Translating spaces and memories of migration: the case of the Red Star Line Museum

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Abstract: This article examines the construction and transmission of memory in the Red Star Line Museum in Antwerp. The museum, which opened in 2013 in the historic buildings of the shipping company, presents itself as a unique *lieu de mémoire*, harbouring the stories of the many Europeans who migrated across the Atlantic in the early 20th century. We concentrate on a Translation Studies perspective to chart and interconnect the various levels of memory-work in this museum.
Drawing on broader definitions of translation as cultural transfer and mnemonic mediation, and linking these to the narrow concept of translation 'proper', our analysis demonstrates how the museum functions as a local repository for transnational memories. Moreover, it shows how the museum becomes a catalyst for the further travelling of these memories. The focus lies on the museum's use of spatiality to 'translate' personal memories of migration for a contemporary audience. It is the physical sensation of shared spaces – either authentic or reconstructed – and the palimpsestic movement through those spaces that help visitors gain a tangible sense of what happened there. Interlingual translations of gallery texts are vital for the worldwide circulation of the stories, but occasionally cause shifts in the spatial-temporal framework.

0. Introduction: the Red Star Line and the travels of memory

'Millions of people, one dream' – this is how the Red Star Line Museum website summarizes the compelling story of the many Europeans who, at the turn of the 20th century, left the continent in search of a better life (Red Star Line, 2013). Between 1873 and 1934, the shipping company carried more than two million passengers from the Old to the New World and chose the port of Antwerp as its operation base for trans-Atlantic migration. A warehouse and shed were initially built at the Rijnkaai, a couple of hundred meters south of the quay at the River Scheldt where the ships moored. In 1922, in reaction to stricter immigration laws in the United States, a large two-story wing in sober Art Deco style was added to accommodate the growing number of 3rd class passengers that required medical and administrative examinations (see Feys, 2013). The historic complex was listed as heritage in 2000, and soon the idea arose to house a museum there. The American architects of Beyer Blinder Belle, who had already renovated the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, signed up for restoring the Antwerp site. The Red Star Line Museum opened its doors to the public in 2013.

According to the museum's website, the aim is to 'revive' the migrants' memories through a mechanism of visitors walking the same ground as the historic Red Star Line passengers and 'following in the emigrants' footsteps' (Red Star Line, 2013). It is indeed no coincidence that the Red Star Line Museum was installed in the historic sheds of the shipping company. The buildings, considered to be 'the most precious item in the collection', function as gateways to the past:

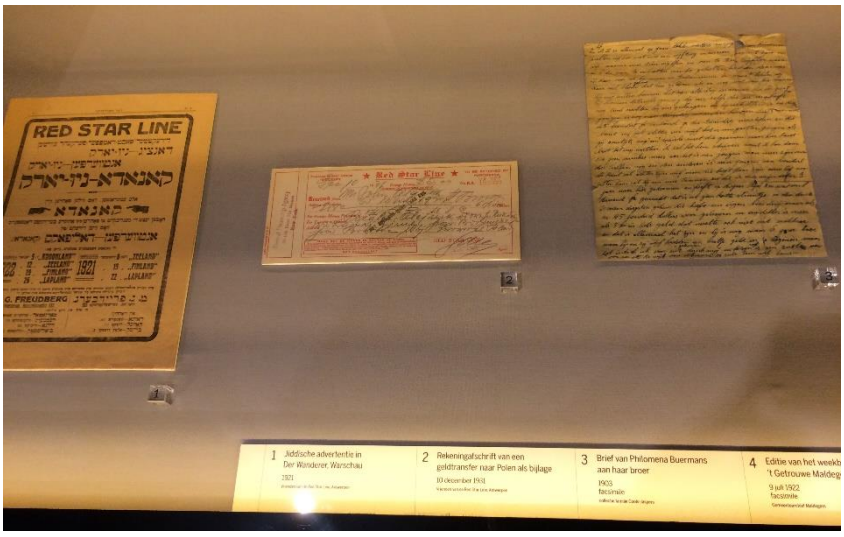
> If the walls of the Red Star Line Museum could speak, they would talk about high expectations and deep disappointments, about adrenaline and sleepless nights, about children that travel to join their family and about families that must leave their children behind. The old Red Star Line buildings make all those emotions and stories tangible, palpable and visible. (Red Star Line, 2013)

The relation between space and memory thus established reminds us of Pierre Nora's *Lieux de mémoire* (*Realms of Memory*), in which he underscores the mnemonic power of space. Although Nora's *lieux* refer both to 'material and non-material' entities serving as symbolic elements of the

memorial heritage of communities (Nora, 1989, p. 19), material vestiges of the past are considered visible and powerful anchors for collective memory. As they 'materialize the immaterial' (Ibid.), they create converging temporal-spatial frameworks and help us recall past events that happened at these exact locations. In our present time, when living memory-cultures erode, Nora argues, constructed *lieux de mémoire* come into being as artificial anchor points through which the past finds expression and becomes accessible for those who have not experienced it at first hand. In her essay 'Das Gedächtnis der Orte', Aleida Assmann (1994, p. 17) endorses the view that memories can be localized within physical sites and then transmitted, in the form of cultural memory, to new generations who have no personal recollection of the events. Jay Winter (2010, p. 213) similarly points out that sites of memory are in fact 'sites of second-order memory, places where people remember the memories of others'.

Nonetheless, there is a significant difference between Pierre Nora's concept of *lieu de mémoire* and the case of the Red Star Line Museum. The kind of memories that are encapsulated and conveyed by the museum are not those of a homogeneous and closed national community, such as the one Nora had in mind, and neither are they stagnant or static stories. They are personal memories of migration, a process implying a spatial transfer and involving various nationalities and social groups. Doris Bachmann-Medick (2009, p. 9) rightly defines the geography of migration as a network of hybrid and 'interstitial' places where people, cultures and languages meet, and which is best explored as a 'translational space' (we will come back to this). The corresponding idea of place as 'process', introduced by geographer Doreen Massey (1991, p. 29), proves to be a suitable concept to describe the Red Star Line site as a unique point of intersection of routes and memories, and offers a starting point to analyze the multiple trajectories and social relations that are interwoven at this particular locus.

The process-like nature of the site is, in fact, reflected in the museum collection, which not only renders the physical movements visible, but also reveals the relations between the old and the new world through original postcards and letters exchanged between migrants and family members back home. The museum effectively links the building and its immediate surroundings to other locales – the city of Antwerp where the migrants often spent several days or weeks, their home country, or (projections of) their new home in North America. A network of interconnected physical and mental places is plotted, with the historic sheds functioning as a temporal grounding point where all the stories contemporarily converge. Moreover, the Red Star Line collection is inherently multilingual, attesting to a great variety of origins and exposing exactly what Bachmann-Medick termed the 'translational' nature of migration. The visitors' immersion in the translational universe of the Red Star Line starts from the entrance, when they hear an audio tape playing the voices of passengers (actors) introducing themselves. They speak in the first person and in the present tense, in a multitude of languages. Exhibited artefacts in the galleries include personal documents drawn up in different languages, ranging from German, French and Dutch, right through to Yiddish, Polish, and Czech. Red Star Line advertisements at the time circulated in translation as they targeted migrants with different backgrounds. **[Insert Figure 1]** Furthermore, in order to overcome linguistic obstacles during the screening process, the shipping company had to provide translations of official forms and instructions. Some of them were inscribed on the walls of the warehouses and are still visible today.



The Red Star Line exhibition illustrates how mnemonic processes unfold across and beyond local and national communities, and as such resonates with recent views in Memory Studies. In a collective essay, Lucy Bond, Stef Craps and Pieter Vermeulen highlight the inherently dynamic nature of memory, its hybridity and its 'unboundedness':

> Memory has, in the last few years, increasingly been considered a fluid and flexible affaire. In a globalized age, memories travel along and across the migratory paths of world citizens. [… It is] conceptualized as something that does not stay put but circulates, migrates, travels. (2018, p. 1)

Astrid Erll, for her part, agrees that 'no version of the past and no product in the archive will ever belong to just one community or place, but usually has its own history of "travel and translation"' (2014, p. 178). New concepts have emerged to describe the travelling of heterogeneous mnemonic archives across spatial, social, linguistic and medial borders – concepts that are explicitly offset against Nora's views on national remembrance. They include 'transnational' (de Cesari & Rigney, 2014), 'multidirectional' (Rothberg, 2009), 'cosmopolitan' (Levy & Sznaider, 2002), 'palimpsestic' (Silverman, 2013) and 'transcultural' memory (Bond & Rapson, 2014; Crownshaw, 2013).

However, while attention is shifting to notions of mobility and movement, Jenny Wüstenberg notes that 'a significant part of what continues to fascinate scholars about memory is its groundedness in concrete locations' (2019, p. 371). It is remarkable how many studies still (critically) refer to Nora's conceptual framework to examine transnational memory sites (for example Radstone, 2011; and a recent issue of *Francosphères*), based on the assumption that the creation of such unique places is fundamental to linking humans through feelings of similarity. As argued by Walter Nicholls – and in keeping with Massey's earlier observations – place must be seen as 'a location where potentially geographically extensive processes meet and operate' (Nicholls et al. 2013, p. 4). Sites such as the Red Star Line building are transnational from the outset by virtue of remembering a past that was itself transnational. At the same time, they rely on 'active practices of place-making and linking to transnational reference points to "hold in place" their transnational character' (Wüstenberg, 2019, p. 375).

In order to capture the process of transnational memory construction and memory transmission in the Red Star Line Museum, we suggest to consider its permanent exhibition from a *translational* perspective. Recent scholarship in Translation Studies indeed offers the conceptual tools to explore curatorial 'place-making' strategies with a focus on hybridity and movement; moreover, it favours a better understanding of the ways in which the museum contributes to the international circulation of memory – to its 'history of travel and translation', in Erll's terms. Ultimately, it is via the lens of translation that we can bring to light the intricate connections between the various aspects of museal memory-work.

1. Translation and/in the museum

Despite the transnational circulation of memories being the centre of attention, Memory Studies scholars have so far given little consideration to the role of translation in the dynamics of memory as it moves across time and space. Research in Translation Studies, by contrast, has started to expand the sightlines of transnational memory and yielded valuable insights into the mechanisms and implications of how, when, where, why and by whom acts of remembrance exactly travel (see for example Brodzki, 2007; Brownlie, 2016; Davies, 2018; Deane-Cox & Spiessens, 2022; Jünke & Schyns, forthcoming; Spiessens, 2018; Spiessens & Toremans, 2016). In this section, we will first turn to extended definitions of translation in order to conceptualize the Red Star Line Museum itself as a form of translation and an instrument to remediate memories. We will go on to address the question of interlingual translation, or 'translation proper', in the exhibition space.

Since the 'cultural turn' in the 1990s, Translation Studies scholars have systematically broadened the horizon of translation, moving beyond the textual and linguistic level, to consider different forms of cultural transfer that imply processes of remediation. Museums, in particular, have been studied as

translational places, because they represent or 'translate' cultures and experiences through various resources, including textual and visual (see for example Simon, 2019). Kate Sturge was one of the first to use translation as an analytical category to understand how museums act as cultural mediators for a target audience in a target space. In her pioneering study on ethnographic museums, she demonstrates that objects belonging to foreign languages and cultures are not only being 'retold in the language of display' (Sturge, 2007, p. 131), but are being 'constructed' at the same time. Similar reflections have been made by Museum Studies scholars such as Karp & Levine or Eileen Hooper-Geenhill, who describe the curatorial representation of cultures in terms of 'meaning-production' and as '"written" and "read" by particular interpretative communities' (discussed in Sturge, 2007, p. 130). When it comes to defining the relation between museum representation and memorialization, Robert Neather suggests that translation can be a way to conceptualize the transition from 'lived experience' to the 'legible trace of that event' (Neather, 2022, p. 156). Translation in the broad sense thus underlies a number of interactions in the Red Star Line Museum as the museum transforms personal memories of the passengers into a compelling narrative for today's visitors.

Whereas the metaphor of 'reading' the museum is a useful tool, and verbal text is indeed a 'driving force behind interpretation' in exhibitions (Neather, 2008, p. 221), Sharon Macdonald is right in claiming that museums cannot be simply equated with texts. Museums have distinctive non-text-like features – their 'sitedness', the centrality of material culture, the non-verbal nature of so many of their messages, and the fact that audiences literally move within them (Macdonald, 1996, p. 5). Sturge agrees that museums offer 'a polysemiotic combination or translation of visual, verbal, aural and kinaesthetic experiences' (2007, p. 131), while Neather characterizes the museum as 'a complex semiotic aggregate in which objects, texts, pictures, diagrams, dioramas and other exhibitionary resources work together to produce meaning in a three-dimensional space' (2022, p. 162). Indeed, museums use several modes of communication to create meanings, which are not only spread across different media but are also the result of their interaction. Richard Sandell, for his part, advises not to underestimate the importance of the museum space and its specific design: 'Exhibitions (…) contain spatial cues, deploy spatial strategies that, while unable to guarantee a given, preordained response in all visitors, can nonetheless privilege certain readings' (2005, p. 186). Other research suggests that 'visitors are strongly influenced by the physical aspect of museums, including the architecture, ambience, smell, sounds and "feel" of the place' (Falk and Dierking cited in Alexander & Alexander, 2008, p. 265). Manifestly, for a museum aspiring to translate migration memories, the representation of space and its incorporation into the museum narrative become key to conveying a sense of history to the visitor.

Yet the Red Star Line Museum also relies heavily on more traditional forms of translation 'proper' to ensure the circulation and perpetuation of memory. In her recent inquiry into memorial museums, Amy Sodaro contends that these museums appear to be 'the embodiment of (…) travelling memory' (2018, p. 5), as they illustrate the transnational movement of mnemonic forms and practices that is so vital for their survival. Although Sodaro herself does not probe into the mechanisms of this transnational movement, it is clearly interlingual translation that enables memory to reach large audiences and travel further across languages and borders. Sharon Deane-Cox rightly identifies translation as 'a verbal mode of mnemonic mediation' and 'an intercultural carrier of memory' when analysing translated audio guides at the French memorial site of Oradour-sur-Glane (2014, p. 272 and 273). Kyung Hye Kim (2020) underscores in a similar way, and also with reference to Alison Landberg's concept of 'prosthetic memory', the role of translation in helping international visitors to 'remember' other people's experiences. When the Red Star Line Museum opened in 2013, it was mandated to offer information in three languages by the City of Antwerp, on which it relies for 85% of its budget (Lippens, 2020, pp. 41-42). Initially written and edited in Dutch, explanatory texts in the exhibition space – flyers, wall texts, video testimonies, interactive screens and object labels – were partially translated into French and English. German was added as a fourth working language after the museum's renewal in 2018, in response to growing numbers of German-speaking visitors.

In the following, we will link larger processes of scenographic translation and mnemonic mediation to instances of translation 'proper'. To use Neather's terms, we propose to integrate a study

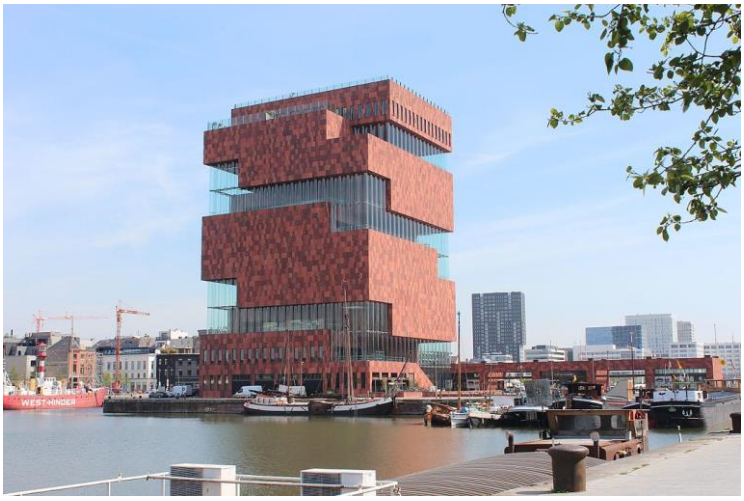
of 'the museum as translation' and 'translations in the museum' (2018, p. 361). Section 2 seeks to understand how transnational memories of migration are translated and made 'legible' for a contemporary museum audience, and especially how the representation or recreation of space is essential to achieve this. Section 3 focuses on the way these memories then travel internationally through interlingual translation of exhibition texts.

2. The Red Star Line Museum as translation

The Red Star Line Museum's strategy relies on *two* spatial frameworks to anchor and mediate the memories of the historic passengers. The first is a direct experience of the location as a place of memory – an experience of the building as a gateway to the past. As we signalled earlier, the museum defines its own topography as 'a place of remembrance', 'on an authentic location' (Red Star Line, 2013). The second framework is drawn by the exhibition narrative and scenography, and is more dynamic. The focus lies on paths, routes and movements. Indeed, the passengers' journey is not limited to their stop in Antwerp, but involves a whole network of other, transnational places that the museum needs to translate and showcase in its galleries. We will first discuss how the historic site as a *lieu de mémoire* is integrated in the exhibition before turning to curatorial strategies that are used to evoke other places and to present the Red Star Line building as a *translocal* site.

2.1. Translating the memories of a place

The first physical experience that visitors have of the museum is that of its urban location. Paul Williams underlines that, given the site-specific nature of most memorial museums, 'an appreciation of their larger geographic location is vital' to establish the 'geographical reach' of the historic event (2007, p. 79). The Red Star Line Museum is situated on 't Eilandje (The Little Island), an old port area. While port activity moved to the North of the city in the course of the 20th century, the atmosphere is still palpable in this district, with its docks, warehouses and hangars. As in many other cities, the museum reflects choices in urban planning (see MacLeod, 2005, p. 3) and is part of a strategy to re-dynamize an area of town that was until recently impoverished. Here the focus lies on branding the district as a place of (maritime) history. A new lookout tower replaces the old chimney of the Red Star Line warehouses in order to mark the city skyline, offering a panoramic view over the area and linking the museum to other important historic or memory sites in the area. These include the waterside where the passengers left the continent, with two massive bollards still there as reminders of the quay's history and its function as a place of goodbye; and the Museum aan de Stroom (MAS) which focuses on the history of Antwerp and visualizes through its distinct architectural design the relation between the city and the water. **[Insert Figure 2]** The visitors' experience of space and memory is framed by the museum from the outset. A panel on the façade offers context to the heritage of the area, extending the museum's influence to non-visitors.



Once inside the museum, however, the visitor is visually cut off from the outside: there are very few windows, most of them obscured or too high to allow a view on the street. Together with the narrow corridor that provides access to the exhibition, this invites visitors to disconnect from their everyday life and immerse themselves into the historic Red Star Line setting. They are prompted to connect with the passengers in various ways: the museum ticket is a reproduction of the original ticket

and visitors receive a paper bracelet designating them as passengers. After the first corridor, the public is invited to 'board' the exhibition and replicate the movement of silhouettes, presumably those of passengers, printed on the walls. Plunging into the Red Star Line story thus becomes a physical experience where visitors '(re)enact history and chronology *choreographically*' (Preziosi, 2006, p. 50, original emphasis). Their bodies communicate with external tangible elements and function as activators of memory.

The spatial and bodily strategy is reinforced through the imposition of a unique linear walking path that partly overlaps with that of the 3rd-class passengers during their screening process. The visitors' tour starts in the corner building, where passengers dropped their luggage at the time of the Red Star Line company, then continues in the main building on the ground floor, in the former bathing and disinfection facilities. Visitors, just like the migrants, then take the stairs to the first floor, where medical and administrative checks were organized. **[Insert Figure 3]** A specific format of panels placed throughout the museum and labeled 'You are here' highlights this palimpsestic movement. They present an archival image alongside a short textual explanation of how the space was used in the days of the Red Star Line company. The chronology of the historical narrative is temporarily interrupted at these instances and deictic elements ('You', 'here') make the visitors aware of their own location in the exhibition room. Interestingly, the panels are framed and hung directly on the wall, as parts of the infrastructure more than of the exhibition, illustrating the museum's intention to make use of the building as a spatial carrier of memory.[1] **[Insert Figure 4]**

[1] Andrea Witcomb's analysis of power relations and the use of space, based on Michel de Certeaus work on tactics vs. strategies, could be applied to critically review the spatialization of the historic narrative. Despite the linear walking path and its reinforcement in Covid times (no possibility to double back or deviate from the imposed route), the Red Star Line Museum does provide what Witcomb calls 'dialogic spaces', especially in the multimedia installations where visitors can more easily interpolate themselves into the exhibition through a process of 'self-inscription' (see Witcomb, 2015).

The connection between visitors and the historic passengers through the experience of physical space is especially triggered in three sections: the arrival and luggage area (section 1 on the map), the showers (7), and the doctor's visit (8). Here, the spatial and chronological frameworks fully converge as the story is told *exactly* where it happened. In sections 7 and 8, we reached the point in the museum narrative where the migrants arrive in Antwerp and are instructed to shower and line up for medical their check-up. To emphasize the connection between past and present, the 'You are here' panels are present in higher concentration in these three sections than in any other. In addition, the archival images are enlarged to be life-size, and arranged to create a visual continuity between the physical space and the space of the photograph. In section 1, the presence of authentic suitcases in the exhibition room in alignment with the ones represented the photograph creates an additional link between the past and present space, with the objects as material traces of the past. **[Insert Figure 5]** For the doctor's visit (section 8), the space of the picture is visually extended into the present space with paint. To achieve all these effects, an important part of the building is left untransformed.

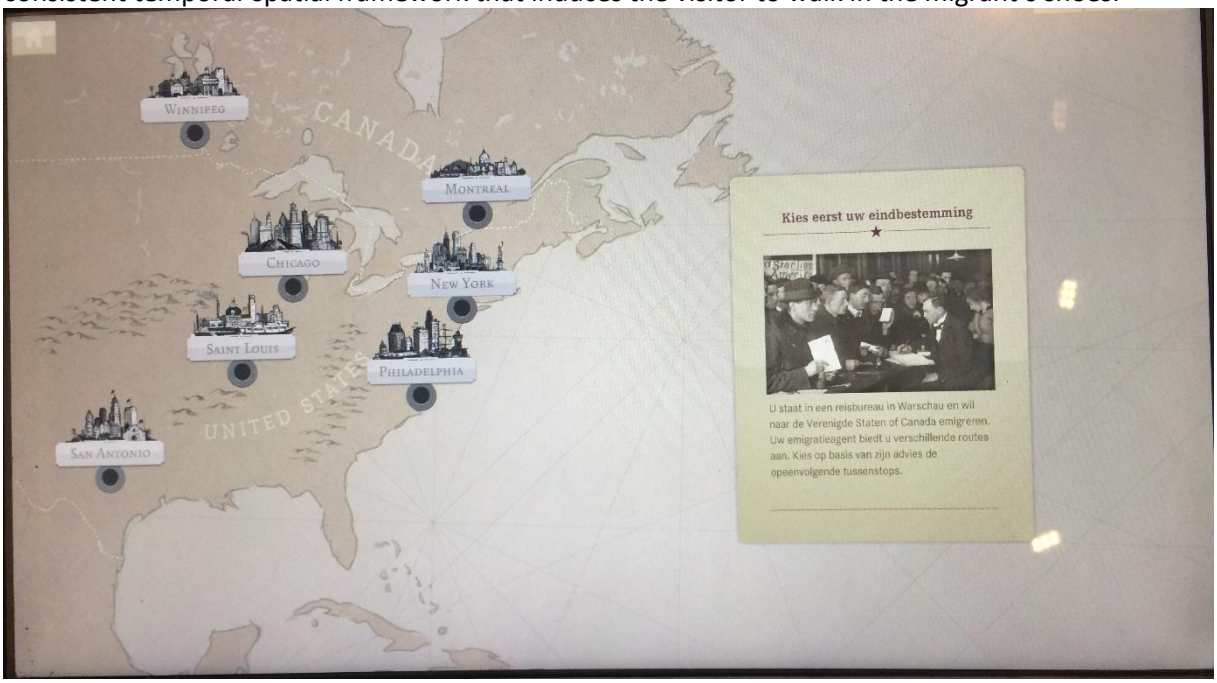
Apart from the 'You are here' displays and archival photos, the feeling of walking in the migrants' footsteps is heightened through the explicit visualization of the visitor path and the use of floor plans throughout the building. In section 7, visitors can locate themselves (again, 'you are here') on a floor plan of the old warehouse attached to the wall, and discover that this was the precise location where the passengers took their shower. The plan is even partly reproduced on the floor of the exhibition room, true to scale, allowing visitors to walk through the map, imagine the past configuration of space, and eventually 'place themselves' within the history of the Red Star Line. **[Insert Figure 6]**

2.2. Translating geographies

So far, we have seen how the Red Star Line Museum uses its physical surroundings to recapture the past: visitors are invited to link the historic sheds to the broader geography of the port district, and are encouraged to literally follow in the passengers' footsteps in the exhibition space. However, the space of migration is, by its very nature, the product of a series of interrelations, interactions and trajectories, centred around movement and networks, as well as locations and settings. In order to draw visitors into the trials and tribulations of the passengers on their long journey, from the departure in their native villages to the arrival in America, the museum needs to bring *other* places and geographies into the exhibition room. As the building and walking path only tell part of the migrants' story, additional translation is necessary.

When the stories are not set in the physical space of the museum anymore, there is less emphasis on the building itself, with a lower number of 'You are here' panels and more prominence to the chronological narrative. A new spatial framework is put in place that helps visitors visualize the migrants' trajectories and imagine a network of places that they can equally 'travel' through. One of

the tools used to generate the sensation of travel is a series of interactive screen displays. In the section dedicated to 'The departure', for example, visitors project themselves as passengers and outline their own journey on a digital world map. **[Insert Figure 7]** Similar screens in the section 'Arriving in America' on the first floor offer the visitors the opportunity to identify with a specific passenger profile to virtually experience arriving at the US customs on Ellis Island and awaiting the verdict of admission or deportation ('You are an 11-year old girl from Czechia. You are travelling in steerage…'). Linguistic elements such as deixis ('you' for personal address) and verb tense (historical present) contribute to a consistent temporal-spatial framework that induces the visitor to walk in the migrant's shoes.



To help visitors envision concrete places beyond the Red Star Line building, spatial distances are overcome through various strategies of scenographic representation and re-creation. A multitude of archival photos evoke foreign places, or sometimes even Antwerp locations situated not that far from the museum **[Insert Figure 8]**; maps of Europe and North-America are drawn on large panels, or integrated into the wrought iron room dividers that grant access to the gallery devoted to the migrants' arrival in the New World **[Insert Figure 9]**. The museum also pays attention to the social construction of space, using interactive screens to open up the archive and let historical witnesses – Red Star Line officials, people from Antwerp and the migrants themselves – report on how they personally experienced certain places in the city related to trans-Atlantic migration. Equally, quotations from passengers are printed on the walls, describing their first impressions of their new home. In a few cases, the museum resorts to more theatrical displays and 'in situ' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, p. 19) mimetic evocations of far-away places. In 'The train journey' (section 5), visitors can watch videos sitting on re-created wooden train seats, and in 'Travelling steerage' (section 9), they walk up a boarding ramp leading to rooms converted into the deck of a ship and into cabins. **[Insert Figure 10]** Music is playing to recreate the atmosphere of an on-board orchestra, and noises of a ship can be heard (for a critical assessment of these installations, see Pelsmaekers & Van Hout 2020).

The museum thus relies on several media and scenographic strategies to translate the passengers' transnational memories. The concept of space – both as a static location and a dynamic process – is central, as visitors are confronted with a series of authentic, represented and recreated spaces, allowing them to put themselves in the shoes of the historic Red Star Line passengers. We now turn to the interlingual translations of museum texts to determine to what extent they reshape the construction and transmission of memory. The focus lies on the temporal-spatial framework that is so carefully set up in the permanent exhibition.

3. Interlingual translation in the Red Star Line Museum

The Red Star Line Museum provides information in Dutch, French, English and German. These languages, however, do not all have the same importance and reach. A hierarchy is established, with Dutch, the local language, being present at all levels of writing and always presented first in the order of reading. It is also the language in which visitors are welcomed by the front-of-house staff. The dominance of Dutch reflects visitor numbers: in 2019, 78% of visitors were Dutch-speaking (Lippens, 2020, p. 41).

Apart from the hierarchical placement of translations in the museum space, it must be noted that not all information is translated into every language. While A-level texts (large wall panels introducing a new section in the exhibition and providing the back-bone of the chronological narrative) are systematically displayed in Dutch, French and English, B-level texts (smaller wall panels providing in-depth information) are presented only in Dutch in the galleries. Visitors can recognize B-texts by the red star preceding them and a red number that refers to the corresponding translation in the visitor guide, which comes in the form of a downloadable pdf on the museum website or a booklet provided at the reception desk. The absence of translations in certain areas of the exhibition space may influence the visitor's walking path[2] and sense of place. This applies particularly to German readers, since German is not present at all in the rooms, not even on the A-level, but only in the visitor guide. It is likely that German-speaking visitors either disconnect from the spatial surroundings and find it difficult to follow in the footsteps of the migrants (when they decide to use the translation booklet or website extensively) – or that they lose track of the chronological narrative and are left with a rather incomplete sense of the historic migration experience (when they give up reading). Video testimonies and interactive screens are provided only with subtitles or translations in Dutch, French and English, which again complicates any emotional connection with the memories of the Red Star Line passengers for German-speaking visitors.

The permanent exhibition further displays a number of authentic, and often very personal, items from the museum collection that make the passengers' stories come alive. The labels identifying these objects are written exclusively in Dutch and are not translated in any of the booklets. While the absence of label translations in the exhibition room is attributable to practical and graphic considerations, and the decision not to provide extra information in the booklets may be dictated by the fear of museum fatigue, it limits possibilities for visitors to think critically about the materials presented and to catch a glimpse of the intimate aspects of the migration experience. In his study of colonial museums, Roberto Valdeón underscores that language policy, and especially non-translation, is never innocent. Non-translation can, in fact, create a feeling of exclusion when certain cultural-linguistic communities are not catered for (2015, p. 362). The museum in Antwerp partly compensates for this by suggesting guided tours with native speakers in all four working languages.

When it comes to actual translated gallery texts, we examined to what extent they uphold or erode the temporal-spatial framework. We concentrated on the rendering of linguistic elements (deixis[3] and verbal tense) that enhance connections between 'here' and 'there', 'now' and 'then', and that foster identification with the historic migrants. As indicated in the previous section, a number of interactive digital displays address the visitors personally with 'you', inviting them to project themselves in a past time and distant space through the use of the historical present tense. Textual material on these displays is provided in three languages: Dutch, French and English. All translations handle linguistic resources in such a way as to convey the original temporal-spatial framework and prompt identification ('*Je bent een meisje van 11 jaar uit Tsjechië/Vous êtes une fille tchèque de 11 ans/*You are an 11-year old girl from Czechia').[4]

The personal address is pursued in the English version of certain A-level texts, contrary to the French translations and even the Dutch source-text:

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[2] We are referring here to the pre-Covid situation, when visitors were effectively encouraged to follow a designated path, but were free to skip sections or inspect certain displays in a different order than suggested by the museum. In Covid-times, the visitor is firmly steered in the right direction, with red arrows on the floor, indicating the circulation plan.

[3] For another study of deixis translation in a museum context, and its impact on the construction of time and space perceptions, see Liao 2016.

[4] These cursory remarks on the use of digital devices to help people connect with other people, in another time and space, should be complemented by a critical and in-depth study of the creation of prosthetic memory. Sharon Deane-Cox's pioneering study on translated audio guides (2014), together with Silke Arnold de Simine's work on museal remediation and empathy (2013), could serve as an inspiration to assess the impact of language and technology on the visitor's immersive experience and the ethical bonding process in the Red Star Line Museum.

DU Elk heeft zijn eigen reden om op weg te gaan. [Each has their own reason to set off.]
FR Chacun a des raisons personnelles pour partir. [Each has personal reasons to leave.]
EN [t]here are many reasons why **you** might decide to leave **your** country.
(Section 4 'The departure')

A similar technique of personal deixis is adopted in English to warn visitors/passengers for swindlers in the Antwerp backstreets:

DU Wie in de val loopt, raakt zowel zijn geld als zijn ticket kwijt. [Those who fall into the trap, lose both their money and their ticket.]
FR Ceux qui tombent entre leurs griffes risquent de perdre leur argent et leur billet. [Those who fall into their clutches, risk losing their money and their ticket.]
EN If **you** fell for their scams **you** could lose all **your** money and even **your** ticket.
(Section 5 'Staying in Antwerp')

Yet, while not dictated by syntactic structures in the target language system, the historical present has made way for a simple past in the above English translation. The shift is in fact noticeable in all A-level texts. Given the narrative prominence of these texts (they constitute the back-bone of the chronological account), their high-profile location (at the beginning of each new section) and the physical dimensions of the wall panels, the shift in tense possibly dilutes the immersive experience for visitors relying on English.

On the 'You are here' signboards, which are critical anchor points throughout the exhibition, translation strategies generally reflect the museum's choice to connect past and present through a spatial experience. All the panels use deixis ('*Hier*' in Dutch) to identify the museum building as the place the present-day visitor shares with early 20th-century Red Star Line passengers. In translation, '*Ici*' and 'Here' are systematically placed at the beginning of the sentence, even when this is not the most idiomatic choice in the target language ('*Ici vous êtes*…' or 'Here you are standing…'). The importance of the location is underscored typographically, with the first words printed in bold characters in all versions. As Louise Ravelli explains, not only does the combination of visual (font style) and linguistic (word order) resources act as a double invitation for visitors to read and find out more; it also helps them to easily determine the focus of the text and its connection with the exhibit. In addition, repeating the same strategy across texts creates a cohesive whole with a clear thematic focus (Ravelli, 2006, pp. 37-46). The strategy for French and English is, therefore, in line with the museum's ambition to enhance the sensation of historical environment and to take the visitors back to a bygone era.

While in general, then, the translations of the 'You are here' signs uphold the overall framework, some of them contain small shifts that could have an impact on the visitors' perception and hamper the transmission of memory. The first panel, presented outside of the museum, introduces readers to 'The Red Star Line Story' and prepares them for a 'journey back in time':

DU Van 1873 tot 1934 zetten zo'n twee miljoen Europeanen hier aan de **Rijnkaai hun laatste stappen** op het continent. [From 1873 to 1934 approximately two million Europeans set foot on the continent for the last time, here at the Rijnkaai.]
FR Entre 1873 et 1934, quelque deux millions d'Européens **foulèrent** ici pour la dernière fois le continent. [Between 1873 and 1934 approximately two million Europeans here set foot on the continent for the last time.]
EN Between 1873 and 1934 the **Rijnkaai** was **the last stop** on the continent for approximately two million Europeans.
(Panel on façade)

In Dutch and English, the exact geographical location of the story is pinpointed: it all happened at the Rijnkaai. This is not the case in French, for which the translation only mentions '*ici*', thus losing the reference to the name of the place that many visitors probably introduced in their phone or GPS system to find the museum. In the same paragraph, in Dutch and French this time, the image is suggested of people walking the soil of the continent here one last time before leaving for an overseas destination ('*hun laatste stappen zetten*', '*fouler pour la dernière fois*'). The English text indicates that the Rijnkaai was the passengers' 'last stop', omitting the physical connection between those passengers and the land. At the same time, the correlated idea of the visitors 'walking the same grounds' as the migrants, literally following in their footsteps, is lost. This can be considered as a small crack in the temporal-spatial construction of the museum narrative.

Inside the building, another 'You are here' text presents the place where migrants awaited their medical examination. What grabs the attention is the French translator's preference for the present tense, where the Dutch and English use a past tense. A historical present could further highlight the palimpsestic visitor path, especially since the wooden barriers mentioned in the text and visible on the archival photo are reconstructed in the same room, not far from their original location, to serve as an exhibition wall. **[Insert Figure 11]** However, the French claims that the barriers form a protection against the noise ('*elles forment une protection contre le bruit*'), when actually they were used to prevent pushing, as it is stated correctly in English. The French translation can probably be attributed to hasty reading and the double meaning of the word '*gedrum*' in Dutch (which can mean both drumming and pushing), but it does have a substantial impact here. Thanks to the photographic and scenographic evocation of the barriers, which show large openings towards the floor and ceiling, visitors can clearly see that they would not have worked as a barrier against noise. Their observation could lead to confusion about the exact location of the migrants in this space and its relation to the movement of the visitor.

As Neather (2008) rightly points out, interlingual museum translation creates a completely new set of interactions between objects, texts and spatial resources. Any shift has potential implications for the way visitors experience the museum environment and position themselves with regard to the transmitted memories. In our last example, the French translation negatively impacts intersemiotic complementarity and could lead to a certain degree of interpretative breakdown for the museum visitor on a crucial location in the exhibition.

4. Concluding remarks

The intersectional domain of museum translation is undeniably a rich and burgeoning field of research that throws light on essential aspects of museum work. In our case study, the translational perspective allowed to critically review Nora's framework and offer a more comprehensive view of the role of the Red Star Line Museum, not only as a local repository for transnational and multilingual memories, but as a catalyst for the transmission and further dissemination of these memories. Drawing on broader definitions of translation as mnemonic transfer and remediation, the analysis illustrated how the museum effectively uses materiality and space to open up connections between past and present. A unique linear path traced through the exhibition space serves as an organizational 'reading' guideline, installing a chronological framework to tell the story of the passengers and facilitate the visitors' journey in their footsteps. It is the physical sensation of shared spaces, either authentic or reconstructed, and the suggested palimpsestic movement through those spaces that stimulate the imagination and bring the visitor closer to the past. Our study further demonstrated how interlingual translation reshapes – mostly sustains and occasionally weakens – the temporal-spatial framework. In addition to conducting a textual analysis focused on deixis and verb tense, we emphasized the impact of language policy (absence of some languages in the exhibition room, non-translation of certain texts) on the international visitor's immersive experience.

Despite some ground-breaking work in the emerging field, to which we hope to have contributed with this article, a number of pressing issues remain underexplored. Allow us to outline two. First, meaning-making in the museum is as much dependent on curatorial decisions as on individual visitors' interpretations. While it has been our central concern here to examine how memories and spaces are *intended* to be perceived, we agree that it is important to know how they are *actually* perceived. The authority of the curatorial voice and the power of exhibition producers to direct the visitors' reading of the museum cannot be underestimated (see Sodaro, 2018, p. 6, and Bal and Kress cited in Simonsson, 2014: p. 30, 32), but research has also shown that collective memory is always interpreted through the lens of individual memory and previous knowledge (for example Falk & Dierking, 1992; Silverman, 1995). The effectiveness of spatial strategies and mnemonic transfer in the museum can, therefore, only be measured by inquiring directly into visitor experience. In cases such as ours, the interlingual setting of the museum adds to the complexity of traditional visitor studies, since different cultural-linguistic target groups could respond differently to parallel museum narratives. It is not surprising, then, that Robert Neather (2018, p. 374) labels 'translational' visitor studies as an essential, yet largely unexplored field of research.

Another topic that urgently needs conceptual work and practical, on-site research, is related to the social function of museums. Indeed, while it is now widely accepted that museums have evolved from mere knowledge institutions to agents of social change ('engines of social transformation' according to Bennett, cited in Gouriévidis, 2014, p. 9), little has been said about the vital role that language and translation play in fulfilling a museum's societal brief. In its latest policy plan, the Red Star Line Museum voices its ambition to develop a participative project and reach out to a 'diverse' audience of both international visitors and 'vulnerable families with a migrant background' who, according to recent visitor statistics, are increasingly finding their way to the exhibition (Red Star Line Museum, 2017, p. 4). Besides encouraging multidirectional links between contemporary migration accounts and the stories of the historic Red Star Line passengers (in section 14, 'Antwerp today'), and diversifying its pool of museum guides, the museum explicitly links its mission of fostering a strong and diverse memory community to the importance of tailoring textual material to the linguistic needs of the targeted audience. In particular, it intends to supply 'multilingual' and 'accessible' texts (Ibid., p. 4 and 16[5]). The example illustrates that language and translation policies in museums are not only dictated by market logic or institutional constraints, or even the exhibition's narrative framework, but have a clear political and social dimension.

[5] The museum's efforts for producing accessible Dutch texts have been rewarded with the Wablieftprijs (Flemish prize for plain and accessible language) in 2014.

And yet, curators do not always acknowledge the linguistic implications of museum activities, or indeed appreciate the need for a rigorous methodology when translating source material. In a wonderful oral history project from 2018 (see Beelaert 2018), during which locally recruited 'field workers' interviewed members of their own communities, the Red Star Line Museum failed to carefully map and review the translation processes underlying the collection, archiving and exhibition of migrant memories. While the field workers received training in heritage methods and interview techniques, they were left to transcribe their conversations and subtitle the videos in English and Dutch without any assistance from language professionals.[6] The case urgently calls for more public *and* curatorial awareness around translation methods and ethics.

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