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Nota di contenuto Introduction: signergy / Ronel Johl, Jac Conradie and Marthinus Beukes

possibilities: toward a pragmatic understanding of iconicity / Vincent Colapietro -- The bell jar, the maze and the mural: diagrammatic figurations as textual performance / Christina Ljungberg -- Iconicity as meaning miming meaning and meaning miming form / Lars Ellestrom -- A view from the margins: theoretical contributions to an understanding of iconicity from the Afrikaans-speaking research community / Ronel Johl -- Part II. Visual iconicity. Iconic and indexical elements in Italian Futurist poetry: F.T. Marinetti's "words-in-freedom" / John J. White -- Taking a line for a walk: poetic contour drawings and contoured poems / Heilna du Plooy -- Iconicity and naming in E.E.

-- Part I. Theoretical approaches. Literary practices and imaginative

Cummings's poetry / Etienne Terblanche -- Bunyan and the

physiognomy of the Wor(I)d / Matthias Bauer -- From icon to index and back: a 16th century description of a "sea-bishop" / C. Jac Conradie -- The poem as icon of the painting: poetic iconicity in Johannes Vermeer and Tom Gouws / Marthinus Beukes -- Part III. Iconicity and historical change. Iconicity and etymology / Anatoly Liberman -- Iconicity

typological and theological: J.G. Hamann and James Joyce / Strother B.

Purdy -- An iconic, analogical approach to grammaticalization / Olga Fischer -- Part IV. Iconicity and positionality. Iconic signs, motivated semantic networks, and the nature of conceptualization: what iconic signing spaces can tell us about mental spaces / William J. Herlofsky -- Iconicity and subjectivisation in the English NP: the case of little / Victorina Gonzalez-Diaz -- Metrical inversion and enjambment in the context of syntactic and morphological structures: towards a poetics of verse / Wolfgang G. Muller -- Part V. Iconicity and translation. Translation, iconicity, and dialogism / Susan Petrilli -- Iconicity and developments in translation studies / Jacobus A. Naude.

Sommario/riassunto

A fundamental issue with reference to the translation process concerns the type of relation between the original and the translated text. Peirce indicates three possibilities: icon, index and symbol. For many scholars it is a given that the relation of similarity between the original text and the translated text predominates and that the iconic relation ordinarily describes the character of translation. However, evidence is provided in this paper to show from a theoretical viewpoint (i.e. from that of translation studies) and a practical viewpoint (with examples provided) that a relationship between source text and target text which is characterised as iconic can only be weakly iconic because a target text can never fully resemble its source text in every respect linguistically and culturally. Furthermore in certain cases an indexical or symbolic relationship rather than an iconic one may even predominate. Since the 1980s, discourses about translation have broadened steadily. An outflow of these developments is a greater understanding of the superordinate categories of translation and the fact that the relation between source and target text is no longer only one of resemblance (i. e. iconicity). An example of iconicity from the Koran and its translation is provided as evidence for a predominant, but weak iconic relationship between source text and target text. Examples from the Sesotho Bible translation and Das neue Testament illustrate that the predominant relationship can also be indexical or symbolic (rather than iconic), respectively.