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## THE MARKS OF ORALITY IN THE GRAPHIC NOVEL *ARRUGAS* (ANALYSIS OF THE ITALIAN TRANSLATION)

Rosa María Rodríguez Abella

rosa.rodriguez@univr.it  
Università di Verona (Italia)

### Abstract

In Spain, *Arrugas* has earned surprising critical and public acclaim among both regular and non-regular readers of comics. In this article, through a series of examples drawn from the novel, we will analyse the solutions the translator Alessandra Papa adopted to solve the difficulties that this hybrid communicative situation poses in the target language.

**Keywords:** Translation studies. Constrained translation. Marks of orality. Comic book. Translation method.



## 1. Introduction

In 2008, Paco Roca won the Spanish National Comic Award for his graphic novel *Arrugas* (published in November 2007, *Wrinkles* in English). His account of an experience of Alzheimer's disease brings together different languages and linguistic, iconic or artistic signs.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the story is told through images and the verbal language presented in speech balloons, voices off and the cases of onomatopoeia that are often found in the images.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the verbal narration, as Zanettin (1998: 1) points out, it “è [...] inserita in un contesto visivo che esercita una forte influenza sulle scelte traduttive”. In addition, the framework within which this textual genre is placed imposes a series of limitations, meaning that this type of text is usually included under the label of “constrained translation” (Mayoral Asensio, Kelly & Gallardo 1986), because although “i due codici espressivi, parole e immagini, convergono a formare un linguaggio unitario” (Zanettin 1998: 1), the reality is that the translator can only manipulate the verbal code. The translator, therefore, must always adapt the translation to the associations imposed by the iconic code.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Comic, graphic novel and orality

Any attempt to analyse the comic, whether as a language or as a means of mass communication, is not without its difficulties; even today there is still no consensus over its definition. However, one of the most insightful definitions

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1. According to Barbieri (2010: 229), the comic is “un médium al tempo stesso figurativo e narrativo”, given that “alla composizione del significato delle immagini del fumetto concorrono componenti sia narrative che non narrative”. The critic also adds that “non è possibile rendere conto degli effetti di senso delle immagini se si esclude l'una o l'altra”.

2. For a detailed description of the space reserved for verbal language, see Gasca and Gubern (2011).

3. On the difficulties of translating the comic genre, see comprehensive studies by Rota (2001), Carreras i Goicoechea, Flores Acuña and Provezza (2008), Zanettin (2008) and Podeur (2012).

on the problematic of the comic is, in our view, that of the French cartoonist Bernard Duc (1982: 6):

Il y a bien des façons de définir une bande dessinée... Celui-ci vous dira que c'est un 'moyen de communication de masse', associant étroitement l'image et le langage, et c'est vrai. Un spécialiste des arts graphiques affirmera qu'il s'agit plutôt d'un genre de littérature dessinée, et c'est encore vrai. Mais un autre soutiendra que la bande dessinée est au fond plus proche du cinéma que de la littérature, et c'est une définition qui ne manque pas non plus de vérité.

S'il est difficile de définir avec précision la bande dessinée, c'est qu'elle se situe précisément au carrefour de plusieurs moyens d'expression artistique: l'art graphique, l'art cinématographique et la littérature. Elle est tout à la fois dessin, cinéma, écriture, se conjuguant entre eux pour former un art nouveau, doté d'un ensemble de moyens d'expressions extrêmement complet et varié [...].

Broadly speaking, most scholars (Ramírez Domínguez 1975; Rodríguez Diéguez 1977; Baur 1978; Muñoz Zielinski 1982) agree that the language of the comic is characterised primarily by a deep interrelationship between the iconic code and the verbal code. However, some authors (Coma 1979; McCloud 2005; Groensteen 2012) argue that the visual takes precedence over the verbal. Indeed, there are examples of 'silent' comics with no words, such as *Arzach* (1975) by Moebius or more recently *3 segundos* (2012) by Marc-Antoine Mathieu, although the narrative possibilities of these panels are undoubtedly very limited. What actually happens, as in real life, is that the two languages combine in perfect synergy to transmit the message because:

qualsiasi immagine è polisemica, così come può esserlo l'elemento verbale, e proprio nell'interazione l'ambiguità viene risolta a favore di una delle possibili interpretazioni. Inoltre l'immagine, di per sé statica, acquista spessore temporale grazie alle parole nel balloon e nelle eventuali didascalie. Allo stesso modo è attraverso le parole che le immagini si uniscono in un continuum logico e viene reso comprensibile lo svolgimento dell'azione (Morgana 2003: 166).<sup>4</sup>

The indissolubility of text and image on the printed page, as well as one of the characteristic features of this hybrid genre, can also be a source of conflict when translating this type of text, although the reality is that the comic simply reproduces two fundamental aspects of human communication: the oral utterance and the visual perception of the communicative situation (Morgana 2003: 166).

4. Morgana (2003: 166) also stresses that the comic is a dynamic, evolving medium whose language is in constant interaction with other languages.

Turning now to the term ‘graphic novel’,<sup>5</sup> García (2010: 269) notes that this label emerged as “a term agreed – or otherwise – to identify an adult comic as opposed to the traditional children’s comic”.<sup>6</sup> According to García (2011: 258), ‘graphic novel’ is the name the general public use to distinguish:

a contemporary, adult and artistic comic that has come out of very diverse sources and through varied currents [...]. Very diverse works, but connected by a sense of difference from the industrial comic spawned from timeless traditions of genres, characters, young people’s subjects, and dominated by professional publishing houses. The graphic novel format —namely the book, resembling a volume of conventional literature more than the classic comic album— has been the preferred conduit for this type of comic and this format has enabled it to break out of the specialised bookshop and the newsagent, where it could not grow, and move towards mainstream bookshops.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, the syntagm ‘graphic novel’ appears to have taken root in the current publishing landscape to refer to a series of works of very varied topics characterised, above all, by their creative freedom and ambition.<sup>8</sup> Paco Roca defends the use of this term to refer to some of his works. In an interview marking the publication of his novel *El invierno del dibujante* (2010), in which he tells the story of five star comic artists who leave the publishing house Bruguera to found the magazine *Tío Vivo*, Roca says:

the medium continues to be the same, but the words “cartoon story”, “comic” and “graphic novel” mark the boundaries. They created children’s cartoon stories; they didn’t consider doing anything that would not interest children. The comic then reached a different audience because it dealt with horror, science fiction, sex and so on. And then came the graphic novel, which gives you total freedom to do what you want and how you want, without restrictions. Basically what separates us is ambition (cited in Barrios 2010: 5).

Nonetheless, as Ramírez (2010: 12) tells us, “the nature of the medium, which is not easily placed within the ‘art institution’ nor that of literature” means

5. García (2010: 33) reports the first use of the expression ‘graphic novel’ in 1978 on the cover of Will Eisner’s *A Contract with God*. In general, most scholars agree that the graphic novel is typically a single, usually complex, medium-length story.

6. The first definition of the word *tebeo* (comic) in the Spanish Royal Academy dictionary (DRAE) is: “(from *TBO*, the name of the Spanish magazine founded in 1917). 1. m. Children’s magazine with stories told through a series of drawings”.

7. For a description of the graphic novel genre, see the comprehensive study by Santiago García (2011).

8. According to Díaz de Guereñu (2014: 10), the current widespread use of the term ‘graphic novel’ attempts to distinguish “with an appropriate label, works that seem obviously different from those designated by the usual terms to date”, works, as the critic stresses, that mark “a radical change in the use of medium” (2014: 11).

that despite its remarkable development, even today the “elevated aesthetic and cultural values of the comics medium” still have to be defended (Ramírez 2010: 12).<sup>9</sup>

The prototypical features of the comic, what many regard as the ninth art, are based on a series of semiotic conventions that the inveterate reader acquires and learns to decode with ease: iconography, literary expression and narrative techniques.<sup>10</sup>

In what follows, our analysis centres on the translation of one aspect of literary expression, namely the feigned orality present in the speech balloons,<sup>11</sup> the voices off,<sup>12</sup> and the onomatopoeia.<sup>13</sup>

In this paper we understand that the term ‘feigned orality’ or ‘constructed orality’ “does not designate a single homogenous phenomenon but rather covers a multitude and great variety of oral manifestations in written form” (Brumme 2008: 7). That is, certain linguistic resources deemed typically oral—repetition, hesitation, re-formulation, the use of vocatives, interjections, onomatopoeia, ideophones, and so on—are used to evoke the authenticity and natural feel of spoken language.

### 3. The marks of orality in *Arrugas* and its translation into Italian

*Arrugas* is a graphic novel originally produced for the French market by Delcourt publishing group, where it came out in March 2007 under the title

9. For Eco (1973: 155), the comic presents precise stylistic characteristics and emerges as a literary genre that is “autonomo, dotato di propri elementi strutturali, di una tecnica comunicativa originale, fondata sull’esistenza di un codice condiviso dai lettori e a cui l’autore si rifà per articolare, secondo leggi formative inedite, un messaggio che si rivolge, insieme, all’intelligenza, all’immaginazione, al gusto dei propri lettori”.

10. Among the typical elements of the *grammatica del fumetto*, Morgana (2012) highlights: “la forma della vignetta e del balloon, le didascalie, il lettering, le onomatopée (in inglese, spesso parole provviste di significato, come gulp, sigh, crash), la punteggiatura emotiva e autonoma dal testo scritto (passata nelle scritture giovanili e informali), le metafore visualizzate, i segni cinetici ecc”.

11. That is, in the “symbolic boxes or containers that encapsulate the dialogues of the characters speaking in the panel, whose origin is shown by a pointer or tail indicating the person speaking the written utterance” (Gasca and Gubern 2011: 279).

12. Gasca and Gubern (2011: 377) state that voice off in comics is used “in the form of utterances from characters we do not see because they are assumed to be outside the territorial boundaries marked by the edge of the panel, or because they are supposedly hidden from the reader by objects such as doors or screens”.

13. Another important aspect is that of lettering, since clearly, “the graphic treatment of the literary texts [...] can add decisive connotations to the text’s meaning” (Gasca and Gubern 2011: 319). For a thorough analysis of the semiotic conventions of comics see Gasca and Gubern (2011).

*Rides*. As Roca explained in an interview (García 2008: 62), he was obliged to make some formal changes to adapt the work to the French editors' tastes:

it is true that the French market requires you to do certain things. I even had to Frenchify certain pages to keep the editor happy. For example, when Emilio had a flashback and returns to the classroom where he studied as a boy, in the Spanish version there was a crucifix and a map of Europe on the wall. I was told to remove the crucifix because France had been a secular country for many years, and it was also suggested that I change the map of Europe for one of France. I changed this, I changed the New Year's Eve dinner menu to make it typically French, and the timetable in the old people's home. But that's the French mentality. In Spain no editor would dream of asking a French author to change such things.

Apart from these small modifications, the script and the rest of *Arrugas* were all written in Spanish. Once Roca had finished the novel, with the dialogues inserted in the speech balloons, it was translated into French.<sup>14</sup> The comic book was also published in Spain in November 2007 by the publishers Astiberri.<sup>15</sup> In Italy, it was brought out by the publishers Tunué in 2008 with the title *Rughe*.

The project, as Roca reveals in the comic album *Emotional World Tour* (Gallardo and Roca 2009: 22), came out of a series of personal experiences. The first circumstance to spark his interest in creating a story about old age was the realisation that his parents were getting older. His desire to understand his parents led Roca to ask them about what "people feel, what they expect from life, their loneliness" (Roca 2012) when they become older.<sup>16</sup>

The second factor was his recognition of the social reality that "people don't want to see elderly people in advertising" (Gallardo & Roca 2009: 23). This realisation aroused his desire to "understand a life stage —old age— that society has a significant phobia about" (Roca 2013a: 177).<sup>17</sup>

And finally, the artist notes that "when you're talking about old age the subject of Alzheimer's will inevitably come up" (Roca 2013a: 177), because Emilio, the father of his good friend MacDiego, had Alzheimer's disease and

14. Information provided by the author in an electronic message (07/02/2015).

15. In 2008 Paco Roca won the Spanish National Comic Award for this work. In 2012 the novel was brought to the screen and won two Goya awards: Best Animated Film and Best Adapted Screenplay.

16. In an interview given to [www.valenciaplaza.com](http://www.valenciaplaza.com) (20/01/2012) the author also said, "that's when I started thinking about doing a comic about old people's homes, and I started doing research, talking to doctors, nurses and people who had relatives in old people's homes."

17. Roca also notes that his choice of subject was partly due to his realisation that "old age is a subject that has rarely been dealt with directly not only in comics, but also in literature or film" (Azpitarte 2009: 158).

he could see “how the illness mercilessly debilitates the sufferer and also has a devastating effect on the relatives caring for them” (Roca 2013a: 177-178).

All these experiences flow harmoniously together in *Arrugas*. Furthermore, according to Díaz de Guereñu (2013: 105), what motivates one to read and re-read the work is “its strength, its capacity to affect the reader, to stir their emotions and move them to reflect; in sum, its artistic value”. The critic also proclaims it a work “destined to last, unhesitatingly convinced of the expressive capability of the comic, which it ennoble with resources of singular eloquence” (2013: 105).

One of the most fascinating of the resources Díaz de Guereñu refers to is undoubtedly Roca’s rejection of narrative voice, about which Roca says, “I wanted the characters to be understood through their gestures so the reader would become more involved in the story” (Azpitarte 2009: 162). In this way, the author shows “what his characters experience and avoids any temptation to comment on it” (Díaz de Guereñu 2013: 110). The omission of the narrative voice is the reason for the absence of any captions with text in the pages of *Arrugas*.<sup>18</sup>

Another clever resource is the skilful use of “the graphic dimensions of the comic to open a window into its characters’ minds” (Díaz de Guereñu 2013: 115). Indeed, the story often enters the mind of a character, allowing the reader to share their fantasies and feelings (Díaz de Guereñu 2013: 114).<sup>19</sup> For example, on this page (Fig.1)<sup>20</sup> he tells us how Emilio, a retired bank manager with clear symptoms of Alzheimer’s, goes to live in an old people’s home without using any narrative text caption. By evoking the character’s first

18. Captions are “boxes inserted in the panel or between two consecutive panels [...] and the text inscribed in them functions to clarify or explain the content of the image or the action, facilitate or complete its narrative continuity, or reproduce the commentary of the virtual narrator. Their functions are clearly just as wide as what Roland Barthes called *anchorage* (to dispel through words the polysemy or ambiguity of an image) and *commutation* (when the linguistic message complements the images to take the narrative forward)” (Gasca and Gubern 2011: 273).

19. Díaz de Guereñu (2013: 115) gives the example we present in Figure 1 to show how by using a shot and reverse shot effect the illustrator takes us back to Emilio’s childhood and evokes the panic he felt on his first day at school. The mental images of other characters such as Señora Rosario (2013: 18) and Carmencita (2013: 44) are found throughout the book.

20. The copyright of the images belongs to the author and the corresponding publishers. Their use in this paper is purely informative, for teaching and research purposes.



day at school, the author manages to convey the feeling of a knotted stomach one has on arriving somewhere for the first time (Azpitarte 2009: 165).<sup>21</sup>

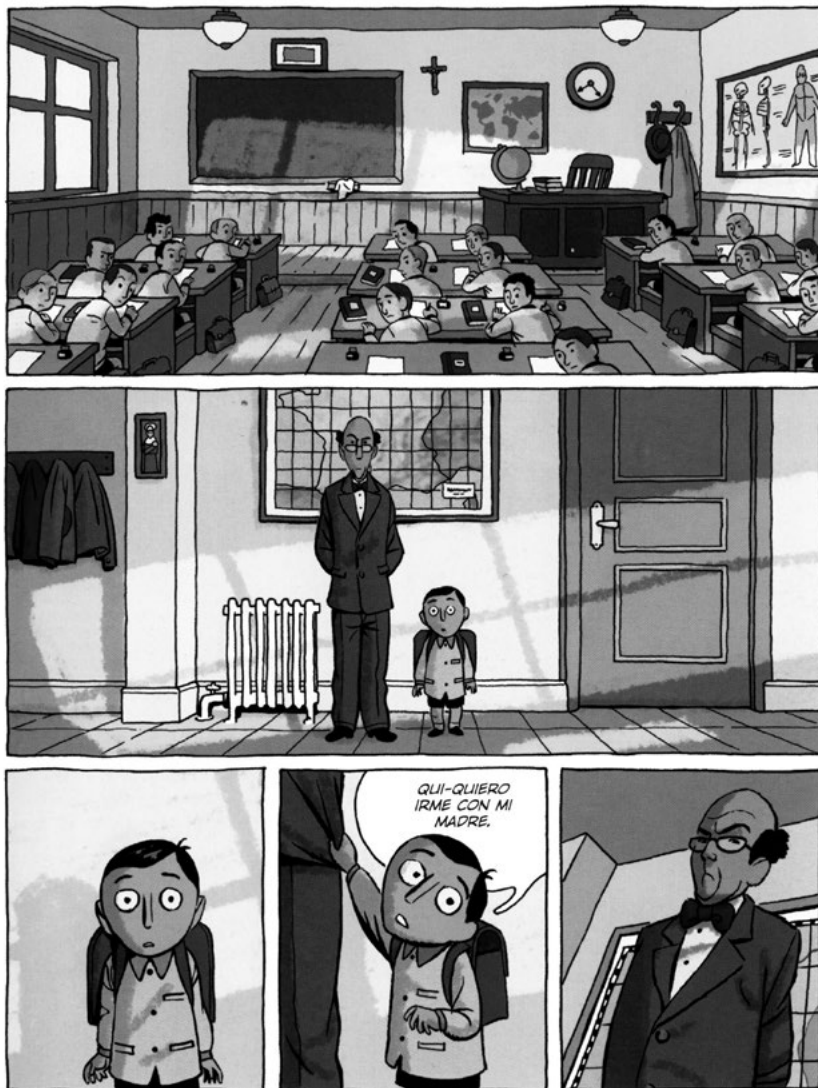


Figure 1

21. On this different way of narrating, Roca says that he believes the success of *Arrugas* “has opened up many people’s eyes to the possibilities of the medium like the comic to tell another type of story” (Azpitarte 2009: 169).

However, as we pointed out in the introduction, the verbal and iconic codes usually combine to make up a single language. Indeed, the marvellous pairing of text and image can also be appreciated in the following panel where the reader now contemplates how, after saying his goodbyes, Emilio, impotent and with a sinking heart, mutters the vulgar insult '*gilipollas*' (dickhead or asshole), aimed at his son (Roca 2013a: 13). The term is also picked up by Juan, a former newsreader who now only repeats what he hears.<sup>22</sup>

In the panel, the "*complicità segnica*" (Morgana 2003: 167), with the readers allows the protagonist's intonation to be portrayed in such a way that this prosodic feature—the murmured uttering—is specified by using a smaller font size for the vulgar adjective that appears in Emilio's speech bubble.



Figure 2

This well-known semiotic convention, typical of the genre, is used here to reflect the protagonist's emotional state. The author has obviously chosen a deliberately vulgar register that to some degree contrasts with the protagonist's personality, precisely to better demonstrate his anger and frustration. However,

22. Silvia Morgana (2012), however, holds that, "a parlare, con apparente ossimoro, sono però prevalentemente le immagini, in genere caratterizzate da forte denotatività e informatività".

in the target text (TT) the translator renders this insult as *cretini* (Roca 2013b: 9), departing from the tone of the discourse in the original text. Furthermore, there is no doubt that the Italian *cretino* falls a long way short of conveying all the expressive nuances contained in the term *gilipollas*.<sup>23</sup>

On other occasions the verbal code is cleverly used to “trigger an experience in the reader resembling the confusion of an old person with Alzheimer’s” (Díaz de Guereño 2013: 115). For example, the instructor leading the mobility exercises asks the group to pass the ball in the opposite direction (2013a: 30-31), that is, to the person on their left. In this case (Fig. 3), the artist alters the conventions of the genre<sup>24</sup> and by doing so subverts the reader’s expectations, such that what we read is not the real dialogue between the characters “but the confused version as perceived by the protagonist” (Díaz de Guereño 2013: 115). Unfortunately, in the TT the author’s original expressive solution, the word *talope*, an anagram of *pelota* (ball in Spanish), is corrected and translated as *palla* (ball in Italian) (2013b: 26-27), the ambivalence of the original therefore being lost completely.

Note also that the verbal code in the original text (OT) fits perfectly with each different communication context. One of the most significant examples occurs when the protagonist, having discovered by chance that he has Alzheimer’s, due to a mistake by the nurse (Roca 2013a: 55), visits the doctor in the old people’s home (2013a: 56-58). Here the artist uses the dialogue to introduce new conceptual elements about the illness, such as diagnosis, medical condition, treatment, etc. In the three-page dialogue between the doctor and Emilio, a particularly dramatic exchange because of the way it seeks to inform the patient about the characteristics of his illness, we see how in approaching the subject, the specialist adapts his manner of speaking to the communicative situation. The result, therefore, is a specialised discourse aimed at informing the general public —the novel’s readers— and Emilio himself.<sup>25</sup> The panels presented below as an example (Fig. 4) show one of the most notable features of this communicative situation, namely, the precise way the doctor expresses himself.

23. According to Beinhauer (1991: 56), *gilipollas* is used to describe an “idiot who behaves in a cowardly and stupid way”.

24. Indeed, as Eco (1973: 150) highlights, the basic element of the *semantics* of the comic is “anzitutto il segno convenzionale della ‘nuvoletta’ (che è appunto il ‘fumetto’, lo ‘echo-plasme’, il ‘balloon’) il quale, se tratteggiato secondo alcune convenzioni, e terminante in una lama che indica il viso del parlante, significa ‘discorso espresso’”.

25. In sum, one of the speakers is a specialist in the field dealt with in the story; he belongs to a specific professional group. The purpose of the communicative situation is to inform and it is formal in tone.

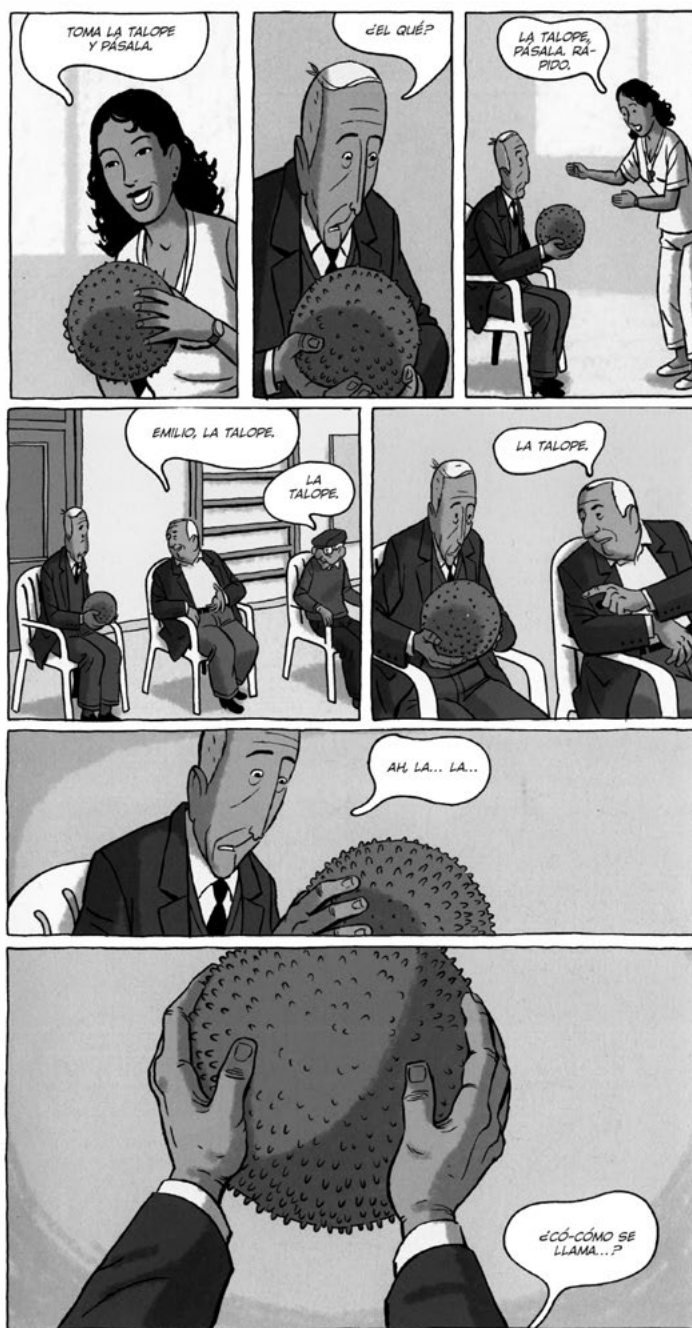


Figure 3

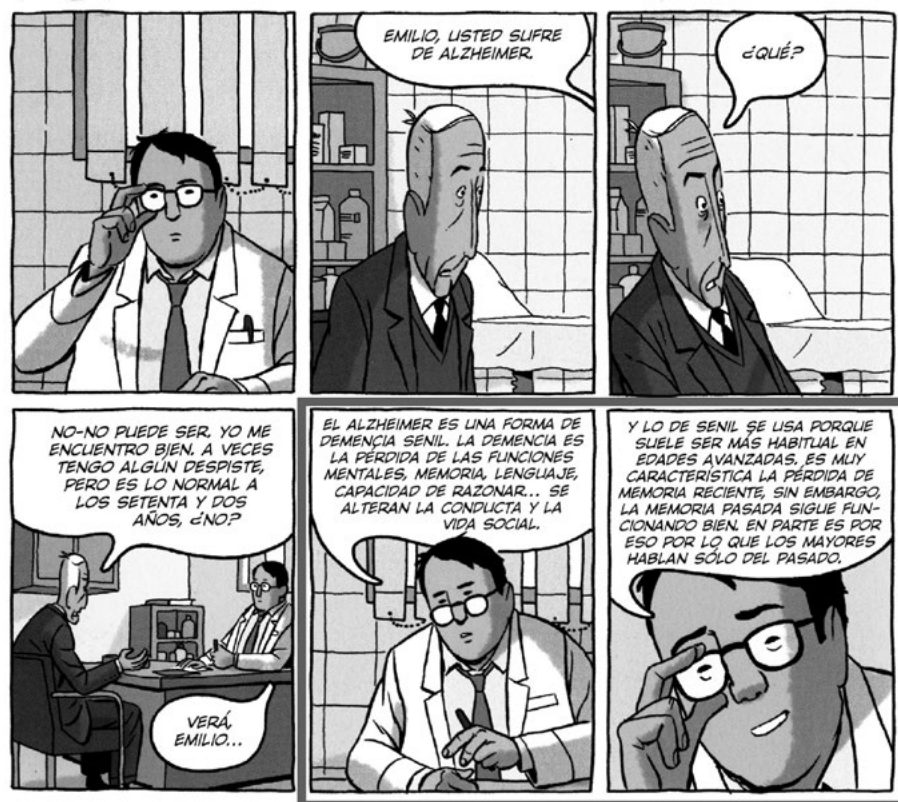


Figure 4

However, in the TT (2013b: 52) the linguistic modality present in the original is altered (2013a: 56) and the conceptual structures of the domain are not respected; indeed, the doctor's scientific knowledge is trivialised, as can be seen in the two panels below (Fig. 5).

Thus, although the OT presents a particular communicative situation with specific terminology (senile dementia, short-term memory, long-term memory, mental functions, etc.), this precision and exactitude of expression is missing in the TT.<sup>26</sup>

26. On the length of this dialogue, Roca states that he wanted to find out whether a doctor would really give so many explanations, and comments that "some doctors think the patient must be told everything, without any secrets" (Azpitarte 2009: 162).



Figure 5

Another characteristic of spoken language is the use of discourse markers. The example below shows the conversational marker *pues* (well or so in English), one of the most commonly used markers in spoken Spanish.



Figure 6

In this panel (2013a: 18), the polyfunctional marker *pues* followed by suspended intonation is used to begin a reactive intervention to Emilio's question,

“Isn’t there anybody awake in this old people’s home?” The marker acts therefore as a question-response link expressing doubt and hesitation.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the visual characterisation we see of Miguel, marked by a pensive gesture, confirms this attitude. It would seem that the interlocutor, Miguel, is giving himself time to find a response to Emilio’s question. The Italian translation uses the functional equivalent *dunque* (2013b: 14),<sup>28</sup> reflecting the idea that the speaker is collecting his thoughts. However, taking into account the communicative situation, if the translation had wanted to highlight Miguel’s hesitation, this nuance could have been rendered in the TT by means of particles such as *ehm* or *beh*, which in Italian are used to fill gaps in speech left by hesitation.



Figure 7

Finally, we explore a key element in the semantics of comics, namely the graphic signs used to represent onomatopoeia and expressive words (phono-symbolic nouns and verbs).<sup>29</sup> It must also be remembered that onomatopoeia plays a particularly important role in the story of *Arrugas*. Indeed, Roca acknowledges his attempts to use this resource creatively to resolve certain

27. On the uses of the discourse marker *pues* and its Italian translation, see Calvi and Mapelli (2004).

28. This particular example basically presents a conclusive and continuative value. Indeed, according to Seriani (1999: 542), *dunque* can be used to denote “una deduzione lógica” or also to express “una sintesi conclusiva di ciò che è stato detto in precedenza”.

29. In accordance with Gasca and Gubern (2009 and 2011), we do not distinguish here between expressive words and onomatopoeia “as an acoustic icon [...] that aspires to become an oral and/or written translation of a noise” (2009: 8). Rather we adopt a broad criterion that covers not only pure onomatopoeia but also a set of verbs and nouns that are used by way of onomatopoeia in the world of the comic.

difficult scenes.<sup>30</sup> In our analysis and the comparison between OT and TT we found that when they occur in the image the onomatopoeia and phonosymbols are not translated, but they are translated when they appear in the speech balloons, although in this case, they are mainly interjections.<sup>31</sup> However, even onomatopoeia “per quanto più trasparenti, sono comunque legate alle specifiche culture in cui sorgono – come dimostrano le variazioni tra le diverse lingue” (Ghenó 2003). In other words, each language lexicalises the onomatopoeia corresponding to a given reference in a different way, depending on its phonology and graphemics.

The panels presented below (Fig.8) show the acoustic representation of applause; as Gasca and Gubern (2009: 255) point out, in Spanish-speaking comics *plas, plas* is used to symbolise “the rhythmic sound of applause”. However, in Italian this sound is transcribed differently with *clap, clap*.<sup>32</sup> In this case, therefore, there is no graphic correspondence between the two languages, but the TT retains the onomatopoeia used in the original language.<sup>33</sup> We are unaware of the reasons for this choice, although it may be that Italian is more open to pure loanwords, especially those coming from English.



Figure 8

30. For example, in two scenes, “the sound precedes the characters and tells the story without the need for a supporting text to explain it” (Azpitarte 2009: 166); the first is when Emilio starts shaving at night (Roca 2013a: 44), and the second when Miguel smokes a cigarette in the snow (2013a: 53).
31. With regard to phonosymbols, note that font size, “as well as colour (cold or warm), suggest an intensity of sound in a singular example of optical-acoustic synaesthesia” (Gasca and Gubern 2009: 9).
32. The second entry in the Treccani dictionary reads as follows: “*clap*<sup>2</sup> <klāp> s. ingl. [dal v. (to) *clap* «battere le mani», di origine onomatopeica], usato in ital. come interiez. – Nel linguaggio dei fumetti, parola che riproduce (generalm. ripetuta: *clap clap*) il rumore prodotto da un applauso”.
33. We are very grateful to the comics illustrator Federico Brusco for his valuable help, advice and suggestions on the subject of Italian translations of onomatopoeia.



There are more examples in the text where other phonosymbols are used asymmetrically in the two languages,<sup>34</sup> such as *rasc*, *rasc* in Spanish (2013a: 25), which denotes the sound made by scratching the skin with one's nails and which in Italian would be depicted as *grat*, *grat*. *Tap* (2013a: 29) is another example used to represent the sound of a blow, often with a knocking effect. In Italian, however, for this semantic value in the panel the sound would be *boing*. Likewise, the Spanish onomatopoeic representation *chof chof chof* (2013a: 44), used for the sound produced by walking through puddles, is retained in the TT, even though in Italian it is transcribed as *splash*, *splash*.



Figure 9

Neither is the onomatopoeic application *tap* (2013a: 63), used in the OT to represent the sound of a book being firmly shut, translated into the target language in the corresponding form, which would be *tump* in this case. The example with *plaf* (2013a: 63) also diverges from the norm: in the panel it denotes the sound of a book hitting a wall, a sound that in Italian is transcribed as *stump*.



Figure 10

34. The examples of onomatopoeia shown in Figure 9 in the TT are taken from pp. 21, 25 and 40. The two examples in Figure 10 come from page 59 of the TT.

In addition to the above, the comparison of the TT and the OT also reveals instances where the translation of very straightforward terms, such as *bocadillo* (roll or sandwich) in the following panels (2013a: 65), frequently applies techniques that are not appropriate in this communicative situation.



Figure 11

The panels show how the Italian translation has unnecessarily resorted to the discursive creation technique<sup>35</sup> in rendering the term *bocadillos* as *bigné* (2013b: 61), which in Spanish is *petisú* (a cream puff or éclair).



Figure 12

35. That is, using an “ephemeral equivalence, completely unpredictable outside the context” (Hurtado Albir 2004: 270).

This transposition is clearly erroneous, especially in light of the reply from the waitress to Miguel's request: "I'll ask in the kitchen. I don't think there'll be any problem" (2013a: 66). The TT reader would surely find it incongruous that an old man would be allowed to eat only *petisús* from one day to the next.

The text analysis also uncovered discrepancies in the translation of names. The current trend in translation is to retain personal names and, indeed, most of the names in the TT are left in Spanish: Miguel, Juan, Dolores, Modesto, Agustín, Esteban, Emilio, Félix, Martín, Josefa, Julia, Ramón; however, four cases are given the Italian equivalent —Rosaria, Anna, Sole and Carmelina— and in one case, that of 'Señor Pellicer', discursive creation is used to change the name to Renato. There is also an inconsistency between graphic and narrative elements in the rendering of *Menú de Nochebuena* (Christmas Eve menu) (2013a: 54) as *Menù di Natale* (2013b: 50).<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the scene in the panels clearly depicts a Christmas Eve dinner: candles, champagne, Father Christmas hats, etc.<sup>37</sup>



Figure 13

### 3. By way of conclusion

In summary, we coincide with Podeur's (2012: XI) view that the graphic novel is the domain par excellence for experimentation, since "les auteurs agissent en toute liberté pour un public adulte restreint désormais éduqué très tôt au verbo-iconique; un public que sait donc lire les différents strates de chaque

36. Spanish families celebrate Christmas Eve, the day before the birth of Jesus, having dinner together, sharing typical Christmas sweets and singing carols. Christmas Day is normally marked with a similar lunch to the previous night's dinner. In Italy, depending on the region, either the Christmas Day lunch (*pranzo di Natale*) or the Christmas Eve dinner is celebrated. In any case, the inconsistency between the images of the dinner and the sign with the menu could have been avoided by translating *Menú de Nochebuena* (Christmas Eve menu) as *Menù della Vigilia di Natale*, or *Cenone della Vigilia di Natale*.

37. Note also that all the dishes on the menu except the dessert have been replaced by more typically Italian fare, an example of the adaptation technique.

cadre-case, et se montre de plus en plus exigeant”.<sup>38</sup> That is, graphic novel readers are obviously used to a type of what we might call ‘multilevel’ decoding. To a certain extent, as Rota (2001: 6) tells us, translating comics means “tradurre non solo un’opera straniera, ma anche un diverso modo di intendere il fumetto, di realizzarlo, di leggerlo”. Hence, one of the challenges facing the translation is also to guarantee the TT readers this experience of ‘multilevel’ decoding.

We have shown that, in general, the Italian translation of *Arrugas* respects the link in the original between the iconic code and the linguistic code. However, our analysis demonstrates that in the case of onomatopoeia, for example, this link is not always kept in the same way. Indeed, Italian readers may be surprised by onomatopoeic usage that is not familiar in the Italian *fumettistica* culture, since as we have seen, many sounds are transcribed differently in the two languages. Yet, in the TT the onomatopoeias are left in the original Spanish even though the graphic representations of the sound in the TT have their own traditional patterns for Italian.<sup>39</sup> We have also demonstrated that most of the cases of onomatopoeia in the original text are specific to the Spanish-speaking environment, as Roca explained to us in an email: “some cases of onomatopoeia are embedded in the drawing, in general, all of those that are not included in speech balloons. [...] It is common to put them in English to make them universal, but I’m not altogether comfortable with that” (26/11/2014).<sup>40</sup>

In addition, the other characteristic markers of orality in *Arrugas* (pragmatic connectors, linguistic register, author’s emblematic style, etc.) are often eliminated, or the expressive nuances present in the OT are not always picked up.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that in the graphic novel, the text-image relationship conditions the translator’s work, but it is no less certain that the very nature of this genre can be an enormous help in this task, serving as an instrument of textual disambiguation.

38. This scholar also points out that the work of the graphic novelist is not an easy task because: “il lui faut un scénario, la compétence d’un dessinateur, écrire pour être regardé, puis lu” (2012: XI).

39. Generally speaking, Italian uses English onomatopoeic expressions much more than Spanish does.

40. On the other hand it is now widely known that “today’s printing techniques allow changes to be made to the script both inside and outside the speech balloon” (Muñoz-Calvo 2013: 120). This detail was confirmed by the publishing manager of Tunué, Massimiliano Clemente, in a telephone conversation (26/11/2014).

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## BIONOTE

ROSA MARÍA RODRÍGUEZ ABELLA is a researcher and Assistant Professor in Language and Translation at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Verona. She holds a degree in Philology, section of Romance Philology (Italian) from the University of Salamanca. Currently, her research is focused on literary translation (*Tratamiento de la cultura lingüística en la traducción al italiano de Asesinato en el Comité Central*, 2013; *La traducción de los elementos culturales en una novela de Vázquez Montalbán*, 2012) and in specialty languages, primarily in the language of tourism (*Hacia una caracterización de la newsletter turística: el caso de Spain.info*, 2015; *Reflexiones en torno al género boletín digital turístico: situación comunicativa y análisis lingüístico*, 2014; *El discurso de la promoción turística institucional en Internet*, 2013). She is a member of the research group *Linguaturismo* of the University of Milan.