthermore, De Campos's and Flusser's (pluri)linguistic model and their dynamic view of translational processes as creative acts could be used to reinterpret intercultural dialogues. From the point of view examined here, cultures are not self-contained unities but constantly shifting, overlapping, and merging entities, without clear-cut borders. Cultures (and languages, for that matter³⁵) are not countable. They always already contain signs of other cultures. Contamination and mixing are inevitable: *KulturConfusão*. Finally, intercultural exchanges could be viewed as creative translational acts during which the foreign and the familiar are playfully reinvented.

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³⁵ See Robert Stockhammer, Susan Arndt, and Dirk Naguschewski, "Einleitung. Die Unselbstverständlichkeit der Sprache," in *Exophonie. Anders-Sprachigkeit (in) der Literatur*. Ed. Robert Stockhammer, Susan Arndt, and Dirk Naguschewski (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2007), 15.

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