

The AALITRA Review

A JOURNAL OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

No. 3, May 2011



AALITRA

The AALITRA Review

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The Tui and the Boar (*L'allodola e il cinghiale*) by Nico Orengo

TRANSLATED BY NIALL DUNCAN

The Tui and the Boar is a New Zealand English translation of Nico Orengo's short novel *L'allodola e il cinghiale*, published by Einaudi in 2001. The excerpt presented here represents approximately the first half of the narrative. The original purpose of this translation project was to examine the controversial methodological approach of full-domestication through the practical application of my own translation. Domestication as an approach, while favoured historically, is often marginalised in contemporary translation studies due to a perceived potential to trivialise or negate original cultures. While there are certainly cases where this is true, I believe that the methodology still offers the modern translator and his or her audience unique benefits, aiding a possibly improved reception of a text, reconstructing a familiarity that corresponds with the original; a contextual fidelity. Thus, in this translation there has been a complete resetting of the story; originally set in Piedmont, Italy, it has now been transferred to New Zealand's King Country. My intention throughout this project was to create a version of Orengo's story that felt entirely authentic. I wanted New Zealand to appear as the original setting to an ignorant reader, while at the same time avoiding being excessively obvious or clichéd.

In any translation there is always an interpretive aspect, this being particularly true in a full-domestication. However, even this as an approach is not necessarily, or even possibly, absolute, and certainly there are still elements in this domestication that have been influenced by the original setting, highlighting how even more extreme translation practices cannot be so cleanly defined. While specific alterations can be discerned from the text itself, here are a few general notes on my own domesticating manoeuvres in the translation:

Setting

L'allodola e il cinghiale (AC) was set in Orengo's native Piedmont, in Northwest Italy. This is never made explicitly clear in the narrative, but can soon be discerned by identifying the small collection of place names provided by Orengo in the source text. However even then, the villages are rather insignificant, tucked away in the extreme northwest of the country, thus it would be surprising if they would be familiar even to an Italian reader. Immediately I wanted to achieve the same result: a semi-ambiguous setting. However to fit with the original plot the new setting had to also meet other criteria. Most notably, it had to:

- Have a population of wild boar
- Be a small farming community
- Have native bush near farmland
- Have pine plantations
- Be next to the sea
- Be fairly isolated

After scouring New Zealand, I ultimately found the ideal location in the small communities that fringe the bays surround the Raglan harbour in the King Country.

Time

There are also very limited temporal clues in AC. It is never made clear in which era the story is set, and only through fleeting and minimal references to such things as mobile phones does it

become apparent that it was set more or less contemporaneously to the time in which it was written: 2001. The season, however, is made obvious. It is soon revealed that it is approaching Christmas, placing it in the Northern Italian winter, this supported by constant references towards the cold. This was problematic. The idea of the approaching first Christmas without the mother was paramount to the tone and emotion of the story. However, this instantly conflicts with the allusions to the cold weather, as in New Zealand December is one of the warmest months. Nevertheless, the enduring theme of the cold and all it represented; the boy's discomfort outside with his father and conversely the comfort he experiences in the warmth of his bed and uncle's house, had a metaphorical significance that I did not want to dismiss. I remedied this issue by pushing the timeframe in *The Tui and the Boar* (TB) slightly back, setting it in the New Zealand spring, which is still appropriately close to Christmas and when the temperatures remain sufficiently low, especially in the early morning and evening when much of the novel is set. However, several more concrete changes were necessary; for example, all references to snow had to be removed.

Perhaps the most significant change was the issue surrounding the Christmas tree. In AC Marco spots a little fir tree that he wants to carry down with him on the way back to make into their Christmas tree. Obviously this contrasts with the new season in TB, as chopping down a Christmas tree in spring is not a plausible action. Instead I digressed slightly from the original to make Sam want to tag a little pine tree as his own, with the intention of returning to get it just before Christmas, a common practice that still allows the preservation of the constantly revisited tree motif in the story.

Flora and Fauna

Flora and fauna are instantly defined by their setting. Piedmont as presented by Orengo in AC is characterised by farmland bordered by great forests of chestnuts, oaks and firs. Conversely, the areas of native forest surrounding the small communities amongst the bays of the Raglan harbour are defined by a combination of low and high canopy forests, exhibiting such endemic plant species as *tōtara*, *manuka* and the Northern hard beech. These areas of native bush are interspersed with cleared farmland and pine plantations (pine also being the equivalent of the silver fir as the classic New Zealand Christmas tree). There are also references to introduced species of plants, especially agricultural flora, which have been adjusted accordingly to match the change of climate and season.

The most important references to fauna in the novel are undoubtedly the two title characters: *L'allodola* and *il cinghiale*. *Il cinghiale* remains in the translation as a boar; however I have chosen to change *L'allodola* (lark) to the native tui. This choice was twofold. Firstly, in colloquial English, the word lark can allude to an amusing incident, folic or spree, which lends to a possible misinterpretation of the title. Secondly, though there are larks in New Zealand, they are far from commonplace or universally known, so I decided to use the iconic and well-known tui in its place.

Language

Orengo wrote AC in a fairly standard Italian, mixed with a few regionalisms and dialectal influences, notably from Ligurian and Piedmontese. I have translated into a New Zealand English appropriate for the King Country setting and subject matter. Features I have employed include:

- The standard spelling and grammatical conventions of New Zealand English
- Features of colloquial New Zealand English, especially in the dialogue. (e.g. *Yeah*, truncated questions, frequent elisions and abbreviations)
- The use of Māori place names and proper nouns for flora and fauna (e.g. *Ruakiwi*, *tōtara*, *manuka*, *kiwi*)
- The use of specific words from a typical rural/hunting jargon (e.g. *bush*, *rock bivvy*)
- The alteration of names to fit into an expected New Zealand English (e.g. *Sam*, *Gary*)

Cultural References

Any literary work necessarily contains countless explicit and implicit references towards the culture from which it comes. In dealing with such references in this translation project, I chose to only replace them with equivalents in the target culture if they appeared awkward in the new domestic context. Thus, while some references were changed, others remained in their original form. Examples include:

- Equivalence: There are two references to wine in AC which have been translated with two different equivalents in each instance in TB to merge with the new setting (the hunter takes wine in his pack in AC, but bourbon in TB/the uncle offers the young boy wine in AC, but coffee in TB).
- Retention: The reference to the *presepe* (nativity scene) has been retained as, even though it is perhaps more expected in the Italian setting, it can still exist in the new setting, making using an equivalent not obligatory.

I believe domestication as an approach to translation offers a translator a unique opportunity to not only examine and dissect an original text, rooted in a foreign culture, but to also to scrutinise his own. Significant elements of the original have been altered to increase familiarity to the new audience, but nevertheless *L'allodola e il cinghiale* and *The Tui and the Boar* remain the same story; the characters, plot and theme remain the same, simply seen through different eyes.

L'allodola e il cinghiale

-...l'ora di andare. Alzati.

Il padre lo strattonò sul gomito che sporgeva dalle lenzuola. Era presto, molto presto. Marco guardò verso le persiane: la luce sulla piazza era ancora accesa.

- Vestiti pesante. Fa Freddo... – gli disse il padre, mentre usciva dalla stanza.

Marco sbadigliò, il letto era caldo. Gli spiaceva alzarsi e lasciare lì i suoi sogni. Anche quelli tristi. Ma la giornata sarebbe stata lunga. E più lunga ancora se avesse fin da subito contribuito a peggiorare l'umore del padre.

S'infilò le calze, i pantaloni, il maglione e andò in cucina. Il padre stava riempiendo una borsa con pane, salame, una bottiglia di vino e una d'acqua.

Macro guardò i fuochi. Erano spenti.

Guardò la sua tazza piena di latte. Disse: - È freddo -, poi si morse la lingua, girando le spalle al padre.

- Mettici dello zucchero, ti riscalderà. Non perder tempo.

Marco bevve il latte in piedi guardando oltre il bordo della tazza, verso l'angolo della cucina dove c'erano il fucile e la cartucciera.

The Tui and the Boar

“...Time to go. Get up.”

His father tugged on the elbow poking out of the sheet. It was early, very early. Sam looked through the shutters; the light was still on outside.

“Dress warm. It's cold...” his father said, leaving the room.

Sam yawned. His bed was warm. He didn't want to get up and abandon his dreams, even the sad ones. But the day would be long, and longer still if he did anything to worsen his father's mood.

He put on some socks, pants and a jersey and went into the kitchen. His father was filling a bag with some sandwiches, chocolate, a bottle of water and a hipflask of bourbon.

Sam looked at the fire. It wasn't lit.

He looked at his cup, full of milk. “It's cold” he said, immediately biting his tongue and turning his back to his father.

“Put some sugar in it. It'll warm you up. Don't mess around.”

Sam drank the milk on his feet, peering over the rim of the cup towards the corner of the kitchen where the rifle and cartridge belt stood.

Non gli piacevano i fucili. Non gli piaceva la caccia. Lui aveva paura dei cinghiali. E non gli importava niente che i cinghiali entrassero per le fasce a mangiare patate o ranuncoli.

Al padre la caccia piaceva. E odiava quei cinghiali che gli entravano nei coltivi e nell'orto.

- Non perdiamo tempo. Hai finito di bere? Prendi la giacca.

Marco raccolse lo zucchero sul fondo della tazza con il dito e andò a staccare la giacca di cuoio dal chiodo.

Uscirono, padre e figlio, in un'aria di cartavetro. Il padre si tirò su il bavero e il figlio si chiuse i bottoni. Era notte, era un buio spesso di blu. Cominciarono a salire verso Ciabauda, il padre portava lo zaino in spalla e teneva il fucile sotto l'ascella. Marco gli camminava dietro, cercando di allontanare il torpore che ancora l'avvolgeva e trattenere il tepore del letto intorno allo stomaco, dove gli si era fermata, come un grumo, la scodella di latte.

L'alba sul mare tardava. Era inverno, mancava poco a Natale.

Pensando a Natale Marco ebbe un brivido. Il primo Natale loro due da soli, senza la madre. Chissà se poteva fare ugualmente il presepe in cucina e il pino in sala. Chissà se il padre gliel'avrebbe permesso. Magari avrebbe voluto che fosse un giorno come un altro, simile a quelle domeniche in cui non salivano più alla messa e lui se ne andava a lavorare come nei giorni qualsiasi.

- Allunga un po' il passo, dài...

Marco s'affrettò, cercando di non inspirare troppa aria, sapeva ancora tanto di notte e terra umida. Per non pensare al cinghiale si sforzò di ricordare dove fosse la scatola del presepe.

Era la madre a custodirla. Ogni anno era lei a riporre nel cotone il bambino, il bue e l'asinello, ad avvolgere nella paglia i pastori e i re magi, a proteggere le piccole palle di vetro per l'albero e il puntale con la stella.

He didn't like guns. He didn't like hunting. In fact he was scared of the boars. And in any case, it made no difference to him if they came into the gardens to dig up the potatoes or turnips.

His father, however, loved hunting and he hated the boars that came into the vegetable plots and garden.

"Don't mess around. You done? Get your jacket."

Sam scooped up the sugar from the bottom of the cup with his finger, then went to get his jacket off the hook.

They left, father and son, into the bitter air. His father pulled up his collar as Sam zipped up his jacket. It was still night, a blue darkness. They began climbing up towards Rangipu. His father carried the pack and kept the gun beneath his arm. Sam was walking behind, trying to shake off the drowsiness still hanging over him and to keep the warmth of his bed in his stomach where the mug of milk had settled like a lump.

The sunrise was late on the sea; it was a brisk spring morning, a few months from Christmas.

Thinking of Christmas made Sam shudder. The first Christmas with just the two of them. Without his mother. Who knew whether they would still set up the nativity in the kitchen, or the tree in the lounge? Who knew if his father would even allow it? Maybe he would want it to be a day just like any other, just like the Sundays when they didn't go to church anymore and he simply went out to work like every other day.

"Pick up the pace a bit. Come on."

Sam sped up, trying not to breathe in too much air. He was already well aware of the ways of the night and damp earth. Trying not to think about the boars he instead tried to remember where the box was that they kept the nativity set in.

It used to be his mother's domain. It was her every year that would put the baby Jesus back in the cotton, the cow and the donkey. It was her that would wrap up the shepherds and the three kings in straw, her that

Era lei che a metà dicembre portava la scatola in cucina a ripuliva le piastrelle vicino al piano del putagè che avrebbe ospitato la piccola processione di pastori e pecorelle verso la capanna di legno.

Quest'anno no. Non sarebbe piú stato cosí, Marco provò a pensare come sarebbe stato.

- Fai attenzione a dove metti i piedi.

Marco aveva inciampato in una radice di pino che attraversava il sentiero. Pensò che era meglio provare a tener dietro al passo del padre, senza andarsi a cercare quel che non c'era piú. Ma già non era facile dirlo, pensarlo poi...

Con la coda dell'occhio Marco vide chiaro sul mare. L'alba arrivò preceduta dal fischio di un'allodola. Il ragazzo girò lo sguardo verso sinistra e colse una piccola macchia arancione all'orizzonte. Improvvisa l'aria se fece meno tagliente.

- Ancora mezz'ora e ti faccio prender fiato da Guido, - disse il padre senza voltarsi.

Arrivarono in Ciabauda con il sole alle gambe. Sotto il pergolato, ad aspettarli c'era Guido con una bottiglia in mano.

- Per il figliolo, latte o vino? – chiese.

- Il latte l'ha preso. Dagliene un dito, che non mi si addormenti per strada.

- Il latte era freddo, - disse Marco senza guardare il padre.

- Ce n'è un bricco sul putagè. Il fuoco è acceso. Ti aggiusti? – chiese Guido.

- Ormai deve imparare, - disse il padre.

Marco entrò in casa e fu avvolto dal tepore della stufa a legna, che gli ricordava quello del letto. Andò in cucina, dove il profumo di ulivo che bruciava era piú intenso. Spostò il bricco del latte sul fuoco e andò alla madia a cercare un pezzo di pane, poi verso la credenza a prendere una tazza. Spezzò il pane nella tazza e andò a sorvegliare la curva del latte nel bricco.

protected the little glass balls and the star for the tree. It was her that in the middle of December would bring the box into the kitchen and polish the tiles by the top of the stove that would hold the little procession of sheep and shepherds towards the wooden stable.

But not this year. It would never be like that again. He tried to imagine what it *would* be like.

“Watch your step.”

He had tripped on a pine root that crossed the path. He reckoned that it would be better to try and follow his father's steps, instead of searching for something that wasn't there anymore. It wasn't easy to talk about it, let alone believe it.

Sam noticed a shimmer on the water with the corner of his eye. Dawn had arrived, marked by the call of a tui. Sam turned towards the left and caught a flicker of green on the horizon. All of a sudden the air became less cutting.

“Another half hour and I'll let you catch your breath at Gary's” said his father without turning.

They reached Rangipu with the sun on their legs. Uncle Gary was on the porch waiting for them, mug in hand.

“What about the kid? Milk or coffee?” he asked.

“He's already had some milk. Give him a bit more. I don't want him falling asleep on me.”

“It was cold” Sam said without looking at his father.

“There's some in a jug on the stove. It's on. You'll manage?” asked Gary.

“It's time he learnt” his father said.

Sam went into the house and was instantly smothered by the heat of the wood-burner, reminding him of his bed. He went into the kitchen where the smell of the burning pine was even more intense. He shifted the jug of milk onto the heat and went into the pantry to find a piece of bread, then to the sideboard to get a mug. He broke the bread up into the mug and then went back to the stove to keep an eye on the milk.

Non gli piaceva la pelle del latte, la madre lo sapeva e spegneva il fuoco prima che bollisse. Afferrò il bricco e si scottò le dita, si morse le labbra per non gridare e d'istinto aprì il rubinetto dell'acqua.

Poi si ricordò che una volta la madre gli aveva detto che l'acqua fredda su una bruciatura era peggio e non toglieva il dolore. Soffiò forte sulle dita, mentre asciugava le lacrime; con uno straccio riprese il bricco del latte e lo versò sul pane. Avrebbe voluto sedersi al tavolo a mangiare, ma sapeva che il padre non avrebbe gradito. Così uscì fuori e andò a sedersi fra i due uomini.

Guido stava raccontando che la notte prima i cinghiali gli avevano rivoltato due fasce di calendola e una di patate.

- Bisogna sterminarli, - disse il padre, - prima che scendano a mangiarci in casa. Prima che ci costringano ad andare a comprare verdura e sementi. Tu il tuo io il mio. Un pallettone nel collo, dritto al cuore.

- Ci vuole altro. Deve intervenire la Provincia, la Regione, devono dare più permessi e meno immissioni. Si riproducono come conigli.

- Non bisogna dargli tregua.

Marco guardò il padre. Era diventata un'ossessione. Due, tre volte la settimana saliva per il Gran Mondo o per il bosco di castagni a cercare il suo cinghiale, quello che gli visitava le fasce di patate e di ranuncoli, che gli aveva mezzo distrutto le piante di pomidori.

Adesso che non c'era più la madre, ci portava anche lui. Prima Marco poteva dire di no: ora non più.

Quella del cinghiale era diventata una fissazione. Come se fra Belenda, Gran Mondo, Sette Camini ci fosse un unico, enorme cinghiale che lui doveva abbattere per salvare la sua terra.

Il padre si era alzato, bevendo l'ultimo sorso in piedi, poi si era caricato lo zaino in spalla e aveva preso il fucile sotto l'ascella.

- Non me lo stancare troppo, - aveva detto

He didn't like it when a skin formed on the milk; his mother knew this and she would always take it off the heat before it boiled. He grabbed the jug and burnt his finger. He bit his lip to stop himself crying out and instinctively turned on the tap.

But then he remembered that his mother had once told him that putting cold water on a burn only made it worse, and didn't do anything to relieve the pain. He blew hard on his finger, wiping away the tears. With a cloth he picked up the jug again and poured the milk over the bread. He would have preferred to sit and eat at the table, but he knew that his father wouldn't approve, so he went outside and sat between the two men.

Uncle Gary was saying that the night before the boars had turned up two of his beds of cabbages and another of potatoes.

"They need to be exterminated" said his father "before they come into our houses and eat us too. Before they force us to go and buy our vegetables and more seeds. You yours, and me mine. A bullet. Right in the neck. Straight to the heart."

"It'll take more than that. The village has to step up, the whole region even. They need to give out more permits and less restrictions. They breed like rabbits."

"We can't go easy on them."

Sam looked at his father. It had become an obsession. Two or three times a week now he would head out towards Ruakiwi or to the valley to find *his* boar. The one that visited his plots of potatoes and turnips, the one that had destroyed half his tomato plants.

Now that his mother wasn't around, he took Sam too. Before he could have said no. Not anymore. The whole mess about the boar had become a fixation. As if between Ohautira, Ruakiwi and Te Akau there was a single, enormous boar that he could kill to save his land.

His father had got up, drinking the last mouthful on his feet. He already had the pack on his back and the gun under his arm.

"Don't wear my boy out too much" Gary

Guido passando una mano sulla testa di Marco.

- Con un po' di fatica cresce.

Marco era arrossito. Era da tanto che nessuno lo accarezzava piú, come se il mondo si fosse dimenticato di lui.

Marco ringraziò per il latte e il padre alzò il braccio in segno di saluto.

- Andiamo che la strada è lunga. E in salita.

Il sole batteva alla schiena e l'aria si era intiepidita. Guardando in alto c'era il Gran Mondo: pietrame, rocce e radi pini. Verso destra il bosco di castagni e di lecci. Marco avrebbe preferito prendere per il Gran Mondo, camminare nella luce e nell'aria azzurra. Si sentiva di buon umore e attraversando l'ultima uliveto si era messo a fischiare, imitando l'allodola.

- Risparmia il fiato. Ne avrai bisogno. Nell'ubago del bosco si cammina male. Ma sento che è lí, di giorno s'intanano. E lí andremo a prenderlo.

Marco aveva smesso di fischiare.

Uscirono dall'uliveto e piegarono verso il bosco di castagni e lecci. Tra l'uliveto e il grande bosco incontrarono una piccola macchia di abeti bianchi. Marco si fermò a guardarli. Erano già come coperti di neve o di batuffoli di cotone. Gli sarebbe piaciuto tagliarne uno, il piú piccolo, e portarselo giú, al ritorno.

- Cosa fai? – chiese il padre, - non cammini?

Marco avrebbe voluto dirgli che si avvicinava Natale e loro erano ancora senza albero, invece disse:

- Perché non abbiamo un cane? Sarebbe bello avere un cane, - e aggiunse, per compiacere il padre, - un cane da caccia...

Il padre lo guardò perplesso, poi, scrollando le spalle e riprendendo a camminare, gli rispose:

- Se vai a cinghiali duran poco.

Marco cercò la mira fra una roccia e un

said, tousling Sam's hair.

“Hard work builds character.”

Sam went red. It had been so long since someone had touched him; it had been as if the world had forgotten about him.

Sam thanked him for the milk and his father raised his hand in a wave.

“Let's get going. It's a long walk. Uphill.”

The sun was beating on their backs now the air had warmed up a little. Looking down there was the river: a small valley of stones, rocks and the odd pine tree. Towards the right was the bush of tōtara and beech. Sam would've preferred to take the route following the river, to walk in the sun and the blue air. Even so, he was in high spirits. Crossing the last creek he started to whistle, mimicking the tui.

“Save your breath. You'll need it. It's tough walking in the thick of the bush. But I know he's there. During the day they hide in their burrows. And we're going in there to get him.”

He stopped whistling.

They came out of the valley and curved towards the bush. Leaving the river, they came across a small cluster of stray pine trees. Sam stopped to look at them.

In the morning light it already looked like they were glistening with lights. He would've liked to mark one, the smallest one with a perfect shape, and come back to find it just before Christmas.

“What's going on?” asked his father “Why have you stopped?”

Sam wanted to tell him that Christmas was coming, and that they would soon need a tree, but instead said:

“Why don't we get a dog? That would be so cool.” And then added to please his father, “a hunting dog...”

His father looked at him, baffled. Then shrugged his shoulders and setting off again said:

“If it's boars you're after, dogs don't last.”

Sam looked at the tree one last time,

ulivo. Sii disse che, tornando indietro, se l'umore del padre fosse stato migliore, avrebbe saputo come ritrovare il suo abete bianco.

- Adesso entriamo, - disse il padre.

Marco guardò il bosco. Era una macchia buia. Spinse lo sguardo al cielo azzurro. Cercò di afferrare il canto dell'allodola che veniva ormai in lontananza dall'uliveto, in basso. Nel bosco avrebbe ritrovato il buio e l'umido della notte, un buio più immobile, un'umidità più densa. Dovevano passare ore e ore fermi, sepolti sotto foglie di castagno in attesa di veder arrivare il branco o qualche capo isolato.

Guardò il padre spiare il cielo, ascoltare il vento e la sua direzione perché il cinghiale ha il naso fine, poi lo sentì ripetere: - Entriamo.

Marco lo seguì in punta di piedi.

Ora avanzavano su un sentiero, nel buio, attenti a non spezzare i rami, a non far frusciare una foglia. Dovevano raggiungere la postazione, una buca al riparo di un masso che sbarrava il loro odore.

Camminarono per oltre un'ora, forse due, piano, curvi, senza dire una parola, mimetizzandosi nel silenzio dei grandi castagni immobili. Andavano senza sentire un fruscio che fosse di serpe o lepre. I cinghiale distruggevano i nidi di tordo o di fagiano selvatico, confinando il bosco al silenzio.

Quando arrivarono accanto alla postazione il padre aprì lo zaino e prese il sacchetto di ciliegie. Sempre tenendo il fucile sotto l'ascella andò a spargerle all'inizio dei sentieri che si biforcavano ai piedi del masso: un mucchietto qui, uno là, qualcuna sparsa su un breve spiazzo. Poi tornò indietro e fece cenno col capo a Marco di seguirlo.

Andarono a sistemarsi nella buca al riparo del masso. Il padre sistemò lo zaino fra sé e Marco, si slacciò la cartucciera allungandola sullo zaino e coprì di foglie la canna del fucile, puntandolo verso il basso.

between a rock and a small fern. He told himself that on the way back if his father's mood had improved, he'd know exactly where to find his little pine, and would mark it somehow as his own.

"Now we go in" said his father.

Sam looked at the bush. It was a dark blur. He looked up at the blue sky, trying to hold onto the song of the tui that now came from the valley below. In the bush he would again encounter the darkness and dampness of the night. A stiller darkness, a thicker dampness. They would spend hours upon hours still, buried under the beech leaves, waiting for the arrival of the drove or some isolated leader.

He watched his father observe the sky and listen to the wind and its direction; the boar had a keen nose. Then he repeated:

"Now we go in."

Sam cautiously followed.

They followed a path in the darkness, careful not to break a branch or rustle any leaves. They had to reach the rock bivvy, a sheltered hollow in a rock that blocked their smell.

They walked for over an hour, two even, cautiously winding without a word, camouflaged in the silence of the great looming tōtara. They went on without hearing so much as a rustle from a bird or lizard. The boars had long ago destroyed the nests and burrows of the once native kiwi and kakapo, condemning the forest to silence.

When they reached their station, his father opened the pack and took out a packet of cherries. Keeping the gun under his arm, he went and scattered them at the beginning of the path that forked out at the foot of the rock. A little pile here, another there, some more spread out in a small clearing. Then he came back and nodded at Sam to follow.

They went and hid in the shelter of the hollow. His father put the pack between them and undid the cartridge belt, laying it over the pack, and covered the barrel of the gun with some leaves, pointing it downwards.

Ora cominciava l'attesa.

Marco si rincantucciò tra le foglie, cercando la protezione dello zaino, tentando di dimenticare l'umido della terra e delle foglie che trapassava i vestiti. Provava a concentrarsi sul tepore del latte che sentiva ancora nello stomaco. Non doveva addormentarsi, il padre non gliel'avrebbe permesso. Doveva essere vigile, ascoltare il bosco, sentire se l'animale, abbandonata la tana, avesse colto nell'aria immobile il profumo delle ciliegie.

Solo dopo un po' Marco cominciò a distinguere, in quel buio così fitto, i tronchi dei castagni e dei lecci, i profili dei rami, quello delle foglie seghettate, i tanti toni di verde, da quelli scuri vicino a terra a quelli più chiari verso la cima degli alberi, oltre la quale l'azzurro del cielo rimaneva bianco, un bianco sporco.

Marco ebbe un brivido, perché ora che ci vedeva di più, sentiva anche di più.

Sentiva la terra fredda risucchiarlo, come in certi sogni che faceva la notte, quando d'improvviso si trovava disteso non più nel suo letto ma nella terra e la terra si apriva e lui sprofondava e soffocava perché la terra gli entrava nelle orecchie, nella bocca.

Allora si svegliava con il cuore in gola e gridava «mamma!» Poi girava la faccia sul cuscino e si placava piangendo in silenzio, come stava facendo ora, lacrime calde.

Il padre gli diede una gomitata, un colpo secco e veloce. Marco temette che l'avesse scoperto nel suo pianto silenzioso; ma il padre voleva solo richiamare la sua attenzione. Si era battuto l'indice contro l'orecchio, guardando davanti a sé. Marco si sollevò un poco sui gomiti, cercò di infilare lo sguardo fra le rocce. Non vedeva nulla, non sentiva nulla se non il denso silenzio del bosco.

Si massaggiò entrambe le orecchie, strizzò gli occhi per liberarli dalle lacrime ancora appese. E gli venne da pensare, con un sorriso, che avrebbe preferito avere un padre pescatore ed essere in barca, anche soffrendo, come soffriva un po', il mal di mare. Avrebbe preferito starsene in mezzo all'acqua, sotto il cielo, e guardare la costa e

So began the wait.

Sam hid away in the corner amongst the leaves, yearning for the protection of the pack. He tried to forget the dampness of the earth and the leaves getting into his clothes, instead trying to focus on the warmth of the milk he still felt in his stomach. He couldn't fall asleep; not that his father would have let him anyway. He had to stay alert, to listen to the bush, to hear if any animal, lair abandoned, caught the smell of the cherries in the stagnant air.

After a while Sam began to be able to distinguish through the thick darkness the beech trunks from the manuka, the outlines of the branches, those with jagged leaves and the countless shades of green; the darker greens near the ground right up to lighter tones of the canopy. Above the sky remained white, a dirty white.

Sam shuddered. Now that he could see more, he could feel more too.

He felt the cold earth sucking him in, just like in the dreams he had where he found himself lying not in his bed, but on the earth which began to open and consume him, suffocating him as it got into his ears and mouth. He would wake in a cold sweat and cry out "Mum!" Then, turning on his pillow he would comfort himself by crying silently. Cold tears, just as they were now.

His father gave him a nudge, a quick sharp jolt. Sam was worried that he had spotted his silent tears, but he had only wanted to get his attention. He tapped his finger against his ear, looking around. Sam propped himself up a little on his elbows, trying to peer between the rocks. He couldn't see anything. He couldn't hear anything except the dense silence of the bush.

He rubbed his ears and blinked to expel any lingering tears. He thought, smiling to himself, how he would rather a fisherman for a father, and to be in a boat right now, even though he would often get seasick. He would rather stay in the middle of the ocean, beneath the sky, watching the coast and inhaling the breeze.

respirare la brezza.

Già, ma nessun pesce veniva a devastare gli orti, a mangiare l'uva e le pesche, a scalfare cespugli di margherita e ranuncoli. I pesci se ne stavano sott'acqua a pensare ai fatti loro. E poi, si chiedeva Marco, abbattere un cinghiale cosa avrebbe cambiato? Il bosco ne era pieno, un altro sarebbe sceso a rovistare tra le fasce. Non sarebbe stato meglio proteggerle con la rete, come già facevano tanti padri dei suoi amici? E poi, se proprio lo si doveva fare, non era più sensato andare alla battuta in gruppo? I cacciatori si mettevano in dieci, anche venti, avevano i telefonini, circondavano il bosco, non lasciavano varchi aperti. «Ci deve pensare la Provincia», «ci deve pensare la Regione», aveva detto lo zio Guido.

Marco non aveva capito cosa volesse dire: forse il problema dei cinghiali che attaccavano i coltivi non poteva essere risolto dai singoli cacciatori e dalla capacità della loro mira, ma doveva essere affidato, ne aveva accennato una volta la maestra in classe, a una competenza superiore. Era così?

Suo padre non avrebbe mai accettato quella soluzione, lo sapeva. Come avvertiva, senza saperselo spiegare, che un rancore profondo lo spingeva alla caccia del cinghiale. Era qualcosa che andava ben oltre i danni lasciati sulla terra, Marco lo sentiva distintamente. Era un odio cieco, scoppiato dopo la morte della madre.

Una volta il padre aveva detto, riferendosi al cinghiale: «quello è u cancro».

- Sta venendo avanti, lo senti?

Marco tese l'orecchio, strinse gli occhi. Sentiva il battito del cuore, si posò una mano sul petto e spinse per farlo tacere. C'era solo quel bum-bum sordo e null'altro.

- È nella macchia, a sinistra. Ha sentito le ciliegie. Arriva.

Marco voltò lo sguardo a sinistra, in basso, dove le foglie erano nere e marroni. Sentì come un grattare sulla terra, come un'unghia che scorticava muschio e sterpi.

Il padre aveva abbassato il fucile verso il mucchietto di ciliegie, a una ventina di metri

Yes, that would be much better. Fish didn't come and dig up the gardens, they didn't eat potatoes or turnips, and couldn't trample plants or flowers. They just stayed underwater, minding their own business. Then Sam wondered, what could killing the boar possibly achieve? The bush was full of them; another would soon come and wreak havoc amongst the plots. Wouldn't it better to put up a fence, like his friends' fathers already had? And if it were really necessary, wouldn't it be better to do so in a group? Hunters would get together in groups of three, even six. They all had cell phones and would surround the entire area, leaving no means of escape. "The village has to step up, the whole region even" his uncle had said.

Sam hadn't understood it at the time. Maybe it was just that the problem, the fact that they ravaged the gardens, couldn't be solved by a single hunter and the skill of his aim, but instead it needed to be entrusted to a higher authority, like his teacher had once said at school. Was that it?

His father would never accept that as a solution, he knew it. He sensed, without knowing how to explain it, that a deep resentment pushed him to hunt the boar. It was something that far surpassed the damage they left on the earth, Sam clearly felt it. It was a blind hatred that had exploded after the death of his mother.

Once his father said, referring to the boar: "That thing is a *cancer*."

"He's coming up ahead. You hear him?"

Sam strained his ears and squinted his eyes. He could hear his heart beating. He pushed his hand into his chest to silence it.

"He's in the scrub to the left, he's smelt the cherries. He's coming."

Sam looked down towards the black and brown leaves towards the left. He heard a sort of grating on the earth, like a claw shredding through the moss and ferns.

His father lowered the gun towards the pile of cherries, a good twenty metres away.

da loro. Marco concentrò lo sguardo sui frutti rossi luccicanti. A guardarli gli mettevano fame. Non erano ciliegie nostrane, chissà da quale lontano paese venivano. Il padre le aveva comprate al supermercato e le aveva messe in alto, nel frigo. Erano per i cinghiali, ma gliene aveva fatte assaggiare un grappolo. Erano dure e asprigne ma succose, facevano venire in mente la primavera e quei begli alberi che loro avevano sulle fasce, accanto alla vigna.

Marco era perso in quella fantasia quando all'improvviso vide il cinghiale avventarsi fuori dalla macchia, con il muso a terra, la coda ritta. Caricò la montagnetta di ciliegie, mentre il colpo di fucile del padre si scaricava, frustando l'aria. Il cinghiale rimase immobile un attimo, come sorpreso, poi con agilità sorprendente sparì nella macchia.

- L'ho ferito, - disse il padre con disappunto. Voleva dire che l'aveva scalfito, che il proiettile non si era conficcato nella spalla per scendere verso il cuore, il fegato, la milza e inchiodarlo, magari dopo una corsa disperata di due-trecento metri, chissà dove, a terra.

No, l'animale era stato ferito superficialmente. Marco guardò il padre. Era preoccupato perché sapeva che di averlo reso più incattivito e diffidente. Lo vide indeciso.

- Cosa fai? - chiese Marco.

Era una domanda importuna, forse offensiva. Se ne rese conto.

- Ha avuto uno scarto. Ci ha sentiti.

- Tornerà?

- Ci sono ancora un po' di ciliegie... è un bastardo goloso. Tornerà.

Il padre ricaricò la doppietta e si acquattò nel terreno. Anche Marco si lasciò scivolare fra le foglie. Non se l'era presa per le sue parole. Una paura gli era passata, adesso rimaneva con l'altro, quella di veder tornare il cinghiale.

- Centocinquanta chili, - disse il padre. E aggiunse: - In poco più di un metro.

Marco capì che il padre era ammirato, oltre ad essere preoccupato. Lui aveva solo paura

Sam fixed his gaze on the red, glistening fruit. Looking at them made him hungry. They weren't from around there, who knew which far away country they had come from. His father had bought them at the store and put them up high in the fridge. They were for the boars, but he had let him try a few. They were hard and a little sour, but still juicy. They reminded him of summer, and the trees they had at the back of the farm.

Sam had lost himself in his thoughts when all of a sudden he saw the boar burst out of the brush with its nose on the ground and its tail erect. It was scoffing the little mountain of cherries when the gunshot fired, whipping the air. It remained frozen for a moment, stunned, then with surprising agility disappeared back into the undergrowth.

"It wounded him" said his father, disappointed. He had meant that the bullet had only grazed him, that it hadn't stuck into its back to then make its way down to the heart, liver or spleen and then finish him after a desperate flight of two, maybe three hundred metres somewhere on the ground.

But no, the animal was only wounded superficially. Sam looked at his father. He was worried because he knew that now he had only made the animal more vengeful and wary. He saw him torn.

"What now?" Sam asked.

It was an annoying question, offensive even, he knew it.

"He had a close scrape. He heard us."

"Will he come back?"

"There are still a few cherries...he's a greedy bastard. He'll be back."

His father reloaded the gun and crouched down on the ground. Sam let himself slide amongst the leaves. His father's words hadn't upset him. But now, even though one fear had passed, he was left with another, the boar's imminent return.

"A hundred and fifty kilos" his father said, "in just over a metre."

Sam understood that he was saying it out of admiration rather than fear.

che tornasse e che il tempo non passasse più. Da quanto erano lì in quella buca? Quanto tempo era passato da quando erano entrati nel bosco, da quando si erano intanati e da quando il cinghiale era sbucato dalla macchia sotto i castagni...

Il ragazzo provò a contare il tempo, ma non sapeva come dividerlo, cercò di ricordare quando aveva smesso di sentir caldo allo stomaco, a cosa aveva pensato subito prima che il muso nero arrivasse a macchiare il rosso delle ciliegie. E poi il rumore dello sparo che gli aveva chiuso l'orecchio destro, il gran silenzio in cui il bosco aveva continuato a esistere: non si era alzato nessun uccello, nessun altro rumore aveva accompagnato lo sparo e la fuga del cinghiale.

Ma era passato del tempo, perché aveva fame.

Il padre non si muoveva, forse rimuginava sul tiro fallito. Forse stava misurando la distanza fra la propria imprecisione e il destino che aveva allontanato il bersaglio, imprimendogli uno scarto improvviso.

Ma restava fiducioso, sapeva che se quello era il «suo» cinghiale, il cancro che, sera dopo sera, gli aveva divorato le fasce, sarebbe tornato. E per invitarlo a tornare lui ci avrebbe puntato altre ciliegie.

Marco vide il padre prendere lo zaino e scendere verso la biforcazione dei sentieri. Aveva lasciato il fucile a terra, vicino a Marco.

- Papà, dove vai?

- Ha bisogno di altre ciliegie, - disse il padre da sotto il masso.

- Il fucile... - sussurrò Marco.

Il padre alzò le spalle e camminando carponi s'avvicinò al terreno, dove era rimasta una poltiglia rossa, come una macchia di sangue, di ciliegie calpestate dagli zoccoli dell'animale. Allontanandosi dalla canna del fucile, Marco guardò il padre ricostruire la piccola montagnola di frutti rossi. Non gli piaceva stare lì solo, tutto diventava più freddo, come quella canna di fucile.

Poi vide il padre alzarsi e tornare indietro,

But he himself feared the boar's return and that time would stop again. How long had they been there? How many hours had it been since they had entered the forest? Since they had been hiding there in that little lair of their own? Since the boar had come out of the scrub beneath the tōtara?

Sam tried to count the time, but he didn't know how to divide it. He tried to remember when that warm feeling had left his stomach, what he was thinking just before the black snout appeared, staining the red cherries. After that came the sound of the shot that had blocked his right ear. In the enduring silence, no birds had been roused; no other noise accompanied the shot and the boar's flight.

But he knew time had passed. He was hungry.

His father didn't move. Maybe he was brooding over the botched shot. Or maybe he was measuring the distance between his own imprecision and fate which had moved his target, granting it a sudden swerve.

Still, he remained confident. He knew that if it had been *his* boar, that cancer that night after night devoured his crops, he would be back. He went and added some more cherries to the pile to encourage him. Sam watched his father as he got the pack and went down to the fork in the path. He had left the gun on the ground, near Sam.

“Dad...where are you going?”

“He needs some more cherries” said his father from beneath the rock.

“But the gun...” Sam whispered.

His father shrugged. Crawling on all fours he went down to the ground where a red mush of fruit, like a bloodstain, remained, trampled by the animal's hooves. Moving away from the gun, Sam watched his father rebuild the little mountain of red fruit. He didn't like being up there by himself. Everything was getting colder, like the barrel of the gun.

Then he saw his father get up and head

era già sotto il masso quando incespì e cadde a terra con un tonfo e un grido.

- Cos'hai fatto? – urlò Marco.

- Non gridare, cristo, non gridare, - disse il padre con rabbia, - sono inciampato in una radice, cristo.

Marco si sporse, il padre era piegato a terra, non accennava ad alzarsi.

- Vieni su, - lo implorava Marco.

- Sí, sí... ma stai zitto. Devo essermi slogato una caviglia...

Marco vedeva i tentativi che il padre faceva per mettersi in piedi senza riuscirci, e il dolore che provava nel trascinarsi sul terreno.

- Scendo a darti una mano, - disse.

- Stai lí fermo. Adesso prendo fiato e il dolore passerà...

Marco tuffò la faccia tra le foglie. Pregò perché il padre si rimettesse in piedi e tornasse lí, vicino al suo fucile. Lasciò che passassero un po' di minuti poi tornò ad affacciarsi oltre il masso. Il sacco era abbandonato in mezzo al sentiero, mentre il padre era riuscito a trascinarsi sotto di lui.

- Sali? – gli chiese timidamente.

- Adesso non ce la faccio, devo avere proprio qualcosa di rotto.

- Scendo a darti una mano, - disse Marco.

- Stai su, è pericoloso qui... quel cancro potrebbe tornare...

- Ti sporgo il fucile, vuoi?

- Lascialo scivolare giù, fai attenzione...

Marco aprì il fucile, tolse le due cartucce e lo lasciò cadere vicino al padre, poi infilò le due cartucce nella cartucciera e la fece scivolare lunga la parete rocciosa.

- Hai preso? – chiese.

Avrebbe voluto andare a raccogliere il sacco, aveva anche sete ora e lí dentro, oltre al pane e al pezzo di salame, c'era la bottiglia dell'acqua. Ma il padre gli aveva

back. He was already under the rock when he stumbled and fell to the ground with a thud and a shout.

“What happened?” cried Sam.

“Don't shout. Christ. Don't shout” said his father viciously. “I tripped on a root. Christ.”

Sam leant out. His father was bent over on the ground, showing no sign of getting up.

“Come back up” Sam pleaded.

“Yes, yes. But keep quiet. I must've sprained my ankle.”

Sam watched his father's failed attempts to stand, feeling his pain as he dragged himself along the ground.

“I'm coming down to give you a hand” he said.

“Stay right where you are! I just need to catch my breath, then the pain will go...”

Sam plunged his face into the leaves. He prayed that his father would get back up on his feet and come back up near the gun. He waited a few minutes, then went back to peer over the rock. The pack had been abandoned in the middle of the path. His father had managed to drag himself under the overhanging rock.

“Are you coming up?” he asked nervously.

“I can't just now. I must've broken something.”

“I'll come down and give you a hand.”

“Stay up there. It's dangerous down here...that cancer could come back.”

“I'll lower you down the gun. Do you want it?”

“Slide it down. Be careful...”

Sam opened the gun, took out the cartridges and let it fall down near his father. Then he slipped the cartridges into the belt and slid it down the face of the rock.

“Have you got it?” he asked.

He wanted to go down and get the pack. He was thirsty now and besides the sandwiches and chocolate there was a bottle of water. But his father had told him to stay put. But

detto di stare fermo. Per quanto? Sporgendosi vide che si era appoggiato il fucile lungo le gambe distese e si era buttato la cartucciera sulle spalle. Si tanto in tanto si lamentava.

Quanto tempo sarebbero dovuti rimanere così?

- Ho sete, - disse Marco, debolmente.

- Succhia una radice. Lecca una foglia.

Marco strappò una radice. Era amara ma sugosa e le labbra si sciolsero un poco. Si guardò intorno, le foglie erano immobili. Guardò in alto, dove tempo prima aveva intuito delle macchie di bianco. Non c'erano più. Forse era già pomeriggio. A sentire i crampi della fame, dovevano essere passate molte ore da quando erano entrati nel bosco.

Tornò a sporgersi dal masso:

- Mi senti?

Dal basso non venne nessuna risposta.

- Papà... - insistette Marco.

Forse il padre si era addormentato. Stava sdraiato, immobile. Marco provò a lanciare un sassolino. Inutilmente. Allora si chiese se avrebbe fatto bene a scendere. Voleva sapere come stava il padre, e avrebbe potuto recuperare lo zaino. Ma non voleva disobbedire e aveva paura. La stessa paura che gli era venuta la prima notte che aveva saputo che la madre non sarebbe più tornato a casa. Come adesso era rimasto paralizzato, incapace di muoversi, di avere un sentimento. Allora era in casa, protetto dalla sua stanza, con i suoi giochi, i suoi libri, il suo stereo. Adesso, forse, provò a dirsi, era meno peggio.

- Sei lì?

La voce del padre gli arrivò come da lontano, come fuori da un sogno che non voleva fare.

- Sí, - disse, - e tu?

- Dove vuoi che sia, qua, che non riesco a muovermi. Devo cercare di stecarmi la cavaglia. Guarda se intorno a te vedi qualche ramo. Ma non strappare nulla, non far rumore.

for how long? Leaning out he saw that he had laid the gun on his stretched out legs and thrown the cartridge belt over his shoulder.

Every now and then he groaned. How long would they have to stay there?

"I'm thirsty" Sam said faintly.

"Suck on a root. Lick a leaf."

Sam snapped off a root. It was bitter, but juicy, moistening his lips a little. He looked around; the leaves were still. He looked up to where a little while before he had glimpsed some shimmers of white; they weren't there anymore. Maybe it was afternoon already. He heard his stomach rumble. It must have been several hours since they had entered the bush.

He went back to lean over the rock:

"Can you hear me?"

No response came from below.

"Dad..." Sam insisted.

Maybe he had fallen asleep. He was lying down, still. Sam tried to throw a stone. Useless. He wondered if it was best to go down; he wanted to know if his father was alright, and also he'd be able to get the pack. But he didn't want to disobey him, and he was scared. It was the same fear he'd had that first night when he knew his mother was never coming back. He was left paralysed, just as he was now, unable to move or feel anything. But then he was at home, protected by his room, his games, his books and stereo. Then again, this time wasn't nearly as bad, or so he told himself.

"You there?"

It was as if his father's voice was coming from a great distance, like in an unwanted dream.

"Yeah," he said, "and you?"

"I'm just where you want me. Right here. I can't move, can I? I need something to splint my ankle with. Look around to see if there are any branches near you. Don't break anything though. Don't make any noise."

- Quelle ciliegie, - aggiunse, - continuano a profumare.

Marco si guardò intorno, vide dei pezzi di ramo, erano secchi, si sbriciolavano fra le dita. Lo disse al padre.

- Fa niente, aspettiamo.

“The smell of cherries,” he added, “is still in the air.”

Sam looked around. He saw some broken branches but they were brittle and crumbled between his fingers. He told his father.

“Ok. Don’t do anything. We’ll just wait.”

Job's Children (“Os Filhos de Job”) by Vimala Devi

TRANSLATED BY PAUL MELO e CASTRO

Vimala Devi is the *nom-de-plume* of the Goan writer Teresa de Almeida. Born in 1932, in the then Portuguese colony of Goa, Devi left for Lisbon in 1958. There, over the course of the 1960s and early 1970s, under her pseudonym, she published a series of works related to her native land, which in 1961 had been liberated from colonial rule after invasion by the Indian army. Devi released a volume of poetry entitled *Súria* in 1962 and then, in 1963, a book of short stories entitled *Monção*. The latter collection, from which “Job’s Children” is drawn, is one of the most complete literary depictions we have of Goa at the tail end of the colonial period, a society caught between tradition and change, its population crosshatched by differences of language, religion, caste and class. In 1972, together with her husband Manuel de Seabra, Devi published *A Literatura Indo-Portuguesa*, two volumes of criticism and anthology crucial to anyone today taking an interest in Lusophone Goan writing.

“Job’s Children”, translated here, is drawn from *Monção*. I have chosen “Job’s Children” as the story features several themes that run through Devi’s short narratives. The plot revolves around a poor community of fishermen and their struggle to wrest a living from the sea. In line with the other stories in *Monção* that deal with the Goan subaltern, “Job’s Children” shows the constricted lives of those at the very bottom of Goan society, their entrapment within tradition and superstitious beliefs, yet also their courage, integrity and tremendous class solidarity across creeds, an important point in a Goa too often depicted, particularly in colonial discourse, as inexorably split between Catholics and Hindus. “Job’s Children” touches on the social tension between upper and lower castes, not expressed as outright revolt, but discernible in everyday forms of verbal resistance, the importance of which Partha Chatterjee, amongst others, has highlighted in the subcontinental context of rigid social hierarchies. This class/caste antagonism, perhaps more than any other dispute, would come to dominate Goan politics in the immediate post-liberation period in which “Os Filhos de Job” was written. A recurrent feature of Devi’s stories is the sensitive depiction of the hypotaxis in traditional Goan society of the lives of women to those of men, particularly amongst the lower orders. Though in “Job’s Children” the subordination of women does not take the overtly oppressive or exploitative form it does in other stories, the last scene leaves the reader in no doubt as to who, in the end, will bear the brunt of the suffering that the old fisherman’s illness will necessarily cause.

Common stereotyping would see Portuguese as a wordy language and English as more direct and to the point. This clichéd certainty could not be any less the case than with Devi, whose deceptively simple, pared-down style is fully evidenced in the opening paragraph of the story. The challenge, in rendering her work into English, is to match the economy and accuracy of her expression. Though my version is slighter longer than the original, I have, I hope, kept explication to the barest minimum. As in much postcolonial writing, and particularly the postcolonial short story, where lexical choice can suggest place with the necessary concision, Devi at times uses words and expressions drawn from the language native to the society she is depicting. In the case of Goa, this is Konkani, in which such figures as depicted in the story would certainly have expressed themselves, particularly given that all but the two Brahmins are described as speaking no Portuguese. I have more or less followed the author’s lead in dealing with these items of vocabulary. Sometimes these are directly glossed in the text by the narratorial voice, an option no doubt motivated by the site of original publication being Lisbon as opposed to Goa. At other times no explanation is given. In the cases where the vocable indicates a pan-Indian referent (such as the beedi) I have used the word most commonly found

in English, trusting that such terms have entered the international lexis of the Anglosphere. A short glossary explaining and specifically Goan vocabulary follows the story.

The translation of Portuguese-language works takes on a particular importance in the context of today's Goa. As in other decolonised spaces where the colonial language has been discarded, knowledge of the former colonial tongue has declined vertiginously in recent decades. Today's generation of Goans, even authors and those interested in literature, are often unaware that writers in Portuguese such as Devi exist and have certainly seldom read any of her stories, which in any case were never published in Goa and are long out of print in Portugal. It is my hope that this translation will be a small contribution to opening up this rich patrimony to a new readership.

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Os Filhos de Job

by Vimala Devi (1963)

I

Se fosse dado a Bostião escolher entre o mar alto e o rio, optaria por este sem hesitação. Todas as madrugadas, na canoa, remando penosamente, ia até às estacas onde prendia as redes. Mas pesca de rio é pesca miúda, não rende. Não podia ficar assim, à mercê da sorte. Ganhar apenas para as despesas do dia não lhe bastava. A vida não tem piedade dos fracos. Nem a vida, nem os homens. Isso era lição velha, que o tempo ensinava cruelmente. Por isso, todos os anos, na época das cavalas, com os outros, afoitava-se ao largo, apesar dos anos e de muita canseira de corpo.

“Deixa-te estar em casa, homem. Tu já não agentas os rigores do mar”, dizia-lhe a mulher.

Era verdade. O seu corpo, magro, gasto por mais de dez lustres de lida fera, já fraquejava, já cedia ao esforço. Mas insistia, dando coragem por forças:

“Não te rales, Angelina! Bem sabes que não é por gosto. Noutros tempos ainda havia o isco da aventura... O mar é tentação para gente nova, mas para velhos como eu já não tem engodos.”

Depois da monção, quando os grandes cardumes começavam a aparecer, todos os dias esta cena se repetia. E todos os dias terminava com lágrimas e rogos.

“Pai, não vá... Fique-se pelo rio, pai!

Os Filhos de Job

by Vimala Devi (1963)

I

Given a choice between the river and the open sea, Bostião would pick the former with no hesitation. At dawn each day, he would go forth in his canoe, rowing laboriously out to the stakes where he strung his nets. But river fish are puny, and give no profit. He could not go on at the mercy of chance; barely covering his daily expenses would no longer do. Life shows no mercy to the weak. Neither life, nor our fellow men. It was an old lesson, which time imparted pitilessly. As a result, each year, when the mackerel returned, he braved the open sea with the others, despite his age and the great weariness of his body.

“Leave yourself be at home, man. The sea is too much for you now”, his wife would say to him.

It was true. His scrawny body, worn out by over six decades of hard graft, was growing weak, faltering under the strain. Yet he kept on, screwing up his courage into strength:

“Don't get yourself het up, Angelina! You know I'd rather not go. Once there was the lure of adventure... But the sea only entices the young, for old-timers like me it holds no attraction.”

After the monsoon, when the large shoals began to appear, this scene would recur each day. And each day it would end in tears and entreaties.

“Don't go, father... Stay in the river!

Com camarão também se ganha dinheiro...”, pedia a filha com a ternura dos seus vinte anos, lembrando-se de outros pescadores, que um dia lá ficaram.

Bostião tentava explicar, de todos os feitios, o seu lugar na sociedade sudra a que pertencia. E os seus deveres, a que não podia fugir, que o faziam escravo. Bem via que todas as raparigas da aldeia com a idade da Carminha se iam casando. Pelo bairro, comentava-se já, à boca fechada: “Quando será que o Bostião casa a filha?” E abanavam a cabeça, contristados, com maus presságios. E Bostião sabia isso. Ouvia. Sentia. Doía-lhe. Mas que podia fazer? Ele é que sabia as linhas com que se cosia. Mas era certo. Havia uma censura velada nas falas dos companheiros. Exigiam-lhe que desse de casar à filha. Faziam-no sem se lembrarem de que era velho e mal podia já ir todas as manhãs até às estacas do rio levantar as redes. Mas era assim. Sempre fora assim, desde tempos remotos. Bostião sabia. E tinham razão. Que as raparigas, em passando da idade... E não seria o primeiro caso! “O corpo é mau conselheiro, e há que colocar as raparigas logo que começam a despertar”, diziam, com uma sabedoria de milénios.

“A vender camarões não conseguirei amearhar para o teu dote”, murmurou. “Julgas que morrerei tranquilo sem te ver arrumada? É um peso que trago cá dentro, e já me sinto tão velho!”

“Se não fosse a doença do *sâpây*...”, exclamou a mulher, referindo-se ao sogro. “Gastámos o que tínhamos e o que não tínhamos! E nem ao menos ele se salvou daquela maldita malária...”

“Não foi malária, Angelina! Nós é que julgávamos mas o médico sempre disse que era dos pulmões. Se lhe tivéssemos dado ouvidos logo de começo, talvez o pai se salvasse...”

Não tinham relógio em casa. Regulavam-se pelo nascer e pôr do Sol, pelo abrir e fechar das lojas, pela chegada e partida das lanchas e, por fim, pelo sino da

We can make money with shrimp too...”, his daughter would plead with all the tenderness of her twenty years, remembering other fishermen who had set out one day and never returned.

Bostião tried to explain, every which way he could, the place he held in shudra society. The duties he could not shirk, that enslaved him. He was well aware that in the village all the girls Carminha’s age were getting married. In the neighbourhood, whispered comments passed from mouth to mouth: “When will Bostião marry off his daughter?” they asked, shaking their heads sadly, filled with apprehension. Bostião knew this. Heard this. Felt this. It pained him. But what could he do? He alone knew how hard it was to make ends meet. But one thing was certain. In the words of the other fishermen was a veiled reproach. They expected him to earn enough for his daughter to marry. They expected this even though he was old and could barely row out to the stakes each morning to collect his nets. But that was the way it was, and had been since time immemorial, Bostião well knew. And they were right. If girls go past the age... And it would not be the first time it happened! “The body gives poor counsel, arrangements must be made as soon as girls begin to awaken”, they said, with the wisdom of the ages.

“I’ll never scrape your dowry together selling shrimp”, Bostião muttered. “Do you think I can die in peace without seeing you right? It’s like a weight inside me, and I feel so old!”

“If only *sâpây* hadn’t fallen ill...”, exclaimed his wife, referring to her father-in-law. “We spent everything we had and more besides! And even then he didn’t recover from that damned malaria.”

“It wasn’t malaria, Angelina! We thought it was, but the doctor said lung trouble all along. If we had listened to him from the start, perhaps Father could have been saved...”

Their house had no clock. They measured time by the rising and setting of the sun, by the opening and closing of the shops, by the arrival and departure of the

igreja de Penha de França.

Depois do jantar, rezaram o terço. A seguir Bostião acendeu um *viddi* e saiu, deixando a mulher e a filha a lavarem os cobres e os barrois.

Foi sentar-se à entrada, cimentada havia pouco, antes da doença do *sâpây*, quando as coisas ainda corriam menos mal e havia umas rupias de lado. E ficou a olhar rio, mais adiante, o rio tranquilo que era pai.

Costumava passar assim muitas horas, sorvendo o fumo lentamente, sozinho consigo. Umis vezes ficava só a olhar, sem pensar em nada. Outras, deixava o pensamento escorrer em liberdade. E sempre ia acabar na Carminha. Como naquele dia. Pensava nela e no pouco tempo que tinha, como estava velho. “Rapariga sem dote, quem quer?”, pensava. “Quem quer rapariga sem dote?”, repetia. E ficou de olhos abertos, imóvel, até ouvir a voz de Gustin, do cais.

“Bostião! Eh, Bostião, vamos embora!”

Custava-lhe largar o aconchego da casa, a protecção das olas tecidas, o calor do fogão, lá dentro, onde as brasas não se tinham apagado do todo, para passar toda a noite no mar, numa luta que já não era para ele. E depois, aquele frio, o relento e o terral que lhe punham todo o corpo a tiritar...

Esticou as pernas, preguiçoso, chupando mais uma fumaça do *viddi* e esfregou as mãos. Mas não tardou a ouvir também Vitobá:

“Eh, Bostião, vamos embora!”

“É só um bocado...”

“Temos que aproveitar a maré!”

Bostião levantou-se com energia. Havia determinação nos seus gestos. Carminha veio entregar-lhe o *cambolim*, sorridente. Bostião lançou-o sobre os ombros e afastou-se lentamente ao encontro dos companheiros.

boats, and, lastly, by the bells of the village church in Penha de França.

After dinner, the family said its prayers. Following that, Bostião went out, lighting a *beedi* and leaving his wife and daughter to wash the copper plates and earthen vessels.

He sat down in the doorway. It had been concreted over not long previously, before *sâpây* had fallen ill, when things had been less desperate and they had some rupees put aside. He gazed out at the river ahead, the tranquil, paternal river.

Bostião spent many hours here, smoking in long draws, alone with his thoughts. Sometimes he would sit and stare, his mind a blank. At others, he would let his thoughts run free. But they always returned to Carminha, as they did that day. He thought of her and the little time he had left, how he had grown old. “Who wants a girl without a dowry?” he thought. “A girl without a dowry, who would want her?” he repeated. He stared on, wide-eyed, immobile, until he heard Gustin’s voice from the quay.

“Bostião! Hey Bostião, let’s go!”

It was a wrench to leave the comfort of his home, the protection of its palm-leaf roof, the warmth of the stove inside, in which the coals were not quite spent, to pass the whole night at sea, locked in a struggle he no longer wanted any part of. And then, that cold, the wet night air, and the sea wind that set his whole body shivering...

Lazily he stretched out his legs, took one more puff on his *beedi* and rubbed his hands. But before long he heard Vitobá:

“Hey, Bostião, let’s go!”

“Just a moment...”

“We’ve got to leave with the tide!”

Bostião sprang to his feet, determination showing through in his movements. Carminha came out to hand him his *cambolim* with a smile. Bostião slung it round his shoulders and walked off slowly to meet his companions.

Carminha ficou a olhá-lo em silêncio até que o pai se virou. Então sorriu-lhe de novo.

Mais do que nunca, precisava de inculcá-lhe coragem. Estava em jogo a sua condição de solteira. Estava nas mãos dele o seu destino de mulher. Muitas vezes se perguntava por quanto tempo iria continuar exposta aos olhares dos vizinhos, dos parentes, das más-línguas. Além disso, de vez em quando, aqueles ardores, aqueles sobressaltos que a punham fora de si e quase a faziam gritar... No fundo, porém, não se preocupava muito. Havia nela uma simplicidade natural que a não deixava perder o norte. Talvez se o pai não tivesse falado tão claramente, talvez iludida pelo sabor da juventude, levasse muito mais tempo a compreender a verdadeira natureza do problema. Sentia-se feliz em ir vender no mercado o peixe que o pai apanhava. Só isso, já por si, constituía uma pequena e sedutora aventura social. No mercado de Mapuçá tinha oportunidade de conversar com os rapazes que vinham de Bombaim e de outros sítios a passar a licença a Goa, gabando-se de coisas que tinham visto lá por fora, talvez exagerando, ela sabia, para espantar os aldeões. Carminha gostava deles. Eram elegantes. Tinham outras maneiras, usavam muita brilhantina no cabelo e apareciam no mercado sempre de pijama, ao contrário dos pescadores que, quase sempre, só usavam langotim.

No umbral, de olhos fechados, Carminha sorvia a aragem fresca que vinha do rio. E recordava um a um os rostos morenos dos rapazes que apareciam todos os anos na aldeia, de cabelo lúcido e horizontes abertos no olhar. E, pensando neles, adormeceu sobre o cimento, enquanto o velho Bostião, fazendo bofe das tripas, mourejava no mar.

II

Na manhã seguinte, muito cedo, as mulheres juntaram-se no cais, ansiosas, olhando para a foz. Pousaram os cestos e sentaram-se ao lado, no chão, insensíveis ao sol já ardente. No rio, começava o

Carminha stood and watched in silence. When her father turned back towards her, she smiled once again.

More than ever it was necessary to instil courage in her father. Her chances of getting married were at stake. Her future prospects as a woman were in his hands. She often asked herself how long she would remain prey to the watchful eyes of neighbours, family members and local muckrakers. What's more, from time to time, she had these burning urges, disturbances that left her beside herself, and almost made her shout out loud... At heart, however, she was not greatly troubled. Within Carminha was a natural simplicity of spirit that kept her on an even keel. Had her father not spoken so candidly maybe she would have remained caught up in the headiness of youth, and taken far longer to realise the true nature of her predicament. She was happy going to market to sell her father's catch. This trip alone represented a small yet seductive adventure into society. At Mapuçá market she could chat with the young men who came back from Bombay, or further afield, to spend their holidays in Goa. They would show off about sights seen abroad, perhaps exaggerating, she knew, in order to impress the locals. Carminha liked them. They were stylish. They had a different way about them, wore lots of brilliantine in their hair and always came to market in pyjama trousers, unlike the fishermen, who almost only dressed in dhotis.

Carminha crouched in the doorway, eyes closed, and breathed in the fresh breeze coming from the river. She recalled one by one the young men with brown faces who appeared each year in the village, their glistening hair and eyes filled with wide horizons. And, turning them over in her mind, she fell asleep on the cement floor, while old Bostião, stretched to the limit, slogged his guts out at sea.

II

The next morning, very early, the women gathered anxiously on the wharf and peered out towards the mouth of the river. Placing their baskets on the floor, they sat down beside them, unfazed by the

movimento e as tonas de transporte cruzavam-no, carregadas de gente que ia para os empregos em Pangim. As mulheres ficaram a olhar, paradas, na esperança de que a tona grande surgisse, a tona grande e sem toldo, carregada de bom peixe.

E, de súbito, as mulheres sorriram. Sorriram ao mesmo tempo, porque era como se todas elas fossem uma só mulher. Sentiam em uníssono. Porque eram os maridos de todas que voltavam na tona grande que já se aproximava. As mulheres sorriam, ao lado dos cestos, que depressa se encheriam de grandes cavalas prateadas.

“Hoje os nossos homens veem a remar em silêncio. Se calhar não tiveram sorte...”, murmurou uma.

“Não. Talvez não. A época é boa!”, disse outra.

“Eu não distingo o Bostião no grupo!”, exclamou uma terceira.

E ficaram suspensas. Acotovelaram-se, caladas, até que a tona se aproximou e os homens se curvaram mais, erguendo o corpo de Bostião nos braços.

As mulheres estremeceram e fitaram Angelina, de olhos muito abertos, a bainha do *capodd* amarrotada entre os dedos.

E, de súbito, o grito saiu-lhe das entranhas, com angústia e revolta:

“Ai, *Devá, Devá*, meu Bostião! *Devá!*”

As outras rodearam-na, tapando-lhe a vista, enquanto os homens conduziam Bostião para casa.

Angelina seguiu-os, soluçando todo o caminho, num queixume:

“Ai, *Devá, Devá*, como me trouxeram o Bostião!”

Quando chegaram, as mulheres deixaram-na chegar ao pé do marido estendido na esteira.

“Ai, Bostião!”, gritou ela, caindo de joelhos.

already scorching sun. On the river the traffic was just getting started. Boats ferrying people over to their jobs in Panjim crossed to and fro. The women sat and stared, motionless, hoping that the big boat would appear, the big boat with no tarpaulin cover, filled with a fine catch.

Suddenly the women broke into smiles. They smiled in unison because it was as if they were but one woman. Their hearts leapt in unison, as it was all their men who were returning on the big boat, which now approached. The women smiled, at their sides stood baskets that would soon be filled with large silvery mackerel.

“Our men are rowing in silence today. Perhaps they didn’t have any luck...”, one of them murmured.

“No. Maybe you’re wrong. It’s the right season!” said another.

“I don’t see Bostião amongst them!” exclaimed a third.

They stopped short, nudging one another in silence until the boat drew in. The men stooped low, lifting Bostião up in their arms.

The women shivered and turned to stare at Angelina. Her eyes were wide-open, the hem of her *capodd* twisted between her fingers.

Then, suddenly, she let out a raw cry of anguish and dismay.

“Oh, *Devá, Devá*, my Bostião! *Devá!*”

The other women formed a circle around Angelina, blocking her view, while the men carried Bostião home.

Angelina followed behind, sobbing all the way and wailing:

“Oh, *Devá, Devá*, look how they’ve brought me back Bostião!”

When they arrived the women allowed her to approach her husband, who was stretched out on a mat.

“Oh, Bostião!” she cried, falling to her knees.

Mas os homens começaram a falar.

“Tragam-lhe um caldo de canja”, ordenou Salvador, impondo silêncio.

Em casos de desmaio, Gustin recomendava que se cheirasse uma cebola e aguardente.

“Uma dose de fenim para reanimá-lo!”

Carminha regressava do poço com duas bilhas de água. Ao ver toda aquela gente, estremeceu. A bilha que trazia à cabeça tombou, encharcando o embostado.

“Meu pai!”, soluçou.

“Já mandei chamar a *distican*”, disse alguém. E esta palavra dizia tudo sobre a suposta causa do sucedido.

Angelina friccionava com óleo de coco os braços e o peito do marido com toda a energia. Pouco a pouco, Bostião ia voltando a si, abrindo os olhos e ingerindo canja de arroz que uma vizinha lhe metia na boca à força.

“Coma, Bostião, para ficar bom!”, dizia-lhe, insistindo.

Mas nesse momento chegou a *distican* a correr, ofegando.

Era uma mulher com perto de cinquenta anos, enérgica, segura de si. Trazia o cabelo empastado com óleo de coco e enrolado na nuca. Olhou para o doente com perspicácia e franziu o nariz. Depois deu uma volta, agachou-se junto da esteira e passou-lhe a mão em frente do rosto. Bostião, fatigado, fechou os olhos.

“Preciso de sal e três pimentas!”, gritou, com voz rouca, a *distican*, sem desfitar o pescador e rezando alto, cadencialmente:

Satmântâm

Devá bapá sarvhukumdâr...

Uma das mulheres estendeu-lhe as pimentas e o sal. E a velha, curvando-se,

The men had already begun to speak up.

“Bring some chicken broth”, Salvador ordered, imposing silence.

To bring someone round from a faint, Gustin recommended wafting an onion in firewater under their nose.

“Some feni to revive him!”

Carminha was on her way back from the well with two pitchers of water. When she saw the crowd, she shuddered. One pitcher dropped from her head, drenching the cow-dung floor.

“Father!” she sobbed.

“I’ve already sent for the *distican*”, someone said. This word alone expressed what they thought had caused Bostião’s affliction.

Angelina rubbed coconut oil into the chest and arms of her husband with all her energy. Little by little, Bostião came to his senses. He opened his eyes and swallowed the chicken broth one of his neighbours was spooning into his mouth.

“Eat up, Bostião, so you get well again!” she said, not taking no for an answer.

At that moment the *distican* arrived. She rushed in, huffing and puffing.

A small woman around fifty years old, she was brisk and full of self-assurance. Her hair, thick with coconut oil, was tied up in a bun. She gave the patient an astute look and wrinkled her nose. Walking round to the far side of the mat, she crouched down in front of Bostião and waved her hand across his face. He shut his eyes, exhausted.

“I need some salt and three peppers!” the *distican* shouted hoarsely. Without taking her eyes off the fisherman she began to pray, loudly and rhythmically:

Satmântâm

Devá bapá sarvhukumdâr...

One of the women passed her the peppers and the salt. The old woman leant

passou-os três vezes pelo corpo do doente, repetindo:

Satmântâm

Devá bapá sarvhukumdâr...

Sorguincho ãni samsâracho rachnar...

A seguir, entre o silêncio geral, levantou-se e foi lançar as pimentas ao fogo. Ergueu-se uma labareda mais viva e ouviu-se um estalido forte. Angelina virou-se para as outras mulheres:

“Já viram? Eu não tinha dito que era mau olhado?”

“Não admira!”, apoiou Florinda. “Ultimamente todos diziam: ‘O velho Bostião ainda aguenta muito bem a pesca das cavalas.’ Eu logo vi. Deviam ter chamado a *distican* mesmo antes dele ir para o mar!”

“Na quarta-feira ele ficará completamente bom. Quarta-feira é o dia de tirar o mau-olhado”, garantiu a velha, da porta.

Angelina estendeu a mão e entregou-lhe quatro tangas, que a velha se apressou a meter no bolso. E, virando as costas, voltou para casa, satisfeita.

Logo que a *distican* saiu, na barraca de Bostião as pessoas começaram a retirar-se.

“Se precisarem de alguma coisa, mandem chamar-me”, disse Tomsó.

“E se for preciso dinheiro... Não sou rico, mas há-de arranjar-se qualquer coisa”, murmurou Gustin.

“Não chore, Carminha!”, disse VencTexa, que viera comprar peixe e entrara ao saber do sucedido. “Vá a minha casa e a minha mulher dá-lhe uma raiz que, esfregada numa pedra com água e posta na testa de seu pai, o põe logo bom. Vai ver como se levanta logo”, garantiu.

over and trailed them three times across the ill man’s body, repeating:

Satmântâm

Devá bapá sarvhukumdâr...

Sorguincho ãni samsâracho rachnar...

Afterwards, amidst the silence around her, she got to her feet and threw the peppers into the fire. A tongue of brighter flame flashed up and a crackling sound was heard. Angelina turned to the other women:

“Did you see? Didn’t I say it was down to the evil-eye?”

“It’s no surprise!” Florinda chipped in. “Lately everyone has been saying: ‘Old Bostião still has what it takes to go mackerel fishing’. I knew it then. They should have called in the *distican* even before he set out to sea!”

“He’ll be all better by Wednesday. I guarantee Wednesday’s the day to lift the evil eye”, said the old woman, standing in the doorway.

Angelina reached out her hand and gave the old woman four *tanga* coins, which she hurriedly shoved in her pocket. She turned away, satisfied, and set off for home.

As soon as the *distican* had left, people started to file out of Bostião’s shack.

“Send for me if you need anything”, said Tomsó.

“If you need any money... I’m not rich, but I can scrape something together”, Gustin said, quietly.

“Don’t cry, Carminha”, said VencTexa, who had made his way over to buy fish and had come in after learning what happened. “Go to my house. My wife has this root. Rub it on a stone with some water then place it on your father’s forehead. He’ll get better straight away, you’ll see. Up and about in no time”, he guaranteed.

III

Curvado sobre o doente, o Dr. Amoncar tinha uma certa dificuldade em auscultá-lo.

“Sempre a mesma coisa, sempre a mesma coisa!”, resmungou. “Porque não me mandaram chamar há mais tempo? Primeiro a *distican*, não é?, depois o *gaddi*, e eu só no último caso! Quantas vezes já lhes disse que não tomem paliativos!”

Gustin, Tomsó, Vitobá, Franxavier e Savitri estavam aos pés de Bostião, cujas costelas salientes parecia que lhe rasgavam a pele seca. As palavras do médico fizeram-nos baixar a cabeça. Em todos os rostos se podia ler uma grande angústia.

O Dr. Amoncar estava habituado a falar assim. Fazia parte da sua rotina. Aquilo tornara-se-lhe já uma coisa mecânica. Estava calejado. Não tinha ilusões de pretender que lhe obedecessem, isso era outra verdade. Aquela gente tinha a sua *distican*, em que acreditava. Tirar-lhe podia talvez fazer-lhes mais mal do que bem. O que achava mais urgente era livrá-los daquela ignorância, daquele desprezo íntimo pelo progresso, que, ao fim e ao cabo, reconhecia-o, lhes permitia ser felizes à sua maneira, mas que, por outro lado, os tornava vítimas indefesas de todos os males.

“Se é questão de dinheiro, doutor...”

Gustin não chegou a completar a sua ideia, pois o médico interrompeu-o:

“Qual dinheiro, homem! Vocês bem sabem que eu nunca me importei com o dinheiro dos doentes e, tratando-se de gente pobre, nem um poicá recebo. Interesse-me é pela vossa vida, percebem?” Custava-lhe ser mais uma vez ríspido, mas tinha consciência de cumprir um dever. É que a sua principal tarefa não era assistir aos doentes, mas influenciá-los. Tinha que penetrar no espírito daqueles pescadores drávidas, que tão bem conhecia e que por isso mesmo estimava como verdadeiros homens que eram. Sabia que se deixavam guiar apenas pelo instinto, que a sua vida era toda feita de pressentimento... Por isso

III

Hunched low, Dr Amoncar was having a difficult time checking his patient’s heartbeat.

“It’s always the same old story, the same old story!” he grumbled. “Why did you not send for me before? First you call the *distican*, then the *gaddi*, and then me only as a last resort. How many times have I told you not to take palliatives!”

Gustin, Tomsó, Vitobá, Franxavier and Savitri stood at Bostião’s feet. Sharp ribs seemed to pierce right through his desiccated skin. At the doctor’s words the group bowed their heads, great anguish clearly etched on every face.

Dr Amoncar had grown accustomed to expressing himself bluntly. It was part of his routine, a mechanical response. He had become hardened and was under no illusion that the fishermen would obey; this also was true. These people had their *distican*, in whom they had faith. To take that away would perhaps do more harm than good. To Amoncar what was more urgent was to lift them from their ignorance, their inner disdain for progress. Admittedly, when all was said and done, it was this ignorance that allowed them a happiness of sorts, yet it was also what left them powerless, prey to each and every misfortune.

“If it’s a matter of your fee, Doctor...”

Before Gustin could finish his sentence, the doctor interrupted:

“Fee! You know I’ve never cared a fig about my patients’ money, man. I treat the poor without receiving a paisa in return. I’m interested in the way you live your lives, don’t you understand?” It pained him to speak harshly once more, but he was conscious of fulfilling a duty. The main task he faced was not to attend to patients, but to exert his influence over them. He had to enter the minds of these Dravidian fishermen, whom he knew so well and whom, as a consequence, he esteemed as the true men they were. He knew that they allowed themselves to be governed by their instincts, and that their lives were ruled by

procurava, sempre que possível, ensinar-lhes as regras mais elementares para o tratamento dos seus males. “Antes deles, milhões de homens foram ignorantes”, pensou. “Estes também aprenderão um dia.” E sorria, mansamente, ao reflectir no inconcebível progresso do homem, esse triste macaco sábio.

Acabou de passar a recita e hesitou. Depois estendeu-a a um dos homens.

“Vá a minha casa buscar alguns destes remédios. Outras terão que comprar.”

Vitobá avançou com humildade:

“Obrigado, doutor. Diga-nos o que devemos fazer para vermos o Bostião livre desta doença.”

“Ele não pode continuar a dormir no chão. Vocês não têm pelo menos um colchão?”, perguntou.

“Colchão?... Não, doutor”, titubeou Carminha.

Mas D. Lavínia, acabava de entrar. Ninguém dera pela sua presença, mas ela apressou-se a fazer-se notada, intervindo:

“Se é questão de cama, posso emprestá-la, mas sem colchão. Como é de tábuas, basta pôr uma esteira por cima e fica boa.”

Os pescadores ficaram a olhar para ela, espantados. Devia ser um rebate de consciência porque, embora fizesse frequentemente “vistas de caridade”, D. Lavínia era incapaz de emprestar, e muito menos dar, fosse o que fosse. Ante qualquer desgraça premente, respondia piedosamente: “Deus o ajude!”, acrescentando: “Deus sabe bem as linhas com que me coso.” Mas ninguém ignorava que era tudo mentira, que o marido lhe deixara farta herança com propriedades de arroz e coco, e que os dois filhos estavam bem colocados no Golfo Pérsico, donde lhe mandavam mesadas chorudas.

Gustin não podia perdoar a D. Lavínia ter-lhe recusado um punhado de arroz fino que pedira emprestado para a filha, quando estivera doente e proibida

omens... So he sought, whenever possible, to impart to them the most elementary rules for the treatment of their ills. “Before them, millions of men lived in ignorance”, he thought. “These men too will learn one day.” He smiled gently, reflecting on the incalculable progress made by man, that sad yet clever ape.

He finished writing out the prescription then hesitated, before passing it to one of the men.

“You can fetch some of these medicines from my house. The others you will have to buy yourselves.”

Vitobá edged meekly forward:

“Thank you, doctor. Tell us what we have to do to help rid Bostião of this sickness.”

“He can’t go on sleeping on the floor. Don’t you at least have a mattress?”, he asked.

“A mattress...? No, doctor”, Carminha stammered.

By this time Dona Lavínia had come in. She had entered unseen, but lost no time making herself noticed. She chimed in:

“If it’s a bed you need, I can lend you one, but without a mattress. It’s got boards underneath, all you need to do is put a mat on top and it’s fine.”

The fishermen stared in surprise. Her conscience must have been pricked. Despite frequent “charity visits”, Dona Lavínia was incapable of lending - much less giving - anything to anyone. Faced with a pressing misfortune she would say: “May God help you!” and add: “God knows I struggle to make ends meet.” Everybody knew this to be a lie. Her husband had left her a fat inheritance, including lands rich in rice and coconuts, and her two sons had found comfortable positions in the Persian Gulf, from where they sent home a generous allowance.

Gustin had not forgiven Dona Lavínia for refusing to lend him a handful of fine rice when his daughter had been ill and the doctor had forbidden her to eat

pelo médico de comer o corangute. Quis, portanto, dar-lhe uma lição e respondeu com arrogância:

“Não vale a pena, Lavin bai. Nós podemos ser pobres, mas uma cama sempre se há-de arranjar.”

Os outros sorriram levemente, aprovando. Angelina aproveitou também para se desforrar da humilhação sofrida por ocasião da ladainha da Cruz, quando D. Lavínia recusara vender-lhe alguns cocos para o doce que tinha que oferecer aos convidados. E disse, com ironia:

“Não queremos a sua cama, Lavin bai. Em último caso podemos sobrepor umas tábuas com uma manta por cima...”

“Que cambada!”, exclamou D. Lavínia em português para o médico. “Esta gente é pobre e mal agradecida. Que soberba!”

Não ocultava o seu desprezo por certas atitudes da “gente do povo”. O que lhe valeu naquele momento foi a desforra de poder exhibir o seu português no meio da “cambada”, que só falava concaninim.

O Dr. Amoncar assistia a uma cena que só o fazia admirar ainda mais aqueles sudras humildes e tisonados. No fundo do coração, detestava aquela mulherinha irritante e presunçosa, hipócrita consumada, exploradora de manducares. E retorquiu:

“Não tem razão, D. Lavínia. Esta gente não é cambada e é bom não confundirmos dignidade com soberba! Diante de tanta coisa de que o doente precisa, que faz a senhora? Empresta-lhe uma cama. Nem sequer dá: empresta. E o resto? O Bostião precisa de mais: remédios, injeções, boa alimentação, tónicos... E onde vai arranjar dinheiro para tudo isso? Eu, pela parte que me toca, não receberei nem um poiçá e vou ver se lhe arranjo os medicamentos de graça.”

D. Lavínia enrubescou e contra-atacou:

corangute. Wanting to teach Dona Lavínia a lesson, he retorted:

“There’s no need, Lavin bai. Poor we may be, but we can always make do for a bed.”

The others gave thin smiles of approval. Angelina took advantage of the situation to avenge the humiliation she had felt when, at the time of the litany of the Cross, Dona Lavínia had refused to sell her coconuts to make a sweet for her guests. She added ironically:

“We don’t want your bed, Lavin bai. If the worst comes to the worst we can always lay a mat out across a few boards...”

“What rifferaff!” Dona Lavínia exclaimed in Portuguese to the doctor. “Miserable ingrates the lot of them. What arrogance!”

She did not hide her disdain for the behaviour of the “common herd”. The only thing that allowed her to save face, and gain a measure of revenge, was the opportunity to show off her Portuguese to the “rifferaff”, who could only speak Konkani.

This exchange only increased Dr Amoncar’s admiration for these humble, dark-skinned shudras. At heart he detested this silly little woman who was so tiresome and presumptuous, this consummate hypocrite who exploited her *mundkars*. He replied angrily:

“You’re wrong, Dona Lavínia. These people are not rifferaff, and you would do well not to confuse dignity with arrogance! There are so many things that this invalid obviously needs and what do you do? Offer to lend him a bed. Not even give, just lend. What about the rest? Bostião needs more: medicines, injections, a good diet, tonics... Where on earth is he going to get the money for all that? For my part, I’ll not receive a single paisa for my work and I’ll try to see if I can get him his medicine for free.”

Dona Lavínia blushed red, before hitting back:

“Defende a dignidade desta gente, esquecendo-se da minha, que é superior. Repare que sou brâmane, como o doutor! Quanto a isso de dar, cada um faz o que pode. Cada qual sabe de si e Deus sabe de todos, doutor.”

O médico encolheu os ombros, desinteressado. D. Lavínia fez uma careta de desagrado e passou a mão pelo rosto. Depois, bruscamente, erguendo-se da única cadeira existente no compartimento escuro, pretextou pressa em voltar a casa.

“Como boa cristã, não podia deixar de cumprir este dever de visitar um doente”, disse, estendendo a mão ao médico. “Mas não posso demorar-me, vocês compreendem... Meus filhos chegaram ontem do Golfo Pérsico e os preparativos para a festa ainda não terminaram, vocês compreendem...”

No caminho de volta, sentiu-se melhor: “Que cambada!”, resmungou, arrependida de lá ter ido. “Juntos como formigas num quarto tão miserável e pequeno, só com uma janelinha por onde mal entra a luz do dia, uf! Que falta de ar!”

Logo que chegou a casa foi estender-se numa cadeira *voltaire* e começou a abanar-se nervosamente com uma ventarola comprada na feira da festa da Senhora da Conceição. Aquele gesto queria dizer que estava indisposta.

Ao vê-la, Robin, o filho mais velho, indagou:

“Mamã, não se sente bem?”
 “Nada”, respondeu D. Lavínia, furiosa, “É que esta gente do povo está cada vez mais altanada. Estive agora mesmo em casa do pescador Bostião e fiquei furiosa com aquela cambada. O pior foi o médico. Anda feito com eles.”

Robin achou a oportunidade boa para espantar a mãe com os seus conhecimentos angariados em terras longínquas:

“Se calhar o médico é comunista!”

“You defend the dignity of these people, yet forget mine, which is of a higher order. Like you, I too am a Brahmin. As for handouts, each of us gives what we can. Our consciences are known only to ourselves and to God, doctor.”

Dr Amoncar shrugged, showing no interest. Dona Lavínia grimaced with displeasure and wiped her face with her hand. Rising abruptly from the only chair in the ill-lit room, she invented a pretext to rush back to her house.

“As a good Christian, I had to fulfill my duty to visit the patient”, she said, holding her hand out to the doctor. “But I cannot stay, you must understand, my sons arrived back from the Persian Gulf yesterday, and the preparations for their welcome reception are not yet complete, you must understand...”

She felt much better on the way home. “What ruffraff!” she grumbled, regretting ever having come. “Heaped up like ants in that wretched little room, with that slit of a window that hardly lets in any light. Phew! How close the air was in there!”

No sooner had she arrived back than she stretched out on her chaise longue and began cooling herself nervously with a fan she had bought at the fair at the feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception. This gesture signalled that she was not in a good mood.

Coming in, her eldest son Robin asked her:

“Mama, are you feeling poorly?”
 “I’m fine”, Dona Lavínia snapped. “It’s just that those people in the village are getting airs above their station. I’ve just been to that fisherman Bostião’s house, I was livid with those ruffraff. The worst of it was that doctor. He’s in cahoots with them all.”

Robin saw a good opportunity to impress his mother with the knowledge he had acquired in far-off lands:

“That doctor is probably a Communist!”

“Ora essa!”, murmurou D. Lavínia. “Eu cá não compreendo esses novos termos... O que disseste?”

IV

Em casa do Bostião travava-se uma verdadeira luta entre os pescadores e o médico. O Dr. Amoncar esforçava-se por explicar que um tuberculoso tem que ser internado no sanatório. Mas ninguém se deixava convencer.

“Não, doutor, não vou para o hospital! Deixe-me estar aqui entre os meus! Prefiro morrer na minha aldeia, na minha casa, com Gustin, Vitobá, Tomsó e todos deste bairro. Não... não, doutor, hospital nunca!”

Estas palavras fracas do doente foram abafadas pela voz aguda de Angelina:

“Se o doutor não quer tratar do meu marido, seja franco. Havemos de chamar outro médico. Se for preciso, até empenhamos os cobres e as redes!”

“Pode contar comigo, Angelina. Não sou rico, mas dinheiro para Bostião arranjar-se!”, interveio Gustin.

“Comigo, também podem contar! Coragem, Carminha, seu pai não sairá daqui!”, garantiu Vitobá.

O Dr Amoncar quase se deu por vencido. Achava-se num estranho campo de batalha, onde os sentimentos e as tradições eram mais fortes do que a razão e onde não tinha possibilidades de triunfar. Por isso mudou de tática. Encarou o doente com sinceridade:

“O Bostião, esqueça-se de que sou doutor e vamos falar de homem para homem. Está bem? Ora diga-me uma coisa, você lembra-se de como morreu seu pai?”

“Sim senhor, não foi malária... foi dos pulmões...”, virou-se para o lado direito, para encarar o médico, fazendo ranger as tábuas da improvisada cama. “O doutor queria que o pai fosse também para

“Heavens above!” murmured Dona Lavínia. “These new-fangled terms are too much for me... What did you say again?”

IV

At Bostião’s house a veritable battle was being waged between the fishermen and the doctor. Dr Amoncar was striving to explain that the patient had tuberculosis and needed to be admitted to the sanatorium. Nobody would listen.

“No, doctor, I won’t go to hospital! Leave me be here with my people! I’d prefer to die in my own village, in my own house, surrounded by Gustin, Vitobá, Tomsó and my other neighbours. No, doctor... no hospital. Never!”

The patient’s feeble words were drowned out by Angelina’s shrill voice:

“Dr Amoncar, if you don’t want to treat my husband just be upfront about it. We’ll call in another doctor. If we have to we’ll even pawn our fishing nets and copperware!”

“You can count on me, Angelina. I’m not rich, but I can always find some money somewhere for Bostião!” Gustin chipped in.

“You can count on me too! Chin up, Carminha. Your father’ll not leave this house!”, Vitobá added.

Dr Amoncar was on the verge of giving in. He found himself on a strange field of war, where feelings and traditions outfought reason, and where he had no hope of triumph. He decided to switch tactics. He turned to the patient and spoke sincerely:

“Look Bostião, forget that I’m a doctor. Let’s talk man-to-man, OK? Tell me something, do you remember how it was your father died?”

“Yes, sir, it wasn’t malaria... It was lung trouble...” He turned over onto his side to face the doctor, making the boards of the improvised bed groan in the process. “You wanted him to go into hospital too. I

o hospital, lembro-me bem.”

“Agora escute-me: você tem a doença de seu pai. Compreendeu? E portanto tem que ir para o tal hospital... Se não for, o mal é para si e para os outros porque você pode pegar a doença a outras pessoas. Se for, ficará bom e dentro de pouco tempo pode voltar para casa!”

Bostião ficou a olhar, parado, pensativo. Fitava o médico de frente, nos olhos, para tentar saber se não estaria a querer enganá-lo. Mas abanou a cabeça, convencido. O médico era pessoa séria. Não enganava ninguém. Já dissera o mesmo do *sâpây* e não tinham querido dar-lhe ouvidos. E *sâpây* morreu. D doutor tinha razão. O *sâpây* morreria porque não tinha ido para o hospital. Encarou o médico, decidido:

“Doutor, minha doença pode pegar aos outros? Então vou... Não quero desgraçar ninguém por minha causa. Vou ao tal hospital...”

Nos semblantes dravídicos, um misto de culpa e admiração marcava a derrota aceite com dignidade... Quanto ao Dr. Amoncar, podia-se considerar vencedor, mas, em vez disso, experimentava uma sensação dolorosa. A fala ficou-lhe presa na garganta.

Nesse momento, muito contra sua vontade, D. Lavínia surgiu no cubículo impregnado de odor a drogas e incenso. Tivera o propósito de nunca mais lá pôr os pés, mas a maldita consciência acusara-a e não a deixava em descanso. Para reaver a paz, teve que se ir confessar. E o padre dera-lhe por penitência uma humilhação: “Volte a casa do Bostião e leve algum auxílio. A senhora não tem o direito de se revoltar contra eles, de lhes desprezar. Eles são sudras. A senhora herdou a riqueza e a casta de seus antepassados, portanto sem mérito... E lembre-se de que Deus disse: *E mais fácil a um camelo passar pelo buraco de uma agulha do que um rico entrar no Céu.*” E não tivera outro remédio. Mas ia contrariada. Que não se podia ser mole com aquela gente. Depois

remember it well, Dr Amoncar.”

“Now listen to me: you’ve got your father’s illness. Do you get that? You have to be admitted to hospital. If you don’t go, it’ll be bad for you and bad for the others, they could catch your illness. If you do go, you’ll get better and be home in no time!”

Bostião stopped and stared, thinking it over. He looked the doctor straight in the eyes, trying to work out whether he was telling the truth, and then shook his head, convinced. Dr Amoncar was an honest man, and never misled anybody. He had said the same thing about *sâpây* and nobody had wanted to listen. And *sâpây* had died. Dr Amoncar was right: *sâpây* had died because he had not gone to hospital. He looked at the doctor, his mind made up:

“The others can catch my illness, Doctor? I’ll go then... I don’t want to be the cause of anyone else’s ruin. I’ll go to your hospital...”

On the faces of the Dravidians a mixture of guilt and admiration marked their dignified acceptance of defeat... As for Dr Amoncar, he could consider himself the victor. Yet, instead of triumph, all he experienced was a painful sensation. He had a lump in his throat, and could not speak.

At that moment, and against her own wishes, Dona Lavínia entered the room, which reeked of medicaments and incense. She had decided never again to cross that threshold, but her damn conscience had rounded on her and would not leave her alone. She had gone to confession to regain some peace of mind, and the priest had ordered that she humble herself in penitence: “Go back to Bostião’s house and take him succour. You have no right to curse or despise those people. They are shudras. You inherited your wealth and caste from your forbears, and thus have done nothing to deserve either. Remember the words of God: *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*” So she had no choice but to go. She

abusavam. Olhou para Bostião e avançou até meio da casa. Depois, lentamente, para que todos vissem bem como era generosa, tirou uma rupia da mala e colocou-a na mão do doente:

“É para leite!”, disse. E vincou bem a palavra ‘leite’, que eles nunca bebiam. “Vá, fique bom. Pedirei por si a Deus”, acrescentou, comovida com a sua própria piedade.

“Obrigada, Lavin bai” murmurou Angelina. “Peça também por Carminha, que agora precisa mais do pai... e peça também pelos pescadores de Orlim.”

Mentalmente, o Dr. Amoncar pôs-se a fazer o cálculo do tempo necessário para transportar o doente até ao hospital. Não podia deixar passar nem mais uma noite, não acabassem por desistir.

“Bem, é bom aprontarem uma tona para levarem Bostião”, exclamou. “Já falei no hospital. Basta entregarem lá uma carta minha.”

Tirou a carta do bolso e estendeu-a a Gustin, que era o maioral.

“Não se esqueça de a entregar no hospital. O resto já está tratado.”

Venctexa fez sinal aos outros para que o seguissem. Só Gustin ficou atento às instruções do médico.

“Vamos ver se a tona se prendeu no lodo. A maré é vazante.”

E logo a seguir, a *distican* apareceu. Vinha cansada, a correr. Soubera da notícia no mercado. Furou por entre as mulheres e ofereceu-se para fazer qualquer coisa. Mas não havia nada em que pudesse ser útil. Angelina já tinha feito uma pequena trouxa com roupa e chorava, enxugando as lágrimas com a ponta do *capodd*. Quando os pescadores voltaram, com os pés sujos de lodo, o seu choro aumentou, transformando-se num lamento animal.

went unwillingly, however. One could not be soft on these people, or they would take advantage. Looking directly at Bostião she walked to the centre of the room. Then, slowly, so that everyone could see her generosity, she took a rupee from her bag and placed it in the patient’s hand:

“This is for milk!” she said, stressing the word “milk”, which those people never drank. “God speed your recovery. I shall pray for you”, she added, moved by her own piety.

“Thank you, Lavin bai”, Angelina murmured. “Pray also for Carminha, who now needs her father more than ever, and for all the fisherfolk of Orlim.”

In his head, Dr Amoncar calculated the time it would take to transfer the patient to hospital. He could not let another night pass, for fear they might change their minds.

“Right, you’d better get a boat ready to transport Bostião”, he exclaimed. “I’ve already spoken to the hospital. All you have to do is show them this letter.”

He took a letter from his coat pocket and handed it to Gustin, the head of the group.

“Don’t forget to show it at the hospital. The rest is already taken care of.”

Venctexa made a sign for the others to follow him out. Only Gustin stayed behind, listening attentively to the doctor’s instructions.

“Let’s go and see if our boat has got stuck in the soft mud. The tide is on its way out.”

The next moment, the *distican* appeared. She had run all the way from the market, where she had heard the news, and was exhausted. She squeezed her way past the women and offered her help, only there was nothing left to do. Angelina had made up a little bundle of clothes and was now crying, wiping away her tears with the hem of her *capodd*. When the fishermen returned, their feet dark with mud, her crying increased until it became an animal-like keening.

“Por que esperam? É melhor levarem-no...”, murmurou o Dr. Amoncar num tom seco que não lhe pertencia.

Angelina, Carminha, Savitri, D. Lavínia choravam como se ali, perante a dor, fossem todas iguais e as castas não separassem até à morte.

Num breve relance, Bostião colheu as últimas imagens da sua velha aldeia; a casa com telhado de churtas, a mulher e a filha, todas as pessoas que não abandonaram até ao fim. Ao longe, a Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Penha de França reflectindo-se no Mandovi, surgia-lhe como uma esperança.

No cais, apenas o ruído dos remos contra a água. E Carminha, hirta come uma estátua de resignação.

“What are you waiting for? You’d better take him...”, Dr Amoncar muttered in a harsh tone that did not belong to him.

Angelina, Carminha, Savitri, and Dona Lavínia wept as if they were all equal before such pain, no longer divided by caste until their dying day.

Bostião glanced up one last time at his old village: his house with its palm-leaf-covered roof, his wife and daughter, the friends who until the end had not abandoned him. In the distance, the church of Our Lady of Penha de França, mirrored in the Mandovi river, rose up like a last hope.

On the wharf there was nothing but the sound of the oars against the water. And Carminha, frozen like a statue of resignation.

Glossary of Goan Terms

Cambolim	- woollen cloak
Cappod	- sari used by married women
Corangute	- type of coarse grained rice
<i>Devá!</i>	- My God!
Distican	- faith healer, woman who can remove evil eye
Gaddi	- sorcerer
Mundkar	- sort of Goan serf
Sâpây	- father-in-law
<i>Satmântâm</i> etc	- lines from the Apostles’ Creed in Konkani

Niko Samedashvili's Fleeting Moments

TRANSLATED BY REBECCA GOULD

Niko Samedashvili (1905-1964) was thirty-three when the greatest Georgian poets of his generation – Titsian Tabidze, Paolo Iashvili, and Mikhel Javaxishvili – were killed in the 1930s purges that permanently altered literary life in the former Soviet Union. Not wishing to be executed for his political views, Samedashvili lived and died in utter obscurity, remaining unpublished during his lifetime.

The milieu in which Samedashvili wrote his poems recalls that faced by Kafka on the brink of the Second World War. Also like Kafka, Samedashvili spent his entire life as a bureaucratic functionary. He never joined the Georgian Writer's Union or participated in the literary gatherings that were mandatory for all official writers during that period. His poetic output attests to a conviction that the path of obscurity was the only path open to a Soviet Georgian poet wishing to retain his integrity.

Since the publication of his poems in 1974 and 1989, with the onset of a now fully open climate for literary publication, Samedashvili is posthumously coming to be recognized as one of the great unknown poets of Georgian literary modernity. The rise in his importance to Georgian literary history is also attested by the many pilgrimages Georgians make to his grave today in contemporary Tbilisi. Samedashvili will soon take his place alongside the two Tabidzes (Titsian and Galaktion), Paolo Iashvili, and Gabriel Jabushanuri. Collectively, these poets rewrote the Georgian literary canon and brought Georgia's ancient literary tradition into conversation with modern life. When his legacy is measured against the achievements of his fellow Georgian modernists, Samedashvili will be recognized as the most philosophical, and the most given to reflecting on the absurdity of life under the conditions of Soviet rules.

Samedashvili is not given to verbal pyrotechnics; time and again, he searches for the expressions that transparently convey images of suffering, confusion, despair, resignation, and, less often, contentment and joy. But what is simple in one language all too often appears as empty formalism in another. The translator of these poems faces many challenges; perhaps the hardest to surmount is Samedashvili's embrace of monochromatic, deliberately deadpan language. Lucid Georgian phrases risk losing their imagistic power in translation. Thus, to take one example, the title translated here as "A Heart That Used to Ache" is expressed economically in Georgian as *natkevni guli*, *natkevni*, being the past participle of the verb "to cause pain". The phonic power of *natkeveni* by itself evokes pain, entirely apart from the word's semantic content.

The poem "Yellow Lungs" affords another example of resistance to translation. The phrase rendered here as "on this side transience" is a diluted version of the idea that is expressed in Georgian with one powerful word: *tsutisopeli*. *Tsutisopeli* combines two words in a genitive construction: *tsuti* (instant, a fleeting period of time) and *sopeli* (village). This single word thus translates literally as "the village of an instant", seemingly a nonsensical combination. But in Georgian it makes perfect, and indeed devastating, sense. To reference "an instant's village" is to demonstrate the brevity of human life, to signal mortality by alluding to the most potent symbol of collective identity: a village. In the Georgian literary and folk tradition, the world is conceived as a combination of fleeting time (*tsuti*) and a community (*sopeli*). The poet who has *tsutisopeli* in his poetic armory is able to suggest in five damning syllables that the human community cannot withstand the ravages of time.

Once Samedashvili's deployment of *tsutisopeli* is grasped in terms of its literary precedents, the poet's thematic itinerary appears more clearly etched. "Yellow Lungs" foretells

the poet's own death from tuberculosis. What history has forgotten or otherwise suppressed is here permanently inscribed into the literary record. In view of the contrasts between the passing spectacle of human existence and hard-won permanence of literary life that mark the poet's *oeuvre*, the inscription on Samedashvili's much-visited grave is a fitting place to conclude:

გაივლის დრო და დიდი ხნის მერე
იტყვიან: – ნიკო გვეწვია.
შემოიხვევა ცის უწვედენ მერქანს
ჩემი ცხოვრება და პოეზია

gavlis dro da didi khnis mere
itqghvian: Niko gvetsvia.
Shemoikhveva tsis utsvden merkans
chemi tskhovreba da poezia.

A little time will pass here and then
they will speak of how they tortured Niko.
Then the sky will wrap this tortured wood
and bless my life and poems.

Further reading:

“Landslide” (interview with daughter and granddaughter of the Georgian modernist poet and contemporary of Samedashvili, Titsian Tabidze, d. 1937, conducted by Rebecca Gould)
Guernica: A Magazine of Art & Politics.

http://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/1930/tabidze_8_1_10/

Gould, Rebecca. “The Twilight of Georgian Literary Modernism.” *Metamorphoses: Journal of the Five-College Seminar on Literary Translation* 17, 1 (2009): 50-66.

Tabidze, Titsian, et al. Feature section on “Georgian Literary Modernism”. *Metamorphoses: Journal of the Five-College Seminar on Literary Translation* 17, 1 (2009): 67-103.



Grave of Niko Samedashvili, Tbilisi, Georgia

ფიღვანების სიყვითლე

დაისს ელოდნენ ქართლს სოფლები.
ერავდა სივრცე, დაგვიღი სუფთად.
ფიღვანებს მიწხევდა თვის
ფოტოებივით,
სენი სხეულის მომრდილი სუნტქვა.

მივის სინატრე ხავსივით ექრა.
თიროდნენ გზაზედ ტარხი ქაღები.
ცვენ გსვინოდა რია ქარებთან,
აქ ვუთისოფლის, იქ გრიგადების.

მე დაქარგული მქონდა გონება,
როცა ქარებმა გვიან იყვირის.
სენ უცქეროდი გაოგნებული
ცემი ფიღვანების ცემრად სიყვითლეს.

ბედი ვაეროთ სადრაც, ჯანდაბას..
მსურდა მომექცა თავი უდანოდ.
ბინდების გარმით ვყარვივით სცინდა—
მარადისობის ცუმი იდაბნო.

სადრაც უდოოდი სურგამვარებით,
ცისართყვერებსი ისმოდა ცექვა.
მე ქი მოვრბდი დედამივისქენ,
რომ შემეყვივითი ბარების რექა.

წარწერა

მზე გადიოდა ცას ბორანივით.
ტყეში შიშვერი ქარი ჰკიოდა.
დექსს იძახოდა ხიდან ყორანი,
ქრისტე მოსჩანდა საიქიოდან.

ძვირვს ვამშვიდებდი მოქანცულ
ჩიტებს,
თვარს მიშტერებდა წარმართის
ღოცვა.
ღოდებზე იჯდა გიჟი პოეტი,
კვენსოდა მთების ყრუ გარემოცვა.

დაფრეთიღ სხეულს, დაღადულ
ფიქრებს,
ახლოვდათ მხოლოდ სიცოცხდე
მკვდარი.
სადღაც ეშოვნათ კუბო ჯიბგირებს
და მოეწერათ ზედ ჩემი გვარი!

Yellow Lungs

While Georgia and I waited for dusk,
lightening swept clean the firmament.
Your body's tired breath
dried my lungs like leaves.

Light clung to the moss's fingertips.
Black-clad women drenched the road.
We feared life's severance from this:
on one side transience; on the other, death.

I lost my mind when the wind
whistled in the twilight.
My death was as lucid to you
as my yellow, rancid lungs.

Fate brought us to the cliff.
I dreamed of silent suicides.
Beneath the moon, my endless desert
glowed like an endless sky.

Suddenly, a rainbow broke the horizon.
To make the bells cease,
to make silence speak,
I returned to the source of its sighs.

Epitaph

The sun crossed the sky like a ferry.
The naked wind wept in the forest.
A lonely raven cried poems from the
bridge.
Christ returned from paradise.

I barely calmed my aged birds.
My eyes are numb from pagan prayers.
The crazy poet sat crying on the rock
while mute mountains keened.

Crushed body, tired thoughts:
my life resembles a dead man.
They found a pickpocket's grave
and inscribed on my name there

[Untitled]

ერექლი თითისვიდისადმი

ქვეყნიერებას უცქეროდი ატასნაირად,
ვარმართ ტვარებზე ქრისტეს ვყვავდა გქონდა
აქრუდი,
მტვარე დაისი გაგიტბია, როგორც დაურა,
და ანგვერდებს უღანჯრისხარ მუხებზე დაზრუდი.

ბნეე გეტსიმანის ბარსი დიდხანს
თრუბადურობდი,
რმერთების ჯოგი გოდგოტაზე გედანდებოდა,
დასყვევდეს შირმა, რარა ნისრებს
დაუმეგობრდი,
ტუ არ იცოდი, სად ინტრა, სად ბნეედებოდა?

რა საოცარი იყო შენი მარადისობაც:
დევნიდ სიცოცდეს ბნეე სიმრების ჯანყუ
მადავდა.
დრო. საუქუნის ჯახაჯუხსი ცაისრისება,
და ეგ ცხოვრებაც მოტავდება, როგორც
ბადადა.

Zღივს ნურარ ერცი, ტუ დოდებმა ამოიხრეს,
ბედს ნურარ ერცი, ტუ დოდებმა ამოიხრეს,
ითყვიან: ნეთავ დაგენახათ, როგორც
ვვადობდა,
სანამ დარდებმა საცოდავი სუდ არ გამოხრეს.

ეხდა დადიხარ და ხეებსაც ქი ერიდები,
ხან არც ქი გინდა, რომ ბინასი შემოგყვეს
ცრდილი,
ცოთა ხანს ქიდევ... იმის მერე, რომ
დაბერდები,
ეგ თავის ქადი ქდდეს ფირსი გაცრიდი.

და შენს ხერხემალს სადამურად გამოიყენებს
არმაზის ქერფი ან ქარების თიადი დორი,
სანამ გრიგადებს შენს ჯვერბს ქვერტბი
დააყრვეინებს
გოდგოტის მტიდან მორექიდი რმეტების ჯოგი.

Untitled

for Irakli

You stared at the world a thousand ways.
Christ glowed in your eyes.
When you warmed the moon with your
gaze
the angels cursed your pagan eyes.

You were a troubadour in the Garden of
Gethsemane.
On Golgotha you saw the pagan god.
Why do befriend the fog when you don't
know
the beginning of light or the end of
darkness?

Your life hid an uprising of dreams
from darkness. Time secretes
cacophonies of centuries.
Your life will end like a ballad.

Even crucifixion couldn't save you.
Don't avoid your fate when the pillars
moan
They want to see you suffering
before killing you.

Now you walk, afraid of the trees.
You try to keep the shadows from your
home.
A little time, and you'll be grey, your skull
lodged in a cliff's mouth.

Your courage will push the idol away.
The wind's slow grace will deflect Armazi.
A flock of gods will descend
like sheep from Mt. Golgotha.

რგმენა

რამეა, მივად სურ მართმართო,
ცემი ფიქრები ცემს გურსა ფლობენ,
და ასასები—ქუცის მართვედნი,
ქაცობრიუბას ყარაულობენ.

ვარსქვდავის სუქსი ქრთის საქმევედი,
მტვარე სამტვაროს სანაქურისა ჰგავს,
და დედამივა ამ სარქმედუდან
ბართ გადმოყრიდ ქვისას და ნაგავს.

ნათქენი გური

სამოხვად მართო, დაჯდები ცუმად,
გამონედდება სიმრერა ყურებს,
აფრინდებიან დანდები ჯგუფად
და დავიგყვებას მისაყვედურებ.

ტვარებს მიაფყრობ ბნერ სიყმავევდას,
ეხრაც ქედლებზე რომ ირვენტება.
ქრდე სვიბუდებს გვერის ვივირებს
და სქედ რრუბდების ქვეს გატენდება.

მოგონა

მეუბნებოდი, დავრიოტ რვენო,
როგორც ტეზავი ისე გადავქრათ.
ცვენ იქნებ გურსი ცავირორინო...
გარეთ ქი ისევ სვვინდა საზაგდად.

გამოქვაბუდი, ქარის თირიდი,
ქვესქენელს ბევიდან ხევსი საჰქონდა.
ქუცებსი მართო და გაცრეციდი,
გზებგადამცდარი ნიცსი ბრაოდა.

ცვენ ვცრიდოტ ციქებს და
ვახსენებდატ,
ვისაც განცხრობა მიაცნდა ზარდად.
სენ დედას არ გასვენებდა,
გარეთ ქი ისევ სვვინდა საზაგდად.

Faith

My thoughts accompany me like beggars
when I wander through the streets alone.
The loneliness of these streets
guards the human race.

Incense trembles in the stars' rays.
The moon paints itself, remembering
mixtures of earth and incense,
salvaged from dust bins.

A Heart That Used to Ache

Walk alone and sit silently.
Let your ears melt to the melody.
Let the shadows hover by your side.
Let yourself forget.

Your eyes are held prisoner
by the shadows on these walls.
Infant snakes nest in the cliff.
Satiated clouds bear the light onwards.

A Memory

When you told me to drink hard
I thought we might
do better by laughing
at the wicked rain.

The wind screamed in the gorge.
Lost in the flow of time,
reduced to rags by the streets,
Nietzsche roared.

Let's drink to all philosophers, and to
everyone for whom pleasures are not the
reward.
Your mother's shadow persists.
That's why we hide from the wicked
rain.

[Untitled]

ნამთირარევი მოვდივარ დღესაც,
სადაც ათ მივედ, ყვედგან ღამეა.
ნეთავ ცემ გუდსი სამოგახედათ,
რამდენი ქვნევსა და ვერამია.

თითქოს ქადაგად დავცემურიყვე
საქუთარ ბედის ანთებურ ხათთან,
და ბნერ მთიების მამრის ყივიღმე
ავგზნებურიყვე ქარსი თანდათან.

საღღაც ქიაქობს მთვარის ბუღვი,
სუქი დამეჯებს—უნდა რომ ვუხდეს.
თითქოს მე ვიყავ გამოქვამბური
და ცემ ქვეს სისხრის მდინარე ჰუხდეს.

Untitled

I walk in sadness.
Everywhere I go, night flows.
If you look into my heart,
you will see so many tragedies.

I was beat into prophecy.
I am framed by fate like an icon.
Only sometimes do I set off
towards the wind, when the rooster
crows.

The moon shimmers translucently.
Seeking to sadden me, the light
thinks I am made of stone.
Beneath me blood-rivers flow.

Mohamed Choukri's Preface to *Al-Khbuz Al-Hafi* / الخبز الحافي / ("For Bread Alone")

TRANSLATED BY MAHMOUD GEWAILY

Mohamed Choukri is a Moroccan writer who writes in classical Arabic. In his early years, having no money, he would live in mosques or sleep on the streets. Educated people helped him with Arabic, and a turning point in his life was his graduation, in his twenties, from colloquial Moroccan Arabic to classical Arabic. He became one of the most respected and widely read writers in North Africa. His novel *Al-Khbuz Al-Hafi* / الخبز الحافي was written in classical Arabic but was first published in Arabic in 1982, later than its three other versions in translation. Choukri wrote a preface to the Arabic original. This preface is entitled كلمة and is dated 17 May 1982. In this preface, Choukri not only refers to three other languages into which the original was translated – English, French and Spanish – but also draws the attention of the Arab reader to the significance of the history of the untranslated Arabic preface. I shall elucidate below the significance of Choukri's preface before giving my translation of it, in order to gauge whether to recommend the inclusion of the preface in Paul Bowles's English version of the novel – should any revision of that translation be undertaken in the future.

The Arabic preface كلمة, specifically addressed to an Arab audience, is all the more important because the Moroccan Board of Censorship banned the Arabic text in 1983, a ban which remained in effect for seventeen years until the book was allowed to circulate freely in 2000, three years before Choukri's death. The preface naturally focuses on the problem of the political and imaginative freedom of literature and the cultural and personal consequences of censorship. It is almost a cry of despair by Choukri at the problems of his time and at the misinterpretation of his original text.

The title of the Arabic original, الخبز الحافي, means plain bread or bread without anything to go with it. The rendition of the title in its English version as *For Bread Alone* is highly consistent with the depth of the novel, because a literal translation of the original's title is "The Bare-footed Bread". Additionally, the Arabic original has a subtitle (Arabic) which may be translated as "An Autobiographical Novel 1935-1956". *For Bread Alone* is the first volume of a fictional autobiography, and the second one is *Streetwise*. The main cover of *For Bread Alone* mentions the name of Paul Bowles as the translator, but the second page in the documentation mentions both Bowles and Choukri. Choukri probably never told Bowles that he should include the preface in the English version, but the preface was finally published in Arabic nine years after the publication of Bowles's English version. The English translation *For Bread Alone* does not include this preface of course because it preceded the original. Since Bowles did not read classical Arabic, the preface had to be translated by Choukri into colloquial Moroccan Arabic (Mughelon), which Bowles did understand. It is possible that the "Arabic version of the novel" already had a preface, when Choukri and Bowles cooperated, but that Choukri preferred not to have it translated into English. Perhaps Bowles ignored it because the version translated into Mughelon did not have the preface at that time, before the publication of the English version in 1973. Or perhaps the translator ignored it and replaced it with the translator's "Introduction" (pp. 5-6).

Shades of meaning of words in Arabic were partly determined by the use of French and Spanish equivalents. It is in relation to his use of French and Spanish equivalents to help him

French and Spanish, it is important to examine the degree of difference between the words of the preface written in classical Arabic and the response of the translator to the basic story narrated in colloquial Arabic. It would thus be useful to translate Choukri's Arabic preface, as this shows Choukri's unique style with all its verbal virtuosity. (Note: the underlined Arabic word زئبقى is given in the original as رئبقي. However, I went with the meaning closest to the form of the word and the surrounding context, to mean زئبقى "mercurial" as an adjective so as to express the quality of ceaseless changing – for example, a mercurial mood. You may say that the time is mercurial when it is not gracious.)

كلمة

صباح الخير أيها الليليون

صباح الخير أيها النهاريون

صباح الخير يا طنجة المنغرسه في
زمن زئبقى

ها أنذا أعود لأجوس. كالسائر نائما. عبر الأزقة و الذكريات.
عبر ما خططته عن حياتي الماضية. الحاضرة...كلمات و
استيهامات و ندوب لا يلثمها القول.

أين عمري من هذا النسج الكلامي؟

لكن عبير الأماسي و الليالي المكتظة بالتوجس
و اندفاع المغامرة يتسلل الى داخلتي ليعيد رماد الجمرات
غلالة شفافة أسرة.

منذ سنتين مات "عبدو فروسو". البطل الحقيقي الذي

أبقت مخيلتي و أعانني على تحمل القهر و الحرمان و عنف

الصراع الجسدي. مات قبل أن أنشر قصة " الخيمة" التي

استوحيتها من حضوره و تدفقه و شغفه بالحياة. أنتظر أن

يفرج عن الأدب الذى لا يجتر و لا يراوغ: مثل هذه الصفحات

عن سيرتي الذاتية. كتبتها منذ عشر سنوات و نشرت ترجمتها

بالانجليزى و الفرنسية و الأسبانية قبل أن تعرف طريقها الى

القراء في شكلها الأصلي العربي.

WORD

Good morning, the day-time people.

Good morning, the night-time people.

Good morning, Tangier, the one rooted in a
mercurial time.

Here I am back, moving like a sleep walker
across ramps and memories, across what I have
planned for my life in the past and the present.
Saying is not enough to heal words, inspirations
and wounds.

Where is all my age in this verbal texture?

But the flavor of nights full of worries and love
of adventure creeps within me in order to renew
the ashes of stones, a transparent captive gown.

Two years ago, Abdu Froso died. He was the
real hero who had inspired my imagination and
helped me to be courageous in facing the need
and the violence of a struggling body. He died

before the publication of the short story "Tent".
The presence of Froso and his love of life
inspired me to write the "Tent". I am waiting
for the heroic literature to be no longer
censored. The following pages present my
biography. It was written ten years ago. It was
translated into English, French, and Spanish
before it comes to you in its original Arabic
form.

لقد علمتني الحياة أن أنتظر. أن أعي لعبة الزمن بدون أن
أتنازل عن عمق ما استحصدته: قل كلمتك قبل أن تموت فانها
ستعرف، حتما، طريقها. لا يهم ما ستؤول اليه. الأهم هو أن
تشعل عاطفة أو حزنا أو نزوة غافية.. أن تشعل لهيبا في
المناطق اليباب الموات.

فيا أيها الليليون و النهاريون. أيها المتشائمون و المتفائلون.
أيها المتمردون أيها المراهقون. أيها العقلاء "...: لا تنسوا أن
لعبة الزمن أقوى منا. لعبة مميتة هي . لا يمكن أن نواجهها الا
بأن تعيش الموت السابق لموتنا، لاماتنا: أن نرقص على حبال
المخاطرة نشداننا للحياة.

أقول: يخرج الحي من الميت

يخرج الحي من النتن و من المتحلل. يخرج من المتخم و

المنهار...

يخرجه من بطون الجائعين ومن صلب المتعيشين على "
الخبز الحافي".

م.ش

طنجة 1982/5/17

Life taught me to wait, to understand the time
game without abandoning the depth of what I
have gained: before your death, say your word
that will have its effect of course. It is not
important what it will come at, but the most
important is to ignite a passion or sadness or a
silent lust, to make a fire in the areas of the
dead.

O, Night-time and day-time people!

O, Pessimists and optimists!

O, Rebels!

O, Adults!

O, "Reasonable" people ...:

Do not forget that the "time game" is sturdier
than us; it is a fatal game. We can not challenge
it unless we do live the death, which is
precedent to our death, to our nothingness: to
dance on the risky rows in a celebration of life.

I say: He, Our Lord, creates the live from the
dead.

He creates the live from the rotten, from the
dissolved, and from the disappointed.

He creates the live from the bellies of the
hungry and from the power of those living on
"For Bread Alone".

M. C

1982/5/17 Tangier

An Excerpt from “The Coachman and the Painter of Arms” by Herman Lenz

TRANSLATED BY EDUARD STOKLOSINSKI

The Coachman and the Painter of Arms (pp.7-16)

by Hermann Lenz

Von der Alleenstraße, wo er in einem Hinterhaus logierte, fuhr der Kutscher August Kandel am siebzehnten Juni, abends gegen halb acht, zum Neuen Schloß. Er horchte auf das Hufeklappern und überlegte, wer der Reisende sein könne, der hinter ihm, die Beine übereinandergeschlagen und zurückgelehnt, eine Zigarre rauchte, als Gepäck nur eine glasperlenbestickte Tasche bei sich hatte, die längst aus der Mode gekommen war, und leise mit sich selber sprach. Kandel meinte, er habe seinen Dialekt, eine Mischung aus Tschechisch und aus Deutsch, zum ersten Mal in Wien gehört.

Der Mann war groß und hatte breite Schultern; gelbliches Haar hing ihm über den Rockkragen; sein Gesicht war faltenserschnitten, abweisend und streng; und trotz der Wärme trug er einen schwarzen Havelock.

Jetzt schwieg er endlich. Kandel überließ sich seiner schaukelnden Kalesche, die gut gefedert war und zwei altersgelbe, in den Ritzen grünspanige Lampen hatte. Wieder murmelte der Eigenbrötler hinter ihm und spuckte auf die Straße; das war nicht elegant. Aber Format hatte der Kerl, das jedenfalls; so etwas merkte doch ein Kutscher. Und Kandel schaute, jetzt nicht weit vom Friedrichsbau, die Straße zum Hotel hinunter, das Goldlettern überm Eingang glänzen ließ, sah Säulen einer Kolonnade rechter Hand, wo die Schaufenster des Hofjuweliers Gustav Louis Menner spiegelten, und war dann bald auf dem rötlichen Kiesbelag unter Kastanien, die ein Rasenparterre mit Brunnen, Siegessäule und Musikpavillon umgaben. Beim Schloß wurde die Stille einer wenig befahrenen Straße spürbar, Kandelaber zeigten zwischen Eisenketten die Sträuße ihrer Lampen, und auf zwei Sockeln hielten ein Löwe und ein Hirsch ovale Wappenschilder fest, beide geschwärzt.

From the Alleenstraße where he lodged in a rear building, the coachman August Kandel drove, on the seventeenth of June in the evening at about half past seven, to the Neue Schloß. He listened to the clatter of hooves and thought about who the traveller behind him might be, who, legs crossed and leaning back, was smoking a cigar, who carried as luggage only a glass bead embroidered bag that had long gone out of fashion and spoke quietly to himself. Kandel reckoned he had heard this dialect, a mixture of Czech and German, in Vienna for the first time.

The man was tall and had broad shoulders; yellowish hair fell over his coat collar; his face was cut by furrows, dismissive and stern; and despite the mild weather he wore a black cape. At last he was silent. Kandel settled into his rocking calèche, which was well sprung and had two lanterns, age-yellowed, and with verdigris in their cracks. Again the eccentric mumbled behind him and spat on the street; this was not elegant. But the fellow had class, by all means; a coachman noticed such things. And Kandel, not far from the Friedrichsbau now, looked down the street to the hotel with its golden letters shining above the entrance, saw columns of a colonnade on the right hand where the shop windows of the court jeweller Gustav Louis Menner reflected the light and was, soon after, on a reddish gravel surface underneath chestnut trees that surrounded a lawn parterre with fountain, victory column and music pavilion. At the castle, the tranquillity of a street rarely travelled was palpable, street lights between iron chains displayed a spray of lamps, and on two

»Ja, hineinfahren... In den Hof. Und vor der Auffahrt halten. Dienstboteneingang bin ich nicht gewohnt«, sagte der Mann.

Der Posten ließ ihn durch. Es rauschte jetzt der Sandbelag des Hofes unter den Kutschenrädern, ein Geräusch, das Kandel liebte. Und er freute sich, weil sein Mann vor dem Mitteleingang abgewiesen und zur Lieferantentüre geschickt wurde. – »Ich bin Wappenmaler, und die dort brauchen mich, auch wenn sie mich von hinten hineinkriechen lassen«, sagte er und bezahlte mit einer Goldmünze. Kandel gab ihm heraus. Dann schenkte ihm der Wappenmaler fünfzig Pfennige, ein angemessenes Trinkgeld, nicht zu viel und nicht zu wenig.

Beim Zurückfahren zum Standplatz, dem Bahnhof gegenüber und im Schatten des weißen Hotels Royal, dachte er an ihn zurück. Wappenmaler... der richtige Beruf. Jedenfalls besser als Kutscher. Der führte ein Leben, das sich lohnte. Bei dir kommt nicht besonders viel heraus, aber es reicht... Immerhin hatte Kandel ein Baumgut gekauft, zwar nicht besonders groß und auf der Maurener Geruhstatt bei Münchingen gelegen. Und er dachte: nach Wien kommst du wahrscheinlich nie mehr... Vor vielen Jahren war er dort gewesen und sah jetzt die Stadt in Gedanken wieder: Vor einem breiten und schwarzen Museum fiel Regen blank herein und spritzte auf dem Trottoir; ein Gärtner rechte Kies und war von blankem Licht umrändert, als wär er eine steinerne Gestalt; an einer Ecke der Marc Aurel-Gasse, nicht weit von der Altstadt, kam im scharfen Wind – denn immer war's windig in Wien, anders als hier, wo's öfters schwül war – ein Mann mit Backenbart auf ihn zu, dessen Gesicht er nicht vergessen konnte, weil es ihm abgerückt erschienen war, anders als das des Wappenmalers. Am Stadtkanal wurden Bäume vom Morgenlicht beschienen und bewegten sich; der Ballhausplatz war weit, und die Anlage mit der weißen Marmorwand, die zur Erinnerung an Kaiserin Elisabeth errichtet worden war, tauchte herauf; dazu ein Springbrunnen, der schwankte, als ob er eine Peitsche mit silbernem Stiel wäre.

Alles war dasselbe, und wozu das Ganze? Dieses Herumzockeln mit der Kutsche; immer devot daherschwätzen müssen, während dir die Leute doch gleichgültig oder widerwärtig sind. Einer wie der Wappenmaler aber... oder Lili, seine Nichte, die bei den Amerongens war und wußte, wie sie

pedestals a lion and a deer held oval armorial shields, both blackened.

»Yes, drive on ... into the courtyard. And stop in front of the driveway, I'm not used to servant entrances,« the man said.

The sentry let him pass. Now the sand surface of the courtyard crunched underneath the coach wheels, a sound Kandel loved. And he was pleased because his man was dismissed at the middle entrance and sent to the delivery door. – "I am a painter of arms, and those inside need me, even though they let me crawl in at the back", he said and paid with a gold coin. Kandel returned the change. Then the painter of arms gave him fifty pfennig, an appropriate tip, not too much and not too little. On the drive back to his stand opposite the train station and in the shadow of the white hotel Royal he thought about him. Painter of arms ... the right profession. Certainly better than coachman. He led a life that was worth it. You are not getting very far with yours, but it's enough ... at least Kandel had bought an orchard, not particularly large, located near Münchingen at the Maurener Geruhstatt¹. And he thought: you'll probably never get to Vienna again ... Many years ago he had been there and now he saw the city in his mind: In front of a wide, black museum rain fell brightly, splashing on the footpath; a gardener raked gravel and was outlined by a fair light, as if he was a figure of stone. At the corner of Marc Aurel Gasse, not far from the centre, a man with side whiskers approached him in a sharp wind – as it was always windy in Vienna, unlike here, where it was often muggy – whose face he couldn't forget because it appeared to him distraught, different from that of the painter of arms. At the canal, trees were illuminated by the morning light and stirred; the Ballhausplatz was spacious and the park grounds emerged with the white marble wall, erected in memory of empress Elisabeth; and further, a fountain that swayed as if it was a whip with a silver handle.

It was all the same and what was the point? This jogging along with the carriage; always having to talk submissively, while people are indifferent or repulsive to you, Someone like the painter of arms, however ... or Lili, his niece who was with the Amerongens and knew

¹ stone bench, hist. rest place for load carriers

sich ein schlaues Leben machen konnte, indes er mit seinen siebenundvierzig Jahren am liebsten weggefahren wäre. Schluß machen, verschwinden, und weitab wieder neu anfangen; den Namen wechseln und für niemand mehr erreichbar sein, das hätte sich gelohnt. Wenn du weit weg bist, schmeckst du etwas Frisches; jede Wegbiegung und jedes Trottoir ist neu und unbekannt . . .

Einem wie dem Wappenmaler aber hing nichts an den Gelenken; kein Zuhause, kein stickiges Ungefähr. . . Und Kandel sah wieder den Schloßhof vor sich: leer im weiten Licht, das die hohen Fenster starr machte, eine gläserne Versammlung in grünlichen Sandsteinmauern; ein sandiger und weiter Platz, von schattigen Bäumen umstellt; und ungerührt das Ganze trotz dieser Bewegung breitlappiger Blätter, starker Äste.

Es gefiel ihm, wenn er daran zurückdachte, und er wunderte sich über seine wechselnde Empfindung. Also bleibst du hier, dachte er und lächelte für sich. Sein Kollege Egelhaf, der neben ihm auf dem Samtpolster seines Wagens eine Decke zurechtlegte, sagte: »Jetzt sieht der Kandel wieder menschlich aus.« Sie lachten, und Egelhaf fügte hinzu: »Wie du vorhin aus' schaut hast, möcht ich dir nicht im Wald begegnen.« Der war ein dicker Kerl mit Sattelnase, Schnauzbart und am Kinn einer grauen Mücke, während Kandel glatt rasiert ging. Egelhaf gefiel ihm; der wohnte in Gaisburg hinter einem Misthaufen und hatte Landwirtschaft dabei. Jetzt sagte er: »Du, gestern abend hat dem König Karl sein Weib wieder Wasser am Jakobsbrünnele getrunken« und pries das Gaisburger Wasser als seltene Gottesgabe. Wenn ihm sein Mädle – so sprach er von seiner Tochter – das Wasser bringe, sei der graue Steinkrug außen immer naßkalt beschlagen, so kühl sei dieses Wasser. Und Kandel dachte an das Märchen vom Wasser des Lebens und sagte zu Egelhaf: »Ich komm mal zu dir, und dann bringst du mir ein Glas.« Darauf Egelhaf: »Aber net bloß Wasser, ha?« – »Ha freilich.«

Was man halt so mit einem Kollegen schwätzte. Und warum auch nicht? Der Wappenmaler ist dir doch begegnet . . . Er sah den Bahnhof mit seinen altersschwarzen Säulen, sah unten überm Eingang des Hotels Goldlettern glänzen und hörte von Egelhaf, daß dort sein Schwiegervater für fünfzig lebende Forellen ein Goldstück bekommen habe. Gut, daß das Gold als Münze noch von Hand zu Hand ging, denn das bedeutete etwas. . . Aber du bist doch gar nicht fürs Solide, denk bloß an den Wappenmaler. Also, der führt

how to be smart about her life, while he with his forty-seven years would have preferred to drive off. Call it quits, disappear, start anew somewhere far away; change one's name and be out of reach of anyone, it would have been worth it. When you're far away, you taste something fresh; every turn and every footpath is new and unknown . . .

Someone like the painter of arms had nothing that weighted him down; no home, no stale destiny . . . And Kandel saw the castle forecourt in front of him again: vacant in the far light, which made the tall windows look rigid, a glassy assemblage in greenish sandstone walls; a wide and sandy square surrounded by shady trees; and all of it unmoved, despite this stirring of broad leaves, of strong branches.

He liked to remember it and he wondered about his changing impressions. So you're going to stay here, he thought and smiled to himself. His colleague Egelhaf, who was folding a blanket on the velvet upholstery of his carriage next to him, said: "Now our Kandel is looking human again." They laughed and Egelhaf added: "The way you looked earlier, I wouldn't want to run into you in the dark." He was a big fellow with a saddle nose, moustache and a grey chinstrap, while Kandel was clean-shaven. He liked Egelhaf, who lived in Gaisburg, behind a dung heap, where he had a farm. Now he said: "You know, yesterday in the evening the wife of König Karl drank water at the Jakob's well again" and he praised the Gaisburger water as a rare gift of God. When his *Mädle* – that's how he called his daughter – brought the water, the grey stone jug misted up, that's how cool the water was. And Kandel thought of the tale about the water of life and said to Egelhaf: "I'll come and visit you and you'll have to fetch me a glass." And Egelhaf: "But not just water, right?!" – "Of course."

Things one chatted about with a colleague. And why not? After all, you've met the painter of arms . . . He saw the railway station with its columns blackened by age, saw gold letters shining above the entrance of the hotel and was told by Egelhaf that his father-in-law had once received a gold piece there for delivering fifty trout. It was good that gold coins still exchanged hands because it meant something. . . But you're not at all for the solid, just think about the painter of arms. He

kein solides Leben; darauf kannst du dich verlassen.

Obwohl er nichts von dem Mann wußte, stellte er sich ihn doch so vor, so wie er meinte, daß er vielleicht wäre; also ehrgeizig und rücksichtslos, während er, August Kandel, sich gefällig und zufrieden zeigen mußte. Du willst deine Gefühlswallungen in der Hand behalten. Dies erscheint dir wirkungsvoll, falls du auf Wirkung bei den anderen bedacht bist; nun, das will schließlich jeder, du findest es zwar dumm, wenn's einer will, und auch bei dir hältst du's für töricht. Und Selbstgespräche waren immer Ausflüsse einer Stimmung und nicht einmal einer, die man sich klar machte.

Er wartete, stand neben seiner Kutsche, ging zum Pferd, streichelte es. In fünf Minuten machst du Schluß für heut, und niemandem erzählst du von dem Wappenmaler... Egelhaf schwatzte; der erzählte wieder einmal von seinem Vater, auf den er stolz war, vielleicht, weil der nur nebelhaft in seiner Erinnerung lebte als hagerer Mensch mit schwarzem Backenbart, ein Metzger, der, als Egelhaf drei Jahre alt gewesen, an den Pocken gestorben war. Er sagte von ihm, daß er »keinen guten geraucht« habe und ein hitzköpfiger und jähzorniger Kerl gewesen sei; der hatte nicht umsonst drei Jahre auf dem Asperg sitzen müssen. Der war dort eingelocht gewesen, weil er als Freischärler bei der Revolution mitgemacht hatte; Anno achtundvierzig... Doch war's natürlich barer Unsinn, Revolution zu machen, weil niemals etwas anders wurde und alles nur so ablief wie es mußte; denn auch Revolutionen waren eingeordnet und gehörten zum Plan, den keiner kannte. Hätte ein Mensch den Plan gekannt, dann hätte er vielleicht gar nicht mehr leben wollen.

Zu Egelhaf sagte er: »Mach's gut, Louis«, stieg auf den Bock und ließ die Zügel auf den Pferde Rücken klatschen: »Komm, Hansel.« Er wendete und fuhr die Friedrichstraße abwärts zur Alleenstraße, wo das Grün in den Vorgärten und das Laub der Bäume den Hauch des Abends hatte. Ausbleichendes Zwielficht mischte sich in die fast leere Straße, machte sie weiter als sie war. Dies erschien Kandel eindrucksvoll, wahrscheinlich, weil's die Häuser so einschichtig machte, wie auch der Wappenmaler ausgesehen hatte. Jawohl, das war's. Mit siebenundvierzig entsprach etwas wie Zwielficht und der Wunsch, nicht mehr ins Abgenutzte und Gewohnte heimkehren zu müssen, dem küh-

doesn't live a solid life; that much is certain.

Although he knew nothing of the man, he still imagined him as he thought he might be; ambitious and reckless that is, while he, August Kandel, had to show himself compliant and content. You want to keep your emotions in check. It seems effective, should you be concerned about your impression on others; everyone wants to, although you find it stupid if they do, and if you do, you also think it's foolish. And talking to yourself was always an outpouring of your mood, not necessarily one you were clear about.

He waited, stood next to his carriage, went to the horse, patted it. In five minutes you're calling it quits for today and you're telling no one about the painter of arms ... Egelhaf chatted; once again he talked about his father who he was proud of, perhaps because he lived only hazily in his memory as a haggard man with black whiskers, a butcher who, when Egloff had been three years old, had died of smallpox. He said about him that he had been hard to get on with and had been a hot-headed and quick-tempered fellow; it was not for nothing that he had spent three years in the Asperg prison. He had been locked up there because he had taken part in the revolution as a *Freischärler*², in the year eighteen forty eight ... But it was pure nonsense of course to make a revolution because nothing ever changed and everything proceeded as it had to; and revolutions were also included and belonged to a plan that no one knew. If someone had known the plan, he may not have wanted to go on living anymore.

To Egelhaf he said: "So long, Louis", climbed on the box seat and let the reins slap on the horse's back: "Let's go, Hansel." He turned and drove down Friedrichstraße to Alleenstraße, where the green in the front yards and the foliage in the trees had a trace of evening. A fading twilight mingled with the almost empty street and made it appear farther than it was. This seemed impressive to Kandel, probably because it made the houses so single-layered, the way the painter of arms had looked. That's right. At forty-seven, something like the twilight and the desire not to have to return to the worn and the familiar matched the cool whiff he felt behind his

² rebel in the 1848 revolution

len Hauch, den er hinter der Stirne spürte; oder an der Stirne. Ja, dies war genauer... Und Kandel lehnte sich zurück im Fahren und streckte beide Beine aus.

Dann einbiegen, im Hof ausspannen und den Gaul mit schleifendem Geschirr in den Stall stapfen lassen.

Er nahm das Kummer ab, striegelte sein Pferd wie jeden Abend. Der Hans bekam sein Wasser und den Hafer. Und so wie jeden Abend unterhielt er sich auch jetzt mit seinem Gaul. »Etwas Neues möcht ich hören, etwas anderes. Verstehst mich, Hansel?« sagte er und wünschte sich, sein Pferd möge aufpassen, wenn er mit ihm sprach.

Kandel rasierte sich und zog sich um. Der Abend war die Zeit der Freiheit; da durfte er ausschweifen; zumindest in der Phantasie war's ihm erlaubt. Er bürstete den Schoßrock, nahm aus der Weste, die noch warm war, seine Uhr, die gewichtige Silberzwiebel, die mit einem kleinen Schlüssel aufgezogen wurde, und legte den Schlüssel wieder in den Geldbeutel zurück. Er schmunzelte und sagte zu sich selber: »Welch ein ordentlicher Mensch der Kutscher Kandel ist... nicht auszudenken!« Er brauchte sich nach niemandem zu richten, konnte weggehen, wann es ihm behagte. Und daß du niemals mehr nach Wien kommst, das ist sehr die Frage; einmal leistest du es dir, dorthin wegzugehen... Und wieder dachte er an Egelhaf, der stolz auf seinen revolutionären Vater war und gerne rebellische Reden führte, freilich solche lustiger Natur, etwa gegen die Verdorbenheit der feinen Leute oder daß der deutsche Michel halt immer der Dumme sei und auch drüben in China für die Engländer den Polanti habe machen müssen. Nein, Egelhaf sagte nicht »Polanti«, denn das war bayerisch oder österreichisch.

Hinausgehen in die Nacht. Und es schien ihm, als ob vor ihm der Wappenmaler ginge: Jetzt blieb der stehen, drehte sich zur Seite und verschwand in einem Haus. Vielleicht suchte er den Kutscher Kandel... Unsinn, bilde dir nichts ein... Und im Weitergehen sah er den Wappenmaler vor sich, wie er dagesessen war, die Hände auf den Elfenbeinknauf seines Stocks gestützt und vorgebeugt; die Lider halb geschlossen, schien er nachzuhorchen oder etwas nachzuprüfen, wahrscheinlich ein Wappenbild, das er zu malen dachte. Und Kandel sah die Hände dieses Wappenmalers, welche mager waren, lang und fest und mit ovalen Nä-

forehead; or on his forehead. Yes, this was more precise ... And Kandel leaned back while driving, and stretched out both legs.

Then, turning, unhitching in the yard, letting the horse trudge into the stable with the harness dragging.

He took off the harness, brushed his horse as every evening. Hans got his water and the oats. And, as every evening, he also talked to his horse now. "I want to hear something new, something different. Do you know what I mean, Hansel?" he said, and wished his horse would pay attention when he talked to him.

Kandel shaved and changed clothes. The evening was the time of freedom; now, at least in his imagination, he was allowed to ramble on. He brushed his tailcoat, took his pocket watch out of the waistcoat, which was still warm, his watch, the weighty silver onion, which had to be wound up with a small key, and put the key back into his wallet. He smiled contently and said to himself: "What an orderly person the coachman Kandel is ... unbelievable!" He didn't have to put up with anyone, could leave whenever he felt like. And that you will never again make it to Vienna, that remains to be seen; one day you'll afford to go there ... And again he thought of Egelhaf, who was proud of his revolutionary father and liked to make rebellious speeches, of a funny nature of course, against the decadence of the gentlefolk for instance, or that the German *Michel*³ was always taken for a ride, and even over there in China he had to play the *Polanti*⁴ for the British. No, Egelhaf didn't say 'Polanti', that was Bavarian or Austrian.

Stepping out into the night. And it seemed to him as if the painter of arms walked in front of him: Now he stopped, turned aside and disappeared into a house. Perhaps he was looking for the coachman Kandel ... Nonsense, don't flatter yourself ... And as he kept walking he pictured the painter of arms again, how he had been sitting, his hands resting on the ivory knob of his walking stick, bending forward; with his eyelids half closed, he seemed to be listening for or examining something, a coat of arms, perhaps, that he thought of painting. And Kandel saw the

³ common person/ representing the German character

⁴ servant, lackey

geln; auf dem Handrücken bildeten sich Adern ab. Kandel wunderte sich, daß er die Finger dieses Mannes deutlich im Gedächtnis hatte. Du hast sie doch kaum angesehen. . . Eigentlich nur, als er dir das Goldstück gegeben hat und du ihm herausgeben mußtest. . . Es kam ihm in den Sinn: am Ende sei das Goldstück falsch. Er lachte, schüttelte den Kopf im Gehen und wunderte sich, daß ihm so etwas eingefallen war. Nein, nichts zum wundern. Aber du mußt mit deiner Nichte über diesen Wappenmaler sprechen. Ohne merken zu lassen, daß du an ihm interessiert bist, solltest du aus deiner Nichte etwas herausholen, das für dich interessant ist. . . Im übrigen mußt du auf sie aufpassen, das bist du deiner toten Schwester schuldig. . . Und er dachte an das Dorf Hirschlanden, wo sein Schwager eine Gemischtwarenhandlung umtrieb und wie Egelhaf Landwirtschaft und einen Weinberg dabei hatte.

Eine elegante Kutsche fuhr vorüber. Egelhaf winkte mit der Peitsche. Ja, der. . . Der hatte einen feineren Wagen als er, und in den Polstern roch es nach Parfüm; der hatte Samtpolster, während Kandels Wagen Ledersitze hatte, die heiß wurden, wenn die Sonne darauf schien. Aber solch ein Lederpolster war doch hygienischer, und Kandel brauchte nicht so viel zu putzen. Denn Egelhaf war immer am Ausbürsten, oder er rieb Flecken aus dem dunkelblauen Samt. Der fuhr eine ausrangierte Hofkutsche, die er billig gekauft hatte, weil an der linken Lampe ein Messingadler abgebrochen war.

Kandel hoffte, seiner Nichte zu begegnen, weil er nicht in die Villa Amerongen gehen konnte, obwohl die einen Lieferanten-Eingang hatte; Besuche für die Domestiken waren dort jedenfalls nicht erwünscht. Wenn er Lili zufällig auf der Straße traf, dann war es besser. Und er erinnerte sich, von Egelhaf gehört zu haben, seine Nichte sei vom Kollegen Eipper mit einem gewissen Herrn von Süskindt zum Wilhelma-Theater gefahren worden, wo der Schwank ›Wie man Männer fesselt‹ gespielt wurde.

Du gönnst der Lili alles; wenn sie nur kein Kind. . . Aber er konnte sie nicht hüten, und das verlangte auch niemand von ihm. Lili wußte, daß er einer war, der seine Freiheit haben wollte. Ach ja, deine ›Freiheit‹. . . Immerhin, jetzt kannst du gehen, wohin du willst; es darf dir keiner was vorschreiben. Und er ging wieder nach Wien, freilich nur in Gedanken. Eine abwegige Sache, diese Sympathie für

hands of this painter of arms, which were thin, long and firm, with oval fingernails; veins protruding on the back of the hands. Kandel was astonished that he remembered the fingers of this man so clearly. After all, you hardly had a good look at them. . . Only, in fact, when he gave you the gold coin and you had to return the change. . . It crossed his mind: in the end the gold coin was fake. He laughed, shook his head while he was walking and wondered that something like this had occurred to him. No, nothing to wonder about. But you have to talk to your niece about this painter of arms. Without letting on that you are interested in him you should get something out of her that interests you. . . as for the rest, you have to look after her, you owe it to your dead sister. . . And he thought of the hamlet Hirschlanden, where his brother-in-law ran a grocery store and, like Egelhaf, owned some land and a vineyard.

An elegant carriage drove past. Egelhaf waved with the whip. Well, Egelhaf. . . He had a finer coach than Kandel, and the upholstery smelled of perfume; he had velvet upholstery, while Kandel's coach had leather seats, which became hot when the sun was shining on them. But leather upholstery was more hygienic, and Kandel didn't have to clean it all the time. Egelhaf was always brushing or rubbing stains off the dark-blue velvet. He drove a decommissioned court carriage, which he had bought cheaply because a brass eagle had broken off the left lamp.

Kandel hoped to meet his niece because he couldn't go to the Villa Amerongen, although it had a delivery entrance; visitors for the domestics were not welcome. It was better if he accidentally met Lili in the street. And he remembered having heard from Egelhaf that their colleague Eipper had driven his niece together with a certain Herr von Süskindt to the Wilhelma theatre where the farce 'How to enthrall a man' was playing.

You're happy for Lili; as long as there's no child. . . But he couldn't watch over her and no one asked him to. Lili knew that he was someone who wanted to have his freedom. Yes, your 'freedom'. . . at least you can go wherever you like; no one can tell you what to do. And he returned to Vienna, only in his mind of course. An absurd thing, this compassion for a city where he didn't want to

eine Stadt, wo er nicht leben wollte, weil er dachte: dann wird sie dir auch nur gewohnt oder gewöhnlich... Und ihm fiel ein, daß er in Münchingen, wo er als Sohn des Bauern Kandel, der auch Mesner gewesen war, den Ofen in der Kirche geheizt hatte. Nicht weit vom Ofen aber war die Tochter des Grafen Leutrum gesessen. Alles längst vorbei... Aber gut, daß sich das Bild zurückgezogen oder versenkt hatte, sozusagen in unteren Schichten, als wär dort etwas abgelagert worden, aus dem er's hervorholen konnte, wann er wollte. Und er erinnerte sich, daß er winters immer den Ofen in der Kirche hatte heizen müssen; das war ihm leichtgefallen, weil er's dem jungen Fräulein von Leutrum zuliebe tat, der Tochter des Grafen Leutrum also, dem die Nippenburg gehörte. Sie kam mit ihren Eltern in die Kirche, winters in einem Schlitten; und Kandel wär am liebsten beim Grafen Leutrum gewesen, doch dies arrangierte sich halt nicht; weshalb er für das Fräulein diesen großen gußeisernen Ofen links unter der Kanzel heizte und vor der Kirche, die Hände in den Hosentaschen, mit den Alten zusah, wie sie zwischen ihren Eltern vorgefahren kam und wie die Decke auf ihrem Schoß schwarz war und rote Streifen hatte; denn eine derart dicke, breite Decke, eine wie ein Fell glänzende, die fingerlange Fasern hatte, war ihm bis heute nirgends vorgekommen, obwohl er eine solche für seine Kutschengäste gerne gehabt hätte. Aber was dachte er denn an die Decke, wenn's ihm doch auf Franziska Leutrum ankam.

Es war doch nur ihr grünes Kleid gewesen, und daß sie beim Schäferlauf in Markgröningen in der offenen Kalesche am Rand des kahlen Feldes im Septemberlicht gestanden war, die Hand über den Augen; und als die Schäfer barfuß übers Stoppelfeld gelaufen waren, hatte sie sich auf ihren Daumen gebissen, wahrscheinlich weil sie aufgeregt war. Freilich, ein anderer hatte gewonnen, nicht der, dem sie es gewünscht hatte; das merkte er, weil sie den Mund verzog und von ihrer Mama angeschubst werden mußte, um dem Sieger, der ihr gleichgültig war, die Schäferkrone aufzusetzen. Gewöhn dich nur daran, immer kommt's anders... dachte er, als ob es heute wäre, jetzt, bei Nacht, aber trotzdem im Hellen. Die junge Gräfin Leutrum hatte sich nach Wien verheiratet, und deshalb war er dort ein halbes Jahr gewesen. Freilich nicht als Kutscher, sondern als Austräger einer Musikalienhandlung, weil er gehofft hatte, das Fräulein werde dort einmal eine Gitarre kaufen. Zwar poetisch gedacht, aber falsch kalkuliert. Du hast gemeint, die würde Lieder zur Gitarre singen, so pas-

live because he thought: it'll only become usual or ordinary ... and he remembered that in Münchingen he had heated the stove in the church, the son of the farmer Kandel, who had also been the sexton. And near the stove the daughter of count Leutrum had been sitting. Long gone, all of it ... But it was good that this picture had retreated or sunk to deeper layers, so to speak, as if something had been deposited from where he could retrieve it whenever he wanted. And he remembered that in winter he always had to heat the stove in the church; it had been easy because he did it for young Fräulein von Leutrum, the daughter of count Leutrum, who owned the Nippenburg. She came to church with her parents, winters in a sledge; and Kandel would have liked to be in the service of count Leutrum, but it didn't eventuate; that's why he heated the large cast iron stove to the left underneath the pulpit and watched with the old folks, hands in pockets, in front of the church, how she drove up between her parents and how the blanket on her lap was black with red stripes; and he hadn't come across such a thick wide blanket, shiny like fur, with finger-sized fibres ever since, although he had wanted one like it for his passengers. But why did he think about that blanket if it was Franziska Leutrum that mattered.

It had only been her green dress and that she had stood in the open barouche during the shepherd race in Markgröningen at the edge of the barren field in the September light, her hand shielding her eyes; and when the shepherds were running barefoot across the stubble field, she bit her thumb because she was excited, most likely. Of course another, not the one she had wished for, had won; he noticed it because she screwed up her mouth and had to be pushed by her mama to put the shepherd's crown on the head of the victor she felt indifferent towards. You better get used to it, it always turns out differently ... he thought, as if it was happening today, now, at night, and yet in the light. The young countess Leutrum married and moved to Vienna and that's why he had been there for half a year. Not as a coachman of course, but as a delivery boy for a musical department store because he had hoped that one day Fräulein Leutrum would buy a guitar there. Poetically thought, but wrongly calculated. You thought she would sing songs to the guitar; it would have

se es zu ihr. Zu der paßte wahrscheinlich etwas anderes, also vielleicht Pferde; doch auch im Prater hast du sie nie reiten sehen. Und wie oft bist du dort herumgestrichen, fast an jedem Sonntag Morgen. Und die Kutscher hast du arg beneidet. Aber in Wien leben? Nein. Das wär ja so gewesen, als ob du die kleine Leutrum bekommen hättest. . . Denn es mußte etwas in der Ferne stehenbleiben, das unerreichbar war; sonst wurde es bloß steinern und blieb nicht mehr so angeschienen und als sähe er's von weitem. Also, sagen wir mal: eine Wolke.

Hm, du . . . mit deinem Anschauen von ferneher. . . Aber du willst's nicht anders. Auch deine Nichte Lili soll nur bei den Amerongens bleiben und mit einem namens Süskindt ins Theater gehen; das ist schon recht. . . Den Wappenmaler aber, den möchtest du wiedersehen; weil der alles weiß, weil der's erreicht hat, in ein Schloß hineinzukommen. . . Übrigens in dasselbe Schloß, wo auch die Lili öfters hinkam. Und der Wappenmaler war ein Lebensmeister.

suitied her. But something else suited her better, horses perhaps; yet you never saw her riding in the Prater either. And how often did you roam about there, almost every Sunday morning. And you envied the coachmen very much. But to live in Vienna? No. It would have been as if the Leutrum girl had been promised to you . . . Because something that was unreachable had to stand still in the distance; otherwise it would turn into stone, wouldn't remain so illuminated, as if he saw it from far away. Like, let's say: a cloud.

Hmm, you . . . and your looking at it from afar . . . but you don't want it any different. And let your niece stay with the Amerongens and visit the theatre with someone called Süskindt; that's alright after all . . . but the painter of arms you would like to meet again; because he knows it all, because he has succeeded in making it into the castle . . . The same castle, by the way, that Lili often had to go to. And the painter of arms was a past master of life.

Literature and Globalization: Some Thoughts on Translation and the Transnational

DAVID ROBERTS and BRIAN NELSON

Abstract

This article argues that it is time to re-embed the study of literature in the larger project of “world literature” – literature conceived ecumenically, and recognized as the best means of allowing the comparative study of societies and cultures in a globalized world. World literature, as David Damrosch has argued, is a kind of writing that *gains* in translation, enabling texts to transcend their culture of origin. Translation gives us a unique purchase on the global scope of the world’s cultures, past and present.

I. Literature and the Academy

Departments of literature are feeling the cold winds of change. All the efforts to renew the discipline in the native or foreign languages seem only to confirm and deepen the sense of crisis, as the proliferating alternatives wilt in the harsh climate of the commercialization of the university. It would be wrong, however, to attribute the present malaise solely to an unfriendly environment. It has a deeper root in the nationalization of literary studies, that is, in the founding ideological assumptions that governed the establishment of separate, segregated philologies, assumptions that persist above all in the form of institutional inertia and manifest themselves in the jealous defence of territory by Departments of English, French, German, etc. even when they are subsumed into Schools of Languages and Literatures. The nationalization of language, literature and culture in the age of nationalism appealed to the self-evidence of linguistic originality as well as the inescapable plurality of “national” languages. The study of national languages and literatures, sheltered within the national institution of the university, emerged chastened but unchallenged from the twentieth century’s apocalypse of European nationalism. The postwar challenge came from below, driven by the rapid expansion of the university in the 1960s. However, as we know, institutional inertia (rationalized as preserving what was intended for the few in the mass university) seldom yields to anything other than pressure from above, generally perceived as hostile interventions bent on destroying the accumulated wisdoms of disciplinary practice. However justified resistance to bureaucratic fiat may be, it is nevertheless the case that our crisis coincides with a profound mutation of the university. The demise of the University of Culture, based on the German model of *Bildung*, goes together with the accelerating globalization of the contemporary University of Excellence. Bill Readings argues that historically the integrity of the modern university has been linked to the rise and decline of the nation-state, which it served by promoting and protecting the idea of a national culture. Now that national culture no longer needs promoting, universities are turning into transnational corporations, in which the idea of culture has given way to the bureaucratically-driven discourse of excellence. This coincidence of external pressures and internal malaise makes the question of rethinking and reforming the study of literature in the academy all the more urgent. Hence the present proliferation of competing alternatives, of which the current favourites are cultural studies, Anglo-American or German style, communication and media studies and various permutations thereof. It would not be too unkind to characterize them as

programmes in search of content and method, to be read either as symptoms of the disintegration of the national paradigm or as signs of new, emerging paradigms. Certainly, the cultural and communicative turn of literary studies corresponds to the globalizing imperative of the university. Self-interrogation and external scrutiny thus correspond, at least negatively, in the need to go beyond the national.

These introductory comments will be familiar to colleagues in departments of literature. And yet, while we sense more or less acutely the exhaustion of the national paradigm as a basis for teaching and research, we have not perhaps fully grasped the blindness inherent in the nationalization of literary studies. It is a blindness that belongs to the institution and not to the object of study: writers and readers in English, French, Spanish or Italian. We cannot blame writers and readers for the artificial boundaries that came to define the study of literature within the limits of the national. We must therefore distinguish between our practice as readers and our practice as professionals of the segregation of literary studies into “national” containers. Although we like to think of departments of comparative literature as the necessary complement to departments of national literatures, they have remained marginal within the university, due not least to the fact that their complementary role is tied to the same founding premise of linguistic originality. As much as we would like as teachers to demand and expect a reading knowledge of two or more foreign languages, such demands, especially in Anglo-American universities, effectively deter all but a few students. Moreover, we should ask ourselves what our own literary education would look like if we confined our reading to texts in their original languages. While comparative literature may be the bad conscience of the national paradigm, translation is and remains the blind spot of the study of literature in its nationally or comparatively institutionalized forms. Susan Sontag is right to remind us that translation is “the circulatory system of the world’s literatures” (177).

The ideology of linguistic originality together with the expressive understanding of literature and culture as an inner, authentic essence – underlined and reinforced by copyright – combined to devalue the very concept of translation and with it the transnational, occluding the hybrid nature of “national” identity. And yet, who could deny the fundamental role that translation has played in the formation of national languages; the prime example for Europe (apart from the romance languages) must be translations of the Bible. Moreover, we must be careful not to subsume geographical, political, and cultural identities under the one heading of the national. Norman Davies’s *The Isles* is a salutary corrective to the unifying, teleological prejudices of all national histories, whether of Great Britain or France or Spain, in that the author’s and the reader’s interest diminishes as the fascinating story of the linguistic and political diversity of the isles contracts to the perspective of the United Kingdom over the last three centuries. Literature in Spain is no less multilingual: in his *Literature of the Spanish People* Gerald Brenan includes works in Spanish, Arabic, Catalan, Galician and Portuguese. If, on the other hand, we speak of literature in English, it is difficult to resist Bruce Clunies Ross’s argument that contemporary poetry in English belongs to a “language which exists as a cluster of variants, just as it was in the Middle Ages, but its range now extends beyond linguistic variations in Wales, Ireland, Scotland and England to include affiliations with the postcolonial world and the United States as well as interactions with non-European languages.” In its latest evolution as a world language, English is now to be understood as an extended transnational range of variants comprising a single language, in which the vitality of poetry in English derives not from a centre but from a globally devolved network of dispersed influences. In other words, the centre-periphery model, frequently used to frame postcolonial literature, fails to register “the polycentric devolution of the English domain,” in which literature can be transnational without translation (V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie). Although the British empire and present American hegemony go far to explain the global spread of English, they cannot explain the diverse developments of the English language or of poetry in English in the second half of the twentieth century (Clunies Ross 293-96).

Writing of literature in India, Francesco Orsini distinguishes between the regional, the

national, and the international, with their respective readers, publishers, journals and public spheres. The regional encompasses writing in regional languages, the national refers to literature in English, and the international to literature in English that becomes part of global culture (transnational without translation). Orsini takes exception to critics such as Pascale Casanova who stress the inequalities of globalizing literary practice over the last two hundred years. Orsini is right in preferring the interactive model of the two-way traffic of appropriation to the centre-periphery model. If the local may be defined as that which resists translation, this in no way excludes a perspective that transcends the local. That is to say, regional, national, and international constitute different but not necessarily exclusive frames of reference, since each of the terms is comparative. It is just as important to approach the global in terms of its national or regional appropriation – or rejection – as the national from a global perspective. That is, complex processes of cultural appropriation or rejection both presuppose and precede intra-lingual translation.

Histories of literature have never really transcended the age of nationalism of which they were not only the products but also culturally formative influences. They possess as their enabling and disabling birthright an imputed subject and a selective vision, in which a retrospective narrative teleology is allied to a centralizing perspective. The institutionalization of the study of literature in segregated departments is thus necessarily blind, for without this blindness how could a national corpus of works in English in the United Kingdom, in French in France, and so on be determined? A national literature stands and falls with its exclusionary boundaries, just as a colonial literature presupposes an imperial centre. And just as a colonial literature only becomes post-colonial through the deconstruction of the asymmetry of centre and periphery, and a national literature only becomes post-national through a deconstruction of its foundational assumptions, so a post-national literature only becomes transnational by deconstructing the linguistic asymmetry of original and translation. Only then are we in a position to arrive at a concept of literature defined not in terms of national exclusion but of transnational inclusion, that is, a concept with the same global reach as painting or music. Departments of the visual arts or of music are as common as departments of literature are uncommon. For very obvious reasons, it will be objected. Even if we abandon the national *raison d'être* of departments of literature, we cannot simply jettison the premise of linguistic originality, which is ignored but seldom queried by cultural or communication studies. There is no such thing as “language” corresponding to “literature,” other than as empty generic signifiers. Nevertheless, literature is sustained by the agency of translation.

II. Literature in Translation

Translation is one of the tools we need to make sense of the world beyond our usual field of vision. Translation promotes cosmopolitanism; it protects us from provincialism. And it plays a vital role in literary culture. Edith Grossman, in her valuable little book *Why Translation Matters*, shows how the very notion of literature would be inconceivable without translation, citing Goethe's belief that without outside influences national literatures rapidly stagnate. Authors have always borrowed and been influenced by writers in other languages. Milan Kundera, in his personal essay on the novel, *The Curtain*, first published in French in 2007, argues precisely for a kind of literary cosmopolitanism. In his view, there are two contexts in which works of art can be understood: the “small” context of the nation and the “large” context of the world, encompassing the supranational history of art forms themselves. Provincialism is the inability to imagine one's national culture in the large context, and Kundera thinks it has done great damage to our understanding of literary history:

[...] because a novel is bound up with its language, in nearly every university in the world it is studied almost exclusively in the small, national context. Europe has not managed to view its literature as a historical unit, and I continue to insist that this is an irreparable intellectual loss. Because, if we consider just the history of the novel, it was to Rabelais that Lawrence Sterne was reacting, it was Sterne who set off Diderot, it was from Cervantes that Fielding drew

constant inspiration, it was against Fielding that Stendhal measure himself, it was Flaubert's tradition living on in Joyce, it was through his reflection on Joyce that Hermann Broch developed his own poetics of the novel, and it was Kafka who showed García Márquez the possibility of departing from tradition to "write another way." [...] [G]eographic distance sets the observer back from the local context and allows him to embrace the *large context* of world literature, the only approach that can bring out a novel's *aesthetic value* – that is to say: the previously unseen aspects of existence that this particular novel has managed to make clear; the novelty of form it has found. (35-36)

Literature, Kundera is saying, has always been world literature. The entire history of literature, it might be argued, is informed by a process of transmission; a great work of literature, indeed any text, is able to enrich itself by generating new meanings as it enters new contexts. Translation could be seen in this perspective as the secret metaphor of all literary communication.

But the way translation is viewed, especially in stereotypical terms, and especially in the English-speaking world, remains quite negative, despite everything that has been written about translation by theorists, writers and translators themselves. Translation is often seen as an unfortunate necessity at best, and at worst a terrible act of treachery. The most common stereotype is that translation always entails loss. Esther Allen has drawn attention to an excellent example of the ingrained nature of this view of translation as loss: the current Wikipedia entry for George Steiner's book about translation, *After Babel*. The entry quotes Steiner's famous dictum: "To understand is to decipher. To hear significance is to translate" – a statement that places translation at the heart of perception itself, and thus at the centre of all intellectual processes. However, the entry goes on to summarize the meaning of *After Babel* in the following terms: "Real translation between languages is impossible because the original meaning is always lost: the translated text is tainted by the translator's own cultural beliefs, knowledge and attitudes." As Allen points out, to say of translation that "the original meaning is *always lost*" is to express a kind of medieval yearning for an absolute language that can exist without regard to context or culture. Despite the multicultural reality of the contemporary world, the statement reflects a kind of nostalgia for the monolingual unity that preceded Babel, and a degree of frustration with the linguistic diversity and the debased impostures of translation that result from it. To go on to say that the translated text is tainted by the translator's own beliefs, knowledge and attitudes is to deny or seek to refute the process of transmission, the intertextuality, that informs the entire history of literature, and the ability of a great work of literature, or any text, to enrich itself by generating new meanings as it enters new contexts.

One way of redressing the view of translation as inherently inadequate is to foster a clearer appreciation of the fact that every translation of a text is a *performance* of that text as reflected in the selection and sequence of words on a page. If we are able to appreciate the dimension of *performance* in relation to music or theatre, why not also in relation to translation? The more good translations and retranslations are produced, the easier it will be to effect an appreciation of translation as performance. An encouraging sign in recent years is that retranslations of Proust, Tolstoy, Cervantes and other classics have engendered extensive and sometimes heated debate about the prowess (or otherwise) of the translators. It is certainly the case that, in relation to the so-called classics, there is an increasing willingness to discuss the translator's performance. The translators of Proust, for example: Scott Moncrieff in the 1920s, Terence Kilmartin in the 1980s, D.J. Enright in the 1990s, Lydia Davies, James Grieve and the other members of the Penguin "team" in the last decade – all compared in their ability to deal with the intricate twists and folds, the carefully modulated rhythms and shapes, of Proust's long sentences – his cadences, his register, his inflections. And the stakes could not be higher, in the sense that form translates thought: style is vision; if you don't get the style, you miss the vision.

A translation is a reading of a literary work, and it is a literary work. Translation sheds

light on and gives life to the work it translates. A translation is an expression, moreover, of the translator's creativity and cultural sensitivity. To the extent that we treat translators as creative writers whose work can greatly enrich the texts they translate, we will have better translators, better translations, and a better literary culture generally. Examples of excellent or brilliant translation performances are not hard to find. One such example is Julie Rose, the distinguished Sydney-based translator, whose new retranslation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* appeared in 2008. Rose has spoken eloquently in public discussion about what she called "the art of hearing the voice", by which she means the combination of all the elements that characterize a writer: "Voice encompasses a whole work, from personality to meaning. 'Hearing' the other person's voice, profoundly, viscerally, and dredging an answering voice up from out of the depths is the joy of the [translator's] job." Our invocation of Julie Rose leads us to another point about translation: the desirability of the translator's empowerment. By this I mean the translator's potential role, within a given literary culture, as a prominent spokesperson for a text in another language, not just by enlarging the readership of a book deemed to be important, but by proposing texts for translation and by talking publicly, and writing, critically and sympathetically, about texts from other languages. Julie Rose has made a significant contribution, we believe, to a reevaluation of Victor Hugo as a writer.

This point goes to the heart of the enterprise of literature itself. Literature itself is sustained by the agency of translation. The case for translation in these terms was made in a particularly compelling way by Susan Sontag in her 2002 St Jerome Lecture on Literary Translation ("The World as India"). The essential argument of her lecture was that a proper consideration of the art of literary translation is a claim for the value of literature itself.

My sense of what literature can be, my reverence for the practice of literature as a vocation, and my identification of the writer with the exercise of freedom – all these constituent elements of my sensibility are inconceivable without the books I read in translation from an early age. Literature was mental travel: travel into the past and to other countries. (Literature was the vehicle that could take you *anywhere*.) And literature was criticism of one's own reality, in the light of a better standard. (179)

The cultural importance of translation, thus stated, can't be overstated. And the importance of translation is particularly pronounced, of course, in relation to works written in less widely spoken languages. Without translation, the novelists Orhan Pamuk, Imre Kertész, José Saramago and Naguib Mahfouz, all Nobel Prize winners, would not be known outside their native countries – Turkey, Hungary, Portugal and Egypt respectively. And it's not just a question of high culture. It's an ethical, political, human question as well. The America of George W. Bush showed in many ways the dangers of being closed off from the rest of the world. Brian Castro, in a rather melancholy article in a special *Meanjin* issue on Translation in 2005, wrote:

If the 9/11 Commission found that the FBI had failed principally through a *lack of imagination* by not detecting the plots to demolish the World Trade Center, I would suggest that this failure of imagination stemmed directly from the fact that its members did not read foreign novels with small print runs that challenged their way of thinking. They could not imagine their way into inhabiting the Other through language. (8)

Translation plays an indispensable role in creating a space of real cultural encounter. And yet English translates very little, relatively speaking. Less than 3% of works published in the English-speaking world are translations, whereas the corresponding figure for a country like Sweden is in excess of 50%. Fewer works of foreign literature are being translated into English than twenty or thirty years ago. The essential point to make here is that that dismaying statistic, less than 3%, together with the persistence in the English-speaking world of a view of translation as loss, is fraught with danger: the danger of consolidating the global domination of English, accelerating the ever-dwindling number of world languages taught, and impoverishing non-

anglophone cultures by actually encouraging them to write in English in order to be heard by the rest of the world.

III. World literature

It is striking that Goethe baptised the idea of (a coming) world literature at the very time that the modern idea of national literatures was establishing itself. The connection between national and world literature is clearly to the fore in Goethe's anticipation in 1827 of a general world literature in his discussion of the French reception of his recently translated *Torquato Tasso*: "I, for my part, would like to draw the attention of my friends to the fact that I am convinced of a general world literature, in which an honourable role is reserved for us Germans. All nations look round for us, they praise, censure, adopt or dismiss, imitate and disfigure, understand or misunderstand us, open or close their hearts: we must receive this all with equanimity, since the whole is of great value to us" (Goethe 1). It is appropriate that Goethe sent a copy of *Ueber Kunst und Altertum*, in which his thoughts on world literature appeared, to his English translator Thomas Carlyle (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* had been published in 1824). In his letter to Carlyle he compares various forms of cultural translation to the exchange of currencies. The task of the translator is to act as mediator of this general intellectual trade, increasing mutual awareness by advancing mutual exchange. The translator as mediator thus plays the indispensable, if usually invisible role in the coming into being of world literature. His invisibility corresponds to the blind spot of departments of national and of comparative literature. Literature in translation is denied citizen rights in the national paradigm and that means in the university, with one partial exception: the Great Book courses for undergraduates at some American universities, as distinct from postgraduate courses in comparative literature. (We exclude from consideration the recent emergence of translation studies in departments of literature.)

We therefore arrive at the concept of national literature by a process of exclusion, to be diagnosed as a persistent, institutionalized dissociation of the national from the world republic of letters. In turn, we arrive at a definition of world literature in a similar exclusionary fashion: world literature is not a corpus of works, the imaginary sum of all national literatures, as assumed by Comparative Literature, which would be comparable to Malraux's imaginary museum of world art. Here we follow David Damrosch's definition of world literature as "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translations or in their original language" (4). As a concept, world literature therefore signifies "not an infinite, ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading [. . .] a form of detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time" (281). The study of world literature, according to Damrosch, does not consist of sampling a smorgasbord of works from all the world's written (and oral) cultures, nor of mastering a given canon of classics; rather, it concentrates on following the movement of works that travel well between contexts, eras, and languages. "The work of world literature exists on two planes at once: present in our world, it also brings us into a world very different from ours" (164). "World literature [he says] is always as much about the host culture's values and needs as it is about a work's source culture" (283). It is thus a kind of double refraction. And the crucial point from the perspective of translation is that world literature, thus conceived, is a kind of writing that *gains* in translation – acquiring new depths of meaning and horizons of interpretation, enabling texts to transcend their culture of origin. Translations, Damrosch argues, can give us a unique purchase on the global scope of the world's cultures, past and present. In the context of national literatures translation typically appears as loss, whereas in the context of world literature translation necessarily appears as gain in the sense that it is the means by which texts transcend their culture of origin (Damrosch 289). World literature is a function of relations; it is, as it were, the relationality, the translatability inscribed into the act of translation. The "translational" mode of reading thus generates in the minds of writers and readers the "great conversation of world literature" of which Goethe spoke in the early nineteenth century. If we are to understand world literature as a function

of translation, we cannot appeal, as Damrosch rightly insists, to Schleiermacher's or Gadamer's fusion of horizons. The translational mode involves rather a mutual estrangement of horizons, the enriching tension of the distant and the near, inherent in the two-way traffic of translation.

World literature may therefore be conceived as the reciprocal of translation/translatability, and if we are to avoid a circular definition of world literature, translation becomes the concept that demands definition, or rather unfolding, because we are dealing with a term whose semantic complexity exceeds its theorization. As the translation into Latin of Greek for metaphor, the term translation thus possesses besides the direct meaning of intralingual translation a culturally important range of metaphoric meanings. The following, by no means exhaustive list conveys something of the polysemy of the word, built around the root meaning of removing to another place: "to remove to heaven; to enrapture; to render into another language; to express in another artistic medium; to interpret; to transfer from one office to another (bishop); to transform; to renovate; to make new from old" (Chambers Dictionary). Translation is the act common to paraphrase and parody on the one hand and conversion, metamorphosis, transfiguration and transubstantiation on the other. It embraces restatement, interpretation and transformation, the three dimensions of intra-lingual translation, which is as much a cultural as a linguistic phenomenon. Mary Snell-Hornby understands intra-lingual translation as an interaction between two cultures. Svend Erik Larsen defines translation as a "productive cultural invention propelled by the mutual challenge of two or more languages and media, an intervention that changes both languages and is thereby a powerful factor in cultural development" (33).

It is not by chance that translation forms the blind spot of a "national" conception of literature: it represents a differential conception of identity incompatible with all essentializing constructs of the nation. Lacking birthright and authenticity, literature in translation had the deficient status of hybridity (just as the self-understanding of comparative literature as the "international" complement of the "national" tied its fortunes to the decline and demise of the nationalization of literary studies). We stress this exclusion of translation – against all historical evidence – in order to foreground the fatal equation of a national and a nationalized literature. The founding condition of the national is the transnational: the national emerges from the dialectic of self and other, starting with the translation and transmission of the sacred sources of cultural values. Precisely because the founding condition of the national is the transnational (and not an original, native corpus of texts as in historicism's organic conception of culture), we may say that adopting the perspective of world literature changes everything and nothing, because it does not signify the identification of another canon or corpus of texts but of another mode of reading applicable to "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translations or in their original language." In this sense all reading and writing is comparative, just as all cultures and civilizations live from the ongoing process of transmission and translation. The transcendence of the local through translation plays a particularly important and recognized role for so called minor literatures with only a few readers or for writers who are cut off from readers through censorship.

Everything and nothing changes in the light of world literature, as can be neatly illustrated in terms of the coexistence of capital and metropolis. The one functions as the political and cultural centre of a wider territory and acts as the regulator of the social hierarchy and as the custodian of the common heritage of a territorially defined population. As metropolis, the capital city functions neither as the centre of power nor as the source of identity but as the site of multiple networks of exchange and heterogeneity: the place where migrants find their "natural" destination (cf. Querrien).

The migrant, the subject and object par excellence of translation, finds his place in the interface between identity and difference, capital and metropolis. As the centre of a national literature, the capital assimilates cultural interactions in terms of centre-periphery. As the locus of world literature, the metropolis replaces the former's central perspective with polycentricism,

articulated through networks of circulation. This coexistence of capital and metropolis is not new, it is in fact as old as Babel, but it has acquired a heightened significance as the mirror of the often explosive struggles for national identity under the pressure of accelerating globalization. To interpret this struggle for identity, as Samuel Huntington does, as a clash of civilisations is a dangerously essentializing mistranslation of the inherent conflicts of identity within cultures and civilisations (see Roberts, "From Modernization to Multiple Modernities")

Babel should serve, not as the parable of a lost original language, the *fata morgana* of language theory, but as the *menetekel* of all hubristic conceptions of identity as well as of their melancholy converse: the decadence theories of culture, in which the fall from plenitude manifests itself in the gulf between a lost original language of presence and its evermore imperfect and distant translations. (This belief in the power of the original, not lost but betrayed, drives the religious fundamentalisms of today.) The phantasm of unity and authenticity inhabits the normative distinction between original and translation and the hegemonic distinction between centre and periphery. Pluralism is admitted only in the asymmetrical form of derivation from a determining origin, that is, genetically as a descent that denies reciprocity as the defining term of translation. Hence the tautology, as Derrida has demonstrated, of the definition of the nation by the appeal to the origin, entailing "a recourse, a re-source, a circular return to the source," that silently excludes the indispensable supplement of translation as the means to the simultaneous assumption and creation of the national status of a language and culture. Moreover, once we accept with Derrida the inescapable indeterminacy inherent in all acts of translation, then all asymmetrical constructions of the primacy of centre or origin are called into question. In this spirit Edouard Glissant proposes a *poétique de la relation* that replaces the centre-periphery model by the geopoetics of a world-system, composed of multiple interlocking worlds of linguistic singularities.

S.N. Eisenstadt has developed a persuasive account of modernization engendering the emergence of multiple modernities as it has spread from its initial north European core to central Europe, North America, Russia, South America and beyond. In place of Casanova's hegemonic perspective, Eisenstadt takes as his dynamic of modernization the endemic and irreducible conflict between totalizing and pluralizing visions of the world as the key to European identity and to the multiple modernities of world societies. Global diversity and inflamed nationalisms do not disappear with globalization. On the contrary, pre-modern cultures, whether popular or elite, continue to exist, either through continuing popular support or through state subsidization of 'ethnic' or 'national' cultural identities or even through tourism. Not only can and does the pre-modern coexist with the modern, the multiple modern cultures of the globalized world retain their unmistakable individualities in a constantly shifting balance between the native and the foreign. We must be careful therefore not to equate cultural modernization with Westernization or Americanization. Nor conversely should we confuse protection of the indigenous with modern national, racial or religious fundamentalisms. Anti-modernism is an eminently modern attitude.

Against all fundamentalisms it is essential to stress the centrality of translation, understood as a cultural activity, to the interpenetration of the global and the local throughout history, an interpenetration that has progressively accelerated over recent centuries and taken on a new dimension, thanks inter alia to the revolution in communications in our lifetime. Roland Robertson's outline of the successive phases of globalization since the fifteenth century helps us to understand this new dimension. He distinguishes between a germinal phase (1400-1750), an incipient phase (1750-1870), a take-off phase (1870-1920s), the struggle for hegemony (1920s-1960s), giving way to the present phase of uncertainty. The third and fourth stages from 1870 to the 1960s were governed by competition and warfare between rival national imperialisms, bringing about an ever greater consciousness of the world as one in space and time and leading to the present global problematization of cultural and civilizational identities, in which the "localization of globalization" ("glocalization") renders all distinctions between the local and the global increasingly complex and problematic. Vytautas Kavolis describes the consequences of these

ongoing processes of the self-reconstructions of identity: “boundaries are blurred, contents interpenetrate, even central meanings become subject to contestations both within and outside of particular civilizational-traditions-in-transformation, alien genres suggest themselves for uncovering native experiences. Bicultural, multiethnic identities or identity diffractions arise, either functioning imaginatively as workshops in critical translation or dissolving into the waste products of ‘cosmopolitan’ consumerism” (Kavolis qtd. in Buell 295). Workshops in critical translation – what better description could we have of the contribution world literature can make to an understanding of globalization?

In posing the question of literature and globalization, our intention has been to clear the ground for a rethinking of our discipline from outside its national compartmentalizations, that is, from a deterritorialized standpoint that replaces works qua canonic corpus by networks of relations. What changes if we adopt a global perspective? Nothing, in the sense that a transcendence of national cultures addresses the same texts as before but now in terms of world literature. As Damrosch puts it: “One of the most exciting features of contemporary literary studies is the fact that all periods as well as all places are up for fresh examination and open to new configurations” (17). In other words, world literature calls for a different way of reading and for a reframing of the study of literature in the academy. Conversely, we need to ask to what extent the nationalization of literary studies has blinded us to the fact that literature has always been world literature. Here, the recognition of literature as the workshop of/for critical translations between the local and the global suggests that everything has changed in our global age of uncertainty, just as the University of Culture, predicated on the cultivation of the national heritage, has been replaced by the University of Excellence, in which the whole question of relationality has been “translated” into global benchmarking and the purpose of teaching and research redefined in terms of excellence, indifferent to content. We observe here a clearing of the ground that has problematized the maintenance of old disciplinary identities in the humanities and the social sciences (thus Robertson deplors the imprisonment of sociology since the 1920s within the assumption of culturally cohesive and sequestered national societies) and by the same token opened the way to an as yet unrealized interdisciplinarity in teaching and research, which would truly transcend the closure of university departments. Let us define interdisciplinarity with Svend Larsen as involving topics and themes too large for any one discipline but of interest to a number of disciplines. Interdisciplinary projects of this kind require if they are to succeed a fundamental rethinking of disciplinary perspectives: the recognition that no discipline is an island unto itself imposes the necessity of reading widely outside of one’s own discipline and the acceptance of the reciprocity of obligations on the part of all participants. In short, interdisciplinary projects, whether in teaching or research, call for an ongoing questioning and rethinking of disciplinary boundaries that makes them workshops in critical translation in their own right.

The logic of this self-interrogation, and of the question of literature and globalization, is to ask: Do we need yet more interpretations of the literary canon confined within the narrow horizons of our specializations? Is it not time to re-embed the study of literature in the larger project of world literature – literature in the singular but conceived ecumenically, and recognized as the best means of allowing the comparative study of societies and cultures in a globalized world?

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Making Classics New

MEREDITH MCKINNEY

Abstract

This article discusses issues concerning the re-translation of classics, with particular reference to four Japanese classics the author has translated for Penguin, including *The Pillow Book* (10th century) and *Kokoro* and *Kusamakura* (early 20th century).

I've recently been reading Peter Carey's novel, *Parrot and Olivier in America*. Carey does voice extremely well, and I've always felt that one of the more creative aspects of translation is the creation of "voice". In Carey's book, there are two quite dissonant first person voices that take turns to relate the story, which is based on Tocqueville's travels in America in the 1830s. The Tocqueville character, Olivier, speaks (or rather writes, since this purports to be his journal) in an elaborately literary style, startlingly alien in a modern novel. Parrot is much more lively and full of vivid vernacular, and is a fine example of the way Carey can create a voice that belongs uniquely to a character, doesn't feel out of place in its historical moment, but also feels somehow immensely modern. But it was the Tocqueville character that intrigued me, because here Carey seemed to be deliberately parroting, as it were, a tone that would strike a modern reader as "classical".

In fact it's much more complex than that, of course. His carefully ornate and old-fashioned style isn't just crude historical pastiche, but defines the character of Olivier himself in quite crucial ways. But I was intrigued to read a review of the novel in the *London Review of Books* that pointed out just how close to pastiche Olivier's voice is, and how relatively thin this makes the Olivier character. The review, by Nicholas Spice, said several things in passing that startled me. He pointed out that a surprising amount of Olivier's description and observation echoes quite closely passages in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* — but of course Carey has relied on the English translation of this work, so the voice is at a double remove. And Spice went on to say, in partial explanation of the odd thinness or emptiness of Olivier's voice: "However good the translation, there's always something rootless and linguistically indeterminate about translated language." Carey was borrowing, he suggests, from a version of Tocqueville that had already been somehow, necessarily, emptied out via translation.

Something in me very much doesn't want to acknowledge that this might be true — which means, of course, that I have to acknowledge that to some extent it probably is. But it's another of Spice's passing observations that I want to focus on here, this one so passing that it's a mere aside in brackets. In the novel, a substantial chunk of Tocqueville's notes are quoted verbatim, and Spice is cross that the quotation is from the later Wilson Pierson translation rather than that by Francis Lieber published in 1938 — "earlier," he says, "and therefore, one might have thought, a better source." He acknowledges elsewhere that both are "perfectly serviceable renderings" (damning with rather faint praise) and that "the differences aren't great". So what on earth can he mean? It could only be that a translator working in the 1930s was seventy odd years closer than the new translator to the English that would have been equivalent to Tocqueville's 1830s French, and therefore is more to be trusted to get the voice right.

This astonishing aside points to something that frequently haunts translators of earlier works — the huge question of voice, and how to translate voice not just across languages and cultures but across time. More importantly, it throws up the whole question of the unconscious assumptions readers make about translations of the classics, and about their retranslations.

It's extremely rare, perhaps impossible, for a modern translator of something designated as a "classic" to be the first to translate it. The current theory seems to be that a classic ideally needs a new translation every fifty years or so. When you're commissioned to do a new translation, what exactly are you being asked to provide?

The ideal situation, of course, is when you're dealing with a classic that's old enough to allow scholars to wrangle over it. You can be fairly sure that after fifty years there'll be new interpretations that will allow you to produce something genuinely different from previous translations. Or, if you're very lucky, you'll be working with something that has been poorly served by its previous translators. If possible, it's nice at least to tell yourself this is so, whether it is or not. It's very daunting to be faced with providing a new version of something whose previous translation you've always admired. But assuming that your classic is straightforward and free of textual choices that would allow you to produce something new, and that the previous translation or translations are a lot better than the dread word "serviceable", why the need for a new translation? What exactly are you being asked to make new?

In many ways the question is a silly one, of course. Every translation is different, and there's nothing to prevent yours from being just as good as the previous very good one, in different ways. A classic has generally attained its status because it's a fine literary work, and this means that it allows for all manner of subtle choices in its reading and rendering. But there's also something going on inside the assumptions of the need for retranslation which is about updating, and this is where the difficulties arise.

The slow drift of language generally means that after fifty years a translation will probably feel slightly old-fashioned. Anyone translating a contemporary work from another language will naturally make it contemporary, of course. What about a work written fifty years ago? I'd guess that, all things being equal, most translators would do the same thing — silently, perhaps even unthinkingly, make it contemporary. After all, it would do the author a sad disservice to make her come across as at all stuffily old-fashioned. What of something a hundred years old? Here we begin to get into difficulties. After a century, not only language but social mores and indeed everyday life itself have undergone considerable changes, such that conveying it all in our contemporary English can often seem rather jarring. This is particularly true of dialogue, of course, which is always acutely sensitive to register problems, but to a lesser extent it influences choices we make about the prose in general.

This came home to me when I translated an early modern Japanese classic by Natsume Soseki, *Kokoro*, written in 1914. Glancing at the previous translation, made about fifty years ago, I registered how old-fashioned it seemed. Old-fashioned to me, of course, not to the translator, who hadn't hesitated to make the novel read like a contemporary work. Well I can do better than *that*, I thought happily. But what I discovered as I worked was that in fact it was harder rather than easier to render the novel in natural contemporary English. Contemporary language would have set up expectations deeply at odds with the style, the themes, the whole substance of the novel. It kept wanting to be in a subtly almost Edwardian English (an English that might well have struck the previous translator as stuffily old-fashioned). So that, in the end, is how I translated it.

Something had happened in the intervening fifty years. Back then, *Kokoro* was an important novel that deserved to be kept alive. Now, fifty years later, it's worthy of appearing in the Penguin Classics list. Translating it brought home to me some of the complexities lurking behind the need to "update".

So much for the relatively recent past. But what happens as a work gets more remote from us in time? Once it's achieved accepted classic status, certain expectations and assumptions settle

on it that can bedevil a translator who wants, or is required to, "make it new". There's a language deemed appropriate to the classic, a heightened lexical register that readers expect, and they're often disgruntled when they don't get it. It evolves over time, I think roughly a century or two behind the contemporary language. 150 years ago Matthew Arnold, who demanded his Homer be plain and direct, quotes approvingly a translation that strikes us today as impossibly archaic and convoluted (*On Translating Homer*, 1861). This in his day was what he deemed language suitable to the classics. Today, our idea of such language is probably a version of the sort of language Arnold himself wrote. It gives you pause to consider that in 2150 there may well be reverent translations of the timeless classics that make them sound like our contemporary English.

But the dilemma is a real one. *Kokoro* is a hundred years old, so modified Edwardian works perfectly for it. What of something two hundred years old, or five, or ten? It goes without saying that we can't possibly translate it into the equivalent English of its day. Does this then liberate us to ignore the whole question and make it simply modern?

I faced this question with the first classic I translated, back when I was too naive to recognize that there was a question at all. The work was the tenth-century Japanese classic known as *The Pillow Book*, a kind of journal of anecdotes and observations written by Sei Shonagon, a gentlewoman at the empress's court. I was overawed by this commission, partly because of the work's difficulty, and partly because of my admiration for the previous translation done by Ivan Morris in the 1960s (*The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon*). Sometimes a previous translation has attained a kind of classic status in itself, and any attempt to update it feels to readers about as sacrilegious as updating Chaucer or Shakespeare. The translation and the work are one. The Morris translation didn't have quite this status, but it was close. The only way I could dare to proceed was by finding my old copy of it and putting it right at the back of a cupboard and metaphorically locking the door on it. If I'd had it beside me when I was working, I would have been paralyzed.

I began with the unthinking attitude of reverence due to a classic. This worked quite well for the famous opening section, a poetic evocation of the different times of day and their appropriate seasons. But within a few pages, I began to have my doubts, largely because Sei Shonagon apparently did too. She could do poetic when she chose, but her style is overwhelmingly that of a forthright, rather down-to-earth woman who gets immense pleasure from the world around her and charms you by assuming you do too. It didn't take me long to decide that it was this direct and at times quite pithy voice that I wanted to bring across, freed of all the reverence due to a hallowed classic, so I didn't hesitate in the end to make her quite modern.

The work I'm presently engaged on throws an interesting new perspective on this question of choice of register. It belongs to three centuries later, a time that already looked back with deep nostalgia to the high culture of Sei Shonagon's day. What's more, the author, Yoshida Kenko, a somewhat conservative and traditionalist *littérateur*, is particularly susceptible to worship of this former age, and this is often reflected in rather old-fashioned language. What was up-to-the-minute contemporary language in Sei Shonagon's day had become three centuries later the epitome of classic elegance. Kenko wrote a journal consciously styled after *The Pillow Book*, and he would have been most offended if I didn't give his prose a touch of refinement. But it has provided me with an interesting dilemma. I'm sometimes faced with the problem of having to translate a sentence or whole passage that closely follows one in *The Pillow Book*. There, I gave it an unselfconsciously contemporary tone, but for Kenko three centuries later, these same words trail clouds of classic nobility. "Look, isn't that a beautiful flower," for him sounds something like "Behold yon beauteous bloom." Such are the pitfalls of classical translation.

Of course problems of voice and register, even within our own contemporary language, are far more complex than I've indicated here, and many internal factors besides the work's age and status as a classic can affect the translator's decisions. Yet the fact that what you're translating is a classic inevitably brings with it a little swarm of assumptions, expectations and conundrums that hover and nag as you work. I hope I've managed to elucidate a few of them.

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The Opening and the Ending of Paul Valéry's "Fragments of the 'Narcissus'": A Case Study for Translators

DAVID ELDER

Abstract

This paper will concentrate on what I recently called the *formal content* of the text for translators. Translation is an incomparable school of writing, and poetry in particular requires the development of specific linguistic skills in an essentially bicultural framework. A brief introduction to Valéry's poetics will be followed by a study of the complex interactions between form and meaning in the opening and closing lines of his "Fragments of the 'Narcissus'" with special reference to certain pages from his notebooks and other manuscripts. The objective here is to highlight some of his key aesthetic preoccupations before embarking on the final stage: an attempt at translating the many facets of sound and meaning in the lines we have chosen for this exercise. Last, but not least, this study is designed to increase an awareness of *le restant / le résidu* – or what is left *out* or left *over* in translation.

In a recent publication on translation theory¹, I concentrated on analyzing certain functions of what I called the *formal content* of the text. The starting point for this article will be to highlight the role of form, contrasts, relationships between sound and meaning in Paul Valéry's poetry (all of which are familiar to many of his readers and amply evidenced by his manuscripts, notebooks and of course the *vox in actu*²) before applying them to a *genetic* and phonostylistic reading of the opening and ending of his "Fragments of the 'Narcissus'". The second part of this study will centre on my own English versions of the text as well as those by Peter Dale and David Paul.

Form and meaning are united in Valéry's poetry. Indeed, a study of the functions of the form within the poem is necessary to avoid misreading certain aspects of his (poetic) intentions. His aesthetics involve looking at *form* in association with « *les rapprochements des résonnances significatives des mots* » (*Cahier XVII*, 21) [the coming together of meaningful resonances in words] and « *l'accroissement des connexions* » (*Cahier IX*, 118). In short, he is concerned with the interactions between sound and meaning: « *Le son du sens et le sens des sons agissent* » (*Cahier XVII*, 21). *Meaning* is embedded in the qualities of the *form with its complex connections*.

For Valéry, « *le fond devient l'acte de la forme* » (*Cahier XV*, 881) ["the *meaning* becomes the *act* of the *form*"]. He is « *un formel* » ["a formalist"] and proceeds « *par les formes, à partir des formes vers la "matière" des œuvres ou des idées* » (*Cahier XIV*, 103) ["through forms, from the substance, the material of works or ideas"]. Moreover, the essence of a beautiful line of poetry lies in its resistance to change. Its elements must be "crystalline" and "undeformable" [« *cristalline et indéformable* »³ (*Cahier V*, 24)]. At the same time, Valéry liberates the sensuality of his "Fragments of the 'Narcissus'" from the corset of the quatrains and the tercets of "Narcissus speaks" while retaining a certain classicism from La Fontaine's *Adonis* – a text he was reading at the time he composed the "Fragments".

To translate Valéry's poems one needs to *be aware* of the importance of their lyrical or resonant state and, at the same time, *beware* of anything verging on the oratory. But the translator, like the poet, is not simply there to weigh syllables (*un peseur de syllabes*). (There are already sufficient ridiculous examples of such attempts in operatic works.) Valéry's poems approach music, algebra and architecture – but decomposing or *deboning* the skeletal structure of the consonants in a line will never allow us to recreate exactly its form (rhythm, tone, etc.).

Unlike prose, poetry is a form of writing that cannot be reformulated in spite of its very specific – though modest – musical profile.⁴

Valéry's poetry aims at a state where sound and meaning are of equal importance.⁵ In fact, « Le poème n'a pas de *sens* sans SA VOIX » (*Cahier* XXVI, 807) ["The poem is meaningless without ITS VOICE"]. We are a long way from the discourse-melody (à la Racine), but closer to the melody-discourse (à la Mallarmé). It is « l'union étroite ou la mystérieuse symbiose du son et du sens » ["the close union or the mysterious symbiosis of sound and meaning"] that « est essentielle »⁶ ["is essential..."]. For Valéry, « La voix, clef de la poésie » (*Cahier* VII, 164) ["The voice is the key to poetry"]. The poetic text for Valéry is, in a sense, a libretto.⁷ The essential part is unwritten and has to be performed. The **voice** of the poem is at the very centre of poetry and yet it remains impossible to reproduce.

At another level, reading a poem also means being attentive to its *otherness* in relation to a norm (be it linguistic or otherwise). It is this *difference* that must be kept in translation as we look at the nature of the carefully constructed cracks and gaps⁸ in Valéry's texts. Indeed, a feeling of detachment pervades all of Valéry's creative work. « J'ai toujours fait des vers en m'observant les faire »⁹ ["I have always written poetry while watching myself doing so"]. The translator of his poems must remain aware of the distance between the *vouloir-faire* and the *vouloir-dire* as well as his notion of harmony as something "undefinable" situated between what the line of poetry "is" and "is saying" (*Cahier* VII, 151). Hence the necessity to concentrate on the nature of the *contrasts* and *combinations* in translation.¹⁰ His poetry is heavily immersed in the themes of proximity and distance – « Imminence éternelle de toute ma pensée » (*Cahier* III, 680) ["Eternal imminence of all my thought"] – and the paradoxes of philosophical and poetic systems that are open and closed, ajar and adjourned.

« J'ai aimé travailler « une page » – comme un peintre un tableau – *indéfiniment* – Pas de limite. » (*Cahier* XX, 302)

["I liked working on a page, like an artist on a painting – *indefinitely*. No limit."]

Note that the *formal* nature of the *Narcissus* cycle in *Charms* relies essentially on an « infinite » set of « contrasts » or oscillations between two « poles »¹¹ within the following context: « Quel poème admirable que la contemplation se nourrissant d'elle-même » (*Cahier* V, 524) ["Contemplation nourishing itself! What an admirable poem!"] Indeed, the theme of contemplation nourishing itself is essential for Valéry – as it is for translators! But it is the text in a perpetual state of becoming that is our major concern in the poem I will now study.

With the above background statements in mind, let us now "dissect" the first alexandrine of the "Fragments of the 'Narcissus'" in *Charms* before translating it:

« Que tu brilles enfin, terme pur de ma course ! »

k

k

[The two «k» sounds stand out like pillars at each end of the line.]

m m

b -----> p

[voiced and unvoiced forms « b/p »]

t t

R R R R

↘

↘

z -----> s [voiced and unvoiced forms « z/s »]

ã ã

[*enfin*: the veiled (nasalised) finality of the text inside this line]

– tu	ma –
k t	f t p k s
b R z	R R m R

[Notice the balance between voiced and unvoiced consonants.]

It would be a major error to underestimate the importance and the functions of openings in poetry. In the case of the line above, we need to concentrate on the richness of this *event-limit* that is detached from the rest of the poem. Note that the « terme pur » of this “race” serves as an internal and metaphorical closure (terminus), an end, a goal, a desire as well as an opening for the text. This line is rich in *contrasts*, oscillations¹², oppositions and closeness/proximity (*tu / ma*). Note that the word « enfin » means “finally” and “in the end”, just like « terme » is a “terminus” and a “word”. The « terme pur » is a *corps verbal* at the very limit of language. It is both the frontier for consciousness racing to complete a task and the aim of *work in progress*. But the goal is unreachable given that literature for Valéry is a matter of *form* – images are merely images. There is no congruency between language and reality. The experience of the specific and the particular for Narcissus as well as his quest for his « seule essence » [“his own sole essence”] will end up being liquefied in a bodiless universe. In this way, he provides us with the provisional *end* for a state of imminence in a poem where « L’affaire du poète est de construire une sorte de corps verbal qui ait la solidité mais l’ambiguïté d’un objet » (*Cahier* VI, 118) [“Poetry is about building a sort of *verbal body* that has both the solidity and the ambiguity of an object”]. But « À mesure que l’on s’approche du réel, on perd la parole » (*Cahier* II, 554) [“The voice is lost as we approach the real”]. This is also the ultimate fate for the « belles infidèles » in translation.¹³

The quotes above are essential as we contextualise the “Fragments of the ‘Narcissus’” and navigate between what « brille[s] » [“shines”] at the beginning of the poem *and* what « brise » or « fuit » [“breaks” or “flees”] in the last line with its untranslatable echoes.

« Que tu brilles enfin, terme pur de ma course ! »

Aesthetic limits are a major theme in Valéry’s poetry.

« Art – L’opération de l’artiste consiste à tenter d’*enfermer un infini*. Un infini potentiel *dans* un fini actuel. » (*Cahier* XVIII, 44)

[“Art – The artist tries to *enclose an infinity*. A potential infinity *in* something present and finite.”]

The opening exclamation of this soliloquy is ambiguous. It conveys presence, imminence, approximation, approach, appearance, seduction, closure, a way of carrying the « terme » to its limit, « une manière d’en finir par les *mots* »¹⁴ [“a way of ending with words”], the paradox of a future inaccessible « terme pur » or horizon for the work...

The essential ambiguity¹⁵ of the first line of the “Fragments of the ‘Narcissus’”:

« Que tu brilles enfin, terme pur de ma course ! »

is eliminated in the English translations and its relevance to the poem (and to Valéry’s poetry in general) is lost.

“How you shine, [...]” [presence and amazement]

or

“May you shine, [...]” [absence and becoming]

On the other hand, if we were to combine these two expressions:

“How you shine and may you shine, [...]”

the conciseness, the ambiguity and the doubling up of meanings would be diluted. Worse still, the awkward amplification of the word “you” could only be offset by placing the word « ma » [“my”] (at the end of the line) in italics.

“How you shine and may you shine, pure end of *my* race!”

But Valéry would oppose all attempts at diluting poetic effects.

It goes without saying that the « tu » (symbolising *proximity*, as opposed to distance and even discontinuity) in this text has its equivalent only in an archaic and inappropriate form in English.

Besides,

“Shine on finally, pure end of *my* race!”

is an aberration as the « tu » (subject) is absent. The fundamental and necessary opposition between « tu » / « ma » (perfectly placed at both ends of this line in French) is completely lost. In Valéry’s *Cahiers*, consciousness is all about the distance between a *subject* and an *object*. On the other hand, he notes that dreaming is when the frontiers between the two are blurred.

So the last thing to do with this poem would be to reduce the variations on *opposites* that are so present in his poetry. In the context of the theme of Narcissus, proximity and distance, oppositions or *contrasts* and imminence are omnipresent, and amply developed. At the risk of diminishing the multiple oppositions and divisions inherent in this line, some translators have chosen:

“How you shine...”

By doing so, they eliminate the essential ambiguity of the first words of the text. The ideal situation for the translator here would be to create oppositions between *presence* and *becoming*, while at the same time maintaining a *state* of discovery and *absence*. Note that « L’extrême du désir s’alimente d’absence » (*Cahier* XIX, 470) [“The extreme point of desire feeds on absence”]. States of approaching and waiting are powerful « excitants » and « stupéfiants » (*Cahier* XVII, 678) [“stimulants”] favoured by Valéry. « La « création poétique » – c’est la création de l’attente » (*Cahier* XII, 660) [“Poetic creation is the creation of a state of expectancy”] or « Le plus grand plaisir est l’approche du plaisir » (*Cahier* VII, 528) [“The greatest pleasure is the approach of pleasure”]. Or, as his “Young Fate” would say: « Tout peut naître ici-bas d’une attente infinie » [“To infinite waiting, here below, all may come” (Paul)].

Right from the beginning of the “Fragments of the ‘Narcissus’” the « je » (the “I”) is absent. However, in David Paul’s translation of the first line:

“How you finally gleam¹⁶, pure goal of the race I run!”¹⁷

we find two *subjects* (“you” / “I”), and not a *subject* and an *object*, in opposition – which, by the way, is what Valéry is writing about.¹⁸ It is particularly the absence of the « je » (the *I*) that opens the poem. The « je » only comes on stage *progressively* in this text. It is *decentred* and *suspended* both here and at the end of the text. Indeed, its presence is *delayed* or *deferred* for both aesthetic and thematic reasons until the sixth line (where it is accompanied by a verb in the *negative future form*). In the 19th line the « je » is associated with a quest in the *conditional* followed by a play on possession. It is in the 4th stanza that the « je » reveals itself – but essentially to announce its solitude. In the second “Fragment”, it only appears in the last part of the text to become the subject of the (un)divided self.

The universe of Narcissus is *within* and *without* the line as well as being an integral part of the *workings* in Valéry's aesthetics. The *end* of the « course » *calls for* the « source » in the form of a rhyme in the second line. (Peter Dale achieves this, but David Paul reduces it to an *internal* “pool” and misses the point.) The *circle* or *circuit* here is closed and open – but to respect this in translation, an obsolete meaning of the word « course » is required in English. Let us not forget that Valéry's « conception sportive » (*Cahier* XIX, 223) of the poetic language is linked to intellectual gymnastics (rather than the spiritual acrobatics of a Mallarmé). This is the case of the poem « le Rameur » [“The Rower”].

« Je remonte à la source où cesse même un nom. »

There are other essential links between « terme », « course » and « source ». According to Valéry: « Tout commencement achève quelque chose » [“All beginnings end something”]. In order to insist on the theme of *attente-désir* the following translations could be proposed.

“At last you shine, pure end of my course!”

or

“At last you shine, pure term of my course!”

The word “term” in English today is more likely to evoke “terms of reference”. (But Valéry would perhaps not have refused this meaning.)

The last line of these “Fragments” creates another set of problems.

« **Passe, et dans un frisson, brise Narcisse, et fuit... »**

	s		[z]s		[z]		s s
p			f				f
			R		R		R
a		[a]					a
			i		i		i
		e					e

[« et » – this “addition” is so clear and light in French]

First and foremost, it is the word « Narcisse » that is decomposed in both sound and meaning in this line.

Passe, et dans un frisson, brise Narcisse, et fuit... »

[ɑs [an]z rɪs [n] rɪz (**narsis**) i]

Valéry contrasts voiced and unvoiced consonants as well as vocal oppositions (open, veiled, sharp and acute vowels):

« s » / « z » / « s » / « z » / « s » « s »
 « p » / « b ».

« **Passe, et dans un frisson, brise Narcisse, et fuit... »**

	e		i		i		i		e	i
a	ã	œ	ö		a					

[Vocal oppositions: opening and closure]

The phonetic qualities of the last line intensify our understanding of its meaning. It requires notes that are vibrant, whispering, acute and open. There are essential oppositions between the verbs: « passe » (open / whispering), « brise » (vibrant / sharp) and « fuit... » (The lightness of this last verb is amplified by the fourth and final fleeting note in the line.)

« Passe, et dans un frisson, brise Narcisse, et fuit... »

p s	f s	s s f	[unvoiced consonants]
d z	r	<u>b r z n r</u>	[voiced consonants]

All the words here have been repeated elsewhere in the text to reinforce a certain feeling of closure. (This is another challenge for translators as they approach Valéry's aesthetics.) On the other hand, the first alexandrine is *detached* on purpose, and key words such as « brilles », « terme » and « course » are used only once in the poem. This in itself amply justifies separating it from the rest of the text.

But even if the word « Narcisse » is absent from the first line, it is present elsewhere, and especially when our mythological protagonist speaks about himself in the third person singular.

** ** *

Let us move on to the unfinished “Finale” of the “Fragments of the ‘Narcissus’” that was published for the first time in France in 1973.²⁵

The opening line

« La fontaine n'est plus qu'une splendide nuit »

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ε	ε	y	y	i	i	["clear" vowels]
[n]	n	n	n	[n]	n	[audible or visible consonants]
a	[n]	n	n	n	[n] i	[Narcisse – without “s”, or “{”;
						survival of the consonant “n” and the most
						open (“a”) and closed vowels “i” at the
						opposite ends of this line.]
	l			l		

can be translated in the following ways:

“The fountain is nothing but a splendid night”	ə ntɪn ɪ nʌ ʌ ə s ndɪd naɪt
“The fountain is merely a splendid night”	ə ntɪn ɪ ɪəli ə s l ndɪd naɪt
“The fountain has become a splendid night”	ə ntɪn ɪ ə s ndɪd naɪt

But in order to maintain the incomplete echoes in English of the word Narcissus, another melodic structure can be proposed:

“The pond is but a splendid night”

ə	n	ɪ[z]	ə	s	n	ɪ	naɪ	[the word <i>Narcissus</i> : with its residue of echoes]
p			b			p		[mirroring of unvoiced and voiced consonants]

Narcissus is absent from this nocturnal universe:

« il ne trouve plus que l'univers étincelant
reproduit par les eaux et comme achevé
fermé, **formant** un tout complet [...] »

It is the drama of an impossible *form* or its limits in relation to an all-embracing *corps-complet* or *corps-regard*. Herein lies the formal game for the translator as well. In fact, the text is situated between *corporalité* (the unexplainable physical side) and *form* (what is “fixed”). The drama oscillates between the aspirations of formal unity (the text) and the feeling of multiplicity (le corps). In short, we need to study closely the *symmetry* and *asymmetry* in Valéry's texts before translating them.

** ** *

In conclusion, the conditions for metre, rhythm and other sound effects in French are only partly reproduced in English. If, for David Paul, French is a violin with its “vibrato”²⁸, English is a complex keyboard instrument. The major obstacle for translators is the specific musicality of each language. When translating the tightly knit web of connections in Valéry's poetry it is important never to underplay the effects created by the voice and the specific functions of his personal vocabulary. Valéry is also acutely aware of the limits of translation. We are condemned to translate – and the limitations of our writerly skills make the task in(de)finite – hence the important role of the translator's notes in order to account for the *remainder*, the *residue* – or, in other words, what is left *out* or left *over*.

Last but not least, this paper contains a fragment of the groundwork for a further study of one of Valéry's overarching and earliest principles concerning translation: “The life of the mind (or mental activity)” [la « vie mentale »] is an “infinite series of translations” [« série infinie de traductions »]²⁹, and thought « est une série de traductions » [“is a set of translations”].³⁰

¹ ELDER, David. Réflexions à « claire-voix » sur la forme du texte à traduire. In D'AMELIO, Nadia. *La forme comme paradigme du traduire*. Mons: Éditions du CIPA. 2009: 301-318.

² Le poème est corps mais corps animé, « vox in actu » (*Cahier XXI*, 180). « Le Moi c'est la Voix » (*Cahier XIV*, 390).

³ My highlighting and underlining.

⁴ VALÉRY, Paul. *Lettre à Madame C*. Paris: Les Amis des Cahiers verts, Grasset, 1928.

« On peut dire qu'elle va chanter plus qu'elle ne chante ; et qu'elle va s'expliquer, plus qu'elle ne s'explique. Elle n'ose sonner trop haut, ni parler trop net. Elle ne hante ni les sommets, ni les abîmes de la voix. Elle se contente de ses collines et d'un profil très modéré. »

⁵ The poet is « un homme pour qui les sons du langage ont une importance égale (égale, vous m'entendez bien !) à celle du sens » VALÉRY, Paul. *Œuvres, Vol. I*. Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1957: 1079.

⁶ VALÉRY, Paul. « Images de la France », *Œuvres, Vol. II*. Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1960: 1003.

⁷ « L'écriture dans le poème joue le rôle de partition. L'essentiel n'est pas écrit. » (*Cahier IX*, 98) For LYOTARD, « Lire est entendre et non pas voir. L'œil ne fait que balayer les signes écrits. » [Reading is hearing and not seeing. The eye merely skims over the written signs.]

LYOTARD, Jean-François. *Discours, figure*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2002: 217.

⁸ « Toute vie de l'esprit – est écart. Penser est s'écarter. (...) » (*Cahier XXV*, 587)

⁹ VALÉRY, Paul. *Calepin du Poète, Œuvres, Vol. I*. Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1957: 1455.

¹⁰ « Tantôt c'est la combinaison de choses, et il faudra la traduire ; tantôt c'est celle des mots qui jouira de la propriété énoncée, et il faudra la justifier. » Id.: 1454.

¹¹ « ... c'est un monologue infini que celui qui peut s'entendre (si on y prête l'oreille) entre deux... pôles celui que l'on est par les circonstances, par la mémoire,

par l'observation de chaque figure particulière de l'instant,
l'examen de son corps, l'état de son humeur, – en somme,
tout ce qui peut être nommé, décrit, fixé ; et d'autre
part en contraste absolu avec celui-là, l'autre qui ne
peut, ni ne veut être défini, qui se refuse à toute spécification,
qui ne consent à aucune détermination, qui se dégage automatiquement
de tout acte de conscience.

Pour moi, mon « Narcisse » n'est pas tant occupé de
sa beauté. » (Ms. 162 105/317)

¹² « Narcisse.

Le problème – et la poésie – de l'*objet* – l'oscillation entre l'objet et le
sujet – qui est le problème du moi et de son *fonctionnement* –
n'est-ce pas le mythe du Narcisse ? » (*Cahier XII*, 795)

¹³ VALÉRY, Paul. « Tel Quel », « Littérature », *Œuvres, Vol. II*. Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade,
1960: 564.

« Grâce aux règles bizarres, dans la poésie française classique, la distance entre la « *pensée* » initiale
et « *l'expression* » finale est la plus grande possible. Ceci est de conséquence. Un travail se place entre
l'*émotion* reçue ou l'*intention* conçue, et l'achèvement de la *machine* qui la restituera ou restituera une
affection analogue. Tout est redessiné ; la pensée reprise, etc.

Ajoutez à ceci que les hommes qui ont porté cette poésie au plus haut point étaient tous *traducteurs*.
Rompus à transporter les anciens dans notre langue.

Leur poésie est marquée de ces habitudes. Elle est une traduction, une *belle infidèle*, – infidèle à ce
qui n'est pas en accord avec les exigences d'un langage pur. »

¹⁴ Note: « La prose jamais n'est *finie*. Mais le vers se trouve fini. Quand la prose est finie, elle est *un vers* »
(*Cahier VII* 84). [“Prose is never *finished*. But a line of poetry is. When prose is complete, it is *a line of*
poetry.”] But this must be read in conjunction with the following fundamental intellectual principle (that also
applies to poetry): Nothing in the mind is complete.] « Un poème n'est jamais achevé – c'est toujours un
accident qui le termine [...] » “A poem is never complete – it is always an accident that completes it.”
VALÉRY, Paul. « Tel Quel. Littérature. » *Œuvres, Vol. II*. Paris: Édition de la Pléiade, 1960: 553.

¹⁵ See: LAWLER, James. *Lecture de Valéry: Une Étude de « Charmes »*. Paris: PUF, 1963: 103.

¹⁶ The word *gleam* in English has little to do with the vivid light of the verb *briller*. David PAUL uses the
same verb to translate: « les rares lueurs des clairs anneaux perdus. » [“And the fitful gleamings of bright lost
rings.”]

¹⁷ VALÉRY, Paul. *Poems* [translated by David PAUL]. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1971: 140.

PAUL falls into a similar trap in his translation of the 1st line of « La Jeune Parque »:

« Cette main, sur mes traits qu'elle rêve effleurer, »

“*This hand of mine*, dreaming it strokes my features,” [my underlining]

“This hand of mine” is excessive as the Young Fate is not yet aware that it is *her* hand. (It is perhaps
numbed.) Besides, the poem is about the awakening of consciousness and such a declaration in English is
therefore unwarranted here. Valéry also replaces « Ma main » with « Cette main » in many early draft
versions of the poem.

¹⁸ There is an intense poetic play on multiple oppositions and *contrasts* in this text: *je / me / mon / ma / mes /*
moi / moi-même / Narcisse / il / l(e) / la / s(e) / son / sa / ses / soi / soi-même / (ce)lui / nous / nos / vous / votre
/ vos / tu / ton / ta / te / tes / toi / leurs... as well as in the following text in the *Cahiers*.

« Monologue en soi – qui est dialogue

À qui parle-t-on ?

Ici la logique voudrait intervenir – –

« Parler » implique *quelqu'un* qui parle et
quelqu'un à qui il parle.

Ce propos naissant se crée des pôles.

Il est très difficile d'observer ce monologue sans
le falsifier.

- Comment peut-on être *deux*, dans *Un ?* » (*Cahier XX*, 261)

¹⁹ « Hélène » (1891) « AZUR ! c'est moi... Je viens des grottes de la mort. »

« Orphée » (1926) ... « JE compose en esprit sous les myrtes, Orphée »

« Narcisse parle » (elegies) (1891) « Ô frères ! tristes lys, je languis de beauté »¹⁹

« L'amateur de poèmes » (1906) « Si je regarde tout à coup ma véritable pensée, je ne me console pas de
subir cette pensée intérieure. »

« Un feu distinct... » (1920)

« Un feu distinct m'habite et je vois distinctement »

²⁰ Except in a few of Valéry's early poems, the « Je » [the "I"] does not manifest itself ostentatiously in an opening line. This is not the case for Rimbaud in « Le Bateau ivre », « Oraison du soir », « Ma Bohème (Fantaisie) », « Au Cabaret-vert », « Sensation », « Aube » and many other prose poems.

²¹ « Rêve » (1889) « Je rêve un fort splendide et calme, où la nature / S'endort »
« Ensemble » (1892) « Je vous salue, ô frère exquis !... ô Mien ! »
« Solitude » (1897) « Loin de ce monde, je vis seul comme un ermite / Enfermé »

« Testament de Vénitienne » (1897) « Le jour où je mourrai, courez à ma gondole »

²² VALÉRY, Paul. Fragments of the Narcissus. *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry, Poems* [translated by David PAUL]. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1971: 141.

²³ *Course* and *source* are kept here in English in spite of an inevitable digression from the meaning of the text in Peter DALE's translation of VALÉRY's « Fragments du Narcisse » as both the second and the last line in French move from the *static* noun "flight" / « fuite » to movement through the verb "flees" / « fuit »: [VALÉRY, Paul. *Charms* [translated by Peter DALE]. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2007: 61.]

²⁴ The first lines of this text in the typed manuscript (*N ms 1,44*) are well known to all Valéry specialists. Nicole CELEYRETTE-PIETRI and Huguette LAURENTI also published them in LEVAILLANT, Jean. *Écriture et génétique textuelle. Valéry à l'œuvre*. Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1982.

« Voici.. Tu m'as conduit au terme de ma course,
Ce soir comme du cerf la soif que fuit sa course
Ne cesse qu'il ne tombe au milieu des roseaux,
Amour tu m'as [...] »

These first lines undergo immense changes – but the « je » is never present. Valéry plays with the "hugolian" effects of the word « Voici » which will disappear in the published version of this 1st « Fragment »,

« Amour voici briller ta substance, source »

The word « Voici » is an opening for one of his early poems: « ... Voici la porte refermée », as well as in a draft version of his « *Naissance de Vénus* »: « La voici ! fleur antique et d'écume fumante / La nymphe magnifique [...] ». In his later poems, Valéry focuses more on *imminence* than *presence*.

²⁵ ELDER, David. « Le finale fragmenté des « Narcisse » de Valéry », *Poétique et poésie* [Édition inaugurale des *Cahiers Paul Valéry*, Éd. ROUART, Agathe et LEVAILLANT, Jean]. Paris: Gallimard, 1973: 187-206.

²⁶ VALÉRY, Paul. Fragments of the Narcissus. *Poems* [translated by David PAUL]. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1971: 161.

²⁷ VALÉRY, Paul. Fragments of the 'Narcissus', *Charms* [translated by Peter DALE]. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2007: 81.

²⁸ See VALÉRY, Paul. *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry, Poems* [translated by David PAUL]. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1971: 391.

²⁹ VALÉRY, Paul. *Cahiers 1894-1914. Vol. II*. Paris: Gallimard. Collection Blanche, 1988:156 and VALÉRY 1957-61, I, 275.

³⁰ VALÉRY, Paul. *Cahiers 1894-1914. Vol. II*. Paris: Gallimard. Collection Blanche, 1988: 160.

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Vulgarity and Allocution in the Italian Dubbed Version of *Taxi Driver*

ANNA COLOMBI

Abstract

This article outlines problems that pertain to the dubbing of the film *Taxi Driver* (Scorsese, 1976) into Italian. Aside from the various constraints of audiovisual translation, such as lip synchronization, it focuses on the extensive omission of vulgarity and on the problem of allocution. Despite the importance of the link between vulgarity and violence in *Taxi Driver*, much of the vulgarity of the original has been completely suppressed in the Italian. At the same time, in the Italian dubbed version there is frequent inappropriate use of the Italian formal mode of address “lei”, but no lexical items that would justify this use are present in the original. Consequently, the Italian audience’s perception of the main character and ultimately of the entire film is completely different from that of the Anglophone audience.

In my analysis of the Italian dubbed version of *Taxi Driver*, I have borne in mind all of the typical obstacles of audiovisual translation: line length, coordination of frame and utterance, number of characters speaking at the same time, lip synchronization and so on. I have paid particular attention to lip synchronization in all of the three forms theorized by Thomas Herbst in “Why Dubbing is Impossible”: quantitative, qualitative and nucleus. As Herbst explains, quantitative lip synch means that the length of the translated text has to be roughly the same as the original, as we don’t want to see lip movements on the screen and hear no words or vice versa. Qualitative lip synch concerns the sounds of the dubbed version. These should be compatible with the lip movements we see on the screen. For example, we always need to dub a round vowel in the original with a round vowel in the translated version. Nucleus synch, finally, refers to certain movements of the body that are only articulated when a stressed syllable is pronounced, such as shaking one’s head or raising one’s eyebrows. Keeping these major obstacles in mind, I will examine the two main problem areas in the Italian dubbing of *Taxi Driver*: vulgarity and allocution. We will see that the suppression of some vulgar language, combined with an unjustified extended use of the Italian formal mode of address (“lei”), results in a different perception of both the main character and the entire film.

Vulgarity and violence are inseparably linked in *Taxi Driver*. They provide a realistic description of the environment in which the action takes place: the city of New York at the end of the 1970s. From the very beginning of the film, most of the characters encountered by Travis Bickle, the film’s protagonist, are vulgar: his employer is vulgar, the girl he tries to be nice to at the porn theatre is quite vulgar, his fellow cabbies use many vulgar expressions, and Sport (Iris’s pimp) is very vulgar indeed. Almost all of the characters are part of this microcosm of verbal and physical violence in New York City.

The film can be divided into two parts: in the first part there is a preponderance of verbal violence; whereas in the second part, in addition to verbal violence, we have a whirlwind of physical violence and death, beginning with scene 16 and culminating in the massacre at Iris’s apartment. In the original version, the coarse language of the characters mirrors this violence. In the Italian dubbed version, however, much of this vulgar language has not been rendered into Italian. In particular, Travis’s vulgarisms in the first part of the film have been completely suppressed. The “first Travis” has been censored.

Let us consider some examples, taken from scene 4 of the film in which the taxi drivers are having a break from work at a café. Wizard’s “Whatever the fuck it is, she uses a lot of it” becomes “Comunque si chiami ne aveva su una tonnellata”, with no equivalent for “the fuck” and no vulgarism in the Italian dubbing. Then we have a case in which a vulgar expression is maintained. Wizard describes a sexual experience he has recently had while driving his taxi,

and his language becomes quite colourful. He says: “In the middle of the Triboro bridge... this woman is beautiful... she changes her pantyhose [...] I fuck her brains out.” This is correctly rendered as “L’ho scopata che a momenti le usciva il cervello dagli occhi.” When Travis starts to speak, his “No, he got cut up by some crazy fucker” becomes a banal “matto” (simply “crazy”) in the Italian. Finally, there is a “Fuckin’ Mau Mau land” dubbed as “Quella è la zona di Mau Mau” with no equivalent for “Fuckin’” in the Italian.

The entire film is studded with examples of vulgarisms mistranslated in the Italian dubbing. Most of them are pronounced by Travis. For instance, in scene 8, his “Jesus Christ, I’ve got a taxi!” is rendered as “E poi il tassì ce l’ho anch’io, no?” Thus, the Italian Travis avoids swearing altogether. Later in the film, a “Shit!” in scene 16 becomes “Brutto schifoso” in the Italian. A less vulgar expression is preferred to the equivalent “Merda”. The same word is later translated as just “Ah!” (scene 20) during the conversation between Travis and Sport outside Iris’s apartment block, and completely ignored in scene 21, when Travis is in Iris’s apartment. It is not difficult to see that mistranslating all these vulgar expressions with items which are not quite as vulgar or not vulgar at all can change the perception of a character dramatically.

Another reason why the “first Travis” of the Italian dubbed version is a very different character from the original is the inappropriate extended use of the Italian form “lei” in the Italian version of the film. The fact that Travis uses this mode of address throughout most of film and with most of the characters makes him seem kinder than he really is in the original version. This is due to the problem of allocation. The English form “you” can be translated into Italian as either “tu” or “lei” according to the specific social situation in which it is used. As Maria Pavesi argues in “L’allocuzione nel doppiaggio dall’inglese all’italiano”, we need to find equivalence between two different systems: the English system, which codifies allocation at a lexical level, usually with vocatives, such as “Sir” or “Madam”, but also with other kinds of lexical markers, such as more formal terms; and the Italian system, which codifies it at a grammatical level, with pronouns and verbs. Pavesi speaks of two allocation parameters: superiority-inferiority and distance-nearness. These two parameters apply to different languages and help in finding equivalence between two different language systems. If the superiority-inferiority parameter prevails, this means that we have asymmetry. As a result, in a translation into Italian, a “superior” character would use the “tu” form when addressing an “inferior” character, but the “inferior” character would address the “superior” one with the “lei” form. This is what is likely to happen in a working environment between a manager and an employee, for instance. When the second parameter prevails, we have reciprocity, which means that both characters would symmetrically use either one form or the other. Reciprocity is likely to be used in everyday conversation among people of the same age, profession, etc.

Let’s have a look at Travis and Betsy’s first date (scene number 5). This is the dialogue in the original:

BETSY: 15,000 volunteers in New York alone is not bad but, Christ! The organizational problems...

TRAVIS: I know what you mean, I’ve got the same problems. I gotta get organized. You know little things like my apartment, my possessions. I should get one of those signs that says “One of these days I’m gonna get organized”.

BETSY: You mean organized?

TRAVIS: Organized. Organized. It’s a joke. ORGANIZED

BETSY: Oh, you mean organized, like those old signs they have in offices that says “Thimk”?

TRAVIS: You like the place you work at?

BETSY: That’s good people working force. I think Palantine’s got a good chance.

TRAVIS: You know you have beautiful eyes?

TRAVIS: You like the guy you work with?

BETSY: He’s okay.

TRAVIS: Yeah but, I know, but do you like him?

BETSY: He's funny and he's very good at his job...he's okay though he does have a few problems.

TRAVIS: I would say he has quite a few problems. His energy seems to go in the wrong places. When I walked in and I saw you two sitting there, I could just tell by the way you were both related that there was no connection, whatsoever. And I felt when I walked in that there was something between us, there was an impulse that we were both following so that gave me the right to come in and talk to you, otherwise I never would have felt that I had the right to talk to you or say anything to you, I never would have had the courage to talk to you. And with him I felt there was nothing and I could sense it when I walked in I knew I was right. Did you feel that way?

BETSY: I wouldn't be here if I didn't.

This is the Italian dubbing:

BETSY: 15.000 propagandisti soltanto a New York non sono pochi, ma abbiamo problemi organizzativi.

TRAVIS: Eh, capisco benissimo, sono problemi che ho anch'io. Anch'io devo organizzarmi, piccole cose, la casa dove vivo, tutta la mia roba. Voglio farmi un cartello con sopra scritto "Un giorno devo orgasmizzarmi".

BETSY: Vuol dire organizzarmi?

TRAVIS: Orgasmizzarmi.Orgasmizzarmi è uno scherzo. Un gioco di parole che mi ha raccontato un amico.

BETSY: Ah, orgasmizzarmi. Non so che cosa vuol dire ma è meglio non approfondire, credo.

TRAVIS: Le piace lì dove lavora?

BETSY: Sì. Ho un sacco di colleghi simpatici e Palantine ha molte probabilità.

TRAVIS: Lei ha degli occhi bellissimi.

TRAVIS: E quel suo collega le piace?

BETSY: Sì, è un bravo ragazzo.

TRAVIS: Sì, ma le ho chiesto se le piace.

BETSY: Be', è divertente e in gamba nel suo lavoro. È a posto, anche se ha qualche problema.

TRAVIS: Già, secondo me ne ha parecchi di problemi. Mi pare uno di quelli che spreca le sue energie. Quando sono entrato e vi ho visto lì tutti e due che parlavate, ho capito da come vi comportavate che non vi somigliate. Ma proprio niente. E nello stesso istante ho sentito che fra noi due c'era qualcosa, qualcosa che ci spinge l'uno verso l'altro e questo mi ha dato il diritto di parlarle, sennò non avrei avuto il coraggio di venire da lei e di dirle quello che le ho detto. Non avrei avuto neanche il coraggio di parlarle. Invece quello lì era un estraneo.

Lui era un estraneo per lei e io no. L'ho capito subito. O mi sbaglio? L'ha sentito anche lei?

BETSY: Sennò non sarei venuta.

In the original dialogue there are neither vocatives nor any other type of formal verbal markers. Despite this, in the Italian dubbing Travis addresses Betsy by the "lei" form. In this context, the "lei" form sounds quite strange given the situation (they are out on a date) and the level of intimacy between the two characters. Travis is complimentary of Betsy's eyes, makes a joke, and even dares to express his opinion of Betsy's colleague. It is thus clear that the "tu" form would be more suitable to this situation of intimacy stated by Travis himself ("And I felt when I walked in that there was something between us, there was an impulse that we were both following"). According to Margherita Ulrych, "reciprocal 'tu' is reserved for close relationships and to signal the progression from acquaintanceship to greater intimacy" ("Fim Dubbing", p. 149). Intimacy is also mentioned by Pavesi as one of the situations creating reciprocity in allocution: "si userà il Tu quando c'è familiarità e intimità tra i due interlocutori, o comunanza di interessi, la stessa professione o, in generale, l'appartenenza ad uno stesso gruppo" [The *Tu* form will be used when there is familiarity and intimacy between the two interlocutors, or common interests, the same profession or, generally speaking, when belonging to the same group] ("L'allocuzione nel doppiaggio", p. 120). Curiously, the joke Travis makes in this

sequence, which turns on the word “organized” and is not vulgar in the original, is rendered as the quite vulgar “orgasimizzarmi” in the Italian. “Orgasmizzarmi” implies a reference to orgasm not present in the original, as if the translator wanted to compensate for the many vulgarisms attenuated elsewhere by deliberately inventing a coarse joke where the joke is not coarse in the original. While acknowledging the translator’s effort to compensate, we can’t help but wonder why they did not adhere more closely to the source film elsewhere, and translate English vulgarisms with Italian vulgarisms exactly where they are located in the source film.

The “lei” form sounds even more out of place when Travis and Betsy go out on a second date, in scene 8. Here is the dialogue in the original version:

BETSY: Hi, there.
TRAVIS: Hi. Did you have a nice day today?
BETSY: Not particularly.
TRAVIS: Got a present for you.
BETSY: Oh!
[...]
TRAVIS: Where are you going?
BETSY: I have to leave now.
TRAVIS: Why?
BETSY: I don’t why I came in here. I don’t like these movies.
TRAVIS: Well, I... You know, I didn’t know you’d feel that way about this movie. I don’t know much about movies but if I had known...
BETSY: Is this the only kind of movies you go to?
TRAVIS: Yeah, I come and... This is not so bad.
BETSY: Taking me to a place like this is about as exciting to me as saying “Let’s fuck”!

The dialogue is dubbed as follows.

BETSY: Salve.
TRAVIS: Salve. È andata bene in ufficio?
BETSY: Niente di speciale.
TRAVIS: Un regalino
BETSY: Oh!
[...]
TRAVIS: Ma dove va?
BETSY: Me ne vado a casa.
TRAVIS: Perché?
BETSY: Non so perché ci sono venuta. A me non piacciono questi film.
TRAVIS: Ma guardi che io... io non lo sapevo che lei la pensava così per questi film. Io poi non mi intendo di film. Se l’avessi saputo...
BETSY: E questi sono gli unici film che lei va a vedere?
TRAVIS: Sì, io ci vengo qui... mi pare che non sono mica male.
BETSY: Portarmi in un posto simile significa non avere il minimo rispetto per me!

Again, in spite of the fact that there are no vocatives in the original, and no other lexical elements which might signal a formal conversation, in the Italian version both characters are quite formal to each other. Travis uses a formal greeting (“Salve”), and says “Ma dove va?”, “ma guardi che”, “Io non lo sapevo che lei la pensava così”; as we can see, the “lei” form can be found in all three of these sentences. Betsy uses the same formal greeting (“Salve”), as well as the “lei” form (“E questi sono gli unici film che lei va a vedere?”), and seems quite formal when she says “significa non avere il minimo rispetto per me” at the end of the scene. In the Italian we thus have a symmetrical use of the formal mode of address. Therefore, according to Pavesi, we should have distance between the two characters; but this is not present in Scorsese’s film. This is Travis and Betsy’s second date, and, before entering the porn theatre, they seem quite close to each other. They stroll together through the streets of New York City,

Travis gives Betsy a present, and they seem to be excited to be going out together. The proxemic and kinesic markers that we see on screen, which Ulrych (p. 143) calls non-verbal codes, suggest nearness rather than distance. Furthermore, towards the end of the passage, Betsy becomes very upset with Travis for taking her to a porn theatre. So, it is even less likely that, when walking away from him, she would use the “lei” form to address him. In the original, Betsy is also slightly vulgar in the language she uses in this final part of the dialogue. She tells him “Taking me to a place like this is about as exciting to me as saying ‘Let’s fuck!’”. This is yet another feature of the dialogue that would not suggest the “lei” form in translation. Interestingly, this vulgarism is attenuated in the Italian and the sentence is rendered with “Portarmi in un posto simile significa non avere il minimo rispetto per me!” Instead, a much less vulgar sentence is used: literally, “Taking me to a place like this means not having any respect for me at all”.

In Travis and Betsy’s first and second date, thus, there are neither verbal nor non-verbal markers which could justify the use of the “lei” form in the translation. Moreover, it is highly improbable that a character like Travis, who has very little education, as he himself notes when applying for the job he then obtains, would use this form for so long. The form “tu”, on the contrary, would adjust perfectly to the character, the dating scenes, and, generally speaking, the microcosm of violence and vulgarity in which the entire film is set. *Taxi driver* is, in fact, a film which describes the darkest and most dangerous corners of the 1970s New York City. A real event, the attempted murder of Governor Wallace, inspired Paul Schrader to write the script for the film. It is not by chance that the film is highly realistic, as both Schrader and Scorsese wanted it to depict 1970s New York City in all its roughness. That is why Travis’s taxi goes to Harlem and The Bronx, as well as to other unspecified dangerous New York City blocks. With Travis’s taxi, the viewer ventures into the most dangerous blocks of the city. Of course, in the original, the language of the characters mirrors this microcosm, and vulgarity plays a key role in establishing the mood and meaning of the film. Travis himself describes the city in very rough terms in scene 6, when he picks up Palantine and his assistant. When asked, “What is the one thing about this country that bugs you the most?” he answers,

Whoever it is, he should clean up this city here because this city here is like an open sewer. It’s full of filth and scum. Sometimes I can hardly take it. Whatever becomes the President should just really clean it up. You know what I mean? Sometimes I go out and I smell it and I get headaches it’s so bad. You know? And they just never go away, you know? I think that the President should just clean up this whole mess. He should just flush it right down the fuckin’ toilet.

The roughness of the original is not mirrored in the Italian dubbed version:

Chiunque eleggono deve ripulire questa città perché questa città fa...fa proprio schifo e da tutte le parti, poi, gentaccia. Roba da rivoltare lo stomaco. Chiunque diventa Presidente prima di tutto deve darci una ripulita, capisce cosa dico? Certe volte il puzzo ti piglia alla gola e ti fa venire il mal di stomaco, capisce?...è come se...come se ci si soffoca. Io credo che quello che diventa Presidente prima di tutto deve buttarla nel cesso tutta questa immondizia e poi tirare l’acqua.

The reason why the Italian does not sound as crude as the original is twofold. Both allocution and vulgarity are involved in making the scene in the Italian less rough. First of all, the fact that Travis uses the formal mode of address when speaking to Palantine makes his Italian speech less crude, and to a large extent less sharp, than the original speech in English. We must say, though, that in this case the “lei” form is not completely out of place. Travis is addressing a public figure, a politician. Therefore, it is quite natural for him to show respect through the formal mode of address. Secondly, many vulgarisms present in the original are rendered with much less vulgar phrases: “fa proprio schifo” for “is like an open sewer”; “da tutte le parti poi gentaccia” for “it’s full of filth and scum”. The whole imagery related to sewers and garbage, expressed in the original dialogue through various similes, does not even appear in the Italian.

Even though a few sentences such as “Certe volte il puzzo ti piglia alla gola e ti fa venire il mal di stomaco” and “Quello che diventa presidente prima di tutto deve buttarla nel cesso tutta questa immondizia” are quite direct and crude in the Italian too, they are not as rough as those in the original. To sum up, even if we can understand the reason why the translator used the “lei” form, and we can hear some vulgar language in the Italian, we still feel that more could have been done to mirror the sharp crudeness of the original, by making the dialogue more direct through the “tu” form, and by adhering more closely to the imagery of sewers and garbage.

This last scene epitomises Travis’s view of the city he lives in. From the very beginning of the film the viewer is shown New York City in all its “filth and scum”, and this “filth and scum” is shown through Travis’s eyes. As previously mentioned it is, in fact, through Travis’s taxi that the viewer gains access to the most dangerous blocks of the city. It is through Travis’s body and eyes that we can see how miserable Iris’s life is. Since we can see New York City only through what Schrader calls a “one-eyed view of the world” (qtd in Pazzotta, pp. 67-68), we can’t but accept this view and embrace it. As well as Travis’s view, we must accept Travis’s language in all its vulgarity and crudity. Translating much of the coarse language in the original film with dialogues free of vulgarisms, and using the “lei” form in most of Travis’s dialogues, results in a different and less realistic view of this microcosm of vulgarity and violence, a microcosm which both Schrader and Scorsese wanted to be as realistic as possible. What we see (and hear) in the Italian dubbed version is a different and less realistic view of this microcosm, a different and less realistic Travis, and, ultimately, a different and less realistic film.

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