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# TRANSVERSE
Issue 7: Translation

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*editor:* andrés pérez simón

*critical writing:* andrés pérez simón (ed.), sarah o'brien,
pablo pemeja, teresa russo, ioana sion

*creative writing:* adil d'sousa (ed.), zarko radakovic,
hugh leonard, vanessa robinson

*new books:* jena habegger
*copyeditor:* laurel damashek
*cover design:* bao nguyen

to contact the editor, please send an email to
transversejournal@gmail.com

www.chass.utoronto.ca/complit/journal.htm

**transverse: a comparative studies journal**
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## *translation in comparative studies*

editor’s preface
andrés pérez simón 8

intersection/ crossings/ translation of literatures
dorothea martens 10

criminal adaptations: successful artistic and cultural infidelities
joe culpepper 19

preposterous translation: ass-lore and myth in *a midsummer night’s dream*
kristen bennett 31

crevel’s *babylone*: a paradigm of babel?
tania collani 43

the use of italics in the english translations of dostoevsky’s *the gambler*
nadezhda korchagina 55

how nationalism enhanced the first translation of *beowulf*
mark bradshaw busbee 64

## *new books*

şebnem susam-sarajeva. *theories on the move: translation's role in the travels of literary theories.*
naomi baldinger 82

sandra bermann and michael wood. *nation, language, and the ethics of translation*.
hallie smith 84

arnetha f. ball and ted lardner. *african american literacies unleashed: vernacular english and the composition classroom*.
abbey j. kanzig 86

ngũgĩ wa thiong'o. *wizard of the crow*.
alexander hartwiger 88

## *creative writing*

the wooing of etain
rosemary rowley 91

polyphony
jesse ferguson 103

the catch
jaleen grove 104

práctica profesional
natasha tiniacos 105

soft sleeper
d. bruno starrs 106

***contributors*** 117

## editor's preface

In his seminal essay "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" (1959), R. Jakobson differentiated "three kinds of translation." The first one was the intralingual translation or interpretation of verbal signs by using other signs of the same language; the second, interlingual translation, or interpretation of verbal signs by means of other verbal language; the third, intersemiotic translation, or interpretation of verbal signs by signs of nonverbal sign systems. While it was the second type that was traditionally defined as proper translation for centuries, linguistic and literary studies in the last decades have broaden this initial concept to encompass the other two variants as well. The present issue of *Transverse* proposes a reexamination of the role of translation in the field of comparative studies. The fact is that translation constitutes a key factor not only in the intersection of national literatures, but also in the aesthetic/ideological fluxes that are produced by adaptations from one artistic code into another.

Issue number 7 of *Transverse* is composed of six essays, four literary reviews, and five pieces of creative writing. According to our new policy of thematic issues, the sections of Critical Writing and New Books are devoted to topics relevant to translation and comparative literature. In Critical Writing, two of the contributors analyze the strong presence of textual echoes of classic literature in later works. In her "Intersection/ Crossings/ Translation of Literatures," D. Martens explains how the renowned poet S. Heaney translated a passage from Virgil's *Aeneid*, and the way he recurred to T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* to produce intertextual resonances that were equivalent to those in Virgil's poem. In her "Preposterous Translation: Ass-Lore and Myth in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," K. Bennet avoid a narrow definition of translation by providing an analysis of Shakespeare's "metamorphosis," a constant remaking of textual sources ranging from Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* to Ovid, St. Paul, and Erasmus.

In "Crevel's *Babylone*: A Paradigm of Babel?," T. Collani writes about her experience as translator of the French surrealist author R. Crevel. Her Italian translation constituted a *tour de force* that constantly required her to abandon literal transposition in order to (paradoxically) remain faithful to the aesthetic and linguist codes in Crevel's novel. In his "How Nationalism Enhanced the First Translation of *Beowulf*," M. B. Busbee explains how nineteenth-century European nationalism motivated the study of *Beowulf*. He analyzes how the nineteenth-century Danish scholar, poet and priest, N.F.S. Grundtvig, used translation to popularize the poem.

J. Culpepper analyzes R. Dahl's short story "Lamb to the Slaughter" and its cinematographic adaptations by A. Hitchcock and P. Almodóvar. In his "Criminal Adaptations:  Successful Artistic and Cultural Infidelities", Culpepper works with a concept of "translation" that is decidedly cross-cultural and cross-medium. Finally, N. Korchagina proposes a comparative analysis of two English translations of one of F. Dostoevsky's novellas. In her "The Use of Italics in the English Translations of Dostoevsky's *The Gambler*", Korchagina reveals how italicized units in both translations do not necessarily correspond with those in the original work, thus producing a considerable semantic shift that should not remain unnoticed when reading the English version.

As I mentioned before, the section of New Books contains four reviews of recent works that are relevant to our field of inquiry. H. Smith reviews *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation* (2005), edited by S. Bermann and M. Wood; Naomi Baldinger writes on *Theories on the Move: Translation's Role in the Travels of Literary Theories* (2006), by Sebnem Susam-Sarajeva; and A.J. Kanzig examines *African American Literacies Unleashed: Vernacular English and the Composition Classroom* (2005), by A. Ball and T. Lardner. In the field of fictional writing, A. Hartwiger reviews the novel *Wizard of the Crow* (2006), by the Kenian author N. Wa Thiong'o, who published the novel in his native Gikuyu two years before than the English version.

Four poems and one short story are included in the section of Creative Writing. "The Wooing of Etain" is a long poem by R. Rowley that recreates the tradition of the Irish epic. The other three pieces in this issue of *Transverse* are "Polyphony," by J. Ferguson; "The Catch," by J. Grove; and "Práctica profesional," by N. Tiniacos. The story "Soft Sleeper" was written by D.B. Starrs.

I would like to thank my editorial team for the hard work in the preceding months, especially Adil D'Sousa, editor of the Creative Writing section. I want to acknowledge the support of Roland LeHuenen, Bao Nguyen, and Aphrodite Gardner, all of them members the Centre for Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto.

Andrés Pérez Simón

# intersection/ crossings/ translation of literatures

dorothea martens

Black lake, black boat, two black, cut-paper people. (Sylvia Plath)

In this article, I would like to point out that while translation is generally understood to enable literature to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries, translators still rarely find any means to preserve those crossings of literature which are manifest within the text itself. Taking the theory of intertextuality as a framework, I investigate how the English translators of the Latin epic Virgil's *Aeneid* deal with the intersections of both Greek and Latin literature, which permeate and characterise the text profoundly. In order to point out how enriching translations which do render the literary echoes can be, I will focus on the analysis of one such case: Seamus Heaney's translation into English of a passage from *Aeneid* Book VI, which he included in his poetry collection *Seeing Things* (1991).

Although the term 'intertextuality' was coined by Julia Kristeva only in the late 1960s, the understanding that texts do not stand on their own but relate to one another was already present in Classical antiquity. Focussing on the role of the author, Horace and Longinus in particular emphasise the poetics of *imitatio* (i.e. elevating one's style by explicitly drawing on one's predecessors) as essential for the creation of sublime poetry[1]. Indeed, Classical writing may be seen as some of the most intertextual and self-conscious, which also explains my choice of case-study. In contrast to the Classical approach, Kristeva concentrates on the text as the dynamic space where previous texts intersect, which she calls 'intertextuality'. She famously defines it as "a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double" (37). A new text emerges from the interplay of existing texts which are still traceable on its lexical surface creating "at least double" meaning.

Considering Kristeva's view of texts, I become intrigued to explore how it may be reconciled with the practice and need for translations. For how can the "mosaic of quotations" be rendered into a new language and culture? How can the double meaning be conveyed, if the echoing elements in one language are represented with some in another that do not necessarily possess that characteristic? These questions already assume two events which cannot automatically be assumed: the translator recognises the echoes of other texts, and s/he chooses to translate them as carriers of double meaning. Already, we glimpse some aspects of the difficulties and challenges involved in this issue, which I will further illustrate with a study of actual translations and their dealings with intertextuality.

In my case-study, I look at Virgil's *Aeneid* and investigate how its English translators deal with its intertextual relationships. Predominantly, the *Aeneid* closely engages with Homer's epic poems *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and defines itself through and against them. Yet the overall scope of texts which it relates to is vast, including both Greek and Latin literature. Indeed, Kristeva's "mosaic of quotations" aptly defines it. A multitude of *Aeneid* translations into English have been accomplished over the centuries, beginning with Gavin Douglas' *XII bukes of Eneidos* at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Probably the most influential translation was by John Dryden in 1697; it is still admired. In the nineteenth century, John Connington's *Aeneid of Virgil Translated into English Verse* (1866) is noteworthy, as is C. Day Lewis' *Aeneid of Virgil* (1952) in the twentieth century. Out of the most recent ones, David West's translation (1991, rev. 2003) is recommendable[2].

Taking these translations as representatives of the available multitude of *Aeneid* translations, I studied them with particular focus on the intertextual issue. Though not totally unexpected considering the complexity of the issue, my discoveries were rather disillusioning. None of the translators translate any of the literary echoes at all. Instead, the emphasis is (throughout time!) on choices of metre, diction, and whether or not line-by-line translation should be followed[3]. Various reasons for such behaviour may be suggested. The translators as readers of the Latin text may not have been aware of the scope and types of literary echoes to its Greek predecessors and Latin contemporaries. Or they may have themselves decided not to render these echoes in the translation. Such a decision may have been due to the fact that they could not find satisfactory translation solutions, and/or found it impossible to render these comprehensibly to the new target audience. Since intertextual relationships are such difficult constructs both to identify and reconstruct, it is also possible that translation practices traditionally tend to leave them untranslated, except perhaps where direct quotations are concerned. However, the result is, of course, that the reader of the translation does not gain access to these transformations and intersections manifest within the original.

In light of this tendency not to translate literary echoes, I would like to point out by means of thorough illustration how enriching for the translation it can be, if the translator does choose to render these literary echoes. In my reading of translations from the *Aeneid*, I found one wonderful exception where this was the case. Seamus Heaney opens his poetry collection *Seeing Things* (1991) with a translation into English of a passage from *Aeneid* Book VI. In this book, Aeneas travels to the underworld to meet his dead father Anchises, and also to learn more about the future city of Rome and its heroes. The translated passage comes from the beginning of Book VI before Aeneas enters the underworld. He has just met the Sibyl of Cumae who prophesied all his sufferings yet to come once he has reached his final destination in Latium: it will be a second *Iliad* essentially. The translated passage begins with Aeneas' response to this very unfavourable prophecy:

> non ulla laborum,
> o virgo, nova mi facies inopinave surgit;
> omnia praecepi atque animo mecum ante peregi. (*Aeneid*, VI, l.103-5)
>
> [No new and unexpected form of toils arises to me, o maiden, I have imagined everything before, and I have gone through it all before in my mind.]

Many readers will know the Aeneas of the Dido episode in Book IV. There, Aeneas falls in love with Dido and seemingly forgets his mission to found Rome. Instead he supports Dido in building Carthage, until he is reprimanded by the gods and breaks with Dido to continue his journey (which also causes most readers to break with him in turn). How changed do we find him here! In these lines, Aeneas discloses a clear knowledge not only of the scope of trouble still awaiting him but also of the responsibility he is carrying. Here, he is fully aware of his role as founder of Rome and willing to undertake it despite (or rather in full sight of) the dangers he has yet to overcome. Note that "omnia" is placed in the emphatic first position of the line. Aeneas stresses that he is prepared for everything. The last line is particularly weighty, expressing both a sense of suffering and enduring the same for the greater good – the line has almost a majestic feel about it. Note the opening with the long "o"-vowel that forms an assonance with the previous line in "o virgo". Remarkably, three elisions occur in this line, which may express in form Aeneas' imagined overcoming of future troubles. The dominance of the "a"-vowel is also salient, forming another assonance. The repeated long "o" and "a" sounds add a solemn touch as well as express a sense of suffering. Also striking is the alliteration in "p" of the two compound verbs that complement each other. Probably most powerful, however, is the anagram of “omnia” and “animo”. Note how beautifully sense and form mirror each other here: he has already perused everything (omnia) in his mind (animo). This line is exceedingly rich, expressing a controlled mind which nonetheless allows for human emotions. And this is what characterises the hero Aeneas in this part of the poem.

Aeneas’ trip to the underworld rings with echoes to Odysseus’ trip to the underworld in *Odyssey* Book XI. He travels there to meet the blind seer Tiresias who foretells him particulars about his return home to Ithaca, a journey that may still hold for him terrible sufferings in the form of his entire crew being lost, himself shipwrecked, and at the end the war with the suitors of Penelope. Concluding, however, he also prophesies his gentle death in old age. Odysseus responds:

> Τειρεσιη, τα μεν αρ που επεκλωσαν τεοι αυτοι. (*Odyssey*, XI, l.139)
>
> [Tiresias, these things then, I suppose, the gods themselves have spun the thread of.]

Although having sought Tiresias to hear this prophecy, Odysseus’ response almost appears to make it superfluous in retrospect. Whatever the dangers and sufferings awaiting him, he attributes it to the gods’ decision and sees lamenting or further deliberation as pointless. When comparing his words to Aeneas’, it strikes me that Odysseus does not mention himself. In contrast, Aeneas stresses himself (note the two pronouns and two verbs in the first person singular). Both accept the prospects of suffering, but there is a clear difference: the one almost waves it off as inevitable by referring to the gods as his superiors that control the situation; and Aeneas draws attention to himself, his “animus” in which he has pondered the full weight and scale of the dangers: he carries the “labores” of the future people. This is a fine example where we can see Virgil’s epic defining itself both within and against its Greek model: the idea of the hero takes a new turn but does so within the original parameters. In his translation, Heaney renders Aeneas’ words as follows:

> Heroic Aeneas began: ‘No ordeal, O Priestess,
> That you can imagine would ever surprise me
> For already I have foreseen and foresuffered all.

My interest lies in the third line, particularly its closure. This echoes Tiresias' words in 'The Fire Sermon' of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. There, Tiresias describes the afternoon scene between the typist and the clerk and concludes with an aside in which he stresses that his part as eternal fore-seer has made him also eternal fore-sufferer:

> And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
> Enacted on this same divan or bed;
> I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
> And walked among the lowest of the dead.
> (*Waste Land* III. 'The Fire Sermon', l.243-6)

Eliot himself draws attention to the central part Tiresias plays in his modern epic in the accompanying notes to line 218:

> Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character', is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem. (78)

If we follow Eliot's interpretation, his poem pivots on Tiresias, he is the protagonist, the modern hero, possibly the modern Aeneas as has been suggested and debated by academics. Parallels are undeniably there between the modern appearance of the blind seer and the Virgilian Aeneas, the founder of Rome, though whether they play a more important role than other texts for *The Waste Land* is indeed questionable[4]. With his allusion in his translation, Heaney possibly puts his interpretation forward. However, most relevant to my investigation is the fact that Heaney draws the link with the English poem at all. Here, we see a possible translation solution that succeeds in conveying to the readers of the translation, to some extent at least, the intertextual quality of the original text. Rather than going back to Homer's *Odyssey* or ignoring the allusion completely, Heaney recreates it with an allusion to a text from the target culture, which he can therefore expect to be more accessible for his target audience. Thus, Heaney encourages his readers to view his translation also in the light of *The Waste Land*, to view Aeneas also in the light of Tiresias. He creates access to further meaning which was present also in the original, but difficult to preserve across the cultural boundary.

How ingeniously this is done becomes clear when we consider not only the already suggested possible links between *The Waste Land* and the *Aeneid*, but also the fact that it is Tiresias who is being alluded to—Tiresias whom we already met prophesying to Odysseus, a conversation which serves as the Greek model for the encounter between the Sibyl and Aeneas[5]. Thus, Heaney's choice of allusion to *The Waste Land* may also be seen to function as representation of the original relationship between the Greek model and its Latin successor, as well as its intertextual continuation into Modern times. This is also further elaborated by Heaney's choice of text for the second translation, which concludes the collection. It is a translation from Dante's *Inferno*, which Dante modelled on Virgil's *Aeneid*. Heaney's translation is entitled 'The Crossing' and follows on in narrative from his *Aeneid* translation: Dante with Virgil as his guide reaches the Styx, encounters the ferryman Charon, and together they cross the lake to the underworld. This episode echoes the lake-crossing of Aeneas and the Sibyl in the *Aeneid* once they have acquired the golden bough, with whose quest Heaney's translated passage closed. Taking into account the importance of Dante's poetry for Eliot's *The Waste Land* as well, we may get some idea of the complexity of text transformation and intersection suggested by Heaney both in his poetry collection through the choice of framing translations, and in the translation itself through his choice of translation solution.

In conclusion, intertextuality clearly poses a challenge for translators. Unfortunately, translators are rarely willing to take up that challenge, as the case-study of *Aeneid* translations exemplified. One exception was Heaney's translation, in which he draws on the English Modern poem *The Waste Land* to convey the allusive quality of the original Latin poem. Indeed, close analysis showed what greater aims Heaney pursues with his translation solution: while establishing an intertextual link in the target-culture, it represents the original literary relationship within itself. This is possible through an interplay of translation and previous allusion combined in the new text. It is a very creative and powerful translation solution, which adds a further complexity to the concept of intertextuality in rendering the same.

## notes

[1] Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, and Longinus, *On Sublimity* in Russell (1989).

[2] English translations of Virgil: Connington, J. (1866), *The Aeneid of Virgil Translated into English Verse*, London: Longman, 1866; Douglas, G. *XII bukes of Eneidos*, London: William Copland, 1553; Dryden, J. *The Works of Virgil, Containing His Pastorals, Georgics, and Aeneis. Translated into English Verse*, London: Jacob Tonson, 1697; Lewis, C.D. *The Aeneid of Virgil*, London: Hogarth Press, 1952; West, D. *The Aeneid*. 1991. Rev. ed. London: Penguin, 2003. See also Gransden, K.W. ed. *Virgil in English*, London: Penguin, 1996.

[3] For short and comprehensive surveys of *Aeneid* translators, cf. Gransden (1996: p.xix-xxx) and Burrow (1997).

[4] See Reeves (1989: 28-58) for a powerful intertextual reading of *The Waste Land* in the light of *The Aeneid*, where he also discusses links and triangular engagement with Dante's *Inferno*. While Reeves emphasises the multi-facetness of *The Waste Land* which allows for many, possibly completely different readings, Kenner (1973) and Ziolkowski (1993: 123) argue about whether or not the Aeneid plays the most important role for Eliot's poem, rather than Jesse L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* and other texts.

[5] I  have not found this fact pointed out anywhere in the literature on Heaney, although it is clearly highly relevant.

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# criminal adaptations: successful artistic and cultural infidelities

joe culpepper

> I steal from every single movie ever made […] I steal from everything. Great artists steal, they don't do homages.
>
> (Quentin Tarantino, who stole this line from T.S. Eliot)

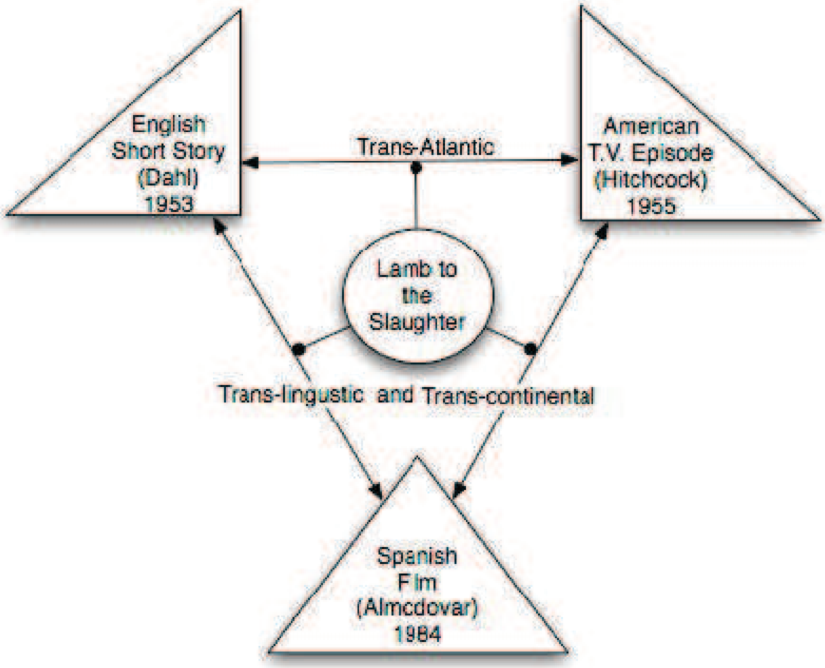
Steal once and they call you a plagiarist; steal a thousand times and they call you a genius. The art of adaptation is, in many ways, the art of creative thievery. Sometimes a story is lifted from one medium to another (such as from a novel to a film), but in some cases the act of theft crosses cultural borders rather than artistic ones. In 1994, Mike White accused filmmaker Quentin Tarantino of unfairly adapting Ringo Lam's *Lung fu fong wan* (1987) to create *Reservoir Dogs* (released in 1992). White constructed an 11-minute short film, titled *Who Do You Think You're Fooling: The Story of a Robbery* (1994), which juxtaposes the Hong Kong and the U.S. films' strikingly similar plot elements and camera angles. Closer scrutiny of this short piece of video criticism reveals that Tarantino and Lam's films complement each other intertextually – exploring interesting parts of the narrative left unexplored by the other. Here, however, I would simply like to signal the emotionally charged tone of White's title and how this example puts a new twist on an old prejudice that has consistently plagued adaptation criticism.

"Who do you think you're fooling?" is the rhetorical question shouted by the betrayed lover to the unfaithful partner. The question is actually a statement, which assumes guilt and expresses anger precisely because it is formed as a question: "you should have known better than to try and lie to me" is the veiled meaning. And although White's video criticizing Tarantino for not citing Lam's film as a source of inspiration is in many ways justified, the tone of its title echoes the counter-productive and self-righteous "infidelity" discourse found in much adaptation criticism.

In the introductory chapter of his *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Adaptation*, Robert Stam identifies terms such as "'infidelity,' 'betrayal,' 'deformation,' 'violation,' 'bastardization,' 'vulgarization,' and 'desecration'" as indicators of the moralistic and presumptuous tone taken by many literary critics towards adaptations (3). Here, however, Stam is arguing against the classic prejudice of scholarly connoisseurs regarding works of literature adapted to film. Like the majority of criticism devoted to tackling questions of adaptation – George Bluestone's "The Limits of the Novel and the Limits of Film," Seymour Chatman's "What Novels Can Do that Films Can't (and Vice Versa)," and Bruce Morrissette's "Aesthetic Response to Novel and Film" to name just a few – Stam's approaches the issue of adaptation prejudice with the novel/film relationship at the theoretical forefront. But how do other types of adaptations inspire different types of bias?

Instead of thumbing his nose at an "inferior" filmic representation of a celebrated Jane Austen or Charles Dicken's story, Mike White expresses moral outrage of a different sort; it is as if Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* has cheated on him (the viewer) by sleeping with another text and then hiding that fact. In this instance of uncited, invisible, and unmarked adaptation, fidelity to the "original" text is not the main problem; instead, fidelity to the spectator (who wishes to be informed of such textual relations) is paramount. Is this shift in moral outrage indicative of the different attitudes concerning cross-medium adaptations (literature to film) versus like-medium adaptations (film to film)? And if so, how does the added element of a cross-cultural exchange influence the adaptation process?

To engage such questions, this paper will avoid using the staple food of literary criticism's diet: the novel. Instead, Alfred Hitchcock, Roald Dahl, and Pedro Almodóvar's versions of "Lamb to the Slaughter" – a television broadcast, a short story, and part of a film respectively – will be used to analyze the results of cross-cultural and cross-medium "translation." I place the word "translation" in quotation marks to indicate its near synonymous relationship to the concept of adaptation in this discussion. This theoretical proximity is only possible based on the new brand of translation criticism, which Linda Hutcheon describes as focused on the process of "transmutation or transcoding," basically the recoding of a text into "a new set of conventions as well as signs" (16). In *A Theory of Adaptation*, she also notes that this recent conception of translation is a far cry from old-school approaches, which idealize the "source" text and denigrate the "target" text. In the past, adaptation critics inherited translation critics' biases for the "original" or the "authentic" text; today, scholars are focusing more on the moment of contact and the process of transaction taking place as multiple languages or texts cross paths. As a professional translator, adapter and screenwriter has recently argued: translation is adaptation (Paquin 1). The Latin preposition *trans* – across, beyond or over – captures the movement of "Lamb to the Slaughter" from one continent and language to the next; the verb "adapt" – to fit or to modify – signals the text's multi-media recoding; the combination of these kinetic changes results in a holistic product of multidirectional intersections:


English
Short Story
(Dahl)
1953
Trans-Atlantic
American
T.V. Episode
(Hitchcock)
1955
Lamb to
the
Slaughter
Trans-lingustic and Trans-continental
Spanish
Film
(Almodovar)
1984

This diagram is by no means a complete model of "Lamb to the Slaughter" incarnations, there are surely others waiting to be discovered; therefore, it is not meant to imply that an "ideal" reader (no such person exists) needs all three versions mentioned to complete some textual puzzle and to unlock the secret meaning (no such thing exists) of this story. At the least, a perusal of each section of this text's tripartite, symbiotic existence will generate a better understanding of citation practices, different mediums' aesthetic techniques, and cultural modifications employed to make each adaptation successful. For example, both Alfred Hitchcock and Roald Dahl's' versions of the same story operate autonomously and independently, but together they reveal a unique short story to television and English to American translation.

To begin, three specific moments in the T.V. version will be isolated and compared to Dahl's prose version. This method of analysis attempts to read the two texts against the common critical grain, which often approaches adaptations as necessarily linear, chronological events; in other words, as a literary source and its filmic derivative or a primary and its secondary [1]. Most often, of course, the order of a story's appearances in the artistic world has little to do with the order in which the spectator receives it. Despite the fact that Dahl's fiction was widely read in the U.S. when the short story was published (1953), Hitchcock's 1955 broadcast (or one of its subsequent rebroadcasts) more likely constitutes the average Anglophone's first reception of "Lamb to the Slaughter." Therefore, just as most people saw Mary Maloney murder Patrick Maloney for the first time on television, examples of differing artistic renderings will be analyzed via screen shots first and prose passages second.

Hitchcock's version uses a special technique to control the spectator's point of view and reception of the central narrative event in "Lamb to the Slaughter:" the unique way in which one shocked, desperate, and temporarily insane housewife kills her husband by hitting him on the back of the head with a frozen club of meat. The actual murder, which in both Hitchcock and Dahl's versions is surprisingly abrupt, is designed to catch the audience, like Patrick Maloney, completely off-guard. The following shot-by-shot analysis of the murder begins right after Mary has distractedly carried a frozen piece of meat from the garage into the kitchen. Though Patrick has just announced to his pregnant wife that he loves someone else and wants a divorce, Mary, in a daze of disbelief, automatically begins to prepare the evening meal:

> (Medium shot of Mary, her hands unwrap the leg of lamb for dinner on the kitchen table)
> (Long shot of Patrick in the living room preparing to leave without his supper)
> — "I'm leaving," he says.
> (Medium close-up shot of Mary)
> — "Patrick you can't. You can't go, you can't, you can't."
> (The smooth shift from a medium shot to a medium close-up redirects the audience's view of Mary away from her hands and the huge leg of lamb on the table. The meal's main course, soon to be a murder weapon, is subtly placed off-screen, out of sight and out of mind. The more desperate tone in her voice and her increasingly distraught facial expression command the specators' attention and naturally motivate the camera's closer framing of her body. The audience, like Mary, has forgotten about the lamb on the table, because Patrick's impending departure demands more immediate attention).
> — "No?"
> (This is Patrick's disinterested response from the living room which openly

> adjoins the kitchen.
> His reply is strictly oral – the camera remains on Mary and her imploring face).
> — “Patrick I won’t let you, I won’t, I won’t, I won’t!”
> — “There’s no sense getting hysterical about this whole thing.”
> (The camera continues to hold Mary’s face in a medium close-up).
> — “Patrick I mean it!”
> (Pause)
> (Long shot through the open doorway of Patrick as he turns from the writing desk).
> — “Try and stop me,” he says.
> (Back to the same medium close-up shot of Mary).
>
> (At this point, Mary slowly, almost involuntarily, moves from the kitchen and through the doorway. The only sound heard is a scrape or two of her feet on the linoleum before she steps onto the living room carpet. The camera follows her movement, tracking from left to right, which reveals slightly more of Mary’s figure as she approaches Patrick with an imploring look on her furrowed brow face. To the audience it appears that she is walking with her hands folded in front of her. As she moves from the living room to the kitchen, Patrick’s figure, still standing and bending over the desk, enters the frame.)
>
> (Only in the last second or two of this tracking shot is it noticeable that Mary holds onto something with both hands. By the time the audience realizes that she has invisibly carried the frozen leg of lamb with her from the kitchen, the murder is taking place. Suddenly her arms heave up, raising the club of meat into full view, right before crashing it down onto Patrick’s unsuspecting head. Immediately afterwards, she stumbles in a trance-like stupor into the kitchen and puts the lamb onto a tray and into the oven.) [2]

Hitchcock’s masterful use of visual deception to surprise the audience is similar to the narrative technique known as “ellipsis.” First of all, the above combination of passionate dialogue and subtle framing represents the filling in of an ellipsis left open by Dahl’s original text. “Ellipsis,” according to Robert Stam, occurs “where major or minor events are completely skipped over" (33). For example, the description of Patrick Maloney's murder in the short story is described by a mere six lines of prose:

> "For God's sake," he said, hearing her, but not turning round. "Don't make supper for me. I'm going out."
> At that point, Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head.
> She might just as well have hit him with a steel club (Dahl 111).

Hitchcock's scene breaks into and opens up this part of the narrative after Patrick's line "I'm going out" (or "I'm leaving," as is said in the television episode). Narratively and visually, the filmed segment adds dialogue, facial expressions, and physical movement that the prose version either leaves vague or does not provide at all. Because Hitchcock is turning an eight-and-one-half-paged story into a 23 minute television broadcast, he is able to spend extra time fleshing out the murder scene without eliminating important plot elements. His addition of detail and filmic sleight-of-hand with a leg of lamb does not slow down the action of the murder itself. The two presentations of Patrick's death each highlight the event's speed. Using two different artistic techniques, both versions deny premeditation on Mary's part and emphasize the unfortunate combination of an unfaithful husband, an unlikely murder weapon, an impulsive reaction and a moment of temporary insanity.

"Ellipsis" in both literature and film's terminologies also refers to the skipping over of larger narrative events as a whole in terms of discourse-time and story-time. Two other scenes, the one following the murder and the one preceding it, reveal artistic modifications made in Hitchcock's filmed narrative and Dahl's written one. After coming to her senses and putting the lamb into the oven to cook, Mary Maloney decides to cover up her crime. The audience watches her make a phone call, canceling a date the couple had arranged with friends, because Patrick is terribly "tired" and wants to have dinner at home. Mary then goes to the grocery store to buy some vegetables for the meal, creating an alibi for herself. Dahl's prose spans an entire page describing both Mary as she practices what she will say to the grocer and then the encounter itself, but Hitchcock uses ellipsis to rapidly move over this part of the narrative. The camera shows Mary leave the house and then a quick dissolve sequence of her items being rung up at the store, indicating in a few seconds of visuals (discourse-time) the passage of a roughly twenty-minute shopping trip (story-time). The next shot shows Mary returning home, pretending to discover her husband's dead body, and then crying and sobbing into the phone as she notifies the police. Hitchcock carefully places an ellipsis to visually gloss over the narrative's shopping trip – constituting an ellision of a minor event and certain details.

In another earlier scene, however, Hitchcock does just the opposite and fills in an ellipsis left open in Dahl's prose. To describe the initial confrontation between Patrick and Mary and the revelation of his extramarital affair Dahl simply writes: "And he told her. It didn't take long, four or five minutes at most, and she sat very still through it all, watching him with a kind of dazed horror as he went further and further away from her with each word" (110). Here, there is a specific reference to four or five minutes of story-time passing that the author tells the reader to skip-over in discourse-time. The script (also written by Dahl) as adapted and filmed by Hitchcock fills in the "he told her" ellipsis with specific dialogue and details:

> — "I wanna leave you, Mary. You understand me don't you. I want to leave you."
> — "You don't mean that."
> — "Yes I do mean it, and what's more I want a divorce. There's someone else I want to marry. That's really all there is to it. I love her and she loves me. Now, we've got to be sensible about it all – calm and sensible. I'll arrange for the divorce. You'll have the baby, naturally…"[3]

By making Patrick's declaration of infidelity more explicit in the T.V. broadcast, Hitchcock quickly establishes the harsh facts of the situation and presents Patrick as a cold, and indifferent person. Today, the effect of the prose line "he went further and further away from her" might be simulated using sound (by reducing the volume of Patrick's voice until it is completely muted for example), but Hitchcock's reaction shots of Mary's facial expression clearly indicate the emotional distancing taking place. Furthermore, such an unusual sound effect would have broken with the fairly conservative television conventions of the 1950s. More important than the technique chosen is the fact that Hitchcock's version embellishes some segments of the "Lamb to the Slaughter" narrative, while skipping over others developed at greater length in the short story. More than once, ellipsis represents a ficional give and take between these two texts. Read together, these versions of the same basic story combine to form a richer and more asthetically complex murder mystery. This intersection of two very different mediums also reveals an act of cultural and linguistic translation between two distinct English-speaking countries.

Though the theme of marital infidelity and the 1950s gender role represented by Mary's character are all relevant to English, American, and (soon-to-be-discussed) Spanish audiences, the way the murder weapon is described changes with each retelling of the story. Comparing Hitchcock and Dahl's versions, little linguistic markers appear at odd yet significant moments and signal the presence of cultural modifications. "Lamb to the Slaughter" adapts its language depending on its geographic location.

Although the English Mary and the American Mary are both stereotypical examples of a 1950s homemaker, they have two different vocabularies. This fact is most noticable during a scene when detective Jack Noonan (who has the same name in both versions) questions Mary about possible murder weapons. The central source of suspense and tension in both Hitchcock and Dahl's storys' results from the investigators' inability to discover the implement of Patrick Maloney's demise. Mary has, of course, cleverly hidden the instrument of death in the most unlikely of places – inside the oven – and must play dumb. Both detectives explain that they are searching for a heavy, blunt object and ask her if there is anything in the house that might meet that description. Do you have something like a club or "a heavy metal bar," suggests Noonan to the American Mary who then replies: "oh, like a baseball bat?" Do you have something "like a big spanner," suggests the English Jack Noonan to the English Mary (115). The difference may seem a triffle, but use the word "spanner" instead of "wrench" on American television and 80% of the viewing public will have no idea what object is being described. Likewise, the average English household might have a "cricket" bat around, but not a single piece of equipment used to play American baseball. At the end of the Hitchcock Presents episode – as the worn out and hungry detectives devour the leg of lamb Mary has offered them for dinner – one of the Irish policemen even uses the word "shillelagh" to imagine what could have been used for the crime. This nuance points to the stereotypical "Irish cop" character within U.S. film's discourse (particularly strong during the 1950s). Each culture invokes different linguistic codes to conjure up images of potential weapons. The overall text of these two versions are remarkably similar (mostly because Dahl wrote both of them). At the end of the short story and the T.V. episode, Mary has the last laugh and literally chuckles as the police gorge themselves and wonder outloud about the missing weapon: "probably right under our very noses?" (116).

Oddly enough, the first shot of the same investigation scene in Pedro Almodóvar's version of "Lamb to the Slaughter" is a close-up of a Spanish detective's nose hovering above a bowl of cooked meat. At this exact moment, another officer is heard saying that the crime must have been committed using a very blunt object. Many of the same key elements composing the English and American versions are present in this third take on the narrative including the interogation of the murderess (this time she is named Gloria). However, *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (1984) [What Have I Done to Deserve This?] comes out about thirty years after Dahl and Hitchcock's versions and is a strange mixture of both. The simultaneous influence of both the U.S. and English texts are in evidence during the quick paced interview conducted by two idiotic officers. "¿Buscas algo?" (Looking for something?) asks Gloria, and the two policemen (P1 and P2) rattle off a round of staccato questioning:

P1: ¿Tiene usted una barra de hierro?
P2: ¿Un bate de béisbol?
P1: ¿Una llave inglesa?

P1: Do you have a metal bar?
P2: a baseball bat?
P1: a monkey wrench?[4]

Aside from these two implicit markers from the other texts (the basball bat and the "llave inglesa"), there are also key plot similarities. However, Gloria is an entirely different cultural product than the two Marys.

Almodóvar's film is a melodramatic (yet also tragic) satire of a stereotypically traditional Spanish family. Being released only five years after Franco's death, it aims to subvert the normative values established during the years of his regime. Instead of a short narrative about the picture-perfect 1950s family destroyed by a husband's infidelity and subsequent murder, Gloria's life is a post-modern portrayal of dysfunction. One of her sons deals drugs; another is sold to a pedophilic dentist; and her best friend, Cristal, is a prostitute. Gloria is hooked on "No-Doz" (alertness pills), because when she is not cooking and cleaning for everyone at home, she hires herself out as a maid to both a Karate studio and a wealthy author. When she finally snaps – clubbing her unfaithful and physically abusive husband with a leg of lamb – she represents a different kind of female protagonist. When the English or American Patrick Maloney dies the audience is shocked; when the Spanish Antonio is killed the audience is relieved (even feeling joy and liberation). The former male character is dislikeable, but the latter is a disgustingly macho oppressor. He uses Gloria's bobby pins to clean his ears; he makes no effort to please her sexually; he forbids her to work outside of the home; and, just before his murder, Antonio slaps his wife for refusing to iron a shirt he wants to wear for a date with Ingrid Muller (his former German mistress). The audience empathizes as Gloria fights back, putting an end to both him and the legacy of misogynistic entitlement his character embodies.

Almodóvar's placement of the short "Lamb to the Slaughter" narrative within his feature length film is both a subtle hommage (to Hitchcock and Dahl) and a clever rendition of the suppressed housewife's revenge. Despite many changes – the police do not actually consume the murder weapon, a green lizard dies who is the crime's "único testigo" [only witness], and Gloria lives in one of Madrid's giant, poverty-stricken, cube-like housing projects – there are still key characteristics and easily identifiable traits shared by all three stories. Almodóvar's version is such a free and unfaithful adaptation of the two others that it is difficult to find a particular moment where he obviously opens up and enters into a particular part of a previously established narrative. There are no striking camera shot similarities between his and Hitchcock's presentations. Furthermore, the techniques of such a post-modern film (filled with fragmented allusions to other texts and disjointed chronological events) make it difficult to draw direct aesthetic comparisons to the straight-forward linear storytelling of the T.V. episode or the short story. Therefore, the film's real contribution to this article's tripartite model of textual co-presence lies in its cultural difference and more feminist protagonist.

Culturally and politically, Almodóvar adds a strain of convention-breaking rebellion to the textual mix. Regardless of their individual contributions, together the U.S., English, and Spanish tellings of the same murder mystery represent a successful, multi-directional, multi-media, and multi-linguistic translation of "Lamb to the Slaughter."

## *Final Thoughts: A Note on the Possibility of Endless Citation.*

> Any text that has "slept with" another text, as a postmodern wag once put it, has also slept with all the other texts that that other text has slept with.
>
> — Robert Stam

The Internet Movie Database's current entry for *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* lists Roald Dahl as a contributing author with the note: "Lamb to the Slaughter (uncredited source)." Why is there no mention of Alfred Hitchcock's name or of his 1955 broadcast?

The fact that the T.V. version was careful to credit Dahl as author makes perfect sense, because he wrote the screenplay. But why chastise Almodóvar, who wrote a screenplay with quite loose references to Dahl's short story, for not citing the English author? Furthermore, is it not possible that the short story was inspired by an uncited source? It is difficult to explain exactly why and how adapted or translated material is referenced precisely because it travels between artistic mediums, languages and citation practices. Television and film are often careful when borrowing from written material, because the printed word has spent centuries constructing a legal system of fairly standardized and rigorous guidelines. But despite film and television's less defined conventions for quoting or borrowing material, Alfred Hitchcock is arguably as famous a director as Roald Dahl is an author and deserves equal recognition. This pairing of two celebrities from two different mediums offers fertile ground for further research on the question of adaptation citation. It turns out that a large number (at least five) of the Hitchcock Presents episodes were adaptations of Dahl's stories. Therefore, it is likely that many modern-day directors who were influenced by Hitchcock will retell, in part or in whole, those stories. By doing so, they may unconsciously adapt both his and Dahl's work. In such cases, cases of adaptations inspired by adaptations, what is the filmmaker's responsibility?

In his contribution to *Four Rooms* (1995), Quentin Tarantino self-reflexively cites Alfred Hitchcock's T.V. broadcast "Man from the South" (also a Roald Dahl short story) as a source. However, the credits of *Four Rooms* make no explicit reference to either Dahl or Hitchcock. The case of Tarantino brings this exploration of adaptation, translation and fidelity round full circle. Change partners and do-si-do! The question remains – where does cross-medium and cross-cultural citation end?

## notes

[1] Here I cite another two appropriately titled articles: “From Novel to Film” (Michael Cunningham) and “Films Out of Books” (David Glassco).

[2] This section is a combination of quotes transcribed from Hitchcock’s episode and my own commentary.

[3] All quotes are transcribed from Hitchcock’s 1955 episode “Lamb to the Slaughter.”

[4] Spanish quotes have been transcribed from the film and the English translations are my own.

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# preposterous translation: ass-lore and myth in *a midsummer night's dream*

kristen bennett

> And those things do best please me
> That befall preposterously. (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3.2.120-121)

While the intertextual nature of his work has been widely acknowledged, Shakespeare has become so elevated in the canon that many readers no longer recognize the omnipresence of specific allusions that generate powerful consequences for his characters and plots. Sometimes he is terribly obvious, as in his translation of Ovid's version of *Venus & Adonis*, while at other times his allusive mastery emerges more subtly in the context of multiple sources, as evidenced in the synthesis of thematic and rhetorical nods to Livy, Marlowe, Ovid, and Kyd in *Titus Andronicus*. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, however, "translation" is not limited to Shakespeare's hermeneutic approach, but is used in conjunction with "transposition," while also serving as an emblematic descriptive of the metamorphoses that occur throughout the play. We begin to observe this in Act I, beginning with Lysander's signature lines: "For aught that I could ever read / Could ever hear by tale or history, / The course of true love never did run smooth" (1.1.132-134). The references to reading, "tale" and "history" reinforce the allusive nature of the play, while "course" implies conveyance associated with translation. Later in this scene, we see "translation" accrue connotations of transposition in Helena's lines to Hermia: "Were the world mine, Demetrius being bated, The rest I'd give to be to you translated!" (1.1.190-191). Helena wishes she were literally in Hermia's place as the object of Demetrius' desire. Her following lines: "Oh teach me how you look and with what art / You sway the motion of Demetrius' heart," (192-193) accrue connotations of "transformation:" "A change in form, appearance, or substance; to transmute; to transform, alter" (*Old English Dictionary*). This reading of "translation" as transformation is reinforced following Bottom's metamorphosis as Quince exclaims: "Bottom, thou art translated!" (3.1.97).

By representing translation as transposition, transformation, and metamorphosis, Shakespeare reminds us of the word's primary definition: "To practice translation, to make a version from one language or form of words into another." Indeed, just like *Venus & Adonis*, or *Titus Andronicus*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a "translation," a carrying across of literary historicity that effects what Gerard Genette (1997) would call an intertextual version of Shakespeare's influences. It's important to remember that intertextuality is literally a kind of being between texts; the Latin prefix 'inter' carries with it the etymology of "between, among, amid, in between, in the midst" (*OED*). Translation, thus, by its nature, is an inherently intertextual enterprise and we see this emerge in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as both theme and methodology; therefore we must read it from this perspective.

Bottom's notorious metamorphosis into an ass is a direct allusion to Lucius' transformation in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*. Yet Shakespeare doesn't limit his "translation" to Apuleius, but also draws on Ovid, St. Paul, and Erasmus to build a contextual framework that regenerates our reading, especially in regard to the character of Nick Bottom. From this context, the play emerges as a palimpsest of interpretive possibilities. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* makes cameo appearances throughout the Shakespeare canon, and as noted, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is no exception. In Book XI of the *Metamorphoses* Ovid tells the story of Midas. In Ovid's translation, Midas offends the god Apollo by vociferously proclaiming his preference for the rustic music of Pan over Apollo's divine compositions. Ovid describes Apollo's subsequent vengeance:

> Apollo could not suffer well his foolish eares too keepe
> Theyr humaine shape, but drew them wyde, and made them long and deepe,
> And filld them full of whitish heares, and made them downe too sag,
> And through too much unstablenesse continually to wag.
> His body keeping in the rest his manly figure still…
> (*Metamorphoses*, XI, 196-200)

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare "translates" this story via Bottom's transformation at the hands of Puck, whom Bottom likewise offended with his horrible acting. The allusion to Midas and Bottom's shared 'asinine' taste in music is picked up when Titania offers to have the fairies play music for Bottom and he replies: "I have a reasonable good ear in music. Let's have the tongs and the bones" (4.1.24-25).

Observing the thematic parallel between Midas' preference for the rustic music of Pan, and Bottom's request for "tongs and bones," helps to illustrate the humor and irony of Bottom's position. When we read this through the lens of Ovid's translation, the echo resounds and makes the scene more engaging. We are now in on the joke: Bottom literally has "asinine" taste in music.

By recognizing the manner in which Shakespeare translates Ovid, and the way in which this allusion generates an accrual of symbolic significance for his characters, we can build on this by reading Apuleius' story *The Golden Ass: Being the Metamorphoses of Lucius Apuleius*. While Midas and Nick Bottom directly offended the deities that cursed and transformed them, Lucius Apuleius was bodily transformed when he was illicitly using magical ointment stolen from the witch Pamphile. But, like Midas and Bottom, he retained his human understanding. The thematic parallels between Lucius and Bottom extend well beyond their asinine transformations. Each was loved in their bestial state by a beautiful woman who spoke to them in the language of love; both women assigned their lovers four attendants to bring them to their beds, and upon dismissal of the attendants, embraced them lovingly.

The corresponding details of each Bottom's and Lucius' respective seductions— the number of attendants, the manner of their dismissal, and the terms of endearment employed— in the context of transformed beings, serve to reinforce a view of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a play of translation, about "translation." We will come to see the implications of this claim veritably explode as we shift into consideration of the combination of sources. Among the material from Shakespeare's sources, Apuleius included, are allegorical and Biblical allusions, which appear juxtaposed and thus reveal and conceal intent almost ad infinitum. Observing how Shakespeare translated Apuleius' version of the myth of Cupid and Psyche is one of many ways to open this proverbial can of worms.

While allusions to this pagan myth are peppered throughout the play, let's start by looking directly at Cupid's "part." When Cupid accidentally imbued the love-in-idleness flower with the power of passion, he effectively triggered many of the events in the play. It is often noted the Puck takes on the role of Cupid in this play by administering the love juice among the Athenian lovers. We can read Puck more convincingly when we read him in the context of Apuleius' Cupid:

> …Cupid, rash enough and hardy, who by his evil manners, contemning all public justice and law, armed with fire and arrows, running up and down in the nights from house to house, and corrupting the lawful marriages of every per son, doth nothing (and yet he is not punished) but that which is evil (*Golden Ass* 191)

Puck's parallel characteristics emerge as he brags about his mischief:

> I am that merry wanderer of the night.
> I jest to Oberon and make him smile
> When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile,
> Neighing in likeness of a filly foal;
> And sometimes I lurk in a gossip's bowl
> In the very likeness of a roasted crab,
> And when she drinks, against her lips I bob
> And on her withered dewlap pour the ale. (*Midsummer* 2.1.43-50)

Each is under the protection of a more powerful deity; Cupid has his mother Venus "egging him on," and Puck serves Oberon, King of the Fairies. The resemblance continues in thematic action: Puck is tasked by Oberon to gather the magical love juice so he may take revenge on Titania, and Cupid is tasked by Venus to take revenge on her mortal rival Psyche. Arguably, we might generate observations about the juxtapositioning of the Puck/Cupid roles without reading Apuleius at this point, but it is precisely at this point that we see Shakespeare directly translating the novel into his play:

> [Venus's instructions to Cupid] 'My dear child, by the motherly bond of love, by the sweet wounds of thy piercing darts…revenge fully the injury which is done to thy mother upon the false and disobedient beauty of a mortal maiden […] that she may fall in desperate love with the most miserable creature living, the most poor, the most crooked, and the most vile, that there may be none found in all the world of like wretchedness.' (*Golden Ass* 191)
>
> [Oberon's intentions for the love juice obtained by Puck] Having once this juice, I'll watch Titania when she is asleep / and drop the liquor of it in her eyes. The next thing then she waking looks upon, Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull, On meddling monkey, or on busy ape, She shall pursue it with the soul of love. (*Midsummer* 2.1.177-183)

Observing the influence Apuleius and others had on Shakespeare is an important consideration for reflecting on Shakespeare's genius and methodology. It's also an excellent way to exploit the intertextual nature of his work to achieve a greater understanding of authorial intent. By recognizing how Shakespeare translated his influences, and reflecting on what elements he retained in light of what he omitted, readers generate a stronger contextual framework from which to explore some of the ambiguous problems that arise in his work. For example, one of the questions that repeatedly arises about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is "Did they do it?" in reference to Titania and Bottom. As Frank Kermode claims, "it is scarcely conceivable, though the point is disputed, that the love-affair between Titania and Bottom is not an allusion to the Golden Asse." (218) Thus, it would seem irresponsible not to consider this problem in light of Lucius' happy coupling with the Corinthian matron. Here, Lucius describes the interlude:

> [She said] "Thou art he whom I love," "Thou art he whom I only desire," "With out thee I cannot live," and other like preamble of talk, as women can use well enough when they mind to shew or declare their burning passions and the great affection of love. Then she took me by the halter and cast me upon the bed... (*Golden Ass* 509)

While we are left in no doubt about the consummation of Lucius' affair— indeed, the woman paid his keeper for another night— Titania and Bottom's encounter is more ambiguous.

In the context of Lucius' felicitous affair, we could definitely argue that the echoing allusion suggests that they DID, in fact, do it. This is complicated, though, when we consider Lucius' next almost-sexual encounter with the woman who had been sentenced to death for mass parricide. His master had arranged for him to publicly fornicate with this woman at a carnival-like event. While his master had been paid for Lucius to have sex with the Corinthian matron, prostitution to this degree was morally intolerable for him: "I, being wrapped in great anguish […] devised rather to slay myself than pollute my body with this mischievous harlot, and so be defamed as a public sight and spectacle" (525). Granted, the circumstances are very different here than in the previous comparison between love-scenes, but the effect of Lucius' moral protest is to suggest that Bottom may share his moral code as well.

While we rarely think of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a "morality" play; it is, after all, a comedy, reflection on the implications of "Bottom's Dream," in the context of Shakespeare's allusions to St. Paul, Apuleius and Erasmus, raises lines of inquiry in this vein. Upon awakening, Bottom is temporarily unaware that he has fallen asleep, but soon realizes:

> I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was…but man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was… (*Midsummer* 4.1.198-206)

Bottom seems skeptical about his experience and the Biblical language evokes a ghostly apparition of Lucius' dream on the beach in Corinthians. Lucius, to escape having sex with the villainous harlot, ran away to a beach in Cenchrae in Corinthians. Exhausted, he fell asleep and was then:

> awaked with a sudden fear, and saw the moon shining bright as when she is at the full […] Then I thought with myself that this was the most secret time, when that goddess had most puissance and force […] I found good hope and sovereign remedy […] to be delivered of all my misery, by invocation and prayer to the excellent beauty of this powerful goddess. (*Golden Ass* 539)

This first time that Lucius fell asleep, he was awoken by the moon and thus inspired to pray for redemption. Arguably, the moon transformed him from a somewhat hedonistic ass with a growing moral consciousness to an ass who prayed for a more physically (in form), and spiritually fulfilling life. Following his fervent prayers, Lucius fell asleep in the moonlight once more. It was during this "dream" that he experienced divine revelation. As this moon motif is employed repeatedly in Apuleius' text, it becomes productive to explore how Shakespeare translates the orb in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In his version, the moon is not only symbolically predominant in the play, but in the play-within-a-play, the moon even becomes a character. It seems to me, however, that a most interesting line of inquiry would be to consider how Titania personified the moon as lamenting "enforced chastity." Lucius' moon also represented chastity via the virtues of the mother goddess Isis; could Shakespeare possibly be putting paganism on a par with Christianity?

Anca Vlasopolous explores the pagan patterns in the play and their Christian counterparts. Most notably, she illustrates the relationship of the pagan Midsummer Night to St. John's Day: "the feast of Saint John the Baptist follows the license and misrule of the eve and night preceding […] Moreover, Saint John's Day is distinct in that it is the only holy day celebrating the nativity rather than the death of a saint"(23). It is interesting to consider this allusion to nativity, which itself suggests fertility, in light of the marriages, and fairy blessings for future children, that follow the night of "misrule" in the wood. The aforementioned allusions to chastity emerge as perhaps not such different representations of the virtue. Arguably, the moral instructive in each version is similar: remain chaste until otherwise sanctioned (via marriage in *AMSND*) by a god.

There are definitely pagan themes in both Shakespeare's play and Apuleius' novel, but the overt allusions to St. Paul and Corinthians in parallel contexts of vision and revelation force readers to dig a little deeper if any kind of clarity is to be achieved. Lucius prays to a pagan goddess for salvation, but Apuleius situates him on the island of Cenchrae in Corinthians! Interestingly, Lucius' pagan conversion has strong overtones of Christianity throughout. Isis tells him that he has suffered because of his curiosity and lusty appetites. She promises to help him conditionally: "And if I perceive that thou art obedient to my commandment and addict to my religion, meriting by thy constant chastity my divine grace, know that I alone may prolong thy days above the time that the fates have appointed and ordained" (*Golden Ass* 551).

Lucius is happy to serve his goddess, arguably ecstatic. His ecstasy and transformation mirror that of St. Paul who has also experienced a religious conversion. That Bottom mis-quotes St. Paul upon awakening from his encounter with divinity reinforces the need for contextual consideration. What does the sensory juxtaposition indicate when he says: "The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was" (5.1.203-205). The Biblical quotation itself could suggest that Bottom experienced a conversion from St. Paul's description of carnal man to a more pure version, but his mixing up of the verse could likewise suggest the opposite. John Tobin suggests we consider this misquotation of St. Paul in light of Apuleius' conversion on the beach in Corinthians:

> This passage is not only a parody of 1 Corinthians 2.9ff., but is also a reminder that Apuleius/Lucius, following his restoration to human form, could not reveal the nature of his initiation into the Isiac religion, but was granted a direct vision of Isis herself. The author of Corinthians had, of course, also undergone a radical and religious conversion. (Tobin 39)

Like Lucius, Bottom cannot reveal what happened to him that night in the wood. He seems to want to, but is somehow restrained: “Masters, I am to discourse wonders. But ask me not what; for if I tell you, I am no true Athenian. I will tell you everything…Not a word of me.” (5.1.21-25) Analogies regarding conversion may be drawn between these two, but certainty is elusive. Structuring a discussion of Bottom and Titania’s interlude from this intertextual perspective is, however, an excellent way to generate a thoughtful, critical discussion and illuminate the complexities of Shakespeare’s work.

The direct Biblical reference to Paul in the play also alludes to another interesting aspect of Bottom’s character in light of Erasmus’ book *The Praise of Folly*. Erasmus’s tale is one of paradoxically wise “Folly.” Erasmus writes at length of the virtues of Folly, who is, incidentally a woman. The implication is that just as the feminine predicates the masculine, so does Folly predicate Wisdom.

It should be noted that Erasmus’ text appears to allude to Apuleius as well, thus multiplying intertextual implications. While Apuleius employs pagan gods to effect Lucius’ revelation, Erasmus invokes Christianity in the following vein: “To speak briefly, all Christian Religion seems to have a kind of alliance with folly, and in no respect to have any accord with wisedom” (177). Like Apuleius, Erasmus tells of a kind of metamorphosis, but his version is more akin to the spiritual metamorphosis and revelation that Lucius experienced after his dream in Corinthians. Erasmus likewise links the unspeakable nature of such divine revelation with the correct and direct quotation from the Bible:

> So much better are things spiritual than things corporal, and things invisible than things visible; which doubtless is that which the Prophet promiseth: ‘The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor has it entred into the heart of man to consider what God has provided for them that love Him.’ (I Corinthians 2.9)

This parallel arguably works in a similar manner to the effect that our reading of Midas’ transformation in Ovid’s text has on our reading of Bottom. After reflecting on Midas’ transformation, Bottom accrued characteristics that contributed to his overall development in our eyes as readers. Likewise, the similarities among Apuleius, Paul, and Erasmus can help us recognize the contextual framework Shakespeare is working from so that we may better apprehend their significance.

Reading through the lens of Erasmus, a more intelligent reading of Bottom’s

Biblical misquotation of St. Paul becomes possible. That Bottom is an “ass” misquoting Paul echoes Erasmus’ reference to St. Paul framed in the context of “Folly.” Thus it is significant that later in I Corinthians, Paul expostulates about wisdom and folly:

> Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.
>
> For the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God. For it is written He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. (I Corinthians 3. 18-19)

It should be noted that Shakespeare invokes foolish characters in other plays as wise characters: Polonius in *Hamlet*, The Fool in *King Lear*, etc. Is Bottom truly a “wise-ass”? Deborah Baker Wyrick discusses Biblical connotations of the ass, wisdom, and foolishness:

> Biblical asses are generally benign, even exemplary; they are the progenitors of the “admirable ass” tradition. The most memorable ass in the Old Testament is Balaam’s articulate animal (Numbers xxii). This ass was not only given a sight of the angel of the Lord; she was also designated a communicatory channel for God […] The picture of an ass patiently bearing occupational burdens leads to the image of the animal as a type of Christ, one reinforced by Christ’s choice of the lowly ass as a vehicle for his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Christ, then, is the cosmic ass, patiently bearing the world’s burden of sin. (Wyrick 432-433)

The traditions in ass-lore of the admirable ass, the foolish ass, and the wise ass, combine to create almost endless potential for Bottom’s character. He is foolish, granted, but is he not likewise a leader among his group of mechanicals? It is from his chivalrous consideration of the feelings of the ladies that his suggestions for prologues in *Pyramus and Thisbe* are engendered. In like manner, he consciously tries not to take advantage of Titania’s misguided feelings for him. It should be noted that his respect for the lady is of greater merit when we consider that he did not yet recognize himself as an ass. He felt a bit hairier than normal, but was otherwise apparently unaware of his metamorphosis. Arguably, Bottom’s asinine characteristics serve to veil the more complicated implications that arise when we interpret this play within the context of its allusions. At this point, we have generated four different lenses from which to hermeneutically approach Shakespeare's translation of source material. From Ovid, we have a reading of Bottom in the context of Midas that generates an accrual of character development. From Apuleius, we have been invited to read this text through Lucius' double metamorphosis and his experiences therewith, as well as to reflect on the role of the myth of Cupid and Psyche in the play. A reading of Erasmus generates more comprehensive context from which to approach the Biblical connotations as well as from which to reflect on the relationship between foolishness and wisdom in ass-lore.

A most important point of this exploration is to remind ourselves that we effectively *translate* Shakespeare with every reading. The language has evolved, the accents and rhythms are different, and we are far removed from the historical context from which it was generated. Translation is the hermeneutic practice we employ to carry Shakespeare's art into our time and place in a way that makes sense to us. As George Steiner pointed out in his text on translation, *After Babel*: "The import, of meaning and of form, the embodiment, is not made in or into a vacuum" (298). When we read Shakespeare in isolation, despite the multitudes of footnotes (which can detract as much as they contribute to the experience) it is inherently impossible to pick up on the layers of historical symbolic and thematic allusion that make his work truly genius. Approaching *A Midsummer Night's Dream* through this lens of translation thus generates almost "bottomless" interpretive opportunities: "It shall be called "Bottom's dream" because it hath no bottom; and I will sing it in the latter end of the play…" (4.1.206-207)

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# crevel’s *babylone*: a paradigm of babel?

tania collani

In this article I aim to present a case study—my Italian translation of the fascinating French Surrealist novel *Babylone* (1927) by René Crevel[1] —which may serve as an investigation of both translation theories and stylistic structure concerning my work. I will demonstrate how the linguistic complexity of this novel is linked to its hermetic and lyric contents by isolating some crucial points encountered in my translation, namely: the transposition of proper nouns and nicknames, the influence of Surrealist poetics on lexicon and syntax (arbitrary analogies, puns and polysemy of words and expressions), and the erudite, intertextual references (Crevel quotes and rewrites passages from Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Shakespeare, etc.). Comparing my translation to Kay Boyle’s English version[2], and relying on the considerations on translation norms and censorship made by theorists such as Toury, I will show to what extent a feeling of revolt inspires the different levels of this novel (linguistic, semantic, historical, philosophical) and therefore asks for a translation strategy careful in “normalizing” things. In these terms, Crevel’s *Babylone* can be seen as a paradigmatic case of Derrida’s Babel.

René Crevel (1900-1935) was among the intellectuals surrounding André Breton when the First Manifesto of Surrealism was drafted (1924). He vigorously took part in all Surrealist activities, including the hypnotic séances and the alliance between the movement and the communist party. A nighthawk, habitué of cabarets, a cocaine and opium addict, and a homosexual, Crevel consecrated his short life (he committed suicide in 1935) to a poetical and ontological research of “real life,” which was to be reached through man’s rebellion against his material situation. Nonetheless, in Crevel’s fiction, this revolt is rarely constructive: indeed, in *Babylone* all characters come to a fatal end[3]. Like the biblical legend of a united humanity building the utopian tower of Babel/Babylon to reach unto heaven, the insubordination of Crevel’s characters and story (the abandonment of rationality and upper middle class attitudes) is an evil omen.

First of all, I will make some general considerations on the criteria that inspired my work. This novel represents the peak of Crevel’s creative life and its subject matter appears to be in perfect equilibrium with its stylistic investigation: the plot is enriched with fragments of lyrical prose, with images taken from the Surrealist background, and with erudite adages. Since Crevel’s prose aims to elude the linearity of narration, its syntax is particularly rich in intricate sentences, digressions, and ellipses, and its language is very dense and metaphorical. As I believe formal research represents one of the major foundations of Crevel's poetics/aesthetics, I thought it necessary to preserve as much as possible of this lexical and syntactic arduousness, because *Babylone* embodies in its linguistic and syntactic structure the complexity and the multiplicity of its subject matter. And the more sophisticated the text, the more complicated it is to find a coherent and effective translation strategy.

Therefore, I tried to resist every temptation of leveling these stylistic elements to facilitate the reader's comprehension. In this sense, I decided not to surrender to the normalizing process to which the translator is liable to resort for the sake of understanding: "the translator usually normalizes the source, if only by virtue of the fact that he/she has to make it comprehensible to target readers" (Morini 124). In other words, I tried not to abuse the "sanctionative power" (Morini 124) that translators have at their disposal and, in particular, I tried to preserve Crevel's latent sense of revolt as it emerges at different levels in his prose. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that I opted for a literal translation; as a matter of fact, these observations don't affect the more general rule of the 'coherence' of a good translation. As one can see in my case study, I recognized in the text analogous situations and, according to some general "norms" (i.e., I didn't want to use footnotes, I wanted the French context to be always respected, and I wanted to maintain the spontaneity of some ironic images and of some masterly puns into Italian), I tried to maintain a "regularity of behaviour in recurrent situations of the same type" (Toury 55).

As far as translation footnotes are concerned, I decided not to use any in the text, according to a consolidated "norm" adopted in most fiction books. As Jacqueline Henry frankly states in her article on this subject, the use of this kind of paratextual apparatus can be disturbing for the reader: footnotes are a "moral contract" drawn up between the translator and the author (Henry 239), since the translator chooses to "add" something to the original text. However, I don't believe that resorting to footnotes is a real failure—or, in Henry's terms, an "échec"—since they can sometimes help translators justify their position before the reader, as well as fill in some cultural gaps. In this case, the Italian publisher of *Babylone*, who allowed me to devote a few pages of my critical essay to a translation note, facilitated my choice. This way, readers interested in this aspect could discover it in some detail, without their reading process being somehow distracted by translation footnotes.

Keeping in mind, on the one hand, my wish to preserve the anti-realist sense of rebellion hidden in Crevel's language and, on the other hand, a general strain to adopt coherent solutions in similar situations—“translational norms (whether weak or strong, personal or collective, imposed or freely adopted) […] may be assumed to govern other decisions regarding other parts of the text as well” (Hermans 14)—, I will now inspect some relevant practical cases in which this strategy was applied. No previous Italian translation of *Babylone* exists, but in the process of my own translation I did refer to *Babylone*’s English translation, which in fact proved helpful in addressing some difficult points (even though my final decisions are often quite different from Kay Boyle’s). I shall start by analyzing the translation of characters’ names.

Characters in *Babylone* are usually designated by their role within the family, which represents the hub of the first half of the novel: mother, father, grandfather, and grandmother. On the contrary, the characters external to the familial cell are identified by ‘normal’ proper nouns: Reverend Mac-Louf, Alfred Petitdemange, Lucie and Cynthia. The child, who is the hero of the novel and the indirect narrator of the story, doesn’t have a name, and the epithet “child” doesn’t even imply a family relation (e.g., daughter). She is just a child looking at the explosion and disintegration of the familial nucleus revolving around her. Her father is always indicated as “father”, except for one occasion in which his name, Jérôme, appears in the text within one of the child’s several reveries[4] . If I leave Cynthia, Lucie, and Jérôme aside, I am left with two ‘speaking names’ (or ‘meaningful names’), marked by a genuine irony: in the case of pious Mac-Louf, for example, his name surprises the mother when she first hears it[5]. In French slang, the adjective “louf” is synonymous with “loufoque,” meaning “strange,” “odd,” “queer”; “mac,” in French argot, is the abbreviation of “maquereau,” meaning “pimp,” besides being a prototypical Scottish prefix also used to justify Mac-Louf’s British origins. The other ‘speaking name,’ Petitdemange, is less derogatory but similarly burlesque: “petit” means “little” while démanger means “to itch” or “to pinch.”

Since I wanted to maintain the likelihood of these names in their context, I decided to sacrifice their multiple meanings in Italian and treat them as the other proper names of the novel (Cynthia, Jérôme, Lucie); that is, I decided not to translate them. And so did Kay Boyle in her English translation. Their transposition in some possible ‘meaningful name’ in Italian (i.e., Alfredo Grattatina, Reverendo Mac-Smagna) would have misled the reader through an excessive estrangement given the declared French context of the novel (the family lives in Paris and a French heritage is explicitly recalled when Mac-Louf’s name is first introduced: “À des oreilles françaises ce nom semble peut-être moins flatteur que La Rochefoucauld ou Talleyrand-Périgord”). If I had decided to "adapt" Mac-Louf, I would have had to change the whole sentence with magniloquent Italian names (such as De' Medici or Brandolini d'Adda) as substitutes for the French ones. But of course, besides considering whether the "transposition of such names in the target language [was] technically possible", I also asked myself "to what extent this would be viewed as an appropriate procedure" (Manini 161) in the context of their appearance.

On the contrary, I thought it more appropriate to translate nicknames and characters' appellatives, which are not really proper names, although they often have the same function. As soon as the decline of the honored family of the "Third Republic's most celebrated psychiatrist" begins, common names substitute proper ones: Lucie is "the little chambermaid", but also "the Kerosene drinker"; the grandmother is "the spouse of the Third Republic's most celebrated psychiatrist", but she also becomes "Amie." Although capitalized in the French text, these names have the same role as those indicating the relationships within the family (father, mother, etc.). That's why I chose to translate the French Amie with Amica (keeping the literal meaning of "Friend"); Bourri, Révérend, and Ratichonnet (the epithets used to indicate Mac-Louf) with Somaro ("Donkey"), Reverendo ("Reverend") and Corvaccio ("bad Rook"); Reine (the epithet of the old cocaine-addicted lady in Marseille) with Regina ("Queen"). As a matter of fact, these names are sufficiently univocal not to create estrangement in the target reader; and, since they are nicknames and not family names (unlike Mac-Louf or Petidemange), I thought their translation should maintain this difference. Kay Boyle used different strategies on this matter: while she translated Bourri with "Donkey", Révérend with "Reverend," and la Reine with "the Queen", she maintained the French appellatives "Amie" and "Ratichonnet"[6].

I would like to close this section devoted to the translation of names by presenting a difficult case of 'onomancy'—that is, the influence exerted by names on the people carrying them: "tu vois d'ici le danger de la métaphore des mots. Ainsi, notre grand-tante Laura fut-elle demi-mondaine, par la faute d'un nom prédestiné dans un temps où l'on appelait "lorettes", les femmes qui se conduisaient mal"[7] (Chapter 4). In French, lorette is not only the diminutive of Laure or Laura, but it also used to designate a "prostitute" or a "lady of pleasure" at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In this case I used, *nomen omen*, a French proper noun—in line with the "norm" of respecting French context and family relationship (Laura was the grandmother's grand-aunt)—which in Italian hints to another 'licentious' sense: I substituted Laura and lorette with Lucile and lucciola (literally "firefly" but, in a figurative sense, "prostitute")[8]. So

I kept the ‘imaginative’ etymology Laura-lorette (Lucile-lucciola) by using a “domesticating” strategy with the aim of preserving a similar effect on the Italian reader; Kay Boyle decided not to translate any of the two terms and maintained both “Laura” and “lorette”.

Given the highly imaginative prose of *Babylone* and its closeness to the Surrealist practice of figurative language, metaphors represent a peculiar feature of this text and, as such, they raised some interesting considerations in the translation process. I adopted a contextual approach to metaphor translation[9] and took into account the role that single linguistic metaphors have within the metaphorics of the novel. In a famous article, Michael Riffaterre described Surrealist *metaphore filée*, and he underlined its complexity, its “multiple derivation” (Riffaterre 54, my translation), and the fact that it replaces the referential function of language with a reference to form (Riffaterre 51). In all these cases, relevance is given to the “arbitrariness” of the image associations and to their “automatism”, which recalls both the Surrealist automatic writing and the spontaneity of these associations—because, even if contradictory, they are not censored by reason. This is a further reason why I decided not to use footnotes and resorted to a “domesticating” strategy for this kind of metaphor in order to maintain the same spontaneity for an Italian reader. Let’s see some examples and compare them with Kay Boyle’s “foreignizing” strategy, which implies a reasonable use of footnotes.

In Chapter 1, the grandmother talks about the stinginess of her English brother-in-law in a mostly ironic tone: “Je le revois si impeccable, économe (un peu plus, on aurait même pu le dire greffé sur martin sec)”. I translated the sentence literally: “Lo rivedo ancora, così impeccabile, parsimonioso (un po’ di più e lo si sarebbe detto innestato su un martin secco).” Kay Boyle decided to make its meaning explicit, scarifying the peculiar image: “I can see him now, immaculate, economical (a little more in that direction and he might have been judged a skinflint).” The expression “greffé sur martin sec” isn’t documented to have any idiomatic meaning in French. The “martin sec” is, in both French and Italian, a variety of pear tree, but none of the features of this tree seems to hint at the idea of avidity or stinginess, although the verb “greffer” (literally “to graft”) indeed seems to suggest that “martin sec” refers to the tree. This obscure expression certainly aims at troubling the reader in pure Surrealist style: the reader expects a logical connection (i.e., he is so economical that he is a skinflint), but he falls on a ‘troubling’ object, the martin sec (he is so economical that he is grafted on a pear tree?).

The choice of maintaining this expression in my translation is partly motivated by my initial statement of reducing to a minimum the cases of 'censorship' and simplification. Moreover, Crevel's 'estranging' use of metaphors reflects the Surrealist poetics of 'odd coincidences' and 'strange encounters': as Pierre Reverdy states for literary and visual analogies, "the more distant and apposite the relationships between the two realities are, the stronger the image will be, and the more emotive power and poetic reality it will have" (Reverdy 73 [my translation]). From this point of view, for example, I could see Riffaterre's "multiple derivation" activate different images. The "martin sec" could allude to the French common name par excellence for donkeys (l'âne Martin) or to La Fontaine's adage "Martin-bâton accourt, l'âne change de ton," which closes one of his fables[10]. It is quite surprising to find a reference to a donkey in both these "hypothetical" interpretations, as if it were a hidden message for the grandmother's brother-in-law!

Furthermore, in order to illustrate some other cases of the shift between common language and new or 'refreshed' images, I could consider the expression "béni soit le rayon de mémoire" (in English "blessed be the ray of memory" and in Italian "benedetto sia il raggio di memoria") in which "memory" substitutes the more usual "light". Or again the interesting "revitalization" of the expression "à mourir" (in French, for example, "s'ennuyer à mourir" means "terribly boring", but we should keep in mind that mourir means also "to die". In Chapter 4 I read "Si la pauvre fille avait cessé de vivre, le chien hurlerait à la mort": I managed to preserve this 'revitalized' metaphor in Italian, thanks to the closeness between the two languages and the existence of this same expression "da morire" ("Se la povera ragazza avesse cessato di vivere, il cane avrebbe ululato da morire"), while in English this nuance is mostly lost ("If the poor girl were dead, the dog would be howling"). Likewise, in Chapter 2, the original "ce sinon... qui est aussi sûrement à menaces que les armes sont à feu" could be preserved in Italian, thanks to the analogy between "armes à feu" and "armi da fuoco" (literally "fire-arms"), as well as between the French use of à + infinitive and the Italian da + infinitive ("quell'altrimenti… che è da temere come le armi sono da fuoco"). In this case though, the English translator creatively resorted to another common construction, "charged with + noun" in order to preserve Crevel's wordplay ("this otherwise…, which was as surely charged with threats as guns are with bullets").

There are several other cases of calembours and multiple meanings in Crevel's *Babylone*—cases in which some French words or expressions have two layers of sense because they activate both an idiomatic and a literal sense. An example can be found in the profession of Lucie's brother, whom Lucie herself, an uneducated cook, describes in these terms: "… elle avait un frère qui doit s'occuper dans l'aviation, puisqu'il est, à ce qu'elle prétendait, un monte-en-l'air…" (Chapter 2). Kay Boyle translates this passage maintaining in French the 'troubling' expression and adding a footnote to explain it: "…she had a brother who must have had something to do with aviation because he was, after what she told me, a 'monte-en-l'air.'" In a footnote, Boyle specifies: "Monte-en-l'air is archaic slang, meaning 'burglar' or 'second-story worker.'" However, the problem—and the richness—of this expression consists in its functioning at two different levels: the first is the level of the cook who candidly takes the expression literally, assuming that monte-en-l'air (literally "goes-up-in-the-air") has to be a profession dealing with aviation; the second is the level of ordinary language, the sense of which is explained by Kay Boyle in her footnote (a monte-en-l'air is a "burglar"). Since I thought it inappropriate for a naïve and uneducated cook to use a French word, I decided to maintain this 'estranging' effect in Italian, using the expression "predone acrobatico" (literally "acrobatic plunderer"), which allowed us to maintain the semantic field of aviation ("acrobatico") and of burglar ("predone"): "aveva un fratello che deve lavorare nell'aviazione, perché, da quel che diceva lei, fa il predone acrobatico". The expression does not retain the idiomaticity of the French one, but I felt that its oddity wouldn't be too out of place in the rambling discourse of the Kerosene drinker.

One last topic I would like to address regarding Crevel's *Babylone* is the richness of references to other literary texts. As far as translation is concerned, intertextual literary references call for an 'authoritative' translation, if available, or at least for an aware transposition. Sometimes quotations in the original text are explicit and involve specific lines of avowed works: the refrain taken from Shakespeare's *As you like it* (Chapter 1), which is in English in both the French and the Italian text—"With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino"; the line taken from Racine's *Athalie* (Chapter 2)—"Un songe, me devais-je inquiéter d'un songe?"[11]; the line from Racine's *Andromaque* (Chapter 4)—"Avant que tous les Grecs vous parlent par ma voix"[12]; and the line from Sonnet 28 of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal*—"La froide majesté de la femme stérile."[13]

But apart from these overt and less problematic quotations, there are a series of quotations that are quite obvious to French readers, but not so to Italian or English readers. This is the case, for example, in the quotation by Stéphane Mallarmé, "Une négresse par le démon secouée,"[14] or Gabriel Fauré's song *Les Roses d'Ispahan dans leur gaine de mousse*[15], for which the author does not expressly indicate the source. Nonetheless, in all these cases, once I identified the source—and indeed the internet proves to be an invaluable aid to the translator’s encyclopedic knowledge—, I solved the problem by referring to an authoritative translation. However, there is a more complex case of rewriting of a passage taken from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* in the text. In Chapter 7, while the narrator is talking about the purple flowers (“ces longues fleurs pourpres que les vierges appellent doigts d’homme mort”), it is evident that Crevel is referring to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*[16]. In this case too, I resorted to an authoritative translation of Hamlet[17] and rewrote the passage trying to adhere as much as possible to the chosen Italian version.

Crevel’s *Babylone* could be interpreted as the metaphoric disintegration of a wealthy Parisian family. What I tried to show is how this ‘disintegration’ can also be found at the level of language, which explodes and multiplies the possibilities of meaning. When Jacques Derrida wrote his essay “Des Tours de Babel”, playing with the homophony between the French “détours” (“loopholes” but also “roundabout expressions”) and “des Tours” (“On Towers” or “Some Towers”), he made a clever reflection on the philosophical advisability of the translation process, which involves the role of God as well. The divine dismantling of both the tower and the unique language implies the impossibility of reconstructing either (Derrida 171). It is interesting to note how, in Chapter 6, Crevel adds an obscure formula, while specifying that it is “difficult to translate”: “Ho la rio to atcho palaïo / Aïo la mïo vokno Rotadcho / Digo mugo rudou banaïou”. It seems as if the author is putting himself at the same level of Derrida’s God, since God “at the same time imposes and forbids translation” (170). The dismantling of a bourgeois family implies the impossibility of rebuilding it, for once man has reached his extremes, he cannot go back. And once man has discovered the Surrealist use of language and sense, he cannot avoid using it, he cannot go back to the rational tradition. The inherent revolt of this novel goes along with the revolt of man against material life, the quest of the modern man for a transcendental life outside canonical religion. In this sense, the whole book can be seen as a paradigm of the legend of Babel, of men’s arrogance (“hybris”), a paradigm which I tried to transpose without censorship, while being aware that “the translator works to restore communication when God has decreed it should be destroyed, thereby working against God” (Long 2).

## notes

[1] Published for the first time in 1927, Paris: Kra editions. All references to the French edition are taken from: Crevel, René. *Babylone: roman*. Paris: Pauvert, 1975. All references to the Italian edition are taken from: Crevel, René. *Babilonia*. Ed. and trans. by Tania Collani, Bologna: Clueb, 2007.

[2] Crevel, René. *Babylon: A Novel*. Trans. Kay Boyle. San Francisco, CA: North Point Press, 1985. All references to English translation are taken from this edition.

[3] Even in Crevel's previous novel, *La Morte difficile* (1926), the hero ends up killing himself.

[4] In chapter 2: "Phosphore, c'est encore plus joli que Jérôme qui déjà pourrait bien être un nom de fleur". In the Italian version I decided to keep the French Jérôme, while in the English version I find the same name without any accent, "Jerome."

[5] Chapter 5: "'Mac-Louf?' 'Yes, Mac-Louf. This name may be less pleasing to French ears than La Rochefoucauld or Talleyrand-Périgord, but the gratification that men derive from three or four syllables that call attention of their contemporaries to them, I know what it is worth. The pride of calling oneself Countess of X, or Baroness of Z—what vanity compared to a respectable peace."

[6] The epithet of "Ratichonnet" was given to the Reverend by some prostitutes in Marseille (in Chapter 7). Besides the fact that Ratichonnet has no meaning in English, in the original French text the term is also used in two occasions without capital letter, so as to underline the common sense of the term. In colloquial French, ratichon is the "priest", besides being a synonym of "raven". Moreover, it may sound a little odd to "hear" a foreign term in such a low social milieu.

[7] "Thus was our great-aunt Laura made a demimondaine through the fault of a predestined name in a time when women who misbehaved were called 'lorettes'".

[8] "Così, la nostra prozia Lucile fu una mezza-mondana per via di un nome già segnato al suo tempo, ché già allora si chiamavano "lucciole" le donne di facili costumi".

[9] As pointed out, among others by: M. Snell-Hornby. *Translation Studies*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995; and more recently in some case-studies by Kay Wikberg, in “English Metaphors and Their Translation: the Importance of Context.” *Discourse Patterns in Spoken and Written Corpora*. Eds. K. Aijmer and A.-B. Stenström. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004. 245-265; and Enrico Monti, “Dwelling upon Metaphors: The Translation of William Gass’s Novellas.” *NJES* V:1 (2006): 117-132.

[10] *The Fables of La Fontaine*. Trans. Elizur Wright. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004: “La Fontaine has ‘Martin-bâton’, a name for a groom or ostler armed his cudgel of office, taken from Rabelais” (Fable V, Book IV, 129). And: “Old Martin did his office quick./ Surprised were all that who did not know the trick/ To see that Martin, at his will,/ was driving lions to the mill” (Fable XXI 175).

[11] “Un sogno, è tale, un sogno, da potermi inquietare?”. Jean Racine. *Britannico, Bajazet, Atalia*. Ed. Maria Luisa Spaziani. Milano: Garzanti, 1986. In English: “A dream, should I be worried by a dream?.”

[12] “Prima che tutti i Greci vi parlino per voce mia”. I referred to: Jean Racine, *Andromaca*. Edited Mario Luzi. Milano: Rizzoli, 1980. In English: “Before all Greeks address you with my voice.”

[13] “La fredda maestà della donna sterile”. I referred to: Charles Baudelaire, *I Fiori del male*. Trans. Attilio Bertolucci. Milano: Garzanti, 1975. In English: “The glacial majesty of the barren woman.”

[14] “Una negra dal dèmone agitata”. I referred to Stéphane Mallarmé, *Versi e prose*. Ed. Clemente Fusero. Milano: Dall’Oglio, 1951. In English: “A Negress shaken by the demon.”

[15] I maintained the original, since it is a song that isn’t translated in Italy; while Kay Boyle decided to translate it: “The roses of Ispahan in their sheath of moss”.

[16] French passage: “Et par quoi remplacerais-tu ces longues fleurs pourpres dont la jeune fille ceignit son front avant d’aller au ruisseau, ces longues fleurs pourpres que les vierges appellent doigts d’homme mort, mais que les bergers silencieux désignent d’un nom moins réservé?”, refers clearly at act 4, scene 7 of Hamlet: “There with fantastic garlands did she come/ Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples/ That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,/ But our cold maids do dead men’s fingers call them”.

[17] William Shakespeare. *Amleto*. Ed. Alessandro Serpieri. Venezia: Marsilio, 1997: “Lì ella fece fantastiche ghirlande, di ranuncoli,/ ortiche, margherite, e di quei lunghi fiori purpurei/ a cui gli osceni pastori danno un nome più volgare,/ ma che le nostre caste fanciulle chiamano dita di morto”.

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# the use of italics in the english translations of dostoevsky's *the gambler*

nadezhda korchagina

Or, shall I say "*The use* of italics in translation"? Or maybe even, "The use of *italics* in translation"? The use of a graphical marker such as italics can easily alter the message. Any use of italics is a part of language code, since it affects the reader's comprehension of the meaning expressed by a word. While the use of italics is not predetermined by language rules, it may be a very expressive feature of a text. Although such an emphasis does not stand out much in a larger body of text, it signifies a context difference while the text is being read.

The use of italic text as a typographical method was invented by Aldus Manutius, a 16th-century Venetian printer. The original purpose of italics was to compress the text in order to save space, and the word itself derived from the Greek 'italikos' ("Italian"). Thus, the original function of italics in a text was of a quite practical nature (Adams and Woolf). However, that function changed as typography developed. The Russian poet Vasily Zhukovsky was the first Russian writer to utilize italics as an intonational device (Lotman 69). Today italics are used very widely in all kinds of writing. Scholarly studies of the use of this graphical marker began in the 1970s. Yuri Lotman in his *Analysis of the Poetic Text* referred to the marker as "the graphics of lexical tone (font graphics)" and mentioned that the "graphic structure of poetry is as yet almost unstudied" (69). At about the same time Boris Uspensky mentioned in passing that "an analysis of *War and Peace* clearly indicates that Tolstoy often made deliberate use of someone else's speech, by marking it in the text, as a rule, by italics" (33). Further development of literary semiotics led to the emergence of the concept of *kreolizovannyi* text in 1990. This is a term attributed to the Russian scholars Yu.A. Sorokin and E.F. Tarasov. It originated from their studies of texts that combine codes of two systems (such as a combination of verbal and visual codes in writing). While the most obvious application of this concept, such as the language of advertising, is extensively researched, I intend to demonstrate in this essay that this concept may also be applied in the analysis of translations. For the research material for this essay, I have chosen a short novel by the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Gambler* (1866), in the English translation.

The popularity of Fyodor Dostoevsky in the West is indisputable. His popularity is manifest in a large number of translations. For example, *The Gambler*, one of his lesser known works, has been translated into English numerous times: by Constance Garnett in 1912, by C. J. Hogarth in 1948, by Jessie Coulson in 1966, by Victor Terras in 1972, by Jane Kentish in 1991, by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky in 2005, and finally by Hugh Aplin in 2006. The large number of translations, as well as the shorter periods of time between the latest translations, are indirect indicators that interest in this work is increasing in the West.

This essay resulted from a comparative analysis of two original translations of the first chapter of *The Gambler* into English. The comparison of the translations with the original revealed that the number of italicized text units in both translations was much greater than it was in the original work. The following essay is an attempt to analyze the use of italics in the translations, as well as the factors that determine that type of emphasis. The material for this research is limited to the first chapter of the story in three variants: the original text by Fyodor Dostoevsky, a translated text by Constance Garnett, and a translated text by C.J. Hogarth. This essay employs two methods: a comparative analysis between the original and the translations in order to identify the similarities in the emphatic functions, and a contrastive analysis of the two translations in order to find alternative ways of expressing the emphasis. The goal of this essay is to show how the use of italics, while being an optional tool in the hands of a translator, reflects his or her individual translation approach.

## *Conventional use of italics.*

The use of italics in modern English is generally recommended in two instances: to mark words of foreign origin and to place emphasis on a certain word in writing in order to reflect how it would be emphasized if spoken.

Since the use of foreign words (most notably, French) was very widespread in 19th-century Russian literature, it would only be logical to find them in translations. Remarkably, all French words are preserved in both translations in order to re-create the atmosphere of Russian society of that time.Thus, it is not the use of italics, but the author’s choice of a large number of foreign words, that is important. It is a convention in the English language to represent foreign words with italics, and therefore this type of use is determined by tradition. The following examples belong to this group: some names (the newspaper *Opinion nationale*), realities of foreign culture (*table d’hote*, *chateau*), and certain phrases that identify the speaker as French (“*que je suis heretique et barbare*,” “*Cela n’etait pas si bete*”).

*Translator-instigated use of italics.*

In her translation, Constance Garnett develops a very peculiar approach associated with the use of italics. This approach involves the usage of words of the third language: in the process of translation she replaces Russian textual units with French words (and, consequently, they are written in italics). Yet again, the choice of French language is not accidental and is quite logical along with the other French words used in this text. However, the research of Uspensky contains some very important observations in this regard. Having compared the rendition of French speech in the works of Pushkin with *War and Peace* by Tolstoy, he noted that

> In the Russia of Pushkin's time French was not a marked linguistic phenomenon. It was so much a part of everyday speech that it was necessary to call special attention to it. Tolstoy, on the other hand, describing the same period as Pushkin, describes it from a larger vantage point when the use of French was at least to some extent already marked in the speech of the Russian society. (Uspensky 51).

Considering that *The Gambler* was published in 1866, just one year after the first publication of *War and Peace*, this statement is applicable to the overall use of French in the story by Dostoevsky as well. Therefore, Garnett's substitutions contribute to the increase of such lexical "markedness". There are, however, two essential factors which determine these substitutions: there is no direct equivalent of a word in the target language, English (or the translator feels that the direct equivalent of a word is inappropriate in a particular context), and the word is surrounded by a self-explaining context. This approach may be observed in the following instances:

A. "Poline uzhasno ne nravilis' moii voprosy, i ia videl, chto ei khotelos' pazozlit' menia tonom i dikostiiu svoiego otveta; ia ob etom totchas zhe ei skazal" (Dostoevsky 213). Here a Russian word *dikost'* (liter. 'wildness') is translated by Garnett as, "Polina was not at all pleased at my questions; I could see that she was doing her best to irritate me with the *brusquerie* of her answers" (151). This sentence can be compared with Hogarth's translation, which reads, "Polina greatly disliked my questions, and I saw that she was trying to make me angry by her tone and the strangeness of her answers” (9) [underlining is mine]. In this case the use of a foreign word allows the translator to convey the meaning in a much more economical way. Even if the potential reader does not speak French, the meaning of that particular word can easily be guessed from the context: what kind of answers should a displeased person give in order to do her best to irritate somebody?

B. “Frantsuzy dazhe perenesli, kogda ia rasskazal, chto goda dva tomu nazad videl cheloveka, v kotorogo frantsizkii eger’ v dvenadtsatom godu vystrelil – edinstvenno dlia togo, chtob pazriadit’ ruzh’e” (Dostoevsky 212). A Russian word *eger’* (liter. ‘huntsman’) is rendered as, “I told them that I had, two years previously, seen a man at whom, in 1812, a French *chasseur* had shot simply in order to discharge his gun” (Garnett 7). Compare with Hogarth’s translation, which reads, “A fat Polish nobleman, who had been the most offensive of all who were present at the *table d’hôte*, at once went upstairs, while some of the Frenchmen were simply disgusted when I told them that two years ago I had encountered a man at whom, in 1812, a French ‘hero’ fired for the mere fun of discharging his musket” (148). Curiously enough, both translators choose not to render this word literally. Hogarth’s translation adds an evaluative component to the target text (the quotation marks around “hero” signify that the word is not used in its direct meaning), and the substitution of a foreign word allows Constance Garnett to withdraw any kind of emotional evaluation in the given context (this word is quite neutral in the source text).

Hogarth’s translation exhibits a quite different approach associated with the use of italics. His approach is only observed in the verbal discourse of the story (such as dialogues of the characters), and it can be easily mistaken for an attempt to reflect an unusual or emphatic intonation of their speech. However, a comparison with the alternate translation by Garnett reveals that the use of a graphical marker allows Hogarth to omit certain information (usually verbal modifiers such as “he *wanted*” vs. “he would like to very much”; “he knows me” vs. “he *knows* me very well”; “you know” vs. “you know perfectly well”; “you *know*” vs. “you know all about”), to attract readers’ attention to the indirect meaning of the word (“actually *compromise* me” vs. “compromise me, so to speak”; “they *were*” vs. “who knows, they maybe”), and to render the emphasis in a much more economical way (“I *must*” vs. “I must… I must.”).

| Hogarth | Garnett (underlining is mine) | Dostoevsky (underlining is mine) |
|---|---|---|
| He *wanted* to do so, but each time was met by me with such a fixed, disrespectful stare that he desisted in confusion. (144) | The man is absolutely unable to look me straight in the face; he would like to very much, but every time I meet his eyes with an intend, that is, disrespectful air, seems overcome with the embarrassment. (3) | *Etot chelovek reshitel’no ne mozhet smotret’ mne priamo v glaza; on by i ochen’ khotel, no ia kazhdyi raz otvechaiu emu takim pristal’nym, to est’ nepochtitel’nym vzgliadom, chto on kak budto konfuzitsa.* (208) |
| Though I am not your mentor, nor wish to be, at least I have a right to require that you shall not actually *compromise* me. (144) | In any case though, I am not your mentor and have no desire to be, yet I have the right, at any rate to desire that you will not compromise me, so to speak… (4) | *Vo vsiakom sluchae, khot’ ia i ne mentor vash, da roli takoi na sebia brat’ ne zhelaiu, no po krainei mere imeiu provo pozhelat’, chtoby vy, tak skazat’, menia-to ne skompromentirovali. (209)* |
| Perhaps in very truth they *were* “Comte et Comtesse”. (145) | …well, who knows, they may be Conte and Comtesse. (4) | *…chto zh, mozhet byt’ i v samom dele oni comte et comtesse.* (209) |
| Of course, strictly speaking, he *knew* me… (145) | He knows me very well, however. (4) | *On, vprochem, menia ochen’ khorosho znaiet.* (209) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| “Come what may, I *must* have money,” she said. (149) | I must have money, come what may,” she said. “I must get it or I am lost.” (7) | - Mne vo chto by to ni stalo nuzhny den’gi, - skazala ona, - i ih nado dobyt’; inache ia prosto pogibla. (212) |
| “You *know* he has not,” retorted Polina angrily. (150) | “You know perfectly well that he hasn’t!” (8) | - Vy otlichno khorosho znaiete, chto net! – s serdtsem skazala Polina (213) |
| “I *knew* you would ask about him!” (150) | “I knew you would ask about him directly.” (8) | - Ia tak i znal, chto vy o nem seichas sprosite. (213) |
| “You *know* who she is – just Mlle. Blanche. (152) | “You know all about Mlle. Blanche.” (9) | - Vy sami znaiete, chto takoie mademoiselle Blanche. (214) |

In the examples above, Hogarth’s approach may be considered a compensation for the loss of lexical units by means of emphatic intonation. However, at times he uses the same approach when there is virtually no need for it. This can be supported by a comparison with the translation by Garnett, who often uses precisely the same words to render the meaning of the source text, yet chooses not to add any emotional overtones, as observed in the examples below:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| “*Why* do I continue to dance attendance upon the General, instead of having left him and his family long ago?” (146) | “Why I went on dancing attendance on this General, and had not left them long ago?” (5) | …*zachem ia vandalaius’ s etim generalom I davnym-davno ne otkhozu ot nikh?* (210) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| … his lordship might just as well finish off *my* affair as well. (147) | … that as Monseigneur was receiving, he might settle my business, too. (6) | ... *chto tak kak monsen'er prinimaiet, to mozhet konchit' i so mnoiu.* (211) |
| Yes, I believe that you *will* come in for a great deal. (150) | I fancy you'll get a great deal. (8) | *Mne kazhetsa, vam ochen' mnogo dostanetsa.* (212) |
| *Now*, are you satisfied? (151) | Well, are you satisfied? (9) | *No chto, dovol'no s vas?* (213) |

As we can see in the examples, the use of italics is similar to a purely rhetorical marking (emphatic intonation); however, such marking is a byproduct of the process of translation, as it is absent in the original text. Here, clearly, it is the translator's voice that can almost be heard.

The goal of this paper has been by no means to evaluate these translations, much less to bring to light any "flaws" or "misinterpretations," since such conclusions may only be drawn from the analysis of translations as literary works in their entirety. This essay serves to illustrate that even the use of optional devices such as the use of emphasis (usually marked by italics), which are often neglected in scholarly research, reflects the two distinct personalities of the translators. Garnett uses the abundance of words of French origin in the source text to camouflage her own modulations to the source text, while Hogarth clearly favors the emphatic use of italics, at times at the expense of the exact translation, but at times through adding expressiveness in order to "verbalize" the speech of characters due to what seems to be his personal preference. Even in terms of using emphasis, where the range of potential application in translation is limited to only three options (to render the emphasis of the original, to add an emphasis in the translation, or to not use any emphasis whatsoever), translators exhibit patterns of preference. This leads us to a much more global question: what happens if the range of available tools is virtually unlimited (such as words and their combinations)? To conclude, I would like to note that the field of psychological comprehension of the written text has never really been studied in the theory of translation. There are a number of ways to express emphasis in written texts (use of italics, underlined words, increased spacing between the letters, etc.), but the use of italics seems to be the leading one. Its presence in the text may be determined by cultural tradition or linguistic or literary reasons, as well as by the personal preference of the writer. However, the comparison of two independent translations of the first chapter of *The Gambler* by Dostoyevsky reveals that, while the use of emphasis is an optional tool in the hands of a translator, both translators of the story favored the use of italics.

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# how nationalism enhanced the first translation of *beowulf*

mark bradshaw busbee

This article focuses on the first modern translation of *Beowulf*, which was done in Danish between 1815 and 1820 by the poet, priest and historian N.F.S. Grundtvig.  My purpose is to demonstrate, through an analysis of Grundtvig's translation, how an assertively nationalistic rendering of the poem can enrich a venerated but misunderstood text, like *Beowulf*, and shake it free from its narrow appeal as a national artifact.  I will begin by discussing the current scholarly suspicion of the validity of nationalist translation work, then briefly outline the fervently nationalist climate in which Grundtvig worked on his translation, and finally offer examples from his translations to demonstrate how it enriched and enhanced the poem for a modern audience.

Suspicion of the validity of nationalist translation work, especially of works considered culturally important, has increased in the past few decades.  Antoine Berman argues that the translations produced by German Romanticism were "primarily concerned with ethnocentric, annexationist translations" (286).  And Annie Brisset demonstrates that similar appropriative tendencies appear in twentieth-century Quebec, where "translation becomes an act of reclaiming […] a reterritorializing operation [one capable of] elevating a dialect to the status of a national and cultural language" (346).  Lawrence Venuti extends these conspiratorial claims by stating that translation norms themselves "are always housed in the social institutions where translations are produced and enlisted in cultural and political agendas" (*Invisibility* 29).  These are valid arguments, as there is certainly a duty to maintain the cultural integrity of the source text and to be aware of the political forces that might affect translation.  Unfortunately, these arguments also share the dangerous assumption that a nationalist translator's primary goal is the "reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values" (Venuti *Reader* 20).  These arguments also neglect the role nationalist translators played in bringing to light works composed by cultures long past in languages no longer spoken or written.  In cases where source texts were not so much removed from their target audiences by cultural values as by time, a few nationalist translators tasked themselves with their "enhancement" – to use George Steiner's term (316) – rather than their reduction, so as to increase their importance and relevance for modern readers.  The tradition of patriotic translations of *Beowulf* is evidence for this point, in that, through time, each new translation was another step towards better understanding of an ancient text.

In the introduction to his celebrated translation of *Beowulf*, Seamus Heaney writes that the subtext of the poem is “the whole vexed questions of the relationship between nationality, language, history, and the literary tradition” (xxiv). Heaney admits that he approaches it with the political tensions of Northern Ireland in mind, and he explains that the poem carries the aura of Englishness to such a degree that for him it becomes inseparable from its tradition. Although early nineteenth-century scholars were often too busy trying to comprehend medieval vernacular texts to ponder their “mythical potency,” national fervor compelled them to unwittingly focus on it. It is true, as Berman points out, that translation projects became politicized. French scholars came to admire *La Chanson de Roland* as that most coveted of properties, a national epic, and Germans came to ascribe the virtues of their national character to the influence of the *Nibelungenlied* (Niles 4). Unlike these, *Beowulf* contains many fantastic elements: the Danes are being attacked by a monster and its mother until *Beowulf*, a foreign hero from Geatland, saves them. Then, after ruling as king for fifty years, he dies killing a dragon that was attacking his own people. But with its inclusion of a variety of peoples and events connected with the histories of a variety of modern nations, *Beowulf* came to be seen not only as the earliest English epic but the earliest German epic, “an ancient record of a Germanic language and a new window to the pan-Germanic heroic age, through which everyone eagerly peered” (Kiernan 197). John D. Niles explains the deep-running implications of this early nationalist enthusiasm for *Beowulf*:

> Nationalist biases of this period had a profound effect on the early reception of *Beowulf*, establishing intellectual houses that have remained inhabitable for the occasional reader despite their shaky foundations. Rather than accepting the poem as an Old English historical fiction dating from the tenth century [. . .] early scholars took it to be a direct record of the Germanic Heroic Age of the fifth and sixth centuries [. . .] What was of interest to most scholars at this time was the poem’s connection to the ancestral Heimat. The true poem needed to be rescued from the poor, late Old English record in which it happened to be preserved. (Niles 4)

It is therefore not difficult to conclude that Heaney’s attention to the deep political component of the poem is nothing new. What is relatively new is that such a component can be regarded with disinterest (though early English romantic fascination with *Beowulf* might well have been apolitical.)

The Dane Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin's edition and accompanying translation of *Beowulf* began the nationalist debate over the poem; it was published as *De Danorum rebus getis seculi III & IV. Poëma Danicum dialecto Anglo-Saxonica* [Of Events Concerning the Danes in the Third and Fourth Centuries: A Danish Poem in the Anglo-Saxon Dialect]. As its title shows, Thorkelin believed *Beowulf* to be essentially Danish and Anglo-Saxon to be little more than a dialect of a Scandinavian mother tongue. His edition and translation were based on his stated belief that *Beowulf* itself was a translation of an original Danish work, one possibly carried out at the court of Alfred the Great. Concerning his working methods, Thorkelin writes, "Conscience did not allow me to change, remove or add anything [in my copying of the poem]. It was nonetheless my duty to display the proper shape and structure of the poem in clearly divided and punctuated verses, which, being written on the parchment in a continuous series of lines, have been obscured through faulty punctuation (Thorkelin in Bjork 313).

Unfortunately, whether due to his ignorance of Old English, the faulty state of his transcriptions, or the devastating setback caused by the British attacks on Copenhagen in 1807, Thorkelin's edition and explanation of the contents of the poem are deeply confused[1]. Among the absurdities in his rendering are the following: all of the peoples involved in the plot are Danes, though they are divided into subgroups; Grendel is not a monster but a rival chieftain, whom Beowulf defeats in a sea battle; and Grendel's mother is a witch who heals her son after a first battle with Beowulf.

By mid 1816, scholars from England, Prussia and the German-speaking territories of southern Denmark had responded. The Prussian Abraham Jacob Penzel (1749-1819) and the Holsteiners Nicholaus Outzen (1752-1826) and Friedrich Dahlmann (1785-1860) published highly politicized reviews arguing for the German provenance of *Beowulf*. The Englishmen Sharon Turner, John Josias Conybeare and William Taylor of Norwich had also published discussions of Old English poetry in 1805, 1814 and 1816 respectively. Those articles were less political and, in the case of Taylor's 1816 essay on *Beowulf*, were generally less accurate in their explanations and analyses than those of Penzel and Outzen. Penzel's untitled (and unsigned) review displays nationally motivated skepticism of Thorkelin's presentation of the history of the poem as particularly Danish (cols. 354-5)[2]. Penzel provides a mostly accurate summary of the plot (cols. 355-56). He accuses Thorkelin of attempting "to make a veritable *Ossian* out of his unknown author" by placing the poem in the third or not later than the fourth century[3]. This dating is not accurate, Penzel writes, and the poem is no *res gestæ Danorum*, as Thorkelin calls it (col. 356). The poem's legends are intimately interwoven within it; therefore, it is unlikely that the Christian parts were interpolated (col. 357). However, the poem is "ein Hexenmärchen, das zur isländischen blauen Bibliothek gehört (a witch tale which belongs to the 'Blue Library' of Iceland, col. 356), and that fairy tale element should be burned out so that "sehr viel echtes Gold herauskommen würde" [the abundant true gold might shine forth] (col. 363). The poem cannot be ranked as an epic, Penzel argues, because it lacks epic unity; it deals with the entire life of the hero and it lacks a proper epic theme. He calls for a complete translation and separate explanations of the historical and mythological matter of the poem (col. 363). In closing, Penzel criticizes Thorkelin's classical expressions and manner of presentation:

> So wie *Th. Vedera Leode* durch *gens aeolica* übersezt: so hascht er auch sonst ängstlich nach römischer und griechischer Literatur, und verfährt also ungefär so, wie jener Münzsammler, der von seinen Münzen den edlen Grünspan ab beizen wollte: er raubt ihnen Originalität! (col. 364)
>
> Just as Thorkelin translates Vedera Leode as *gens aeolica* in an effort to give the poem the flavor of Roman and Greek literature, so has he, like a coin collector, scraped away at the poem's noble patina, and thereby destroyed its originality.[4]

Andreas Haarder writes, "with the Schleswiger Outzen, patriotism comes to dominate the entire review" ("Beowulf-anmeldere" 66). Outzen and Dahlmann were German-speaking Danes living in the Schleswig-Holstein region of Southern Jutland (the southern-most part of Denmark). As such, they considered Schleswig to be essentially German and not Danish. The connection of this political point with *Beowulf* is through the notion of "ancestral Germanness" or *Urdeutschheit*, as Tom Shippey calls it (17). They believed that the "ancestral homeland of the Angles, or English, was in the district of Angeln in southern Schleswig, just to the south of the Danish border" (Shippey 17-18). This belief is evident in the title of Outzen's article on *Beowulf*: "Das angelsächsische Gedicht Beowulf, als die schätzbarste Urkunde des höchsten Altertums von unserm Vaterland" [The Anglo-Saxon poem of *Beowulf* as the most valuable document about the very great age of our fatherland]

(1816). Outzen's concern is primarily with the geographical location of events in *Beowulf*, for political reasons. He is principally concerned with locating events in the poem in German-speaking regions. Outzen writes, "The true and definite scene of all the narrated deeds and events is our present fatherland, that is, the mother country of [English scholars'] own distant ancestors" (310), since Outzen's "fatherland" is Angeln or North Schleswig, and most of his comments in the article are tied up with proving that the action of *Beowulf* takes place there[5].

I have laid out some of these early aggressively nationalist attitudes towards *Beowulf* in order to provide a backdrop for a discussion of the first complete and accurate translation of *Beowulf* in a modern language. Unlike the work of Thorkelin or his German-speaking critics, the Danish historian N.F.S. Grundtvig had been hard at work understanding the poem as a poem, and he was unhappy with what he saw in Thorkelin's edition and accompanying translation and the flattering review of it by Thorkelin's friend Peter Erasmus Müller,[6] so he entered the discussion of *Beowulf* on 29 July in the bi-weekly *Nyeste Skilderie af Kjøbenhavn* [The Latest Scenes of Copenhagen] with two successive serial reviews of Thorkelin's edition and Müller's ideas about the poem[7]. Grundtvig was himself a patriot, but his vision for *Beowulf* extended well beyond the petty (and incorrect) assertions of his contemporaries. From the beginning, his primary concern was for an accurate account of the contents of the poem. Grundtvig states that as a result of their own inability to read the work, they blame the text for its difficulty. He writes:

> Den latinske Oversættelse […] paa mange Steder er aabenbar urgtig, og paa mange mørkere end Texten selv. […] Hvor den latinske Oversættelse giver nogen Mening, følges den blindt, og hvor den ingen giver, skydes Skylden paa Digtets Dunkelhed, ja Digteren beskyldes endog for at have modsagt sig selv […] Men hvad er dog sligt for et Væsen? er det den Erudition og Critik, hvorpaa Man pukker saa saare? er det saaledes Hedenolds Minder skal kundgiøres og omtales i Dannemark, at Udlændinge skal pege Fingre ad os, som de der prise og bedømme hvad vi ei forstaae? (cols. 945-946)
>
> The Latin translation […] in many places is openly wrong, and in many places more obscure than the original text itself. […] Where the Latin translation gives any sense, it is followed blindly, and where it does not, the blame is cast on the obscurity of the poem, indeed the poet gets the blame even for having con

> tradicted himself […] But what sort of behavior is this? Is this the scholar ship and the criticism on which people insist so strongly? Is this the way such memorials of the heathen age shall be made known and referred to in Denmark, so that foreigners shall point the finger at us, as people who praise and damn what we do not understand? (Grundtvig in Shippey-Haarder 108-09)

Grundtvig then goes on to translate the first 52 lines (cols. 948-51) and lines 1870-73a of *Beowulf* into Danish verse (col. 1112) and lines 2426-2470 into Danish prose (col. 1114). Then, he announces his intention to translate the entire poem for his people (col. 1030). He will provide:

> et bedre Billede af Digtets Eiendommelighed, end lang Tale mægtede, dog dette Billede kan kun forklares gjennem en stille Beskinelse af det hele, som jeg i en rimet Oversættelse skal stræbe at gjøre muelig for dem af mine Landsmænd, hvis Leilighed det ikke er at trænge ind i Grundsproget. (col. 1028)
>
> a better picture of the poem's uniqueness than a long account [might provide]. Such a picture can only be provided though a styled reflection of the entire poem, that I will try to make accessible in a rhymed translation for those of my countrymen who do not have the ability [to read] it in the original language.

He explains that his translation will be in verse because "naturligviis [...] Digt ei kan være bogstavelig" [naturally, a poem [i.e., translation] cannot be literal] (col. 947).

Grundtvig's methodology for the translation and his confidence in the original are clear. Considering his willingness to defy the authority of the translation community and stand alone in his interpretation, it is safe to conclude that he is not concerned at this point with following the rules of "scholarly" translation as Thorkelin and Müller would understand them. His approach is a "dethroning," as Hans J. Vermeer would describe it (228), of the status of the *Beowulf* manuscript, in favor of an understandable and therefore more useful and popular translation. With this dethroning, the translator becomes more and more conspicuous as the author of the original work, rather than its interpreter. As a "stille Beskinelse" (styled reflection) the translation has a special relationship with *Beowulf*, one that is similar to Grundtvig's later "efter-klang" (echo) poems, in that it attempts to enhance and echo the essential, spiritual elements of the source text.

Unlike his other major translation work on Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* and Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla*, Grundtvig had no complete or accurate model to follow for his translation of *Beowulf*.[9] Thorkelin's edition had an accompanying Latin translation, but it was as misleading as often as it was helpful. The only two existing partial English translations that could have been of any real help were Sharon Turner's partial translations in the first edition of *The History of the Anglo-Saxons* (1805) and John Josias Conybeare's better Latin verse translations with English paraphrases of the Finnsburg materials (1814).[10] Grundtvig may have known about Turner's translations from Thorkelin's Preface (ix), but these would have been no help to him, and there is no evidence that he knew anything of Conybeare's work of 1814.

The nature of Grundtvig's translation attempts in 1815 therefore required his taking risks. Andreas Haarder writes, "In his work on *Beowulf* [Grundtvig] is a pioneer and had to pay the going price for daring to make imaginative leaps over chasms, whilst ordinary scholarship preferred to remain on the side where it was already standing" ("Grundtvig" 80). Concerning the freedom Grundtvig took, Bent Noak writes,

> In his poetic reproduction of the original in Danish, he already exhibits an essential feature in his work as a translator: he uses far more lines than the Anglo-Saxon original, not because he was not able to reproduce the verses more exactly and briefly, but because he was convinced that it was necessary to transform the verses considerably if he wanted to render the Anglo-Saxon according to the Danish language and poetic style of his own time. (Noak 34)

Rather than praise his discernment of the beauty of *Beowulf* or regret his inattention to its original rhythms, Thorkelin attributes Grundtvig's translation to its translator's "fanciful brain" (1815: col. 1059); "creative imagination" (col. 1060); and "dream-engendering brain" (col. 1079). There is no doubt, writes Thorkelin, that "imagination" (col. 1080) will be Grundtvig's guide as he attempts a translation of the entire poem.

Grundtvig defended himself against such criticism by insisting that he balanced philology with creativity, and in that defense he revealed a tendency that he would carry on throughout his work with *Beowulf*:

> Thi ihvorvel jeg ingenlunde kan tjene Udg. eller Nogen med enten at oversætte

> Bjovulfs Drape eller overalt gjøre Noget, uden Phantasie, mener jeg dog at min ivrige Omgang med Grammatik og Lexikon maae frikjende mig for den Beskyldning ei at kunne eller ville holde Styr paa min Smule Phantasie med et Gran Fornuft. (cols. 1145)
>
> For although I can never oblige the editor or anybody else by either translating *Beowulf* or doing anything anywhere without imagination, I still think that my persistent use of grammar and encyclopedia [i.e., Hickes and Sommers] must acquit me of the charge that I cannot or will not control what imagination I have with a bit of reason.

This effort at balance made Grundtvig’s work on *Beowulf* unique at this early stage. He would continue to use his imagination to bring out and invigorate the meaning of the text when philology failed him, a method consistent with the Augustinian notion of *inventio*. The result was that he was often forced to invent meaning, a practice that sometimes led him astray and other times gave him special insight into the meaning of *Beowulf*. However, the result of Grundtvig’s imaginative translations in 1815 was not only that for the first time the plot and *charac*ters of Beowulf were clear, but also that for the first time the poem was being treated like a work of literature rather than an artifact.

On the whole, his continued trust that the original text contained a vital, universal truth, allowed Grundtvig to move beyond the apparent problems and inconsistencies that the poem presented, and as he continued to translate the poem his understanding of its profounder meaning would come into focus.

In time Grundtvig began to use the word “fordansk” (“render” in Danish) instead of “oversætte” [translate] to describe his method. Before a translation of another Old English poem, “The Battle of Brunanburh” he writes,

> Saaledes maa da Rimets Ord udtydes, men dermed er i mine Tanker Rimet ingenlunde oversat eller fordansket, det ligger som et Liig til Ravn og Ulv, og Aanden er borte, denne vil jeg nu søge at gribe og lade tale saa godt den kan med min Danske Tunge, uden at udsige Andet end den gamle Skjald.
> (“Om Bjovulfs” 79)
> This then is how the poem’s words are to be constructed—but to my mind

> the poem has by no means been translated or made into Danish thereby. It lies like a corpse, for the raven and the wolf, and its spirit is gone. This spirit I will now try to catch and allow to speak as best it can with my Danish tongue, whilst not saying anything other than did the ancient *skald*. (Grundtvig in Bradley 46-7)

His translation of parts of *Beowulf* in 1819 demonstrates a similar desire to invigorate latent themes. Adding to his 1815 specimen, he translates lines 53-114, which he titles “Hjerte-Borgen” [Heart Fortress] in a deliberate shift from the “Hjorte-Borgen” (Hart Fortress) which appears in his manuscripts of the translation; lines 115-187, titled “Grændel’s Uvæsen” [Grendel’s Attacks]; and lines 189-257, titled “Bjovulf og Strand-Ridderen” [*Beowulf* and the Knight of the Shore]. In each section Grundtvig emphasizes the spiritual quality of the locations in the poem, not as Outzen had done, but by enhancing their imaginative value. He also dramatizes the consequences of Grendel’s attacks and the hero’s arrival. A few passages from each section of the poem demonstrate the “højst personlig” [highly personal] tone of Grundtvig’s translation (Malone 7).

> Mens nu Folket sov saa trygt,
> Kom i Salen ind den Lede,
> Lugte kunde Trolden Frygt,
> Var til Mord og Mandslæt rede,
> Ti og Tyve Kæmper fage
> Tog i Søvne han af Dage.
>
> Ja, han vog dem, mens de sov,
> Under salens mørke Bue,
> Axlede saa slux sit Rov,
> Bar det sin Jette-Stue;
> For Utsket var paa Disken
> Folk-Liig en Lækkerbidken!
> (“Stykker” 242)

> Now, while the people slept very soundly, the troll came into the hall. He was

> obsessed with death and with manslaughter. Ten and twenty warriors he took in their sleep. Yes, Grendel attacked them while they slept under the dark arch of the hall, exulting shouldered thus straight away his booty. He carried it away to his giant's den. He destroyed its [Heorot's] peace. Once in his giant-chamber he had the bodies of the slain as a tasty snack.[11]

Grundtvig describes this scene of endangered folk-life in a somber tone, and he takes a dark moment to reflect upon the hopeless time before the advent of Christianity.

> Dansken i en Tylvt af Aar
> Var forviist fra Hjerte-Borgen,
> Saar paa Saar til bitter Smerte
> Fik den ædle Skjoldungs Hjerte!
> . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
> Til deres Afgud da ginge de hen,
> Med høitid og Offer tillage,
> Bade om Hevn over Folkets Uven,
> Om Trøst for det plagede Rige.
>
> Saa var det Skik i den hedenske Tid,
> Man stoled paa Afguders Raade,
> Ikke man kjendte den Herre saa blid,
> Som Alt har at styre og raade. (248-249)

> Over a period of twelve years the Danes were banned from the Fortress of the Heart. The noble Danish king received sorrow upon sorrow from bitter tears. Then they offered honor, feast and sacrifice to their idol. They did so for revenge on the people's enemy, for comfort for the plagued realm. So it was thus in heathen times: one relied upon the idol's guidance, not knowing the merciful Lord, who rules and guides all.

In the final part titled "*Beowulf* and the Knight of the Strand" (189-257), Grundtvig depicts the hero's arrival. Unlike the first two parts, which are written in modern art-ballad stanzas, this third one is in the form of a folk song. *Beowulf* asks,

> Er det sandt, hvad os er sagt,
> Solgt for gode Vabre,
> Har en dunkel, fjendtlig Magt
> Folket last i Snare!
>
> Teer et Skrække=Villed stæk
> Sig i morke Nætter,
> Øver sælsomt Nidings=Værk,
> Blodige Idrætter? (257)
>
> Is it true, what was said to us: that a dark fiendish power has laid the people in a snare and ignored their pleas? That he ignores the tribute, living alone, and in the dark night committing bloody, evil deeds?

With the promise of the “Alfader’s” assistance, *Beowulf* will hold “fiendly power well in check” (“Stykker” 250). The specimens end here, as though to urge the reader to read on in the forthcoming *Bjowulfs Drape* about how *Beowulf* will conquer Grendel and reestablish Heorot’s former glory.

From these selections it is evident that by 1819 Grundtvig has developed a mature understanding of the poem’s language and contents, even though his versions deviate radically from the original poem’s meter and sometimes from its literal meaning.

Grundtvig’s complete 1820 translation of *Beowulf* dropped or changed many of the 1819 passages that are not in the original, such as those that describe Heorot and Grendel’s den, but to a large degree the intimate feeling of the 1819 specimens was maintained. The translation was not well received. As S.A.J. Bradley points out, there was “hardly anyone in England—hardly anyone in the world, therefore!—who could adequately read Anglo-Saxon” (147). Those who could read Old English were still less interested in *Beowulf* as a work of art than as an artifact, and they translated the poem as such (Osborn 345). To give an idea of the state of scholarly understanding of *Beowulf* when *Bjowulfs Drape* [The Heroic Poem of *Beowulf*] appeared, it should be noted that in Germany no one had yet produced a complete translation of the poem, and in

England (1820) Sharon Turner was still crediting Thorkelin for restoring the proper order of the poem and as a result was still incorrectly translating the introductory passages.

All too often foundational texts, like Grundtvig's translation of *Beowulf*, are neglected simply because they were made in an era dominated by ideologies that are no longer favored. Often they can offer an interpretation that might reinvigorate a well-worn text. With this translation, which balances imagination, philology and patriotism, brand new possibilities were created for *Beowulf*.

## notes

[1] The best synopses of Thorkelin's plot of *Beowulf* are to be found in Franklin Cooley (46-51) and J.R. Hall (240-241). Robert E. Bjork (1996) provides a translation of Thorkelin's preface.

[2] Haarder ("Beowulf-anmeldere" 65) identifies the author "Pia" as Abraham Jacob Penzel. Penzel's review appeared in *Ergänzungsblätter zur Jenaischen allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung* (1816: no. 45, cols. 353-60; no. 46, cols. 361-5).

[3] Penzel is clearly casting suspicion onto Thorkelin's translation by making such a comparison. It is interesting to note that Grundtvig footnotes a passage from *Ossian* in the same vein, as a literature from another Northern culture that reveals an underlying Nordic unity. He had no doubt drawn the idea of "kendskab" (acquaintance, knowledge) among nations from his reading of Suhm and from Steffen's lectures in 1803 concerning *Ossian*. Other than Goethe's *Werther*, it is doubtful that Grundtvig had read Ossian. Lundgreen-Nielsen maintains that Grundtvig read Ossian later (206-207) and that he had already developed parallels between Ossian's character Car and Suhm's Sigrid (84-5).

[4] All English translations are mine, if no further reference is provided.

[5] The fact that one or two of the medieval English chroniclers known to Grundtvig say that Sceaf (Scyld in *Beowulf*) landed in Angeln would have been fuel for the German "annexation" of the poem.

[6] Thus Haarder ("Beowulf-anmeldere" 65-66) identifies this anonymous reviewer of Thorkelin's edi-

tion as Peter Erasmus Müller, who signs his review “PEM.”

[7] For brief analyses of these articles, see Haarder (“Beowulf-anmeldere” 72-75; “Grundtvigs” 7, 17-18); both are repeated in Haarder (‘Beowulf’ 58-89).

[8] Hans J. Vermeer explains this important concept of translation: “What the skopos states is that one must translate, consciously and consistently, in accordance with some principle respecting the target text. The theory does not state what that principle is: this must be decided separately in each specific case” (228). Gideon Toury warns that “explicit comments from participants in the translation process should be treated with circumspection since at best they are a significant indication of the working practices; at worst, they reveal what the translator feels he ought to be doing” (1995: 65).

[9] Grundtvig’s models for his Saxo translation were Latin translations by Christen Pedersøn (1514) and primarily that by Ander Søvrensen from Vedel (often called simply Ander Vedel) and Johan Friis’s and Peter Oxe’s Danish recreations.

[10] Conybeare’s translations were accompanied by transcriptions of poetry from the Exeter Book. This publication in *Archaeologica* was based on a series of lectures Conybeare had given in 1813 to the Society of Antiquaries in London.

[11] Toldberg (1946) notes that Grundtvig had difficulties deciding how to translate simple phrases such as “Ti og Tyve” and that he borrowed “Jette-Stue” from Oehlenschäger. He finally settled on the most “folkelig” language for these types of expressions (1946: 129).

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# new books

## susam-sarajeva, şebnem. *theories on the move: translation's role in the travels of literary theories*. new york: rodopi, 2006.

If theory travels, translation is its vehicle. In 2000, Edward Said posited the notion of "traveling theories" which nourish and sustain intellectual life throughout the globe. This travel is "never unimpeded," because of the political and cultural differences between receiving systems, but analyses of traveling theory tend to neglect translation's vital role in the transmission and reception of ideas. The power differentials inherent in translation, the direction of a theory's travel, and the backgrounds of the translators themselves all influence the reception of a translated theory. Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva's *Theories on the Move* represents an attempt to fill this lacuna in literary scholarship. Susam-Sarajeva employs two specific instances of translated theory to illustrate how translation transforms (or deforms) a theory. She compares and juxtaposes structuralism's reception in Turkey and French feminism's reception in Anglo-America, which in her terminology refers to Anglophone North America. By choosing one emblematic figure to represent each theory, Susam-Sarajeva controls the scope of her study. Roland Barthes stands in for structuralism, and Hélène Cixous for French feminism. Susam-Sarajeva remains conscious throughout of the implications of her choice of emblematic figures and of terminology. For example, while she is aware that "French feminism" is comprised of various differing and divergent strands of thought, she chooses to group them under a single term because the totality of French feminist thought was largely perceived by Anglo-American readers as a monolithic and impenetrable entity. She also provides numerical evidence to support her choice of Barthes and Cixous as emblematic figures; based on the number of translations devoted to various structuralist and feminist theorists in the Turkish and Anglo-American contexts, respectively, Barthes and Cixous were indeed perceived by readers in the receiving systems as representatives of entire traditions of thought. This allowed readers of their translations to focus their criticism on a "straw man" figure whose writings symbolized all the challenges inherent in their respective translated theories.

According to Susam-Sarajeva, translation "plays an overdetermined and formative role" in the receiving system's perception of a given theory. Significantly, she uses the term "receiving system" rather than the more conventional "target language" in order not to gloss over either the agency of the receiving system or the role political and institutional, in addition to linguistic, aspects of the system play in a theory of reception. The important role these aspects play leads to the "overdetermined" aspect of a translation's reception. For example, structuralism met with scorn in Turkey before the 1980s because of its perceived incompatibility with Marxism, whereas it was more widely welcomed after Turkish authorities made an effort to quash Marxism in Turkey. Also, because Anglo-American feminist thought was geared towards concrete political action, Cixous's emphasis on psychoanalysis and "performative rhetoric" seemed irrelevant and overly theoretical to many of those reading her work in translation. Thus, a receiving system reacts to translated theory based on its own perceived political and cultural needs.

In addition to the attitude of the receiving system, the direction in which a theory travels is vital in any analysis of its reception, as is the power differential between the languages involved. For example, when structuralism traveled east to Turkey, it was translated from a "powerful" language (French) into a "weaker" one (Turkish). During the 1980s, when the majority of Barthes's texts were translated into Turkish, Turkey was undergoing a conscious (re-)orientation towards the West, which began with a program of language reform in the 1920s designed to remove Arabic and Persian elements from the Turkish language. Therefore, when translators worked with Barthes's theoretically and terminologically dense material, it was often difficult to find equivalents for the French theoretical terms in Turkish. As Susam-Sarajeva demonstrates, this often led to a proliferation of widely different neologisms and word compounds for the same French term, and consequently to a perception of Barthes and structuralism as "impenetrable," "elitist," and overly "scientific." However, because of the program of Westernization, translators often blamed this perception on the supposedly "deficient" Turkish language. By contrast, when French feminism traveled west to Anglophone North America, it was translated into a language that is equally, if not more, powerful. Thus, Anglo-American feminists were more interested in producing an intercultural "solidarity" that would conform to their own model than in introducing new concepts. Furthermore, a prevailing wish to "domesticate" and "universalize" French feminist texts led to disappointment over these texts' stubbornly persistent "foreignness" and supposed irrelevance to local political struggles.

Susam-Sarajeva remarks that theories are commonly perceived as more "foreign" than literary texts, which in her analysis means that their travel is all the more politically fraught. Her study furthers the efforts of translators and literary scholars to attain greater consciousness of the roles translation, power and politics play in the movement of theories around the globe. *Theories on the Move* is a valuable contribution to the field of translation studies in its endeavor to analyze the numerous political, linguistic, and structural features of the receiving system that influence whether a given theory's journey is smooth or difficult and whether its welcome is warm or reserved.

naomi baldinger

### bermann, sandra and michael wood, eds. *nation, language, and the ethics of translation*. princeton, nj: princeton university press, 2005.

Recent scholarship on translation extends beyond philological explication or formalist evaluations of how the content and form of an original source are "carried across" into the translation's target language. Along with Derridean-influenced critiques of the very terms "original" and "translation," there has been a significant "cultural turn" (Susan Bassnett's term) in translation studies since the 1990s. Contemporary translation theory—influenced by and influential to the fields of postcolonial theory and cultural studies—tends to foreground the hybrid national, cultural, and linguistic contexts of source texts as well as the culture and politics of the target audience for translations. Sandra Bermann summarizes the current situation, describing translation as "an important border concept in the humanities" (5), "engaging both with 'nation' and with 'language,' with 'cultural studies' and with 'theory,' as well as with more traditional literary history, with close reading and, not the least, with everyday experience in a global context" (4-5). Indeed, "translation" seems such a capacious metaphor for contemporary cultural discourse that it runs the risk of becoming a buzzword.

If you were to read only two books to get a sense of the rapidly expanding field of translation studies, the first would have to be The Translation Studies Reader, Lawrence Venuti's compilation of touchstone essays by significant twentieth-century translators and theorists including Walter Benjamin, Vladimir Nabokov, George Steiner, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Anthony Appiah, and Venuti himself. The second crucial book to read is the subject of this review, *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*, edited by Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood and published by Princeton University Press as part of their Translation/Transnation series. (This series has recently included impressive and provocative works by Azade Seyhan, David Damrosch, and Etienne Balibar that investigate the concept of translation in broad and not necessarily text-based ways.) The topics in Bermann and Woods's volume also range widely from worldwide literary, legal, and cinematic translations to the ludic and manipulative qualities of "pseudotranslations" (texts that purport to be translations but do not derive from any prior original), and to practices of simultaneous translation (the on-the-spot translations that professional translators pipe into diplomats' earpieces). The terms from the book's title—"Nation," "Language," and "Ethics"—indicate the general categories that the essays fall into; a fourth section on translation as "medium and across media" is also included.

By far the greatest contribution of the volume is in the variety of its political and philosophical approaches to the concept of ethics in translation. All of the book's essays touch on this subject in some way, but six essays by Spivak, Henry Staten, Robert Eaglestone, Stanley Corngold, Jonathan Abel, and Emily Apter provide sustained attention to the issue. Spivak, a respected translator of Bengali verse and of Derrida, is here represented by "Translating into English," a continuation of the ideas from her influential earlier essay, "The Politics of Translation" (printed in The Translation Studies Reader). In that essay Spivak describes translation as an act of intense and intimate reading to be performed only by a speaker of the translated language. Spivak emphasizes translation's erotics over its ethics, a term she discards because of the tendency for empathetic reading to cause "other" to be replaced by "self." She argues that since an "ethical" model of translation is centrally concerned with showing that "other" is just as valuable as "self," the preoccupation leads "self" to overwrite "other." In contrast, a model of erotic translation allows "self" to submit to "other." Thus the unincorporated and profoundly inassimilable traces of "other" cling and remain in the translation. In "Translating into English," Spivak returns to her requirement that the translator be intimate with the translated language and carries the point further. She describes how a "would-be translator" of Bengali defends his or her qualifications by saying "'bangla porte jani' (I can read Bengali)" (95). Spivak asserts that "a translator must not only make an attempt to grasp the presuppositions of an author but also [. . .] inhabit, even if on loan, the many mansions, and many levels of the host language. Bangla porte jani is only to have gained entry into the outer room, right by the front gate" (ibid).

Spivak's essay is of course only one example from the anthology. Many of the other essays are noteworthy as well, particularly Robert Eaglestone's philosophical approach in “Levinas, Translation, and Ethics,” which also takes seriously the concern that to translate is to obliterate. Worth careful attention in its own right is Bermann’s introduction, which, in addition to setting out the parameters of the volume’s project, also serves as a concise overview of contemporary cruxes in translation studies, such as tracing a poetics of responsible, responsive translation while remaining attentive to the philosophical and political underpinnings of an ethics of translation.

hallie smith

## ball, arnetha f., and ted lardner, eds. *african american literacies unleashed: vernacular english and the composition classroom*. carbondale, il: southern illinois university press, 2005.

How we evaluate and value translations in literature as modes of discourse fixed in time and space can be extrapolated to how we look at student writing, particularly that of multi-lingual students. We acknowledge the many genres within literature, each presenting its strengths and weaknesses, without superimposing a standard to which all literature must conform. Using this as a frame, we can approach the “translations” needed when codeswitching between dialects and between spoken and written language. In their book *African American Literacies Unleashed: Vernacular English and the Composition Classroom*, Arnetha Ball and Ted Lardner recognize and acknowledge that composing is a social practice that assists and prepares some students, while marginalizing others. We have a moral and ethical obligation to not further subjugate marginalized peoples and devalue their discourse by superimposing the hegemonic dialect. Writing is political, and what we include or exclude from our classes implicitly reveals our agenda. Ball and Lardner’s study contributes to the current conversation of how teachers should “deal” with African American Vernacular English (AAVE), asserting that changes in both theory and praxis must take place. Their praxis-oriented book presents strategies for unlearning racism within the writing classroom and “changing the status quo.” They call for a “three-part change in the way composition specialists approach diversity in the classroom:

1. Knowledge. 2. Self-reflection. 3. Personal and professional/classroom change" (xvii).

Emphasizing the need for the aforementioned changes, Ball and Lardner frame their position as a moral and ethical one that underlies the understanding that all dialects are valid. Furthermore, they explain that the rhetorical traditions and socio-linguistic research on AAVE adds to the view that AAVE is a "language system" (xv). They quote Geertz, saying that teachers need "fluency in an enlarged vocabulary" to adequately convey thoughts, feelings, and reactions, a vocabulary which "defines the intellectual, emotional, and moral space within which we live" (3). Consequently, Ball and Lardner situate their argument for teachers' understanding and acceptance of AAVE as critical in understanding the various "cognitive, affective, and sociocultural locations" in order that we might be "better writing teachers" (3). Their personal narratives also contextualize their position while acknowledging their histories with AAVE.

Ball and Lardner address Writing Program Administrators (WPA), teacher educators, and researchers, elaborating on their influence on a teacher's sense of efficacy. They also address researchers and the bidialectalism movement (which began in the 1960s) teacher authority, and cultural nuances shaping their classes, Writing Program Assessment, and teacher change. They conclude their book by stressing that silence enables us to forget our mistakes. It is a discussion and understanding of AAVE that will enable change. A concise call for a change that would intertwine theory and practice, Ball and Lardner's *African American Literacies Unleashed* advocates the move away from "essentializing" AAVE-speaking students by "intermingling discourses" (49). No dialect is privileged, yet academic discourse is still taught; students and teachers learn to translate, as this approach enables students to codeswitch and reinforces the validity of their home cultures while encouraging them to learn academic conventions. Ball and Lardner confront the issues of "whiteness," "assimilation," "literacy practices," "multiculturalism," "learning communities," and other issues in the writing classroom, clearly addressing the need to translate both between the teacher and the student and between the possible discourses. Through reflections on what they have learned that at times can be self-deprecating, Ball and Lardner effectively tackle a sensitive issue for composition teachers, especially in open-admissions universities, two-year colleges, and basic writing programs. Their writing is applicable and accessible for graduate assistants, part-time faculty, and full-time faculty alike.

abbey j. kanzig

### ngũgĩ wa thiong'o. *wizard of the crow*. new york: pantheon books, 2006.

Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's volatile relationship with the English language is well documented. His oft-cited 1986 theoretical work, *Decolonizing the Mind*, calls for African writers to work in their native dialects, thereby resisting colonial languages. Ngũgĩ contends that the use of European languages in Africa displaces Africans from their cultural heritage. With such a strong stance on indigenous languages and as director of the International Center for Writing and Translation at the University of California at Irvine, it should be no surprise that his latest novel, *Wizard of the Crow* (2006), first appeared in his native Gikuyu under the title *Murogi wa Kagogo* (2004). *Wizard of the Crow* marks Ngũgĩ 's first major literary effort in nearly twenty years. In Ngũgĩ's own words, *Wizard of the Crow* sets out "to sum up Africa of the twentieth century in the context of two thousand years of world history." More specifically, this novel wrestles with African dictatorial regimes, the growing influence of the World Bank in Africa, and the current geopolitical climate. Even with such a daunting agenda and length (766 pages), *Wizard of the Crow* is immensely accessible. Drawing on traditional African oral narrative structure, Ngũgĩ keeps the novel flowing with his sense of humor and engaging storyline. His ability to sustain such a rich command of language and maintain a playful tone in translation demonstrates Ngũgĩ's prowess as both author and self-translator.

Set in fictional Aburirĩa, which could be any number of real African nations, the Ruler, as he is simply known, governs with a paranoid fanaticism and strikes out at any and every threat. The novel traces two characters' attempts at changing Aburirĩa's political landscape. Kamĩtĩ, a.k.a. the Wizard of the Crow, works at transforming individuals while Nyawĩra leads the collective grassroots campaign, the Movement for the Voice of the People. The complementary approach of these two characters is juxtaposed comically with the incompetence of the Ruler and his many Ministers. Magical realism has a long tradition in postcolonial literature, notably in many of Salman Rushdie's novels. Magical realism is often one of the only ways to adequately describe the irrationality and impact of colonialism, allowing writers to emphasize certain points by juxtaposing them with the ordinary. Ngũgĩ's use of magical realism in *Wizard of the Crow* does not dislocate the novel from the very real issues it raises; if anything, the incorporation of magical realism only serves to underscore the absurdity of the Ruler's government. For instance, in a show of loyalty to the Ruler, several of the ministers in the cabinet have surgery to enhance their abilities to serve him. The Minister of Foreign Affairs has his eyes enlarged in order to “spot the enemies of the Ruler no matter how far their hiding places” (13) while the Minister of State has his ears enlarged to listen in on any plots against the Ruler. As you would expect from Ngũgĩ, there is a political subtext running throughout *Wizard of the Crow*. Underlying much of the novel is a cosmopolitan sensibility exemplified in Kamĩtĩ. His healing powers are a blending of what he learned growing up in Africa and what he brought back from his education in India. Kamĩtĩ is very much a citizen of the world and his teachings offer a potential remedy to the globalizing forces which tear away at the fabric of Aburirĩa its people. In the novel, local solidarities associated with cosmopolitanism combat dehumanizing global designs, offering an alternative to globalization’s top down approach. If there is one weakness in *Wizard of the Crow*, it is that some of the situations seem played out. At times, the same cast of characters, the U.S., the World Bank, a ruthless African dictator, play the roles that readers of contemporary postcolonial literature have come to expect. For example, we unsurprisingly find out that the U.S. helped the Ruler rise to power in Aburirĩa. Part of this reliance on overused and oversimplified cast of characters might stem from the length of time the novel took to complete--nearly ten years. These figures seem a little dated and more appropriate for a novel from the late 1990s. That being said, the scope of the work overcomes this limitation, problematicizing the role of African leadership. *Wizard of the Crow* will be a definitive postcolonial text for the early twenty-first century in much the same way that *Midnight’s Children* offered a critique of post-independence India in 1981 and *Texaco* questioned the future of Martinique and the Caribbean in 1992. As these other texts have for India and the Caribbean, *Wizard of the Crow* forces us to consider Africa’s future in a way that other novels have not.

alexander hartwiger

# creative writing

# the wooing of etain

rosemary rowley

## I.1.

Never such a shivering tale be told
Etain bathing by the stream one day
Saw a horseman whose brooch and hair were gold
He was a man in beautiful array
His shield and buckle gold, his eyes were grey
His strap of silver and his five pronged spear
Gold as the  barley at the turn of year.

## I.2.

The rider told her of the fairy forts
Was this prophecy, or was it dream
Desecration of the fairy world imports
A nightmare of what we are or seem
And battle with kings who would deem
It honour to dispute her name
But peace within her beauty not reclaim.

## I.3

The maidens shied away from such a man
Others made bold to hold his silver gaze
Then Etain remembered heaven's plan
Something that would haunt her all her days
The King's eye healed, another king to faze
The drowned horses, and the Tethbae birds
She to be swallowed in the big Queen's curds.

## I.4

The hooves danced with the cutting of the blades
In tunic red and cloak of deepest green
He turned his back to Etain and her maids
Heading back to lands as yet unseen
She would remember what such colours mean
Borrowed from her the green eternal world
The red was rowan berry, death unfurled.

## I.5

The High King thought she was his to woo.
And won her after a summer’s night
Her heart did not stir for him, as who
Rode in the memory like a vision of the light
The king possessed her, did not own her sight
Nor touch, nor hearing, she was yet another’s
Whose mystery dwelt in the lives of others

## I.6

He saw her unwind her plaited golden hair
Loosening the golden balls with a silver comb
Her tunic was red and green, each golden layer
Like the year’s turning, handsome as they come
As sweet as life crammed in a honeycomb
Her arms, silken, slender, white
Her head a silver circle in the night.

### I.7

Years later, when all that was left was talk
In Tara there was held a loving feast
At such momentous meeting lovers balk
But Echu the King had his magic tryst
And sent out word the greatest was the least
Etain’s famous beauty now enriched him
He had seen her bathing, it bewitched him.

### II.1

The King’s brother, Ailil, was stricken
The Druid said it was love or jealousy
So he pleaded with Etain that she quicken
His life, though he was vowed to celibacy
Three times a date was set, three times fallacy
Until stood before Etain her former prince,
Her husband, Midhir, not forgotten since

### II.2

The day she saw him in his red and green
Reminders of the holly and the berry
The scent of wild flowers to the eye unseen
The secret of the eternal in the merry
Faultless land of the faery queen
Which she was, eternal, and he her mate
Living in an unfallen, unblemished state.

II.3

“I was once your husband in a faery land
Where there is no birth in sin or pain
Only children born to a joyous band
With yellow hair, white skin, and foxglove stain
Not withering to age, but honeyed rain
Sweet water, mead, making a pleasant drink
Eternal life is promised at the brink

II.4

My first wife, Fuaimneach, was a sorceress
With a red rowan wand she cast a spell
Turned you into a pool of water, no less
Than what was between us, to create hell
She then turned you into a worm as well
And as a scarlet butterfly you flew with me
In a wild tempest across the sea.

II.5

Your father’s wife swallowed you in a drink
You were born on Earth, and lost to me
How deep is Paradise, I can only think
It meant nothing when you weren’t there to be
Loved by your husband, you know I am he
Come to reclaim you to your rightful place
In fairyland within a mythic race.”

II.6

The earth-husband, Echu, had a visitor

A stranger clad in purple and in gold
With a chess game challenged the Inquisitor
Let him win, five fold and ten fold
Dark grey horses, broad-chested, with firm hold
Wide nostrilled, swift, dappled red ears
Enamelled bridles for the fifty dears.

### II.7

The next night there was wagered fifty boars
Curly-haired, fiery, contained in a blackthorn vat
Fifty white red-eared cows and calves without sores
Fifty swords, gold-hilted, ivory blades to follow that
Three-headed wethers, fifty cloaks.  He spat
Another wager to clear stones, lay a road
The fairy folk at night worked at such a load.

### III.1

The final stake was a kiss from Echu’s queen
A month postponed, the hire of fighting men
But she had already dreamt the red and green
Her husband had to give permission when
Midhir asked for a kiss, and in that crafty ken
Their lips met, and when she opened her eyes
She was back in the fairy Paradise.

### III.2

Echu saw two swans with a golden chain
Fly disappearing into the air

And in the fairy land, life renewed again
Etain was to give birth to his heir
On the first of May, the child was born, so fair
By Midhir’s request, also called Etain
He didn’t mind another’s child to gain

### III.3

By a silver stream mother and daughter dreamed
Their life eternal, beautiful and kind
Etain the younger, wondered how life seemed
So dull, when tales of mortal mind
Of feast and famine, light and dark combined
To her, an interesting, fascinating story.
Tara in its golden Celtic glory.

### III.4

Echu, at home, longed for his wife
He dug up mounds to find the fairy fort
Each morning not a blade of grass or life
Disturbed the rolling hills of Tara’s court
While ravens came to stir anger, stayed to sport
Blind dogs and cats stood guard with limping hounds
Scleth and Samhair, Echu’s anger knew no bounds.

### III.5

Midhir came back to Tara, to ask
Why he was persecuted by the King
“I do not consider you wooed fairly in the task
You who sought magic ways to bring
My wife Etain to the world of eternal ring”

"I will by tomorrow Etain return
If you desist from deeds, my name to burn".

III.6

By the third hour on the morrow there were fifty
Etains in the mist surrounding the mound
An old hag whose age count was quite thrifty
Stood before him without a single sound
Which of them was his true love in the round?
He saw one with a genuine aura
Who appeared to be a skillful pourer.

III.7

That night, with Etain sleeping on his arms
He found love, remembering his youth
And he was quietened by her fairy charms
Her freshness, with her show of ruth
Till Midhir mocked him with the awful truth
Confessing his joy to him across the water
Learnt he had slept with his own, and Etain's daughter.

IV.1

Such treachery broke the heart of the earthly king
He now looked at his daughter-wife with pain
How he was saddened in this golden ring
Had lost his soul his bitter heart to gain
Sick at heart that he had with his daughter lain
She was now pregnant with his child
So he banished her forthwith to the wild.

### IV.2

Etain was faced with the cruelty of the world
She who already had been to Paradise
Now in the wild wood, with the king’s anger hurled
At her beneath the stormy, earthly skies
She would have to grow old in pain, be wise
The infant to whom she would give birth
Snatched from her, to be cradled in the earth.

### IV.3

The men came and snatched away the child
A beautiful girl, with embroidered cloth
The name, Etain thrice-born was now defiled
She was going to be destroyed through wrath
As the evening hour drew upon the moth
Wondering which men were angels, which were weak
To smile on a little girl, not vengeance seek.

### IV.4.

Her mother, stricken, wept both night and day
Mourning her daughter she never would see
She who was beautiful, was now bereft
Of gladness, grace, of joy that could not be
A desert life as dry as dust, no glee
But mourning like the grey and bitter hag
Who brought her to earth, the burden of a nag.

## IV.5

There were no more feasts at Tara, now deserted
The King died, his mind and heart oppressed
Etain searched the mounds, they were converted
Against the Sidhe a borderland undressed
To which rough soil her silken face was pressed
And so to death, it seems for being a mother
The king her husband, to whom she was wife and daughter.

## IV.6

Mind against mortal raged and won the day
Death was a cup as bitter as the gall
When offered life, no one seemed to pay
The end foreclose, to live or not the pall
Death had such sting, why do we live at all
Only the fairy folk know the answer
To live forever as a golden dancer

## IV.7

Who can choose to be mortal or immortal?
A fairy love that can last forever
A threshold on this earth that has no portal
Choosing can  mean from those we love we sever
All healing love bands, as if never
To the wildwoods ringing our departure
Never signaled by the one-eyed archer.

### V.1

With her tunic embroidered at the breast
Young Etain was taken to the woods
The men stopped at Findlam’s for a rest
Resolved to go no further the bud
Where rested the green and red royal blood
To a guard-dog puppy she was given
To a humble cottager, at last forgiven.

### V.2

Her existence brought a blessing on the couple
Her beauty all over gained renown
Her face was fair and full, her body supple
In beauty, she was given Nature’s crown
And all who knew her loved her, not a frown
Lived on her handsome forehead, but a glance
As she embroidered made hearts dance.

### V.3

The years went by, untroubled rural calm
The mortal parents were bursting with pride
The king forgot the child, the dreadful sham
And soon to mortal doors, which opened wide
And closed again, as he, his story died
But in people’s hearts there remained a story
Of Tara, its blight and its glory.

V.4

Eterscelae was a new king in the province
He heard of Etain’s beauty, and resolved
To go and woo her, he would convince
Her parents that with her was dissolved
All harm, all evil, problem not yet solved
The world with love and wonder would not cease
There would be a beginning of a peace

V.5

She had been brought up in isolation
Now to learn the touch of human hand
A bird flew above in exaltation
Rested his breast on hers in loving band
Eyes closed, he stroked her as the land
From whence she came, from dear earth as a child
Would come the son of Eterscalae, bound in geasa, smiled.

V.6

Born with three gifts, the greatest gifts to see
What could not be seen by any of sight
Nor judgement, that brought good to be
But his father’s sins were endless as the night
Not to shoot birds, in Tara, around in flight
There was hope that harm in Etain be undone
Not a stranger be admitted to the dun.

## V.7

So Etain birthed a new hero who grew only to die
Between times, carved out a noble life
Loved and honoured, though neither could fly
Back to the end of youth, the end of strife
Conara, son of Eterscalae with promise rife
Broke geasa, his heroic antique vows
The night he was slain in Da Derga’s lodging house.

## **polyphony**

jesse ferguson

epiphany pales
eureka’s beggared by this mad
simple vision:

Master Leoninus, twelfth-century
music man to the Notre Dame cathedral
one night leaves the key in the door
of his mind-cloister
looses a soundquake to shape
the landscape of music ever after

piles constellation upon constellation
in a compound-complex notation

cants a revolution slant
on the uniform drabness
of Gregorian chant
that monophonic teat
upon which he’d nursed

the miraculous birth:
a schism in music’s throat
a splintering into counterpoint
and freeing of solo, virtuosic voice
to leap dolphin-like
above a sea of choral accompaniment

one Sunday in gothic Paris
the ears of history perked up

## the catch

jaleen grove

Illustration:
before my hungry eyes
you jig a neon hoochie coochie
and troll fine lines that i
take for silver dreams
of what might be

lustre:
pearly easter eggs
glisten in this aqua sapphire glow
and gilded secrets slip by
in halfsaid poems it seems
like cool comets

lust:
the dazzle of the lure is such
that i most willingly take the bait
but in catching me you’re caught too
your desire’s a hook that teams
my light and yours

lux:
the brightness of you
i trap with my cagey ribs
rays shine out between, and
people mistake these beams
for my beauty

## **práctica profesional**

natasha tiniacos

Es hora de que salga a la calle
a estornudar el polen de las flores
a resbalarme en las aceras húmedas
a codearme con ellos: el hombre
que espera el bus sentado en el hidrante,
la muchacha que se acomoda el morral
lleno de libros,
el perro nauseabundo al que de lejos
se le pueden contar las costillas.
Hace un día hermoso allá afuera
debo acercarme, salir a los fenómenos,
ser el transeúnte que se asoma curioso
detrás de la reportera que transmite en vivo,
deben ser mis ojos los testigos
del alzamiento de alguna protesta
donde se queman cauchos, tiran piedras,
debe retumbar en mis oídos
el estruendo de un accidente de tránsito
sin sobrevivientes,
debe ser mi garganta
de donde salen gritos de dolor, sin lágrimas,
debe ser mi blusa la ensangrentada
debe ser mi hijo el fallecido
debe ser mi corazón el que se queda
sin vida
no debo ser yo la poeta.

# soft sleeper

d. bruno starrs

David Meredith regarded the train to Shanghai with a cocked eyebrow intended to impart an air of world weary sophistication. Steam rose in staccato bursts from the blue gun-metal hide of the shuddering machine as it snorted and belched to life, scaring a chubby-legged, wide-eyed child into the arms of a comforting, wide-faced mother. Another toddler in a backside-less jump suit was supported by her mother as the child dumped a steaming load right in the middle of the platform. Nobody seemed to take any notice. A few minutes later a businessman in a dark overcoat and Fedora hat stepped in the hot mess and instantly realised his mistake. Meredith couldn't hold back and laughed out loud as the browning slush on the concrete merged with other shoeprints. Suddenly, the wind began displaying its uncaring strength, bending all things human in its path, whistling around the paint-flaked square poles of the platform and gusting into drawn-taut faces. The Australian had been impatiently waiting as delays were explained in still unlearnt Mandarin over the P.A. for nearly half an hour. The express train from Beijing to Shanghai was not yet accepting passengers as it sat amid the fluttering snow of a typically freezing winter day. Should he return to the warmth of the crowded waiting room? His clock tower gaze got him nowhere: its hands had been locked on 12.10 since he'd arrived. He looked at the other waiting passengers to gauge the situation, all stamping feet and restless huddled families. Then a whistle drew his eyes back to the train and he finally heard the announcement that he guessed equated to 'All aboard!'

Beijing had been Meredith's home for the past year while he taught English to sophomores at the Chinese Agricultural University and now, as he took off his padded overcoat in the sweltering confines of his – as yet – unshared two-sleeper compartment, his three most dedicated students had found him and were bidding him farewell. His next academic year would be spent teaching at a private university in the great southern Chinese city of Shanghai. The former students of his were all smoking American cigarettes, savouring their last few minutes with their status-elevating foreigner laoshi along with the blue Virginia fumes. They were praising the luxury of his soft sleeper berth (not any ordinary soft sleeper, but a deluxe gāojí ruǎn wò) and were making him promise to send cards regularly. At long last the Porter saved him by leaning into the compartment and ordering the guests out, and so former teacher and students shook hands for the last time mere seconds before the train lurched away.

It was so hot in the compartment that Meredith took off his jacket and gently laid it on the bunk on the left, thus claiming that bed as his own. Minutes later, as the sweat trickled down his lower back, he also took off his shirt and folded it over the bed-rail. He sat on the small steel stool fixed next to the wood-inlaid writing desk in his moist cotton singlet and took out a stick of gum, which he chewed slowly in time with the rhythm of the train. The sweat trickled further and he considered taking his pants off too - he was alone, after all - but he decided against it. He tried again to make sense of the Chinese sign beneath what looked like a thermostat but soon gave up. There was a small electric fan on the desk and he swivelled it towards him but its feeble breeze provided little comfort. He sighed, unpacked his expensive lap-top computer and began idly downloading and editing some photos from his digital camera. Suddenly he became aware of a Chinese accented female voice emanating loudly from the corridor and his curiosity was piqued. Whoever it was complained stridently in English “Don’t you have even one empty berth, Porter?”

A male voice replied in Chinese but Meredith gathered the Porter’s answer was not what she wished to hear as she responded in a near shout.

“That is so insulting! You can work out something for a man but not a woman? How antiquated and sexist you are!”

At this, Meredith could hold back no longer: he had to see she who was the owner of that voice and that attitude. He opened the door and extended his head into the corridor. The woman immediately saw him and blushed. She was a slim but athletically built Chinese woman with a fashionably gelled hairstyle and immaculate make-up. Her clothing consisted of a pale grey flared pants suit with a crimson scarf around her slender neck and she looked very stylish. Meredith was quite impressed.

“The dining room it is then. OK. But if a vacancy does arise please let me to know immediately.” She followed this with a few harsh words of Mandarin before turning on her heels, and marching down the corridor lugging her heavy suitcase, the weight of it almost bending her horizontal. Just as she was about to exit into the dining carriage she stopped, straightened and looked back at Meredith. As their eyes met she blushed and demurely lowered her gaze.

‘So very Chinese’, Meredith thought to himself, engrossed. Her eyes had instantly burned into his psyche. This Chinese girl had, in this minor altercation with a railway minor official and her fleeting glance in his direction, suddenly captivated him. There was now only one objective in his existence; to find out more about this girl. He was ablaze now. Burning with an almost forgotten passion, he sat alone in his compartment as the train slowed for the station at Feng Tai. The room was less stultifying as fresh air blew in the open slot of the window, but Meredith hardly noticed. Instead, he wondered how he could discover more about the mystery woman who spoke English better even than his best university students.

The Shanghai express shuddered to a halt and Meredith quickly buttoned up his shirt, pulled on his jacket and climbed off the train. As the cold air on the platform hit him he caught the surprising sight of a familiar face. It was his friend James Newman, an American born Chinese teacher of English from another Beijing university. He looked again to be certain, but Meredith was confident it was him.

“James! James, mate!” Meredith waved to the man sitting on a bench just out of reach of the driving sleet and the balding, tweed-coated man looked up with surprise from the fish and sautéed vegetables he was carefully eating from a white Styrofoam take-away food container.

“David Meredith! Ni hao! My God, are you on this train too?” yelled the effusive American. Several Chinese on their way to board the train raised eyebrows at the man of Chinese appearance shouting in English so loudly and enthusiastically.

Unswayed by the glances, Newman stood, wiped himself clean with a paper serviette and vigorously shook hands with the Australian.

“Yes, mate. I got a job offer too good to turn down. It’s at a private university in Shanghai and as I’ve got heaps of time on my hands ‘til next semester, I decided to do it by …” and Meredith then half-lowered his eyelids in a comic attempt at looking sensual, “ … romantic train travel rather than efficient air.” The two middle-aged men laughed loudly and after a pause Meredith continued, “So, Shanghai, too, huh?”

“Yes, indeed. You remember my fiancée, Xiyun, whom you met just after you arrived in China? Well, she had to fly to Shanghai three days ago when her father had a stroke. You know how the Chinese are so dedicated to their parents. And I’ve just finished a weekend English camp here in Feng Tai. Anyway, we’ve set a February date for the wedding and to save a few kuai, I’ll be riding on a hard seat. But I’ll bet you’re in a first class soft sleeper, right?”

"Actually, a deluxe soft sleeper, with its own bathroom. The new university is paying all my expenses. So how are you and Xiyun? I haven't seen you for a month."

"Try two months! We're both fine but working our butts off. Trying to get enough dough together to start our own school after the wedding, but keep that one to yourself, buddy! Say, you must try this fish stew. It's the speciality of Feng Tai and it's absolutely exquisite! I've got plenty and it's piping hot; straight out of the pot!"

Newman pointed to a food stall doing good business in a sheltered corner of the platform. Meredith smiled, grabbed his friend's suitcase and headed for the train.

"OK, Newman, when it comes to Chinese cuisine I know you're the expert but let's get ourselves on board in the dining room first where it's warm and dry."

"No argument there, my friend!"

* * *

The two men climbed aboard the dining car where Newman had his ticket checked and they both ordered coffee before sitting opposite each other in the brown vinyl-upholstered booth.

As they sat, Meredith immediately noticed the outspoken woman he had observed before seated alone just two booths down. She appeared to be deeply immersed in a novel, the title of which Meredith could not make out. After a few minutes more of catching up with Newman, during which he was constantly trying hard not to stare at the girl two tables away as he sipped his coffee and nibbled on his friend's fish dish, Meredith decided to tell Newman about the incident.

"Not long after the train pulled out from Beijing I saw something quite remarkable outside my compartment. Or I should say, some one quite remarkable."

Newman arched his eyebrows. "Oh, really. Tell me more."

"There was this beautiful young Chinese woman arguing with the porter because he couldn't put her in a compartment with a male passenger. Seems she really wanted a soft sleeper but the porter wasn't going to waver from the regulations. She was making it quite clear she was not happy; in Mandarin and … in perfect English. She actually used the words 'sexist' and 'antiquated'! In the same sentence! And she's now seated just two tables away. No, no, don't look. Oh, it doesn't matter; she's totally absorbed in her book."

But just as Newman turned with what anybody watching would interpret as an expression of unbridled curiosity, the woman looked up at the two westerners and smiled knowingly. Meredith momentarily cringed with embarrassment but decided to make the most of the situation. He cockily saluted the girl with two outstretched fingers to his forehead fully expecting her to cover her mouth and giggle like a schoolgirl. Instead, the woman simply lifted her book to cover her face entirely, seemingly unimpressed. Disappointed, Meredith looked at his companion hoping he had missed the girl's snub. But Newman's smirk told him he had seen all.

"You do realise you've got no chance at all with her, don't you?"

Newman realised his comment had stung, and tried to explain himself.

"It's not that she's out of your league, buddy. But you've got to be introduced. By a friend of the family or a work colleague. Especially if you're a foreigner. Even me. I mean, I look Chinese, but if I hadn't been working alongside Xiyun when we met then nothing ever would've happened. It's the Chinese way."

"But you saw the smile she just gave me! Well, gave us."

"Hey, prove me wrong," Newman chortled, "Whatcha got to lose?"

Newman, still sniggering, reached into his jacket and retrieved a packet of Marlboro menthol cigarettes. He tore off the cellophane top and proffered one to his Australian friend who dismissively waved them away.

"Hey, have you quit, pal? Well, good for you!"

Newman lit up and exhaled a thick blue plume high into the air. The girl behind him looked up again as the distinctive menthol aroma wafted over and she instantly beckoned the dining car attendant over.

"Excuse me, waiter. Do you have Marlboro menthol cigarettes?" She spoke in Mandarin except for the words 'Marlboro menthol cigarettes'.

The Porter answered in Mandarin. Something, Meredith guessed, along the lines of: 'No, Miss. We don't stock imported goods on the train.'

"But aren't those Laowai smoking Marlboro menthols over there?" She had spoken again in Mandarin but gestured to the foreigners. Meredith, who had been watching her every move out of the corner of his eye, strained to hear her but only made out her use of the term 'Laowai'.

The waiter apparently responded with a repeat of his statement about imported goods but added an unmistakable tone of derision. The girl was instantly inflamed and she deliberately rose her voice as she spoke in English.

“You people on this train are so backward. So scared to try anything new! Oh, just go! Just go!”

The waiter smiled with embarrassment at the woman’s anger and embarrassment at his inability to understand her English. He backed down the aisle toward the dining room counter, smiling as he went, until Meredith stopped him with a hand on his arm.

“Excuse me, waiter, did that young woman ask for menthol Marlboros?”

A barely noticeable sigh escaped from the exasperated waiter’s lips.

“Wo bu mingbai!” he said, and continued, smiling as ever, towards the sanctuary of the dining room galley.

Meredith decided to seize the opportunity. He grabbed his friend’s cigarettes, got quickly to his feet and strode the few paces to the woman’s booth.

“Excuse me, Miss. Would you care for a menthol cigarette?”

The woman looked up from her book and blushed, just as she had when he had first seen her in the corridor outside his compartment. “Oh, no, I couldn’t …”

“Please, help yourself. Take a few, they’re not even mine!” said Meredith, laughing as he extended the cigarettes.

“OK, thanks. Although I really should be cutting back!”

The woman put down her book and smiled back. Eying the paperback novel, Meredith recognised his chance.

“Oh, ‘The Quiet American’. What a great book! Have you read ‘A Burnt Out Case’?”

“No, is it good?”

“It’s my favourite Graham Greene! Um, forgive me for being so forward, but please permit me to introduce myself. I’m David. David Meredith.”

The young Chinese woman slipped off her right-hand black glove slowly and held out her hand to shake. Meredith was mesmerised by the perfection of her fingers, her nails, her knuckles, her palm. He hesitated to touch it with his own clumsy, calloused ham of a hand until her voice shook him out of his trance.

“It’s nice to meet you, David. But how did you know my name?”

Confused, Meredith found himself shaking hands with her and marvelling at the firmness of her grip. Most Chinese women, and many Chinese men, shake hands with all the strength of an ill child. Still, the strangeness of her question worried him.

"I'm sorry, Miss, but I have no idea what your name is."

The woman's pencilled brows furrowed as she, too, became confused.

"But you just called me by my English name. You called me 'Meredith'" The Australian threw his head back and roared with laughter as he realised the error.

"My name is Meredith. It's my family name. I know it's a girl's name and I can tell you I've often thought of changing it by deed poll!"

"Deed poll? What is a deed poll?"

"Oh, it's just a piece of paper that let's you change the name in your driver's licence, passport and everything else. But by the time I was legally old enough to change my name, being teased by the other kids was no longer an issue."

"I am getting a free English lesson! Well, I am your grateful student."

Slowly, as she always moved when she knew she was being watched by a man, Meredith - the Chinese woman - carefully took a fashionable silver lighter from her elegant black leather handbag and lit one of the cigarettes Meredith – the Australian man - had given her. To him, the whole process seemed to take about five minutes. She blew a plume of smoke out of the side of her lip-sticked mouth and away from the Laowai man, who was still standing awkwardly next to her cubicle. All the time she avoided looking at him, well aware of his studious gaze. She was still avoiding his scrutiny when she spoke, only looking at him from under her mascara-ed eyelashes when she finished the sentence.

"You'd best be calling me by my Chinese name, Zhang Lian-yun."

"Well, Lian-yun, I'm happy to make your acquaintance. May I join you?"

Lian-yun gestured to the bench seat opposite her.

"Please do, Mr. Meredith. I need to practice my English."

Meredith smiled inwardly. The first hurdle had been overcome.

* * *

"Why don't you ask your friend over as well?" Lian-yun indicated to Newman now smoking by himself. Although the American was safely betrothed, Meredith was not keen on sharing this encounter. Nevertheless, he knew enough of Chinese etiquette to realise that in doing so he would prevent disapproving stares. The presence of the

Chinese-looking Newman, acting as an apparent chaperone, would prevent anyone from assuming she was a … well, a prostitute. Meredith called to Newman to join them. As the porter re-appeared Lian-yun immediately accosted him.

“Porter, what time will we get into Tientsin?

The poor fool gave her a blank stare and Lian-yun asked again in Mandarin. Apparently, he then said “Six o’clock. Are you getting off at Tientsin?”

Meredith knew very little Mandarin, but he knew the time he knocked off from work. Lian-yun continued to talk to the porter in English.

“Well, naturally! Do you expect me to sit here in the dining carriage for 14 or 15 hours until we get to Shanghai? I’m going to have to get off at Tianjinand hope I can get a soft sleeper on the next train!”

The porter didn’t seem to understand or care but after Lian-yun repeated her question in Chinese he apparently recommended a hotel in Tientsin, to which suggestion Lian-yun sniffed in derision. As she did, she took her purse from her handbag at her side and proffered the porter a red 100 renminbi note.

“I’d like to pick up the bill for these two gentlemen.”

Of course, by this stage Newman had not even been properly introduced, and his instant reaction was to stand and refuse the woman’s generosity. Lian-yun was insistent, however, reminding the two men of their generosity with the cigarettes.

Meredith thought for a moment about the revelations of the last few minutes. There was a perfectly good reason now to invite Lian-yun to join him for dinner; a repayment for her covering the coffees. But she had just indicated to the porter that she would be getting off the train at six which was far too early for anything but the most rushed of dinner dates. What was he to do?

“You have business in Shanghai, Miss Lian-yun?”

“Yes. And it will be quite inconvenient if I miss it by staying overnight in Tianjin-waiting for the next soft sleeper.”

“Please don’t consider me forward, but I think I can help you with your situation. You see, I have a deluxe class soft sleeper compartment all to myself. We could take turns getting some rest in there without anyone thinking or knowing about it. While you sleep, I’ll read here in the Dining room, and then vice versa.”

“That’s really too kind, Mr. Meredith, but the Porter would be bound to find out, and then what would happen? I’m afraid I couldn’t.”

“If he does I’ll just slip him some cash to keep him quiet.”

“Well, it is a long trip to Shanghai. I will need to catch a few hours sleep at some stage. But I cannot repay you for the gesture. My salary is quite modest.”

“Forget it. I’ll busy myself with your Graham Greene book. It’s been ages since I’ve read any quality English novels. So, what do you do, Miss Lian-yun?”

“I’m a cadet journalist with a magazine in Shanghai. They sent me to Beijing to report on a new nightclub. You might have heard of it: ‘Citrus’? It’s very trendy.”

“I don’t get out much, so, no - I’m not familiar with it. I guess it’s not just another karaoke bar if they sent you all the way from Shanghai to cover it.”

“Well, in itself, it’s not so special, but it’s popular with some celebrities.”

Lian-yun then rattled off a list of Chinese TV stars and singers, only two of whom sounded vaguely familiar to Meredith. Nevertheless, he acted impressed.

“Get any exclusive confessions for your magazine?”

“Naturally, but if I told you then they’d no longer be exclusive!”

“Then pray tell me your own exclusive: how you’re so fluent in English?”

“Why, that is such a simple story it wouldn’t even rate a full paragraph.”

“Nonetheless, I would like to hear it. You see, I am a lecturer of English and none of my Chinese university majors speak half as well as you.”

“And that is because none of them had parents who went to school in London. Although I have never left China, my parents speak only English at home.”

* * *

The evening continued along most pleasantly for Meredith, as the three ate a light dinner. A little past ten, just after the train had pulled away from the industrial city of Shijiazhuang, where the industrial city’s pollution ensured all windows were temporarily shut, he noticed his new young friend yawning. Newman had been quiet most of the evening and had just retired to his uncomfortable hard seat where he would employ his enviable skill at falling asleep anywhere under any conditions.

“Lian-yun, perhaps it is time for you to take me up on my offer. How does five hours sound to you? I’ll come in at four or five a.m. and then you can make use of the private bathroom at your leisure. I’ll put my eye mask on so I won’t see a thing: your modesty will be intact. You can wake me just before we get to Shanghai later in the morning. That way we'll both arrive relatively refreshed."

Lian-yun simply smiled and nodded.

Meredith carried the girl's luggage to his cabin, which was still unoccupied by any other passenger, and stowed her luggage on the rack over the bunk.

"I'll lock the door. But remember, if by chance, some other man does come aboard and the Porter lets him take the other berth here, just keep the curtain across your bunk drawn and nobody will be the wiser."

"Mr. Meredith, you are too kind."

"Please, I told you to call me David. You know, I hope maybe we can catch up again in Shanghai and you can show me the sights."

Lian-yun said nothing and lowered her eyes, but the blush that warmed her cheeks said enough. After a few seconds, she raised her gaze.

"Thank you, David. I think you can teach me a lot."

And with that, Meredith locked her in and went back to the dining car where he read 'The Quiet American' for five hours until he returned to his soft sleeper. He gently shook Lian-yun awake and she immediately grabbed her clothes and locked herself in the bathroom. Exhausted, the Australian changed into pyjamas and swallowed a sleeping pill with a swig from his bottled water, as was his routine. He inserted earplugs, slipped on an eyemask and crawled between the sheets in the berth opposite the bunk Lian-yun had been asleep in only minutes before.

* * *

Meredith woke slowly as he remembered through crusty eyelids that he was on an express train to Shanghai. He realised it had stopped and he was very likely now at his destination. He prised out his earplugs and lifted off his eye mask, groaning as he eased his stiff, aching body from the bed and swung his legs over the edge. A splash of cold water to the face from the washbasin and he started to feel a little more alive and the prospect of a piping hot coffee saw him go to his briefcase for his wallet. Suddenly, he was very much awake and scrambling through his bags. Frantic, he lifted the mattress of the bunk: had he decided to hide it after he took his sleeping pill? But there was now no mistaking it. His wallet was gone. His face turned white as he realised his laptop computer and camera were also gone.

Meredith leapt from the train unperturbed by the fact he was still wearing his pyjamas. He ran a few steps down the platform before turning and running the opposite direction. Unfamiliar with the Shanghai station he began shouting wildly.

“Help! Help me! I’ve been robbed! She’s robbed me! Police! Police!”

Seeing a woman in grey strolling the other way he sprinted up to her and swung her around violently but it wasn’t Lian-yun. He stammered out an apology in Mandarin to the startled stranger before noticing another young Chinese woman speaking in English to an older male foreigner.

“Watch out, mate! Don’t trust ‘em! They’re only out to steal from you!”

Meredith was now red in the face, screaming and spluttering.

“She’ll just rip you off! All they want is your money! They say they want to practice their English but it’s a con! She just wants your money!”

A small circle of Chinese people had formed around the raving foreigner. Specks of foam flew from his fast-moving lips. No-one offered assistance. James Newman got off the train two carriages further along and stopped, recognising his friend. He hesitated briefly before walking briskly in the opposite direction.

Meredith had not even seen Newman. Nor did he see Lian-yun - now dressed in a plain blue skirt, blazer and beret - disembark with a Porter wheeling her luggage behind her as she quickly exited the station.

A few of the younger Chinese people in the crowd started laughing at the crazy Laowai dressed in nothing but pyjamas and screaming unintelligible English at the top of his lungs. One sneering young man in a sharp navy blue suit tossed a few coins towards him. Suddenly, as Meredith fell to his knees, he noticed the absence of snow on the platform of the Shanghai railway terminal.

## contributors

**dorothea martens** is in her second year of Ph.D. in Translation Studies at the University College of London. Previously, she completed a MA in Comparative Literature at the same university. She is particularly interested in intertextuality in translation, the translation of (literary) allusions and quotations.

**joe culpepper** is a second year PhD student at the Centre for comparative literature at the University of Toronto. He specializes in 20th C. literature in English, Spanish, and French. He also collaborates with the Book History and Print Culture program, studying magic books and magic libraries.

**kristen bennett** is currently taking a MA in Literature at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Her research interest lies in the translation of source texts and literary influences among the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the Renaissance and Romantic authors who inspired him. She plans to continue this work in a PhD program starting in 2008.

**tania collani** received her PhD in European Literatures at the University of Bologna in May 2006, with a dissertation titled *Surrealist Marvelous: View into European Literature*. She currently holds a post-doctoral position at the University of Haute-Alsace (France), within the ILLE (Institute of European Literatures and Languages). Her research interests include European avant-gardes history and literature.

**nadezda korchagina** graduated from the University of Latvia with a BA in Russian Philology. She earned her MA in the Russian-English Translation from Kent State University in the spring of 2006. Currently she is a graduate student at the University of Toronto, completing a MA in the department of Slavic Languages and Literature.

**mark bradshaw busbee** is an Assistant Professor of English at Florida Gulf Coast University (Fort Myers, Florida), where he teaches courses in Old and Middle English language and literature, as well as History of English Language.  He holds a Ph.D. from the University of California, Davis, and a MA from Middlebury College in Middlebury Vermont, and he studied translation theory at the University of Copenhagen while on a Fulbright Fellowship.

**naomi baldinger** is a second-year PhD student at the University of California, Los Angeles. She received her B.A. in 2005 from the University of Texas at Austin, where she studied French and Hebrew. Her current research interests include exile and migration in France and the Middle East, as well as translation studies.

**hallie smith** is currently a graduate student in the English department at the University of Virginia. Her dissertation examines how recent American poets incorporate translated material and borrowed poetic forms into their English-language poetic practices. She also holds an M.A. from the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University in Poetry Writing.

**abbey kanzig** holds a masters degree in English from the University of Akron and certificates in literature and in gender and conflict. She is currently working towards a PhD in Rhetoric and Writing at Bowling Green State University.

**alexander hartwiger** is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. His research interests include Postcolonial Theory and Literature, Cosmopolitanism, and Critical Pedagogy. His dissertation topic focuses on the intersection of cosmopolitanism and pedagogy, looking at the ethical engagement between reader and text.

**rosemarie rowley** has published five books of poetry. *The Sea of Affliction* (1987) one of the first works in eco-feminism, is on the Irish Literary Revival website [see www.irishliteraryrevival.com/rosemarierowley.html]. She has four times won the Epic award in the Scottish International Poetry Competition. Her most recent books are *Hot Cinquefoil Star* (2002) and *In Memory of Her* (2004) both published by Rowan Tree Press, Dublin.

**jesse ferguson** is a graduate student at the University of New Brunswick. His poems and reviews have been published in eight countries, in both print and online formats. Recently, his work has appeared in *Matrix Magazine*, *The Dalhousie Review*, *QWERTY*, *Aesthetica*, *The Nashwaak Review* and *dANDelion*. His poems have also been selected for the Ottawa anthology *Ottawater II* and the Irish anthology *Cúirt 21*.

**jaleen grove** is a visual artist and designer based in Vancouver, BC [see www.groveartworks.com]. Her interests and work encompass sociology of art, relational aesthetics, and commercial art practices. She intends to pursue a Ph.D in visual culture with a dissertation on the history and cultural impact of contemporary Canadian illustrators.

**natasha tiniacos** is a graduate student in Spanish and Comparative Literature at the University of South Carolina. Her research focuses on late 20th century Latin-American Literature. In 2004, she won the First National University Award in Literature in Venezuela, with her book of poems *Mujer a fuego lento* (2006), published by Editorial Equinoccio of Universidad Simón Bolívar. Read her blog at http://natasha-t.blogspot.com.

**d. bruno starrs** holds masters degrees from Bond University and the University of Melbourne. He is currently working towards a PhD on the films of Rolf de Heer at the Queensland University of Technology. In 2000 he was an English teacher in Shiajiazhuang, China and he has also taught in Thailand, Korea and Indonesia. His novel *I woke up feeling Thailand* was published by Sid Harta in 2004.