Embodiment in Translation Studies: Different Perspectives

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Abstract & Keywords
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Adesso è forse il tempo della cura
(Mariangela Gualtieri, "Adesso")

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Over the past few decades, the human body has been much more present in sciences and humanities, sometimes there is even talk of a corporeal (or body) turn (see Alloa et al. 2019). The body's relevance is summed up fundamentally (but not exclusively) in the concept of Embodiment or Embodied Cognition. The core idea underlying these concepts is that the cognitive processes are deeply rooted in the body and in its interaction with the environment. As summed up by Farina (2021: 74): "[E]mbodied cognition theorists […] aim to explain the full range of perceptual, cognitive and motor capacities we possess as capacities that are constitutively dependent upon aspects of an agent's body."

Research on Embodied Cognition has been thriving in recent years. In this regard, Goldinger et al. (2016: 960) report quantitative data derived from a keyword search on Google Scholar using "Embodied Cognition": For the period 2000-2015, the search engine registered over 15.000 books and articles. Out of curiosity, we have extended the period until 2021, and the number of publications focussed on the key concept "Embodied Cognition" has risen to over 22.000 publications. The boom is still going on, evidently.

While Goldinger et al. (2016) start from this fact to give a rather critical reading of the Embodiment concept, we consider it a necessary and potentially insightful perspective not only for cognitive sciences but for several disciplines in the humanities, including in particular translation studies and translation didactics. On principle, we refer to Farina (2021) for a convincing response to Goldinger et al. as well as "to all those, an increasing minority in the sciences, that still belittle or trivialise the contribution of embodied cognition to our understanding of human cognitive behaviour" (Farina 2021: 73). As Tschacher and Bergomi note (2011: Vii), Embodiment can be seen as "a theory, a paradigm, a perspective, a methodology, or a scientific field", depending on the angle from which it is studied. Going beyond a neurobiological interpretation of cognition, "it rests in the much broader idea that the body – including behaviors and properties such as facial expression, movement, prosody, gesture, and posture – influence, and at the same time are influenced, by the mind" (Tschacher and Bergomi 2011: Vii). By emphasising the deep intertwinement of body and mind, this "growing research programm" (Farina 2021: 74) encompasses a wide range of approaches that try to move away from the computational model of the mind (the "computer metaphor") and the notion of cognition as solely information-processing.

It should also be emphazised that the issue of Embodiment is far from being new. It brings us back to the mind-body problem that runs through Western philosophical thought, starting (at least) with Plato and his distinction "between an immaterial entity (the soul) and a material entity (the body and, by extension, reality as such)" (Buongiorno 2019: 310). In this context, it was notably Descartes' reflections that contributed to the notion of separation and to the entrenchment of a dualism in Western philosophical thought.[1]

With this special issue, we aim to contribute to the discussion of the potentials and implications of Embodiment theories for translation studies and translation didactics. We focus on perspectives concerning the factual relevance of bodily dimensions for translators' literary translation processes. In the following, we introduce the theoretical background that motivated the compilation of the contributions as a whole and we define and explain our theoretical location in the field of Embodiment and translation studies.

1. Basic aspects in different perspectives on Embodiment and the relevance for language theory

Theories on Embodiment and/or Embodied Cognition differ fundamentally in the degree to which they move away from computationalism, and can therefore be categorized either as fully embodied or as radical embodied (for a detailed discussion of the different accounts, see Gallagher 2019; for a helpful review, see also Farina 2021). The proliferation of theoretical approaches led, as Gallagher (2019: 355) recalls, to a further conceptual distinction within Embodied Cognition, resulting in the 4E-model (see Tschacher in this special issue). Without diving deeper into the distinction between fully and radical approaches, we want to recall some findings of Embodiment research within the cognitive science that we consider important also for the subject of translation.

When it comes to *language processing* and *understanding language*, the embodied perspective suggests that even in the mental processing of linguistic meaning and in the understanding of concepts there are multiple domains involved – domains that concern perception, senses, social-interactive actions and/or inner feelings. The claim is that the body not only constitutes a medium for language use and communication, but language itself is grounded in bodily processes of perception and action. That is, by incorporating the philosophical premises of Embodiment and the findings of cognitive psychology into the study of language, the idea got supported that understanding of concepts and language processing is firmly rooted in bodily states and experiences (see among others, Barsalou 1999, 2008, 2009; Johnson 2007; Gallese and Lakoff 2005; Glenberg 2008, 2010; Glenberg and Kaschak 2002; Lakoff and Johnson 1999; MacWhinney 1999; Pecher and Zwaan 2005; for an extensive review see Zepter 2013: 201-221, Bryant and Zepter 2022: chapter 2).

A classic and much-cited example in this context is that of the construction of metaphors. As argued by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999), many cognitive processes, such as, for instance, those related to time and space, are expressed and influenced by metaphors – where the metaphors depend on the way we conceptualize the body, drawing on embodied experiences. "Metaphors, hence", to put it with Foglia and Wilson (2013), "are not merely useful for embellishing communication, but reflect the embodied experience that we have as creatures that move through the world in particular ways." Following this assumption, metaphorical simulation hypothesis provides evidence for the sensory-motor grounding of abstract language.

In general, simulation is a key concept within this research framework, as a great number of studies have shown that mental representations underlying cognitive processes are "mental simulations of the initial state the body had when learning about those objects or situations, and they are also related to the actions they afford" (Ionescu and Vasc 2014: 277). Barsalou (2008; 2009), for instance, claims that the concepts are fundamentally grounded in the perceptual system and that they are gained from perception through simulation, i.e. "the re-enactment of perceptual, motor and introspective states acquired during experience with the world, body and mind" (Barsalou 2009: 1281). Among others, Glenberg and Kaschak (2002) have shown how linking language describing actions with congruent physical responses produces a facilitation effect for sentence comprehension.

Furthermore, MacWhinney (1999) shows that in order to understand (in reading or listening) a specific sentence or a specific expression comprehensively, the recipient has to take an appropriate perspective – a perspective from which she/he can interpret the sentence/the expression. MacWhinney distinguishes several possible perspectives, but all are related to (human) perceptual and accordingly bodily experiences. For example, our mental definition and our mental understanding of a concept like banana results from the perspective of affordances, that is, the perspectives of our body in contact with individual objects that fall under this concept:

> When we hear the word *banana*, each of these affordances [in vision, smell, taste, touch, skeletal postures, haptic actions, and even locomotion] becomes potentially activated. The visual affordances or images may be the quickest to receive activation. If the sentence requires nothing more, this may be all that we experience. However, just activating the raw visual image is enough to enable embodied processing of the word *banana*. (MacWhinney 1999: 218)

MacWhinney's also points to another aspect: given our past experiences and their processing, our actual language reception is always dependent on the context and on 'us' as recipients. All these factors influence our specific processing of a concept, a sentence or a text:

> In order to understand sentences, we must become actively involved with a starting point or initial perspective. We use this perspective as the foundation for building an embodied understanding of the sentence. For example, when we listen to a sentence such as *The skateboarder vaulted over the railing*, we take the perspective of *the skateboarder* and imagine the process of crouching down onto the skateboard, snapping up the tail, and jumping into the air, as both rider and skateboard fly through the air over a railing and land together on the other side. Identifying with the skateboarder as the agent, we can evaluate the specific bodily actions involved in crouching, balancing, and jumping. The more we know about skateboarding, the more deeply we understand this utterance. (MacWhinney 1999: 214ff.)

Thus, in short, understanding language implies simulation of the contents of words/sentences, and this "trying to imagine a body in active engagement with the world" (Shapiro and Stolz 2019: 24) involves the activation of those cognitive domains and brain regions that would be involved when taking similar actions.

Then, if language understanding depends on an individual's history of bodily interactions with the world, we can understand the body not only as a necessary condition, but also as an expansible resource for the understanding of concepts and their linguistic expressions – and obviously, this should not only be true for the reception/production and the learning of a first language, but for language learning in general (on L2-learning, see also Bryant and Zepter 2022: chapter 2). And accepting this interrelation for monolingual reception and production, we argue that the body represents a potential resource for the process of translating from one language to another too.

In claiming this perspective, we refer to the *living body*, i.e. to the phenomenological idea of the body as center of experience (*Leib* in the German philosophical tradition, which distinguishes terminologically between *Leib* and *Körper*): "[W]hat makes a body a *living* body is the fact that it inhabits and experiences itself (and others) within a certain environment, and this experience is inseparable from the kinesthetic processes performed by the body" (Buongiorno 2019: 314).

Overall, phenomenological philosophy represents a fundamental point of reference for embodied thinking, starting with the distinction between *Leib* und *Körper*. The phenomenological orientation is particularly evident in Embodied Linguistics, but it is worth noting that several other fields of Embodiment research also draw on this philosophical thinking; see e.g. Farina (2019: 81) on an embodied approach to vision; or Gallagher (2019: 370) on the fact that the concept of affordances is rooted in phenomenological tradition. Likewise, Gallagher (2019: 376) points out that more recently, Husserl's concept of *Leiblichkeit* as well as that of *corps vivant* theorized by Merleau-Ponty have regained importance within the framework of the *enactive* approaches, which emphasize the constitutive role of affects and intersubjectivity for cognition (cf. Husserl 1982 [1913] and Merleau-Ponty 2012 [1945]).

2. The phenomenological ground of embodied language and embodied translating

According to Breitinger (2017: 28-29), language becomes a phenomenological issue when it is not seen as a mere means of transforming experiences into words, but, on the contrary, as fundamental for the constitution of experience itself. An account to this approach to language was provided by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose thinking on language is focused on the speaking subject (*sujet parlant*), as well as on the intersubjective dimension of linguistic communication (for an extensive discussion of Merleau-Ponty's thinking on language, see Breitinger 2017):

> [Language] presents, or rather it is, the subject's taking up of a position in the world of his significations. The term 'world' is here not just a manner of speaking: it means that 'mental' or cultural life borrows its structures from natural life and that the thinking subject must be grounded upon the embodied subject. For the speaking subject and for those who listen to him, the phonetic gesture produces a certain structuring of

experience, a certain modulation of existence, just as a behavoir of my body invests – for me and for others – the objects that surround me with a certain signification. (Merlau-Ponty 2012 [1945]: 199)

Applying this approach to translation, Scott (2012a) argues that the translational act should not so much be conceived as an interpretative act, but rather as a readerly experience which come into existence through translating and which implies "an existential and bodily encounter with text" (Scott ibid: Xi). Scott illustrates the claim by engaging with Merleau-Ponty's thought, thus building his "phenomenological 'way-to-translation'" (Scott ibid: 2; see also Scott 2012b as well as his paper for this issue). Following Scott (2012a: Xi) "we translate psycho-physiological perceptions which we derive from a source text into a target text which embodies those perception".

In this respect, Scott's view of translation can be seen as an emblematic example of the embodied perpective we are discussing in this special issue, though it is notworthy that Scott himself does not explicitly refer to the concept of Embodiment. If he mentions it, it is only to distance himself from Embodiment, assuming that it does not support the phenomenological ground of translation:

> [B]y "embodiment", the cognitive analyst means the body-in-the-world from which cognitive processes derive and by which it is superseded, rather than the activation, by reading, of the body of the reader, or the elicitation of kinaesthetic response by text. [...] An underlying danger of its approach is that it attributes to the consciousness of the reading mind what it describes as happening linguistically within the text; that is, it projects poetic effects from the text on to the reader, rather than trying to capture those effects in the reading experience itself. And even though cognitive poetics believes that it is psychological and individual, it is ideological and social (even though it worries that is not). (Scott 2012a: 21; footnote 1).[2]

We agree with Scott in parts, but not in whole. That is, on the one hand, we can observe the following tendency:

The notion of Embodiment has had a particular impact in the field of the Cognitive Translation Studies focussing on the mental aspects of translating and interpreting. For example, the papers collected in Muñoz (2016) give an insight into the various possible empirical research directions resulting from a new paradigm within Cognitive Translation Studies, "a paradigm inspired by the 4E cognition, i.e. an embodied, embedded, extended, enactive, affective approach to the mind" (Muñoz ibid: 9).[3] These directions include, for instance, empirical studies on "the neural systems in which translation and interpreting are embedded" (García, Mikulan and Ibáñez 2016: 21), as well as on the situatedness and social embeddedness of translating, whether by investigating the processes of writing and translation "within their real-life contexts in the workplace of a freelance translator/copywriter" (Risku, Milosevic and Pein-Weber 2016) or by "[i]nvestigating the ergonomics of a technologized translation workplace" (Ehrensberger-Dow and Hunziker Heeb 2016: 69); or by rethinking the concept of translation quality in terms of social, process and product quality (cf. Jääskeläinen 2016). *Reembedding* translation process research can also mean to investigate "the impact of positive and negative emotions on translation performance" (Rojo López and Ramos Caro 2016) – by considering feelings and emotions as part of cognition (for a more bodily/*leib*-oriented and differentiated perspective on emotions in literary text, see Frickel in this issue). Furthermore, the research in question can focus on cognitive efficiency in translation, by questioning "what characterises translation efficiency and whether and how expertise and efficiency in translation are related" (Hvelplund 2016: 150), as well as on the ways how professional translators behave when dealing with translations proposed by translation memory systems (cf. Mellinger and Shreve 2016).

The range of research directions is clearly wide and continue to be further explored (see, among others, also Risku, Rogl and Milosevic 2019; Kappus and Ehrensberger-Dow 2020). But as summed up by Muñoz (2016: 16), reembedding translation process research in these ways basically implies "rooting the cognitive aspects of translating and interpreting *in the brain*" (our italicization). Then, coming back to Scott's concerns, although we recognize the role of the embodied cognition perspective in moving away from the notion of cognition as mere information processing (i.e. from the computational theory of mind), we likewise see some risks in the abstract conceptual norms underlying the objectifying view of this perspective and in the declared focus on anchoring translation processes in the brain. But despite these concerns and unlike Scott, we still use the terms *embodiment* and *embodied* – suggesting to conceive them in a broader sense which is not only compatible with the corporeity of language and translation from a phenomenological perspective but rather presupposes it. That is, we propose to reflect the concepts in their phenomenological foundation also in the context of translational research. To be highlighted: Following, among others, Gallagher or Tschacher (see Tschacher's contribution in this issue), Embodiment in other disciplines is explicitly defined by refering *wider* to the perspective of the mind being grownded in the *body as a whole* – hence, not solely in the brain. From this perspective, phenomenologically understood corporeality (in the sense of *Leiblichkeit*) takes on crucial significance.

Therefore it is noteworthy for us that the phenomenological grounding of translation seems to be drawing more attention in recent times. Rabourdin (2020) explores, for example, the relationship between linguistic and spatial translation, by bringing translation studies into dialogue with phenomenologists, in particular with Merleau-Ponty. We also refer to Breitling (2017) who, in discussion with the phenomenological perspective on language, develops the claim of "*translation* as a paradigm of interlingual communication as well as of linguistic sense-making in general" [4] (Breitling ibid: 273: "*Übersetzung* als Paradigma der zwischensprachlichen Verständigung wir auch der sprachlichen Sinnbildung im Allgemeinen"): Based on a phenomenological analysis of deictic expressions, Breitling shows how language is rooted in the speaking body and how its creative potential is understood as the possibility of expressing what has already been said, as well as what is to be said for the first time, in always *different* ways (cf. ibid: 321). Following Breitling, from here to interlingual translation is a short step, because the possibility and at the same time the necessity of translation is based on linguistic creativity which makes possible an equating of the non-equal (ibid: 321: "die ein Gleichsetzen des Nichtgleichen ermöglicht"). Such an idea of translation also implies an ehtical dimension, which Breitling (ibid: 325) describes as the willingness to engage in a confrontation with the other and the foreign, in which one's own language and ones own world view are called into question.

As we know, this dimension has been described by various philosophers (see, especially, Benjamin 1972; Berman 1984; Derrida 1996; Lévinas 2007; Ricœur 2004). With reference to Ricœur, Breitling terms the attitude to open oneself to the new and thereby also to transform oneself as "linguistic hospitality" (*hospitalité langagière*): "where the pleasure of dwelling in the other's language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home, in one's own welcoming house" (Ricœur 2006: 10). At the same time, Breitling (2017: 327f.) emphasizes

that the term is not unproblematic, because the reference to one's home at least potentially evokes a controversial distinction between mother tongue and foreign language.

Here, we consider useful to take up again with Scott, who deals with Derrida's notion of linguistic multiplicity and frees translation from the constraints of the notion of national language and thus also from the dichotomy of mother tongue and foreign language:

> [...] the languages of communication *in texts* are not just the national languages but also the languages of the text (the multilingualism of, say, punctuation, or spacing, or lineation, or typeface), that multiplicity denies us nothing, but affords us constantly changing experiences of our singularity, makes our singularity polymorphous, the place of modulations into alterity or shared experience. (Scott 2012a: 10)

In other words, "multilingualism refers not only to national languages, but to textual languages", which invites us to see translation as "a multilingual and multi-sensory" practice, rather than a bilingual and linguistic one" (Scott ibid: 20), thus confirming the creative potential of language and of the speaker's body such as stated above.

Altogther, Scott's perspective seems to us stimulating for any theoretical (as well as didactical) consideration on translation. The perspective indeed challenges both levels, questioning concepts and criteria they often refer to, such as equivalence, choice, translatability and intraducibility, source vs. target, mother tongue vs. foreign language, and so on.

Going further, we suggest to likewise take a closer look at those scholars who, although not explicitly talking about the body, are theorising an embodied perspective on translation, in the sense we give to this term here. Among them is in particular Nasi (2015; 2021), whose work has long been focused on the idea of translation as an exercise in creativity. Nasi supports his claim by describing concrete experiences of translations of texts such as puns, acrostics, sonnets, picture books and others, i.e. of texts whose characteristics often deviate from the so-called norm. It could be easily argued that this kind of translation experiences – which Nasi himself describes as extreme (cf. Nasi 2015) – provide a particularly fertile ground for creative solutions, but the crucial point for us is that in the concrete translation experiences that the author describes, the linguistic, graphic, performative and musical aspects of the text involve the reader's and translator's body, including his/her senses, voice, gestures, emotions. On this base, Nasi suggests to conceive translation teaching as "a critical and creative thinking workshop" (Nasi 2021), claiming that the development of critical thinking, which is both rigorous and creative at the same time, is inherent in translation itself. For Nasi, translation is

> an act that has to do with life, which is an encounter, which is complexity and questioning of oneself and of the other as well as of oneself in the other, which is made up of constraints and freedom, of constraints and evasions, of respect and awareness (Nasi 2021: 12 – "un atto che ha a che fare con la vita, che è incontro, che è complessità e interrogazione di sé e dell'altro, di sé nell'altro, fatta di costrizioni e di libertà, di vincoli ed evasioni, di rispetto e consapevolezza").

Once again, we see the ethical dimension emerging as a constitutive part of the embodied perspective of translation.

It is worth noting that Nasi gives voice to a perspective that has a long tradition in Italian translatology and which can ideally be traced back to Mattioli (1983; 2001; 2009), who well before the emergence of Embodiment suggested a phenomenological approach to translation. We could therefore perhaps even speak of an Italian approach to the phenomenology of translation (see also Arduini 2020; Magrelli 2018; Nasi and Silver 2009).

Similarly to Nasi, Malmkjær (2020: 3; 49) states that "the translating enterprise as such is creative in its essence" and that, beyond the moments of spontaneity which creative acts presupposes, "the ability to exercise creativity can be enhanced through teaching and practice". Malmkjær provides, in our view, an important contribution to the embodied perspective on translation, framing translation as an "aesthetically insipered translating" (Malmkjær ibid: 70). More specifically, Malmkjær argues that "[t]he aesthetic attitude to an object is enjoyment of or interest in the object for its own sake" and that creativity in translation process can be fostered by developing an aesthetic attitude towards the source text (ibid: 29; 4: see the contribution of Ivancic and Zepter in this issue in which this dimension is explored in its didactic implications).

3. Our perspective on Embodied Translating

Overall, in proposing the idea of Embodied Translating we suggest to turn the phenomenological understanding of the body – and thus the concept of *Leiblichkeit* – back at the centre. In this scope, we share the view of Alloa et al. (2019):

> With the concept of the body, a dimension of bodily existence is named that is not absorbed in an objectivist or materialist understanding of the body, but is most closely connected with the category of experience. [...] The body as an organ of perception, as a zero point of orientation, as a way of accessing the world: these are keywords that are connected with the phenomenological tradition of a thinking of corporeality, which is particularly in focus here. (Alloa et al. 2019: 1-2: „Mit dem Leibbegriff wird eine Dimension körperlichen Daseins benannt, die nicht in einem objektivistischen oder materialistischen Körperverständnis aufgeht, sondern aufs engste mit der Kategorie der Erfahrung verbunden ist. [...] Der Leib als Wahrnehmungsorgan, als Nullpunkt der Orientierung als Weise des Weltzugangs: Das sind Stichworte, die sich mit der phänomenologischen Tradition eines Denkens der Leiblichkeit verbinden, das hier hier besonders im Blickpunkt steht.")

It is this perspective on the concept of Embodiment we focus on – by particularly reflecting upon literary translation. The main anchor point in this context represents the Embodiment research concerning language comprehension and cognition being grounded in perceptual/sensory-motor experiences (recall section 1 above). To highlight again, it is only a small step from the recognition of the relevance of bodily experiences for processes of language comprehension and language processing to the recognition of such a relevance for translation processes and the desideratum to research the corresponding field.

Notably, the reference to experience also always invokes the dimension of the person who experiences. In the translation process, this is the translator. Therefore, a further, practice-related background of such an approach can be found by examining the voices of the literary translators themselves, more precisely the ways they describe themselves and their work (see also the contribution of Schindler in this issue). In terms of a current

terminological distinction within the concept of voice in translation studies[5], we thus refer to the extratextual translators' voices (cf. Taivalkoski-Shilov 2013), as conveyed by their own. Especially significant in this context are translators' self-representations, a textual genre that has been quite widespread in the last two decades among Italian literary translators and, to a lesser extent, also among the German ones (see, for example, Basso 2010; Bocchiola 2015; Bocci 2007; Geier 2008).[6]

Due to its diffusion, there have been several terminological proposals in Italian translatology to name this type of texts. Lavieri (2007: 18) proposed, for example, the term *racconti di traduzione* ('stories of translation'), focussing on the narrative and fictional character of the translators' self-representations. From that point of view, the text type falls within the broader category of fictional representations of translation and/or of translators. The term *autobiografia del traduttore* ('translator's autobiography') proposed by Giulia Baselica (2015), on the other hand, points to the autobiographical dimension of the text in question.

Certainly, we recognize both dimensions, the fictional and the autobiographical one, as characteristic features of this textual typology. But crucially, we do not consider either of them to be *the* essential feature – which rather lies in what we suggest to call "the living experience of translation", in analogy to Busch's (2015) term *Spracherleben* (the living experience of language). Referring explicitly to "the phenomenological foundation of the concept of Erlebnis or *Erleben* [lived experience] as developed by Husserl […]", (Busch ibid: 356, note 1), the term *Spracherleben* foregrounds the bodily and emotional dimension of language. Something very similar can be identified in the texts of the translators we examined, in which there is a constant reference to the corporeal dimension of the translation act. What dominates in these texts is thus the living experience of the translation process which assumes an existential role in life stories. Therefore, *translation biography* seems to us the appropriate term, recalling the concept of *language biography* used in sociolinguistics to designate biographical narrations in which language – the living experience of language – likewise takes on an existential role in the narrator's life.

But now, going beyond questions of terminology, the crucial issue to be analyzed is the frequent *reference to the body* made by translators – implying that "translators endorse (more or less implicitly) the idea of the bodily origins of meaning, thought and language − thus, the idea which has been developed in various sciences under the term 'embodiment' or 'embodied cognition'" (Ivancic and Zepter 2021: 124).

The references to the body are of various kinds. In some cases they are realized comparing the act of translating to physical activities that imply a great physical effort such as climbing a mountain, swimming or walking on a rope like a tightrope walker (cf. Basso 2020: 97, 25, 142). For Bocci, the translator is a gymnast as well as, taking up a concept dear to the German Romantics, a *Wanderer* (cf. Bocci 2004: 27-29). Whereas the first metaphor stresses the physical effort (just as the body references by Basso), that of the *Wanderer* can be seen, on the one hand, as grounded in the bodily experience of moving/walking, and thus mapping onto the abstract idea of moving through the space of the text. On the other hand, it can be understood as grounded in a cultural artefact, namely that of Romanticism. From that point of view, the metaphor describes literary translation in terms of the romantic experiencing the nature's vasteness and of the longing for a union with it.

Furthermore, the idea of physical effort/fatigue is often associated with the process of breathing: that is, translating means searching for the appropriate rhythm of breathing (Basso 2010: 25) and this search is intimately connected with *slowness* (ibid: 142). Slowness belongs to one of the key words in Basso's text: it refers to the capacity of *listening* to the text as well as waiting for the (right) words to emerge (ibid: 7). From her point of view, even consulting a dictionary can be compared to a 'physical gesture', which offers the translator "a kind of break, like lighting a cigarette, to distract herself for a moment and then go back to work more focused" (ibid: 6; our translation). In a similar way, Bocci (2004: 36) grasps translation as "an experience that offers and at the same time requires the slowest reading possible". Also in a recent publication that collects the reflections on translation of a dozen of the most prominent Italian translators, slowness seems to be one of the most relevant characteristics of the literary translator's work (cf. Arduini and Carmignani 2019) ─ or at least a necessity, which, of course, inevitably collides with the times required and imposed by the publishing market.

Turning to German literary translators, Swetlana Geier, who is famous as 'the woman with the five elephants' (an image created by herself referring to the five major Dostoyevsky's novels she translated into German), describes her own approach to literary translation as follows:

> I had a wonderful teacher: And when I was translating something, she would say to me in German: 'Nase hoch beim Übersetzen' – Stick your nose up in the air when you are translating. That means: Lift your head while translating, instead of translating from left to right. A translation is not a caterpillar crawling from left to right, a translation always emerges from the whole. That is all … One has to make the text entirely one's own. The Germans say *internalize*, 'verinnerlichen'. (Geier 2008: 62)

Once again, we find a body based image: The nose-motto can be understood both as a metaphor used to structure the abstract idea of internalizing the literary text, as well as the description of a concrete physical posture towards the text that itself appears indispensable in order to support the process of its internalizing.

Moreover, the body also appears as a necessary device for translating: when Basso (2010) describes her experience as the translator of Alice Munro, she underlines that in the specific case of this author, she prefers to write her translations by hand instead of using the computer, since this habit would allow her to perceive the text physically.

Altogether, the body in terms of body parts, bodily experiences or physical activities seems to be a kind of leitmotif in the translators' descriptions. Can this leitmotif be seen as a sign of the translators' (implicit) awareness of Embodiment or even as an argument for Embodiment itself? There is no easy approach to reject this question, to negate or to affirm it because at least two problematic aspects should not be ignored.

Firstly, for some body-related metaphors it can be shown on an empirical basis that the corresponding cognitive representations are grounded in original bodily experiences (recall section 1 above and see for an overview Bryant and Zepter 2022: chapter 2). However, this does not necessarily allow a generalization and a transfer to the incidents at stake. Crucially, there is a difference between metaphors/bodily experiences that are necessary to understand a text that has to be translated and metaphorical descriptions in the *reflection* of the *translation process/act as such*. Investigating the connection between metaphors using the body or body parts as domains in metaphoric mappings and the notion of Embodiment, Goschler (2005) convincingly claims that "occurrences of

metaphors where body parts are mapped onto other domains cannot be directly used as a proof of the embodiment hypothesis". She therefore argues "for a careful use of the term 'body' and for the search of more empirical evidence for the grounding of metaphors and 'basic experiences'" (Goschler ibid: 33). We definitely share Goschler's perspective, but this also does not justify to ignore the prominent and repeated presence of images connected with body and bodily experiences in reflecting upon the process of literary translation and to rashly consider the issue irrelevant.

Secondly, taking up a teminological categorisation proposed by Toury (1995: 65), the text type of self-representations by literary translators falls into the category of the "extratextual sources" that include "statements made by translators, editors, publishers, and other persons involved in or connected with the activity". While Toury (1995: 65) discredited the category as "partial and biased", in more recent times Munday (2013: 125) argued, bringing into play research methodologies from history and literary studies, that the analysis of such texts "give potentially unrivalled insights into translator decision-making". For Munday, mediation is a crucial criteria in dealing with such material, thus he proposes to distinguish between more and less "overtly mediated testimonies" (Munday 2014: 68), a distinction that might be useful also in our context.

The texts we are considering imply a degree of fictional construction and would thus be an example of strongly overtly mediated testimonies. This makes them suspect for the purposes of a scientific study, in line with the abovesaid view of Toury (1995). But again, awareness of the critical issues does not justify "outright dismissal" (Munday 2013: 125). Rather we argue that the most relevant aspect here is the conscious description of individual translation routines and processes, including also episodes from everyday life as well as "fascinating incidental details" (Munday, 2014: 77) of the lives of translators.

Remarkably, some of the aspects that emerge in the overtly mediated extratextual material produced by the translators are confirmed by empirical research in cognitive translatology focused on literary translators' workplace dynamics. Kolb (2019), for instance, shows how the translators' professional and personal spheres of life are closely tied together and how this "blurring of boundaries […] significantly impact the emergence of the translator's voice and the translation product" (ibid: 25). This intimate connection between private and professional life likewise emerges in all the texts we analyzed, to the point where it is no longer possible to draw a clear boundary between them, as is particularly true for Geier's testimony (2008).

Kolb's research emphasizes how "seemingly irrelevant outside interruptions or physical activities, such as leaving one's desk for a few moments may in fact turn out to be highly significant by directly impacting the emergence of the target text" (Kolb 2019: 39). The same holds for the role of the "largely invisible actors from a translator's immediate and/or personal environment, such as spouses or friends" (ibid: 38). The first aspect falls under what Kolb calls "the fragmentation of the translation process", while the second one proves the claim of "the hybrid nature of the translator's voice" (ibid: 26), shading some light on the role of agents that the translation process research has so far overlooked (cf. ibid: 37). The impact of these figures arises fully in the texts we analyzed, just like the role of physical activities as well as that of embodied experiences. The difference is that in our case the data are derived from overtly mediated testimonies, whereas Kolb's data were collected using the keylogger Translog and the open-source software Audacity for recording concurrent and retrospective verbalizations, which implies a much lower degree of mediation.

We do not in any way want to equate the two methodologies, but at the same time the similarity of the results are at least surprising and render further research on the translators' self-representations (and, more generally, of extratextual sources) desirable. Considering the self-representations as a proper source for investigating "the situatedness and social embeddedness of translatorial action and cognition" (Kolb 2019: 27), as pointed out by Wilson (1998: 14), "[o]ne begins to understand the origins – and learns to appreciate the interdependence – of human skill, intelligence, and vitality by looking at the details, one piece and one persona at a time."

Last but not least, we share what Wakabayashasi (2011: 87) states with regard to the fictional representations of author-translator relations (where the mediation grade is obviously even higher than in the above mentioned texts): these texts "can identify certain aspects that have not been fully explored in the theoretical literature, such as the affective impact of translators' work".

Putting the pieces together, this special issue which builds on the above and elaborates on it can be situated in the field of the so-called Literary Translator Studies. As pointed out by Kaindl, Kolb and Schlager (2021) in a recent volume dedicated to this emerging field within the Translation Studies, the term relates to those studies which bring the translating persons into the centre of attention and suggest various approaches to analyze them "not as functioning units but as human beings in their uniquenes" (cf. Kaindl, Kolb and Schlager 2021: cover text). In the volume's introductory pages, Kaindl (2021) recalls how a greater focus on the person of the translator has been present in Translation Studies for a few decades already, but how a decisive impulse towards this direction came especially thanks to the contributions of Chesterman (2009) and Pym (2009), published within the special issue "Translation Studies: Focus on the Translator" of the journal *Hermes – Journal of Language and Communication in Business*.[7] In the light of the "call for humanization" (Pym 2009) launched on that occasion, the interest in the biographical, social, cognitive, pyschological and individual aspects of translatioral subjects has increasingly grown, especially with regard to literary translators.

The concept of Embodiment provides, we claim, a very useful and rich framework to this emerging research field – *if* it is brought back to its philosophical origins — that is to the idea of *Leib*. This is the perspective we propose with the papers collected in this special issue.

4. On the special issue's various contributions

The volume opens with the contribution of **Wolfgang Tschacher**, which offers a general introduction to the concept of Embodiment. The author describes several empirical case studies in the fields of psychology and neuroscience which provide scientific evidence for bidirectional relationships between mind, environment and body. By presenting and discussing the encompassing theory of "4E Cognition" (embodied, enactive, embedded, extended), the paper highlights the still controversial aspects of the Embodiment perpective and its potential large scope, also for translational studies. As empirical evidence shows, Embodiment has already radically changed the way we comprehend cognition.

The contribution of **Clive Scott** proposes a deeply *Leib*-oriented approach to literary translation. Drawing inspiration mainly from Merleau-Ponty, he conceives the translational act as an encounter between the body of the

text and the body of the reader, which leads him to argue the thought-provoking thesis that the translational act is much more a psycho-physiological response to the text in its materiality rather than a question of meaning interpretation and choice. This thesis is supported through the translation of stanzas from Hugo's "Booz endormi", which highlights the multidimensional facets of rhythm and the way they influence the act of translation.

Just as Clive Scott, also **Franco Nasi** emphasizes the kinaesthetic experience that language and thus also literary translation implies. The phenomenon relates in his case particularly to rhythm, as he shows by the example of the "psychic rhymes and rhythms" of Walt Whitman and Mark Strand. Analyzing a couple of tentative Italian translations of their poems, Nasi invites to pursue a theory of translation capable of listening to the pulsing of the body and mind, going beyond predictiveness, regularity and norms.

Daniela A. Frickel focuses on the topic of emotions in literary texts. In recent years, translation scholars have become increasingly interested in the role of emotions in the translation process. The main question is how emotions and emotionality can influence the translators' cognitive processes and thus the translation peformance. Frickel's contribution, on the other hand, focuses on the text as a source of emotionalization, with the aim of showing what contribution literary studies concepts can make to sounding out the potential of emotions in literary texts and making them useful for literary translation.

Kirsten Schindler conceives literary translation as a special form of writing and explores the contribution of empirical writing research for this perspective. The theoretical framework she adopts is that of the *Schreibwissenschaft* (writing science), which has recently been established in Germany as a branch of writing research that expands the stronly cognitively determined empirical writing research developed in the 1980s.

Susanna Basso offers a very special view of the translation process that feeds on her long personal experience as a literary translator. In her essay, she dwells above all on her experience of translating Alice Munro, with whom she spent more than ten years, and on her current experience of translating the entire works of Jane Austen. Basso describes the existential involvment with the texts she is translating, i.e. her personal reactions to the translator's task which include enthusiasm, doubts, physical and mental fatigue, sense of inadequacy as well as joy. In her reflections, the temporality and spatiality of languages and texts meet that of the translator's body. Due to the specificity of this paper, which is not intended as an academic article but as a personal statement, it was not subjected to a double blind peer review, but only reviewed by the guest editors.

In the final contribution of **Barbara Ivancic and Alexandra L. Zepter**, the didactic perspective is brought into play: After discussing the educational/didactic implications of an embodied perspective to cognition, the authors focus on the question how a bodily approach can be implemented in teaching literary translation and describe a concrete didactic esperience they proposed in the context of German-Italian literary translation courses held at the University of Bologna. In this way, the article promotes a broader reflection on the didactic implications of a phenomenological view on language and on translating.

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Notes

[1] For a brief reconstruction of the philosophical origins of the Embodiment problem, see Buongiorno (2019: 310-316); for German-language readers, we recommend Fingerhut, Huffendiek and Wild 2013.

[2] Although Scott's critique addresses cognitive poetics in particular, it can easily be extended to the cognitive framework in general.

[3] Muñoz calls the paradigm "cognitive translatology" (Muñoz 2016: 9; see also Muñoz 2010), though not all the authors share this terminology, as he underlines.

[4] Unless otherwise specified, all translations of quotations not originally written in English are ours.

[5] The terminological issue is summed up by Kolb (2019: 38), who refers to the most recent publications on the subject.

[6] Due to our own affiliation in Italian and German translations studies and linguistics we started our research by focusing on these contexts and met with a prospering discourse.

[7] Cf. **https://tidsskrift.dk/her/issue/view/2853**