Research Article

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Ophelia, more or less. Intersemiotic reinterpretations of a Shakespearean character

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Abstract: Ophelia, Shakespeare's most tragic heroine, seems to be the character who has generated much more enthusiasm on the part of visual artists than on the part of literary critics. Consequently, there are a high number of artefacts, produced starting with the nineteenth century, which have been inspired by Hamlet's unfortunate bride. Of this assortment of artefacts, we have picked some to deal with here. In analysing them, we survey through the history of the heroine's representation in various visual media, comment on them from the point of view of intersemiotic translation, and verify, in broad lines, the hypothesis that they may be tributary to a number of factors ranging from some connected to the artist's own identity and subjective interpretation of the original to factors connected to more general stereotypes, beliefs, attitudes, and socio-cultural trends.

Keywords: intersemiotic translation, Shakespeare's Ophelia, adaptation in translation, gender stereotypes

1 Introduction. Ophelia, more or less

If the phenomenon of Shakespeare's adaptation and appropriation has grown more and more independent from the Bard himself, generating an afterlife separated from his original work, the same can be said about the playwright's most famous tragic heroine, Ophelia. Traditional literary criticism paid little, if any, attention to Hamlet's bride, considering, like A.C. Bradley (1991) in 1904, for example, that discussing a character Shakespeare himself chose to keep silent about was a sacrilege. The interest in Ophelia started in the nineteenth century, the responsibility for this attention being related, according to some critics (Roussillon-Constanty 2019), to the iconic Pre-Raphaelite representation of the heroine's death in John Everett Millais's 1852 painting. Ophelia's status as the ultimate star, at least in terms of visual responses, was consolidated in the last few decades of the twentieth century, this effect being related by Peterson and Williams (2021, 4) to Elaine Showalter's seminal study on the feminist necessity to rehabilitate Ophelia and give her a more nuanced, active, centre-stage role (Showalter 2013, 92).

Showalter is among the first critics to discuss, in explicit terms, the inverse relation between Ophelia's relative absence from the Shakespearean text and her visibility in representations of the tragedy in various media. She also notices a paradox in many feminists' desire to give more agency to Ophelia and "tell her story" (2013, 78), even if this story can be told only via those who dictated her life (her father, brother, fiancé) or those who described her death (Queen Gertrude). Therefore, it is not surprising, as Remedios Perni observes in Peterson and Williams (2021, 194), that there is no actual story of Ophelia which is not, in

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fact, the story of her representation (on the stage, offstage, written, visual, or otherwise). If, in the Shakespearean text, she is significant only for us to better understand Hamlet and to understand the protagonist in contrast to his bride, the subsequent history of Ophelia's representation is also by proxy. We learn more about ourselves, men or women in various cultural moments and geographical locations, by looking at Ophelia, than we learn about herself. In the tragedy, her death (as, in many ways, her life) is filtered and rendered indirectly, in a description which is rather symbolic than concrete. Moreover, the heroine's later depictions are mediated, artists freely contributing their own interpretations to her portrayal. This is, in a way, a natural consequence: "representations of Ophelia dying repeat her initial textual elision, allowing [them] to substitute for the absence of a real history" (Peterson and Williams (2021, 8). As Showalter also explains, the actual scene of Ophelia dying does not exist in the play, therefore nothing has actually interfered with the artists' "imaginative supremacy" (2013, 84) in picturing Ophelia. This makes the visual history of the character's afterlife a metarepresentation, a response to a response about her madness and her death.

In the original text, Gertrude refers to the girl's drowning in terms rendered vague by their poeticity. This prudish discretion is conceded by Laertes too, who wants to know and, at the same time, would like to dismiss the details of his sister's alleged suicide. The two characters' dialogue seems to justify subsequent representations of the scene, which, in their vast majority, highlight the decorous, aesthetic, pretty, and hygienic side of Ophelia's demise:

QUEEN GERTRUDE
One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow; your sister's drown'd, Laertes.
LAERTES
Drown'd! O, where?

QUEEN GERTRUDE
There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
There with fantastic garlands did she come
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element: but long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

LAERTES
Alas, then, she is drown'd?

QUEEN GERTRUDE
Drown'd, drown'd. (Shakespeare 2007, Act V, scene 7, 138–59)

2 Ventriloquizing Ophelia

In her latest book on adaptations of Shakespeare's plays, Brînzeu (2022, 325) presents Ophelia as an obedient character who lacks control of her decisions and feelings, who only replies to what other

characters say to her, and who is treated by everyone as a stage prop. But, in reminding us of William Hazlitt's famous idea that "we are Hamlet," the Romanian critic also invites us to speculate that we are also Ophelia. It is not mere coincidence that Ophelia's presence on the lens is as old as photography itself, as Keefe Ugalde points out (2015, 36). In other words, Ophelia has been a recognizable presence in both elitist and popular culture since the nineteenth century even to those who never read a line or watched a play by Shakespeare. Such visual representations, according to Ugalde, are part of a meta-artistic language, because they intersect literature, theatre, views on gender, psychiatry, and plastic and photographic techniques. While Ugalde refers to a series of collages by Catalan artist Eugenia Balcells's from the 1970s, the entire history of Ophelia's appropriation by visual artists can actually be discussed in terms of a long series of superimposed images, technical or artistic interventions which "open a creative space, unmasking the illusion of ... objectivity" (2015, 44). They all de- and re-contextualize Ophelia's original script, reinforcing or questioning her roles, referring to cultural constructions of femininity, to stereotypes of frailty, physical beauty, sexuality, innocence, etc. They all, in a way, tell the story on her behalf, even when they project the illusion that they are empowering her with a voice of her own.

Showalter believes that the numerous approaches to representing the Shakespearean heroine lead to the creation of a "Cubist Ophelia" (2013, 92) because artists working in various media, tributary to various cultural views, more or less sensitive to debates between the dominant patriarchal discourse and the feminist approach, paying tribute to canonical representations or criticizing, deconstructing them, offer posterity a multiple, ambiguous figure.

By looking at a selection of visual responses to Ophelia's muted personality and destiny, this article has a three-fold intention: (a) to survey through the history of the heroine's representation in various visual media (from painting, etching–engraving, to photography and installation); (b) to touch upon the process of intersemiotic translation involved in the transfer from Shakespeare's Ophelia, in his written play, to Ophelia reconfigured in various artistic forms which operate with sign systems other than linguistic; and (c) to verify the hypotheses that these interventions in Ophelia's story may be tributary to gender stereotypes and that there is variation between representations of Hamlet's bride by male and, respectively, female artists.

3 Nineteenth-century painting and Ophelia's decorous presence

3.1 Leopold Burthe's "Ophélie" (1851)

Even if the vogue of representing Ophelia on canvas is already visible at the end of the eighteenth century, British and French artists in the nineteenth century discover the potential of responding to Ophelia's story rather than to Hamlet's dilemmas. Admired as the Danish prince was admired by the Romantics, with his metaphysical drives and his powerful genius, Ophelia becomes an attraction because she is a "lacuna" (Peterson and Williams 2021, 6), a blank sheet on which painters can let their imagination manifest as freely as they want. A first direction, which continues the aesthetic ideals of the Augustan period, suitable also to the Victorian middle-class taste and need for prudishness, is the neo-classical Ophelia. Her half-nudes, sculpted in white marble or painted in milky shades or pastels, convey an abstract image not so much of an individualized woman or story, but rather of generic femininity. In life or in death, they seem to tell viewers that femininity is beautiful and weak, worthy of admiration, and in need of protection.

Leopold Burthe's 1851 "Ophélie" (Figure 1) represents the heroine a moment before her evoked death, while she is still clinging to the branch of a willow. Asleep or in a trance, the model is the central piece of a static composition. The surface of the water is as immobile as the woman's body, while both seem equally imponderable. Ophelia is thus presented mainly as a passive character, devoid of agency, lacking even the will to act or react. The painting of the half nude illustrates the tendency to present Ophelia as a sexualized object of desire, even if the emphasis falls more on sentimentalism than on eroticism. It announces a line of

Figure 1: Leopold Burthe, "Ophélie," 1851, oil on canvas. https://scribe4haxan.tumblr.com/post/110217571266/ophelie-de-leopold-burthe/amp.

interpretation that will remain unchallenged for more than a century, namely that, while Hamlet's tragedy is to be perceived in moral, intellectual, religious, philosophical terms, his bride's demise is pure physicality. Her madness, whether approached artistically or medically, is connected, in all nineteenth-century representations, to gendered definitions of hysteria. Showalter summarizes this identification between a woman's sexualized body and her fragile mental state in a rhetorical question: "Is [Ophelia] the textual archetype of woman *as* madness or madness *as* woman?" (2013, 78, emphasis in the original). Burthe follows the spirit of the Shakespearean text in the sense that he charges his painting with emblematic and symbolic details. The model is holding white daisies and crow-flowers, evoked by Gertrude in her description, is wearing a "coronet" made of similar wildflowers, and is holding the "sliver" which is about to break. Her mermaid-like floating, referred to in the original text, is enhanced here by not only a graceful, but also a trance-like pose, as if Ophelia's mind, if not also her body, has already crossed into another form of existence.

Based on the above, looked at from the point of view of intersemiotic translation, Burthe's painting may be considered, at least partially, a faithful reproduction, in a different sign system, of the original Shakespearean text (we understand faithfulness in the context of intersemiotic translation as we explained in in Percec and Pungă (2022), mostly following Dusi (2015): any reproduction that displays coherence with the enunciative choices of the source (text) may be considered faithful to it; we also, however, resonate with Newmark (1988) in our understanding of faithfulness in the context under scrutiny: any reproduction that manages to convey the same contextual meaning as the original may also be considered faithful to it).

Apart from the echoes of the original text, we have noticed in Burthe's composition the presence of additional elements which may linger in the artistic consciousness as long as, and even longer than the Shakespearean details. While Shakespeare left his heroine's outfit unspecified in colour or degree of formality ("weeds," "clothes," and "garments"), Burthe painted Ophelia in a white dress or shift. A symbol of innocence and fragility, linked to the girl's alternative status of bride-to-be or novice in the nunnery, this detail is, from the nineteenth century onwards, part of the meta-artistic language.

Thus, if we continue to agree with Pereira (2008), as we did in a previously published article (Percec and Pungă 2021), that the techniques at use in interlingual translation may be recognizable in intersemiotic translation as well, Burthe's decision to dress his Ophelia in white would be the equivalent of modulation under the form of narrowing down the option from the general to the specific. A choice of cut and colour of Ophelia's garments should necessarily have been made by the painter; the fact that this choice is the one that can be seen in the painting discussed here adds to the work of art being in a faithful intersemiotic translation relationship to the original text.

3.2 John William Waterhouse's "Ophelia" (1894)

Burthe's typical neo-classical composition, graceful, discreet, and sentimental can be discussed in terms of continuity and discontinuity in the painting school that dominated the British artistic environment during the second half of the nineteenth century, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. While John Everett Millais's iconic Ophelia drowning, in a lavish décor filled with vegetal symbolism, has been discussed extensively elsewhere (Percec 2020), another painter who returned obsessively to Ophelia in a series of compositions is John William Waterhouse. He follows Ophelia's life and death in a sequence, which moves from an indoor composition ("Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May," 1909), in which Ophelia stares blankly while holding a vase of rosebuds, more like a Victorian middle-class angel in the house, to outdoor compositions. His 1889 "Ophelia" pictures a young woman lying in a field, her disheveled dress and hair suggesting her distressed state of mind, staring absently past the viewer, a brook barely distinguishable in the background. In 1894, he paints another "Ophelia" (Figure 2), whose rich, gold trimmed dress contrasts with the natural décor (she is sitting on a log, looking at a pond with lilies). Her solemn face also contrasts with her gesture of arranging her hair, a gesture which suggests coquetry but also an insecure, anxious, and disturbed state of mind. This painting contains typical Pre-Raphaelite elements, such as the mimetic representation, the great attention paid to details – whether natural (the lilies blooming in the water) or vestimentary (the model's opulent dress has a golden heraldic lion embroidered on the hem, connecting Ophelia to English royalty), the medieval inspiration, visible in the cut of the dress, the rich colours, etc. The scene responds both to Shakespeare and to nineteenth-century representations of Ophelia. Creatively, Waterhouse combines the scene in which Ophelia speaks last (and sings about flowers, love, treason, and unhappiness), alarming the other characters about her mental health, with the scene in which we witness her drowning from a distance, filtered through Gertrude's aseptic story. The flowers enumerated by Shakespeare are there, including the nettles with white flowers, at the model's feet. Additionally, brought more to the forefront than the daisies and the crow-flowers, all white and innocent, Waterhouse places poppies in the girl's hair. Apart from their chromatic effect, which draws the viewer's eye to Ophelia's hair and face, the poppies, absent from the Elizabethan iconography, are relevant for Victorian observers, due to their associations with the most common drug of the age, the opium, and to the most commonly prescribed antidepressant, laudanum. The poppy is central to another painting by John William Waterhouse, "Sleep and His Half-Brother Death" (1874), where Hypnos and Thanatos are twin opium eaters. This additional vegetal symbol places Ophelia's story close to her final moment, imminent death being also detectable in the extreme pallor of the model's skin. The composition seems to place Ophelia outside her own story, a witness to her own potential drowning, as she is staring away from the viewers, at the pond. The aquatic element, clear and well-lit in Burke's painting, takes a darker turn here, as the expanse of the lake, despite the graceful lilies floating on it, is murky, black, transcribing Shakespeare's evocation of the "muddy death," but also making the symbolic connections with madness, depression, and mental torment.

Like Burthe's, Waterhouse's 1894 painting of Ophelia may also be considered a faithful intersemiotic translation of Shakespeare's original. There is at least one element – the poppies in the girl's hair that we mentioned – that constitutes, in terms of translation techniques, an addition to what the written text tells the readers and one – the ornaments on the young woman's dress – that represents, like in the case of Burthe's painting, an instance of translating the general by the more specific. The latter remains neutral in

Figure 2: John William Waterhouse, "Ophelia," 1894, oil on canvas. https://www.john-william-waterhouse.com/ophelia-1894/.

terms of its additional contribution to the overall message that the painting transmits when considered in connection to the Shakespearean play (though it may play an artistic role) – it does not tell more than that Ophelia is nobility. The former, however, places even more emphasis than the original text itself on the character's condition: frail and distressed.

3.3 Jean Baptiste Bertrand's "Ophelia" (1876)

Late Victorians and early twentieth-century artists perceived Ophelia as a genuine case study in hysteria. Lithographers, photographers, but, increasingly, psychiatrists too documented madness with Ophelia-like patients, not models proper, but inmates of asylums, wearing white and being in a state of induced hypnosis. An interesting example in this context of clinical observation combined with artistic experimentation is Jean Baptiste Bertrand's 1876 painting reproduced in a black and white etching-engraving, "Ophelia" (Figure 3). Bertrand's "Ophelia" is a composition which is clearly anchored in the time of its creation, not only because of the techniques used but also because of the approach to the subject of youthful female mental disorder. The natural surroundings of previous Ophelias in visual adaptations of

Figure 3: Jean Baptiste Bertrand, "Ophelia," 1876, black and white etching-engraving. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Baptiste_Bertrand#/media/%20File:Jean_Baptiste_Bertrand02.jpg.

Shakespeare's tragedy are replaced by a flowery wallpaper, sliding from outdoors to indoors, from a girl roaming freely in the woods to a patient confined to a room, cell, or ward. The model-patient's pose is reminiscent of Elizabethan visual representations of melancholy, which is an interesting metarepresentational strategy, adding an unexpected gender complication to the message of the composition. During the Renaissance, especially in England, melancholy was a fashionable pose embraced by many young aristocratic men, as we can see from several sixteenth-century paintings and miniatures, such as those by Nicholas Hilliard ("Young Man Leaning against a Tree among Roses," cca. 1585) or Isaac Oliver ("Young Man Seated under a Tree," 1590). The Aristotelian influence associated melancholy with high intellect and genius, but contemporary philosophers, like Robert Burton (2001) in his influential 1621 *Anatomy of Melancholy*, saw melancholy as a mark of aristocratic leisure. Thus, melancholy was a sign of male prestige, sophistication, and prominence. Bertrand's Ophelia is adopting an equally melancholy pose. The style of her outfit is reminiscent of the Renaissance, but the modern wallpaper and Victorian purse have her teleported in an age which gives another name to her mental state, associates it with her own sex, and burdens it with negative connotations. Rather than a freely chosen, controllable fashion, melancholy-hysteria is an epidemic, which afflicts those who have no choice. Ophelia's neurosis sets her in contrast with Hamlet's self-imposed, methodical madness, the former being, as the etymology of hysteria tells us, organic, visceral, and unruly, while the latter is rational, respectable, and deliberate.

Another irony of the composition lies in the treatment of the model-patient: her elegant purse is accessorized with Renaissance-looking garments, which, however, look alarmingly more like underwear than like an outdoor dress. This could be the white shift of an inmate in a lunatic asylum or a sleepwalker.

The purse highlights a confusion of intentions in the young patient: to remain indoors, in the apparent safety of the domestic or medical environment, or not to remain, and run away from the constraints of domesticity or hospitalization? Bertrand's model's obvious youthfulness, enhanced by her coy look, criticizes nineteenth-century social practices of infantilizing women, also by confining them to the space and roles associated with the household, or by transforming them into what Foucault later called "docile bodies," rendered docile by institutions like the prison or the hospital (1995).

Bertrand's engraving announces a trend that will become dominant in the twentieth century, in artists representing Ophelia, to depart from the original source in order to address contemporary subjects and to respond to responses to Shakespeare's tragic heroine.

From the point of view of intersemiotic translation, detachment from the original source means a decrease in the level of faithfulness of the target artefact to it. Technically speaking, adaption is in store so as to fit the transmission of a certain message and its connection to a well-defined historic, social, and cultural context: Bertrand's Ophelia may be symbolic of Victorian hysteria-suffering young women, confined to a ward in an asylum or of infantilized women jailed in their own homes and denied access to the outside world, a world that is free but, at the same time, harsh on them. The details that are added as compared to what we find out from Shakespeare's text – the girl's pose and her purse and the replacement of the brook by a static, lifeless wallpaper are details of the general obvious process of adaptation.

If, in message construction and transmission terms, an art work like Bertrand's engraving marks the tendency of distancing from the original, from a translation perspective, the increasing unfaithfulness to the source may be paralleled to the transition from linguistic to functional approaches. The latter posits that the source acts only as input for creating the target and that, based on this input, the target may take any shape deemed appropriate to serve a specific function, in a specific context of reception.

4 Metarepresentational and intersectional Ophelia in contemporary art

From the seventh decade of the twentieth century, there has been a significant shift in Ophelia's representation in visual arts, mainly due to feminist revisions. Showalter talks about an "antipsychiatry movement" (2013, 86), which has determined the depiction of Ophelia's madness to become less stereotypical. Dual, deliberately ambiguous contemporary Ophelias are powerful figures, whether they stand for protest and rebellion, or their plight is a critique of sexual intimidation, marginalization, and other forms of victimization. Concomitantly, contemporary visions of Ophelia appropriate the tragic figure in order to address a wider range of social and political aspects, which include race, sexual identity, or the environmental crisis. This tendency can be explained within the framework of intersectionality, as proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, to understand the interplay between privilege and discrimination in an individual's social and political identity (Cho et al. 2013, 785). Last but not least, late twentieth and early twenty-first century revisitations of the Ophelia theme depart from Shakespeare's text and respond creatively and critically, by means of collage, pastiche, or parody, to other iconic depictions of the tragic heroine. Contemporary artists comment less on Shakespeare's motifs and more on the intentions and techniques of famous predecessors.

4.1 Tom Hunter's *The Way Home* series (2000, 2012)

An illustrative example we would like to discuss here is a photograph in the series *The Way Home*, exhibited and published in book form by Tom Hunter in 2000 and 2012, respectively (Figure 4). Hunter is a British photographer known for his stylized compositions which respond to famous artworks in order to draw attention to sensitive contemporary social issues. His strategy is that of drawing legitimacy and credibility

Figure 4: Tom Hunter, "The Way Home," 2000, colour print. https://aad40002josephrichardson.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/tom-hunter.jpg.

from historical paintings to which his compositions allude, adding more weight to his social commentaries about marginalization, poverty, social exclusion, prejudice, subcultural group identities, etc. As biographer Richardson puts it (2017), Hunter's empathic gaze focuses on "modest environments imbued with status and dignity." One photograph in the series presents a young woman who has drowned in a pond at the back of her house. The woman lying face up in shallow water, surrounded by greenery, can be instantly recognized as a nod to Millais's "Ophelia" (1852). According to Richardson, Tom Hunter had recently heard about an incident with a young woman found dead after falling into a canal when returning from a party early in the morning. The fact that the cause of her death was as uncertain as that of Shakespeare's heroine – was it an accident, a suicide, or foul play? – must have been an irresistible coincidence for the artist, who decided to address the subject critically. This is clear from the fact that the departure from Millais's composition is as obvious and striking as the similarity to it is. The elegantly clad Victorian model, who was meant to remind viewers of Ophelia's royal blood as well as of the Pre-Raphaelites' appetence for flamboyant representations of the past, is replaced by Hunter with a casually and modestly dressed girl. Her patched jeans and black jumper or jacket also show Hunter's escape from the tradition of whiteness in picturing Hamlet's bride. It is true that the Pre-Raphaelites avoided the purely white shifts, replacing them with pastel-coloured gowns, but the darkness of Hunter's colours invites viewers to attribute more sorrow and pain to Ophelia's (and the modern girl's) story. The mourning-like clothes of the model make this composition also referential to the first known photographic representation of Ophelia, by Julia Margaret Cameron in 1867. As Roussillon-Constanty (Spring 2019) discusses, Cameron's sepia photograph emphasized the characters' sense of tragic loss by contrasting her youthful face and the white rose bud adorning her chest with the deep mourning attire.

The greenery surrounding Hunter's drowned girl is and is not Millais's. The attention to detail in capturing the abundant vegetation is, indeed, reminiscent of the Pre-Raphaelite technique, but the décor is also a critical social commentary. Like in other photographs taken in the suburbs of London, especially Hackney, Hunter's intention is to capture and deplore the post-industrial landscape and semi-abandoned suburban habitats, which demonstrate the precariousness of life for lower working-class East Enders, for squatters and homeless people. Hunter's greenery is an unkempt vacant lot, with brambles, nettles, and chaotically growing weeds, a far cry from the daisies, crow-flowers and willows Shakespeare proposed to accompany Ophelia in death. In the distant background, we can see the rooftops of houses or warehouses, a suggestion of human presence but also of human indifference. If Ophelia's drowning is only indirectly witnessed, through Getrude's story, making readers and viewers take a comfortable, albeit insensitive distance from her tragedy, Hunter's dead girl seems to be the victim of outright callousness. Only a few steps away from the place of her fall (literal as well as metaphorical), other people carry on with their lives as if the woman's death is nothing to them. This meditation is reminiscent of Hamlet's own comments on people's lack of empathy, when he refers to actors unable to render Queen Hecuba's intense suffering to the spectators: "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,/That he should weep for her?" (Act II, scene 2, 547–8) At the same time, it addresses contemporary symptoms of indifference to the suffering of the others, for which the audio-visual media's inclination towards the sensational bears a heavy responsibility. The contemporary world's emotional response – or lack thereof – to human tragedy is completely removed from the ancient and Renaissance notion of catharsis. Thus, Hunter's colour saturated print takes us back not only to Ophelia, but also to the generic Hecuba, to the moral question about how to contemplate the death of our next-door neighbour.

Adaptation is even more obvious and complex here than it is in Bertrand's case, so much so because it has been resorted to in at least two stages: one represented by Millais's "Ophelia," the other by Hunter's photograph itself. The interference of the former as an intermediary in the intersemiotic translation process amplifies it and provides the next artist with already enriched material to work with to the point that, as we explained above, the original fades away and leaves more room to the intermediary to be perceived as a source of inspiration. As in the previous case, however, here too adaptation presupposes replacements in the character's and the surroundings' appearance as compared to both the source and the intermediary. Focus on the fulfilment of a specific function to suit the artist's critical intentions and the choice of compositional elements to meet them is also very obvious.

4.2 Anne Wenzel's installation "Ophelia is not here" (2009)

The intersectional grid has been a rewarding approach to studying Shakespeare in recent years, with mutual benefits in Shakespeare studies and in already established fields like postcolonial or gender studies, in emerging fields like animal studies, or in transdisciplinary fields like ecofeminism. An artwork which successfully illustrates the intersectional framework of analysing Shakespeare's plays via Ophelia's character is Anne Wenzel's installation "Ophelia is not here" from 2009 (Figure 5). The German artist is well known for her unconventional use of ceramic and clay in sculpting humans and animals. A presentation of her portfolio, made available by the Dutch art gallery AKINCI (2021), depicts her sculptures displaying "a brutal sense of decay" against apocalyptic landscapes, which give viewers the sense of "witnessing some horrific events taking place." "Ophelia is not here" features a regressive figure, made of ceramic, melting down, reduced to the size of a small child (Vega 2009). While some other visual artists also chose to present Ophelia as child-like, in order to emphasize her vulnerability, Wenzel's figure, crouching, her head bent down, shoulders hunched, adds a sense of resignation to the traditional frailty. The nature that surrounds the ceramic figure is a far cry from Millais's summery meadow, with bare trees painted on a black wall, the painting half washed away. Great disasters could have occurred to render the forest so devastated: a wildfire, a flood, a nuclear accident.

Figure 5: Anne Wenzel, "Ophelia is not here," 2009, installation. https://joel7663.wordpress.com/2009/05/13/ophelia-is-not-here/.

The backdrop of the sculpture increases the impression of fragility and transience. This is not only the fragility of an individual woman's body and mind, not even the fragility of the generic woman, but the fragility of an entire ecosystem. This composition appears, therefore, to be indebted to ecofeminism, which considers that the contemporary cultural and political discourse is bound to make women–nature connections, environmentally, socially, and morally indispensable. As one of the theorists of ecofeminism states, the necessity of bringing together such categories as women, children, animals, and plants is a must in the posthumanist age: "Environmental destruction and women. And women? What do these environmental issues have to do with women? … Ecological feminists claim that any feminism, environmentalism, or environmental ethic which fails to take these connections seriously is grossly inadequate" (Warren 1995, 5).

Wenzel's installation has Ophelia melt rather than drown, surrounded by objects, lumps which might have been human figures too, in a more advanced state of decay than the girl in the middle. The trees behind her do not continue the symbolism of Shakespeare's flowers, or of the vegetation detailed by Pre-Raphaelite painters. In contrast to a previously discrete symbolism – Elizabethan (daisies for innocence, nettles for fertility) or Victorian (poppies for sleep, lilies for purity) – the bare trunks convey a homogeneous message of inner and outer desolation.

From an intersemiotic translation perspective, this installation is the farthest from the original and perhaps the most illustrative as far as functional adaptation is concerned. Wenzel's work bears some traces of fidelity to the Shakespearean original in that the German artist's Ophelia, like Shakespeare's, becomes the prototype of female fragility, though the way she is moulded in ceramic does not take anything over from how she is described in words. Apart from that, however, a plethora of new meanings are put forth by the contemporary work of art, none of which are suggested in Shakespeare's play or in any other easily identifiable Ophelia-inspired intermediary artefacts. The type of "situational information at the level of the socio-cultural artefact" (Holmes 1988, 85) that the installation gives reminds viewers of very little of the

information at the level of the initial literary piece, showing once more that "informational loss must be highest in intersemiotic translation, in which the semiosis shows maximum degeneracy (and hence minimum generacy)" (Gorlée 1993, 163). This is the consequence of the fact that the function(ality) of the target artefact supersedes content-related equivalence with the original.

5 Conclusion

Our survey through the Shakespearean heroine's representations in various artistic means, at different moments in time, from the nineteenth century to the present day, has hopefully highlighted the fact that intersemiotic translation may be a pretty straightforward process, often closely resembling direct interlingual translation. Nevertheless, as complex as it is, it may as well be more flexible, less strict as compared to translation between two languages. In cases when the connection between the original – written on page in our case, and the target artefact is easy to grasp, faithfulness in translation is also pretty clear. However, once the network of interconnected reinterpretations of the original spreads out, the original may get to serve only as input for the creation of artefacts whose "meaning" diverge, sometimes greatly, from it. This process is visibly influenced, as we have shown, by the artist-translator's own creativity and understanding of the Shakespearean text (potentially induced by his/her reactions not only to the text itself, but also to other elements in the interconnectivity web based on it, the play's representation on stage included), by the target sign system translations potential itself, and by the society's at large beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes, etc.

The hypotheses that interventions in Ophelia's story may be tributary to gender stereotypes and that there is variation between representations of Hamlet's bride by male and, respectively, female artists have been confirmed by our analysis. Nineteenth century male artists presented Ophelia's weakness as an aesthetic feature, capitalizing on female passivity. At a first glance, nineteenth century female artists followed the same patriarchal pattern, but viewers are invited to read more into the vulnerability of the character. This may be regarded as the first step in the transition towards twentieth century critical interpretations. Contemporary artists, both male and female, charge their representations with a critical dimension. Their response to Ophelia's tragedy is often tributary to the intersectional paradigm, mixing feminist observation with ecocriticism, race, or queer studies.

Thus, to sum up by returning to the very title of this article, there is more or less of the Shakespearean Ophelia in each of its subsequent representations by other artistic means, in terms of both the intersemiotic translation choices made and what meanings these choices help the artists to convey. All Ophelias that are subsequent to Shakespeare's are manifestations of culture perceived as "an infinite process of total translation" in which "the same source text may underlie multiple various translations" (Torop 2000, 72). None of these extratextual translations is exactly the same as the original, none can be considered absolute or ideal, but they all make their contribution to cultural communication flowing between the intertextual worlds they represent.

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