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TRANSLATING THE NEW WORLD(S):  
A SEMIOTIC APPROACH TO PARROT AND OLIVIER IN  
AMERICA BY PETER CAREY



*ARTE POÉTICA* E POESIA DIALÓGICA: UM ESTUDO  
INTRODUTÓRIO SOBRE CONCEPÇÃO VITAL DA  
LINGUAGEM E INTERFERÊNCIAS DISCURSIVAS EM  
HORÁCIO

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## Resumen

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In his latest novel *Parrot and Olivier in America* (2009) the Australian-born novelist Peter Carey explores the way three seemingly incompatible civilisations translate the New World. On the one hand Olivier, the snobbish French aristocrat, struggles to understand the concept of democracy in America because he wants to translate it 'literally' into his own system (of behaviour, social convenience, pragmatics, etc.). On

the other hand, Parrot, the British-Australian pícaro and Olivier's "clown and secretaire", enjoys rewriting his master's awful calligraphy, changing some of the Frenchman's views on America according to his whim, and deliberately acting as a bad translator. Thirdly, the American free citizen, the "Man of the Future" (p. 187): s/he uses language creatively, coining a personal idiolect as evidence of belonging to a nation at its début, where "greed might tear the land apart but still the low could climb so high" (p. 251). This paper aims at illustrating how these three entities translate other systems of values, or their loss of values, into systems with which they can identify. The theoretical framework of my study proceeds from the contributions of Yuri Lotman, the main representative of the Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics.<sup>1</sup>

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## Resumo

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Em seu mais recente romance **Parrot e Olivier na América** (2009), o romancista nascido-australiano Peter Carey explora a forma como três civilizações aparentemente incompatíveis traduzem o Novo Mundo. Por um lado Olivier, o aristocrata francês esnobe, se esforça para compreender o conceito de democracia na América, que ele quer traduzir "literalmente" em seu próprio sistema (de comportamento, conveniência social, pragmática etc.) Por outro lado, Parrot, o pícaro anglo-australiano e "palhaço e secrétaire" de Olivier, gosta de reescrever a caligrafia horrível de seu mestre, alterando alguns dos pontos de vista do francês na América de acordo com seus caprichos e, deliberadamente, agindo como um tradutor ruim. Em terceiro lugar, o cidadão americano livre, o "Homem do Futuro" (p. 187): ele/ela usa uma linguagem criativa, cunhando um idioleto pessoal como prova de pertencimento a uma nação em sua estréia, em que "a ganância pode rasgar a terra distante mas ainda o baixo pode subir tão alto" (p. 251). Este artigo visa ilustrar como essas três entidades traduzem outros sistemas de valores, ou a sua perda de valores, em sistemas com que se podem identificar. O referencial teórico do meu estudo procede das contribuições de Yuri Lotman, o principal representante da escola semiótica de Tartu-Moscou.

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## Entradas para indexação

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**KEYWORDS:** Peter Carey. Parrot and Olivier in America. Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Peter Carey. Parrot e Olivier na América. Escola Semiótica de Tartu-Moscou.

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## Texto integral

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Peter Carey's novel **Parrot and Olivier in America** abandons the author's mostly frequented Australian scenery to traverse France, England and, more extensively,

the United States. The narrative is centred on the parallel life-stories of two characters, Olivier de Garmont, an alter ego of the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville, and the partially real figure of Parrot,<sup>2</sup> alias John Larrit, a British ex-convict with a bohemian, picaresque slant to the world. Both personalities negotiate their expectations about America inside their personal, concrete circumstances, depicting a rather peculiar portrait of the New World. Olivier has embarked on a journey to the “U-Knited States” (as Parrot misspells them), officially in order to write a report on the American prison system but, at the same time, to escape the chaos of the French July Revolution in 1830, which led to the institution of Louis Philippe’s bourgeois monarchy. His improvised servant, “clown and secrétaire” John Larrit, amiably called Parrot for his habit of emulating people’s gaffes and language twists, acts as a counterweight to Olivier’s austere snobbery. Though gaining differing lessons in life, they come to share a similar fate, as Parrot clearly points out to his master, describing his childhood as a convict in Australia: “I was transported by misadventure [...] your voyage to America was pretty much the same” (p. 287). Parrot is an artist manqué – he calls himself “a pimp for art” – and this reflects on his freewheeling, inventive, often sarcastic tone; on the other hand, Olivier’s style is formal, conventional and occasionally quite dry. Identical episodes are sometimes recalled, reported in a more familiar argot, by the two protagonists in totally different manners. For example, they both give an account of a town assembly in a local village church, where the most futile aspects of community life inflame the opposing political groups. To the Frenchman, this is an outstanding example of democracy, but according to Parrot it is nothing more than “boring tripe” (p. 303). Parrot and Olivier, confronted with a new environment and new ideas, carry out a process of complex intercultural translations which, as will be demonstrated, does not only alter their perception of America, but also that of America towards them, or towards itself. As Lotman argues, “Translation is a primary mechanism of consciousness. To express something in another language is a way of understanding it,”<sup>3</sup> regardless of the more or less accurate result of this process of comprehension. A first instance of the significance of translation, meant not only as language transfer, but also as a form of cultural exchange, even within the same language, is illustrated by an

example that also brings together Carey's fiction and its historical background. In November 1839, four years after the publication in France of the first part of his monumental book **De la démocratie en Amérique**, Tocqueville writes a concerned letter to his English translator:

It has seemed to me that in the translation of the last book you have, without wanting it, following the instinct of your opinions, very lively coloured what was contrary to democracy and rather appeased what could do wrong to aristocracy.<sup>4</sup>

Translations must always keep an eye on their purposes and addressees, of course. For this reason, some might be inclined to challenge Tocqueville's opinions about a translation of his own work. But following his vicissitudes after returning to France from a journey to America seven years earlier, his unsuccessful political career under the despised 'bourgeois' monarchy, and the awareness that aristocracy could not play any role on the institutional stage at that time, the French historian could not be blamed for querying some details of a translation aimed too blatantly at an egalitarian British or American audience. De's comment throws open the vexed question of how one culture represents another.

From a semiotic viewpoint, the novel is a real trove of what the Estonian semiotician Yuri Lotman calls the "text within the text"<sup>5</sup>, a texture of interwoven text-types. This multiplicity of voices is so persistent that it made Nicholas Spice insinuate in his review of Carey's book: "And if it turns out that the novel is partly an extravagant patchwork of other people's writing, why should this matter? Is it faking or making? Forging or forgery?"<sup>6</sup> This process of mutual contamination is more common in Parrot's dialectics than in Olivier's meditations, but in both cases the "mother" text does not only emerge in a new setting, it compromises its own initial wholeness. Lotman exemplifies this back and forth interaction referring to Hamlet as a text that already contains another text, the theatrical re-enactment of the murder of Hamlet the father. Moreover, he owns that "Hamlet is not just a play by Shakespeare, but it is also the memory of all its interpretations" and of all the

events and associations the mother text can awake in the reader/audience.<sup>7</sup> Referring back to Parrot and Olivier, what kinds of subtexts can be observed? The main secondary sources of the book, some of them quoted literally, are the following:

Original letters and diaries by Alexis de Tocqueville;

Letters by Alexis' fellow-traveller to the States, Gustave de Beaumont: in the novel, Olivier's friend, named Blacqueville, dies before boarding the steamship Havre to America;

**Democracy in America:** curiously, as Nicholas Spice contends, Carey uses a twentieth-century translation of Tocqueville and his friend's writings, thus clearly avoiding any attempt of imitating sophisticated nineteenth-century prose;

Charles Dickens' American Notes (1842) especially the passages describing a visit to the Eastern State Penitentiary;

A fake newspaper article reporting the latest of a long series of arsons in New York;

A maths formula:  $h(t) = Xit\beta$ , expressing the increase of property values in the New York area. The community of artists use it to calculate their dues after claiming an indemnity from an insurance company;

An illustration of the *célérifère*, the ancestor of the bicycle;

Eugène Delacroix's painting **Liberty Leading the People** (1830), celebrating the July Revolution;

Thomas J. Maslen's map of Australia (from **The Friend of Australia**, 1827).

Non-linguistic texts are particularly relevant in the economy of the novel, especially the bizarre map of Australia, as will be clarified later.

To complicate things and make Parrot's role in the story even more unreliable, the reader finds a dedication at the end of the book, where the servant acknowledges he is the only one who "cobbled" this history together. In previous episodes Parrot poses as a translator of Olivier's official, stiff language (with the excuse of

correcting his bad English), and he even says “[Olivier] set me to making a fair copy of his smudgy notes. It was a mistake to trust it to me, for he never had the patience for the proofs.” (p. 143) Parrot can even claim to have a place in History (with a capital H) because he personally modified notes that would be included in Olivier/Tocqueville’s first book of **Democracy in America**.

In this story of forgery and creative lies, what is the place of America and how can it be translated by the two characters? First of all, let us consider which kinds of relationship can be established between the three agencies: Parrot, Olivier and America. Parrot is an Englishman, though he does not bend to the imperialistic urge that permeates his own age. On the contrary, he is the son of an itinerant printer who helps a clandestine publisher to forge assignats, the French Revolution’s currency, so that it will devalue itself. As a consequence of this incrimination, Parrot becomes a convict and, later, an illustrator. Olivier’s royalist aristocrat creed does not assist him in taking a clear stance about the new American mentality, and his legalistic frame of mind does not entirely penetrate the reasons why democracy may become the new frontier of freedom; instead, he compares democracy to a “wave” that is doomed to break on the Frenchmen’s heads (p. 157). The third element, the American public opinion, has created a halo of democratic ideals and egalitarianism that justifies what Tocqueville will define in prophetic terms as the “tyranny of the majority”. Besides, in cultural-political terms, both the Englishman and the French aristocrat are antagonists of America: Parrot belongs to a nation that the Americans had strenuously opposed in order to attain independence. At the same time, Parrot is an outcast of British society, and his sense of estrangement towards both France and his native country makes him more willing than his master to live the American “experiment of democracy”. Parrot says about himself living in Australia:

*I had a wife, a child, a home, but for all that I did not understand it was my home. She, my wife, would not call it home either. All around us everyone was the same – soldiers, convicts, even captains with their holds stock full of rum. Home did not mean here. That was elsewhere. (p. 266; italics by the author)*

His definition of Australia also has a tinge of mockery:

[...] Australia was invented by the British, that whole dry carcass, its withered dugs offered to our criminal lips. Now that, sir, is a place of penance. (p. 265)

Olivier is potentially a friend of the Americans, considering France's role in fostering the American Revolution and the heroic intervention of the French nobleman, General Lafayette, in the War of Independence, but nevertheless, Olivier is an aristocrat, a sceptic where democracy and equality are concerned. These unresolved positions complicate the already laborious dialogue between the two cultures.

Now, what is the function of translation as an intermediary between two cultures? Translating one culture into another is a process through which a text is perceived and incorporated into the other culture. Texts can be verbal, visual or embedded in behaviour, such as attitudes, gestures, etc. The exchange of texts between different cultures can happen on an ideal level when the message is unequivocal, straightforward: in this case the two cultures partake of the same code as, for example with the message conveyed by the colours of a traffic light. The existence of a communal code is objectively impossible in natural languages, even between individuals belonging to the same background. Therefore, in the interrelation between texts based on different codes something becomes lost, or new information is added in the process of translation. Lotman underlines the paradox of communication: we as speakers suppose that the highest degree of communication depends on the effectiveness of a message, on how clearly it can be transmitted. However, the most elaborate texts, *e.g.* **La Divina Commedia**, clearly demonstrate how ambiguity and polisemiosis are not obstacles to a real understanding of the poem, but they make up the essence, the constituent of literary communication.



In which ways do cultures translate themselves? Lotman proposes a close affinity between a culture as a self-sustained system, where every part depends on the others, and the biological phenomena that characterize the biosphere. In fact, the semiotician elects Vernadsky's theory of the biosphere, where "all life-clusters are intimately bound to each other"<sup>8</sup> as the paradigm of his own theory of the semiosphere. Just as the broken piece of a mirror reflects the same image of the object as the whole mirror placed at the same distance from it, so every text included in a sign system interacts in building a global image of a culture. Culture should not be considered as a static organism: as in nature, it tends to evolve when its peripheral surface interlaces with another cultural system. There are three stages of interrelation, occasionally recurring together, between constituent elements: symmetry, enantiomorphism (mirror symmetry) and asymmetry. It will be useful to look at these terms in turn and in some detail.

Symmetry is a process through which one culture tries to translate another culture in its own terms, overlooking the peculiarities of the other. It is clearly a way of dismissing the other culture as irrelevant or scarcely informative. Symmetry implies an egotistic, self-sufficient projection of one's own supposed flexibility to get acquainted with the other cultures. This approach dominates many episodes onboard the boat to America, *e.g.* when Olivier is expected to behave in a way that the average American citizen considers culturally consistent:

'The Americans will not take it well,' he [Mr. Peek] said.

I understood the word take, and thought take money.

'The expulsion of your copyist – the republicans will be against it.'

'Ah yes, but the servant is your natural enemy, an Englishman.'

'On the other hand you are, your lordship, an aristocrat. [...] they will not like to see you refuse to share your cabin with your man.'

'They?'

'The Americans, my lord. It will not go down well with them.'

'But do they share quarters with their servants? I am sure they do not.'



'They do not, but they believed that you did and they liked you for it [...].'

(p. 134; italics by the author)

Olivier decides to comply with this rule, which completely disregards his principles of social rank and respectability. The ideal Frenchman that the Americans create is dictated by their cultural expectations, but he is completely removed from the real Frenchman. The same attitude to symmetry is adopted by Olivier in a number of cases, when he observes that Americans behave exactly as ideal pre-revolutionary French society should behave: in their religious devotion, in the way they have decentralized power and respect their sovereign institution. The only exception is their excessive indulgence to ladies, who are even allowed to stroll around alone with men at inconvenient times, while maintaining their good reputation.

Enantiomorphism (mirror symmetry) is a further step in the recognition of another culture, and signals the separation between the real and the other, and the terms in which this other is more revealingly contemplated. It is not yet a complete divergence, but it is the creation of a double, a mirror image, like two hands, or two gloves: they look the same, but they can only be joined together since they are not identical. With reference to the mirror image, Lotman specifies that "every reflection is at one and the same time a dislocation, a deformation which, on the one hand, emphasizes certain aspects of the object, and on the other hand shows up the structural principle of the language into whose space the given object is being projected."<sup>9</sup> This reflected image, however, is not a separate entity and either a conventional or an unconventional vehicle may be used to translate it. Translation becomes a kind of mirror reflection of what the translator considers to be her/his version of the original. It is, in a certain way, the double of a double. The Russian linguist Peeter Torop makes a clear distinction between 'homologating' and 'estranged' translations, where the former usually neutralize cultural differences with respect to the original, while the latter, visibly ignoring the reader, are more centred on rendering the culture specificity of the source.<sup>10</sup> A common example of a homologating approach to the source is literal translation: through

the convention of word by word adherence to the source, it nevertheless loses touch with the “here and now”, the time-space orientation of the original. For instance, a version from English or German into Italian, or another romance language, which systematically translates the forms of the simple past tense of the original with an aorist verb will deflect the variety of nuances of meaning related to a more flexible use of the ‘simple past’ tense, or the German Präteritum, in the family of Germanic languages. With regard to Carey’s novel, Olivier’s style is often a kind of literal translation of a stranger’s language into his own, without any negotiation on meaning. Thus, the American culture becomes a mirror reflection of the French one. Let us consider an example where Olivier discusses the aristocratic habit of being dressed by a servant:

PEEK: [...] I would hesitate to share my heartfelt feelings with an employee of any nation.

MIGRAINE [Parrot’s nickname of Olivier]: We would see it as no different to being dressed by one.

PEEK: Dressed, sir?

MIGRAINE: Is that not your custom?

PEEK: To stand naked? Sir I would not stand naked with my wife.

MIGRAINE: We do not call it naked with a servant.

PEEK: What do you call it?

MIGRAINE: We call it getting dressed.

There was a long pause before Lord Migraine spoke again, and then the subject had its clothes on. (p. 142)

The meaning-ridden act of “getting dressed” in French culture is simply a mirror image of the “standing naked” for the Americans, but there is a substantial difference in the master/servant relationship, as much as the concept of decency does. Words are like price-tags attached to items of reality: for various reasons, the price tag rarely shows the real value of the item, and the concept of value itself is debatable. Likewise, language may conceal the essence of a culture (words have to be clothed). In short, to Olivier the mirror reflection of another culture is resolved

in a reversal of the hierarchic roles, but this clash does not bring either side to redefine their stand. Later on, Olivier understands that he is playing the part of a slapstick actor; he is incapable of keeping in touch with reality. His attempt to draw the reader into his own cultural context through references to his French château or to an illustration of his *célérifère*, at the beginning of the book, is ineffective. Strangely enough, the only historically justifiable character, Olivier, is the most unreal and text-confined, and his attempt to translate America into his own frame of mind is doomed to fail. In a dialogue between him and his prospective father-in-law, Olivier clumsily explains why he cannot take Amelia to France and marry her. Contact between the American and French cultural systems is only superficially attained by the entrapment of language:

[Olivier:] 'French society has none of your vigour, your love of innovation. It is looking backward while it marches to its doom.'

[Mr Godefroy:] 'What are you saying?'

[Olivier:] 'I have no intention of being insolent.'

[Mr Godefroy:] 'Slap my face, man. I do not care. I have been wrong.'

[Olivier:] 'They will not be able to grasp Amelia's originality'.

[Mr Godefroy:] 'Amelia, original?'

[Olivier:] 'My mother, my father, the family. Their lives are circumscribed.'

[Mr Godefroy:] 'Circumscribed?'

[...]

[Olivier:] 'Should I be more blunt?'

[Mr Godefroy:] 'You mean they are snobs?'

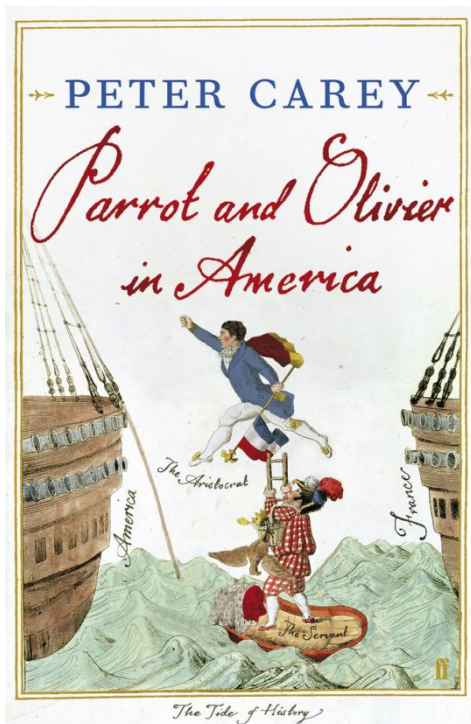
[Olivier:] 'They have a way of living.'

[Mr Godefroy:] 'Snobs.'

[Olivier:] 'You may think them so.'(p. 430-431)

In the end, Olivier's attempt to understand or accept American culture is unsuccessful. The only referential places to him are France and his own book. The potential for communication established by the creation of a mirror image of the

other does not find its fulfilment due to Olivier's hostility to America; conversely, Americans are reluctant to accept the projection Olivier subtends. A visual expression of this incommunicability is shown in the cover illustration of the Faber & Faber edition of Carey's book (the same cover image has been reproduced in the Italian edition by the publisher Feltrinelli).



2009, Copyright Faber & Faber

In this vignette, Olivier stands between two worlds: France and the 'here and now' of referential reality on one side, and America as pure convention on the other side. Olivier is not even jumping from a boat to land, but from one boat onto another: this sharpens the sense of cultural instability of his role.

How does Parrot take in the American experience? He seems to redefine the way language relates to objects. Names are there to remind us of the objects to which they refer but in unusual, newly experienced ways. Parrot opposed the descriptive potential of language to Olivier's myth of a language that creates reality out of the simple act of naming it.<sup>11</sup> Words create an asymmetry between what they usually

mean and the extra meaning they can express. Lotman compares the discovery of the new potentials of language with a child's language-learning process:

The child does not receive single words, but a language as such. The great amount of words that have already entered his conscience are not connected for him with any sort of reality. The following process of learning of a culture consists in the discovery of these connections and the attribution to the 'foreign' word of its 'proper' meaning.<sup>12</sup>

Olivier's attitude to language has something of the child's ingenuity, while Parrot's more mature style tries to penetrate beyond the surface of formal communication. This cultural acquisition, resulting in a kind of emancipation from the language of children, resembles the process of asymmetry in the way we deal with a stranger. In fact, asymmetry is the third, most fruitful, exchange of cultural information. This stage usually instigates a differentiation with respect to the mirror image used to grasp the essence of the other. In this perspective Parrot, himself an Anglophone, starts to relearn English as a new language within the American cultural system, and his search is oriented basically towards the visual, emotive aspects of language and the consequent unveiling of cultural asymmetries. Words must acknowledge their lack of space/time limitations; hence, the main vehicle for asymmetry is the pictorial description of nature and human beings, probably two of the most universal subjects of observation. For example, Parrot compares Paris and Broadway:

This was not Paris where you might drift uselessly from place to place, affecting to carry your wit and learning in a conch shell up your bottom. There were no *flâneurs* on Broadway. They were a hundred per cent business and they banged against one another like marbles in a lottery barrel. (p. 340; italics by the author)

The use of the French word *flâneurs* makes a clear point about asymmetry. By means of a foreign word, Parrot is neither praising American fervour nor being

critical or condescending towards American culture. In a different context, in **The Art of the City, Views and Versions of New York** (1984),<sup>13</sup> Peter Conrad depicts the proudly American writer Walt Whitman as a “flaneur” among the Broadway crowd, a “flaneur” whose “idling sensual appraisal” allows him to reach an almost physical “incorporation of himself with all those he passes,” celebrating a sort of “bacchanal, with one man twined around, rooted in, contained by, or containing multitudinous others.”<sup>14</sup> Parrot cannot possibly sympathize with such optimistic display of epic brotherhood. He cannot condescend blindly to American culture. The asymmetry lies in the use of a foreign term to indicate the absence of a translation, and the impossibility even to come up with a euphemism to explain it in other words. Elsewhere, describing the dungeon in New York, he condemns injustice in the American prison system and its internal asymmetry compared with the outside world:

Outside on the street the citizens were innocent and kind, with the luxury of being distressed by copulating pigs. But here the chill of legal murder was in the air I breathed. (p. 197)

Parrot’s cultural dialogue with America is the result of a process of acclimatization with different civilizations he never really wants to appropriate. He is, after all, the rootless vagabond who finds the ‘here and now’ of his changeable referential world the sole reason for cultural enrichment without losing his own uniqueness. The acknowledgement of the other as asymmetric differentiation from the previous state of enantiomorphism does not mean ruling out the interlocutor, on the contrary, it is the discovery that reciprocal differences makes the dialogue highly gratifying and inspirational. Parrot has the ability to absorb and appropriate the hic et nunc that dominate the most disparate circumstances and milieus: from the English culture he takes in the libertarian principles of his father, without dissociating him from his identity as an outlaw, a forger. The French culture offers him an array of personalities: Tilbot, the aristocrat who saves him from poverty but, at the same time, confined him to Australia; Olivier, a strenuous defensor of



French aristocracy, a “dying breed” (p. 340). Parrot’s lover Mathilde is French too: she is an unconventional artist who was forced to portray aristocrats in France – Parrot ironically epitomizes her as a “genius of horror” (p. 326). Of the Australian culture not much is left to Parrot, except memories of a family without a home. Finally, Parrot’s personal idea of American culture is perceived through the lenses of art: he joins a community of dissident artists, where he reunites with Mr. Wilkins, an old acquaintance he had met at the time of the forgery of banknotes, and who had miraculously survived the fire of the clandestine publishing house. Parrot seems to rebuild a previously disrupted master-apprentice relationship.

All these categories, “father/forgery”, “French aristocrat”, “artist”, “family without a home”, “community of artists” belong to the ‘outcasts’, they do not follow the mainstream of cultural homogeneity. However, as Lotman observes, the “rejected” are usually the spokesmen of new cultural information which tends to migrate from the outskirts to the centre of the cultural sphere.<sup>15</sup>

This tendency to asymmetry, regardless of its apparent blunders, is picturesquely delineated in the following peculiar map of Australia, inserted in Carey’s novel.



Thomas J. Maslen, 1827



Maslen, the real author of this map, added a caption discussing the best way to define the local Australian population: “the term Indians, as used in North America, seems most suitable, because, to call people Blacks who are not black, is improper, many being fair, and all being brown. To call them savages is a libel on the quiet tribes.”<sup>16</sup>

Parrot claims to have drawn this map to please his former patron, the Marquis de Tilbot, so he denies all responsibility for this counterfeit, explaining that he

[...] drew this fancy to his instructions. The Delta of Australia was his invention, I know because he changed the name so many times and caused me endless trouble. If there is a sea where he says there is, no one has found it yet.’ (p. 260; italics by the author)

The idea of the Delta of Australia is an unlikely cultural translation of an idealized asymmetric otherness, where the sea is inside the continent and a delta projects inland rather than into the ocean. It seems that the marquis de Tilbot knows the secret of cultural interlacing: the asymmetry between old culture (French) and the representation of the new culture (Australia) as both coherent and opposite to normal, is likely to bring new information, albeit objectively misleading but enabling new translations into other codes:

‘It would please Napoleon, don’t you think, to imagine all those fertile lands unoccupied? Why, we might have transported a million French felons to colonise the land.’ (p. 261)

It goes without saying that Australian history has taken a similar course, but with different actors and circumstances.

## Notas

1The translations of Lotman's works are still fragmentary. My reference texts, mainly from Italian and English are: Jurij M. Lotman, *La semiosfera. L'asimmetria e il dialogo nelle strutture pensanti*, a cura di Simonetta Salvestroni (Venezia: Marsilio Editori, 1985); Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind. A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, Introduction by Umberto Eco (London, New York: 1990, I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd); Jurij M. Lotman, *Il girotondo delle muse, saggi sulla semiotica delle arti e della rappresentazione*, a cura di Silvia Burini (Bergamo: Moretti & Vitali, 1998); Jurij M. Lotman, *Tesi per una semiotica delle culture*, a cura di Franciscu Sedda (Roma: Melteni editore, 2006). Some further texts will be indicated in separate footnotes. Due to dissimilarities in transliteration of the Russian alphabet, the spelling of Lotman's first name and patronimic may vary according to the language of the translation.

2 Parrot's book of engravings, *Birds of America*, is reminiscent of the homonymous miscellany of 435 engravings by John James Audubon (1785-1851): <http://www.audubon.org/john-james-audubon>. (accessed on 9 November 2012).

3 Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 127.

4 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. George Lawrence, New York/Evanston/London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966, p. 47.

5 Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 18-19.

6 Nicholas Spice, "Forged, Forger, Forget," *London Review of Books*, 5 August 2010, p. 14-16.

7 Jurij M. Lotman, *La semiosfera* 259-60, and *Universe of the Mind*, p. 19.

8 Quoted in Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 125.

9 Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. 56.

10 Peeter Torop, *La traduzione totale*, Trans. Bruno Osimo. Milano: Hoepli, 1995, p. 64.

11 Lotman and Uspensky discuss the two faces of language – description and identification – in their article 'Myth-Name-Culture', *Soviet Semiotics: An Anthology*, ed. D. P. Lucid. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins U. P., 1977) p. 233-252.

12 Jurij Lotman, *La semiosfera*, p.107; my translation.

13 Peter Conrad, *The Art of the City, Views and Versions of New York* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 15.

14 Jurij M. Lotman, *La semiosfera*, p. 15; my translation.

15 Jurij M. Lotman, *La semiosfera*, p. 165-80.

16 [http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover\\_collections/history\\_nation/exploration/maslen.html](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/discover_collections/history_nation/exploration/maslen.html). (accessed on 9 November 2012)

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## O Autor

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**Luigi Gussago** formou-se em Línguas Estrangeiras e Literatura na Universidade Católica del S. Cuore em Brescia (Itália). Ele se candidatou a uma posição de pesquisa de pós-graduação e agora é um doutorando da Escola de Estudos Europeus e Históricos em La Trobe University (Melbourne, Austrália). Professor de Inglês escola secundária na Itália, ele está trabalhando atualmente como um tutor de língua italiana em seu corpo docente. Sua área de pesquisa lida com o legado do romance picaresco na literatura italiana e anglófona contemporânea. Ele publicou um artigo de literatura comparada sobre Primo Levi e Martin Amis; outro ensaio, lidando com o autor italiano Cesare de Marchi, foi recentemente aceito para publicação. Ele também apresentou um ensaio sobre a teoria e a prática da tradução em versões de de Marchi para o alemão, a ser incluído, eventualmente, em um volume de estudos variados sobre literatura e tradução.