

Fellows



Massimo Leone

IFK_Senior Fellow

Duration of fellowship

01. October 2017 bis 31. January 2018

Massimo Leone

PROJECT-TITLE

Translation and Blasphemy: A Semiotic Perspective

PROJECT-DESCRIPTION

Drawing from Hjelmslev's theory of language, the project elaborates a typology of translation difficulties, claiming that the most insurmountable one relates to cultural patterns that are invisible to cultures themselves. As a solution, the project suggests the establishment of an anthropological variety of translation, exemplified through a pair of case studies. Verses 22–45 of Canto XXVIII of Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* are usually problematic for Muslim translators: they describe the punishment in hell of Muhammad and Ali, the founders of Islam. Most Muslim translators choose not to render them in their language (Arabic, Farsi etc.). The same verses have generated an iconography whose most famous instance is in the cathedral of San Petronio in Bologna. Giovanni da Modena's fifteenth-century fresco depicting Muhammad in hell became the object, at the turn of the twentieth century, of heated tension between local Muslim radical associations, which wanted the fresco removed, and Catholic commentators, who defended the integrity of the Christian artistic heritage. Taking as a point of departure these two interconnected case studies, the project explores the difficult role of translation at the conflict-ridden crossroads of different semiotic ideologies.

CV

Massimo Leone is Professor of Semiotics and Cultural Semiotics in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Turin, Italy. He graduated in Communication Studies from the University of Siena, and holds a DEA in History and Semiotics of Texts and Documents from Paris VII, an MPhil in Word and Image Studies from Trinity College Dublin, a Ph.D. in Religious Studies from the Sorbonne, and a Ph.D. in Art History from the University of Fribourg (CH). He was a visiting scholar at the CNRS in Paris and the CSIC in Madrid; Fulbright Research Visiting Professor at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley; Endeavour Research Award Visiting Professor at the School of English, Performance, and Communication Studies at Monash University, Melbourne; Faculty Research Grant Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto; "Mairie de Paris" Visiting Professor at the Sorbonne; DAAD Visiting Professor at the University of Potsdam; Visiting Professor at the École Normale Supérieure of Lyon (Collegium de Lyon); Visiting Professor at the Center for Advanced Studies at the University of Munich; Visiting Professor at the University of Kyoto; and Visiting Professor at the Institute of Advanced Study, Durham University. His work focuses on the role of religion in modern and contemporary cultures.

Publications

Sémiotique du fondamentalisme: messages, rhétorique, force persuasive, Paris 2014, ins *Arabische übersetzt* 2015; *Saints and Signs: A Semiotic Reading of Conversion in Early Modern Catholicism*, Berlin and New York 2010; *Religious Conversion and Identity: The Semiotic Analysis of Texts*, London and New York 2004.