estudos semióticos

The Hobbit in prose and comics: exploring intersemiotic relations *

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Abstract: This paper investigates the intersemiotic relations between J.R.R. Tolkien's prose novel *The Hobbit* (1937) and the homonym graphic novel by David Wenzel and Charles Dixon (1990). The study aims to explore the specific characteristics and challenges involved in adapting a literary work from a verbal to a verbo-visual sign system. Our approach involved a review of relevant bibliographical sources and an analytical-expository method. We first contextualized the historical development of Anglophone comics, drawing on the works of Babic (2016) and Kukkonen (2013). We then examined comics as a distinct sign system, utilizing Groensteen's (2015) theoretical perspectives to understand their unique elements. Afterwards, we explored key concepts of intersemiotic adaptation, translation, and transposition as respectively articulated by Eco (2001), Jakobson (1995), and Plaza (1987), among other scholars. By comparing these theoretical frameworks with the characteristics of both works, we aimed to determine the most accurate description of their relationship. Our analysis concluded that the relationship between the novel and the graphic novel is best characterized as an intersemiotic transposition. This finding aligns with Plaza's (1987) concept of Index Translation and is supported by arguments on the role of the translator as discussed by Eco (2001), Pina (2014), and Plaza (1987).

Keywords: *The Hobbit*; graphic novel; intersemiotic translation; intersemiotic adaptation; intersemiotic transposition.

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Introduction

Comics, as we know them today, are a relatively recent form of artistic expression compared to other art forms, and there is considerable debate regarding the specific historical point that marks their origin. Some scholars, such as Anessa Ann Babic (2014), argue that *Histoire de Mr. Vieux Bois* (1837), by the Swiss author Rodolphe Töpffer (1799-1846), represents the first comic book publication. This work was later published in the United States under the title *The adventures of Mr. Obadiah Oldbuck* (1842). However, it was not until the 20th century that comics began to attract a substantial audience.

In 1937, what is now acknowledged as the Golden Age of comics, began in the United States with the publication of *Detective Comics*, a comic magazine owned by National Allied Publications under the direction of its owner and editor, Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson. This period is notable for the creation of some of the most iconic superhero titles, such as *Batman* (Kane and Finger, 1939), *Superman* (Siegel and Shuster, 1938), and *Wonder Woman* (Moulton and Peter, 1942). It was also during this time that comics began to be produced and distributed on a large scale, with hundreds of thousands of copies sold. The primary audience for comics was children and teenagers; however, as noted by Babic (2014), reports suggest that during World War I (1914-1918), comics were also widely consumed by Allied soldiers in the war zones.

Two decades later, the comic book medium faced a significant setback with consequences that would last for decades. The psychiatrist Frederic Wertham (1895–1981) published *Seduction of the innocent* (1954), in which is argued that comics were a major factor contributing to juvenile delinquency. The book ignited existing criticisms of comics from various segments of society and triggered a substantial uproar among U.S. parents. This concern reached the U.S. Congress, which promptly consulted Wertham to determine the best course of action to address the perceived threat. In an effort to protect the reputation of an already vulnerable industry, comic book publishers created the Comics Code Authority, an organization responsible for regulating content and preventing further scandals. Although the Comics Code Authority continued to exist into the 21st century, it lost much of its influence by the 1980s.

Between 1980 and 1990, superhero comics began to adopt a more mature tone, exemplified by works such as *The dark knight returns* (1986), by Frank Miller, and *Watchmen* ([1986–1987] 1987), by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons. The latter is part of what is popularly known as the British Invasion (1983–1989), a period marked by the arrival of British artists in the U.S. market who revolutionized comic book storytelling and elevated the medium to mainstream

recognition. Simultaneously, underground publications gained recognition, aided by artists such as Art Spiegelman, who later published *MAUS* ([1980–1981] 1991), a Pulitzer Prize-winning work and one of the greatest classics in the history of comics.

In 1985, comics began to take their first steps toward systematic and formal study within an academic context with the publication of *Comics as sequential art* (1985), by Will Eisner (1917-2005). Babic (2014, p. 12) argues that "Eisner's work looked at comics as art and literary forms with sequential expression. He marked comics as literary forms because their stories bear strong resemblance to those of literature". In this new context, which fostered the creation of more intricate narratives, many comics were conceived not only to entertain but also to provoke reflection and address a range of social themes and motifs. This development led to debates regarding the proper terminology for the medium in various countries, including France and Argentina. In the United States, the term *graphic novel* became widely adopted.

We can infer that, despite a past marked by instability and its relatively recent emergence, comics have increasingly gained recognition for their relevance and importance and have attracted growing attention from academic studies. Figures such as Moore, Spiegelman, and Eisner are notable examples of authors who have innovated within the medium and demonstrated the unique storytelling potential of comics. Moreover, their works continue to be analyzed and debated, reaffirming the capacity of this art form to convey multiple levels of meaning. These developments have also contributed to ongoing debates about the literariness of comics, and the relationship between comics and literature has been explored in academic contexts from various perspectives. One such perspective involves comparing a novel and its adaptation into a graphic novel, which is the focus of our investigation.

In 1937, J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973) published his first fantasy novel, *The Hobbit* (1991), which eventually became a favorite for readers worldwide. According to Pedro Macêdo and Cláudio Moura (2021), although initially considered a children's book, the novel has influenced people of all ages and serves as an important milestone in modern fantasy, alongside Tolkien's magnum opus, *The lord of the rings* (Tolkien, [1954–1955] 2009), to which it serves as a prelude. The literary universe created by Tolkien has been translated into more than 40 languages, sold millions of copies, and has become a cultural phenomenon that extends beyond literature, reaching other forms of media and expression.

The novel tells the story of Bilbo Baggins, a hobbit who lives a peaceful life in a comfortable hole-house at Bag End, spending his days relaxing and avoiding any significant troubles. One day, the wizard Gandalf visits Bilbo, and after their unusual encounter, Bilbo continues with his daily routine. However, soon after,

thirteen dwarves arrive unexpectedly at his home, entering as though they had been invited by Bilbo himself. Bilbo learns that it was Gandalf who had arranged this gathering, and the dwarves persuade him to join them on a journey to reclaim their treasure at the Lonely Mountain, their former home, which was attacked and occupied by the dragon Smaug. Although Bilbo initially refuses multiple times, he eventually agrees to accompany them, embarking on the greatest adventure of his life.

Years later, Bilbo would undertake the journey to the Lonely Mountain once again, this time within the pages of a comic book. The idea of adapting novels into comics dates back to the early years of the latter, a medium that, according to Kukkonen (2013), was initially regarded as a lesser form of narrative. In this case, adapting literary classics was a viable strategy for gaining more credibility. This approach aimed not only to introduce the literary canon to younger readers but also to expand the audience for comics. Over the decades, this strategy extended to works beyond the traditional literary canon. *The Hobbit* (1990), a graphic novel written by Charles Dixon and illustrated by David Wenzel, is an example of a fantasy novel reimagined in comic form.

There are, however, many terms used interchangeably to describe this type of transcodification (a term in itself), which can lead to confusion or even practical inaccuracies regarding specific aspects of the object under examination. To illustrate these differences and to understand how the two works are related, this paper employs the terms *intersemiotic adaptation*, *transposition*, and *translation* to investigate which definition best describes the relationship between the verbal and verbo-visual systems in the selected works. We also examine which elements are most pertinent to understanding this process of transcodification. To explore the intersemiotic relations in *The Hobbit* as prose and comics, our analysis draws on the contributions and reflections of Julio Plaza (1987), Roman Jakobson (1995), and Umberto Eco (2001), among other scholars.

Furthermore, we examine the historical context and significance of comics over the decades and their potential in relation to literature, drawing primarily on the ideas presented by Miranda and Pinheiro-Mariz (2014) and Babic (2014). This study incorporates discussions from contemporary scholars who explore the relationship between comics and adaptations, whether in the form of a graphic novel adapted into a movie or a literary classic reimagined within panels and speech balloons. One of the foundational texts for our analysis is Thierry Groensteen's *The system of comics* (2007), which offers a collection of essays and reflections on the Ninth Art. Groensteen characterizes comics not merely as a vehicle for adapting novels but as a distinct system with its own unique characteristics, thereby broadening the discussion beyond a simple comparison to literary works.

1. Comics and literature

Comics have garnered considerable attention worldwide by means of its mass production industry. For decades, this medium has been regarded as an inferior form of reading, largely due to its use of illustrations alongside verbal narratives, which were believed to *mutilate* the reader's imagination, as Miranda and Pinheiro-Mariz put it (2014). To explain this alleged mutilation, researchers suggest that it arises from the dual use of verbal and visual language in comics, which is thought to constrain the reader's imagination and interpretative possibilities. However, books written for children have long included illustrated pages, and in those cases, the illustrations function as operative signs that complement the verbal narrative.

For this reason, editors, writers, and artists have sought ways to validate comics and gain the trust of their audience. One significant decision involved the use of the term *graphic novel*, which was popularized by Eisner and became one of the most recognized examples in the U.S. market, though it was not the first. Eisner's objective was to coin a term that would avoid the word *comic*, motivated by the need to find an expression that excluded the term's childish and humorous connotations, as "comic" originally means "funny" (García, 2010). In his work *A contract with God* (1978), Eisner deliberately presented it as a narrative for adults. To reinforce this intention, Eisner chose a publishing house (Baronet Books) known for its focus on content for mature audiences and for publishing literary classics. Moreover, the format of the book differed from typical comics, receiving more refined treatment, such as a hardcover and high-quality paper.

Each country has its own terms for referring to comics, such as *fumetti* in Italy, *bande dessinée* in France, *bildgeschichte* in Germany, and *quadrinhos* or *romance gráfico* in Brazil, with these terms arising from different historical and cultural contexts. The search for a new term in the American market reflects the efforts of certain authors and editors to have comics recognized and respected as a legitimate art form. While both terms – *comic* and *graphic novel* – refer to the same medium, the latter has become widely accepted among publishers, fans, booksellers, and other participants in the market. As Hatfield (2005) suggests, a work labeled as a *graphic novel* is seen as more credible and is likely to attract the attention of more buyers and critics.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned, graphic novels often receive special treatment in their editions, are intended for a particular audience, and, according to García (2010), invite readings and attitudes distinct from those of traditional comics. For this reason, the term *graphic novel* can be understood as a category within the broader comics medium. Thus, the choice to use the said term in reference to a work in this context reflects the specifics of the anglophone

market and the intentions of Wenzel and Dixon (1990), along with their publisher.

Another strategy developed between 1930 and 1950, the first decades of the medium as a large-scale product, was to adapt literary classics, which was a way of introducing the younger audience to canonical works from literature, and also attract them to comics. Karin Kukkonen, in his work *Studying comics and graphic novels* (2013), dedicates a chapter to discuss adaptations of literary classics into comics, and how demanding this process is. It is widely known that comics consist of a system that often combines both text and illustrations, but what might not be always acknowledged is that it goes further, beyond such description. As it is characteristic in this medium, the combination of elements results in a structure that only works properly when all of them are connected, which means that both art and text must communicate with each other. Thus, the artist and writer's perspectives play a primary role in adapting literary works, and their choices may vary from being inclined to look mainly for fidelity to the introduction of original elements that might benefit the narrative in the new format. Concerning this aspect, Kukkonen explains that:

> In adapting novels, comics have to translate narrative strategies from the written word into images, words, and sequence. They need to deal with verbal ambiguity, the differences between descriptions in words and images, the pacing and perspectives of narration when subject to panel divisions, and (sometimes) the restricted length of the comic-book format (Kukkonen, 2013, p. 75).

These aforementioned aspects illustrate how the process of adapting a novel into a comic can be challenging, and the result may not fully capture the equivalence to the source text, given the distinct elements of the sign systems and narratives involved. This is why discussions regarding the concept of fidelity are often highly specific to each case. In examining this issue, Kukkonen (2013) raises the question of which aspects define what it means to remain faithful to the source work, and at what point this fidelity might cease to be beneficial. Elements such as the historical period in which the narrative is set, the dialogue, and even the visual representation of the narrative's components are crucial considerations. For instance, the portrayal of characters will inherently be specific, and the interpretation of descriptions (or the lack thereof) will be managed by the translator. The creative insights of the artist play a fundamental role, as Kukkonen (2013) demonstrates through the example of an adaptation of *Pride and prejudice* (1813), by Jane Austen (1775-1817), highlighting how comics provide a new perspective on the affordances of written narrative:

> Some of these affordances, like the novel's capacity to avoid being specific and to render layers of cognitive complexity, are connected to the notion of 'literariness' and seem to preclude successful

> adaptations of novels like Jane Austen's which thrive on exactly these affordances of the written word. Comics, however, can work around these limitations, and present undefined panels, removed from time and space, or suggest ironic reflections on the characters' misconceptions (Kukkonen, 2013, p. 90).

The graphic novel *The Hobbit* exemplifies the ongoing discussions regarding fidelity and the ability to retain crucial elements of the narrative when transposed into another medium. When comparing an illustrated page in the comics to the corresponding passage in the prose novel, it is evident that Charles Dixon made efforts to preserve Tolkien's dialogue and descriptions as much as possible. However, this adherence sometimes affects the narrative fluidity, particularly in situations where illustrations could have been more effectively used to *show* rather than *tell*. In the following excerpt from the novel, followed by its corresponding page in the graphic novel, we can observe how the same action is portrayed in both formats:

> The feast that they now saw was greater and more magnificent than before; and at the head of a long line of feasters sat a woodland king with a crown of leaves upon his golden hair, very much as Bombur had described the figure in his dream. The elvish folk were passing bowls from hand to hand and across the fires, and some were harping and many were singing. Their gleaming hair was twined with flowers; green and white gems glinted on their collars and their belts; and their faces and their songs were filled with mirth (Tolkien, 1991, p. 251-252).

Figure 1: Bilbo finds the woodland king.

Source: Wenzel & Dixon (1990, p. 75).

In this section of the graphic novel, we can see that the authors retained details such as the description of the woodland king, his crown of leaves, and even the mirth on the faces of the elves. However, since all these elements are also depicted visually in the illustrations, the written descriptions become redundant rather than complementary, which is the usual dynamic in comics that integrate text and illustration. Still, this characteristic remains consistent throughout the whole graphic novel.

As Hutcheon (2006) argues, transcodifications involve repetition without replication. This means that while elements from the source work can be represented in the target medium, they should present something new to the reader rather than merely replicate parts of the source. This is why the potential offered by illustrations is so significant when analyzing comics, for the final outcome is heavily influenced by the way these visual elements are conceived.

Regarding the illustration process, which ultimately shapes the final graphic novel, Wenzel asserts in an interview with the YouTube channel *Comics History Project* (2018) that Dixon and their editor were aware of his familiarity with Tolkien's work. Having previously illustrated the art book *Middle-earth: The World of Tolkien Illustrated* (1977), Wenzel was able to imprint his own artistic vision onto the graphic novel. According to Wenzel, although Dixon was responsible for the script, he provided only "rough layouts" (Comics History Project, 2018). However, this indicates that although the illustrator had the freedom to interpret and visualize the comic according to his perspective, Wenzel was still constrained by the content that had been predetermined to appear in the graphic novel.

A significant example that delineates the limits of Wenzel's creative freedom is the first page of his work, which reproduces excerpts from the opening pages of the novel with minimal or no alterations to the source text, as observed in the following passage and, subsequently, in Figure 2:

> *In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit hole, and that means comfort.*
>
> It had a perfectly round door like a porthole, painted green, with a shiny yellow brass knob in the exact middle. The door opened on to a tube-shaped hall like a tunnel: a very comfortable tunnel without smoke, with panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided with polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats — the hobbit was fond of visitors. The tunnel wound on and on, going fairly but not quite straight into the side of the hill — *The Hill, as all the people for many miles round called it* — and many little round doors opened out of it, first on one side and then on another. No going upstairs for the hobbit: bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens, dining-rooms, all were on the same floor, and indeed on the same passage. The best rooms were all on the left-hand side (going in), for these were the only ones to have windows, deep-set round windows looking over his garden, and meadows beyond, sloping down to the river.
>
> This hobbit was a very well-to-do hobbit, *and his name was Baggins*. The Bagginses had lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for time out of mind, and *people considered* them *very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected*: you could tell what a Baggins would say on any question without the bother of asking him. *This is a story of how a Baggins had an adventure, and found himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected.* He may have lost the neighbours' respect, but he gained — well, you will see whether he gained anything in the end.
>
> The mother of our particular hobbit — *what is a hobbit? I suppose hobbits need some description nowadays, since they have become rare and shy of the Big People, as they call us. They are* (or were) *a*

> *little people,* about half our height, and *smaller than* the bearded *Dwarves*. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly when large stupid folk like you and me come blundering along, making a noise like elephants which they can hear a mile off. *They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; they dress in bright colours* (chiefly green and yellow); *wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair* like the stuff on their heads (which is curly); have long clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day when they can get it). Now you know enough to go on with. As I was saying, *the mother of this hobbit — of Bilbo Baggins, that is — was the famous Belladonna Took,* one of the three remarkable daughters of the Old Took, head of the hobbits who lived across The Water, the small river that ran at the foot of The Hill. It was often said (in other families) that long ago one of the Took ancestors must have taken a fairy wife. That was, of course, absurd, but certainly there was still something not entirely hobbitlike about them, and *once in a while members of the Took-clan would go and have adventures. They discreetly disappeared, and the family hushed it up;* but the fact remained *that the Tooks were not as respectable as the Bagginses*, though they were undoubtedly richer.
>
> Not that Belladonna Took ever had any adventures after she became Mrs. Bungo Baggins. Bungo, that was Bilbo's father, built the most luxurious hobbit-hole for her (and partly with her money) that was to be found either under The Hill or over The Hill or across The Water, and there they remained to the end of their days. Still *it is probable that Bilbo, her only son, although he looked and behaved exactly like* a second edition of his solid and comfortable *father, got something a bit queer in his make-up from the Took side, something that only waited for a chance to come out.* The chance never arrived, until Bilbo Baggins was grown up, being about fifty years old or so, and living in the beautiful hobbit-hole built by his father, which I have just described for you, until he had in fact apparently settled down immovably (Tolkien, 1991, p. 3-5, emphasis added).

Apart from the speech balloon with the exclamation in the bottom right corner of the page in Figure 2, there is no textual adaptation beyond modifications for sentence structure. Therefore, by examining the highlighted sections in the aforementioned quotation, one can identify the content of those parts presented within the panels of the page.

Figure 2: The introduction of the protagonist.

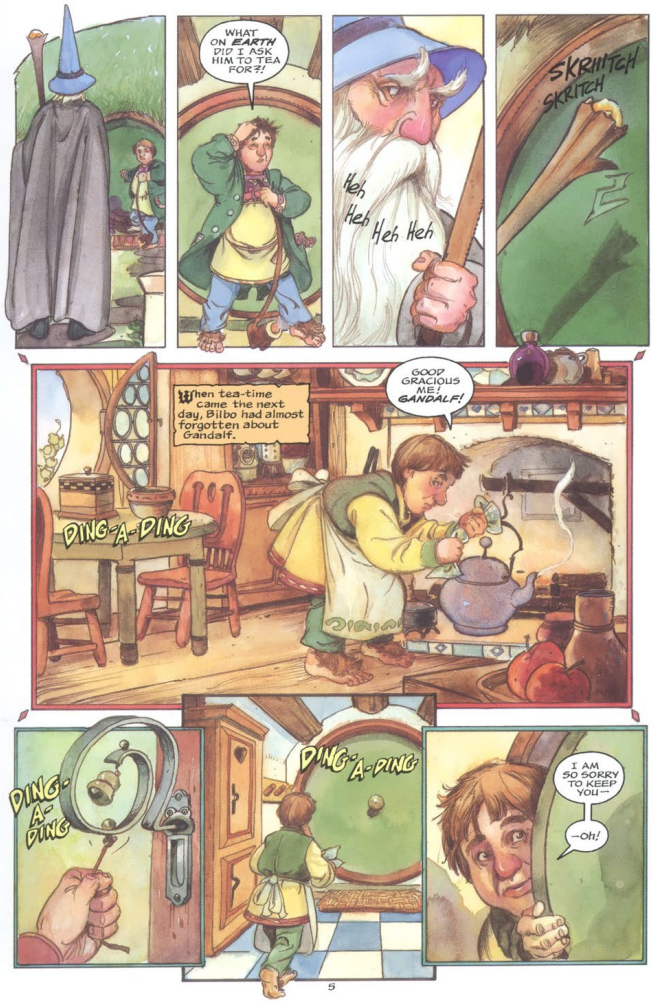
Source: Wenzel & Dixon (1990, p. 1).

As observed, not only are the illustrations constrained by the script, but the script itself relies more on direct excerpts than on rewriting. However, there was still room for minor additions of elements not explicitly presented in textual form within the graphic novel, though described in the source text. This is exemplified by the depiction of "[...] a perfectly round door like a porthole, painted green, with a shiny yellow brass knob in the exact middle" (Tolkien, 1991, p. 3), and the fact the character was "[...] smoking an enormous long wooden pipe that reached nearly down to his woolly toes" (Tolkien, 1991, p. 5). Additionally, certain instances of artistic interpretation by Wenzel can be identified, particularly in the liberties taken – whether consciously or not – in deviating from explicit descriptions of the main character's appearance. While the novel emphasizes, through the use of parentheses, that Bilbo has curly hair, Wenzel's depiction presents the protagonist with straight hair. Whether this discrepancy was

intentional or simply overlooked and later approved by Dixon, it remains a slight departure from the source text.

Still regarding both the quotation and Figure 2, it is also worth noting that by fragmenting the source text, the illustrator and scriptwriter made a deliberate decision about what was relevant to convey at that moment from the perspective of the medium. Unlike the novel, which dedicates an entire paragraph to describing Bilbo's house, Dixon chose to omit the textual description, as Wenzel would visually depict the interior in the following pages, as illustrated in Figure 3:

Figure 3: Bilbo's house.



Source: Wenzel & Dixon (1990, p. 5).

The examples displayed function as a reminder that another important aspect concerning comics and literature is the definition of their own boundaries. Some researchers argue that comics possess literariness, while others consider them a less profound form of art. Miranda and Pinheiro-Mariz (2014) suggest that the reluctance to accept comics as a literary form may stem from the medium's structure, which integrates both visual and verbal elements, allowing

readers to encounter text alongside images that are inherently linked. However, the inclusion of images actually provides a range of narrative strategies unique to comics. The scholars further elucidate that:

> The images that form the comics are not there by chance, they constitute a meaningful whole, once the image is not separated from the whole, cohesive, that transmits something to us, referring to elements transposed from the real world, provoking the reader's imagination (Miranda; Pinheiro-Mariz, 2014, p. 176, our translation from Portuguese).[1]

On the other hand, Samuel R. Delany (2012) offers a different perspective by defining comics as paraliterature. This term refers to texts that do not meet the criteria of literary art, thereby relegating comics to a derivative status. However, this definition overlooks the evidence that demonstrates the contrary. Many graphic novels present rich narratives with complex structures, integrating verbal and visual elements in ways that are unique to the medium. These works provide readers with opportunities to analyze multiple layers of meaning. To further illuminate Delany's definition, we can consider the insights of theorists such as Douglas Wolk, who observes that:

> Comics are not prose. Comics are not movies. They are not a text-driven medium with added pictures; they're not the visual equivalent of prose narrative or a static version of a film. They are their own thing: a medium with its own devices, its own innovators, its own clichés, its own genres and traps and liberties. The first step toward attentively reading and fully appreciating comics is acknowledging that (Wolk, 2007, p. 14).

Wolk (2007) views comics as a distinct medium, highlighting the ongoing debates about how this sign system should be perceived. Thus, despite the presence of literary elements within comics, they will not be considered merely as a form or derivative of literature in this context. Comics are, in fact, an art form with unique elements and limitless artistic potential. Consequently, they require analysis not only in relation to other media but also as a system in their own right. Our perspective aligns with that of Groensteen (2007), one of the first theorists to study comics through the lens of semiotics and to analyze them as an independent system.

[1] Original text: As imagens que compõem os quadrinhos não estão ali por acaso, elas constituem um todo significativo, uma vez que a imagem não é separada do todo, coeso, que nos transmite algo, remetendo-nos a elementos transpostos do mundo real, provocando o imaginário do leitor.

2. *The Hobbit*: intersemiotic relations from prose to comic

The intersemiotic relationship between comics and literature, as we have explored, indicates that both art forms constitute authentic systems of signs, sharing common features like verbal language. Recognizing comics as a system of signs is crucial for understanding the intersemiotic process bringing into relation written words and image. The idea of comics as a system of signs was introduced by Groensteen (2007), who addressed the intrinsic characteristics and elements of comics as the central theme. This formal perspective prioritizes the form of comics over historical and sociological aspects. Building on this understanding of intrinsic characteristics and elements of comics, we examine how intersemiotic relations are intertwined in *The Hobbit*'s graphic and prose forms. We consider Groensteen's formal perspective to highlight how the two works align and diverge structurally.

Several researchers examined the form of comics before Groensteen (2007). Will Eisner (1985) and Scott McCloud (1993), for instance, conducted studies discussing the form and function of comics. However, it is important to note that these scholars were primarily comic creators rather than academics approaching comics from an external perspective. Despite this, their works were instrumental in presenting new viewpoints on the study of comics and contributing to the development of a specific terminology for the medium. Babic (2014) cites one of McCloud's arguments regarding this terminology and its significance in validating research in the field:

> Aside from clearly deconstructing the anatomy of comic books, he demonstrates the importance of a unified language within an often misunderstood medium. McCloud states, "A single unified language deserves a single unified vocabulary. Without it, comics will continue to limp along as the 'bastard child' of words and pictures. Several factors have conspired against comics receiving the unified identity the genre needs" (Babic, 2014, p. 15).

With this consideration, we arrive at the core of the discussion initiated by Groensteen (2007) concerning comics from a semiotic perspective. Semiotic studies primarily focus on understanding the relationship between different sign systems and how they operate to convey meaning. The influences of semiotics on other fields of knowledge, particularly within the humanities, have fostered the development of diverse theoretical perspectives. However, semiotic studies concerning graphic novels are relatively recent, dating back only a few decades. It can be inferred that the historical undervaluation of this medium likely contributed to the delay in recognizing it as a legitimate subject of academic inquiry.

Groensteen (2007) delineates crucial aspects necessary to understand the multiple dimensions that compose the structure of comics. According to Groensteen, it is not merely a matter of integrating images and text but involves comprehending diegetic connections and layout. The author asserts that "Comics are [...] an original combination of a (or two, with writing) subject(s) of expression, and of a collection of codes. This is the reason that it can only be described in the terms of a system" (Groensteen, 2007, p. 15). Consequently, Groensteen argues that it is impossible to decompose this medium into its most fundamental constitutive units. To illustrate this point, the scholar highlights the significance of various elements in constructing meaning within a graphic novel. These include the design of speech bubbles, the arrangement of panels, the use or absence of color, and the interpretations evoked by gutters. All these semiotic aspects and their simultaneity support the argument that comics constitute a distinct system. Thus, while comics incorporate visual and textual signs, they are not derivative of either, as these elements function in very specific ways within this medium. For instance, as Groensteen argues, comics employ the concept of simultaneity, where multiple narrative elements are presented on a single page – whether or not they follow a specific sequence, yet remaining easily assimilable by the reader. This idea of simultaneity can be observed in Figure 4, which depicts the Battle of the Five Armies portrayed in the graphic novel:

Figure 4: The Battle of the Five Armies.

Source: Wenzel & Dixon (1990, p. 124).

Figure 4 illustrates how Wenzel and Dixon encapsulate a significant portion of the Battle of the Five Armies on a single page, considering that in the novel, Bilbo is mostly unconscious during the battle. The graphic novel's creators condense the battle into a layout that depicts multiple events occurring simultaneously, reflecting the chaotic nature of combat. This approach is indicative of a distinctive feature of comics: the ability to convey simultaneous actions through visual means. This method demonstrates that the authors did not always rely on Tolkien's detailed descriptions, highlighting that visual representation alone can be an effective storytelling strategy.

Similarly, Figure 5 demonstrates how Thorin's retelling of the dwarves' loss of their kingdom of Erebor to the dragon Smaug employs visual cues to integrate both present and past within the same page. The absence of clearly defined panels may also be interpreted as a technique to distinguish the embedded narrative as a recollection from memory. Furthermore, one could argue that the

use of non-delineated panels functions as a representation of the fluidity of memory, where events blend into one another, creating an indistinct transition between moments.

Figure 5: How the dragon took over the mountain from the dwarves.

Source: Wenzel & Dixon (1990, p. 11).

Still regarding Figure 5, Wenzel's visual solution for conveying the limited information about the dragon's appearance, due to the lack of textual description at that point in the novel, was to depict it solely in profile before sunset. One might argue that this effect could have been replicated in the graphic novel by restricting the dragon's initial mention to text within speech balloons, thereby seemingly transposing the effect achieved in the novel. However, we contend that such an omission, if confined to the textual level, might easily go unnoticed by many readers of the graphic novel. Thus, the creative decision to visually present only the dragon's silhouette suggests that its actual appearance may

have been unknown to the dwarves, given that these events occurred long ago, or that their memory of it had faded over time. Another possibility is that this choice serves as a narrative strategy employed by both the novel and the graphic novel to foreshadow the dragon's eventual full revelation, leveraging the unique affordances of each medium to gradually introduce the enemy, ensuring that the reader, like Bilbo, only fully encounters it when the moment arrives.

Given this context, defining or describing the act of adapting a narrative from one medium to another is inherently complex, even though we commonly use the term *adaptation* to describe such processes. Primarily, this endeavor involves significant subjectivity if not guided by established theoretical frameworks. It requires a nuanced understanding of the unique aspects of both the source material and the target medium. To begin, we can consider the aspects highlighted by Groensteen regarding the adaptation of prose works into comics:

> [...] we must conceive the writing of a comic as an adaptation of a narrative project to the particular resources and exigencies of the medium. The breakdown is the first agent of this process. It seizes pre-existing narrative material (drawn up or not, somewhat vague or already structured), and it transforms this fable or this discourse into a succession of discrete units, the panels, which are frequently associated with verbal utterances, and that are links of a narrative chain. These panels are equipped with a frame (if only virtual), which designates them as separate entities, enclosing each within a meaningful fragment (Groensteen, 2007, p. 116).

Adapting prose to comics, as described by Groensteen, involves the process of breakdown. The uniqueness of the comics medium creates a new system of signs to the narrative adapted. As a result, enclosing separate entities requires the signs to come into action to create a meaningful narrative aligned with the source material. In this case, adaptation is closely related to translation involving different sign systems.

Roman Jakobson (1896-1982) classified the translation process based on three possibilities. According to Jakobson (1995), when verbal signs are interpreted within the same language, such as defining or rephrasing a word, the process is called *intralingual translation*. The interpretation of verbal signs from one language into verbal signs of another language involves an *interlingual translation* (commonly referred to simply as *translation*). An example of this is the Brazilian Portuguese edition of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. And interpreting verbal signs through non-verbal signs is referred to as *intersemiotic translation* or *transmutation*, as described by Jakobson. This form of translation is prevalent across various art forms and is often encountered without conscious recognition. For instance, adaptations of novels into films or musical interpretations of classic works exemplify how a narrative can be transformed across different media.

Daniella Aguiar and João Queiroz (2016) provide a distinct example of intersemiotic translation by analyzing Ana Paula Carneiro Dias's (2011) adaptation of the Brazilian poem *Macunaíma* (1928), by Mário de Andrade, into a dance performance. Aguiar and Queiroz (2016), considering the many ways to translate *Macunaíma*, argue that Dias focused on translating the properties of the rhapsody, according to her choices concerning the hero, anthropophagic cultural background, and other aspects. The anthropophagic movement is recreated by the dancer, changing the metaphor of a devouring modernist into a concrete act. The artist interacts with fragments of the novel, rolling over them and imprinting the text on her naked body.

These translation possibilities show that the artist selected subjective elements deemed essential for translating the poem into dance. Patrícia Pina (2014) further reflects on translation as a process offering multiple possibilities. Relying on an intersemiotic translation perspective, the author asserts that translation is an act of reading, which encompasses not only the decoding of written signs but also their interpretation. This way, Pina considers translation as an interplay between differences and identities, where the perception of the object is shaped by cultural and temporal contexts.

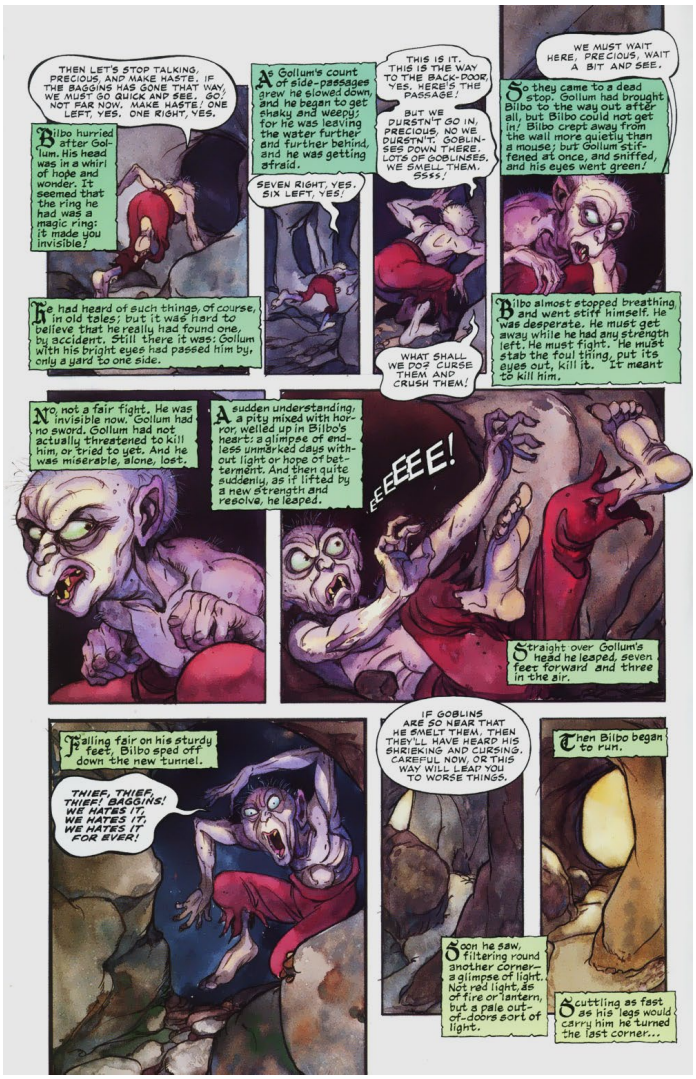
The intertwining relations of differences and identities in translation processes imply that an intersemiotic translation involves a significant degree of subjectivity, which is even more pronounced in intersemiotic adaptation and transposition. Based on these reflections, the intersemiotic translation can be characterized as follows:

a. it involves the interpretation of verbal signs through non-verbal sign systems;
b. the interpretation and subjectivity of the translator play a crucial role in the process and significantly influence the finished product. This contrasts with interlingual translation, which generally tends to aim at minimizing the translator's influence and presents a more transparent conversion between languages.

Drawing from such perspective, we can infer that a graphic novel cannot be simply characterized as an intersemiotic translation. The interpretation of verbal signs through non-verbal signs, as put by Jakobson (1995) referring to intersemiotic translation, does not align with the nature of comics. As previously mentioned, comics are a medium that integrates both verbal and non-verbal signs. Although there are instances of comics that use only images and illustrations without text, this is not the case for the work analyzed here. Wenzel and Dixon's work relies heavily on text over visuals, often filling pages with large

blocks of text to the extent that elements that could be shown are instead merely described, as exemplified in Figure 6:

Figure 6: Invisible Bilbo is persecuted and escapes from Gollum.



Source: Wenzel & Dixon (1990, p. 54).

Figure 6 portrays the protagonist using the magic ring to escape from being devoured by Gollum. The ring's properties render Bilbo invisible, allowing him to save himself. However, in the novel, this invisibility affects only Gollum, while the reader, through textual cues, can still track Bilbo's movements. In contrast, Wenzel's artistic approach offers no visual indication of Bilbo's whereabouts, relying solely on text to inform the reader – who, at this point, is as blind to the protagonist's presence as Gollum himself – of Bilbo's actions. Beyond the visual clutter caused by the excessive text, this decision leaves the graphic novel's reader in the dark in a way that the novel's reader never is. While we can only speculate on the impact of this choice on the reader's experience, one possible effect is a diminished sense of complicity with the protagonist.

As previously mentioned, the role of the translator in intersemiotic processes is a significant consideration. Scholars, such as Umberto Eco in *Experiences in translation* (2001), extensively reflect on this issue. It is pertinent to note Eco's assertion that it is possible to "change the literal meaning of a sentence in order to preserve the meaning of the corresponding micro-propositions, but not the sense of major macropropositions" (2001, p. 39). This perspective emphasizes that maintaining the essence of the message is more crucial than preserving its exact form. Furthermore, Eco discusses functional equivalence, arguing that the primary goal of translation is to produce the same effect as the source text. Compromising other aspects to preserve the core of a message or structure, as put by Eco, involves transmutation (intersemiotic translation). This is why Eco prefers the term *adaptation* over *translation*, as the latter typically refers to *interlingual translation*, which aims to preserve the structure of the message as much as possible. In contrast, adaptation necessitates a critical perspective and is central to the intersemiotic process of transmutation (Eco, 2001). Consequently, the goal is not merely to find correspondences in words, sentences, and structures but to use the source work as a basis for reshaping it through new ideas and/or interpretations.

The perspective regarding the translator's role that Eco discusses is similarly addressed by Hutcheon (2006). The latter reflects on the role of the adapter, comparing their actions to those of an author who creates a narrative from scratch. Hutcheon explains that adapters use the same tools as storytellers, updating or concretizing ideas; they select elements, extrapolate, critique, or praise. Consequently, adapting from one sign system to another involves using the source work as a foundation while creating new elements based on what both the source and the target system offer. In the graphic novel *The Hobbit*, for instance, the illustrator creates elements such as certain landscapes. Although Tolkien provides details on the visuals of some places, the author does not always do so comprehensively, and the illustrator helps fill in the gaps. In these instances, translators have the freedom to create, whereas in other cases, they may choose to adhere closely to the prose depiction, as previously discussed.

In accordance with Hutcheon (2006), it is pertinent to revisit Pina's (2014) reflections on the act of translating between different sign systems as a form of adaptation. Pina argues that translations, as a result of transcoding, expand the potential of sign relations, enabling new forms of reading and demonstrating how hybrid languages can offer novel interpretations. Consequently, adaptations often aim to transcend mere replication of a work through a new perspective, which, according to Julio Plaza (1987), represents an unachievable objective.

It is, in fact, a matter of understanding the interpretative potential of the source and utilizing it in a manner deemed most suitable for its new form. Consequently, the adapter's perspective plays a crucial role in this process,

shaping the final result, and thus, the issue of fidelity to the source is secondary. The primary objective is to preserve the essence of the narrative, even if its signs adopt new and entirely different forms. Therefore, the main characteristics of intersemiotic adaptation are:

a. focus primarily on the content and the effects desired on the reader. treating the form as secondary;
b. the translator, referred to as the adapter in this context, has significant influence over the finished product, with their interpretation and perspective being central to the process and, consequently, to the outcome.

Considering the second characteristic, the analyzed sections in the graphic novel indicate that the creation process in this case extends beyond a mere intersemiotic adaptation. According to Wenzel's (2018) description of the creation process, Tolkien's perspectives were affected by the illustrator's own creative choices regarding the adaptation of the literary universe. This can be observed in the following excerpt from the novel, where Smaug is finally introduced to the reader, described in detail to provide a clearer image of the dragon's appearance:

> There he lay, a vast red-golden dragon, fast asleep; a thrumming came from his jaws and nostrils, and wisps of smoke, but his fires were low in slumber. Beneath him, under all his limbs and his huge coiled tail, and about him on all sides stretching away across the unseen floors, lay countless piles of precious things, gold wrought and unwrought, gems and jewels, and silver red-stained in the ruddy light.
>
> Smaug lay, with wings folded like an immeasurable bat, turned partly on one side, so that the hobbit could see his underparts and his long pale belly crusted with gems and fragments of gold from his long lying on his costly bed. Behind him where the walls were nearest could dimly be seen coats of mail, helms and axes, swords and spears hanging; and there in rows stood great jars and vessels filled with a wealth that could not be guessed (Tolkien, 1991, p. 198).

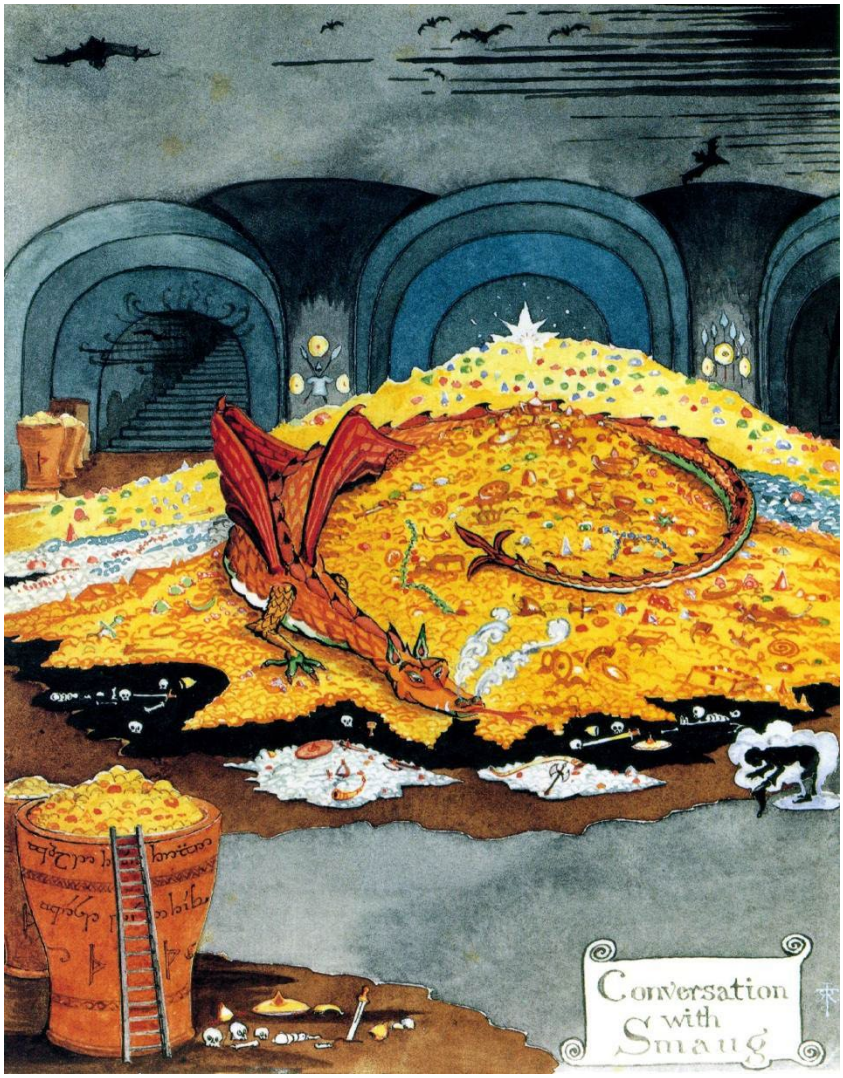
Figure 7: First sighting of Smaug in his lair.

Source: Wenzel & Dixon (1990, p. 101).

As shown in Figure 7, Wenzel chose to depict Smaug visually rather than simply transposing the novel's written description into a panel, an approach he had previously employed. However, this depiction strives to remain as faithful as possible to Tolkien's text. At the same time, its visual appeal and the chosen perspective create a contemplative effect characteristic of the medium, effectively balancing text and image in a complementary manner, exemplifying an equilibrium often absent throughout the graphic novel.

Ironically, an earlier depiction of the same scene, drawn by Tolkien himself – who frequently engaged in drawing, heraldry, and lettering as a hobby, particularly in relation to his fictional universe – adopts a less literal approach. This illustration appears in the 2008 HarperCollins edition of *The Hobbit*, and it is reasonable to assume that Wenzel had access to such material, given that the graphic novel was published 53 years after the novel's release. This can be observed in Figure 8:

Figure 8: Conversation with Smaug: an illustration by J.R.R. Tolkien.



Source: Tolkien (2008, no page).

As seen in Figure 8, Tolkien's own depiction of Smaug does not strictly adhere to the textual description, where the dragon is "[...] turned partly on one side, so that the hobbit could see his underparts and his long pale belly crusted with gems and fragments of gold" (Tolkien, 1991, p. 198). In contrast, Wenzel's interpretation appears more faithful to the text. However, this raises the question: is one depiction more valid than the other? We argue that no definitive answer exists, as compelling arguments can be made for both approaches. The nature of intersemiotic adaptation is shaped not only by the use of different codes and signs but also by the subjectivity of both the artist and the audience.

Moving on to the concept of intersemiotic transposition, Nicola Dusi (2016) highlights the importance of not only the translator's role but also the effort to reformulate key aspects of the source work. This process aims to maintain a high degree of equivalence and meaning between the systems, even when utilizing different sign systems. Consequently, the new text must preserve

certain elements while transforming or reformulating others. Dusi (2016) illustrates this by noting that, in a novel, the characteristics that define its originality should be retained. In the graphic novel, descriptions of places and characters are crucial for readers to understand how the landscape influences the narrative and the appearance of different races and characters. Tolkien's detailed descriptions contribute to the uniqueness of the novel, making it essential for the translator to consider these elements.

Overall, we observe similarities between intersemiotic adaptation and transposition, as both aim to preserve the original elements of a narrative without strictly replicating their form. Plaza (1987) provides valuable insights into the specifics of intersemiotic transposition. First, it is crucial to understand Plaza's views on translation and its variations. The scholar argues that it is not possible to assume the existence of a definitive interpretant, as each reading produces a different meaning. Peirce (2010) classifies the interpretant into three types: Immediate, Dynamical, and Final. The Immediate interpretant refers to the inherent qualities of a sign, the potential impression it can produce, without regard to actual reactions. The Dynamical interpretant, on the other hand, is the actual interpretation made of a sign, which involves both action and reaction in active and passive forms. For example, the agitation caused by surprises, rather than their inherent qualities, can manifest actively and passively: a positive expectation towards surprises is active, whereas a negative expectation is passive. Then, the Final interpretant is the ideal interpretation that would ultimately be made of a sign. This suggests that the Final interpretant consists in a process of continuous renewal, establishing connections with other interpretants to sustain the inherent incompleteness of signs in semiosis *ad infinitum*. As Peirce posits, the Final interpretant reflects how every mind, and not any, would act under certain conditions. Thus, it refers to how a sign can represent itself with the purpose of relating to its object. In this context, considering the assumptions highlighted, the interpretant that arises from the reading process is not definitive as it continually generates new signs without fully encompassing the work.

The analysis of different types of translation proposed by Plaza (1987) is aligned with Charles Peirce's categories of signs, especially encompassing the classification of icons (association by resemblance), indices (association by cause and effect), and symbols (association by cognition). For Peirce (2010), an icon is a sign which refers to its object according to resemblance of qualities, whether it exists or not, such as the physical similarity between people who even do not know each other. An index is a sign which refers to its object by virtue of genuine or degenerate relations, with two grades of degeneracy. A genuine index refers to its object through existential relations, involving a relation of cause and effect, like smoke indicating the presence of fire. A degenerate index, however, refers to

its object by virtue of contiguity or reference rather than direct causation. The structural elements of *The Hobbit* as a graphic novel, for instance, are derived from and dependent upon *The Hobbit* as a prose novel.

According to Peirce (2010), there are two grades of degeneracy. A degenerate sign in the lesser degree is an obsistent sign, or index, which retains a genuine relation to its object, such as a sound indicating danger. A degenerate sign in the greater degree is an icon, an originalian sign, though not a pure one, as it derives from a second, such as a portrait representing a person. A symbol is a sign which refers to its object by virtue of cognition, laws, or reason. Symbols have an arbitrary relationship with their objects and do not inherently resemble them. A genuine symbol has a general meaning. Degenerate symbols can be singular or abstract. Words are symbols, culturally established without direct resemblance to what they refer to. However, some iconic qualities of symbols may correspond to their object, such as the Christian cross, which resembles a person standing up with arms outstretched, evoking the image of Jesus on the cross. This means that Peirce's categories of signs act upon each other.

Plaza (1987) addresses these types of Peircean signs to characterize translation as iconic (similarity of structures), indexical (relations of direct contact or contiguity between source and target text), and symbolic (conventional relations). Iconic translation, by merely evoking what it represents, lacks a dynamic connection to the source material. It is based on structural resemblance. Plaza metaphorically characterizes the challenges of translating the immediate object of the source material into the target medium as isomorphic, paramorphic, and ready-made. The scholar views iconic translation as a form of transcreation.

Considering the transition from novel to comics, Plaza (1987) argues that indexical translation is determined by its precedent sign. Interpretation relies on the sign that precedes the resulting translation into another medium. This connection may involve cause-and-effect relations (translation of one sign into another medium) or contiguity by reference (emphasis on the materiality of the medium that forms the translated signs). In indexical translation, interpretation occurs through concrete experience, turning this translation process into a transposition. Meanwhile, symbolic translation is characterized by its reliance on conventional symbols, blending sensitivity and intelligibility. Plaza describes this process as transcodification.

Plaza (1987) also posits that the contiguity of signs can be classified as topological contiguity, contiguity by reference, and contiguity by convention. Topological contiguity refers to the relationship between signs and their inherent support. For instance, the materiality of a word written on a page is in contiguity with the page itself, serving as the supportive background. This connection indicates contrast and meaning through the sign's embodied materiality,

establishing it as an individual entity. Contiguity by reference occurs when signs convey new meaning based on changes in their context and material background. Words, for example, can acquire different meanings when used in new expressions or placed in different media. Lastly, contiguity by convention refers to the normative syntactical relationships that form established language patterns.

In this context, regarding the concrete experience that interpretation generates in the translation process, the presence of the author is also considered, as is the case in intersemiotic adaptation. However, in intersemiotic transposition, the focus is not solely on the translator's creative freedom to reshape the narrative according to their vision and the readers' expectations. Instead, the translator must also use their creativity to harmonize the essence of the work with the new form of signs to ensure continuity. This perspective aligns with Jakobson's (1995) argument about the relevance of creativity in translating poetry, which involves working with all elements of the verbal code, including their similarities and significance. The same principle applies to comics, which are created with specific tools and elements that function cohesively. Thus, just as poetry cannot be translated with the exact same form and meanings, so too with comics. As Jakobson asserts, the only viable approach is creative transposition, which involves an intersemiotic transposition from one sign system into another. Thus, it is possible to infer that intersemiotic transposition is characterized by the following traits:

a. the translator seeks to maintain the levels of meaning between the source and target systems, but does not necessarily impose their critical perspective on the final result;
b. the transposition is an indexical translation, which is determined by the source signs in a relationship of contiguity, emphasizing the characteristics of the system in which the signs are reformed.

The elements presented align with the intersemiotic relation between the works analyzed and provide an appropriate description. As previously noted, Dixon chose to retain most of the dialogue and descriptions from the source work, without significantly introducing new elements or making creative adjustments that could alter the narrative. Our earlier discussions reveal that fidelity played a major role in the creative decisions during the development of the graphic novel. Dixon opted not to take many creative liberties that might substantially change the narrative, while still incorporating elements inherent to the comics medium when necessary. This approach is consistent with Plaza's (1987) concept of indexical translation, which describes the contiguity between signs in the written work and their representation in the illustrations of the

target text. Moreover, Dixon's approach as a translator aimed to establish equivalence between the novel and the comic, focusing on capturing the core of the narrative and its elements in the new medium, even when it meant retaining details and dialogue that were already depicted visually. Therefore, this study demonstrates that, among the concepts discussed, intersemiotic transposition mostly accurately describes the process Dixon used to transpose Tolkien's *The Hobbit* into a graphic novel.

Final remarks

The investigation conducted in this paper aimed to elucidate the relationship between comics and literature, specifically focusing on a well-known fantasy prose novel and its corresponding graphic form. Through a theoretical and historiographical literature review, while recognizing its limitations in fully exploring certain concepts, we have determined that the process connecting *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 1991; Wenzel, Dixon, 1990) as prose and graphic novel would better align with the tenets of an intersemiotic transposition. Additionally, our study highlights the current status of comics in the U.S. market and the efforts by authors and scholars to establish a systematic analysis of this medium and to develop appropriate terminology for future research.

Starting with the expansion of comics during the 20th century, including their mass production, periods of censorship, and subsequent reestablishment in the 1980s through the works of Moore, Miller, and Spiegelman, we now have a clearer view of the medium's evolution in the North American context. It was during the 1980s that Will Eisner first popularized the term *graphic novel*. The analysis of this term's usage and dissemination reveals an ongoing effort to bridge comics with literature, a pursuit that extends beyond the U.S., though our focus has been on this region. As García (2010) explains, many countries sought a term to validate the medium as worthy of respect from adult readers and as a subject for research and reflection, specifically for comic books produced under certain conditions. Therefore, the choice between *comic* and *graphic novel* depends on understanding the author's intentions and how the content is presented to readers. Clarifying this relationship helps readers understand the distinctions and appreciate that *historietas*, *gibis*, and *comics*, while belonging to the same medium, possess specific characteristics that categorize them in their respective countries.

The frequent use of comics to engage young readers with literary classics, the inclusion of textual elements in many comics, and the efforts by some authors to create works that transcend traditional notions of children's reading have spurred ongoing debates about the literariness of comics. Despite this, scholars like Groensteen (2007) have advanced the understanding of comics as

a distinct art form. This perspective is crucial for researchers analyzing comics, as it emphasizes that comics possess intrinsic characteristics and stand as an independent medium, even when compared to literature or cinema. Familiarity with the technical terminology and unique features of comics, much of which is provided by Groensteen, will be beneficial for future studies. Given that the field of comics studies is relatively new and has only recently gained the attention it merits, there remains much to explore and develop.

Regarding translation studies, particularly in the context of creating a graphic novel adaptation of a prose work, it is now clear that this process involves more than merely selecting crucial texts and dialogues or illustrating descriptions from the prose rigorously. Reflections by Wolk (2007) and Miranda and Pinheiro Mariz (2014) highlight that comics offer a rich field for discussions about their form, content, and sometimes their value. The genre continually evolves, presenting opportunities for innovation and new approaches.

Throughout the investigation, it became evident that different terms, even when seemingly similar, describe distinct circumstances and processes. From the broader concept of adaptation, as discussed by Hutcheon (2006), we gain insight into the dynamics of reshaping a work from one medium to another. Although the act of adapting is neither new nor obscure, it continues to provoke debates about aspects such as fidelity. Reflecting on various perspectives, we argue that fidelity drives the choices of translators/adapters subjectively, and researchers must acknowledge this. However, we also infer that fidelity is not the primary focus when analyzing a work originally from another medium. According to different perspectives on intersemiotic processes, such as those discussed by Plaza (1987), complete fidelity to the source work is not achievable. Therefore, while understanding various aspects of translation studies is crucial, it is also important to reflect on and determine which aspects will be most relevant for the development of a particular investigation or study.

Regarding the concepts of intersemiotic translation, adaptation, and transposition investigated, each has offered insights that extend beyond the specific works analyzed, suggesting ideas that may be valuable for studies involving works across multiple media, such as cinema and television. Some semiotic concepts were crucial to this investigation, as they characterize the complexity of translation, which depends on various factors, including the core message, the role of the translator, the purpose of the translation, and the signs involved. These elements underscore the complexity of translation studies in general – whether intralingual, interlingual, or intersemiotic – and demonstrate that there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

The study enhanced our understanding of the process involved when novels are adapted into comics, offering a broader comprehension of some of the specific elements and demands inherent in such adaptations. It also shed

light on what adaptations, in general, can offer to both new and experienced readers. Additionally, we have recognized that defining a work beyond the term *adaptation* is challenging and requires a thorough, case-specific analysis. Thus, our investigation yielded insights across multiple areas, each potentially supporting discussions within their respective fields and advancing studies that recognize comics as an independent art form rather than a derivative of other media.

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The Hobbit em prosa e em quadrinhos: explorando relações intersemióticas

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Resumo: O presente artigo investiga as relações intersemióticas entre o romance em prosa *The Hobbit* (1937), de autoria J.R.R. Tolkien, e o romance gráfico homônimo produzido por David Wenzel e Charles Dixon (1990). O estudo objetiva explorar as características e desafios específicos no processo de adaptação de uma obra literária de um sistema de signos verbais para um sistema verbo-visual. A abordagem utilizada fez uso de uma revisão bibliográfica de fontes relevantes ao estudo em questão e do método analítico-expositivo. Primeiro, contextualizou-se o desenvolvimento histórico dos quadrinhos anglófonos a partir dos trabalhos de Babic (2016) e Kukkonen (2013). Em seguida, por meio da perspectiva teórica de Groensteen (2015), examinou-se a mídia quadrinhos enquanto sistema sígnico autônomo, a fim de compreender seus elementos distintos. Foram, então, explorados os conceitos-chave de tradução, adaptação e transposição intersemióticas conforme articulados, por Eco (2001), Jakobson (1995), Plaza (1987) e outros teóricos. A partir da comparação do supracitado referencial teórico com as características de ambas as obras, buscou-se determinar a descrição mais precisa para tal relação. A análise concluiu que a relação entre o romance em prosa e o romance gráfico é melhor caracterizada como uma transposição intersemiótica, o que se alinha ao conceito de Tradução Indicial de Plaza (1987), além de se apoiar na argumentação deste, de Eco (2001) e Pina (2014) sobre o papel do tradutor.

Palavras-chave: *The Hobbit*; romance gráfico; tradução intersemiótica; adaptação intersemiótica; transposição intersemiótica.

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