



# Post-Translation and Holocaust Memory in Social Media: The Case of *Eva Stories*

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Volume 35, numéro 1, 1er semestre 2022

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1093024ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1093024ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Association canadienne de traductologie

ISSN

0835-8443 (imprimé)

1708-2188 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Cantarero Muñoz, M. (2022). Post-Translation and Holocaust Memory in Social Media: The Case of *Eva Stories*. *TTR*, 35(1), 147–172.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1093024ar>

Résumé de l'article

Cet article a pour objectif de montrer que, à l'ère numérique, les définitions traditionnelles du sens, du texte et de la traduction sont insuffisantes pour refléter la réalité virtuelle dans laquelle les textes numériques circulent. En effet, les réseaux sociaux offrent un espace idéal pour la (re)production de discours et la (re)présentation d'identités et de cultures. Or, de même que le passage du monomodal au multimodal constitue un point tournant dans notre façon de percevoir le sens, le texte et la traduction, de même le recours aux nouveaux média et l'utilisation continue d'applications de communication par le biais d'écrans nécessitent de nouveaux paradigmes traductionnels qui rejettent les dichotomies préétablies de la discipline, afin de tenir compte du caractère multimodal, ouvert et fluide des textes que nous recevons, lisons et partageons tous les jours. Au vu de la prolifération de médiations et d'intermédiaires entre les événements et leur narration, il convient dès lors d'interroger la manière dont ces événements ont été traduits et comment leurs récits sont post-traduits dans cet espace numérique. Aussi cet article vise-t-il à montrer dans quelle mesure ces nouveaux textes relèvent de la réécriture et de la post-traduction à partir de l'analyse d'*Eva Stories* (Instagram, 2019), une mini-série lancée sur Instagram Stories qui propose une post-traduction du journal intime d'Éva Heyman (Zsolt, 1948), remédié et renarré sur un support et dans un contexte complètement différents. Éva a été victime de l'Holocauste à l'âge de 13 ans. Qualifié à maintes reprises d'ineffable, cet événement a néanmoins été représenté, réécrit, traduit et post-traduit d'innombrables façons, ce qui continue de donner lieu à des débats d'ordre éthique par rapport auxquels l'article cherche également à se positionner.

# Post-Translation and Holocaust Memory in Social Media: the Case of *Eva Stories*

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## Abstract

This article aims to show that, in the digital age, traditional definitions of meaning, text, and translation are insufficient to reflect the virtual reality in which digital texts circulate. Virtual social networks are an ideal space for the (re)production of discourses and (re)presentation of identities and cultures. Just as the so-called shift from the monomodal to the multimodal represents a turning point in our way of perceiving meaning, text, and translation, the prevalent use of new media and screen-based communication requires new translation paradigms that reject the pre-established dichotomies of the discipline and attend to the multimodal, open, and fluid character of the texts that we receive, read, and share daily. With the proliferation of mediations and intermediaries between events and their narration, it is not unreasonable to question today how these events have been translated and how their discourses are post-translated within this digital space. In order to show how new texts are remediated and constitute rewritings and post-translations, this paper analyzes *Eva Stories* (Instagram, 2019), a mini-series launched on Instagram Stories, as a post-translation of Éva Heyman's diary (Zsolt, 1948) remediated and retold through a different medium and in a completely different context. Éva was a 13-year-old victim of the Holocaust. This event, though repeatedly defined as ineffable, has been represented, rewritten, translated, and post-translated in countless ways, thereby giving rise to on-going ethical debates the article also seeks to address.

**Keywords:** Post-translation, Holocaust literature, digital narratives, multimodality, social media translation

## Résumé

Cet article a pour objectif de montrer que, à l'ère numérique, les définitions traditionnelles du sens, du texte et de la traduction sont insuffisantes pour refléter la réalité virtuelle dans laquelle les textes numériques circulent. En effet, les réseaux sociaux offrent un espace idéal pour la (re)production de discours et la (re)présentation d'identités et de cultures. Or, de même que le passage du

monomodal au multimodal constitue un point tournant dans notre façon de percevoir le sens, le texte et la traduction, de même le recours aux nouveaux média et l'utilisation continue d'applications de communication par le biais d'écrans nécessitent de nouveaux paradigmes traductionnels qui rejettent les dichotomies préétablies de la discipline, afin de tenir compte du caractère multimodal, ouvert et fluide des textes que nous recevons, lisons et partageons tous les jours. Au vu de la prolifération de médiations et d'intermédiaires entre les événements et leur narration, il convient dès lors d'interroger la manière dont ces événements ont été traduits et comment leurs récits sont post-traduits dans cet espace numérique. Aussi cet article vise-t-il à montrer dans quelle mesure ces nouveaux textes relèvent de la réécriture et de la post-traduction à partir de l'analyse d'*Eva Stories* (Instagram, 2019), une mini-série lancée sur Instagram Stories qui propose une post-traduction du journal intime d'Éva Heyman (Zsolt, 1948), remédié et renarré sur un support et dans un contexte complètement différents. Éva a été victime de l'Holocauste à l'âge de 13 ans. Qualifié à maintes reprises d'ineffable, cet événement a néanmoins été représenté, réécrit, traduit et post-traduit d'innombrables façons, ce qui continue de donner lieu à des débats d'ordre éthique par rapport auxquels l'article cherche également à se positionner.

**Mots-clés** : post-traduction, littérature de l'Holocauste, récits numériques, multimodalité, traduction et réseaux sociaux

## Introduction

We live in a time of constant change, movement, and hyperconnectivity that leaves little room for reflection and pause. Digital media have absorbed everything: film, writing, reading, music, subjecting the audience and the reader to their speed of reproduction. The Internet, where every narrative is remediated, is constantly used as a form of activism and visibility. Many focus on its use in the politicization of a given event, others, on the total loss of privacy following the arrival of Web 2.0 and social networks. The advantages and disadvantages of the latter have been highlighted on countless occasions, through multiple angles of analysis. Nevertheless, thanks to their scope and the tools they offer to transmit information, virtual social networks are an ideal space for the (re)production of discourses and (re)presentation of identities and cultures. In some cases, the majority of the audience are teenagers, as on Instagram. These networks provide access to narratives that would otherwise be absent from their daily lives. Therefore, their immediacy is a resource for bringing past events into the present such as, in our case study, the Holocaust.

This historical event has repeatedly been defined as indescribable, inexplicable, and ineffable. The abundant literature on the subject

reveals very different perspectives. Indeed, the Holocaust has received constant attention from diverse areas of study, including historiography, literary criticism, ethics, political science, psychology, law, and translation studies, with the common thread uniting them being the ethical or legitimate way to represent it. In this sense, memoirs, films, fiction, graphic novels, and, currently, social networks, are of particular importance. Art and literature have played an essential role in depicting the Holocaust and preserving its memory; a role that implies a collective thinking, as Hannah Arendt explains:

[T]hinking, because it can be remembered, can crystallize into thought, and thoughts, like all things that owe their existence to remembrance, can be transformed into tangible objects which, like the written page or the printed book, become part of the human artifice. (1998 [1958], p. 76)

However, “different questions and problems, different responses, emerge, dominate, and recede over time” (Eaglestone, 2017, p. 4): as we distance ourselves from the Holocaust, the historical narratives and fictional accounts, all of which influence the way we think about it, are reconfigured. The Jewish people have been historically attached to notions of diaspora and exile, as well as religiously bound to memory. This remembrance “inevitably [...] becomes narrative and the corresponding scholarship responds not only to the corrosive effects of the acceleration of time but also to the new directions and developing shapes of testimony and the ways in which we talk about witnessing” (Aarons and Lassner, 2020, p. 3).

The present article aims to contribute to the abundant literature on these questions (see Lang, 2000; Fernández Gil, 2013; Eaglestone, 2017; Aarons and Lassner, 2020, among others) by raising a new one: to what extent is it ethical to represent the Holocaust on social networks, specifically, on Instagram? As part of its main hypothesis, the article posits the need for new analytical tools to describe novel forms of representation of the Holocaust on social networks. The innovative and transdisciplinary methodology developed in the area of post-translation studies, as first set forth by Edwin Gentzler (2017), will provide the framework for a critical study of these representations, which not only integrate historical discourses into the new media, but also reconfigure the conventional media used until recently to transmit memory.

Far from being “only translated,” these representations are also rewritings that bring the old and the new, history and its stories, into dialogue in different and original ways. Furthermore, given that social networks are multimodal spaces dominated by texts, sounds, and images, the concept of post-translation contributes to what has been called the outward turn in translation (Bassnett and Johnston, 2019), in line with the transdisciplinary methodologies recently adopted by translation studies scholars like Kaindl (2020) and Kress (2020), among others. Our study examines how elements that make up the “story” of the Holocaust have been post-translated, and how the combination of images (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006), sounds (Goodman, 2010; Jordanous, 2016; van Leeuwen, 1999), and Instagram tools (Hernández Martínez, 2019) have been used to create a 21<sup>st</sup>-century representation. Specifically, the final section of this article will draw on the above methodologies to analyze *Eva Stories* (2019), an Instagram mini-series that rewrites the diary of Éva Heyman, a 13-year-old girl murdered at Auschwitz.

Éva Heyman’s diary has been studied by several researchers whose work confirms the relevance of our analysis of its post-translation, although their focus and aims differ from those of the present study. On the one hand, while Maya Klein’s article (2022) is noteworthy insofar as it contextualizes the diary’s translation history, from the “lost” manuscript to its subsequent versions and their paratexts,<sup>1</sup> to its adaptation to Instagram, it stops short of describing the digital tools used in the adaptation. On the other hand, while Ayelet Kohn and Rachel Weissbrod’s article (2020) focuses on the Instagram features, such as collage, it proposes a comparative analysis with those of Hollywood productions and other documentary genres that predate the social network. Finally, Gabriel Mayer’s article (2015), published prior to the diary’s post-translation into the digital medium, compares the Hungarian, Hebrew, and English versions, bringing to the fore the differences between the original and the translations.

Our case study aims to contribute to the existing scholarship by showing how this narrative of trauma and terror is inserted into a contemporary social network and interwoven with elements present in the victim’s diary (Heyman, 1974 [1964]). Rather than judging the level of accuracy or fidelity of the post-translation to the original,

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1. Klein (2022, p. 142) includes references to the German, Romanian, French, and Catalan versions.

which we believe cannot be determined on the basis of a text that has raised suspicions about its veracity (see Mayer, 2015; Klein, 2022); and rather than limiting our analysis to *Eva Stories*' Instagram features, we focus on our own taxonomy of broader features that we consider to be of equal interest, namely discourse, images, sound, and silence, in addition to Instagram's own tools.

### **1. Representing the Ineffable**

Despite the many publications and works (artistic, cinematic, theatrical, etc.) devoted to the Holocaust, the subject has spawned an on-going controversy with two main strands. The first one pertains to the ethics of depicting the Holocaust, that is, whether it is legitimate to speak of the horrors experienced by different minorities, especially the Jewish people. The second strand raises other questions, specifically: how is this experience to be represented? Who has the right to do so, and what forms of historical representation are morally acceptable? These are increasingly pressing questions. As the post-war period recedes, we risk forgetting or even denying the Holocaust if it is no longer represented in the media, despite access to new means and formats that could ensure the continued presence of an event of such magnitude. So far, the Internet has contributed to the dissemination of graphic documents, written works, films, and series about the Holocaust. However, it is urgent to critically examine the texts created for Internet platforms, as we propose to do in the final part of this article. As we shall see, *Eva Stories* offers a different representation and a new way of reading the past, insofar as the events it relates are drawn from an historical source (Éva's diary) but narrated on Instagram as though happening in the present tense and first person, through videos that reconstruct fragments of the diary.

The controversy over what should be represented and how this should be done emerged soon after the genocide became known. In this regard, Theodor Adorno stated that "lyric poetry after Auschwitz would be barbarous" (1967, p. 23). For Levinas,

[t]he acuity of the apocalyptic experience lived between 1933 and 1945 is dulled in memory. The extraordinary returns to order. There have been too many novels, too much suffering transformed on paper, too many sociological explanations and too many new worries. (1999 [1995], p. 84)

Many of these stories are considered “simplifications” or “stereotypes,” as Primo Levi (1988) put it. In this respect, many—like George Steiner and Elie Wiesel (see Fernández Gil, 2013)—have advocated historical documents as the only means of bearing witness to this atrocious part of human history. Lamm (1992) went even further: “[t]he more speech, the more insult, and therefore silence is the greatest praise” (cited in Fernández Gil, 2013, p. 72). Despite this, the “unimaginable” has been re-imagined on numerous occasions and in various ways. In fact, some of these authors, like Adorno, have subsequently retracted their previous statements: “perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream; hence it may have been wrong to say that after Auschwitz you could no longer write poems” (2004 [1973], p. 362).

As Lang (2000, p. 4) has pointed out, the question of whether such an event should or can be represented, and, if so, what forms these rewritings should take in any kind of discourse or medium, remains controversial. Indeed, interest in representations of the Holocaust and other traumatic events continues to foster extensive study and analysis, as attested by the recent publication of *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Trauma* (Davis and Meretoja, 2020). Although full consideration of these often antagonistic viewpoints exceeds the scope of this article, it is necessary to mention them here for two main reasons. First, insofar as this debate continues to take place, it is highly relevant to the digital context within which this paper is framed. Second, the originality of the present study resides precisely in its aim to contribute to further thinking on this ethical issue by applying it to the social networks that many young people interact in on a daily basis. It should be noted, however, that the impact of hybrid and digital contexts on the evolution of narratives has not gone unnoticed in academia, especially since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century when a number of scholars turned their attention to digital narrative (Hayles, 2003; Taylor, 2013; Pressman, 2009; Brillenburg Wurth *et al.*, 2018). Consequently, the question of ethics in representing the Holocaust remains relevant in the current age of hyperconnectivity, in which images continually circulate at great speed and scale. As Rigney suggests,

if the (un) representability of the Holocaust was the central issue in cultural theory for decades, seventy years after the end of World War II, this has become compounded by the issue of accessibility: the moral

and imaginative difficulties of later generations in overcoming the experiential gap between “then” and “now.” (2016, p. 114)

Conversely, the idea of circulating the (redressed) testimony of a genocide victim on social networks has also been treated as frivolous or unethical. Beyond the questionable use of emoticons or hashtags to convey a narrative of such magnitude, part of the concern is that these media are often considered to be essentially spectacular. This may also help explain the increasing number of studies on Internet phenomena like digital literature and *twitterature*, among others (Ritchel, 2008, among others). In fact, the latter, defined as the set of literary creations transmitted through Twitter, provides the only other example of post-translation of Holocaust literature that we found on social media. Between January and May 2015, Antonio Hernández Martín (a concentration camp survivor) reclaimed his voice through a Twitter account created by his grandnephew (@deportado4443), in which he recounts, in the first person and present tense, his experience in the Mauthausen concentration camp. As a post-translation of Hernández de Miguel’s previous work, *Los últimos españoles de Mauthausen* [*The Last Spaniards in Mauthausen*] (2015), this narrative retelling created a kind of spatio-temporal wormhole that allowed the network’s users to offer encouragement, share memories, or ask for help and protection for relatives who had already died.

Although many may find this way of representing the Holocaust is unethical or frivolous, we will argue that, in *Eva Stories* (Instagram, 2019), as in the case of Twitter account @deportado4443, frivolity does not apply to the representation *per se*: the story is based on a real diary, that is, it is a direct testimony, unlike other types of youth literature on the Holocaust, such as fiction, fantasy, graphic narrative or picture book genres (Krongold, 2020). Indeed, the fact that we can consider this diary as youth literature is what justifies its representation on social networks.<sup>2</sup> The ethical debate stems from the form in which this diary has been mediated. In other words, the criticism here does not lie in the presence or absence of representations of the Holocaust on social media, but in how this particular story was mediated and what tools have been used to this end.

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2. According to *Statista* (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/325587/instagram-global-age-group/>), in January 2022, 38.6% of Instagram users were between 14 and 24 years old compared to 28.2% of Facebook users in the same age group. This fact and the image-centred design of Instagram favour the use of this social medium to post-translate young narratives.



The following section focuses on the development of post-translation theory within a transdisciplinary framework, drawing on media, digital, and multimodality theories (Kress, 2010; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Kaindl, 2020; Boria *et al.*, 2020) to expand the conceptual frame of analysis in an *outward turn* (Bassnett and Johnston, 2019).

## 2. Post-Translation Studies

In her “Foreword” to Edwin Gentzler’s seminal work, *Translation and Rewriting in the Age of Post-Translation Studies*, Susan Bassnett (2017, p. viii) begins by explaining the prefix “post” and its two meanings. On the one hand, the end; on the other, the beginning of a new phase, “rather a sense of excitement, of new beginning, of moving on to new ideas, new ways of thinking” (*ibid.*). She suggests that this new phase of translation studies implies breaking down dichotomies between original and translation, which further implies questioning the discipline’s traditional terms and concepts (*ibid.*, p. ix). This broader, more open idea of translation has some affinities with Lang’s reflection on Holocaust literature: “[i]f we assume in any image or ‘representation’ a construct that substitutes the representation for an original, then since no representation can ever be that original, representations will also never be quite adequate, however close they come to the original” (2000, p. 19). In breaking down the dichotomies of existing theoretical frameworks and expanding old definitions, we can begin to use terms in new ways, much like comparatist Linda Hutcheon does when she “uses the word adaptation to refer to both a product and a process of creation and reception” (2006, p. xiv). Hutcheon explains that her motivation for treating the original as an adaptation responds to a “laterality” rather than a “verticality” of the adapted work: the notion of priority is no longer relevant in a context where access to an adaptation can precede access to the “original.” Likewise, the adaptation or rewriting does not have to be viewed as a derivative or secondary product but is itself a creation.

On the one hand, this suggestion is not new in the field of translation studies, as evidenced by the multiplicity of terms used to refer to different kinds of translation or cultural transfer since the emergence of the discipline. Deviations from “originals” and from criteria of suitability or quality have generated numerous alternatives to the concept of “translation proper,” to use Jakobson’s term (1959). Susan Bassnett already suggested as much in 1991:

“Much time and ink has been wasted attempting to differentiate between translations, versions, adaptations and the establishment of a hierarchy of ‘correctness’ [...] all texts are translations of translations of translations” (cited in Raw, 2012, p. 1). On the other hand, Hutcheon’s notion of laterality (giving the same consideration to a translation as to an original), like Lang’s conception of representation in Holocaust literature (no representation can ever be the same as the original if we consider the Holocaust as original), captures how the discipline’s many twists and turns have blurred the boundaries established in the name of fidelity and accuracy to reflect the many possibilities of translation.

The notions of rewriting and adaptation have thus been (re) explored, notably in the wake of Bassnett and Lefevere’s call for translation studies to offer “a greater awareness of the world in which we live” (1990, p. ix) by accepting rewritings, versions, or adaptations, both interlinguistic and intersemiotic, as the new norm of the discipline. This then paved the way for new conceptions of translation developed by Cronin (2013), Bassnett (2014), Bassnett and Johnston (2019), and Vidal Claramonte (2019), among others.

In this light, we conceive translation as “fundamentally transdisciplinary, mobile, and open-ended” (Arduini and Nergaard, 2011), a conception expanded upon by Gentzler in the context of his definition of post-translation, according to which—in a very similar sense to Bassnett’s definition above—texts become “a rewriting of a rewriting of a rewriting” in which “translation plays a significant role” (2017, pp. 9-10). In this way, we go beyond the traditional comparative analyses that highlight the differences between cultures or languages, between originals and translations, to see what the rewriting has done in a specific situation, what it has created, rather than what has changed or been maintained, hence the term post-translation. As Gentzler explains:

Young people using new media have taken such “rewriting” processes to new heights: authoring blogs, spinning the news, adapting music and film, creating YouTube pastiches, devouring comics, playing games, expanding upon original characters in fan fiction, and crowd-sourcing translations, all taking standard texts, regardless of the original language, and rewriting them in new terms and genres. (2017, p. 7)

Based on these ideas, we will see how the post-translation that we propose as a case study involves taking into account what many

authors have claimed is necessary, namely the study of the future of the Holocaust and its representations in an imminently digitalized culture. Roskie and Diamant have suggested that “Holocaust literature [...] unfolds both backward and forward: backward, as previously unknown works are published, annotated, translated, catalogued, and promptly forgotten; and forward, as new works of ever-greater subtlety or simplicity come into being” (2012, p. 3). At a time when the literature of this part of history needs to be analyzed through its new rewritings, our case study of this digital post-translation of Éva Heyman’s diary therefore seeks more broadly to determine how memory and the past merge with the current media and reconstruct in new formats stories that have been told, but have often gone unnoticed. However, this requires not only a post-translation framework, as described above, but also a view of translation open to other disciplines in order to acquire models that can be applied to purely multimodal formats in a comprehensive way. In this sense, we need to consider the outward turn proposed by Bassnett and Johnston (2019).

Traditionally, works such as *Schindler’s List* (1994), *Life is Beautiful* (1997), or, more recently, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2008) have been analyzed as audiovisual documents that rewrite the Holocaust. These offer a rather reduced image and a distant vision of a much cruder and harder reality. According to Eaglestone (2017, p. 140), the latter can obscure, rather than reveal, past events and generate ideas that are not only simplistic, but even erroneous. However, many of them have reached a wider audience than works of a more historical nature, hence the question of whether this “awareness” of the Holocaust is preferable to its absence in media or formats that target a large segment of the population, to the detriment of a more historically realistic view. In the same vein, Lang notes:

If the criterion for justifying Holocaust images is accessibility, or more positively, “attraction” [...] then the sole means of drawing distinctions is numerical. The film *Schindler’s List* drew audiences in the tens of millions; Claude Lanzmann’s eight-hour-long *Shoah* is unlikely ever to reach more than a small fraction of that audience. Thus, in terms of comparative value or quality based on numbers or “appeal,” the conclusion to be drawn is uncontested; it is a conclusion, however, rarely defended by those who object to the alternative criteria compressed into the few terms mentioned above but one that would then point a significant question: Which of the two films “represents”

more authentically or more deeply or more fully the event of the Holocaust itself? (2000, p. 8)

Other productions such as *The Underland Chronicles* or *Harry Potter* have represented these events through metaphor and extrapolation (see Eaglestone, 2017; Krongold, 2020). From our perspective, the latter are post-translations that create proximity by making the events that occurred to a group of the Jewish people accessible to a new audience. While some scholars have focused on these productions as well as on other modes of transfer they regard as unethical (for example, in sculpture or Lego productions) (Eaglestone, 2017), we include all rewritings that lie outside the norm within the purview of post-translation studies. In this respect, it bears noting that a number of scholars have drawn attention to such representations. As early as the 1970s, Adorno exposed the kitsch aesthetic that emerged in relation to the Holocaust. More recently, Eaglestone's contribution stands out, as noted above:

[W]hat is at issue in post-Holocaust kitsch is less the content for itself and more the idea that the artwork gives the impression of breaking some kind of boundary, which in turn reflects on the context which sets that boundary. But this shifting boundary also marks the link between the world of the Holocaust and the present. (2017, p. 142)

That being said, these kinds of transfer have only begun to be considered through the lens of translation, mainly because they involve representations far removed from traditional conceptions of translation, namely the transfer between words, between words and other systems, or between different cultures. However, as emphasized above, current forms of transfer go beyond hermetic categories. If we are to consider these works as post-translations, the tools currently proposed by translation studies are insufficient.

Like the texts that characterize the contemporary digital landscape, translation is inexorably linked to movement. For this reason and following Bassnett, post-translation studies proposes an opening of translation studies to theories of multimodality so as not to forget where we come from, or worse, where we are going and with whom (Bassnett, 2014, p. 25). That is why looking outwards means reconsidering what we think we know and exchanging concepts with fields that will enable us to “seek a redefinition of what translation actually is [...] to understand how [...] attitudes to translation in some contexts have come to be” (Bassnett and Johnston, 2019,

p. 17). Therefore, we argue that it is impossible to access the new forms of representation, communication, and expression, which are increasingly hybrid, without allowing concepts to flow between these areas of study. The new texts are not only multimodal, but also hybrid in nature: they mix genres, languages, and systems, and are transmitted through multiple channels, sometimes simultaneously.

### 3. Multimodality and Digital Narratives

Andreas Huyssen explains that “we cannot discuss personal, generational or public memory separately from the enormous influence of the new media as carriers of all kinds of memory” (2002, p. 225). The possibilities for these media to convey meaning in multimodal environments are numerous. At the same time, the use, especially by young people, of these networks as a showcase for private life and social relations is undeniable. These two elements, combined with their similarity to newspapers or zines, in which present and past are united, have turned social networks into a space of representation with great potential for transmitting narratives of all kinds. Moreover, social networks possess a high degree of performativity, as they constitute a fragmented representation of stories that can be transmitted in the present tense and subsequently updated.

As Flanzbaum has suggested, “the shape and language of memory is dictated by cultural contexts, [...] where you are standing and when you are standing there makes all the difference in the world” (2011, p. 66). However, what began as a narrative that was “reserved” only for direct witnesses and victims of genocide has become an element of collective cosmopolitan memory, overcoming national barriers and bringing their stories to other countries, collectives, and generations distant in time and space from this event. Thus, as Fernández Gil noted, following Heidegger, the projection of a past time into the present offers the victims a mode of presence or “transcendence and exteriority,” a way of “being-in-time” (2013, pp. 12-13). Translation has undoubtedly contributed to this, and we believe that it should continue to do so, in many different forms and under diverse guises.

For Eaglestone, “our most active form of engagement with memory is through stories and culture which not only recall the past but assign meaning to it and so shape the present” (2017, p. 4). Meaning is constructed, today more than ever, through the interaction of modes, and this has consequences for how it is constructed when

using new, fully multimodal formats to transmit the trauma, fear, and pain characteristic of testimonies, such as diaries written during the Holocaust. In addition to precedents set in film and theatre, multimodal post-translations of these stories now include art and literary works in different genres, such as comics or twitterature, as mentioned above. The digital text analyzed in the final section of this article is characterized by a blatant hybridization of genres (Instagram Stories, diary, and mini-series) that converge in a multiplicity of ways and use multiple tools to rewrite a story originally published in 1948.

We will focus on the speech, images, sound, and Instagram tools that have been used to post-translate Éva Heyman's diary. However, we must first point out that social networks such as Instagram, initially focusing on the image, have transitioned towards the multimodal by incorporating tools that allow the addition of filters to the image, the uploading of videos, the sharing of songs, and more. Accessed by many young people every day, these pages are thus a breeding ground for manipulatable texts that transmit ideologies, beauty patterns, and identities through different modes. Studying these discourses thus means examining post-translations that incorporate, among other elements, sound, image, text, and colour as subtle conductors of meaning. More malleable than ever thanks to these new tools, digital narratives also serve as a means of (re)telling stories and producing counter-narratives that construct new representations of the Other.

Traditionally, studies on multimodality in the field of translation have focused on audiovisual texts. However, a growing body of research suggests the importance of including new formats and texts from a translational perspective (Page, 2010; O'Halloran and Smith, 2011; Gibbons, 2012; Dicerto, 2018). In this regard, the so-called shift from the monomodal to the multimodal described by authors such as Gambier (2006), Kress (2010), Gibbons (2012), Desjardins (2017), and others represents yet another turning point in our way of perceiving meaning, text, and translation. Not only do the new media and continuous use of screen-based communication create multimodal forms of interaction (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), but they also foreground interactivity and participation as intrinsic features of the digital age (Cronin, 2013, p. 61). As we will see in the next sections, the processes that manipulate how discourses are read and produced in this context are varied. At the same time, they generate and circulate new texts that emerge halfway between the original and the adaptation. These discursive processes that flow in

and out of the network require new translation concepts to account for the multimodal, open, and fluid character of the texts that we receive, read, and share daily.

#### 4. The Case of *Eva Stories*: Instagram and the Holocaust

Journals and memoirs are two well-known genres used in Holocaust literature. They have been criticized, however, mainly because traumatic memory may not accurately reflect reality and also because they are mediated stories. Although writing about genocide has generally been legitimized for those who suffered it in the first person, we agree with Lang when he suggests:

Of course, experience alone does not ensure the power of expression, but neither does the power of expression ensure authenticity. The partiality of any personal or group identity shapes the future no less than the past, [...] both the past and the future experience of writers and readers shape their present roles. (2000, p. 133)

Without a doubt, the world's best known Holocaust diary in different formats is that of Anne Frank.<sup>3</sup> For many young people, this is the first and only exposure to this type of literature beyond textbooks and, consequently, one of the images that most influences their way of seeing and reflecting on the facts. The case study presented here bears some similarity to this diary, as Éva Heyman was very close in age to Anne (13) and addressed her diary as a kind of intimate confidant in which she could express her ideas about the events that were happening around her. While Éva's diary, published originally in Hungarian in 1948 and translated into different languages (first into Hebrew in 1964, and into English in 1974), has not acquired the same prominence globally as Anne Frank's, the publication of the mini-series on Instagram went "viral" and extended the reach of this other testimony to a wider audience.<sup>4</sup> The diary format seems to be an attractive genre for a teenage audience, as it provides a sense of immediacy, especially when the author's age is close to the reader's. However, as Fernández Gil has pointed out, the diary also has similarities with fictional literature. Although not a literary work

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3. A number of diaries of Holocaust victims and survivors have been published and translated since the end of the war, some of which were also written by teenagers. See, for instance, those of David Rubinowicz, Yitzak Rudashevski, and Moshe Flinker included in Boas (1995), in addition to Anne Frank's and Éva Heyman's diaries.

4. See <https://en.globes.co.il/en/article-evas-instagram-holocaust-story-goes-viral-worldwide-1001284341>.

*per se* insofar as it tends to avoid aestheticism, the diary is detailed, formally coherent, and chronologically structured (2013, p. 77). In addition to these elements and its subject matter, the novel format of the *Eva Stories* Instagram mini-series also lends itself to analysis from a post-translation perspective.

“What If a Girl in the Holocaust Had Instagram?” is the question posed in the pre-series advertising and its preview. It is also the starting point for a project that has achieved just that: to bring the story of a Jewish girl who suffered from the Holocaust<sup>5</sup> to an Instagram account.<sup>6</sup> On Instagram, Éva’s diary is presented as a mini-series transmitted through one of its tools, the so-called *stories*. These short “stories” have a maximum duration of 15 seconds, so sometimes there is a small cut in the videos that are longer and occupy several stories. This format constitutes, from our perspective, an example of a post-translation, since it brings the past into the present and subjects the translations to a new rewriting made up of signs and features informed both by the current context and the original context of publication.

#### 4.1 Speech

The use of oral or written speech is very important in any kind of narrative, but it is a central issue when it comes to the Holocaust. As Paul Bandia points out, translation and interpretation are indispensable conduits for orality, which has been explored from a myriad of perspectives, such as the representation of otherness through different artifacts, from literature to the spoken word (2015, p. 125). Bandia goes on to explain that oral discourse has gained ground in translation studies, identifying two approaches

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5. Éva Heyman started to write in her diary on her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday (13 February, 1944), but stopped four months later on 30 May, three days before she was deported from the ghetto to Auschwitz, where she was murdered on October 17, 1944 (for further information about the context, see Reiniger, n.d.). Her testimony was brought to light thanks to Mariska Szabó, Éva’s grandparents’ cook. Mariska had access to the Oradea ghetto from which Jews were distributed to various concentration camps. Éva gave her the diary before she was deported. Ági, Éva’s mother, upon her liberation from Bergen-Belsen, returned to Oradea and Mariska gave her the diary, which she published in 1948.

6. Mati Kochavi, an Israeli entrepreneur, and his daughter Maya Kochavi launched the Instagram project by combining “storytelling and technology” to show the world Éva’s story (see their interview in Rutnik, 2020). As Kohn and Weissbrod state (2020, p. 289), Mati and Maya Kochavi “function as translators” of the diary for its rendering on Instagram.



that are worth noting for this study. On the one hand, the pragmatic approach explores orality as an inter-semiotic and inter-linguistic (*ibid.*) translation practice. On the other, the metaphorical approach links orality in translation to issues surrounding the representation of otherness, marginalized identities, minorities, or subaltern cultures in an intercultural and transnational context (*ibid.*, p. 126). Both approaches are relevant to our case study because the post-translation of Éva's diary was created with the objective of foregrounding the voice of the Other.

The decision to write in one language or another is not trivial: “[e]xpressing the Nazi underworld in Yiddish or in Hebrew as opposed to doing it in any other language not explicitly linked to Judaism responds to the desire to show special sympathy for the victims” (Fernández Gil, 2013, p. 96). From a linguistic point of view, we cannot ignore the fact that, with the death of most of its speakers, the Yiddish language was also nearly eliminated in the Holocaust. *Eva Stories* was shot in English and is subtitled in Hebrew. Likewise, the hashtags, profile description, and all other texts accompanying the images or videos are written in both languages. Thus, the use of English for the mini-series deserves special attention and can be read in different ways. As Rosen (2005) has pointed out, each language represented a particular group during the genocide, however not all languages can be linked to the Holocaust in the same way. While the marginal position of English in the events has given it a central role in following them (*ibid.*, p. 11), Rosen argues that English is linked to the oppressive hand of the Holocaust, since it is “both the medium that can thwart terrible evil and also the one that takes on many of the characteristics of an oppressor” (*ibid.*, p. 15).<sup>7</sup>

*Eva Stories* also presents special characteristics in terms of how it represents abstract concepts such as “evil,” which appears in the mini-series as a key word used by Éva to refer to Hitler and his acolytes. The term, however, seems to lack all the connotations and force needed to

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7. The ambivalence of English as global or imperial deserves its own investigation. However, we understand the role of English in this mini-series to be globalizing, in that it aims to reach a wide number of people. From another perspective, although they speak in English, the accents of the actors can lead us to assume that they are Hungarian. This characteristic is described by Kohn and Weissbord as being “in line with American films dealing with the Second World War and the Holocaust” (2020, p. 293). In addition, the quotes from the English version of the diary and the Hebrew subtitles reveal several levels of translation, at once oral and written, working at the same time to convey one concrete testimony.

convey the realities it seeks to portray. As Eaglestone explains, the relation between words and their meaning is reconfigured over time: “[e]ven how we understand evil and complicity, which are not new in themselves, has changed” (2017, p. 4). These kinds of words, which can be considered more complex because in today’s context they address issues of a different nature, acquire different meanings when mixed with others in everyday language, as described by Primo Levi:

Just as our hunger is not that feeling of missing a meal, so our way of being cold has need of a new word. We say “hunger,” we say “tiredness,” “fear,” “pain,” we say “winter” and they are different things. They are free words, created and used by free men who lived in comfort and suffering in their homes. (cited in Fernández Gil, 2013, p. 69)

Some elements may have been post-translated in other ways for this reason. In the case of hunger, for example, there is a particularly suggestive scene in the digital narrative where Éva and her friend discover a jar of jam in the ghetto that they swallow without hesitation. There is no other noise than that of the two girls eating, hardly breathing. This contemporary perspective on ghetto hunger is the post-translation of an absence of speech in the diary, where a similar scene takes place, and where no one intervenes with words in the language of ghetto hunger. We could say that speech in the digital text operates in a symbolic way, notably through the use of Hebrew, which serves to contextualize the receiver, leaving aestheticism to other tools such as image, video, and sound. It should be noted, however, that some quotations taken directly from the English version of the diary are particularly striking. For instance, Éva’s last words from her final entry on May 30, 1944 stand out as emphatic statements in the face of an unimaginable reality: “I don’t want to die, I still want to live [...] I would wait for the end of the war in a cellar, or in the attic, or any hole, [...] only not to be killed, only to be left alive!” (May 30 entry, Heyman, 1974 [1964]). In this case, speech is accompanied by other elements, for example, the close-ups of Éva, holding her mobile phone as a self-portrait and confessing to the screen as if it were her diary. Here the prefix “post” acquires its full meaning: by “giving” a girl in the Holocaust a “real” voice through speech and devices such as a telephone and an Internet connection, *Eva Stories* is a striking example of a post-translation.

## 4.2 Images

In his essay on press photography, Barthes (1977, p. 25) reflects on the paradigm shift from written language to image-based communication, to the point where the former has become subjected to the latter. The use of images as transmitters of diverse narratives has been analyzed by other authors, who consider them to be symbolic constructions due to their simple and automatic appearance (see Mitchell, 2002; Berger, 2016 [1972], p. 10). Consequently, images can be used in multiple ways to offer us various narratives of the real (Vidal Claramonte, 2019).

Virtual social networks are based on relationships established between individuals, but in order to come into contact, each participant has to create a profile and share content. From the beginning, Instagram focused almost exclusively on images. For this reason, we may consider Instagram as a post-translation space, where rewritings are constantly produced and transmitted through often simple images. Subsequently, videos and the possibility of including music were added. In *Eva Stories*, each of the short chapters includes fixed and moving images interspersed with filters and other current languages of communication, such as emoticons. This has led many to comment on the frivolity of the creators in presenting a history of the Holocaust through a medium where it is completely out of place<sup>8</sup>—an ethical viewpoint addressed at the outset of this article. We contend, however, that to present this history, a post-translation was certainly needed, since other forms of rewriting have been fully explored.

Initially, 12 photos were uploaded to the account which, together and in order, formed a poster (due to the Instagram layout, the images appear in rows of three), imitating the printed format of film posters. In it, a hand drawn in black and white holds a mobile phone with words in Hebrew and the start date of the series (01-05-19) on its screen. The hand appears between the characteristic barbed wires that symbolize the concentration camps, and the background is a gradient of the representative colours of Instagram (from purple to yellow through pink and orange). Here, each element constitutes a meaning

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8. The creators of the project addressed these ethical concerns by explaining that the content is serious and necessary in that it shows the horrors of the Holocaust to a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience through a medium used by young people themselves to communication (see for instance <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/30/world/middleeast/eva-heyman-instagram-holocaust.html>).

construct: the colour and the motif refer to the social network; in contrast, the image of the hand and the wire (in black and white) represents the “history,” the past; the words in Hebrew, as opposed to another language, have meaning beyond what the sentence transmits. The interaction of these elements create a composite image that produces a complex, yet predetermined meaning: it would not have been the same if the text had been in Arabic, for example, or if other colours had been used. In other words, what this composition tells us is precisely that the past has been brought into the present and that it has been post-translated, because within the process of remediation and recontextualization, new features and symbols have been used. In this way, this rewriting not only translates, it creates as well. Kohn and Weissbrod (2020, p. 290) also point to this ambivalence, focusing more specifically on the frames and the black and white Hollywood cinematic traditions recycled for *Eva Stories*.

The importance of photography in this Instagram story is evident if we consider that, according to her diary, Éva dreamed of being a press photographer. The images we find instead are photos of friends or family, or memories of other moments, often in boomerang format. However, the desire to be a reporter is still present, post-translated through videos using the hashtag “#reporterlife.” Barthes (1977) explained that words introduce different levels of meaning and connotation; in our case, the use of text or tags modifies the meaning of the image, just as emoticons or songs do. In this multimodal construct, the individual elements do not have a stable meaning, but this is supported and built up through all available modes.

### **4.3 Sound and Silence**

Undoubtedly, sound is a key element in this series, since, as is well known, it contributes to creating meanings in film productions. In this case there is a strong contrast between the stories. On the one hand, moments representing memories, or expressing joy and happiness, are accompanied by songs that reinforce the meaning and function of the audiovisual. In this sense, the main and recurring theme is the song *Parlez-moi d'amour*, performed by Lucienne Boyer. The choice of this song was not random, as it appears in the diary itself as one of the favourites of Éva's mother, Ági, and as a gift from her grandfather for her birthday. On the other hand, the play with silence and other sounds to transmit fear and uncertainty, and also to install them in the spectator, is even more relevant. The meaning of silence has been

studied from multiple perspectives (Barthes, 1977; Morris, 1997; Goodman, 2010, Voegelin, 2018; among others). Goodman suggests that both sound and silence are closely related to power and have an affective capital, so both sound and silence can be used to generate discomfort, threat, or fear (2010, p. xiv).

We argue, then, that in this rewriting, silence has a political meaning and is a reinterpretation of the moments in which it is described in the diary. Morris claimed that “there is no such thing as silence, only a failure to pay attention to sound” (1997, p. 4). In this light, the post-translation has paid attention to the diary’s silence, but it is differently perceived in a here and now, in a context far from the fear and terror of suffering persecution. As a result, in the series it is sometimes broken by moans of pain, sobbing, or the protagonist’s own breathing, which intensifies the feeling of panic in certain scenes. Other sounds that create these sensations are the trucks in the street, the knocking on the doors of the neighbours, the creaking of the wood under the boots of the Nazis, their shouts, or the barking of the German shepherds who accompany them. However, throughout the diary, silence is used as something indescribable by the author herself and coincides most closely with the series in the moment of waiting for the transfer to the ghetto: “but we don’t know when they are coming to take us, [...] No one says a word. My little Diary, I was never so afraid!” (1 May entry, Heyman, 1974 [1964]). That said, we consider that this absence of sound, for the diarist, is her perception, a rewriting of what she feels and hears. In turn, in the Instagram representation, silence has been post-translated in a different way, as a rewriting of other cinematic documents on the Holocaust (*The Last Train to Auschwitz*, 2006; *The Pianist*, 2002; *Schindler’s List*, 1994; *The Diary of Anne Frank*, 1959), to highlight the contrast between the absolute silence of fear and the terrifying and extreme power exercised by the military, symbolized through barking, the cracking of wood, blows, and other indescribable sounds.

#### 4.4 Instagram Features

Throughout the stories, other elements contribute to creating a coherent narrative. Thus, Instagram features are used to establish time and place. For example, the small pieces are grouped into days, so that the featured stories can be viewed on the main profile page in chronological order. The stories for each day are classified under the

headings “February 13,” “February 15,” and so on. In other words, they imitate the entries in a diary.

On the other hand, the tool “location” is used to add context to each story. From our point of view, this information follows the conventions of the stories genre specific to Instagram and adds drama to the series. The latter is due to the change in the narrative from natural stories in which a pre-teen shares her life in “the school,” “the park,” or her “home,” to the tragic reality of the Holocaust, in this case limited to the location “the ghetto,” for consistency with the plot. The recontextualization of the diary also constitutes a kind of post-translation nod to the features of the network: in a diary, entries are normally divided by different pages that are dated chronologically; on Instagram, they are separated and organized by stories, as most teenagers do.

In the same way, the hashtags first used seem to be those of a schoolgirl, with the particularity of being in a period of war: #lifeduringwar, #reporterlife, #thisis13, #pistabae, #igotitfrommama, #meetthefam, and #nazisarehere. These elements concentrate a lot of apparently natural and simple information, but also condense the stages of Éva’s short life. On the one hand, some moments of her life focus on tantrums or falling in love, while others reveal her hopes for the future: to become a photojournalist. On the other hand, we see how more tragic situations that express fear, uncertainty, and despair, in reflections that are not typical of a girl her age, are marked with hashtags that contain the words “war” or “Nazi.”

Throughout the chapters, other features of Instagram Stories are added, such as surveys or reaction meters that again contribute to the virtual realism of the story and invite the recipient to intervene through responses, likes, messages, and so forth. In this way, the question posed in the mini-series’ preview comes full circle: if a girl had access to Instagram during the Holocaust, a tragedy and an ineffable reality could have been narrated on streaming. These features and the aforementioned ones lead us to conclude that this series is a perfect example of a post-translation that reframes and renarrates the past in the present.

## **Conclusions**

Despite being defined as an ineffable event, the Holocaust has been represented, rewritten and (post)translated in countless ways. Memorials, diaries, records, history books, comic books, paintings,

sculptures, films, series, fiction, and non-fiction literature constitute an immeasurable corpus that exemplifies the different ways of narrating the indescribable. Criticism of who has the power to describe these events or how legitimate it is to do so has not posed an obstacle to creativity and formal innovation. In the digital era and as we distance ourselves from this moment in history, the importance of these rewritings and post-translations becomes evident. Since there are more and more mediations and intermediaries between events and their narration, it is not unreasonable to question today how these events have been translated and how their discourses are post-translated.

Throughout this article, we have argued that, with the new digital texts, traditional definitions of meaning, text, and translation are insufficient to reflect the virtual reality in which these texts circulate. Indeed, the power of the Internet as a means of representing identities, telling stories, and manipulating discourses thanks to its tools, offers translation studies an unparalleled space to analyze how these post-translations are rewriting a fragmented, diverse, and plural reality. Consequently, it seems clear that, in going beyond outdated dichotomies between originals versus translations, post-translation can provide the necessary framework for understanding daily communicative processes on the Internet (via tweets, *emojis*, vines, snaps, for example) as rewritings influenced by previous translations.

We have further argued that the example of *Eva Stories*, an Instagram account through which a mini-series based on Éva Heyman's diary was broadcast, constitutes a sample of what translation does when a narrative is inserted into a new culture, medium, and place—in this case, digital—in which multiple individuals and identities converge. The complexity of history and its contemporary digital representations can no longer be analyzed within a traditional theoretical framework; rather, it is necessary to adopt a post-translation perspective that takes into account theories of multimodality. Returning to the question our case study has attempted to address, namely to what extent is it ethical to represent the Holocaust on Instagram, it bears repeating that, although many consider this post-translation to be unethical, we cannot deny its success in bringing a history of the Holocaust to an audience who would otherwise not have access to it. This article thus offers a starting point for further research on aspects only touched upon here, such as the symbolic power of language, the power of social networks, the

construction of meaning through different modes, or the legitimacy of discourses and their post-translation in new media.

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