POETICS IN PUBLIC SPACE

TOWARDS A HERMENEUTIC FRAMING OF EPHEMERAL POETIC EXPRESSIONS

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to revisit some hermeneutical aspects which are essential for a theoretical approach to the interrelated notions of the poetic and poeticity in public space. I will use examples of ephemeral poetic forms such as graffito or performance, but also some examples of poetic objects from linguistic fields such as English, Portuguese, Spanish and German. These reflections on a theoretical and methodological framework for poetry and translation in public space can be subsumed under the key concept of transit-translation. I will associate four poetic expressions from four related cultural areas, with non-lyric discourse in visual, verbo-visual and performance poetry, in public space. They will be distributed along four thematic lines which I consider crucial to the current description of the phenomenon: the intermedial-intermaterial transition, the transfer from the poetic-political to the commercial, the poetic-political multimedia project, and the conflict between the poetic and the public. Drawing from different theoretical backgrounds (Heidegger, Benjamin, Rancière, Badiou, Bhabha, Butler and Spivak), I propose that these forms of non-lyric poetry might represent the advent of a new public sphere, which is no longer exclusively formed by an idealistic, romantic tradition, but rather characterised by a hermeneutic ambiguity which suggests a reconfiguration of the subject and of poetic subjectivity.

KEYWORDS: Poetic; Poeticity; Public space; Translation; Banksy; Augusto de Campos; ±MaisMenos±; Camilla Watson; Helmut Seethaler

Notions of what is considered the poetic have undergone fundamental changes since the era of Romanticism. Poetry's supposed essence has been questioned by the multiplicity of hybridized forms and an increasing commercialization of poetic production, while access to poetry and public performance has been democratized. These developments have taken place in a public sphere which, similar to

information and knowledge societies, has been subject to profound, and often intrinsically political, changes.

In hermeneutical terms, how can one approach the poetic and poeticity in public space, in 21st century Western societies that are conditioned by so many rapid changes? And how does one relate the (political and social) interventionist nature of much poetic expression to a current notion of poetry in this public space? In order to gather elements for a hermeneutical framework that may provide an explanation to these questions, we must firstly revisit the concepts of the poetic and poeticity in contemporary public space.[1]

Here I am especially interested in poetic expression which seeks to intervene in the social and political reality of Western societies, whether in a material, urban context (graffiti, performance etc.) or in a virtual environment (blogs, social networks etc.). The majority of these poetic expressions are often characterised by varying degrees of transmediality, and specifically by a word-image fusion, which is increasingly prolonged and diverse in a virtual context, and may even have a global reach. This diversification and medial hybridization of poetry and public spaces calls into question the distinction between *communicative actions* and *dramaturgical actions*, as outlined in much of Jürgen Habermas's work (cf. e.g. 2005). To date, Habermas's theories remain the most referenced in terms of questions related to public space, despite their having being developed in a pre-digital period.

However, one can hardly argue that there is a clear separation between a public space where political or literary opinions are exchanged, and another public space as a site of self-representation. For example, in the case of street art, performance or installation, they are usually accompanied by texts of a poetic nature. It is a complex debate, but perhaps one could describe this increasingly global and even 'glocal' public sphere as a space of permanent encounter and debate of 'narrative' versions of the organisation of global society from the perspective of different contexts of experience and life-knowledge (cf. Marramao, 2004). Seen in this way, poetic expression as a 'narrative' in a current glocalised public context would have a representative dimension that is not limited to a rational communicative action, or an ideological strategy, or a

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[1] The concept of public space has undergone many changes and has been the subject of much debate in recent decades. Although I will address some aspects of this debate in section 3, I cannot deal with questions of its historical evolution in dept, and will only make some indirect references to its legal, philosophical and sociological complexity: Arendt (1958), Luhmann (1971), Habermas (1990, 2005), Fraser (1992) or more recently, García Leguizamón (2010). With the POESPUBLIC research project (FFI2012-33589, 2012-2016) we have already dealt with different aspects of the relation between poetry and public space (cf. footnote 3).

subjective self-vindication; and neither would it serve to equate cultural relativism with ethical relativism.

The Poetic expressions in the public space under discussion here, do not wish to be hostages to an enlightened rationalism or a relativist postmodernism. They can also be related to what emerges from Karen Gregory's update of a well-know 1970s feminist slogan: "The Personal Is Public Is Political" (2014). A significant part of the poetic expression present in street art or poetic action in public space, involves illustrating the need for a renewed critical reassessment of the way our daily lives depend on structural constraints, be they political, economic, or systemic. The three interdependent areas of the personal (or subjective), the public, and the political can be considered fundamental to the analysis of this poetic expression and its generic transgressions, in contemporary Western public space.

In this context, this study aims to revisit some hermeneutical aspects which are essential for a theoretical approach to the interrelated notions of the poetic and poeticity in public space. I will use examples of ephemeral poetic forms such as graffito or performance, but also some examples of poetic objects. The selection criteria were based on a desire to combine both internationally known and less well-known figures, and on an attempt to cover different linguistic fields such as English, Portuguese, Spanish and German. It seeks to demonstrate the significance of the urban, transmedial and political characteristics of graffiti and installations (Banksy, ±MaisMenos±, Camilla Watson and Batania Neorrabioso), and also the characteristics of poetic objects (Augusto de Campos and Helmut Seethaler).

In order to systemise some of their common aspects, I will firstly set out a theoretical framework, related to the following three areas, which I believe are essential for structuring an analysis of current poetic expression: (1) the concept of non-lyric poetry in an ontological context, (2) the hermeneutics of poetry as translation, and (3) the relationship between public space and poetry as translation. I will explain the key concept of transit-translation and subsequently provide examples of poetic expression from four current observable dynamics: the intermedial-intermaterial transition, the transfer of the poetic-political to the commercial, the poetic-political project, and the conflict between the poetic and the public.

NON-LYRIC POETRY

The concept of non-lyric poetry[2] is not just an *ex negative* definition of poetic expression

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which no longer fits the Romantic lyric tradition. Rather, it aims at subverting the identification between poetry and lyric which, in the Romantic-Hegelian tradition, was linked to experiential introspection, to an idea of truth or reality that ignored its fictional condition, or to a form of individual communication through the reception of printed poems. Since then, artistic production has become increasingly marked by alterity and difference, creating heuristic and methodological openings. Nowadays, poetic subjects and subjectivities often perform alternative models which re-examine authorship and authority, as well as orality or the semantics of bodies. Poetic work has become characterized by dialogism, heteroglossia, polyphony or by multiple kinds of hybridization where textual language is no longer indispensable. A transversality between poetry and social or political action, which tries to avoid being conditioned by past paradigms is gaining importance, as well as trans-generic, trans-artistic or trans-medial aspects. Therefore, a non-lyric perspective that emphasizes the character of disintegration of poetic work, questioning its coherence, communicability or even translatability, becomes interesting for an updated conceptualization of poetic production, intervention and reception.

The non-lyric is a theoretical tool to describe and analyse the complexity and variety of discourses which condition a large portion of current poetic production, be they formal, aesthetic, medial, theoretical, or ideological.[3] Our case deals especially with the interrelated notions of subject or subjectivity, of space, and of the public sphere. There have been several studies[4] of the way in which current non-lyric discourses represent a change in intrinsic subjectivity, and "a willingness towards reception" (Casas, 2015: 7). Their results indicate that there is a new subjectification and mental reality (Deleuze/Guattari) which is related to a conception of art as an event within a very specific space.

In order to paradigmatically illustrate a non-lyric poetic expression, which initially even dispensed with textual language, I will analyse a lesser-known graffito by the artist and activist Banksy. This graffito, most likely from a London neighbourhood, shows a zebra crossing coming down a wall and travelling over an abandoned car (*cf.* Image 1). A photograph of the event subsequently appeared in the book *Existencilism* (2002), together with a comment that is both poetic and political: "Painting something that defies the law of the land is good. Painting something that defies the law of the land

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(2011), Casas (2012a, 2012b), Baltrusch & Lourido (2012), Gräbner & Chamberlain (2015) and Wiersma (2015). The following definition is an adaptation from Baltrusch & Lourido (2012: 10-14).

[3] In short, "It could be said that where the lyric, as an exercise and as a theoretical object, seeks a form of essentiality [...] the non-lyric is characterised by [...] the outside, the disorder, the unstable" (Casas, 2015: 100).

[4] *Cf.* footnote 3.

and defies the law of gravity at the same time is really good". The initial artistic event was a poetic intervention in a significant material space in a run-down urban environment, in the objects themselves and in their usual order, where the interpretation of these spatiotemporal parameters was fundamental. This constellation of aspects evokes some ontological questions about art, which can be summarised by drawing from Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1935), in order to highlight how the public urban context, from the street or from mobility, leads to a "nearness of the work" that can take us "suddenly somewhere else than where we usually care to be" (2006: 19)[5].

Here the event of poetic intervention is characterised by proximity, abruptness, and the transformation of place and of what is known. Banksy as author vanishes before the subjectivity of the receivers, whether the initial passer-by depicted in the photograph, or the subsequent public who observe the 2002 exhibition or its printed catalogue. The zebra crossing graffito simultaneously represents a public order utopia and heterotopia (*cf.* Foucault, 1984). The graffito's irregular line reinforces its transfiguring intention. It crosses and subordinates yet another heterotopia, that of the automobile, here representing the
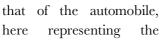

Image 1: Banksy, in *Existencilism* (2002)

utopia of almost unlimited mobility. Moreover, the car symbolises an ideology and a technology that have conditioned the freedom of movement in public space, which are themselves called into question by the car's broken and abandoned state. Without yet wishing to deal with definitions of the poetic and poeticity (*cf. infra.*), this type of artistic expression also suggests, "a relationship which is basically political, founder of a new subject space" (Casas, 2015: 102), in which "poetry and place are solidly linked" (103).

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[5] For this study I will draw in Heidegger's ideas in a decontextualised way, giving them a socio-political dimension which is absent from their original ontological perspective, and applying them to art forms which the controversial German philosopher might not have considered as such.

Returning to Heidegger, we could understand these non-lyric poetic expressions in a literal public space as a work of art, in which "the truth of beings (*des Seienden*) has set itself to work (*sich ins Werk gesetzt*).[6] 'To set,' in German '*setzen*,' says here: to bring to stand" (2006: 20).[7] The zebra crossing graffito, the very instance of its performance, starts as a being (*Seiendes*) which quickly loses its aura (W. Benjamin) and becomes a fait acompli, which in turn triggers a series of critical questions that contribute to the transformation of the given being. Its relation to the original is comparable to literary translation's fundamental dilema: part of the original is conserved, while it ends up being transformed.

From this perspective, Heidegger's idea of philosophy as interpretation and ontology as temporal interpretation, in the sense of *energeia* and event, can be adapted to the analysis of non-lyric poetic expression, "as public (or political) art/poetry" (Casas, 2015:100). These poetic forms not only interpret temporal ontological circumstances, but also translate discourses and ideological values, "as the event is *made discourse*" (104-105). In the case of Banksy's graffiti, the event has several spatiotemporal, material and epistemological layers and moments: The moment or context when it was first produced, when the first passers-by noticed it, when the photographer took the photograph, its subsequent exhibition before the observing public, another type of 'passer-by', the book and its readership, and finally its digital circulation. These are different instances and types of implemented discourse and transit-translation (*cf. infra*), that occur in distinct public spaces, yet have common poetic characteristics: the search for another "truth"[8] – the idea and critical reflection that stems from a poetic action – where "truth only happens in such a way that she institutes herself in the strife and play-space that opens itself through truth herself" (Heidegger 2006: 44).

The producing and receiving subjects which appear at each spatiotemporal layer in the poetic expression of Banksy's action, suggest that the subject, according to Alain Badiou, is always a local dimension of a truth process, in which one could say that the poetic event occurs at the subject's choosing: "Poetry is […] an action of which one

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[6] The translators explain in a footnote that "The phrase "*ins Werk setzen*" is deliberately ambiguous: colloquially the phrase is used to say the likes of "to set in motion, to set to work, to put into effect;" but it also bears the literal sense of "to set in the work," here namely in the artwork." (2006: 20).

[7] In our case, we consider that 'truth', since it is an idea or impulse implicit in the poetic or interventionist act, 'stands' and 'establishes' its own constructive nature. (*Cf infra* the comparison with Walter Benjamin's "pure language")

[8] We can also understand this 'truth', according to Benjamin's philosophy of language, as a utopian correspondence or equivalence between language and object, or as a relativisation of the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified (W. Benjamin, 2011). *Cf. infra* the comparison with Benjamin's concept of "pure language".

can only know whether it has taken place inasmuch as one bets upon its truth" (2005: 192).

TOWARDS A HERMENEUTICS OF POETRY AS TRANSLATION

The event, the decentralisation and the instability of the non-lyric suggest a different conception of the poetic phenomenon and of its production and reception aesthetics which I now wish to relate to the hermeneutical idea of poetry as translation. It is therefore important that I briefly define my adapted concept of translation[9] which is derived from the intersection of neuroscience and philosophy.

In the early 1990s Daniel Dennett suggested the idea of the Self or personality as a "benign user illusion" (*cf.* 1992: 311), and proposed a concept of human consciousness using an analogy of text edition, the "Multiple Drafts Model" (111 fallowing.). According to this model, the many "narrative fragments" that are "edited" in different places in the brain are in competition, without a single coordinator that would lead to a "final" or "published" version.[10] If Dennett's "narrative fragments" represent provisional drafts of a supposed perceived reality, textual or visual translations can also work with descriptive outlines based on the convention of a 'real exterior original', within a continuous translation process. This dynamic between the "benign user illusion" of an original creation, and that of a reality in which everything is recycled and rewritten, establishes a translational relativity that questions essentialisms and foundationalisms. If we wish to write the 'history' of the creative and translational consciousness of subjects and their subjectivity, it would have to be through a critique of multiple translational processes,[11] by observing creation/translation as a movement of continuous transposition, or in the words of Walter Benjamin, a "continuum of

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[9] There have been also attempts to provide a holistic definition of translation based on the concepts of translation and paratranslation (e.g. Baltrusch 2006 and 2010). Here, the use of the term 'holistic' should be understood in the context of Systems Theory (Luhmann) and Constructivism (v. Glasersfeld).

[10] "[…] at any point in time there are multiple "drafts" of narrative fragments at various stages of editing in various places in the brain. While some of the contents in these drafts will make their brief contributions and fade without further effect —and some will make no contribution at all— others will persist to play a variety of roles in the further modulation of internal state and behavior and a few will even persist to the point of making their presence known through press releases issued in the form of verbal behavior. […] the Multiple Drafts model avoids the tempting mistake of supposing that there must be a single narrative (the "final" or "published" draft, you might say) that is canonical —that is the actual stream of consciousness of the subject, whether or not the experimenter (or even the subject) can gain access to it—." (Dennett, 1992: 113).

[11] Even a subject's own consciousness could be compared to a translation between a combination of different conventions that interact in a almost corporeal sense to construct the history of a Self.

transformations" (261).[12] Ultimately, the experience of this continuum functions as a dialectic of change and stability, of distance and closeness, which eventually becomes detached from its subject. In relation to the artistic event, Badiou describes "the becoming formal of something, which was not", a process which opens "a new possibility of formalization" (2005). According to Badiou, this "disobjectification of presence" (2004: 238) happens mainly through poetic operations and experiences which strive to "gain access to an ontological affirmation that does not set itself out as the apprehension of an object" (236). One could also say that during the creative/translation act, we part from our language, our culture, or our (supposedly original) reality, in order to cross over to a position which Homi K. Bhabha has tied to the idea of "Third Space". So a reading of texts, as well as practically any perception of phenomena would be an event within such a transition, or translation, zone.

In our example of the graffito and its photographic reproduction, Banksy has placed the accidental passer-by in a third space in a highly visual and material way: between the translation of a supposed reality, in pursuit of systematisation (the dislocated, distorted zebra crossing) and the required reception/interpretation from the interpreting passer-by (the various observing public). Although the idea of order, the zebra crossing, is maintained within the change to what is considered common and real, i.e. gravity and movement, it no longer has the same function, and the relationship with the objects on display is no longer the same. Therefore, this notion of translation and poetry both represent a critique of and resistance to an essentialist conceptualisation of perception, language, discourse and image; and ultimately, to the demand for objectivity in traditional philosophy or that an ontological statement needs to apprehend an object.

The question of the poetic and poeticity which I intend to relate to this expanded notion of translation, starts with the relationship between certain fundamental dualities of modern Western thought, which Arturo Leyte (2013) has analysed from a hermeneutic perspective: signifier-signified (Saussure), unconscious-conscious (Freud) and consciousness-content (Husserl). Leyte has identified two ways of interpreting the transitions which typically occur between the opposing parts of these dualities. One way would be "hermeneutics as a general theory of interpretation which naturally implies a general translatability", while the other would be the hermeneutics of untranslatability, from which "transition itself proves to be inaccessible, [...] unexhibitable" (Leyte, 2013: 225). I suggest comparing the first approach with what is

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[12] Which would also end up as a path to knowledge and sociocultural criticism, given that semiotics has already been compared to translation, or rather a sociology of translation (*Cf.* Akrich et al. 2006).

usually called the poetic, while relating the second, fundamentally untranslatable and inexplorable approach to poeticity. Following this model, we could construct a hypothetical statement 'this is poetry', which can be used in a given context to identify a conception of the poetic. The link ('is') between the two elements (S is P; with S=this and P=poetry) is characterised by an asymmetrical structural ambiguity (referring to S and referring to P), whose sides are so different that identity is thereby impeded. Thus, a statement like "this is poetry" reveals itself as structurally false, because S can never become P (cf. 228). We could also say that the poetic phenomenon must not be confused with its signifier. The "this" would be the poetic phenomenon's designating act, which carries the poeticity and is already part of the transit itself: the translation process between the thing, what is considered real, or the poetic phenomenon on the one hand, and on the other, the constructed norm or genre. With regard to non-lyric poetry, this transit-translation is to a large degree, recurring. The "this", the thing, the very poetic phenomenon "strives to appear, but is unable to completely do so" (229), as with any translation, it can only approach the original, without ever completely corresponding to it. However, the ('original', 'poetic') phenomenon and its translation usually share some type of language, be it verbal or visual, which is in itself the result of a transit. In ontological (and still essentialist) terms, Heidegger linked language and poetry as follows:

> Language itself is *Dichtung* [poetry] in the essential sense. Now however, because language is that happening in which being (*Seiendes*) first discloses itself for man as being (*Seiendes*), therefore poetry, *Dichtung* in the restricted sense, is the most original *Dichtung* in the essential sense. Language is *Dichtung* not because it is primordial poetry, but rather poetry *ereignet* [takes place] itself in language because language keeps-in-trust the original essence of *Dichtung*. (2006: 57)

I propose to relate Heidegger's concept of the "original essence of *Dichtung*" with the aforementioned unexhibitable transit which I have equated to poeticity. Far from being able to encompass all this proposal's implications, I only wish to indicate the possible (critical, dialectical) reading of Heidegger's concept by drawing from Walter Benjamin's philosophy of translation and his concept of "pure language". In "The Translator's Task", Benjamin uses "pure language" as a constant of translatability, that is to say, the ability of the 'original' (the poetic in this case) to adapt to other contexts and be translated throughout the ages.

In this pure language — which no longer signifies or expresses anything but rather, as the expressionless and creative word that is the intended object of every language — all communication, all meaning, and all intention arrive at a level where they are destined to be extinguished. And it is in fact on the basis of them that freedom in

translation acquires a new and higher justification. (1997: 162-163)

This last level is a precondition of the translation process, and indeed the poetic process if one associates language with the original essence of *Dichtung*.[13] But this need not be understood in metaphysical or foundational terms when related to poeticity.[14] One could also say that Banksy's graffiti, by the mere fact of being an intervention/declaration of poetic intent, includes a search for poeticity, for something new, albeit ultimately untranslatable and unexhibitable. Naturally, and by its own non-lyric character, this declaration occurs while already aware that at the deepest level, all meaning, and all intention fade away, prioritising the outside, disorder and instability. Yet it is precisely this double bind which opens up a third space that guarantees the translational action and the artistic intervention its poetic freedom. If an 'original' confers a different material dimension from the source language, culture or art; the transit-translation to another language, culture or art will also bring about another change which is not located in any of the implicated languages, cultures or art forms, but rather in a space between them.

Image 2: Banksy [censured grafito] (2014)

Each transit-translation leads to a more complex situation of an increasingly Babelic nature, as is evident from the succession of reproductions of Banksy's action: Here a graffito, which represents a translation or transfiguration of a given present, becomes a photograph, which leads to an exhibition, a book publication and finally digitalisation which circulates online. Thus, throughout the translation, "true transit has no way back, [...] because every time it advances, something has changed" (Leyte, 2013: 229), either in respect of the language, the meaning or its synchronic or diachronic context. Though there is also something unique, the thing, the poetic phenomenon in its synchronic moment, which "delimits and causes the transit" (*ibid.*), especially when it occurs "in a literal (the town square) or a figurative (the internet) public space" (Casas, 2015: 103).

We can illustrate this with another of Banksy's works (*cf.* Image 2) which the Clacton-on-Sea city council removed following a complaint which misinterpreted it as racist. This occurrence clearly shows how hermeneutics can understand both general translatibility and misunderstanding (Leyte, 2013: 225). This case also reminds us of the

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[13] *Cf* also Heidegger *supra* and footnotes 7 and 9.
[14] *Cf* Haroldo de Campos (1997).

hermeneutic interpretation of the thing's move to its predicate, clearly showing the ambiguity of the transit. In the hypothetical proposal mentioned earlier, "This is Poetry", the 'is' would be bidirectional: "It is neither this nor the other, nor the identity between one and the other, it is pure difference. The transit is the difference" (231). In other words, poetic creation is also translation, subject to casual spatiotemporal conditions, at the moment of both production and reception. This condition of transit as difference shows how poetic subjectivity eventually settles in an "in-between" space (*cf.* Bhabha *infra*), which is particularly relevant to works of art of political significance or, as Rancière puts it:

> The dream of a suitable political work of art is in fact the dream of disrupting the relation between the visible, the sayable and the thinkable without having to use the terms of a message as a vehicle. It is the dream of an art that would transmit meanings in the form of a rupture with the very logic of meaningful situations. As a matter of fact, political art cannot work in the simple form of a meaningful spectacle that would lead to an awareness of the state of the world. Suitable political art would ensure, at one and the same time, the production of a double effect: the readability of a political signification and a sensible or perceptual shock caused, conversely, by the uncanny, by that which resists signification. (2013: 59)

The reactions that led to the removal of Banksy's graffito exemplify how this resistance to meaning operates in public space.

PUBLIC SPACE AND POETRY AS TRANSLATION

Poetic transit-translation involves a series of layers or levels which affect its temporal condition. If we interpreted it diachronically, we would only access its logical-grammatical value. Although returning again to Heidegger, the hermeneutical perspective rivals the synchronic perspective, since "the true past has no way back" (Leyte, 2013: 230), unlike the diachronic perspective, it cannot be repeated.

Here, the poetic event marks and defines the present, while the past is only apparently original, and is simultaneously occurring as a past that can never fully reveal itself. In another graffito example (Image 3), the statement from Magritte's well known original work is still present, influenced by Freudian psychology in that the representation is not the thing, the phenomenon, but something else. Here, it remains only as an ultimately inexplorable substratum that tries to but does not fully appear because in this case it relates to, or rather it is subordinated to, the denunciation of supposedly intrinsic brand values. The material culture in question here is present both as a (linguistic) sign and a poetic image. Graffiti as poetic expression eventually becomes a transforming vehicle for contemporary material culture and its aestheticized

technical production. If we consider poetic expression as a process of intervention in public space, such as the search for another 'truth'; the objects and tools that are used also become politicised, as well as its sensitive context, despite being initially incompatible. The process can be illustrated through Badiou's comparison of his idea of truth[15] with aesthetics (initially explained by drawing from politics), where "the concept of forcing, on the ontological level, and the concept of compatibility, on the phenomenological level, already deal with the relation between truth and the situation in which truth is operative" (2013: 109-110). The Graffito in image 3 is an example of a situation where the search for another 'truth' eventually becomes operative. Tension arises between traditional meanings, transforming the habits of perception; this transit-translation shows how a merely ontological experience of poetic experience is practically impossible. The transit-translation that causes this poetic phenomenon is ephemeral, but also philosophical, and

Image 3: Anonymous [Foto by Dimitri dF, Montevideo 2006]

above all, public and political. This allows us to elicit different concepts of public space and of poetic transit-translation that converge from critical theory, postmodern or postcolonial perspectives.

In *Knowledge and Human Interest*, Jürgen Habermas has taken a socio-psychological approach to the issue of public space as a place of translation processes. Drawing on the Freudian model of self-reflection as translation from the unconscious to the conscious, Habermas argues that this situation would entail transparency of the subject and of society in general.[16] Thus from a psychoanalytic perspective this transparency would be an essential condition of public space.[17] This can be compared to the relationship between the poetic action of a political graffito, and its public audience. However, the creator of the graffito in image 3 is not revealed to us. This could indicate that self-reflection as translation, through the image of a person who re-appropriates

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[15] "[…] a unified multiplicity, governed or organized by something that makes compatible that which may not have necessarily been so at the start" (Badiou, 2013: 109).

[16] "This [psychoanalytic] translation reveals the genetically important phases of life history to a memory that was previously blocked, and brings to consciousness the person's own self-formative process. Thus psychoanalytic hermeneutics, unlike the cultural sciences, aims not at the understanding of symbolic structures in general. Rather, the act of understanding to which it leads is self-reflection." (Heidegger 1972: 228)

[17] "The analyst instructs the patient in reading his own texts, which he himself has mutilated and distorted, and in translating symbols from a mode of expression deformed as a private language into the mode of expression of public communication." (ibid.)

previously alienating contents in modern society, is not always as dialectical as Habermas's model. Neither is it so exclusively fixed within a culture or nation state's political space, although in this case we know the graffito comes from Montevideo, Uruguay.

The concept of public space from postmodern and postcolonial perspectives is different. In a historical postmodern space, the subject is deprived of its status when one questions the values of universal logic, uniform identity, metanarratives, and even universal emancipation. Consequently, public space gradually loses its status as an exclusive place for socio-political change. Even the concept of socio-political change gives way to the idea of cultural subversion as a response to the challenges of hegemonic globalisation, which is also central to postcolonial theory. According to Homi K. Bhabha, subversive cultural translation takes place in a hybrid, transgressive, third space, with the help of processes which dilute Western modernity's binary conceptualisations and politics: It is precisely "the 'inter' —the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space— that carries the burden of the meaning of culture." (1994: 38-39). This "in-between space" is the basis for articulating cultural differences and where the colonised subject "takes place" (58). Here, negotiation and translation appear to be the sole means of socio-political change, and can be directly related to the case of alternative poetic-political expressions in public space:

> […] the specific value of a politics of cultural production […] gives depth to the language of social criticism and extends the domain of 'politics' in a direction that will not be entirely dominated by the forces of economic or social control. Forms of popular rebellion and mobilization are often most subversive and transgressive when they are created through oppositional cultural practices. (20)

These political practices, and indeed the poetic practices as seen in image 3, also call to mind Rancière's "double effect" between political significance and sensitive impact (2013: 59), which he considered to be characteristic of political art. Yet this effect could also be extended to theory itself, whose poetic-political role should not be underestimated. Given the need to construct a political discourse and an activism against cultural domination, Bhabha called for a "translation of theory" (1994:27), Rancière followed with an attempt to show the poetic nature of theoretical statements, and how this subverts the limits and hierarchies of discourse (2013: 61). In any case, the notion of cultural translation has proved to be useful for discussing many current poetic forms, from graffiti to performative variants which contest institutionalised aesthetics, and which could be seen as colonisers since, "cultural translation desacralizes the transparent assumptions of cultural supremacy, and in that very act, demands a

contextual specificity, a historical differentiation within minority positions" (Bhabha, 1994: 228).

The arrival of these and other hybrid, postmodern and postcolonial conditions, has deprived public space of its politically autonomous status, and its independent character (*cf* Buden 2003). It could be said that culture itself has become the principal site of political change. As protest is not only confined to the street, social networks and media have become essential, and this required a previous cultural change. The classic notion of public space has also been devoured by the culturalisation of the information and knowledge society. Judith Butler (1996) has argued that current social changes are transgressive, and are no longer a dialectical process, as Habermas has maintained. These changes take place within a mediation process of continuous social and cultural transgressions through democratic negotiations, hence cultural translations and their respective interpretation dilemmas[18]. It is precisely these cultural translations that are capable of highlighting alterity, which set the necessary limits to rules and their universal aspiration[19].

Almost a decade earlier Gayatri Spivak (1987), justified a strategic use of essentialism[20] as a reaction to the continued practice of essentialist identity and identification politics (people, nation etc.) that disregarded the nature of fiction and construction. The idea was of a translation between two incompatible languages: between postmodern anti-essentialist language, and the language of institutionalised political practice, notionally outdated but still prevailing. In the cultural context of nation states which still function as the foundation of geopolitical order, Boris Buden argues that the "only possible way of a communication between them is a kind of translation", and that there is still "a need for the old political agency of the public space as a site of translation between, let's say, an actual act of cultural subversion and

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[18] "The contemporary scene of cultural translation emerges with the presupposition that the utterance does not have the same meaning everywhere, indeed that the utterance has become a scene of conflict (to such a degree, in fact, that we seek to prosecute the utterance in order, finally, to "fix" its meaning and quell the conflicts to which it gives rise). The translation that takes place at this scene of conflict is one in which the meaning intended is no more determinative of a "final" reading than the one that is received, and no final adjudication of conflicting positions can emerge. Without this final judgment, an interpretive dilemma remains, and it is that interpretive dilemma that is the dynamic mark of an emerging democratic practice." (Butler, 2002: 50-51).

[19] "The kind of translation that exposes the alterity within the norm (an alterity without which the norm would not assume its borders and "know" its limits) exposes the failure of the norm to effect the universal reach for which it stands, exposes what we might underscore as the promising ambivalence of the norm." (Butler, 2002: 50).

[20] "[The project to retrieve the subaltern consciousness is] a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest." (Spivak, 1987: 11).

old-fashioned power politics" (2003).

These reflections on a theoretical and methodological framework for poetry and translation in public space can be subsumed under the aforementioned key concept of transit-translation. In the following examples, I will associate four poetic expressions from four related cultural areas, with non-lyric discourse in visual, verbo-visual and

Image 5: Augusto de Campos "cidadecitycité", digital transcreation by Erthos A. de Souza (1975)

performance poetry, in public space. They will be distributed along four thematic lines which I consider crucial to the current description of the phenomenon: (A) the intermedial-intermaterial transition, (B) the transfer from the poetic-political to the commercial, (C) the poetic-political multimedia project, and (D) the conflict between the poetic and the public.

INTERMEDIAL-INTERMATERIAL TRANSITION

atrocaducapacaustiduplielastifeliferofugahistoriloqualubrimendimultipliorganiperiodiplastipublirapareciproustisagasimplitenaveloveravivaunivora

cidade

city

cité

Image 4: Augusto de Campos, "cidadecitycité" (1963)

Brazilian Concrete poetry has undergone a number of important intermedial and intermaterial transformations over the past decades. Published in 1963, Augusto de Campos's poem, "cidadecitycité" (Image 4), is already a classic, and thereby serves as a paradigmatic model of the relationship between poetry, translation, and public space in recent history. It consists of a list of words that characterise the modern city (and public space in the classic sense) without the suffix "-cidade" (city). This only appears at the end of the text, together with its respective translations in English and French, global languages linked to historical notions of the urban. The meaning of the prefix "atro-" is revealed only at the end of the text when it can be read as "atrocidade" (atrocity), thus gaining a dimension of urban criticism. Consequently, there is a recurring transit, over and back, between the predicates themselves, and between the

predicates and the concept of *city*.

In 1975 the poem's text was adapted to digital language by Erthos de Souza (image 5), and in 1987 it was transformed again, not only intermedially, but also intermaterially. In the São Paulo biennial, Julio Plaza displayed the words of the poem on one of the exhibition buildings (image 6), while inside, Cid Campos used the poem in a performance, accompanied by a photo-light installation. During the exhibition, the consubstantiation of this poem with the city became direct and material. As a modern, urban epigraph, its poeticity points at layers of signification beyond the mere poetic inscription on a public building.

The text-poem transited to an object-poem or an installation-poem, since applying it to a building façade highlighted the materiality and colour of its signs. The installation-poem or poetic object was not a mere ornament, but rather a designation of the thing, the modern mega-city, which was omnipresent throughout the exhibition. It is as if the poem itself were saying "This is the city", establishing a transit-translation between its signs, their meanings, the materiality of its signs, and the surrounding urban materiality. That moment denoted a carrier phenomenon for a poeticity which was now part of the transit itself and of the translation movement between what is considered real, poetic and political (the 'concrete' poetic perception of the city) and prefabricated norms and ideas (the institutionalised concepts of city, urbanity, etc.)

The enacted transit-translation affects the language itself, since the final words acquire both a noun value and a suffix value in their respective languages, thereby enabling both interlinguistic and intralinguistic transpositions. In each of the languages the poetic phenomenon simultaneously designates and translates the city,

Image 6: Augusto de Campos, "cidadecitycité", installation by Julio Plaza at the São Paulo Biennial (1987)

though it fails to completely appear. The aforementioned, materialised transits prevent it from fully corresponding with the thing. The image of instability, exteriority and disorder is thus reinforced, the very opposite of what a city is supposed to be. However, the (non-lyric) evocation of its untranslatable and unexhibitable content includes a search for poeticity, and this double bind between the city's designation and deconstruction enables an in-between space which makes future artistic translations of

the same poetic material possible. This is clearly demonstrated by the intermedial and intermaterial transformations that this poem has undergone over time. One of these transformations has been transposing it to a video-poem or 'clip-poema' as it is called in Brazil. Shortly after that, Augusto de Campos's musical adaptation together with Cid Campos (*cf.* image 7) became part of a CD, and later part of a performance which was presented between 1995 and 2003 in Brazil and internationally, while later living on in the digital realm.

Image 7: Augusto de Campos / Cid Campos, "Poesia é Risco" (1995)

Yet, it could be argued that its status as a poetic-political event was at its clearest in the São Paulo Biennial installation, and more diluted in its subsequent hybridizations. With each transit-translation, the poetic condition became more complex and moved further away from the urban material body. With each step forward something had changed and there was no way back: the language, the meaning, the media, and the respective context had evolved. But in each poetic event, there was something unique and untranslatable, namely the poetic phenomenon in its precise synchronic moment as an event in a real or virtual public space, which in itself was the result of a transition. The countless transformations this poem has experienced, from 1960s concrete poetry to the digital era, show the ambiguity of the transit-translation and its bidirectionality, in a very paradigmatic way. An identity between poetic expression and the city did not occur at any of the poem's evolutionary moments: from the text-poem, to its computerised transcreation, to its installation, and performance, to its musical-performance adaptation, to its web circulation. The transit remained as difference, as a third space where the poetic was subject to chance production and reception conditions that would not neutralise its political message.

TRANSIT FROM A POETIC-POLITICAL EVENT TO A COMMERCIAL EVENT.

Naturally, there are countless examples of the commercialisation of poetic action in public space, in many varying degrees. The work of the aforementioned Banksy is one of the most prominent and complex examples. However, I would prefer to focus now on a less globalised poetic example that nonetheless represents a variation of paradigmatic commercialisation, without authorial intent or request, and which derives from a political graffito.

Political paintings and graffiti had marked Portugal's urban landscape in the years following the 1974 Revolution.[21] The onset of the 21st century economic crisis saw their proliferation and diversification, making Lisbon one of the most important spaces internationally for street artists. A noteworthy painting from this second wave is an anonymous graffito which shows a likeness of Fernando José Salgueiro Maia, one of the revolution's most emblematic captains (Image 8). In

Image 8: Anonymous, [Salgueiro Maia], foto by B. Baltrusch (Almada, 2013)

the current climate marked by controversial Troika imposed austerity and excessive European Union control, poverty has rapidly increased, coinciding with a significant loss in Portuguese national sovereignty. Evoking the revolutionary significance of this now legendary figure was a clear and subversive demand for a second revolution. Ironically, or indeed cynically, photographs of the graffiti appeared on sale on a microstock agency

Image 9: anonymous, [Salgueiro Maia], foto by P. V. Martins (Lisboa, 2012)

website almost simultaneously. The appropriation and commercialisation of this artistic action's poetic-political discourse illustrates how the hermeneutics of the transit-translation process encompass not only translatability and misunderstanding, but also the intentional abuse at reception level, even more so when we see it was taken by a certain P. V. Martins, from the same country affected by the crisis and the accompanying misery (Image 9).

In addition, the commercial appropriation of poetic expression also shows how it can lose its independent nature in a public space, and how this public space can

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[21] This phenomenon has been documented in a visual essay by Ricardo Campos (2014), which brought together contemporary graffiti that was critical of the current Portuguese government and its economic politics. José Luís Cardoso, director of the University of Lisbon's Institute of Social Sciences and editor of the prestigious journal *Análise Social*, caused controversy when he ordered a temporary suspension of issue number 121 featuring Campos' essay. This act of self-censorship was in response to pressure from various sources, and prompted numerous protests. This episode reveals a series of transit-translations: the socio-political situation to the artistic-poetic phenomenon, its journalistic and academic reception, (self-)censorship and the subsequent protests, etc.

simultaneously be deprived of its autonomous political status. The initial 'double effect' between political significance and sensory impact became neutralised through the reification of poetic expression. This example of transition to the commercial fits Rancière's definition for "aesthetic art" in a very practical way if we link his idea of aesthetics to our aforementioned definition of the poetic and poeticity:

> There is a metapolitics of aesthetics which frames the possibilities of art. Aesthetic art promises a political accomplishment that it cannot satisfy, and thrives on that ambiguity. That is why those who want to isolate it from politics are somewhat beside the point. It is also why those who want it to fulfil its political promise are condemned to a certain melancholy. (2002: 151)

Martins' appropriation of the original graffito can be related to Rancière's *dissensus*, conceived as a political dynamics that can open up new possibilities beyond the consensual and normative, which has been invested in the commercialised event and its virtual circulation. Thus, the graffito's potential to destabilise, which included a new subjectivity and a new reality project, has been truncated by the ambiguity of transit-translation's hermeneutic freedom and the difficulty in controlling it.

THE POETIC-POLITICAL MULTIMEDIA PROJECT

A very different form of attempting to control this ambiguity can be found in another phenomenon in current poetic expression in public space which can be characterised as a poetic-political multimedia project. The increasing technological possibilities of the digital age have led to a proliferation of this kind of poetic-political action. As I will briefly outline in the following three examples, here I understand these projects as enduring works of a certain poetological consistency, which fit into a solid, reasoned, theoretical and social framework.

The first example is the Portuguese artist and designer, Miguel Januário, known professionally as ±MaisMenos± ('more or less'), who offers a comprehensive project in methodological and media terms. His work brings together graffiti, performance, visual art, video, and object art, among other elements. Januário has been active in Portuguese public space for almost a decade, and now some of his objects can be found in exhibitions, museums and even the art market. He began with a graphic design proposal which linked the expression 'more or less' to certain Portuguese character stereotypes, and the country's current economic and political crisis. He subsequently defined his activity as an intervention project which aims to reflect on the models of political, social and economic organisation in Western society, intentionally seeking a simplified, programmatic expression through oppositions such as more/less, positive/negative, or white/black. A Portuguese/English bilingual artistic project grew

from this, which moved between performance and graffiti, employing neologisms such as *quotaction* or *streetment*. In a controversial performance during the European Capital of Culture 2012 programme in Guimarães, Januário dramatised the stabbing of a statue of Portugal's founding king, and organised the symbolic burial of the country itself.

All these activities have been documented in film and photograph on the Internet.[22] His website also includes what he calls *objections*, a hybrid of graffiti and street installation. They operate both online and in physical space, subverting emblematic consumerist values, and Portuguese cultural values, such as the national anthem or the famous revolutionary song, "Grândola, Vila Morena". As a poetic-political project with a planned strategy in the public sphere, ±MaisMenos± is a model of an anti-system political message that does not exclude the commercial dimension. It is professionally produced, like a commercial brand, combining graffiti and artistic action with the digital world and the circuit of institutionalised exhibitions[23]. In conferences and TEDx Talks[24], Januário has reflected on the problem of preserving the poetic-political impetus of his actions when faced with the need to earn an income from his artistic work.

Another example of a poetic-political project is that of the Spanish poet and graffiti artist, Batania Neorrabioso, whose interventionist and artistic work also takes place in the public space. His minimalist poetic graffiti show a predilection for precise, direct and sometimes aggressive language, always characterised by a pronounced metaphoricity. Based in Madrid, where he prefers to graffiti public buildings, this poetic activist has self-published two books (2012, 2014) with poems and images of graffiti-poems, which range from socio-political and philosophical reflection to love poetry. He gains exposure through social media (blogs, Twitter and Facebook), where he has published quite an extensive oeuvre[25]. He survives on very limited resources, and apart from the poetic-political project, his is a lifetime project where life and art

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[22] *Cf.* the website <http://www.maismenos.net> and the channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/plusqueminusque>; together with other artists he has also created the website <https://ministeriodacontrapropaganda.wordpress.com/> featuring subversive advertising posters. [Accessed 06/05/2015]

[23] Apart from participating in the programme of "Guimarães – Capital Europeia da Cultura" in 2012, his work has also featured in the travelling exhibition, "Street Art - Um Panorama Urbano" (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia, 2014), together with artists such as Banksy, Jef Aerosol and Rero from France, the Brazilian Nunca and the Italian group StenLex.

[24] *Cf.* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3RO7tCxhQ0>. [Accessed 06/05/2015]

[25] *Cf.* http://batania.blogspot.com>, <http://neorrabioso.blogspot.com>, <http://lapoesiahavueltoyclaroquetienelaculpa.blogspot.com> and <https://es-es.facebook.com/pages/Batania-Neorrabioso/187580034398> [Accessed 06/05/2015].

overlap. His poetic project is thus based on a certain idea of life as art, and of the riciprocal transit-translation between both. This can be linked, from a diachronic perspective, to aspects of avant-garde, mainly from early modernism (e.g. Fluxus) and up to the present day. There is no doubt that poetic projects like those from ±MaisMenos± and Batania Neorrabioso form part of a current universal phenomenon.[26]

A third example comes from a public, urban space in Lisbon during the last decade, which has focused on visuality and social, but also political action. In 2009, the English photographer Camilla Watson began printing photographic portraits of the residents of the traditional, historic, Lisbon neighbourhood of Mouraria, directly onto the exterior walls of their houses.[27] They were chosen by the neighbourhood residents themselves, and the idea was to show how the subjects fuse with the place. Mouraria is one of Lisbon's oldest and most traditional neighbourhoods; in historical and even essentialist terms, one could call it an 'original' public, urban space. Watson's project contains various intermaterial and intermedial features, as

Image 10: Camilla Watson, [neighbour of the Beco das Farinhas, Lisbon], foto by B. Baltrusch (2011)

well as a socio-political facet which sought to honour Mouraria's senior citizens and their lifestyle. There was also an intervention of the material and discursive space itself; an intermedial-intermaterial transit in the photographs of the residents applied to their material homes.

Beco das Farinhas, one of the neighbourhood's main streets, sees a daily flow of tourists walking up to Lisbon's São Jorge Castle. The photographs printed on the walls have themselves been photographed countless times, thereby creating a transit-

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[26] *Cf.* also <https://es-la.facebook.com/accionpoeticaenchile> [Accessed 26/05/2015]).

[27] The project is described on Watson's website <http://www.camillawatsonphotography.net> and in a short documentary available at <https://vimeo.com/23090337> [Accessed 06/05/2015].

translation in which the project has gone beyond the limits of its initial proposal. Even more so if we consider that the prints have occasionally been covered by Lisbon's ubiquitous graffiti (and vice versa), leading to a coexistence which often includes political messages. For example, the graffito in Image 11 says, "It is time to start thinking for you[rself]" and someone has corrected it to read, "...for rage". The result is a continuous dialogue between the 'original' project and other poetic-political expression, a translation in a synchronic temporality where the transit is always irreversible: from person to portrait, to space and other interventions in this space, together with the overlapping of art and life, and to socio-political and museulisation, among others. There is also the physical aspect, where residents, houses, photographs, graffiti, and the public observer converge, and whose temporal, poetic presence can be read and described according to Jon Clay's definition of performance as, "a sensational and temporal unfolding of a poem in conjunction with a self and body of a reader" (2010: 61). Thus the poetic expression of these photographs encrusted in walls and interwoven with graffiti surpasses the initial action's intention. Individual corporeality is added to the body "of an actualized poem, that exists only in this conjunction and that is a movement of a poem in performance" (61).

CONFLICT BETWEEN POETIC INTERVENTION AND PUBLIC SPACE.

Obviously, there have been certain conflictive moments in the majority of the examples mentioned, political as well as legal or ethical, given that they are inscribed directly onto urban material. I shall illustrate this with one final example of a long-term poetic project from the Austrian poet Helmuth Seethaler, who goes by the name "Zettelpoet" in German, which roughly means 'note poet' or 'post-it poet'. In keeping with his belief that art should be omnipresent in public space, since 1974 Seethaler has stuck or posted hundreds of thousands of small notes containing poems or aphorisms on posts, trees, in metro stations and other public spaces in Vienna. He designated these as "collectable poems", and published a selection of them in 1995.[28]

Seethaler received more than 2,000 official complaints over the course of more than three decades, almost all of which were dismissed. However, 2010 saw his highly contested conviction for serious material damage, which was eventually overturned. Yet this episode did not mark the end of Seethaler's poetic activism, rather it led to a public debate on the relationship between artistic freedom, public space and civil and

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[28]   In recent years, his activity has been documented online <http://www.hoffnung.at/hoffnung/indexneu.html>, <http://helmutseethaler.jimdo.com/> y <https://www.facebook.com/wiener.zetteldichter> [Accessed 06/05/2015].

criminal law. Given Seethaler's limited income and life-long dedication to this task, this case is characteristic of the poetic-political project and the overlapping of life and art, through the ongoing conflict between the poetic and the institutionalised norms of artistic expression and performance in public space.

CONCLUSION

In all these examples of contemporary poetic expression, as presented from a transit-translation perspective,[29] we can see moments of return of the excluded, of empowerment, and of emancipation of the subject. Of most interest have been the phenomena which, despite contradictions and ambiguities, search for a renewed public space and new ways of becoming poetic-political occurrences that can be converted into discourse. This occurrence, or event, according to Badiou, implies always "the formal promotion of a domain that had been considered extraneous to art" (2013: 68-69).

Moreover, the choice of current poetic expression intended to focus on the aspect of the event where the enunciating subject loses its centrality. The very notion of the event prevails over that of the language and the poetic action. Whether as a process of truth (Badiou) or *dissensus* (Rancière), it works as an intervention in significant material spaces, in the things themselves and in their usual order. Even if the analysis of each case has not always been sufficiently complete, this is apparent from the medial and material transitions, from the relationships between the commercial and the poetic-political, and from the strategically planned poetic projects, each in conflict with the public sphere to varying degrees. All of them feature a search for poeticity and a non-lyric poetic (socio-political) translation in the public space, from either the perspective of hermeneutical transition or cultural translation.

For these reasons, the concept of transit-translation has been useful in the context of an ontological search for a fresh spatiotemporal interpretation. The basically non-lyric character implies a double bind between a new proposal for poeticity, and the realisation that intent and meaning will have to be abandoned at some point, thereby requiring a constant repetition of the translation process. Here, translation meets poetry in their shared role of criticism and resistance to essentialist and authoritarian

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[29] Taking into account the ephemeral nature of the majority of the examples, it should be noted that some important questions have not been addressed because of lack of space (such as affixing, temporality or institutionalisation, and their respective systemic impacts). Also pending address is the complexity of material documentation (recording, collecting etc.) versus immaterial documentation (in cultural memory etc.) and the back and forth between production, realisation and reception and their respective hermeneutical implications.

conceptualisations of discourse and symbols; or as Bhabha articulated, "It is by placing the violence of the poetic sign within the threat of political violation that we can understand the powers of language" (1994: 60). In public space, this poetic creation and intervention as translation, plays with the traditional politics of power by continuing to use its forms and symbols, but eventually converting it into an act of cultural subversion, which opens up alternative spaces to poetic freedom. It is an idea of constant change which in turn creates an up-to-date, differential stability.

If the poetic can be restricted to questions and contexts of reception, poeticity refers to the poetic's discursive and normativising field, and the excluded, untranslatable and inexplorable in their respective historical present. According to Benjamin, works of art are both evidence of the philosophy of history, and expressions of metaphysical, political and economic tendencies of their time (cf. 1991: VI, 117 and 219). In all these examples of poetic action or poetic events, translations of traditions and their opposition to power and knowledge structures, reveal a desire to resignify the real, through practices characterised by intertextuality and indeterminacy. Their place is neither inside nor totally outside the system, rather in a new, constantly transfiguring in-between space.

Repeating the symbols, signs and production techniques of graffiti, performance or poetic action establishes differentiating facets when practiced in specific contexts. They aspire not only to an artistic-cultural translation, but often to very specific social translations, namely processes that are inseparable from political thought[30]. Their performative nature provides a backdrop for cultural and epistemological differences, and also the inherent problem of representation. This relates to Benjamin's idea of a translation as a preliminary way of dealing with the "foreignness of languages to each other" (1997: 157).[31]

Perhaps these forms of non-lyric poetry might even represent the advent of a new public sphere, to the effect that their new forms and practices could now be, "something else which does not concern *us*" (Casas 2012: 3) as subjects exclusively shaped by an idealistic, romantic tradition. To a certain degree, in some of these poetic expressions, such as Banksy's graffito discussed earlier, we could even deduce a poetic dimension which is disassociating itself from a uniquely human, central, foundational

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[30] *Cf.* also Bhabha: "The subaltern or metonymic are neither empty nor full, neither part nor whole. Their compensatory and vicarious processes of signification are a spur to social translation, the production of something else besides which is not only the cut or gap of the subject but also the intercut across social sites and disciplines. This hybridity initiates the project of political thinking by continually facing it with the strategic and the contingent, with the countervailing thought of its own 'unthought'" (1994: 64).

[31] *Cf.* also Bhabha, 1994: 227.

value – although this may seem epistemologically impossible.[32] One such non-anthropocentric notion of the poetic - that of a universal poetry, without immediate affiliation to a subject or individualised subjective - could locate itself in a new public sphere where one is no longer exclusively Western or formed by an idealistic, romantic tradition. Or where, as Rancière contemplates, "the whole history of art forms and of the politics of aesthetics in the aesthetic regime of art could be staged as the clash of these two formulae: a new life needs a new art; the new life does not need art" (2002: 10). Analogous to Benjamin's "pure language", we could speak of the poetic as an echo of something unattainable which only survives through constant transfigurations and transpositions that are indispensable to fostering an always primary and fundamental becoming. This could also apply in a political sense though it would be a hermeneutic ambiguity which suggests a reconfiguration of the subject and of poetic subjectivity.

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[32] Because according to our Western logic, without 'human' reception, who or what would (re)construct 'the poetic'? However, there are other indigenous epistemologies, as described e.g. by the anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro (2009) that are contrary to our Western logic. They understand culture, despite its plurality, as something universal (inherent also to the animal world), and nature (body, matter) as the individual par excellence.

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