

The AALITRA Review

A JOURNAL OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

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The AALITRA Review

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The AALITRA Review

is a peer-reviewed journal which aims to publish high quality material concerned with literary translation, as well as translations of literary texts from other languages into English, or vice versa. It hopes to foster a community of literary translators and to be a forum for lively debate concerning issues related to the translation of literary texts.

We welcome submissions in the following areas:

- articles on aspects of translation (both practical and theoretical)
- original translations of poetry and prose
- interviews with established translators on aspects of their practice
- book reviews of translations and texts about translation.

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AALITRA is a national organisation that promotes an interest in all aspects of literary translation. In addition to publishing *The AALITRA Review* we distribute news of events relevant to translators. AALITRA sponsors public lectures and events on literary translation and holds periodic conferences with university bodies interested in the theory and practice of literary translation. If you have an interest in literary translation, and especially world literature in translation, please consider joining the Association.

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This is Not a Short Story (“Esto no es un cuento”) by Carme Riera¹ and It Wasn’t the Wisteria (“No eran las glicinas”) by Neus Aguado²

TRANSLATED BY LILIT THWAITES

Carme Riera (born in Palma de Mallorca, 1948), one of Spain’s and Catalonia’s outstanding contemporary writers and essayists, is also a recognised scholar and literary critic, and Professor of Spanish Literature at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. She has been awarded several important prizes both for her creative (fictional) writing (e.g. Premi Josep Pla 1994 and Premio Nacional de Literatura 1995 for *Dins el darrer blau* and for her own Spanish translation of this same work, *El último azul* respectively) and for her scholarly work (e.g. Premio Anagrama de Ensayo 1988 for *La Escuela de Barcelona*, her critical study of three key Barcelona writers). Her literary debut in 1975 was a dazzling collection of short stories (*Te deix, amor, la mar com a penyora/ Te dejo, amor, en prenda el mar*) that shone the spotlight on Spanish society from a feminine – and frequently feminist – perspective. With each successive work, no matter the genre, no matter the focus, Riera continues to challenge her readers to examine and explore the worlds she creates, the societies that have inspired them, and those who people them.

Perhaps it is because Riera, for historical reasons, grew up with a “triple” personality (Majorcan, Catalan and Spanish) and two languages – Catalan (for fiction) and Spanish (for academic studies) – that identity and the double have always fascinated her, and she has always paid particular attention to words and their many possible meanings and interpretations. Early in her career as a writer, she decided not to have others translate her literary works from Catalan into Spanish, but to undertake the translations – some would say interpretations – herself. She thus poses an additional challenge to those who translate her works into another language.

“This is Not a Short Story” is an excellent example of the multiple games Riera engages in with the text, the reader and the translator. She mixes real people (including her friend Neus Aguado, the author of “It Wasn’t the Wisteria”) with invented ones, gives the occasional nod to literary friends and competitors, confounds her real self with narrative creations, and couches her critical comments and social concerns in humour and irony as she confronts and demonstrates the potential fear of every writer: the potential (mis)use of electronic machines and gadgets.

Neus Aguado was born in Córdoba, Argentina in 1955, to Catalan parents, and “returned” to her Catalan roots and the city of Barcelona when she was

¹ In *Contra el amor en compañía y otros relatos* (Barcelona: Destino, 1991), pp. 145–51.

² In *Juego cautivo* (Barcelona: Laia, 1986), pp. 23–25 (written in May 1979).

ten years old. She studied dramatic art at the Instituto del Teatro, and media studies at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Her first published work (1981) was a collaborative venture in Catalan with Carme Riera: a “reportage” of Barcelona’s cemeteries, *Els cementeris de Barcelona (una aproximació)*. But her initial passion was poetry, and her first two literary works were in fact collections of her poetry, written in Spanish and published in the 1980s. She was, however, simultaneously experimenting with short stories, and the first collection of these, *Juego cautivo*, appeared in 1985. Further anthologies of poetry and prose have since been published, together with an impressive number of journalistic articles and critical studies and reviews of the (literary) works of other writers.

Aguado has been described as an entomologist of humans, an apt description of her ability to dissect and portray the inner and outer workings of her human literary creations and the worlds they inhabit, often with a startling brevity of words which nevertheless capture the images she wishes to convey to her reader. Like Riera, she is not averse to humour, irony, and the occasional note of sarcasm or cruelty; but by the same token, her prose can stun with its poetic and evocative imagery.

“It Wasn’t the Wisteria” is a perfect example of her ability in this regard. Sights, sounds and smells are lyrically captured in a few sentences. Despite the occasional seemingly jarring note, the reader is drawn into what appears to be a garden of earthly delights which, like the Bosch triptych that inspired the story, ultimately shocks the reader into the realisation that what seems paradisiacal can also be(come) infernal. The story poses a similar dichotomy for the translator: in its brevity lies its appeal, but capturing that brevity in another language could prove to be the translator’s nightmare.

La Trobe University, Melbourne

This is Not a Short Story

For José María Merino

Towards the end of the summer of 1987, I coincided at a writers' festival with Andrea Hurtado, who was to die a short while later in tragic circumstances which have yet to be satisfactorily accounted for. During those few November days in Oviedo, I had the occasional conversation with the aforementioned writer from Menorca whom I had met quite by chance at another gathering of intellectuals in Valencia a year earlier. The pages which follow were read by Andrea Hurtado during her last public appearance. Perhaps anticipating what was to come, she gave them to me, asking me to take on the task of finding a publisher if I believed that it was the appropriate thing to do. I am fulfilling that task with pleasure, as a posthumous tribute. May you rest in peace.

I'm afraid that, as a starting point, I have no other option but to apologise to the Director of this Festival, as my contribution today will have absolutely nothing to do with the designated topic. What I'm about to read is not a short story, nor does it have anything to do with fiction, though at times it might seem that way. Those of us who are dedicated to literature know perfectly well that reality doesn't beat about the bush, and that it can defeat the most frenetic imagination with a knockout blow, a fact which, on occasion, is nothing short of a tragedy. Accordingly, I insist that what I'm about to read is not a short story but a denunciation. The denunciation of a situation which already affects some of the writers here today, but which will shortly affect the majority of this country's short story writers, including those of us who are already classified under the Autonomous Regions and write in one of the Spanish State's three minority languages.

The situation strikes me as so serious that I prefer to use up my allotted time to disseminate everything I know, rather than lumbering you with the short story I had prepared, even though this might well be one of the last opportunities I have for disseminating a genuine story, by which I mean a story that is totally mine. What I'm about to put before you has everything to do with the recent upsurge in popularity of our genre, a popularity which has already been commented upon here. There can be no doubt that this has been the summer of the short story. All the newspapers, without exception, many magazines, even Church newsletters, corporate bulletins, never mind photocopied pamphlets, all of them have included short stories. "The revival of the short story", "The return of the short story", "A short story for the swimming pool", "At sea with a short story", "Thursday's story", "The same old story", "Long live the short story", "The never-ending story", etc., are some of the headlines that have emblazoned the literary sections of countless publications.

Since some newspapers had also commissioned stories from me, in mid-June I buried myself away with my computer to try to finish two previously started, long overdue stories. I began with the one that attracted me more, a story about doubles, a worn and overused topic which I was attempting to modify somewhat by centring my version on a *triplication* rather than a duplication: a woman who triplicated herself sideways, upwards and downwards into three

distinct beings who eventually, after a trinity of adventures, reunited again to form a true goddess. I worked on the story for almost two weeks and when I felt I couldn't improve it any further, I polished the style, checked the number of times the word *including* had been used, hit the "replace" command (the time honoured *in addition* and *as well* appeared), watched with pleasure as the letters bunched up like sanctimonious women at the Masses of old in order to accommodate the late arrivals, and considered the story finished. But I didn't send it. I preferred to leave it for a few days before printing it, and in the meantime, turned my attention to the second story, a tale about literary creation and its technical limitations: ball-point pens that dry up, fountain pens that blot, insubordinate typewriters, computers that go on strike, a topic not chosen, however, because these things happen to me; far from it.

At this advanced stage of my life, whether by good luck or misfortune, my situation is the exact opposite. It's perfectly clear that I was born with a great affinity for all types of machinery, and with certain powers of seduction, if not over men, certainly over machines. Perhaps that's why becoming aware of what I'm about to put before you is a talent only bestowed upon – or reserved for – someone like me who, in my long life as an unattached homeowner, have never needed the services of a repairman for any type of domestic appliance, sound system or similar piece of equipment. For I have overcome unassisted the weariness or unwillingness of dishwashers, irons and fridges, at times solely through the use of a few persuasive words of encouragement for a job as self-sacrificing as it is meritorious, and have alleviated the pains or maladies of televisions, record players or washing machines through the soothing remedy of an opportune caress. It's true that on other occasions I've resorted to a more forceful remedy which has even entailed tools and replacement parts, but in either case, my abilities have always been evident, and my neighbours, friends, and even the odd colleague such as Neus Aguado have been able to benefit from this particular gift.

Naturally it goes without saying that the computer – and I bought myself the most sophisticated IBM model – was child's play for me. Practically from the day I acquired it, almost five years ago, our relationship has been one of such harmonious coexistence, such kinship, that it quickly became painful for me to abandon the machine, even if only for a couple of days. If I linger over this point, it is to make it perfectly clear that, despite my air of awkwardness and indifference, I'm not clumsy, and if, as far as fingers go, I'm in the forefront of technological civilisation, when it comes to the acquisition of knowledge about microelectronics, my head is every bit as good as my deft extremities. That explains why my computer is permanently connected to the information nerve centre of IBM for whom, of course, I work, and why that connection led me to my discovery.

It all started one afternoon towards the end of June, just over two months ago when, tired because I couldn't find the desired tone, I decided to set aside the second story for a more opportune moment, and returned once more to the first one, with the idea of looking it over one last time. I entered the appropriate command, ready to start reading: "Countess Serpeiri's motive for selecting the hotel in Lluc Alari was the same as that given by most prospective clients for not staying there – the lack of air conditioning". But what I saw on the screen

was not just this somewhat excruciating opening sentence – I should clarify that I do my own translating into Spanish – but in addition, competing with my text, and inserted between the lines, a series of coded references which, after considerable effort, I managed to decipher, and which referred to works by José María Merino, Torrente Ballester, Borges, and Pere Calders, among others. But there was more. A completely new text followed this series of insertions, a compilation of various texts, a truly magnificent text, but one which under no circumstances could I recognise as my own.

I assume that at this stage you can all imagine the degree of stupefaction with which I launched the timely investigation of my computer's unruly innards, which had clearly been interfered with from within IBM's head office without my knowledge. That was when, thanks to my technical abilities, I successfully uncovered the fact that my story had served as a guinea pig for the experiments of a group of critics and professors, as well as a famous short story writer whom I'd rather not name, with the aim of designing a story machine, a monstrous story machine programmed with as many stories as possible from as many authors and countries as possible. It would suffice for the owner of such a machine to turn it on for it to organise a brand new, totally different story, an original story based on the judicious manipulation of inter- and intratextuality, the best possible story of all those stories already told or yet to be told.

I would imagine, dear colleagues, that you share my concern. If this invention prospers, not only will it shortly ruin our careers as short story writers, but it will also force us to admit that we will never be deemed worthy of competing with the great story machine, and that it will always beat us, no matter how much effort and dedication we put into the telling of our stories. Our contributions, no matter how inspired they might be, will merely serve as ingredients for the cake, a piece of the story puzzle, for every story can undoubtedly be improved, and everything has already been written many times before, in other languages, by many authors.

So, for all these reasons, I ask myself whether we ought to sacrifice our individual interests on the altar of the story machine and send our written contributions down the pipeline solely to see how miniscule a contribution we are deemed worthy of offering, how many lines we are allowed, which of our characters or plots are accepted, or if, on the contrary, we must react in the strongest and most intransigent manner possible, by refusing to allow the great story machine to thrive.

I am of the opinion that this matter is sufficiently serious to warrant profound reflection. If you agree, we could deal with it during discussion time. For my part, I'm absolutely clear as to where I stand. To the barricades! Down with the story machine!

Sitges, September 1987.

Esto no es un cuento

Para José María Merino

A finales de verano de 1987 coincidí en un encuentro de escritores con Andrea Hurtado que habría de morir poco después de manera trágica y en circunstancias no suficientemente aclaradas. Durante aquellos días de noviembre en Oviedo traté un poco más a la escritora menorquina, a quien casualmente había conocido en otra reunión de intelectuales celebrada en Valencia el año anterior. Las páginas que siguen a continuación fueron leídas por Andrea Hurtado en su última intervención pública. Tal vez presintiendo su final me las regaló, pidiéndome que, si lo creía conveniente, me ocupara de su publicación. Cumplo gustosa el encargo, como homenaje póstumo. Descanse en paz.

Me temo que no me queda otro remedio, de entrada, que comenzar por pedir disculpas al Director de estos encuentros porque mi intervención no va a ceñirse en absoluto a la propuesta de su convocatoria. Lo que voy a leer no es un cuento, ni tiene nada que ver con la ficción, aunque a ratos pueda parecerlo. Quienes nos dedicamos a la literatura sabemos de coro que la realidad no se anda con chiquitas y puede vencer por K.O. a la imaginación más frenética, lo que, en ocasiones, no deja de ser una tragedia. Insisto, por tanto: lo que voy a leer no es un cuento, sino una denuncia. La denuncia de una situación que afecta ya a algunos de los escritores aquí presentes, pero que muy pronto repercutirá en la mayoría de cuentistas de este país, incluso en los que estamos ya transferidos a las Comunidades Autónomas y escribimos en las tres lenguas minoritarias del Estado.

El hecho me parece tan grave que prefiero consumir mi turno informándoos de cuanto sé que en endosaros el cuento que tenía previsto, aunque tal vez ésta sea una de las últimas oportunidades que me quedan para difundir un relato auténtico, es decir, totalmente mío. Lo que a continuación voy a poner en vuestro conocimiento no tiene que ver precisamente con el reciente auge alcanzado por el género, como ya se ha comentado aquí. No cabe duda de que éste ha sido el verano de los cuentos. Todos los periódicos sin excepción, muchas revistas hasta hojas parroquiales, boletines corporativos e incluso panfletos ciclostilados los han incluido entre sus páginas. “Resucita el cuento”, “Con el cuento que vuelve”, “Para la piscina un cuento”, “En el mar, un cuento”, “El jueves, cuento”, “El mismo cuento de siempre”, “Viva el cuento”, “El cuento de nunca acabar”, etc., son algunos de los títulos con que diversas publicaciones han encabezado sus selecciones literarias.

Como a mí también algunos periódicos me habían encargado relatos, a mitad de junio me enfrasqué en el ordenador para tratar de terminar dos viejas historias pendientes. Comencé por la que más me interesaba, una narración sobre el tema del doble, un tópico tan viejo como manido que yo pretendía variar un punto ya que mi relato no se centraba en un desdoblamiento, sino en un *destriplamiento*: una mujer se triplicaba a lo largo, a lo ancho y a lo alto en tres seres distintos que volvían, al fin, a reunirse, tras una trinidad de aventuras, en una diosa verdadera. Trabajé en él casi dos semanas y cuando ya me sentí incapaz de mejorarlo más, pulí el estilo, contabilicé el número de repeticiones de la palabra *incluso*, palpé el comando de sustitución

(aparecieron las consabidas *además y también*), vi con sumo agrado cómo las letras se arracimaban cual beatas en las misas de antes para dejar sitio a las recién llegadas, y di por concluido el relato. Pero no lo envié. Preferí que reposara unos días antes de publicarlo mientras me dedicaba al segundo, una fábula sobre la creación literaria y sus limitaciones materiales: bolígrafos que se secan, plumas que emborronan, máquinas de escribir que se insubordinan, ordenadores que se declaran en huelga y no porque el asunto fuera conmigo sino al contrario.

A mí a estas bajuras de la edad, ya no sé si por suerte o por desgracia, me ocurre absolutamente al revés. Está claro que nací con una gran disposición afectiva hacia todo tipo de máquinas, y con ciertos poderes de seducción, ya que no sobre los hombres, sobre los aparatos. Tal vez por esto sólo a alguien como yo le estaba dado –o guardado– percatarse de lo que en seguida explicaré, puesto que en mi larga vida de solitaria ama de casa no he tenido que requerir jamás los servicios de mantenimiento de ninguna fábrica de electrodomésticos, aparatos de alta fidelidad o semejantes pues yo misma, a veces hasta con la simple persuasión de unas palabras de aliento a una labor tan abnegada como meritoria, he paliado el cansancio o la desgana de lavaplatos, planchas y neveras, mitigado los dolores o achaques de televisores, tocadiscos o lavadoras con el lenitivo de una caricia oportuna. Bien es verdad que en otras ocasiones he utilizado una terapia más contundente en la que han entrado incluso herramientas y piezas de recambio, pero tanto en un caso como otro mis habilidades han quedado siempre de manifiesto y mis vecinas, amigas y hasta alguna colega como Neus Aguado han podido beneficiar de ese don.

Ni que decir tiene que manejar el ordenador –y eso que me compré el modelo más sofisticado de IBM– fue para mí un juego de niños. Prácticamente desde el día en que lo instalé, va para cinco años, nuestras relaciones han sido de una convivencia tan intensa, de un trato tan fraternal que pronto me resultó penoso abandonarlo, aunque fuera por dos o tres días. Si abundo en este punto es para que quede bien claro que, pese a mi aspecto desgarbado y a mis gestos patosos, no soy ninguna manaza, y si en cuanto a dedos estoy en la avanzadilla de la civilización técnica, en cuanto a la adquisición de conocimientos sobre microelectrónica mi cabeza no va a la zaga a mis extremidades superiores. Esto explica que mi ordenador esté conectado a perpetuidad con la central de informática de IBM, para la que precisamente trabajo, y que esa conexión me pusiera en el camino del descubrimiento.

Todo empezó una tarde de finales de junio, hace poco más de dos meses, cuando decidí abandonar para mejor ocasión mi segundo relato, cansada de no encontrar el tono apetecido, y retomé de nuevo el primero con la intención de echarle el último vistazo. Pulsé el comando correspondiente, dispuesta a comenzar a leer: “El motivo por el cual la Condesa Serpieri escogió el hotel de Lluç Alcari era el mismo por el que solían rehusarlo casi todos los posibles clientes, la falta de aire acondicionado”. Pero lo que vi en pantalla no fue sólo este comienzo, algo chirriante –olvidaba aclarar que yo misma había realizado la traducción al castellano– sino que también, contrapunteando el texto, insertándose entre líneas, aparecían, una serie de referencias en clave que tras múltiples esfuerzos logré descifrar y que remitían a obras de José María Merino, Torrente Ballester, Borges, Pere Calders, entre otros. Pero aún

había más. Tras toda esa serie de ingerencias aparecía un texto nuevo, una suma de textos diversos, un texto realmente magnífico pero que en absoluto podía reconocer como mío.

Supongo que a estas alturas podéis imaginaros con qué grado de estupefacción inicié las pesquisas oportunas en el río revuelto de mi ordenador que, sin duda, había sido interferido desde las oficinas centrales de IBM sin que yo lo supiera. Fue entonces cuando, gracias a mis habilidades técnicas, pude descubrir que mi relato había servido de conejo de Indias para los experimentos de un grupo de críticos y profesores además de un gran cuentista que prefiero no nombrar, para diseñar un aparato contador, una gran máquina cuentera, programada con todos los cuentos posibles, procedentes de los autores y los países más diversos. Batará que quien la posea le dé pie para que ella organice un cuento nuevo y distinto, un cuento original a base del sabio manejo de la intertextualidad y del intratexto, el mejor cuento posible entre los cuentos ya contados o por contar.

Imagino que compartís, queridos colegas, mi preocupación. Si el invento prospera, no sólo pronto arruinará nuestras carreras de cuentistas, sino que además nos llevará a tener que admitir que jamás seremos dignos de competir con la gran máquina contadora y que, por mucho esfuerzo y dedicación que pongamos en contar cuentos, ella nos vencerá siempre. Nuestras aportaciones, por geniales que puedan ser, servirán sólo de ingredientes del pastel, de pieza del *puzzle* contador, porque todo relato es, sin duda, mejorable y todo ha sido escrito ya muchas veces por muchos autores, en otras lenguas.

Por eso, por todo eso me pregunto si debemos sacrificar nuestros intereses individuales ante la máquina y pasar por el tubo escribiendo únicamente para ver qué minúscula aportación ofrecemos de provecho, cuántas líneas se nos admiten, qué personajes o situaciones se nos aceptan, o si, por el contrario, tenemos que reaccionar del modo más duro e intransigente oponiéndonos a que la gran contadora prospere.

Creo que la situación es suficientemente grave y requiere una reflexión profunda. Si os parece, podemos tratar de ella en el debate. Por mi parte lo tengo claro: ¡A las barricadas! ¡Muera la máquina contadora!

Sitges, septiembre de 1987

It Wasn't the Wisteria

The woman was walking slowly. When she reached the shadiest part of the copse, she stopped for a moment and took a deep breath. She headed off again into the sun, took the path leading off to the left, and found herself facing the large country house. It was unmistakable, especially in the spring. Wisteria in all its glory adorned the facade. Clusters of flowers covered the branches. The aroma, and the buzz of insects sipping their nectar brought back the memory of other springs when she had cut splendid branches with which to adorn the salons. While arranging them in various cut crystal bowls, she would peck greedily at the flowers. She relished the flavour they released. And yet it wasn't the wisteria that had seduced her.

She circled the house and pushed open the gate to the back garden. There she was. The little girl was unperturbed. The woman came into the garden at the same time every afternoon. Sometimes she stroked the child's hair. The child would feel the gentle progress of her nails across the top of her head. On other occasions, she would caress the little girl's cheek, or place her stiletto-thin fingers on top of the child's chubby hand. They had never spoken.

The visits had begun towards the end of April. Now, in early May, they continued with mathematical precision. Day after day, the same scene unfolded, the kneeling child picking wild strawberries and arranging them with extreme care in a wicker basket.

Occasionally she would stand up and offer the woman strawberries, or an elegant posy of white flowers that she had prepared beforehand, flowers with the scent of strawberries.

Sometimes the child didn't notice the woman's presence, absorbed as she was in finding the little red berries hidden in the grass. On those rare occasions when the woman found the little girl in that totally absorbed state, her mind would begin to wander. She would recall Bosch's "The Garden of Earthly Delights". She could picture the central panel in all its detail: a naked man offering a ripe strawberry of enormous dimensions to a young naked woman. She could still hear the murmur in her ear, "the strawberry is the fruit of Venus": the fruit of Venus, the fruit of love and of perdition, of amorous delirium.

Today, the little girl was looking at her, smiling, wearing a small straw hat which couldn't quite contain her abundant chestnut curls. For the first time, the woman spoke to her. The child willingly offered her some strawberries. The woman stood motionless for a moment, then bent over, took a handful and stored them in her pocket. In the next instant, she picked up the child. Swiftly, instinctively, she impaled her on a sharp spike on the wall which had once served for hanging up tools.

The child didn't emit even the tiniest cry. Only one brief little spurt of blood stained her chin, and another more brilliant one, the little dress covered with bows. There she stayed, eyes open, still clutching the little basket tightly.

With her hand, the woman cleaned the blood from the surprised face. She untied the ribbon which, when done up in her hair, made her so beautiful, and wound it round the child's waist, binding her to the spike. She couldn't resist the temptation of taking another handful of strawberries from the basket and eating them then and there, savouring them slowly, her face very close to

the child's. Suddenly, startled, she stepped back. She had the impression that the child was trying to approach her.

The fragrance of the wisteria bothered her. The smell of blood was already becoming noticeable. She passed through the garden gate without a single backward glance.

When she arrived at her hotel, she asked for the bill. Once in her room, she opened her suitcase and put it on top of the bed. She folded each garment with care, the pyjamas decorated with deep turquoise flowers, which she liked so much; the rose coloured nightgown and matching peignoir, the dress with little birds all over it, the striped jacket which made her look younger ... She went into the bathroom, brushed her teeth, washed her hands, hurriedly gathered her toiletries. Finally, with a convulsive, almost robotic gesture, she seized a locket which always accompanied her on her travels. She looked at it for a moment as if she had never seen it before, then smiled, opened it and carefully deposited a lock of chestnut hair in it. The lock blended with others, blonde, black, red ... The bas-relief on the lid featured a reproduction of a nineteenth century automaton: The Fairy of the Strawberries.

No eran las glicinas

La mujer caminaba despacio. Cuando llegó a la parte más umbría del bosquecillo, se paró un momento a respirar profundamente. Salió nuevamente al sol, tomó el camino de la izquierda, y se encontró frente al caserón. Éste era inconfundible, sobre todo en primavera. Hermosas glicinas adornaban la fachada. Los racimos de flores llenaban las ramas. El aroma y el zumbido de los insectos que libaban el néctar le traían el recuerdo de otras primaveras, en el transcurso de las cuales ella cortaba espléndidas ramas y adornaba los salones. Mientras las colocaba en diversas fuentes de cristal tallado, solía picotear golosa las flores. Le gustaba el sabor que desprendían. Sin embargo, no eran las glicinas quienes la habían seducido.

Rodeó la casa y empujó la puerta del jardín de atrás. Allí estaba. La pequeña no se inmutó. Cada tarde a la misma hora aquella mujer entraba en el jardín. A veces le acariciaba los cabellos. La niña sentía el paso de las uñas, muy suavemente, por la cabeza. En otras ocasiones, le acariciaba la mejilla o ponía su afilada mano encima de la más gordezuela de la niña. Nunca habían hablado.

Las visitas habían empezado a finales de abril. Ahora, entrado mayo, continuaban con una precisión matemática. Día tras día se representaba la misma escena, la niña arrodillada recogía fresas silvestres y las amontonaba con sumo cuidado en una canasta de mimbre. De vez en cuando se ponía en pie y ofrecía fresas a la mujer, o ya le tenía preparado un gracioso ramo de flores blancas, flores con perfume de fresas.

Algunas veces la niña no advertía su presencia, abstraída como estaba en buscar entre la hierba los pequeños frutos rojos. En las contadas oportunidades en que la mujer encontraba a la niña en esa reconcentrada actitud comenzaba a divagar. Recordaba el *Jardín de las delicias* del Bosco. Veía con exactitud el panel central: un hombre desnudo le ofrece a una joven desnuda un fresón maduro de enorme tamaño. Todavía percibía el murmullo en su oído, “la fresa es el fruto de Venus”: el fruto de Venus, el fruto del amor y de la perdición, del

desvarío amoroso.

Hoy la niña la miraba sonriente, llevaba una pequeña pamelita de paja que no conseguía recoger los abundantes rizos castaños. Por primera vez la mujer le dirigió la palabra. La niña, con docilidad, le ofreció fresas. La mujer permaneció un momento estática, después se inclinó, tomó un puñado y se las guardó en el bolsillo del vestido. Acto seguido incorporó a la niña del suelo y de manera rápida, impensada, la clavó en un hierro punzante de la pared que en su día había servido para colgar aperos.

La niña no emitió el menor grito, sólo un breve chorrito de sangre manchó su barbilla y otro más luminoso el vestidito lleno de lazos. Quedó con los ojos abiertos, sujetando con fuerza la cestita.

La mujer limpió con la mano la sangre del sorprendido rostro. Se soltó la cinta que anudada a su cabello la hacía tan bella, la pasó por la cintura de la niña atándola al hierro. No pudo resistir la tentación de tomar de la cesta otro puñado de fresas; las comió allí mismo saboreándolas con lentitud, muy próxima su cara a la de la niña. De repente se apartó sobresaltada. Tuvo la impresión de que la niña intentaba aproximarse.

La fragancia de las glicinas le molestó. El olor a sangre ya empezaba a hacerse patente. Atravesó el portal del jardín sin mirar ni una vez hacia atrás.

Al llegar al hotel pidió la cuenta, ya en la habitación abrió la maleta y la colocó encima de la cama. Dobló con esmero cada prenda, aquel pijama de flores turquesas, ultramar, que tanto le gustaba; el camisón y el salto de cama rosa, el vestido estampado de pequeños pájaros, la chaqueta a rayas que la rejuvenecía... Entró en el cuarto de baño, se lavó los dientes y las manos, recogió apresuradamente los objetos de tocador. Por último, con un gesto convulso, estereotipado casi, agarró un medallón que siempre la acompañaba en sus viajes. Lo miró un momento como si nunca lo hubiese visto y sonrió, lo abrió y depositó con destreza un mechón de cabellos castaños. Un mechón que se mezcló con otros rubios, negros, pelirrojos... El bajo relieve reproducía un autómatas del siglo diecinueve: *El Hada de las Fresas*.

Knock-Out Lines: Oliver Scharpf's *Uppercuts**

MARCO SONZOGNI

Oliver Scharpf is a Swiss author who writes in Italian. Born in Lugano in 1977, he studied Performing Arts in Milan. Currently Scharpf is working full-time in fiction and non-fiction, but it is his “alternative” poetry that has earned critical attention and led to the publication of two books in less than a decade. Scharpf won the prestigious Premio Montale for an unpublished collection, which was then released by Moby Dick with the title *Uppercuts*. The Premio Montale was followed by the Premio Città dell’Aquila and the Premio Schiller and in 2007 peQuod published Scharpf’s second collection, *La durata del viaggio dell’oliva dal martinicoctail*. This book includes his first sequence of poems, *Uppercuts 1*, and a new sequence of similar poems, *Uppercuts 2*.

The poems presented here have been selected as examples of the author’s poetics and for the intrinsic merits of each poem as well as for the interesting translation issues they raise. Scharpf’s poems can be defined as expanded haiku describing physical and emotional journeys. His verse has a distinctive colloquial diction – a sort of “noisy” stream of consciousness established by unorthodox syntax, sparse punctuation and frequent resort to verbalisms.

In terms of content, Scharpf engages the reader with vivid snapshots of recognisable situations and emotions that involve the reader in the resonance of the poet’s experience. Matching an unconventional form with what is in essence shared, even conventional content produces refreshing poems. Early in the first sequence of poems, with the unmistakable voltage of a manifesto, Scharpf declares his dissatisfaction with canonical verse:

enough of poetic poetry
but also of real poetry
for that matter
you can no longer make poetry
out of poetry no more books of poetry
if poetry has to be
then it has to be something close
to a name written on the groin of a beach
just before a tongue of foam
licks it away

The last four lines, in particular, reveal the range of the author’s registers and how he demands the full attention of the reader and the critic – and of the translator – regardless of the seriousness or triviality of the topics addressed. This is a writer who is not afraid to use an uppercut.

In his preface, Scharpf reveals that he is aware of how much he exposes himself in his pursuit of an uppercut. His own explanation of what he is trying to do with

**A Choice of Uppercuts* – Oliver Scharpf’s *Selected Poems (1999–2007)* – will be published later this year by Guernica Editions. The translator would like to thank the author, Oliver Scharpf, as well as Pip Cockburn, Jacqueline Hemmingson and Bob Lowe, for their encouragement and help. Heartfelt thanks to the Swiss Arts Council, Pro Helvetia, for the award of a translation grant and residence at the Übersetzerhaus Looren.

his poetry – reclaiming the first verse, which God has stolen, quoting Paul Valéry – testifies to the lucidity and resolution of his artistic effort. This intention never leads him to pretend or pose; he never generates abstract structures of thought nor does he indulge in ineffective word games. The complexity and depth of Scharpf's poetry arise from its simplicity and sincerity.

These traits challenge the translator of Scharpf's poetry to find English rich enough to match the brevity and colour of his Italian. These translations illustrate the difficulties and opportunities of this challenge as well as the novelty and quality of the originals.

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[2]

un giovedì pomeriggio di aprile
una gran bella ragazza
con un golfino azzurro di hopfner
stava seduta vicino alle grandi finestre ben pulite
del café-glacier remor di ginevra
accarezzando con i polpastrelli
i bordi perfettamente lisci del tavolino
come se volesse
senza darci peso o cos'altro
invitare una lettera d'amore
scritta in un braille muto da sempre
a dire qualcosa

a thursday afternoon in april
a really beautiful girl
in a hopfner blue cardigan
sitting near the big, spotlessly clean windows
of the café-glacier remor in geneva
caressing with her finger tips
the perfectly smooth edges of the coffee-table
as if she wanted
nonchalantly
to get a silent love letter in braille
to tell her something

[3]

accanto al carlo felice di genova
in un angolo
contro il muro
ci sono dei barboni nei loro sacchi a pelo
come bozzoli
in attesa di un indizio di farfalla

near the carlo felice in genoa
in a corner
against the wall
there are tramps in sleeping bags
like chrysalises
awaiting the butterfly sign

[6]

non se ne può più della poesia poesia
ma anche della poesia autentica
se è per questo
non si può più fare della poesia
con la poesia basta con i libri di poesia
se proprio si vuole
allora deve essere qualcosa che si avvicini
a un nome scritto sull'inguine di una spiaggia
un attimo prima che una lingua di spuma
lo lecchi via

enough of poetic poetry
but also of real poetry
for that matter
you can no longer make poetry
out of poetry no more books of poetry
if poetry has to be
then it has to be something close
to a name written on the groin of a beach
just before a tongue of foam
licks it away

[7]

o sui vetri appannati delle docce
negli alberghi da due lire
quando fuori piove e tutto il resto

or on the steamed glass-panes of a shower
in a cheap hourly hotel
when outside it's raining and all

[8]

dopo aver messo giù il telefono
scrissi il tuo nome
sulla sabbia del gatto

when i hung up
i wrote your name
in the sand of the cat's litter tray

[12]

lungo bab-el wazir
nel cuore del cairo fatimida
su un carretto tirato da un asino
accanto a due bambine addormentate
ecco delle bombole del gas
così arrugginite
che sembrano delle anfore romane tirate su
da qualche relitto in fondo al mare
ma sono mille volte più belle e interessanti,
non ci sarebbe neanche bisogno di dirlo

along bab-el wazir
in the heart of fatimid cairo
on a cart drawn by a donkey
next to two little girls asleep
look there are some gas cylinders
so rusty
that they look like roman amphorae fished up
from some wreck on the bottom of the sea
but they are a thousand times more beautiful and interesting
needless to say

[13]

ai limiti della città dei morti del cairo
si entra in un bar a bere un té e fumare
il bancone
dicono
è la tomba di non ho capito bene che pasha

on the edge of the city of the dead in cairo
we go into a bar to drink tea and smoke
the counter
they say
is the tomb of I didn't quite get which pasha

[14]

dalle finestre del secondo piano
della confiserie sprüngli in paradeplatz
si vedono le cime dei tram blu cobalto
scorrere via come corna di cervo
qui, dove le cameriere sono anziane
e tutte piuttosto grasse
delle nonne sorridenti ecco
che sembrano battere in fatto
di calma e gentilezza
qualsiasi monaco buddista

from the windows of the second floor
of the confiserie sprüngli in paradeplatz
you can see the antlers of cobalt-blue trams
race away like deer
here, where the waitresses are old
and all rather fat
like smiling grandmothers
who seem to be
more calm and kind
than any buddhist monk

[15]

quando alla quinta ripresa del match
tra mike tyson e frank bruno a las vegas
del venticinque febbraio dell'ottantotto
bruno andò giù
tutti in piedi
e decine e decine di flash
che sbocciarono come magnolie

on the twenty-fifth february eighty-eight in las vegas
in the fifth round of the match
mike tyson vs frank bruno
bruno drops down
everyone springs up
and flash after flash after flash
like blooming magnolia

[16]

in taxi da palermo a mondello
dal finestrino abbassato
si vedono in faccia al mare i mandorli
accanto a case abusive
lasciate a metà, così.
nessuna di queste due faccende
incanterebbe poi tanto
se non ci fosse l'altra accanto,
dico sul serio

in a taxi from palermo to mondello
from the lowered window
you can see along the sea front almond trees
around unauthorised houses
left half-finished, just like that.
neither
would be that enthralling
without the other beside it,
i really mean it.

[17]

sull'ultimo metrò preso a rotta di collo
una notte di gennaio
dopo la fermata madeleine
d'un tratto si sente il conducente dire
battendo con una penna o cos'altro
per una questione di ritmo
o per tenere desta l'attenzione, chissà
una poesia che parla, mi pare di capire
di un pupazzo di neve

just making the last metro
one night in january
after the madeleine station
suddenly you hear the driver speak
tapping with a pen or something
for the sake of rhythm
or who knows, just to attract attention
he's reciting a poem
about a snowman, i think

[18]

intercity delle 8.30 zürich-lugano
primi di gennaio, mattino di sole
classico paesaggio da cartolina
costituito dalle montagne innevate.
attenzione, lì, tracce di pettirosso:
un breve tragitto nella neve...
ma sì, è così
alla fine tutto quello che si può scrivere
non è altro che l'interruzione
di un tragitto del genere

the 8.30 intercity zürich-lugano
beginning of january, sunny morning
a typical postcard landscape
with snow-covered mountaintops.
look, there, red robin tracks:
a brief path in the snow...
but yes, that's it
in the end all one can write about
is only the break
of a journey like that

[19]

al quinto set di un momento chiave
della finale di flascinmidovs
di non so più che anno
ivan lendl senza più fiato, le guance incavate
guardò dall'altra parte della rete come per dire
non è possibile fare una cosa così adesso
eppure macenroe l'aveva fatta:
una smorzata così delicata e violenta
che avrebbe lasciato a bocca aperta
perfino shakespeare

at the fifth set in a crucial moment
of the flaschinmidovs final
in some year or other
an exhausted ivan lendl, with hollow cheeks
looks over the net as if to say
it's not possible to do something like that now
yet macenroe has just done it:
such a delicate drop shot but brutal
that would have left shakespeare himself
gob smacked

[20]

seduto sopra i gradini di santignazio
mi rendo conto che vabene
che l'espressionismo astratto americano
tipo pollock franz kline o cos'altro
è qualcosa
ma come faccio a spiegarvi la disinvoltura
l'intollerabile grazia
di queste cagate di piccione sui gradini
come pure di tutte le altre
sui gradini delle chiese di roma

sitting on the steps of santignazio
i realise that ok
the american abstract expressionism
of pollock franz kline and what have you
is really something
but how can i explain to you the nonchalance
the unbearable grace
of these pigeon droppings on these steps
and of all the other pigeon droppings
on the steps of the churches in rome

[23]

ecco l'infermiera avvicinarsi con una pila...
le chiedo di darmi ancora della morfina
dopo l'operazione ho un male cane
è la terza volta che la chiamo con il coso
appeso a un filo sopra il letto
me la spara nel braccio
e lì, così, con quella luce fioca
sembra una di un quadro di delatour

here comes the nurse with a lamp...
i ask her to give me more morphine
after surgery i'm hurting like hell
it's the third time i've called her with the thingy
hanging from a line over the bed
she shoots it in my arm
and then, just like that, in that low light
she seems to have stepped out of a delatour painting

[24]

e quando la morfina incomincia a fare effetto
lì, nella notte del reparto di ortopedia
aile roseraie
dell'ospedale universitario di ginevra:
un angelo che se n'è appena andato via

and when the morphine begins to work
there, in the dark in the orthopaedic unit
of the roseraie wing
in the university hospital in geneva:
an angel has just left

[26]

in vicolo delle grotte a roma
a due passi da campo de' fiori
sulla tovaglia di carta
c'è del pane
del vino bianco della casa freddo
e tu sorridi
e c'è che c'è qualcosa di vicino
all'incanto, in questa attesa
per gli spaghetti alle vongole

in vicolo delle grotte in rome
near campo de' fiori
on the paper tablecloth
there is bread
chilled white house wine
and you're smiling
and something close
to magic in this wait
for spaghetti alle vongole

[28]

giù sotto nella stazione duomo verso la linea 3
un ragazzino suona una cantata di bach
con un piano-flauto giocattolo da due lire.
e allora so che il mondo sta in piedi grazie a lui
a quest'esile melodia che ora sento alle spalle
a quelli che sentendola qualcosa allo sguardo
gli sale ben su
mica di certo per gli applausi
dopo un opera diretta da muti agli arcimboldi
o cos'altro

in the subway at the duomo station on the way to line 3
a boy plays a bach cantata
on a penny whistle.
and so i know that the world is still standing thanks to him
to that delicate melody i can hear behind me
and to those who hearing it get a shiver up their spine
certainly not for the applause that
follows a work conducted by muti at the arcimboldi
or what have you

[33]

dalle parti della stazione termini
un barbone sanguina di brutto
dall'occhio sinistro.
una donna uscita dal mecdonalds
gli porge un tovagliolo di carta.
ma ve la ricordate veronica
quel venerdì lì di passione?
ecco, uguale

near termini station
a tramp's left eye
is bleeding badly
a woman who has just come out of mecdonalds
gives him a paper handkerchief.
so you remember veronica
that friday of passion?
that's it, the same

[39]

mia madre mi chiama per vedere il pettirosso
dice che quando arriva viene sempre a nevicare,
eh sì, si macchiò il petto con il sangue di cristo
cercando di levare i chiodi con il becco
e adesso si occupa di annunciare la neve

my mother calls me to look at a robin redbreast
she says when he comes it's always going to snow,
and so he got his chest stained with christ's blood
trying to pull out the nails with his beak
and now he works at forecasting snow

[41]

il quattordici si ferma in escherwyssplatz
una ragazza con una breve coda di cavallo
guarda fuori dal finestrino
tipo fiammella azzurra di un beccobunsen
dimenticato in un'aula di liceo il venerdì

the number fourteen stops in escherwyssplatz
a girl with a short pony tail
looks out of the window
like the little blue flame of a bunsen burner
left forgotten on a friday in a high school classroom

[44]

zone di anemoni come spalti dopo un goal
sparse qua e là nei boschi fuori lugano
ogni anemone è un nome
sono i nomi che non sapremo
di tutte le belle passanti
incontrate per strada in questi anni

patches of anemones like football stands after a goal
scattered here and there in forests outside lugano
every anemone is a name
they are the names that we will never know
of all the beautiful women
who passed by over these years

[47]

una testa di pescespada al mercato di catania
ha delle rose in bocca

in the market in catania the head of a swordfish
has roses in its mouth

[48]

sull'intercity romapalermo dopo salerno ecco
che si sente l'odore in italia la notte in maggio
e l'inizio di un salmo... cocabirrapanini... caffè...
acqua... minerale... caffècocabirrapanini... acqua
cocabirracaffèacqua... cocabirrapanini... caffè...

on the intercity romapalermo after salerno
there you can smell the may night in italy
and the opening of a litany cocabirrapanini... caffè...
acqua... minerale... caffècocabirrapanini...acqua
cocabirracaffèacqua... cocabirrapanini... caffè...

Don't Trust the Band ("Méfie-toi de l'orchestre") by Boris Vian

TRANSLATED BY PETER HODGES

This story has been selected from Boris Vian's collection of short stories gathered under the title *Le Ratichon baigneur*. Vian wrote many short stories during his lifetime, but it was not until after his death in 1959 that this collection was assembled. Most of the stories are indeed short, mostly under a thousand words, but they provide interesting material for consideration in translation.

Vian is famous for his word plays and unique style of humour. How does the translator deal with this? I don't believe it is possible to capture every word play, every neologism, and every joke or piece of humour at the precise moment it occurs in the source text. The difference between languages and cultures just does not allow it to happen. Of course, there are times, probably more often than not, when the target text does convey all the subtleties of the original. But what about those times when, no matter how hard you try, and think, and reflect, and ask other people, you are just unable to find an appropriate translation for a word play or a joke? Sometimes an opportunity presents itself at a different point in the source text, where the temptation to dabble with the language is just too great. This is the case with the paragraph ("Deux fois, d'abord ... Double-Mètre"), where the "guy in the white jacket ... does a double take". It seems the perfect opportunity to insert another "double", which, to my mind, is in keeping with the spirit of the author. This particular paragraph could have been translated in a number of different ways. It could have been translated more literally, following ST word order and syntax, but it would most likely have been awkward, and could possibly have directed the TT reader to ask who is "Yvon Petra, known as Double-Metre"? The method employed here has preserved the macro-level integrity of the ST, and has deflected attention away from "Yvon Petra" by providing a more TT-oriented approach, thus possibly avoiding annotation and explanation, while at the same time capturing a word play that may have been lost somewhere else in the text.

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“Méfie-toi de l’orchestre”

Public des cabarets, méfie-toi de l’orchestre!

Tu arrives là, bien gentil, bien habillé, bien parfumé, bien content, parce que tu as bien dîné, tu t’assieds à une table confortable, devant un cocktail délectable, tu as quitté ton pardessus chaud et cossu, tu déploies négligemment tes fourrures, tes bijoux et tes parures, tu souris, tu te détends ... Tu regardes le corsage de ta voisine et tu penses qu’en dansant tu pourras t’en approcher ... tu l’invites ... et tes malheurs commencent.

Bien sûr, tu as remarqué sur une estrade ces six types en vestes blanches dont provient un bruit rythmique; d’abord cela te laissait insensible et puis, petit à petit, la musique entre en toi par les pores de ta peau, atteint le dix-huitième centre nerveux de la quatrième circonvolution cérébrale en haut à gauche, où l’on sait, depuis les travaux de Broca et du capitaine Pamphile, que se localise la sensation de plaisir née de l’audition des sons harmonieux.

Six types en vestes blanches. Six espèces de larbins. Un domestique, à priori, n’a point d’yeux, si ce n’est pour éviter de renverser ton verre en te présentant la carte, et point d’oreilles autres que ce modèle d’oreille sélective uniquement propre à entendre ta commande ou l’appel discret de ton ongle sur le cristal. Tu te permets d’extrapoler pour les six types, à cause de leurs vestes blanches. Oh! public! ... Ton doigt dans ton œil! ...

Don’t Trust the Band

Nightclub patrons, don’t trust the band!

You arrive there, in a good mood, well dressed, the right cologne, and happy with life because you have had a nice meal. You sit yourself down at a comfortable table, a mouth-watering cocktail in front of you. You have taken off your expensive warm overcoat. You arrange your furs, jewellery, and accessories as you take a look around. You smile. You start to relax ... You look at your neighbour’s corsage, and think that while you are dancing you might move in on her ... you ask her to dance ... and your troubles begin.

Of course you have noticed those six guys in white jackets producing rhythm on stage. At first the music doesn’t have any effect on you, but then gradually it enters your body through the pores of your skin, reaches the eighteenth nerve centre of the fourth cerebral convolution at the top on the left which, as everyone knows, since the work of Broca and Captain Pamphile, is where the centre of pleasure born from the detection of harmonious sounds is located.

Six guys in white jackets. Six guys paid to be there. It used to be that staff only had eyes to avoid knocking over your glass when handing you the menu, and no ears other than the one designed specifically for hearing your order or the discreet tap of your finger on the crystal. You allow yourself to jump to conclusions about those six guys because of their white jackets. Oh, patrons! Don’t let them fool you!

(Ne te vexe pas si je te traite tantôt en camarade, comme on entretient un homme, et si, tantôt, je souligne d'une plume audacieuse, le galbe éclatant de ton décolleté – tu le sais bien, public, que tu es hermaphrodite.)

Mais, au moment où tu invites ta voisine ... Ah! Malheur à toi, public!

Car un des types en vestes blanches, un de ceux qui soufflent dans des tubes ou tapent sur des peaux, ou des touches, ou pincet des cordes, un de ceux-là t'a repéré. Qu'est-ce que tu veux, il a beau avoir une veste blanche, c'est un homme! ... Et ta voisine, celle que tu viens d'inviter, c'est une femme! ... Pas d'erreur possible! ... Elle se garde bien de transporter ici les envelopes grossières du tailleur, slacks et chaussures épaisses qui, d'aventure, avenue du Bois, le gris du jour aidant, pourraient faire que tu la prisses pour l'adolescente qu'elle n'est point, oh, deux fois non! ...

(Deux fois, d'abord, car c'est ce qui frappe le plus le type en veste blanche, à qui sa position élevée permet l'utilisation du regard plongeant, mis à la mode par certains grands du monde. Citons incidemment: Charles de Gaulle, dit Double-Maître, et Yvon Pétra, dit Double-Mètre.)

Et, à ce moment-là, public, tu n'es plus hermaphrodite.

Tu te scindes en un homme horrible – un rougeaud repu, le roi de la boustife, un marchand de coco, un sale politicard – et une femme ravissante, dont le sourire crispé témoigne de la dureté des temps, qui l'oblige à danser avec ce rustre.

(Don't be annoyed if I have been treating you as a friend just now, talking to you man to man, and if, in a little while, I emphasize the dazzling cut of your neckline with a bold pen. Patrons, you should all be aware that you are hermaphroditic.)

But just as you invite your neighbour to dance ... Oh, patrons! Woe betide you!

For one of those guys in white jackets, one of them who is blowing in tubes, or tapping on skins or keys, or plucking strings, one of them has spotted you. What do you expect? Even though he has a white jacket, he is still a man! ... And your neighbour, the one you have just asked to dance, she is a woman! ... No mistake about that! ... She is very careful not to be seen here in anything but the finest clothes. No slacks and big boots, which might make you mistake her for a teenager, which she certainly is not, if by some chance you saw her on the Avenue du Bois in fading light. But you wouldn't make that mistake twice!

(The guy in the white jacket, whose elevated position allows him to look down on the crowd, a technique made fashionable by certain great people in the world, Charles de Gaulle known as Double-Master, and Yvon Petra known as Double-Metre, just to name two, does a double-take when he sees someone who stands out.)

And patrons, that is when you cease to be hermaphroditic.

You split in two: a horrible man, a red-faced over-indulger, the king of gluttony, a coke dealer, a dirty politician; and a ravishing woman, whose tight-lipped smile bears witness to the harshness of the time that forces her to dance with this clod.

Qu'importe, homme horrible, si tu as, en réalité, vingt-cinq ans et les formes d'Apollon, si ton sourire charmeur découvre des dents parfaites, si ton habit, de coupe audacieuse, souligne la puissance de ta carrure.

Tu as toujours le mauvais rôle. Tu es un pingre, un pignouf, un veau. Tu as un père marchand de canons, une mère qui a tout fait, un frère drogué, une sœur hystérique.

Elle clame ... elle est ravissante, je te dis.

Sa robe! ... ce décolleté carré, ou rond, ou en cœur, ou pointu, ou en biais, ou pas de décolleté du tout si la robe commence plus bas ... Cette silhouette! ... Tu sais, on voit très bien si elle a quelque chose sous sa robe ou rien du tout ... Ça fait des petites lignes en relief au haut des cuisses

(Ça en fait si elle a quelque chose. Si ça ne fait pas de lignes en relief, en général, le type de la trompette fait un couac que tu ne remarques pas, parce que tu mets ça, généreusement, sur le compte du jazz hot.)

Et son sourire! ... Ses lèvres rouges et bien dessinées et elles sentent sûrement la framboise ... Et toi! ... Tu dances comme un éléphant et tu écrases sûrement ses pieds fragiles.

Et puis, vous revenez à votre place. Enfin, elle va respirer. Elle se rassied à côté de toi.

Mais quoi?

La main ... Ses ongles effilés laqués d'argent ... sur ton épaule de bouseux? ... Et elle te sourit? ...

Ah! ... La garce! ... Toutes les mêmes! ...

Et puis, les types en vestes blanches attaquent le morceau suivant ...

What does it matter, you horrible man, if, in reality, you are twenty-five years old with the body of Apollo, if your charming smile reveals a perfect set of teeth, if the dashing cut of your suit emphasizes the broadness of your shoulders?

You will never win. You are a peasant, a miser, a misfit. You have a father who is an arms dealer, a mother who has been around, a manic sister, and a brother on drugs.

She is crying out to be noticed ... She is ravishing, I tell you.

Her dress ... with that neckline! Square, or round, or heart-shaped, or plunging, or to the side, or no neckline at all if the dress is off the shoulder ... And that figure! ... You know, it's easy to tell whether or not she is wearing anything under her dress ... It makes faint raised lines around the top of the thighs ...

(But it only makes them if she has anything. Usually, if there are no lines, the guy on the trumpet hits a false note that you don't notice, because you generously put it down as being what you would expect from hot jazz.)

And her smile! ... Her perfectly shaped red lips that must surely taste like raspberries ... And you! ... You dance like an elephant. You are sure to crush her delicate feet.

And then you return to your seat. Finally she can catch her breath. She sits back down next to you.

Now what?

Her hand ... Her slender fingers with silver nail polish ... on your country bumpkin shoulder? ... And she is smiling at you?

Oh! ... The bitch! ... All the same! ...

And then the guys in the white jackets launch into the next piece ...

Traveller (“Putnik”) by Petar Preradovic

TRANSLATED (2003) BY
BARRY HAJDINJAK AND GORDON BLOK

Petar Preradovic (1818–1872) was a nineteenth-century Romantic poet from the Balkan Krajina region on the current Croatian/Serbian border. His poems appeared at a crucial time in the struggle for the establishment of Croatian identity and language. The poem “Putnik” was and remains a cultural icon worthy of translation.

Born in Grabrovnica to a Croat father and a Serbian mother, Petar Preradovic became a professional soldier, rising to the rank of general in the occupying Austrian army. While stationed in Zadar, on the coast of Dalmatia, Preradovic began writing poetry for *Zora Dalmatinska* (Dalmatian Dawn) and was influenced by the Illyrian movement, which was connected to the “Pan-Slavism” movement. He was thus exposed to nineteenth-century Romantic nationalism, often associated with political activism and idealism. Interestingly, in the Balkans the most influential English poet was Byron. The impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon’s reforms was profound. Hundreds of years of occupation by the Austro-Hungarian Empire had resulted in severe colonialist cultural oppression to the extent that writing in Croatian had been banned.

“Putnik” is a lament of the lost traveler, and asks: “where do we belong?” The sense of place is and was profound for rural folk tied to the land. Many of his poems are thus “poems of the homeland” and “Putnik” is probably the best known Croatian poem of this genre. It is a poem very much alive in the hearts of Croatian (and Serbian) people today in much the same way that “Waltzing Matilda” is alive in the hearts of Australians with the story of the swagman. The poem is significant in that it still has the power to re-connect the huge Croatian diaspora to the homeland of their ancestors.

The narrative of the poem is not clear because it is about the transcendental/timeless “traveller” or “putnik” who wanders away to a foreign land.

The most obvious sub-text, influence and connection in reading “Putnik” is Homer’s *Odyssey*:

Dear child, whatever put this in your head?
Why do you want to go so far in the world –
And you our only darling? Lord Odysseus
Died in some strange place, far from his homeland

Homer, *Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fitzgerald
(London: Everyman’s Library, 1992)

This resonates with the opening stanza of “Putnik”. . .

Murrumbeena, Melbourne, and Dulwich Hill, Sydney

Boze mili, kud sam zaso!
 Noc me stigla u tudinju,
 Neznam puta, ne znam staze,
 Svud go kamen noge gaze,
 Trudne noge po pustinju !

Jos nocista nijesam naso!
 Sjever brije s snjezdog brda,
 A tudincu siromaku
 Jos je veci mrak u mraku,
 Jos je tvrda zemlja tvrda!

Naokolo magla pada
 Zastrta je mjesecina ,
 Ne vidi se svijezdam traga;
 Majko mila, majko draga,
 Da ti vidis svoga sina!

Da ti vidis njega sada
 Okruzena bijedom svega,
 Ti bi gorko zaplakala,
 Ruka bi ti zadrhtala
 Od zalosti — grlec njega!

Zasto tebe nijesam sluso,
 Kad si meni govorila:
 “Ne idi, sinko, od matere,
 Koja mekan lezaj stere
 Tebi usred svoga krila

Ne idi , sinko, draga duso,
 Ne id’ od krova ocinoga
 Tuda zelmja ima svoje,
 Ne spoznaje jade tvoje,
 Tuda ljubav ljubi svoga!” —

Govoreci sobom tako,
 Ka kolibi jednoj klima
 Koju spazi iznenada
 Umoreni putnik sada,
 I zakutca na vratima.

Otvarajuc sve polako,
 Pitajuc se : tko ce biti?
 Glavu pruzi jedna stara.
 “Daj u ime Bozjeg draga
 Bako, meni prenociti!

Good Gracious God what have I done!
 Trapped by night in a foreign land,
 I don’t know what track to follow,
 On bare rocks my feet do wallow,
 Weary legs in a wilderness!

No shelter here have I yet found,
 The North wind blows on snowy peaks,
 While this poor wayfaring stranger
 Finds in darkness darkest danger,
 As this rough earth with hardness speaks

All around the fog has fallen
 And covered up now is the moon,
 Star tracks have disappeared and yes
 Mayko mila (mother dearest),
 If you could only see your son!

If only you could see this soul
 Surrounded just by poverty.
 You sure would shed a bitter tear,
 Indeed your hand would tremble here
 To see him in such misery.

Why did I not listen to you?
 When all of this you said to me:
 “My son please don’t leave your mother
 And a bed soft as a feather
 Forever beneath my wings

“Please don’t go, son - my dearest one,
 Don’t abandon your father’s roof.
 All distant lands they have their own
 And won’t recognize your sorrow
 A foreign heart just loves itself!”

Thus speaking softly to myself,
 I approach a lonely shack
 Which has suddenly appeared.
 From travelling now I am so tired,
 And so I knock upon the door.

The door is opened very slow,
 The question asked: “And who are you?”
 An older woman’s head looks out.
 “In the name of our Lord
 Old lady let me lodge tonight!

Ne znam, gdje sam –kud sam zaso,
Noc me stigla u tudinju,
Ne znam puta, ne znam staze,
Svud go kamen noge gaze,
Trudne noge po pustinju!

Drugi nocaj gdje bi naso!
Sjever brije s snjezdog brda,
A tudincu siromaku
Jos je veci mrak u mraku,
Jos je tvrda zemlja tvrda.

Naokolo magla pada,
Zastrta je mjesecina
Ne vidi se svijezdem traga,
Majko mila, majko draga,
Primi pod krov tudeg sina!"

*"Primlia bi tebe rada,
Ali vidis: tuj spavaju
Tri mi sinka I tri kcerce,
Koji cijelo majke srce
I svu kucu ispunjaju!"*

"Nij daleko vec do dana,
Vec pozdravlja pijevac vile;
Dok zagrije danak bozi,
Malo vatra bar nalozi,
Da otopim smrzle zile!"

*"Vatra mi je zapretana,
Drva nemam skoro nista,
Ovo malo, sto j'unutra,
Traba mojoj djeci sjutra,
Kad se skupe kod ognjista!"*

"Za tudinca nista nemas,
Tuda majko, kad te moli,
Tude dijete tvoje nije!" ---
Tim mu grozne suze dvije
Niza lice kapnu doli.

*"Gdje su ruke tvoje majke,
Sad da skupe suze sina?
Gdje koljene, da pocine,
Da ti tesko breme skine,
Gdje je tvoja domovina?"*

Where am I? Where have I come?
Trapped by night in this foreign land.
I don't know what track to follow,
On naked rocks I just wallow,
Weary legs in this wilderness!"

What other shelter can I find?
The North wind blows on snowy peaks
While this poor wayfaring stranger
Finds in darkness darkest danger
As this cold earth with hardness speaks."

All around the fog has fallen,
And well concealed now is the moon
Star tracks have disappeared and yes,
Mayko mila (mother dearest),
Take under your roof a foreign son!"

*She said: "I'd take you in with pleasure,
But look; see how they are sleeping –
Three sons three daughters, a full house,
Which fills this mothers heart of course
To the brim – it's overflowing."*

My answer to her: "Look the dawn,
Is near, see how the rooster crows;
Until God heats the day for us,
Start up a little fire, no fuss,
So I can thaw these frozen veins!"

*She thus replied: "The fire's gone out,
Firewood here I don't have any.
What little that there is inside
Is for my children who reside
So that tomorrow we can be"*

I cry out: "So for me nothing?
Foreign mother I do beg you,
I know that I am not your own!"....
Suddenly the tears are flowing
Down my cheeks and falling ...

*She speaks: "Where are your mother's
palms,
Collecting up her sons tears?
Where are the knees on which to rest,
To unload burdens from your breast.
Where is your home – where is your
country?"*

Ko da su mu grci ljuti
Timi rijecmi srce stisli,
Sav ukocen putnik stoji,
Leden znoj mu celo znoji
I otimlje mozgu misli.

Ali oci mu uzdignuti
Okrenu se, oj onamo,
Gdje od drage domovine
Svako jutro sunce sine,
Tamo zeljom hiti, tamo!

Tebi opet dusa dise,
Tebi opet srce bije;
Domovino, majko srce,
K tebi opet sin se krece,
Od radosti suze lije

Primi opet svoje dijete,
Dovijeka ce tvoje biti,
Ljubit tebe svako doba,
U tvom polju daj mu groba,
Tvojim cvijecem grob mu kiti!

As if gripped by some evil cramps,
With these words my heart was stricken,
All rigid there from travelling,
Beads of sweat upon my forehead,
I was coldly stopped from thinking.

Then my eyes became uplifted,
I turned around and looked beyond,
Where the sun shines bright each
morning
Where a land of love is burning.
With my desire to run upon!

Oh! my soul again is breathing,
Yes this heart again is beating;
This land, our home, our happiness
Your son is now returning,
From pure joy these tears I shed.

Accept again your long lost child
I belong to you forever.
With fresh new love out in the field,
A filial strength in time will yield
Your flowers to adorn my grave.

Norms and Geeks and Pigs: Targeting the Source

ANITA WESTON

Forget all this talk about translation “norms.” When was the last time you held a norm in your hand, or heard one call to you from across the room? Norms are fictions, hypotheses, methodological constructs whose existence cannot be proven, only imagined.

Doug Robinson, “Double Binds of Translation: Norms vs. Freedom”, home.olemiss.edu/~djr/pages/.../db-norms.html

Katherine Dunn’s pyrotechnically inventive novel *Geek Love*¹ centres on the Binewski family’s freak show in a travelling circus, the Carnival Fabulon. Binewski juniors include Oly, a bald Albino hunchback dwarf, the novel’s narrator; Electra and Iphigenia, svelte and beautiful Siamese twins, and Arturo the Aqua boy, with flippers for limbs. All of them were lovingly procreated as freaks by the use of drugs, insecticides, and radioisotopes, “spar[ing] no expense” (p. 8), since their deformity/difference was considered a sound, stock-market-proof investment, according to their parents: “What greater gift could you offer your children than an ability to earn a living just by being themselves?” (p. 7) as their mother Lil puts it. Occasionally the experiments went wrong, and the child was practically normal: “It was a disappointment when I emerged with such commonplace deformities”, Oly confides; in her brother, Fortunato’s, case it was a near-disaster: “I did everything, Al ... [...] What happened?” Lil wails (p. 64); “Despite the expensive radium treatments incorporated in his design, Fortunato had a close call in being born to apparent normalcy. That drab state so depressed my enterprising parents that they immediately prepared to abandon him on the doorstep of a closed service station as we passed through [...] Wyoming late one night” (pp. 8–9). Fortunately (hence his name), as they were packing his abandonment trousseau the baby sucked his mother towards him and clamped onto her, using the telekinetic force over objects and people which became his trademark and made of him “my parents’ masterwork”.

The idea had come to their father when he was “troubled by business boondoggles”: a moment of financial crisis. Wandering around the experimental beds of a municipal garden, admiring their “designed [...] striped and layered” roses, it occurred to him that “the oddity of them was beautiful, and [...] contrived to give them value”. Children too, he realized, “could be designed [...], a rose garden worthy of a man’s interest!” (p. 9). A close and for many years happy family was soon created (““family values’ will never be the same”, as the book blurb remarks) and the first chapter closes with them all “cozy in

¹ Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love* (New York: Vintage, 2002 [1983]). All page references are to this edition and will be incorporated in brackets in the text.

the warm booth of the van, eating popcorn and drinking cocoa and feeling like Papa's roses" (p. 10).

Their father and mother had no such gifts (Lil was originally "a water-cool aristocrat from the fastidious side of Boston's Beacon Hill" [p. 7] before she ran off and joined the circus), and consequently had to work hard for their living. Lil found herself having to improvise the "profession" of geek, and the novel opens with her children's favourite bedtime story:

When your mama was the geek, my dreamlets, she made the nipping off of noggins such a crystal mystery that the hens themselves yearned towards her, waltzing around her, hypnotized with longing. "Spread your lips, sweet Lil", they'd cluck, "And show us your choppers." [...] She'd shake her star-white hair and the bitten-off chicken head would skew off into the corner while she dug her rosy little fingernails in and lifted the flopping, jittering carcass like a golden goblet and sipped! (pp. 3, 6)

The family, then, flaunt their difference, spearheaded by Arturo, self-denominated Art, or Arty, who quickly takes over the (meta-)narration. Like all his family, but more, Art loathes what he dubs "norms": everybody with the *normal* complement of limbs in the *normal* places: people who, as it were, go quietly about their communicative business without foregrounding themselves as signifiers within the social text. He berates his little sister for being scared by a ghost story: "Hey, nit squat! Those are written by norms to scare norms!" and personally, systematically "practise[s] hate-forms on the norms" (pp. 46, 78). There is an incident later in the novel when a norm tries to gun down Art's whole family, but his norm-aversion is spontaneous and self-inciting, and was already entrenched when, as a three-year-old, he would relish making eyes at the audience through his glass tank, then "paddle off, revealing the turd trailing from his muscular little buttocks" (p. 8).

Publicly, Art makes a show of relishing the signifiers of his deformed, deviant body, decking it out in a sequined swimsuit and swimming to the top of a giant tank through pink spot-lights and champagne bubbles; he then props his fins on the rim and cosies down with the audience for a chat. "It was a central charm of [Arty's] act", his brother says, "that, though he looked and acted alien [...] he would prop his chin on the lip of the tank to talk 'just like folks'" (p. 49). But Art, we know, hates "folks", hates "norms", and indeed his brother cautions us "Only it wasn't quite like folks". Observing (and resenting) his brother's literal power to move people, Art perfects his own verbal form. His chats become incantatory and bardic, nurturing a "quasi-religious cult of Arturism" (p. 227) to which the norms convert in their droves; craving full communion with him through a shared sign-system, they beg to surgically shed their normality, their limbs, joint by joint, until they are slithering torsos. Like mother like son: off with their chickens' heads, off with their norms' limbs.

So what is it with Art and norms? Has he got it in for Gideon Toury, Theo Hermans, and systems theorists generally? Has he, perhaps, heard Toury say he "[doesn't] think literature is all that different from other kinds of texts",²

² In Christina Schäffner (ed.), *Translation and Norms* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 1999), p. 48.

or overheard talk of “manipulation”,³ of “performance instructions”,⁴ of “an attempt [...] to eliminate choice”,⁵ in the “modifi[ca]tion” of “text relations in the original” in favour of “[more] habitual options offered by the target repertoire”?⁶ Does he fear that, as a non-integrated “foreign body”, he can never meet an adequacy, let alone an acceptability, norm, or any social “assumptions and expectations about correctness or appropriateness”?⁷ Is he right in offering a pre-emptive first strike at the norms he is subverting, realising that only affirmative action can create a space, inside and outside the Big Top, for his family’s own minoritised body language; that unless the *non*-dominant is also recognised in any “descriptive” system – unless, that is, the description is also applied to the Source – then only the Target dominant will be endorsed in translation practice? A translatorly approach to this kind of literary language, Art must suspect, will make short shrift of his de-familiarised family signifiers and the Bakhtinian carnivalesque multi(de)formity of the Fabulon road show, and knock the sequins and spotlights off any text which refuses to normalise and “talk like (Target Culture) folks”.

Dunne’s novel, from the near-oxymoron of its title, is a celebration and enactment of the anti-norm in theme and language. Gothic in its lavish descriptions of the unfeasible, the incredible, and the unacceptable, and science-fiction in its systematic inversion of norm-expectation, with its own parallel world and values system, it pushes a series of conventions to their limits while always, ultimately, returning to the defamiliarised but recognisable parameters of the realist novel tradition. Her platform is humanist and ethical. Humour is never at the service of the purely ludic, and the reader is never allowed post-modern absolutism, but is forced to commit emotionally and painfully to recognizing *mon semblable, mon frère/ma sœur*. At the same time the metafictional invitation is clear in elements like “Carnival”, “Fabulon”, and the function of Art, and for present purposes I have chosen, only slightly speciously, to privilege this reading of the novel as an extended metaphor of fabulation and literary language, the deviant word made flesh, which, like the Binewski family, “earns a living *just by being itself*”: representational, a-synonymous and unmodifiable.

The Binewskis, then, embody the theory of literary language as skewed, differently-able, and in Shklovsky’s famous term “defamiliarised”, as propounded from the Romantics through to the Structuralists and beyond. With different emphases, Mukarovsky, Havránek, and linguists such as Richard Ohman have argued that literary language is non-automatised, not used in the service of communication, and without the normal illocutionary forces of language, but should be seen as marked, foregrounded, iconic, and self-referential, all subsumable under Wittgenstein’s famous warning in Zettel⁸

³ For example, Hermans in Román Álvarez & M. Carmen-África Vidal (eds.), *Translation, Power, Subversion*, (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 1996).

⁴ Toury in Theo Hermans, *Translation in Systems: Descriptive and System-oriented Approaches Explained* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1999), p. 75.

⁵ Davis quoted by Toury in Schäffner, p. 14

⁶ Toury in Hermans, *Translation in Systems*, p. 93

⁷ Schäffner in Schäffner, p. 1

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), quoted in Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 162.

that “a poem” (and the poetic function of language in general), “although it is composed in the language of information, is not used in the language-game of giving information”. As Arty’s brother has it, it doesn’t talk “*like folks*”. In his father’s more sumptuously Gothic terminology, it “d[igs] its rosy little fingernails into the flopping, jittering [referential] carcass, and turns it into a golden goblet”.

The above definitions can stand as a respectably mainstream if not uncontested view of literary language (Carter and Nash, for example, and most pragmatists, prefer to talk about “deflection” and a cline of literariness, from referential to representational language).⁹ But whether deflection or deviation, how are these features accounted for in literary translation? It might now be a courtesy towards the Binewskis, knowing the metalinguistic trouble they took to source their offspring’s abnormality and the viciousness with which it was targeted, to look at some of the translation theories dealing with literary language and its transfer, check the extent to which they foreground the difference/*différance*/defamiliarisation of the ST, and see what provisions are made in the TT, at least within the prevailing, domesticating norms of the Western canon, for the linguistic equivalent of wheelchair access. It might be useful to question the applicability of norms-based translation theory to a description of literary translation, and the legitimacy of dethroning the ST and terming as no more than “adequate” a translation which acknowledges its otherness, reserving “acceptable” for a text more in harmony with our own system. There will always be a time-gap between the appearance of a new literary form and possible terms in which to assess its translation into a new readership and critical system: how to test the water or let the TL reflect some of the splash made by, say, the *nouveau roman* or magical realism – both of which, in very different ways, push the SL to new acceptancy levels – if the translator’s eye is on containment and conservation of target norms? This is more likely to reverse Lil’s trick with her chicken and turn the “goblet” into a “carcass”, corralling the ST (and slightly mixing metaphors) back into the canonical and the known.

As a circus performer, Art would be the last person to ignore audience satisfaction; he knows he has to acknowledge their world (using the “language of information”, “like folks”): he “ha[s] contact with norms”, he tells us, “but only in dashes and flashes. I never thought of carrying on a conversation with one of the brutes” (p. 175). He plays the language-game by a different set of rules, and requires his audience to shed target expectations and accept a relational norm-reversal whereby they submit totally to the source, even if it means deforming itself/themselves in the process. Art seems not to want to be “Turned”, linguistically or culturally: he demands to be accepted but not interpreted; to be matched limb for limb, deformity for deformity, an eye for an eye, signifier for signifier.

Is a theory which charts the application of prevailing norms best equipped to carry on a conversation with ideas of this kind? Or rather, since the answer to that is simply “it doesn’t converse but *describes*”, the question

⁹ Ronald Carter and Walter Nash, *Seeing Through Language: A Guide to Styles of English Writing* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 5.

could be rephrased to consider how far description can ever remain such before passing into endorsement and refraction, rewriting towards a more comfortable linguistic, stylistic or, worse, ideological fit: from description to prescription,¹⁰ norm to strategy, “‘is’ to ‘ought’”.¹¹ Norms are predicated on the referential, contextual world, and draw on sociology, anthropology, and the behavioural sciences, and although competing “anti” norms are countenanced, it is the dominant behavioural trend which is emphasised, and the language of the “folks” *outside* the tank which is listened to. To accept, though, that the TC force-field is desirable or even inevitable introduces the risk that in the textual world, SL deviance and difference (which of course is intralingual difference, from its own referential canons, as well as interlingual) will come to be seen as a deformity to be shot down in a domestic-readership-cossetting, underdetermined, undertranslation. In that case “the brutes” are us, *hypocrite traducteur*; and at that point the dominant norm has become precisely the “negative analytic” Berman tells us we are hard-wired to produce and must resist if we are to “accept the foreign as foreign”.¹²

Ethics and ideology apart, an immediate teacherly objection is that, given an inch of norms theory, a translation class will take a yard of normalising, automatising, and dumbing-down. When dealing with texts of any nature they struggle to resist “talk[ing] like folks” (“this is what my native Italian/Dutch/Farsi would say”,/ “You can’t say that in my native ...” etc.), and explicate Toury’s law of growing standardisation whereby an ST feature will be modified into the repertoire of the TL. The following sentence, taken from Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, is my personal trial-by-fire ST-deviance-resistancy test for classes:

And to prove to himself the non-existence of God he now stood in the dining-room of the city’s most famous hotel, with pigs falling out of his face.¹³

I have never been able to elicit a linear, one-to-one substitution, though it would work perfectly in any language I know or have asked about. What the pigs are rooting for, surely, is a fat, juicy signifier which nobody has messed with except the author. What they often get is a change of noun category, from “pigs” to “pork”, or one of the items in the food repertoire, and the metonymising of “face” into “mouth” (= “with pork coming out of his mouth”). However many collocation searches the students make, however much information I have given them about Rushdie, magical realism and his allegorical form of political satire, and whatever jokey assurances I give about British eating habits, even specialist students remain convinced there must be some residue of a rhetorical

¹⁰ “In a debate on prescription versus description, he [Kurt Vonnegut] said the former, ‘as nearly as I could tell, was like an honest cop, while description was like a boozed-up war buddy from Mobile, Ala.’” Introduction to the *Norton Anthology of American Literature*, quoted in a review of The Random House Dictionary, *New York Times* (30 October 1966).

¹¹ Andrew Chesterman quoted in Anthony Pym, *Method in Translation History* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1998), p. 111.

¹² A. Berman, ‘La Traduction comme épreuve de l’étranger’, *Texte: Revue de critique et de théorie*, 4 (1985), 67–81; trans. L. Venuti, ‘Translation and the Trials of the Foreign’, in L. Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 284–298.

¹³ Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking, 1988), pp. 29–30.

figure behind the English, or some different frequency tolerance, which helps to normalise it in the *source*, but which is not an option open to their target language.

There are two issues here, cultural and linguistic, and to avoid applying a norms-oriented reading naively we – I – should perhaps take into account Toury’s distinction between the translation act (the individual translator’s interaction with the ST) and the translation event, all the circumstances surrounding the production aspect. The act belongs to the ST, in all its denotative, connotative, and formal peculiarity, and no short-cuts or target-slanting can be countenanced at this stage, whatever the ultimate skopos options: this should be, as it were, the ST’s last semantic supper, where it gets to preach its own Word to a respectful audience, however heavy the communicative cross to be borne in the social *event* of the translation and its reception. The event belongs to the fallen world of compromise and crowd-pleasing social expediency, which, in the case of the Rushdie example, may endorse translating “pig” into a culturally less-sensitive animal (cf. Nida’s various zoological translations of the lamb of God), or adapting the pigs/face juxtaposition to the target reality of particularly fastidious notions of linguistic or wider cultural correctness. The aesthetics of magical realism quite quickly forced a violent paradigm shift, and Rushdie himself, in addition, near-miraculously managed to refamiliarise if not exactly normalise allegory, in many ways the least “cool” of tropes, after some three centuries of disuse. It demanded a steady head from its translators – a steadier head than it received from some commentators and national governments – , and it might be worth considering in what way a dominant-norm training would have influenced Rushdie’s first translators both in the translation of these tropes, and in dealing with more culture-specific issues in the text: what sort of constraints it might have imposed, to the detriment of the subversive agenda of the originals. Some implications of a constrained translation reading are clear from the continuation of the passage:

On the day [Gibreel] was discharged from hospital [...] he got out of the limousine at the Taj hotel and [...] went directly into the great dining-room [...] and loaded his plate with all of it, the pork sausages from Wiltshire [...] and the rashers of bacon from godknowswhere; with the gammon steaks of his unbelief and the pig’s trotters of secularism. [...] [he] began to eat as fast as possible, stuffing the dead pigs into his face so rapidly that bacon rashers hung out of the sides of his mouth [...] On that day of metamorphosis [...] his recovery began. And to prove to himself the non-existence of God, he now stood in the dining-room of the city’s most famous hotel, with pigs falling out of his face.

The pigs, we understand, are in the mouth of an apostate, enacting his apostasy, and all the ideological and metaphysical horror Gibreel feels is translated into the final, grotesque, Boschian image. There is a careful progression from referential, metonymic details – “pork sausages”, etc. – to metaphorical – the “gammon steaks of his unbelief” – ; this acts as internal normalising which partly prepares us for the “stuffing ... dead pigs”, further naturalised by both the “stuffing” pun (as in pork stuffing) and the “stuff your face” colloquialism. Then a quick Monty Python swap of dead pig for live, or pig of unspecified ontological status, and *les jeux sont faits*: “And so he stood there ... with pigs falling out of his face.” The apostasy is double: from a Catholic perspective

what he has also put into his face is a skewed version of the eucharist, the wafer which transubstantiates into the body of Christ, as the rasher re-transubstantiates into the body of pig.

This is a delicate, dangerous image to carry into a new system, and it presents issues which go far beyond the textual – all issues which would have to be discussed in translator-training. But it puts the clearest possible argument for resistancy and linguistic fundamentalism – telling it as it is: and with all the questions “as it is” immediately begs, there has to be a moment when we ask our inner Derrida: “what is it about ‘original’ that you don’t understand?”. What theory of transnationalism or Jamesonian new post-modern international culture requires us to hesitate here? It can’t be part of our brief¹⁴ to remove the ideology from a man’s mouth because we happen to be squeamish about his signifiers: a mouth is a face is a limb is a fin.

Hermans’ position on the question of “original” in translation is a beguiling one, and sends us into an elegant *mise-en-abîme* of hermeneutics, narrative voice, and the subject-position of the translator, which could be summarised as “fear translators bearing gifts of neutrality and equivalence”; the lady protests too much who says she is nowhere to be found in her translation. “We construe translation as a form of delegated speech, a kind of speaking by proxy [presuming that] only the translator who operates with self-effacing discretion can be trusted not to violate the original. [... But] the norms concept is there to remind us [...] that [this] is an illusion, a supreme fiction. We all know that a translation cannot coincide with its source”;¹⁵ or, as he put it in the abstract of his paper “How to read translations?” given at the 2009 IATIS conference, “while reported [delegated] speech is primarily mimetic, its mimesis is never pure. It leaves a diegetic margin which permits translators to speak in their own names, however indirectly.”¹⁶

A fair objection might be that it is one thing to acknowledge that language transfer contains this margin, and another to set out to create it, in deference to different target norms; but it is too necessary a statement to quibble with, not least for those of us who bear the white translator’s burden of a language which has imposed its “own name” in too many countries, and is “compromised by its own history and status”.¹⁷ Here are eggshells to be trodden on aplenty (and out of cowardice or courtesy alone it is worth remembering that the more scrupulously the target tries to calque the source, the more the source can be held responsible for its own statement, and the lighter the burden; the more refracted the translation on the other hand, the more *mea* the *culpa*). For a variety of reasons, we all have semantic/hermeneutic/ideological blood on our hands, as it were: at best, we’re “telling it as we think it is”, placing as many anti-leakage controls as we possibly can by replacing like with like wherever possible. There remains, in any case, a Source with which we can’t coincide but surely shouldn’t collide: yet norms theory’s vocabulary of manipulation,

¹⁴ Unless of course we endorse the idea of Lefevere’s “refraction”, translating or rewriting according to a specific ideological agenda (André Lefevere in Theo Hermans, *Translation in Systems*, p.126).

¹⁵ Hermans in Schäffner, *Translation and Norms*, p. 62

¹⁶ Conference Abstracts of 3rd Conference of the International Association for Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS), Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, 7–10 July 2009.

forcing, refracting, containing, and meshing in conditions of power seems not to bode well for intertextual pacifism.

If this is simply a description of dominant translation practice, rather than a plan of action, then it is ideologically necessary to provide the counterweight of norm-departure “norms” and alternative practices;¹⁸ the idea of “polemical translations”;¹⁹ Holmes’s “mimetic form”,²⁰ where the TT calques the forms of the ST as closely as possible (and which finds one of its extremes in the Zukovskys’ phonetic translations); Venuti’s (Berman-influenced) “foreignised” translations, and their ancestor, Schleiermacher’s, “alienated” ones: otherwise our accounts of “descriptive” systems will be as biased and collusive as reporting by “embedded” journalists covering only selected lines of engagement, to be written up and delivered as the dominant and victorious strategy. Fear norms theorists bearing gifts of pure description, we could add then, since:

As long as there is such a thing as appropriate vs. inappropriate behaviour (according to an underlying set of agreements), there will be a need for performance instructions as well. In a way [...] norms may be seen as part of Swidler’s “tool kit”: while they may not be “strategies of action” in themselves, they certainly give rise – and lend justification – to such strategies.²¹

Used diachronically, norms-awareness extrapolates patterns, tendencies and “turns” and, in showing the roads not taken, offers feasibility studies for future alternatives; applied deterministically they can become target-textual engineering, tantamount to strait-jacketing a text into the acceptability norm dominant in a particular culture’s polysystem, and averting any possible clash of civilisation for the Target readership by translating alterity into the form we ourselves endorse. One wo/man’s street-wise internationalism is another’s political intolerance, promoting precisely the cultural hegemony it ostensibly deplors and applying a protectionist nationalism to translate the foreign into the dominant values of the target community. “Translation should be made to respond to the demands of a culture”, Mary Snell-Hornby writes,²² though it could be Bush or Rumsfeld, and norms-theory vocabulary of “response prediction”, “containment”, and “the foreclosure of options” has scary connotations of preparatory linguistic air-strikes and regime-change of a source culture which had originally had its own “demands”. And “containment”: isn’t that the word Niranjani constantly uses when she criticises translation as exploiting the discourse of colonisation through strategies of containment?²³ Isn’t that shooting down Art and his “uncontained” language to make him talk “just like folks”? To allow myself a little post 9/11 hyperbole, to forcibly remove a text from its own territory and transport it to a culturally unknown

¹⁷ Hermans, Introduction to *Translating Others* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2006), p.1.

¹⁸ Cf. Hatim and Mason’s stress on norm-departure, mentioned in Schäffner, p. 4.

¹⁹ In Schäffner, p. 21.

²⁰ In Anthony Pym, *Exploring Translation Theory* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 96.

²¹ Toury in Schäffner, p. 15.

²² In Lefevere (ed.), *Translation/History/Culture A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 6.

²³ For example, in Lefevere, p. 21.

destination for the purposes of extracting data which suits our *own* agenda could be seen as not translation but extraordinary rendition. And that, we hope, we have now put behind us.

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Translating Hybridity: the Curious Case of the First Kanak Novel (Déwé Gorodé's *L'épave*)

RAYLENE RAMSAY AND DEBORAH WALKER

This article is a collaborative work, in which we reflect on issues that emerged from our co-translation of Déwé Gorodé's 2005 novel *L'épave/The Wreck*. The project arose partly from our collective reactions to and reflections on the interventions of editors and outside readers. It also follows on from Deborah Walker's work on domestication vs foreignisation and the issues surrounding the translation of cultural terms in indigenous literatures.¹

A Culturally Specific Novel

L'épave is itself a fascinating if uneven and in some ways difficult work. This first Kanak novel, by independence activist, prominent local political figure and writer, Déwé Gorodé, is barely even a novel in the conventional Western sense of the word. It is complex, plurivocal, and unclassifiably hybrid, defying attempts to categorise it in terms of genre or thematics and to summarise it in the usual terms of plot and characterisation. Constantly shifting stylistically and generically, its prose narrative is interspersed with didactic passages, some quite lengthy quotes from both the Koran and the Bible, reinterpretations of texts from Kanak "orature" (oral literature), and original pieces of poetry, rap poetry, even graffiti. As in oral tradition, stories or elements of story are woven together, not unlike the pieces of shell and flying fox fur, the beads or seeds that make traditional *monnaie*. Although it is impossible to read this novel in realist terms, it is not magic realism and although its cyclic characters can only be fully grasped through a symbolic reading, each represents a particular voice or positionality as well as sometimes doubling the voice of the narrator and indeed the author. Gorodé's novel has been seen as "dangerous" both by the French political establishment and by Kanak militants.

Synopsis

Against a backdrop of political protest, two young Kanak protagonists, Tom and Léna, begin a romantic relationship. An old upturned wreck on a beach, not far from the centre of Nouméa, is the scene of their initial lovemaking. Léna has just lost her mother and is unsure whether she is ready for a relationship. Moreover, she is haunted by dark childhood memories that both trouble and deepen her growing passion for the young Tom, who until now has experienced nothing beyond fleeting sexual encounters with women. The young couple will cross paths with a series of other characters, each with their personal grief and

¹ Deborah Walker, "Voice Image Text", in Raylene Ramsay (ed.), *Negotiating Identities in Francophone and Anglophone Pacific Literatures* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2010, forthcoming).

often dark secrets. The rap poetess, Lila, victim of incestuous child sexual abuse back in the *tribu*, will be raped and murdered. Suspicions fall on Old Tom, the tramp who inhabits the wreck on the beach. Is he benign sage or threatening ogre? Perhaps a mixture of the two? Then we meet Léna's double, Old Léna, herself the sexual victim of a perverse older uncle, who eventually seeks solace in the arms of another woman, Eva, temporarily escaping with her into the "Paradise of Women". Young Tom and Young Léna will learn, like so many others before them, that passion can be as much a prison as a paradise. The final chapter ends ambiguously, with elements of poetic justice and suggestions of hope juxtaposed with doubt. The closing sentence leaves the reader unsure as to whether the cycles of abuse that pervade the novel have been finally arrested.

Hybrid Reading Frames

The novel raises the dual questions for the translator of cultural specificity and readership. One Kanak reader is inscribed within the text: this is Lila, *la conteuse aux pieds nus*/the "bare-foot Bardessa", the re-teller of stories from oral tradition, who observes that although she may be only a street girl, she is perfectly capable of understanding and supporting the work done by her educated activist "sista". Other implied readers are those targeted by the text's detailed ethnographic descriptions – of a wedding and a *bougna*,² for example – or indeed, those seeking new and truer cultural understandings of both the richness and the acute problems of contemporary Kanak society. These readers would be largely European, Metropolitan French. There are also a number of factors, both intra and extra-textual, that suggest Gorodé was also reaching out – through an eventual translation – to an Anglophone indigenous Pacific audience. More generally, the reader of the novel is called upon to solve the puzzles posed at the text's primary level, that of the detective story. The question of "who's who" relates in the first instance to who killed Lila or again to the psychological mystery/drama driving the plot. This is most immediately young Léna's slow coming to awareness of the secret of the childhood rape she has repressed. Léna's feeling of searching for things buried somewhere deep within her consciousness, "like the excitement of a detective sensing he's about to uncover the clue that will open the gates of truth", is, however, also a programme for both writer and reader, not to mention, of course, the translator. "Naked, cruel, indecent – whatever. I must have the truth. And I will track it down until it blows up in my face" ("Nue, cruelle ou indécente, il me la faut, la vérité! Et je la traquerai jusqu'à ce qu'elle m'explose en pleine figure").³ Gorodé's text thus also functions on a self-reflexive level, self-consciously modelling and commenting on the writing and reading processes required as on the purposes of her cultural practice.

One explicit European frame for a reading of the complexities and apparent illogicality of Gorodé's modern story of the power of the Ogre is the European fairytale. Old Tom, the incestuous devourer of his own children, incorporates the animal magnetism of the legendary figure of the animal fiancé,

² Foods moistened with coconut milk, wrapped in banana leaves and cooked in a traditional earth oven.

the Beast. However, whereas (Hé)Léna follows Eva into the primeval garden (“the paradise of women”) as into the “new Eden”, and goes into the mangrove behind Éva “as into an enchanted forest where her fairy godmother would wash away the bad memories of her past, and sluice them far away on the tide”, the fairy story as retold by the Kanak woman writer points most particularly to the shadows, to the underbelly of her society, to the literal source of the tale of the Cannibal Ogre. “For the stories of Prince Charming, of fairies and witches are only make-believe. At best, they end up with a little grandfatherly groping, at the worst, a little fatherly rape. Dads and granddads, they’re the true sorcerers and ogres of the fairy stories” (“Car les histoires de prince charmant, de fées et de sorcières ne sont que des contes à dormir debout avec au bout au mieux les attouchements du pépé et au pire le viol du papa. Les voilà les vrais sorciers et autres ogres du conte!”)⁴

Foreignisation vs Domestication

The very hybridity of these frames of speaking and reading return us to the question of cultural specificity and the issue of foreignisation vs domestication. The extent to which the translator should foreground or erase the foreignness, cultural specificity and difference of the ST (Source Text), has been at the centre of debates in literary translation studies for the last twenty years. Throughout the 1990s, Translation Theory focussed increasingly on the perceived colonising consequences of domestication, particularly when dealing with indigenous texts or texts whose subject matter involves depictions of, and lexical items and linguistic features belonging to or derived from, indigenous cultures. Domestication of the text, eliminating and/or concealing the uniquely foreign linguistic, cultural and social conditions of the original in order to create the illusion of transparency for the TA (Target Audience), came to be equated with Venuti’s “ethnocentric violence of translation”.

Running counter to the foreignisation trend is the central requirement for TT (Target Text) intelligibility, which must often come to terms with an inevitable degree of TA ethnocentric bias. Theorists such as George Steiner⁵ therefore see good translation practice as a perpetual balancing act, aiming at successfully negotiating the domestication-foreignisation divide or continuum.

In the 1990s, Venuti’s foreignising paradigm dominated translation theory, particularly in terms of post-colonial texts. Heavily influenced by French post-structuralist and deconstructionist theory,⁶ Venuti’s resistant, abusive, foreignising approach is one that more or less equates a foregrounding of the foreign with respect for the otherness of the source text and culture.⁷ The

³ Déwé Gorodé, *L’épave* (Nouméa: Editions Madrépores, 2005), p.61.

⁴ Gorodé, *L’épave*, p.130.

⁵ George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, third edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁶ Venuti draws on André Lefevere, *Translating Literature. The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig* (Assen/Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977); Philip E. Lewis, *Vers la traduction abusive* (Paris: Galilée, 1981) and Antoine Berman, “La traduction et la lettre, ou l’auberge du lointain”, in *Les Tours de Babel: Essais sur la traduction* (Mauvezin: Trans-Europ-Repress 1985).

⁷ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge

influence of Venuti and other post-colonial theorists on culturally sensitive translators eager to recognise and reproduce the writing back of often resistant indigenous source texts resulted in a reluctance to situate translations at the domestication or cultural transposition end of the continuum. Domesticating strategies came to be seen as the mark of a colonising universalising gaze that sought to level out and eradicate cultural difference, and with it the identity of indigenous groups.

Since the late 1990s, however, and increasingly since the turn of the millennium, Venuti's foreignisation approach has come under considerable fire. While it is generally more respectful of the indigenous ST culture to foreignise by retaining culturally specific terms, it has been pointed out that such respect does not necessarily require or result from a rigid foreignising approach – in fact, quite the opposite can be the case.⁸ Far from empowering marginalised cultures, foreignisation can have the opposite effect of exoticising them in a patronising and/or elitist manner. Excessive, uncritical foreignising can also result in an obscure and overly literal TT, a series of stilted, clumsy calques that can often distort meaning, as we will see, and which do no justice at all to the indigenous author, his or her text and culture. As Tymoczko and Gentzler remind us: “No single translation strategy can be associated with the exercise of oppression or the struggle for resistance: no single strategy is *the* strategy of power.”⁹ In terms of translating New Caledonian texts in general and *L'épave* in particular, nowhere is this clearer than in the translation of the French term *la case*, to which we now turn.

Foreignisation vs Domestication and the Case of *La Case*

One difficulty in using a fully foreignising approach to translate central Kanak terms is precisely that, in the absence of a common indigenous language (Kanak culture comprises some twenty-eight regional languages), most now circulate in the language of the colonizing Other, i.e. in French. *La case* for the traditional dwelling is thus by no means an exception. Other equally important French terms are *la tribu* for the Kanak village or customary lands, *la pirogue* for the traditional outrigger canoe and *la coutume* for the exchange of customary gifts and custom in general as protocol/*kawa* or *tikanga*.

In the following section, we will discuss in some detail the translation problems, strategies and choices in translating *la case*. These are summarised

1995) and *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London: Routledge 1998).

⁸ See, for example, Anthony Pym, “Venuti's Visibility”, *Target*, 8 (1996), 165–177; Gillian Lane-Mercier, “Translating the Untranslatable: The Translator's Aesthetic, Ideological and Political Responsibility”, *Target*, 9 (1997), 43–68; Maria Tymoczko, “Translation and Political Engagement: Activism, Social Change and the Role of Translation in Geopolitical Shifts”, *The Translator*, 6:1 (2000), 23–47; Edwin Gentzler, “Translation, Poststructuralism, and Power”, in Tymoczko & Gentzler (eds.), *Translation and Power* (Amherst & Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), pp. 195–218; Mary Snell-Hornby, *Turns of Translation Studies: New Paradigms or Shifting Viewpoints?* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2006), pp. 145–148; Ovidio Carbonell i Cortés, “Can the Other Speak? Metonymic (Re)creations of the Other in Translation”, in Raoul Granqvist (ed.), *Writing Back in/and Translation* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 55–74.

⁹ Tymoczko & Gentzler (eds), xx.

in table form in Appendix I, together with other key indigenous terms and linguistic features of Gorodé's text.

La case variably designates the thatched house, the home or hearth, the ceremonial and spiritual centre of Kanak culture memorialized, for example, in the *cases ouvertes* of Renzo Piano's Centre Culturel Jean-Marie Tjibaou. For a young Kanak man, the collective building of his own *case* (narrated in ethnographic detail, on page 40 of *L'épave*) constitutes a rite of passage that today would symbolise a choice to (re)turn to Custom. Each linguistic region has its specific term and architectural form, but generally speaking, most are round buildings constructed out of beaten earth with a low entrance that forces anyone entering to bow down in respect for the "master of the place"¹⁰ and high cone-shaped thatch roof, generally topped by a ceremonial carving or *flèche faïtière*.

In rendering *la case* [ka:z], transfer is not possible without italics due to pronunciation issues and homonymic confusion with the English. Even with italics, *la case* more often than not, reads somewhat oddly when inserted into an English text. The term for the chiefly or "great" house *la grande case* is an exception due to the addition of the adjective. In our translation, we opted to transfer *la grande case* in italics, with a footnoted gloss added to the first mention.¹¹

For the "ordinary" *case*, we would have liked to use a transliteration, coining a neologism, *kaze*, in English, in order to facilitate TA pronunciation. However this solution was rejected due to the fact that the word *kaze* exists in Kanak languages from the Loyalty Islands, with (so we are told) the meaning of an evil spell.

A further, compounding problem in attempting to render *la case* in English, lies in the fact that the French term literally signifies a primitive or rudimentary dwelling: a hut. English Thesaurus searches for hut give: shed, shack, lean-to, cabin, shelter, shanty – none of which give an accurate picture of the architectural design and cultural signification which the originally pejorative French term has come to signify in the Kanak context. A common synonym for *case* in French is *cabane*, used in New Caledonia (and by Gorodé) to signify several types of construction: variously a shanty, cabin, hut or shed. Thus, in translating *L'épave*, we reserved the use of hut for *cabane*.¹²

Gorodé has pointed out to us that *la case* is a mistranslation: the various indigenous words that describe traditional Kanak dwellings are the equivalent, not of *la case* as hut, but simply, and unsurprisingly, "house", sometimes also "container". Therefore, the "best" translation in the sense of best rendering the meaning of the signifier to the STA (Source Text Audience) – is a thorough

¹⁰ This point is made explicitly in Weniko Ihage's contemporary fable "L'oiseau migrateur" ("The Migratory Bird"), in Weniko Ihage & Déwé Gorodé, *Le Vol de la Parole* (Nouméa: Edipop, 2002).

¹¹ Gorodé, *L'épave*, p.12.

¹² In our earlier translation of Gorodé's poetry (Déwé Gorodé, *Sharing as Custom: A Bilingual Anthology*, trans. and ed. Ralene Ramsay & Deborah Walker [ANU Canberra: Pandanus Press, 2004]), seeking to avoid domestication, we sometimes resorted to "hut" for *la case*. This is a choice we deeply regret and would hope to rectify in a subsequent edition.

domestication. In contexts where the naturalising “house” would confuse the TA as to the architectural design and erase the cultural specificity of the dwelling in question, we have used *thatch-house* or, in one case, *thatched-case* as a more communicative equivalent.¹³ However, in most cases, early in the translation, in Chapter 2, for example, where the type of dwelling is made explicit by the text itself, we have chosen to translate *la case* simply as “house”. Our task was facilitated in many cases since the term *la case* is often followed by an explicative: *la case des femmes* = the women’s house; *la case de la cuisine* = the cooking house; *la case de mon grand-père* = my grandfather’s house.¹⁴ In subsequent chapters we have most often transferred *la case* using italics.

Our example confirms recent theoretical shifts away from an uncritical application of foreignising strategies, clearly illustrating that there can be no absolute fixed rule in terms of the domestication/foreignisation continuum. No strategy, no single point on the continuum, is intrinsically better or worse, more or less faithful to the ST than another. In the case of *la case*, we eliminated the pejorative literal equivalent: “hut”. In the case of *la tribu*, in the early chapters (1-4) we opted for either transfer or calque (“tribe”), eliminating more communicative glosses (Kanak/tribal village; customary lands; local people) as inappropriate for text and dialogue “spoken” from an insider cultural perspective.¹⁵

TA ethnocentric bias, “abusive fidelity”, reappropriation

If theory is to fuel rather than hinder best practice, it must be constantly mindful of the highly context-specific nature of translation practice. The translator’s aim will be to respect and render the otherness of the ST, respecting its tone and register while simultaneously ensuring comprehensibility for the TA. This process will necessarily entail varying levels of domestication, in order to recognise the inevitability of TA ethnocentric bias. As Maria Tymoczko’s recent work suggests,¹⁶ the latter cannot be totally eliminated due to hardwired neurological mechanisms: the brain processes new information by attempting to form associations with what is already familiar and in adulthood, its forward-feed mechanisms (the setting up of expectations for the future based on experiences in the past) make it reluctant to accept extreme novelty and difference. We would thus argue that a degree of familiarisation through domestication is a necessary pre-condition for the successful negotiation of difference.

¹³ We prefer “thatch-house” to the commonly used Pacific “round-house”, since the geometrically precise adjective would not work for all Kanak *cases*, some of which are rectangular.

¹⁴ Thus Gorodé’s earlier short story entitled *La case* is best rendered as *My Grandfather’s House* (as in Raylene Ramsay (ed.), *Nights of Storytelling: A Cultural History of Kanaky, New Caledonia* [Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 2010, forthcoming]).

¹⁵ Subsequently, once we considered the reader would be familiar with the “original” *tribu*, we felt confident in dropping the *calque*.

¹⁶ Maria Tymoczko, “Neurophysiology and Translation: Hardwired Dimensions of Consilience and Conflict in Cultural Translation” (Conference paper: IATIS 3rd Conference, *Mediation and Conflict: Translation and Culture in a Global Context*, Melbourne, 7–10th July, 2009).

Returning briefly to Venuti's (via Lewis) concept of "abusive fidelity", one notes that its foreignising bias also incorporates a deconstructive, self-reflexive, dimension that gives greater visibility and power to the translator. Drawing inspiration from Barthes' *Death of the Author*,¹⁷ translation as consciously acknowledged rewriting can easily cross the invisible and oft contested line between translation and adaptation. While this is perhaps justifiable in the context of historical Western works (e.g. Shakespeare, Virgil, Homer), we are sceptical as to the merits of overly self conscious and/or "free" translation approaches that seek to re-appropriate the indigenous source text for the benefit of the perceived TA and greater glory of the translator/editor.

For the essential problem of translation licence as poetic licence, the tension between fidelity and invention, is particularly acute when dealing with indigenous literature, be it poetry or prose. Whether embodied by an individual or not, the indigenous author is not singular: behind him or her there stands a larger community, if not an entire people. And more often than not, a people whose voice has been constantly silenced, deformed, misappropriated by dominant colonial forces. For these reasons, we argue, a certain contemporary tendency towards translation as re-invention runs the risk of silencing the voice of the indigenous author and resulting in a colonising misappropriation of the text.

In the present case of *L'épave*, after consciously reining in our own editorial instincts, we had to deal with attempts by a number of outside readers and editors to help us clarify and smooth, i.e. "clean up", i.e. "whiten" and domesticate Déwé Gorodé's text.

The Editorial Process: Misreading Hybridity

Whether dealing with culturally specific terms or original authorial metaphor, in many cases, the translator need only stay close to Gorodé's own text, which is often at pains to explain the connotations or symbolism of a material element or sign. One of the paradoxes of Déwé's writing praxis is that despite the fact that her work constitutes a *parti pris* of rootedness, immersion, in a Kanak view of the world, she also engages with the Western reader in a sometimes surprisingly didactic manner.

This raises the question of the degree of insider cultural knowledge necessary to successfully translate the full significance of material symbols and of symbolic networks such as the customary pathways of matrimonial alliances, or the foundational character of intricately woven Kanak genealogies, for example. The decision to "foreignise" or to "domesticate" is further complicated by the recognition of the very real problems of reading that Gorodé's deliberately "savage" text poses for readers outside New Caledonia, including Metropolitan French.

The response of the editor and "expert" readers of the Pacific press ISP, with which we had a contract to publish before the Press was suddenly disbanded in 2009, brought home fully the significant issue of the text's receivability or

¹⁷ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", in *Image Music Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

“readerliness” and the implicit expectations of what an emerging indigenous Pacific novel should be. These turned out to be much more constraining and conventional than we had anticipated.

As the editor writes: “[D]o you think Déwé would be prepared to look again at the work in the light of the [reviewers’] comments and take some of them on board? Alternatively, would she be prepared to allow me to work on the manuscript as it now stands, and offer a revised version for her consideration? I do believe that the work would be better received by an English-speaking audience if the points raised were considered. What do you think?” The assumption by the ISP editor that this first Kanak novel, translated from French to English, should be “worked on” in order to be “better received by an English-speaking audience” (domesticated in a radical way, indeed partially re-written) raised a number of questions for us both, as translators of a stylistically very original text whose interest lies precisely in its committed positioning inside Kanak culture and outside any evident Western canon.

Between the Noble and the Ignoble Savage

As scholars have now well demonstrated, the Pacific long served as Europe’s “Other”, allowing Europe to understand what it was in relation to what it was not and also providing a tool for the Enlightenment thinkers to critique the archaic, irrational and unjust aspects of French society. Gorodé’s text, in which both the myths of the noble and the dark (romantic) savage meet and mix, gives the reader no such clear moral purchase. Given the writer’s deconstruction of the politically correct, noble, eco-savage, it is not surprising that the editor’s preference for the novel’s title was for the passive past participle “Wrecked”, which would refer explicitly to the situation of the characters, rather than to the more literal, polysemous, and intertextual image of “The Wreck” that has been woven through New Caledonian literature since Jean Mariotti’s foundational “colonial” novel, *A Bord de L’Incertaine*.¹⁸ (This text figures a mysterious wrecked sailing ship, object of mystery and utopian desire but also of disillusionment for the young protagonist growing up in small town in rural New Caledonia.)

Between European and Kanak Structures

The readers’ reports reveal another evident gap between *L’épave*’s textual games with the French language and its commonplaces – that, we would argue, bear similarities to the experimental work of Queneau or even of Nathalie Sarraute – and their own horizons of expectation. The narrative structure based on multiple voices, the many life-stories *en abyme* within Léna’s story, told by the street-girl Lila, or by Eva, or by Old Tom, or again the tales from oral tradition adapted to comment on the present situation of women through Lila’s role as modern bard or story-teller, the inserted poems, rap-songs, young people’s “texting”/love-writing on the leaves of the aloe tree weave a complex tissue in a very particular space-time. As Witi Ihimaera’s novel, *The Matriarch*, describes this: “At the same time as the spiral is going out, it is returning. At the same time as it is going forward, it is going back.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Jean Mariotti, *A Bord de l’Incertaine* (Paris: Stock, 1942).

In the light of the readers' comments, it seems that the text's failure to enact an anti-colonial or feminist allegory or to construct a reality of childhood "abuse" that is evidently autobiographical, its failure, in short, to correspond to recognisable conventional categories creates a problem for publication/readership. So too does the novel's perceived lack of a moral message or of a happy ending (see Appendix II).

In fact, for many readers, knowing "who's who", in the text's complex, largely symbolic genealogies, accepting that four generations of women share the same name and many of the same characteristics, or admitting the power of the resurgence of layers of the past within the present, repeating patterns over generations, is not self-evident. And neither the courageous and complex message carried in the novel's critique of gender power-relations and sexual violence against young girls over generations (seen by one reader "as dreary, empty, and despairing") nor the play with words, with dialogue, with changing registers and genre ("a lengthy rap song that is difficult to follow, endless graffiti; and poetry"), fit within the horizon of expectation of the two so-called "expert" but clearly conventional readers. What is implicit in their critique is the assumption that the indigenous novel must fit pre-existing categories of Western understanding, literary genres and conventions to be readable – the traditional realist categories of believable, psychologically coherent, individually distinct characters who evolve within a continuous and coherent story. There is an expectation of something resembling a political allegory: thus one reader curiously sees Old Tom, as necessarily representing oppression by the "*new conquering masters*" (*sic*). It is notable that the most culturally different aspects of the novel, the power of *mana* for evil or to enslave others, of sorcery, or revenge are simply not mentioned.

This issue of general "readability" is one the editor would like the translators to address. In contrast to this desire to position Gorodé's messages clearly, the work itself is structured around the perversely hybrid, metamorphosing leitmotif of the wrecked canoe linked to the enigmatic fisherman, Old Tom

Translating Perversity

When her mother took her to Nouméa for the first time, at the age of eight, Déwé asked her about the identity of the statue of Colonel Gally Passebosc, killed putting down the 1878 Kanak revolt. Her mother, the daughter remembers, told her that it was a monument to Ataï, the Kanak chief who had led the rebellion. And if Déwé herself writes fiction to rehabilitate the place of the Kanak in their own history, it is also because "the political discourse that I myself used, colonisers – colonised, does not account for the perversity and ambiguity of the real relationship between the colonisers and the colonised in the past and in the present".²⁰ Perversity here is somewhat analogous to Homi Bhabha's "sly civility", the re-appropriation and redefinition of the dominant culture within the terms of the subaltern culture, a redefinition we would argue

¹⁹ *Witi Ihimaera, The Matriarch* (Auckland: Reed, 1986), p. 149.

²⁰ Blandine Stefanson, "Entretien avec Déwé Gorodé", *Notre Librairie, Revue des Littératures du Sud*, 134 (1998), 75–86.

to be characteristic of Gorodé's particular hybridity. Perversity again is what characterises her representations of a Kanak culture that, in her own words, is being presented (and not only to tourists) as "too clean" – deeply spiritual, non-physical, and unified.

There is, then, no pure origin or homogeneous noble selfhood, no possible full 'return' to some lost Golden Age: Gorodé's Old Tom, the ancestor, the cannibal ogre who devours his children, his son or avatar, the tribe's Orator and customary uncle, who molest little girls and are sexually pursued by them as older women re-write the myths of the noble savage as of the dark savage. Alongside the *parti pris* of a Kanak view of the world, the denunciation of the power of the maternal uncles, of rape and incest, is accompanied by the attempt to rewrite the dynamics of power in gender relations. The text explores the limits and possibilities of the liberation of women's bodies both from the Puritanical constraints imposed by the Church and from ancient forms of control by sexual "sorcery".

Might the ordinary readers' difficulties with this perversely hybrid text persuade us to revisit our translation? We had attempted to respect the novel's various voices and disparate styles – its movement without transition from smooth literary narrative to jagged, ungrammatical or colloquial speech. Should we now go back and distinguish systematically and clearly between Léna as the Ogress (Héléna's grandmother), Héléna/Old Léna, Young Léna, and Little Léna, glossing them into their respective generations and relationships, and making explicit hidden/possibly incestuous family relations? Should we effect some spatial marking of the transitions between main and embedded stories? Should we make the dialogue more "realistic" rather than dialogic? Reduce "perversity" to readability? On one level, the novel offers a degree of poetic justice and swift closure: the repressed secret of Léna's childhood rape is revealed to her and both her tormentor and his female accomplice (Old Léna) meet their deaths. However, there is also ambiguity: Little Tom and Little Léna, who in their turn are "learning to love" on the black stone of the ancestral canoe are possibly the grandson and granddaughter of the Orator, that is, descendants of Old Tom perpetuating age-old behaviour.

Should we heed the advice of our expert readers and slightly rephrase the last two lines, rendering the prospect for change explicit and making the end both a returning and a going forward in a love that is non-coercive rather than a suspected repetition of the familial pattern of incest? If form is meaning, then the answer must clearly be a resounding negative. Altering the opacity and pirouetting, the "now you see me, now you don't"²¹ positioning of the woman author addressing a taboo socio-political problem (the power of the maternal uncles/fathers to whom young girls can refuse nothing) within a culture to which she is also intensely committed, altering the attempt of the text to both explore and conceal the complex depths of its own questions would amount to unacceptably altering crucial elements of the textual message, replacing the indigenous authorial voice by a Western editorial one.

Similarly most of the "corrections" made to the submitted translation by the ISP editor or our own experienced English language editor who helped us

²¹ Gorodé, *L'épave*, p. 58.

in proofreading the Gallicisms out of the English, functioned in the direction of smoothing out a number of authorial idiosyncrasies (long sentences interspersed with fragments, mixed tense narration, original metaphors, abrupt changes in register) to produce a fluent but conventional literary narrative in a more uniform literary register. Readers also questioned the novel's unconventional use of tense or rhythm in French, which Gorodé draws from the tense patterns and registers used in the literary genres of Paicî, her first language. Notable is the present historic of Kanak "orature", as opposed to the "Once upon a time" past historic tense of Western story-telling traditions. As Déwé herself has pointed out:

You begin your stories with "once upon a time". In the formula used in my language to begin stories you cannot use the past tense. For us, when a story is being told, history is brought into the present. As if you enter a circle: you speak of the character, like in the theatre, and you are there together in the circle.²²

Where Gorodé's text is somewhat fragmented, the edits add commas and "and" to her lists, change the order and rewrite to create conventional literary register. The present is changed to the past. Past tense narration is regularised. Original metaphors are made more standard and the register often moves higher or becomes less spoken. We rejected the quasi-totality of these "improvements" which we saw as inappropriately naturalising and "whitening" Déwé's work.²³

Conclusion: The Role of the Translator

In translating *L'épave*, we saw our role as cultural mediators as including an ethical call to respect and defend, where necessary, the integrity of text and author from re-appropriation by Western editorial sources. But in order to be defenders of the ST and its author, we first had to be "expert" readers, which in turn, required a considerable degree of cultural knowledge and sensitivity. Our own experience of living in New Caledonia, together with the opportunity to work with the author,²⁴ facilitated our task greatly. For the translator's art, to state the obvious, involves first and foremost, the ability to recognize the multiplicity of ST variables: ST genre, specific valence and connotation of the ST term at the level of sentence, text and work; prosodic factors, rhythm and voice and to calibrate their receivability for representative sections of the target audience(s). Only then it is possible to choose wisely between potential TT terms and renderings, eliminating those that are inappropriate and opting for the best available solution in terms of the above variables, case by case, without being swayed by theoretical or ideological prejudice. As has been our experience in translating other colonial and post-colonial Caledonian literary texts, achieving balance in Steiner's sense of the word, negotiating the fine line of the foreignisation/domestication continuum, respecting both indigenous author and target audience, is much more like a slalom course (which has the

²² Stefanson, 'Entretien avec Déwé Gorodé', p. 84.

²³ In Chapter one, for example, we retained a dozen or so suggested edits out of around one hundred.

²⁴ We met with Déwé on four different occasions, individually, for work sessions that lasted three to four hours.

translator(s) constantly zig-zagging, often at breakneck speed, from one end of the continuum to the other) than a safe journey down a politically correct middle of the road, or indeed a high wire tight-rope act above the Scylla and Charybdis of foreignisation and domestication. Translating such an uncompromisingly hybrid post-colonial text as *L'épave* demands an equally uncompromising yet hybrid translation approach.

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Appendix 1

The Foreignisation/Domestication (F/D) Continuum

Exoticism/Transfer With italics; with or without gloss; footnote	Cultural Borrowing/ Transliteration	Calque / Literal translation	Communicative translation	Cultural Transplantation / Naturalisation	
				Maori/Pasifika + M/P English	Standard NZ English
Kanak ST terms, eg. Popwaale;			White / European	Pakeha/pakehi	Pakeha/ White/European
Kanak ST terms, eg adii			Traditional (Kanak) Money		
Kanak formal features: Tense usage; Use of deictic; Imagery Authorial style: genre + register mixing; fragments					
Original metaphor					
Local French, Slang & Colloquialisms, eg <i>Poken</i>					Local French, Slang & Colloquialisms
Kanak (voice) Slang & Colloquialisms eg. <i>Aauu!</i>				Kanak (voice) Slang & Colloquialisms	
la case /ka:z/	"kaze"	hut	thatched roof hut / house; traditional house; round-house thatch house x 1 / thatched case x 1	whare/fare	house, home
la grande case		Great Hut / Big Hut	Chief's Hut; Chief's/Chiefly House	whare-miti	
la pirogue w'engâ /w ____ / (paici)	"wunga"		outrigger canoe	_____	canoe
la tribu		tribe	Kanak/tribal village; customary lands; local people		village, home
le clan		clan	extended family		one's people
patate douce kûmwâla (paici) p.40		sweet potato	sweet potato	kumara	kumara →sweet potato

Bold Font: translation choices/strategies adopted in translating *L'épave*. Strikethrough: inappropriate. Non bold: choices that might be appropriate for other texts.

Appendix 2

Elle l'observe lui aussi maintenant, l'orateur qui marche devant elle au bord de la falaise surplombant le trou aux ailerons, un lieu parfois infesté de requins. Un faux-pas et il glisse et s'agrippe à un bout de rocher. Il la supplie de lui tendre la main. Pour la première fois, elle lit la prière dans son regard. Pour la première fois, elle voit des larmes dans ses yeux. Et elle le reconnaît.

Tout le voile se déchire instantanément du fond de sa mémoire. Et elle revoit la scène du viol de son corps et de son enfance par l'orateur, alors adolescent, sous l'œil complice du pêcheur qui use et abuse d'elle comme d'une poupée sur la roche noire de *l'épave*.

Elle en oublie les ailerons qui tournent plus bas et se sauve en entendant un grand plouf derrière elle. Elle tombe nez à nez avec son homonyme qui lui crie déjà comme une accusation: « Où est-il? Où est-il? » Elle lui indique la mer sous la falaise où elle court, le cœur battant, comme à chacun de leur rendez-vous. Léna se retourne pour la voir sauter et entendre son hurlement se perdre dans les flots.

Sur la plage, elle retrouve les deux enfants venus avec leur grand-mère, Tom et Léna. Le petit Tom, le petit-fils de l'orateur. Et sa petite Léna. Avec les autres, ils y viendront souvent par la suite. Et une fin d'après-midi de leur adolescence, ils mettront un temps fou pour répondre à ses appels. Et à revenir du bosquet de l'épave de la grande pirogue où sur la pierre noire, ils apprennent à s'aimer.

(*L'épave*, pp. 166–167)

She observes him now, the orator, walking in front of her at the edge of the cliff looking over the shark hole, a spot sometimes indeed infested by sharks. He makes a false move and slips, grabbing hold of the edge of a rock. He begs her to pull him up. For the first time, she reads supplication in his face. For the first time, she sees tears in his eyes. And she recognises him.

The veil across the depths of her memory is suddenly torn aside. She sees once again the scene of the rape of her young child's body by the orator, an adolescent at the time, under the complicit watching eye of the fisherman, he too, using and abusing her like a doll on the black rock of the wreck.

Léna forgets about the sharks swimming around below and runs off to the sound of something heavy falling into the water behind her. She comes face to face with her namesake who calls out to her accusingly, 'Where is he? Where is he?' She points to the sea below the cliff and old Léna runs towards it, her heart beating as it does at every one of their rendezvous. Léna turns round just in time to see her jump and hear her scream die away in the waves.

On the beach, she finds the two children, Tom and Léna, who came down with their grandmother. Little Tom, the grandson of the orator and her own little Léna. They will come here often with the others. And one afternoon, when they are adolescents, they will take an age to answer her calls. They will take forever to return from the grove of the wreck of the great canoe. Where, on the black stone, they are learning to love.

Trans. Deborah Walker and Raylene Ramsay.

Interpreting Eloquence: When Words Matter as Much as Ideas

MARC ORLANDO

During the 2007 Auckland Writers' Festival, I had the privilege to interpret for Andrei Makine, the celebrated French writer of Russian origin, who had been invited to participate in two events, a general discussion with the public and, with two other writers, a panel discussion entitled *The Art of Translation*. Apart from the assignment itself, the particular interest I found in this task was that I had to interpret the words of a writer while he was being asked to reflect upon his work and the processes of creation, writing and translation. The purpose of this paper is to describe the insights I gained during this very practical interpreting experience. In particular, I wish to discuss the existence of a possible new facet in interpreting.

Makine is unique on the french literary scene, having won two major french literary prizes – the Prix Goncourt and the Prix Medicis – in the same year (1995) with the same novel, *Le Testament français*, despite the fact that french is his second language . He is a unique character too: his style, his personality, a tendency to avoid answering the questions asked, and sometimes a wish to travel with his audience in the unknown territory of creativity, are all elements – as one immediately realises on meeting him – that will render the task of the interpreter more complex, but also more exciting, than anticipated.

The work I had to perform on these two occasions revealed a new facet of the complex work of the interpreter, for I could not rely on the interpreting techniques I usually use. Reading my notes afterwards and reflecting on this special assignment, I came to the conclusion that interpreting for a writer – would it be true for any artist? – is different from the usual kind of work an interpreter does, as the work of a literary translator is different from the work of a technical or legal translator.

To discuss the possible existence of a new facet of the work of interpreters, it is useful to focus first on some aspects of literary translation and the role of literary translators. Translation means rewriting a text in another language with the aim of transferring its essence and function. The semantic transfer, which often goes beyond words and grammar, and the necessary cultural adaptation, results in a new text, which must be as stylistically faithful as possible to the original, but is independent of it. As Makine mentioned during the panel discussion, in relation to the concepts of loss and fidelity in translation, a translation is a limit, a threshold which generates a new text compatible with the target culture. A translation is thus an act of communication

in which meaning is both lost and generated. The act of translation is an act of re-creation.

It is often pointed out that the paradox of a translation is that it provides a new vision and can erase the difference, the particularity, of the original text and can itself be seen as being original. A different language entails a different vision of life. This is why I believe that literary translators bring a new and different vision to a text, a new identity among many possible others, and which depends of course on the sensibility and background of the translator. Literary translators know that a literary work can be translated, and re-translated many times, for the same reason that a play can be staged differently an infinite number of times: because there is no single and ultimate truth of the text.

But who and what are literary translators? Are they merely, as some have claimed, frustrated writers with expertise in language and using someone else's text to satisfy their own creative urges? Or would it be more appropriate to say that literary translators are talented creative writers, who are able to capture the soul and the life spirit of an author, to rewrite the source text making its stylistic and semantic transfer possible and to create a new literary text that crosses borders and time, and bridges different worlds creatively but realistically? Whatever the answer, it is indisputable that to meet the challenge of literary translation, and find a way to take the original text across borders, translators need more than linguistic skills: they also need literary skills, they need to be practised readers. As Gayatri Spivak has argued, translation is "the most intimate act of reading".¹ Above all, translators need to be creative, for the ability to play the role of go-between requires creativity.

Such a view of the role of the translator is generally limited to the translator of the written word. However, it is relevant to ask the same questions in relation to translators of the spoken word: who and what are they? What does their task consist of and how different is this task from that of the translator of a written work? Very often, during diplomatic interpreting or conference interpreting assignments, for example, interpreters appear to be merely the voice of a speaker and seem not to have any responsibility for the content of what is said, relayed and conveyed. They don't even seem to exist as entities; they are figures either hidden behind the tinted glass of a booth or do their best to become a kind of "Invisible Man/Woman". Until recently, most people would see interpreters merely as fascinating skilled parrots, able to rephrase what has just been said in another language. Because of the simultaneity (or quasi-simultaneity) of the translation, the task seems to be rather literal, a word for word exercise.

However, work done in recent years by Translation Studies scholars and by interpreters themselves has helped to change or to clarify this image. I believe that it is well understood today that the interpreter, the translator of the spoken word, must be a creative go-between too, able to create a new "text" just like the translator of the written word. The interpreter is a "bridge" whose act of translation from one world to another, one language to another, in a very limited period of time, is a complex act which requires faithfulness not

¹ Gayatri Spivak, "The Politics of Translation" in L.Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 397-416 (p. 398).

only to the speaker but also to the target audience. More than anything else, an interpretation is an act of communication, an interpreter “a communication tool”. And of course some adjustments, some adaptations, have to be made for the initial message to be properly conveyed into the other culture and language, for precisely the same reasons that compel the translator of the written word to adapt the original text to the target culture.

An interpretation can be either simultaneous or consecutive. In the case of consecutive interpreting, the interpretation can be in a short consecutive mode – short phrases or sentences will be interpreted directly – or in the “classic” consecutive mode, where the interpreter has to take notes and interpret from them when the speaker pauses. Note-taking techniques are taught to interpreters very early in their training, because they will need this tool from very early on. Since the flow of words when spoken is faster than when written, interpreters have to find a way to write down what is said. Even if each interpreter develops his/her own note-taking technique, principles exist and have been modelled. It is often said that oral language facilitates the instant comprehension of an idea and that its evanescence induces the interpreter to retain only meaning and to forget the words themselves. Indeed, the idea rather than the words is what the interpreter has to capture when interpreting. As early as 1956, Jean-François Rozan developed a note-taking technique which has since been taught in many interpreting schools and programs.² Rozan believed that the interpreter must be free of the often misleading constraints that words represent. It is through the analysis and notation of the ideas that the interpreter will avoid mistakes and a laboured delivery. Generations of interpreters worldwide have been trained to respect the “seven principles” Rozan established to guide the interpreter in his note-taking. According to Rozan, the elements the interpreter must focus on while writing down what is being said are as follows:

- 1 Ideas, not words
- 2 Rules of abbreviation
- 3 Links
- 4 Negations
- 5 Adding emphasis
- 6 Verticality
- 7 Shift

These principles have been elaborated on by Danica Seleskovitch,³ who has proposed ten principles or commandments, and recommended a focus on:

- 1 Ideas
- 2 Links, relations of ideas one to another
- 3 Transcodable terms
- 4 Numbers
- 5 Proper names

² Jean-François Rozan, *La Prise de notes dans l'interprétation consécutive* (Geneva: Librairie de l'Université, 1956), trans. A. Gillies, as *Note-taking in Consecutive Interpreting* (Cracow: Tertium, 2003).

³ Danica Seleskovitch, *Langage, langues et mémoire. Etude de la prise de notes en interprétation consécutive* (Paris: Minard, Lettres modernes, 1975).

- 6 Technical terms
- 7 Lists
- 8 First sentence of each new idea
- 9 Last sentence
- 10 Striking usage (a word or expression that stands out)

These principles, taught regularly from the very beginning of training, are designed to ensure that the interpreter is able to capture the meaning of the message and to redeliver it without too many alterations, even if the words uttered by the speaker are not all relayed.

Seleskovitch's "théorie du sens" has also helped interpreters to conceptualise what they are doing, in terms of cognitive process, when on assignments. A central tenet of the theory is the notion of "déverbalisation", i.e. the ability of the translator to perceive the meaning of a text in its context and to convey its underlying message. As interpreters, we do not merely decode and transcode speech, we deliver ideas, we convey the message(s) of what is said through another language, another linguistic vehicle. This view implies that between the original words and their expression in the target language a non-verbal phase exists, in which the translator "interprets" the text before reformulating it. The interpreter discards the form of the source text (words, structure) and is free to concentrate on analysing its meaning and conceiving strategies for reformulating the message into the target language.

A consensus seems to exist on what the interpretative chain is, as far as the cognitive process for consecutive interpreting is concerned. It appears that every act of interpretation could be deconstructed as follows:

- perception of the message;
- comprehension of what is said (identification of words, meaning of the words in the sentence, meaning in the context);
- deverbalisation (summary of the meaning/interpretation) and notetaking (this phase includes the "immediate and deliberate discarding of the wording and retention of the mental representation of the message";⁴
- reformulation (creation);
- rephrasing/reexpression (free and natural).

Or, as Daniel Gile has modelled it,⁵ the chain could also be represented as a combination of "efforts", in two distinct phases. During the listening phase, we have:

- a Listening Effort
- a Production Effort (producing notes, not a target-language version of the speech);
- a short-term Memory Effort (storing information just received until it is noted for that part of the information taken down as notes).

During the reformulation phase, Gile distinguishes:

⁴ Danica Seleskovitch, *Interpreting for International Conferences* (Washington, D.C: Pen and Booth, 1978).

⁵ Daniel Gile, *Basic Concepts and Models for Translator and Interpreter Training* (Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1995).

- a Note-Reading Effort;
- a long-term Memory Effort (for retrieving information stored in long-term memory and reconstructing the content of the speech);
- a Production Effort, for producing the target-language speech.

Being aware of these different cognitive sequences and knowing how to apply all these principles doesn't guarantee that the interpretation will be perfect, but it generally ensures that the interpreter will not miss much of what must be relayed. Complemented by good preparation for the assignment thanks to the documents sent to them and the research they have carried out, interpreters working along these lines are well armed to face the challenges of interpretation on D-day.

During the Writers' festival sessions, I had to interpret and translate, consecutively, the words and views of a world-famous author just as he was expressing them. And because of the particular nature of this task, because working for a writer is not the same as working for a politician or a scientist, I wonder today if I really did exactly the same work as usual. I prepared for the assignment as thoroughly as I could. I was provided with a lot of information about Makine. I was sent the questions which would be asked and the themes which would be talked about. I read many interviews with Makine from which I gained the clear impression that he is someone who does not want or like people to be able to anticipate his responses. On this occasion, contrary to the majority of the assignments I had previously undertaken, I did not have what I needed the most: the (intended) words of the speaker, his (possible) answers to the questions, and his views on the subjects he would have to deal with. And when I met him for the first time, and asked him after a while if we could read through the questions and prepare the events, he simply rejected the idea, albeit in a very friendly manner, explaining that he loved improvisation, and that he would not know until the precise moment of the question what he would answer. Too many elements – the place, the public, the atmosphere – would influence his reflections! It thus became clear that this assignment would not be like any other and that I would have to wait until the very last moment to know what I would have to interpret. During the four days I spent in his company, Makine was unfailingly pleasant, attentive and available. He simply did not feel like preparing the interviews.

When interpretation is "classic" consecutive interpretation, the translation is obviously made from an oral source and is delivered orally. However, as mentioned above, it goes through a written – usually codified – message. It is generally the result of a necessary deverbalsation of the text, so as to capture the intended meaning of the original sentence. Makine has little knowledge of English, but during the first event, within ten minutes, he realised that I was not translating *exactly* what he had just said. He realised I was translating the idea, not the words; and words are of the highest importance for a writer! He wanted me to interpret, or to try to interpret, all his words, and he also wanted the audience to be informed about this demand! Consequently, I realised that I could not simply try to codify his words and transmit only the message, the idea: I had to write more extensively and be more literal. So, not only did I try to deliver the meaning of his message, but I also tried to translate the words, almost all the words, and to convey to the audience Makine's very distinctive spirit, soul and style.

The task was unusual and different. Certainly less mechanical. I produced more than a verbal translation, more than an interpretation. I soon realised that I was more concerned than usual with the audience's understanding of and reaction to what was being said. Makine speaks as creatively as he writes, and I was wondering if the "epiphanies" he mentioned, the "aporias" he talked about, the poetic tone, images and style he deployed – his eloquence – were all understood and felt as they should be. And I did not want the audience to miss any of the particularities of what this artist was saying (rather cryptically at times) about the process of creation and writing, or about his feelings of loss and fulfilment regarding the act of translating, or even to miss his tendency to create a progressive effect when addressing important questions.

At some stage in the conversation, Makine was asked about the so-called "loss" of something in translation. To give his opinion on this familiar issue, he elaborated a long and progressive explanation, saying that in translation many things can be lost but many things are gained too; and his explanation reached a climax after a few minutes when he declared with lots of effect and style that "the loss is not such an issue because above all translation is an adventure". In this precise example, simply relaying the idea that "translation is an adventure", without communicating the fact that the writer was performing, very eloquently, and without rendering his conclusion as the climax of a stylistically elaborated answer in which nearly every word was important, would have missed the point. On hearing the applause from the public after that particular long segment, I understood that my approach was right.

Like many artists, Makine is a performer, and you can feel when listening to him that he likes performing. He also wanted to be funny and to amuse the audience. This also had to be translated. All translators know that the translation of humour is a very difficult and dangerous exercise. But in order to keep the spirit of Makine's words, and also to transmit his desire to be funny and entertain the public, the mere translation of ideas would not have worked. Everything he said, with an emphasis on certain words, had to be relayed.

As I wrote nearly the whole of what Makine was saying, I ended up with quite long and dense literary passages to translate. It was as if I was performing a sight translation: the instant verbal translation of a written text. More precisely in this case, I was producing a *literary* sight translation. This was rather unusual too. Following the principle that the interpreter should capture only the idea, relay the gist of what is being said, I was doing a very bad job. But if one admits that it was ethically, linguistically and artistically important to relay the exact style and spirit of Makine's words, then my unusually detailed notes – where nearly every word had its importance – were justified.

Simultaneous interpretation would surely be a better option when interpreters have to work on such assignments, but the logistic and economic demands it requires will make it impossible for festival organisers to consider it. Yet the job has to be performed. And interpreters have to be aware of this facet of their work and have to be prepared and trained to focus, on certain occasions, as much on words as on ideas.

As far as training is concerned, the issue is not a new one. As Danica Seleskovitch explained as early as 1965, three forms of speech exist (descriptive, dialectic and affective) to which three forms of interpretation correspond (an explanation, an argumentation, and an eloquence exercise).⁶ Obviously, speech

⁶ D. Seleskovitch and M. Lederer, *Interpréter pour traduire, fourth edition (Paris: Didier Erudition, collection "traductologie", 2001).*

can be a mix of those different forms, and the role of the interpreter is always to be absolutely faithful to the speaker. However, each form implies a more or less “*deverbalised*” interpretation. The interpreter will thus have to be more or less faithful to the words of the source speech. The explanatory, descriptive interpretation (e.g. technical or scientific debates, procedural discussions), totally devoid of emotive power, can be longer or shorter than the original, and also very free as far as reformulation is concerned. The most important thing is that the stream of thought should be perfectly conveyed and understood. The meaning is what matters, and the content of the interpretation prevails even if its form differs from the original. The argumentative interpretation (e.g. political negotiations, arbitration tribunals, where the stances of the participants are known beforehand) must scrupulously reflect the original speech and all the nuances of the words and terms chosen, as well as convey all the arguments and intentions of the speaker (threat, limitation, compromise, etc.). Both content and form matter. An eloquent speech (e.g. welcoming opening remarks, thank-you dinner or banquet speeches) is generally targeted at an audience, not at interlocutors. It aims at moving the audience and triggering emotions. When interpreting eloquence, the interpreter has to convey the same emotions, feelings and style, and therefore has to make a connection with the audience and find the right voice. During an eloquence exercise, the form is preponderant.

Despite the artificial character of such distinctions, it is nevertheless relevant to train interpreters in the different methods of interpretation they imply. When interpreting for an artist as eloquent as Makine, the form of the interpretation is essential. Words matter as much as ideas. no doubt I worked differently on that occasion; I had to be more creative than usual and to use linguistic *and* literary skills. I found the resources to do so in my own literary background. Was it a requirement to perform well that day? I don’t know. But the work I did was definitely of a stylistic, literary order. This is why I wonder today whether we should recognise the existence of a new facet in the role of interpreters. I felt on that special assignment that I was a sort of literary translator of the spoken word, a *literary interpreter*.

Daniel Gile has explained that if we accept a taxonomy for written translation which differentiates literary translation and the translation of essentially factual and informative texts (legal, medical, etc.), we could also use taxonomy for interpretation which clearly differentiates conference interpreting, court interpreting, and social/community interpreting.⁷ How would we classify the type of interpretation interpreters do when they work for artists and writers? I would be tempted to add a new category to this acknowledged taxonomy: that of *literary interpreting*.

More and more often today, artists and writers are invited to participate in various festivals worldwide. Very often, on those occasions, interpreters are hired to help them to convey their ideas, to spread their word, to explain their art, to talk about their work. Without these interpreters, the link with the target

⁷ Gile, *La Traduction, la comprendre, l'apprendre*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, linguistique nouvelle, 2005).

audience would not exist and consequently, the “artistic” value of many works of art would not be understood by speakers of other languages. In this respect, in the context of global communication, interpreters play an important part as literary interpreters in the process whereby art and literature become world art and literature.

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Guidelines for Contributors

Submissions (General)

Manuscripts should be sent electronically as an e-mail attachment. Please include a covering email with a bio and bibliographical note, a short abstract or description of the submission, and contact details.

Submissions (Articles, Reviews and Interviews)

Manuscripts should be in Word. Submissions should not normally exceed 6,000 words (including footnotes). The text should be double-spaced, except for indented quotations (see below). Use footnotes rather than endnotes, italics rather than underlining. When articles are written in English, spelling should observe Australian norms, which are British rather than North American.

References

All bibliographical information must be contained within footnotes.

Books:

John Smith, *A Brief History of Consciousness* (London: Academic Press, 2001), pp. 21–32.

Articles in journals and chapters in books:

Justin Thyme, “Having Your Cake and Eating It: Rereading Proust”, *New Journal*, 12: 2 (2001), 106–118.

C. Below, “Resisting Interpretation: Puzzles and Epiphanies”, in Bruce Bottomley and Pierre Austral (eds), *New Modes of Interpretation* (Melbourne: Mystification Press, 2001), pp. 120–135.

For subsequent references to a given publication, simply use the author’s family name and the page reference (for example, Smith, p. 64). If reference is made to two or more works by the same author, use a shortened form of the title rather than *ibid.* or *op. cit.* (for example, Below, “Resisting Interpretation”, p. 124).

As indicated above, full expansion is used in page numbering and in references to a span of years (for example, 1945–1968).

Quotations

Use double quotation marks; within a quotation use single quotation marks. We do not use guillemets. Quotations of longer than fifty words should be indented and single-spaced. Always preserve the spelling, punctuation and grammar of the original. All omissions from quotations should be shown as [. . .] to distinguish them from suspension points used by the authors quoted. Check your transcription of quotations carefully. Also note that footnote numbers should follow all punctuation (for example, “[...] the term ‘implied author’,³ [...]”).

Dates

Use the form 26 February 1950. Months are spelt out in full. Decades are given as: the 1960s or the sixties, not the ’60s.

Numbers

Cardinal and ordinal numbers up to one hundred are spelt out: eighty-four, nineteenth-century literature; but: 45-year-old woman. Numbers over one hundred are given in figures (789), except with round figures (two thousand). For percentages in text use: 84 per cent.

Abbreviations

Use a full stop after an abbreviation (ed.), but not after a contraction (eds, Mr, Mrs, Dr).

Submission of Translations

Translations are accepted in a range of genres, with a preference for prose and poetry. Prose pieces should not normally exceed 4000 words. Extracts from longer pieces will be considered. Translations should be accompanied by a short translator’s commentary or note.

Translations are normally published in parallel text. We ask that submissions be formatted as Word documents, with the two texts in facing columns. Please ensure that the two columns are in sync to the best of your ability (while allowing, of course, for differences between languages, and while maintaining the integrity of both texts).