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Brittany has long been seen as a sort of “far west”, a peninsula far removed from major communication routes and economic developments. Since the 1960s, however, the region has gained a reputation in the history of transmission. French people were thus able to watch the first human steps on the Moon live on television thanks to the site of Pleumeur-Bodou where the “Radôme” was built. The latter was the result of a transatlantic collaboration between NASA and CNET, and had already broadcast the first live television images from the United States to Europe a few years earlier. In 1983, Brittany was also the birthplace of the Minitel, the French precursor of the Internet, which certainly was not as successful as the World Wide Web, but nonetheless contributed to the economic development of the region, as testified by the Rennes Atalante science park. Moreover, in the face of policies of centralisation that have long repressed cultural specificities, Brittany is emblematic of issues related to the transmission of a minority language and culture, in a way similar to the debates that have fuelled the Celtic Revival movements in the United Kingdom, for example.

From the Latin meaning “to send (*mittere*) beyond (*trans*)”, the term transmission refers to the notions of passage, circulation, communication and heritage. Transmission is a key concept in science and technology (one can think of the mechanical transmission of forces, the transmission of waves, acoustic transmissions, etc.). In biology, it is both a necessity (the transmission of genes) and a source of potential dangers (the transmission of diseases or viruses). The notion of transmission is also at the heart of social and cultural practices that cannot exist without the transmission of knowledge, ideas, values, information... or misinformation. Transmission involves distance (in time or space) and connection points (whether physical or symbolic), as well as agents (persons or institutions) and channels/media which all determine the modalities of this transmission. It combines the reproduction of the same and transformations due to the process of transferring, thus allowing for reappropriations, reconfigurations and new interpretations.

From a political, economic and social point of view, the notion of transmission plays a crucial role in issues of power. It is the object of institutional and legal regulations, involves social structures that “guarantee” actual or symbolic transmissions of power (hereditary monarchy is a patent example), as well as the transmission of financial but also cultural capital (question of lineage, whether aristocratic, bourgeois or popular, of patriarchal domination, etc.). In other words, the notion of transmission questions the factors that make the constitution and perpetuation of socio-economic-political and cultural hegemony possible, just as it questions, in turn, the conditions of the emergence and the survival of practices considered undesirable or deviant, and of movements of reaction, resistance or opposition to the transmission of hegemonic wealth and status, and that of standardized and normative values. From this perspective, transmission raises questions of identity in relation to the notions of class, gender, race, intergenerational links and/or conflicts, etc.

Furthermore, transmission is constitutive of the writing of history itself, be it international, national or family history. Who has the authority to dictate what events are worthy of remembrance and to arbitrate between conflicting memories? How can hidden events still be transmitted? What are the conditions to ensure the material transmission of documents and testimonies from the past that constitute an intangible cultural heritage (ICH, as defined by UNESCO)? Conversely, the notion of heritage can be perceived as a duty, in the present, or even a fetishistic devotion to objects, monuments, places or traditions inherited from the past. Indeed, the process of patrimonialization is potentially conflictual, insofar as it can induce a biased and restrictive vision of the past, by privileging certain aspects to the detriment of others, as Laurajane Smith underlined with the concept of “authorized heritage discourse” to describe the domination of certain discourses.[1]

We may also wonder what transmissions are still possible in the context of climate change, which is already having an impact on our cultural and natural World Heritage sites. Indeed, if historic monuments and buildings are vulnerable to climate change, natural heritage is also imperilled, its conservation being threatened by the action – or inaction – of human beings on the environment. One question arises with increasing insistence: what world are we going to pass on to our children?

Finally, many instances in recent years have shown how the transmission of information – which has now become “viral” – is intrinsically related to power. The emergence of new channels and agents of communication have not only dramatically altered the media sphere but have also brought some fundamentals of democracy into crisis, such as the notion of representativity or the very possibility of a contradictory debate.

In the fields of literature, art, film, and cultural studies in general, researchers could focus on any of the above-mentioned themes. Science fiction narratives are replete with contaminations, transmissions of diseases, viruses or other pathogens, which convey the fears and fantasies of an era. Whether literal or figurative, viral transmissions expose physical and/or moral corruption, reveal dysfunctional mechanisms in society and query the boundaries between living creatures as well as between the living and non-living.

Filiation and inheritance were common themes in nineteenth-century novels, and remain topical, as illustrated by our guest of honour’s work. Jackie Kay wrote a collection of poems called *The Adoption Papers* (1991),[2] in which she relates her experience as an adopted child in a Glasgow family and the emotional journey she went through when discovering her lineage. The thematic field of transmission allows for insights into the genre of bildungsroman, the representation of the go-between figure, of the master and the disciple, of Pygmalion-like characters, the dramatization of intergenerational conflicts, of the tensions between tradition and modernity, particularly within multicultural families (for example the autobiographical fictions of British authors of Indian, Pakistani, Caribbean or African origin) or in a context of globalization (*The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) by Kiran Desai or the well-named novel *Transmission* (2004) by Hari Kunzru, in which the main protagonist unwittingly spreads a computer virus, causing worldwide chaos). It also evokes all types of testimonial literature, for example slave narratives and the specific issues they raise, such as the conditions of their production. Moreover, the *mise en abyme* of the transmission of the text itself can serve as a narrative device, as with the insertion of supposedly “found” manuscripts or letters, from Gothic novels to Margaret Atwood’s *The Testaments* (2019).

In a narrative perspective, areas of interest include the mediating role of narrative voices between text and readers, Genettian focalisations in the transmission of the information that constitutes the storyline, and the question of writing itself as a tool for transmitting meaning both in a hermeneutic perspective (what are the elements of repetition, clarification, semantic and formal circulation, or stylistic discontinuity?) and in an intertextual one (does the text fit in “the tradition” or does it break with it?).

Lastly, in addition to the variation of the aforementioned themes, researchers may consider the question of the very conditions of the transmission of works (conservation of manuscripts and works of art, genetic criticism, works available in translation or not), as well as the criteria that make one work go down in history rather than another. One could also examine the role of the channels (oral, written and new media) or modes of expression (verbal and non-verbal) and the way in which the nature of the transmission impacts the content of the message, in accordance with McLuhan’s famous phrase “the medium is the message”. [3]

In the field of cultural studies (film and music in particular), where the distribution sector is so critical, how is the transmission of works carried out, and to what audiences? At a time when digital platforms are disrupting the socio-economic landscape of production and distribution of films, series and music, what are the new modes of cultural consumption?

Similarly, as regards fine arts, one may question the role of galleries in the transmission of a selected heritage, which includes issues related to museography and cultural mediation, as for example the web portals which take the artworks out of the physical museum space while altering them for a wider public. Art studios but also academies and private collections have also contributed to the transmission of artistic models, in a history that has long excluded women. Feminist criticism has notably pointed out the absence of “old mistresses”, to quote Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock,[4] in discourses about art dominated by Eurocentric, masculine paradigms of genius. Today, ethnic minorities are also reclaiming their history/histories of the arts and, like Sonia Boyce, are now transmitting to British schools and universities a heritage long buried in the reserve collections of museums and absent from curricula.

In the field of linguistics, researchers could focus in particular on the various parameters and modalities of the situation of interlocution. If Jakobson’s model, whereby the verbal exchange is based on the encoding and decoding of a message, remains a possible entry point for reflection, research carried out within the framework of the theories of enunciation has led to qualifying the systematic transparency of the message. More specifically, this approach brings to light the possible failures of transmission and the adjustment mechanisms between interlocutors, which both challenge the relevance of a one-way transmission and induce one to consider any enunciation as an activity of co-construction and reconstruction of meaning by the different participants.

Besides, if there is transmission, what exactly is transmitted through language? In other words, what does a statement convey? Meaning, certainly, through the explicit propositional content, but also a large quantity of additional information that is produced more or less consciously and implicitly by the speaker: sociolinguistic connotations related to the socio-economic, professional, cultural and geographical origin of the enunciator through the varieties of lexicological, syntactic and phonetic realisations; linguistically preconstructed implications but also conversational implicatures at the crossroads of linguistics, logic and pragmatics; modalisations of the utterance by the emotions and the intentions of the enunciator; or even some linguistic and/or cultural heritage that appear through the use of old sayings that one seeks or not to transmit actively. This last point may be of interest to specialists in diachrony, didactics or discourse analysis.

Translation studies could logically embrace the theme of transmission. The translator is at the nexus of the communication chain and bears the responsibility for transmitting a message to a foreign audience. In particular, we can wonder what factors or conditions facilitate this transmission or, on the contrary, disrupt or hinder it, what objectives or functions it must fulfil, what role or decision-making power the translator exactly plays in this mechanism, and what impacts the tools and new technologies have on the quality of this transmission.

Finally, in Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Education, where transmission is at the heart of the teaching and learning processes, the contents and methods of teaching nevertheless remain the subject of constant redefinitions. In the collective work *Transmettre, apprendre*,^[5] the authors go so far as to assert that “we have definitely moved from a society of transmission to a society of knowledge”, in which “the imperative to transmit” has given way to a “model centered on the act of learning”.^[6] What new articulations are there between transmission and learning? What values and representations does teaching English as a foreign language convey on English-speaking societies and socio-professional environments, for example in English for specific purposes? Possible questions include past and current language-teaching policies, the respective roles of the teacher and the learner, the conditions and mechanisms that make transmission possible, as well as the criteria for evaluating this transmission.

Notes

[1] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, New York: Routledge, 2006. [2] Jackie Kay, *The Adoption Papers* [1991], Hexham: Bloodaxe Books Ltd, 1998. [3] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964. [4] Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses. Women, Art and Ideology* [1981], New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 2013. [5] Marcel Gauchet, Marie-Claude Blais, Dominique Ottavi, *Transmettre, apprendre*, Paris : Stock, 2014. [6] Our translation.