# The AALITRA Review

## A JOURNAL OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

Vol 20, December 2024

AALITRA

# The AALITRA Review



***The AALITRA Review***
aims to foster a community of literary translators and to be a forum for lively debate concerning issues related to the translation of literary texts. We publish two non-thematic issues a year, and in alternate years, one special issue devoted to a particular topic. All submissions (except book reviews, interviews and translators' diaries) are subject to anonymous peer review.

We accept a variety of high-quality material concerned with literary translation, as well as translations of literary texts from other languages into English, or vice versa. More specifically, we welcome submissions in the following categories:

- **scholarly articles** on aspects of literary translation (practical and theoretical)
- **commentary:** original translations into English of literary texts accompanied by a critical introduction and commentary by the translator
- **commentary:** original translations of Australian literary texts into LOTE accompanied by a critical introduction and commentary by the translator
- **interviews** with established translators or Translation Studies scholars on aspects of their work
- **book reviews** of major Translation Studies publications
- **book reviews** of literary translations into English, or of Australian writing into other languages
- ***New*:** **Literary Translators' diaries** documenting works in progress, including detailed consideration of a particular translation issue or dilemma

We also welcome proposals for Special Issues.

***Submissions***, prepared according to the Guidelines for Contributors (available from our website), should be submitted via the journal website (both available through our website). Following the peer review process, accepted pieces are usually published within six to eight months of submission.

Check for our calls for contributions for special issues, typically every second year.

***The Australian Association for Literary Translation (AALITRA)***
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**Thematic Section: *Exploring Indigenous Australian literature in other languages***



**Non-Thematic Section**

*Published by*
LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

# Thematic Section:

## *Exploring Indigenous Australian literature in other languages*

# Introduction

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This 2024 issue of *The AALITRA Review* is thematic, as is the *Review'*s practice every second year.

This year's theme is *Exploring Indigenous Australian literature in other languages.* It attracted a translator's interview, articles and Translations & Commentaries from Japanese, French, Chinese and Italian translators of works in English by Australia's and New-Zealand's Indigenous authors of novels, poems and songs.

*Our heart-felt thanks go to our Indigenous consultant, who kindly reviewed all the thematic contributions*. *Authors were asked to consider their comments in line with the Indigenous code of ethics, but any final decisions on specific wording was the choice of individual contributors.*

The authors translated here in other languages than English belong to the pantheon of Australia's and New Zealand's modern classics: Kim Scott, Tony Birch, Keri Hulme (first Māori writer to win the Booker Prize), Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Ali Cobby Eckermann, Evelyn Araluen, Bruce Pascoe, without forgetting *Blackfella Whitefella*'s song writer George Rrurrambu Burarrwanga. Some of the translations have been commissioned by a publisher (for instance Nadine Gassie's translation into French of Tony Birch' *The White Girl*), while others are considering their publication options.

This literature presents many challenges, the first being its reception in cultures with little knowledge of Australian and New Zealand First Nation people. At one level, how do you reproduce the *sound* of Indigenous words or names in other languages: Masaya Shimokusu interviewed by Sonia Broad on translating Kim Scott for Japanese readers, learned the Noongar language so as to accurately transliterate the name of the protagonist and other Noongar words that 'popped up' in *That Deadman Dance*.

The gap between source and target cultures is addressed by Tiziana Borgese-Flocca and Anna Gadd in their exegesis of Borgese-Flocca's translation of Bruce Pascoe's *Young Dark Emu,* a 'work of counter-memory', for an Italian audience of young readers 'far removed from the source context, geographically and experientially'. The translator's task raises ethical issues which are discussed in depth by Borgese-Flocca and Gadd. Although not mentioned by our translators and commentators, they abide by the AIATSIS code of ethics of 'Engaging with Indigenous research and literature, both academic and community', as well as contributing to 'developing community educational resources' that contribute to Indigenous knowledge.[1]

Reception of those texts *by the translators* is also discussed since the encounter with such foreign and yet familiar texts[2] was often a decisive moment in the intellectual and emotional journey of the literary translators, a conscious gesture of jolting the hegemon and working towards decolonising. Francesca Benocci writes: "The linguistic structure and cultural context of te reo Māori offered a unique challenge and insight into Keri Hulme's *The Bone*

[1] The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), p. 18 and 20.
[2] Indigenous authors also comment on their encounters with their own country's literature. See for instance Alice Te Punga Somerville, 'The Indigenous backstage pass', *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, Volume 14, Number 2, 2021, 65-79.

*People*, a novel that deeply impacted me and inspired my move to Aotearoa New Zealand." And if Benocci is the only one to mention her position as a 'translation activist', most of the translators here point to a sense of commitment towards their source texts.

This is why they are keen to tackle the unique challenges of a lexical, semantic, ethical and cultural nature posed by Indigenous literature. Figurative speech for instance is notoriously difficult to translate, bordering on issues of untranslatability, even more so when it comes to poetry. The translation process is in this case highly interpretative, as demonstrated by Margherita Zanoletti translating into Italian First Nations' poets Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Ali Cobby Eckermann, and Evelyn Araluen. Zanoletti is attune to assonance and allusions in the source texts that might need explicitation in the target language.

And yet, such a domestication strategy is only applied on occasions. Most translators in this issue adopted a foreignizing strategy. Benocci for instance respected the 'linguistic-cultural continuum' of Keri Hulme's *The Bone People* by choosing to keep in her Italian translation the bilingualism inherent to Indigenous texts replete with words unique to their language groups or even coinages.

Amongst the approaches translators discuss, there is the highly structured 'Action research design guid[ing] action and reflection' (Borgese-Flocca & Gadd), aimed at 'preserving the finesse of *Young Dark Emu*'. Nadine Gassie for her part embraces Henri Meschonnic's 'pratique-théorique' which accounts for her narrative approach to her Translation & Commentary. Her in-depth understanding of Tony Birch's oeuvre leads Gassie to use a concrete metaphor, that of the language of 'boxing', using jabs, hooks and uppercuts in her rendition of the novel. According to her, this allows her to avoid Antoine Berman's deforming tendencies of *Rationalisation* and *Expansion*. She lists her eleven precepts or strategies which will resonate with many translators.

Shan Ma's conceptual framework is different yet again, as his corpus is the 1985 icon of Australian culture, the song *Blackfella Whitefella* written by Neil James Murray and George Djilaynga (aka George Rrurrambu Burarrwanga). Translation of lyrics requires a unique purpose: making it singable. Ma is inspired by Peter Low's model to take into consideration singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme. Ma focusses on specific elements of the song, starting with its title, and going through thought processes, hesitations, changes of mind, and most importantly, awareness that 'translation blind spots [...] exist beyond the vocabulary or language domains'.

Whatever the genres of their source texts and the language groups of their authors, the translators contributing to this issue undoubtedly furthered the cross-cultural understanding of First Nation people's literary output and its dissemination beyond our shores.

The issue also includes non-thematic contributions: one theoretical article, translation & Commentary of a Chinese chronicle, a Russian autobiographical prose, a French poem, two book reviews and, for the first time, a Translator's Diary, which is a new type of submissions we called for this year. The inaugural diary is by eminent French into English literary translator, Emeritus Professor Brian Nelson.

We are also very pleased to publish two of this year's winning AALITRA translation awards: a poem in French by Marilyne Bertoncini translated by Heidi Bula and Shiva Motlagh-Elbakri into English.

# Exploring the Translation Process of Bruce Pascoe's *Young Dark Emu* into Italian: Choices, Reflections and Learnings

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**Abstract**
This article is based on a translation of *Young Dark Emu: A Truer History* (YDE) into Italian – *L'Oscuro Emù per Ragazzi: una storia più vera* (L'OEPR) and a theoretical exegesis, which were part of the first author's Master of Translation Studies dissertation, completed at The University of Western Australia in 2023 under the supervision of the second author. Bruce Pascoe's YDE is the version of *Dark Emu* (DE) for young people aged 7 to12 years in which he advocates for a reconsideration of the label given to pre-colonial Indigenous Australians. Both books won several prizes and contributed to rethinking Indigenous life in Australia and changing Australian identity. Indigenous Australian literature's well-defined political identity always demands ethical awareness in translation. In the case of YDE the original's culture-sensitive counter-memory and the fact that the book is written for children contribute to making it a particularly challenging book to translate into another language. Translating YDE for Italian children, became an exploration of strategies and choices in relation to the ethical positioning of the authors of this article. Source-oriented translation strategies suit this type of text especially when dealing with culture-specific elements and the title. *A priori* standards were met by navigating a theoretical framework interwoven to assist the process. An action research design guided action and reflection, leaning broadly but not exclusively on contributions to Translation Studies of Reiss, Toury, Eco, Venuti and Osimo. This article discusses choices, rationale behind solutions, insights, consistency with ideology and ethical positioning.

## Introduction

YDE is the children's adaptation of Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu: Aboriginal Australia and the Birth of Agriculture*.[1] The book's description of Indigenous Australian communities at the time of British colonization challenges the common conception of First Nation Australians as nomadic hunter-gatherers, focusing on recounts that depict them as agriculturists and aquaculturists. It is aimed at children 7 to 12 years of age (Magabala Books) and it portrays another perspective of history and different types of knowledge that are of general interest to humanity particularly in the 'Anthropocene' era.

Pascoe's work has generated ongoing debate, at a societal, political and academic level, in Australia. Although it is commonly recognised for shedding light on important past and present issues, the controversies have made it a slippery slope to tread. Indeed, very few

[1] Bruce Pascoe identifies as an Indigenous man from many language groups, including Tasmanian Palawa, Bunurong people of the Kulin nation (Victoria), and Yuin (southern New South Wales), acknowledging his Cornish and European Colonial ancestry as well.

translations of the book DE into languages other than English exist[2], and an Italian translation has not yet been attempted (Opac Sbn). The paucity of Italian translations (and studies) of Indigenous Australian literature has been attributed to its strong political identity; nonetheless, it raises the call for further efforts to encourage its dissemination in mainstream Italian culture (Di Blasio and Zanoletti 57).

Translating YDE opened the translation of children's literature to scrutiny. This genre has gained prominence since the years following the First World War, with the idea that it can play an important role in establishing peaceful relationships, solidarity and knowledge of other cultures (O'Sullivan, "Internationalism"). Subsequent academic debate has focused on whether, and to what extent, translations of children's books should be adapted. More recent trends in children's literature, consider young readers to be endowed with research skills and are therefore geared towards informing and stimulating curiosity and self-conducted research (Better Reading; Cole Adams; Watkins). Despite the evolving capabilities of young readers, the translation of YDE arguably required cultural adaptations that allowed effective communication and exchange. Yet, a different perspective of history and the translator's ethical positioning (the agency attached to their values and beliefs), remained central, possibly leading to antagonism between translation strategies.

The process was explored from an inside perspective employing an Action Research design that guided the understanding of daily practices, activating change and/or improvement through a cyclical process of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Planning was informed by theory at a general and specific level; the translation issues that formed part of the data found solutions within the literature, advice sought and reflection; changes were immediately applied to the work that followed and thus modified the subsequent process, data and results.

Translation and exegesis were informed by a Translation Theory framework:

- Text analysis as described by Reiss.
- Toury's initial norm of adequacy.
- Venuti's foreignization vs domestication ethics.
- Eco's notion of the Model Reader.
- Osimo's works (*Manuale del Traduttore*; "Logos Portal"; "Translation as Metaphor").

In this article, based on the author's MA thesis, supervised by the co-author, we consider literature findings regarding the text and its role within Australia, the *status quo* of Indigenous Australian literature in Italy, the text's dual nature and Translation Theory pertinent to the theoretical framework. We describe the study design, text analysis, criteria for data collection and observations; finally, we discuss findings and share learnings.

## 1. Text, contexts and Theory

Four areas of study were identified and researched: the text, Indigenous Australian literature in Italy, Translation of Children's Literature and Translation Theory. Knowledge of the text and context is a prerequisite for translating culture-sensitive literature. Accepting the complexity and dual nature of the text opened a window to past and new trends in children's literature. The discoveries induced the creation of a theoretical framework.

[2] *L'émeu dans la nuit : Australie aborigène et pratiques agricoles multimillénaires* (Publisher: Éditions Petra, Paris, 2022); *Dāku* emyū*: aborijinaru ōsutoraria no shinjitsu senjūmin no tochi kanri to nōkō no tanjō* (Publisher: Akashishoten, Tōkyō, 2022); *Hei an er miao : Aodaliya yuan zhu min ji nong ye de qi yuan* (Publisher: Fu dan da xue chu ban she, Shanghai, 2021) (WorldCat.org)

### *1.1 The text: Understanding YDE in Australia*

The translation process begins with making sense of a text that is not an isolated piece of writing but that interacts with the environment in which it lives. YDE is part of the 'DE phenomenon'[3] that has occurred in Australia since it was first published.

A considerable amount of epitextual material exists around DE. There is criticism for the fallacies of its underlining research (Sutton and Walshe); for forcing the pre-colonial Indigenous status into the colonialist logic of evaluation of humanity (Porr and Williams); for proffering white Australians the absolution they desire with a truth that offers hope of healing: a truer history without justice that comforts only white Australia (Grant). However, the same critics recognise that Pascoe "builds awareness of the fact that British Empire colonists in Australia assumed their superiority and justified conquest, slaughter and massive land theft" (Sutton and Walshe 12); that "Dark Emu has single-handedly and fundamentally changed the public perception of the past of Aboriginal Australia" (Porr and Williams 302); and that "the effect has been seismic. For many Australians, *Dark Emu* shifted the ground beneath their feet. The book has been praised for deepening our understanding of and collective interest in the pre-colonial history of this land" (Grant 32).

### *1.2 Indigenous Australian Literature in Italy and YDE*

A recent survey by Zanoletti regarding the reception of Australian literature and culture in Italy reveals that, although remaining a niche market, translated Australian literature is growing in Italy, becoming part of the national literary polysystem. However, Zanoletti reports that as little as five Indigenous Australian literary works were translated into Italian between 2003 and 2021 (Di Blasio and Zanoletti 58).[4] In arguing that further efforts are required to encourage its dissemination in mainstream Italian culture, Zanoletti underlines the strong political identity of Indigenous Australian literature in both fiction and non-fiction. For Indigenous Australian people, she argues, over the decades writing has become a way of reconnecting with history and recreating an identity after being displaced (Zanoletti 12). DE and YDE, although intended as historical and pedagogical texts, are, like other Indigenous Australian literary works, acts of counter-memory.[5] The author challenges the veracity of the history told by colonisers, engaging in a deeply political discourse.

The cultural specificity and weight of these literary works, then, pose a significant challenge to the interlingual translator who is tasked with recognizing, decoding, and transmitting the form, content, and intent to an Italian readership that is far removed from the source context, geographically and experientially (Federici 266). The information load is interpreted within an ideological climate that may differ between the contexts of reception of

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[3] YDE is the children's adaptation of Bruce Pascoe's DE *Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident?* published in 2014, revised and republished in 2018 with the title of DE*: Aboriginal Australia and the Birth of Agriculture.* Within the first seven years of its release it sold 250,000 copies (Coate et al.) becoming probably the most widely read book about Indigenous Australia (Porr and Williams 300). Assoc. Prof. Julienne von Loon additionally reports on *The Dark Emu Story* (the documentary released in July CY at the Sydney Film Festival and currently available on ABC iview) that hitherto DE has sold over 360,000 copies (Clarke). The ongoing phenomenon according to von Loon makes the book "one of the highest selling books of its kind."

[4] *Wild Cat Falling*, *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence*, *Carpentaria*, *Auntie Rita* and the collection of political writings by Indigenous writers and activists translated by Pericle Camuffo: *Le Nostre Voci*.

[5] Counter-memory' is explained by Foucault in his 1978 essay *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*: "The historical sense gives rise to three uses that oppose and correspond to the three Platonic modalities of history. The first is parodic, directed against reality, and opposes the theme of history as reminiscence or recognition; the second is dissociative, directed against identity, and opposes history given as continuity or representative of a tradition; the third is sacrificial, directed against truth, and opposes history as knowledge. They imply a use of history that severs its connection to memory, its metaphysical and anthropological model, and constructs a counter-memory—a transformation of history into a totally different form of time." (93).

the post-colonial text and its translation (Tymoczko 31). Hence: "translation of Australian Aboriginal texts should […] be attentive to cultural references and initiate a dialogue between cultures that are far apart in terms of geography, experience, and power" (Federici 270). Federici advocates the importance of the translator's ethical position to which she ascribes the potential of facilitating the transmission and survival of Indigenous Australian complex past, or its erasure by a translation that can be "a further act of colonization." She insists that translation choices influence the reception of a text, thus translation ethics should bring awareness of the risks of speaking for others while moving between what can be done in interlingual translation and what is required when giving voice to a minority culture (271).

### *1.3 Translation of Children's Literature: YDE's duality*

"Teaching children that's the only way to change anything" states Bruce Pascoe in *The Big Issue* magazine under the colossal title 'I Want Change' (Smyrk). Similarly, following the two world wars, hope for peace relied to some extent on children learning about other cultures, "children's literature thus serves as a site on which adult difficulties are addressed and often placated" (O'Sullivan "Internationalism" 19). The academic debate regarding the translation of children's books has focused on the production of an adequate or adaptive text with the progressive shift towards adaptation often reversing the effect of bridging cultures (18). Despite the adult agenda, in O'Sullivan's view "It is important for young readers to experience a range of different cultural understandings, otherwise their perception of their own remains narrow" (19). Oittinen considers the young reader's experience as imagined by the translator. She also reflects on the translator's own reading experience and their ethics, shifting the focus from the text to the translator and reader. In her ethical view, the task consists of helping children to fully enjoy their human potential, according to the translator's child image (37). Young readers' experiences remain poorly researched (Lathey10; Kruger 180) and opinions are divided. Although translators have recently demonstrated greater confidence in children's ability to embrace differences, the general attitude is that their books should require exceptional adaptation. It could be argued, however, that in the present technological era, the translator may need to embody the image of a child with an adult-like, if not greater, research potential. As discussed by Watkins (82), non-fiction for children begins to question objectivity and subjectivity and to challenge the knowledge of history.

A significant aspect of children's literature is illustrations and lettering and text. There is a general agreement in recommending the translator to advocate for minimal visual text alterations. Moreover, Tabbert warns against the "frequent disturbance of the original balance between words and pictures […] caused by the fact that translators tend to put bits of information into the target text which in the original book is only conveyed by the pictures" (318).

The complexity of translating YDE becomes evident in Lathey's recommendations, who emphasises that the translator should master "linguistic and political finesse" (6) in order to preserve all messages for the child reader of the target culture or explain source political context by using peritextual material. Moreover, she advocates against oversimplification of language, in order to respect the author's intentions and to stimulate children's learning (8).

### *1.4 Translation Theory: A Theoretical Framework to Navigate YDE's Complexity*

The 'finesse' required for the translation of YDE, is what Cavagnoli defines as *Arte e Mestiere di Tradurre.*[6] Text analysis as described by Reiss establishes text type, variety and style which

[6] Art and Craft of Translating. (Translated by T. Borgese-Flocca)

we will discuss further. Reiss's functionalist approach does not contemplate the cultural and ethical issues considered central to our work.

Toury's essay regarding norms in translation introduces the significance of culture within translation activity. Two aspects are of particular interest concerning the translation of YDE. He acknowledges the distinct position that original and translated texts occupy in their specific contexts and regards useful on behalf of the translator to establish the "initial norm" of adequacy or acceptability.[7] Expected shifts from the original text that always occur in translation become thus less arbitrary and more norm-governed. Toury distinguishes between preliminary and operational norms in translation. While the latter informs decision-making during the act of translation, the former relates to the choice of texts to be translated.

According to Lawrence Venuti (*A History of Translation* 125), the choice to translate a text that defies the conventions of foreign literature in the receiving culture is *per se* foreignizing[8] and in turn a dissident cultural practice. Unfortunately, both the adoption of another language and the political dissidence can enact ethnocentric appropriation. However, it is this stance that allows the emergence of linguistic and cultural differences that may cause changes in the existing literary conventions of the receiving language. If 'ethnocentric violence' in translation is inevitable due to the issues implied in making one culture fit into another, translation may, all the same, become an act of resistance. In pursuing Venuti's ethical guide for the translation of YDE, one must take into account the concerns expressed by his critics regarding the risks of stereotypical representation, the creation of an over-exotic Other, or unnecessary distancing between cultures (Kadiu 23).

Translating for the young a text that carries some form of political ideology justifies retrieving Eco's Model Reader notion. Eco presupposes that the Model Reader interprets the text but also cooperates in generating it according to the instructions provided by the author. Different interpretations create different text types (Eco 3). The text is built on the premises of an existing competence, but at the same time, it works on building competence (8). Eco introduces the concept of having to foresee and provide for, different forms of decoding. He advocates a flexible strategy that anticipates possible differences of interpretation in order to limit misconceptions (8). Eco's Model Reader goes beyond the simple perception of the child reader's experience, as it implies that the possibility of different interpretations and the cooperation of the reader in text creation are, to some extent, determined by the tools supplied by the translation (in terms of lexical and syntactical organization of the text).

In discussing interpretation Osimo points to the concept of inner language. Translation is a process, starting in the author's mind and ending in the reader's and involves interpretation; hence, it is incompatible with equivalence. Translation creates a similar sense; thus, it can only produce subjective correspondence.[9] Osimo contrasts the challenge of hiding the process of cultural and linguistic mediation by avoiding peritextual interventions at all costs. The mediation in translation should be cultural rather than cognitive. To redefine translation Osimo resorts to an alliance with anthropology. The translator, like an anthropologist, visits an alien culture and tries to explain it to their own. Untranslatability is considered a learning factor; in anthropology, it is referred to as a 'rich point' (Agar 5).[10] Dealing with the untranslatable

[7] Toury (171) defines 'adequate' "the translation [that]will tend to subscribe to the norms of the source text, and through them also to the norms of the source language and culture"; and 'acceptable' the translation where "norms systems of the target culture are triggered and set into motion".

[8] Foreignization and domestication are terms coined by Venuti to describe opposite translation approaches. One preserves cultural specificity; the other adapts foreign elements, transforming them into familiar features, with the result of making cultural and linguistic differences unnoticeable to the receiving culture.

[9] "The aim is to produce a similar text in a different culture" (90).

[10] The translator who embraces this view does not consider cultural specificities to be stressful elements; on the contrary, they are perceived in the perspective of cultural enrichment (96).

means creating new sense ("Translation Metaphor"). Osimo's notion liaised across the possible 'rich points' and theoretical controversies in the translation of YDE. His works (*Manuale Traduttore*; "Logos Portal") also extensively assisted in retrospective analysis.

YDE's duality poses the issue of balancing a strategy normed by strong ethics, yet sufficiently adaptive for the young Italian reader.

## 2. Methodology: An Action Research Design

Originating in the social sciences, action research, is "an approach to knowledge and inquiry" (Reason) now considered suitable in the context of a variety of disciplines ranging from science and health to artistic and creative practices, regardless of people's status, level of expertise, position or age. It means carefully examining one's own work, "so it becomes critical self-reflective practice […] an enquiry of the self into the self" (McNiff 23) and a way of experiencing theory through a practice that brings theory to life. A philosophy and a research methodology: the framework of principles that guided our translation practice. Principles take different forms and are debated across the various disciplines that base their investigation on an action research paradigm; for this reason it is safe to say that there is no single or univocal definition of action research. In McNiff's words:

> it [is] important to remember that there is no such 'thing' as 'action research'. It is a form of words that refers to people becoming aware of and making public their processes of learning with others, and explaining how this informs their practices. (24)

McNiff clarifies that action research is not a theory to be discussed, but a living practice (Ibid.). We approached it as: "research as a self-analysing action" (Pym), observing ourselves while striving to produce new knowledge aimed at fostering change – specifically, increasing studies and translations of Indigenous Australian Literature in Italian and giving translators a voice by maintaining our ethical stance.

*Study Design and Working Cycles*

In action research the process of planning, acting, analysing and reflecting is cyclic and it applies at a macro level (the study in its entirety) and at a micro level (during the practice, to solve problems that arise as they arise).

The study design cycles at the macro level coincided with the systematic stages of research:

Plan

- Identification of a topic – the translation of YDE into Italian.
- Clarifying its importance – contrasting the absence of translations of a book that is important to Australian culture and the (near to) absence of studies and translations of Indigenous Australian literature into Italian.
- Formulation of a research question – explore the choices/strategies adopted to translate culture specificity and counter-memory for children (losses and compensations, negotiations, ethics).
- Researching the literature to support claims and inform future action – gather information about the text, contexts and relevant translation theory.

Act

- Implementation – translation of YDE and collection of data.

Analyse

- Analysis of collected data – close observation, categorization of untranslatability and other issues.

Reflect

- Evaluations/conclusions/recommendations – results assessment, explanation of the choices made.

The investigation was conducted systematically: theory informing practice, practice refining theory, "in a continuous transformation" (O'Brien).

### *2.1 Text Analysis and Ethical Positioning*

The translation process begins with reading the text and understanding it. A first act of interpretation (Eco, *Dire Quasi La Stessa Cosa*; Osimo) and self-reflection: "The first obstacle that translators – as readers tasked with a massive responsibility – are faced with is reading the text and understanding their perception of the text itself" (Cavagnoli, "The Responsibility of Writers as Translators" 84). Understanding the ongoing process around YDE in Australia allowed us to calibrate the responsibilities associated with its translation: "Being a translator cannot be reduced to the mere generation of utterances which would be considered 'translations' [...]. Translation activities should rather be regarded as having cultural significance" (Toury168).

Pascoe, quoted in *The Guardian*, argues that YDE goes beyond reversing a past effaced from memory, it wants to generate a different way of feeling Australian (Touma). His strategy of bridging the distance between his adult and child reader, rather than "adapting language, subject-matter, and formal and thematic features to correspond to the children's stage of development and the repertory of skills they have acquired" (O'Sullivan, "Comparative Children's Literature" 191), consists of 'economy and concision' (Glatch). He distilled the adult version, rearranged it accordingly and remarkably supported it with striking visual elements, organising factual information into a text that young readers can understand and experience. Close reading[11] defined the genre of the text and revealed its structure, characters and setting, topics, themes and morals, style, point of view, tone and mood.

Reiss's method identified type, considered variety and examined style in detail.

*Type* – Reiss argues that at the origin of all writing, there are three essential communicative forms expressed similarly across cultures; she identified three text types:

- informative – the content is the main communication aim
- expressive – the focus is on the artistic disposition
- operative – the goal is to persuade (124).

She contemplates the existence of 'mixed forms' as is the case of YDE which features plural intentions, i.e. communicating content (informative) and stimulating change (operational), and an additional text type, that also applies to YDE:

- multi-medial: when additional information is provided by another sign system (e.g. illustrations), therefore the text as a whole communicates through all its components. This is a 'hyper-type' which she positions above all other text types, namely: "a super-structure for the three basic types" (125). The balance between all components (in terms of communication) needs to be considered alongside and above the other basic communication forms when translating.

[11] Detailed and careful analysis of a written work, *also*: the product of such analysis (Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary).

*Variety* – These are "specifically structured socio-cultural patterns of communication belonging to specific language communities" (126). Reiss explains that varieties may be partly common to languages and cultures yet, the language and structure patterns adopted for texts of the same kind/variety often vary amongst cultures. YDE features a selected portion of the content derived from its adult version. Language, topics and themes are unchanged, implying that Australian children aged 7 to 12 years, can understand and cope with the latter, cultural correspondences related to this aspect were contemplated. Variety was also considered in regard to illustration captions which in Italian differ in structure and wording.

*Style* – Reiss relates style to the individuality of the text and describes it as the selection of linguistic signs and their possible combinations directed by type and variety. Style is analysed in detail following a trajectory, that similarly and in parallel to 'reverbalization'[12], goes from word to sentence, to paragraph, to chapter, etc. (127).

The results of text analysis guide the translating method. If the source text aims to convey content, the translation mode will be "according to the sense and meaning" (127). Artistic writing requires identification with the creative intention of the writer (128). Persuasive content requires "adaptive translating" (129), i.e. culture-appropriate language that stimulates behavioural change. In the presence of mixed forms, as was the case of YDE an established dominant communicating function (text type), informs the mode of translating which applies to all text elements where conflicts may arise. Considering that the persuasive content of the text addresses the process of re-constructing Australian identity, an issue that impacts non-Australian readership in a thoroughly different manner, the informative function became dominant in translation.

*Ethical positioning* – Changes in the foreign function occurred because, as discussed above, the text's specific role in its original context cannot coincide with that of the receiving culture. The inevitable incompatibilities, according to Toury (170), require interventions in translation which, if not regulated by norms, become arbitrary choices of the individual, resulting in a lack of accountability. "It has proven useful and enlightening to regard the basic choice which can be made between requirements of the two different sources as constituting an initial norm" (170-171). We established *a priori* to adhere to the norms of the source text, and consequently of its language and culture in pursuing an adequate translation, rather than abiding by the norms of the receiving culture with the aim of acceptability. The first tendency is prone to breaking rules in terms of language and beyond. In the second instance norms of the receiving culture operate flawlessly increasing shifts from the source text. Establishing the 'initial norm' provided an explanatory tool for decisions at the macro and micro levels (171).

Osimo ("Logos Portal") argues that adequacy must not be overly pursued at the cost of unacceptability and/or nonfulfillment of the translation's Model Reader. However, YDE is a different perspective of history: "a revised account of Australian history carried through voices […] that speak of the experiences of the non-victors" (Federici 270) The ethical stance becomes agency, in that fluidity and readability cease to be the primary goals (279).

[12] In Reiss's words: "The process of reverbalization is a linear one constructing the TL [target language] text out of words, syntagmas, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, etc. During this process of reverbalization a decision has to be made for each element of the text whether the linguistic signs and sequences of linguistic signs selected in the TL in coordination with a sign form and sign function can guarantee the functional equivalence for which a translator should strive, by due consideration of text variety and text type." (127)

### *2.2 Collecting Data*

The analysis of the source text identified that the target text should be informative children nonfiction, characterized by clear, accessible and passionate storytelling.

The dominant informative text function prefers a translation mode according to sense and meaning (Reiss 127). YDE can 'make sense' to young Italian readers if most of its substantial context-specific elements are comprehended. The geographical, historical and social peculiarities, (i.e. the realia), were the most consistent and significant issue to be addressed. Some of the adaptations made by Pascoe to address his young readers resulted in idiosyncrasies that had to be negotiated in translation. Thus, attempting to achieve comparable clarity, accessibility and passion of the original storytelling while remaining consistent with the *a priori* established 'initial norm' required battling to find a balance.

*Realia*[13]

To explain what is intended by realia in translation studies, Osimo avails himself of the definition given by Vlahov and Florin:[14]

> words (and composed expressions) of the popular language representing denominations of objects, concepts, typical phenomena of a given geographic place, of material life or of social-historical peculiarities of some people, nation, country, tribe, that for this reason carry a national, local or historical colour; these words do not have exact matches in other languages (1969 438). ("Logos Portal")

He discerningly divides realia into:

- Geographic – physical, topographic, meteorological, and biological elements.
- Ethnographic – elements of everyday life, namely: food, work, art, spirituality/religion, measures, currency, clothing/fashion.
- Political and social – elements regarding regional administrative agencies/positions/organisms/offices; social and political life; military/army. (*Manuale Traduttore*, 112; "Logos Portal")

A total of 55 realia were addressed during the translation of YDE:

- 19 Geographic realia
- 23 Ethnographic realia
- 13 Social and Political realia

(For a summary of the realia arranged by categories see Appendix 1)

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[13] "The word 'realia' has its origins in Latin, not the language spoken by Romans, that used by Middle Age scholars in many European countries as a language of science, research, philosophy. Since in Latin the plural neuter nominative of an adjective transforms it into a name, 'realia' means 'the real things', as opposed to words, that are considered neither 'things' nor 'real'. For this reason, the word is a plural of 'realis' (real), that, however, is not found in most Latin dictionaries because they usually contain the Classical, not Medieval, Latin occurrences. In this meaning, the word signifies the objects of the material culture. Entering in the field of translation studies, a radical terminological change must be enforced: 'realia', in fact, does not mean objects, but signs, words and, more precisely, those words signifying objects of the material culture, especially pertaining to a local culture. It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish realia-objects (mostly outside translation studies) and realia-words (mostly inside translation studies)." (Ischenko 274; Osimo "Logos Portal").

[14] Bulgarian translators Sergej Vlahov and Sider Florin published in 1980 a whole book covering what is normally called 'untranslatable', their in-depth study coined the modern sense of the word 'realia' (see Osimo).

*Children's adaptations*
Despite not being and not sounding like a children's story, YDE is a children's adaptation of an adult book. Minor changes in language use have been made by the author, however, the changes identified, often concerning titles (but not confined to them) possibly aiming at captivating, and vivifying wit by using a more age-appropriate language, required some manipulation by the translator in an attempt to reproduce a similar effect. (See Appendix 2: *Other Issues and Solutions*)

*The translation of realia*
Osimo (*Manuale Traduttore* 112-113; "Logos Portal") describes several possible strategies for addressing realia in translation. The first option is a non-translation, i.e.

- Transcription (or transliteration in case of two different alphabets) – rewriting the same foreign word or creating its sound in the writing mode of the receiving culture.

Other strategies are:

- Creating a neologism (or calque) in the receiving culture – literal translation of words/elements of the foreign utterance
- Appropriation – adaptation of foreign realia by creating a word in the receiving language essentially based on the structure of the original word
- Fake/Pseudo/presumed calques – use of another word from the issuing culture falsely presented as the original form of the realia element
- Addition – of an adjective to assist in identifying the realia's origin
- Substitution – replace the culturally specific element with an equally culturally specific element of the receiving culture
- Approximation (generalization, functional analogue, description, explanation, interpretation) – rendering a vague/unspecified content
- Contextualization – the translation of the systemic, relational meaning that would not be found in the dictionary. It represents an option when context is the dominating factor.

(Strategies adopted to address realia are summarised in Appendix 3)

**2.3 *Observing Choices***
The underlining principle guiding translation choices – and particularly when dealing with realia – is that it is impossible to establish general rules; it is advisable to consider the advantages and disadvantages of possible strategies on a case-by-case basis (Osimo, *Manuale Traduttore* 113; "Logos Portal"). There are several elements that according to Osimo may determine the strategy to be adopted. These are:

- The type of text – transcription/transliteration is currently preferred in fiction and nonfiction for reasons of clarity and intelligibility. Explanatory translation notes support transcriptions of informative texts.
- The importance of the realia in its natural context – if the element is alien to the source culture, it must somehow be preserved because the foreignizing effect is intentional. If the element belongs to the source culture it becomes a foreignizing element in translation; its preservation is still recommended unless it becomes a hindrance in terms of understanding and actualization of the translated text function.

- The type of realia – if they are commonly found in dictionaries, transcription is almost mandatory, the same applies to realia that can be misleading if translated (e.g. territorial, economic or political agencies like Chief Aboriginal Protector).
- Source and receiving cultures and their permeability to other languages – there are considerable differences in the amount of foreign words between the dictionaries of different countries. Some cultures absorb more foreign words than others and, for many reasons (which may be historical, political, technology-related, etc.), some cultures export more words than others.
- The presence of interlingual homographs – words written the same, but usually having a different meaning.
- Difference between the Model Reader of the source and receiving cultures – levels of education between readers; popularity of the source language and publishing policies of the receiving culture.

Below is the summary of the strategies adopted to address the realia encountered when translating YDE (The percentage figures have been rounded off).

| **Number of Realia** | **Strategy** | **%** |
|---|---|---|
| 21 | Transcription | 38 |
| 19 | Approximation | 35 |
| 14 | Neologism | 25 |
| 1 | Substitution | 2 |
| Total 55 | | 100 |

*Table 1. Translation strategies for Realia*

A total of 55 realia were considered. 21 (slightly above 38% of the total) were transcribed. Some transcriptions have been supported by notes in a compiled glossary. Others are primarily illustration captions, hence visually supported or else, the immediate understanding of their meaning is not deemed indispensable to the main function of the text; on the contrary, readers are stimulated to carry out research according to their interests.

**3. Discussion: Reading Experience vs Ethics**

Translating a weighty text such as YDE became a research enquiry given that the characteristics of the text created a translation strategy conflict; fluidity and readability had to be negotiated in order to protect cultural specificity, an ethical stand that we consciously embraced. Consequently, the endeavour involves the seemingly impractical task of finding sufficiently adaptive solutions that enable the text to communicate in the target culture while retaining its essential 'Australianness,' and at the same time, learning, reflecting, observing and explaining the translation process.[15]

The pre-translation phase established that informative and persuasive, historical, educational children's text YDE could be rendered, due to differences in context, as the

[15] These are the criteria and standards for self-evaluation of our research: "criteria and standards feature in judging quality: technically, criteria are objective and descriptive (they identify what we expect to see), and standards are subjective and explanatory (they give opinions about how we would like things to be)" (McNiff 164). Criteria is transformed into standards when we establish how criteria are achieved, i.e.: I expect to produce a text that communicates to young Italian readers, but this is subject to preservation of cultural specificities.

informative children's nonfiction text L'OEPR. The latter implied a double loss in terms of function: the text's persuasiveness and its educational aspect. Both are context-induced – being a child in Australia at this time in human history – and are for obvious reasons impossible to compensate for. The new informative version – which can be intended as educational[16] albeit in a different way – considering the change in circumstances of the receiving context requires major support for comprehension. In other words, the Model Reader's ability to interpret the text for what it has been generated for is different for the translated text; outside the text's cultural space, different decoding instructions became necessary to allow the translated text to communicate. This resulted in compensations through a glossary and a number of explicitation strategies at the micro level.

In light of the modified communicating function and consistently with our ethical stance in favour of minimising "ethnocentric violence" (Venuti), Toury's 'initial norm' of 'adequacy' was established as a guide for macro and micro choices and strategies. Translation practice was aided by Osimo's theory. His vision of translation as a creative process, of cultures as living organisms in which similar sense is produced, inspired the creation of an Italian text, symbolically similar (rather than impossibly equivalent) to the Australian text with a potential of reciprocal cultural (ex)change.

Data collection, processing and analysis occurred during translation and revision. The first reverbalization concurred with substantial research into the realia of the text and decisions were made according to findings.

Solutions adopted for the main issues and the process that led to choices are discussed below.

*Title*

After giving significant thought to the title: *Young Dark Emu: A Truer History* we decided not to make any major changes without the author's consent.[17] We were enthralled by the Indigenous concept of the 'Emu in the Sky' (Kelly and Neale 147) and *Young Emu in the Sky* flowed smoothly in Italian. However, in Venuti's words:

> Fluency in translation produces an effect of transparency, whereby the translated text is taken to represent the foreign author's personality or intention or the essential meaning of his text. Fluency thus assumes the concept of the human subject as a free, unified consciousness that transcends the limitations posed by language, biography and history and is the origin of meaning, knowledge and action. (187-188)

To retain the characteristics of the original as much as possible, we first created the title: *Il Giovane Dark Emù: una storia più vera*, adopting a mix of transcription and adaptation that

[16] It is educational because it introduces novelties in the child's life, however, it has to be taken into account that differently from the Australian text, it is not part of formal educational curricula, thus the Italian child may not be assisted by an adult in reading it.

[17] As part of the thesis preliminaries, we made an attempt to contact Bruce Pascoe via email to inform him about our work, asking if we could contact him for advice or clarifications and an e-mail was also sent to the editor (Magabala Books). No further communication took place. Glowczewski and Lundberg (trans) argue, with reference to DE*,* that: "Pascoe does not comment on this mysterious title; rather, it is as if he is basing his argument on tacit knowledge common to early Australians. Any translation is difficult, but even more so when it comes to Indigenous concepts from traditions other than those of the dominant history of Western societies and languages." (84).

became misleading for the reader.[18] Lastly, after trying a few other combinations,[19] we settled for L'OEPR. The adjective preceding the noun in Italian describes the subject,[20] which capitalised becomes a proper noun. 'Oscuro' was preferred to 'scuro' because it conveys the idea of lack of light.[21] Finally, 'Ragazzi' capitalised remarks that it is a book for youth.

*Social and political realia*

Four of the thirteen social and political realia were italicised and supported by notes in the glossary. The most complex and representative of the thought process behind decisions were:

- *Aboriginal people* – 'people' can be translated into Italian as follows:

  Persone – plural of *persona* intended as an individual of the human species, without distinction of sex, age, social status.[22]
  Gente – indeterminate number of persons gathered in a place or otherwise considered collectively.[23]
  Popolo – group of individuals who share origins, language, religious and cultural traditions and laws, and form an ethnic and national group with its own identity and self-awareness, independently of political unity.[24]

  Inspired by Margherita Zanoletti's translation: *My People | La Mia Gente*, 'Aboriginal people' became 'Gente aborigena'. However, the emphasis sought by capitalization did not produce the same effect as the collocation 'mia gente'. Less of its possessive adjective, 'gente' was likely to acquire a negative connotation or at best, one of insignificance,[25] which was the opposite effect to the one we were seeking. Therefore, 'Aboriginal people' was mainly translated into 'popolo/i' aborigeno/i' according to semantics.
- *Country* – can be translated as:

  Stato – state
  Nazione – nation
  Campagna – rural area
  Patria – homeland
  Paese – village
  Paese – portion land, mostly cultivated and inhabited, distinguished by particular physical, climatic, economic or human characteristics.[26]

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[18] 'Dark' in Italy mistakenly refers to the Gothic subculture born in Milan during the 1980s that brought together a group of young people who, dressed in a dark, and exaggeratedly emphasised style, refused to conform to the new cultural trend that in those years promoted hedonism. The collocation 'Giovane Dark' would have been misleading. Moreover, 'Young' in the Australian's text title, is likely to be referred to the book DE, which is an impossible correspondence in Italian due to the fact that there is no Italian version of it (yet).

[19] 'L'Oscuro Emù: una storia più vera Ragazzi… (may have been too irregular in terms of language canons); 'L'Oscuro Emù: una storia più vera per Ragazzi' (can mislead the reader because 'history' and 'story' are homographs in Italian, therefore, it could be interpreted as 'a truer story for young readers').

[20] https://accademiadellacrusca.it/it/consulenza/sulla-posizione-dellaggettivo-qualificativo-in-italiano/92

[21] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/oscuro

[22] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/persona/

[23] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/gente/

[24] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/popolo/

[25] Garzanti's first definition of 'gente': people, others in general, especially as opposed to ourselves; an indefinite number of people considered collectively. Variations: 'genterella' (diminishing); 'gentaccia' (pejorative); 'gentucola' (derogatory). https://www.garzantilinguistica.it/ricerca/?q=gente

[26] https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/paese

'Paese' was capitalised when 'country' was capitalised, italicised and explained in the glossary. Thus marked, the word assumes a connotation of unfamiliarity, resembling the English version.

- *Free settlers*
  To translate this collocation the neologism 'coloni volontari'[27] was created, italicised, and explained in the glossary. The literal translation 'coloni liberi' commonly refers to a specific category of tenants or farmers of the Roman Empire,[28] therefore it could be misleading.
- *Chief Aboriginal Protector/Aboriginal Protector and Government Surveyor*
  Osimo (*Manuale Traduttore* 115; "Logos Portal") clearly states that it makes no sense to translate "words indicating given territorial or economic or political agencies" because even if some functions may coincide across cultures it easily becomes a historical fallacy. He advocates transcription with explanatory notes. While in the above case, we adhered to his recommendations, in another,[29] we settled for the correspondence of the function to avoid unnecessary exoticism.

*Geographic realia*

Six of the nineteen geographic realia were glossed, of these, three are source realia. The observational data showed possible strategic inconsistencies, these are:

- *Grain and grasses*
  'Grain', which in English refers to the seeds of plants (such as wheat, corn, and rice) that are used for food,[30] translates into the Italian 'cereale/i'. It is also a false friend, since 'grano' is the Italian word for 'wheat'. However, 'grains', intended as seeds/granules in general, corresponds to the Italian plural 'grani' in meaning. Hence, the apparent inconsistencies. We tried to use 'grani' when the meaning was not compromised especially because one of the cases was a subtitle and another a piece of information written in creative style.
  The term 'grass' in the source text features solo, as well as in four different collocations, namely: grass heads, grass seeds, grasslands and grass people.[31] It translates into the Italian 'erba', which however, is seldom associated with seeds[32] or grain. Therefore, these terms were addressed case by case with varying terminology that created a similar sense.
- *Known locations and common geographic nouns*
  No clear rule regulates the transposition of the proper names of foreign places (toponyms) into Italian, as shown by the variety of cases. Therefore, prevailing usage becomes the most suitable criterion for choosing the best form in each case (Manenti). Čerče and Haag praise the Italian translation of *Rabbit-Proof Fence* for retaining, in addition to toponyms, elements like river, lake, desert, beach, and similar; lamenting however, incomprehensible inconsistency throughout the text. The translator may have

[27] Voluntary settlers
[28] The collocation was found in scholarly historical works in Italian and as a transcribed realia in similar papers in languages other than Italian.
[29] 'Government surveyor'.
[30] https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/grain
[31] Grass people is classified as a social and political realia. It is included in the geographical realia discourse due to its belonging to the 'grass' terminology. It has been transcribed and included in the glossary.
[32] With the exception of marijuana (in slang 'erba' or 'grass') seed which alerts on the risk of misleading the reader.

applied the above criterion of prevailing usage recommended by the Italian authoritative Accademia della Crusca.[33] Similarly, we translated 'Western Australia', while transcribing 'Queensland' according to common usage in Italian (Kinder and Savini 201). We translated elements like river, lake, etc. except for 'creek' which is found and explained in Italian dictionaries.[34]

*Ethnographic realia*

Ethnographic realia were the most represented. Eight of them feature in the glossary. The strategies applied to address them are almost levelled (transcription exceeding by three that feature as source realia) except for one, the dubious solution for *'yabber, yabber'*.

- *Yabber, yabber* is a source realia and the only case where a substituting strategy was implemented. The origin of this Australian word is traced back to the mid-1800s and the Collins online dictionary, ascribes it to the native Australian language *yabba* talk, probably influenced by jabber.[35] It occurs once in the text, as part of a quote from a settler's diary dated 1897. Because it was part of the description of a scene, to achieve a similar effect on the Italian reader, it was rendered with the international onomatopoeia 'bla, bla, bla', transforming (what we consider) a double realia[36] into a general, neutral element.

*Evaluation and Learnings*

Translating YDE into L'OEPR did not reveal to be in contrast with a translation strategy that pursues preservation of culture specificities. The latter was a choice we established in our capacity as translators, in virtue of personal values and in this particular case, due to not being subject to external (industry) pressure. According to our ethics, we worked through each translating issue, negotiating solutions that while not being able to find a perfect fit of one language into the other, created a space of exchange between two cultures, allowing the source text to communicate to a different culture through the realization of a new Model Reader, i.e. different decoding instructions that enable text actualization. This became the insight, the true learning: the question was not adaptation versus adequacy or, in Venuti's terms, domestication versus foreignization, pursued by adopting a number of translation strategies considered 'appropriating' versus a number of strategies that preserve cultural specificities. Words don't work like numbers, (although numbers facilitate observation, reasoning and insight). The endeavour was rather, conveying what was identified as the dominant issue, i.e. the content of a text that challenges the conventions of foreign literature in the receiving culture, a choice of dissidence (Venuti, *A History of Translation* 125), that nonetheless required adaptation. "Yet the domesticating work on the foreign text can be a foreignizing intervention, pitched to question existing cultural hierarchies." (Venuti, *A History of Translation* 267)

Further insight is likely to derive from observing the text live in the receiving culture, i.e., how it is perceived by young Italian readers. However, that is yet another research project, and another research cycle.

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[33] Known also as 'la Crusca' and founded in 1582 in Florence, the Academy is dedicated to the study and preservation of the Italian national language.

[34] As discussed earlier (p. 49) translation of an element commonly found in dictionaries of the receiving language is not recommended. 'Creek' is found in Treccani Enciclopedia online which explains it appropriately: *in Australia, the term is used almost exclusively for temporary waterways*. https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/creek

[35] https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/yabber

[36] Source and target realia.

**Conclusions**

Surrendering to the required sacrifices, compromises and negotiations was revealed to be the utmost ethical practice since ultimately, when we established – through text analysis – that part of the original communicating function of the text was 'lost in context' before being lost in translation, we committed to the remaining communicating function, the informative – diversely educational – content. It became clear that the priority was the actualization of this new function and to achieve it we had to enable the text's 'rich points' to operate. Therefore, the choice to preserve cultural specificities went beyond the preservation of foreign elements at all costs, it came about through meticulous consideration of each element, prioritising the outcome case by case, consistently with the new communicating function (or dominant). In other words, the practice revealed that preserving the source culture's elements was not in itself protective of cultural specificity, rather it could become tantamount to its opposite. Practice informed by research operates in meta-thinking mode: tiny unperceivable and unperceived processes that continuously "shuttle from the mental map to the verbal map" (Osimo, "Logos Portal") avoiding deception, oversimplification, and preserving the golden thread that keeps together the author's motifs.

According to Bishop "translation is a competitive sport" and this is how improvement comes about. An ethically informed translation approach to Indigenous Australian children's literature into Italian (L'OEPR), lends itself to comparative studies, smoothing the path of Indigenous Australian literature translations and perhaps for – the longed-for – translation of DE into Italian.

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**Appendix 1**

Summary of YDE’s Realia Arranged by Categories

| | ***Geographic realia*** | ***Ethnographic realia*** | ***Social and Political realia*** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Aboriginal/Contemporary Grain Belt | Blackfellow | Aboriginal people | |
| 2 | Bush | Bush bananas | Book of the year award | |
| 3 | Colonial bush | Bush tomatoes | Chief Aboriginal Protector/Aboriginal Protector | |
| 4 | Creek | Bushels | Convicts/ escaped convict/ emancipated convict | |
| 5 | Grain | Bushman | Country | |
| 6 | Grass heads | Coaching | District | |
| 7 | Grass seeds | Corroboree | Free settlers | |
| 8 | Grass, grasses | Creator spirit | Gentleman’s estate | |
| 9 | Grasslands | Dancing grounds | Government Surveyor | |
| 10 | Grinding well and Sharpening grooves | Direct storage | Grass people | |
| 11 | Mounds | Fire sticks | Indigenous writer’s Prize | |
| 12 | Native grasses | Fisheries | Lieutenant | |
| 13 | Pasture | Gum | Premier’s Literary Awards | |
| 14 | Perch | Harvest of moths | | |
| 15 | Spinifex | Humpies/humpy | | |
| 16 | Vanilla lilies | Murnong/ myrnongs/ munyoura/ munyeroo/ nardoo | | |
| 17 | Wattle trees | Pannin | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | Yam daisy | Pointed dome house | | |
| 19 | Yam seed head | Stockpiling | | |
| 20 | | Troughs | | |
| 21 | | Warran | | |
| 22 | | 'yabber yabber' | | |
| 23 | | Yam | | |
| | Total 19 (34%) | Total 23 (42%) | Total 13 (24%) | Total 55 |

## Appendix 2

Other Issues and Solutions

| ***Word/Expression*** | ***Translation*** | ***Comment*** |
|---|---|---|
| The Land Grab | L'accaparramento della terra | Difference in immediacy of concept |
| Sustainable Futures | Futuri sostenibili | 'Futuro sostenibile' (singular rather than plural) would be more common |
| Empty land | Terra vacante | Obsolete terminology |

## Appendix 3

Summary of the solutions and corresponding strategies adopted for translating YDE's realia[37]

| | ***Realia*** | ***Solution*** | ***Strategy*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Aboriginal people | Popolo/i aborigeno/i; gli aborigeni; persone aborigene | Approximation or contextualization |
| 2 | Aboriginal/Contemporary Grain Belt | Grain Belt [Cintura dei Grani] Aborigena; Grain Belt [Cintura dei Grani] Contemporanea | Transcription and neologism/calque |
| 3 | Blackfellow | *Blackfellow*[38] | Transcription |
| 4 | Book of the year award | Book of the year award | Transcription |
| 5 | Bush | *Bush* | Transcription |
| 6 | Bush bananas | Banane del bush | Neologism |
| 7 | Bush tomatoes | Pomodori del bush | Neologism |
| 8 | Bushels | *Bushel* | Transcription |
| 9 | Bushman | *Bushman* | Transcription |
| 10 | Chief Aboriginal Protector/Aboriginal protector | *Chief Aboriginal Protector/Aboriginal protector* | Transcription |
| 11 | Coaching | Accantonamento | Neologism |
| 12 | Colonial bush | Bush coloniale | Neologism |
| 13 | Convicts/ escaped convict/ emancipated convict | Galeotti; prigionieri; evaso; ex detenuto | Approximation (functional analogue) |
| 14 | Corroboree | *Corroboree* | Transcription |

[37] The table includes all the elements that are considered context-specific. Several elements do not pose translation concerns (e.g. Nos. 13, 17, 20, 22, 34, 36, 40, 45) as suggested by the fact that they were not discussed above. However, as context-specific elements they are part of the observed data when reflecting, illustrating and accounting for the translation process.

[38] Italicised items correspond to those of the translated text, i.e. words explained in the text's glossary.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | Country | *Paese* | Neologism |
| 16 | Creator Spirit; creator Spirit Emu | Spirito Creatore; Spirito Emù creatore | Neologism |
| 17 | Creek | Creek | Transcription |
| 18 | Dancing grounds | Teatro di danza | Approximation (functional analogue) |
| 19 | Direct storage | Conservazione diretta | Neologism |
| 20 | District | Distretto | Substitution |
| 21 | Fire stick | Asticelle accendi-fuoco | Approximation (description) |
| 22 | Fisheries | Allevamenti | Approximation (generalization) |
| 23 | Free settlers | *Coloni volontari* | Neologism |
| 24 | Gentleman's estate | La tenuta del gentiluomo | Neologism |
| 25 | Government Surveyor | Agrimensore governativo | Neologism |
| 26 | Grain/grains | Cereali, grani | Approximation (functional analogue) |
| 27 | Grass, grasses | Piante erbacee | Approximation (explicitation) |
| 28 | Grass heads | Spighette | Neologism |
| 29 | Grasslands | Praterie | Approximation (functional analogue) |
| 30 | Grass people | *Grass people* | Transcription |
| 31 | Grass seeds | Semi delle *piante erbacee;* Sementi graminacee | Approximation (explicitation, generalization) |
| 32 | Grinding well and sharpening grooves | Pozzo per la macina e scanalature per l'affilatura | Approximation (explanation) |
| 33 | Gum | Eucalipto | Approximation (interpretation) |
| 34 | Harvest of moths | Raccolta | Approximation (generalization) |
| 35 | Humpies/humpy | *humpy* | Transcription |
| 36 | Indigenous writer's Prize | Indigenous writer's Prize | Transcription |
| 37 | Lieutenant | Tenente | Approximation (functional analogue) |
| 38 | Mounds | Cumuli | Approximation (functional analogue) |
| 39 | Murnong/murrnong; myrnongs/ munyoura/ munyeroo/ nardoo | *Murrnong myrrnong; munyoura/ munyeroo/ nardoo* | Transcription |
| 40 | Native grasses | Piante erbacee native | Neologism |
| 41 | Pannin | *Pannin* | Transcription |
| 42 | Pasture | Pascoli | Approximation (functional analogue) |
| 43 | Perch | Perch | Transcription |
| 44 | Pointed dome house | Casa a cupola acuminata | Neologism |
| 45 | Premier's Literary Awards | Premier's Literary Awards | Transcription |
| 46 | Spinifex | *Spinifex* | Transcription |
| 47 | Stockpiling | Stoccaggio | Neologism |
| 48 | Troughs | Abbeveratoi | Approximation (functional analogue) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 49 | Vanilla lily/lilies | *Vanilla lily* | Transcription |
| 50 | Warran | *Warran* | Transcription |
| 51 | Wattle trees | Alberi di acacia | Approximation (generalization) |
| 52 | ‘yabber yabber’ | *‘bla bla bla’* | Substitution |
| 53 | Yam | *Yam* | Transcription |
| 54 | Yam daisy | *Yam daisy* | Transcription |
| 55 | Yam seed head | Cima di yam daisy | Approximation (explanation) |

# Metaphor and Translation: Case Studies in Indigenous Australian Poetry

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**Abstract**
The translatability of metaphors is one of the most complex and debated issues in translanguaging studies and can be approached from a variety of perspectives. This contribution focuses specifically on the interlingual dimension, exploring the translatability of figurative language and, in particular, metaphors. Developing as a reflection on the practical experience of translating a number of Australian authors into Italian, the paper examines the ways in which three First Nations writers (Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Ali Cobby Eckermann, and Evelyn Araluen) employ metaphors, by comparing their verses in English with some possible Italian translations. Their specific uses of metaphor highlight some of the mechanisms that drive the functioning of figurative language and the theoretical level of translatability, drawing attention to a few crucial problems that translators have to face and the strategies they can resort to, in the light of the most recent debates in the translation studies field.
Beyond any claims of the defining or normative orders, the aim of this enquiry is to call attention to literary translation as an interpretive process that contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of metaphoric meaning. As the examples provided suggest, metaphor opens to new world, new perspectives, and new interpretive orientations.

**Keywords** literary translation, metaphor, Australian literature, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Ali Cobby Eckermann, Evelyn Araluen

## Introduction

The poem that opens the collection *Inside My Mother*, published in 2015 by Yankunytjatjara poet Ali Cobby Eckerman, is entitled "Bird Song".[1] It is a brief composition, organised graphically as a flock of migratory birds:

our birds fly
on elongated wings
*they fly forever*
*they are our Spirit*

*our bird song*
is so ancient
*we gifted it*
*to the church* (Eckermann 3)

[1] This essay is based on the seminar entitled "Metafora e traduzione. Casi studio nella poesia australiana" [Metaphor and Translation. Case Studies in Australian Poetry], held in Ferrara on 29 March 2023 as part of the lecture series "Giornate dell'editoria e della traduzione letteraria", co-organised by the University of Padua and the University of Ferrara. The methodology illustrated in the seminar is also employed in Zanoletti, "Le metafore", with reference to the theme of hope in Australian poetry.

The highlighted parts (italics mine) can be qualified as figurative expressions, containing metaphorical language. Reading the poem, in fact, no one will think that there are real-live birds that are able to fly endlessly (as the hyperbolic expression "they fly forever" implies); it is equally unlikely that the same birds can be made to coincide with what the author calls "our Spirit"; nor does it make sense to assume that, in the context of the poem, by referring to the birds' song we are talking about a real gift ("we gifted it to the church"). On the contrary, these expressions can be considered linguistic manifestations of metaphor, for two main reasons: first, the basic sense of the words employed does not coincide with the contextual meaning; and second, the contextual meaning of the words employed can be related to the basic sense through a similarity link (Steen).

Translating these verses into Italian ("Canto d'uccelli"), we would obtain something similar:

i nostri uccelli volano
con ali allungate
*volano in eterno*
*sono il nostro Spirito*

il nostro canto d'uccelli
è tanto antico che
*lo abbiamo elargito*
*alla chiesa*

(Eckermann 3, my translation)

As can be seen by comparing Eckermann's poem with the proposed translation, the metaphors expressed in Italian tend to follow literally those in English. The penultimate line is an exception: the past participle "elargito" (literally, "bestowed"), higher and rarer than "donato" or "regalato" (literally, "gifted"), evokes the semantic field of religion and anticipates the image of the church, closing the stanza. The verb "elargire" derives from the Latin adjective "largus" meaning generous, broad, wide. "Largus" recalls the image of the elongated, wide-open wings of the flying birds, protagonists of the first quatrain. Moreover, the assonance "elargito" / "antico" strengthens the underlying idea of antiquity, summoned by the Latinism. Finally, the allusion to spirituality implicit in "church" / "chiesa" (with lower-case initial letter) parallels and contrasts with, in the first tercet, the capitalised word "Spirit" ("Spirito"). Overall, except for the detour from literal rendering represented by the choice to translate "gifted" with "elargito", in the Italian retextualisation the use of figurative language follows the prototext. Why?

In "Bird Song", the image of singing appears to be connected to the sacred sphere and can be read as a metaphor for spiritual and cultural identity, intimacy with nature and the land, continuity between past and future, and resilience. It can be read as a metaphor for belonging and hope. And since the metaphorical expressions employed by Eckermann, a writer of Aboriginal ancestry, refer to precise cultural coordinates that underlie a world vision, the act of translation implies not only interpreting what the incipient sign system denotes, but also understanding the internal system of a language and the structure of a given text in that language, and reciprocating the textual system so as to reproduce similar effects in the reader (Eco, *Dire quasi* 16). Essentially, translating metaphors entails an intralingual, interlingual,

intercultural, and interemotional transference, where it is crucial to seize and internalise the emotional dimension, intimately connected with the cultural and connotative impact expressed by the signs that constitute it (Petrilli and Ji; Zanoletti, "Aboriginal" 255-256). This can be done by implementing different interpretive-translation strategies.

This contribution investigates the process that makes such transference possible, from a translation-semiotic perspective. Drawing on the experience of translating several Australian authors into Italian (Zanoletti, "Ab origena", "In Other", "Translating an Artwork", "Oodgeroo", "Translating an Imagetext", "*My People*", "Aboriginal", "Poems", "Le metafore"), I shall examine the ways in which three Indigenous writers, namely Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Ali Cobby Eckermann, and Evelyn Araluen, employ metaphors to talk about the future, by comparing their verses in English with some possible translations into Italian. Their distinct usages on one hand suggest some specific meanings that the concept of future has in the historical-cultural context of reference of each poet; on the other hand, they draw attention to some of the challenges that the translator must face and the techniques she can put in place, in light of the most recent advances in translation studies.

My investigation is structured in two main parts. The first part provides a propaedeutic introduction on the link between metaphor and translation. The second part focuses on the translation-oriented analysis of three poems, one for each author, highlighting some of the mechanisms that govern the functioning of metaphors and the theoretical level of translatability. Beyond any claims of the defining or normative orders, the aim is to emphasize the importance of translation as an interpretive process that contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of metaphoric meaning (Petrilli and Zanoletti 356-359) as well as a meaning-making operation that indicates the meaning option(s) relevant to the situation (Marais; Tyulenev). The generation of meaning through the processes of metaphorisation opens to new perspectives and interpretive orientations (Petrilli, "Meaning" 112).

**Figurative Language, Metaphor and Translation**

As is generally known, metaphors belong to the broader field of figurative language, to which simile, hyperbole, synecdoche, pun, and personification are also ascribable. Figurative language often implies a deviation from what speakers of a language learn as the standard meaning of a sequence of verbal signs, aimed at pursuing some special impact or meaning (Zanoletti, "Figures"; Eco, "Ekfrasi"; Petrilli, *Significare* 418-421; Welby 452-455).

According to the seminal theory of I. A. Richards, any metaphor consists of two elements: the *tenor* is the main subject, i.e. what one wants to describe (e.g. future); the *vehicle* is that to which the tenor is compared, i.e. the image used (e.g. movement forward). By means of the comparison between tenor and vehicle, the metaphor connects distant phenomena by analogy, constructing and translating concepts from one perceptual sphere to another (Arduini 46). Understanding metaphors, therefore, implies being able to discern similarity through an intuitive perception of resemblance within diversity, even at the intertextual level (Eco, "Ekfrasi" 5).

Less well known, though widely documented, is the fact that metaphor is not simply a linguistic entity or rhetorical phenomenon, but a cognitive construct. It is a matter of thought, before being a matter of language. According to the cognitivist theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson, to cite a milestone in this area of research, verbal metaphors are the by-product of a deeper analogical mental structure, which enables us to know and define the surrounding world in terms of what is most familiar to us. Far from being a mere ornament, metaphors contribute to modelling, conceptualising, and naming concepts, through a mechanism of a translational nature (Arduini 43; Petrilli, *Oltre* 114).

Translation, in fact, occurs when one employs metaphor, considering the movement from one field of discourse to another, from one language to another (Faini 98; Petrilli, *Oltre* 114). With the expression "principle of translation", the philosopher Victoria Lady Welby theorised the translational development of meaning, i.e. the relationship of mutual implication and amplification between signs and meanings in the continuous shift from one sign to another, in an infinite interpretative chain (Petrilli, "Il contributo" 456-458). For Welby, the concept of translation had a much broader meaning than interlingual reverbalisation. She understood translation in semiotic terms, as a trans-signal, trans-systemic, transdisciplinary, and transcultural phenomenon; as the capacity for mutual connection, dependency, and correspondence between different signs, senses, and idioms; as the ability to look at signs with other eyes. The interconnection between different interpretative/translative processes are decisive for the life of the signs in the human world and for the generation of new senses (Petrilli, *Significare* 253-255; *Oltre* 114).

From this semiotic perspective, dealing with the interlingual translation of metaphors means dealing with the capacity that verbal language has of translating images (Eco, "Ekfrasi" 1). And since, as noted above, a language reflects not only a lexicon and a grammar, but above all stories, cultures, and worldviews, the translation of figurative language implies the interpretation not only of the semantic sense, but also of the valuative (emotional, ethic, aesthetic, and pragmatic) sense underlying those signs (Petrilli, "Meaning" 93). The translator's task is to reinterpret and simplify the vision that produced those signs within the target cultural paradigm.

Within this framework, therefore, even when interpretation and translation occur within the verbal realm, a translation theory will be concerned not so much with prescribing how metaphors should be translated as much as with setting up models according to which observable phenomena can be adequately described. In other words, a non-prescriptive, explanatory approach should be preferred (van den Broeck 77): an approach applying theoretical paradigms able to represent all kinds of sign manifestations, and not only verbal ones.

**Types of Metaphor and Translatability**

Two thousand years and more of philosophical reflection on metaphor, starting with Aristotle, have bequeathed abundant terminology and countless classifications. Throughout history, the number of taxonomic systems developed to classify metaphors is as large as that of the models theorised to account for rhetorical figures in general. Drawing on the subdivision proposed in linguistics by Raymond van der Broeck (also Newmark; Faini 99-100; Eco, "Ekfrasi" 9; Steen 17), this study proposes three semiotic typologies: dead metaphor (DM), conventional metaphor (CM), and private metaphor (PM).

***Type 1*: *Dead* (or *lexicalised*) *Metaphors***

| | |
|---|---|
| *Description*: | DMs constitute the majority of metaphorical tropes, and most are non-deliberate. They are linked to a specific concept and have become the norm in the usage by a particular linguistic community. The analogy underlying its formation tends to be forgotten. |
| *Examples*: | "the legs of the table" ("le gambe del tavolo"); "bottleneck" ("collo di bottiglia"). |
| *Translatability*: | as a rule, DMs have high translatability. In complex texts such as poetry, they have low translatability. |

***Type 2*: *Conventional* (or *prosaic*) *Metaphors***

*Description*: CMs are those in which there is little awareness of the image evoked by the expression, and most are non-deliberate. They have become, over time, an integral part of everyday language, and no longer constitute a deviation from the norm.

*Examples*: "the politician was a clever fox" ("il politico era un volpone"); "to be hanging from a thread" ("essere appeso a un filo").

*Translatability*: CMs do not necessarily require metaphorical translation if the target language does not have a corresponding conventional metaphorical sense available.

***Type 3*: *Private* (or *poetic*) *Metaphors***

*Description*: PMs are expressions employed deliberately and for the first time. Their emotive and evocative force is intense, since they stimulate us to see a content of which they do not clearly prescribe the type. They violate the semantic rules of standard language, and are employed for expressive or persuasive purposes.

*Examples*: "All the world's a stage" ("Tutto il mondo è un palcoscenico"; "Gumtree in the city street, / Hard bitumen around your feet" ("Eucalipto nella strada di città, / Duro bitume attorno ai tuoi piedi").

*Translatability*: PMs are more easily translatable than CMs.

These categories, it is useful to point out, are dynamic. Just as there are fully-lexicalised metaphors and others are in the process of being lexicalised, "in complex texts such as poems, the structuring principle of artistic (or poetic) organisation to which the contextual patterns of ordinary language are subordinated reawakens the symbolic force of the dead metaphor, so that in a certain sense it becomes a 'living' metaphor again" (van den Broeck 83).

Applied to metaphors, the notion of interlingual translatability refers to the possibility to express figures transverbally. It also implies that between incipient and subsequent sign systems the relation is open: in other words, a translation can always be challenged by a new, future transposition.

**Translation Strategies Applied to Verbal Metaphors**

Like the classifications of the types of metaphor, the translation strategies applicable to metaphoric language are also varied and articulated (van den Broeck; Newmark; Larson; Tirkkonen-Condit, Alvarez, Denroche). Cross-referencing the varied contributions concerning interlingual translation, they could be traced back to three:

***Strategy 1:*** *onomasiological* (or *literal*) *translation* implies rendering the metaphor sensu stricto. The aim is to reproduce the formal play of the incipient sign system word-by-word.

***Strategy 2:*** *semasiological* (or *substitution*) *translation* implies transforming and dynamising the image, seeking a non-literal variant in the target language. The aim is to maintain some form of connotation and to retain the underlying structural principle of the incipient sign system.

> ***Strategy 3:*** *discursive* (or *standardising*) *translation* involves dissolving the metaphor into a simile, replacing the private metaphor with a conventional metaphor, or replacing it with non-figurative language, with a paraphrase, a footnote, or an explanation. The aim is to achieve greater transparency and clarity.

It will be beneficial to remember that there are different translation tactics, not only because the most suitable strategy must be chosen each time when faced with different types of metaphor, but above all, because there are different translation projects, and it is important for the translator to make her own explicit (Berman). For example, the choice could be between a *domesticating* translation, which interprets a metaphor foreign to one's own culture as something to camouflage and, instead of highlighting difference, adapts to the norms of the target language; and a *foreignising* translation, which tends to emphasise diversity, with deviating, alienating, exotic, or archaising results (van den Broeck 85; Venuti; Arduini 48). Or translators could opt for a *text-centred* approach, focusing on aesthetic, poetic, and expressive functions and considering metaphors as manifestations of the writer's individual creativity; alternatively, they could favour a *reader-centred* approach, focusing on how metaphors are more likely to be familiar to the receiver (Eco, "Ekfrasi" 8).

**Translation Difficulties and Risks**

The categorisations outlined above might suggest that translating metaphors is a linear process, free of ambiguities and misunderstandings. On the contrary, such a process is not without its difficulties and risks.

One knot of complexity to keep in mind relates to the structure and function of a metaphor within the sign system to which it belongs. As will become clear in the second part, translating a poetic metaphor does not entail dealing with an isolated figure but with an entire sign system, where that one figure is just one of many threads. Hence it is necessary to examine each thread, given the interconnections and interdependencies between the various constituent signs of the plot (Arduini 43-44). Moreover, not only are there different types of metaphor, but these different types are intertwined with other figures in the poem. It is paramount to make the most of all the peculiarities of that figure, that is, its links with other semiotic elements, with the synchronic and diachronic conventions which make that figure semantically poignant.

Having said this, for the purposes of this investigation, among the possible difficulties related to the interlingual translation of metaphors I will limit myself to pointing out three macro-typologies: linguistic issues, extra-linguistic factors, and aesthetic conventions and traditions.

Linguistic issues include differences of a grammatical nature between source language and target language. One need only think, for example, of the different rules that dictate the word order within the sentence (Steen 20); or, on a phonological level, of the fact that in English there are more consonantal sounds than in Italian, whereas Italian is a language rich in vowel sounds; or, again, of the relationship between written and spoken language. In the case of First Nations authors writing in English, the specificities of Australian Aboriginal English (AAE) should also be considered (Malcolm).

Extra-linguistic difficulties are related to the cultural system from which the texts originated (van den Broeck 80), such as semantic anisomorphism. It is equally important to note how, as different cultures conceptualise the world differently, metaphors tend to be context-specific. The complexity inherent in translation, then, is not due to the lack of an equivalent lexical element in the subsequent sign system, but rather to the divergent cultural conceptualisation of phenomena in the two linguistic communities. With regard to the Aboriginal authors examined here, for example, it ought to be considered that the cultural

contexts where the metaphors exist and are analysed also have a political and socio-historical dimension.

As for conventions and aesthetic traditions, one aspect not to be underestimated is that the act of translation is often influenced by the expectations of the target audience. Furthermore, it is good practice to consider the differences in the aesthetic and ethical codes of the sign systems being compared: translatability will have a lower difficulty coefficient in the case of, for instance, shared literary practices (81).

**The Interlingual Translation of Metaphors of Future**

Based on the theorisations illustrated so far, the second part focuses on the translation of figurative language contained in three poetic texts. Authored, respectively, by Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Ali Cobby Eckermann, and Evelyn Araluen, these texts have been selected from a larger corpus to be representative of one important topic: the future and the life of generations to come. As the analysis will show, metaphors allow each author to touch on themes such as memory, identity, hope, and belonging; and contribute to exemplify the link between suffering and healing, and between death and life as prominent motifs within First Nations poetry.

Of course, pre-translation text analysis is an integral part of the interlingual translation procedure, particularly in literary translation, as it facilitates the translator in making conscious and informed decisions on which paths to take and which choices to make. In this case, given the focus of the study, when transcribing the verses in English I have italicised figurative language, in particular metaphors. Moreover, the interpretation work has been carried out with regard not to the individual metaphor but, as mentioned above, to the image in its context. This broad view has entailed the comparison between the choices made by the author of the poem and those made by the translator.

**Case Study 1: "Assimilation – No!"**

The connection between past and future is central to the work of the Quandamooka writer Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1920-1993), who was the first in Australia to employ poetry as an instrument to claim socio-political rights on behalf of the Indigenous peoples, subjugated by the white invaders. In her collection *My People* (1970), the word "time" occurs on no less than 48 occasions; in addition, 22 are the direct references to the past, 6 are those to the present, and 10 are the explicit mentions of the future. "Assimilation – No!" ideally belongs to a nucleus of poems dedicated to the theme of identity (Zanoletti, "*My People*" 70) and encourages the overcoming of the process of assimilation towards a future built on authentic multiculturalism. Symbolising circular time, Oodgeroo's poem opens and closes with the same metaphor:

*Pour your pitcher of wine into the wide river*
*And where is your wine? There is only the river*.
Must the genius of an old race die
That the race might live?
*We who would be one with you*, one people,
We must surrender now much that we love,
The old freedoms for *new musts*,
*Your world for ours*,
But *a core* is left that we must keep always.
Change and compel, *slash us into shape*,
But not *our roots deep in the soil of old*.
*We are different hearts and minds*
*In a different body*. Do not ask of us

*To be deserters*, *to disown our mother*,
To change the unchangeable.
*The gum cannot be trained into an oak.*
*Something is gone, something surrendered*, still
*We will go forward* and learn.
*Not swamped and lost, watered away*, but keeping
Our own identity, our pride of race.
*Pour your pitcher of wine into the wide river*
*And where is your wine? There is only the river.* (Oodgeroo 144)

Oodgeroo's poem unfolds in 22 lines, framed by a proverb-like metaphor in identical rhyme (river / river, Type 3). With this refrain, Oodgeroo criticises the policy of assimilation perpetrated by the Australian state and Federal governments against the Aboriginal peoples, comparing it to the act of pouring wine into a flowing river. This is not, however, the only metaphor employed by the poet: "The gum cannot be trained into an oak" matches "We will go forward and learn. / Not swamped and lost, watered away, but keeping / Our own identity, our pride of race". In the first case, a metaphorical maxim referring to the Australian landscape (Type 3) suggests that it is against the law of nature to distort someone's identity. In the second case, a CM ("We will go forward", Type 2) precedes a chain of PMs ("Not swamped and lost, watered away", Type 3) wishing for a future when Aboriginal identity and pride fully emerge.

Other metaphors are scattered throughout the lyric. The CM "We who would be one with you" is followed by the metonyms "new musts" and "Your world for ours" (lines 7-8, Type 2) evoking the process of assimilation which forced Aboriginal people to adapt to superimposed models. Oodgeroo proposes, in contrast, that the essential part cannot be repudiated ("a core is left that we must always keep", Type 2). Finally, she warns the whites that however much they want to mould Indigenous individuals in their own image and likeness, her people's roots will remain firmly planted in ancient soil ("slash us into shape, / But not our roots deep in the soil of old", Type 3). In this PM, the past is the tenor, and roots is the vehicle.

In the final part, a metonymy tells that Aboriginal people have distinctive physical, sensory, and mental characteristics ("We are different hearts and minds / In a different body", Type 2), while the exhortation "Do not ask of us / To be deserters, to disown our mother" (Type 3) brings to mind the Australian desert (from Late Latin "desertum", literally "thing abandoned") and Mother Earth, evoking that ancient soil where the Indigenous roots are planted.

Assimilazione – No !

Versa la tua brocca di vino nel vasto fiume
E dov'è finito il vino? C'è soltanto il fiume.
Il genio della vecchia razza antica deve morire
Per salvare la razza?
A noi che per sentirci uniti a voi come un solo popolo,
Ora dobbiamo rinunciare alle tante cose amate,
Le vecchie libertà per i nuovi doveri,
Il vostro mondo per il nostro,
A noi rimane un nucleo che dobbiamo preservare.
Potete trasformarci, obbligarci, tagliarci in nuove sagome,
Ma non le nostre radici sprofondate nella vecchia terra.
Siamo cuori e menti diversi

In corpi diversi. È inutile chiederci
Di abbandonare, di rinnegare nostra madre,
Di cambiare quello che non si può cambiare.
L'eucalipto non potrà mai diventare una quercia.
Qualcosa è sparito, qualcosa ha ceduto, ma
Nonostante tutto vogliamo andare avanti e imparare.
Non annegati e persi, travolti dalla corrente,
Ma con la nostra propria identità, l'orgoglio di razza.
Versa la tua brocca di vino nel vasto fiume
E dov'è finito il vino? C'è soltanto il fiume.

(Oodgeroo 145)

The process of translating Oodgeroo's poem into Italian could draw on the general principle that PMs (Type 3) can be rendered sensu stricto (Strategy 1), while DMs or CMs (Types 1 and 2) would suggest adopting a non-literal variant or periphrasis (Strategies 2 and 3). Following this indication, in the proposed translation the onomasiological and semasiological strategies (Strategies 1 and 2) prevail with regard to the rendering of metaphors. Only to a small extent have metaphorical expressions been translated discursively (Strategy 3). The choice of Strategies 1 and 2 has helped to preserve as much of the imagery created by Oodgeroo as possible, in particular images of the future (*text-centred approach*).

Onomasiological translation has in many cases involved PMs (Type 3). Let us look at a few examples. The Italian translation of lines 1-2 and 21-22 follows the source sign system almost literally, with the sole exception of the idiomatic expression "dov'è finito il vino?" (literally, "where did the wine end up?"), which reinterprets the colloquial and inquisitive tones of Oodgeroo's question. Similarly, lines 10-11 combine a sensu stricto translation ("le nostre radici sprofondate nella vecchia terra", Strategy 1) and a substitution ("nuove sagome", literally, "new outlines", Strategy 2). A further example of literal rendering is "Non annegati e persi, travolti dalla corrente" (Strategy 1). In only two cases, PMs have been rendered discursively, reducing the semantic complexity of the initial signs (Strategy 3): following the Latin etymology, "to be deserters" has become "abbandonare" (literally, "to abandon"), while the metaphor of training in "cannot be trained into" (almost a kind of manipulation, or at least interference) has been translated, a little more neutrally, as "non potrà mai diventare" (literally, "can never become"). Rhythmic and prosodic reasons have prompted these choices, as literal translation would have lengthened the text excessively.

This analysis suggests that Oodgeroo's writing, seemingly plain and straightforward, is imbued with metaphorical language. Noonuccal's depiction of the future is made of images of resilience and hope. These images contribute to make her political message comprehensible to all, emphasizing a sense of involvement and connection.

**Case Study 2: "Unearth"**

Politics is not the exclusive domain of Oodgeroo's writing but, *ça va sans dire*, represents a primary topic in much of Indigenous Australian literature. A poignant example is Ali Cobby Eckermann's poetry, whose subject matter is the problematic history of Indigenous Australians since colonial times. In her collection *Inside My Mother* (2015), Eckermann explores her own life and experience as an Indigenous woman and one of the Stolen generations as well as looking at the historical perspective. She returns to this subject repeatedly, lit by dreams and visions of startling intensity, populated by symbolic presences and ritual scenes. In "Unearth" the emphasis goes, like in Noonuccal's poem, to the link between the past and the future and

the connection between generations. Exploring this topic, Eckermann scatters the poem with rhetorical figures, including metaphors:

let's *dig up the soil* and *excavate the past*
*breathe life into the bodies of our ancestors*
when movement stirs their bones
boomerangs will rattle in unison

it is not the noise of the poinciana
stirred by wind in its *flaming limbs*
the sound of the rising warriors *echo*
*a people suppressed by dread*

a hot wind whips up *dust storms*
we glimpse warriors in the mirage
in the future the petition will be everlasting
even when the language is changed

*boomerang bones will return to memory*
*excavation holes are dug in our minds*
*the constant loss of breath is the legacy*
*there is blood on the truth*

(Eckermann 37)

"Unearth" plays on continuous temporal leaps from the present to the future and back. It opens with an exhortation to excavate the earth and bring the ancestors' bones back to surface and life. In fact, the polysemous verb "dig up" carries within itself not only a denotative meaning (to excavate) but also metaphorical meanings (to bring to light something hidden, buried, and dead, Type 1). Moreover, throughout the poem Eckermann combines archaeological lexicon (soil, excavate, bones, bodies, excavation holes, dug) with abstract philosophical terminology (past, life, dread, language, memory, minds, truth), and this combination produces a series of metaphorical expressions.

Most metaphors created by Eckermann are PMs (Type 3): for instance, "breath life into the bodies of our ancestors", "flaming limbs", "excavation holes are dug in our minds", and "there is blood on the truth". DMs ("dust storms", "echoes") and CMs ("suppressed by dread") are also at play. One of the most extraordinary inventions, however, is line 13, where Eckermann associates the boomerang's property of returning with anamnesis ("boomerang bones will return to memory", Type 1). In fact, echoing Oodgeroo (238-240), the expression "boomerang bones" evokes a range of associations including the historical theft of Aboriginal skulls and skeletons and their display in European museums, and campaigns for their return and reburial in Australia. "Boomerang" is not only a metaphor for return, but also have a metonymic function signifying both the kitsch appropriation of Aboriginal artefacts by settler culture and the resilience of Indigenous cultures.

As we have seen, the three metaphor types can be translated using different strategies. Generally, non-deliberate metaphors (i.e. DMs and CMs, Types 1 and 2) can be translated either by finding a corresponding image in the target culture (Strategy 2), or by dissolving the image in a paraphrase (Strategy 3): the principle is translating the less familiar with the more familiar. Deliberate metaphors, on the other hand (Type 3), can most often be rendered

verbatim (Strategy 1). Let us see if and how this is put into practice when translating the poem into Italian:

Dissotterrare

scaviamo il terreno e riesumiamo il passato
diamo il respiro ai corpi degli avi
quando il movimento scuoterà le loro ossa
i boomerang sibileranno all'unisono

non è il fruscio della poinciana
con le sue fronde fiammeggianti al vento
il suono dei guerrieri insorti echeggia
un popolo soffocato dal terrore

un vento caldo monta tempeste di sabbia
nel miraggio scorgiamo guerrieri
in futuro l'istanza sarà eterna
anche quando la lingua sarà cambiata

ossa come boomerang torneranno alla memoria
è nella nostra mente che si scava
la costante perdita di respiro è l'eredità
c'è del sangue sulla verità

(Eckermann, my translation)

The most frequently employed translation strategy has been to resemantise metaphors strictu senso. This often allows the images to be rendered more vividly, emphasising Eckermann's poignant imagery (*text-centred approach*). Verse 1, where "excavate" has become "riesumiamo" (literally, "exhume"), is an exception: the PM has been dissolved in its paraphrased explanation (Strategy 3). This choice circumvents the risk that "dig up" and "excavate", almost synonymous, create a redundancy effect in Italian; moreover, the prefix ri- strengthens the idea of bringing back and avoids the cacophonic pun "ed esumiamo", whose pronunciation would coincide with "e desumiamo" ("and we deduce").

In other cases, structural movements have been introduced with respect to the source text (Strategy 2) to mediate the connotative meanings of the incipient sign system. For example, the new PM "diamo il respiro" (literally, "let's give breath") keeps reference to the semantic field of respiration conveyed by "breathe life into" and at the same time recalls the concept of giving life, to which the act of breathing is conditio necessaria. The new metaphor sounds more natural and effective than an onomasiological translation (*reader-centred approach*), also because it resembles the CM "dare fiato a", meaning "to announce loudly". Similarly, translating "suppressed" with "soffocato" (literally, "suffocated") introduces a new CM on breathing, emphasizing a leitmotif. Finally, "ossa come boomerang" ("like boomerangs, bones") transforms Eckermann's PM into a simile, making the boomerang / memory analogy more explicit while maintaining a certain degree of figurativeness. This is a good example of how translation makes meaning by reducing the pool of potentialities to an actuality that fits a particular situation (Tyulienev).

The final rhyme eredità / verità, where the idea of future rhymes with that of authentic historical reconstruction, attempts to redeem, at least in part, the musicality of Eckermann's poem. The violence against the Indigenous peoples, Eckermann seems to allude, must and will be remembered.

**Case 3: "Decolonial Poetics (Avant Gubba)"**

While Oodgeroo's idea of the future as expressed in "Assimilation – No!" is made to coincide with the overcoming of assimilation policies in favour of intercultural dialogue, and Eckermann's representations of future are closely linked to the themes of memory and intergenerational connection, Evelyn Araluen's writing advocates a future where Aboriginal cultures are acknowledged as the foundation of Australia. Born and raised on Dharug country, Araluen is a descendant of the Bundjalung Nation, and the theme at the heart of *Dropbear* (2021), her debut collection, is the questioning of Australian settler-colonial narratives of the nation that suggest the land is an extension of Britain. In "Decolonial Poetics (Avant Gubba)", in particular, she makes it clear that today one cannot speak of post-colonial literature, as the legacy of an imposing and lying narrative of a terra nullius, a narrative that became a harbinger of violence and dispossession, is still in place. In the poem, the auxiliary verb "will", expressing the future tense, features no less than 7 times:

*when my body is mine* I will *tell them*
*with belly&bones*
do not *touch this prefix*
or let your hands burn back
with your *unsettlement*
there are no metaphors here

*when i own my tongue* i will *sing*
*with throat&finger*
gobackwhereyoucamefrom
for i will be
*where i am for*

when *i am aunty*
i will say, jahjums,
look what we made for you
look at this earth we *cauterised*
*the healing we took with flame*
i will show them a place
they will never have to leave

and when i am dead
they
will not
say my name

and when you are dead,
you can have poems

(Araluen 39)

“Decolonial Poetics” can be read as an outraged, experimental declaration of intent about the aim and sense of making poetry. Metaphors are the key: although in line 6 the author denies it, the entire lyric is played out on the shift between literal and figurative, a shift that generates paradox and nonsense.

Except for two DMs (“do not touch this prefix”; “unsettlement”), which the poet highlights with the antiphrasis “there are no metaphors here”, Araluen’s metaphors could be all classified as PMs. In lines 1 and 7, metaphors generate seemingly illogical sentences. On close reading, “my body” refers to the whole physical structure that forms my person (denotative meaning), while “mine” emphasises that the body in question is my property (connotative and figurative meanings). Likewise, “my tongue” is both my piece of flesh and the idiom I speak (denotative meaning), while “i own” emphasises that I am in control of my body and my language (connotative and figurative meanings). These gaps create paradox. The final couplet “when you are dead, / you can have poems” is also contradictory, as arguably it makes no sense for dead people to own anything.

The DM “unsettlement” deserves special attention as it is rather complex. The word can have a dual sense here: making someone feel uneasy or unsettled (as the Italian “disagio”), and “decolonise”, i.e. undoing the effects of the “settlement” of Australia by European colonisers.

A further metaphorical phrase appears in line 16, where Araluen imagines being old (see the metonymy “aunty”, a term of respect for an Indigenous elder) and telling Aboriginal children (“jajhums”) that her generation has healed the earth with fire. Anticipated a few lines above (“burn back”), this image recalls the practice of Cool Burning, or the small fires that Aboriginal people have set since time immemorial to hunt animals, maintain ecosystems and manage territory. In this context, however, the healing could also be a metaphorical healing: the process of decolonisation. Finally, it is worth noting the multi-word metaphors “belly&bones” and “throat&finger”: indeed, it is hard to imagine speaking with one’s belly and bones, and to sing using one’s fingers.

How to negotiate all this semantic complexity, when translating Araluen’s poem into Italian? How to bring out the semantic nuances of the source signs, without misinterpreting or parroting?

Poetica decoloniale (avan gubba)

quando il mio corpo sarà mio
dirò loro pancia&ossa
nessuno tocchi questo prefisso
o possano bruciare le vostre mani
e la vostra destabilizzazione
non parlo per metafore

quando sarò padrona della mia lingua
canterò con gola&dita
tornatedadovesietevenuti
perché sarò
dove devo essere

quando sarò un’Anziana
dirò jahjums, bambini
guardate cosa abbiamo fatto per voi

guardate questa terra cauterizzata
la guarigione conquistata col fuoco[2]

mostrerò loro un luogo
che non saranno costretti a lasciare
e quando sarò morta
loro
non
pronunceranno il mio nome

e quando sarete morti voi,
prendetevi qualche poesia (Zanoletti 2023b)

Translating these verses presupposes getting to the heart of the culture that generated these metaphors. The translation of metaphors is not limited to a word-for-word, sign-for-sign transfer, but implies a plunge into the worldview from which the images spring, connecting seemingly distant worlds and concepts. Therefore, the Italian version of "Decolonial Poetics", a militant poem built on a precise historical-political vision and deliberately keeping a high degree of semantic ambiguity, is oriented towards the onomasiological translation of figures (Strategy 1). An exception is line 16, where I have chosen to explicate the PM with a semasiological reformulation, structurally similar but semantically simpler, adding an explanatory footnote about the practice of cool burning: "la guarigione conquistata col fuoco" (literally, "the healing conquered with fire") is thus an example of Strategy 2, which narrows down the initial pool of semantic potentialities.

As mentioned, the AAE word "aunty" does not describe the mere degree of kinship, but implies a relationship based on deference and affection, and is widely understood in this way by settler Australians. In Italian, a homological counterpart does not exist. In fact, the word "anziana" is often used as a euphemism instead of "vecchia", which can be perceived as derogatory. Both "anziana" and "vecchia" convey the denotative meaning (advanced age) but omit the Indigenous term ("aunty" in the sense of an elder). An alternative translation emphasising the connotative meaning is "un'Anziana": the capital letter adds importance and institutionality, while the indefinite article makes it clearer that the word refers to a social category and not just age.

This possible translation of Araluen's lyric attempts to mediate the complexities of the source sign system in a sensitive way, respecting the graphic rendering, the verse structure, and the word order as much as possible (*text-centred approach*). Only in limited cases was the choice made to facilitate the Italian reader's interpretative work (*reader-oriented approach*). In no case were non-English words or words referring to specific aspects of Indigenous cultures (e.g. "gubba", "aunty", "jahjums") omitted or paraphrased (*foreignising approach*). The Italian anaphors "quando" and "sarò" reciprocate Araluen's repeated references to the future ("will") and contribute to making the poem resound like a propitiatory chant, full of strength and hope.

[2] L'immagine del fuoco richiama i piccoli incendi che da tempo immemore le popolazioni aborigene appiccano per cacciare gli animali, mantenere gli ecosistemi e gestire il territorio. Questa pratica, chiamata "cool burning", genera habitat disomogenei preferiti dai piccoli animali e impedisce ai fulmini e agli incendi selvaggi di consumare il territorio. [The image of fire recalls the small fires that Aboriginal peoples have set since time immemorial to hunt animals, maintain ecosystems and manage territory. This practice, called "cool burning", generates patchy habitats preferred by small animals and prevents lightning and wild fires from consuming the land.]

## Conclusions

In the relatively underexplored field of study concerning the translation of figurative language, this investigation has entailed two main stages. The first stage, of theoretical-methodological nature, has involved examining the relationship between metaphor and translation at the crossroads of translation studies and semiotics, through an interdisciplinary approach aimed at broadening translation research beyond the boundaries of verbocentrism (Petrilli, "The Intersemiotic"; Marais; Petrilli and Zanoletti). Emphasis has been placed on three fundamental goals: identifying the different types of metaphor and their translatability; categorising the different translation strategies applicable to metaphors; and highlighting the potentialities, difficulties and risks involved in the process of the interlingual translation of metaphoric language. The aim has been to observe and describe metaphor and translation as semiotic phenomena concerning signs of various kinds, rather than exclusively linguistic phenomena.

The second stage has put these theoretical-methodological premises into practice, involving the analysis of the metaphors contained in three poetic texts written in English by different authors and translating them into Italian. The interpretative-translative process has proved to be an effective method for investigating the functioning of metaphorical language: it has required the translator to deepen her listening and understanding of the author's voice, as well as of her own language. During the analysis, several peculiarities related to the translation of metaphors emerged that are useful in shedding light both on interlingual translation in general and on specific aspects of metaphor in comparison to other types of figurative or polysemic expressions. As emerged repeatedly, for instance, the translatability of a metaphor relies on the relationships that the sign system it belongs to establishes with other elements at different levels. Moreover, translation tends to reduce the semantic complexity of the initial sign.

Since, in conclusion, an evaluation of the results must consider the range of the corpus taken into consideration, as well as the number of texts examined, the hope is that the methodology proposed and applied here may stimulate wider-ranging investigations, either within the study of Australian literature or towards new research perimeters. Translation is poised to become an important operative tool in a new transdisciplinary research paradigm and, as advocated in this study, a powerful lens to interpret Indigenous cultures in new and fruitful ways.

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**Translating into French *The White Girl* by Tony Birch, with its Indigenous Australian idiosyncrasies of style, context and contents**

NADINE GASSIE
Translator and Independent Scholar

As a preliminary, let it be stated that the adjective "Aboriginal" and the noun "Aborigine" will be used throughout this essay, since the more contemporary denominations "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" or "Indigenous" or "First nation people" were not in use at the time of the fiction studied here (the 1960s), and as the author of the novel himself uses such adjective and noun throughout his narrative.

Also, I must claim that my take is that of a French professional translator (not an academic) embracing Henri Meschonnic's "pratique-théorique": "La pratique, c'est la théorie" (Meschonnic), hence the narrative nature of the account of my experience.

Tony Birch is a famous Indigenous Australian writer "who grew up in inner-city Melbourne with a rich Aboriginal, Barbadian (convict), Irish and Afghani [sic] heritage" (Daley). He is said to be "quintessentially Fitzroy" (ibid.), Fitzroy being historically a working-class area, now a hip neighbourhood of Melbourne. His Afghan great-grand-father settled in Fitzroy in the 1890s.

This brief outline of Birch's origins might suffice to characterize the peculiarities of his writing, regarding both contents and context, and style. Birch is recognized as one of Australia's finest writers of short-form fiction: "Tony Birch's *The Promise* stamped him as the outstanding Australian practitioner over shorter distances" (Whish-Wilson). "His short stories are semi-autobiographical, depicting *mostly children* [italics mine] coming to terms with domestic and social violence, a hand-to-mouth life on the fringes where money is visible but forever out of reach" (Walters). They convey with both poignancy and humour a sense of dread and urgency mixed with the ever-possible happening of magic and the miraculous; a combination of horror and fairy-tale penned in the most realist and raw fashion with mesmerizing flashes of utter human tenderness. And outright laughter.

Birch's main theme of interest, as identified above in Walters, is therefore childhood confronted with hardship and violence. This particular focalization can be seen as encapsulating and allegorizing the author's other important topic: the plight of Aboriginal peoples confronted with hardship and violence throughout the whole history of Australia-in-the-making – the corollary of which being resilience (on the part of both Aborigines and children) through fortitude and strength, cleverness and an indomitable sense of humour. This is the very topic of *The White Girl* (TWG).

My own take on Birch's style (as a literary translator with an ear trained on poetry and rhythm) is that his short stories carry the energy and speed of the short-distance runner, which I know Birch to be, echoing the afore-mentioned quote by Whish-Wilson. Birch has also been a boxer, trained by his father in childhood (cf. *Shadowboxing*) and his short stories definitely pack punches and leave you stunned, or "bruised" to borrow from the following quote about his first novel *Blood*: "The book explodes in its last third with equal parts exhilaration and dread, racing to a seemingly inevitable end that is awful, but not without hope, and leaves you bruised. A fantastic book." (Hopkirk) Here's another quote to confirm the physicality of his style in relation to his own training as a boxer: "He's a knockabout bloke who, despite

diminutive height, exudes a formidable physical presence and has something about him of the featherweight boxer—not surprising, perhaps, given his fighting antecedents." (Daley).

Prior to being offered the opportunity by Synchronique Editions to translate Birch's third novel, *The White Girl*, I had read all of Birch's collections of short stories, while overlooking his novels, thinking them less "punchy" on the grounds of the first few pages read online. I must confess that I would rather have been offered to translate one of his collections of short stories, though I said nothing, of course, to Louise, the kind editor who contacted me. I just mentioned that I had read and loved all of them, as a sort of guarantee of dedication and commitment; my way of asserting a kind of *Hieronymic Oath* (Chesterman) of my own, in keeping with the truthfulness item of Chesterman's proposition: "I will be honest about my own qualifications and limitations; I will not accept work that is outside my competence. [Truthfulness]". The corollary being in my view: "I will only accept to translate literary material that I truly love and appreciate."

As expected, TWG, on first reading, appeared to me to be a deeply moving and emotional story, replete with insight and information about Aboriginal history and life, a clear tribute to Aboriginal women and a virulent criticism of Australian historical policies around Aborigines. However, on that first reading, the novel style sounded somewhat humdrum, compared with Birch's blistering short stories. Something Walters also noted about *Blood*: "The writing here is unadorned, the language bordering on plain." I was nevertheless prepared to tackle the translation of TWG, feeling proud and honoured to be Tony Birch's new French translator (only *Blood* had been translated into French at that point). I was also proud and honoured to have been recommended to Louise Razsik at Synchronique Editions by Elaine Lewis, long-time member of AALITRA. I was in no way betraying my implicit *Hieronymic Oath*, since I truly love Birch's writing and respect him immensely as a talented writer. Also, my qualifications as a translator having specialized for nearly 30 years in Australian Literature legitimized my acceptance of the contract. My personal longstanding interest in Indigenous peoples' rights and literature (I have translated several novels by Native American writers) could also have been added to my declaration of expertise and acted as a guarantee that I would not overlook the issues of representing culture in translation.

Of course, as would be expected with Birch, something *magical* happened during the course of the translation, that changed altogether my perception of his style in TWG. Here's what I wrote to Louise:

> Revising the first 50 pages of my manuscript, I am surprisingly pleased with the result—especially since the translation process was a bit tedious in the beginning; I thought the style quite plain and not very engaging—unlike Birch's style in his short stories—though I could tell that this simplicity of style was in the service of an extreme sensitivity. I was, as is often the case in literary translation and without being aware of it, waiting for an *epiphany*... And it happened! My interest was rekindled by the reading of a beautiful French text by Marie Richeux [*Sages femmes*: *wise women*, also evocative of *sages-femmes*: *midwives*, definitely echoing with the subject matter of TWG]. I suddenly understood the specific style adopted by Tony Birch in TWG! Beneath a factual and unadorned appearance seemingly devoid of affect, it triggers in the reader the rising of these very affects, feelings, emotions, in the interstices of the narrative—in its silences—that the reader is led to fill by him/herself. It's a very interesting and subtle strategy indeed, and we must be careful, in the translation, not to add extra feeling or psychology, which seem to be absent but are implicitly left to the reader's sensitivity. This is the true

> elegance and power of this writing! When I understood this, it kind of liberated me and I took great pleasure in revising my text and translating the rest! Knowing that Tony Birch had been a boxer [...] I realized in fact that this seemingly factual and affectless style in this particular novel was *as powerful as boxing*: a series of little *jabs* which end up shaking and waking up the opponent/partner (us/the readers) so as to make them feel the feelings and feel the pain! It's fun, actually. Like a *lightweight boxing strategy*. And undoubtedly very Aboriginal too."

Indeed, I recognized this fighting/writing style as clearly Aboriginal, boxing having always been a sport embraced by popular classes and racial communities (see the Indigenous tent boxers in Australia) as an identity-affirming way out of poverty or discrimination and, in the best-case scenarios, to fortune and fame (Burlot). In that, I made him an heir of the great Muhammad Ali, who like him was both poetically and politically involved in black empowerment and emancipation. And *the jab*, I discovered, was Ali's most used offensive weapon! As this former heavyweight champion comments: "The right hand can take you around the block! But the jab will take you around the world" (*Le Cercle Boxing*). So I decided to go along with the jab tactic and trust Birch to lead me to victory! In the process I made Ali's famous motto: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee" my own, because during the length of the match/novel, Birch could be expected to be making use of all the other classic punches in boxing such as *hooks* and *uppercuts* for maximizing effects.

Since my main theoretical grounding and key ethical guidance in professional literary translation have always been Antoine Berman's precepts of ethics and analytics in translation (Berman), I may not have needed to identify this stunning peculiarity of Birch's writing in order to respect his endeavour at simplicity. However, it made me all the more aware that amongst the twelve "deforming tendencies" Berman has identified, the two main ones that I needed to most consciously avoid here were: *Rationalisation* and *Expansion*. And indeed both were visible in my first draft where I had spontaneously added (as a French person is prone to do, but as I normally refrain from doing as a professional translator...), too many logico-temporal links (*thus*, *therefore*, *afterwards*, *indeed, after, before,* etc.) and markers enhancing perception or judgement (*very*, *much*, *more*, etc.), plus a tendency to reorganize sentences according to a very French normative preconception of logic or reason... (See 1st extract: *Incipit*, below).

Another ground on which I normally base my translation strategies (which need changing and adapting to each new project) is the author's own advice (whether specifically addressed to me or generally stated). In this case, I could rely on Birch's prescription to me in an email he sent in response to a question regarding the interpretation to be given to the expression "the river path": I needed to know whether this path was a *towpath*, since in French it would entail a specific translation (*chemin de halage*). Birch replied:

> You are right. There are no tow-paths in Australia. *So, translate as necessary* [italics mine]—'river track' or track along the river'—if you need to be more descriptive you could write 'dirt track ...'

So this became my additional roadmap: "*translate as necessary*", the corollary being to "*not* translate as *not* necessary, unnecessarily, or unnecessary things". Which is also in keeping with Berman's principles, and interestingly allows both an integration and a breaking away from the seemingly unsurpassable Derridian notion of a "relevant translation": no need here for "a seasoned dish"... *"un plat relevé"*... nor for "Sublimation, elevation, exaltation"... but *merely*

(if I may say so) sticking to a "translation relevant to the conjoined motif of justice […] and justness or appropriateness *[justesse]*" (Derrida) which is the primary definition of *relevant* in English and (in my view) maybe the only relevant *[pertinent]* one...

Prior to our exchange of emails, I had already taken some strategic decisions regarding Aboriginal-related terms or issues, based on another Birch's principle I'd read in an interview he gave in 2019 to *The Lifted Brow*, a quarterly literary magazine based in Melbourne, in the Nr.40 announced as *a First Nations issue with a twist*. As a member of the Blak Brow Editorial Collective, Birch was asked the following question:

> Did the collective feel any pressure to *contextualize certain ideas or concepts for a non-indigenous* (sic) *audience*? [italics mine]

It was a question I was also asking myself as the translator of an Indigenous Australian writer for non-Indigenous-Australian French readers. Here's Birch's reply:

> *Not at all—we neither thought we needed to do so, nor did we take that position out of disrespect*. I believe that you need to do two things as a writer: one, make the best work you can, and two, *assume a thoughtful and generous reader*. [italics mine] (*Lifted Brow*)

Another delightful precept for me, in keeping with this dogma in literary translation that I abide by: "the non-feeble-mindedness of the reader" theorized and taught at the ESIT (*École supérieure d'interprètes et de traducteurs*), Paris, by Danica Seleskovitch, founder with Marianne Lederer of the *Théorie du Sens* (Theory of Sense) or *Théorie Interprétative de la Traduction* (*TIT*; Interpretive Theory of Translation) for professional interpreters and translators (Lederer, 1990).

Some of these translation strategies I also shared with my editor, realizing afterwards that those were the *hooks* and *uppercuts* I had to use, in keeping with Birch's own writing/boxing strategies, in keeping also with Lawrence Venuti's "*Call to action*" in *The Translator's Invisibility* ( 2018, p. 311) which allows the translator to break away from the too simplistic (and in my view now outdated) dichotomy between foreignization and domestication and "to revise the individualistic concept of authorship […] not only by *developing innovative translation practices* [italics mine] in which their work becomes visible to readers, but also by presenting sophisticated rationales for these practices in prefaces, essays, lectures, interviews".

**Translation strategies**

Here are my/our (Birch and me) hooks and uppercuts:

***1. A minimum of footnotes***

Three so far, restricted to cultural points (*Nan, Akubra, Jacky*). This is because the unquestionably fictional (see below) nature of Birch's narrative, though based on true facts and stories, doesn't allow for too many societal, political, or historical interventions in the form of footnotes during the course of the reading.

2. ***The use of a foreword***

Suggest to the publisher a foreword providing historic details on the Australian legislations concerning Aboriginal people which differed according to each Australian state or territory. This is because Odette and Sissy's story in TWG is not situated in any specific Australian state:

> The plot begins in the 1960s in fictitious Deane, a country town whose physical, historic and bureaucratic character might place it in southern Queensland, north-western New South Wales or Victoria, where Aboriginal people were at the whim of "protectors", be they police or missions, and from whom they required permission for most freedoms, including travel. But Deane, a dying colonial town on a drying river whose waters have been stolen for whitefella agriculture, *has national resonance* [italics mine]– just like racist colonial legacies. *Deane is anywhere. Deane is everywhere*. [italics mine] (Daley)

3. ***Meaningful terms italicised***

Consistent with Birch's own strategy of italicizing terms marking segregation or linked to Australian and/or Aboriginal history (*settlers, superstitions, pioneers,* etc.)

4. ***Untranslated syntagms***

Quotations of syntagms in English from the original text, followed by their French translation, both in italics, these syntagms being in italics in the original text, hence the author's insistence on them. The doubled insistence in French is intended to have the French reader "hear" something of the Australian vernacular, either in "blackfella" or in "whitefella" style (which often appear to be very similar –see below), or of the racial or cultural assumptions that underlie them (*them wild young gins off the mission*, *a true white man*).

5. ***Italics in original as in translation***

All other mentions in italics in the original text are kept as italics in their French translation (all occurrences, not just the first one as the general convention goes) without mention of the original in English. This is because those do not have the above-mentioned linguistic or cultural revelatory quality.

6. ***The meaning of the words through context***

On the opposite end of this arc of translation strategies, specific Australian and/or Aboriginal English terms are kept exclusively in English, without translation nor footnote, since the context points towards their meaning (*boongs, blackfella, whitefella, sister*). This is to stimulate the reader's perceptiveness (keeping them on their toes, so to speak) and to fully embrace the non-feeble-mindedness-of-the-reader dogma. I was inspired in this audacious approach by a fellow French translator, David Fauquemberg, who recently published his bold French translation of *Too much lip* by Melissa Lucashenko (Lucashenko, 2023) where "whitefella" and "blackfella" (amongst other Australianisms) are not translated into French but kept, without italics, in Australian vernacular.

7. ***When to use full translation for cognitive impact***

The specific terms *Welfare* and *Welfare Board* have been treated differently according to context. First occurrence of *Welfare authorities*: full translation into French by *services sociaux*, for a better cognitive impact on the French reader, followed by a gradual introduction of the terms *Welfare* and *Welfare Board* untranslated and in italics so as to convey to the French reader the same sense of foreboding and dread attached to them in the Aboriginal consciousness.

8. ***The non-canonical translation of terms***

Use of non-canonical translation for terms specific to Australia, such as *half-caste*. Since it is an administrative category, with its loaded ideology, and not a social or subjective one, I opted for a "francization" into *demi-caste* (neologism), alongside *quarteron* (proper term) for *quarter-caste*, and *octavon* (proper term) for *octoroon*. I rejected too simplistic or outdated (or more evocative of Native American culture) solutions that would limit the meaning to *mixed-race* ("*métis*"), *mixed-blood* ("*sang-mêlé*") or *half-blood* ("*demi-sang*").

9. ***The very important word "country/Country" in its Aboriginal sense***

Regarding the very important topic of the use of the word "Country" in its Aboriginal sense and unique grammatical form (*Ø country/Country*) of which we are well aware since we've been translating Australian literature for 30 plus years and witnessed the transformation of the language over the years, we've opted, as in other translations of Australian literature (Stow, 2024), to alternate between "*le pays*", "*la terre*", "*la contrée*" ("country" being etymologically and literally the French word "*contrée*") with specifiers "*le/la*" (the) since it would sound like "broken French" (!) to use the forms *Ø pays/Ø contrée* in prose. Only in one instance could we dare to use *Ø contrée* in this narrative, with a kind of poetic twist at the end of the novel: "*it's wild country out there: c'est contrée sauvage par là-bas*" instead of "*c'est une contrée sauvage par là-bas"*. This remains to be discussed with the editor and publisher.

10. ***The oral style and speech of the characters in the novel***

As suggested earlier concerning the oral style of the characters in the novel, it is striking to notice no significant difference between Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal people's speech, which is also a significant feature of contemporary Australian vernacular (except in areas marked by phenomena of creolization). Unlike novels or writings situated in areas or eras concerned with early colonization (like Alexis Wright's *The Plains of Promise*, for example), TWG is situated in the 1960s in an area where Aborigines were no longer "Mission Aborigines" and did not speak any kind of "pidgin" or "broken English". Hence, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australian speakers are heard here to be already speaking the same Australian Language, which could be called an Aboriginalized Colloquial English: English as spoken by the British working-class migrants with all their regional idiosyncrasies, transformed by its adoption and fertilization by Aboriginal native speakers of "languages-other-than-English", who were also dwellers and custodians of their own country and culture, and whose own linguistic idiosyncrasies like clipped forms, elisions and truncations have flown/merged inevitably into Australian English (*bong, bush, mate, brother, sister, mob, country, you going, you better, better not, kiddies, Big smoke, etc*). As Sydney Baker observes in his famous (although dated) *The Australian Language* : "Australian Aboriginal dialects are sources from which we have drawn much of our idiom [...]" (Baker). This has also been noted in the case of the American language: "the perception of the Indians as the originators of the American style of speech" is

even central to Robert M. Pirsig's novel *Lila* (Pirsig, 1991). This unique style of speech (its poetics) is mainly what has to be rendered in translations from Australian literature (vs American literature), and it is mostly to do with orality, i.e. rhythm, colloquialisms and wry humour. Hence, words like "bong [dead]" ("gone bung" says Henry, a "whitefella"), and "yabber [jabber]" (says Odette, a "blackfella"), both originating from Aboriginal languages, will be translated into French colloquialisms *[foutu, blabla]* without linguistic or anthropological explanations by way of footnotes. On the other hand, words like "billabong" which are supposed to be universally known will be kept in their original form and not italicized.

### 11. *Finding the feeling of the language*

Last but not least, let's mention a strategy I have been using for quite a while so as to better get the feeling of the musicality of the language: listening to recordings in audiobooks read by native speakers has now become a must for me. In this case, TWG read by Shareena Clanton has been an invaluable help (Wavesound, 2019).

As a conclusion, let's say that the only notable difference in Aboriginal speech (vs "whitefella" speech) in TWG seems to be a paradoxical blend of both bluntness and tenderness, or severity and care, on the part of Aboriginal speakers when speaking amongst themselves. This can also be seen as a notable Indigenous strategy of survival through transmission of core values of both toughness and caring for others.

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**Translation Extracts**

| *Incipit:* | *1st draft :* | *Final draft :* |
|---|---|---|
| Odette Brown rose with the sun, as she did each morning. She eased out of the single bed she shared with her twelve-year-old granddaughter, Cecily Anne, who went by the name of Sissy. Wrapping herself in a heavy dressing gown to guard against the cold, Odette closed the bedroom door behind her and went into the kitchen. She put a lit match to the wood chips and strips of old newspaper in the stove. | Odette Brown s'était levée aux aurores, comme chaque matin. Se glissant hors du lit d'une personne qu'elle partageait avec sa petite-fille de douze ans, Cecily Ann, dite Sissy, elle passa à la cuisine, emmitouflée dans une chaude robe de chambre, et referma la porte de la chambre derrière elle. Elle craqua une allumette pour enflammer les copeaux de bois et bandes de vieux journaux déjà prêts dans la cuisinière. | Odette Brown se leva aux aurores comme elle le faisait chaque matin. Elle se glissa hors du lit à une place qu'elle partageait avec sa petite-fille de douze ans, Cecily Ann, dite Sissy. Emmitouflée dans un lourd peignoir pour se garder du froid, elle passa à la cuisine et referma la porte de la chambre derrière elle. Elle craqua une allumette et la posa sur les copeaux de bois et les bandes de vieux journaux dans la cuisinière. |
| 'Do they call you by another name,' the policeman asked, smiling, 'other than John?' 'My friends call me Jack.' 'Jack?' The policeman smiled. 'Or is it, Jacky?' He smirked. Jack winced. 'No. Jack.' | « Vous appelle-t-on par un autre prénom ? demanda le policier avec un sourire. Autre que John ?<br>– Mes amis m'appellent Jack.<br>– Jack ? sourit le policier. Ou bien Jacky[1] ? » Son sourire se fit narquois.<br>Jack broncha. « Non. Jack. » | (Note de bas de page) : Surnom péjoratif donné aux hommes aborigènes par le passé, signifiant leur infériorité et leur domesticité. |
| The Line had been drawn a century earlier to separate the Aboriginal people incarcerated on the nearby mission from the good white *settlers* of Deane. | | La Ligne avait été tracée un siècle plus tôt pour séparer les bons *pionniers* blancs de Deane des justiciables aborigènes internés dans la mission proche. |
| When the stone mine first opened the old people despaired, convinced that cutting into the ground and destroying country with explosives would do great harm, to themselves and the earth. Their *superstitions* were ignored | | Quand la carrière avait commencé à être exploitée, les anciens avaient été au désespoir, convaincus qu'entailler le sol pour extraire de la pierre et détruire le pays à coups d'explosifs causerait de grands dommages, à eux-mêmes et à la terre. Leurs *superstitions* furent ignorées. |
| 'My family, we've been in this area from the very *beginning*. We are pioneers.' | | Ma famille, nous sommes dans la région depuis *les origines*. Nous sommes des *pionniers*. |

He tolerated blackfellas who'd come off the mission and made a go of it for themselves. Many walked by his gate, some even doffing their caps as they passed by. It didn't mean he'd tolerate cheek from them. Jed Lamb might have been a junkman, but he was also *a true white man*.

Il tolérait les *blackfellas* qui renonçaient à la mission pour s'en sortir par eux-mêmes. Beaucoup passaient à pied devant son portail, certains soulevant même leur couvre-chef en le voyant. Mais cela ne signifiait pas qu'il était prêt à tolérer de l'insolence de leur part. Jed Lamb avait beau être un ferrailleur, il était aussi un *true white man, un vrai homme blanc*.

The white community of Deane, thriving on the gossip of a light-skinned Aboriginal baby, exchanged salacious tales about *them wild young gins off the mission* and the so-called respectful men in town who secretly chased after them.

La communauté blanche de Deane, avide de ragots sur un bébé aborigène clair de peau, échangea des fables salaces sur *them wild young gins off the mission*, *ces filles faciles abos de la mission* et les soi-disant hommes respectables du village qui leur couraient après en secret.

Fretting for the children, a group of women approached the head of the mission, Reverend Holman, and asked that they be permitted to take the girls to an important place along the river, *to fix them better*.

Inquiètes pour leurs enfants, un groupe de femmes vint demander au directeur de la mission, le révérend Holman, la permission de conduire les fillettes jusqu'à un lieu important au bord de la rivière, *to fix them better*, *pour les guérir mieux*.

I love the sea and earned my wage on the boats. Worked with an old boatman, the first decent whitefella I'd ever met. He taught me a lot about working the tides and where to lay the nets. He was a good man. I was free as a blackfella could be around that time. When I wasn't working on the boats, I would head off fishing for myself. Same as we used to do in the old days. Then the boating business went bust, so I tried my hand at shearing with a couple of other boys, a whitefella and a blackfella. We were a team of three. Ten years I was on the shearing. All over I went.'

J'aime la mer et j'ai gagné ma vie sur les bateaux. Je bossais avec un vieux marin, le premier *whitefella* correct que j'avais jamais rencontré. Il m'a appris beaucoup sur l'influence des marées et les meilleurs emplacements pour jeter les filets. C'était un type bien. J'étais aussi libre qu'un *blackfella* pouvait l'être en ce temps-là. Quand je travaillais pas sur les bateaux, j'allais pêcher pour mon compte. Tout comme on faisait dans l'temps. Puis l'entreprise de pêche a fait faillite, alors je me suis essayé à la tonte des moutons avec deux autres gars, un *whitefella* et un *blackfella*. On était une équipe de trois. Dix ans, j'ai fait, comme tondeur. J'ai été partout.

From that time on, Odette had no choice but to engage in a

À partir de cet instant-là, Odette n'eut d'autre choix que de jouer au jeu dangereux du chat et de la souris avec les services sociaux.

dangerous game of cat and mouse with the Welfare authorities.

With the permission of the Aborigines Welfare Board, the men moved into new quarters in Quarrytown, close to the mine site and within the boundaries of reserve land.

In the schoolyard at lunchtime they would sometimes argue over who the Welfare Board went after, the dark or fair children.

'The Welfare, they're in love with the fairer ones these days. My ex, he was an Irish fella, red hair, freckles. […] My girls look more like him than me.'

'You'd have been in some trouble,' Odette said. 'You'd need to be riding fast to keep them Welfare fellas off your back.' 'Don't worry about that, I'd have been riding fast enough.'

She glanced across to a blackboard on the wall behind Bill's desk. She was unnerved to see a column on the left side of the blackboard documenting the names of each *known Aboriginal child of any admixture of blood within the jurisdiction*. The second column listed the age and birth date of each child. The third column listed a parent. The final column, beneath the title *caste*, listed descriptions such as *half-caste, quarter-caste and octoroon*. Odette ran an eye down the board and counted sixteen names. Towards the bottom of the list was the name of her granddaughter, *Cecily Brown*. Alongside it were the

Avec la permission de l'*Aborigines Welfare Board*, l'agence d'État dédiée à la protection sociale des Aborigènes, ces hommes avaient pu emménager dans un nouveau quartier de Quarrytown, à proximité de la carrière et dans les limites des terres de la réserve.

Dans la cour, à l'heure du déjeuner, elles discutaient parfois pour savoir après qui le *Welfare Board* en avait : les enfants à la peau foncée ou ceux à la peau claire ?

Le *Welfare*, ils en pincent pour les plus clairs, désormais. Mon ex-mari, il était irlandais, cheveux roux, taches de rousseur. [...] Mes filles lui ressemblent plus qu'à moi.

– Tu te serais attiré des ennuis, observa Odette. Il aurait fallu que ton petit poulain galope drôlement vite pour distancer ces inspecteurs du *Welfare*.
– T'en fais pas pour ça, j'aurais galopé sans m'arrêter. »

Elle jeta un œil au tableau noir sur le mur derrière le bureau de Bill. Ce qu'elle y vit la rendit nerveuse. Il y avait une colonne à gauche listant les noms de tous les *enfants aborigènes connus de quelque pourcentage de sang que ce soit* au sein de la juridiction. La deuxième colonne listait les dates de naissance et âges des enfants. La troisième colonne était réservée au nom d'un parent. La dernière colonne, sous l'intitulé *caste*, renseignait des descriptions telles que *demi-caste*, *quarteron*, *octavon*. Odette parcourut la liste des yeux et compta seize noms. Vers le bas de la liste figurait le nom de sa petite-fille, *Cecily Brown*. Sur la même ligne, les mots *presque blanche – caste inconnue*. Elle ferma les yeux et s'intima de contenir sa colère grandissante.

words, *near white – caste unknown*. She closed her eyes and willed herself to contain her growing anger.

‘What’s happened here? The bike has gone bung.’

« Qu’est-ce qui y est arrivé là ? Le vélo est foutu. »

This might be nothing but drunk yabber or crazy talk, for all I know.’

Pour ce que j’en sais, c’est peut-être rien d’autre que du blabla d’ivrogne ou du délire paranoïaque.

‘But you’re heating the bath water. You’ve never done that on a Wednesday. Why are you putting water in the bath?’
‘Because I’m about to get in it and wash myself,’ Odette snapped. ‘I can take a bath any day I feel like it,’ she added, ‘after all, I’m a grown woman.’

« Mais tu es en train de préparer un bain. Tu n’as jamais fait ça un mercredi. Pourquoi est-ce que tu chauffes de l’eau dans la baignoire ?
-Parce que je vais me mettre dedans pour me laver, répondit sèchement Odette. Je peux prendre un bain tous les jours si j’en ai envie, ajouta-t-elle, est-ce que je suis pas une grande personne ? »

She offered Sissy the paper bag. ‘Would you like this second pastie? I can’t eat it.’
‘No. You keep it for later. You might be hungry then Nanna [...].’

Odette tendit le sac en papier à Sissy. « Est-ce que tu veux le deuxième chausson ? Je n’ai pas faim.
– Non, garde-le pour plus tard. Tu risques d’avoir faim plus tard, *Nanna*. [...]. »

‘What’s with you, woman?’ he asked. ‘Don’t you be looking at me that way. I know what you’re thinking. Well, you can get this over and done with and say what’s on your mind and I’ll be on my way. You reckon I’m some kind of traitor, don’t you?’

« Qu’est-ce qu’il y a, femme ? demanda-t-il. Ne commence pas à me regarder comme ça. Je sais ce que tu penses. Eh bien, vas-y, finissons-en, dis le fond de ta pensée, et je m’en irai. Tu penses que je suis une sorte de traître, c’est ça ? »

‘I best go,’ she nodded to Jack. ‘You look after yourself.’

« Il faut que j’y aille. » Elle gratifia Jack d’un signe de tête. « Prends bien soin de toi. »

You’re living under the Act, and she’s under the Act as well. That girl is not permitted to travel anywhere. It’s as simple as that.

Tu es soumise à la Loi sur les personnes aborigènes, et elle y est soumise aussi. Selon l’*Act*, cette gamine n’a le droit de voyager nulle part. Point final.

‘But what about the Act?’ She whispered the words – the Act – as Aboriginal people generally did. It was a curse, rarely spoken aloud. ‘It would hold you back from travelling, wouldn’t it?’

Jack scoffed dismissively at Odette. ‘The Act doesn’t mean nothing to Jack Haines,’ he boasted. ‘I was finished with the Act years back. It can’t touch me. I don’t need it. And I’m free of it.’

– Mais que faites-vous de *l’Act* ? » Elle chuchota ce mot – *l’Act* – comme les Aborigènes avaient coutume de le faire. Ce mot était une malédiction, rarement prononcée à voix haute. « La loi devrait vous empêcher de voyager, non ? »

Jack se moqua ouvertement d’Odette. « *L’Act*, ça veut rien dire du tout pour Jack Haines, se vanta-t-il. J’en ai fini avec *l’Act* depuis des années. Il peut plus me toucher. J’ai pas besoin de lui. J’en suis libéré. »

**Bone-Deep: How a Novel Took Me All the Way to Aotearoa, New Zealand**
**An Annotated Translation**

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## Introduction

When I began studying te reo Māori, during my MA in Translation Studies at the Università di Siena in 2012, I was unaware that this decision would profoundly shape my personal and professional life. The linguistic structure and cultural context of te reo Māori offered a unique challenge and insight into Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*, a novel that deeply impacted me and inspired my move to Aotearoa New Zealand. As I reflect on my journey – completing my PhD, enduring personal loss, and raising a family – my dedication to translating this seminal work has become a means of honouring Hulme's legacy and the cultural richness she represents.

My approach to translating *The Bone People* is deeply influenced by postcolonial and feminist translation theories and happens – and it is necessary – within the decolonisation discourse. The need to address power dynamics and cultural hegemony in translation guided me in recognising and preserving the novel's cultural nuances, guaranteeing the representation of the Māori elements in translation, and ensuring that the translated text maintains the same critical stance towards dominant cultural narratives. My ethical positioning as a translation activist, advocating for approaches that emphasise cultural preservation and authenticity, aligns with my personal and professional experiences, which have shaped my understanding of the novel and its cultural significance.

## The book

*The Bone People* is a tale of the tension between two coexisting cultures and the synthetic third space existing between them. This tension, and the balance accompanying it, is embodied in the three main characters: the Māori man (Joe), the deaf Pākehā boy (Simon/Haimona/Clare), and the mixed-heritage woman (Kerewin). The character of Kerewin Holmes performs as Keri Hulme's alter ego, and – through her – Hulme[1] explores biculturalism, transcending the destructive force of a politically imposed construction of the self, and offering the concept of the 'numinous', which transforms the dichotomy 'either/or' into a holistic 'both/and', thus preserving the wholeness of the individual. It is also, therefore, a tale of identity – and the negotiation thereof – in a landscape inhabited by a dominant colonising culture – a hegemonic power – and by a dominated culture (and language) still fighting for its survival exactly 40 years after the novel was first published. However, Hulme writes in the conscious attempt to decolonise Aotearoa New Zealand by fighting *for* something rather than *against* something else. She embraces cultural inclusion as a form of healing, as it is the synthetic third space – the intercultural realm – that holds all the magic, it's the three characters that "[t]ogether, all together, […] are the instruments of change"[2]. Consequently, the characters' diseases/accidents portrayed in the book are in fact 'cultural' ones that are finally healed when the three become a multicultural family, and they each resolve their own identity in their coexistence with the other two.

[1] Keri Hulme identified closely with the Kai Tahu tribe of the Māori of which she claimed one-eighth ancestry.
[2] Incipit, *The Bone People*, Keri Hulme, 1984.

The tale came to Hulme in a dream, in short form, which she then decided to expand into a novel, feeling that the characters needed more space to tell their story.[3] It took her fourteen years to get *The Bone People* written and published, after quite the publishing rollercoaster. The first publisher rejected it, leading Hulme to rewrite the whole thing with her mother's help. After this massive revision, four more publishers rejected it for various reasons – ranging from a concern over the cultural content of the book (read the Māori elements), the stylistic experimentation of the work, and some of the themes she explored in the narration – and suggested further significant editing and cutting of whole sections. Finally, in February 1984, *The Bone People* came out unaltered, published by Spiral Collective, and all copies from the first and second print run sold out. In that same year it won the Mobil Pegasus Award for Māori Fiction and the New Zealand Book Award for Fiction. In 1985, a new edition was published by Spiral Collective in conjunction with Hodder and Stoughton and went through a number of reprints, while the first American edition was published by Louisiana State University Press. 1985 was the year *The Bone People* was awarded the prestigious Booker Prize, first New Zealand publication to ever receive the accolade and one of only two to this day (the second came 35 years later with *The Luminaries* by Eleanor Catton).

It doesn't surprise that something eliciting such a strong response from the New Zealand publishers of the time would become such a critical success both home and abroad. In Aotearoa New Zealand it's the mid-eighties, the Māori Renaissance is flourishing, decolonisation is slowly happening also by means of Māori literature written in English and language revitalisation and reappropriation. The empire is finally writing back, to say it with Ashcroft et al.[4] and it is majestic. Aotearoa New Zealand wants to read *itself* and the world wants to read it too. And this discovery of literary identity brings with it the concept of biculturalism (and bilingualism!) as an alternative to government integration policies, very uncomfortably close to colonialist policies of cultural assimilation.

**Te reo Māori**

It is in this landscape that Hulme's use of te reo Māori happens, as she experiments with its fusion with English (te reo pākehā) trying to craft a new language able to fully express the postcolonial experience and identity of Aotearoa New Zealand. One of the primary challenges in translating *The Bone People* was and is navigating being a translation activist and making decisions between annotation and translation: as a translator committed to an appropriate[5] foreignizing approach[6], I had to decide when to preserve Māori terms in their original form and when to provide annotations. This decision was crucial in ensuring that the translation retained the cultural specificity of Hulme's work while remaining accessible to Italian readers.

I was recently talking to Marian Evans – kaitiaki[7] of Spiral Collective – and we were discussing translation and ethics and how much translators have the duty to represent what is in the source text or, even more so, what the source text *is*. We were reflecting on handling texts that have te reo Māori in them, and how translators of languages other than English have handled them in the far and recent past.[8] We then started talking about how the writers – well, the texts, if we're being purists, which I tend to be – use te reo Māori (or any minority language

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[3] Te Kaihau – The Windeater, Keri Hulme, Victoria University Press, 1985.

[4] *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft et al, Routledge 1989.

[5] It is my strong opinion that no theory of translation should be embraced too fiercely, as theory's primary function is that of enabling the translator to localize themselves ethically and inform their practice without defining it. Any theory should be impressing itself on the translator, not the translation.

[6] To be interpreted along the lines of what was theorised by Lawrence Venuti and in juxtaposition to a not desirable (at least no longer so) domesticating translational stance.

[7] Guardian (te reo Māori).

[8] Be it translation, annotation, etc.

for that matter): the use of loan words/sentences/paragraphs can go from the inclusive and didascalic to the exclusive and enraged but, as it were, there are many cases in which the use of te reo Māori in a text has nothing to do with its intended readers! In the book *Imagining Decolonisation*, Jennie Smeaton, very simply, states:

> Language is another structural thing that underlies life in this place (Aotearoa NZ, ed.). We use many terms in te reo Māori in this book – Sometimes we will stop to explain these, for those who do not speak te reo, but sometimes we won't. If you don't know the meaning of this kupu, we encourage you to look them up in a Māori dictionary as you go.[9]

Usually, I choose to annotate te reo Māori in only two cases: where the writer provides paratext and where the term in question is understandable/accessible to non-te-reo-Māori speaking readers, meaning a commonly used term that has been borrowed by New Zealand English and is therefore easily accessible to most New Zealand readers. This choice was made to preserve the bilingualism of the literary production of indigenous writers while avoiding excluding Italian readers from understanding those more commonly used terms. This decision, considering the continuum of Māori language knowledge among non-te-reo-Māori-speaking New Zealanders, was made subjectively, based on my experience in Aotearoa/New Zealand and my perception of the average level of te reo knowledge among non-Māori – it is, therefore, forever changing.

| **English** | **Italian** | **Note** |
|---|---|---|
| "Raupo and ferns" | "Raupo e felci" | I decided not to annotate as "raupo" is not as accessible but also quite clear from context. |
| "They are ngaio" | "Sono ngaio" | I could have annotated in this case, but it is so clear from context that we are dealing with trees that it seemed rather pleonastic. |
| "Her chest of pounamu" | "Lo scrigno dei pounamu" | I have annotated in this case, as most New Zealanders know what pounamu are. In this case it is a chest containing all of Kerewin taonga (treasures). |

**Hulme's voice(s)**

The significant translational challenge of te reo Māori use in *The Bone People* is paired with Hulme's use of idiosyncratic and creative vocabulary in English.[10] For example, she tends to merge words that would exist well as hyphenated, in English, and to create humorous or ironic neologisms. These instances need to be handled on a case-by-case basis, but the rule of thumb would be to try the hardest to preserve the neologisms and puns, wherever possible. Thus, words such as careworm, spicejars, slateblue, bartop, saltstained, navyblue, sunfire, bloodyholed, soulwringing, rolledup, sackneck, windwarped, sharpedged, fistplanted,

[9] Elkington, Bianca et al. *Imagining Decolonisation*, BWB Texts, Bridget Williams Books Ltd, Wellington, New Zealand, 2020. p.18

[10] and other languages featured in her use of loans, including German and Italian.

highbones, hollowcheeked, silverblond, seabluegreen, birdboned in the original text, have been either:

- unpacked into their two-word equivalent and translated "naturally", as Italian syntax doesn't allow *noun phrases* nor does it tolerate *adjective + noun* structures too often, without sounding rather stiff and antiquated.
- translated into Italian as:

| **English** | **Italian** | **Note** |
|---|---|---|
| "the careworm was still there" | "il senso di preccupazione strisciava ancora" *(The sense of worry/dread still slithering)* | I attempted to preserve the reference to the "worm" by using the verb "to slither", in Italian. |
| "saltstained rim" | "orlo salso" | I used the short adjective "salso" to avoid using complements of specification, thus maintaining the effect of the original. Also, the choice between "salato" and "salso" comes from the former being predominantly used for taste, and the latter evoking "salsedine", which is the sediment salt leaves behind. |
| "navyblue" | "blumarino" | I took the liberty of merging the Italian "blu marino" into one word, since in this case it was possible without lexical effort. |
| "soulwringing night" | "notte contorcianima" | I took the liberty of keeping "contorcianima" as a one-word adjective, rather than translating "notte che contorce l'anima", especially given its use in direct speech. |
| "silverblond" | "biondoargentei" | I took the liberty of merging the Italian "Biondo argentei" into one word, since in this case it was possible without lexical effort |
| "seabluegreen" | "verdeblumarino" | I took the liberty of merging the Italian "verde blu marino" into one word, since in this case it was possible without lexical effort |

- or, like the case of "sinshine", where – once again, given the lexical freedom allowed by direct speech – I decided to recreate the punny neologism as an equivalent, and opted for the single word "malalba" (literally "evil dawn") to preserve the negative connotation of "sin" with "mal" ("evil") and the reference to light carried by the root word "sunshine" with "alba" ("dawn").

Other incredibly compelling "plot points turned linguistic devices" (and vice versa) of the novel are the inclusion of Simon's sign language and the constant shifting of point of view (POV) of the narration.

Simon's personally created sign language casts the reader once again in a dance of exclusion and inclusion mediated by language. Similarly to Joe's use of te reo Māori to (unsuccessfully) exclude Kerewin from the conversation, Simon's sign language initially includes Joe but excludes Kerewin, who will need time and observation to get into the *flow of things*. From a historical and sociological postcolonial standpoint, it is interesting to see how it is the Māori man and the Pākehā boy who are excluding (or attempting to exclude) mixed heritage Kerewin from the bicultural/bilingual space, and how it takes everyone's self-awareness, negotiation, and to some extent rebuilding of their own identity to communicate, coexist, and ultimately thrive. I translated all Hulme's descriptions of Simon's hand movements and facial expression as precisely as I could in the target text.

As mentioned above, the narration POV shifts continuously throughout the book. Hulme's skills in this space allow the reader different degrees of insight into the characters and their stories, as exactly as Hulme needs them presented and disclosed.

There are three main positionings of the narrating voice:

1. The narrator is 'internal' to the character (we feel their thoughts and perceive the action from their most intimate POV: it is a very effective strategy for Simon's character, that can thus 'talk' to us);
2. The narrator is 'external' but adopts the POV of one of the characters to describe a given action, with two potential outcomes:
   - If the character is in a group, we will witness – especially through the description of their external reactions, as we are not in 'internal' mode – their perception of the scene taking place;
   - If the character is alone we will witness, without the help of any cognitive filter eliciting our empathy, the barest expression of the character's self;
3. The narrator is completely external and equidistant, without taking any privileged POV.

This is a powerful device because it allows the readers to empathise with the characters – even when their actions are far from sympathetic – by enabling them to shift between a subjective and an objective view of a given situation. Moreover, when in 'internal' mode, the readers have access to some of the characters 'unspoken' traumas and motives, their most intimate history and most defining perceived identities. This ability allowed to the readers results in the powerful experience of witnessing positive change while having committed to deeply flawed characters, and makes their renewed self-awareness, rediscovered identity, and ultimately their redemption and joy a cathartic experience.

This style of narration is complex and multifaceted: within each of the above-mentioned point of views there's space for flashbacks, nightmares, visions, poems, songs, with everything punctuated by a change in register, typographical choices, and so on. I adhere as precisely as possible to these guidelines, as I understand them for what they are and therefore not needing any adjustment on my part. They are the novel's score, and I am only working on the lyrics.

**Conclusions**

The action of power does not flow exclusively from top to bottom; it is not always a matter of relentless repression and constraint, but also moves from bottom to top. In the case of Aotearoa

New Zealand and its literature, the translator's aim should be to preserve the balance of the linguistic-cultural continuum already present in the original texts. The choice becomes one of fostering the drive towards decolonisation and the reclamation of identity by the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific. This trend is evident in the intensification of bilingualism, no longer as timid and didactic but proud and authoritative, in contemporary literary texts. The translator can participate in this process of decolonisation by recognising this assertion of identity and reflecting it in their work.

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| The bone people | Nelle ossa |
|---|---|
| **Keri Hulme** | |
| He walks down the street. The asphalt reels by him.<br>It is all silence.<br>The silence is music.<br>He is the singer.<br>The people passing smile and shake their heads.<br>He holds a hand out to them.<br>They open their hands like flowers, shyly.<br>He smiles with them.<br>The light is blinding: he loves the light.<br>They are the light.<br>He walks down the street. The asphalt is hot and soft with sun.<br>The people passing smile, and call out greetings.<br>He smiles and calls back.<br>His mind is full of change and curve and hope, and he knows it is being lightly tapped.<br>He laughs. | Lui cammina per la strada. L'asfalto gli si srotola accanto.<br>Tutto è silenzio.<br>Il silenzio è musica.<br>Lui è il cantante.<br>La gente che passa sorride e scuote la testa.<br>Lui tende loro la mano.<br>Aprono le mani come fiori, timidamente.<br>Lui sorride con loro.<br>La luce è accecante: lui adora la luce.<br>Loro sono la luce.<br><br>Lui cammina per la strada. L'asfalto è caldo e soffice di sole.<br>La gente che passa sorride e lo saluta.<br>Lui sorride e risponde.<br>Ha la testa piena di cambiamento e svolta e speranza, e sa che la stanno consultando un pochino.<br><br>Ride. |
| Maybe there is the dance, as she says. Creation and change, destruction and change.<br>New marae from the old marae, a beginning from the end.<br>His mind weaves it into a spiral fretted with stars.<br>He holds out his hand, and it is gently taken. | Forse c'è la danza, come dice lei. Creazione e cambiamento, distruzione e cambiamento.<br>Un nuovo marae[11] dal vecchio marae, un inizio dalla fine.<br>La sua mente tesse tutto in una spirale adorna di stelle.<br>Tende la mano, che è dolcemente presa. |
| She walks down the street. The asphalt sinks beneath her muscled feet.<br>She whistles softly as she walks. Sometimes she smiles.<br>The people passing smile too, but duck their heads in a deferential way as though her smile is too sharp.<br>She grins more at their lowered heads.<br>She can dig out each thought, each reaction, out from the grey brains, out | Lei cammina per la strada. L'asfalto le affonda sotto i piedi muscolosi.<br>Fischietta piano mentre cammina. Ogni tanto sorride.<br>La gente che passa sorride a sua volta, ma abbassa la testa con deferenza come se il sorriso di lei fosse troppo tagliente.<br>Lei sorride ancora di più alle loro teste basse. Può estrarre ogni pensiero, ogni reazione, fuori da quei cervelli grigi, fuori |

[11] Luogo sacro dove i Māori si riuniscono per le attività religiose e concernenti la comunità: festeggiamenti, matrimoni, funerali, scuola, preghiera.

through the bones. She knows how. She knows a lot.
She is eager to know more.
But for now there is the sun at her back, and home here, and the free wind all round.
And them, shuffling ahead in the strange-paced dance. She quickens her steps until she has reached them.
And she sings as she takes their hands.
They were nothing more than people, by themselves. Even paired, any pairing, they would have been nothing more than people by themselves. But all together, they have become the heart and muscles and mind of something perilous and new, something strange and growing and great.
Together, all together, they are the instruments of change。

attraverso le ossa. Sa come fare. Sa un sacco di cose.
È impaziente di sapere di più.
Ma per adesso ha il sole sulla schiena, e una casa, qui, e il vento libero tutto intorno.
E loro, che le trotterellano davanti in quella danza dal ritmo bizzarro. Accelera il passo finché non li ha raggiunti.
E canta quando li prende per mano.
Non erano nient'altro che persone, da soli. Anche appaiati, qualsiasi paio, non sarebbero stati altro che persone da sole.
Ma tutti insieme sono diventati il cuore e i muscoli e la testa di qualcosa di periglioso e nuovo, una cosa strana e incalzante e grandiosa.
Insieme, loro insieme, sono gli strumenti del cambiamento.

In the beginning, it was darkness, and more fear, and a howling wind across the sea.
"Why not leave him?"
They can't whisper any more.
"No guarantee he'll stay on the bottom. Besides, we'll have to come back for the boat."

In principio era l'oscurità, e ancora paura, e un vento ululante che batteva il mare.
"Perché non lo lasciamo?"
Non possono più sussurrare.
"Non c'è garanzia che resti sul fondo. E poi, dobbiamo tornare per la barca."

The voice. The nightmare voice. The vivid haunting terrible voice, that seemed to murmur endearments all the while the hands skilfully and cruelly hurt him.
"We'll have to move soon."
It is happening again, and like the time before, there is nothing he can do to stop it. It will take away the new people, it will break him, it will start all over again. He cannot change it. And worst of all, he knows in an inchoate way that the greatest terror is yet to come.
There is a sudden pause in the crashing of the waves, and a drawn prescient hissing.
"Jump now! Take the jacket, I'll swim. I can take care of him. . . ."
Even now, the barb of laughter in his voice.
Take care? Aiie!
In the memory in the black at the back of his eyes, there are words, different words. Help, but not help. Words. There were words.

La voce. La voce da incubo. La voce vivida terribile persistente, che sembrava sempre mormorare tenerezze mentre le mani lo colpivano con sapienza e crudeltà.
"Dobbiamo darci una mossa."
Sta succedendo di nuovo e, come le altre volte, non c'è niente che lui possa fare per impedirlo. Gli porterà via tutti i nuovi amici, lo devasterà, ricomincerà tutto da capo. Non può farci niente. E la cosa peggiore è che sa, in cuor suo, che il terrore più grande deve ancora venire.
C'è un'improvvisa pausa nel frangersi delle onde, e un sincopato sibilo premonitore.
"Salta! Prendi il giubbotto, io nuoto. A lui bado io…"
Perfino adesso, lo scherno del riso nella sua voce.
Badare? Aiie!
Nei ricordi nel nero dietro ai suoi occhi, ci sono parole, parole diverse. Aiuto, ma non aiuto. Parole. C'erano parole.
Ma poi il gemito lancinante e travolgente della barca che si infrange sugli scogli.

But then the overwhelming wrenching groan of the boat as she struck the rocks.
In the beginning, it was a tension, an element of strain that grew and crept like a thin worm through the harmony of their embrace.
"What *is* it you want?"
"Ahh nothing . . . you're all the man I need."
Chuckles in the warm dark.
Sitting up then and saying to him urgently:
"You must have a son. You must have people."
It gnaws at him. She knew, somehow, that she wasn't going to be the person who gave him a son, who gave him people. And she never told him.
Then, he had only chuckled again and said, "Well, we got him on the way, ne?"
But the undefinable careworm was still there.
After the storm-night, they talked about the tide-washed child.
"I think he likes us," he had said.
"He needs you . . . look at him hold on though he's not himself yet."
"Shall we keep him then?" half-joking.
She had answered "Yes!" without hesitation.
"Before our baby? Before our son?"
"Before them all, man," and she had turned out of his arms and danced, in lumbering triumphant glee.
Then the worm of care had gone. They were whole and sound together until the night they took her away.

It gnaws at him: the last words she gave him as they wheeled her under the flaring lights. Harsh and whispered, "O Ngakau, mind our child."
Timote was already dead.
She meant the other one, the one who sat on his lap unmoved it seemed, while he was shaken and robbed of breath by sobbing.
"Hana is dead, dead, dead . . ." the pale child held his hand, and looked into his face with alien sea-coloured eyes, unclouded by tears. Marama said how

In principio era un'attrito, un elemento di tensione crescente che si faceva strada strisciando come un verme sottile nell'armonia del loro abbraccio.
"Che cos'*è* che vuoi?"
"Ahh niente … sei tu tutto quello che voglio."
Risa sommesse nell'oscurità calda.
Poi si tira su e gli dice insistente:
"*Devi* avere un figlio. *Devi* avere una famiglia."
Lo consuma. Lei sapeva, chissà come, che non sarebbe stata la persona che gli avrebbe dato un figlio, che gli avrebbe dato una famiglia. E non gliel'aveva mai detto.
Poi, lui aveva ridacchiato di nuovo e le aveva detto, "Beh, tra poco il piccolo arriva, *ne*[12]?"
Ma l'indefinibile senso di preoccupazione strisciava ancora.
Dopo la notte di tempesta, avevano parlato del bambino-della-marea.
"Mim sa che gli piacciamo," aveva detto lui.
"Ha bisogno di te … guardalo, tiene duro anche se non è ancora tornato in sé."
"Lo teniamo, allora?" un po' per scherzo.
Lei aveva risposto "Sì!" senza esitazione.
"Prima del nostro bambino? Prima di nostro figlio?"
"Prima di tutti, no?" e si era liberata dal suo abbraccio e aveva ballato, preda di una gioia trionfante e sgraziata.
A quel punto il verme della preoccupazione se n'era andato. Erano stati completi e solidi insieme, fino alla notte in cui se l'erano portata via.
Lo consuma: le ultime parole che gli ha detto mentre la barella sfrecciava sotto le luci brillanti. Dure e sussurrate, "O Ngakau, bada al nostro bambino."
Timote era già morto.
Intendeva quell'altro, quello che gli sedeva in grembo, all'apparenza indifferente, mentre lui era scosso e senza fiato per i singhiozzi.
"Hana è morta, morta, morta …" il bambino pallido gli teneva la mano, e lo

[12] Interiezione in Māori nell'originale.

bitterly, how hysterically upset he had been. But he never showed it to me.
It gnaws at him: he has this one thing left of her, this second, hand, barely-touched half-formed relic of her presence.
And he no longer really wants it.
And he knows the rock of desolation, and the deep of despair.

She had debated, in the frivolity of the beginning, whether to build a hole or a tower; a hole, because she was fond of hobbits, or a tower – well, a tower for many reasons, but chiefly because she liked spiral stairways.
As time went on, and she thought over the pros and cons of each, the idea of a tower became increasingly exciting; a star-gazing platform on top; a quiet library, book-lined, with a ring of swords on the nether wall; a bedroom, mediaeval style, with massive roofbeams and a plain hewn bed; there'd be a living room with a huge fireplace, and rows of spicejars on one wall, and underneath, on the ground level, an entrance hall hung with tapestries, and the beginnings of the spiral stairway, handrails dolphin-headed, saluting the air.
There'd be a cellar, naturally, well stocked with wines, home-brewed and imported vintage; lined with Chinese ginger jars, and wooden boxes of dates. Barrels round the walls, and shadowed chests in comers.
All through the summer sun she laboured, alone with the paid, bemused, professional help. The dust obscured and flayed, thirst parched, and tempers frayed, but the Tower grew. A concrete skeleton, wooden ribs and girdle, skin of stone, grey and slateblue and heavy honey-coloured. Until late one February it stood, gaunt and strange and embattled, built on an almost island in the shallows of an inlet, tall in Taiaroa.
It Ias the hermitage, her glimmeri"g retreat. No people invited, for what could they know of the secrets that crept and chilled and chuckled in the marrow of her bones? No need of

guardava in faccia con occhi alieni color mare, senza nemmeno una lacrima.
Marama ha detto quanto aspramente, istericamente fosse sconvolto. Ma a me non l'ha fatto vedere.
Lo consuma: gli resta solo questo di lei, questa reliquia di seconda mano, quasi intatta, semi-formata della sua presenza.
E lui in fondo non la vuole più.
E conosce lo scoglio del dolore e l'abisso della disperazione.
Era stata indecisa, nella frivolezza del principio, se costruire una tana o una torre; una tana perché le piacevano gli hobbit, o una torre – beh, una torre per tanti motivi, ma soprattutto perché adorava le scale a spirale.
Col passare del tempo, riflettendo sui pro e i contro di ciascuna, l'idea della torre cominciò a farsi sempre più appassionante; una terrazza per guardare le stelle in cima; una biblioteca raccolta, zeppa di libri, con un anello di spade sul muro in fondo; una camera da letto, stile medievale, con travi massicce e un letto semplice e squadrato; ci sarebbe stato un soggiorno con un enorme camino, e file di spezie su una parete e di sotto, al piano terra, un salone d'ingresso tappezzato di arazzi e l'inizio della scala a spirale, il delfino del corrimano culminante in un saluto all'aria.
Ovviamente ci sarebbe stata una cantina, ben fornita di vini, sia fatti in casa che d'importazione; zeppa di barattoli di ginger cinese e scatole di legno piene di datteri. Barili lungo i muri e cassapanche negli angoli bui.
Aveva lavorato tutta l'estate sotto il sole, senza altra compagnia che manovalanza retribuita e sconcertata. La polvere confondeva e scorticava, la sete era insopportabile e l'umore era allo stremo, ma la torre cresceva. Uno scheletro di cemento, costole e busto di legno, pelle di pietra grigia e ardesia e bronzo. Finché, quasi alla fine di un febbraio, si erse spoglia e strana e possente, costruita in una quasi isola nelle secche di una baia, imponente a Taiaroa.
Era l'eremo, il suo ritiro scintillante. Non ci avrebbe invitato nessuno, che ne sapevano dei segreti che strisciavano e raggelavano e ridacchiavano nel midollo

people, because she was self-fulfilling, delighted with the pre-eminence of her art, and the future of her knowing hands.
But the pinnacle became an abyss, and the driving joy ended. At last there was a prison.
I am encompassed by a wall, high and hard and stone, with only my brainy nails to tear it down.
And I cannot do it.

# I

## Season of the Day Moon

### 1

### Portrait of a Sandal

*I*

". . . Like our bullock, Jack. Bugger'll be on the old age pension before he's killed."

"Yeah, but look who's laughing meantime?"

There was a rattle of laughter round the bar.

Kerewin, sitting apart, rang a coin on the counter and beckoned the barman.

"Same again?"

"Yes please."

> *This ship that sets its sails forever*
> *rigid on my coin*
> *is named Endeavour.*
> *She buys a drink to bar the dreams of the long nights lying.*
> *The world is never what it seems* and the sun is dying . . .

She shrugs.

Wonder what would happen if I started singing out loud?

The beer moves in a whirlpool to the lip of the glass: the hose withdraws.

delle sue ossa? Non aveva bisogno di nessuno, perché lei era un essere auto-appagante, deliziato dalla pre-eminenza della sua arte e dal futuro delle sue mani sapienti.
Ma il vertice divenne un abisso e la gioia motrice ebbe fine. Da ultimo ci fu una prigione.
Sono ccircondata da un muro di pietra, alto e arduo, e ho solo le mie mani sapienti per farlo a pezzi.
E non ce la posso fare.

# I

## Stagione della luna diurna

### 1

### Ritratto di un sandalo

*I*

"…Come il nostro torello, Jack. Quel bastardo c'avrà la pensione d'anzianità prima che lo ammazzano."

"Seh, ma chi è che se la ride intanto?"

Uno scroscio di risa percorse il bar.

Kerewin, seduta in disparte, fece tintinnare una moneta sul bancone e fece cenno al barista.

"Un altro?"

"Sì, grazie."

> *Questa nave che spiega le vele per sempre*
> *rigide sulla mia moneta*
> *si chiama Endeavour.*
> *Paga un giro per scacciare i sogni delle lunghe*
> *notti distese.*
> *Il mondo non è mai ciò che sembra* e il sole muore…

Dà un'alzata di spalle.

Chissà che succede se mi metto a cantare a squarciagola?

“Had a nice night?” asks the barman politely.

It’s the first thing anybody has said to her.

“Yeah.”

He hands her back the change.

“Fishing been any good?”

> How long did it take to get round town that I had bought a boat?

“O fair enough,” she says, “fair enough.”

“Well, that’s good. . .” he mops the bartop cursorily and drifts away down to the other end of the bar, to the talk and the ever-curious people.

> It’s late, Holmes, way after eleven. There’s no point in staying.

There had been no point in coming to the pub either, other than to waste some more time, and drink some more beer.

Guffaws.

Somebody’s in the middle of a rambling drunken anecdote. A Maori, thickset, a working bloke with steel-toed boots, and black hair down to his shoulders. He’s got his fingers stuck in his belt, and the heavy brass buckle of it glints and twinkles as he teeters back and forwards.

“ . . . And then fuckin hell would you believe he takes the candle . . .”

> I’d believe the poor effing fella’s short of words. Or thought. Or maybe just intellectual energy.

The word is used monotonously, a sad counterbalance for every phrase.

“And no good for even fuckin Himi eh? Shit, no use, I said....”

La birra si muove in un vortice fino al bordo del bicchiere: il tubo della spina si ritrae.

“Passato una bella serata?” chiede gentile il barista.

Sono le prime parole che le vengono rivolte.

“Seh.”

Le dà indietro il resto.

“Andata bene la pesca?”

> Quanto c’è voluto perché si spargesse la voce che ho comprato una barca?

“*O* non c’è male,” dice, “non c’è male.”

“Beh, bene dai. . .” passa di sfuggita lo straccio sul bancone e si dirige all’altro capo del bar, verso le chiacchiere e la gente indiscreta.

> È tardi Holmes, le undici sono passate da un pezzo. Non ha senso restare.

In effetti non aveva alcun senso nemmeno esserci andata al pub, a parte perdere un altro po’ di tempo e bere un altro po’ di birra.

Risata fragorosa.

Qualcuno è sbronzo, nel pieno di un aneddoto farneticante. Un maori, tarchiato, un operaio con gli scarponi da lavoro e capelli neri fino alle spalle. Ha le dita infilate nella cintura e quando barcolla avanti e indietro la pesante fibbia di metallo luccica e scintilla.

“. . . E poi cazzo da non crederci prende la candela . . . ”

> Si direbbe che quel povero disgraziato del “c” sia a corto di parole. O di pensieri. O forse proprio di energia intellettiva.

L’uso che fa della parola è ripetitivo, una triste compensazione a ogni frase.

Why this speech filled with
bitterness and contempt?
You hate English, man? I
can understand that but
why not do your
conversing in Maori and
spare us this
contamination? No swear
words in that tongue...
there he goes again. Ah
hell the fucking word has
its place, but all the time?
... aue.

Kerewin shakes her head. No use thinking about it. She drains her glass, slips off the stool, and heads for the door.

The group at the end of the bar turns round to stare. The man stops his yarn and smiles blurrily at her. She didn't smile back.

"Goodnight," calls the barman.

"Goodnight."

. . .

The crayfish moved in silence through clear azure water. Bright scarlet armour, waving antennae, red legs stalking onward. Azure and scarlet. Beautiful.

It Ias Iout then Ie realised she was in the middle of a dream, because living crayfish were purple-maroon and orange: only when cooked, do they turn scarlet. A living boiled cray? A crayfish cooking as it walked calmly through a hot pool?

She shuddered. The crayfish moved more quickly through the blue crystal sea and the fog of dreaming increased....

. . .

It is still dark but she can't sleep any more.

She dresses and goes down to the beach, and sits on the top of a sandhill until the sky pales.

"E cazzo non è bene neanche per Himi eh? Porca puttana, è inutile, ho detto. . ."

Come mai queste parole
piene di amarezza e
disprezzo? Odi l'inglese,
ciccio? Posso capire, ma
allora perché non conversi in
maori e ci risparmi questa
contaminazione? Quella
lingua non ne ha di
parolacce…arieccolo. Ah,
fanculo, quella parola del
cazzo ha un suo perché, ma
di continuo? . . . aue[13].

Kerewin scuote la testa. Pensarci non serve a niente. Si scola il bicchiere, scivola giù dallo sgabello e si avvia verso la porta.

Quelli del gruppo in fondo al bar si girano a guardarla. L'uomo interrompe la sua tirata e le sorride sfuocato. Lei non ricambia il sorriso.

"Buonanotte," dice il barista.

"Buonanotte."

…

Il gambero si mosse silenzioso nell'acqua azzurra limpida. Armatura scarlatta, antenne fluttuanti, zampe rosse in avanzata. Azzurro e scarlatto. Magnifico.

Fu più o meno allora che si rese conto che stava sognando, perché i gamberi vivi sono marrone-violaceo e arancio: solo quando sono cotti diventano scarlatti. Un gambero vivo bollito? Un gambero in cottura mentre cammina tranquillo in una pozza calda?

Rabbrividì. Il gambero si mosse più svelto nel mare azzurro cristallino e la nebbia del sogno si fece più fitta…

…

È ancora buio ma non riesce più a dormire.

[13] esclamazione di sgomento o disperazione (te reo Māori).

Another day, herr Gott,
and I am tired, tired.

She stands, and grimaces, and spits. The spittle lies on the sand a moment, a part of her a moment ago, and then it vanishes, sucked in, a part of the beach now.

Fine way to greet the day,
my soul . . . go down to the
pools, Te Kaihau, and
watch away the last night
sourness.

And here I am, balanced on the saltstained rim, watching minute navyblue fringes, gill-fingers of tubeworms, fan the water . . . put the shadow of a finger near them, and they flick outasight. Eyes in your lungs . . . neat. Thee three-fin blenny swirls by . . . tena koe, fish. A small bunch of scarlet and gold anemones furl and unfurl their arms, graceful petals, slow and lethal . . . tickle tickle, and they turn into uninteresting lumps of brownish jelly . . . haven't made sea-anemone soup for a while, whaddabout it? Not today, Josephine . . . at the bottom, in a bank of brown bulbous weed, a hermit crab is rustling a shell. Poking at it, sure it's empty? Ditheringly unsure . . . but now,

nervously hunched over his soft slug of belly, he extricates himself from his old hutch and speeds deftly into the new . . . at least, that's where you thought you were going, e mate? . . . hoowee, there really is no place like home, even when it's grown a couple of sizes too small. . . .

Si veste e scende alla spiaggia e si siede in cima a una duna finché il cielo non comincia a schiarire.

Un altro giorno, herr Gott, e
sono stanca, stanca.

Si alza, fa una smorfia e sputa. La saliva se ne sta per un istante sulla sabbia, parte di lei un istante fa, e poi svanisce, risucchiata, ora parte della spiaggia.

Bel modo di salutare il
giorno, anima mia … va' alle
pozze, Te Kaihau[14], e guarda
svanire l'amarezza della
scorsa notte.

Ed eccomi qui, in equilibrio sull'orlo salso, a guardare minute frange blumarino, le dita branchiate dei vermi tubo, che ondeggiano nell'acqua … mettigli vicino l'ombra di un dito e guizzano al riparo. Occhi nei polmoni … figata. La bavosa mi vortica accanto … tena koe[15], pesce. Un mucchietto di anemoni rossi e oro che spiegano e ripiegano le braccia, petali leggiadri, lenti e letali… ghirighiri e diventano ammassi inutili di gelatina brunastra … è da un po' che non fai la zuppa di anemoni di mare, chennedici? Oggi no, Giuseppina[16] … sul fondo, in mezzo a un banco di alghe bulbose e marroni, un paguro trafuga una conchiglia. Le dà dei colpetti, sicuro che è vuota? Titubantemente esitante … ma ora,

curvato nervosamente sul suo morbido corpo di lumaca, si divincola dal suo vecchio alloggio e con destrezza si affretta dentro il nuovo … almeno, è lì che pensavi di andare, *e*[17] amico? … aaah, non c'è nessun posto come *casa*, anche quando ormai ti va stretta di un paio di taglie. . . .

[14] lett. mangiatore di vento (te reo Māori: kai=food, to eat; hau=wind, breeze, breath). Può significare sia vagabondo che perdigiorno.
[15] ciao, forma di saluto a una persona (te reo Māori)
[16] "Not tonight Josephine" era un'espressione ironica (o semi-ironica) usata comunemente per declinare l'invito sessuale della partner, attribuita a Napoleone Bonaparte e al suo rifiuto di possedere Giuseppina. Dal 1970 è entrata nell'uso comune dell'inglese australiano e neozelandese ("Not today Josephine") per dire di no.
[17] Interiezione in Māori nell'originale, omografa alla congiunzione copulativa positiva italiana "e", che si è scelto di mantenere usando il corsivo. Corrisponde, più o meno, all'italiano "eh".

There is a great bank of Neptune's necklaces fringing the next pool.

"The sole midlitoral fuccoid," she intones solemnly, and squashes a bead of it under the butt of her stick. "Ahh me father he was orange and me mother she was green," slithers off the rocks, and wanders further away down the beach, humming. Nothing like a tidepool for taking your mind off things, except maybe a quiet spot of killing. . . .

Walking the innocent stick alongside, matching its step to hers, she climbs back up the sandhills. Down the other side in a rush, where it is dark and damp still, crashing through loose clusters of lupins. Dew sits in the centre of each lupin-leaf, hands holding jewels to catch the sunfire until she brushes past and sends the jewels sliding, drop by drop weeping off.

The lupins grow less; the marram grass diminishes into a kind of reedy weed; the sand changes by degrees into mud. It's an estuary, where someone built a jetty, a long long time ago. The planking has rotted, and the uneven teeth of the pilings jut into nowhere now.

> It's an odd macabre kind of existence. While the nights away in drinking, and fill the days with petty killing. Occasionally, drink out a day and then go and hunt all night, just for the change.

She shakes her head.

> Who cares? That's the way things are now. (I care.)

She climbs a piling, and using the stick as a balancing pole, jumps across the gaps from one pile to the next out to the last. There she sits down, dangling her legs, stick against her shoulder, and

C'è una bella fila di collane di Nettuno che incornicia la pozza seguente.

"L'unica fuccoide del mesolitorale," intona solennemente schiacciandone un grano sotto la punta del bastone. "Ahh il padre avevo arancio e mia mamma era verde,[18] scivola via dagli scogli e si avventura più avanti lungo la spiaggia, canticchiando. Niente ti libera la mente dai pensieri quanto le pozze della bassa marea, eccetto forse un'ammazzatina…

Col bastone innocente al suo fianco, le impronte dell'uno che si appaiano alle sue, ritorna in cima alle dune. Giù di corsa dall'altra parte, dov'è ancora buio e umido, precipitandosi attraverso un rado ammasso di lupini. La rugiada giace al centro di ogni foglia, mani piene di gioielli esposti al fuoco del sole finché lei non gli sfreccia accanto e fa scivolare i gioielli, che goccia a goccia lacrimano via.

I lupini si diradano; l'Ammophila si riduce a una specie di sottile erbaccia; la sabbia piano piano si trasforma in fango. È un estuario, dove tantissimo tempo fa qualcuno ha costruito un pontile. Le assi sono marcite e la dentatura irregolare dei pali ora si affaccia sul niente.

> È uno stile di vita strano, macabro. Far passare le serate bevendo e riempire le giornate con uccisioni futili. Ogni tanto, bersi una giornata e poi andare a caccia tutta la notte, tanto per cambiare.

Scuote la testa.

> Chissenefrega? Così stanno le cose ora. (A me me ne frega.)

Si arrampica su uno dei pilastri e, usando il bastone per mantenere l'equilibrio, salta gli spazi fra un palo e l'altro fino all'ultimo. Ci si mette a sedere,

[18] Canzone umoristica del canone folk irlandese nota come "The Orange and The Green", ha un chiaro riferimento alla contrapposizione tra protestanti e cattolici.

lights a cigarillo to smoke away more time.

Intermittent wheeping flutes from oystercatchers.

The sound of the sea.

A gull keening.

When the smoke is finished, she unscrews the top of the stick

and draws out seven inches of barbed steel. It fits neatly into slots in the stick top.

"Now, flounders are easy to spear, providing one mind the toes."

Whose, hers or the fishes', she has never bothered finding out. She rolls her jeans legs up as far as they'll go, and slips down into the cold water. She steps ankle deep, then knee deep, and stands, feeling for the moving of the tide. Then slowly, keeping the early morning sun in front of her, she begins to stalk, mind in her hands and eyes looking only for the puff of mud and swift silted skid of a disturbed flounder.

> All this attention for
> sneaking up on a fish? And
> they say we humans are
> intelligent? Sheeit . . .

and with a darting levering jab, stabbed, and a flounder flaps bloodyholed at the end of the stick.

Kerewin looks at it with slow smiled satisfaction.

> Goodbye soulwringing
> night. Good morning
> sinshine, and a fat happy
> day.

The steeled stick quivers.

She pulls a rolledup sack from her belt and drops the fish, still weakly flopping, in it. She hangs the lot up by sticking her knife through the sackneck into a piling side.

The Iater round the jetty is at thigh-level when she brings the third fish back, but there has been no hurry. She guts the fish by the rising tide's edge, and lops off their heads for the mud

con le gambe che dondolano e il bastone contro la spalla, e accende un cigarillo per far passare un altro po' di tempo.

Il canto intermittente delle beccacce.

Il suono del mare.

Un gabbiano grida.

Finito di fumare svita l'impugnatura del bastone

ed estrae una quindicina di centimetri di acciaio seghettato. Si incastra alla perfezione nei solchi in cima al bastone.

"Ora, i rombi sono facili da infilzare, però si deve stare attenti ai piedi."

Quali, se suoi o dei pesci, non si è mai preoccupata di scoprirlo. Si arrotola i jeans più in alto che può e scivola nell'acqua fredda. Procede con l'acqua alle caviglie, poi alle ginocchia e si ferma per sentire il flusso della marea. Poi lentamente, tenendosi il sole del primo mattino di fronte, comincia la caccia, la mente nelle mani e gli occhi attenti solo allo sbuffo di fango e all'improvvisa scia di limo di un rombo infastidito.

> Tutta questa concentrazione
> per cogliere di sorpresa un
> pesce? E poi dicono che noi
> umani siamo intelligenti?
> Caaazzo …

e con uno scattante affondo dall'angolazione perfetta, infilza, e un rombo si agita, trafitto, in cima al bastone.

Kerewin lo guarda soddisfatta, sorridendo di gusto.

> Addio notte contorcianima.
> Buongiorno malalba, e una
> bella giornata piena.

Il bastone puntuto freme.

Tira fuori dalla cintura un sacchetto arrotolato e ci butta il pesce, che ancora si agita debolmente. Appende tutto al lato di un pilastro infilzando i manici del sacchetto col coltello.

L'acqua intorno al molo le arriva alla coscia quando riporta il terzo, ma se l'è presa calma. Sventra il pesce al limitare della marea che sale, e mozza le teste per lasciarle ai granchi. Poi si sdraia nel fitto dell'erba e, con un braccio per cuscino e

crabs to pick. Then she lies down in a great thicket of dun grass, and using one arm as a headrest and the other as a sunshade, falls quietly asleep.

It Is the cold that wakes her, and clouds passing over the face of the sun. There is an ache in the back of her neck, and her pillowing arm is numb. She stands up stiffly, and stretches: she smells rain coming. A cloud of midge-like flies blunders into her face and hair. On the ground round the sack hovers another swarm, buzzing thinly through what would seem to be for them a fog of fish. The wind is coming from the sea. She picks up the sack, and sets off for home through the bush. Raupo and fern grow into a tangle of gorse: a track appears and leads through the gorse to a stand of windwarped trees. They are ngaio. One tree stands out from its fellows, a giant of the kind, nearly ten yards tall.

Some of its roots are exposed and form a bowl-like seat. Kerewin sits down for a smoke, as she nearly always does when she comes this way, keeping a weather eye open for rain.

In the dust at her feet is a sandal.

For a moment she is perfectly still with the unexpectedness of it.

Then she leans forward and picks it up.

It can't have been here for long because it isn't damp. It's rather smaller than her hand, old and scuffed, with the position of each toe palely upraised in the leather. The stitching of the lower strap was coming undone, and the buckle hung askew.

"Young to be running loose round here."

She frowns. She doesn't like children, doesn't like people, and has discouraged anyone from coming on her land.

"If I get hold of you, you'll regret it, whoever you are. . . ."

She squats down and peers up the track. There are footprints, one set of them. Of a sandalled foot and half an unshod foot.

> Limping? Something in its foot so that's why the

uno per parasole, pian piano si addormenta.

È il freddo a svegliarla, e le nuvole che oscurano il sole col loro passaggio. Le fa male il collo e il braccio-cuscino è insensibile. Si alza, rigida, e si stiracchia: sente odore di pioggia in arrivo. Un nugolo di simil-moscerini le vola in faccia e nei capelli. Per terra, intorno al sacchetto, si libra un altro sciame che ronza fievole attraverso quella che potrebbe sembrargli una nebbia di pesce. Il vento arriva dal mare. Prende il sacchetto e si avvia a casa attraverso la macchia. Raupo e felci crescono in un groviglio di vegetazione: appare un sentiero che conduce attraverso le piante fino a un gruppo di alberi incurvati dal vento. Sono ngaio. Un albero si distingue dai suoi compagni, un gigante della specie, alto quasi dieci metri.

Alcune delle radici sono scoperte e formano una seduta a ciotola. Kerewin si siede per farsi una fumata, come fa quasi sempre quando passa di qui, con un occhio meteo all'erta per la pioggia.

Nella polvere ai suoi piedi c'è un sandalo.

Per un attimo resta completamente immobile di fronte alla natura improvvisa della cosa.

Poi si china in avanti e lo raccoglie.

Non può essere stato qui a lungo perché non è umido. È appena più piccolo della sua mano, vecchio e logoro, con la posizione di ogni dito leggermente impressa nella pelle. La cucitura del cinturino in basso aveva quasi ceduto e la fibbia ciondolava di traverso.

"Troppo giovane per gironzolare da solo qui intorno."

Aggrotta le sopracciglia. Non le piacciono i bambini, non le piacciono le persone, e ha dissuaso chiunque dal mettere piede sulla sua terra.

"Se ti becco te ne pentirai, chiunque tu sia …"

Si accovaccia e dà un'occhiata al sentiero. Ci sono delle impronte, una serie. Di un piede calzato e di mezzo piede scalzo.

sandal is taken off and left behind?

She rubs a finger inside the sandal. The inner sole was shiny and polished from long wearing and she could feel the indentation of the foot. Well-worn indeed . . . in the heel though there is a sharpedged protrusion of leather, like a tiny crater rim. She turns it over. There is a corresponding Indriven hole In the rubber.

"So we jumped on something that bit, did we?"

She slings the sandal into the sack of flounders, and marches away belligerently, hoping to confront its owner.

But a short distance before her garden is reached, the one and a half footprints trail off the track, heading towards the beach.

Beaches aren't private, she thinks, and dismisses the intruder from her mind.

The wind is blowing more strongly when she pushes open the heavy door, and the sky is thick with dark cloud.

"Storm's coming," as she shuts the door, "but I am safe inside. . . ."

The entrance hall, the second level of the six-floored Tower, is low and stark and shadowed. There is a large brass and wood crucifix on the far wall and green seagrass matting over the floor. The

Zoppica? Ha qualcosa nel piede, per questo si è tolto il sandalo e l'ha lasciato qui?

Passa un dito dentro il sandalo. La suola all'interno è liscia e lucida per l'uso e riesce a sentire i solchi lasciati dal piede. Consumato per bene, insomma … nel tallone però c'è una sporgenza di pelle affilata, come il bordo di un piccolo cratere. Lo gira. Nella gomma c'è un buco corrispondente, all'indentro.

"Allora abbiamo messo il piede su qualcosa che buca, eh?"

Butta il sandalo nel sacchetto dei rombi, e avanza belligerante, sperando di affrontarne il proprietario.

Ma pochi metri prima di raggiungere il giardino, l'impronta e mezza si allontana dal sentiero in direzione della spiaggia.

Le spiagge non sono private, pensa, e si toglie l'intruso dalla testa.

Il vento soffia più forte appena apre il pesante portone, e il cielo è fitto di nuvole scure.

"Arriva il temporale," mentre chiude la porta, "ma dentro sono al sicuro…"

L'ingresso, il secondo dei sei piani della Torre, è basso e spoglio e buio. C'è un crocifisso di legno e ottone sul muro di fronte alla porta e il pavimento è tappezzato di una stuoia verde. Il

handrail of the spiral staircase ends in the carved curved flukes of a dolphin; otherwise, the room is bare of furniture and ornament. She runs up the stairs, and the sack drips as it swings.

"One two three aleary hello my sweet mere hell these get steeper daily, days of sun and wine and jooyyy,"

the top, and stop, breathless.

"Holmes you are thick and unfit and getting fatter day by day. But what the hell . . . ."

She puts the flounders on bent wire hooks and hangs them in the coolsafe. She lights the fire, and stokes up the range, and goes upstairs to the library

Corrimano della scala a spirale finisce nelle pinne intagliate e ricurve di un delfino; per il resto la stanza è spoglia di qualsiasi mobile od ornamento. Si avvia di corsa per le scale e il sacchetto dondola, sgocciolando.

"Un due tre arincoglionita mia cara inferno puro diventano ogni giorno più ripide, giorni di sole e vino e giooooiaaaa,"

in cima, si ferma, senza fiato.

"Holmes sei tozza e fuori forma e diventi più grassa ogni giorno che passa. Ma che cavolo…"

Mette i rombi su uncini di fil di ferro e li appende al fresco e al riparo dalle mosche. Accende il fuoco e attizza la brace nella stufa, e va nella biblioteca al

for a book on flatfish cooking. There is just about everything in her library.

A sliver of sudden light as Ie comes from the spiral into the booklined room, and a moment later, the distant roll of thunder.

"Very soon, my beauty, all hell will break loose . . ." and her words hang in the stillness.

She stands over by the window, hands fistplanted on her hips, and watches the gathering boil of the surf below. She has a curious feeling as she stands there, as though something is out of place, a wrongness somewhere, an uneasiness, an overwatching. She stares morosely at her feet (longer second toes still longer, you think they might one day grow less, you bloody werewolf you?) and the joyous relief that the morning's hunting gave, ebbs away.

"Bleak grey mood to match the bleak grey weather," and she hunches over to the nearest bookshelf. "Stow the book on cooking fish. Gimme something escapist, Narnia or Gormenghast or Middle Earth, or,"

it isn't a movement that made her look up.

There is a gap between two tiers of bookshelves. Her chest of pounamu rests in between them, and above it, there is a slit window.

In the window, standing stiff and straight like some weird saint in a stained gold window, is a child. A thin shockheaded person, haloed in hair, shrouded in the dying sunlight.

The eyes are Invisible. It is silent, immobile.

Kerewin stares, shocked and gawping and speechless.

The thunder sounds again, louder, and a cloud covers the last of the sunlight. The room goes very dark.
If it moves suddenly, it's going to go through that glass.
Hit rockbottom forty feet below and end up looking like an imploded plum. . . .

piano di sopra a prendere un libro sulla cucina dei pesci piatti. Nella sua biblioteca c'è proprio di tutto.

Quando, dalla spirale, entra nella stanza piena di libri, una scheggia improvvisa di luce argentea e, un attimo dopo, il lontano rombo del tuono.

"Molto presto, bella mia, si scatenerà l'inferno…" e le parole restano sospese nell'immobilità.

Sta lì vicino alla finestra, i pugni chiusi sui fianchi, e guarda il crescente ribollire della spuma sottostante. Ha una strana sensazione mentre se ne sta lì, come se ci fosse qualcosa fuori posto, un'incongruenza da qualche parte, un'oppressione, qualcosa che incombe. Si fissa i piedi, cupa (gli indici più lunghi sono rimasti più lunghi, pensi che un giorno possano accorciarsi, stupida licantropa?) e il gioioso sollievo della mattinata di caccia scivola via.

"Umore grigio e tetro che fa il paio col tempo grigio e tetro," e si piega verso lo scaffale più vicino. "Mettiamo da parte il libro di cucina sul pesce. Datemi qualcosa per evadere, Narnia o Gormenghast o la Terra di Mezzo, o,"

non è stato un movimento a farla voltare.

C'è uno spazio tra due delle librerie. Lo scrigno dei pounamu[19] sta lì nel mezzo e sopra c'è una feritoia.

Nella finesta, dritto e rigido come uno strano santo in una teca dorata, c'è un bambino. Un esile essere scarmigliato, aureolato di capelli, avvolto nella luce del sole morente.

Gli occhi non si vedono. Sta zitto, immobile.

Kerewin lo fissa, scioccata e imbambolata e senza parole.

Il tuono risuona di nuovo, più forte, e una nuvola nasconde quel che resta della luce. La stanza si fa molto buia.

Se si muove di scatto, finisce che casca di sotto.
Un volo di dieci metri e si schianta come una prugna…

[19] Pounamu è la giada della Nuova Zelanda, anche detta "pietra verde". Molto spesso usata per fare gioielli, e armi decorative.

She barks,

"Get the bloody hell *down* from there!"

Her breathing has quickened and her heart thuds as though she were the intruder.

The head shifts. Then the child turns slowly and carefully round in the niche, and wriggles over the side in an awkward progression, feet ankles shins hips, half-skidding half-slithering down to the chest, splayed like a lizard on a wall. It turns round, and gingerly steps onto the floor.

"Explain."

There isn't much above a yard of ,it standing there, a foot out of range of her furthermost reach. Small and thin, with an extraordinary face, highboned and hollowcheeked, cleft and pointed chin, and a sharp sharp nose. Nothing else is visible under an obscuration of silverblond hair except the mouth, and it's set in an uncommonly stubborn line.

Nasty. Gnomish, thinks Kerewin. The shock of surprise is going and cold cutting anger comes sweeping in to take its place.

"What are you doing here? Aside from climbing walls?"

There is something distinctly unnatural about it. It stands there unmoving, sullen and silent.

"Well?"

In the ensuing silence, the rain comes rattling against the windows, driving down in a hard steady rhythm.

"We'll bloody soon find out," saying it viciously, and reaching for a shoulder.

Shove it downstairs and call authority.

Unexpectedly, a handful of thin fingers reaches for her wrist, arrives and fastens with the wistful strength of the small.

Kerewin looks at the fingers, looks sharply up and meets the child's eyes for the first time. They are seabluegreen, a startling colour, like opals.

It looks scared and diffident, yet curiously intense.

"Let go my wrist," but the grip tightens.

Abbaia,

"Scendi immediatamente di lì, porca miseria!"

Ha il respiro affannoso e il cuore che batte così forte che sembra che l'intrusa sia lei.

La testa si volta. Poi il bambino gira lentamente e con cautela su se stesso nella nicchia e si contorce oltre il bordo in una progressione sgraziata, piedi caviglie stinchi fianchi, mezzo-scivolando mezzo-strisciando fino alla cassapanca, appiccicato come una lucertola al muro. Si gira e poggia delicatamente i piedi sul pavimento.

"Spiega."

Più o meno un metro di lui, lì in piedi, pochi centimetri fuori dalla sua portata massima. Piccolo ed esile, con un volto straordinario, zigomi alti e guance scavate, mento aguzzo con la fossetta e un naso affilato affilato. Non si vede nient'altro sotto l'oscuramento dei capelli biondoargentei eccetto la bocca, fissa in un'inconsueta espressione di caparbietà.

Disgustoso. Gnomesco, pensa Kerewin. Il turbamento della sorpresa sta svanendo e una rabbia fredda e tagliente arriva dirompente a prenderne il posto.

"Che ci fai qui? Arrampicata sui muri a parte?"

C'è qualcosa di palesemente innaturale in lui. Se ne sta lì immobile, imbronciato e silenzioso.

"Allora?"

Nel silenzio che segue, la pioggia fa vibrare i vetri delle finestre, venendo giù a ritmo deciso e regolare.

"Lo scopriremo molto presto," con tono aggressivo e afferrandolo per una spalla.

Spingilo giù di sotto e chiama la polizia.

All'improvviso, una manciata di dita sottili le afferra il polso e lo stringe con la forza assorta dell'esile.

Kerewin guarda le dita, alza lo sguardo all'improvviso e per la prima volta incontra gli occhi del bambino. Sono verdeblumarino, un colore sorprendente, come gli opali.

Sembra spaventato e diffidente, eppure curiosamente forte.

"Lasciami il polso," ma la morsa si stringe.

Not restraining violence, pressing meaning.

Even as she thinks that, the child draws a deep breath and lets it out in a strange sound, a groaning sigh. Then the fingers round her waist slide off, sketch urgently in the air, retreat.

Aue. She sits down, back on her heels, way back on her heels. Looking at the brat guardedly; taking out cigarillos and matches; taking a deep breath herself and expelling it in smoke.

The child stays unmoving, hand back behind it; only the odd sea-eyes flicker, from her face to her r hands and back round again.

She doesn't like looking at the child. One of the maimed, the contaminating. . . .

She looks at the smoke curling upward in a thin blue stream instead.

"Ah, you can't talk, is that it?"

A rustle of movement, a subdued rattle, and there, pitched into the open on the birdboned chest, is a pendant hanging like a label on a chain.

She leans forward and picks it up, taking intense care not to touch the person underneath.

It was a label.

1 PACIFIC STREET
WHANGAROA
PHONE 633Z COLLECT

She turns it over.

SIMON P. GILLAYLEY
CANNOT SPEAK

"Fascinating," drawls Kerewin, and gets to her feet fast, away to the window. Over the sound of the rain, she can hear a fly dying somewhere close, buzzing frenetically. No other noise.

Reluctantly she turns to face the child. "Well, we'll do nothing more. You found your way here, you can find it back." Something came into focus. "O there's a sandal you can collect before you go." The eyes which had followed each of her movements, settling on and judging each one like a fly expecting swatting, drop to stare at his bare foot.

Non anticipa la violenza, imprime il significato.

Proprio mentre pensa questo, il bambino fa un respiro profondo e lascia andare l'aria con un suono strano, tra un sospiro e un gemito. Poi le dita intorno al polso di lei scivolano via, disegnano impazienti nell'aria, si ritraggono.

Aue. Si accovaccia, seduta sui talloni, molto indietro sui talloni. Osserva circospetta il ragazzino; tira fuori cigarilli e fiammiferi; fa anche lei un respiro profondo e lo espelle in fumo.

Il bambino resta immobile, le mani dietro la schiena; solo gli strani occhi di mare le guizzano dal viso alle mani e da capo di nuovo.

Non le piace stare a guardare il bambino. Uno degli storpi, dei contaminati. . . .

Guarda invece il fumo, che si arriccia verso l'alto in un sottile flusso blu.

"Ah, sei muto, quindi?"

Un fruscìo di movimento, un clangore smorzato e lì, esposto in bella vista sul petto da uccellino, c'è un ciondolo appeso tipo un'etichetta a una catenella.

Si sporge in avanti e la prende, facendo estrema attenzione a non toccare la persona che c'è sotto.

Era un'etichetta.

1 PACIFIC STREET
WHANGAROA
CHIAMARE 633Z A CARICO

La gira.

SIMON P. GILLAYLEY
MUTO

"Interessante," strascica Kerewin, e si rimette in piedi alla svelta, lontana dalla finestra. Al di sopra del rumore della pioggia, sente una mosca che sta morendo lì vicino e ronza frenetica. Nessun altro suono.

Riluttante si volta verso il bambino. "Beh, facciamo finta di niente. Come hai trovato la strada fin qui, troverai quella per tornare indietro." Le viene in mente una cosa. "Ah c'è un sandalo che puoi riprenderti prima di andare via." Gli occhi, che hanno seguito ogni suo movimento, soffermandosi su ciascuno e giudicandolo come una mosca in attesa del colpo, si abbassano a fissare il piede nudo.

She points to the spiral stairs.
“Out.”

Lei indica la scala a spirale.
“Fuori.”

## *Blackfella Whitefella* Chinese Translation

SHAN MA
Freelance translator and interpreter

*Blackfella Whitefella* is a rock song written by musicians Neil James Murray (1956-) & George Djilaynga (also known as George Rrurrambu Burarrwanga, 1957-2007)[1], recorded by their Aboriginal rock group Warumpi Band, and released in 1985 as part of their album *Big Name, No Blankets*. The Warumpi Band was Australia's first rock act to sing in an Indigenous Australian language (Bisley). [2]

This iconic song is one that marks the history of the Aboriginal Rights movement and is often referred to as "an anthem for the reconciliation movement in Australia" (Reconciliation Australia). The song is so powerful and direct, making the audience feel as if they are being spoken to personally and not just in general, urging them to contribute to the Aboriginal reconciliation cause (Ballantine). The song has inspired the documentary film *Blackfella/Whitefella* by Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and a picture book project in which children around Australia were invited to illustrate the meaning of the song. In 2018, as part of Triple M's "Ozzest 100", the "most Australian" songs of all time, this song was ranked number 82. And countless well-known musicians have performed this song on Australian and international stages since its release (Wikipedia).

To translate this song's lyrics, I followed Peter Low's suggestion (79) to take into consideration five aspects of lyrics translation for singing purpose, namely singability, sense, naturalness, rhythm, and rhyme. Low also urges translators to aim at achieving a high overall score across all five criteria without giving undue emphasis to one criterion over another.

Given the rap nature of this song, I decided the translation should keep the informal and colloquial style of the ST (Source Text). Adding a non-syllabic suffix "r" (儿) to some of the nouns (retroflex suffixation) has that effect, which is a common feature in spoken language in Northern China, particularly in the Beijing area. And it also helps with rhyming. Therefore, where possible, a "*儿*" is added to the noun at the line ends in the TT (Target Text), particularly for words like "哥们" (bro/mate) or "姐们" (sis).

The special meaning of the term "Blackfella" is noted in the translation. It is both Australian English and Aboriginal Australian English, referring to Indigenous Australians, in particular Aboriginal Australians (Delbridge etc.). It is a derogatory term originally used by White colonisers and has been reclaimed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, but it may still offend if used by people outside that group (Penguin Books). "Whitefella" is an expression that derived from Blackfella, suggesting the speaker is a Blackfella or is at least respectful of the Blackfella speech.

"Blackfella" might be translated as "黑人兄弟" (black brother) or "黑人哥们" (black mate/bro) in Chinese. However, both terms in Chinese usually refer to African people or African Americans, as there are no readily available terms in Chinese for Indigenous Australians specifically. To highlight the difference, I chose to translate the term as "*黑色的*

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[1] George Rrurrambu Burarrwanga was a Yolngu man, who lived in North-Eastern Arnhem Land, Northern Territory.

[2] Acknowledgments: Comments and suggestions by the reviewers and the editor, Professor Hélène Jaccomard, have helped to improve the quality of the manuscript. Mr Hui Jin and Dr Jinyue Wang offered valuable helps in the manuscript revision process. The author is very grateful to them.

*哥们儿*" (black-coloured mate) in Verse One: "colour" is mentioned specifically in the lyrics ("*It doesn't matter what your colour*"), and "哥们儿" is informal and colloquial. Accordingly, "Whitefella" is translated as "*白色的哥们儿*". In Verse Two, however, I used "*黑种的哥们儿*" (black-race mate) to parallel with "*黄种的哥们儿*" (yellow-race mate), as yellow-race people are called "黄种人" in Chinese (rather than "黄人" or "黄色的人"). Considering that the theme of this song applies to more than Indigenous Australians (see discussion below), this variation in the translation of the term "Blackfella" is compatible with this general implication.

Translation variation also happens for the same Line 6 of both Verse One and Verse Two, "*With different lives in different places*" — it was translated literally as such in Verse One, but "*生活在各处唸不同的经文儿*" (Live in different places and study different (religious) scripts) in Verse Two. The reference to people's different social economic lives in different places has already been translated in Verse One, so this variation is both acceptable and preferable, as it couples with the reference to "religions" in the next line in Verse Two. The use of polysemy "*种*" with three different meanings at different places in Verse Two (*race* in Lines 1, 2 & 5, *type* in Lines 2 & 3, and *brave* in Line 4) is also unique to TT, making the lyrics interesting and stimulating to the audience. The switching between different meanings of "*种*" is natural in the target context, and compatible with the source context as well.

The song has a clear Indigenous Australian focus, and promotes Indigenous Australian rights. Neil James Murray spent a long time living with Indigenous people before writing this song; George Djilaynga (aka Rrurrambu) was Aboriginal himself; and the debut performance of this song was by an Aboriginal band. But the song is not limited to Aboriginal rights only; it also aims to promote reconciliation in Australia in general, calling for the solidarity of brothers and sisters around the world to fight for racial equality and social justice. Given that understanding, I chose to translate the term "family plans" in the four-line chorus generally as "*四海一家*" (the whole world is one family), rather than literally as "大家庭计划".

"*Stand up and be counted*" is the "trope" of this protest song[3]. Three times in a row in the chorus, these commanding verbs are sending a very clear and powerful message, urging people to stand up and openly declare their support to the reconciliation movement. It is translated as "*站起来勇敢表态*" (stand up and bravely declare your position). "勇敢" (bravely) is added here to encourage people to do the right thing (openly supporting the reconciliation course), although it might be a difficult thing. Courage/bravery is not explicitly mentioned in that trope in English, but it is implied: "to make your opinions known even if doing so might cause you harm or difficulty" (Cambridge Dictionary). The Chinese expression "表态" means to make your opinions known, but it does not have the implication that doing so is difficult and requires courage, so "表态" alone does not have the same strength and moral imperative represented by "Stand up and be counted". The added adverb "勇敢" here will make up that missing part, therefore this explicitness is justified.

It is worth noting that, as a non-native speaker of English, at first I treated "stand up and be counted" as two separate phrases, and translated them as "站起来, '算我一个'" (stand up, and 'count me in'). It was only when a reviewer shared his research on these phrases

[3] It is interesting to compare "*Blackfella, Whitefella*" with Bob Marley's famous song (1973) "*Get up, Stand up for your rights*" (see https://zh.myfavouritelyrics.com/bob_marley_the_wailers/get_up_stand_up/ for a Chinese translation). Both are powerful protest songs that address social issues, but the latter has a more confrontational and revolutionary tone, whereas the former is more conciliatory, promoting harmony and unity between different races. Despite that, due to historical context, power dynamics, fear and ignorance, and disruption caused by change, the racial reconciliation movement still faces tremendous challenges and resistance, and supporters need great courage to participate and persist in the cause. That is why "Stand up and be counted" is repeatedly called here.

together that it dawned on me that these five words together are actually a set phrase, and "算我一个" (count me in) is not an adequate translation here. "算我一个" can be for anything in social gatherings, but it does not have the bravery element entailed in that set phrase. Thus, it was revised accordingly.

This experience suggests to me the existence of potential "blind spots" in translation practice in general. To mitigate translation risks (Pym & Matsushita), translators should only spend time and energy investigating content that is important, unfamiliar, or appear unnatural. When a literal or obvious translation of a ST appears to be straightforward and natural, AND fits the context well at the same time[4], as "站起来, '算我一个'" did in this case, translators tend to choose that "obvious" translation without questioning. When that "obvious" translation is actually inadequate, however, that mistake becomes a "blind spot" or "unknown unknown", hard for the translator to identify. Unless one researche it consciously, which is unlikely due to its unknown feature, this "blind spot" probably can only be avoided if the translator happens to know both languages/cultures at the native-speaker level at the same time. In my case, for example, "算我一个" appears obvious and fits the context well; barring deliberate research, only a true master of both languages and cultures would understand the real meaning of "stand up and be counted", and pick up the inadequacy of the "算我一个" translation as well. If the translator knows only one language well, they will miss either the real and full meaning of the trope, or the inadequacy of the translation "算我一个"; and in both cases, mistakes are unavoidable. Even if two bilingual translators from different cultures work side-by-side, as is recommended in commercial translation, both know the other's language well, but neither is a true master of both languages and cultures, the above point may still escape their radar. In my case for example, assuming we have Ms Wang, who is a native Chinese speaker and knows English well enough to understand "stand up" and "be counted" separately, but not well enough to know "stand up and be counted" is a set phrase. Also we have Peter who is a native English speaker and knows Chinese well enough to understand that "算我一个" means "to join the group", but not well enough to understand that it doesn't have the "bravery" element implied in the set phrase "stand up and be counted". Then when Ms Wang and Peter work together to translate this song, "算我一个" is likely to appear natural and fit the context for both of them. For them, the inadequacy of "算我一个" is a blind spot (the unknown unknown). Therefore, it would not come to their mind that they need to investigate the meaning of "stand up" and "be counted" combined (for Ms Wang), and the implication of "算我一个" (for Peter), or check them with each other explicitly. Then that mistake escaped with neither's notice.

It Is necessary to point out that "translation blind spots" exist beyond the vocabulary or language domains. To understand the nuances and appreciate the hidden implications in the source text, and to choose the proper translation rendition in the target text, one needs to know the cultures, histories, and the pragmatical arrangements of both languages well. For example, without understanding the resistance and challenges faced by supporters of the Indigenous Australian Rights movement in the 1980s when the song was composed, one might not appreciate the implications and necessities of that trope, "Stand up and be counted", which is too heavy for a social phrase like "算我一个" to carry in the Chinese translation. This suggests that the "blind spots" are personal, and different people may have different blind spots. Thus, we all need to endeavour to improve our understanding of other's cultures continuously. Only in that way, can we gradually reduce the areas covered by the "blind spots" for ourselves.

[4] The Chinese idiom "望文生义" means to "look at the text and assume its meaning". The case discussed here is to "look at the CONTEXT", not just TEXT, and assume its meaning. Or "望上下文生义" in Chinese.

Given the rapid development of AI and its applications in language models, it would be interesting to see whether the current AI knows both English and Chinese languages and cultures well enough to pick up the error and avoid this particular "blind spot". For that purpose, I took my translation of this song to ChatGPT-4o, the latest AI Language Model (LLM) available on the market at the time this paper was drafted, but changed "站起来勇敢表态" to "站起来, '算我一个'", and asked it to review and comment. ChatGPT-4o's only suggestion was to use "我" ("I") to replace "俺" (another word for "I", used mainly in Northen China) which I used initially, and it did not see any other issues in my translation. Only after I pointed out that "算我一个" is inadequate here and explained why, ChatGPT-4o admitted the oversight and agreed with me. Assuming ChatGPT-4o has got the native-level understanding of English and its cultures, one may conclude that at the time this paper was drafted it had not yet obtained, or be trained at, the same level of mastery of the Chinese language and culture.

The song *Blackfella, Whitefella* is almost forty years old now. At the time of its release, the challenges and resistance faced by supporters of the Aboriginal Rights movement were very common and often severe. While the severity of challenges and resistance has generally decreased since the 1980s, significant obstacles remain for those who support Indigenous Australian rights. The movement has seen progress, partly due to the influence of this and other songs of similar nature, but there is still a long way to go to achieve full racial equality and social justice. In other words, forty years on, the song is still relevant and resonates with us. It is my hope that the translation of this song will contribute to a better understanding and deeper involvement of the great cause of racial reconciliation and social justice by the Chinese-speaking communities around the world.[5]

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[5] The Chinese translation of the song discussed above is singable, but due to licensing issues, its music scores cannot be shown here.

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**Blackfella, whitefella**

Lyrics & Music: Neil James Murray & George Djilaynga

Translation: Shan Ma

Due to licensing issues, the English lyrics of the song cannot be shown here. However, they can be viewed on the following website:

http://lyrics.lyricfind.com/lyrics/warumpi-band-blackfella-whitefella-1

**黑色的哥们儿，白色的哥们儿**

词曲：Neil James Murray & George Djilaynga

译文：马山

黑色的哥们儿，白色的哥们儿，

不论你是啥色的哥们儿，

只要你是真正的哥们儿，

只要你是老铁的哥们儿。

各个种族的不同哥们儿，

在不同的地方过不同的日子儿；

不论你是哪里的大腕儿，

咱都得换个不同的活法儿。

如想成事儿，要更多的哥们儿；

如要挽救，要更多的姐们儿。

你可是挺身而出表态的那位哥们儿？

你可是与我并肩高呼的那位姐们儿？

你可是随时出手相助的那位哥们儿？

你可是理解“四海一家”的那位姐们儿？

黑种的哥们儿，白种的哥们儿，

黄种的哥们儿，任一种哥们儿。

不论你是啥种的哥们儿，

只要你是有种的哥们儿。

各个种族的不同哥们儿，

生活在各处唸不同的经文儿；

不论你进的是什么教门儿，

那船到沉时谁也没门儿。

如想成事儿，要更多的哥们儿；

如要挽救，要更多姐的们儿。

你可是挺身而出表态的那位哥们儿？

你可是与俺并肩高呼的那位姐们儿？

你可是随时出手相助的那位哥们儿？

你可是理解“四海一家”的那位姐们儿？

站出来，站出来勇敢表态！

站出来，站出来勇敢表态！

站出来，站出来勇敢表态！

你可是挺身而出表态的那位哥们儿？

站出来，站出来勇敢表态！

站出来，站出来勇敢表态！

你可是随时出手相助的那位哥们儿？

你可是理解“四海一家”的那位姐们儿？

**Masaya Shimokusu on translating Kim Scott for Japanese readers**

SONIA BROAD
The University of Queensland

Narratives by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authors began appearing in Japanese translation in the early 1980s, initially as children's picture books and later as novels, dramas and short stories. However, less than twenty translations of Indigenous works have been published in Japan, to date, according to bibliographical data from the ongoing BlackWords project in AustLit, Australia's largest database on Australian literature and criticism based at the University of Queensland. Moreover, this number is only a fraction of the approximately 1,300 Australian literary works that have been translated into Japanese since the early 1940s, including a further 30 works tagged with the bibliographical subject term of "Aboriginal Australians" but written by non-indigenous authors. Interestingly, three of the BlackWords records are linked to the multi-award winning Western Australian Noongar author and scholar Kim Scott and his Japanese translator Masaya Shimokusu, a professor in the Department of English at Doshisha University, Kyoto.

Kim Scott debuted in 1993 and has a diverse writing career spanning fiction and non-fiction works in English and the Indigenous language of Noongar. He is also a professor of writing at Curtin University in Perth and noted for his work across Aboriginal studies and language revitalisation projects. In June 2006, Scott's writing was introduced to Japanese readers through Masaya Shimokusu's translations of the short stories "Capture" (2002) and "Into the Light" (2000) which appeared in *Subaru*, a leading monthly Japanese literary journal that was featuring a selection of contemporary Australian short stories to celebrate the Australia-Japan Year of Exchange. Driving this selection was *Diamond Dog: Contemporary Australian Short Stories: Reflections on Multicultural Society,* a long-term project that was later published by Gendaikikakushitsu Publishing in 2008 with support from the Australia-Japan Foundation (AJF). *Diamond Dog* was the first anthology of its kind in Japanese translation to shine a light specifically on multicultural and Indigenous writing, including Scott's "Capture".

My research interest in Scott in Japan relates to the Miles Franklin Award-winning novel *That Deadman Dance* (2010), which was translated by Shimokusu as the 5th work in the Masterpieces of Contemporary Australian Literature series in 2017. The Masterpieces series (2012-2023), which followed on from *Diamond Dog*, was an initiative of Gendaikikakushitsu Publishing that was made possible through AJF funding and the support of scholar translators tied to Australian Studies in Japan. In investigating the Masterpieces series and the role of scholar translators, I interviewed Masaya Shimokusu in October 2023 via Zoom. I was eager to learn about his approach to translation and professional experience in introducing contemporary Australian Indigenous writing to Japanese readers. In this excerpt from the interview, Shimokusu reflects on his translation process and journey of learning the Noongar language. He also touches upon the issues of translator's notes and transliteration with reference to the Japanese context, while expressing his desire to encourage Japanese readers to learn more about the Noongar language and Australian Indigenous writing through and beyond translation.

*Sonia Broad (SB):* How did you go about the translation and the checking process over the two-year period?

*Dr. Masaya Shimokusu (MS):* So, this may be my translation or related to my own translating method but, actually, translation is really hard work! Now, in recent years, I have avoided committing to translation too much. I think that without translation everyday life is really easy! But if we have a book for translation, if anything happens, we must move forward even if it is little by little. We must move forward—without doing that the project never ends. That's how I kept translating from beginning to end, little by little. And in the process, I noticed we cannot escape the limits of time. But thanks to modern technologies now, we can check earlier issues or some words, special words, on the computer. We can easily go back to a former part, and so whenever I noticed that my translation had a kind of contradiction or something like that, I returned to that part. But that was a really hard thing for me because I wished to go forward steadily, like a turtle or a caterpillar. I wanted to move forward, but I must go back, so that was frustrating.

Another challenge is the language of Noongar, so the language of the Aboriginal people (from the south-west of Western Australia). Noongar pops up (in *That Deadman Dance*) so I stopped my translation and I bought this book published by UWA Publishing.

*SB:* Is that a Noongar picture book?

*MS:* Yes, a Noongar picture book.

*SB:* Brilliant!

*MS:* Yes, I bought a couple of books.

*SB:* They're beautiful.

*MS:* Yes, this is *Mamang*. This has a kind of YouTube presentation video, so I saw it again and again. Do you know the training for interpreters—shadowing or something like that?

*SB:* Yes, I'm familiar with that.

*MS:* Yes, I did shadowing with this one! I did that, you know!

*SB:* Wow!

*MS:* Yes, so actually I found out about a Noongar actress, Kylie Bracknell (née Farmer) Kaarljilba Kaardn. She is not a member of Kim's group, but in an Australian Noongar theatre company—Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company. So, I discovered that Noongar is performed in Shakespearian plays.

*SB:* Yes.

*MS:* So, I found a couple of her videos. And I learnt that the greeting *kaya* is very important for the Noongar people. So, I must thank the internet and modern technologies, but still translating (Noongar into Japanese) is difficult for me. I also found a Noongar-English

dictionary on a PDF that I could follow on the internet, so actually I checked various things. But even then I felt I couldn't do a perfect job. But the point is that the author Kim Scott, himself, did not put any notes to Noongar words. It's a kind of "noise", you know, for the English-speaking readers. But I think that must be okay. And do you know the author Lafcadio Hearn? Koizumi Yakumo?

*SB:* Yes. You've done work on this Greek-Irish writer and translator who became a Japanese national later in life.

*MS:* *Kwaidan*, ghost stories of Japan, is maybe one of Hearn's best-known books. And he sometimes put Japanese words into his translation, but with no notes. Probably, Hearn wished English readers to enjoy the sounds.

*SB:* Yes.

*MS:* So, imagine the meaning with the sound. That's why I focussed on putting the alphabetical Noongar words into Japanese phonetic letters, katakana. But, as you know, I also faced another problem. For Noongar words, their spelling doesn't perfectly correspond to the sounds of the words. So, I checked some lectures on *That Deadman Dance* but the pronunciation for the name of the hero in *That Deadman Dance* varied. This posed difficulties (for translation), but fortunately Kim gave a lecture on *That Deadman Dance*, so I could pin down the pronunciation of the protagonist's name. However, the pronunciation doesn't correspond to the spelling. Throughout this process, though, I noticed that at the beginning of the book the protagonist, Bobby, tried to write his own name in English. And so, he thought about what he should write down, you know, and in that special spelling. This one [holding the source text] is let me say Bobby W-a-b-l-n-g-n. Maybe this one on the first page is ボビー・ワバランギン *Bobii Wabarangin* in Japanese and this may be a clue from Scott to the reader. And so, thinking (about) those things, and believing my own instinct of the language, I tried to put the Noongar lines into the Japanese phonetic letters without (translator's) notes.
But this book is my translation, you know, so in the translator's afterword, I wrote "If you are interested in the (Noongar) language, itself, you can find the language education materials for that, so you can buy this kind of book [*Mamang*] like myself or please keep studying the language" or something similar.

*SB:* Yes.

*MS:* That's why I did that, you know.

Reflecting on my interview with Masaya Shimokusu, I am drawn to his passion to introduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories to Japanese readers who have limited exposure to these works in their native language. At the same time, I often return to his concept of "noise" to consider how translators negotiate the space between writing to deliberately foreignize and transliterate words that are deliberately foreign.

# Non-Thematic section

# Reading / Translating Proust

BRIAN NELSON
Monash University

*The function and task of a writer are those of a translator*
— Proust, *Time Regained*

*Brian Nelson offers some reflections arising from his ongoing work as general editor (with Adam Watt) of the new, 7-volume Oxford edition of Marcel Proust's* In Search of Lost Time *(scheduled for publication between 2023 and 2027). His translation of the first volume,* The Swann Way, *appeared in 2023.*

Christopher Prendergast, editor of the Penguin edition of Proust, has said: "the kinds of judgements and decisions bound up with literary translation make it one of the higher forms of criticism" (Tonkin). Is that an overstatement? Perhaps. But it's a proposition I find very appealing. In any case, I'd like to bring out, with reference to Proust, the inseparability of criticism and translation, reading and translating.

*Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure. In Search of Lost Time* (traditionally called the *Search* for short) opens with a little jolt. Proust uses the *passé composé* where one would probably expect the imperfect; and the second sentence moves immediately, almost abruptly, to the imperfect (*mes yeux se fermaient*), which for the next 3,000 pages becomes the dominant tense of the narrative. I'd make two points about the effect of this oddity: the grammatical disorientation corresponds to the general feeling of disorientation described in the opening pages, figured in a sleeper awakening in a strange place and posture, not knowing who or where he is; and, more significantly, the tense form of the first sentence points to the most crucial aspect of Proust's novel: temporal structure. The *passé composé* is a compound tense that combines the present of the auxiliary with the past of the participle; and the reader of the *Search* comes to realise that the "I" of the narrative is a double "I" moving fluidly between the present of the middle-aged narrator and the past of his younger self. These shifting perspectives continue until the narrator and his younger self meet up, so to speak, in the novel's final volume. Moreover, as Christopher Prendergast has noted (Prendergast 164), there is a further grammatical feature of the first sentence that is emblematic of the entire novel: the splitting of the reflexive verb into nominative and accusative (*je / me*) heralds a narrative that is both by and about the "same" person.

Scott Moncrieff's rendering of the sentence is: "For a long time I used to go to bed early." Terence Kilmartin followed Moncrieff, but the "used to go" was subsequently changed to "would go" by D.J. Enright. Moncrieff, Kilmartin and Enright ignore Proust's choice of tense and translate the French as if he had used the imperfect, normalizing the sentence, so to speak, by putting the verb in the tense of habitual action. James Grieve has: "Time was when I always went to bed early." Alfred Corn suggests: "For a long time now, I have gone to bed early" (Corn 300). Richard Howard declared his preference for "Time and again, I have gone to bed early" (Howard 1989 16). Grieve and Howard are clearly attracted to the idea of starting the novel as it ends, with the key word "Time". But Grieve's rendering has a self-conscious and unnaturally colloquial quality, and the "always" is an addition; while Howard's "Time and again" is oddly emphatic, gratuitously attributing significance to the idea of recurrence. William Carter, in his own revision of Moncrieff, has: "For a long time I went to bed early."

Lydia Davis and I decided on the same formulation, but with the retention of the comma: "For a long time, I went to bed early." I think this matches as well as possible the ambiguity of the original. There is potential for ambiguity in the use of the *passé composé* in French (but not in the use of the perfect tense in English) in terms of whether the action in question took place over an extended period of time in the past and is completed, or whether it's open-ended and stretches up to the present. Corn and Howard want to indicate unambiguously that the *Longtemps* stretches up to the present. But *Longtemps*, conjoined with the *passé composé*, is indeterminate, an effect heightened by the comma that sets the word off in the original (but is absent from most of the versions I've just mentioned). What's in a comma? Sometimes quite a lot.

I'd like to broach the question of the kinds of consideration that go into translating, and the variability of the choices made by translators, with reference to the title of the second volume of the *Search*. The title of that volume is *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs.* It's arguably the most difficult title to translate out of the seven volumes. The plethora of choices gives some idea of the complexities involved in any attempt to translate an entire novel by Proust.

At an early stage of the Oxford Proust project I organized a collective email discussion of the problem by the translators involved (plus a couple of others). It went as follows (with names transposed into letters):

**A:** *A l'ombre de*… What did Proust want to imply? In the company of/close to? Not in their shade in the sense of overwhelmed by/made invisible by... In their company but more like trailing after them, following (they're in the light, he's in the shade). Under the protection of/protected by? So: "In the Shelter of…"? As for the question of blossoming, flowering, etc., we never say girls are "in flower". We do say they're blossoming, even blooming, and we definitely say budding, though that might be too "unpoetic"; and I can see that budding and in bud are too early in the process of blossoming.

**B:** I think "shade" is better than "shadow" or "shelter" (which makes me think of a bus shelter). "Young girls" is probably better than "girls" or "young women" (for rhythm, though I agree that "young girls" is perhaps literally younger in English than in French) and I'd keep "in flower", I think. We could perhaps insert "the" before "young girls"? So we'd end up with: *In the Shade of the Young Girls in Flower.*

**C:** "In the Shelter of Young Girls in Flower", perhaps? It has a certain lilt to it with the repetition of the "…er", but the resonances of bus, refuge and rain are decidedly unromantic. "Sheltered" would avoid that and you still get a faint lilt. I think you need "young" for the rhythm.

**D**: I first thought simply "In the Shade of Young Girls in Flower". The last word is a bit odd, though feminine with its last syllable, which makes the title wobble a bit. But it's close to the original and works well, I think. However, slightly shorter and therefore quicker, not so odd, and also more grounded because of a stressed last one-syllable word, lead me to prefer "In the Shade of Young Girls in Bloom". It's more "English" as usage, more ordinary, and so the visual metaphor doesn't upstage the process. I sense the presence of the young girls better, rather than inadvertently imagining pink flowers. "In bloom" makes them seem more vibrant and assured, less passive. The rhythm is right and you have closure, but gently, with the long vowel in "bloom".

**A again:** I agree that "In the Shade of Young Girls in Bloom" is the most relaxed and "ordinary". I'd begun to come round to "in flower" and its more overt sexuality. It's like "in bud" except further along in the process. But I like what [D] says about the vibrancy of "in bloom". I'm still not convinced the girls need to be as young as "young girls" suggests. On the other hand, "young" is poignant, should poignancy be called for.

**E:** I agree that "shelter" may be too redolent of wet afternoons waiting for the bus. *In the Shade of Young Girls in Flower* would be good. The combination of attraction, allure, vulnerability and fleetingness is captured, as is a glimmer of the oddity of the original.

So, no clear consensus, though that's hardly surprising. I went round the houses a couple of times with the translator of the volume, Charlotte Mandell. Charlotte settled on *In the Shadow of Girls in Blossom.* She writes in her "Translator's Note":

> I chose "shadow" instead of shade because, throughout the book, the narrator is very much in the girls' shadow, first in Gilberte's shadow and then in the shadow of the girls in the "little band". He is never their equal; his love for them borders on a kind of idolatry, so that the girls take on a kind of superhuman power to bestow or withdraw an elusive (and never truly attained) happiness. And shadows themselves play an important part in the narrative, especially in the paintings of Elstir […] I opted for "girls" instead of "young women" because the girls in the "little band" are still very much girls, playing childish games like hide-and-seek […]; they are not […] "young girls", since their ages range from about 14 to 16 or 17 […] I chose "in blossom" instead of "in flower" because I thought it had a little more of a sexual, first-bloom-of-youth connotation. (And I chose "blossom" instead of "bloom" mainly for the rhythm of the phrase.) Moncrieff's *Within a Budding Grove*, while it does hint at a budding sexuality, loses all the nuances and hidden meanings of the original title, and leaves out the main subjects of the novel, the girls themselves. (Proust 2025 xvi)

This discussion shows that literary translation is an approximate art – always provisional, never definitive. It also illustrates what literary translation is. It's a unique form of close reading and creative (re)writing, involving scrupulous attention to verbal patterns and effects – tone, texture, rhythm, register, syntax, sound, all those things that make up style and reflect the marriage between style and meaning. As Proust himself said, in *Time Regained* and elsewhere, "style … is a question not of technique but of vision". If you miss the style, you miss the vision.

Daniel Hahn, in his book *Catching Fire: A Translation Diary*, writes: "Every translator has a favourite metaphor to help to convey the rigours and joys of this strange profession…" (Hahn 5) I find myself drawn to the metaphor of mimicry. I think of translation as an art of imitation or impersonation, an attempt to find and re-create a text's voice. Words in one language are replaced by words in another language; everything is changed so that the text stays the same, that is to say as close as possible to the translator's experience of the original.

One's experience of Proust: what is that experience? The novel opens with an evocation of the shadowy world of sleep and semi-sleep. The narration describes the kinds of disorientation produced by falling asleep in an armchair or while reading a book. A deep sleep, the narrator tells us, will make him lose all sense of the place where he fell asleep. The in-between state he describes corresponds to a precarious sense of identity. What appears as a source of salvation is memory, with its ability to recompose or recreate the self. The structuring motifs of the opening pages are: uncertainty, instability, memory, and the search for the self.

"Where am I?" leads immediately to "Who am I?" The *Search* is about the ways in which identity is formed – how we come to be who we are. And the borderland between sleep and waking is where it all begins: inside the narrator's mind. The opening of the *Search* inaugurates a 3,000-page mapping of the mind. "Every page of Proust," writes Edmund White, "is the transcript of a mind thinking" (White 138). Translating Proust means getting inside that mind, seeing things as it sees them. Getting into the skin of the writer, entering fully into their sensibility and style – the idea makes me conjure with method acting as another metaphor for translation.

Proust's sentences are typically long and serpentine. With their "coiling elaboration" (Howard 2004: 98), their parentheses and subordinate clauses, they embody the syntax of the mind. As they uncoil, the sentences express the shape of thought. My aim was to re-create that quintessential Proustian style, because… style is vision. It was crucial, I felt, to stay as faithful as possible to the structure and rhythm of Proust's sentences, while producing a living, breathing text in English, so that the reader can see the processes of thought unfolding in their full complexity, with their peculiar twists and turns, their particular tonality and resonance.

It's Important, I think, to recognize how boldly experimental the *Search* was. It was quite unlike what contemporary readers understood to be a work of fiction. Instead of a conventional linear story with a clearly identifiable plot and a quasi-omniscient narrator, it uses a kaleidoscope of memories to create a startlingly new form of first-person narrative. It's important also to note that Proust sounded strange in French, to his French audience, because of his highly original literary style. It's a strangeness – a stylistic otherness – the translator should keep in order to enable Anglophone readers to experience that originality of style in their own language.

All translations are interpretations, and they inevitably differ from each other to varying degrees. Their dissimilarities aren't the result of "mistakes", or proof of the impossibility of translation, but the result of the passage of time, changes in sensibility, new readings, new readerships, different approaches. Classic texts in particular are susceptible of multiple retranslations over time. Retranslations of classic works afford an opportunity to celebrate the art of translation, the richness of the translated text, and language itself. Readers should welcome variety in translation, as they do different interpretations of symphonies by different orchestras and conductors. These would be some of the points I'd make in response to the question: "It's been done before, so why do it again?" – a fair enough question, as long as it isn't meant rhetorically.

For decades, Scott Moncrieff's translation of the *Search*, published between 1922 and 1932, *was* Proust for Anglophone readers. Moncrieff had an excellent ear for the cadences of Proust's prose. His translation has a poetic, almost musical quality. But his language dated over time, especially in dialogue, and he was prone to tamper with the text, through embellishment or the heightening of language. The reservation commonly voiced about his translation is that it changed Proust's tone. He tended to make Proust sound flowery, whereas Proust's style is not in the least affected or ornate. His prose is precise, rigorous, exact. Grand rhythm and maxim-like concentration often work together. Proust's sentences are elaborately constructed, but they have a beautiful balance, a musicality that becomes particularly apparent when the text is read aloud. (My own aim was to restore Proust to what he was all along: intricate but straightforward; poetic but precise; musical but matter-of-fact.)

Moncrieff's choice of English title, the "poetical" *Remembrance of Things Past*, taken from a Shakespeare sonnet, hardly reflects the plainness (or the thematic implications) of *A la recherche du temps perdu*. John Sturrock has commented that that choice is symptomatic of "the unhappy way in which Moncrieff contrived to play down the stringent intelligence of his author by conveying it in an English prose that is constantly looking to prettify. It's as if the

translator had been taken aback by how acrid and how ruthless Proust can be in his exposure of the deep falsities of the inhabitants of the Parisian *beau monde*, and was determined to muffle its cruelty by the gentility of his English" (Sturrock 115).

Moncrieff was revised by Terence Kilmartin in 1981, and ten years later D.J. Enright produced a further revision in the light of the new Bibliothèque de la Pléiade edition (1987–89) of the *Search*. Kilmartin and Enright made hundreds of small, deft changes, making Proust's prose plainer (on the whole) and more accurate. But the revised edition remained essentially Moncrieff's.

The appearance of the Penguin Proust in 2002 brought the *Search* to new audiences and stimulated wide discussion both of Proust and of literary translation – clear testimony to the value of retranslations of classic authors: they can breathe new life into those authors (think of what Emily Wilson has done with Homer!). Lydia Davis's translation of the first volume, entitled *The Way by Swann's*, is marked by a commitment to exactitude. Davis writes in her Translator's Introduction: "I wanted to reproduce as nearly as possible Proust's word choice, word order, syntax, repetition of words, punctuation – even, when possible, his handling of sounds, the rhythms of a sentence and the alliteration and assonance within it" (Proust 2002 xxxi). This determination to cleave to the original in every possible way is often successful, producing sentences that are crisply precise, but it can also result in an awkward literalism which can cause Proust's ironic, poetic voice to be muted.

There was an earlier translation of *Swann's Way*, by James Grieve, published in 1982 by the Australian National University, and republished last year by *New York Review Books*. Grieve (who also translated volume 2 of the Penguin Proust, with the title *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*) adopted an approach starkly different to Davis's, in pursuit of what he called "real English". He took a very liberal approach, opting for an idiom that sounds more like spoken English, with difficult expressions glossed over or rephrased to make their meaning easier to grasp, and changing the order of the phrases in a sentence so that it would sound smoother in English, and sometimes even breaking up sentences. By departing so much from Proust's text, and by giving Proust's narrator a more modern, breezy style of speech, he loses the flavour, the unique voice, of the original. His version of Proust is idiomatic, but it tends to read more like a rewriting than a translation – whereas what readers want, surely, is to read what Proust wrote.

The contrast between Grieve and Davis corresponds in some measure to the difference between so-called domesticating and foreignizing approaches to translation. Foreignization denotes, in its milder form, a determination to stay as close as possible to the original, and, in its more zealous form, a kind of interventionism that heightens the reader's awareness of the foreign and reminds them that they are reading a translation. There is of course a foreignness inherent in the text, in that different languages reflect different cultures. And who wouldn't want to respect foreignness in that sense – for instance, by keeping culturally specific words and phrases in the original ("Bourse" rather than "Stock Exchange", for example; even "*curé*" rather than "priest")? But foreignize linguistically? Christopher Prendergast, in his General Editor's Preface to the Penguin Proust, describes as "demented" Terence Kilmartin's statement: "A translator ought constantly to be asking himself: 'How would the author put this if he were writing in English?'" (Proust 2002 xv) Demented? Kilmartin's statement expresses a view widely held, I believe, by translators. To quote Daniel Hahn again:

> [Translation is] an incredibly *writerly* challenge. And the *writing*, for me – that's the pleasure of it. It's a piece of new writing, and a re-writing, at once. You might think of it as writing the book I believe the author would have written if they'd been writing a book in English. (Hahn 9)

How stylistic foreignization might work, beyond producing varying degrees of literalism, is not clear to me. I'm reminded of a *New Yorker* cartoon showing a disconsolate-looking translator asking his disappointed-looking author: "Do you not be happy with me as the translator of the books of you?" (Polizzotti 60) In any case, translating Proust's "strangeness" does not mean somehow making him sound "foreign".

Part of my job as editor of the new Oxford Proust with oversight of the various translations has been to facilitate unity of voice and tone across the volumes (while bearing in mind stylistic variations produced by Proust himself). Early on, I wrote some "Standardization Notes". These include an A-Z glossary addressing standardization of recurring words, phrases, terms, modes of address, and so on; and the notes also include some minor suggestions designed to produce maximum smoothness of expression. I have a section on syntax: what I said above about capturing "the syntax of the mind" was accepted as a common approach. I also made some suggestions about tone. Edmund White has commented: "Proust […] is extremely companionable as a writer. He holds your hand. He tells you everything. He lives with you throughout the book[…]" (qu. Najm 2013). I felt it was important to give appropriate stress to the personal, confidential quality of Proust's expression (of which the opening sentence of the *Search* is emblematic, even more in French than in English). So we've given him a more spoken tone of voice than found in Moncrieff (but less jarringly colloquial than sometimes found in Grieve). We've done this by using a range of contracted verb forms ("I'd feel", "we'd go", etc.) in the narrative, not just in dialogue, as well as by opting for everyday overly elevated expressions where possible, and seeking the maximum of syntactic concision compatible with the structure of Proust's sentences.

Finally, some comments on a key aspect of "style as vision": Proust's comedy. I'd like to stress Proust's humour, because it's a dimension of his work not usually associated with him, and because it's a deeply enjoyable feature of his writing. The *Search* is one of the funniest novels in French literature. Comic vision is central to Proust's work and is expressed in multiple registers, from wry and whimsical to savagely satirical. Comedy of manners, comedy of love, comedy of character: not only does the *Search* contain a wonderful parade of comic characters, the narrator's younger self (named 'Marcel' on one occasion) is himself in part a comic character. This relates to the double vision of the narrative, as it shuttles between the present of the narrator and the past of his younger self. As Roger Shattuck puts it: "Marcel and the Narrator form a contrasting pair like comic and straight man" (Shattuck 69). Marcel is a comic figure in that he continually misreads people and situations. The *Search* is a narrative of error and disillusionment. The older, wiser narrator, as he looks back on his younger self, chronicles the tantalising gaps between desire and reality, illusion and truth – which means that comedy and irony suffuse the narrative.

Much of Proust's comedy is a matter of catching an ironic tone. But it can also be specifically linguistic, with direct implications for the translator. Proust was fascinated by language as a medium in which personal and social identities are created and expressed. He's a brilliant caricaturist of speech. He plays with many different voices: the peasant servant Françoise's malapropisms and invented words; Odette's fondness for Anglicisms and trendy phrases; Bloch's preciousness; the aristocratic Guermantes's attachment to a rather archaic French as a mark, as they see it, of their continued contact with the peasantry; Norpois, the former diplomat, with his sententiousness and long-windedness; Baron Charlus, with his supercharged, over-the-top style of rhetoric; the manager of the Grand Hotel in Balbec, who likes to use expressions he thinks are distinguished, without realizing they're incorrect. There's so much verbal play. Françoise, the servant, grappling with her feelings after the death of her mistress, Marcel's Aunt Léonie, confuses the word *parenthèse* (parenthesis) with *parenté*

(kinship): *"Elle était tout de même de la parenthèse, il reste toujours le respect qu'on doit à la parenthèse."* Lydia Davis has: "All the same, she was your own kith and kindred, and there's a proper respect we owe to our kith and kindred…" Grieve has: "Say what you like, she was kithing kin. There's nothing like respect for your own kithing kin …". Moncrieff–Kilmartin–Enright have: "All the same she was kith and kindle; there's always the respect due to kindle…" Moncrieff (unrevised) has: "All the same she was a geological relation; there's always the respect due to your geology…" I went with the geological gambit too: "After all, she was part of the family geology, and you've always got to respect your geology…" A suitable note, possibly, on which to conclude.

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**2024 AALITRA Translation Awards Winner**

# Translating Marilyne Bertoncini's ode to artistic inspiration and collaboration in her poem *Adam&ve*

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## An introduction to the poem

Marilyne Bertoncini's poem *Adam&ve*, composed just last year in December 2023, is an escape into the furthest reaches of the galaxy. In *Adam&ve*, she draws her audience into a "space" before time and humankind, which flirts with the Christian origin story of Adam and Eve, the first humans to be created. Stardust, "nebulous" dreams and existentialism pervade her verse and allow the sound and images of lone words to take centre stage. This article will delve into the translation I undertook of this poem for the AALITRA Poetry Competition of 2024 and how I, as both a lover of poetry and researcher at the University of Melbourne, have come to appreciate her poem within the body of Bertoncini's work and prolific career.

Unsurprisingly, this poem was not written in a vacuum. *Adam&ve* was the fruit of an artistic project led by visual artist Louise Caroline, based in Provence, and the electroacoustic composer Marc-Henri Arfeux from Lyon. Also residing in the South of France, poet, teacher, translator and *Niçoise*, Marilyne Bertoncini, embarked upon this project in 2023 for the artist's book "aux premiers jours du monde".[1] Unfortunately, this book is not easily accessible, however, Bertoncini's poem is to be understood alongside Caroline's distinctive "recadrages"[2] and Arfeux's diegetic and intergalactic-sounding work-specific composition.[3]

## On Marilyne Bertoncini and her process

*Adam&ve* was therefore born from a contemporary artistic collaboration, which has been something of a regular occurrence throughout Bertoncini's long literary career. The heterogeneity of her texts published in both French (her home country) and international journals and anthologies is a testament to the numerous and prolific collaborations that she has engaged with overtime. As an editor of multiple journals, co-director of the international online review for poetry *Recours au poème*[4], active poet and performer at literary festivals across the Mediterranean since at least the 90s, keen translator of Italian and English and teacher, Bertoncini has many strings to her bow. But most of all, when it comes to her literary productions, it is clear that her collaborations with the visual arts and music are what has distinguished her work. Consistently, she has engaged with these two arts, incorporating sound

[1] Before its publication, the manuscript was titled, "aux commencements du monde", which appeared in the AALITRA communications for the 2024 French translation competition. Now, the title of this work is "aux premiers jours du monde". This deceivingly minimal change involves in fact a noticeable semantic transformation of the previous title. Instead of referring to the time in which the world began in vague and universal terms with 'commencements', the change to 'premiers jours' transforms this time into something specific, singular and past. The book has not been launched yet and is having some teething issues according to Bertoncini who doesn't think that it will be printed in great volumes. There will be an unveiling of the book at the Médiathèque Albert Camus of Antibes next January 2025. I have attached photographs of the book at the end of this article. See Appendix 1.

[2] Perhaps best translated to *reframings* in English. These are made of reclaimed cloths originally used to clean printing presses. Her interest in this process is inherited from her family who ran a printing house.

[3] Marc-Henri Arfeux's composition for the book can be heard here: https://soundcloud.com/marc-henri-arfeux/aux-premiers-jours-du-monde

[4] Started in May 2012, this journal can be accessed here at: https://www.recoursaupoeme.fr/actualites/

and vision into her work, resulting in poems constructed by personal recollections of sensation and memory. These 'inspired' poems often lean on independent artistic creations quite outside the realm of her personal control and knowledge. In this way, her responses are always organic and refreshingly naïve and poignant, capturing the immediate and ephemeral in an artistic encounter. Many of her poems also draw connections with the Greek myths, revealing a desire to expand inner worlds into outer worlds and beyond. That is certainly what she achieves in her poem *Adam&ve*, in which, already, by the spliced biblical title, she creatively prepares her audience for her characteristic blurring between personal and universal, 'I' and 'you', 'they' and 'us'.

**On translating *Adam&ve***

When it came to translating her poem *Adam&ve*, I was aware that in some ways, I was embarking upon the writing of my own poem. Critically, Lawrence Venuti describes the work of a translator of poetry in this way:

> To translate a poem, then, regardless of the language, culture, or historical moment, has [meant to] create a poem in the receiving situation, to cultivate poetic effects that may seek to maintain an equivalence to the source text but that fall short of and exceed it because the translation is written in a different language for a different culture. The poem that is the object of translation inevitably vanishes during the translation process, replaced by a network of signification – intertextual, interdiscursive, intersemiotic – that is rooted mainly in the receiving situation. [5]

Indeed, I knew that the translation I was going to produce could not be identical to the original work and in that way, would be an original work of its own. However, in order to most faithfully replicate the feel and style of her poem and its voice, I would need to carefully examine the poetic devices used and have a clear and profound understanding of the meaning of the poem. This meant considering a range of effects like tone, imagery, sound, rhythm and appearance, as well as the inspiration behind the poem and its overall meaning.

In my translation into English, I made a concerted effort to maintain the fluid and mystic qualities of her writing in French. I noticed that she achieved this through careful word choices and attention to lyricism. Of course, in the translation process, it was important to remember that a poem is not only a *read* work, but also a *performed* one.[6] I paid particular attention to the sonority and musical dynamics in the French in order to offer a similar interpretation in the English. *Adam&ve* is also written in free verse, which arguably made this process easier, allowing me to forgo any rhyming, which, as we know, is a much more difficult task for the translator.

There are also visual aspects to take into consideration when translating Bertoncini's poem. *Adam&ve* is made up of floating stanzas spread across the page. Some of the other visual effects Bertoncini uses include elements like the shape of the stanzas, the spacing, the lexical emphases and word associations made through formatting and other visual cues.

Ultimately, throughout the translation of her poem, I realised that there were three main effects to consider, which are also true of the translation of most poetry. These were: 1. meaning (semantics, semiotics and cultural references in the target or source language); 2. sound

[5] Lawrence Venuti, "Introduction: Poetry and Translation," *Translation Studies* 4, no. 2 (2011): 128.

[6] The topic of "viva voce" in poetry can be further explored in publications like: Mildred Larson, Ed. *Translation. Theory and Practice: Tension and Interdependence* (Binghamton: State University of New York at Binghamton, 1991).

(rhythm and other aspects related to oral performance); and 3. appearance (formatting, spacing, visual associations and dissociations and word placement).

**Inspiration & poetic effects**

As a translator herself and a speaker of at least three languages, Bertoncini, like all multilinguals, must look at language from multiple points of view. This polyphony would be further amplified by her eclectic sources of inspiration. *Adam&ve* is an 'inspired' poem reflecting directly on prints by Louise Caroline for her book *Aux premiers jours du monde*. Whilst translating the poem, I was unaware of which exact prints inspired Bertoncini, so I decided to select a potential contender that was on the artist's website. The work *Maternité* (fig. 1)[7] seemed like a suitable support.

Judiciously splattered with blue and diluted red dye, this folded fabric monotype resembles the inkblots used by psychologists in the Rorschach test.[8] Emerging from the bottom centre of a splayed rectangular canvas is a large bead made from the gathered fabric. Its yonic shape, coupled with the pink smatterings of ink point to childbirth and probably explain the title of the work. Emotional qualities such as pain and chaos can be perceived in the overall composition of the work and what look like blood stains, once again reminiscent of childbirth. Yet, the positive themes of union and creation are also evoked by the pink bead at the centre and the relative symmetry and freedom expressed through both the folding process the artist undertook to create the print and the application of the ink splodges themselves. This joy is, of course, another emotional quality associated with *la maternité*. Here, creation and chaos are at the heart of a work like this, and Bertoncini certainly explores similar themes in *Adam&ve*.

Figure 1: Louise Caroline, *Maternité* (motherhood), blue and red ink on fabric, 120 x 96 cm, 2019.

However, since writing this article, I have been in correspondence with the poet based in Nice and am finally able to reveal the identities of the artworks by Caroline that inspired *Adam&ve*. Not one, but two small scale dyed fabric squares were used for inspiration: one titled *Adam* and the other, *Eve*.

[7] (Fig. 1.) Artwork by Louise Caroline, entitled *Maternité* (motherhood), blue and red ink on fabric, 120 x 96 cm, 2019, currently within the artist's personal collection. To access more of her artworks, go to: https://www.louisecarolineart.com/galerie

[8] The Rorschach test was created to examine a person's personality characteristics and emotional functioning.

Figure 2: Louise Caroline, *Adam* (on the left), *Eve* (on the right), blue, green, yellow and red ink on fabric, dimensions unknown, but close to the size of a hand, 2023.

These swirling cool toned abstract works contain what looks like futurist figures at their centres, pushing against the masses of dye in a battle to stretch out and take up space across the fabrics. Bertoncini also mentions a third source of visual inspiration from a medieval miniature by the Flemish painter, Jean de Limbourg. This source, she explains, has been following her around for a very long time. A longer text accompanies the poem *Adam&ve* in relation to this work, in which she explores notions about infinity. As a miniature, this sumptuous gold leaf and lapis lazuli illustration occupies a very small section of an otherwise entirely blank page in the original manuscript (circa 1416). In the top left corner of the page, the delicate figures of Adam and Eve migrate across the illustration in various motifs, narrating the story of their banishment from the Garden of Eden.

This circular and dual journey is embodied by the kingdom of God, which is situated both within Eden, encircled by a golden orb or ring, and outside, with its spires reaching into the heavens of the blank page. This ring, symbolic of eternity, was also explored in an earlier publication of Bertoncini, entitled, *L'Anneau de Chillida* (2018).[9] This book, like much of Bertoncini's work, was again inspired by an artistic source, this time, the work of the late Spanish sculptor, Eduardo Chillida. The concept of infinity has surfaced at multiple points within the last decade of the poet's career and it is unsurprising that this latest poem of hers is the tissue of past literary explorations.

Lastly, in my correspondence with Bertoncini, she emphasises a compositional quirk in the medieval illustration that allows for a more layered reading. To her, the Flemish artist intentionally played with the negative space of the blank page and the miniature scale of his "enluminure"[10] to illustrate a sense of infinity, as the tiny couple appear to look out at an immense white void, represented by the blank page. This further reference to not only the Christian notion of eternity as life everlasting, but also to a perhaps more secular reading of infinity, is something that has inspired Bertoncini's latest literary meditations.

[9] Marilyne Bertoncini, *L'Anneau de Chillida et le tombeau des danaïdes* (Mont-de-Laval: Atelier du grand tétras, 2018).

[10] In English, we would call these delicate drawings *manuscript illustrations*. However, "enluminure" is a more interesting term as it relates to the Latin *illūmināre*, or *to illuminate*, which was the purpose of these illustrations, to illuminate texts often from the Roman Catholic Church.

Figure 3: Jean de Limbourg, *Les très riches heures du Duc de Berry*, manuscript (Ms. 65), 294 x 210 mm (folio size), c.1416.

**The poem**

Returning to her poem now, it certainly explores Genesis and the story of Adam and Eve against a backdrop of the big bang or what the Ancient Greeks referred to as the moment chaos turned to order in the great cycle of entropy.[11] In the poem, she goes back and forth between the fatality of existence and the infinity of the universe with her stanzas taking the shape of sinewy images and sounds, much like a haiku, without an obvious head or tail. There is drama in her writing and suspense, conveyed by a rolling crescendo that reaches its summit at the middle of the poem, somewhere in between the lines – "la stellaire explosion" and "se délite et se forme" – and slowly declines after the mention of "la prison d'Eden".

Although I clearly revelled in the literary reflections to be had in the process of analysing the meaning of this poem, the translation of grammar and syntax also occupied me considerably. However, admittedly, this was the part that felt more stylistic and intuitive for me of the translation process.

As Pierre Bourdieu observes when undertaking the translation of poetry, translators often seek to garner "poetic legitimacy"[12], dangerously distinguishing themselves from the original author of the text. This is indeed a worry, but this literary independence and experimentation is arguably, a necessary part of all successful translations of poetry.

**Technical challenges**

Despite its free-flowing form, Bertoncini's poem presented a number of translation challenges. These challenges touched on common translation issues from French to English related to pronouns, syntax and grammatical tense.

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[11] Steven Fry, *Mythos* (London: Michael Joseph, 2017).

[12] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 51.

For example, where Bertoncini writes “une même chair, une seule bouche”, I wrote “same flesh, one mouth”. Now, this could have equally been translated to “one skin, one mouth”, or even “same skin/flesh, same mouth” for the purposes of alliteration, which is applied in the source text by the use of “une”. However, a clear distinction is made between the different adjectives describing the *flesh* and the *mouth*. Where possible, I tried to respect these lexical differences and opted to remain as close to the source text as possible. My use of *flesh*, instead of *skin*, also shows a similar attempt to maintain the same associations of meaning and imagery as in the French poem. Verb conjugations also proved difficult to translate with trying formulations like “sont à naître”, which I simply translated into the present tense to reflect a loose timelessness. The middle stanza in which the poem reaches its crescendo also proved obstruse. Here, I felt that more than anywhere else in the poem, the poetic effects of rhythm and sound mattered. This is why I chose to apply a more liberal translation of the verbs and adjectives used in the French. Although the musicality is certainly not identical in my translation, the same emotion and relative rhythm is there in those stanzas. This resemblance can also be found when listening to Arfeux’s musical recording for “aux premiers jours du monde”, which now not only interplays beautifully with Bertoncini’s French images and word sounds, but also the English translation.[13]

**Conclusion**

By analysing, translating and connecting with this poem on a personal level, I have been introduced to Bertoncini’s complex oeuvre, rooted in an assemblage of influences from the worlds of music, art and literature. Research into her work, brings to light a keen interest in writing about the personal and minute, which, in fact, conceals an even greater desire to address the infinite and universal. Her multilingualism and translations also reflect a similar desire to represent and possess multiple points of views in her writing, which is poignantly expressed in her fusion of Adam and Eve. In spite of the heterogeneity of her work and her many sources of inspiration, what distinguishes Bertoncini’s poetry is indeed its fusion, embracing many things, revelling in the chaos, but ultimately, finding both solace and strength in unity, where her multiple voices are able to fuse together and create one single exquisite voice, just like in *Adam&ve*.

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[13] I made sure to write the English translation whilst bathed in Arfeux’s sound landscape, which made for a very unique translation experience!

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Fig. 2. Caroline, Louise. *Adam* [1st artwork], and *Eve* [2nd artwork]. Blue, green, yellow and red ink on fabric, dimensions unknown, but close to the size of a hand, 2023.

Fig. 3. Limbourg, Jean de. *Les très riches heures du Duc de Berry*. Manuscript (Ms. 65), 294 x 210 mm (folio size), c.1416. Musée Condé, Chantilly.

***Adam&ve***

Nés de bien plus loin que l'Eden
pétris de la matière noire du Désir

Adam&ve

Une même chair
une seule bouche

le sang des étoiles bat à leurs tempes
dans l'espace-océan, l'éther mer infinie où les formes sont à naître
nageuses étoiles au chant de sirènes nébuleuses

la blancheur de leur corps sur l'encre de la nuit

avant les commencements
et les dieux des humains

délivrés
retrouvant dans l'espace
l'obscurité céleste
la stellaire explosion
multiple de leur corps
se délite et se forme
la dimension cosmique
niée par la Genèse
enfermant leurs semblances

dans la prison d'Eden

Or la voix des étoiles frissonne
Grelot de givre des étoiles où coagulent ces deux corps
issus d'une poussière astrale

Corps translucide de nébuleuses dérivant dans l'espace
méduses bras étendus en longue trainée de Voie lactée

zébrant le bitume indigo du vide universel
leurs cheveux de comètes
et leurs yeux de soleils fulgurent dans la nuit des espaces infinis

d'où le monde naquit

d'elle-lui
Adam&ve

***Adam&ve***

Born from somewhere more distant than Eden
kneaded from the dark stuff of Desire

Adam&ve

Same flesh
One mouth

the blood of stars beats in their temples
in the ocean of space, the infinite sea-like ether
where forms emerge
like stars swimming to the song of nebulous sirens

the white of their bodies against the ink black night

before the beginnings
and the gods of humans

unfettered & free
moving in space's
celestial obscurity
the multiple stellar explosion
of their bodies
fragmenting and forming
the cosmic dimension
denied by Genesis
locking their appearances

in the prison of Eden

Now, the voice of stars quivers
Bell of frost made from stars in which these two bodies coalesce
from stardust

Translucid body of nebulae
drifting in space
jellyfish with tentacles spread wide
painting the Milky Way

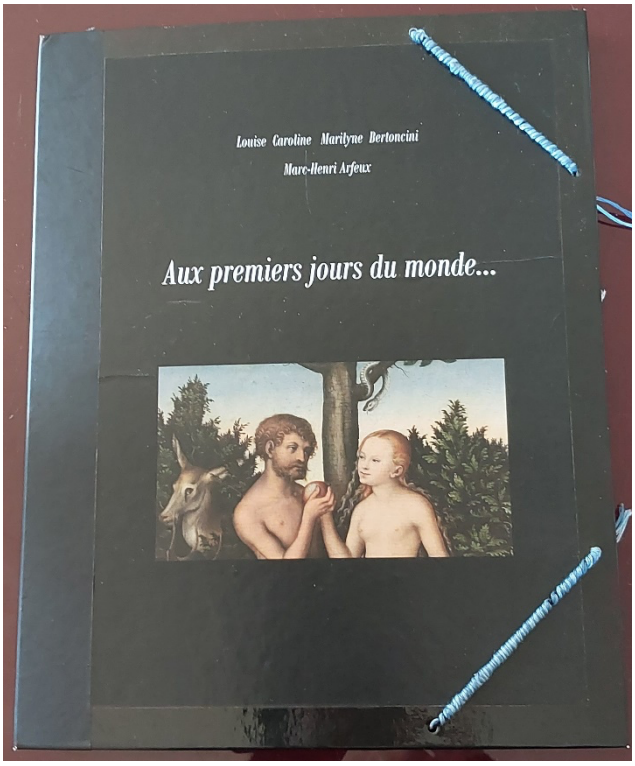
streaking the indigo bitumen of the universal void with
comets for hair
suns for eyes shimmering in the night of infinite spaces
where the world once began

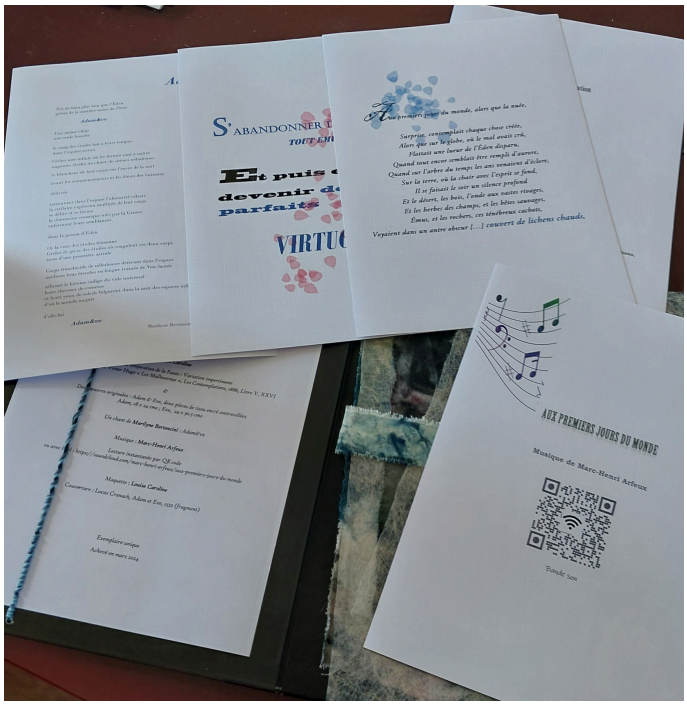
from her-him

*What next? Marilyne Bertoncini will exhibit a series of photographs taken during walks throughout the city for her exhibition "A Fleur de bitume", which will take place next year in January.*

**Appendix 1**

Photographs taken by Marilyne Bertoncini of the book *Aux Premiers jours du monde*.




**2024 AALITRA Translation Awards Winner**

**Translation of Marilyne Bertoncini's *Adam&ve***

SHIVA MOTLAGH-ELBAKRI
Translator of French and German into English

Marilyne Bertoncini's poetry frequently delves into themes of nature and the transience of human life. Her works are rich in sensual imagery, skillfully weaving the physical and metaphysical to create layers of meaning that delve into life, loss and continuity. Bertoncini's poem *Adam&ve* exemplifies this complexity through its existential, interwoven metaphors, as I interpret them. Translating this poem led me down a rabbit hole of research, as translators often find themselves doing in pursuit of the perfect word. Even after completing the translation, I still question whether my interpretation captures the poem as the author intended. This lingering doubt may be an inherent part of translating poetry, a reminder of language's limitations and the beauty of ambiguity. As a poet, teacher, and translator herself, Bertoncini captures this ambiguous experience of translation in her blog:

> …c'est bien le même ETRE-ENTRE-DEUX que j'éprouve quand je traduis – c'est dans cet entre-deux que je vis, que je chemine, portant à la lumière (de mon écran) l'ombre des mots…
>
> …it's precisely this 'BEING-BETWEEN' that I feel when I translate – I live and journey in this in-between, bringing the shadow of words to light (on my screen)…
>
> ("Diary of Translations")

As a native-English speaker, my reading of the French source text (ST) was laced with effort. The density of astronomical terms in French was as perplexing as their English equivalents would be for me. I still wonder if my choices, which leaned toward a broader interpretation, adequately honour the ST. My reading suggests that the ST intertwines two metaphors: one of celestial bodies and another of the first man and woman from the Abrahamic religions. In Bertoncini's depiction, the primordial couple occupies a space between being a singular hermaphrodite and two distinct beings who "find themselves in the space in between." Examining the ST closely, it seems that this 'being' shifts between plurality (*nés* - "[they were] born"), singularity (*Une même chair, une seule bouche* - "one flesh, one mouth"), and eventually, a visceral attraction that drives them toward full differentiation as the poem progresses:

> their temples pulsing with stardust in the
> infinite ethereal ocean where being are born
> specks of stardust swimming
> to the melody of sirens' nebulous calls

This union culminates in a "starry explosion" and the formation of an embryo that "layer by layer, takes shape" (*se délite et se forme*). While *se déliter* typically means "disintegrate" or

“dissolve,” I opted for "layering" to convey the imagery of a growing embryo. Here, and in relation to other elements of the poem, the disintegration of *Adam&ve*’s pure essence after succumbing to temptation seemed implied, so I leaned into the image of the formation of the first three embryonic germ layers in all of mankind.

After this union, the bodies withdraw, and we are pulled into an image of a foetus bobbing in amniotic fluid (“a translucent body of nebulae drifting in space”), before it is ‘born’ (“pierces the indigo bitumen of the cosmic void”).

Bertoncini’s brilliance lies in her seamless intertwining of celestial and physical imagery, each stanza representing a step in the journey of these ‘bodies’. Retaining this dual imagery while staying faithful to the ST was the greatest challenge in translating this piece. I recognise that the ST leans more heavily into astronomical imagery, while my translation accentuates the union of two people coming together to create life. This interpretive preference may be subconsciously influenced by my experience of new motherhood, which has shaped my recent perspective. This raises the question: “Is this faithful to the original?”

I find solace in Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction approach, which underscores the multiplicity and ambiguity of language, where words derive meaning in relation to one another (Derrida 158-159). Reflecting on this, I believe it is the sequence of the imagery in each stanza which provided the strongest foundation to support my interpretive choices. For Derrida, this interpretive act is not only acceptable but inevitable: a “perfect” translation is impossible, and each translation is a transformative process that produces a new text (Davis 16).

Regarding lexical and structural choices, readers may notice that I introduced four-line sections where the ST contained only three lines. In these instances, I allowed rhyme and rhythm to guide my word selection, introducing rhyme where none existed in the ST. This led me to split lines, particularly necessary for the lines including “born” and “call,” a rhyme that resonates in the Australian accent. Roman Jakobson’s theory of intersemiotic translation posits that meaning in art transcends literal language and encompasses various modes of expression (Jakobson 114). For poetry, this concept invites the translator to see the text as part of a broader aesthetic experience. In this case, I applied it to interweave the rhythmic experience of the poem in the context where it was designed to be paired with a musical composition.

In a similar vein, I translated *d’où le monde naquit* as “where beings take shape,” maintaining the rhyme scheme of this ST section. While a more literal translation would have been “from which the world was born,” I felt that retaining rhythmic cadence took priority. This decision, among others, reflects an intersemiotic approach, where the priority was to capture the ST’s sound and feel.

In translation, one often grapples with balancing a literal rendition and a more natural, fluent style. Early in my career as a translator, I leaned toward literalism, but Jakobson’s intersemiotic approach has encouraged me to engage with poetry as a multi-dimensional experience, where rhythm and sound are integral to meaning. Derrida’s deconstruction philosophy allowed me to embrace the boldness of my own interpretation. Translating *Adam&ve* has become both a celebration of poetic expression and a milestone in my journey as a translator, reflecting my evolving voice and confidence.

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***Adam&ve***

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d'où le monde naquit

d'elle-lui
Adam&ve

**Adam ‘n’ eve**

Born of something much further away than Eden
by the dark matter of Desire shaped

Adam ‘n’ eve

One flesh,
one mouth

Their temples pulsing with stardust in the
infinite ethereal ocean where beings are born
specks of stardust swimming
to the melody of sirens’ nebulous calls

the white of their bodies amidst the ink of the night

before the Beginning and the
gods of men

relief!
finding themselves in the space in between
celestial darkness
starry explosion
a copy of them
layer by layer, takes shape
its cosmic dimensions
rejected by Genesis
capturing their image

in the prison of Eden

Then, these astral beings shiver
In an instant these bodies - made of stardust –
slow down, pull back

A translucent body of nebulae drifting in space
spiraling the Milky Way up to maturity

piercing the indigo bitumen of the cosmic void
their celestial outer case
and bright eyes light up the
night of infinite space

where beings take shape

from he ‘n’ she
Adam ‘n’ eve

# The concept of "meaning" in literary translation from a Wittgensteinian Perspective

GERARDO PIÑA
Independent scholar

**Abstract**
The concepts of *meaning, family resemblance, language games* and *way of life* that Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein developed in his book *Philosophische Untersuchungen* have been widely analysed and debated in different disciplines (i.e. Philosophy, Linguistics, Psychology, etc.). In this article, I aim to summarize them and link them to their relevance when translating literary texts. I believe that translating a literary text implies, first, an interpretation as well as comprehension of the text by the translator. In doing so, their translation cannot be a mere conveyance of words from one language to another, but of a full interpretation and search of effects.

**Keywords:** Wittgenstein – translation – interpretation – creativity

The purpose of this article is to present the most relevant concepts of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen* and how they are linked to some recurrent processes and problems in literary translation. I am interested in a vision that transcends the signaling of the usual conflicts in translation (e.g. tracing, localization, faithfulness, etc.) and focuses on literary translation more as a creative act than a technical process.

The link between some concepts derived from Wittgenstein's philosophy and translation studies is not new. Maria Tymoczko, for example, uses the Austrian philosopher's concept of "family resemblance"[1] in her book *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* to present a way of defining the concept of translation.

> As in the case of language (itself a concept upon which translation rests, we must remember) discussed by Wittgenstein, there is "no one thing in common" that entails the use of the world's various words for all the exemplars of the category or concept translation [...] Open concepts or categories, such as Wittgenstein proposes for language and such as I am proposing for translation, are common in human culture – kinship relations and number and tool being among the most well known and most notorious of this type of concept.
>
> (Tymoczko)

When speaking of the processes of literary translation, Tymoczko reminds us that the meaning of the source text and that of the target text change by necessity. "Because meaning is both language-specific and conditioned by contextual relevance, translations and their source texts have different meanings" (Tymoczko 2014). When speaking about meaning in his book *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Wittgenstein refuted (at least) three common principles on that subject:

[1] James Holmes also uses this concept of "family airs" to assert that the very nature of translation is a common feature among different translations, although this "something" is difficult to specify (Holmes 1988 24 ff.).

1) Words get their meaning by representing objects. Wittgenstein explored this postulate in depth in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. From that book, one can conclude that this relation was not possible in all subjects of understanding (e.g. religion, ethics, and aesthetics).
2) Words obtain their meaning thanks to their link with ideas. The meaning of a word is obtained by following a thread of ideas and mental referents. For Wittgenstein, however, the meaning of words depends on a social contract.
3) All words have an essence; hence they have a meaning. From a thorough analysis one should be able to find the meaning of a word through its essence and observe how that character is imposed in the different contexts in which that word is used; this is another postulate, and a very pertinent one, when speaking of literary translation, which Wittgenstein proves to be false in this book.

We think of understanding language as a mental process that attends to our linguistic activities. That is, when I speak, listen or read, something happens in my mind that constitutes "grasping the meaning" of the signs used; there is a process of decoding language. This idea is practically taken for granted in a translation process: I know the meaning of some word because I can decode it and look up its equivalence[2] in another language. Wittgenstein, however, claims that understanding language is not a process but a skill. "When do we understand a sentence? – When we have pronounced it completely? Or while we are pronouncing it?".[3] To illustrate this thesis, he gives the example of "knowing how to play chess". If knowing how to play chess were a process, then someone could be asked, "When do you know how to play chess, all the time or only while moving a piece?" The lack of logic of these questions shows us that it is a mistake to think of understanding or knowledge as an event or a series of events in the mind. In his view, understanding or knowing something are rather capacities, practical abilities that we have. "The comprehension of the language seems like [...] being able to multiply" (§11).

In his book *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Wittgenstein claims that there is not one "logic of language" but many, since language does not have a single essence. In his view, language is a huge collection of different practices, each with its own logic. Meaning does not consist in the denotative relation between words and things or in an image relation between propositions and facts. In reality, the meaning of an expression is its use within the multiplicity of practices that make up a language. Moreover, language is not something autonomous and finished that can be analysed without considering other factors, since language is intimately linked to all human activities and behaviours. Consequently, our different uses of language acquire content and meaning from our daily actions, our work, our interactions with other human beings, and with the world we inhabit. Language is part of what he calls a "way of life".

According to the Austrian philosopher, instead of making theories to solve philosophical or language problems, we must undo those problems by removing the misunderstandings that cause them. In his works subsequent to the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein proposed a series of considerations that can help to clarify what the philosophical problem is in each particular case and thus seek the best way to solve it. These considerations seem to me to be more than pertinent to approach and solve several (if not all) of the problems that arise during a literary translation process. Establishing rules (let alone methods) that must always be observed in a translation assumes that all texts in a language represent a single use of language

[2] I adhere here to the definition of "equivalence" provided by A. Rędzioch-Korkuz: "Equivalence is a relation between two objects: the source and the target text; there is some kind of transfer or replacement that leads to its establishment; this transfer operates on various levels and ranks […] equivalence may be measured in terms of some extralinguistic contexts, e.g. the principle of similar effect or culture" (Rędzioch-Korkuz, 2023).

[3] „Wann verstehen wir den Satz? - Wenn wir ihn ganz ausgesprochen haben? Oder während wir ihn aussprechen?" (Wittgenstein 1984 §12). All translations from German are mine unless otherwise stated.

whose “essence” or “underlying logic” only needs to be unveiled in the complicated moments of a translation.

In order to solve the problems of language, Wittgenstein distinguishes between a “surface grammar” and a “deep grammar”. But in speaking of “grammar,” Wittgenstein is not referring to the common usage we give to it (e.g. generative grammar, structuralist grammar etc.) but to the logic of a given linguistic activity. Since there are many kinds of linguistic activities, there are also many ways in which the grammar of language works.

> One could distinguish a ‘surface grammar’ from a ‘deep grammar’ in the use of a word. That which immediately impresses itself on us in the use of a word is its mode of use in the sentence structure, that part of its use – one could say – which one can grasp with the ear. – And now compare the deep grammar, of the word “to mean” for instance, with what its surface grammar would lead us to suppose. No wonder, if one finds it difficult to know.
>
> (Wittgenstein 664)[4]

It is “difficult to know” because “to mean” means, from a superficial grammar, that someone has the desire to enunciate something, nothing more. We do not observe the intention and use of that which is enunciated at a given moment. This happens frequently in literary translation. The translator must prioritize the deep grammar of the words and propositions of the source text in order to achieve in the target text, a similar creation of the evocations, effects etc. interpreted from the source text.

One of the conclusions of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* is that philosophy should not seek to explain but to *describe* something, because by explaining we only create more and more theories (which, in turn, lead us to add more and more information). By describing, instead, we seek to organize language in a way that is adequate to make ourselves understood through what we already know about language and thought. That is, when we encounter a translation problem, and look for the solution in surface grammar, we will hardly go beyond the dictionary. However, in deep grammar there is a multiplicity of possibilities to describe what we understand in the source text and that we do not necessarily have to translate word for word. The idea that when translating it is not necessary to look for an equivalence of words in two languages is already in common use today among professional translators, as Mark Polizzotti states:

> Throughout history, some of the most celebrated and beautifully realized translations have been successful precisely because the personality of the translator shone through and made itself felt. Recreating someone else’s text [...] is less a matter of following the original line by line–replacing each word with its nearest equivalent as if they were carpet tiles–than of conveying what’s between those lines, and this takes a certain amount of interpretation, not to say idiosyncrasy.
>
> (Polizzotti)

This, of course, does not exempt us from pointing out (and correcting) translation errors that are based on misinterpretations of meaning, whether due to a lack of understanding of the ST or for some other reason. Let’s look at an example: the first stanza of an English translation of

[4]„Man könnte im Gebrauch eines Worts eine ‚Oberflächengrammatik’ von einer ‚Tiefengrammatik’ unterscheiden. Das, was sich uns am Gebrauch eines Worts unmittelbar einprägt, ist seine Verwendungsweise im *Satzbau*, der Teil seines Gebrauches –könnte man sagen–den man mit dem Ohr erfassen kann. –Und nun vergleiche die Tiefengrammatik, des Wortes »meinen« etwa, mit dem, was seine Oberflächengrammatik uns würde vermuten lassen. Kein Wunder, wenn man es schwer findet, sich auszukennen” (§664).

the well-known poem by Federico García Lorca, "Romance sonámbulo" (Sleepwalking Ballad):

| | |
|---|---|
| Verde que te quiero verde. | Green, how I desire you, green. |
| Verde viento. Verdes ramas. | Green wind. Green branches. |
| El barco sobre la mar | The ship upon the sea |
| y el caballo en la montaña. | And the horse in the mountains. |
| Con la sombra en la cintura | With the shade wrapped about her waist |
| ella sueña en su baranda, | she dreams on her balcony, |
| verde carne, pelo verde, | green flesh, a green coat, |
| con ojos de fría plata. | With eyes of cold silver. |
| Verde que te quiero verde. | Green, how I desire you, green. |
| Bajo la luna gitana, | Beneath the gypsy's moon, |
| las cosas le están mirando | all green things follow her |
| y ella no puede mirarlas (Lorca, s.f.). | yet she sees them not (Horton, 2009) |

The translator adds a vocative comma in the first line and makes the word "green" (verde) the interlocutor of the first line, which does not happen in Spanish. This change is not minor, since the word "green" plays a fundamental role in the whole poem. The ambiguity generated in Spanish about what is the referent of "green" in this first line could be maintained in English: (e.g. Green I really want you green"; "Green that I want you green", "Green, I want you green", etc.). Further on, in the seventh line, the translator translates "pelo" (hair) as "coat" (animal's fur), which is inaccurate. The same happens with "la luna gitana," ("the gypsy moon") which is translated as "the gypsy's moon" and "las cosas le están mirando" ("things are looking at her") as "all things follow her", also quite inaccurate. One meaning of the Oxford English Dictionary recognizes "follow" as "pay close attention to", which would give a close equivalence to the verb "mirar" of the source text, but the translator does not repeat it. "Ella no puede mirarlas" means that she cannot look at them [the things]. He could have done so to be consistent in his choice ("yet she follows them not"), instead he chooses: "yet she sees them not".

Finally, and in my opinion most importantly, the translator desists from seeking any rhythm or musicality in his translation. Lorca's poem is written in octosyllabic verse, one of the most common measures in Spanish poetry particularly in Lorca's poetry. We know that English verse is measured in other units (i.e. foot) and follows other conventions. However, the translator could have made a greater effort to create some kind of rhythm or meter (or both) to invite his readers to follow a certain musicality. A more successful literary translation –or interpretation– does not leave out rhythm; especially in poetry, where musicality is as or even more important than the meaning of words.

At the beginning of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Wittgenstein quotes, in Latin, a fragment from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine in which he talks about how he learned language.

> When they [my elders] named anything, and as they spoke turned towards it, I saw and remembered that they called what they would point out by the name they uttered. And that they meant this thing and no other was plain from the motion of their body, the natural language, as it were, of all nations, expressed by the countenance, glances of the eye, gestures of the limbs, and tones of the voice, indicating the affections of the mind, as it pursues, possesses, rejects, or shuns. And thus, by constantly hearing words, as they occurred in various sentences, I collected

> gradually for what they stood; and having broken in my mouth to these signs, I thereby gave utterance to my will[5].

With this quotation, Wittgenstein seeks to show that this way of looking at the learning and use of language is very old and almost universal. However, it leads us to investigate language in the wrong way, to ask questions about the essence of language, of propositions, of thought. Wittgenstein responds to Augustine's text in order to begin his exploration of the concept of "meaning" as follows:

> In these words, it seems to me, we get a certain picture of the nature of human language. Namely this: The words of language name objects-sentences are compounds of such namings. -In this picture of language we find the roots of the idea: every word has a meaning. This meaning is assigned to the word. It is the object for which the word stands (1977 [1953])[6].

Wittgenstein points out that there is no such "essence" of language with universal meanings but *uses* of language, and it is these uses that give meaning to words and propositions.

> Now, however, it can seem as if there is something like a final analysis of our linguistic forms, that is, a completely dissected form of expression. That is, as if our common forms of expression, essentially, were still unanalysed; as if something were hidden in them, which is to be brought to light. If this is done, then the expression is completely clarified and our task is solved.
>
> (§91)[7]

He alludes here to over-interpretation – to the idea that a word or proposition means something more than what it says or that the meaning of the word is another word in another language. This view is compatible with the way we tend to see the language of a literary text we want to translate. We see the text as if it were an essence whose meanings are evident from the mere use of the words chosen by the writer. That is, as if in solving a translation problem, the solution was to be found in the "authorized" meaning of a word and not in the possibilities conferred by the context itself. We look for a solution to a problem (e.g. how to translate such a word or phrase) through objects (dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc.) that most of the time do not contemplate the context to which the word or phrase I want to translate belongs. In fact, finding a certain meaning of a word in a dictionary does not guarantee a good translation. It is not even a sign of having understood the text.

A translation reflects, as a matter of principle, the understanding of the translated text. Hence, a translation (like a literary text) can always be "improved" and each choice of words implies a commitment on the part of the translator. The use of words is thus key to finding their meaning(s). We use language to describe, to inform, to deny, to speculate, to give orders, to

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[5] St. Augustin, *Confessions*, Book I: 18. Wittgenstein quotes Augustin directly in Latin. I quote the English translation by Edward Bouverie, available in *Project Gutenberg*. https://gutenberg.org/files/3296/3296-h/3296-h.htm.

[6] „In diesen Worten erhalten wir, so scheint es mir, ein bestimmtes Bild von dem Wesen der menschlichen Sprache. Nämlich dieses: Die Wörter der Sprache benennen Gegenstände–Sätze sind Verbindungen von solchen Benennungen. –In diesem Bild von der Sprache finden wir die Wurzeln der Idee: Jedes Wort hat eine Bedeutung. Diese Bedeutung ist dem Wort zugeordnet. Sie ist der Gegenstand, für welchen das Wort steht." (§1).

[7] „Nun aber kann es den Anschein gewinnen, als gäbe es so etwas wie *eine* letzte Analyse unserer Sprachformen, also eine vollkommen zerlegte Form des Ausdrucks. D. h.: als seien unsere gebräuchlichen Ausdrucksformen, wesentlich, noch unanalysiert; als sei in ihnen etwas verborgen, was ans Licht zu befördern ist. Ist dies geschehen, so sei der Ausdruck damit vollkommen geklärt und unsre Aufgabe gelöst." (§91).

translate, and so on. Wittgenstein calls these activities "language games."[8] These can be defined as the different activities we carry out involving different uses of language.

> –There are innumerable such types: innumerable different ways of using everything that we call "signs", "words", "sentences". And this diversity is nothing fixed, given once and for all; but new types of language, new language games, as we can say, arise and others become obsolete and are forgotten [...] The word "language game" should emphasize here that the speaking of language is a part of an activity, or a form of life (Wittgenstein 1997 §23)[9].

It is important to note that the term "game" in reference to language has no connotation of frivolity or unimportance. Wittgenstein himself explains his reasons for using this notion:

> For example, consider the processes we call "games." I mean board games, card games, ball games, fighting games, etc. What is common to all these? -Don't say, "They must have something in common, or they wouldn't be called 'games'"-but see if they all have something in common. -Because if you look at them, you will not see something common to all of them, but you will see similarities, affinities, and quite a number of them (§66)[10].

And it is precisely this analysis that makes it possible to introduce one of the most useful concepts of these disquisitions: "I cannot better characterize these resemblances than by the word 'family resemblances'; for thus the various resemblances which exist between the members of a family overlap and intersect: Growth, facial features, eye colour, gait, temperament, etc., etc. -And I will say: the 'games' form a family" (§67)[11]. To understand the different functions of language we must first recognize its variety and multiplicity.

> Instead of stating something that is common to all that we call language, I say that there is not one thing at all common to these phenomena, which is why we use the same word for all of them, -but they are related to each other in many different ways. And because of this relationship, or these relationships, we call them all "languages" (Wittgenstein 1997 §65)[12].

It is now clearer why the concept of "meaning" proposed In the *Tractatus* is insufficient; there, Wittgenstein asserted that the meaning of a word is the object it denotes (a view, as we have

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[8] See §§ 23, 27, 280, 288 and 654 for examples of the uses mentioned above.

[9] „–Es gibt *unzählige* solcher Arten: unzählige verschiedene Arten der Verwendung alles dessen, was wir »Zeichen«, »Worte«, »Sätze«, nennen. Und diese Mannigfaltigkeit ist nichts Festes, ein für allemal Gegebenes; sondern neue Typen der Sprache, neue Sprachspiele, wie wir sagen können, entstehen und andre veralten und werden vergessen [...] Das Wort »Sprach*spiel*« soll hier hervorheben, daß das Sprechen der Sprache ein Teil ist einer Tätigkeit, oder einer Lebensform." (§23).

[10] „Betrachte z.B. einmal die Vorgänge, die wir »Spiele« nennen. Ich meine Brettspiele, Kartenspiele, Ballspiel, Kampfspiele, usw. Was ist allen diesen gemeinsam?–Sag nicht: »Es *muß* ihnen etwas gemeinsam sein, sonst hießen sie nicht ›Spiele‹« – sondern *schau*, ob ihnen allen etwas gemeinsam ist. –Denn wenn du sie anschaust, wirst du zwar nicht etwas sehen, was *allen* gemeinsam wäre, aber du wirst Ähnlichkeiten, Verwandtschaften, sehen, und zwar eine ganze Reihe." (§66).

[11] „Ich kann diese Ähnlichkeiten nicht besser charakterisieren als durch das Wort »Familienähnlichkeiten«; denn so übergreifen und kreuzen sich die verschiedenen Ähnlichkeiten, die zwischen den Gliedern einer Familie bestehen: Wuchs, Gesichtszüge, Augenfarbe, Gang, Temperament, etc. etc. –Und ich werde sagen: die ›Spiele‹ bilden eine Familie." (§67).

[12] „Statt etwas anzugeben, was allem, was wir Sprache nennen, gemeinsam ist, sage ich, es ist diesen Erscheinungen gar nicht eines gemeinsam, weswegen wir für alle das gleiche Wort verwenden, –sondern sie sind miteinander in vielen verschiedenen Weisen verwandt. Und dieser Verwandtschaft, oder dieser Verwandtschaften wegen nennen wir sie alle »Sprachen«". (§65).

already mentioned, very common in the translation processes). In the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, he asserts that the meaning of an expression is the use that can be made of it in any of the various possible language games: „Die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch in der Sprache." ["The meaning of a word is its use in language."] (Wittgenstein 1997 §43).

At the beginning of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, through the quotation from St. Augustine, Wittgenstein shows that the denotative theory that he himself had proposed in the *Tractatus* is erroneous. The argument, in general terms, is as follows: if the meaning of words consisted in a denotative link to objects, then that link would have to be able to be established by means of an ostensive definition, i.e. by pointing to an object and pronouncing its name. However, the act of pointing to the object cannot be the foundation by which we learn language, since in order to understand that a pointed object is being named it is necessary to have mastery of at least one part of language: the language game that consists of naming objects.

Let us imagine that someone teaches a little girl that that object over there is called a chair; she points to the object and pronounces the word "chair". How could the child know beforehand that the word "chair" refers to the object itself and not, for example, to the colour of the object, its function, or the material it is made of? This relationship (pointing to an object and linking it to a meaning) is similarly reproduced in translation practice when we say that the meaning of a word is another word in another language. What is considered an axiom is, in reality, an automatic process that is often limited to a superficial grammatical search. Even when we say, for example, that "chair", "Stuhl" and "chaise" are three signifiers of the same meaning, we have not moved from the superficial character of the word. To attend to the meaning of a word we must consider its use, the context in which it is uttered, the intention, etc. as well as who interprets the word and under what conditions. Someone might think that it is impossible to consider all this when looking for the meaning of a word, but, as Wittgenstein himself points out, these considerations are relevant when we are faced with a problem of comprehension and not in every sentence we translate. In the case of a literary translation, the problem may not be the lack of knowledge of a word equivalent to another in two or more languages, but the tone, the sonority, the cultural implications, etc.

Wittgenstein deliberately does not use a "theory of meaning as use" in the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. This is because the uses of language utterances are as many as the language games in which they occur and, consequently, no theory could cover all that variety. Mastery of a language, according to these postulates, consists in having the ability to use and recognize these uses in the many language games to which they belong. It is important to remember that, for Wittgenstein, understanding is neither a state of mind nor a process, as we mentioned earlier. "Einen Satz verstehen, heißt, eine Sprache verstehen. Eine Sprache verstehen, heißt, eine Technik beherrschen." ["To understand a sentence is to understand a language. Understanding a language means mastering a technique."] (Wittgenstein 1997 §199). This technique consists of following the rules of use of expressions according to the language set to which they belong. In a parallelism with translation processes, attending to the meaning of a word or expression according to contexts that are foreign to the use in the text we are translating is of little use since it creates confusion. Hence, a literary translator capable of knowing in depth the literature of an era, the works of an author, a genre, etc. will have a greater number of resources to recognize the language games and the uses of the words and expressions used in a literary work. I am not speaking here only of linguistic resources but of recognition of the uses of language too; even more: uses of language in certain circumstances. The constant reading and analysis of a literary work or group of literary works will improve our comprehension technique when translating, because our ability to interpret such literary texts will be increasingly greater. A good literary translation will be the one that manages to evoke in a reading audience the effects and images (visual, auditory, synaesthetic, etc.) perceived by

the translator; not the one that achieves a greater "fidelity" to the words of the source text. Although in principle there is no better perception of someone when reading a literary text, the translator cannot help but to interpret the text and transmit this interpretation through their translation. To my mind, the relationships between literary works, other arts and other references are what sustain the literary work; not the language in which it is written. This must be considered at all times when speaking of a literary translation. Marie Vrinat-Nikolov states:

> More than by language, it seems to me that literary forms are "influenced" (rather than influences, let's talk about mutual contacts of each other) by the crossbreeding and hybridization that have taken place, not only between literatures, but also between literature and other arts (painting, music), and this, to a great extent, through translation. It is this connection between cultures that proves fertile for literatures[13].

Of course, as Maria Tymoczko points out, the translator cannot guess the possible interpretations of potential readers, but this does not prevent us from recognizing in translation a particular reading process, whose interpretation may come close to a recreation of the multiple effects and images of the source text.

It goes without saying that authors and translators cannot ever fully anticipate or control readers' responses, and thus it follows that authors and translators cannot circumscribe the meaning of their own textual production. Nor does a text mean the same thing to author and translator or to any two readers. A text elicits different responses depending on the individual reader's (or hearer's) experience, situated knowledge, and affective life[14], and the meaning of the text is configured differently as a result.

A translator does not transfer the meanings derived from a text, since that would be an impossible task. "Instead of actually attempting to transfer meaning, a translator copes with the surplus of meaning in a text by making choices about meaning, prioritizing those meanings, and creating a heuristic for constructing the translated text so as to perform the meanings desired" (2007).

For Wittgenstein, understanding something is not deciphering an image to which the word or expression we want to understand is related, since understanding is not an experience akin to observing a form or feeling pain, for example[15]. This does not imply that in understanding something there are no simultaneous sensory experiences; something unthinkable, above all, when reading literary works (a word can evoke an image, a memory, a pleasant or unpleasant experience, another literary work, etc.) but these emotions do not constitute either the meaning of the word or our understanding of it. For Wittgenstein, this has two important implications: 1) one does not learn the meaning of words from the mental association between a word and a specific experience, object or situation; and 2) that we confer a meaning to a certain word or expression on several occasions does not mean that we will have the same experience on all of them, nor that our mental process will be identical on each occasion. Wittgenstein exemplifies the above in the following way. Let us think of pain. One

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[13] « Plus que par la langue, il me semble que les formes littéraires sont 'influencées' (plutôt que d'influence, parlons de contacts mutuels) par le métissage et l'hybridation qu'ont opérés, non seulement les dialogues entre les littératures, mais aussi entre littérature et autres arts (peinture, musique), et ce, en grande partie par la traduction. C'est cette mise en rapport entre les cultures qui se révèle fécondante pour les littératures. » (Vrinat-Nikolov, 2010).

[14] Tymoczko refers to the concept of "situated knowledge", something that seems to me to be consistent with what Wittgenstein proposes regarding knowing something and understanding it, since knowledge always comes from one or several points of view; there is no knowledge in a pure state. All knowledge belongs to a context and a time; to certain values, cultures and beliefs.

[15] See Wittgenstein, 1997: §140, §154, §§217-8.

can feel pain and say whether it lasts for a long or short time, that it is localized in the head or in the back, that it is intense or mild, etc., but we cannot say any of these things when speaking of the understanding of a word or expression. We do not say that we understand a word for a short time, in the back, or with little intensity, for example. We either understand it or we do not. In fact, different people associate different images or have different reactions to the same word or expression; therefore, the meaning of such an expression cannot consist in these mental accompaniments (images, evocations, etc.) nor can it consist in the actual understanding of the word or expression (cf. §§ 137-8). Moreover: according to Wittgenstein, in order to understand an utterance, it is not enough that a given mental process exists. That is, it is not enough for me to perform a mental process in order to "grasp" the meaning of a word because the meaning, as we have already mentioned above, depends on the use of the word and also on certain social rules and conventions. In sum: we cannot extract the meaning of a word solely from the mental associations it evokes.

To understand, therefore, is to know how to do something; in the case of language, to understand language means *to know how to use it*. Hence, understanding a second language does not only mean knowing its equivalences in a native language, but knowing how to use the language to best fulfil the strategy that constitutes the literary text[16]. The translator acts here as another interpreter of the text who will hardly be able to decode and understand all the strategies of the text. Nevertheless, they will have to make something out of them in order to translate and their interpretation will be the one shared through the translation. For Wittgenstein, the relationship between meaning, understanding and use is absolute. This has a fundamental implication for literary analysis and literary translation: understanding, as a practical ability, is far from belonging to the inner mental life of an individual; it is something that exists for all to see and belongs to the public domain. By understanding a sentence or word, we actively participate in our social environment to a much greater extent than in an isolated mental process, because understanding implies following certain rules and conventions.

The concept of rules to which Wittgenstein refers is linked to that of language games[17]. Wittgenstein proposes a concept of rules which, in a game-like manner, vary from game to game and can even be modified or adapted at the discretion of the players or participants. This is not new in the area of literary translation. It is often necessary to modify certain rules in order to carry out a translation work (e.g. if the source text uses the foot as a poetic measure and the target text uses the syllable, the length of the translated lines will have to be adapted; if in one of the working languages the concept of consonant and assonant rhyme does not exist, the texts will also have to be adapted, etc.). Wittgenstein is opposed to a universal system of language rules, among other things, because by not following these rules perfectly, one falls into the concept of "incorrectness"; a translation process is understood, interpreted or judged on the basis of an external and supposedly objective system[18].

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[16] In his book *The Event of Literature*, Terry Eagleton concludes that strategy is the key to define a literary text: "There is one concept in particular which can illuminate a good many [theories of literature] even if it is not always a concept they themselves employ. This is the idea of the literary work as a strategy." (Eagleton 2012) Eagleton speaks of a strategy when referring to the literary work because he thinks that it is the only thing that all literary theoretical and critical approaches share, since each literary work constitutes, in its own way, the set of answers to the questions that it itself creates.

[17] Wittgenstein deals with the subject of the rules of language use from §143 to §242 of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*.

[18] This relates to the way we tend to think about the "meaning" of a word, phrase, etc., not only in a literary text. "[Semantic meaning is traditionally the type of meaning privileged in (Western) philosophical theories of meaning, as well as in translator training. Some of the types of meaning that lie outside the domain of semantic meaning are well recognized in translation studies, for instance, linguistic meaning. Form, genre, poetics (including sound, rhythm, rhyme, timing, duration, pace, and other literary conventions), and style carry meanings that go well

The collective use of a rule is, for Wittgenstein, what gives meaning to that rule. The following of the rules of a language game is established by the agreements, customs and practice of those involved. The example Wittgenstein uses to explain this is that of a traffic sign. "A rule is written there, like a signpost. Does it leave no doubt about the way I have to go? Does it show in which direction I should go when I pass it; whether along the road, or the dirt road, or cross-country?", Wittgenstein asks. The sign does not tell us what to do after following the indicated direction. Evidently, no such sign indicates the entire course one must follow to the end; they are only momentary guides (e.g. "go straight ahead," "turn left," etc.). "So I can say, the signpost does not leave any doubt. Or rather: sometimes it leaves a doubt open, sometimes not" (§85)[19]. And further on, Wittgenstein warns us against the idea that every interpretation of a rule or a sign is equally valid. And he adds: "Every interpretation hangs, together with the meaning, in the air; it cannot serve as support for it. The interpretations alone do not determine the meaning" (§198)[20]. That is, the signal tells us which direction to take, but it does not force us to follow that path nor does it tell us how to continue. The emphasis in this argument is on habit. A person understands and is guided by a traffic sign because there is a convention, generated by the habit of doing so. We read and interpret texts in the same way; in a first phase the reading is a mere decoding of signs, but later (or perhaps in parallel) one or several possible interpretations come to mind, which will have to be corroborated through an analysis, which is also guided by a habit. In fact, when we apply some theoretical model, this habit becomes the norm (e.g. structuralism, formalism, etc.). When we begin the translation of a literary text, we have already made at least one interpretation: the one that has allowed us to understand, even if only in a general way, the work to be translated. When the translator does not read the literary work before starting the translation, he/she leaves out parts of the interpretation process that could make their work more complete. Often this habit to which Wittgenstein alludes can be equivalent to the literary genres and conventions with which translators work. There are formulas (e.g. "once upon a time", "at that time Jesus said to his disciples...") or conventions that we hardly dare to question (e.g. the translation of Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* as *Metamorphosis*.) The decisions made by the translator of a literary text, from the title to the end point, reflect the level of understanding they had of the text and the ability to tackle creative dilemmas beyond an intralinguistic conversion.

In this regard, Maria Tymoczko reminds us that the translator's decisions necessarily involve biases, but these are not defects in themselves:

> As a result of such decision-making processes, translations are metonymic. In fact translating and interpreting are both metonymic processes: they are always partial representations of the source text. Inspection of literary texts illustrates clearly as well that translators introduce features into their translated texts that have metonymic significance relating to the receiving languages and cultures. Such metonymies and partialities are not defects of translation: they are often inherent in the asymmetries of language and culture, and they facilitate the reception and understanding of translated texts by receiving audiences.
>
> (2014)

beyond semantic meaning" (Tymoczko 2007)].

[19] „Eine Regel steht da, wie ein Wegweiser. –Läßt er keinen Zweifel offen über den Weg, den ich zu gehen habe? Zeigt er, in welche Richtung ich gehen soll, wenn ich an ihm vorbei bin; ob der Straße nach, oder dem Feldweg, oder querfeldein? […] –Also kann ich sagen, der Wegweiser läßt doch keinen Zweifel offen. Oder vielmehr: er läßt manchmal einen Zweifel offen, manchmal nicht" (§85).

[20] „Jede Deutung hängt, mitsamt dem Gedeuteten, in der Luft; sie kann ihm nicht als Stütze dienen. Die Deutungen allein bestimmen die Bedeutung nicht" (§198).

Thus, translation involves metonymic processes, but based on meanings belonging to certain cultural and linguistic conventions. The translator's decisions are not gratuitous. Hence, the application of the concept of "following a rule" presupposes a custom. In short: following the rules of a language game is not a private or hidden mental activity; it is a public matter. We do not need to dwell on every word and every expression and elaborate a conscientious analysis to make every decision. We do this only when we encounter a difficulty, a problem.

Rule-following is essentially a social practice; that is, it is something that exists within a community and it is precisely the existence of *agreements* in that community that establishes the rules to be followed. "The word 'agreement' and the word 'rule' are *related* to each other, they are cousins. If I teach someone the use of one word, he will also learn the use of the other" (Wittgenstein 1997 §224)[21]. Therefore, just as no one can follow or break a rule outside a community, no one can create a meaning for himself alone, nor choose a certain phrase or word when translating that is only self-referential. Following or breaking a rule can only be checked with respect to the uses that others make of these rules[22]. For Wittgenstein, understanding a sentence implies understanding the language game of which it is a part in its use; just as following a rule or convention of language implies having a mastery in the practice of the very act of following rules.

From the above, it could be objected that, if following the rules of a language is based on the agreements of the members of a linguistic community without the "objective" limits imposed by way of facts or scientific proofs, etc., is a mathematical *truth*, for example, also the product of such agreements? If a group decides that such a word is to be translated, through agreements and customs, in this way, is it to be accepted without further ado, do dictionaries and other normative referents take second place? To this Wittgenstein responds as follows: "So you say that the agreement of men decides what is right and what is wrong?" –Right and wrong is what people *say*; and in *speech* people agree. This is not agreement of opinions, but of the way of life (§241)[23]. A "way of life" is an underlying consensus of linguistic and non-linguistic behaviours, assumptions, practices, traditions and natural tendencies that humans, as social beings, share with each other and that form part of the presuppositions contained in the language they use. Language is woven into the pattern of human character and activities, and the meaning attached to its expressions obeys the shared outlook and nature of the users of that language[24]. In the words of Fox Craig: "Wittgenstein has not offered a theory of what meaning consists in; that is, a word's meaning does not *consist* in a word's use. Rather, it is the word's use that will often lead us to see what the meaning is".

A way of life consists, then, in the natural concordance of a community in terms of its natural and linguistic responses, which are given through agreements in definitions, judgements and behaviours. This is fundamental to understand that there is also a limit established between the possible meanings of language through its own use. Because the foundations of the practices in which the uses of language belong to the "way of life" with which that language is interconnected, for Wittgenstein, questions about an ultimate explanation or justification of the concepts represented in our thought and speech very soon hit bottom. What justifies our uses of language is the shared form of life that underlies these uses and that is all: for the Austrian philosopher it is neither necessary nor possible to say more

[21] „Das Wort »Übereinstimmung« und das Wort »Regel« sind miteinander verwandt, sie sind Vettern. Lehre ich einen den Gebrauch des einen Wortes, so lernt er damit auch den Gebrauch des andern" (§224).
[22] See §202.
[23] „»So sagst du also, daß di Übereinstimmung der Menschen entscheide, was richtig und was falsch ist?« –Richtig und falsch ist, was Menschen *sagen*; und in der *Sprache* stimmen die Menschen überein. Dies ist keine Übereinstimmung der Meinungen, sondern der Lebensform" (§241).
[24] Cf. §19, §23, §241 and of the second part: §174 y §226.

about it. The way of life is the frame of reference in which we learn to develop when we train ourselves in the use of the language of our community; learning that language means learning the views, assumptions, and practices with which that language is inseparably linked and from which expressions acquire their meanings[25].

Thus, translating a word or expression from a source text by another that is not equivalent (according to the definition provided by Rędzioch-Korkuz at the beginning of this article) in the target language must have a justification (context, accuracy, intertextuality, etc.). Errors of meaning are ruptures of the established consensuses in our way of life and breaking them when translating (whether by ignorance or whim) implies presenting the reader with an invalid or *irrelevant* (in Umberto Eco's words) interpretation of the source text. It is a fault that ranges from the lexical to the ethical; and just as we saw above how much these faults can affect a poem as in the case of the translation of García Lorca's "Romance sonámbulo" into English, such faults should be avoided even in texts whose nature is in itself a breach of grammatical, logical or semantic conventions. To make this point clearer, let us take as an example "Femme et oiseau" by André Breton, a short prose poem. It is one of the poems Breton wrote in 1958 based on a series of paintings for an exhibition by Joan Miró. The poems were published under the title *Constellations* in 1959. Here is the poem:

> Le chat rêve et ronronne dans la lutherie brune. Il scrute le fond de l'ébène et de biais lape à distance le tout vif acajou. C'est l'heure où le sphinx de la garance détend par milliers sa trompe autour de la fontaine de Vaucluse et où partout la femme n'est plus qu'un calice débordant de voyelles en liaison avec le magnolia illimitable de la nuit (Breton, 2024).
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> El gato sueña y ronronea en la penumbra de la tienda de instrumentos músicos de cuerda. Escruta en el fondo del ébano y al sesgo lengüetea de lejos el caoba vivísimo. Es la hora en la que la esfinge de la granza afloja por millares su trompa alrededor de la fuente de Vaucluse y en la que la mujer, en todos lados, no es sino un cáliz desbordante de vocales enlazando a la magnolia ilimitable de la noche (Paz, 2000)[26].

The poem is not easy to translate. Even less so because it is about an author who was part of a literary movement that sought to subvert the poetic norms of his time and to which other writers and painters also belonged, often working together. In other words, surrealism shaped, through the work of all the artists who subscribed to this movement, its own conventions and postulates.

On first reading, some of the above-mentioned errors or "breaks in the established consensus" come to light. For example, translating "lutherie" as "stringed musical instrument store" is unfortunate because the length of the target text compared to that of the source text differs too much (6 words to 1) in the two languages. This causes a total break in the rhythm and sonority of the ST. On the other hand, "laudería" is in widespread use in several Spanish-speaking countries; furthermore, "instrumentos músicos de cuerda" shows a syntax completely foreign in Spanish and makes no sense. The same could be said of "al sesgo lengüetea de lejos el caoba vivísimo", the syntax is so messy that it renders the image (of a cat licking a very shiny mahogany instrument) meaningless and makes the rhythm of the ST completely lost.

[25] Cf. §217 and of the second part: §226.

[26] Here I offer an English version which conveys the style of the Spanish translation: "The cat dreams and purrs in the half-light of the stringed instrument store. It scrutinizes in the ebony background and at the slant it licks from afar the vivid mahogany. It is the hour in which the sphinx of the chippings loosens by thousands its horn around the fountain of Vaucluse and in which the woman, everywhere, is nothing but an overflowing chalice of vowels linking to the limitless magnolia of the night."

Where we have a line made almost exclusively of anapests: "et de biais lape à distance le tout vif acajou," the translation lacks any rhythm at all. On the other hand, "le sphinx de la garance" is a type of butterfly typical of France; its scientific name is Hyles Gallii. Here the translator could have chosen "mariposa diurnal", "mariposa del atardecer", or "mariposa" simply, but "sphinx de la garance" does not refer the Spanish-speaking reader to any type of butterfly. Finally, "en liaison avec" means "in collaboration with" or "in a love affair with" the colour evening magnolia (although there are several types, magnolias are white or with pinkish tints) and the hue refers to dusk. It is difficult to know if Breton alludes to the figure of the woman in contrast with the colour magnolia or in an amorous act with that colour, since it is a poem inspired by a series of paintings by Joan Miró (there is a series of 23 paintings with that same title: *Constellations*) and therefore the theme of contrast and perspective makes a lot of sense. However, "enlazando a la magnolia" ("linking to the magnolia") denotes more a lack of understanding of the ST than a solution on the part of the translator. This decision does not portray any of the images that the French poem suggests.

This translation of Breton's poem "Femme et oiseau" could be accepted as valid only if it were accepted that the translator could "create" his own language; something that is unacceptable, as we have seen. For Wittgenstein, the concept of "form of life" is closely linked to the public character of language, as opposed to the idea that meaning and understanding are inner or hidden states or processes of the mind. The idea of a private language is implicit in a standard conception of those expressions that refer to our own pains, moods, feelings, etc. Since these are private, no one else can have access to these states unless those who possess them express them in the form of language or behaviour; we think that no one else can experience my moods or my pains or discomforts. Moreover, if we do not wish it, it would be very difficult for anyone else to detect them. From this we might suppose that an individual could construct a language to talk to himself about his sensations and his inner life, which would in principle be denied to others. However, Wittgenstein analyses this idea and concludes that this is impossible[27]. The reasons are as follows: a) to understand a language, one must be able to follow its rules of use, and there can be no such thing as a private following of the rules. "Therefore, 'following the rule' is a practice. And to believe to follow the rule is not: to follow the rule. Therefore, one cannot follow the rule 'privately', because otherwise *believing* to follow the rule would be the same as following the rule" (1997: §202)[28]; b) speaking a language implies participating in a way of life and for this it is necessary to have the appropriate training to be able to share this way of life, this training has to take place among other human beings (since the training to share a way of life is what gives meaning to language)[29]. What we usually think of as private mental states and processes (pain, anger, etc.) are features of human nature that therefore have natural behavioural expressions (a baby's cry to indicate hunger, for example), and the linguistic resources we use to talk about them are the result of public learning; moreover, these linguistic resources are, for Wittgenstein, replacements for behaviour. Saying, "My stomach hurts" is part of the pain. Wittgenstein calls this "verbal behaviour"; an extension of the natural expressions of expectation, desire, pain, etc., which in the case of the latter would take the form of a grimace, a holding of the hands to the area of pain, moaning, etc. As with all words, the meaning of words expressing individual sensations lies in their use; and this use is constituted by the rules publicly agreed in that shared way of life upon which the possibility of such agreement rests. The rules are the same and depend on the same public criteria.

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[27] See §243 to §363.

[28] „Darum ist ›der Regel folgen‹ eine Praxis. Und der Regel zu folgen *glauben* ist nicht: der Regel folgen. Und darum kann man nicht der Regel ›privatim‹ folgen, weil sonst der Regel zu folgen glauben dasselbe wäre, wie der Regel folgen." (§202).

[29] Cf. §244, §257 and §283.

With these remarks, Wittgenstein leads us to reconsider what we mean by understanding not just in a general sense, but also in the field of literary translation. To translate a literary work implies much more than having a good knowledge of the source language. We are encouraged to reflect on our own role in society as conveyors of meaning, as followers of language's games and rules, and on our ability to interpret a literary text before translating it.

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# Navigating Sociolinguistic Settings: Translating Wei Zhou's *The Hidden Mother Tongue* for Cross-Cultural Understanding

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## Introduction

*The Hidden Mother Tongue* [隐蔽的母语] by Wei Zhou [维舟], is a poignant exploration of contemporary China's linguistic identity and a subtle expose on cultural assimilation there. Wei Zhou was born in Miaozhen, Chongming Island, Shanghai. He brings a deeply personal perspective to this essay, which was originally published on Wei's official WeChat account. As a distinguished Chinese writer and book reviewer, Wei's writing offers nuanced remarks on the interplay of regional dialects, social mobility, and urbanity in Shanghai.

Wei Zhou's deeply personal essay, recounts his experiences navigating the linguistic landscape of Shanghai as a native speaker of the Chongming dialect. Through a series of revealing encounters – most notably a conversation with a taxi driver who makes disparaging remarks about Chongming people without knowing Wei is a concealed Chongming native – Wei explores how dialect speakers often hide their linguistic identity to avoid discrimination. The essay weaves together several narrative threads: a female taxi driver's prejudice against Chongming drivers, the author's own experiences of dialect concealment, and observations of how his high school classmates gradually abandoned their mother tongue in favour of Shanghainese. Wei draws parallels between the Chongming people's linguistic assimilation and similar phenomena among other marginalized groups in Shanghai, particularly migrants from the northern Jiangsu province. The essay concludes with a poignant comparison with Studio Ghibli's *Pom Poko*, suggesting that like the tanuki who must transform into humans to survive in the modern world, dialect speakers must suppress their true linguistic identity to thrive in urban Shanghai, finding freedom only in moments when they can return to their mother tongue.

Wei's background as a native of Chongming Island lends authenticity and depth to his observations. He is a graduate of the department of journalism and communication at Xiamen University, and he has established himself as a leading figure in Chinese literary circles, especially in online literary circles. His contributions as a columnist and book reviewer for highly influential publications such as *Southern Metropolis Daily* and *The Economic Observer* have cemented his reputation as an acute observer of Chinese society and culture.

The importance of "The Hidden Mother Tongue" is heightened when viewed alongside Wei's larger corpus, such as his popular writings about his hometown of Chongming Island. This particular essay can be understood as part of a much larger narrative that Wei has been fashioning about regional identity and the impacts of rapid urbanization and cultural homogenization on linguistic heritage.

In the context of Chinese literature, "The Hidden Mother Tongue" forms part of a growing corpus challenging the idea of Chinese identity understood in monolithic terms. It brings to the forefront the experiences of marginalized linguistic communities within the broader Chinese cultural sphere, a theme that resonates with global discussions on language preservation and cultural diversity. This perspective is further developed in Wei's published works, such as *A Foot in Postmodernity* [一只脚踏进后现代] (2020), *Island Without Shore* [无岸之岛] (2019), and *All the Rivers on the Earth* [大地上所有的河流] (2014), with each work offering a rich exploration of contemporary Chinese society and culture.

The essay can be read against the backdrop of Shanghai's rapid urbanization and the influx of a rising number of migrants from surrounding regions; in such a context, understanding these social dynamics has become very important. As China's economic powerhouse, Shanghai has long been a magnet for internal migrants seeking better opportunities. However, this type of domestic migration has, in turn, led to tangled social hierarchies based on origin and linguistic background. It is against this backdrop that Wei examines the Chongming dialect speakers as representatives of these broader societal tensions. In doing so, he draws on his personal encounters and observations as an individual who has navigated these linguistic and cultural divides.

This essay is particularly challenging to translate because of the depth of its roots in Chinese cultural and linguistic realities. There are several references to local dialects, cultural practices, and social norms that have no direct equivalents in English cultures. The essay also makes use of personal anecdotes and reflections, creating an intimate tone that should be carefully preserved during translation.

In approaching this translation, I have adopted Venuti's concepts of foreignization and domestication while being guided by Skopos theory as developed by Vermeer. While Venuti argues for foreignization as a way to preserve cultural difference (*Translator's Invisibility* 23-25), I recognize that the complex linguistic and cultural elements in Wei's essay – particularly those involving dialect discrimination and social dynamics – require a more nuanced approach. Therefore, I align with Nord's concept of "function plus loyalty" (126), which advocates maintaining fidelity to the source text while ensuring the translation fulfils its intended function for the target audience. This approach allows for what Eco terms "negotiation" in translation (6, 43, 63), where certain cultural elements are preserved while others are adapted to ensure comprehensibility.

Specifically, in line with Toury's notion of translation norms (55-65), I have sought to balance what he terms "adequacy" (adherence to source text norms) with "acceptability" (adherence to target culture norms). This is particularly relevant when handling dialect representation and culture-specific references in Wei's essay. As Baker suggests in her discussion of equivalence at different levels, I have employed various strategies to achieve both semantic and pragmatic equivalence, ensuring that the cultural and social implications of language use in the source text are effectively conveyed to English readers.

This commentary aims to provide insight into the specific challenges encountered in the translation process and the strategies developed to address them. It is grounded in these theoretical frameworks and contributes to the broader discourse on translating contemporary Chinese literature.

## Translation Challenges and Strategies

### 1. *Navigating Dialectal Variations and Sociolinguistic Features*

One of the primary challenges in translating "The Hidden Mother Tongue" lies in effectively conveying the linguistic diversity that forms the essay's thematic core. The text features multiple Chinese language varieties, including Shanghai dialect (Shanghainese), Chongming dialect, and Mandarin, each carrying distinct social and cultural connotations. This multilingual complexity presents what Hatim and Mason term "socio-textual practices" (15-19), where language varieties index social identity and power relations.

I have followed Toury's concept of adequacy versus acceptability norms, and have adopted a balanced approach that preserves the sociolinguistic significance of dialect differences while ensuring comprehensibility for English readers. This was manifest in several

specific translation strategies, particularly when handling dialect-specific expressions and accent representations.

For instance, the taxi driver's use of the insult "崇蟹" (Chong ha, which literally means Chongming crabs) presents a particularly complex translation challenge that exemplifies what Venuti, drawing on Lecercle's work, terms the "remainder" (*Scandals of Translation* 9-11)– those linguistic elements that resist standardization and reveal language's socially situated nature. Aixelá's concept of "extratextual gloss"(62), led me to retain the insult in its original form, accompanied by an explanation of its linguistic significance:

> *Source Text: 这句骂辞我还是第一次听见，不过立刻就明白是专骂崇明人的 – – 因为崇明方言著名的特征和笑柄之一是〝啥〞和〝蟹〞谐音。*
>
> *Translation: This was my first encounter with this particular insult, but I instantly understood it was directed at someone from Chongming Island – famous in part because their dialect makes the words for "what(sha)" and "crab(ha)" sound alike.*

This approach allows the reader to "hear" the original dialect while understanding its meaning and significance. Moreover, I have intentionally included the Chinese pronunciations "sha" for "what" and "ha" for "crab" in parentheses, making it easier for English readers to recognize and understand their phonetic similarities, particularly in the latter syllable, "ha".

For more nuanced accent distinctions, I implemented what Newmark terms "descriptive equivalence" (1988, 83-84), using metalinguistic commentary instead of attempting to reproduce features of any given accent in English. This aligns with Nord's "function plus loyalty" principle, maintaining fidelity to the source text's meaning while adapting a form enabling target audience comprehension. For instance, when the female taxi driver comments on Wei speaking Shanghainese without an accent, the translation becomes particularly complex:

> *Source Text: "那你上海话一点也听不出来口音。"她笑了笑说："侬到底混得好呀！"*
>
> *Translation: "Well, your Shanghainese has no trace of an accent". She grinned and remarked in Shanghainese, "You've really made something of yourself, haven't you!"*

This example presents multiple translation challenges that required careful theoretical consideration. The Shanghainese pronoun "nong" (侬) serves as a crucial dialect marker distinguishing it from the Mandarin "ni" (你). If I were to follow Toury's concept of adequate translation, preserving this dialectal distinction would be important for source text fidelity. However, when applying Nord's functional approach (80-93), I recognized that attempting to find an English dialectal equivalent for "nong" would risk introducing unintended cultural associations. Instead, I opted for what Newmark terms a compensatory strategy (1988, 90), preserving the dialect shift through metalinguistic commentary ("remarked in Shanghainese") while using the standard English "you" for the actual pronoun. This approach maintains the sociolinguistic significance of the code-switching without risking misrepresentation of the source culture's linguistic dynamics.

The idiomatic expression "混得好" (literally: "mixed well") presents a related challenge, carrying connotations of social advancement that required careful rendering in English. Following Baker's principle of pragmatic equivalence (230-63), I chose "made something of yourself" as an equivalent English idiom that captures both the colloquial tone and the implied social mobility. This solution aligns with Nord's loyalty principle by preserving the pragmatic function of the original while ensuring cultural appropriateness for the target audience.

For dialect-specific expressions deeply embedded in local culture, I also opted for what Venuti terms a "minoritizing translation" strategy (1998,10), retaining the original form with explanation to preserve its cultural specificity while ensuring comprehension. For example, when handling the Chongming dialect term "沙上人", the translation of:

> *Source Text: 甚至讲着同样方言的海门、启东人，在我小时候还被归为"沙上人"而受鄙视。*

becomes:

> *Translation: Even those from Haimen and Qidong, who spoke the same dialect, were disparaged as "Shashangren" (sand dwellers) and looked down upon during my childhood.*

In this translation, I preserved the Chongming dialect term through romanization ("Shashangren"), while providing its meaning ("sand dwellers", literally: "people in the sand") in parentheses. This minoritizing approach resists complete domestication by keeping the original dialect term visible, while the parenthetical explanation ensures comprehensibility for English readers. The strategy allows the translation to highlight the distinct linguistic features of the Chongming dialect while conveying the dialect term's sociocultural connotations as pejorative.

These kinds of approaches to handling dialectal variations and their associated linguistic features reflect Eco's concept of translation as negotiation, where decisions must balance multiple competing demands, that of preserving linguistic authenticity, maintaining readability, and conveying social significance. The goal throughout has been to achieve what Newmark terms "functional equivalence" (1988, 83), where the target text fulfils its communicative purpose while respecting the source text's cultural and linguistic complexity.

### 2. *Culture-Specific Concepts and Sociocultural Implications*

The essay presents numerous culture-specific concepts that require what Aixelá terms "culture-specific items" (CSIs) (56-60). These are textual elements whose function and connotations present translation challenges due to the cultural gap between source and target contexts. Here, I followed Leppihalme's framework for handling "cultural bumps" in translation "[…] for a situation where the reader of a TT has a problem understanding a source-cultural allusion. Such an allusion may well fail to function in the TT, as it is not part of the TL reader's culture" (4), and Venuti's concepts of domestication and foreignization, uses various strategies to address these challenges while maintaining textual coherence. These strategies were calibrated according to what Hatim and Mason term "social distance" (18) – translation choices reflect the power dynamics and social relationships between text producers and receivers. This framework is particularly relevant when handling culturally-specific terms that carry complex social implications.

A prime example of CSI handling involves the concept of "上海人" (literally: "Shanghainese people"), an example of what Florin terms a "cultural realia" (122-28) – a term carrying complex connotations of local identity, social status, and cultural belonging that resists simple translation. I drew on Nord's instrumental translation approach (50-52) and rendered the phrase "上海人" 的身份和纯洁性 as "the identity and 'purity' of being 'from Shanghai'" to capture its complex implications fully. This sentence thus translates as follows:

*Source Text: 因为只有对这些人来说，“上海人”的身份和纯洁性才特别值得捍卫。*

*Translation: To them, the identity and “purity” of being “from Shanghai” are particularly sacrosanct.*

I avoided the direct translation to “Shanghai people” because, officially, Chongming is part of Shanghai, and its inhabitants are also technically “Shanghai people”. I also refrained from using “Shanghainese” to denote “Shanghai people” since this term is reserved for describing the Shanghai dialect in this translation. Moreover, a critical implication here is that individuals from Chongming Island or other regional areas are perceived as not truly “from Shanghai”.

For elements less central to the overarching themes, I employed domestication to improve readability. For example, “拆迁” (chai qian, literally: “demolish and relocate”) was translated as “urban renewal”, following what Toury terms “norms of acceptability” (56-57) to provide a concept more readily understood by English speakers while preserving the essential meaning.

Conversely, for terms with rich cultural implications, I applied what Aixelá terms “intratextual gloss” (62)– the strategy of embedding explanatory elements within the text itself. A prime example is the translation of “老江湖” (lao Jianghu):

*Source Text: 这个老江湖既不惊讶，也不道歉，甚至没有尴尬。*

becomes:

*Translation: The veteran driver, seasoned in the ways of city life, showed neither surprise nor apology, not even embarrassment.*

Here, the intratextual gloss “seasoned in the ways of city life” is woven into the translation itself, helping readers understand the cultural connotations of “江湖” (jianghu) – a term that traditionally refers to the realm of martial arts and travelling adventurers in Chinese folklore and historical narratives, suggesting a complex subculture of honour and survival. In line with Baker’s concept of pragmatic equivalence, I expanded the translation to include both the practical meaning (“veteran driver”) and the cultural implications (“seasoned in the ways of city life”) while maintaining textual fluency. This approach allows readers to grasp both the literal and metaphorical meanings without requiring a footnote or separate explanation.

While Wei’s original text does not include footnotes, I made a strategic decision aligned with Appiah’s concept of “thick translation”(817) and Aixelá’ approach of “extratexutal gloss” (62) again – providing cultural context through explanatory additions. This decision reflects what Venuti describes as the translator’s ethical responsibility to mediate cultural difference. For complex cultural concepts like “土八路” (Eighth Route Army), I added footnotes to explain the relevant historical context without disrupting the narrative flow. Similarly, for geographic references – such as Huaihai Road, Qidong, or Sanlin – I employed what Pedersen terms “specification” as the added material may be part of the sense or connotations of the Extralinguistic Cultural Reference (ECR) (43, 161-62) through footnotes, providing background geographical information that helps readers understand these locations’ relationships with Shanghai and Chongming. This strategy aligns with Tymoczko’s view that translators must often expand the target text to convey cultural information implicit in the source text (259-64).

This multi-layered approach to handling culture-specific elements reflects Eco’s concept of negotiation in translation, balancing the need for cultural authenticity with reader

comprehension. The varied strategies – from domestication to thick translation – work together to ensure that China-specific historical and social phenomena, particularly the complex relationships between urban centres and surrounding rural areas, are effectively conveyed to the target audience with their cultural significance also preserved.

### *3. Preserving Stylistic Features and Authorial Voice*

The stylistic richness of "The Hidden Mother Tongue" presents what Boase-Beier terms "cognitive stylistics" (74-82) challenges – where the author's linguistic choices reflect both conscious artistic decisions and cultural thought patterns. Wei's style interweaves personal reflection, sociological observation, and elements of humour, requiring what Reiss classifies as an "expressive" translation approach that prioritizes aesthetic equivalence, described by Reiss as "In texts of the expressive type, priority is given to equivalence at aesthetic text-composition level and to form-focused language use" (142). This is manifest in careful attention to the author's distinctive voice and stylistic devices.

Following Newmark's principles of communicative translation (1980, 39), which emphasizes preserving the effect of the source text on its readers, I maintained Wei's rhetorical questions as key devices for reader engagement. For example:

> *Source text: 大概很少有人把讲崇明话当作一个原则问题吧？*
>
> *Translation: Presumably, few regard speaking the Chongming dialect as a matter of principle?*

Here, the rhetorical marker "吧" and its questioning tone are preserved through the adverb "presumably" and the question mark, maintaining both the interrogative form and the author's subtle scepticism. Similarly:

> *Source text: 那你觉得我是哪里的？*
>
> *Translation: So, where do you think I'm from?*

This preservation of rhetorical devices aligns with House's concept of "overt translation" (54), which maintains the visibility of the source text's original features, to 'to remain as intact as possible given the necessary transfer and recoding in another language' (55-56). The conversational tone and direct reader address are deliberately kept preserving the author's engagement strategy.

The essay's tonal variations present what Hatim and Mason term "text act" variations (30-4, 119-33) – shifts in communicative function that require different translation approaches. This is particularly evident in passages that move between personal narrative and social commentary. For instance, when translating memories of dialect discrimination:

> *Source text: 自小到大，电台里常有针对崇明方言的滑稽戏段落 – – 不过我一直没意识到这是"种族玩笑"。*
>
> *Translation: When I was growing up Growing up, radio shows frequently aired comedy sketches that mocked the Chongming dialect – though I never recognized these as "ethnic jokes".*

Here, I employed what House calls "covert translation", where the target text functions as an original in the target culture while maintaining the source text's effect. This involved:

- Rendering the temporal phrase "自小到大" as the idiomatic English expression "When I was growing up"

- Using the en dash to replicate the reflective pause in the original
- Maintaining consistent use of the past tense to convey the historical nature of the experience
- Preserving the quotation marks around “种族玩笑”/“ethnic jokes” to highlight the term’s significance

These choices work together to maintain what Boase-Beier identifies as the cognitive aspects of style – the way language choices reflect thought patterns and cultural perspectives (98-100).

Next, I drew on Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory, which posits that metaphors structure how we understand abstract concepts through concrete experiences (48-54), to preserve Wei’s original metaphorical expressions where they carried similar conceptual significance in both cultures. For example:

> *Source text: 那就像是随身携带的一片故土，有着与生俱来的亲切和安心。*
>
> *Translation: It’s akin to carrying a piece of homeland, providing an innate sense of familiarity and comfort.*

This metaphor works effectively in translation because it builds on what Kövecses terms shared "bodily experience" (2005) that can serve as basis for metaphorical understanding across cultures. The physical experience of ‘carrying’(携带) and spatial relationships provides a concrete foundation that both Chinese and English speakers can map onto abstract concepts of cultural identity and emotional connection. As Kövecses argues, such shared bodily experiences allow for metaphorical conceptualizations that can work across linguistic boundaries when the experiential basis is similarly understood in both cultures. This enables the metaphorical mapping of ‘homeland’ as portable object to resonate effectively in both Chinese and English, maintaining both the figurative expression and its emotional impact.

I applied a similar approach to Wei’s extended metaphor comparing dialect speakers to the tanuki in *Pom Poko*:

> *Source text: 就像宫崎骏的动画《百变狸猫》里那样，狸猫们最终敌不过坚持都市开发的人类，结局是他们不得不变化为人类，同样在都市里谋生，只不过对他们来说，一起变回狸猫时，才是自由的一刻。*
>
> *Translation: This is reminiscent of Hayao Miyazaki’s animated film Pom Poko, where the tanuki (raccoon dogs) are ultimately unable to withstand the humans’ push for urban development. In the end, they have no choice but to transform into humans and adapt to city life. For them, however, the moments when they can revert to being tanuki together represent their true freedom.*

This metaphor employs what Lakoff and Johnson term a “structural metaphor” (14), where one concept (linguistic assimilation) is systematically structured in terms of another (physical transformation). The metaphor works because it maps:

- Physical transformation → linguistic adaptation
- Urban development → cultural homogenization
- True form → authentic identity
- Collective reversion → shared linguistic heritage

By maintaining these metaphorical mappings in translation, the text preserves both the cognitive framework and the emotional resonance of the original while remaining accessible to the target audience.

**Cross-Cultural Impact and Concluding Reflections**

The translation of "The Hidden Mother Tongue" serves as both a bridge for cross-cultural understanding and a case study in translating contemporary Chinese literature. Through systematic application of contemporary translation theories and careful attention to cultural nuance, this project demonstrates how translation can illuminate complex social dynamics that resonate beyond specific cultural contexts while maintaining cultural authenticity.

**A. Synthesis of Translation Strategies**

The translation process revealed several key insights that contribute to the broader field of translation studies:

*Cultural Mediation and Theoretical Application*

The implementation of Venuti's foreignization strategy, particularly in handling dialect terms like "Chong ha" and "Shashangren", demonstrates how cultural specificity can be preserved while ensuring comprehensibility. Meanwhile, Nord's "function plus loyalty" approach proved essential in balancing source text fidelity with target audience accessibility. And finally, Eco's concept of negotiation guided decisions about when to retain Chinese elements and when to provide contextual explanations.

*Linguistic Strategy Innovation*

The treatment of dialect interplay required developing a hybrid approach that combines (i) the transliteration of key dialectal terms, (ii) metalinguistic commentary to convey sociolinguistic significance, and (iii) strategic use of footnotes for cultural-historical context.

This approach extends beyond the traditional foreignization–domestication binary, suggesting new possibilities for handling multilingual texts.

*Cultural–Universal Dynamic*

The translation demonstrates how Toury's concept of adequate-acceptable norms can be applied to preserve cultural specificity while highlighting universal themes. Furthermore, the handling of cultural touchstones (e.g., the *Pom Poko* metaphor) shows how local references can illuminate global patterns of cultural change. And Baker's concept of pragmatic equivalence guided decisions about conveying social implications across cultural boundaries.

**B. Implications for Translation Studies**

This translation project offers several contributions to translation studies. First, for methodological innovation, it demonstrates the effectiveness of combining multiple theoretical approaches rather than adhering strictly to a single framework. Second, it provides a model for handling multiple dialects in translation while preserving their sociolinguistic significance. Third, it suggests ways to balance academic rigour with the accessible presentation of cultural content.

In terms of new theoretical insights, it first challenges the traditional binary of foreignization versus domestication by showing how these approaches can be strategically combined. Second, it extends Nord's functional approach by demonstrating how "loyalty" can be maintained to strike a balance between both source culture specificity and target audience

comprehension. Third, it suggests ways of applying Aixelá's handling of culture-specific items in the context of dialect translation.

The success of this translation, measured by its ability to convey both cultural specificity and universal themes while maintaining scholarly rigour, demonstrates the potential for contemporary Chinese literature to contribute meaningfully to global literary discourse. As China's literary scene continues to evolve and engage with global audiences, translations that maintain this balance between cultural authenticity and universal accessibility become increasingly vital. Through careful cultural and linguistic mediation, informed by both theoretical understanding and practical innovation, translations can help build more nuanced, empathetic perspectives on contemporary Chinese society and its peoples while advancing the field of translation studies itself.

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隐蔽的母语

晚上淮海路塞车。司机试了几次后不得不屈从于缓慢阻滞的车流，这时旁边有几辆出租车见缝插针地穿插到前面，她的烦躁终于爆发出来，骂了一声：“崇蟹！”

这句骂辞我还是第一次听见，不过立刻就明白是专骂崇明人的 – – 因为崇明方言著名的特征和笑柄之一是“啥”和“蟹”谐音。

我问：“刚才那辆车是崇明司机？”她愤愤地扯着大嗓门说：“除了这些乡下人还有谁？”她朝前开了一段，缓过劲来又说：“先生，我跟你说，不仅我们司机不喜欢崇明人，乘客也不喜欢崇明司机，甚至崇明人自己也不喜欢崇明司机！”我问：“最后一点你是怎么知道的？”她没解释，只是继续愤愤骂那些乡下人。

她在这个男性为主的行业里已经干了 12 年，并不奇怪，她对崇明司机讨厌的原因之一是他们令人憎恨的勤劳，以至拉低了整个行业的利润。确实，我也听说过，崇明司机有时为了抢生意，在晚上 11 点后会默许那些会砍价的客人免掉 30%的返程费。当然，为了多做几单，他们恐怕也不见得那么遵守交通秩序。

The Hidden Mother Tongue

That evening, Huaihai Road [1] was gridlocked. The driver made several attempts to move forward before reluctantly accepting the traffic’s slow pace. Amid this, a taxi aggressively squeezed right in front of our car. Her frustration erupted, and she cursed, “Chong ha!”

This was my first encounter with this particular insult, but I instantly understood it was directed at someone from Chongming Island [2] – famous in part because their dialect makes the words for “sha(what)” and “ha(crab)” sound alike.

I asked, “Was that taxi driver from Chongming?”

She answered loudly, her irritation unmistakable, “Who else but those bumpkins?” After driving a bit further and calming down, she continued, “You know, it’s not just us drivers who dislike people from Chongming. Passengers don’t appreciate Chongming drivers either – not even the Chongming folks themselves!”

“How do you know that last bit?” I inquired. She didn’t elaborate, just kept venting about “those bumpkins”.

Having worked in the male-dominated taxi industry for 12 years, she had a deep-seated dislike for Chongming drivers, partly due to their notoriously hard-working nature which, she believed, drove down the industry’s average earnings. Indeed, it was known that Chongming drivers, in their eagerness to secure more fares, would sometimes waive 30% of the return fare for savvy customers if it was after 11 p.m. In their rush to complete more trips, they often didn’t adhere strictly to traffic rules.

[1] The central section of Huaihai Road is one of two major shopping streets in central Shanghai. Nanjing Road is the other. When comparing with the more touristy Nanjing Road, Huaihai Road is more upmarket, and is the preferred destination of local residents. Note: All footnotes were added by the translator.

[2] Chongming Island, which is located at the Yangtze River estuary, is China’s third largest island and the world’s largest alluvial sand island. Often referred to as the “door to the Yangtze River” and likened to the mythical Yingzhou Island in the East China Sea, Chongming covers 1,267 square kilometres. Together with the Changxing and Hengsha islands, it forms the northernmost part of Shanghai’s provincial-level municipality.

这并非我第一次听到有人吐槽崇明司机。这回我沉住气，直到下车打发票时才告诉她：“其实我就是崇明人。” 这个老江湖既不惊讶，也不道歉，甚至没有尴尬，相反端详了我一下说：“那你上海话一点也听不出来口音。” 她笑了笑说：“侬到底混得好呀！”

I had heard complaints about Chongming drivers like this before, but this time I stayed calm all the way. It wasn't until I was exiting the taxi and requesting a receipt that I disclosed, "Actually, I'm from Chongming".

The veteran driver, seasoned in the ways of city life, showed neither surprise nor apology, not even embarrassment. Instead, she gave me a once-over and commented, "Well, your Shanghainese has no trace of an accent". She grinned and remarked in Shanghainese, "You've really made something of yourself, haven't you!"

的确，在这座中国最大都市的丛林里，只要我隐藏起自己的口音，通常更容易被上海人引为同类，也因此更容易听到别人毫无防备地流露他们建立在方言差异基础之上的地域歧视。

Indeed, in the vast urban landscape of China's largest city, concealing my accent usually makes it easier for locals to see me as one of their own. This, in turn, often makes it simpler for me to witness firsthand the unguarded expressions of regional bias based on dialect differences.

和我早年时想象的相反，在上海生活之后我才逐渐发现，对这种歧视持强烈姿态的正是那些常被视为“善良”的普通百姓，因为只有对这些人来说，“上海人”的身份和纯洁性才特别值得捍卫。

Contrary to my expectations from when I was younger, I discovered after settling in Shanghai that it's often those deemed "kind-hearted" ordinary people who harbour the strongest prejudices. To them, the identity and "purity" of being "from Shanghai" are particularly sacrosanct.

日前读到这段话时我很有共鸣：“中国人的地域差别很少看得出，方言几乎是唯一可以凭借的标志。因此，中国人的种族玩笑通常是针对其他群体方言特点的言语游戏，……如果不讲方言，一个中国人可以轻易地伪装自己的地域出身，成为另一个群体的成员。……对个人而言，自己种族群体的交易地位越弱，这种选择的吸引力越大。” （黄绍伦《移民企业家 – – 香港的上海工业家》）。

A passage I recently read struck a chord with me:

Regional differences among Chinese are seldom apparent, with dialect almost the sole identifier. Consequently, ethnic humour among Chinese often centres on the dialect characteristics of other groups. [...] By concealing their dialect, a Chinese person can easily mask their regional background and blend into another group. [...] The more marginalized an individual's ethnic group is in societal exchanges, the more appealing it becomes to adopt this disguise. [ Wong Siu-lun, *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Shanghai Industrialists in Hong Kong*.]

这种情形实在是太熟悉了。自小到大，电台里常有针对崇明方

This situation is all too familiar to me. When I was growing up, radio shows frequently aired comedy sketches that mocked the Chongming

言的滑稽戏段落 – – 不过我一直没意识到这是“种族玩笑”。至于通过讲上海话来伪装自己的地域出身，有意无意地也基本都为所有在上海谋生的崇明人所遵守 – – 大概很少有人把讲崇明话当作一个原则问题吧？

和不少崇明人一样，我母亲对自己母语的评价也极低：她觉得这种方言实在难听极了，有时她和外地客人说了几句，甚至自己也哈哈大笑起来。

这就像《小泥屋笔记》里说的，非洲的多瓦悠人看不起自己的母语，多数酋长甚至“拒绝使用此种原始、不雅，只比动物鸣叫略高一等的语言，因此他们不懂为何有人学不会它”。有些酋长则效法当地强势的富来尼人，自抬身价，“即使面对族人也拒绝说多瓦悠语。听到母语，却装出听不太懂的样子。”就像有些中国人，喜欢苦恼地表示自己“中文说得不好”。

大一的寒假里，我听说了一个故事：考到上海高校的高中同学里，某个男生在浸染了上海的繁华后，兴奋地故意用半生不熟的上海话给同城的女同学打电话 – – 他的这个玩笑触怒了对方，女孩子骂了他一句“触眼睛骨”（讨厌）。

那时假期回来，每次遇到老同学，都发现他的语言表达的混乱加剧：他说着说着就从崇明话跳到普通话，又不断夹杂着上海话和英语。他甚至自觉地和另一个同学互相比较谁的上海话讲得不露口音，

dialect – though I never recognized these as “ethnic jokes”. Nearly all Chongming inhabitants adopt Shanghainese to obscure their regional background, whether it is conscious or not. Presumably, few regard speaking the Chongming dialect as a matter of principle?

Like many from Chongming, my mother holds her mother tongue in low esteem. She finds the dialect grating to the ear. Sometimes, after exchanging a few words with out-of-town guests, she herself bursts into laughter.

This reminds me of a section from *The Innocent Anthropologist: Notes from a Mud Hut*, where the Dowayo people of Africa had disdain for their own language. Many chiefs refused to use what they considered a primitive, inelegant language. They believed it was barely better than animal calls and were puzzled why someone would take the time to learn it. Emulating the locally dominant Fulani, some chiefs tried to boost their status by not speaking Dowayo even to their own people, choosing instead to emulate the locally dominant Fulani. Upon hearing their native language, they pretended to barely comprehend it. This mirrors how some Chinese lament their “poor Chinese language skills”.

During winter break of my freshman year of university, I heard a tale about a high school peer who had recently started attending Shanghai Jiaotong University, one of the top universities in China. Revelling in the city’s glamour, he playfully called a female classmate from our hometown in his rudimentary Shanghainese. His jest fell flat. Instead, it provoked the girl to snap back “chu yanjing gu” (how annoying) using our local dialect.

Whenever I met this old classmate after that winter holiday, I noticed his speech was becoming increasingly disjointed. He would start a sentence in the Chongming dialect and then switch to standard Mandarin while mixing in bits of Shanghainese and English. He and another high school peer, both originally from Chongming but studying in Shanghai, would self-consciously compare whose Shanghainese was more seamless; the one whose

然后两人中遗留“崇明味”较重的一个遭到自己同乡的嘲笑。上海话一直讲不溜损害了他的自信，最后这个交大高材生毕业后出乎我们所有人的预料，回了崇明 – – 他内心深处觉得自己无法融入上海。他讲上海话时会紧张。

speech retained a stronger “Chongming flavour” would be mocked by the other. This top student from Jiaotong University, whose confidence had dwindled due to his struggles with Shanghainese, surprised us by moving back to Chongming after graduation. Deep down, he felt unable to blend into Shanghai life, growing anxious whenever he spoke Shanghainese.

有时高中老同学间到别的大学串门，一路说说笑笑 – – 不过到近校门的地方就自觉地压低声音以至不说话。因为一群人说崇明话很容易被门卫辨别出来，混进校门就不大方便了。那时他们把这个故事当作笑话讲给我听，自比为穿过鬼子防线的土八路。

Sometimes, when visiting other universities, my high school classmates would instinctively lower their voices or stop talking altogether whenever they neared the campus gates. Any group that spoke in the Chongming dialect could easily be recognized by university’s security guards and complicate their entry onto other campuses. They laughed while sharing this experience with me, likening themselves to the Local Eighth Route Army[3] stealthily crossing enemy lines.

口音的隐蔽是一种生存技能，艰于掌握，不仅是发音的模仿，还涉及微妙的分寸拿捏。就像你想要扮演某个角色，远不只是换身戏服，还得举手投足都到位。

Mastering the concealment of one’s accent is a subtle art of survival. It involves more than just mimicking pronunciation: it requires a subtle understanding of social norms. It’s akin to playing a role – not only do you change your attire, but you must also adopt every nuance of the character’s behaviour.

有一晚加班回家，出租车司机送我到三林城，感叹了一声：“现在老上海都被赶到外环来了。” 他转头问我：“侬是买的房子？”我开玩笑说：“我也是拆迁过来的。”他一边打票一边瞟了我一眼，说：“不可能，你口音不像。”“那你觉得我是哪里的？”“你的口音已经掩盖得极

One night, returning home after overtime, the taxi driver took me to Sanlin.[4] He sighed, “Now even Shanghainese natives are being pushed out to the outer ring”. He turned and asked me in Shanghainese, “Did you buy your apartment here?” I joked, “No, I moved here because of urban renewal”. As he printed the receipt, he glanced at me and said, “Impossible. Your accent doesn’t match”. “So, where do you think I’m from?” I asked. “Your accent is so well masked, it’s hard to pinpoint…” He

[3] The name “土八路 (tu ba lu) is a colloquial and somewhat informal term derived from “八路军 (ba lu jun), which means the Eighth Route Army. This was a military unit of the National Revolutionary Army of the Republic of China, which was under the command of the Chinese Communist Party during the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945). The term “土” in “土八路” means “local” or “native” and implies something rudimentary or rustic. When combined with the Eighth Route Army, it emphasizes their grassroots, peasant-based composition and their close connection with local Chinese population, as opposed to a more formally trained and equipped military force.

[4] Pudong, which denotes “the East Bank of the Huangpu River”, originally described the less-developed territory facing Shanghai’s urban core. This area, largely agricultural, saw only gradual development until the 1990s. Sanlin Town, situated on the periphery, is a typical example of one of the most remote towns within Pudong.

好，很难辨别……”他侧头思索了一会，逐一排除周围郊县，最后说：“倒有点像是崇明、启东那一带的。”

pondered for a moment, methodically ruling out the surrounding suburban counties one by one, before finally suggesting, “You might be from around Chongming or Qidong[5]”.

一半是出于必要，一半是出于羞耻，我们慢慢习惯于将自己真正的母语隐蔽起来 – – 它逐渐收缩自己的使用范围，从街头退缩到家门内，最后变得更像是深藏心底的隐私。

Out of necessity and sometimes shame, we’ve become adept at hiding our true mother tongue. Its use dwindles, moving from public streets to the privacy of our homes, eventually becoming a deeply guarded secret.

现在高中同学偶尔聚会，有的人已经习惯于讲上海话 – – 无人会嘲笑他们，相反，他们看起来有理由嘲笑仍讲崇明话的人。这就像我经历过的职场，时而出现的中国人之间大讲英语一样。

Now, when high school classmates meet up, some naturally converse in Shanghainese. They face no ridicule – quite the opposite, they are the ones who might tease those who still cling to the Chongming dialect. This mirrors my workplace experiences, where Chinese colleagues often opt to speak in English with each other.

这当然并非崇明人独有的遭遇。“上海的苏北人往往费很大力气来掩盖其身份。最常见的办法是，他们在家外或在邻里不讲江北方言，部分是为了避免惹麻烦，但也是为了确保不让任何人知道他们的苏北人身份。最年轻一代的成员就连在家里也不想讲苏北方言。……有些人以自己是苏北人为耻简直做绝了，有些在上海长大的年轻人竟同他们的父母完全脱离关系。”（《苏北人在上海，1850–1980》）

Of course, this experience isn’t unique to people from Chongming.

In Shanghai, people from Subei (northern Jiangsu province) often go to great lengths to hide their origins. The most common strategy is to refrain from speaking their native Subei dialect outside their homes or in their neighbourhoods, partly to avoid conflicts but also to prevent others from discovering their origins. The youngest generation at home even avoids speaking the dialect [...]. Some people are so ashamed of their Subei roots that some young people who grew up in Shanghai have entirely severed ties with their parents.

这些情形我都在崇明人身上目睹过 – – 也不奇怪，在很长一段时间里，崇明实际上也是被划在“苏北”的范围之内的，虽然不少崇明人自认要比更北的这些穷乡亲高那么一丁点，甚至讲着同样方

I’ve seen all these scenarios among Chongming residents, which isn’t surprising since Chongming was long considered part of the “northern Jiangsu” region. Many Chongming residents saw themselves as slightly better off than their poorer northern neighbours. Even those from Haimen[6] and Qidong, who spoke the same dialect, were disparaged as “shashangren” (sand dwellers)

[5] Qidong, a county-level city administered by Nantong in southeastern Jiangsu province, China, is situated on the northern bank of the Yangtze River opposite Shanghai. It forms a peninsula extending into the East China Sea.
[6] Haimen, a district within Nantong, Jiangsu province, hosts a population of approximately one million. It lies on the opposite bank of the Yangtze River from Shanghai, directly north of Chongming Island.

言的海门、启东人，在我小时候还被归为“沙上人”而受鄙视。必须承认，在这环环相扣的鄙视链上，崇明人并不总是受害者。

and looked down upon during my childhood. It's important to acknowledge that in this tangled web of disdain, Chongming residents are not always the victims.

在时代的浪潮面前，连上海话这些年来也逐渐成了濒危物种，更弱势的崇明话自然更无人在意，有谁会把坚持说母语方言当作一个原则问题来加以捍卫吗？但对我们这些曾以它为生的人来说，那就像是随身携带的一片故土，有着与生俱来的亲切和安心。

In the face of changing times, even Shanghainese has gradually become endangered. The more vulnerable Chongming dialect naturally receives even less attention. Few are willing to champion the cause of speaking their mother tongue on principle. Yet for those of us who once lived by it, it's akin to carrying a piece of our homeland, providing an innate sense of familiarity and comfort.

就像宫崎骏的动画《百变狸猫》里那样，狸猫们最终敌不过坚持都市开发的人类，结局是他们不得不变化为人类，同样在都市里谋生，只不过对他们来说，一起变回狸猫时，才是自由的一刻。

This is reminiscent of Hayao Miyazaki's animated film "Pom Poko", where the tanuki (raccoon dogs) are ultimately unable to withstand the humans' push for urban development.[7] In the end, they have no choice but to transform into humans and adapt to city life. For them, however, the moments when they can revert to being tanuki together represent their true freedom.

[7] The author has misattributed the direction of the film *Pom Poko* (Japanese: 平成狸合戦ぽんぽこ, Hepburn: Heisei Tanuki Gassen Ponpoko, literally: "Heisei-era Raccoon Dog War Ponpoko"). This 1994 Japanese animated fantasy film was written and directed by Isao Takahata, not by Hayao Miyazaki, though both are prominent directors from Studio Ghibli. Takahata and Miyazaki have both directed works for the studio, but each is known for distinct projects.

# Sergei Aksakov's *Collecting Butterflies* (Excerpts)

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## Translator's Introduction

The name of Sergei Timofeyevich Aksakov (1791-1859) is less familiar to the English-speaking public than those of the great Russian novelists of his day, though he has never lacked admirers in his homeland.[1] His best-known works, *The Childhood Years of Bagrov's Grandson* and *A Family Chronicle*, came late in his career and were overshadowed by others at a time when Gogol, Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky dominated the literary landscape. Born in the provincial town of Ufa, west of the Urals, Aksakov attended the new University of Kazan and spent some years managing the family estate in Orenburg province, before settling in Moscow. There he moved in theatrical circles – he would later write of his acquaintance with Gogol – and made his name as a translator of Molière and Walter Scott. (See Durkin, "Pastoral"; Durkin, *Sergej Aksakov*; Mashinsky; Aksakov, *Notes of a Provincial Wildfowler*)

Apart from his works of fiction and some early poetry, he is remembered for his seminal writings in the field of natural history, which came in the form of "notes" on fishing, wildfowling (Aksakov, *Notes on Fishing*, *Notes of a Provincial Wildfowler*) and butterfly-collecting, the latter being the subject of some reminiscences written in 1858 (Aksakov, "Sobiranie babochek") and presented in abridged form below.

Vladimir Nabokov, the novelist, translator and lepidopterist, had no time for this memoir, or indeed for its author. The hero of his novel *The Gift* speaks contemptuously of "the wretched Aksakov" and his "disgraceful blunders" in hunting scenes and descriptions of nature (Nabokov, *Gift* 85). These were, he avers, "well-meaning prattle, larded with fatuities of every kind" (Nabokov, *Drugie berega* 75). Aksakov is the name given to a fittingly minor character, Van's "chaste, angelic Russian tutor" in *Ada* (Nabokov, *Ada* 149), whose subtitle *A Family Chronicle* pays back-handed homage by introducing a family most unlike that in Aksakov's *Family Chronicle*. Nabokov's commentary on *Eugene Onegin* mentions Aksakov as "a very minor writer, tremendously puffed up by Slavophile groups" (Pushkin III 139).

While Aksakov himself, a modest man, would have accepted "very minor" without demur, many readers, writers and critics, and not only "Slavophile groups", would dissent. Among the writers of his day, Dobrolyubov, Turgenev, Gogol, Nekrasov and Dostoyevsky were quick to acknowledge his talent. On reading his wildfowling notes, the critic Nikolai Chernyshevsky exclaimed, "What masterly descriptions, what love for his subject and what knowledge of the life of birds!" (Aksakov, ru.wikipedia). Aksakov is widely recognized as a consummate stylist in no way inferior to his better-known contemporaries. In the Soviet period, some who shared his love of the natural world, including Mikhail Prishvin, Ivan Sokolov-Mikitov, Konstantin Paustovsky and Vladimir Soloukhin, admired his talent and saw in him a kind of spiritual father.

Aksakov often deplored his own lack of imagination. His forte lay in vivid and precise description, in conveying what D. S. Mirsky called "the impression of photographic, unswerving, incorruptible fidelity to fact" (Aksakov, *Chronicles* xi). Non-fiction was his natural home, to the extent that when he did turn to fiction no suspension of disbelief was required. His fictional creations breathed authenticity. Edward Crankshaw described his

[1] This introduction draws on Aksakov, *Provincial Wildfowler* xi-xxi, and Windle 10-29.

*Family Chronicle* as "a classic example of that essentially Russian genre, a factual record faintly disguised as fiction, or a fiction so actual, so apparently inconsequent and uncontrived, that it reads like fact" (Aksakov, *Russian Gentleman* xi).

Aksakov was blessed with a vocabulary of exceptional range and richness, an eye for detail and an unerring sense of *le mot juste*. The distinguished critic Aleksei Khomyakov wrote: "He felt incorrectness of expression as a kind of insult to the subject itself, as a kind of untruth in relation to his own impression, and he would rest easy only when he found the right word" (quoted in Aksakov, *Fishing* xx).

Any translation of Aksakov's prose needs to reflect his descriptive skill and stylistic elegance, along with the precision he brought to a scientific subject. The version below seeks to achieve accuracy where accuracy was important to the author, for example, in the identification of species, which is less easy than it may appear. Long before any agreed nomenclature, the same vernacular name might denote a number of species, and any given species might be known by several names. Historical changes in entomological taxonomy complicate the identification of butterflies by their scientific names, and Aksakov does not always use them. Some of the fish and birds he names (*plotichka*, *loshok*, *bolotny kulik*, *kulichok-zuyok*) can only be definitively identified by recourse to the detailed descriptions in his fishing and wildfowling notes.

In relation to Aksakov's prose, the phonetic properties of vernacular names of species should not be overlooked. As a poet with a keen interest in language, he was fully alert to them and often commented on names of particular interest (the Russian names for "curlew" and "capercaillie", among others. Aksakov, *Provincial Wildfowler* 170, 222). Just as Nabokov was acutely aware of the evocative power of "fritillary", "swallowtail", "hairstreak" and "Camberwell beauty" (Nabokov *Speak, Memory* 119-39, 231), and the "fluffy and dreamy" syllables of *cheryomukha* (bird-cherry) (Pushkin III 9-15; Boyd 18), so too is Aksakov conscious of the musical resonances and associations inherent in, for example, *galateya* (marbled white), *ivolga* (oriole), *kronshnep* (curlew), *veretennik* (godwit) and *varakushka* (bluethroat). The resonances are inevitably altered in translation, simply by the substitution of technical target-language equivalents, but those may have a music of their own.

A century after Aksakov's death, in his novel *Tremor of Intent*, Anthony Burgess, a writer well versed in Russian literary culture and in addition a composer and connoisseur of music, would exploit the auditory effects of bird names for a very different purpose: "[Hillier] let the cries of birds possess his ears," and a catalogue of twenty-three species follows, including some of Aksakov's favourites: the oriole, curlew, godwit and bluethroat (Burgess 1966, 79). In Burgess's novel they form part of the accompaniment to Hillier's "immense sexual bout" with Miss Devi (Burgess 1990, 127), helping to convey "the rhythms and cries of rutting". Burgess would answer his critics by saying that much in that chapter "makes sense only to the ear"; rather than "senseless surrealism" it was an attempt at "phonographic realism".[2]

Aksakov's realism is more scientific in nature, which means that where the names of particular species occur the translator has little choice but to apply their standard English common names. The author's detailed descriptions are an invaluable aid to identification, but here the translator has to navigate the lexical pitfalls of some colour terms: *purpurny*, used of the bands on the red admiral's wings, corresponds to "purple" only in an obsolete sense, "crimson". *Yakhontovy* has two very different meanings: ruby red and sapphire blue. In the

[2] Whether Burgess's acquaintance with Russian literature extended to Aksakov's nature notes is unknown, but in *Tremor of Intent* his name occurs in what may be an authorial hint, when Hillier delivers a report on intelligence gathered. It includes the following sentence, without further explanation: "The assassin of Sergei Timofeyevich Aksakov is in retirement at Fribourg; he goes under the name of Chichikov – a pretty touch" (Burgess 1966, 181).

case of the peacock butterfly, lest the reader be in doubt, Aksakov adds the qualifier *sinii* (dark blue).

Elsewhere, however, "accuracy" is not to be construed as word-for-word replication in a syntactic copy. Nabokov's forcefully promulgated "ideal of literalism" (Pushkin I, x), if applied to Aksakov's longer periods and folk sayings, might deter all but the most determined readers and necessitate a Nabokovian commentary. In the interests of readability, this translation strives to eschew the "Gefühl des Fremden" (sense of the foreign) advocated by Friedrich Schleiermacher in a famous essay (1813, 2002) and resuscitated by later theorists such as Lawrence Venuti ("foreignization").

Writing in 1858, Aksakov was "looking back lovingly" at the enthusiasms of his youth fifty years earlier. The translation below attempts to convey the "tender emotion" and nostalgic feeling. It does not deliberately archaize but does try to avoid obvious lexical and stylistic anachronisms.

While Aksakov's autobiographical prose and his fishing and shooting notes are available in English translation, there appears to have been no previous English version of "Collecting Butterflies".

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**Собирание бабочек** (Excerpts)
Sergei Aksakov, *Sobranie sochinenii v 5-i tomakh*, Pravda, Vol. 2, 1966, pp. 158-214

Собирание бабочек было одним из тех увлечений моей ранней молодости, которое хотя недолго, но зато со всею силою страсти владело мною и оставило в моей памяти глубокое, свежее до сих пор впечатление. Я любил натуральную историю с детских лет; книжка на русском языке (которой названия не помню) с лубочными изображеньями зверей, птиц, рыб, попавшаяся мне в руки еще в гимназии, с благоговеньем, от доски до доски, была выучена мною наизусть. Увидев, что в книжке нет того, что при первом взгляде было замечаемо моим детским пытливым вниманием, я сам пробовал описывать зверьков, птичек и рыбок, с которыми мне довелось покороче познакомиться. Это были ребячьи попытки мальчика, которому каждое приобретенное им самим знание казалось новостью, никому не известною, драгоценным и важным открытием, которое надобно записать и сообщить другим. С умилением смотрю я теперь на эти две тетрадки в четвертку из толстой синей бумаги, какой в настоящее время и отыскать нельзя. На страничках этих тетрадок детским почерком и слогом описаны: зайчик, белка, болотный кулик, куличок-зуек, *неизвестный* куличок, плотичка, пескарь и лошок; очевидно, что мальчик-наблюдатель познакомился с ними первыми. Вскоре я развлекся множеством других новых и еще более важных интересов, которыми так богата молодая жизнь; развлекся и перестал описывать своих зверьков, птичек и рыбок.

Collecting butterflies was one of the pastimes of my early youth which possessed me with such passion, however briefly, that it left deep traces in my memory, still fresh to this day. From childhood I loved natural history; while at school, I acquired a Russian book (I forget the title) with chapbook-style pictures of wild animals, birds and fish, and read it with religious devotion from cover to cover until I knew it by heart. Realizing that it did not cover some things which my inquisitive child's eye noticed at first glance, I tried to produce my own descriptions of the little animals, birds and fish I had become more closely familiar with. Those were the first childish attempts by a boy to whom every scrap of self-acquired knowledge seemed a precious and important revelation, unknown to anybody else, to be recorded and communicated to others. Now I look with tender emotion on those two quarto notebooks of thick blue paper, which today is nowhere to be found. On their pages are descriptions in childish terms and a childish hand of a hare, a squirrel, a black-tailed godwit, a common sandpiper and one unidentified sandpiper, a roach, a gudgeon and a taimen trout. It is clear that the boy-observer was encountering them for the first time. Soon I developed many other interests, in other new and even more important things of the kind a young life is so rich in; I was distracted and ceased to describe my animals, birds and fish.

Но горячая любовь к природе и живым творениям, населяющим божий мир, не остывала в душе моей, и через пятьдесят лет, обогащенный опытами охотничьей жизни страстного стрелка и рыбака, я оглянулся с любовью на свое детство – и попытки мальчика осуществил шестидесятилетний старик: вышли в свет

But my passion for nature and the living creatures which populate God's world did not fade in my heart, and fifty years later, enriched by an ardent hunter's and fisherman's experience, I looked back lovingly at my childhood: an old man of sixty brought to completion the efforts of the boy. *Notes on Fishing* and *Notes of a*

«Записки об уженье рыбы» и «Записки ружейного охотника Оренбургской губернии».

Еще в ребячестве моем я получил из «Детского чтения»[1] понятие о червячках, которые превращаются в куколок, или хризалид, и, наконец, в бабочек. Это, конечно, придавало бабочкам новый интерес в моих глазах; но и без того я очень любил их. Да и в самом деле, из всех насекомых, населяющих божий мир, из всех мелких тварей, ползающих, прыгающих и летающих, – бабочка лучше, изящнее всех. Это поистине «порхающий цветок», или расписанный чудными яркими красками, блестящими золотом, серебром и перламутром, или испещренный неопределенными цветами и узорами, не менее прекрасными и привлекательными; это милое, чистое создание, никому не делающее вреда, питающееся соком цветов, который сосет оно своим хоботком, у иных коротеньким и толстым, а у иных длинным и тоненьким, как волос, свивающимся в несколько колечек, когда нет надобности в его употреблении. Как радостно первое появление бабочек весною! Обыкновенно это бывают бабочки крапивные, белые, а потом и желтые.

Какое одушевление придают они природе, только что просыпающейся к жизни после жестокой, продолжительной зимы, когда почти нет еще ни зеленой травы, ни листьев, когда вид голых деревьев и увядшей прошлогодней осенней растительности был бы очень печален, если б благодатное тепло и мысль, что скоро все зазеленеет, зацветет, что жизненные соки уже текут из корней вверх по стволам и ветвям древесным, что ростки молодых трав и растений уже пробиваются из согретой влажной земли, – не успокоивала, не веселила сердца человеческого.

*Hunter in the Province of Orenburg* are now in print.[3]

While still a child, I learned from "Reading for Children" about larvae which changed into cocoons, or chrysalids, and then into butterflies. That of course made butterflies more interesting in my eyes, but I was very fond of them anyway. And really, of all the insects which inhabit God's world, of all the little crawling, jumping and flying organisms, the butterfly is the best, the most graceful. It is truly a "fluttering flower", either painted in wonderful bright colours, brilliant gold, silver and mother-of-pearl, or stippled with indeterminate colours and patterns of no less beauty and appeal; it is a pure, lovable creature that does no harm to anyone, feeds on the sap of flowers which it sucks through its proboscis – short and stout in some, and in others long and as fine as a hair, coiled into several rings when not in use. What a delight is the first appearance of butterflies in spring! Usually, the first are the tortoiseshells, the whites and then the yellows.

How they enliven nature as it first awakens to life after a long, cruel winter with hardly any green grass or leaves! The sight of the bare trees and last year's faded autumn vegetation would be dreary indeed, but for the bountiful warmth and the thought that everything will soon turn green and come into flower, the thought that vital juices are already flowing from the roots up through the boles and boughs, that new shoots of grass and plants are breaking through the warm moist soil – thoughts that calm and warm the human heart.

[3] *Zapiski ob uzhen'e ryby* first appeared in 1847. The English translation, *Notes on Fishing*, was published by Northwestern University Press in 1997. *Zapiski ruzheinogo okhotnika v Orenburgskoi gubernii* appeared in 1852; the English translation, with the title *Notes of a Provincial Wildfowler*, in 1998 (Northwestern University Press).

В 1805 году, как известно, был утвержден устав Казанского университета, и через несколько месяцев последовало его открытие; между немногими преподавателями, начавшими чтение университетских лекций, находился ординарный профессор натуральной истории Карл Федорович Фукс, читавший свой предмет на французском языке. Это было уже в начале 1806 года. Хотя я свободно читал и понимал французские книги даже отвлеченного содержания, но разговорный язык и вообще изустная речь профессора сначала затрудняли меня; скоро, однако, я привык к ним и с жадностью слушал лекции Фукса. Много способствовало к ясному пониманию то обстоятельство, что Фукс читал по Блуменбаху, печатные экземпляры которого на русском языке находились у нас в руках. […]

In 1805, as is well known, the charter of the University of Kazan was ratified, and it opened a few months later. Among the few staff who began lecturing there was a professor of natural history, Karl Fyodorovich Fuchs, who gave his lectures in French. That was at the beginning of 1806. Although I could read French fluently and understand French books even of abstract content, the spoken language and the professor's speech at first caused me difficulty, but I soon grew accustomed to it and avidly followed his lectures. It helped greatly that Fuchs followed Blumenbach, printed copies of whose work we had in Russian.[4] […]

Между слушателями Фукса был один студент, Василий Тимьянский, […]

One of Fuchs's students was Vasily Timyansky. […]

Однажды Тимьянский при мне рассказывал, что видел у профессора большое собрание многих насекомых, и в том числе бабочек, и что Фукс обещал выучить его, как их ловить, раскладывать и сушить. […]

On one occasion Timyansky recounted in my presence how he had seen at Professor Fuchs's home a large collection of many insects, including butterflies, and said that Fuchs had promised to teach him how to catch, dry and set them. […]

Весною 1806 года я узнал, что Тимьянский вместе с студентом Кайсаровым уже начинают собирать насекомых и что способ собирания, то есть ловли, бабочек и доски для раскладывания их держат они в секрете. […] Вдруг загорелось во мне сильное желание самому собирать бабочек. Я сообщил об этом другу моему, студенту А. И. Панаеву, и возбудил в нем такую же охоту. Сначала я обратился к Тимьянскому с просьбой научить меня производству этого дела; но он не согласился открыть мне секрета, говоря, что тогда откроет его, когда сделает значительное собрание, а только показал мне несколько экземпляров высушенных бабочек и насекомых. Это

In the spring of 1806, I learned that Timyansky and a student called Kaisarov were starting to collect butterflies, and that they were keeping their methods of trapping and displaying them secret. […] At that a powerful urge to collect butterflies myself awoke in me. I told my friend Alexander Panayev, and aroused the same enthusiasm in him. First I went to Timyansky and asked him to teach me how to do it, but he would not reveal his secret, saying that he would do so only when he had a substantial collection. He would show me only some dried specimens of butterflies and other insects. That fired me with even more enthusiasm, and I decided to go at once to

[4] Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840): scientist and philosopher at the University of Göttingen, author of *Handbuch der Naturgeschichte* (1780).

воспламенило меня еще больше, и я решился сейчас ехать к профессору Фуксу, который был в то же время доктор медицины и начинал практиковать.
[…]

Мы ходили с Панаевым также на пасеку, или посеку, и находящиеся по обеим ее сторонам гористые места, или, лучше сказать, глубокие овраги, обраставшие тогда молодым леском. […] Поиски наши были более или менее удачны, и мы, мало-помалу, приобрели всех тех бабочек, которые находились в собрании Тимьянского, и которых нам недоставало, кроме, однако, Кавалера Подалириуса.

Мы даже не имели надежды достать его, потому что появление Кавалера в окрестностях Казани считалось тогда редкостью. Кавалер Подалириус торчал, как заноза, в нашем сердце!

Не скоро достали мы и Кардамонную бабочку, которая, не будучи особенно ярка, пестра и красива, как-то очень мила. Ее кругловатые, молочной белизны крылушки покрыты каким-то особенным, нежным пухом; на каждом верхнем углу верхнего крыла у ней находится по одному пятну яркого оранжевого цвета, а испод нижних крыльев – зеленовато-пестрый. Но самыми красивыми бабочками можно было назвать, во-первых, бабочку Ирису; крылья у ней несколько зубчатые, блестящего темнобурого цвета, с ярким синим яхонтовым отливом; верхние до половины перерезаны белою повязкою, а на нижних у верхнего края находится по белому очку; особенно замечательно, что испод ее крыльев есть совершенный отпечаток лицевой стороны, только несколько бледнее. Еще красивее бабочка Аталанта, или Адмирал (Atalanta). У ней крылья также зубчатые, черные с лоском, испещренные белыми пятнушками; во всю длину верхних крыльев лежит повязка яркопурпурового цвета, а на нижних крылушках такая же повязка, только с черными пятнушками, огибает их боковые края. Надобно признаться, что у нас и у

Professor Fuchs, who was also a doctor of medicine and beginning to practise. […]

Panayev and I visited a bee-garden and the hilly area on both sides of it, better described as a place of deep gullies overgrown at that time with young trees. […] Our searches yielded a measure of success, and little by little we acquired all the butterflies which Timyansky had in his collection and which we lacked, with the exception of the swallowtail. We did not even entertain any hope of catching one, because they were then thought to be rare in the Kazan region. The swallowtail nagged at our hearts like a thorn!

After a while we caught an orange tip, which, though not very brightly coloured, is mottled, pretty and very appealing. Its rounded milk-white wings are covered in soft down of some particular kind. In the upper corner of each fore-wing is a single bright-orange patch, and the underside of the hind-wings is a greenish dapple. But the prettiest butterflies are the peacock and the red admiral. The peacock's slightly jagged-edged wings are a bright reddish-brown with a vivid sapphire sheen, and on the upper edge of each fore-wing and hind-wing is a white spot. Of particular note is the fact that the underwing is an exact copy of the upper wing, only a little paler. The Atalanta butterfly, or red admiral, is even prettier. It too has jagged-edged wings of glossy black with splashes of white; running the length of the fore-wings is a band of bright crimson and a band of identical colour, but dotted with black, borders the hind-wings. It must be admitted that in our collection, as in Timyansky's, there were many butterflies which we could not positively identify with the aid of Blumenbach, and for which Professor

Тимьянского было много бабочек безыменных, которых нельзя было определить по Блуменбаху и которых профессор Фукс не умел назвать по-русски.
[…]

Между тем лето вступало в права свои. Прошла весна. Соловей допел свои последние песни, да и другие певчие птички почти все перестали петь. Только варакушка еще передразнивала и перевирала голоса и крики всяких птиц, да и та скоро должна была умолкнуть.

Одни жаворонки, вися где-то в небе, невидимые для глаз человеческих, рассыпали с высоты свои мелодические трели, оживляя сонную тишину знойного, молчаливого лета. Да, прошла голосистая весна, пора беззаботного веселья, песен, любви! Прошли «летние повороты», то есть 12 июня; поворотило солнышко на зиму, а лето на жары, как говорит русский народ; наступила и для птиц пора деловая, пора неусыпных забот, беспрестанных опасений, инстинктивного самозабвения, самопожертвования, пора родительской любви. Вывелись дети у певчих птичек, надобно их кормить, потом учить летать и ежеминутно беречь от опасных врагов, от хищных птиц и зверей. Песен уже нет, а есть крик; это не песня, а речь: отец и мать беспрестанно окликают, зовут, манят своих глупых детенышей, которые отвечают им жалобным, однообразным писком, разевая голодные рты. Такая перемена, совершившаяся в какие-нибудь две недели, в продолжение которых я не выходил за город, сильно поразила и даже опечалила меня, когда я, во второй половине июня, вместе с неразлучным моим спутником Панаевым, рано утром вошел в тенистый Нееловский сад. – В прежние годы я не замечал такой перемены.
[…]

Наконец, все экзамены кончились. Надобно было ехать на летнюю вакацию: мне в Симбирскую губернию, в Старое

Fuchs did not know the Russian name.
[…]

By now, summer had come on in earnest. Springtime was over. The nightingale had sung its last song and the other small songbirds had almost stopped singing. The bluethroat alone was still mimicking and playing its variations on the calls and songs of many other birds, and soon it too would fall silent.

Only the skylarks, somewhere aloft in the heavens, invisible to the human eye, went on pouring down their melodious trills from on high, enlivening the sleepy stillness of the sultry, silent summer. Yes, the springtime of vibrant song, the carefree season of merry-making, singing and love was over! The “turn of summer”, that is 12th June, was past: the sun had turned “winterwards”, as Russian country folk say, and ushered in the summer heat. A busy time set in for the birds too, a time of ceaseless cares, endless dangers, instinctive self-denial and self-sacrifice, and parental love. The songbirds’ eggs had hatched, and they had to feed their young, then teach them to fly and be on guard every moment against dangerous foes, predatory birds and animals. They no longer sang, but they called: it was no longer song, but speech: father and mother called constantly, summoning their silly offspring, who replied in piteous monotonous squeaks, their hungry mouths agape. This change came about in a matter of a fortnight, during which time I did not leave the town, and it struck me forcibly and even saddened me when in mid-June, with my inseparable companion Panayev, I entered Neyelovsky Park early one morning. In previous years I had not noticed such a change. […]

At last all the examinations were over. It was time to leave for the summer

Аксаково, где жило этот год мое семейство, а Панаевым – в Тетюшский уезд Казанской губернии, где жила их мать и сестры. В первый раз случилось, что радостное время поездки на вакацию в деревню, к семейству, было смущено в душе моей посторонней заботой.

По совету Фукса, бабочек мы оставляли в гимназической библиотеке под надзором ее смотрителя. Но что же было делать с моими гусеницами и хризалидами? Семь ящиков и три стеклянные банки нельзя было везти с собою в простой ямской кибитке; в одни сутки червяков бы затрясло, а хризалид оторвало с места и вообще все бы расстроилось, да и просто некуда было поместить эти громоздкие вещи; оставить же без призора мое воспитательное заведение – также было невозможно. Да и на кого же мог я положиться? В Казани оставался только мой кучер с лошадью. Кто мог заменить меня? Признаюсь также, что жаль мне было оторваться от этого постоянного наблюдения, попечения, забот и ожиданий, которые я уже привык устремлять на жизнь моих питомцев, беспрестанно ожидая новых превращений и, наконец, последнего, полного превращения в какую-нибудь неизвестную мне чудную бабочку. Но делать было нечего, и с этою мыслию я уже примирился.
[…]

Когда все разъезды были кончены, деревенская жизнь с возможными по тамошней местности удовольствиями пошла по своей обыкновенной колее. Что и говорить – не было никакого сравнения между Старым и Новым Аксаковом! Там была река, огромный пруд, купанье, уженье и самая разнообразная стрельба, а здесь воды совсем почти не было, даже воду для питья привозили за две версты из

vacation: I was going to Old Aksakovo, in the province of Simbirsk, where my family were staying that year, while the Panayev brothers were going to Tetyushi in the province of Kazan, where their mother and sisters lived. For the first time the joy of travelling to the country, to my family, for the holidays was clouded for me by a nagging worry.
Following the advice of Fuchs, we had left our butterflies in the library in the care of the custodian. But what was I to do with my caterpillars and chrysalids? I could not take seven cartons and three glass jars with me in an ordinary covered wagon; in one day the caterpillars would have been shaken to death, the chrysalids torn loose and everything would have been jumbled up,[5] and there was simply nowhere to put such bulky objects. To leave everything unsupervised was also out of the question. And on whom could I rely? In Kazan there was only my coachman and his horse. Who could take my place? I also admit that I was loath to tear myself away from the ceaseless observation and expectant care which I had grown used to lavishing on the life of my charges, constantly expecting new transformations, including that final complete metamorphosis into some wonderful new butterfly unknown to me. But there was nothing for it, and I had already resigned myself to the idea. […]

When we had finished paying all our visits, country life resumed its wonted course, with all the pleasures that the locality offered. Say what one might, there was no comparison between Old and New Aksakovo! In the former there was a river, a huge pond, bathing, fishing and the most varied shooting, while the latter had hardly any water – even drinking water had to be carried two *versts* from

[5] That was what we thought at the time, but we were mistaken: caterpillars can be safely transported in grass and leaves, and especially pupae in cotton. (Так мы думали тогда, но ошибались: червяков в траве и листьях, и особенно хризалид в хлопчатой бумаге, можно везти безопасно. Author's note)

родников; охота с ружьем, правда, была чудесная, но лесная, для меня еще не доступная, да и легавой собаки не было.

Впрочем, отец возил меня несколько раз на охоту за выводками глухих тетеревов, которых тамошний охотник, крестьянин Егор Филатов, умел находить и поднимать без собаки; но все это было в лесу, и я не успевал поднять ружья, как все тетеревята разлетались в разные стороны, а отец мой и охотник Егор всякий раз, однако, умудрялись как-то убивать по нескольку штук; я же только один раз убил глухого тетеревенка, имевшего глупость сесть на дерево. Вальдшнепов было великое множество, но для них еще не наступила пора. Впрочем, Егор приносил иногда старых и молодых вальдшнепов: молодых он ловил руками, с помощью своей зверовой собаки, а как он ухитрялся убивать старых – я и теперь не знаю, потому что он в лёт стрелять не умел. Около моховых болот, окруженных лесом, жило множество бекасов, старых и молодых; но я решительно не умел их стрелять, да и болотные берега озер под ногами так тряслись и опускались, «ходенем ходили», как говорили крестьяне, что я, по непривычке, и ходить там боялся. Езжали мы иногда в лес, целой семьей, за ягодами, за грибами, за орехами; но эти поездки мало меня привлекали. Итак, поневоле единственным моим наслаждением было собирание бабочек; на него-то устремил я все свое внимание и деятельность. Бабочек, по счастию, в Старом Аксакове оказалось очень много, и самых разнообразных пород; особенно же было много бабочек ночных и сумеречных. Гусениц попадалось уже мало, да я и не занимался ими, потому что выводиться было им уже некогда или поздно: наступал август месяц.

При первых моих поисках и в старом плодовитом саду, и на поникшей речке Майне, и около маленьких родничков,

some springs. The shooting, it is true, was wonderful, but it was forest shooting – still beyond my abilities, and we had no pointers.

However, my father did take me out hunting several times for broods of capercaillie, which a local hunter, the peasant Yegor Filatov, knew how to find and flush without a dog. But that was in the forest, and before I could raise my gun all the capercaillies had scattered in different directions. My father and Yegor somehow managed to shoot several each every time, while I only once succeeded in killing a small one which was silly enough to alight on a tree. Woodcock were very abundant, but the season for them had not yet opened. Yegor did sometimes bring in old and young woodcock: he caught the young birds with his hands, with the aid of his hunting dog, but how he managed to kill the adults I do not know to this day, because he was unable to shoot them in flight. Round the peat bogs, surrounded by woodland, lived many snipe, old and young, but I was quite incapable of shooting them, and the marshy fringes of the lakes shook so much and gave way underfoot that I, being unused to this, feared walking there; the ground danced, as the peasants said. Sometimes we drove as a family into the forest to pick berries, mushrooms or nuts, but those excursions held little appeal for me, so my only pleasure, willy-nilly, was to collect butterflies. That was the focus of all my attention and energy. Fortunately, in Old Aksakovo there were huge numbers of them, and of the most varied kinds. Moths and evening species were particularly abundant. I found few caterpillars, and did not bother much with them, because they would have too little time to hatch, as it was the beginning of August.
On my first expeditions and in the old orchard, along the low-flowing River Maina, and round the small springs which

которые кое-где просачивались по старому руслу реки, и на полянах между лесами я встретил не только бабочек, водившихся в окрестностях Казани, но много таких, о которых я не имел понятия. Сумеречных бабочек я караулил всегда в сумерки или отыскивал в лесном сумраке, даже середи дня, где они, не чувствуя яркого солнечного света, перепархивали с места на место. Ночных же бабочек, кроме отыскивания их днем в дуплах дерев или в расщелинах заборов и старых строений, я добывал ночью, приманивая их на огонь. Я сделал себе маленький фонарь и привязывал его на вершину смородинного или барбарисового куста, или на синель, или невысокую яблонь. Привлеченные светом бабочки прилетали и кружились около моего фонаря, а я, стоя неподвижно возле него с готовой рампеткой, подхватывал их на лету. В непродолжительном времени я поймал около двадцати новых экземпляров; трудно было определить их названия по Блуменбаху, как мы ни хлопотали над ним вместе с сестрой.

[…]

Когда мы соединили наши четыре ящика и привели их в надлежащий порядок, то есть расположили бабочек по родам, выставили нумера, составили регистр с названиями и описаниями, то поистине наше собрание можно было назвать превосходным во многих отношениях, хотя, конечно, не полным. Все студенты соглашались беспрекословно, и уже не было никакого спора, чье собрание лучше, наше или Тимьянского. Можно сказать, что мы с Панаевым торжествовали.

Между тем начались лекции, и я, чувствуя себя несколько отставшим, потому что с самой весны слишком много занимался бабочками, принялся с жаром догонять моих товарищей. Панаев тоже. Через неделю, однако, мы решились с ним, по старой привычке и не остывшей еще охоте, выйти за город, чтобы посмотреть, не

here and there broke through the old river bed, and in the woodland glades I found not only the butterflies I knew from Kazan, but many others of which I knew nothing. I always sought crepuscular moths at twilight, or in the gloom of the forest, where there was no bright sunlight and they fluttered from place to place even in daytime. As for night-flying moths, I hunted for them at night by luring them to a flame, besides seeking them during the day in tree hollows or chinks in fences and old buildings. I fashioned a little lamp and tied it to the top of a blackcurrant or barberry bush, or a lilac, or a small apple tree. Attracted by the light, the moths would fly in and circle round my lamp, while I stood motionless nearby, with my net at the ready, and caught them in flight. I soon had some twenty new specimens. It was difficult to identify them by name from Blumenbach's guide, however hard my sister and I tried. […]

When Panayev and I combined our four cases and put everything into proper order, that is, arranged the butterflies in families, numbered them and compiled a register with names and descriptions, our collection could in many respects be truly considered splendid, although of course less than complete. All the students were in full agreement: there was no argument as to whose collection was the better, ours or Timyansky's. For Panayev and me, that could be called a moment of triumph.

In the meantime, lectures had recommenced, and I, feeling that I had fallen somewhat behind because since early spring I had spent too much time on my butterflies, set determinedly about catching up with my classmates. So did Panayev. A week later, however, he and I decided, following our old habit and not

попадется ли нам какая-нибудь новая, неизвестная порода бабочек. Но не только не попалось нам новой, даже известных бабочек встретилось мало, потому что наступил уже конец августа и погода очень похолодела. С этого дня прекратились наши походы за бабочками, и прекратились навсегда! Пришла суровая осень, и все свободное время от учебных занятий мы посвятили литературе, с великим жаром издавая письменный журнал, под названием: «Журнал наших занятий». Я же, сверх того, сильно увлекся театром. У нас в университете составились спектакли, которые упрочили мою актерскую славу. Бабочки отошли сначала на второй план, но мы с Панаевым еще каждый день смотрели их, любовались ими, вспоминали с удовольствием, как доставались нам лучшие из них и как мы были тогда счастливы. Потом эти воспоминания день ото дня становились реже и беднее. Бабочки забывались понемногу, и страсть ловить и собирать их начала казаться нам слишком молодым или детским увлечением. Так казалось особенно мне, который был привязан к этой охоте несравненно горячее и страстнее Панаева.

В непродолжительном времени судьба моя была решена моим отцом и матерью: через несколько месяцев, в начале 1807 года, я должен был выйти из университета для поступления в статскую службу в Петербурге.

В университете в это время царствовал воинственный дух. Большая часть казенных студентов желала, хотя безнадежно, вступить в военную службу, чтоб принять личное и деятельное участие в войне с Наполеоном. Друг мой Александр Панаев с братом своим Иваном, нашим университетским лириком, также воспламенились бранным жаром и решились выйти немедленно из университета и определиться в кавалерию. […]

having cooled to the chase, to go into the country again to see if we could catch some new and unknown species. But not only could we find no new ones, even the familiar ones were scarce, because it was already late August and the weather had turned much colder. From that day forth, our expeditions ceased, and ceased forever! A harsh autumn drew on, and all our spare time was given over to literature, as we eagerly produced a magazine called *Our Journal of Studies*. In addition, I had become deeply involved in theatricals: at the university we produced plays, which bolstered my reputation as an actor. Our butterflies retreated into the background at first, though Panayev and I still looked at them every day, admiring them and recalling with pleasure how we had captured the best of them and how happy we had been. Later, day by day, those memories became less frequent and less vivid. We slowly forgot about butterflies, and our passion for catching and collecting them began to seem too juvenile or childish a pastime. That was how I felt, especially, and I was incomparably more ardent and keen in the pursuit of it than Panayev.

Soon my fate was sealed by my father and mother: in a few months, at the beginning of 1807, I was to leave the university and enter the civil service in St Petersburg.

At that time, a warlike spirit reigned in the university. The majority of the state-scholarship students cherished a hopeless longing for an army career, in order to take a personal active part in the war against Napoleon. My friend Alexander Panayev and his brother Ivan, our university poet, were also fired by the martial flame and resolved to leave the university as soon as possible and join the cavalry. […]

Прежде поступления на службу в Петербурге мне предстояло еще встретить весну в деревне, в моем любимом Аксакове. Прилет птицы приводил меня в восторг при одном воспоминании о той весне, которую я провел там, будучи еще восьмилетним мальчиком; но теперь, когда я мог встретить весну с ружьем в руках, прилет птицы казался мне таким желанным и блаженным временем, что дай только бог терпенья дожить до него и сил – пережить его. При таком настроении не было уже места бабочкам в мечтах и желаниях, кипевших в то время в моей голове и душе. Сначала я подарил свою половину бабочек Панаеву. Панаев же подарил мне прекрасные рисунки лучших из них, снятые им с натуры с большим искусством и точностью; а как потом Панаев задумал в военную службу, то мы отдали бабочек в вечное и потомственное владение Тимьянскому. Остались ли они его собственностью, или он пожертвовал их в университетский кабинет натуральной истории – ничего не знаю.

Before entering government service in St Petersburg, I would spend one more spring in the country, in my beloved Aksakovo. The arrival of the birds delighted me at the mere memory of that spring I had spent there as a boy of eight; but now that I could greet the spring with shotgun in hand, it seemed to me such a blessed time that I wished only for the patience, with God's will, to see it come on, and the strength to last the season. In that mood, there was no longer room for butterflies in the dreams and desires that seethed in my mind and heart. First I gave my half of the butterflies to Panayev. He gave me his wonderful sketches of the best of them, made from life with great precision and art. When Panayev later decided to join the army, we gave our butterflies to Timyansky to keep permanently. Whether they remained his property, or whether he donated them to the university's natural history collection I do not know.

Быстро, но горячо прошла по душе моей страсть – иначе я не могу назвать ее – ловить и собирать бабочек. Она доходила до излишеств, до крайностей, до смешного; может быть, на несколько месяцев она помешала мне внимательно слушать лекции… но нужды нет! Я не жалею об этом. Всякое бескорыстное стремление, напряжение сил душевных нравственно полезно человеку. На всю жизнь осталось у меня отрадное воспоминание этого времени, многих счастливых, блаженных часов. Ловля бабочек происходила под открытым небом, она была обстановлена разнообразными явлениями, красотами, чудесами природы. Горы, леса и луга, по которым бродил я с рампеткою, вечера, когда я подкарауливал сумеречных бабочек, и ночи, когда на огонь приманивал я бабочек ночных, как будто не замечались мною: все внимание, казалось, было устремлено на драгоценную

My passion – I have no other word for it – for catching and collecting butterflies was brief but feverish. It ran to excess, to comical extremes. It may have prevented me from paying proper attention to my lectures for some months. It matters not! I do not regret it. Any selfless concentration of one's spiritual energies is morally beneficial. The joyful memory of that time, of so many blissfully happy hours, has remained with me all my life. The netting of butterflies took place under the open sky, and was accompanied by a variety of wonders and beauties of nature. The hills, forests and meadows I roamed with my net, the evenings when I stalked the crepuscular moths, and the nights when I lured night-flying moths to a flame seemed to pass unnoticed: all my attention was focussed on my precious prey. But, although I failed to notice it, nature imprinted itself

добычу; но природа, незаметно для меня самого, отражалась на душе моей вечными красотами своими, а такие впечатления, ярко и стройно возникающие впоследствии, – благодатны, и воспоминание о них вызывает отрадное чувство из глубины души человеческой.

upon me with its eternal beauty, and such impressions, returning subsequently in luminous and harmonious form, are bountiful, and the memory of them calls forth a feeling of joy from the very depths of one’s being.

# Review of Eckart Förster, *The 25 Years of Philosophy – A Systematic Reconstruction*, and Stephen Gaukroger, *The Failures of Philosophy – A Historical Essay*.

GEORGE STANICA
Contributor to the *Los Angeles Review of Books*

Eckart Förster, *The 25 Years of Philosophy – A Systematic Reconstruction*, Harvard University Press, 2017.
Stephen Gaukroger, *The Failures Of Philosophy – A Historical Essay*, Princeton University Press, 2020.

Eckart Förster, honorary professor at Humboldt University in Berlin, expert in German Idealism, has lectured on German studies at Oxford, Harvard, Princeton, Stanford, John Hopkins and Munich universities. His book, "The 25 Years of Philosophy", is an attempt to reconstruct in a systematic manner a dramatic episode in the history of philosophy between 1781 and 1806. The first bombshell was thrown by Kant who had no hesitation in claiming that prior the "The Critique of Pure Reason", published in 1781, "there had been no philosophy at all." (Preface p. ix) The second bombshell exploded 25 years later when Hegel predicted in 1806 during one of his lectures that his book "The Phenomenology of Spirit" had spelt the end of the history of philosophy. The implication was that during those 25 years, Kant and Hegel had worked out a complete philosophical system which had answered all metaphysical questions and had raised philosophy from a set of random questions to the status of science.

Prof Förster points out that, there was no consensus among Kantian philosophers about what 'science' means. Fichte's conception, "rests on the assumption shared by Kant and Reinhold that philosophy must be systematic and therefore must be derived from a first principle." According to Fichte, however, such a principle is accessible to cognition only in the intellectual intuition of one's own I" (p. 165). The second conception "is inspired by Spinoza's view that scientific knowledge consists in the ability to derive an object's essential properties from its proximate cause or definition. (*Ibid.*) Goethe was inspired by both Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva* and Kant's "Critique of the Power of Judgment' and used the method of intuitive understanding when he wrote "The Metamorphosis of Plants" and "The Theory of Colours'. As a result of Goethe's considerable influence, Hegel took over this method and incorporated it into his "Phenomenology of Spirit" in order to develop his theory based on an ascending scale of concepts starting from sensation, perception and leading to consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, spirit and the Absolute which he considered to have brought about the end of philosophy.

However, Eckart Förster makes the valid observation that the end of philosophy heralded by Hegel could be understood in two senses: completion and cessation. Hegel's dialectics enabled him to overcome the subject-object dichotomy which ended discursive thought and opened the possibility for a new cycle of philosophy. "Alternatively, the history of philosophy may be said to have *come to an end* in the sense that, in the end, only a closed system is possible, and once such a system is erected, philosophy would have exhausted its potential" (p. 372).

In response to Hegel's assumption that philosophy had come to an end, prof Förster considers that even if we accept such a claim, which he does not, another kind of philosophical science different from Hegel's system, something similar to *scientia intuitiva* developed by

Spinoza and Goethe, is open to the future (p. 372]. While Prof Förster does not wish to deny the legitimacy of discursive thought as a necessary stage prior to *scientia intuitiva*, he contends that discursive thought has lost its position of exclusive dominance in a similar way to Euclidean geometry. Unlike Kant, who had concluded that discursive thought could only lead to antinomies and could not reach the supersensible or nuomenon, Eckart Förster hopes that his study demonstrated that the 25 years of philosophy between 1781 and 1806 created the possibility that philosophy "would be able to come forward as a science" (p. 377).

How did philosophy arrive during those 25 years to the standpoint of science? After Fichte's and Schelling's failures to overcome Kant's conclusion that human mind is incapable of knowing the essence or nuomenon, "it was Goethe who elaborated a methodology of intuitive understanding based on Spinoza's *Ethics* and Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Goethe's method consisted in bringing together related phenomena and grasping them in such a way as to form a whole". In a further step, "the transitions between the phenomena must be re-created in thought in order to tell whether the whole was already at work in them or whether the parts are only externally connected" (p. 375).

While Hegel was writing "The Phenomenology of Spirit" which he initially called "The Science of the Experience of Consciousness", Goethe gave a series of private lectures on natural philosophy for a select audience and was close to completing the first part of *FAUST.* Although Hegel did not attend Goethe's lectures, he met him in Jena on a number of occasions when he became familiar with Goethe's *Theory of Colours*. As a result of these encounters, Hegel adopted one of Goethe's ideas required by *scientia intuitiva,* "namely that the ascent from the particular to the universal be followed by a descent from the universal to the particular (p. 360). Prof Förster quotes a letter written by Hegel to Goethe, many years later, in which Hegel acknowledges his debt of gratitude: "When I survey the path of my spiritual development, I see you interwoven in it everywhere and I think of myself as *one of your sons; you have nourished in me a tenacious resistance to abstraction,* and your creations [*Gebilde]* have marked out my path like torches" (p. 362).

Kant was of the view that he had demonstrated convincingly that the road from the absolute idea to phenomena or from phenomena to the idea that corresponds to them (*scientia intuitiva)* was humanly impossible. Hegel and Goethe tried to overcome this position in different ways. Goethe believed that "What is highest is the intuition of the different as identical." And, "Man must be able to elevate himself to the highest reason if he is to touch the deity that is revealed in the *Urphänomenen,* physical and moral, behind which it lies and from which they arise" (p. 370).

Why does Eckart Förster believe that the 25 years of philosophy between 1781 and 1806 worked out a philosophical justification demonstrating that supersensible reality could be known by philosophy as a science and the path of *scientia intuitiva* is still open? And what is actually *scientia intuitiva?* "It is the form of cognition that Spinoza had demanded without being able to formulate it in methodologically adequate terms, and whose methodology Goethe was the first to work out, yet without being able to provide philosophical justification" (p. 372). Intuitive knowledge as defined by Spinoza in his *Ethics* is the comprehension of things by their essences or proximate cause. Spinoza calls *scientia intuitiva* the third kind of knowledge which is superior to perceptive and rational knowledge. Thus, Spinoza says, "The greatest striving of the Mind, and its greatest virtue is understanding things by the third kind of knowledge" (p. 93). However, Prof Förster points out that individual things cannot be grasped in the mode of *scientia intuitiva* without knowing their underlying idea or efficient cause which is probably the reason why Spinoza illustrated the third kind of knowledge with examples selected exclusively from mathematics. Despite such difficulties, the author does not share the scepticism of scholars who doubt the validity of Spinoza's third mode of cognition.

What enabled Goethe to overcome the limitations of Spinoza's method when he wrote the *Metamorphosis of Plants* was the idea found in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* where Kant described the process of intuitive understanding as a movement from the whole to the parts aiming to grasp their reciprocal causations (p. 166). However, Goethe's attempts to overcome the cognitive limitations posited by Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* "were met with little approval among the Kantians." Goethe was unable, as he later wrote, "to bring myself into line with the Kantians: they heard what I had to say, but were unable to respond or to benefit me in any way" (p. 174). Goethe did not give up his belief that humans possess a type of cognition that proceeds from the whole to its parts and he believed that he had applied this method in his *Essay on the Metamorphosis of Plants.* "The philosophical attraction of Goethe's position consists not least in the fact (and in the way that) he mediates between Spinoza and Kant and seeks to make discursive and intuitive thinking compatible" (p. 254).

> Hegel applied this [Goethe's] method to philosophy itself in order to achieve philosophical knowledge of the supersensible. Since philosophical consciousness is a consciousness that makes a truth claim, he began by setting up a complete series of such shapes of consciousness in order to make the transitions between them reproducible in thought. (Whether or not the series is in fact complete can be determined by actually going through and trying to reproduce the transitions one by one.) When the philosophical consciousness of the present now looks back over its past shapes and reproduces the transitions between them in thought, it grasps what it thereby experiences as the knowledge of something that consciousness itself has not produced but merely aided in making visible. This is a self-moving, spiritual content which, although discoverable only in the thinking subject, exists independently of it and is objectively real. In this experience, consciousness apprehends the effects of a supersensible spiritual reality. In this way, it has attained the standpoint of *scientia intuitive.* (Chapters. 12-14) (p. 375)

However, in his book, "The Failures of Philosophy" which traces the rise and fall of various Western philosophical theories, Prof Stephen Gaukroger of the University of Sydney does not share Eckart Förster's optimism about the chances of transforming philosophy into a *scientia intuitiva* or a theory of everything. After Leibniz's "Monadology" where the distinction between the natural and the supernatural continued to operate, Kant, Hegel and the neo-Kantians tried to replace traditional metaphysics with a new theory of epistemology, morality, science and law by establishing the autonomy and supremacy of our cognitive powers dominated by reason divorced from the antinomies generated by empirical cognition. Schelling's, Fichte's and Hegel's move from Kant's transcendental idealism to absolute idealism was triggered by a general perception among his followers that his *Three Critiques* had failed to investigate properly "the principles and procedures underlying the acquisition of transcendental knowledge" (p.248). The Austrian philosopher, Karl Leonhard Reinhold, an avowed admirer of Kant, set out to introduce a more systematic and organic development of consciousness starting from the whole to the implicate order of the parts, by a process of deduction.

Kant's successors, Fichte and Schelling tried to bridge the Kantian gap between sensibility and understanding. "For Schelling, Fichte's subjective idealism fails to do justice to the fact of an external objective world and he developed a 'philosophy of identity' in which the subject and object emerged as products of a self-division in a primordial unity, the Absolute, and on this conception, it does not matter whether we derive the self from nature or nature from the self (p. 250). Hegel, in his "Phenomenology of Spirit" claims to have developed a

comprehensive "science of the experience of consciousness' encapsulating all the stages of empirical and rational cognition. However, Stephen Gaukroger considers that Hegel's 'Spirit', taken over from Schelling's 'Absolute' is obscure as it is not clear whether it was conceived as a kind of collective form if intelligence or some sort of Platonic world of ideas which was accessible to cognizant subjects. Gaukroger accepts that the absolute idealists tried to set up the most comprehensive system of understanding the world possible and the only similar equivalent was the Christian cosmology developed by St. Augustine. However, the search for a theory of everything continued after the collapse of Hegelian philosophy under its own weight. "With the demise of idealist philosophy, the view emerged that science could take over all the questions with which philosophy had concerned itself and could begin to explore them in an empirical way, with the aim of establishing materialism" (p. 252).

Gaukroger's conclusion is that ultimately science assimilates philosophy. However, science needs philosophy as a metatheory, without philosophy, science would run the risk of breaking down into a collection of unsystematic disciplines. Neo-Kantian philosophers like Ernst Cassirer have tried to place mythology and religion through aesthetic forms under a wide-ranging umbrella of symbolic forms with science at the pinnacle. Gottlob Frege's aspiration was to replace epistemology with logic and prove that logic underlies mathematics. Furthermore, Gaukroger points out that Frege attempted "to infer the logical structure of the world from the logical structure of thought" (p. 271). Consequently, Frege's new type of logic and his corresponding theory of meaning opened the way for Hussserl's phenomenology, on one hand, and Russell's, Wittgenstein's and Carnap's analytical philosophy, on the other.

However, the idea that language or consciousness has a logical structure which mirrors the logical structure of the world was criticised by Heidegger, John Searle and by Wittgenstein himself who abandoned his own picture of language offered in the *Tractatus* (p. 277). Dilthey and his student Heidegger questioned the supremacy of reason and the legitimacy of science. In their view, life should not be defined by all-encroaching technology and rampant consumerism but by specific cultures, worldliness, temporality, mortality, anxiety and historical contingency. They appear to be in favour of a return to Pre-Socratic philosophy or even pre-philosophical imagery (pp. 281-282). For Gaukroger, philosophy "seems to have lost its bearings"; for Eckart Förster, the future of philosophy as a science, "has only just begun". In a recent discussion we had, Förster has defined his position as being close to Gaukroger's: "Philosophy has given/is giving way to the sciences and at best functions as a meta-reflection on the procedures of the scientists. This is true, I think, if one identifies philosophy with discursive thinking, as most people do. Only if philosophy also engages in intuitive thought does it have a subject matter *sui generis* – and hence a future independent of natural sciences."

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**Review of *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Interpreting and Crisis***

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Christophe Declercq, Koen Kerremans (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Interpreting and Crisis,* London, Routledge, 2023.

O'Brien (2022 86) defines crisis as "an unexpected event with a sudden or rapid onset that can seriously disrupt the routines of an individual or a collective, posing some level of risk or danger." This definition highlights the abrupt and potentially perilous nature of crises, emphasizing their ability to upend normalcy and introduce significant uncertainty. Such events also demand immediate attention and response. In recent years, the world has faced a series of crises, including war conflicts, natural disasters, and health emergencies. Notable examples include the global Covid-19 pandemic, the devastating earthquake in Turkey and Syria, the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All these events have had an impact on people's lives to some extent. In the crisis, communication plays a role in quickly and accurately conveying critical information to reduce uncertainty and anxiety among those affected. It also facilitates coordinated efforts among affected individuals, communities, and the public.

Given the heightened importance of communication during these crises, the role of translation becomes crucial in addressing those affected individuals across different languages and cultures. O'Brien (2016) also introduces the concept of "crisis translation". In this context, translation services serve as an essential bridge, facilitating communication between affected-people, emergency services, and government agencies, thereby ensuring effective response and support during times of crisis. In the process of information change, each of these situations has highlighted the crucial role of crisis translation in providing life-saving information, ensuring public safety, and facilitating coordinated responses. Under the crisis translation situation, translators and interpreters also play a complex role in representing, and sustaining, narratives and the everyday stories of conflict/crisis-affected populations. *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Interpreting and Crisis* (edited by Christophe Declercq and Koen Kerremans and published in 2023) is one of the series of *Routledge Handbooks in Translation and Interpreting Studies*. This handbook analyses the role of translators and interpreters in crisis situations, examining the impact of crises and demonstrating how crucial translation is in these contexts. This handbook is divided into four sections (policy & practice, professionalization, community, and language strategies and solutions), each exploring different facets in this critical field.

The opening section comprises eight chapters focusing on policy and practice perspectives, illustrated through diverse case studies worldwide. These case studies span across Peru, Brazil, Belgium, Sierra Leone, Australia, Japan, and Hong Kong, showcasing varied approaches to studying policies and practices in different socio-cultural contexts. These different policies and practices can also be implemented in communities with diverse languages, cultures, religions, and ethnicities, whether locally or across regions and countries. Additionally, chapters emphasize the importance of language accessibility in crisis communication, the significance of translation as a tool for risk reduction to enhance multilingual and intercultural crisis communication, and the importance of developing effective crisis translation policies and practices. Moreover, in order to achieve the most effective crisis translation, some

contributions also put forward other solutions including technological and non-technological methods.

Section 2 explores the theme of Professionalisation, comprising six chapters. Case studies from Spain, Afghanistan, and Syria are examined, highlighting the challenging role of translators and interpreters as mediators in translating the narratives of crisis-affected individuals. The contributions address crucial aspects essential for professionalizing language access in crisis contexts, emphasizing the diverse skills required by translators and interpreters under humanitarian negotiations in conflict zones. It covers occupational standards, training, ethical conduct, collaboration with humanitarian organizations, and perceptions of their roles. Furthermore, the section predominantly focuses on interpreting, spanning five chapters, while the final chapter also discusses the professional standing of translators in conflict zones.

The third section including seven chapters mainly looks into the community perspectives of crisis translation and interpreting. Drawing on the cases where interpreters play a crucial role in creating community and fostering belonging among refugees, as well as their crucial function in conflict-affected regions, the contributions examine various community contexts where language needs are influenced by factors such as agency, positionality, and trust, along with the challenges faced by these communities in addressing language needs. Additionally, this section also exemplifies its interdisciplinary approach to crisis response, emphasizing collaboration among diverse fields and areas of expertise.

The final section considers language strategies and solutions in crises. It primarily examines the translation decisions taken when engaging with minority or gender-specific languages in the realm of crisis translation. Chapters demonstrate this frequently necessitates innovative approaches to translating terms and concepts that lack direct equivalents in other languages. Additionally, the concluding chapter also discusses the potential use of automatic speech recognition and machine translation beyond the efforts of translators and interpreters as effective methods for communication under high-pressure situations, ensuring translation quality.

This handbook offers readers a comprehensive overview of contemporary research and practices within this emerging field, underscoring the critical role of translation and interpretation in crisis contexts. It is a valuable resource for scholars and students in the field of translation and interpreting, as it encompasses a diverse array of global case studies. Furthermore, this handbook touches on interdisciplinary studies intersecting with translation studies, including war and conflict, policy, and health crisis services, thereby serving as an indispensable reference for scholars in these domains. Through this book, we hope the humanitarian aid not only within the translator and interpreter, but the technology solutions also can help in the crisis communication.

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