

The AALITRA Review

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The AALITRA Review

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The 1.5-Generation Vietnamese-American Writer as Post-Colonial Translator^{1*}

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Abstract

This essay explores contemporary transnationalism through the creative texts written by Vietnamese-born 1.5-Generation authors residing in the USA, in order to define the generational impact on this emerging literature. I use post-colonial translation theory to examine how the process of migration produces a cultural and linguistic gap for these authors in relation to their readership, and to identify the creative strategies used by these authors in response to it.

Introduction

The 1.5 Generation is a cultural construct that has become increasingly used within a variety of academic disciplines. This diasporic generation is comprised of those who have memories of their birth country, are conscious of being bicultural and are at least conversationally bilingual (Danico 6). They are technically part of the first generation, in that they were born overseas and are immigrants themselves. Earlier literature describes characteristics of this population without using the specific term, as the concept of the 1.5 Generation is relatively new; it has therefore yet to develop agreed-upon parameters (Bartley and Spoonley 67). Different theorists have applied the concept to those who migrated before the age of twelve, middle to late adolescence, or even to young adults; many theorists consider very young children who migrated before school age to be second generation (Park 141). Given the significance of the linguistic and cultural knowledge involved in literary production, the term “1.5 Generation” in this essay refers to authors who experienced migration as children aged between six and sixteen years, including experiencing some of their formative socialization, and therefore language acquisition, in the country of origin. Conversely, members of this Generation need to have arrived in the country of settlement at a young enough age to attend school and to experience non-work related socialization.

In the first section of this article, I propose that the Vietnamese diaspora is not only dispersed geographically but also linguistically; each generation internalizes the dominant language to a different extent, and this results in a linguistic dispersal across generations in each country of settlement. I explore how a cultural and linguistic gap exists for diasporic writers. Strikingly, the cultural and linguistic gap experienced by first-generation authors differs from that experienced by the 1.5 Generation. In subsequent sections, I examine texts by 1.5-Generation authors Lan Cao and Linh Dinh to identify the creative strategies they use to resist invisibility, stereotyping or linguistic colonization, and propose that these strategies change as the cultural and linguistic gap shifts over time and in diverse circumstances of cultural production. I suggest that 1.5-Generation authors do, indeed, have to redefine their positioning with each new creative work, to (re)translate themselves along a shifting continuum of otherness. The article concludes by theorizing the 1.5 Generation’s relationship to language itself.

The Vietnamese diaspora is said to have emerged in 1975 after the Vietnam War,² in which the communist North defeated the pro-western South Vietnamese government and unified Viet Nam after 1975. Vietnam’s post-colonial status is contextualized by French colonialism,

^{1*}This article first appeared in *Kunapipi: Journal of Postcolonial Writing and Culture* 32.1 (2010): 130-146. We are grateful to Anne Collett, editor of *Kunapipi*, for permission to reprint it here.

² I use the phrase “Vietnam War” not in the Western sense of a war fought by the USA and its allies against North Vietnam (mirrored by Vietnam’s description of it as the “American War”). Instead, I use “Vietnam War” to recognize that it was also a civil war between North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

American neo-colonialism during modern times, and nearly a thousand years of Chinese domination in pre-modern times. As with other post-colonial nations, structures of inequity and oppression remain in place after Vietnam achieved independence from foreign powers. In the late 1970s and 1980s, over one million people fled South Viet Nam to settle in countries such as the USA, Australia, France and Canada. The result is a Vietnamese diaspora as social form which remains “an identified group characterized by their relationship-despite-dispersal” (Vertovec 3).

The Vietnamese diaspora is not only dispersed geographically but also linguistically. After settlement, Vietnamese migrant communities increasingly adopt the dominant language of the host country. Generally, first-generation migrants do not become as assimilated as their second-generation children. The linguistic diaspora therefore occurs both geographically as well as across the generations within each country of settlement. In between the first and second generation is the 1.5 Generation.

Linguistic dispersal

Post-colonial theory describes how the process of migration “translates” the subject into object; first- and 1.5-Generation authors would have been members of the dominant culture if they had remained in Vietnam, but post migration and settlement they became members of a minority culture. Unlike the first generation, however, the 1.5-Generation authors re-orientate themselves linguistically after migration to produce Anglophone creative texts. These texts are therefore consumed by a readership that is partially or primarily from a different culture. I suggest these authors are faced with a cultural and linguistic gap that requires their performance as “translators” between the mainstream and minority cultures.

Post-colonial theorists are increasingly reappropriating and reassessing the term “translation” itself, and recognizing the role that translation played during colonization. “Who translates whom becomes a crucial issue. Questions of cultural familiarity, the implied construction of the audience, the problems of constructing the ‘other’ have particular relevance in this context” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 204). Unequal power relations between cultures were supported by centuries of translation as a one-way process for the benefit of the colonizer, rather than as part of a reciprocal process of exchange:

As a practice, translation begins as a matter of intercultural communication, but also always involves questions of power relations, and of forms of domination [...] No act of translation takes place in an entirely neutral space of absolute equality. Someone is translating something or someone. Someone or something is being translated, transformed from a subject to an object.

(Young 140)

The creative writing produced by 1.5-Generation writers can be said to be directed toward a readership that is “partially or primarily of people from a different culture” (Tymoczko 21). For this generation the gap is specifically between the mainstream culture in the country of settlement and the minority culture of the Vietnamese diaspora. Post-colonial translation theorist Maria Tymoczko compares the task required of translators with that required of post-colonial writers. Her assertion is that while translators transport a text, post-colonial writers must transpose a culture, which includes the various systems that enable the text to be grasped by readers:

As background to their literary works, they are transposing a culture – to be understood as a language, a cognitive system, a literature [...] a material culture, a social system and legal framework, a history, and so forth. In the case of many former colonies, there may even be more than one culture or one language that stand behind a text.

(Tymoczko 20)

These are the elements that make up the cultural and linguistic gap that members of the 1.5 Generation must attempt to overcome. Otherwise, their literary production may result in invisibility, stereotyping and linguistic colonization. While the 1.5 Generation exhibits some characteristics of the first generation, the cultural and linguistic gap does, however, impact differently on the first generation as compared to the 1.5 Generation. I spend the remainder of this section examining this so as to apprehend the publication context that is the inheritance of the 1.5 Generation.

I propose that first-generation diasporic authors face, simultaneously, a smaller and larger cultural-linguistic gap than the 1.5 Generation. The first generation face a smaller gap when writing in Vietnamese for the Vietnamese diaspora, because there is generally a shared cognitive system, history, literature and social system. Conversely, the first generation face a much wider gap when they write in English for a mainstream readership in the country of settlement, where a shared culture between author and audience does not yet exist. Researchers note that immediately after the end of the Vietnam War and until the early 1990s literary production written in Vietnamese by first-generation authors, for a Vietnamese readership, was full of “wrath and anger” (Qui Phan Thiet, quoted in Janette 271). In contrast, works written in English, for a mainstream North American readership, adopted a calmer tone, one that was “characterized by patience and tact” (Janette 272). The boundary between insiders and outsiders is clearly demarcated for the first generation of writers.

For the first generation, the fact of displacement also imposes a barrier to writing creatively in the country of settlement, irrespective of the language used. Writing about American eminent first-generation author Võ Phiến, John Schafer explains that “trying to apply his descriptive powers, honed in Vietnam, to local scenes and culture in the United States [...] is not easy for him. In Vietnam he was the insider, reporting on the things he knew well [...] In the United States he is an outsider, trying to understand a strange land inhabited by a people whose language he barely speaks” (Schafer 217). Creative writing relies on evocation and familiarity with not just the language, but also the environment and context. Even when Võ Phiến is impressed by his newly adopted land, it has no resonance for him; he experiences a sense of alienation from place:

In Vietnam, he says, “we had scenery but also feeling, the bright present but also memories of the past”. But in America, when we stand “in this field, on that hillside, or beside that river, we don’t yet have any memories at all. We have the scenery, but not the feeling”.

(Võ Phiến, quoted in Schafer 219-20)

Despite this challenge, Võ Phiến continued his creative output in the USA, writing for the emerging Vietnamese global diaspora. The essays he wrote during the early period of settlement were aimed at fellow refugees and take the form of letters to a “dear friend”. I suggest that Võ Phiến’s strategy of highly personalized and intimate writing is a response to the sense of dispersal and alienation from place. The effectiveness of this strategy is heightened by the fact that Võ Phiến writes in Vietnamese for first-generation migrants, like himself, who are surrounded by the dominance of English.

Schafer is not of Vietnamese heritage but is able to read Vietnamese-language texts. He describes his feelings as an “outsider” reading Võ Phiến’s essays, written not long after he settled in America.

[W]hen someone like myself reads his works it is like eavesdropping on a private conversation [...] Reading [the essays] you feel as if you are perusing a bundle of old letters found in the attic. When you discover that the people talking in the letters are talking about you – about Americans – the strangeness of your situation increases, but, of course, so does your curiosity.

(Schafer 14-15)

These “overheard stories” confirm how wide the cultural and linguistic gap is for first-generation Vietnamese writers when communicating to a mainstream American readership. The value of such works is that “they allow us to encounter the feelings and thoughts of a leading Vietnamese exile writer before they are edited to accommodate American sensitivities” (Schafer 14-15). These early works by first-generation writers are valuable documents in the face of North American hegemony; they provide a unique opportunity for readers in a powerful country like the USA to see themselves through genuinely new eyes, if and when these works are eventually translated into English.

In addition to the sense of displacement caused by migration, first-generation writers found it almost impossible to gain a wider readership. Critic Nguyễn Hưng Quốc notes that works written in Vietnamese are not studied in Asian-American studies, which only focus on English-language publications (263). Schafer suggests that first-generation writers are most often classified under “Asian Studies” rather than Asian-American studies, and that only works written from an American-Asian perspective achieve recognition in mainstream North America (9). “It’s us to us only. There’s no way to reach them [English-language readers]; every road is blocked, every door is shut” (Mai Thảo, quoted in Schafer 8-9).

Anglophone works by first-generation writers are not very well known. Having crossed the linguistic gap by writing and publishing in English, these first-generation pioneers do not, on the whole, overcome the cultural gap. Michele Janette argues that

in practice, many who teach and research in this field have found obstacles to working with Vietnamese American literature, not least of which is the simple lack of knowledge about what is available. Since 1963, over 100 volumes of literature in English have been published by Vietnamese American authors, a figure that may surprise even scholars in the field.

(Janette 267)

When the first generation did write and publish in English, it did not ensure that the mainstream readership took any notice. Janette suggests that “obstacles to this literature becoming well known have had an ideological as well as practical edge, in that these narratives by Vietnamese Americans were not heard because they were not useful to either the American left or right in the years that followed the war in Viet Nam” (267). The cultural and linguistic gap makes post-colonial migrant writers invisible, especially those from the first generation. These works profoundly challenge North American assumptions about itself:

Vietnamese American literature muddies this picture. If what was lost in the war was innocent faith in the American right, it is embarrassing to face the insistent belief in the American Dream that is present in much of this literature. If American forces are the primary victims, it is awkward to listen to the accusations of betrayal from South Vietnamese soldiers. And if the war was really all about America, then accounts that center on Vietnamese experience are phenomenological impossibilities.

(Janette 278)

It was this context of publishing and reading that the 1.5 Generation inherited. Post-colonial migrant literature is transformed over time, starting with the exilic, which becomes migrant and then diasporic literature, with affiliations “renegotiated by every generation” (Trouilloud 21). The salient transformation between the generations in the diaspora is that the majority of 1.5-Generation writers cannot write in Vietnamese at the level required to create literary works.³ For this cohort of writers, the proposal to resist the dominant culture by writing

³ 1.5-Generation American-Vietnamese writer, Linh Dinh is the exception that proves the rule. He has translated his poems into Vietnamese and has edited collections of translated short stories. To date, he has only composed one poem directly in Vietnamese. <http://www.talawas.org/talaDB/showFile.php?res=961&rb=07>

in Vietnamese is not even an option. By creating works in English, the 1.5 Generation have the opportunity for exposure to a world audience, while also being exposed to the dangers of translating themselves. The risk is captured in the aphorism “traduttore, traditore – translator, traitor” (Young 141).

But who is being betrayed, and by whom? I propose that as the demarcation between insider and outsider is often blurred for the 1.5 Generation, these authors may feel as though they are betraying themselves in their performance as cultural translators. In the next section, I examine some of the strategies that 1.5-Generation authors use to resist invisibility, stereotyping and linguistic colonization, while maximizing opportunities for creative invention that arise from their positioning as translators.

Strategies against invisibility

Given that the 1.5 Generation is usually more fluent in English than in the “mother-tongue”, they would seem to be furnished with opportunities that are denied first-generation writers. But having crossed the linguistic gap, these authors must ensure that they are able to cross the gap of invisibility to reach a mainstream readership composed “partially or primarily of people from a different culture” (Tymoczko 21).

In Lan Cao’s novel, *The Monkey Bridge*, published in 1997, the young 1.5-Generation narrator experiences the culture shock of arriving in the USA just months before the fall of Saigon. The teenaged Mai indicates her positioning within the novel: “My mother had already begun to see me as someone volatile and unreliable, an outsider with inside information” (41). However, as a member of the 1.5 Generation, Mai is able to switch from the mother-tongue to embrace the English language with relative effortlessness:

This was my realization: we have only to let one thing go – the language we think in, or the composition of our dream, the grass roots clinging underneath its rocks – and all at once everything goes [...] Suddenly, out of that difficult space between here and there, English revealed itself to me with the ease of thread unspooled.

(Cao 36-37)

The ease of acquiring a new tongue is contrasted with the difficulty of reversing Mai’s cultural positioning. The cultural switch is depicted as being extremely difficult and fraught. In order to create and maintain a new American identity, the 1.5-Generation narrator has to “adopt a different posture, to reach deep enough into the folds of the earth to relocate one’s roots and bend one’s body in a new direction” (39). She makes use of elements found in nature that do not ordinarily change: the trunk of a tree, the pull of gravity, the flowing of a river. Then she applies verbs such as “realign”, “shifting”, “motion”, and “moved” to highlight the impossibility of such a task. “The process, which was as surprising as a river reversing course and flowing upstream, was easier said than done” (39). And yet, *The Monkey Bridge* is proof that the task of bridging the cultural and linguistic gap is possible for the 1.5 Generation, with the qualification that it is somewhat easier to switch to “thinking in another language” than it is to entirely “feel” in another culture.

The tension of intimately knowing a language while being distanced culturally from its corresponding mainstream society is what marks the 1.5 Generation as unique, compared with the first or second generations. In *The Monkey Bridge*, Mai repeatedly encounters the dilemma of being the cultural translator. In the following passage, she is living with her American host family. She is given some newspaper articles by her “Aunt” Mary, who is encouraging her to learn English. The articles contain early representations of the newly arrived Vietnamese community in America. They include stories of Vietnamese high-achievers, the model minorities who pose no danger to America’s cultural hegemony: “a Vietnamese boy smiled contemplatively as he was inducted into the school’s National Honor Society” (87). Then, the narrator sees another article in the newspaper:

It began unspectacularly, with standard descriptions of homeowners and shopkeepers. Then, following the introductory paragraph, in clear inexorable print, neutral as the news itself, was a story about how a Vietnamese family had been suspected of eating an old neighbor's dog. The orphan pup had been the old man's only companion. What was I supposed to say to this? It wasn't Aunt Mary's fault. My dilemma was that, seeing both sides to everything, I belonged to neither.

(Cao 87-88)

Mai is trapped by the cultural and linguistic gap, and is unable to identify completely with either perspective. For the 1.5 Generation, reality can be perceived as two entirely different versions of the same event, both of which can be "as neutral as the news itself". It just depends on whose "news" they are reading.

The dilemma of double-identity is inherent in the structure of the novel itself: the story jumps between Mai's narration (first-person point of view) and Mai's mother, Thanh (first-person point of view filtered through Thanh's diary). These two narratives are delineated by the use of two different fonts. Mai's narration takes place in the present, while Thanh's narration is historical in its retelling of the events prior to the family's departure from Vietnam. The main purpose of Thanh's diary excerpts is to provide Mai with answers to Thanh's actions in the present, and ultimately to reveal the terrible secret about Mai's grandfather, Baba Quan. The fact that this secret is kept from Mai for most of the novel marks her as an unreliable narrator with incomplete information about her half of the story. It also suggests that in Thanh's eyes, Mai is positioned as the translator/traitor, someone who is simultaneously an insider-outsider.

Throughout the novel, Thanh is correlated with Vietnam and the past, both in plotting and description: "[s]he was bent over the sink, her S-shaped spine twisted like a crooked coastline. I felt a spate of feelings – guilt, pity, love – crowd inside my chest" (205). Later, when Mai watches the final days of the Fall of Saigon from the physical safety of North America, the paralleling of Vietnam and Thanh is further emphasized. "It was on TV, a luminous color origami cut from the dark of night, that I witnessed my own untranslatable world unfold to Americans half a globe away [...] It was as if all of America were holding its breath, waiting for a diseased body, ravaged and fatigued, and now all too demanding, to let go. Death must be nudged, hurried, if only it could be" (98).

The "monkey bridge" in the novel's title represents, at different points, the interstitial space between Vietnam and America, life and death, and childhood and adulthood. While Mai's "monkey bridge" is clearly positioned between the two cultures, her grandfather Baba Quan's "monkey bridge" is the power of a man to save US soldiers from land mines thanks to his intimate knowledge of the ancestral land (112). When Thanh as an adolescent girl sees her future husband for the first time while he is crossing a "monkey bridge", it becomes a metonym for the interstitial space between childhood and adulthood.

By the end of the novel, Mai's mother performs two irrevocable acts; she reveals to Mai the terrible secret about Baba Quan, and she commits suicide. These acts free Mai to pursue a materially and intellectually brighter future – although at great emotional and spiritual cost. As Trouilloud points out: "unlike early Vietnamese American novels which were most concerned with keeping the past alive alongside the present to prevent the traditional lifestyle from disappearing, *Monkey Bridge* states the act of unearthing a past to break free from its chains" (209). Cao seems to suggest that one cannot stay in the interstitial space of the "monkey bridge" forever.

As groundbreaking and accomplished as this novel is, it does raise the question of who is translating whom and for what purpose. Mai's narration is contemporary to the time-period depicted in the novel, and is thus given greater importance by the mainstream reader. The dual narration allows readers to hear the first generation's voice, but ultimately privileges the voice of the more assimilated 1.5 Generation. *The Monkey Bridge* has to resist invisibility, and draws on the method of "over-telling" culturally-specific information, in order for the dominant-culture

readership to comprehend the significance of minority-culture practices or objects in the scene. It is a strategy which is perhaps understandable when the cultural gap is great.

There are instances in *The Monkey Bridge* where the strategy of “over-explaining” sits comfortably within the work and adds to its impact. It works particularly well when the reader is able to identify with Mai’s exasperation at the cultural distance between her and another character in the novel, and does not feel distanced or “interrupted” by the “over-telling”. In this passage, Mai is at an interview for entry into an American college, and has been asked by the interviewer where she lived in Vietnam: “I’d concocted a habit of silence where Vietnam was concerned” (127). The cultural gap silences the migrant, renders her invisible. Yet despite this, Mai feels an urge to reveal “something that would make the country crack open so she could see the tender, vital, and, most important, mundane parts” (127-28). It is what is mundane and ordinary that becomes obscured amongst the media-translated images of the Vietnam War. Mai recalls childhood games, the texture of walls and sidewalks, the feeling after it rained, “over-explaining” her memories. “I wanted to tell her: it was not all about rocket fires and body bags [...] The Vietnam delivered to America had truly passed beyond reclamation. It was no longer mine to explain” (128). At the college interview Mai finds that she is unable to communicate across the cultural gap, yet the novel successfully conveys this to its readers.

However, the novel does contain a small number of instances of “over-telling” that do not sit comfortably in the work. These occur where the narrator is directly communicating with the reader rather than with another character. Reading this novel nearly fifteen years after its publication, one can sense some imbalance of power in its act of transposing a culture. *The Monkey Bridge* inevitably contains explanations of Vietnamese cultural practices that are now widely known by many readers in cosmopolitan Western cities. In this case, “over-telling” has the effect of privileging the mainstream readership over the “insider” minority community in a way that disrupts the narrative and distances the narrator from the reader. Mai describes the Mekong Grocery, delighting in all the items that can be purchased there, such as silk fabric, tropical fruit and even apothecary jars. As the list continues, the description becomes longer because the items are so unfamiliar to the mainstream American readership that the narrator has to resort to outright exposition: “even the vats of nuoc mam, salted fish compressed for four months to a year into a pungent, fermented liquid used as a dipping sauce mixed with lime, minced garlic, hot peppers, and a dash of sugar” (64).

The narrator lists every single ingredient in nuoc mam, she tells us what fish sauce is, how it is made and how it is consumed. She has to do this because the target readership is not primarily the Vietnamese diasporic community, who already know this information and possess memories of this quintessential Vietnamese sauce. The novel has to work hard to overcome the invisibility caused by the cultural and linguistic gap at the time of publication. Consequently, a debt is owed to pioneer works such as *The Monkey Bridge* that have contributed to the narrowing of this gap between mainstream- and minority-culture readers.

Strategies against stereotyping

In many ways, 1.5-Generation authors must negotiate the use of existing stereotypes in order to cross the cultural and linguistic gap. Writers wishing to resist invisibility by writing Vietnamese-American characters risk being categorized as an “ethnic writer”. Invisibility and stereotyping can be different sides of the same coin.

A strategy that 1.5-Generation memoirists use to resist ethnic stereotyping is to emphasize the constantly shifting “I” in their works. A second strategy of resistance is to write a collection of stories that emphasize differences in world perception from a diverse range of narrators. I suggest that 1.5-Generation author Linh Dinh uses a combination of both of these strategies in his collection of short stories, *Fake House*, to resist stereotyping as well as to highlight that “[c]ultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation [...] they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (Hall 255).

Fake House was written after Linh Dinh returned to Vietnam to live for two and a half years. The collection is divided into two parts – the first half of the collection is set in the USA, while the second is set in Vietnam. Alienation and the abject are explored through “the unchosen”, such as Viet Kieus (“overseas” Vietnamese), gays, dwarves, ugly girls and other socially outcast characters. Dinh deploys a multi-racial heterogeneous cast to resist being categorized as an “ethnic writer”. Pelaud contends that *Fake House* is a rejection of the expected refugee narrative “that emphasize[s] development and progress” and a “transgression of essentialist assumptions” (45).

Even when Dinh creates characters vastly different to himself, the emphasis is still on the characters’ shifting positionality, rather than on their culturally fixed identities. His characters’ status changes simply through the presence of other characters. In Dinh’s short story “Fritz Glatman”, the eponymous character considers marrying an Asian mail order bride:

Before this *idée fixe*, if you will, took hold, I was never partial to Asian women. Never even thought about them. But with mental exertion came a gradual, grudging appreciation. Stare at anything long enough, I suppose, and beauty will rise to the surface. The girls in *Origami Geishas* are mostly plain, their faces plain, their hair plain. Some are outright ugly. But my future wife must be unequivocally beautiful, though not too beautiful. Son of an immigrant, I was taught to be modest, to shy away from luxuries, and to shun all ostentatious displays. Indeed, even with a six-figure salary, I drive an old-model Ford.

(Dinh, *Fake House* 20)

Stuart Hall proposes that diasporic communities exist in a continuum of otherness: “[w]e do not stand in the same relation of “otherness” to the metropolitan centre. Each has negotiated its economic, political and cultural dependency differently” (228).

Dinh explores this through his main character, who essentializes other cultures, and believes in his higher place in the racial/cultural hierarchy, yet is (comically) shown to be shifting in relation to the metropolitan centre. “Fritz Glatman” is a character sketch – its purpose is not to develop a plot but to let the character demonstrate his ever-changing positioning. The story reveals the power imbalances between newly arrived migrants, and those whose family had arrived a generation earlier. Fritz Glatman is relatively more central (or less peripheral) than the oriental bride he will eventually select. Glatman’s white male identity is, to borrow from Stuart Hall, “not an essence but a *positioning*” (226).

In another work from the same collection, “The Ugliest Girl”, Dinh distils the notion of a constantly shifting positioning to reveal society’s ever-changing perceptions of what is acceptable and what is not. In this story, the first-person narrator is a very ugly girl:

At a party, should there be another ugly girl in the room – perhaps someone only half as ugly as I am – it would be me who would be embarrassed. I would be embarrassed for her because as soon as she sees me, I become her mirror. By being there, I expose her, interfere with her attempt to pass. My presence would ground her. Without me there is a possibility that she could forget, for a moment, who she is. Surrounded by beautiful people, she might even lapse into the illusion that she is one of them, that she belongs to them and not to her own ugliness. But with me in the room, this possibility is eliminated. Suddenly there is a subgroup, a minority of two, a sorority of ugliness.

(Dinh, *Fake House* 31-32)

The plain girl is reclassified as ugly the moment the narrator, an even uglier girl, turns up. Dinh’s story disrupts the notion of binary essentialism (ugly/beautiful, white/black, tall/short) and suggests that what is designated as “other” is not fixed. “The Ugliest Girl” ends with the narrator finding true love, or extreme lust, with another marginal figure, the midget who walks into the bar.

For the 1.5-Generation writer, multiple first-person points of view are used not to convince readers of the essentialized identities (ethnic or otherwise) of a diverse range of characters, for to do so would be a self-defeating project.

The stories [in *Fake House*] suggest that who does the speaking and from which location alter the meaning conveyed by seemingly similar experiences, and demonstrate the human aberrations caused by transnational capital.

(Pelaud 39)

Linh Dinh's stories resist stereotyping by emphasizing and foregrounding his characters as identities that are constantly shifting in their interplay of otherness (and power) in relation to one another.

Strategies against linguistic colonization

Access to the dominant language provides many 1.5-Generation authors such as Lan Cao, Linh Dinh and Andrew Lam with opportunities to reach a wider audience, and yet their writing demonstrates a desire to remain culturally distinct. It appears that the 1.5-Generation author, like other post-colonial writers before them, seeks to “convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own” (Rao, quoted in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 38). However, it would be incorrect to suggest that the 1.5 Generation simply write from a first-generation perspective except in English. Indeed, the defining feature of this cohort is a striking cultural and linguistic transformation; writers such as Dinh and Cao blur the boundary between insiders and outsiders that the first generation had previously found to be all too clearly demarcated. Therefore, the “spirit” that the 1.5 Generation wish to convey in their literary output is often that of being “in-between” culturally and linguistically. From this cultural positioning, the 1.5 Generation has two broad approaches available to it: realism and impressionism. While the former seeks to re-create “objective reality”, the latter seeks to evoke subjective and sensorial impressions.

Under the first approach, realism, 1.5-Generation writers establish their cultural distinctiveness through the content of their work, and do so using standard English. These works rail against the invisibility caused by the cultural and linguistic gap by providing a diasporic Vietnamese perspective on historical events. Their use of standard language confers legitimacy in an arena where history is contested, and encourages a mainstream readership to identify with an otherwise minority viewpoint, as though it were as “neutral as the news itself” (Cao 88).

While the strategy of realism may assist 1.5-Generation authors to overcome invisibility, it brings with it the burden of linguistic colonization – whether felt to be great or small, or felt not at all, by the authors themselves. The question of which language to write in has previously been explored by post-colonial African writers. Frantz Fanon reasons in *Black Skin White Masks* that s/he who has taken up the language of the colonizer has accepted the world of the colonizer and therefore the standards of the colonizer. Following on, Ngugi wa Thiong'o put forward the argument for decolonizing the mind, which

culminated in his decision to write in Gikuyu or Ki-Swahili rather than english [as opposed to Standard English] in order to address an audience other than foreigners and the foreign-educated new elite [...] The strength of Ngugi's position is that it is as concerned with the sociological implications of the use of english [as opposed to English] in terms of the control of production, distribution, and readership.

(Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 130)

Under the second approach, impressionism, 1.5-Generation authors can use an in-between language to convey their in-between-ness, one that makes the (cultural) translator visible. While this is a riskier strategy, as it may alienate mainstream readers, I propose that it is in the poetics of translation that authors of the 1.5 Generation most convincingly explore the

ontological dilemma of double-identity. By applying the strategy of impressionism these texts can communicate an “in-between” view of the world from within. Such an approach brings with it wider implications:

[I]n translation studies a distinction is always made between whether to take an audience to a text, or to take a text to an audience [...] By defamiliarizing the language, post-colonial writers can bring readers face to face with the reality of difference, and call into question the supremacy of the standard language.

(Bassnett and Trivedi 14)

Dinh’s story, “Elvis Phong is Dead”, is set on the day US troops withdrew from what was then Saigon. It coincides with the suicide of a fictional Vietnamese pop singer (modelled on the actual Elvis Phuong, an “overseas-Vietnamese” singer who is himself modelled on Elvis Presley). Readers follow the zeitgeist of a rock ‘n’ roll era, which coincides with the passing of South Vietnam, a state that was backed by the USA during the war:

I remember April 30, 1975, very well. I was sitting in my office at *Viet Rock!*, overlooking Nguyen hue Boulevard [...] I felt fatalistic that day, and wanted to be *implicated* in history, a vain and pompous notion. In any case, I had my radio turned on to the American station, in an early bid for nostalgia perhaps. Someone was singing “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas”. Sick, absolutely sick!, the American sense of humour.

(Dinh, “Elvis Phong is Dead” 51)

In this story, the “in-joke” is between the author and reader, but not necessarily the narrator, who does not even know the name of the singer, Bing Crosby. In addition, the phrase “in an early bid for nostalgia perhaps” might be a “wink” at a knowing readership positioned in an American future. Dinh peppers the story with well-known signifiers of the Fall of Saigon: the radio announcer’s reference to the temperature followed by the Bing Crosby song was a signal for Americans to evacuate immediately. Where Cao’s depiction in *The Monkey Bridge* of the same historical event is limited to that particular moment (99), Dinh’s “Elvis Phong is Dead” self-consciously locates the author and readers thirty years after the event, while its hapless narrator is stuck in 1975.

Elvis Phong is a well-known Vietnamese pop star, who was not an Elvis impersonator, but a duplicate, a copy of Elvis Presley. In post-colonial terms, the Vietnamese pop world was appropriating American pop culture without the need to reference its context. The narrator goes on to “explain” Elvis Phong to the reader:

For the sake of foreigners and the ignorant, I will have to state the obvious: Elvis Phong is the greatest figure in the history of Vietnamese rock and roll. He created a revolution in Vietnam. Even his clothes were original. He often wore open shirts to show off his smooth, hairless chest, and rhinestone studded, fringed jackets even in 100-degree heat. An entire generation imitated Elvis Phong. He defined his generation. Elvis was Vietnam. (52)

Again the “in-joke” is between the author and the reader (at the expense of the narrator). There is nothing original or culturally “essential” about Elvis Phong and the rock ‘n’ roll music described in this short story. Even within Vietnam, before the many boat escapes that created the Vietnamese global diaspora, Vietnamese culture was well and truly shifting. “In 1965, as U.S. Marines were landing on the beach in Da Nang, Elvis wrote ‘vua Xa Lo’ [‘King of the Road’] and ‘Bat Duoc cung Roi!’ [‘I got You Babe!’]” (52). The reader can almost hear these pop tunes as soon their titles are mentioned. The conceit of these “translations” is that they suggest that the Vietnamese song came first, and that it is merely a coincidence that there are famous US

pop songs which match the translations. By suggesting such cultural porosity Dinh undercuts nationalist fervour(s) existing on all sides in relation to the politically charged date of 30 April 1975.

For the bilingual reader, the “translations” are even more hilarious because they are preposterously literal. For example, “Bat Duoc cung Roi!” could be (back)translated into English as: “I’ve *caught* you my darling”, rather than Sonny and Cher’s “I Got You Babe”. Dinh plays with “surface” story in order to make transparent the process of being culturally “translated”. In fact, the process of exact translation can be the very obstacle to actual communication. While meaning may have been (partially and literally) translated, the contextualizing mood, music and social mores that would have accompanied these songs are shown to have been... lost in translation.

There is often an assumption that the text will be diminished and rendered inferior by translation. As Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi point out “it is important also to remember that the language of ‘loss’ has featured so strongly in many comments on translation. Robert Frost, for example, claimed that ‘poetry is what gets lost in translation’” (Bassnett and Trivedi 4). In Dinh’s work, however, translation is a tool for enhancement and enlargement, and what is gained is often hilarious. It seems that all sorts of meanings can be attributed where none was intended, and thus translation clears a space for creative play for the 1.5-Generation writer:

From the beginning, Elvis was in sync with his time. His career coincided with and mirrored the Vietnam War. The Vietnam War made the man, made him write music, made him sing. In an interview published in *Viet Rock!*, June 22, 1967, Elvis Phong famously declared: “The din of hate provides the backbeat to my love songs”. During live concerts, Elvis would shout to his screaming audience, “I write broken songs for all you broken people!”. (2)

Dinh does not attempt to create a realist version of the fateful day. His deployment of impressionism is, I propose, a way to counter the simplification of historical events that is promoted by linguistic colonization. This impressionist strategy suggests that the past is not a world that can be translated into this time and place in a completely neutral way, and that perhaps the use of Standard English in the realism project obscures this from us. “Elvis Phong is Dead” ends with a climax of cultural (mis)translation:

In 1968, the year of the infernal Tet Offensive, in which 64,000 people were killed, 120,000 injured, 630,000 left homeless, Elvis released what must be considered his magnum opus, a monster compilation of delirious songs called *Dia Trang* [*The White Album*]. White, one must remember, is the Vietnamese colour of mourning. (53)

Dinh’s peppering of Vietnamese throughout the text is a strategy to reinforce an in-between cultural and linguistic identity – not just in the content of the writing, but in its very poetics. In contrast, the choice to use homogenized English in these short stories would serve to reinforce the construct of a stable and delineated cultural identity. Dinh writes across languages, rather than being completely in one language or another, and his poetics of translation enhances the content of his work.

In an interview for a Vietnamese diasporic website, Linh Dinh is questioned by renowned first-generation author Phạm Thị Hoài about his bilingualism:

Phạm Thị Hoài: [P]hải ở một ngôn ngữ quen thuộc mới vướng vào những quy định và ràng buộc của nó. Anh chắc là chưa vướng, nhýng đã nhìn ra một số ràng buộc nhất định của tiếng Việt, có lẽ nhìn ra rõ hơn người trong cuộc?
[It’s only when one is caught within a language that one feels entangled by its stipulations and limitations. You seem to not yet be caught in the Vietnamese language, but have

recognized some of its bindings, perhaps seeing them more clearly than those who are within the language?]

Dinh Linh: Thật sự thì tôi không rõ những ràng buộc nhất định của tiếng Việt là gì. *Đối với tiếng Việt, và cả tiếng Anh, tôi chỉ là một thằng Tây ba lô, một du khách trong ngôn ngữ.* Người du khách có thể nhận thấy rất nhiều điều ngộ nghĩnh mà người bản xứ, vì đã ở lâu một nơi, sẽ khó thấy được. Người du khách quả là một trẻ thơ, và nhà thơ nên có sự hồn nhiên và vô tư của một đứa con nít. Không nên ngu như con nít, chỉ nên hồn nhiên như con nít thôi.

[In truth, I do not know exactly what the entanglements and stipulations of the Vietnamese language are. *With regards to both English and Vietnamese, I feel like a “backpacker” to both languages, a tourist in [the country of] language.* As a visitor, I am able to recognize things that a native can no longer perceive because he has remained in one place for so long. The tourist is like a child, and a poet should be child-like and free of worries. Not stupid like a child, just child-like.]

(Phạm, my emphasis, my translation)

Dinh's response suggests that, as tourists in [the country of] language, the 1.5 Generation may be ambivalent about language, and that this is in fact an ontological condition of this generation of writers. As Sherry Simon argues, this bilingual awareness “can only accentuate the false security of the mother tongue. All language becomes denaturalized, distanced” (69-70). Authors of the 1.5 Generation can be deeply ambivalent about language itself because as cultural translators they invariably come up against the limitations of Standard English in fully conveying their post-colonial identity – one which is constantly shifting.

As proposed earlier, 1.5-Generation writers can make use of two main strategies to remain culturally distinct while writing in the dominant language. Each has variable degrees of efficacy in different situations. Realism is a useful strategy to communicate the content of diasporic identity, especially when communicating with monolingual English-language readers, as it confers validity to what was only recently perceived as an ontological impossibility. However, beyond describing the “what” of interstitial identity, realism does not wholly convey this shifting identification (the “how” of being in-between cultures). Hence the need for some 1.5-Generation writers to turn to impressionism to mitigate against the invisibility of the “seamless translation”.

Conclusion

Creative writers of the 1.5 Generation are positioned between the first and the second generation, which casts them in the role of cultural and linguistic translators due to their bilingual capacity and biculturality. The 1.5 Generation's identification shifts along a continuum of otherness. The aphorism “translator, traitor” applies more so to this generation than the first or second generation, because in order to participate in literary production, these authors must constantly return to the question “who is translating whom and for what purpose”? Their answers to this do not remain constant, as the cultural and linguistic gap shifts over time and in different circumstances of cultural production and political contexts. This suggests that the 1.5 Generation's identification is redefined with each new creative work.

These authors must enact creative strategies to resist invisibility, stereotyping and linguistic colonization. The choice of strategies to employ, therefore, changes according to the particularities of the cultural and linguistic gap at play during literary production. The most distinctive works by 1.5-Generation authors are the ones which seek to “decolonize themselves from two oppressors at once” (Mehrez, quoted in Prasad 55) by writing across languages to play with “overheard” messages, to (re)position and (re)translate themselves and their readers.

Finally, as these authors (re)define their cultural “identification” with each new work, they remind us all of our own shifting positioning, and conversely, our role in determining the positioning of others.

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On a blind retranslation of Christian Morgenstern's *Galgenlieder*

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Abstract

This article describes and justifies the process of a “blind” retranslation of a significant body of work (over ninety poems) by German poet Christian Morgenstern (1871-1914) from my own point of view as a practising poet and translator. The blind retranslation is one carried out without exposure to previous translations, followed by retrospective comparison. Plausible and sympathetic reconstructions of previous translators’ decisions are placed in contrast with the author’s approach, which attends to the stylistic devices employed in the source-text poems. In this way, it is argued, the retranslation justifies itself by providing English-language readers with the first fully “direct translation” (Gutt 86) of Morgenstern’s work, one which abandons the binary of documentation and instrumentalism and recognizes that modern poetry readers expect translated poetry both to appear as such, as well as to be enjoyable as poetry in the target language.

Although Christian Morgenstern (1871-1914) is one of the best-known poets in the German language, he remains almost unknown in Anglophone cultures, despite the appearance of three volume-length translations of his most popular poetry. It is with this asymmetry in mind that I decided to attempt a new translation of Morgenstern’s *Galgenlieder* (*Gallows Songs*, 1910).¹ The impetus for this project was at least threefold. Firstly, and naturally enough, the present author’s long-running affinity and familiarity with the *Galgenlieder* could be said to constitute George Steiner’s first move in a “hermeneutic motion”, being the “initiative trust” (Steiner 317) that motivated the retranslation. Secondly, it was felt that an addition to the small corpus of Morgenstern retranslations could be a positive contribution to Anglophone cultures’ reception of the poems’ “curious and winning mixture of innocence and experience” (Waldinger 69). Finally, the blind retranslation, that is, translating an author’s works *without* reading previous translations, represented both a negative strategy of avoiding undue influence, as well as marking a clear boundary between my own choices and those of previous translators. In the positive sense, examining previous translations only *after* completing my own enabled critical reflection and insight. As Robert Bly, who shared this strategy, observed, this is the “fun” part: “we allow ourselves the pleasure of examining other people’s translations [and] we can sympathize” (86). I should like to take this stage a little further and shed light on some key theoretical approaches to poetry translation, chiefly Holmes’s (81-91) notion of the translation as a “metapoem” derived from a mapping of derivation, projection and correspondence; Boase-Beier’s emphasis on recreation of “mind-style” and Sayers-Peden’s metaphor of dismantling and reconstructing the poem.

Background on Christian Morgenstern

Morgenstern’s status in the source culture (SC) itself has been somewhat ambiguous, something of which the poet himself was aware. In his posthumously published memoir (*Stufen* 247) he ruminates about his imminent early death from tuberculosis and resigns himself to the fact that

¹ In fact, many of the poems now brought together under the title *Galgenlieder* were originally published in other volumes. I have followed the convention of considering them all *Galgenlieder*, though some of the poems my predecessors and I have translated appeared in subsequent volumes. My translations are from the 1972 Insel Taschenbuch edition *Alle Galgenlieder*.

he will be remembered, not for his more serious verse, but for the *Galgenlieder*, which had not been composed with publication in mind and were intended only as humorous diversions. Indeed, as Knight (1) notes, many SC readers were puzzled by the verses when they were first published, but by 1929 over 100,000 copies had been sold. Twice that many were sold within five years of the 1932 publication of an expanded edition *Alle Galgenlieder* (Hofacker 45). Arndt (xii), however, notes that “(m)ost conventional literary criteria, categories, and ‘fields’ fail to include Morgenstern” and imputes this to the fact that he is “neither openly didactic nor consistently satirical” (xii). Further to this, Morgenstern drew on a wide range of influences: Nietzsche, Rudolf Steiner’s Anthroposophy, Schopenhauer, Roman and Greek classics, Oscar Wilde, Mendelssohn, Goethe, Rilke, Ibsen and Hamsun, just to name a few (Morgenstern *Stufen* 37-152). B.Q. Morgan (cited in Waldinger 72) even attempted a categorization of Morgenstern’s poems into: “sheer nonsense; rhyme nonsense; punning fancies; sound effects; printed shapes; satires; philosophic concepts; sensible ideas grotesquely presented; bizarre ideas and superior nonsense.” Knight (6) has him as “heir of the romanticists, just as he is a precursor of the surrealists.”

Frequent comparisons are made with other SC poets such as Wilhelm Busch, but in the inevitable (and perhaps unfortunate) search for a target culture (TC) counterpart, Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear are the most frequently cited (Knight 12; Calder 9; Bell 2; Arndt xiii). Emer O’Sullivan’s description of the challenges of translation and reception of Carroll into German is uncannily relevant to the challenges of translating Morgenstern into English: “(w)ord play on the highest level, poems, parodies; the English language not only provides the context of much of its humour, it is frequently its very object” (“Comparing” 49); “its dream like quality, its perverted logic, its incomprehensibility, was totally unlike anything produced by German authors” (*Comparative* 198).

Why a retranslation and why a “blind” one?

Walter Arndt considers translating Morgenstern a “rash, sometimes desperate undertaking” because his “verbal imagination, for all its acrobatics, is rooted in the German language” (xii). The poems typically employ classical stylistics: tetrameters, pentameters, quatrains and couplets form an ironic backdrop to language play, local reference and mock imperiousness. What can be said about translating Morgenstern then, can be said about translating and reading poetry in general: it is more difficult, cryptic and ambiguous than prose and works on a double pattern, confirming readers’ expectations on the combinatorial plane while upsetting them on the selection plane (Jakobson, cited in Weissbort and Eysteinson 113-18; Bradford 24-45). It thus exploits a special relationship between form and meaning and is open to different interpretations (Furniss and Bath 101-27). The elements of Morgenstern’s poetics mentioned above can be seen in Boase-Beier’s terms as embodying the “mind style” of the author, albeit an inferred author, or more precisely, what a reader or translator interprets as the cognitive state of the inferred author (“Mind Style” 271). If it is accepted that each reader and or translator will interpret a poem differently, according to their era, poetics, cognitive state, critical tendencies, ideology, reading skills, etc., the case for retranslation is obvious, since any single translation will be governed by time-bound normative conditions (Kujamaki). It follows that retranslations will reflect and allow for the evolution of stylistic norms (Du-Nour), as well as the targeting of different audiences and even genres (Koskinen and Paloposki; Gambier; Jenn).

I anticipated that a “blind” retranslation would be uniquely illuminating in light of these conditions. It allows the retranslator to temporarily (though not totally) occupy a position similar to that of previous translators in its deliberate isolation from an existing corpus, providing the translator/scholar a clear ground for the analysis of decisions in retrospect. When discussing the translation of Morgenstern in 1969, Calder states that “(t)he only thing any renderer can do is try to read other versions *after* finishing his own” (14, original italics). I have used versions by Jerome Lettvin (*Gallows Songs*, 1962), translator Max Knight (*Gallows Songs*, 1963), the poets W.D Snodgrass and Lore Segal (*Gallows Songs*, 1967), humanities professor Walter Arndt (*Songs from the Gallows*, 1993), and award-winning translator Anthea Bell (*Lullabies, Lyrics and*

Gallows Songs, 1995) as sources of comparison to highlight and reflect on my own approach of straddling documentation and instrumentality and analogous recreation.²

Dealing with style: a comparison

The first known published translations of *Galgenlieder* appeared in the US literary journal *The Fat Abbot* in 1962 as one of twelve *Galgenlieder* translated by Jerome Lettvin and accompanied by an essay in which he compares Morgenstern to Lewis Carroll, reflects on both poets' philosophical beliefs and describes his approach to the translations. Lettvin's version of *Der Werwolf* is an intriguing example of content derivation and instrumentalism:

Der Werwolf (Morgenstern)

Ein Werwolf eines Nachts entwich
von Weib und Kind und sich begab
an eines Dorfschullehrers Grab
und bat ihn: Bitte, beuge mich!

Der Dorfschulmeister stieg hinauf
auf seines Blechschilds Messingknauf
und sprach zum Wolf, der seine Pfoten
geduldig kreuzte vor dem Toten:

“Der Werwolf” – sprach der gute Mann,
“des Weswolfs, Genitiv sodann,
dem Wemwolf, Dativ, wie man's nennt,
den Wenwolf, – damit hat's ein End.”

Dem Werwolf schmeichelten die Fälle,
er rollte seine Augenbälle.
Indessen, bat er, füge doch
zur Einzahl auch die Mehrzahl noch!

Der Dorfschulmeister aber musste
gestehn, dass er von ihr nichts wusste,
Zwar Wölfe gäb's in grosser Schar,
doch “Wer” gäb's nur im Singular.

Der Wolf erhob sich tränenblind –
er hatte ja doch Weib und Kind!!
Doch da er kein Gelehrter eben,
so schied er dankend und ergeben.

Ontology recapitulates philology (Lettvin)

One night, a werewolf, having dined,
left his wife to clean the cave
and visited a scholar's grave
asking, “How am I declined?”

Whatever way the case was pressed
the ghost could not decline his guest,
but told the wolf (who'd been well-bred
and crossed his paws before the dead),

“The Iswolf, so we may commence,
the Waswolf, simple past in tense,
the Beenwolf, perfect; so construed,
the Werewolf is subjunctive mood.”

The werewolf's teeth with thanks were bright,
but, mitigating his delight,
there rose the thought, how could one be
hypostasized contingency?

The ghost observed that few could live,
if werewolves were indicative;
whereat his guest perceived the role
of Individual in the Whole.

Condition contrary to fact,
a single werewolf Being lacked
but in his conjugation showed
the full existence, a la mode.

The werewolf (Newton, 2012)

A werewolf one night, so inclined,
took leave of wife and child and paid
a visit to the village teacher's grave
and asked: “How am I declined?”

²The only other published translations of which I am aware are a small number by W. M Calder in *Oxford German Studies* 4.1 (1969), accompanied by an essay “Translating Morgenstern”. I will not discuss these here for reasons of space.

The headmaster began to levitate
and, settling by his own name plate,
spoke to the wolf who crossed his paws
patiently before the corpse:

“Werewolf, said the learned face;
Werewolf’s, that’s the genitive case;
Whemwolf, dative, as it’s called;
Whenwolf, accusative, and that is all.”

The werewolf, pleased by all this parsing,
rolled his eyeballs back and asked him:
“Could you please then now explain
how the plural form is gained?”

The village teacher had to admit
that he had never heard of it:
“While wolves are many near and far,
‘were’ is strictly singular.”

The werewolf then sat up and cried.
Had he not a child and bride?
Yet being not of learned mind,
he bid his thanks and left, resigned.

Lettvin’s translation preserves what could be argued are some of the key stylistic features of the source text: six stanzas of a-b-a-b rhymed tetrameter, a witty and playful interaction in which a personified werewolf becomes embroiled in a linguistic conundrum. But bilingual readers will immediately recognize the transformation in diction in Lettvin’s version and the effect this has on readability, beginning with the title, in which the name of the creature has become an abstract scientific concept.

Holmes conceives the process of poetry translation (or the construction of a “metapoem”) as the establishment of a “map” (a total conception of the text), which leads to a second map on the basis of selections of elements to be transferred (85-87). This second map will be based on three sets of rules: derivation rules: how translators abstract their own map of the source text (ST) from the ST itself; projection rules: how translators use this map of the prospective target text (TT) in order to formulate the text; and correspondence rules: how translators develop a target-text map from the ST map (86). Lettvin’s accompanying essay provides clues as to how he may have constructed his second map. Lettvin himself was neither a poet nor a professional translator, but rather a high-profile professor of Electrical and Bioengineering and Communications Physiology at MIT and this interest, perhaps preoccupation, cannot be isolated from the professional and psychological environment in which his correspondence rules took shape. Lettvin makes much of Morgenstern’s interest in the philosopher Fritz Mauthner, noting that Morgenstern expresses great interest in Mauthner’s views on language and myth and that many of the Galgenlieder “seem to come explicitly from Mauthner’s ideas” (13). Elsewhere, it is apparent that Lettvin held, justifiably or not, certain assumptions about his audience. Explaining the intertextuality of his chosen title, he remarks “I trust that there are enough readers who remember the old war cry of embryology: ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny” (13). This is, at least with a general contemporary audience, extremely doubtful. A plausible account of how the poem was constructed could run thus: Lettvin saw the Galgenlieder as vehicles for a set of higher-order concepts that interested him (derivation rules), and used this to formulate a text containing abstracted ideas of shared interest between ST author and translator, and finally used correspondence rules to construct the poem along perceived stylistic similarities: tetrameter, rhyme-scheme, layout.

As Holmes (82) notes, many of these rules will be pre-determined (in this case, evidently, the abstracted philosophical ideas of interest to a scientist), and others will be more or less ad hoc, evidently in this case, rhymes like *dined/declined*, *cave/grave*, which introduce content extraneous to the ST. In order to rhyme with the anticipated “grave” the introduction of the word “cave” led to the invention of a dutiful werewolf housewife, who was left to clean the cave after dinner. Lettvin remarks of his handling of the headmaster’s parsing that he felt justified in adapting the noun declensions in the ST into verb conjugations and converting the simple rattling off of cases, to a mixture of English verb tenses: *Iswolf / Waswolf / Beenwolf / Werewolf* (13). This works well in the third stanza alone but then traps the last three stanzas into an altogether more arcane ontological question in the indirect speech of the narrator. It seems I had expected both less and more work from my readers. More work, in that, rather than adapt the headmaster’s parsing stanza I have expected my readers to (1) assume that the grammatical extrapolation is based on German grammar and not be bothered by “were” standing in as a noun that cannot be pluralized, and (2) recognize the faint but distinctive reference to a shared historical grammar between German and English: the “m” in “Whemwolf, dative” and the “n” in “Whenwolf, accusative”, which invoke parallels such as the residual dative “whom”. I have made it the responsibility of readers to recognize this as a stand-in. But I have expected less work from readers in that this glossing allows a reference to singularity – so the werewolf may be upset about the arbitrariness of language depriving him of his wife and children – and in this way does not burden readability, as does Lettvin’s side-tracking into sesquipedalian thought bubbles replacing the central stylistic device of the tearful personification of the werewolf. It was interesting to reflect on a range of decisions that I had not consciously attended to during the translation process. Comparing my own approach with what it is plausible to interpret as Lettvin’s, it is clear as a starting point of reflection that translation choices are subject to a hierarchy of preferences as both Levý (117) and Holmes (82) have suggested, and that some ad hoc decisions designed to solve minor problems may commit the rest of the stylistic development of the TT.

I approached this translation in at least three roles: as a poet, as an analyst (or critic) and as a translator: indeed the three different roles that Holmes (81) sees as interacting and (only sometimes) overlapping in the translation of poetry. I did not think that I had a particular interest in magnifying any of the intellectual strands in Morgenstern’s thinking. Put simply, and rather pre-theoretically, I just wanted to transfer “as much” of “Morgenstern” as I could and give English-language readers an experience as similar as possible to that of reading his work in German. I would later find theoretical accounts that made this explicit, particularly accounts of how style and weak implicatures constitute the special nature of poetry (Gutt 83; Boase-Beier “Saying” 278). What I was unconsciously attempting, I later realized, was what Gutt called a “direct translation” (86), one that does not necessarily see a clear distinction between the documentary and mimetic goals of poetry translation.

My working method in the 91 poems that I have translated seems to have found its best analogical home in the dismantle-reconstruct metaphor of Sayers-Peden (143-157), which sees the translator’s initial task as “de-structing” the poem, or reducing it to its architectural foundations (143). For myself, as a poet, this involved, first and foremost, the basic verse form. This was not in itself the most difficult task (Lettvin after all managed it) since the form is shared between German and English poetic traditions. The basic “building plan” looked something like this (with “x” representing an unstressed beat and “/” a stressed beat and the same quatrain scansion repeated six times):

<i>metre and stress</i>						<i>rhyme</i>
x	/	x	/	x	/	(a)
x	/	x	/	x	/	(b)
x	/	x	/	x	/	(a)
x	/	x	/	x	/	(b)

I read with a pleasing sense of recognition Sayers-Peden’s description of the reconstruction of

Pablo Neruda's *Odas elementales*, where the translator engages in an act akin to the restoration of a building made of logs: "Carefully we mark the logs by number, dismantle them and reconstruct them in new territory, artfully restoring the logs to their original relationships and binding them together with a minimal application of mortar" (144).

For the poet, this can resemble the mechanics of composing original poetry of one's own according to an architectural model such as a sonnet, a villanelle, a haiku, or any other established verse form. "Reality" is to the original poem what the ST is to the translation (Holmes 86). This tends to suggest that poets approach poetry translation as they approach writing poetry. In my own writing of poetry, I almost always compose line by line rather than contemplating the "function" of the poem I intend to write. So whether I am writing or translating a poem with a pre-determined structure, I will begin with the verse architecture, what Holmes (85) considers important to the total effect of a poem. It never occurred to me, (as I doubt it would to other poets) to write out a "literal version" or plan for the *writing* of a poem, as is suggested by Robert Bly (69) and Sayers-Peden (145) for the *translation* of a poem. I am assuming that writing out a literal version, or even considering macro functions is fraught with complications. If one accepts the position of Sperber and Wilson (67), Gutt (217) and Boase-Beier ("Saying" 278) that stylistic devices are the key to constructing meaning, then writing out a "literal version" to answer the question of what a poem is "about" is self-defeating, since to strip a poem to a literal version is to strip it of its stylistic devices and therefore much of its meaning. Even Sayers-Peden says of this stage "the destruction is so total that we want to de-struct the poem in a different way, reducing it not to word clusters strung along a narrative line, but to its architectural frame" (146).

So, guided by the above architectural frame, one that starts with verse form, I began work on the first stanza, attempting to fit lexical items into the framework: first on my hierarchy of correspondence rules, at least provisionally, was to fill the frame with iambic tetrameter. Before considering more adaptive approaches, I wanted to feel confident that I had done all I could to exhaust the mathematical possibilities of available rhymes using a thesaurus and rhyming dictionary. If one is not to be led off track by ad hoc decisions, then the rhymes that need to be abandoned are those found to interfere with higher-order stylistic effects, such as personification, irony or tone. This can take considerable time and yields many unsuccessful candidates. Thus:

*A werewolf late one night escaped
from wife and child and then he braved
to go to a schoolmaster's grave
to ask how "werewolf" conjugates*

fits into the architectural frame but only as a stylistic facade. The word choices skew the style and imply that the werewolf is afraid ("braved"), and that he "escaped" while "conjugates" refers to verbs and will not correspond with the exploitation of German grammatical remnants in English discussed above ("whem" for the residual English dative "whom") in my third stanza, which deals with nominal cases, not verbal ones.

I was willing to extend or cut short the rhythmic structure of some lines for the sake of what I interpreted as an important stylistic connotation: that of the *village* teacher, for instance, which adds the element of the provincial that is important to the satire. It matters little if this results in an extra iamb (/ x) in the third line, since the overall edifice of metre is strong enough to hold the structure together. It is the task of the poetry translator with a correspondence map, and its hierarchy of preferences, to sense when this is permissible. For instance, my additions of "so inclined" and "accusative" were judged as permissible since in the first instance "inclined" allowed for the rhyme without adapting the content, and in the second instance, "accusative" provided extra support for the reader to recognize declensions that would be less familiar to them than to the ST reader. The process involves an extended period of rearranging, substituting and focus-shifting, trial and error. It could be described as a "bottom up" process, in that it begins with words and syllables as building blocks and trades between rhythm and rhyme on the one

hand, and style realized by word choice on the other.

The experience of translating poems also resembled, I found, several of Robert Bly's "Eight Stages of Poetry Translation" (68-89), albeit collapsed into a single process, as Bly concedes they often are:

- (1) writing out a literal version to attend to meaning asking "What does the poem mean?"
- (2) unpacking the meaning
- (3) making the poem "the best it can be in English"
- (4) adjusting the diction to a modern spoken register (American in Bly's case)
- (5) assuring these changes fit the original "mood"
- (6) paying attention to the sound (Bly recommends learning by heart)
- (7) asking a native speaker to assess the results
- (8) drafting final adjustments.

As discussed, I found no reason to engage in the first stage, but the stages of unpacking meaning and attending to mood and sound happened simultaneously, as when a poet composes her own poem line by line, stanza by stanza. Sayers-Peden states that the translator must "sift through the rubble and rescue such materials as metre, rhyme, vocabulary, rhetorical tone, poetic figure and period" (154). But I will complicate things by arguing that meaning, if determined by stylistic devices carried over in the translation, will sometimes emerge and become salient to the translator *after* the translation process, and that this in itself confirms that stylistic devices, if reproduced, will carry with them multiple interpretations not salient to the translator.

Style: conscious and unconscious transfer

By using the example of "Das ästhetische Wiesel", another signature Morgenstern poem, and how it has been translated previously, I will attempt to illuminate something about the notion that translators, as a starting point, establish hierarchies of correspondence, and how in some cases, a preoccupation with this notion can be pre-emptive:

Das ästhetische Wiesel (Morgenstern)

Ein Wiesel
saß auf einem Kiesel
inmitten Bachgeriesel.

Wißt ihr
weshalb?

Das Mondkalb
verriet es mir
im Stillen:

Das raffinier-
te Tier
tat's um des Reimes willen.

The Aesthetic Weasel (Knight)

A weasel
perched on an easel
within a patch of teasel.

But why?
and how?

The Moon Cow
whispered her reply
one time:

The sopheest-
icated beast
did it just for the rhyme.

The aesthetic weasel (Newton, 2012)

A weasel
sat upon an easel
in a pool of diesel.

On whose
behalf?

The mooncalf
revealed to me
one time:

The effete
beast
did it for the sake of rhyme.

There seems no immediate reason to object to Holmes's proposal that a translator of poetry will establish a hierarchy of corresponding elements and effects that they wish to emulate. Functionalists like House (57) have suggested that it is possible to determine the function of a text by identifying the situational dimensions of the ST. Levý (cited in Gutt 104) had already articulated this model using the above poem as an example. To deal with the impossibility of simultaneously rhyming the key denotations (*Wiesel*, *Kiesel*, *Bachgeriesel*), Levý proposes a hierarchy to identify the "essential elements":

- (1) that an animal is the object of an activity in a particular place
- (2) that it is in a *Kalauer* style (told in the style of a riddle or pun)
- (3) that there is an ironic pun to go with the style.

Armed with this hierarchy he argues, as does Max Knight (8) in the introduction to his own *Gallows Songs*, that, on these grounds, any of the following would be justified: "A ferret / nibbling a carrot / in a garret"; "A mink / sipping a drink / in a kitchen sink"; "A hyena / playing a concertina / in an arena" and "A lizard / shaking its gizzard / in a blizzard". Gutt points out the problem that a poem about a weasel has a different feel to a poem about a lizard or a hyena, suggesting the connotation of different lexical choices cannot be isolated from style (110). If we confine ourselves to the interpretation that this poem is merely an amusing self-referential pun about an animal doing something just for the sake of rhyme, we are working from the assumption that content can be isolated from the stylistic choices (conscious or unconscious) which make it poetry.

To be specific, in their generalization of "key" elements in the poem, the above suggestions mask the double irony that the animal *did not*, in fact, do it just for the sake of rhyme. In fact

Ein Wiesel
saß auf einem Kiesel
inmitten Bachgeriesel

can be a lot more than just a weasel (*Wiesel*) sitting on gravel (*Kiesel*) in the middle of a rippling stream (*inmitten Bachgeriesel*). If we are to avoid the intentional fallacy, we need to disregard Morgenstern himself (cited in Knight 11) who insisted that the poem had no deeper meaning and that it was rhyme alone that had caused him to write it. Another possible interpretation is that the first line is a "close up", the second "pulls back" a tiny bit more, while the third line "pans out" wide. The effect is a curious disorientation: what you thought was stable is, in fact, surrounded by running water. This tripartite disorientation and its contrapuntal effect on the declaration that it's "all just for the rhyme" actually adds to the poem's disingenuous subtlety. Previous translations take a more adaptive path: Knight creates a bump with the rare word "teasel", keeps his "beest" on dry land, thus losing the essential disorientation, but playfully adapts with a jazzy feel "The sopheest- / icated / beest". Arndt's translation "The Euphonic Mutt" (in which a "Chau-Chau" went "bow-wow" to a "Mau-Mau") is arguably irrelevant, since it is unclear what "Chau-Chau"

or “Mau Mau” refer to (even though we are told the former is a “mutt” in the title), and a verbal interaction replaces the spatial disorientation, while line breaks seem not to have been treated as weak implicatures capable of contributing to the communication of a cognitive state, or at least, they were relegated to a lower order of significance in Arndt’s hierarchy and abandoned. Snodgrass and Segal manage to retain the disorientation, albeit with a change of animal and addition of another participant: “An otter / sets his daughter / on gravel near swift water”, but limit their rhyme to a narrower audience: only in North American English does “otter” rhyme with “daughter”.

Perhaps naively I insisted on transferring the rhythm, line breaks and rhyme: “A weasel / sat upon an easel / in a pool of diesel”. Diesel, while not running water, seemed a choice with a rich back-story, being of German origin and invented not long before the time Morgenstern was writing. It also opens the rhyme to a wide range of English-speaking audiences and transfers some of the mild danger and liquid instability in the third point of view (“inmitten Bachgeriesel”). The word also had the “right sound” (Bly’s fifth stage) in that it reproduced the extended “e” vowel, while allowing me to keep the weasel. What now seems crucial to me, however, is that I did not notice this aspect of the poem until *after* I had translated it. Boase-Beier (“Mind Style” 254) holds that style must “be expected to manifest elements that lead a careful reader to unconscious views as well as conscious attempts to convey meaning”. This seems to suggest that identifying functions in poetry as a starting point of translation, and establishing a conscious hierarchy to work from, may in fact mask important elements in style that can be arrived at as *a result of* the close attention to style that a “direct translation” (Gutt 175) demands. My choice of “On whose behalf?” was initially justified for its full rhyme with “calf”. Again, significantly, a further interpretation only became salient after the act of translation: the answer to the question “On whose behalf?” implicates the author more strongly, it enhances the self-referential aspect at the centre of the poem’s effect (“it’s me! Christian Morgenstern, who forced the weasel to do it!”). The rich and unfathomably complex repertoire of effects possible in a poem is embedded in the language itself and not always open to identification before or even during the act of translation. As Boase-Beier stresses, if the poem is to work as a poem and not just as a translation (i.e. be instrumentally purposeful), it must leave open the possibility of different interpretations, as does the ST, and poetry in general (“Saying” 280).

Register

The register of Knight’s translation “At the Housefly Planet” (below) could be described variously as “ennoblement” (Berman), “biblical style” (Du-Nour 327) or “high-flown diction” (Bly 80). Jackson Matthews (cited in Holmes 85) has pointed out that “the temptation is much greater (in poetry) than in prose, to fall under the spell of the model, to try to imitate its obvious features, even its syntax”:

Auf dem Fliegenplaneten (Morgenstern)

Auf dem Fliegenplaneten,
da geht es dem Menschen nicht gut:
Denn was er hier der Fliege,
die Fliege dort ihm tut.

An Bändern voll Honig kleben
die Menschen dort allesamt,
und andere sind zum Verleben
in süßliches Bier verdammt.

At the Housefly Planet (Knight)

Upon the housefly planet
the fate of the human is grim,
for what he does there to the housefly
the fly does there unto him.

To paper with honey cover
the humans there adhere,
while others are doomed to hover
near death in vapid beer.

Bly identifies this tendency in Rilke translations, particularly with translators who are not themselves poets: “some of them have an exalted idea of the poet and think Rilke uses written

German; others associate literature with a written language [...] and it never occurs to them to move to the spoken” (77). Knight’s version is in fact so conspicuously elevated (the “unto” particularly, seems to be a choice not forced by the mechanics of metre or rhyme) that it warrants consideration of a second interpretation: that he consciously chose the biblical style to accord with his own reading of the original as a biblical fable, or at least its *adaptability* as one. Knight, a native German speaker is unlikely to have formed this impression in his projection and correspondence rules. He knew Morgenstern, and the source language well. It is perhaps a point of interpretive difference in pre-translational derivation rules that I saw no evidence of a coherent connection between Knight’s style and that of the original. But since these decorative effects persist throughout Knight’s *Gallows Songs*, another plausible interpretation is that Knight carried his lexical items not only into the rhyme structure but in a way that does not sufficiently alter the syntactic patterns of the original, which to add a further complication, is quite close to the delayed verb constructions of English poetic style until the end of the nineteenth century, when poetic form ceased to be one of the last remnants of similarity between German and English syntax. The following is an example used by Holmes of a translation from Goethe’s “Mignon”:

Kennst du das Land, wo die Zitronen blühn...?
Knowst thou the land...

As Holmes (409) notes, the translation is syntactically and morphologically a close parallel but has the “wan, archaic quality of a dead poetic tradition, far removed from the colloquial vigour of the German”. The same phenomenon can be seen in Knight’s version above:

An Bändern voll Honig kleben / die Menschen dort allesamt
To paper with honey cover / the humans there adhere

If rhyme and metre are to be consistently transferred, there must be a pay off, an adjustment of the metrical and syntactic architecture to allow options toward a more temporally neutral plain-speech diction (“contemporary but not faddish” [O’Sullivan *Comparative* 199]), something akin to Bly’s third and fourth stages (73-76), making the poem “the best it can be in English” and, as per Bly’s fourth stage, adjusting the diction to a modern spoken register.³ The source poem is conspicuously matter-of-fact: *da geht es dem Menschen nicht gut* echoes a frequent spoken string: *es geht mir nicht gut; geht es dir gut?* etc. [I’m not well; are you well?]:

On the planet of the flies (Newton, 2012)

The planet of the flies
is not a good place for humans
since what they, here, do to flies
flies, there, do to them.

Honey sheets are covered with men
everywhere there, both far and near
and other humans are condemned
to end their lives in sticky beer.

Readers will notice here that the rhyme scheme has been retained, but that the theme-rheme relationships, verb processes and syntactic order have been transformed into head-driven, verb-frontal structures that are the natural strings of English: *the planet ...* is not good; *honey sheets* are covered and *humans* are condemned. This kind of syntactic recasting, as Bly (76) has it, “asking

³ Bly specifies “American” or “British” spoken style. Aiming for a global readership, I have tried not to slant the register to any particular geographical variant of English.

the ear about each phrase”, is illustrated in the final stanza of *Zivilisatorisches* (“Civilizing Influence”), a kind of rhymed evolution myth in which fish sign up for a gym program to climb the species hierarchy:

(Morgenstern)

Der Molch indes mit spitzen Ohren
hat seine Kundschaft nicht verloren:
Er sandte Schmidten die Broschüre
»Fischhände (später Maniküre)
nur durch Gymnastik in drei Jahren.«
Da war nun alles zu erfahren.
Man sieht, wie da in Westerland
zum Menschen noch der Fisch entbrannt:
die Wunder der Natur, der wilden,
kulturgemäß hinaufzubilden.

(Newton, 2012)

The newt then just pricked up its ears –
it hadn't lost all customers as feared,
so sent to E.P. Schmidt brochures:
“Fish Hands (plus free manicures)
through gym training in three years”
Now it seemed the way was clear.
One sees all over Westerland
fish in shoals becoming man:
strange how nature cultivates
and edifies its vertebrates.

I held the architectural frame of the rhyme as a guide and began to probe how rhyme could accommodate something that sounds like it could be said in English. Many hours were spent exploring a thesaurus and rhyming dictionary until solutions presented themselves. For instance *wilden* – “wild” (thesaurus: wild – nature – animals – species – vertebrates) + *kulturgemäß hinaufzubilden* – “cultural(ly) + elevate/educate” (thesaurus: civilize – teach – enculturate – cultivate(d) – edify). Then, alternating to a rhyming dictionary: cultivate = vertebrate. Sometimes the process begins with seeking a rhyme, other times a synonym, but most often there is constant horse-trading between rhyme and sentence sound. The process is also arithmetical, involving counting and recounting of syllables and attempts to fit re-verbalizations into the rhythm template. It occurred to me that this is the “grunt work” of poetry translation, and its results will depend on how long the translator is willing to persevere or “sift through the rubble” (Sayers-Peden 144) before taking more adaptive approaches or abandoning the poem altogether. The result, though offering similar cognitive gains through correspondent metrical devices, needs to be something thematically and syntactically quite different to the ST:

die Wunder der Natur, der wilden, / kulturgemäß hinaufzubilden
[gloss: the wonder of nature the wild / culturally up to build”]
strange how nature cultivates / and edifies its vertebrates.

Gender

There is a familiar problem here, specific to translating from structurally gendered into less gendered codes. It is a localized version of the problem discussed above: how to reverbitalize obligatory source-language forms into natural-sounding English. In the *Galgenlieder*, inanimate objects are gendered, while animals are gendered or neutral in accordance with arbitrary, unmarked rules. This confronts the translator with the interpretive decision of just how gendered Morgenstern wanted the given object or animal to be, as this seems to differ between poems. Occasionally the genders become marked even in the German. Consider the first two lines of “Die beiden Esel” (The Two Donkeys):

(Morgenstern)

Ein finstrer Esel sprach einmal
zu seinem ehlichen Gemahl:

(Knight)

A gloomy donkey, tir'd of life
one day addressed his wedded wife:

(Arndt)

A gloomy ass one morning said
Unto his mate of board and bed:

(Bell)

A dismal donkey, tired of life
said to his lawful wedded wife:

(Snodgrass and Segal)

There was a donkey, feeling awful,
Told his helpmate, true and lawful:

(Newton, 2012)

A gloomy donkey shared this thought
with its matrimonial consort:

In each previous translation the donkey is marked as male, apparently interpreting an essentially arbitrary assignment (*ein; seinem*). The ST, however, seems to intend a distanced, genderless beast with wife expressed as an ironically formal connotation (*ehlichen Gemahl*). The crucial task here is to identify – in Boase-Beier’s terms (“Saying” 278) – primary meaning, which is embedded in the linguistics of the text (such as arbitrary gender), and weakly implied meaning, which resides in style. Morgenstern deploys gender in both ways: while a die is rendered as an “it”, as is a guinea fowl (for the above reasons), the werewolf, a pike, the air and a raven are gendered in my versions because of evidence in the ST that they were intended that way. The werewolf, for example, has a wife and child (*Weib und Kind* rather than an *ehlichen Gemahl*) as does the pike. The air is clearly a spoilt daughter with a “Papa” who invents sound massage “for her”. Clocks, which are arbitrarily feminine in German, take the unmarked neutral form in my TT. The fictional *Nasobēm*, like *Der Gaul*, is a brute metaphysical beast, again seeming to suggest genderlessness. I have chosen the genderless “its matrimonial consort” and indeed it seems on reflection that this particular use of gender is one of those “elements in the text which are unusual, striking or simply indicative of attitude” (Boase-Beier “Saying” 278).⁴ Yet one poem that presented a unique challenge was “Die wiederhergestellte Ruhe” (“The recently restored silence”), where the gender is both arbitrary *and* a marked stylistic feature central to the premise of the entire poem, reappearing as a point of reference in its last line:

(Morgenstern)

Die wiederhergestellte Ruhe

Aus ihrer Bette steigt sie bleich
im langen Hemd und setzt sich gleich.

Die Zofe bringt ihr Rock und Schuh
und führt sie sanft dem Diwan zu.

Todmüd in grauen Höhlen liegt
der Blick, den Fieber fast besiegt.

Ihr ganzer Leib ist wie verzehrt,
als hätt’ in ihm gewühlt ein Schwert.

Der Medicus erzählt der Welt,
sie sei nun wieder hergestellt...

Die Zofe kniet vor ihr und gibt
ihr von den Blumen, die sie liebt,

und schmückt sie zärtlich aus der Truhe,–
die wiederhergestellte Ruhe.

(Newton, 2012)

The recently restored silence

...tumbled out of bed in nightgown
went pale and then sat straight back down.

The maid brought out the coat and loafers
and motioned gently to the sofas.

Dead tired from out of socket-caves
came the stare that under fever slaved.

The limbs and frame were thin and haggard
as if inside were twisting daggers.

The doctor prescribed to every nation
a course of immediate restoration.

The maid fell on her knees and gave
the flowers she had grown and saved

and dressed with jewels of opulence
the recently restored silence.

⁴ Boase-Beier (“Mind style” 258-263) also discusses gender in *Die beiden Esel*, coming to similar conclusions regarding the deployment of gender as a stylistic device.

The ellipsis that opens my version, by enlisting the title as its nominal subject, suspends the gender of “silence” throughout the poem, since to declare that “she” tumbled out of bed in “her” nightgown would foreclose the possibility (needed for the final “punch-line”) that the character is not a girl or a woman but “silence” itself. To structure the poem around this ploy, it was necessary to suppress eight gender markers of the character in the sections underlined above. Thus *Die Zofe bringt ihr Rock und Schuh / und führt sie sanft dem Diwan zu* [The maid brings her coat and loafers / and leads her to the divan] becomes “The maid brought out the coat and loafers and motioned gently to the sofas”, while *Ihr ganzer Leib* becomes “The limbs”. I can’t help feeling here that the result is somewhat faded, yet the stylistic effect is sufficient and Morgenstern’s delayed personification is retained.

Rhyme as a conspicuous stylistic device

I have mentioned above that I have preferred to work closely with words and syllables in translating these poems. Another reason for this is that syllable stresses, the building blocks of metric feet, provide the key to addressing perhaps the most crucial feature of poetic style (at least in Morgenstern’s case): the scansion and rhythm. It is no accident that the *Galgenlieder* have been set to music on numerous occasions. A key influence on my translations was Lutz Görner’s recordings accompanied by Celtic harp. I had listened to these readings for some twenty years. This familiarization and the resulting affinity cannot be underestimated. It is what George Steiner called “initiative trust” (346) but it was also an extended period of Bly’s sixth stage: paying attention to sound (82). I had been steeped in the sound, the music of the poems and my strategy of counting out the ST syllables in advance of inserting words (ta-dum, ta-dum, ta-dum, ta-dum, etc.) became almost automatic, enhanced by the backdrop of Görner’s readings. Morgenstern himself notes that the *Galgenlieder* began as just that – *Lieder* (songs) (112).

One of the most distinctive musical arrangements in the *Galgenlieder* is realized in the *terza rima* of “Die Behörde” (“The Authorities”). In the poem, Korf, one of Morgenstern’s “spirit beings” receives a letter from the authorities demanding all sorts of personal details and then replies with his own missive, mocking the official’s language and telling him that none of the information is applicable since he, Korf, does not even exist. I include the last three stanzas:

(Morgenstern)

Korf erwidert darauf kurz und rund:
»Einer hohen Direktion
stellt sich, laut persönlichem Befund,

untig angefertigte Person
als nichtexistent im Eigen-Sinn
bürgerlicher Konvention

vor und aus und zeichnet, wenschonhin
mitbedauernd nebigen Betreff,
Korf: (An die Bezirksbehörde in –)«

(Newton, 2012)

Korf responded with precision:
“A high level perusal
establishes according to personal revision

the above portrayed individual
as non existent when defined
by the statutory or the civil.

Co- and under- and counter-signed,
yet regretting any unintended mischief,
Korf (to the Local Authorities, April nine).”

The form, strongly identified with Dante, involves the following rhyme scheme: aba; bcb; cdc; ded; efe, and so on. The enormous challenge of this is that the edifice of complex rhyme is overlaid on the bureaucratic language of Korf and the official. It is crucial to the ironic balance of the poem and necessitated a more complex building plan than that described for “The Werewolf”, since rhymes chosen in one stanza will determine choices made in subsequent stanzas:

/ x / x / x / x (give or take up to three syllables) +	(a) ...ision
/ x / x / x / x (give or take up to three syllables) +	(b) ...usal
/ x / x / x / x (give or take up to three syllables) +	(a) ...ision
/ x / x / x / x (give or take up to three syllables) +	(b) ...ual
/ x / x / x / x (give or take up to three syllables) +	(c) ...ined
/ x / x / x / x (give or take up to three syllables) +	(b) ...vil
/ x / x / x / x (give or take up to three syllables) +	(c) ...igned
/ x / x / x / x (give or take up to three syllables) +	(d) ...chief
/ x / x / x / x (give or take up to three syllables) +	(c) ...ine
...etc.	...etc.

I was forced here, instead of proceeding from one stanza to the next, to alternate constantly between possible rhymed endings, adjusting the metre where necessary (Morgenstern actually uses variable metre – a flexibility necessitated by the rigid rhyme scheme) and inserting rhymes or half-rhymes in advance before a full line is completed. Perhaps understandably, given the to-ing and fro-ing this requires (I was put in mind of knitting a sweater with an intricate pattern), previous translations have either abandoned the ST's distinctive *terza rima*, producing rhymed couplets which sandwich an unrhymed middle line, or else simply three rhymed endings in each stanza. But *terza rima* is not the kind of rhyme scheme chosen by chance. Its intricacy and distinctiveness suggest that it was a conscious choice for this particular poem and thus a key stylistic feature. The altered rhyme schemes employed by previous translations and their resulting monotony flatten out the surprising chimes of the *terza rima* and are less effective in offsetting the ST's mock pedantry. Significantly though, the reproduction of the rhyme scheme serves a documentary purpose: to record Morgenstern's influences, heritage and position in literary history.

We see in the examples below, again, that there is confusion between the voices in the poem: that of narrator and that of the participants.

(Snodgrass and Segal)

Proximitywise referentially discerned,
Korf. (To the police of the state of...)"

(Arndt)

Livened by Ineffable Regret – as must
be the more robust Official Source.

While Snodgrass and Segal manage to emulate the “officialese”, albeit in a simplified gloss, the final stanza suffers from the same problem as Lettvin's “Ontology recapitulates philology”: where Morgenstern's “officialese” is signalled subtly by minimal insertions of officious words here and there – a kind of ear dialect – the translations allow it to spill into the diction, compromising clarity. Arndt seems more overwhelmed, and his final two stanzas place even heavier cognitive burdens on the reader. It is arguable that the breakdowns in coherence are due in part to the abandonment of the verse form chosen by Morgenstern, which adds a coherent music, a sophisticated set of cognitive supports for the reader and listener.

Micro and macro puns

Working with puns is not necessarily difficult if the pun in question is lexically realized. The German term *Sußwasser* (meaning fresh water, but literally expressed as “sweet” water) I rendered thus:

Ein Süßwasser, zwar kurz, / werd ich dann nach meinem Sturz;
A confection current, simply said, is what I'll be when I am dead

while the following plays on a sheep going to the High Court (in German *Hochgericht* can mean

either “High Court” or “High Meal”):

Der Mondschaft geht zum Hochgericht
The moonsheep's on the High Caught Bench⁵

The relative ease of finding candidates for TL puns demonstrates how rich the English language is in puns that will be available to stand in for Morgenstern's seemingly endless repertoire of playful allusions. Occasionally however, non-transferable puns necessitated some pre-emptive strategy pertaining to a poem's base structure when a pun itself, rather than locally deployed, supervenes over an entire ploy. A representative example is “Die weggeworfene Flinte” (literally, “The thrown-away shotgun”), which turns on an expression *die Flinte ins Korn werfen* (“to throw the shotgun in the corn”), meaning “to give up the ghost”:

Die weggeworfene Flinte (Morgenstern)

Palmström findet eines Abends,
als er zwischen hohem Korn
singend schweift,
eine Flinte.

Trauernd bricht er seinen Hymnus
ab und setzt sich in den Mohn,
seinen Fund
zu betrachten.

Innig stellt er den Verzagten,
der ins Korn sie warf, sich vor
und beklagt
ihn von Herzen.

Mohn und Ähren und Cyanen
windet seine Hand derweil
still um Lauf,
Hahn und Kolben...

Und er lehnt den so bekränzten
Stutzen an den Kreuzwegstein,
hoffend zart,
daß der Zage,

noch einmal des Weges kommend,
ihn erblicken möge – und –
(..Seht den Mond
groß im Osten..)

The hung-up gloves (Newton, 2012)

Palmström finds one evening
singing on his way
through a rounded clearing
some hanging gloves.

Mournful, he breaks off his hymn
and sits himself beside the ring
in order to
inspect his find.

Within, he pictures the rejected
thing who hung them there beside the ring
and laments
him sincerely.

Leaves and vines and daffodils
he wraps around their thumbs
and around their laces
and places some inside them.

He puts the decorated mitts
right in the centre of the ring,
tenderly hoping that
their owner

comes once more this way
and sees them – and –
(behold the moon
full in the east..)

Snodgrass and Segal translate the pun with a literal approach (“The Castaway Musket”) and provide a footnote – something in line with what O’Sullivan has called the explanatory approach pertaining to Lewis Carroll translations into German (“Comparing” 49). Knight, on the other hand, renders it “The Thrown-away Towel”. I feel that the former’s inclusion of “Castaway”, particularly next to “musket” creates a divergent set of associations (Robinson Crusoe etc.).

⁵ Admittedly this choice potentially excludes North American varieties of English, but I assume that many Americans readers will still recognize the wordplay as an “eye-pun”.

The latter's lack of precision (the idiom is, in fact "to throw *in* the towel") would be otherwise forgivable, but idioms are notoriously sensitive to even the slightest formal alteration. Further, a towel has no semantic relationship with the potential for violence. I have augmented the poem's environment by turning the corn clearing into a "ring" in order to preserve the essential coherence between the object (pair of boxing gloves for a shotgun) and its adjacency counterpart (a ring for a field of corn).

Place names and local references

A crucial part of the documentary strand in a direct translation is the non-domestication of place names and local references. On reflection, it seems my tendency was not *only* to preserve local references. This can risk coming across as tokenism, fetishism, cognitive burdening or pretentiousness. I sought a way to integrate local material even more deeply into the translated poems. This involved giving them a little more involvement in the polysemy of metre and rhyme:

Die Schildkrö-krö-te (Morgenstern)

“Ich bin nun tausend Jahre alt
und werde täglich älter;
der Gotenkönig Theobald
erzog mich im Behälter

Seitdem ist mancherlei geschehn,
doch weiß ich nichts davon;
zur Zeit, da läßt für Geld mich sehn
ein Kaufmann zu Heilbronn...

The tort-ought-oise (Newton, 2012)

“I am a hundred centuries old
and every day get older
the gothic Emperor Theobald
raised me in a candle holder.

Since then there's much that has gone on
yet I know nothing of it.
Nowadays a merchant from Heilbronn
exhibits me for profit...

I have rhymed "old" with "Theobald", signalling the English pronunciation and retaining the historical reference, enhancing it with "candle holder" (invoking the dark age setting). The intertwining concessions to rhythm were "a hundred centuries" for *nun tausend Jahre* and "Emperor" for *-könig*. But importantly, rhyming the colloquial "gone on" with *Heilbronn* also helps to familiarize the foreign city with a vernacular tone and effectively tells the reader how to pronounce it. The local reference, crucially, is made to feel at home by the previous three elements of diction, metre and rhyme. I have often integrated place names in this way, even where it is not done in the ST. One can foreignize, and then domesticate the foreignization itself:

(Morgenstern)

Diese ißt in Hamburg und
Bremen dann des Menschen Mund.

(Newton, 2012)

These in turn enter mouths of men
in Hamburg and in Bremen.

An overview of title choices is also demonstrative of my attempt to document local context and reflect some of the idiosyncrasies of the German language:

Das Geierlamm
(Morgenstern)

The Hawken Chick
(Knight)

The vulture lamb
(Newton, 2012)

Die Korfsche Uhr
(Morgenstern)

Korf's Clock
(Snodgrass and Segal)

The Korfish clock
(Newton, 2012)

Die Behörde
(Morgenstern)

Wrong Address
(Arndt)

The authorities
(Newton, 2012)

Das Butterbrotpapier (Morgenstern, 1972)	The Sandwich Bag, or Spontaneous Gestation Blighted (Arndt, 1992)	The sandwich wrapper (Newton, 2012)
KM 29 (Morgenstern, 1972)	U.S. 29 (Knight, 1964)	29 KM (Newton, 2012)
Nach Norden (Morgenstern, 1972)	Nor'ard (Arndt, 1992)	Northward (Newton, 2012)
Das böhmische Dorf (Morgenstern, 1972)	Village in Thrace (Arndt, 1992)	The Bohemian Village (Newton, 2012)

Admittedly, the contemporary translator is able to draw on a deeper resonance and cogency between cognate linguistic and metonymic codes: “Bohemian”, “vulture lamb” are newly contemporary, while “Korfish Clock” deliberately reproduces the German language’s ability to assign “...isch” adjectives to people’s names, something that sounds comically intimate in English, but which also gives non German speakers some flavour of the original language’s quirks. Characterizing the previous translations are Americanizations (“The Hawken Chick”; “U.S. 29”), Hellenization and classicism (“Nor’ard”; “Village in Thrace”), as well as explanation (“Wrong Address”; “Spontaneous Gestation Blighted”). If a direct translation balances documentation and instrumentalism, it is more consistent with both the expectations of modern readers of poetry in translation, as well as with contemporary norms for poetry translation, to leave the poems in their natural habitat. However in other instances, local references are of a specific kind unlikely to be accessible to TC audiences:

Das Nasobēm (Morgenstern)

Auf seinen Nasen schreitet
einher das Nasobēm,
von seinem Kind begleitet.
Es steht noch nicht im Brehm.

Es steht noch nicht im Meyer.
Und auch im Brockhaus nicht.
Es trat aus meiner Leyer
zum ersten Mal ans Licht...

The Nasobēm (Newton, 2012)

Upon its noses shuffling,
here comes the Nasobēm,
accompanied by its offspring
undefined by men.

Not listed in classifications
nor in any natural guide.
Just stepped from my imagination
the first time into light.

While maintaining the strangeness of Morgenstern’s title, I have glossed over the three names of German reference books, a decision resembling Hönig and Kußmaul’s “principle of the necessary degree of precision” (96). Yet I did not want to replace an SC reference with an overly local TC one (such as *Britannica* or *Websters*), which would run counter to the strategy of delocalizing, or neutralizing, when an SC reference is simply too obscure. *Britannica* and *Websters* are British and American respectively. “Encyclopaedia” suggested itself as a neutralizer but could not be accommodated by the established reconstruction frame as its six syllables would have occupied an entire line. “Classifications” and “natural guide” on the other hand are simultaneously unambiguous while managing to connote the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century preoccupation with taxonomy that is the ironic counterpoint to the mysterious *Nasobēm*. Thus I tend to accept that conscious hierarchies may come into focus, but only as responses to particular conscious decisions and problems that the translator encounters when having to make decisions. The important point is that *some* hierarchies will become salient during translation, some will

remain unconscious and a good deal will only reveal themselves as results of the transfer of stylistic choices concealed within the language of the poem.

Forced and unforced adaptation

Max Knight's and Anthea Bell's translations of "Das Gebet" ("The Prayer") illustrate well the scope and motivation for adaptation.

Das Gebet (Morgenstern)

Die Rehlein beten zur Nacht,
hab acht!

Halb neun!

Halb zehn!

Halb elf!

Halb zwölf!

Zwölf!

Die Rehlein beten zur Nacht,
hab acht!
Sie falten die kleinen Zehlein,
die Rehlein.

The Does' Prayer (Knight)

The does as the hour grows late
me-di-tate;

med-it-nine;

med-i-ten;

med-eleven;

mednight!

The does, as the hour grows late,
meditate:

They fold their little toesis,
the doesies.

The prayer (Newton, 2012)

The yearlings pray up late,
attenuate!

A ten to nine!

Ten to ten!

Ten to eleven!

Ten to twelve!

Twelve!

The yearlings pray up late,
attenuate:
They are folding their little ear-lings,
the yearlings.

The very specific nature of the language play in this poem is bound to reveal some seams in an attempted direct translation, such as Knight's "does", which I initially read as the third person singular of "to do", and there is the slightly infantilizing "toesies/doesies". But Knight's "The Does' Prayer" demonstrates a solution very similar to my own. The pun with *hab acht!* (meaning "pay attention", but almost identical to *halb acht*, "half past seven") unpacks the clock-time metaphor. To recreate this, Knight has chosen "meditate", exploiting a narrow semantic bridge from "pay

attention” and using the “-ate” as his time generator. This, however, prevented him from adding the extra time, since *Halb zwölf* means “half to twelve” (i.e. half past eleven) and Knight only had times on the hour. For my translation, this would have compromised my intention to document the layout (including line breaks) in a bilingual edition, but without a key word from which to unpack clock times, a direct translation would have been practically unviable. I eventually fell upon a word bearing two numbers: attenuate. This is perhaps an even narrower semantic bridge to cross from “pay attention”, but this choice allowed the unpacking of the clock-times in exactly the same sequence as the ST. The choice of “yearlings” allowed me to exploit a less infantilizing diminutive, but forced me into having the yearlings pray with their ears rather than their toes. In retrospect, I still think there is a correspondence, since the praying ears resemble praying hands. The point is that both in Knight’s and my translations, the adaptations are localized and a result of an attempt to exhaust all other possibilities of both mimesis and documentation.

Bell’s version is a good example of retranslations switching genres (Gambier 1994; Jenn 2006), in this case to children’s literature. The poem appears in the edition *Lullabies, Lyrics and Gallows Songs*, accompanied by colourful background illustrations. Again, stylistic effects of line breaks are dispensed with and the deer become “prey” (“pray for us poor prey, we pray”). The experimental language poem has been instrumentalized into a children’s lullaby: gone is Morgenstern’s unpacking of evolving puns from a single lexical item and gone is the reference to Nietzsche’s “Zarathustras Rundgesang” (“Oh Mensch! gib acht! / Was spricht die tiefe Mitternacht?”). We thus might see this as a case of unforced adaptation, in that an *a priori* decision was made that the ST is more or less untranslatable. Bell admits this much in her introduction (4) and was clearly working to a translation brief. Rather than facing the constraints of the ST’s stylistic ploys (what I have called previously a “bottom up approach”), the translator attempts to identify the function (*skopos*) of the ST poem and recreate its effects in analogous form, in what might be called a “top down” approach. To do this, however, involves an abandonment of a good deal of the documentary function of poetry translation.

Conclusion: a case for the retranslation

Chesterman (15-27) found that later translations take critical stances on earlier ones and that earlier translations enable space for reception of new ones, loosening norms and allowing translators more freedom and a closer rendering of the source text. I naturally hope that this new set of translations, although as yet unpublished, at least complements those that have come before. Berman (287), in line with the romantic view, conceived all translation as inevitable failure – arising from both *resistance* and *incapacity* in the translation process; this “failure” so the argument goes, is at its most extreme in initial translations, which, driven by target-culture readability norms and publishing agendas, are characterized by domestication. I have made some implied criticisms of previous translations of the *Galgenlieder* on some of these grounds, but I do not necessarily subscribe to Berman’s conception of retranslation (let alone *this* retranslation) as a process of consecutive improvement evolving to a pinnacle, a *grande traduction* (cited in Deane 8). Rather, I have tried to make a case for regarding the stylistic features of poetry such as rhyme, metre, line breaks, personification, puns, alliteration, local reference, etc. as a way of combining the documentary and instrumental roles of poetry translation and as a way of producing what Gutt (157) calls a “direct translation”. This in turn is a recognition of the common tendency to publish translated poetry bilingually and of the growing consensus among some scholars that attention to poetic style is a way of combining documentation of ST poetics with the instrumentality of the TT (Gutt 141-165; Tabakowska 129; de Beaugrande 98-121). The process of reviewing my translations while comparing with others, the “blind” retranslation, is certainly an activity I can recommend for any translators who are in a position to initiate their own projects, since it throws into sharp relief the sometimes radically different strategies taken by predecessors, a situation which further justifies retranslation. It is up to other poets, translators, readers and critics to decide how well I have failed in the task of playing Morgenstern in the instrument of English.

from Morgenstern's *Galgenlieder (Gallows Songs)*, translated by Christopher Newton

Möwenlied

Die Möwen sehen alle aus,
als ob sie Emma hiessen.
Sie tragen einen weissen Flaus
und sind mit Schrot zu schießen.

Ich schieße keine Möwe tot,
ich laß sie lieber leben –
und füttere sie mit Roggenbrot
und rötlichen Zibeben.

O Mensch, du wirst nie nebenbei
der Möwe Flug erreichen.
Wofern du Emma heißest, sei
zufrieden, ihr zu gleichen

Der Hecht

Ein Hecht, vom heiligen Antón
bekehrt, beschloß, samt Frau und Sohn,
am vegetarischen Gedanken
moralisch sich emporzuranken.

Er aß seit jenem nur noch dies:
Seegrass, Seerose und Seegrieß.
Doch Grieß, Gras, Rose floß, o Graus,
entsetzlich wieder hinten aus.

Der ganze Teich ward angesteckt.
Fünfhundert Fische sind verreckt.
Doch Sankt Antón, gerufen eilig,
sprach nichts als: "Heilig! heilig! heilig!"

Seagull song

Seagulls always look as though
Emma is their name.
They dress themselves in whitest robes
and can be shot as game.

I wouldn't a shoot seagull dead;
I'd rather let them be
and feed them with stale gingerbread
and wild red sugar peas.

People, you will never reach
the heights a gull can summon.
If your name's Emma just be glad
you have that much in common.

The Pike

A pike in the pond of St Anton,
converted, undertook, with wife and son
a strict vegetarian regime
to enhance thereby his moral esteem.

Since then he's eaten only these:
pond grass, pond mud and pond lilies.
But grass, mud and lilies – oh yikes! –
come out the other end of the pike.

The whole pond was contaminated.
Five-hundred fish asphyxiated!
Yet St Anton, when prayed to, drolly,
said nothing but "Holy! Holy! Holy!"

Der Sperling und das Känguru

In seinem Zaun das Känguru –
es hockt und guckt dem Sperling zu.

Der Sperling sitzt auf dem Gebäude,
doch ohne sonderliche Freude.

Vielmehr er fühlt, den Kopf geduckt,
wie ihn das Känguru beguckt.

Der Sperling sträubt den Federflaus –
die Sache ist auch gar zu kraus.

Ihm ist, als ob er kaum noch säße...
Wenn nun das Känguru ihn fräße?!

Doch dieses dreht nach einer Stunde
den Kopf aus irgendeinem Grunde,

vielleicht auch ohne tiefern Sinn,
nach einer andern Richtung hin.

Die wirklich praktischen Leute

Es kommen zu Palmström heute
die wirklich praktischen Leute,

die wirklich auf allen Zehen
im wirklichen Leben stehen.

Sie klopfen ihm auf den Rücken
und sind in sehr vielen Stücken –

so sagen sie – ganz die Seinen.
Doch wer, der mit beiden Beinen

im wirklichen Leben stände,
der wüßte doch und befände,

wie viel, so gut auch der Wille,
rein idealistische Grille.

Sie schütteln besorgt die Köpfe
und drehn ihm vom Rock die Knöpfe

und hoffen zu postulieren:
er wird auch einer der Ihren,

ein Glanzstück erlesenster Sorte,
ein Bürger, mit einem Worte.

The sparrow and the kangaroo

From behind its fence the kangaroo
has a gap to watch the sparrow through.

The sparrow sits below the eaves
though he's not particularly pleased.

What's more, he notes with head pulled in
how the kangaroo just stares at him.

The sparrow preens its feathers, wary.
This thing is getting far too hairy.

He finds his reasoning is fleeting:
what if the kangaroo should eat him?

But after an hour or so goes by,
it just turns its head – who knows why?

– perhaps without meaning or intention,
in a different direction.

The really practical people

Today Palmström keeps running into
the really practical people, who

really stand straight and upright
on all ten of their toes in life.

They slap him on the back of the neck
and are in so many respects –

so they say – quite complete.
But one who stood with both feet

planted firmly in real life
would already know and identify

regardless of the power of his will
so much pure idealistic swill.

They shake their heads with reproach
and twist the very buttons off his coat

and hope to postulate again
that he too, will become one of them;

an ornament of the highest worth,
a *bürger*, in a word.

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Reading an Incomplete Nobel: Goldblatt's translation of Mo Yan's *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out**

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Abstract

Mo Yan, one of the most successful contemporary novelists in China, was awarded the 2012 Nobel Prize in Literature for the “hallucinatory realism” of his novels. Although Mo Yan considers length, density and difficulty to be hallmarks of the novel, the English version of *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out*, translated by Howard Goldblatt, has been abridged and simplified. This article observes three kinds of deletions – characters' voices, cultural memories and aesthetic description – and focuses particularly on the deletion of characters' voices as the most significant kind of omission. The article then argues that the voices of animals and of “Mo Yan” (as a character in the novel) play a non-trivial role in revealing the author's literary and political stance and thus their deletion compromises the reader's interpretation of Mo Yan's literary work.

Mo Yan is arguably the most successful contemporary novelist in China. He won the coveted Mao Dun Literature Prize in 2011 for his successful, innovative and influential novel, *Frogs*. Thanks to Howard Goldblatt's translations into English for over three decades now, Mo Yan also enjoys a well-deserved reputation as one of the most important Asian novelists in the world literary panorama. The Nobel citation described Mo Yan as a novelist “who with hallucinatory realism merges folk tales, history and the contemporary”. *Red Sorghum*, *Big Breasts and Wide Hips* and *Sandalwood Death* are among his best known early novels, and *Red Sorghum* provided the basis for a very successful film which opened up the new contemporary China to the rest of the world. His more recent and very successful novel *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out* undoubtedly contributed to the awarding of the Nobel Prize in 2012, and it is Goldblatt's translation of this novel that this article will focus on. Some believe that the quality of Goldblatt's translations has played an important role in making Mo Yan such a well-known literary figure on the world stage. Other critics and commentators, however, believe that it is the charm of the novels themselves that has won popularity among Western audiences; Goldblatt himself has expressed this view in several interviews (for example, Liu) as has the prominent translation critic Xu Jun (Xu), among others.

Naturally, praise for the translator is especially lavish among Chinese critics; Zhu

Zhenwu, for example, has praised Goldblatt's translation of *Life and Death*... as "absolutely faithful to the original novel" (quoted in Jiang, my translation). But in the wake of the celebration and applause few have mentioned the translator's filtering role in this "creative" but shortened English version. According to Goldblatt, "many of the omissions are made by the publishing company" (quoted in Luo, my translation). Certainly, the translated book is very successful; words and phrases are cleverly transferred and sentences are beautifully rhythmic, but Western readers, most of whom do not read Chinese, may not be aware that what they are reading has been significantly abridged and supplemented.¹

Regrettably, then, the translation may fall somewhat short of the high expectations of those readers who can read Chinese and who would have a more in-depth understanding of Mo Yan's novels. Some readers may well feel that the translation does not capture the full complexity of the novel and therefore falls short in its duty to represent to global readers the achievements of contemporary Chinese culture. In his preface to the Chinese original (which is missing from the translated version) Mo Yan writes that "length, density and difficulty are hallmarks of the novel, and the dignity of such a great literary genre relies on these features of the novel" (1, my translation). In the light of this philosophy of literature, one may well wonder what Mo Yan might think of the shorter and somewhat simplified English version – even though we know that he has placed a lot of trust in his translator (Fan and Huang).

More specifically, there are at least three types of omission in Goldblatt's translation. The first concerns a reduction in the range of narrative voices. The main deletions are narrations by the characters Pig, Dog and "Mo Yan", with the largest omission being in Chapter 28 (295), where seven pages (5,000 Chinese characters or about 3,125 English words) of Pig's and "Mo Yan's" voices are deleted. Other examples are found in Chapter 27 where Pig describes his view of Diao Xiaosan (286) and in Chapter 33 where Pig recalls an apricot tree (344). Altogether there are about 20,000 Chinese characters of this kind omitted.

The second type of omission refers to culturally shared memories. Among this kind of omission we find, for example, a scene describing a Chinese highway in the 1980s which is missing from Chapter 38 (394), and in Chapter 44 (425) there is a scene describing a lane with bicycles in the 1990s which has been omitted from the English version. Such scenes are probably meant to remind Chinese readers of the daily traffic jams in twenty-first-century China. There is also the gently mocking "Red chili sauce" scene in Chapter 45 (429), in which the brand name and the vulgar slogan on the advertising billboard imply cheap, backyard-made, low quality products and bring to mind the beginnings of commercialization in China in the 1990s. Under this category of omission, a total of 7,000 characters are deleted.

The third type of deletion encompasses literary-aesthetic descriptions. In Chapter 32 (340), there should be highly imaginative, romantic and magical scenes of fish in pursuit of the moon, alluding to the magnetic leadership of Mao Zedong – a good example of Mo Yan's "hallucinatory realism" – but all this disappears. Also missing, from Chapter 33 (345), is a lavish and characteristically "Chinese" description of a strip of sand emerging from the river, trees along the riverbank and an indifferent moon shining over the landscape. The omitted description amounts to 4,000 characters. Other minor deletions include Chinese idioms, cultural

¹ For an instance of the latter, one paragraph (175 words) is added in Chapter 52 in the English translation (488-9). In this paragraph a story is introduced to address Lan Jiefang and Pang Chunmiao's fugitive life in Xi'an: they worked in a sweatshop until it was burned down killing many young girls.

allusions and pop songs. Although all types of omission deserve attention, the remainder of this paper will be devoted to the first of the three major types, that is, the omission of narrative voices. This type of omission occurs most frequently and is arguably the most significant type. Focusing on the reduction of narrative voices will highlight their significance for an unimpeded interpretation of the novel as a whole.

Life and Death are Wearing Me Out tells a contemporary story of the People's Republic of China from 1950 to 2000 through the metaphorical framework of the Buddhist idea of the six paths of reincarnation: a Buddhist concept according to which each living creature, if not reaching *monksa* (that is, if they have not been set free), suffers six cycles of death and rebirth. Ximen Nao, a landlord executed for his "bourgeois sins", goes through a series of reincarnations as a donkey, an ox, a pig, a dog, a monkey and, finally, a human child. Along the way three narrators' voices are interwoven: Big-head (the human child), an almost omniscient character possessing the cumulative memories of Ximen Nao's previous incarnations, is the main narrator who speaks from the perspective of each incarnation (donkey, ox, pig, dog monkey and human child); Lan Jiefang, a commoner whose understanding of the world is limited by his ordinary perspective; and "Mo Yan", a writer and "literati" who pops up from time to time like a clown to say something plausible yet paradoxical and who is clearly meant to be mocked. These three voices converse throughout the story. This experimental technique and complex narrative structure constitute an important element of the novel, reflecting Mo Yan's philosophy of "dense ideas" (密集的思想) and his view that "a good novel should contain very diverse thoughts; within the novel diverse thoughts should conflict, fight and struggle" (5, my translation).

The different voices of these characters compose an intricate, polyphonic kaleidoscope, creating a fictional world that is actually more like a multi-dimensional universe. However, in Goldblatt's version the voices of Pig and Dog (the monkey's role is small in the original Chinese version) are deliberately reduced. This is probably due to the consideration that Western readers may be more interested in Chinese contemporary historical and political events rather than "the animal world". One reader's review on the Amazon website explicitly makes this point and comments:

Another critique would be that Mo Yan focused too heavily on the animal world. Though these are symbolic of what was going on in China at the time (the ox symbolizing the overworked collectives, the Pig King compared to Mao), the book was still light on what political changes or policies were actually being instituted that was [*sic*] causing the township so many problems. After finishing I didn't know that much more about the Cultural Revolution, other than that the youth replaced the old guard, and I wish he spent more time on the suffering the peasants had to endure during the Great Leap Forward, which caused millions upon millions of deaths. Never thought I would say it, but I was actually hoping for more on Chinese agrarian land policies.

(Profane, www.amazon.com)

Common readers may wish, through the novel, to understand not only the traumas of contemporary China, but also the literary world. For instance Freeman, in *The Boston Globe*, asks whether there is "an abattoir so lethal as Chinese history" and characterizes Mo Yan as

one of the “giants of the novel who have addressed this ocean of death”. Other commentators, such as English translator Nicky Harman, claim that the interest of Western editors in the Chinese Cultural Revolution “is really past” (quoted in Li, “Translation of Contemporary Chinese Literature”), yet it would appear that such assumptions are still influencing the choice of passages to omit from Mo Yan’s novel in translation. Goldblatt himself remarked, “We have a rather pessimistic view (on the taste of Western readers): as long as the works show dissatisfaction or criticism of the government, they will be liked and enjoyed by American readers; once the works praise reality, they feel uninterested in them” (quoted in Li, “Goldblatt: Next Step”, my translation). Perhaps to align with the mindset of English-speaking readers, especially their curiosity about major political events in China such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, the translation has abridged content that might be considered unrelated to the major plot developments. This is especially the case towards the final part of the novel, when the narration approaches the time after Deng Xiaoping’s Open Policy (1979) when political events play a far less important role. In this section of the novel the animals are less and less likely to participate in human activities.

A significant example of such manipulation comes from Chapter 41, *Lan Jiefang Feigns Affection for His Wife / Dog Four Watches over a Student* (405-6) where approximately 2,500 Chinese words of narration by Dog Four are deleted. In this paragraph, quite a number of odd and humorous things happen in the dog’s world to parallel, or to indirectly mock, human society of the 1990s. In this part of the novel, Dog persistently sniffs out Pang Chunmiao, Lan Jiefang’s secret lover; Dog leads a meeting of the entire dog community; and Dog is offered delicacies to eat because of his owner’s status as a government official. Any claim that the purely animal activity has nothing to do with the development of the main ideas of the novel, is surely mistaken. Mo Yan wants to show that an animal-like state, free of any human memory of hatred is the ideal, ultimate state of serenity. Memory loss is an important theme in this novel, as may be seen at the end of Part Four when Dog dies and goes to see Lord Yama, who is the authority in control of all suffering, and of life and death. In Chapter 53, *As Death Nears, Charity and Enmity Vanish / A Dog Dies, but the Wheel of Life Rolls on*, the following dialogue between Lord Yama and Dog takes place:

He [Yama] said:

“Ximen Nao, I know everything about you. Does hatred still reside in your heart?”

I [Dog] hesitated momentarily before shaking my head.

“There are too many, far too many, people in the world in whose hearts hatred resides,” Lord Yama said sorrowfully. “We are unwilling to allow spirits who harbor hatred to be reborn as humans. Unavoidably, some do slip through the net.”

“My hatred is all gone, Great Lord!”

“No, I can see in your eyes that traces of it remain,” Lord Yama said, “so I will send you back once more as a member of the animal kingdom. This time, however, you will be reborn as a higher species, one closer to man, a monkey, if you must know, and only for a short time – two years. I hope that during those two years you will be able to purge your heart of hatred. When you do that, you will have earned the right to return to the realm of humans.”

(*Life and Death* 510)

As Ximen Nao turns each time into a different animal, his perspective as a human becomes less and less pervasive and the animals' monologues increase in frequency and even in length. Human memories are replaced by the animals' absolutely innocent and unsophisticated narrations. The narrations of Pig and Dog, compared to those of the donkey and the ox in the previous chapters, contain far fewer thoughts of taking revenge on the cruel people who had once oppressed, teased or bullied Ximen Nao and his family. By doing this, Mo Yan tries to show that the passage of time and the cycles of reincarnation can obliterate the hatred that was once deep-seated in human society.

In parallel with Chinese classical fiction, such as *A Dream of Red Mansions* for instance, where prosperous, important families end up as commoners, in *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out* Mo Yan utilizes the Buddhist understanding of the world in which "everything cycles like a wheel" (世事轮回) (Li, "Big I and Loud Voice", my translation) and history, likewise, abides by the traditional Buddhist wisdom that "a long time of separation ends in reunion; a long time of reunion ends in separation" (分久必合, 合久必分). So love and hatred in the human world, the loudness and arrogance of historical movements, will turn into serenity once all the necessary cycles are experienced; as the last sentence of the story in Book IV of the novel significantly puts it: "Everything that comes from the earth shall return to it" (511). However, the deletion from the English version of such seemingly irrelevant details voiced and enacted by the animal characters, in order to pursue a more compact "human story", appears to discount this important underlying thread. This may prevent readers from discovering the messages that the animal characters are meant to convey.

Curiously enough, it is not only the voices of the animal characters that are stifled; the story of "Mo Yan" the literati representative also receives similar treatment in the English translation. At least eight passages (from pages 246, 279, 323, 340, 352, 400, 409, 410) containing approximately 6,000 Chinese characters, or about 3,750 English words voiced by or about the character of "Mo Yan" are missing from the English translation. "Mo Yan", whose name coincides with that of Mo Yan the author of the book, is a fictional character. He is a prototypical representation of the nosy Chinese literati who with only a little more knowledge than an ordinary Chinese person loves making pronouncements, but only manages to make things worse. The author warns, tongue in cheek, that his word should not be taken seriously. For instance in Chapter 28:

According to Mo Yan, as the leaders of the Ximen Village Production Brigade were bemoaning their anticipated fate, feeling utterly helpless, he entered the scene with a plan. But it would be a mistake to take him at his word, since his stories are filled with foggy details and speculation, and should be used for reference only.

(Life and Death 294)

However, that words should not be believed or taken seriously does not mean they should be obliterated.

Deletions from the story of "Mo Yan's" character are of two kinds. The first kind of deletion is about "Mo Yan's" novels. For instance in Chapters 28 (295) and 26 (279), details of two books written by "Mo Yan" have been deleted: *Popping up and Jumping onto the Moon*

and *Tales of Pig-Raising* (my translation). The second kind is the descriptions of “Mo Yan’s” personality. For example, in Chapter 24 (246), Pig claims that he has learned a lot about the modern world from the very knowledgeable “Mo Yan”; in Chapter 32 (340) Pig mentions the conversation between Lan Jiefang and “Mo Yan”, in which they discuss the morality of writing a novel about pig-raising.

“Mo Yan”, the character in the novel *Life and Death are Wearing me Out*, is an imaginative and creative man whose disparate, idiosyncratic ideas are constantly laughed at by other people. Mo Yan always uses the phrase ““Mo Yan’ the small man” (“莫言那小子”, my translation); to call this clownish literati a “small man” (“那小子”) adds a tone of scorn and self-effacement. This self-ridicule, like “屌丝” (*diao si*, more recent Chinese slang to mean “loser”), is a very common way to deconstruct embarrassing situations (Li, “The Postmodernism Discourse Perspective”), thus dissolving real dilemmas. So through seemingly disparate, paradoxical or mocking language, Mo Yan is in fact deconstructing the language and trying to hide his real intention of political silence. It is possible that including too much of this character’s illogical, apparently trivial and sometimes repetitive accounts in the novel might indeed wear English readers out. On the other hand, reducing the self-ridiculing story of “Mo Yan” may compromise the reader’s understanding of the complexity of the writer’s literary pursuits and political stance. Rather than totally avoiding any mention of the atrocities of the regime (Saval), Mo Yan has made mention of the disasters that have occurred under the folly of political hegemony, although he would soon after awkwardly joke or recriminate himself about what he was saying in his characteristic disconnected, contradictory “jumble of words” (Sun). As can be imagined, when writers ridicule themselves in their own works, they also reveal an acute critical awareness of their own situation. Mo Yan, likewise, ridicules his fictional “Mo Yan’s” novel *Tales of Pig-Raising* to deconstruct the ideological dilemma facing Chinese writers in the 1970s:

I [the Pig] remember that you [Lan Jiefang] had tried to persuade him [“Mo Yan”] to write about something great and noble such as love, friendship, flowers, or pine-trees. But why bother writing about pig-raising? Do pigs have anything to do with “nobility”?²

(生死疲劳 319, my translation)

This part is deleted from Chapter 32 in the English version (340). While the real Mo Yan’s own judgment on “nobility” is unknown, such seemingly paradoxical mocking belies an underlying stance, whereby the author realizes the ridicule but, at the same time, he does not wish to respond to confrontations directly and openly. Actually, such ambiguity and nuance is familiar to Chinese readers. It is found, for instance, in Chinese philosophy in the Daoist “doctrine of means”, and has a well established place in Chinese literary tradition. Tsao Hsueh-Chin³ (1715-1763), one of Mo Yan’s favorite writers, in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, refused to pass judgment on whether his words are true:

² 我记得你当时劝他写点高尚的事，譬如写写爱情，写写友谊，写写花朵，写写青松，写养猪干什么？猪，能跟“伟大”二字联系上吗？

³ This author’s name is also spelt as Cao Xueqin in Pinyin.

Pages full of fantastic talk
 Penned with bitter tears;
 All men call the author mad,
 None his message hears.⁴

(Tsao and Kao 6)

Similarly, Mo Yan has “great fun with the craziness but leaves out the disaster” (Links), although some of the suffering can still be traced in the words of self-mocking in the Chinese version (absent from the English version). The deletion of self-effacement from the English version, however, excludes the reader from interpreting the writer’s choice to remain politically silent, although the Western reader may be more accustomed to writers having a more outspoken stance. Some critics, such as the well known Chinese writer Yu Jie and the artist Ai Weiwei (quoted in News 24), or the internationally renowned Salman Rushdie (quoted in Daley), expect Mo Yan to be sympathetic to dissidents protesting against a repressive Chinese government, and in the end they are disappointed by his silence on political issues. In contrast, it could be argued that a careful reading of the integral, uncut work would reveal that the author’s opinions are clearly laid out in the novel such that some political movements are cruel, but the author does not openly criticize the political turns of history, which are seen as the fate of the nation. The author’s desire is, instead, to wash away painful memories and hatred with the passage of time or through reincarnation. As for his political attitude, Mo Yan has said publicly that “some may want to shout on the street, but we should tolerate those who hide in their rooms and use literature to voice their opinions” (quoted in Grossman). The words of the character “Mo Yan”, deliberately leading the topic astray, are then not simply the incongruous and illogical words of a crazy daydreamer; instead they illuminate the writer’s “nuanced, even contradictory” but nevertheless “principled and heartfelt” literary style (Knight, 80).

Not only is the political and literary stance of the author obscured and hidden, but even facts become blurred, more or less inadvertently, by the incompleteness of the translated text. In the stream of consciousness passages where animal voices intermingle with “Mo Yan’s”, “facts” are ambiguous not just about Chinese society but also Western countries. The following example, which should have been in Chapter 24, *Brigade Members Light a Bonfire to Celebrate Good News / Pig King Steals Knowledge and Listens to Fine Words* (246), will be new to Western readers who might think Mo Yan never makes fun of the West. The 884 characters excluded from the English translation, read as follows:

I [Pig] know [from “Mo Yan’s” reading *Reference News*] that American astronauts landed on the moon with Apollo 17. The astronauts conducted scientific research on the moon, collected rocks, planted there an American flag, and then peed a big load of good urine. Because the gravity of the moon is very weak, this urine splashed and floated around like yellow cherries.⁵

(生死疲劳 220, my translation)

⁴ 满纸荒唐言，一把辛酸泪！都言作者痴，谁解其中味？

⁵ 我还知道美国宇航员乘坐“阿波罗 17 号”飞船登上了月球，宇航员在月球进行了科学考察，采集了大量岩石标本，插上美国国旗，然后撒了一泡很大的尿，因为月球的引力很小，那些尿液，像黄色的樱桃一样飞溅起来。

If one could fathom Mo Yan's attitudes to modern Chinese history, then it would also be possible to perceive his attitude to Western development from deleted passages such as the one just cited. Readers may have very diverse individual experiences in reading. However, what I would like to point out is that this sort of omission may foster unwarranted speculation about the author's political opinions. In any case it is hard to discern whether it is ideological identity that prompts the deletion, or whether it is the desire not to rub against the ideological identity of the reader. But ultimately this translation practice distracts attention from the author's narrative techniques, such as his imaginative blending of realism with myth; it also obscures a fuller understanding of his political views. It is quite clear then that deletions suppress a substantial interpretation of possible worlds, and simplify the overall narrative architecture, preventing readers from uncovering ideas about, among other things, memory and the significance of reincarnation. Thus we reach a similar conclusion to the German sinologist Wolfgang Kubin who, in an interview published in the *Qingdao Daily* (Zhao), went as far as saying that Mo Yan's English novels should have two authors, presumably not just because it is Howard Goldblatt who has helped Mo Yan onto the Nobel prize-winning platform, but also because it is the translator's simplified, rewritten version that fits the ideologies and expectations of Western readers.

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Resonant Scenes: Classical Translation and Poetic Work from Simon Armitage, Josephine Balmer, Anne Carson, Stanley Lombardo and Alice Oswald

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Concerted re-appearances of ancient poetry and drama in the first few years of the twenty-first century suggest to us a self-seeing, a grasp at continuity; arguably any work on and with a literature of the past – be it in a language that is foreign, native or dead – exists also as a search for more stable points from which to observe and contextualize the present. In the case of classical literature: how many *Antigones* across history? To what extent do we still inhabit an Iliadic world? This sense becomes even clearer when a diversity of translational approaches, novel ways in and out of the ancient source material, help align us with a more complete understanding. Translation thus becomes a sort of panopticon.

The bibliographical information listed at the start of this review essay already hints at this variety. It is important to state that all these publications sample a much wider production, yet they are striking examples in the way they manage to re-energize ancient authors, as “old” content re-attaches to contemporary cadences and frames. Bringing together here some of these (re-)presentations of ancient Greek and Roman literature nevertheless illuminates a number of fascinating dispositions and tonalities of translation as we observe (poet-)translators responding to Aeschylus or Ovid, and the ways they choose to continue a dialogue with works as indelible and monumental as the *Iliad* or the *Aeneid*. And when translation itself is re-thought in the process, allowing one to speak of “adaptation” or “appropriation”, there too, one encounters interesting reasons and resonances; fruitful modes of what is also literary work.

In many ways it is apt that a literature at first oral in nature should in modern times often be accessed from the radio dial. Over a weekend in the late summer of 2004, a version of the *Odyssey* done by Simon Armitage was broadcast on BBC Radio 4. The script of this commission as it was published two years later bore the subtitle “a dramatic retelling of Homer’s epic”. A necessary emphasis emerges and informs the translator’s choices here, yet entails various complications: the speech of epic poetry, as eventually written down, does not readily coincide

with what is deemed speakable in today's world. As Armitage himself explains, much of the *Odyssey* is written as narrated poem, so

when characters do enter into discourse, it tends to be with formal speech, rather than what we might call dialogue. Faced with that situation, the role of the dramatist is to transform such narration into a series of conversations and exchanges, and to actualize some of its unspoken intentions by putting speech into characters' mouths. In other words, to get people to talk.

(Armitage, Introduction, v)

Obviously, this already sets off significant adjustments to the original text, but Armitage is keenly aware of purpose, medium and audience. He is thus able to contain any transformations to the levels appropriate. His "retelling" of Homer is not distracted by licenses of the more creative kind – and is all the more successful for it. The poet-translator even proceeds to critique excessive modernizing – Armitage quips that this version is not "set on a housing estate in Salford" – that fails to realize the power of myth to enable resonances without the translator having to ram analogies inside readers' heads. So we do not come across anachronisms that teleport past into present – yet the language is undeniably modern, the dialogues are patterned on everyday speech and pursue plausibility (to the extent possible), the arguments and exchanges are spirited and playful. A sensitivity to the workings and effects of language can be expected from a poet of Armitage's abilities, and a brief of simplicity and speakability does not imply indolence on that front: we often come across subtle discoveries of rhythm and sound (in "The Lotus Eaters" episode, we hear Eurybates report to his King, Odysseus, "Such smoothness enters the mind. / Colours are endless and limitless" to which Antiphos adds how he feels "a vast, velvet pleasantness", 78). Many such decisions in lexis and phrasing – not too bold, but carefully considered – are now more fully savoured in the act of reading.

Armitage's most decided intervention is the organizing of the action into three parts (with the last one occupied solely by events upon Odysseus' return to Ithaca), in turn subdivided into brief chapters that follow the action, with the titles (e.g. "Odysseus and His Army At Sea" or "In The Palace of The Phaeacians") serving to locate us in place or centring around characters. From there usually it is straight into dialogue, with a minimum of stage directions and description, as happens in the amusing opening of "Circe".

Odysseus and the last of his men on land on Aeaea. They are seated around a camp-fire, eating a meal on the beach.

ELPENOS

This is the sweetest food.

EURYBATES

Yes, stag. I feel big when I've eaten stag.

ELPENOS

I know what you mean – as if you've eaten its spirit as well. As if the ghost of the stag enters the blood, making you fearless and proud. Like you're the king of the woods.

EURYBATES

I just meant it's very filling, that's all.

(Armitage, 111)

At the end of his Introduction, Armitage admits to hoping that the “script” may have a “further life” as a piece of writing. His *Odyssey* isn’t exactly a proper translation, nor would we necessarily place it among the classic revisitings of Homer – it remains too self-consciously modest and “functional” for that. But Armitage’s primary goal of reviving the *Odyssey* as drama is realized with level-headedness; the morality and dilemmas of a past age are clearly communicated, the voices hold our attention, our sympathies with Gods and humans are gained. Given exactly the notable oral energies of Armitage’s “script”, there is an issue perhaps – more so than in other similar publications – in the sense that the reader is likely to feel the experience is incomplete without an accompanying disc of the original BBC Radio performance. This *is* available separately; and one can understand how these are simple matters of cost/profit more than anything else: but this *Odyssey* is definitely a case where a complete package would do more justice to Armitage’s craftsmanship, a poet who has in the space of a few years turned into one of the most prominent British poet-translators after Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney. It is worth mentioning in this sense that Armitage’s Homer for the radio is followed by his work on the Anglo-Saxon *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Death of King Arthur*, which appeared in 2006 and 2012 respectively, before his return to Homer with a theatrical treatment of the *Iliad* as *The Last Days of Troy*; this premiered at London’s Royal Exchange Theatre in late Spring of 2014.

Compared to the structural and tonal adjustments Armitage the translator-dramatist effects to an *Odyssey*, Stanley Lombardo’s translation of the *Aeneid* is a far more literal affair. In many respects it is the “proper” approach to ancient authors that we see exemplified here: in the hands of a scholar-translator (Lombardo is Professor of Classics at the University of Kansas), Virgil’s opus is added to a long line of classical texts done into English, notably among those the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* (in 1997 and 2000 respectively), but also works by Hesiod, Sappho and, more recently, Ovid (the *Metamorphoses*, 2011). This list does little to indicate affinity to a specific author, work or period: rather, Lombardo’s is an ongoing project indebted to the cultural and philological legacies of the classical world; he, the translator, is dedicated to the dissemination and re-reading of its literary cornerstones. The path adopted here, as in the case of other classicists like Fagles or Lattimore, leads to “correct and unmediated” contact with antiquity; this would be a translation fortified with paratexts further explaining to us meanings, morals and movements on the map. Yet, though no space for more creative flourishes is allowed, we do notice certain “updates” even to this more traditional approach: the quotes on the back cover (all given by Professors of Classics) praise the narrative pace and oral qualities of this *Aeneid*, highlighting not so much fidelity to the original but those elements that whisper relevance to the present. While scholarly values and the scale and seriousness of the undertaking are never downplayed, the front cover and the publisher’s choice of image – in line with some of Lombardo’s previous translations – further verify certain shifts in the marketing and reception of such editions, and remind us, not least, how significant, though often overlooked, is the visual situating of a translation, the indexes of time and place elected. And so our first impression of Lombardo’s Virgil is a detail from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, DC, with the names of dead soldiers carved in granite.

Analogies of this kind are also drawn in the course of W. R. Johnson’s long and detailed Introduction to the text, but Lombardo’s own priorities, established and continuing from his previous commissions prompt this attitude, too. In prefatory notes, he confirms the use, once more, of the line he developed in response to the dactylic hexameter, based on natural speech cadences as found in much of modern English and American poetry; this aligns with translating the *Aeneid*, as a long poem which was still meant be recited; though, compared to earlier epics Lombardo has been occupied with, it is a less than perfect fit. Instead of modulations effected through many, many years of recitations (and a long series of bards) before it was set down in writing and attributed to one Homer, the *Aeneid* is a far more self-aware, literate work. The Roman poet is mindful of oral delivery but composition happens solely in writing and with an eye to earlier epics that serve as models. Places and relations within a literary tradition are carefully estimated. This more polished, “Augustan” nature of the *Aeneid* is recognized of course, via

T. S. Eliot; yet Lombardo again confidently breaks with the usual “scriptorium” approach and emphatically inserts the oral dimension in the translation process; he composes his version in parts, testing its effectiveness in performances whereby interaction with an audience also helps shape the translating. The break from the customary isolation and the feedback from listeners, readers and fellow classicists will remind us of priorities and practices more pronounced in creative approaches to translating. This more interactive manner of work does not always match the demands of the original when it comes to classical works – and in Lombardo’s case, the results from this process are perhaps better seen in his *Iliad* (1997) than here. Yet the practice itself is very much worth arguing for.

A more composite proposal of classical translation comes courtesy of Canadian poet Anne Carson. She explains in her introductory note how this indefinite-article, “non-foundational” *Oresteia* results from the coming together of three different dramatists, and how this volume exists as a contemporary response to Aeschylus’s trilogy. But in *An Oresteia* the realities of ancient drama are even more fully imagined, and the associations it provokes in us, intensely explored. The volume starts off with Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon* (part of the original trilogy), then jump-cuts to Sophocles’ *Elektra*, and closes with Euripides’ *Orestes* (written about a hundred years later): these three plays encompass changed situations within historical time, ones that not least altered culture, consciousness and dramatic art. And indeed engagement with these works was also initiated at different points in time, with translations serving different purposes, too (one was originally included in a series by OUP, another commissioned for theatrical performance in New York), before eventually Brian Kulick, artistic director with New York City’s Classic Stage Company, came up with the idea to synchronize them – the point being to highlight “the movement from myth to mockery”. This assembly immediately multiplies meanings, because shifting frames of mind are lined up, and translation inevitably offers cross-sections of a culture as it progresses (rather than simply attempting an interlinguistic representation of one author/work). Carson’s *An Oresteia* realizes unexpected linkages and returns to known scenes and landscapes; it underscores the overlaps and distances in style or stagecraft and marches past the knowing reader different copies of the same characters and their moral dilemmas. It is this radical alignment that sheds light both on the entirety of what is called “the Athenian moment” and the development of ancient drama.

In this way too, one might argue that *An Oresteia* forms a sort of lesson in literary anthropology: arguments are formed and conclusions drawn in ways far more prismatic than in encountering these plays in isolation, or properly sequenced by a scholar-translator. But the modern poet is more able to act differently. Approaches like Carson’s do not spell out understandings but *quicken* them; hermeneutical leaps result through a more *literary* disposition to translation. What is more, this disposition is not merely reflected in the originality of *An Oresteia*’s arrangement, the clarity with which protagonists’ motives and predicaments are rendered, or an increased sensitivity to the sound of language(s), leading to choices which can comfortably be labelled subjective (Carson is laconic where fewer words intensify the dialogue, carefully attends to line breaks if these will intone character or crisis). The brief Introductions to each play are equally moving, and one would argue, very much part of the fabric of these translations. A poet’s eye is cast on proceedings, and a literary perception is what guides and expresses the entry points into Aeschylus’s original: “[i]t’s like watching a big forest fire. Big, violent, and the sound not like anything else. Every character in *Agamemnon* sets fire to language in a different way” (3). Among them, Cassandra; and Carson’s anxiousness to convey her gives rise to a paragraph brilliantly contrasting deep-seated needs of the poet-translator with the character’s – and of course our own – relation to language:

As a translator, I have spent years trying to grasp Cassandra in words. Long before I had any interest in the rest of *Agamemnon*, I found myself working and reworking the single scene in which she appears with her language that breaks open. I got some fine sentences out of it, and thought to publish them, but this seemed vain. I dreamed

of her weirdly mixed with the winters of my childhood and imagined a play where someone like Björk would sing wild translingual songs while sailing down a snowy river of ancient Asia Minor. But other people have tried such things and anyway the play already exists. It is *Agamemnon*.

(Carson, 4)

Image and meaning interlock in vivid ways here – and almost immediately, Francis Bacon’s methods and vision are reached for by way of explaining both the ancient dramatist but also what Carson wishes to accomplish.

Bacon’s presence, not least as a reader of Aeschylus himself (he is quoted here as having said that “[r]eading translations of Aeschylus ... opens up the valves of sensation for me”, 4) is already intimated from the ominous cover design. For Carson, the painter’s work reconnects to the violence of reality, working upon sensation in its stated attempt to “return fact onto the nervous system” (5). The poet-translator proceeds to tell us that Aeschylus uses language the way Bacon uses paint, since the ancient dramatist’s method was “to use the theater as a mind” composing scenes in which “[r]eal objects are so packed with meanings both literal and metaphoric that they explode into symbol” (ibid.). Such comments are not simply reflected in decisions made in the course of the translation – inevitably, they also form a nexus of suppositions that the knowing reader will carry into the relationship to be formed with the text.

Similar things happen in the texts prefacing the other two plays included. Arriving at *Elektra*, Carson rightly moves her attention – and ours – from the power of image, to involvements of sound and sense, to how language binds on the complexities of female identity. “She is a torrent of self”, Carson readily confirms about the heroine; it is Electra’s intense relationship with language and noise (“[she] talks, wails, argues, denounces, sings, chants and screams from one end of the play to the other”, 79) that decides things for the translator: the “vocabulary of screams” proves so rich that Carson opts for transliterating them letter for letter (“OIMI!” instead of “Alas!” or “Woe is me!”, ibid.). At the same time, the poet-translator draws attention to the shifts in tone traversing the deception/recognition scene with Orestes, not only because they pose difficulty, in a more technical sense, for the translation; but also because they implicitly comment on the boundaries between art and reality, as well as ones between narrative/scenes echoed and retold: at several points Sophocles appears to directly quote Aeschylus, with words spoken by Agamemnon now issuing from the mouth of his daughter.

When we reach *Orestes* and Euripides’ time, the self has turned further inward and action is more ambivalent. Carson’s Introduction now locates modified boundaries between inner world and narrative, and comments on how those greater intricacies and significance of words, written and spoken, will pronounce elements of irony, (self-)subversion. More than before, lines between outside and inside, truth and falsehood, person and text, the serious and the comical, are blurred. Euripides composes this latter tragedy in ways that repeatedly create a “mad tension between content and form” (176). Here, it is contradictions in plot and style, incoherent and maniacal characters and Gods, inconsequential registers or commands that speak of a different kind of intention from this “most tragic” of the dramatists. The irrationality of the overall design, argues Carson, points to deeper, darker truths – “at the very bottom of its calculations, real depravity has no master plan of any kind” (178). It is such lucid insights, leading into and arriving from the translating act, that account for the overall quality of *An Oresteia*, affirming along the way criticism as part of the art of translation. This is a book that should be studied further, indeed taught in translation seminars. And not least because composing a worthy preface or afterword is most definitely among the abilities the literary translator should strive to possess. The note-perfect paratext is often a sign of a literary translation’s true completion and part of the poetry.

Seeing how original poems connect to recontextualized or “embedded” translations originating from *Tristia*, the exile poetry Ovid composed in Tomis, Josephine Balmer’s *The Word for Sorrow* (first published in 2009 and recently available in paperback), is a more adventurous affair. The progression towards this remarkable book appears in some respects to be natural.

Balmer, a classical translator with perceptive renditions of Sappho and other classical women poets under her belt during the nineties, first explored porous zones between translating and original poetry in *Chasing Catullus: Poems, Translations and Transgressions*, the companion to her *Catullus: Poems of Love and Hate*. Simultaneous publication of these books in 2004 already implies inspirations in translation, inceptions in parallel: the English versions in the latter volume coincide with an unflinching look at masculine worldviews inhabited by a Roman poet, while in *Chasing Catullus* an intricate narrative is threaded in addressing personal loss, with several instances of found poetry and translations or versions from classical poets juxtaposing with Balmer's own work. *The Word for Sorrow* explores this method more ambitiously, moving away from more recognizably autobiographical elements and towards wider scenes of humanity in a time of crisis. Here consciousness is exiled in war, suffering losses on all fronts: as Balmer herself admits, an inscription in a Latin dictionary initially used to translate Ovid's work leads both poet and reader to the testimonies of soldiers fighting the Gallipoli campaign. The process of translation turns to a meditation on conflict, with the dictionary itself then becoming a device bringing together past and present, and uniting very similar experiences across decades and millennia. The found stories and real or imagined voices of British soldiers in a foreign land crosscut with Ovid's sorrows and agonies, which become, in this manner, more tangible than ever:

If on this page you detect some new hand, fresh script
 I have dictated, don't fret: for I am sick –
 sick, here at the end of the unknown world, half-dead
 (reports of recovery exaggerated).
 Here there's no rest-home, rations fit for invalid,
 no one with physician's skill in pain relief;
 no one to comfort, wile away convalescence
 with tall tales, no friend to sit in attendance.
 Stranded far away, thoughts of home creep up in vain
 But most of you, dear wife, so I mouth your name,
 whisper at shades, sigh at shadows: they take your shape.
 [...]

(Balmer, "Naso Writes his Own Epitaph", 20, lines 1-11)

– says the Roman poet, but he is not quite alone in feeling intense pain; his own words are preceded by ones attributed to the owner of the dictionary (re-named here "Geoffrey") that Balmer uses to translate Ovid:

Those of us who came back no longer walked
 with the living. We had felt Hades' breath,
 our hair turned grey in that sharp blast of frost.
 The Turks could drop their bleak propaganda –
 "today the flies, tomorrow the vultures" –
 now we weren't men but novice corpses.

(Balmer, "Knocking at the Door", 19, lines 19-24)

The Word for Sorrow is thus made: a wide range of textualities alternate, inflect or appropriate one another. We come across diaries, eyewitness accounts and historical sources, versioned Ovid and original poetry which nearly always has stories to tell – as the three parts of the book ("The Journey Out", "Landed", "The Way Home") track situations and persons, Ovid and the soldiers (and the poet herself) across time-frames and place-names. The question remains here: how far from translation do we find ourselves? Some of Ovid's poems and lines may be accurately enacted but as Balmer's own notes clearly indicate, far more cases are "based on" or "edited

from” *Tristia* – because Balmer actually intends these translations to resemble detailed sketches, the “almost final” drafts from a translator’s notebook (see her Preface, xvi). The intention is not to convey Ovid “appropriately” but show *engagement with him*, alongside empathy overall with acts of self-expression in the face of traumatic experience. Of course, someone who wants to read Ovid’s isolated voice, *Tristia* by itself, will need to look elsewhere. *The Word for Sorrow* offers a new whole; within this truly original composition, we find Ovid *in part*, resounded from a poet who does not cease to be a masterful translator of classical literature. Balmer’s project very much includes the aim to enliven the ancient text also, to appreciate and *feel* it anew. That these translations weave with documents from the Great War and recognitions set in the present allows for more nuance and depth in our relationship with Ovid’s ancient poems. At the same time, it is this conscious deployment and “creative exercising” of translation that confirms it as an essential aspect of literature and appears to locate living tissue in the writings of the past. The hybrid nature of *The Word for Sorrow*, above all, seems to parallel the scaffoldings inside, as well as many of the associations made in, the creative mind. What is more, the classicist does not really go away; it is an identity informed by new insights gained in acts of poetry, just as the poetry is also indebted to understandings allowed by scholarly work. Balmer’s recent monograph, titled *Piecing Together the Fragments: Translating Classical Verse, Creating Contemporary Poetry* (2013) certainly benefits from this dialogue as it proceeds to survey those rewarding encounters between classical texts and literary creation, across time. Impeccably researched, the book includes various stops at Balmer’s own work and method.

Another side road to ancient source material is presented by Alice Oswald. In fact, her *Memorial* reminds us of the sense in which the essential nature, the core value of an epic like the *Iliad* will survive and persist in its revoicings in other languages and across time. The modern poet understands – and in this she’s not the first – that plot and narrative are of little importance when it comes to the events at Troy: like Christopher Logue (whose *War Music* at points casts a shadow in terms of imagery and verbal urgency) and like other poets and translators before, Oswald confirms the drawing power of the *Iliad* in the realization and rendering of force. Here, violence is all; story and meaning happen afterwards. The telling, in the original as well, is primarily focused on this oft-quoted *enargeia*: on the realness of impacting bodies and the inescapable, unforgiving metal of weapons and armour. These are described in extreme and bright detail, alongside brief glimpses of home and basic biographies of warriors which are earned at death’s door, exactly when their story in Oswald’s phrase, “finishes here in darkness” (20). The other crucial element is of course, the oral tradition and influence from Greek lament poetry. Oswald’s allegiance, admitted clearly in her introductory note is, again, not to the “printed” *Iliad* but to the vital instability and energies of memorable speech. Because Homer inhabits a preliterate culture – a fact also echoed by Eavan Boland in her Afterword to the American edition:

For the reader of a later age, living in an era of fixed text, there is something bright and moving in this image of the *Iliad* as a river, not an inland sea, flowing in and out of song, performance, memory, elegy and human interaction.

(Boland, in Oswald 89)

It is perhaps in revealing this that *Memorial* can be claimed to be a valid image of translation also, a carrying over and across of the method of collaborative composition – as well as aspiring to, and designing, an analogous reception. In the course of this attempted repeating of the epic (where in Oswald’s own words it is emphatically the “atmosphere” that is translated), *Memorial* inevitably becomes an *intensification* of the *Iliad*. The new poem starts as an image of its title, an 8-page long list of capitalized names. Then these names become surrounded by a simple structure of stanza and twice-told simile. It is a remarkably effective “tagging” of lives and selves, barely glimpsed before they are gruesomely lost. Lines like the following testify to Oswald’s ability in echoing and re-imagining the vigor, the present-ness of the original in which violent death is everywhere, happening to nearly everyone already:

[...]
OENOMAUUS
HELENUS
ORESBIUS
PERIPHAS
And

ACAMAS a massive man best fighter in Thrace
Came over the choppy tides of the Hellespont
And almost instantly took a blow on his helmet
The spear pressed through to his skull
Tipped with darkness
It was Ajax who stopped him

Like that slow-motion moment
When a woman weighs the wool
Her poor old spider hands
Work all night spinning a living for her children
And then she stops
She soothes the scales to a standstill

(Oswald 21-22)

Proceeding this way, *Memorial* encounters and collects human consciousness well inside the battlefield; the purpose of this minimal yet poignant patterning seems to lie before explanation begins with narrative, before dramatic structure and literary intent. In this sense also, it is no accident that Oswald subtitles her work “an excavation” (which, interestingly, reverts to the simpler “a version of Homer’s *Iliad*” in the American edition). At the same time, it is perhaps why many of these similes appear to stride a line between capable visual metaphor and the near-meaningless. Their repetition amplifies, simultaneously, both futility and brutal force. The tonal effect is remarkable in how it conveys to readers and listeners the sense that “the ruin and music of war are sensory, not logical” (87), as Boland puts it towards the end of her Afterword. It is in this awareness that original, translation and poetry meet. And further, in realizing that literature’s very origins lie in acts of remembrance: so now, and in this way, ancient soldiers and their lives find their way to us, their names more real because the *Iliad* cannot be just literature – and because this new restatement is crucially directed also by empathy. Even as Oswald maintains that her aim in *Memorial* was “translucence rather than translation”, it is the latter word that we reach for in accounting for this empathy, and for the identifications occurring. Meanwhile, the poetry in this book is arrived at as we share and receive these lives; uncertain why, *and when* they were lost.

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A review of Francis R. Jones, *Poetry Translating as Expert Action*

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Francis R. Jones. *Poetry Translating as Expert Action: Processes, Priorities and Networks*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011, xvi + 227 pp. US\$135.00, hardback, ISBN 978-90-272-2441-5.

Poetry is the essence of a culture; as a consequence, the translation of poetry exerts great influence on cultural exchanges and has never failed to attract the attention of scholars specializing in Translation Studies. This book by Francis R. Jones of Newcastle University in the UK focuses on the translation of poetry mainly from two countries: the Netherlands and Bosnia. By using think-aloud protocol and interviews, this book obtains real data to illuminate how professional poetry translators actually translate; it also analyzes the socio-cultural elements that influence a translator's working mechanism.

The book comprises the following parts: a Preface (pp. i to xvi); Chapter One: Introduction (pp. 1-15); Chapter Two: Poetry in a Political Preface (pp. 17-50); Chapter Three: Poetry Translation Webs (pp. 51-83); Chapter Four: Talks with Translators (pp. 85-107); Chapter Five: Five Translators Translate (pp. 109-146); Chapter Six: Translating Rhyme and Rhythm (pp. 147-172); a Conclusion (pp. 173-200); References (pp. 201-216) and an Index (pp. 217-227).

In examining the important topic of poetry translation, the book does not evaluate whether or not equivalence between the source text and the target text has been achieved, nor does it merely compare linguistic features of different translated versions. Instead, it probes into the decision-making process of poetry translators and examines (1) the choices they make during the process, such as the images translators tend to create or how they deal with rhyme, and (2) the factors underlying those choices, for example it is found that a translator who knows that the translation will be published generally acts differently from one who does not know this, the former tending to be more careful in the choice of words and to spend more time on revision. With the development of Translation Studies as an independent discipline, more attention has shifted to analyzing the translating action – how and why translators work the way they do – and the content of Jones's book corresponds to this new trend in the field. On the other hand, all the translators involved in the experiments in this book have already published translations of poetry and are known as “professionals” or “experts”. They are well-trained and have accumulated much experience in poetry translation, thus the translating action is not random but well-organized, making the conclusions drawn in this book more convincing and reliable.

Moreover, the theoretical framework adopted for analysis is quite pioneering. Unlike other books which set up a theoretical orientation, say within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics or Deconstructionism, this book first tries to give an assumed theoretical framework that provides several networks of agents that impact on the translating action of professional poetry translators, such as publishers, editors, readers, reviewers and so on. The

author then conducts empirical research to test this theoretical foundation, after which revisions for further enhancing the theoretical framework are put forward.

Poetry Translating as Expert Action presents an overall view of poetry translation, which takes into account the translator or the subject as well as the external factors influencing the translator. The internal research is conducted from a cognitive perspective while the external research is conducted from a sociological one: the cognitive priority lies in the understanding of poetry translators as well as the skills employed by translators. With the use of think-aloud protocol and interviews, translators can say aloud what they are thinking during the process and reflect on the process, thus how the choices are made or what translators think they do and what they actually do are examined; the sociological priority mainly takes into account the social factors that influence professional translators and those networks are sorted into different categories according to the level of influence, so that it is clear which factors exert more influence on translators and should be paid more attention. Moreover, the research also employs qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze poetry translation. The author not only focuses on translations of the same poem by different translators but also on translations of different poems by the same translator; thus a range of factors and influences are discussed and analyzed. By focusing on both sides, more balanced data is collected and this ensures the objectivity and thoroughness of the analysis.

Last but not least, the author is able to broaden the academic scope of his research by moving beyond the scenario of professional poetry translation. Though the book is mainly concerned with poetry translation, the analysis is carried out in such a way as to provide guidance not only to poetry translators but also to translators of other genres, whose translating action is influenced by similar networks.

Sofia's Story in Translation. Leaving Shanghai

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“Sofia’s story. Leaving Shanghai”, written by Isabelle Charpentier, is one of five short stories appearing in a collection entitled *Expatriées*, released in 2013 by the French publisher Mon Petit Éditeur. All the stories in the collection are written by women and all take expatriation – moving to another country and adapting to another culture – as their central theme.

Sofia, married to a successful businessman with whom she has two sons, describes in powerful detail the upheavals involved in her family’s move to Shanghai when her husband is posted there by the company he works for. Throughout the story the sense of joy and wonder at discovering a new country and culture is juxtaposed with the difficulties entailed in adapting to daily life in China and the strain that this imposes on family relationships (in particular, Sofia’s relationship with her adolescent son Guilhem). Underpinning the adventure and novelty of the family’s move, there is a pervasive sense of uprootedness that is never far from the surface. At the end of the story, Sofia evokes movingly the overwhelming sense of loneliness that threatens to engulf her.

One of the most striking features of the author’s writing style (and the most challenging from the translator’s point of view) is the use of long and detailed lists that appear at intervals throughout. For example, in the paragraph that begins “Petit carnet de rien du tout...” Sofia’s emotional response to events and experiences in Shanghai is described with startling force and intensity through an analysis of her writing style, as evidenced by the contents of her diary. This is reflected in the lists of verbs used in the assessment of her diary entries (“c’était dans le cahier que ses mots finissaient par échouer pour crier, dénoncer, ou décrire, les dates s’y bouscullaient, son écriture, fine et légère glissait, s’enfuyait, courait...”). The challenge here was to reflect the cumulative emotional intensity of the paragraph in a way that sounded natural in English without losing any of the force of the original. It was important that the style we chose (both in terms of syntax and vocabulary) reflected the ambivalent, sometimes “messy” nature of Sofia’s experience in the same way as the French. At the same time we needed to reflect the lyrical, almost poetic nature of the closing lines (“attraper le rêve, se souvenir du refrain et du rythme, du camaïeu du ciel et de la chanson du vent...”).

In terms of other translation difficulties, the “stand-out” passage in the story was the long paragraph beginning with the words, “Shanghai, la Verticale, l’arrogante Amante...” and ending, “un rêve collectif de nouveaux défis repoussés de jour en jour”. This passage represents a personification of the city of Shanghai, in which Sofia describes its hugely complex and contrasting nature. The beginning of the paragraph was particularly challenging as it starts with a list of sixteen adjectives evoking the negative aspects of the city (“...bruyante et grouillante, crachante et éructante, sale, malodorante, polluée...”). It was impossible to convey the meaning and crescendo-like nature of this list in English without making changes to the syntax of the original. For this, we employed a number of Chesterman’s strategies such as transposition (“It hissed and belched” to render “crachante et éructante”) and paraphrase, such as the use of a whole

phrase to translate an adjective. For example, we expanded the two adjectives “souffrante, éventrée” into a sentence composed of two phrases: “In the throes of a physical torment, it was being ripped apart”. This is followed by a list consisting of thirteen adjectives that evoke the positive aspects of Shanghai, and which begins: “mais aussi, multiple et immense...” Again, we felt it necessary on occasion to modify the syntax of the French by employing paraphrase, clause structure change, and remetaphorization. Thus we translated the three adjectives “marchande, déroutante et souriante” as “a business city with a disarming smile”. Such changes involved something of a balancing act in which we had to be mindful of not compromising the powerfully descriptive force of the French.

A list of a different sort appears in a short paragraph towards the end that encapsulates the juxtaposition and contrast that lie at the heart of Sofia’s experiences. It begins with “Tout cela, soudain, ne lui semblait plus qu’un leurre...” At this point in the story Sofia is overwhelmed by depression, seeing her family’s privileged position as no more than an illusion, and painfully aware that the people, places, and things she holds most dear are far away. In order to highlight this feeling, she uses the word “contre” four times to contrast the perks of life in China with the absence of the things that matter. This sentence posed various challenges for us – repetition of the word “contre” could clearly not be mirrored successfully by repeated use of the English word “against”. In our translation we paraphrased the word “contre” (in the order in which it appears) as: “in order to combat...”; “as a bulwark against...”; “as a buffer against...”; and, finally, as “to compensate for...”. Our aim was to translate the sentence in a way that was both faithful and imaginative, reflecting the concise style of the French while also conveying the poignancy of the contrasts that form the essence of “Sofia’s story”.

Bibliography

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Sofia.

Et puis, quitter Shanghai...

Isabelle Charpentier

Le claquement violent de la porte fit sursauter Sofia... Mardi. Déjà mardi. Cette journée de plus lui sembla soudain être sa première journée de moins... Un regard périphérique lui confirma l'ampleur de la tâche. Comment s'y prendre? Elle avait toujours été farouchement hostile à toute sorte d'organisation; ne pas prévoir, aller là où le cœur bat plus vite, rester libre de son temps, pouvoir dire oui au dernier moment, sans agenda, utiliser sa mémoire, sa meilleure alliée, pour résister à la folie galopante du monde...

Derrière la vitre sale, le bassin était immobile et magnifique. Le vent fou de la veille avait finalement eu raison des dernières petites feuilles du saule; il était nu à présent, et, privé de ses petites écailles vertes, il semblait fragile et parcouru de frissons. Le bassin, lui, s'était paré de toutes ces feuilles tombées mortes et leur offrait une ultime parade: aidé du vent léger et des leurs mauves du ciel de l'aube, il avait dessiné sur l'eau sombre, des arabesques d'argent.

Son regard se brouilla.

Perdue dans ces jeux de reflets, elle n'avait pas perçu ce goût amer envahir sa bouche. La nausée la secoua... comment affronter cette nouvelle épreuve, plonger à nouveau vers l'inconnu ... Elle se laissa glisser sur le sol.

Une musique délirante et lointaine lui vrilla violemment le cerveau... son corps se cabra. Allongée sur le vieux tapis de laine saoudien, au milieu du désordre habituel et rassurant, elle avait dû dormir.

Le jardin était déjà dans l'ombre. Amnésie passagère, parenthèse, pause. Le son discordant de « La lettre à Élise » version électrobuzzée lui arracha une grimace digne de son grand-père.

Sofia's story.

Leaving Shanghai

Isabelle Charpentier

The door slammed loudly, making Sofia jump. Tuesday. Tuesday already! One more day that suddenly felt like one day less... A glance around the room brought home to her the daunting nature of the task ahead. How should she go about it? She had always been fiercely opposed to organizing her life in any way: refusing to plan ahead, acting on impulse, living from day to day, saying yes to things at the last moment and not bothering with a diary. Her memory, her closest ally, was her defence against the frenzied pace of the outside world.

Beyond the grimy window lay the pond in its majestic stillness. The gusting wind of the previous evening had finally blown the remaining delicate leaves from the willow tree; its branches were now bare and, without its covering of fragile green scales, the tree looked vulnerable... subject to the whim of the slightest breeze. By contrast, the pond was adorned with fallen leaves – one last chance for them to show off their gorgeous autumn colours. The reflection of the leaf-strewn pond had traced swirling silvery motifs on the dark water, an effect made more noticeable by a gentle breeze and the purple glow of dawn.

Her eyes misted over.

Absorbed by the dancing patterns on the water's surface, she had not noticed the increasingly bitter taste in her mouth. A sick feeling in the pit of her stomach took hold of her. How could she face this new challenge and take a step into the unknown yet again? She let herself slide down to the floor.

Frenetic music coming from somewhere in the distance pierced her consciousness with ear-splitting force. She sat bolt upright. Lying on the old wool rug bought in Saudi Arabia, surrounded by her familiar clutter, she must have fallen asleep.

Shadows had crept into the garden. A temporary loss of memory, a hiatus, a rupture in her stream of consciousness. The grating notes of *Für Elise* (remix version) contorted

Maudite sonnette! Dehors, quelqu'un s'impatientait. D'un coup d'œil au miroir, elle croisa le visage hagard d'une femme aux traits tirés et aux cheveux en bataille. Un geste rapide rattrapa sa coiffure, elle se pinça les joues, respira profondément et ouvrit enfin la porte.

-NiHao. ! Taitai...!!

-Ha !!... oui, oui, bien sûr!

-NiHao, NiHao... !!

Le large sourire édenté du jardinier la rendit confuse. Elle se sentit tellement lâche et médiocre. Le petit homme chétif au costume de toile vert pâle se tenait bien droit, attendant qu'on lui explique ce qu'il devait faire.

Deux heures plus tard le bassin était vide, les poissons commençaient à suffoquer dans les bacs de plastique, elle dut se presser de les transporter chez leurs amis.

Ce fut là son premier chagrin, la première coupure vers un autre monde, la disparition du bassin et des poissons, si chers à son cœur.

Le vent s'était levé et le ciel s'assombrissait. Sofia ne s'en aperçut même pas. Assise en tailleur au milieu du salon, elle s'était enfin décidée à faire le tri du contenu de sa vieille malle.

Cette malle de bois recouverte de cuir rouge foncé, au vernis écaillé et ornée d'un joli fermoir oxydé vert-de-gris, recelait une multitude d'objets et de souvenirs hétéroclites accumulés au cours de ses voyages. Lettres et cartes postales, enveloppes vides joliment timbrées, dessins et mots d'enfant, dossiers colorés, photos, stylos et crayons, vieux pinceaux, articles de presse et pages de magazines arrachés à la hâte, petits papiers pliés recouverts de mots griffonnés devenus illisibles, listes d'adresses, de choses très importantes « à faire et à ne surtout pas oublier », petits bouts d'étoffes multicolores accrochés aux cartes de visites des magasins du « Fabric Market », et bien d'autres choses encore...

Elle sortirait, une à une, chaque chose, à sa droite: « pour la poubelle », à sa gauche:

her features into a pained expression reminiscent of her grandfather's.

Oh no! The doorbell. Someone was outside getting impatient. Glancing in the mirror, she saw the weary face of a woman with drawn features and hair sticking out in all directions. She quickly smoothed her hair, gave her cheeks a pinch, and took a deep breath before opening the door.

'NiHao. ! Taitai...!!'

'Oh!! Yes, yes, of course!'

'NiHao, NiHao...!!'

The gardener's broad toothless grin embarrassed her, making her feel weak and inadequate. The slight little man in his faded green canvas overalls was almost standing to attention, waiting for his instructions.

Two hours later and the pond was empty. The fish had been transferred to plastic tubs and were struggling for air. She had better not delay taking them to their friends' house.

That moment – the disappearance of the pond and the fish that were so dear to her – signalled her first heartbreak, the first in a series of ruptures before announcing a new world.

The wind had picked up and the sky was growing dark but Sofia was oblivious to it. Sitting cross-legged in the middle of the living room, she had finally made up her mind to sort through the contents of her old trunk.

The wooden trunk, bound in dark red leather with peeling varnish and an ornate rusty lock, contained an assorted collection of objects accumulated during the course of her travels. Letters and postcards, envelopes bearing exotic stamps, notes and drawings from children, coloured folders, photographs, pens and pencils, old paintbrushes, newspaper clippings and pages ripped out hastily from magazines, folded bits of paper covered in illegible scrawl, lists of addresses, "to-do" lists, swatches of multi-coloured fabric stapled to the business cards of traders in the Fabric Market... all these and many other things besides.

One by one she would sort each item into a pile: on her right, "bin"; on her left, "unsure";

« il faudrait voir », puis devant elle: « à conserver définitivement »... Elle commença rapidement à se débarrasser des listes, des vieux stylos, de tous ces petits morceaux de vie. Cela devait aller vite, surtout ne pas s'attendrir, et ne garder que l'essentiel. Être efficace et pragmatique. Des qualités qui lui faisaient froid dans le dos, et que, grâce à Dieu, elle ne possédait pas! Aujourd'hui, elle allait se forcer et surtout, ne pas commencer à perdre son temps avec des enfantillages.

Mais, à la vue du joli cahier Indien, sa gorge se noua. Sa main resta suspendue. Elle se mordit la lèvre inférieure... Il était là, bien fermé, serré dans son ruban rouge, endormi tendrement tout au fond. Elle sut tout de suite, qu'elle ne tiendrait pas son engagement, il recelait tant de sa vie passée, qu'elle ne pouvait le laisser là sans l'ouvrir.

Au fond d'elle, le temps s'arrêtait déjà, sa montre cherchait un nouveau fuseau horaire, et elle savait que la nuit qui s'avavançait, se mêlerait au petit jour sans la ménager.

Les enfants étaient rentrés avec le crépuscule... entre chien et loup... une si belle expression pour qualifier cette transition magique, cet imperceptible basculement du jour contre la nuit. Avec lui venait toujours ces petits instants de vide, de rien entre la vie, puis la mort, des choses du jour...

Elle se redressa soudain, constatant que l'obscurité avait envahi tout l'espace, elle prit peur...

– Guilhem? Étienne?

– ...

– Étienne! Guilhem!

– Wwwwhoouuaaaaiiis! Ça va, ça va! On est là! Qu'est-ce qu'il y a encore?

– Il est tard! Je n'ai pas vu passer l'heure! Descendez vite pour dîner. Je vais prép...

– Maaaa-maaaaan! On a dîné sans toi. Tu sais qu'il est déjà onze heures! Étienne dort depuis longtemps!

Vingt-trois heures! Guilhem disait vrai.

in front of her, “keep”. She quickly binned the lists, old pens... tiny remnants of everyday life. This shouldn't take long. Don't get sentimental – that was the important thing. Keep only what is important. Be methodical and businesslike – qualities that sent shivers down her spine and that she didn't possess, thank God! Today, however, she was going to be strict with herself, and, most importantly, not waste time on childish impulses.

Then her eyes alighted on the lovely notebook from India and she felt a lump in her throat. Her hand wavered and she bit her lower lip. There it was, tightly wrapped in its red ribbon, lying snug at the bottom of the trunk. She knew then and there that she would be unable to resist. So much of her past life was contained within its pages that she could not leave it there unopened.

Already she felt time slowing to a halt within her. Her watch was adjusting to a different time zone and she knew that she would not have a moment's peace until the advancing night had turned to dawn.

The children had come home at twilight. “Twilight”, such a lovely word, evoking the magical transition, the subtle transformation of day into night. Twilight was always marked by these moments when time stood still, when life, death, and daytime things seemed to merge into one...

Sensing the darkness that had encroached, she straightened up, suddenly feeling afraid.

“Guilhem? Etienne?”

No reply.

“Etienne? Guilhem?”

“Wh-a-a-a-t! Chill! We're here. What is it now?”

“It's late! I hadn't realized what time it was. Quick! Come downstairs and we'll have supper. I'll make us a...”

“Mum! Stop! We made our own supper. Do you realize it's already eleven o'clock?! Etienne's been asleep for ages.”

Eleven at night! Guilhem was right. She jumped up. Her back, hips and knees were killing her and felt stiff as a board. She had pins and needles in both feet. Flopping back on

Elle se leva d'un bond; son dos, ses reins, ses genoux, maintenant lui faisaient mal et lui semblaient en béton. Elle avait des fourmis dans les pieds; elle se renversa sur le canapé, se frotta, se massa les jambes et les chevilles, vivement.

Sur le pas de la porte, Guilhem la regardait ahuri.

– T'as un problème?

– ... des fourmis!

– Hé! C'est quoi tout c'bordel?

Le bel ado aux cheveux longs et emmêlés, haussa les sourcils et les épaules, réajusta les écouteurs de son Ipod et tourna le dos. Un jean trop large laissait apercevoir la moitié de son caleçon, son insolente et permanente provocation, et, d'une démarche lourde et nonchalante, il quitta le salon en chantonnant.

Elle aurait peut-être dû lui parler ce soir... lui dire qu'ils allaient bientôt repartir.

Non, c'était trop tôt... elle devait faire attention à la façon de le lui annoncer. Il fallait qu'elle y réfléchisse. La communication était devenue si difficile et si fragile entre eux depuis plus de deux ans maintenant. C'était une douleur permanente pour elle; une blessure sans cesse à vif.

Quelques cafés et quelques heures plus tard, elle était toujours là, trônant au milieu d'un désordre indescriptible. La nuit s'était installée. Le petit dossier Indien était posé et ouvert sur ses genoux croisés... Elle, calée entre les coussins moelleux du canapé et assise en tailleur sur le tapis, avait entrepris la lecture totale du cahier.

Seule, la petite lampe rouge l'éclairait dans toute cette noirceur nocturne, derrière les larges baies vitrées, le jardin silencieux se devinait à peine... une nuit sans lune et sans vent. L'encre du ciel s'était répandue partout et le silence qui l'accompagnait offrait à Sofia un écrin magnifique.

Au cœur de cette immobilité, sur un écran magique défilaient devant ses yeux les quelques années de leur vie passée à Shanghai.

Petit carnet de rien du tout, au début,

the sofa, she rubbed her body all over and massaged her legs and ankles vigorously.

Standing in the doorway, Guilhem looked on in disbelief.

“What's up with you?”

“Pins and needles!”

“Hey! What's with all the mess?”

The handsome teenage boy, hair long and straggly, raised his eyebrows, shrugged his shoulders, adjusted the earphones on his iPod, and turned away. You could see the top half of a pair of boxers above his baggy jeans – his trademark gesture of defiance. Dragging his feet, he left the room humming to himself.

Perhaps she should have had a word with him this evening... told him that they would be leaving again soon.

No, it was too early for that. She had to break it to him gently, rehearse carefully what she was going to say. For the past couple of years now communication between them had been so difficult, so strained. It was a source of constant heartache to her, like an open wound that refused to heal.

Several hours later, fortified by numerous cups of coffee, there she was still, surrounded by a scene of indescribable chaos. Night had fallen. The little Indian journal lay open across her knees. Sitting cross-legged on the rug, soft cushions from the sofa propping her up on either side, Sofia had started reading it from the beginning.

The little red lamp was the only source of light in the pitch black, with the tall glass windows giving only a hint of the silent garden beyond. Neither moon nor wind to interrupt the darkness. Inky blackness had crept into every corner and the accompanying hush was a perfect backdrop for Sofia's reading.

Enveloped by total stillness Sofia looked on as scenes from the family's life in Shanghai unfolded before her eyes, as if by magic.

It had started out as a simple travel journal – somewhere to jot down her first impressions of the place. Over time she had added to it: sketches, photos, descriptive passages written on the spur of the moment and pasted in here and there. She had written her own little poems,

juste pour noter ses premières impressions, elle y avait ajouté, peu à peu, des croquis, des photos, des pages écrites sur le vif puis recollées ci et là, des poèmes sans rime et des rimes d'ailleurs chaque fois que son cœur s'était enflammé ou serré trop fort ... c'était dans le cahier que ses mots finissaient par échouer pour crier, dénoncer ou décrire, les dates s'y bouscuaient, son écriture, fine et légère glissait, s'enfuyait, courait pour ne pas perdre la teinte, l'humeur et le plaisir, attraper le rêve, se souvenir du refrain et du rythme, du camaïeu du ciel et de la chanson du vent... une vie dans sa vie... mais aussi, et surtout, la vie des autres.

[...]

Mais gare à l'envoûtement et à la douceur de l'expatriation. De découvertes en curiosité, les facilités et les ultra-privilèges, l'innocence et la méconnaissance ne devaient pas masquer la douleur, la difficulté de vivre, et la non-liberté de tous ceux que nous croisions quotidiennement: les chinois, ce peuple aux qualités étonnantes. « *Savoir résister pour rester libre* »... Libre? Ce mot résonnait étrangement dans ce contexte où personne ne semblait oser parler ici directement de Liberté. Il y avait les mille et une anecdotes vécues et notées çà et là, les balades au cœur de l'immense ville: Shanghai, la Verticale, l'arrogante Amante, la fière, bruyante et grouillante, crachante et éructante, sale, malodorante, polluée, souffrante, éventrée, boueuse, collante, grise et poussiéreuse, blessée, mouillée et détrempée par les pluies incessantes... mais aussi, multiple et immense, brune et active, marchande, déroutante et souriante, brumeuse, douce et caressante, envoûtante, charmeuse et attachante... Les vélos et leurs capes de pluie de toutes couleurs; les hommes en costumes sombres si souvent, les petits enfants emmaillotés l'hiver, aux joues écarlates comme des pommes d'amour, à la peau si sèche, à la bouche petite et rouge comme une fleur de

as well as quoting other people's poetry, every time something had fired her imagination or had moved her to tears. Words spilled over each page, expressing her need to cry out, to denounce, to describe. Entries followed each other in quick succession. Her delicate handwriting, flowing freely, broke free of constraints, gathered speed in order to capture a nuance, a mood, a fleeting moment of pleasure... in order to pin down a dream, to recall a chorus and a rhythm, the blue of the sky and the song in the wind. It was testimony to her own inner life but also, and most importantly, testimony to the lives of others.

[...]

But the charm and enchantment of living in a foreign country tell only one side of the story. Excursions, perks, and special privileges, coupled with a lack of experience and awareness, should not mask the pain, hardship and lack of freedom that blight the lives of all those with whom we come into daily contact: the Chinese, a people with remarkable qualities. "To be free you must stand firm"... Free? The word sounded a discordant note in a country where no one seemed to dare speak openly about freedom. She thought of the numerous anecdotes that she had committed to memory and then to paper, trips made to the heart of this enormous place they called Shanghai – "the Vertical City", "the Arrogant Concubine". It was a proud, noisy city, swarming with people. It hissed and belched; it was filthy, smelly, polluted. In the throes of a physical torment, it was being ripped apart. Muddy, sticky, grey, dust-covered; the city was buffeted by relentless rainstorms that dampened and drenched it by turns. At the same time, it was vast and multi-faceted, swarthy and bursting with life – a business city with a disarming smile, swathed in mist, gentle and caressing, bewitching, charming, appealing. The bicycles with their colourful rain covers; the men in their customary dark suits; the small children wrapped up against the winter cold, their ruddy cheeks like love

coquelicot, à l'iris noir et brillant derrière leurs paupières fendues presque closes. Les nouveaux quartiers d'affaires se répandaient, partout des chantiers, des grues, des engins de forage et d'extraction, des camions, des centaines de milliers de camions bleus aux remorques si longues, rouillées et tordues, aux pneus usés et aux chargements énormes défiant souvent les lois de l'équilibre, des ouvriers partout travaillant le jour comme la nuit, par tous les temps réalisant des routes, des ponts, des aéroports et des tunnels, des gratte-ciel... pas de répit dans cette mégapole... un rêve collectif de nouveaux défis repoussés de jour en jour.

Sofia revivait à la lecture ses ressentis vifs et ses peurs intérieures. Le chinois fut trop difficile, elle ne le parlerait pas, ce fut une grosse déception, et elle le savait, cela la mettait d'emblée hors jeu.

Alors il restait la découverte, celle toute personnelle qui ne peut que regarder et essayer de comprendre un peu, sentir vibrer les choses, observer, être attentive et humble, accepter sans juger, sans rejeter, tenter de partager et surtout être patiente.

Les voyages en Asie rythmèrent bientôt la vie de la petite famille. Le résultat dans sa tête, comme sur le papier, ressemblait à un jeu de piste, à un message curieux, puzzle codé top secret de mots magiques, ne parlant d'Amour qu'aux initiés.

[...]

Tout cela, soudain, ne lui semblait plus qu'un leurre, qu'un mensonge. Des voyages contre un silence, des souvenirs et des photos magnifiques contre l'absence, une jolie et grande maison contre une attente, des amitiés exotiques contre un désert familial.

Sofia avait sombré intérieurement vers ce qui ne peut se dire. Elle referma son carnet, elle sentit des larmes couler sur ses joues. Un enfermement volontaire, au sein de sa propre famille dans cette geôle superbe lui avait semblé être la seule issue possible...

apples, their dry skin, their small red mouths like poppies, their shiny black eyes beneath almond-shaped lids. New business areas were springing up across the city – everywhere you looked there were building sites, cranes, drilling and mining equipment, trucks... hundreds and thousands of blue trucks with long, rusty, twisted trailers and worn tyres carrying immense loads that often defied the laws of gravity. All over the city workmen laboured day and night, come rain or shine, building roads, bridges, airports and tunnels... sky-scrapers. No time for rest in this huge metropolis – the symbol of a collective dream consisting of new challenges that had to be overcome day after day.

Reading all this, Sofia relived the raw emotion and inner turmoil of those early days. Chinese proved too difficult for her – she would never learn to speak it. She had felt this disappointment keenly, knowing that it would automatically relegate her to the sidelines.

But she had still been able to pursue a journey of discovery – a deeply personal journey in which she had been an observer trying to gain insight, to go with the flow, to exercise concentration and humility, to be non-judgemental, to attempt to participate. Showing patience was, above all, essential.

Before long, trips around Asia were a regular feature of family life. The upshot of this, in her head as well as on the page, was a sort of treasure hunt, a cryptic message, a top-secret code decipherable only to the initiated.

[...]

Suddenly it all seemed nothing more than an illusion... a lie. Journeys made in order to combat a deadly silence, mementoes and stunning photographs as a bulwark against absence, the lovely big house as a buffer against the pain of waiting, friends from different countries to compensate for a lack of family.

Sofia's mental state had deteriorated worryingly. She closed the journal to find tears running down her cheeks. Self-imposed imprisonment, albeit in a gilded cage and surrounded by her family, had seemed the only

Comment trouver la force maintenant de repartir vers de nouveaux horizons, de replanter le décor dans un autre quartier, une autre ville, un autre pays...

Au fond de la malle, un livre, un petit volume plein de souvenirs attira son regard, et fit naître un sourire sur ses lèvres mouillées de larmes... EXPATRIÉES brillait sur la couverture. Elle remonta le temps jusqu'à son séjour en Angleterre bien des années plus tôt, elle avait passé un an à Londres et avait connu des amies littéraires qu'elle retrouvait régulièrement au sein d'un atelier d'écriture. Elle avait aimé ces moments de partage et de création.

Elles avaient trouvé dans l'écriture le moyen d'exprimer leurs espoirs, leurs désespoirs, leurs fous rires et leurs peurs ou leurs élans passionnés vers la découverte d'autres cultures d'autres pays, leurs angoisses et leurs joies avec leurs enfants ou en les attendant... Décidément, elle ne dormirait pas cette nuit. Sofia se glissa dans son lit et prit le livre, à la lueur de sa lampe de chevet, elle se lança dans la lecture des souvenirs d'autres femmes, ses amies.

possible solution.

How would she find the strength now to leave again for pastures new, to make a home in another area of another city... in another country?

At the bottom of the trunk a book caught her eye, bringing a smile to her lips wet with tears. It was a slim volume full of reminiscences... the word EXPATRIÉES shone out on the cover in bold lettering. She cast her mind back to her stay in England many years earlier. She had spent a year in London and had made a number of literary friends with whom she met up regularly at a writing workshop. She had revelled in these moments of shared experience and of creativity.

Through their writing these women had found an outlet for their hopes, disappointments, their moments of hilarity... their fears. They had written about their passionate desire to embrace other cultures and other countries; the pain and joy of bringing up children or of awaiting the arrival of a newborn. She wouldn't be getting any sleep tonight – that was for sure. Sofia slid under the duvet and opened the book. By the light of the bedside lamp she immersed herself in reading about the experiences of other women – these women who were her friends.

Mu Dan and his Poem “Hymn”

LI WANG

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Mu Dan 穆旦, also known as Zha Liangzheng 查良铮 (1918-1977), is regarded by many as one of the most outstanding poets and translators in twentieth-century China. Mu Dan started writing poetry at the age of thirteen and he began studying in the Foreign Language Department of Tsinghua University at the age of seventeen. Upon graduation in 1940 he remained there as an assistant professor. From 1945 to 1948 he published his first three collections of poetry. In 1952 two of his poems were selected for a book titled *A Little Treasury of World Poetry: Translations from the Great Poets of Other Languages, 2600 BC to 1950 AD* by Hubert Creekmore, published in London. During the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) Mu Dan moved with the University to the southwest of China. There he studied poetry under William Empson, and by this time he was already the leading modernist poet in China.

Mu Dan is usually regarded as the major representative of the *Jiuye* School of poets. They had a strong sense of mission and responsibility, and their poetry pursued an aesthetic of balance between art and reality, rationality and sensibility. Most of his poems in the 1940s describe the disasters and disillusionment resulting from the war. They intensely reflect his patriotism and deep concern for the suffering of the people. In 1945, the same year that he published his collection *Tanxiandui* [*An Expedition Team*], he joined the Chinese Expeditionary Army for Burma in an effort to help the British troops there to fight off the Japanese. He was sent as an interpreter to the Burmese frontier. After World War II, he went to study at the University of Chicago. He returned to China the next year and held a teaching position as Associate Professor in English Literature at Nankai University.

From the 1950s onwards, he was mainly engaged in poetry translation. It was not until 1976 that Mu Dan resumed writing his own poetry. He produced more than twenty-seven poems that year. Because of his deep love and profound understanding of life they would forever resonate in the soul like a life-death-symphony. Up until his death in early 1977 from a heart attack, Mu Dan – poet, thinker, translator and patriot of twentieth-century China – unreservedly dedicated his life to the land and people he deeply loved. His work, including modern poetry, essays, translations and other writings, lives on.

His twenty-five books of translations were mainly translations of English and Russian poetry, literature and literary theory, including works by Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin, George Gordon Byron, William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley, L. I. Timofeev and renowned modern English poets. Among his translations are Byron's *Don Juan* (completed in 1972, published in 1980) and many other translations completed over many years under unexpected pressure and published posthumously.

The poem “Hymn” was written by Mu Dan during the hardest stage of the stalemate of the Sino-Japanese War in 1942. In this poem Mu Dan expresses his deep love for his nation, the beauty of the land and his respect for the diligence and courage of its people. He celebrates the farmer who put down his hoe and instead of working in the fields like generations before him, determinedly took up the battle against Japanese invaders until he sacrificed his life. The farmer symbolizes many Chinese people during wartime. Mu Dan's farmer is an image of the Chinese nation, specifically those restrained and tolerant characters who, historically, have stood up to fight against the humiliations and disasters brought by war. The poem is included in various Chinese textbooks published by the People's Education Press in Mainland China.

Mu Dan's poetry always explains life and reality, while also being rich in complex imagery, symbolic meaning and spiritual thinking. His poetry reflects the spirit of the new era,

expressing fiery and sincere emotion, the poet's full personality, powerful, deep thinking, and a sharp and wise manner. Influenced also by W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats, Mu Dan merged the modern Chinese poetry tradition with Western modernism.

Although loved by many, Mu Dan's poetry has sometimes been regarded as difficult to interpret. The difficulty of reading Mu Dan has even been compared with reading Li He (790-816). Li He is known as the "poetry ghost" for a poetry style that is viewed as inimitable and sometimes even "weird". Nevertheless, while both writers' poetry is unique in style and rich in imagery and symbolic meanings, they are different in expression. Li He cast his language into a refined style with quaintness, drawing influences from *Chu Ci* poems, the ancient *Yuefu*, *Qi* and *Liang* royal styles, Li Bai (701-762), and elsewhere. Mu Dan's expression, on the other hand, appears not to be limited by linguistic form. Mu Dan paid close attention to the thoughts and feelings of real life, which was to awaken minds and even save the country. When the theme and form did not match, he would not appease the form by giving up the theme. His expression is sometimes viewed as "unpoetic", unconventional and even dull.

Using "unpoetic" language to write poetry and even seeking poetry dramatization, however, were particularly advocated in China in the 1940s when the land and people suffered so much from war. It was seen as progress from the Chinese modern poetry of the 1920s, which employed a great deal of symbolism that could lead to obscurities, even though the modern vernacular Chinese was used. It was also an improvement on the 1930s, in which Chinese modern poets were trying to merge the Western modernist flavour with Chinese traditional poetic conception in their poetry. The Chinese modern poets of the 1940s, particularly the *Jiuye* School poets, tried to embrace and penetrate reality by bringing a vast and deep life experience into their poetry. Mu Dan's "Hymn" is an example of this. The poem uses modern spoken Chinese to express deep thoughts and feelings, though the sentence structures and expressions may appear a little peculiar for a poem. This is, however, viewed as a poetic style that is consistent with the poet's unusual feeling towards the unexpected reality described in the poem. That is, using unpoetic language and unusual expression to pour out deep thoughts and twisted feelings about the unusual human disasters that happened to his people and land during the war is accepted as a kind of "harmony", in an aesthetic sense, in this translation.

The main priority for the translation is to interpret and display the work's poetic sense and the high regard in which Mu Dan held poetry. The translation aims to present the poet's deep thoughts and feelings in a style and form as close as possible to the original. For example, I use longer sentences in this translation as a partial strategy to reflect the poet's style and to express the unusual over-fulfilled feeling characteristic of this particular period of time in Chinese history. However, to recreate for target-language readers a similar aesthetic sense in form, some compromise in the translation is inevitable, although the translation tries to minimize the distance from the original. To do so, it partially borrows some sentence patterns from *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot for the purpose of producing the necessary rhythm and rhyme.

赞美

穆旦

走不尽的山峦和起伏，河流和草原，

数不尽的密密的村庄，鸡鸣和狗吠，

接连在原是荒凉的亚洲的土地上，

在野草的茫茫中呼啸着干燥的风，

在低压的暗云下唱着单调的东流的水，

在忧郁的森林里有无数埋藏的年代。

它们静静地和我拥抱：

说不尽的故事是说不尽的灾难，沉默的

是爱情，是在天空飞翔的鹰群，

是干枯的眼睛期待着泉涌的热泪，

当不移的灰色的行列在遥远的天际
爬行；

我有太多的话语，太悠久的感情，

我要以荒凉的沙漠，坎坷的小路，
骡子车，

我要以槽子船，漫山的野花，阴雨的
天气，

我要以一切拥抱你，你，

我到处看见的人民呵，

Hymn

Mu Dan

The endless mountains, ups and downs, and
rivers and grassland,

The countless dense villages, roosters singing
and dogs barking,

Connected to an originally desolate Asian
land,

Crossing vast wild grass the dry wind,
whistling,

Under the low murky clouds the eastward
water is momentarily singing,

And in the somber forests the by-gone years
are numerously buried.

They quietly embrace me:

The endless stories are endless disasters
telling, the silent

Is love, is groups of eagles in the sky flying,

And the dried and withered eyes expecting
hot tears, streaming

When the unchangeable grey rank is at the
farthest horizon crawling;

I have too many words, too long feeling
standing,

I will, with the desolated deserts, bumpy
pathways, and the mule carts,

I will, with trough boats, wild flowers over
mountains, and the weather rainy,

I will with everything embrace you, you,

The people I see everywhere, Oh,

在耻辱里生活的人民，佝偻的人民，
The people in humiliation living, the people
stooping,
我要以带血的手和你们一一拥抱。
I will embrace you one by one with my
hands bleeding.
因为一个民族已经起来。
Because you have stood up already,
a nation.
一个农夫，他粗糙的身躯移动在田野中，
A peasant, his rough body is in the fields
moving,
他是一个女人的孩子，许多孩子的父亲，
He is a child of a woman, the father of many
children,
多少朝代在他的身边升起又降落了
How many dynasties have risen and then
fallen beside him
而把希望和失望压在他身上，
But leaving hopes and disappointments
heaped on him,
而他永远无言地跟在犁后旋转，
And he forever silently follows a plough
turning and turning.
翻起同样的泥土溶解过他祖先的，
Turning over the same soil, what has
dissolved his ancestors
是同样的受难的形象凝固在路旁。
Is the same crucified image which by the
road is concreting.
在大路上多少次愉快的歌声流过去了，
On the road how many times merry songs
were flowing,
多少次跟来的是临到他的忧患；
Followed by how many times upon him
suffering;
在大路上人们演说，叫嚣，欢快，
On the road people are speaking, clamouring
and cheering
然而他没有，他只放下了古代的锄头，
But he hasn't, he put down the ancient
hoe only,
再一次相信名词，溶进了大众的爱，
Once more he believes nouns, into people's
love he's dissolving,
坚定地，他看着自己溶进死亡里，
With determination, he sees himself into
death dissolving,
而这样的路是无限的悠长的
But such a road is long infinitely

而他是不能够流泪的，
And he is not entitled to let tears shedding,
他没有流泪，因为一个民族已经起来。
He has no tears to shed, since has stood up
already, a nation.
在群山的包围里，在蔚蓝的天空下，
Under an azure sky, in the bosom of
mountains,
在春天和秋天经过他家园的时候，
When spring and autumn are passing his
homestead,
在幽深的谷里隐着最含蓄的悲哀：
The deep valleys hold the most restrained
sorrow:
一个老妇期待着孩子，许多孩子期待着
An aged woman is expecting the child, many
children are expecting
饥饿，而又在饥饿里忍耐，
Hunger, while in the hunger they are
enduring,
在路旁仍是那聚集着黑暗的茅屋，
By the road is still the thatching with
darkness gathering,
一样的是不可知的恐惧，一样的是
The same is the unpredictable horrors,
the same
大自然中那侵蚀着生活的泥土，
Is the soil in nature life eroding,
而他走去了从不回头诅咒。
But he passed and never looked back to
damn.
为了他我要拥抱每一个人，
For the sake of him, I will embrace every
human being,
为了他我失去了拥抱的安慰，
For the sake of him, I have lost the comfort of
embrace,
因为他，我们是不能给以幸福的，
Because of him, we are not able to grant
happiness,
痛哭吧，让我们在他的身上痛哭吧，
Cry loudly then, let's cry our hearts
thoroughly over him,
因为一个民族已经起来。
Since we stood up already, a nation.

一样的这是悠久的年代的风，
一样的这是从这倾圮的屋檐下散开的
无尽的呻吟和寒冷，
它歌唱在一片枯槁的树顶上，
它吹过了荒芜的沼泽，芦苇和虫鸣，
一样的这是这飞过的乌鸦的声音。
当我走过，站在路上踟蹰，
我踟蹰着为了多年耻辱的历史
仍在这广大的山河中等待，
等待着，我们无言的痛苦是太多了，
然而一个民族已经起来，
然而一个民族已经起来。

The same is the centuries-old long-standing
wind,
The same is under dilapidating eaves
Spreading
The endless groans and chilliness,
Atop of withered trees it is singing,
It has crossed deserted swamps, reeds and
insects chirping,
The same is the sound of the crows flying.
When I passed by, on the road
loitering,
I was loitering for the years of history of
humiliation
In the vast rivers and mountains still waiting,
Waiting, we had too many silent pains,
But we have stood up already, a nation,
But we have stood up already, a nation.

1941年12月
December 1941

Henrique de Senna Fernandes: By Train and by Tram to The South China Seas

PAUL MELO E CASTRO
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Henrique de Senna Fernandes (1923-2010) was one of the most notable Portuguese-language writers to emerge from Macau. In the short story collections *Nam Van* (1978) and *Mong Há* (1998) and the novels *Amor e Dedinhos de Pé* (1986) and *A Trança Feiticeira* (1993), Senna Fernandes sketched out a social history of Macau from an insider's point of view. His key themes include the fragile identity of Macau's creole population, the relations between the different constituent ethnic groups of Macanese society, often via some sort of romantic, border-crossing relationship, and a nostalgia for the Macau of yore that alternates with a reflection on the changes wrought in the territory by the twentieth century. Several of Senna Fernandes's short stories and novels have appeared in English, translated by David Brookshaw.

The story presented here, "A Surprising Encounter", is a translation of "Um Encontro Inesperado", which features in *Nam Van*. Senna Fernandes is not an easy writer to translate. He favours long sentences with multiple clauses. As a consequence I have tried at times to simplify his diction, without, I hope, disfiguring his reminiscent, worldly-wise and expansive style. At other times I have also added some words of explanation for items and references unintelligible to a non-Portuguese speaker. For instance the *aluas* and *coscorões* the narrator eats at his friends' house become "sugary", just to let the reader know that the sweet tooth of the Portuguese is shared by the Macanese, and the statue of Dom José riding into the fog becomes an equestrian statue of the King, to make the image clear to a reader not familiar with downtown Lisbon.

This location of "An Unexpected Encounter" in the imperial metropole makes the story anomalous insofar as it is the only one in *Nam Van* to take place outside of Asia, though the protagonist is Macanese and the whole picture of Lisbon that the tale paints stands in implicit comparison to his tiny homeland. It is not just the geographical setting that is meaningful here. The temporal frame in which the story is told is also of particular importance. The narrator recounts "An Unexpected Encounter" to us in the 1970s. He is on a visit to Lisbon and is reminded of an incident that took place on a train when he was a student in the city in the 1950s under the Estado Novo dictatorship. This temporal disjunction is neatly spatialized when the light car in which he is travelling runs parallel to the Lisbon-Cascais railway line at São João do Estoril. The two modes of transport bespeak the changes in the narrator's life, from callow student to cosmopolitan traveller.

The incident takes place one Christmas, when the narrator is returning home from dinner at the house of some Macanese acquaintances. At that point the Macanese narrator's feeling of estrangement is at its zenith. He has enjoyed a dinner with friends from home, luxuriated in Macanese food, fine wine and reminiscences of the past. Now, making his way back to his digs, he feels "lost in a vast, indifferent world". An unknown girl to whom he is immediately attracted boards his train and the young man begins to conjure up far-fetched images of a possible future together. The ideal aura of the girl provides a mental escape for the boy in his downcast state.

This vast indifferent world that so depresses him is the city of Lisbon, ostensibly the "centre" of the empire but here, in practice, a space of estrangement. Given the autobiographemes present in the narrative, the narrator is of a similar background to the author, and so is someone of mixed Portuguese and Asiatic heritage, a Macanese whose identity is supposedly based on a link to Portugal and the seat of Portuguese imperialism. Lisbon,

however, proves to be a quite *foreign* place for the young Macanese. Once he has boarded the train, his sense of foreignness is shown via his experience of a series of phenomena. After having celebrated Christmas in a way that casts his mind back to Macau, aboard the train he overhears the women beside him whispering incomprehensibly in harsh European accents filled with r's and s's and the men behind them wrangling over football, engrossed in a discussion to which the narrator cannot relate. It is not accidental, I think, that between religious traditions, language and football we have some of the key elements of Portuguese identity both in the *longue durée* and in coeval Estado Novo constructions. Post-war colonial discourse held that Portugal was one country, united culturally from the Minho region in the north to the overseas province of Timor. The narrator's experience gives the lie to this idea of intercontinental, pluriracial homogeneity.

When the girl boards the train, the boy's fantasies transform his perception of the world. She offers him the possibility of connection to his surroundings. He imagines her as coming from a patrician background and weaves chaste fantasies in which he, instead of returning to Macau after his studies, stays in Lisbon, marries her and spends Christmas there "dancing with the girl as her trusting parents watched on". It is a vision of seamless integration and acceptance into the colonial capital. It is noteworthy that the narrator describes his imagination as "billowing out like the full sails of a Golden-Age carrack".

In the end, after a further tram ride, the narrator finally gets his chance to speak to the girl. Before he can make a move, his illusions are shattered. In light of the dual temporal layer of the story, we can read "An Unexpected Encounter" as a moment of Macanese disinvestment from previous identity regimes. After the Second World War and the beginning of the end of European colonialism, the Macanese were faced with a superannuated identity grounded in imperial history and the need to renegotiate a sense of self in relation to their tiny homeland and its geopolitical position. Portugal, encompassing both the poor grey space described in the story and the "perfect" girl who is not what she appears to be, presents no future. Rather this country is itself an impoverished periphery, interested in its colonies purely for its own self-centred reasons. In the 1970s, the time frame of the reminiscence which makes up the story, the narrator tells us that he is on holiday in Portugal and that he had "long lost contact with the Atlantic". The suggestion – in a story integrating a collection named *Nam Van*, a traditional bayside area of Macau – is that the narrator has re-centred his life on the South China Sea. Even though at the time "A Surprising Encounter" is set, Lisbon continues to be the "metropole" referred to in the first lines of the story, the narrator's journey into the future will have other coordinates and a different orientation.

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Um Encontro Imprevisto

by Henrique de Senna Fernandes
(1963)

Num dos primeiros dias de Setembro, aquando da minha recente visita à Metrópole, percorria eu a auto-estrada Cascais-Lisboa, conduzido por mão exímia, a gozar umas férias merecidas, exactamente como o epicurista da tradição. Completara um magnífico passeio a Sintra, ao Guincho e à Boca do Inferno. Vinha inebriado das frondes românticas da Serra e dos largos horizontes da Pena.

E, tendo perdido, há muito, o contacto com o Atlântico, ficara impressionado com as fúrias regougando na Boca do Inferno. Quando cheguei ao Estoril, muito verde e movimentado, espreeitei o Casino, onde arrisquei sem resultado, nos caça-níqueis ali instalados. Depois fui até ao Tamariz e demorei-me a bebericar um whisky, enquanto admirava as fulvas e queimadas beldades que, em bikinis, defrontavam o mar, àquela hora certamente, muito frio. Só quando uma brisa mais acre se levantou, nos resolvemos, eu e o meu grupo, a regressar definitivamente a Lisboa.

A tarde estava muito azul, uma dessas tardes secas, de temperatura crestante para a pele, a anunciar o próximo Outono. As folhas das árvores cintilavam de brilho metálico e o casario recortava-se de encontro ao aveludado do céu, como se desenhado a lápis. Vivendas muito lavadas e alegres desfilavam, umas atrás das outras, mostrando fachadas hospitaleiras. Na estrada, o tráfico era intensíssimo. O Tejo fulgia, abrindo-se acolhedor para um paquete bojudo que languidamente subia a barra.

No lazer do automóvel, na altura que modorrávamos e largos silêncios intercalavam a conversa, revi o passado que a familiaridade dalguns lugares me evocava. Ao atravessar S. João do Estoril e, mais tarde, quando o nosso Simca corria, lado a lado, com o comboio, recordei um

An Unexpected Encounter

by Henrique de Senna Fernandes
(1963)

It was a day in early September on a recent visit to the Metropole, where I had enjoyed a well-deserved holiday like the epicurean of tradition. A friend's expert hand was driving me along the motorway between Cascais and Lisbon. We had taken a wonderful trip out to Sintra, Guincho beach and the Hell's Mouth chasm and I was drunk on the romantic green of the hills and the wide views from Pena Palace.

Having long lost contact with the Atlantic, I had been impressed by the furies shrieking in Hell's Mouth. On arriving at bustling, verdant Estoril I took a peek in at the Casino, and tried my luck, without success, on the one-armed bandits. I then went over to Tamariz beach, where I sat sipping a whisky and admiring the golden-tanned beauties in bikinis as they braved the sea, which at that hour must have been very cold. It was only when a stiffer breeze rose that my companions and I decided to head back to Lisbon.

The afternoon sky was very blue, one of those dry afternoons that toast the skin yet herald the coming autumn. The leaves on the trees sparkled with a metallic glint and the houses stood out against the velvet sky as if outlined in pencil. Cheery, clean-scrubbed villas marched by, one after the other, parading their hospitable façades. On the road, the traffic was intense. The river Tagus glistened and opened itself to welcome a round-bellied packet boat making its way languidly into port.

In the drowsy peace of the car, during the long lulls that punctuated our conversations, I recalled the past that certain familiar places evoked. As we crossed São João do Estoril and, a little later, when our Simca ran side-by-side with a train, I remembered an episode from my

episódio da minha vida, ocorrido há vinte anos de que nunca me esqueci.

Vou narrá-lo aos meus leitores:

Não me demorara muito, na pequena estação de S. João do Estoril, à espera do comboio. Ao comprar o bilhete, verificara precisamente que, fora uma mancheia de cobs, me restavam apenas quarenta escudos duma nota de cem que gastara por aí. Havia poucos passageiros para embarcar, todos silenciosos e pacientes, verdadeiros mundos estanques, cada um com os seus problemas. Minutos depois, os *rails* tremeram com o barulho da grande máquina e o comboio, com o gemido de ferros a travar, estacou à nossa disposição. Não houve correrias nem palavras malcriadas, entre quem descia e quem subia.

Fazia frio e um chuvisco impertinente e muito gelado penetrava até os ossos. Eu vinha dum jantar em casa de amigos, um desses lares quentes de ternura e de filhos abundantes que enchiam a casa de barulho e de vida. Vergava-me, assim a pena de ter deixado aquele lar e fazer um monótono regresso a Lisboa.

Eu era, então, um estudante de Coimbra, no último ano do curso, e viera passar uns dias à capital. Avizinhava-se o Natal e, nessa quadra, para nós que estávamos exilados da família e da terra, o pensamento voava mais do que nunca para Macau. Naturalmente, nestes instantes, havia em nós um pendor mais acentuado para a melancolia e para a exaltação dos sentimentos.

Naqueles tempos, os estudantes de Macau, que iam por largos anos à Metrópole, não tinham possibilidades de rever os pais e o resto da família, senão depois da formatura e só quando se decidiam a retornar para a terra-natal. As despedidas, na época, eram muito dolorosas, realizadas nas pontes de embarque do Porto Interior, pois não existiam ainda os hidroplanadores que cortam o adeus num tempo mínimo. Naqueles dias longínquos, as despedidas

life, one that had occurred twenty years previously and which I have never forgotten.

I shall recount it to my readers:

There wasn't long left to wait for the train at the little São João do Estoril station. After buying my ticket I saw that, a handful of coppers aside, I had exactly forty escudos remaining from a hundred note I had frittered away. Alongside me stood only a few other passengers, all in patient silence, truly hermetic worlds wrapped up in their own problems. A few minutes later the rails shook with the noise of the vast engine and the train which, with a squeal of braking iron, came to a halt before us. Between those getting on and those alighting there was no jostling or discourtesy.

It was cold and the icy, insolent drizzle pierced through to my bones. I had just come from dinner at the house of some friends, one of those homes that are warm with tenderness and thronged by children who fill it with noise and life. Leaving that house behind me to set out on the monotonous journey back to Lisbon had been a dispiriting prospect.

I was, back then, a final-year student at Coimbra University, and had come to spend a few days in the capital. Christmas was approaching and, at this time of year, for those of us in exile from our family and homeland, our thoughts flew more than ever towards Macau. It was natural that, at such moments, there was in us a tendency to melancholy and overwrought feelings.

At that time, students from Macau, who spent years on end in the Metropole, had no chance to see their parents and the rest of their family again until after graduation, and then only if they decided to return to the land of their birth. Saying our farewells, in those days, was a painful affair that took place on the dock of Macau's Inner Harbour, for the hydroplanes that cut goodbyes to a minimum didn't yet exist. In that distant era, we took our leave on the ferry to Hong Kong, either at half past two

faziam-se nos barcos da carreira para Hong Kong das duas e meia ou da noite. A família em peso aglomerava-se em volta de quem partia, por muito tempo, chorando pelos cantos e, assim, na alma do estudante, misturadas com revoadas de esperança aquelas cenas gravavam-se-lhe na memória para sempre. Muitas vezes, os abraços eram os últimos que se davam a alguém, outros, o fim duma amizade que iria resfriar-se, ao longo da separação.

Os actuais estudantes de Macau que possuem a ventura de gozar as férias com a família todos os anos ou, pelo menos, dentro dum espaço relativamente curto de ausência, por causa da rapidez de comunicações e doutras vantagens, não podem calcular o que os estudantes doutros tempos passavam, a sua sensação de isolamento, os seus dias de terrível depressão. E os momentos mais difíceis eram os da quadra do Natal.

Os meus anfitriões eram tão macaenses como eu e a dona da casa confeccionara alguns pratos de Macau, especialmente para mim – minchi, porco balichão tamarindo e galinha-molho – de que há muito a minha boca andava aguada.

Durate o jantar, recordámos os Natais de Macau, de antes da guerra, a Missa do Galo repleta de gente, as “boas festas” que se pronunciavam e se desejavam, à saída da igreja, a caminhada para a casa ao frio, a família reunindo-se apressadamente para a ceia que, em minha casa, tradicionalmente, se fazia com uma succulenta canja da galinha, empadas, aluas e coscorões. Depois havia as prendas e as “surpresas” e acordava-se a garotada para saber o que lhe oferecera o Pai Natal.

Nessa noite, a evocação de momentos felizes fora particularmente reconfortante, toda ela animada também por um inefável vinho tinto que escorria maciamente. Houve instantes de franca gargalhada, ao reviverem-se pequenos retalhos da vida. Mas, ao fim do ágape, pairava em nós o travo misterioso da saudade dos tempos que já não retornam e havia maiores pausas de

or at night. For a long time, in tears, the whole family would crowd around the person leaving. Entwined with swirls of hope, the memory of those scenes would be forever engraved in his soul. Often the embraces would be the last ever given to a loved one; sometimes they marked the end of a friendship fated to grow cold with distance.

Today’s Macanese students who, due to the speed of travel and other advantages, are lucky enough to enjoy holidays with their family every year, or at least after relatively short periods of absence, cannot imagine what the students of yesteryear suffered, the feelings of isolation, the days of terrible depression. And the most difficult moments came during the Christmas holidays.

My hosts were as Macanese as I, and the lady of the house had made some food from home especially for me. *Minchi* hash, pork *balichão* with tamarind, chicken-sauce. How long my mouth had watered for those dishes!

Over dinner, we recalled Christmases in Macau before the war, midnight masses full of people, the “season’s greetings” that were said and wished at the doors of the church, the cold walk home, the family hurriedly gathering round for a supper which, in my house, consisted of a succulent chicken broth and pies, with sugary *aluas* and *coscorões* for desert. Afterwards we would exchange presents and “surprises” and wake the children so they could see what Father Christmas had brought them.

That night, the evocation of happy times had been particularly comforting, our words animated by an exquisite red wine that had just slipped down. At times we laughed out loud as we relived minor snippets of the past. Yet, when our intimate meal drew to a close, there lingered within us a mysterious *saudade* for times that would never return. Longer silences then

silêncio. Cada um de nós tinha um mundo de recordações que vinha à tona, sem nos atrevermos a expô-las a outrem. Este estado continuou na sala, para onde depois nos movemos, ambientado por Toscanini que regia na rádio uma sinfonia de Brahms, e por um cognac muito especial que emprestava o toque adequado ao café e se saboreava devagarinho, em golinhos cheios de unção.

Naturalmente que me despedi sentimental e todo lírico. Também gostaria de ter um lar como aquele que deixara, ouvindo o ramalhar das árvores, o ladrar dum cão transido, à procura de dono, e o gotejar da água, num balde abandonado. As janelas iluminadas das casa revelavam doce aconhego, e eu percorria só, apertando a gabardine. Quando cheguei à estação, parecia perdido num mundo enorme e indiferente.

A carruagem onde me instalei encontrava-se meia-vazia. A noite não convidava para se aventurar cá fora nem para deambulações noctívagas. Com aquela temperatura e chuvisco, só a casa ou o café apinhado, cheio de fumo. Sacudi as gotas que molhavam a gabardine e acomodei-me o melhor que pude. E o comboio abalou depois do inevitável apito lamentoso que estrugiu na tristeza da noite.

Atrás de mim, discutia-se o futebol. Apontavam-se erros dos jogadores, desculpavam-se ou não se desculpavam percalços, delineavam-se estratégias que os mesmos teriam, se, os que falavam, fossem dirigentes. Já deviam ter vindo a conversar, há muito, talvez, mesmo de Cascais. Estavam acalorados como se o jogo do domingo seguinte fosse uma questão de vida ou de morte. Na minha frente, dois bancos, duas mulheres sibilavam a voz. Não as percebia mas podia distinguir a severidade dos “rr” intercalados com os silvos dos “ss”. A minha imaginação especulou. Deviam estar a queixar-se dos maridos, ou, então, das noras, porque, ao entrar surpreendi nos peitos e nos rostos delas a dureza de sogras.

followed. Each of us had a world of memories that was drifting to the surface but which we dared not reveal to the others. This state of affairs continued when we moved to the sitting room. The sound of Toscanini conducting a Brahms symphony on the radio surrounded us as we drank a very special cognac. It lent just the right notes to our coffee, and we savoured it slowly in reverential little sips.

Naturally I took my leave feeling sentimental and full of lyricism. I too would have liked a home such as theirs. The bitter taste of solitude overcame me. I walked the deserted streets listening to the rustle of the trees, the barking of a dog in search of its owner, and the sound of water dripping into an abandoned bucket. The lit windows of the houses bespoke a sweet cosiness whilst I trudged on alone, clutching my raincoat around me. When I arrived at the station I felt lost in a vast, indifferent world.

The carriage I boarded was half empty. It was no night to venture out for an evening stroll. With that cold and the drizzle, home or a packed café full of smoke were the only options. I shook the raindrops from my coat and settled down as best I could. The train pulled away after the inevitable whistle sounded out mournfully in the sadness of the night.

Behind me voices were discussing football, pointing out the mistakes of the players, forgiving or refusing to forgive various incidents and expounding upon the tactics that their teams would adopt if the men talking were made managers. They must have been debating for a good while, perhaps all the way from Cascais, and were het up about next Sunday’s match as if it was a question of life or death. In front of me, on two seats, two women were whispering. I couldn’t hear them properly, only making out harsh “rr” sounds interspersed with hissing s’s. I speculated to myself: they were surely complaining about their husbands, or else about their sons’ wives. When I got on I had spied on

Ninguém me incomodava, no entanto. Imerso nos pensamentos, sentindo-me pesado do jantar, distraía-me a olhar para a noite, lá fora, toda esborratada pela velocidade do comboio e pelos salpicos da chuva, a escorrer, pelo vidro das janelas. Dentro da carruagem, a temperatura estava suportável, mas os meus pés mantinham-se frios.

O comboio parava, passageiros entravam e saíam, mas não se quebrava a monotonia do trajecto. Só gente esgotada, com pressa de recolher para casa. Eu também sentia vontade de chegar à casa onde me hospedara. Pelo menos, não sofreria tanto a solidão e a cama proporcionar-me-ia um esquecimento de nirvana.

Já não me lembra em que paragem, mas julgo ter sido Oeiras, que se deu um pormenor que me despertou a atenção. Vinha remoendo nostalgias, melancólico que a chuva, lírico com o lar pletórico de amor onde jantara. O vinho tinto, trazido numa esplêndida adega virgiliana e o cognac muito especial exaltavam-me a imaginação. Tentava adivinhar o que existia em cada um dos meus companheiros de viagem, mas nenhum deles me suscitava grande interesse, figuras burguesas, de gente atrapalhada no fim do mês, com as suas letras a pagar, as suas intriguinhas de bairro e queixas contra superiores tiranos.

Entre os poucos passageiros que entraram desta vez figurava uma rapariga de dezoito a vinte anos. Sempre gostei de ver uma moça bonita, bem vestida e elegante que caminha com desembaraço, sem trocar os pés nem se perturbar com os olhos dos homens. E quando a frescura da mocidade é evidente, maior é o encanto. Assentei melhor os óculos e escutinei-a.

Deitou um olhar em redor, em demanda dum lugar adequado e, por sorte, foi sentar-se numa bancada à frente de mim, mas doutro lado, junto à janela. Eu podia admirá-la à vontade, de perfil e bastava a moça desviar um pouco a cabeça para trás, para me ver. Mas o seu queixo perfeito

their chests and faces the flintiness of mothers-in-law.

Nobody bothered me. Lost in my thoughts, feeling heavy from dinner, I distracted myself by looking out into the night. Outside everything was rendered blurry by the speed of the train and the water droplets sliding across the window. Inside the carriage the temperature was bearable, though my feet were still cold.

The train stopped, passengers got on and off, but the monotony of the journey remained unbroken. Nothing but exhausted people, impatient for home. I was also eager to return to my lodgings. At least there I would suffer less from my loneliness and, in bed, reach the nirvana of oblivion.

I can't remember which stop it was – maybe Oeiras – where the incident that attracted my attention happened. I was brooding over my nostalgia, feeling melancholy about the rain and lyrical about the bountiful home at which I had dined. The red wine, sourced at a fine Virgilian domaine, and that very special cognac had fired my imagination. I tried to guess the stories of my fellow travellers but none of them stoked my interest, bourgeois figures all, people who ran short at the end of the month, with bills to pay, heads full of little neighbourhood intrigues and complaints about tyrannical bosses.

Amongst the few passengers to board was a girl of eighteen or twenty years old. I have always had an eye for a pretty lass who dresses elegantly and walks with confidence, without stumbling or blushing under a man's stare. And when the freshness of her youth is clear, the greater my enchantment. I adjusted my glasses and inspected her closely.

She glanced around for a suitable space and, as luck would have it, chose the seat in front of mine, only over on the other side, next to the window. I could admire her profile freely and all it would take, for the girl to see me, was for her to turn her head back a little. But her perfect chin pointed

alçava-se para a frente e não parecia ligar a ninguém, habituada a ser examinada por olhares indiscretos ou vorazes.

Tinha realmente um perfil bonito. Tez branca, agora corada pelo frio, o nariz fino e alto, a boca levemente maquilhada dum cor-de-rosa que se casava bem com a pele fresca do rosto. Ao descalçar as luvas, revelou umas mãos bem tratadas, onde as unhas envernizadas da cor dos lábios faiscavam. A sua gabardine branca, apertada na cinturinha, impunha-lhe a marca duma elegância discreta. A sua aparência não denunciava uma caixeirinha nem uma empregadinha de balcão. Pelo contrário, possuía o tipo de filha-família, de moça criada num lar sólido e mesmo patricio.

Olhei com atenção para o seu anelar esquerdo. Não, não estava casada. Tinha também um ar demasiado límpido e virginal que não se coadunava com a existência de marido. Mas devia ter um namorado, concluí. Uma moça tão bonita como aquela, não podia, claro, deixar de ter um namorado. De repente, fiquei a invejar aquele namorado desconhecido, o homem que um dia conduzi-la-ia ao altar e gozaria, vida inteira, as benesses da sua companhia.

Especulei como seria ela. Imediatamente não pus em dúvida que a meiguice seria um dos seus melhores predicados. Isto adivinhara-se na fisionomia, onde resplandecia a candura. E também já não duvidara que seria compreensiva, de coração aberto. Perdoaria os defeitos do futuro marido, haveria sempre palavras de persuasão a animá-lo na luta quotidiana, neste mundo mesquinho. Uma mulher tão bonita, tão distinta, seria a pedra mestra na defesa do lar, a viga mãe da casa.

A minha imaginação enfunada como as velas pandas duma nau dos Descobrimentos, arquitectava mundos para essa moça desconhecida que, pressentindo o meu interesse, se voltava, de vez em quando para trás sacudindo a cabeleira castanha que descia, costas abaixo, em rabo

straight ahead. It seemed she took no heed of anyone and was accustomed to examination by indiscreet or voracious eyes.

She really did have a fine profile. White skin, now a little flushed with cold, a fine, high nose and a light-pink-coloured lipstick that suited her fresh complexion. When she removed her gloves her hands were neat. Her nails, painted the colour of her lips, glistened. The white raincoat she wore, drawn in at the waist, endowed her with a discreet elegance. Her appearance was not that of some little till girl or shop assistant. Quite the contrary, she looked every inch the daughter of a good family, one raised in a solid, even patrician, home.

I took a close look at her ring finger. No, she wasn't married. She looked too pure and virginal to have a husband. But she surely had a boyfriend, I decided. A girl that pretty couldn't not have a boyfriend. I was suddenly jealous of that unknown suitor, the man who would take her to the altar one day and enjoy the pleasure of her company for the rest of his life.

I speculated about her personality. Immediately I knew that sweetness would be one of her greatest qualities. You could see it in her face, which shone with candour. I also knew that she would be understanding and openhearted. She would forgive her future husband's defects, would always have a word of encouragement for him in the daily struggles of this petty world. A woman that pretty, that distinguished, would be the cornerstone of the home, the linchpin of the family.

My imagination, billowing out like the full sails of a Golden-Age carrack, built whole worlds for this unknown girl. She had felt my interest and, turning round from time to time, tossed to one side the brown ponytail that hung down her back. Bathing in her gaze produced a heady

de cavalo. E o banho dos seus olhos exercia em mim uma sensação embriagadora como aquela que sentiria um brâmane piedoso mergulhando nas águas do Ganges.

O comboio seguia, parando aqui e acolá. A nossa carruagem permanecia semi-vazia. A conversa sobre o futebol continuava acalorada. Falava-se agora dum certo jogador, descrevia-se a sua vida íntima, com a dum parente chegado. As cabeças das suas “sogra” estavam mais juntinhas, verrumando coscuvilhices.

Um homem calvo que entrara numa das estações, a testa larga, toda rebrilhante ao reflexo da luz, mirava, sem rebuço, com a ousadia dum fauno pervertido, a moça linda.

Indignava-me. Como era possível pasmar-se alguém daquela maneira, os lábios a babarem-se de sensualidade, o pescoço curto onde as cordoveias entumescidas mostravam como o sangue afluía ao cérebro.

Um homem daqueles só considerava a mulher no seu ponto de vista carnal, não era capaz de descobrir nela qualquer dose de espiritualidade.

Mas ela dava-lhe a lição que merecia. Não lhe ligava nenhuma, a vista posta no jornal, um *Diário Popular*, quase amarrotado. E o que me deliciava, era que, não ligando nenhuma ao sensualão do calvo, se dignava a conceder-me a graça dum olhar real. Sentia-me vingado e tinha vontade de lançar na cara do homem que não era com maneiras malcriadas que se conquista uma mulher. O cognac muito especial que me aquecia os nervos, espicaçava-me a agressividade. Tentasse ele ser mais atrevido, eu levantar-me-ia com ímpetos de D. Quichote para defender a sua Dulcineia.

Veio o revisor para lhe examinar o bilhete que ela lhe estendeu, sorrindo com simplicidade. E a brancura dos seus dentes rebrilhou, uma boca sã que agradecia ao funcionário fatigado, de unhas sujas, que não correspondeu à amabilidade da moça. Outro malcriado! Que custava retribuir-lhe

sensation in me, such as a pious Brahman would feel as he immersed himself in the waters of the Ganges.

The train went on, stopping here and there. Our carriage stayed half empty. The debate about football remained heated. Now they were talking about one player in particular, describing his private life as if he were close family. The “mothers-in-law” had leant their heads even closer, absorbed in their gossip.

A bald man had got on at one of the stations. He brazenly pointed his wide forehead, which was all shiny under the light, in the direction of the pretty girl with all the impudence of a lecherous faun.

I was indignant. How could someone ogle like that, smacking his lips with lasciviousness, the bulgy veins in his short neck showing how the blood was rushing to his head?

Men like that consider women nothing more than carnal objects and are incapable of discerning in them any trace of spirituality.

But she was teaching him a well-deserved lesson, paying him no attention at all and burying her head in her newspaper, a somewhat crumpled *Diário Popular*. And what really delighted me was that, while she ignored baldy’s leering, she conceded me the grace of a regal glance. I felt vindicated, felt like throwing in that man’s face that it wasn’t with coarse manners that you won a lady. That very special cognac heating my nerves also spurred my aggression. Were he to be any bolder and I would leap forward like Don Quixote defending his Dulcinea.

The inspector stopped to check her ticket, which she held out with an unassuming smile. The white of her teeth gleamed, her healthy mouth thanking the tired, dirty-fingernailed employee, who failed to reply in kind. Another boor! What would it have cost him to be nice back? It

também? Não pesaria nada na sua vida triste de revisor, até ganharia com isso, levando para casa a recordação duma mocidade esplendorosa. Mas o que era de esperar dum homem de letras gordas que encarava os milhares de indivíduos que, de manhã à noite, enchiam as carruagens, não como pessoas, com os seus dramas e alegrias, mas sim como meros anónimos que lhe estendiam os bilhetes. Não se preocupava com as caras, só observava se tinham ou não os bilhetes.

Descobri que na mão direita havia um anel de pedra azul. A minha imaginação logo conjecturou que devia ser uma estudante universitária e da Faculdade de Letras. O azul da pedra era o mesmo azul convencional daquela faculdade. Claro que tinha de ser uma estudante. Como não adivinharia isso mais cedo? Mais qualidade a juntar a tantas outras que verificava nela. Possuía mesmo um ar intelectual. O dedo indicador que tantas vezes espetava na ponta do queixo, denunciava reflexão, sisudez, concentração da mente sobre as sebatas, rasgando os cominhos da cultura e do conhecimento. Sim, devia ser um prazer discutir com ela sobre as artes e o surrealismo.

Quem seriam os pais dela? Ainda hoje, depois de tantos anos, não sei como nem porquê, pensei que o pai dela era um médico, com clínica próspera num dos consultórios da Baixa. Um homem educado, com certeza, para ter uma filha patricia como aquela. A beleza que tinha diante dos meus olhos, só podia provir de gente de maneiras que de geração em geração se fosse refinado. O pai nutria um orgulho intenso por aquela filha que crescera bonita, elegante, com a bondade estampada no rosto, a inocência dos olhos luminosos fulgurando como um espelho de alma. Quando voltasse do hospital ou do consultório, teria aquela filha bondosa a acolhê-lo, bem como outros filhos mais pequeninos. E havia também uma mãe muito distinta, anjo do lar, a dirigir a casa, a criar os filhos no exemplo da honestidade e

wouldn't have made any odds to his sad ticket-inspecting life. In fact he would have got something out of it, the memory of her splendid youth to take home with him. But what could you expect of an illiterate who gazed upon the thousands of people filling those carriages from morning till night not as people with joys and dramas but as anonymous hands bearing tickets. He didn't care about faces, only whether or not they had paid their fares.

I noticed that on her right hand she wore a ring set with a blue gem. I immediately conjectured that she must be a university student from the Faculty of Arts. The blue of the gem was the same blue associated with that faculty. Of course she had to be a student. How had I not guessed earlier? Yet another quality to add to the plethora I had already discerned. She really did have the air of an intellectual. The index finger she often pressed into the tip of her chin revealed thought, shrewdness, mental concentration on her studies, the breaking of new ground in culture and knowledge. Yes, it must be a pleasure to discuss surrealism and art with her.

Who might her parents be? Even today, after so many years, I don't know why or how, but I thought her father to be a doctor, with a thriving practice somewhere in the city centre. An educated man, of course, to have such a ladylike daughter. The beauty I saw before my eyes could come only of well-bred stock refined over the generations. The father would have nursed an intense pride in that daughter who had grown into a fair, elegant maiden whose good nature was stamped on her face, the innocence in her bright eyes shining like the mirror of her soul. Upon returning from the hospital or his clinic, he would have that warm-hearted daughter to welcome him back, as well as her younger siblings. There too would be her gracious mother, an angel of the hearth, a homemaker who had instilled in the children high standards of

dos deveres cívicos, uma mãe piedosa, ensinando aos rebentos os básicos princípios da religião tradicional, uma mãe ainda nova, parecida com a filha, com aquele grande dom que escapa a tanta mulher – o de saber envelhecer.

De repente, vi-me a sonhar acordado. Ela e eu, caminhando, de mãos dadas, em trilhos de montanha, por entre o ramalhar gemebundo dos pinheiros, envoltos no odor forte da resina. Ou, então, debruçados no alto da varanda duma casa muito branca, a contemplar o mar, a babugem das ondas a morrer numa maravilha praia doirada. Que outras coisas mais não sonhei, no meu canto da carruagem!

Apercebi-me que tais fantasmas eram influenciadas pelo exemplo do lar que acabara de deixar. Estava a ser muito romântico e atribuía isso e bem justamente, à forte dose de cognac muito especial, genuíno duma adega poeirenta da França, dádiva dum amigo ao meu anfitrião.

Resolvi descer à realidade comezinha. Era demais tecer coisas imaginárias, sem haver talvez uma ponta de verdade, por onde pegasse. Mas tinha ainda vinte anos e nesta idade ainda se sonha imenso, pelo menos no meu tempo.

Estávamos quase a chegar a Lisboa. Em Algés, salvo erro, entrou um grupo ruidoso de jovens. Falavam duma festa qualquer e vinham todos divertidos. O barulho das suas conversas, em voz alta, perturbou a paz dormente da carruagem. Aquele facto irritou-me. Estava tão entretido com os meus pensamentos que aquelas gargalhadas soavam-me como qualquer coisa de sacrílego. E o palreio era tão tolo, coisas inconsequentes que se diziam e só entendidas pelo grupo, mas que causavam uma hilaridade alvar.

Havia uma loiraça muito pintada, cujo riso era grosso quase masculino, que me bulia com os nervos. Para esta mulher, no entanto, volveu as atenções o homem calvo. Mirava-a, não com tanto desprazo como à outra, certamente, por vir acompanhada.

honesty and civic duty, a pious mother who had taught her brood the basic tenets of established religion, a mother who was still young, who resembled her daughter, with that great gift that escapes so many women – knowing how to age well.

Suddenly I found myself daydreaming. The girl and I walked hand-in-hand along mountain paths, below the whiny rustle of pines, amidst the intense scent of resin. Or, else, we leant out from the high veranda of a dazzling white house, contemplating the ocean, the murmur of the waves coming to die against marvellously golden sands. Oh the things I dreamt in the corner of that carriage!

I realized that these fantasies were influenced by the example of the home I had just left. I was being excessively romantic, a fact I attributed, with reason, to the very special cognac I had been drinking, the genuine article from a dusty winery in France that had been given to my host by a friend.

I decided to come back down to earth. Dreaming up fantasies without the slightest basis in truth was a bit much. But I was still in my early twenties and at that age people are full of dreams, at least they were in my time.

We were about to arrive at Lisbon. In Algés, if I'm not mistaken, a group of rowdy youths came aboard in high spirits, discussing some party. Their loud voices disturbed the sleepy calm of the carriage. I was greatly put out. So absorbed had I been in my thoughts that their guffaws seemed somehow sacrilegious. And their banter was so idiotic, full of meaningless in-jokes that provoked witless hilarity amongst the group.

In their midst was a heavily made-up blonde, whose coarse almost masculine laugh grated on my nerves. It was to her, however, that baldy's attention turned. He stared at her, not as brazenly as at the girl, it was true, for the blonde was in company.

Mas a mesma sensualidade patenteava-se no fauno decadente que lambia os lábios, como se estivesse a saborear, de antemão, uma presa certa. A loiraça, lisongeadada com o apreço, exagerava no tom de voz e nos gestos. Tocava constantemente nos cabelos, inclinando, em atitude estudada, a cabeça para a esquerda. Eu não pude deixar de fazer comparação entre uma e outra.

A dignidade com que a “filha do médico” se portava, no seu cantinho, marcava muitos pontos acima daquela loiraça de riso grosso e com o hábito espalhafatoso de menear a cabeça para a esquerda. As outras meninas do grupo, uma delas moreníssima e de forte buço, não eram muito diferentes.

O homem calvo, cuja testa oleosa mais brilhava ainda, ria-se das graças que ouvia. Queria fazer-se simpático, introduzir-se no grupo, como um autêntico cabide. É claro que ninguém lhe dava troco e acabaria por sofrer uma nova frustração.

O comboio chegava finalmente a Lisboa. O mundo humano da carruagem quebrava-se. Havia um movimento geral para a debandada, um ruído de embrulhos, o bater dos pés para desentorpecê-los. Senti uma coisa parecida com angústia. Seguiria ou não seguiria a moça, eis a questão. Se não seguisse, perdê-la-ia para sempre nessa Lisboa imensa. Segui-la era, no entanto, um atrevimento de D. Juan barato, sem que ela tivesse criado motivo para isso. De certo estaria alguém à sua espera. Eu queria ver quem era esse alguém.

O comboio disparou com estrondo, no Cais do Sodré, num chiado de ferros. Depois da travagem, os passageiros ergueram-se numa pressa febril. Não olhei para mais ninguém, senão para a moça. Ela retorquiu-me com um olhar mais profundo e julguei discernir a sobra dum sorriso. Era a minha imaginação a trabalhar furiosamente. Nisto, a caneta que tinha na mão, escapou-se num estúpido despropósito, rolando debaixo dos bancos. Agachar e vasculhar o diabo da caneta,

But the decadent faun displayed the same sensuousness, and licked his lips as if anticipating the taste of certain prey. The blonde, flattered by his interest, exaggerated her tone and her gestures. She constantly touched her hair and tilted her head to the left in a studied movement. I couldn't avoid comparing her to the girl.

The seemly bearing of the “doctor's daughter”, across the aisle, scored far higher than the coarse laughter of that blonde, with her brassy habit of leaning her head to the left. The other girls in the group, one very dark skinned and with a visible moustache, were little different.

Baldy, whose oily forehead gleamed all the more, laughed at their jokes. He wanted to ingratiate himself, to join the group, to slip in like a *coathanger*, as we said back then. Of course, no one paid him a blind bit of notice and again his efforts met with painful frustration.

The train finally arrived at Lisbon. The human microcosm that had formed in the carriage began to disintegrate. As one, the passengers made ready to jump ship, rustling their packages and stamping life back into numb feet. I felt something akin to anguish. Should I follow the girl? That was the question. If I didn't, I would lose her forever in the immensity of Lisbon. But to follow her was the uninvited action of a cheapjack Don Juan. Surely someone was out there waiting for her. I wanted to see who that someone was.

The train roared into Cais do Sodré station. After it had come to a screeching halt, the passengers leapt up feverishly. I had eyes for no one but the girl. Her gaze lingered upon me for a moment and I thought I saw the hint of a smile. My imagination was running wild. At that moment the pen I was carrying slipped from my stupid hand and rolled under a seat. Crouching down to retrieve that damn pen cost me precious seconds. By the time I had alighted the white shape of her

fizeram-me perder um tempo precioso. Quando descí da carruagem, já a mancha branca da sua gabardine se perdia na multidão. Afinal o comboio não vinha tão vazio como aparentava. No atravancamento da estação, em movimento, apesar da hora, atrasei-me. Quando calcorreei o átrio exterior da gare, já ela não se achava em parte nenhuma. Teria ido telefonar, ter-se ido metido num automóvel, bem colocado à porta do Cais de Sodré? Perguntas e mais perguntas, cuja resposta jamais obteria. Errei estupidamente no átrio e, por fim julguei descortinar a mancha branca num carro de linhas americanas que se afastava.

Pronto, era o fim. Nunca mais a encontraria. Fugia-se-me uma oportunidade, talvez fosse a mulher ideal que todos os rapazes de vinte anos procuram, como o Príncipe a sua Branca de Neve encantada.

A chuva parara, mas o frio persistia. Recusei um táxi, para não reduzir, inutilmente, os quarenta escudos que trazia. Sentia-me terrivelmente deprimido, ainda que dissesse a mim mesmo que estava a ser um idiota.

Andei do Cais do Sodré até à Praça do Comércio. Aqui, tomaria um eléctrico para a Praça do Chile, termo da minha viagem. Lembro-me que aquele sector de Lisboa achava-se, então, muito mal alumado. As luzes dos candeeiros tinham um ar soturno, doiravam pedaços tristes de casario. Tráfego de automóveis muito escasso e os eléctricos rolavam, com vidros embaciados. Peões cruzavam-se comigo sem sequer olharem para mim, encolhidos na semi-obscuridade dos passeios. Um bêbedo cantava um fado avinhado, aos tropeções. Mais ao longe, uma mulher grisalha, arrastando um saco, descompunha o seu homem, aos palavrões, e ele, somente, resmungava: “Está calada!...” Dobrado na minha gabardine, defendia-me, como podia, do frio. A todo o momento, esperava que a chuva desabasse e apenas suspirava pelo abrigo do eléctrico. Nem uma única vez voltei a cara para trás. A recordação da

raincoat was melting into the crowd. The train wasn't as empty as it had seemed. In the hectic station, busy despite the time, I found my way obstructed. When I emerged onto the concourse she was nowhere to be seen. Had she gone to make a phone call? Had she climbed into a car conveniently parked in front of the station? Question after question to which I would never have an answer. I wandered the concourse until, finally, I thought I saw her white shape moving off inside an American-style car.

Well, that was it. I would never see her again. The opportunity had slipped through my fingers. Perhaps she was the ideal woman whom all twenty-year-olds seek, like Prince Charming his enchanted Snow White.

The rain had stopped but it was still cold. I waved a taxi away. No point wasting any of the forty escudos I had left. A terrible depression gripped me, even though I told myself I was being a fool.

I walked from Cais do Sodré to Praça do Comércio. From here I would take a tram up to my destination in Praça do Chile. I remember that, back then, this part of Lisbon was very poorly lit. The streetlamps shed a morose yellow light on the sad façades. Car traffic on the streets was scarce and the trams rolled by with fogged-up windows. Pedestrians skirted past without a glance, hugging the half shadows of the pavements. A drunk stumbled along singing a wine-sodden *fado*. In the distance a grey-haired woman, dragging a bag, hurled insults at her man, who just grumbled back: “Shut your face...!” Drawing my raincoat around me I shielded myself from the cold as best I could. I expected the rain to pour down any moment and longed for the shelter of my tram. I didn't turn around, not even once. The memory of the “doctor's daughter” wouldn't leave me alone and I withdrew

“filha do médico” perseguia-me, ensimesmava-me mais ainda.

Trepei, finalmente, para o eléctrico e instalava-me atrás. O condutor alçava o relógio para observar as horas da tabela. Também, como a carruagem do comboio, o eléctrico encontrava-se meio-vazio. Lá fora, os Ministérios dormiam na noite gelada e sombras passavam nas suas arcadas. A estátua de D. José escondia-se nas brumas. Sorumbático, segreguei-me dos rostos anónimos, alheio às conversas fatigadas de que apanhava uma ou outra frase. Estava triste, como se tivesse perdido a coisa mais importante da minha vida. A noite, lá fora, não parecia mais negra que o meu coração.

No momento em que o eléctrico, à hora precisa da tabela, assinalava a partida, senti o roçar dum gabardine branca a meu lado. Ainda hoje me lembra como o meu pobre coração começou a bater, outra vez desperto. A “filha do médico” surgia, inesperadamente do negrume dum Lisboa enorme para raiar de esperança a minha alma. Passou por mim, mirando-me, de relance, e logo compreendi ter-me reconhecido. Afinal havia um elo a ligar-nos, tínhamos sido companheiros de viagem, na mesma carruagem.

Foi-se sentar num banco, à minha alma, mas do outro lado do eléctrico, num lugar semelhante àquele que tomara no comboio. Por ser mais estreito o eléctrico, melhor pude admirar o seu lindo perfil.

Animei-me e ainda hoje não posso descrever a tempestade que ia dentro de mim. Não perguntei donde vinha nem estranhei por que artes de feitiçaria ela ressurgia ali. Ele queria juntar-nos no eléctrico. Eu tinha de aceitar o repto do destino ou nunca mais.

Não despregava os olhos dela, esquecido que imitava o homem calvo do comboio. Tornara-me atrevido, castigador.

A sorte dela era eu estar algo recuado e, por isso, o meu atrevimento não era tão ostentativo. A rapariga, no entanto, pressentia o meu interesse. Volvia-se para

even further into myself.

At last I climbed aboard the tram and found a seat at the rear. The driver held his watch up to check the timetable. The tram, like the train carriage, was only half full. The Ministry buildings outside slumbered in the freezing night and shadows flitted along the arcades. The equestrian statue of King Dom José slipped away into the fog. Feeling glum, I kept my distance from the anonymous faces, indifferent to their tired conversations of which I heard only dribs and drabs. I was disconsolate, as if I had lost the most important thing in my life. The surrounding night seemed no less black than my heart.

As the tram started up, exactly on time, I felt a white coat brush my side. I still recall today how my poor heart, roused once more, began to pound. The “doctor’s daughter” had emerged unexpectedly from the vast Lisbon night. Hope dawned in my soul. She glanced down as she passed, and I saw that she had recognized me. We had something in common, after all, having shared the same train carriage.

She took a seat ahead of me, but on the other side of the tram, just as she had on the train. The tram was narrower, though, and I was better able to appreciate her lovely profile.

My spirits revived. Even today I cannot describe the storm that raged within me. I neither asked myself where she had come from, nor wondered what sorcery had led her to reappear so unexpectedly. I put it all down to fate. Fate had contrived to bring us together on that tram. I had to take the chance before me. It was now or never.

I did not take my eyes from her once, unaware that I was imitating the bald man from the train. I had become offensively forward.

Fortunately for her, I was somewhat tucked away and my boldness not too

trás e fitava-me.

Havia qualquer coisa que me dizia que aceitava lisonjeada a minha aberta homenagem. Gostaria de poder levantar-me e sentar-me a seu lado, pagando-lhe o bilhete. Mas tal atitude não seria apreciada por uma filha-família. Um acto impensado, uma precipitação estúpida da minha parte e tudo ficaria estragado.

Em plena Almirante Reis, eu indagava a mim mesmo qual seria a sua paragem. Desceria no encalço dela, seguindo-lhe as pisadas? Abordá-la-ia depois para dizer duas palavras respeitosas? Talvez ela não apreciasse tal procedimento, pela primeira vez. O melhor era deixar correr as coisas e tomar atitude que devia, conforme as circunstâncias. Fosse como fosse, havia saber onde ela morava e passaria a rondar a casa ou o prédio, como um cão de fila. Ela reunia as condições que aspirava na mulher ideal. Não ia deixá-la escapar.

O destino juntara-nos, insistia, quisera isso mesmo e assim seriam cumpridos os seus desígnios.

A cada paragem, eu dizia a mim mesmo: “É aqui...”. O sangue acelerava-me na expectativa da grande aventura. Mas ela não se movia, absorta em pensamentos.

Pus-me a imaginar o que sairia dali. Se tudo corresse bem, não abandonaria Lisboa. Lembrava-me que juntos os quarenta escudos com o que guardava em casa, eu só podia aguentar-me na capital mais dois dias, contando já com o bilhete de regresso de comboio. Mas isto não era grande impedimento, pediria dinheiro ao irmão em Coimbra. Já me via em Lisboa, no Natal e no Ano Bom, a dançar com a moça, sob o olhar confiante dos progenitores. E se o dinheiro não chegasse, mandaria uma carta patética a Macau, para o pai, inventando uma aflição de chorar pedras para receber um cheque mais substancial.

Pensamentos loucos ocorriam-me em turbilhão, enquanto suspenso esperava que

obvious. The girl had sensed my interest though, and turned and stared.

There was something in her gaze that told me she was flattered by my frank admiration. I wanted to get up and sit next to her, to pay her fare. But a girl from a good family would not appreciate such behaviour. A thoughtless move, a rash act on my part and everything would be ruined.

On Avenida Almirante Reis I began to wonder where she would get off. Would I follow suit, follow her? Stop the girl in the street with a few polite words? Perhaps she would not appreciate such forwardness from a stranger. It would be best to let events take their course, to tailor my approach to the circumstances. Whatever happened, I was going to find out where she lived, and thenceforth I would prowl around her house or apartment building like a guard dog. She had every quality I desired in a woman. I was not going to let her get away.

Fate had brought us together, I insisted. This was fate's express wish and its designs would be fulfilled.

At every stop I said to myself: “It must be here!...” My pulse raced in anticipation of a great adventure. But she sat motionless, absorbed in her thoughts.

I started to imagine possible outcomes. If everything went to plan, I would not leave Lisbon. I remembered that the forty escudos I had with me, together with the money back at my digs, would only be enough to stay in the capital for another two days, taking into account that I still needed a return train ticket. That was no great stumbling block though. My brother in Coimbra could lend me some cash. I already saw myself in Lisbon, at Christmas and New Year's, dancing with the girl as her trusting parents watched on. And if the money was not enough, I would write a begging letter to my father in Macau, invent some sob story in order to wheedle a more substantial cheque out of him.

Crazy thoughts whirled in my head as I

ela se erguesse.

O eléctrico do destino rumava para o fim. Nunca adregara de encher-se completamente. Se me perguntassem quem especialmente vi, além da moça, não conseguiria responder. Não contemplara nenhum rosto, senão o daquela rapariga, linda como um sonho que era nesse instante totalmente a minha vida.

A noite já não era mais triste, propícia aos rostos melancólicos e fúnebres. A noite era pletórica de amor, uma música misteriosa trinava aos meus ouvidos e eu sentia vontade de cantar. Tinha-me reconciliado com o exílio, já não havia em mim saudades de Macau.

Compreendi, de repente, que abeirávamos da Praça do Chile. O eléctrico diminuiu de andamento, deu um puxão final e parou.

Conservei-me estático, enquanto os passageiros saíam, um a um, pelo corredor. Sentia-me comovido, ia agora jogar-se o meu destino. Levantámo-nos ao mesmo tempo, sendo os últimos, a moça à frente, eu atrás. Estava tão perto dela que podia aspirar o perfume dos seus cabelos. Admirei-lhe as costas, a curva da cintura apertada, pernas modeladas e bem equilibradas nos seus sapatos de salto. Era mais baixa que eu, pequenina e mimosa.

Na porta, junto do guarda-freio distraído, ela atrasou o andar. Girando a cabeça para mim, murmuro baixinho:

– São cem “paus”.

Aturdido, como se recebesse uma vergastada, repliquei:

– Só tenho quarenta...

– Ora, bolas!..

A boca torceu-se num esgar de profundo desdém. Saltou do eléctrico e molhou-se num charco de água, que também pisei. Mediu-me ainda uma vez e fez-me um insofismável gesto obsceno. Batendo depois com o tacão na paragem húmida, atravessou a rua, desapareceu rapidamente nas sombras da praça.

Dei ainda uns passos em falso, não atinando para onde me dirigia. A chuva, então, voltou a cair fortemente...

waited in suspense for her to get up.

The tram of fate was reaching the end of the line. It had never been more than half full. If asked had I seen anyone in particular, I would have been unable to answer. I had paid no attention to any face but hers. It was as beautiful as a dream and, at that moment, filled my life completely.

The night was no longer sad, fit only for gloomy, lugubrious faces. The night was full of love, a mysterious music rang in my ears and I felt like bursting into song. I had reconciled myself with my exile, and no longer felt *saudades* for Macau.

All of a sudden I realized that we were arriving at Praça do Chile. The tram slowed, shuddered and stopped.

I sat without moving as the passengers filed out one by one. I felt keyed up. Now my fate was going to be decided. The last people aboard, the girl and I, both got up at the same time, she ahead, me just behind. I was so close to her that I could smell her hair. I admired her back, the narrow curve of her waist, her legs shapely and well balanced atop high-heeled shoes. She was smaller than me, petite and lovely.

At the exit, next to the distracted guard, she slowed her pace. Tilting her head towards me, she murmured:

“It’ll be a hundred escudos.”

Thunderstruck, my head spinning, I replied:

“I’ve only got forty...”

“Oh, for God’s sake...”

Her mouth twisted into a sneer of pure disdain. She leapt down from the tram, straight into a puddle, into which I stepped too. She looked me up and down once more and then made an unspeakably rude gesture. With a clack she turned on her heel, crossed the wet road and disappeared into the shadows.

I stumbled forward, hardly aware of my surroundings. Again the rain began to pour.

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