Two examples of Untranslatability of Poetry

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Abstract
The purpose of this article is to revisit the so-called untranslatability of poetry. The article examines two specific examples – a poem by the Swiss poet Philippe Jaccottet, which I translated from French into English; and a haiku penned by Bashō Matsuo that Jaccottet translated into French from the English version by R. H. Blyth. The first example concerns in particular the double meaning of the French adverb jamais (never / ever). The second refers to the semantic ambiguity of the Japanese particle ha, which is not always the subject marker. Both examples analyze the difficulty of conveying certain nuances that can be crucial to the appreciation of the poem and finding a word-for-word equivalence between two languages. Such examples show how the poetic language makes the most of the semantic range of one word to reflect the affect of the enunciator, and the resulting ambiguity that its translation will discover can be the core of the poetic language itself.

Introduction

To reexamine the so-called untranslatability in poetry formerly emphasized by linguists such as Jakobson (238) or Mounin (Belles infidèles 24), I shall review two examples, one from a contemporary Swiss poet, Philippe Jaccottet, and another from a seventeenth century haiku master translated by Jaccottet. The first example, an untitled poem by Philippe Jaccottet (1925-2021), is taken from his 1967 collection entitled Airs. The relative brevity and the elliptical character of the poems in this collection are mostly inspired by Japanese haiku that Jaccottet rediscovered through the introduction and translations of R. H. Blyth, published between 1949 and 1952 (Low 214). Some poems from Airs were translated into English by the Irish poet and translator, Derek Mahon, and published in a collection of Jaccottet's poems, but not the following, which was translated literally by the author of this paper.

Jeunesse, je te consume	Youth, I consume you
avec ce bois qui fut vert	with this wood which was green
dans la plus claire fumée	in the clearest smoke
qu'ait jamais l'air emportée	the air has ever swept
Âme qui de peu t'effraies	You soul who from little frightens,
la terre de fin d'hiver	the earth of winter's end
n'est qu'une tombe d'abeilles	is nothing but a bees' tomb

(Jaccottet *Poésie* 101)

This translation, ascribed to a non-native English speaker, may seem somewhat dry and tactless, but that is within the scope of this research article. One apparent change I had to make is found in the first line of the second strophe: the soul was called on as an explicit "you" and became

the third person in translation because it was not easy to restore the same form of address in English. As we will see in what follows, the implicitness can hardly be kept the same.

For the sake of reference, I quote below another translation by a native English speaker, Emma Wagstaff, included in her critical study (109). Her translation is, of course, smoother. The one apparent difference from my translation is her choice of the verb "carry" for "*emporter*". I chose "sweep" to convey the nuance of the rapidity and the brutality that "*emporter*" contains, but "carry" is more literal. I also wanted "the air" to be the subject in the subordinate clause.

> Youth, I consume you
> with this wood that was green
> in the brightest smoke
> ever carried by the air
>
> You, easily frightened soul,
> the earth at winter's end
> is only a tomb for bees

As Mounin remarked, along with many other authors, more than half a century ago, when translating a poem, the non-semantic elements thought to constitute its form, namely, its aesthetic features, must often be discarded (*Belles infidèles* 28): the target language seldom offers the exact equivalents.

In this example, two elements in particular are lost: the metre (each line in the original scans around six syllables) and the unique rhyme in the mute "e" (whose fading effect seems to represent a dissipation). Any conscientious translator can hardly abandon these effects altogether. Similarly, certain words may present a challenge to the translator. In this case, the word *jamais* in the last line of the first strophe must be considered carefully. Usually, this adverb means "never". Here, in the original version, the superlative requires another meaning, "ever" (before). Most native French speakers would not hesitate to choose the latter. The beginning French speaker – like the author of this paper himself many years ago – may first be confused by the unusual word order of the line in question: "*qu'ait jamais l'air emportée*". He will likely read some more poems in French and realise that the rhyme with the previous line, combined here with the visual and phonetical repetition "-ée", required the inversion of the last two words and, consequently, notice that the adverb "*jamais*" ends up being stressed. The same beginner may still consider the first meaning of the word in the dictionary and would mistakenly translate the text as "the youth was consumed in the clearest smoke the air has never swept away", He might say to himself, "transparent smoke does not exist, and the air cannot even blow it away". This rendering sounds nonsensical, almost "out of joint", to apply Hamlet's famous expression that Ludwig Binswanger quoted in order to differentiate what poetic language expresses from a thought disorder: a finely structured poem like the one presented above aims to put in words a particular state of mind, sketching or forming "a new eidetic region" (163). Here, the word *jamais* seems to play a key role in nuancing this unfamiliar territory of thought mingled with memory.

However, let us move on from Binswanger and go back to the same beginner in French who was trying to understand the line under consideration. With reflection, he will realize the correct meaning of the line, replacing "never" with "ever". Yet, the first impression, albeit "out of joint", may remain. Perhaps the youth was consumed in this implausible, inacceptable absurdity. Jaccottet himself might have even intended to allude to this first meaning "never". In fact, youth can be as much associated with never as with ever; if it ever existed, it will never

exist again. Like smoke, youth vanishes for*ever*, and its singular occurrence and its entire disappearance are unthinkable, which indicates an oxymoronic effect enhanced by the superlative, "the clearest smoke". The word *fumée* [fyme] evokes fugacity. Its last letter is phonetically void, standing for the mute "e", spreading in this poem (present at least twice, maybe three times in the first line: "*Jeunesse, je te consume*").[1] The first strophe begins with *jeunesse,* and its last line alliterates with *jamais*. The word *fumée* also alliterates with the simple past *fut*. These symbolic alliterations and the dispersion of "e" are indeed untranslatable.

One thing that has emerged from the above is the fundamental affinity between writing poetry and the latent act of translation: the poet is someone who approaches his or her native language as if it were a foreign tongue; he can make resound his language in some other way than our routine usage reducing words to their most common and accepted meanings. Mallarmé is an appropriate example: as Valéry remarked, he had as much "musical delicacy" for his mother tongue as an "infinitely subtle feeling" for his second language, English (Valéry 686).

In the poem presented above, there is the obvious feeling of impossibility and ineffability that the whole text and, above all, the adverb *jamais* seeks to convey. It is common to say that those days will *never* come back, but there may be an uncommon way in which a well-elaborated poem expresses this awareness in a given language. In other words, although the feeling of remorse about the passing of time or lost youth is common to mankind and expressed in lyric poetry of every language, how it appears in each can be very particular, just as the poem I translated exemplifies the use of *jamais* or with the dissemination of the mute "e". As another example, Yeats begins *Sailing to Byzantium* with the line, "That is no country for old men". In Yves Bonnefoy's French translation, the title becomes "*Byzance, l'autre rive* [Byzantium, the other bank]", and the first line: "*Non, ce pays / N'est pas pour le vieil homme* [No, this country / is not for the old man]" (Yeats 62). The fact that Bonnefoy modified the Yeats' saying a little more than necessary shows that he was almost emotionally involved in it: the other side of the river Styx in Greek mythology is also the realm of death, and the awareness of heading toward the end of one's life made Bonnefoy begin the first two lines with the emphatic negation in a conversational tone. But we know that saying just "no" or "never" does not help much, as Jaccottet voiced in another poem: "To speak is to lie, or worse: a craven / insult to grief or a waste / of the little time and energy at our disposal [*Parler alors semble mensonge, ou pire : lâche / insulte à la douleur, et gaspillage / du peu de temps et de forces qui nous reste*]" (Mahon's translation 121). Baudelaire had his word for this disconsolate and inexpressible feeling: "*L'irrémédiable*". Nonetheless, the word derives from its antonym, "*remède* [remedy]", and is finally denied with a negative prefix.

The bifurcation of meaning takes us back to the word *jamais*. In the fourth line, its implied but evident meaning of "never" is not directly translatable unless the target language has the same kind of word (like *mai* in Italian). In English (my translation), "ever" might suggest its negative form *in absentia,* but it still seems difficult to guess when it is not spelled out explicitly, as shown in this example: "… the smoke the air has ever swept and never brings back". Etymologically, the French word *jamais* first meant "never" in the tenth century, before it encompassed the opposite meaning in the thirteenth century, according to the etymological dictionary of the Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales (CNRTL). In English, the two words remained separated, meaning that the antonym produced with just an additional letter was maintained. We can speculate on the etymology of how "once" and "no more" could join and disjoin, even if we remember Émile Benveniste's remark on Freud (this founder of psychoanalysis attached great importance to some words that have opposite meanings [*e.g.*, Latin *sacer*], asserting it as a proof of the collective unconsciousness. Benveniste makes an

[1] I chose *you* and not *thou* in English translation. The effect of alliteration is significant.

objection; the semantic organization of a language often requires the arrangement of opposite terms and such a contradiction is not surprising [Benveniste 81]. Still, it may be said that the poet makes us aware of the oscillating meanings of a word). This kind of collective memory concealed in a language can be echoed and noticed in a good poetic work.

When saying "ever," the poet hinted at "never", but the thought of "never" was too intense not to be *spelled*. In this regard, an important remark by French psychoanalyst Pierre Fédida comes to mind: the "human word is human and is word on condition it has a double meaning (*Zweideutig*, says Freud)" (119). Ambiguity is essential for natural language. If this kind of double entendre in the letters is untranslatable in another language without paraphrasing, it is clearly unsuitable for a poem to lose its density and rhythm. For Mounin, the characteristics of a poem that are lost in translation may constitute the "aesthetic pertinence" of the poem, that is, "the intimate link between linguistic and poetic signifier and signified" (*Linguistique et traduction* 173). In fact, Mounin translates Dante's expression "*legame musaico* [bond of muses]", which creates the harmony of the poetic language for Dante, in linguistic terms (*Belles infidèles* 26). That is, as Mounin suggests, precisely what makes poetry out of the ordinary language.

Concerning the poem quoted above, we may think of the feeling of "*jamais*" reflected concurrently on its external elements and on the semantic range especially in the first strophe. In the second strophe, where "I" speaks to the fragile soul – not even the mind (naturally his own but not necessarily) – in the familiar form (as with "youth"), the tone sounds slightly different. The "I" is nearly telling himself to accept the littleness and the brevity. The word "*peu*", like "little" in English, oscillates again between two opposite meanings: an almost complete denial and an affirmation of almost nothing (hence, fortunately translatable to English). Indeed, the first untitled poem of *Airs*, begins with this word: "*Peu de chose* ["Not much" in Mahon's translation 61]". It may well be a sort of leitmotiv, namely the status of the poetic language. We can also consider the conjugated verb "*effraies*", the spelling of which seems reminiscent of *L'effraie* [barn owl], one of the first collections of poems Jaccottet published in 1953. It may be remembered that the owl itself was connected to an ancient deity in Greek and Roman Egypt: its statues or reliefs remain. Seen or heard, this nocturnal bird flying low in Europe could conjure recollections of the survival of the mythical or mystic background. The names of "Birds, flowers and fruits [*Oiseaux, fleurs et fruits*]" (title of another poem in *Airs*), especially the first two, can be evocative of many things for Jaccottet, who roams the countryside of Provence and find them easily. It may be added that these names, like proper nouns, resist translation (Constantine 69).

This related information can help provide a better appreciation of the poem, but it is not directly translatable either. This kind of knowledge will be part of the interpretation any literary translation will involve. I now wish to conclude the reading of this poem. The "bees' tomb [*tombe d'abeilles*]" to which is likened the earth does not exist: "tombe" comes as a homonym of "*tombent* [fall down]". Birds and bees: their free flight does not last forever. The bees may refer to "the bees of the invisible [*die Bienen des Unsichtbaren*]" that Rilke suggested about his Duino Elegies in a letter dated 13 November 1925 (Rilke 376): we are the creatures collecting and converting inside us the honey of the visible world, so ephemeral. In this regard, it may be mentioned that Freud, in his 1915 paper "On Transience [*Vergänglichkeit*]", recounts an encounter with a young poet, probably Rilke, mourning in mid-summer what will be gone in Winter: "The idea that all this beauty was transient was giving [this sensitive mind] a foretaste of mourning over its decease" (306). The poets collect the honey of the visible beauty – or to put in Hölderlin's words, "bring together / The beautiful things of the earth [*bringen zusammen* / *Das Schöne der Erd*]" (Hölderlin 252), but this beauty, as Freud remembered his discussion with the young poet after the beginning of the First World War, shall be destroyed

in any manner, even if it will be reborn. Jaccottet, who translated some works of Rilke and Hölderlin, wrote in his poem "The work of the poet [*Le travail du poète*]" that this work consists of watching out, so as to save from the world that we see just for the time being "what twinkles and will extinguish [*ce qui scintille et va s'éteindre*]" (Jaccottet, *Poésie* 65) – that which is comparable to the bees that will one day fall.

Jaccottet admits that his nature tends towards what he calls "the poem-discourse", keeping some aspects of daily speech, rather than "the poem-moment", condensed and embodied in the poem cited above. Other examples of the latter are some short poems by Giuseppe Ungaretti and haikus (Jaccottet, *La semaison* 47); Emily Dickinson's poems, also brief, will be considered later. Before looking at the haiku Jaccottet translated, I want to quote the passage of "the poem-discourse" he wrote in the 1970s. At the beginning of the poem entitled "*Pensées sous les nuages* [Thoughts under the clouds]", the impossibility of the trip, of flight for "us" is confirmed: "I don't think finally we'll make this trip, / across all these skies that would be clearer little by little, […] I hardly see us in the invisible wings forever circling the tops, invisible too [*Je ne crois pas décidément que nous ferons ce voyage / à travers tous ces ciels qui seraient de plus en plus clairs,* […] *Je nous vois mal en aigles invisibles, à jamais tournoyant autour de cimes invisibles elles aussi*]". The cloud is another ephemeral atmospheric formation, suspended in the air. Thus, it becomes a symbolic motif in Jaccottet's poetry. Derek Mahon translated the title as "Cloud thoughts", but I prefer the literal rendition because the thoughts themselves are not identified with clouds in the poem, and what matters in this title is the *Stimmung*, the state of being, or a certain ambiance to which our soul state is attuned. In this poem, the aerial shroud hanging over "us" overlaps with "our" gloomy thoughts.

Following the first line of the poem, the enunciator I (*je*), as if split, continues: "But where did you still wish to go, with these worn-out feet? [*Mais où donc pensiez-vous aller encore, avec ces pieds usés?*]… We see you better in the crevices of labor, sweating a sweat of death, rather somber than carried towards these last proud swans [*On vous voit mieux dans les crevasses des labours, suant une sueur de mort, plutôt sombres qu'emportés vers ces derniers cygnes fiers*]…" (Jaccottet, *À la lumière d'hiver* 115; my translation. The word "*Pieds* [feet]" of course should be understood in its double meaning – hence, there is no problem with the English translation. As Jaccottet once told me in a letter, the image of the tired poet-traveller in this poem was inspired by Dante).

The swan, an attribute of the poet (here "last" and "proud" but already gone), reminds us of another poem of Saturnian inspiration (Saturn is also a God of tillage). Baudelaire's "The Swan", in which we hear the repetition of *jamais* – the I, with compassion, says "*À quiconque a perdu ce qui ne se retrouve* / *Jamais, jamais!* [of whoever has lost that which is never found again, never!]" (Baudelaire 86 [William Aggeler's translation of 1954]. This poem brings to mind Mallarmé's famous sonnet on Swan, but *jamais* may evoke his translation of Poe's "Raven": "*Jamais plus*" for "Nevermore"). I do not say Jaccottet was inspired by Baudelaire's poem, but the impossibility of leaving, leaping, and flying makes me think of Bashō's haiku that he retranslated from the English translation by R. H. Blyth; this will be the second example to be examined.

There is a difference of the cultural context. No angel's wings let us suppose about the invisible world, no allegorization (especially with personification) entails the assumption of the meta-physical dimension. All of this arrives at the question of literality: as it is. How should a translation be done, particularly when it is from such a different language shaped in such a different tradition? In this case, the so-called literal translation may risk becoming too flat (to say nothing of the retranslation). However, as shown in the translation, the literal flatness without the allegorical (or illusory) depth is not as flat as we think.

The following is the original haiku: "旅に病んで夢は枯れ野をかけめぐる *tabi ni yande yume ha kareno wo kakemeguru*". The Blyth version: "Ill on a journey: / My dreams wander / Over a withered moor" (Blyth 107). Jaccottet's retranslation from this version is as follows: "*Tombé malade en voyage: errent mes rêves sur une lande aride* [Fallen ill on a journey: wander my dreams over an arid moor]" (Jaccottet, *Haïku*). I think that both versions, sufficiently laconic and literal, succeed in capturing what matters most in the original: unspeakable feelings and intense thoughts of a withering poet-traveler. Readers may be interested in knowing some of Bashō's work and the fact that this is the last haiku he wrote in 1694: we naturally look for the poem's original context, stemming from a "poetic, emotional and cultural *situation*" (Mounin, *Linguistique et traduction* 181).

Jaccottet added "*tomber* [fall]" and operated the subject-verb inversion (natural in French for this kind of sentence); compared with the Blyth version, "*errent*" is the phonetic equivalent of "*Airs* [ɛːr]". We may note in Jaccottet's collection, *Airs* mentioned above, the expression "*L'œil erre* [The eye wanders]" (Jaccottet, *Poésie* 139). Actually, in Jaccottet's translation, we can once again observe the diffusion of the mute "e"; even though it is rather likely to happen here because of the requirement of each word's meaning, the terms selected reflect his preference. He intentionally echoes certain phonemes, if only the mute "e". Acoustically, we should also add that Blyth, for his part, makes us aware of the assonance, "wand*er* […] ov*er* […] with*er*ed". "*Lande aride*" is not quite exact but it is not easy to use the French equivalent to "withered", *fané*, which is suitable for plants but not for *lande*. "Withered" also implies "dead", which is suitable here (especially when the ideogram 枯 is composed of two parts each representing "wood" and "old"), but "moor" in place of "field" may evoke the highlands, the imagery of which could be important for Blyth. At least "withered moor" and "*lande aride*" are three syllables like "*kareno*".

From the native perspective, there are two important aspects of untranslatability in the original. The first is the excess of the number of syllables in the first foot (+1): Bashō's thought went beyond the metrical convention prescribing five. If the inexpressible affect let Bashō extend for but one more syllable – a particle *te*(*de*) meaning here "and" – as he could have observed the convention –, this effect cannot be rendered in translation (the discussion whether it is appropriate to transfer a fixed form of verse from one language into another with a different phonetic structure is outside the scope of this article. For example, Jaccottet translated *Odyssey* of Homer in free verse). The second is the ambiguity of the particle *ha* accompanying "*yume*" (dream). Unlike *ga* accentuating the subject, it doesn't always necessarily indicate that; it means rather "as for" and here it is unclear. Word-for-word equivalence cannot be found between Japanese and English. How should we interpret and translate this conclusive part? As for the dream, it runs about over a withered field (as there are no articles in Japanese, it is difficult to ascertain whether "dream" is singular or plural). Or *I* (myself) is the subject that wanders (as the translation in modern Japanese suggests usually), but in full retreat – even the possessive adjective "my" is not necessary in Japanese: the sentence "dream wanders" stands as it is. So, the latest French translation, helped along by a Japanese translator, proposes: "[…] in a dream, I wander […]" ("*Malade en voyage* / *en rêve, je flâne* / *dans la campagne déserte l'hiver*" [Bashō 349]. This translation, semantically correct but less dense than that of Jaccottet's, also makes the repetition of the mute "e" a little less sensitive. The rendition is close to Carter's: "Ill on a journey, / I run about in my dreams / over withered fields" [366]). However, this may be somewhat too explicit. Nowadays, most Japanese will take this *ha* spontaneously as the subject marker as did Blyth (and Jaccottet).[2] That is not necessarily a

[2] Most of the English translations consider "dream" to be the subject (for examples of translations, see https://www.uwosh.edu/facstaff/barnhill/es-244-basho/hokku.pdf). For instance, Ueda's translation is as follows:

mistake. The use of the particle *ga* would have made the verse strangely emphatic, such as "It is my dream that wanders…"

The grammatical subject (for the verb) is normally needed to translate this kind of sentence into the main European languages, such as English, French and German (Nietzsche's ancient remark about agglutinative languages in *Beyond Good and Evil* [20] has to be remembered). Berman, who points out the platonic nature of the translation placing greater emphasis on the intelligible (26), noted accurately that semantic ambiguity is more or less destined to be clarified in translation. In the case of this haiku, significantly, Bashō chose a word "dream" and a particle that ends up disturbing the position, or even the notion, of the subject. It is as if the enunciator *I* were at the boundary of consciousness, subject to the dream – even if the poet did not mean to give this impression. We might be able to say that the language itself produces this effect here. In translation, it seems difficult to restore this ambiguity caused by this particle.

In general, the brevity of haiku does not always allow a place for *I*. Also, it may be wrong to lay stress on its absence as a sign of its withdrawal. However, the fact that it is possible in the form of a haiku might suggest that the *I* is there, so to speak, subject to what is perceived and felt instantaneously. If what counts is the feeling of unity with the sensible world, stated as briefly as possible, the appearance / disappearance of the enunciative subject in the original deserves consideration in translation. From this point of view, Jaccottet's retranslation echoing naturally the mute "e" becomes highly emblematic, especially in "*errent*", thereby achieving the osmosis between the form and the meaning (Jakobson): the syncope, or even the ellipsis of the "I", the feeling of evanescence like the dissipation in the air. This is a case where the personal concern of the poet-translator, far from betraying the original, succeeded in matching the original.

The poems discussed above bring into focus two specific problems. First, the double meaning of the French adverb *jamais*; and second, the double meaning of the French adverb *jamais* and the indefinite function of the Japanese particle *ha*. Both highlight the gap between two languages (between French and English, between Japanese and English or French), and both raise the question of nuance that the lyric poetry of every language reveals. Such examples maximize the semantic range of one word to better reflect the effect, rather than the intellect, of the enunciator. The inexpressible feeling needs to be received or reflected by a semantic sway, even between extremes such as ever / never. The inconclusiveness remains and resounds through certain (formal and semantic) signs in the mind of a sensitive reader. This inconclusiveness that the poetic language may hold in itself can be one of its key attributes. When it seems cryptic, it is potentially the equivalent of "the mysterious meaning of the aspects of existence" according to Mallarmé, expressed through "the essential rhythm," inherent in each tongue (I paraphrase Mallarmé's famous definition of poetry [Mallarmé 572]). The achieved expression of this ambiguity, the inexplicability or the obscurity, can be a sort of "mystery" in this secularized – and computerized – world.

However, we cannot translate this obscurity, forged by the condensed expression of the original, without rewording and, thus, taking the risk of insipidly clarifying and damaging it.

"On a journey, ailing – / My dreams roam about / On a withered moor" (Ueda 413). In Shirane's version: "sick on a journey / dreams roam about / On a withered moor" (Shirane 279). Actually Bashō, in the first state of this haiku, seemed to have conceived "dream" as the subject, placing the word at the end without any particle. The function of the particle *ha* in the final version is still unclear. Another view of this *ha* suggests that Bashō, having in mind a passage of Su Shi's poem saying, "as for the mind…, and as for the dream…," meant in this haiku: as for my dream it wanders on a withered moor, and as for my mind it comes down there. The author thanks Yûsuké Inaba for some additional information about this haiku.

As observed through these examples, the semantic ambiguity is rarely preserved in translation. It seems still better to start from the literal translation (without over-interpretation), so that the unresolved nature of the original may survive to a certain extent. The choice of just one meaning can destroy that. Yet other remaining elements may also save some of the ineffability. To use Benjamin's expression in "The Task of the Translator", it can well be what should "survive" in translation, even when a translation is retranslated. Contrary to Benjamin's approach to the "task", over-interpretation blurs the intention, sometimes unarticulated, of the author and the translation will not "echo" the original properly. The over-interpretation should not be part of the "creative transposition" that Jakobson advocated in place of the translation of poetry he claimed impossible. And this "creative transposition" should not relieve the translator of his or her "task".

We do not discuss here why Benjamin greatly valued Hölderlin's "literal" translation of Sophocles, which is often judged to be "out of joint" (Marukawa 105), neither do we examine how we should consider some poets' translations involving substantive changes to the poems they translated, such as Celan's (Szondi and Felstiner) or Bonnefoy's (Marukawa 133). But it may be possible to talk in particular about the "survival" and the "echo" of the original with Jaccottet's retranslation of Bashō from Blyth's version, both of which are free of over-interpretation.

We must concede that the literal translation is often preferred by academics, as Mounin claims. I would argue that this literal rendition should be accompanied by an interpretative commentary – which is the task of research and education – to make way for further questioning. However, the translation of a poem should not merely be an accurate accounting of its meaning. It would be ideal that a bit of tact may, without going so far as to the beautification or the distortion, give a new life to the translated poem. This "Gift of the poem [*Don du poëme*]", to quote nothing more than Mallarmé's title, can be accompanied by a "musical fidelity [*fidélité musicale*]", if we use Mounin's term, which seems a little out of character for a linguist (Mounin, *Linguistique et traduction* 147). How can a translator be "musically" faithful to a poem written in another language? Now, is not the time to discuss this question. I cannot return to the validity of parallels between poetry and music, which are so often called into question (Marukawa 10, 239). The tact this translator needs may consist of grasping the original tone and transforming it suitably, affectively, and yet moderately into the target language – his mother tongue, of which he knows by heart the rhythm, inflection, and evocative capacity of each word – but it withstands further generalization at this point.

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