

# The AALITRA Review

A JOURNAL OF LITERARY TRANSLATION

No. 2, November 2010



AALITRA

# The AALITRA Review

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**Proposals** for *The AALITRA Review* should be sent to:

Professor Brian Nelson,  
brian.nelson@arts.monash.edu.au

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A JOURNAL OF LITERARY TRANSLATION AND CREATIVE REWRITING

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# The Blue Cross (“La Croix bleue”) by Claudine Jacques

TRANSLATED BY PATRICIA WORTH

This short story is a translation of “La Croix bleue” by Claudine Jacques, from her collection *Le Cri de l’acacia* published in 2007 by Au Vent des îles, Tahiti, but not yet published in English. The story is one of five translated as part of a Master of Translation Studies degree during which I’ve studied New Caledonian literature, history and culture. In the last couple of years I’ve been to New Caledonia twice and have met Claudine Jacques, who encouraged me to contact her with any questions I had during the translation process.

To discover as much as possible about the author, I read this collection of stories and several of her other short stories and novels, as well as any publicly available information on her personal history. My research revealed a recurring theme in Jacques’ writing, one which I had found in “La Croix bleue”, that of alcoholism as a threat to young Kanaks and other Pacific Islanders. For this reason, though my target audience is Australian, readers in other Pacific nations may also be interested.

The translation challenge in this story lies in the culture-specific expressions, not only New Caledonian-French terms but also words from Wallisian and Polynesian languages. If the meaning was clear from the context, for example a Polynesian word such as *’ūmete*, I left them untranslated, adding richness to the story in the way Jacques allowed them to enrich her French. I have included a glossary for the reader as she did. Other terms in French but specific to New Caledonia, such as *taros d’eau*, *palétuviers*, *patate douce*, required some research beyond dictionaries. It was also important to be aware of certain details of indigenous Caledonian family life. For example, the phrase *tenait sa place* generally means “was behaving appropriately”; in this context, however, it refers specifically to the man’s place as head of the family, so I expanded the clause for clarification. My approach, then, was a compromise between foreignisation and domestication, that is, not to be invisible but to retain a few French and indigenous words while keeping the text readable.

### **La Croix bleue**

La lune était pleine et les chiens hurlaient à la mort de maison en maison.

L'homme hoqueta, tituba puis tomba à genoux près du muret.

Dans sa chute il tenta de se rattraper à pleines mains à une liane de bougainvillée et poussa un cri de douleur qui s'éteignit lentement en une plainte monocorde. Il chavira sur lui-même et roula dans le caniveau, parmi les détritux et les taros d'eau, dans une boue épaisse et nauséabonde. Il n'eut que la force ou l'instinct de renverser sa tête sur le côté afin qu'elle repose sur l'herbe sèche et comprit qu'il pouvait lâcher prise. Alors tout son corps se détendit dans un mouvement presque voluptueux. Il s'endormit ou plutôt tomba dans un genre de coma qui l'isola du monde et des bruits extérieurs à son propre ronflement. Seul dans sa vibration, seul dans sa tête vide mais lourde, si lourde.

Quelques loupiotes restaient allumées aux portes des maisons voisines.

Jéhovana s'était assise sur le seuil de la sienne, elle était certainement la seule, à cette heure de la nuit, à rester éveillée, avec peut-être Roti, la vieille Tahitienne, trois maisons plus loin. Deux raisons à cela, la lune trop ronde, trop blanche et l'attente de celui qui n'était pas encore rentré. Elle aurait pu fermer la porte à clef et s'allonger sur une natte dans le salon mais elle voulait être là pour l'aider quand il rentrerait afin qu'il ne réveille pas les enfants.

Elle soupira, les yeux au ciel, et

### **The Blue Cross**

The moon was full and dogs were howling from house to house.

The man hiccuped, staggered then fell on his knees near the low wall.

In his fall he tried with both hands to catch hold of a climbing bougainvillea, and let out a cry of pain which slowly quietened to a monotonous moan. He tumbled over and rolled into the gutter among the rubbish and the taros, into a thick foul-smelling mud. He had only enough strength or instinct to tilt his head to the side so it rested on the dry grass, then realised he could let go. His whole body relaxed in a movement that was almost sensual. He went to sleep or rather fell into a sort of coma that isolated him from the world and from noises outside of his own snoring. Alone in his vibration, alone in his empty head but heavy, so heavy.

A few lamps remained lit at the doors of the neighbouring houses.

Jéhovana was sitting on the doorstep of her house; she was most likely the only one to still be awake at this hour of the night, with perhaps Roti, the old Tahitian woman three houses away. Two reasons for this, the moon too round, too white, and the wait for the man who had not yet come home. She could have locked the door and lain down on a mat in the living room but she wanted to be there to help him when he came home so as not to wake the children.

She sighed, her eyes to the sky,

s'efforça de penser à autre chose, la lune dévoilait ses rivières et ses fleuves, dans quelques jours il pleuvrait et ce serait bon pour rafraîchir l'atmosphère gluante de ces derniers temps. Il faudrait qu'elle prenne un moment pour passer la tondeuse et nettoyer le terrain, avec toutes ces pluies l'herbe poussait à toute vitesse, il faudrait aussi réparer la toiture et faire tuer le cochon avant la fête, ce n'était pas une décision de femme mais elle y était désormais obligée. Elle n'était pas habituée à prendre certains arrêts et retardait, par décence, leur application. Que diraient les voisins, la famille, en la voyant parler et agir pour lui. Pourtant, lors de la dernière réunion familiale, c'est à elle qu'on s'était adressé, elle avait donné son avis en précisant bien qu'il était concerté et qu'elle le faisait sous le contrôle de son mari, mais il lui avait semblé que personne n'avait été dupe. Elle prenait ainsi dans le clan la place des veuves et cela lui fit froid dans le dos. Ne serait-elle pas mieux lotie si c'était vrai, libérée de toutes ces contraintes, de ces attentes, de ces cris, de ces coups, de ces lessives fétides, sentant le vomi et l'alcool, et surtout de la honte qui pesait sur elle et ses enfants ! Elle marchait droit dans la rue, chantait à l'église le dimanche, travaillait chez le médecin toute la semaine et gardait la tête haute, elle savait aussi qu'on la plaignait et cette idée la rabaisait. J'ai pitié pour toi, lui avait dit une femme du marché, ton homme, il faut l'inscrire à la Croix bleue. Elle s'était sauvée, abandonnant son pochon de légumes. L'histoire avait fait le tour du village et depuis

and did her best to think of other things. The moon was unveiling its streams and rivers; in a few days it would rain and that would be good for freshening up the sticky atmosphere of recent days. She would have to take a moment to do the mowing and clean up the property; with all this rain the grass was growing very quickly. She would also have to repair the roof and have the pig killed before the celebration. It wasn't a woman's decision but she was now obliged to make it. She wasn't used to making certain judgements and, out of decency, put them off. What would the neighbours and the family say, seeing her speaking and acting for him? Yet at the last family meeting it was to her that they spoke; she had given her opinion while stating plainly that it was for both of them and that she was doing it under her husband's control, but it seemed to her that no one had been fooled. So in the clan she was acting in the role of a widow, and this sent shivers down her spine. Wouldn't she be better off if that were true, freed from all these constraints, this waiting, this shouting, these beatings, this fetid washing stinking of vomit and alcohol, and especially from the shame that she and her children bore! She walked in the street as a respectable woman, sang in Church on Sundays, worked at the doctor's all week and held her head high, but she also knew that people pitied her and this made her feel small. I feel sorry for you, a woman from the market had said to her, your man, you should register him with the Blue Cross. Jéhovana had fled, abandoning her bag of vegetables. The story had

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personne ne lui en parlait plus. Mais les regards compatissants persistaient.

Lui, il ne voyait rien.

Il allait de verre de vin à jeun à canette de bière une heure plus tard. De whisky à gin. Tout dépendait de la paye à boire. Un gars lui donnait encore du travail de maçonnerie, pas un vrai travail. Des heures par-ci, par-là. Mais il ne participait plus aux dépenses du ménage.

Cette nuit, pensa Jéhovana, il ne rentrerait pas.

Si le temps semblait tourner autour de lui, autant dans ses absences que dans sa présence redoutée, il passait pour tous sans que rien ne change.

Et le jour de fête arriva.

Les jeunes hommes de la famille étaient venus creuser le four et préparer le cochon.

Lui, assis très droit sur une natte, fumait cigarette après cigarette. Il avait promis à Jéhovana de ne pas boire pendant tout le jour en l'honneur de son fils qui portait la chemise blanche des communicants et s'énervait, donnait des ordres à droite, à gauche, critiquant tout et n'importe quoi. Ses mains tremblaient en manipulant un paquet de tabac et sa chemise ouverte flottait sur son torse amaigri. Il se leva au bout d'un moment et se rendit dans la chambre des filles. Il monta sur la première étagère du placard et fouilla à l'aveugle le casier le plus haut. Il en sortit une bouteille de whisky et, avide, en but une rasade au goulot, puis une

done the rounds of the village and since then no one spoke to her any more about it. But the sympathetic looks persisted.

*He saw nothing.*

He went from a glass of wine on an empty stomach to a can of beer an hour later. From whisky to gin. What he drank depended on his wages. A bloke was still giving him some bricklaying work, not a real job. A few hours here and there. But he no longer contributed to the household expenses.

Tonight, thought Jéhovana, he won't be coming home.

If time seemed to revolve around him, as much in his absences as in his feared presence, it passed for all of them without anything changing.

And the day of the celebration arrived.

The young men of the family had come to dig the oven and prepare the pig.

He was sitting up very straight on a mat, chain-smoking. He had promised Jéhovana not to drink at all that day in honour of his son who was wearing the white shirt of Communicants, and was edgy, giving orders left and right, criticising anything and everything. His hands trembled as he handled a packet of tobacco, his open shirt floating on his wasted torso. After a while he stood up and took himself to the girls' bedroom. He stepped onto the first shelf of the cupboard, reached up to the top shelf and groped around. He pulled out a bottle of whisky and greedily took a swig, then another and again another.



autre et encore une autre. Il s'essuya la bouche, replaça la bouteille à sa place avec le sourire satisfait de ceux qui pensent avoir fait une bonne blague. Il regarda quelques secondes par la fenêtre, le temps de se sentir mieux et alluma une nouvelle cigarette, il en tira une grande bouffée qui devait à son avis cacher l'odeur de l'alcool, ce n'était qu'un leurre mais il en avait besoin. N'avait-il pas promis à Jéhovana de bien se tenir ! Il eut un moment de tendresse envers elle mais qui ne dura pas, se transformant en rancune, elle ne voulait plus de lui dans sa chambre, dans son lit. Elle l'avait banni. Tu sens l'alcool, c'est tout ce qu'elle savait dire ! De temps en temps il la prenait de force, il avait le droit, c'était sa femme, mais des forces, il en avait de moins en moins, son envie d'elle s'était amollie avec le temps. Et puis il n'aimait pas voir son air triste et préoccupé, elle si gaie au début de leur union pleurait souvent. Comment continuer à désirer une femme qui pleure ?

La cour commençait à se remplir, les filles avaient étalé les *fala* à franges sous les arbres et sur le carrelage de la terrasse. La cérémonie à l'église devait être terminée, il venait d'apercevoir son fils entouré de ses cousins et paré comme un petit roi.

Il renoua son *kié* de velours bleu nuit et rajusta sa ceinture de cuir devant le miroir du placard. Il avait été beau, pensa-t-il en se regardant de près, mais l'image montrait un visage émacié, une peau grise et des yeux enfoncés, il se rassura et se redressa, certes il avait maigri, il suffirait qu'il mange un peu plus et tout rentrerait dans l'ordre.

He wiped his mouth, put the bottle back in its place with the satisfied smile of those who think they've made a good joke. He looked out the window for a few seconds, enough time to feel better, and lit a new cigarette. He took a long drag from it, which should, to his mind, hide the alcohol smell; it would only be a distraction, but he needed one. Hadn't he promised Jéhovana to behave himself properly! For a moment he felt tenderness for her which didn't last, changing to bitterness. She wanted no more of him in her room, in her bed. She had banished him. You smell of drink, that's all she ever said! Now and then he forced himself on her, he had the right, she was his wife, but he had less and less strength and his desire for her had softened with time. And then he didn't like to see her sad preoccupied look; she was so happy at the beginning of their marriage but now would often cry. How could he continue to desire a woman who cries?

The courtyard was beginning to fill up. The girls had spread fringed *fala* under the trees and on the tiled terrace. The ceremony at the church must have finished, he just noticed his son surrounded by cousins, dressed like a little king.

He retied his *kié* of dark blue velvet and adjusted his leather belt in front of the cupboard mirror. He had been handsome, he thought, looking closely at himself, but the reflection showed an emaciated face, grey skin and sunken eyes. He reassured himself and straightened up; admittedly, he had got thin but he would just need to eat a

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Allons, tout irait bien, il était le chef chez lui, on lui devait le respect.

Enfin prêt dans sa tête, il affronta les autres.

Toute la famille était là pour ce grand jour.

Assise sous le *mohokoï*, Jéhovana riait avec sa mère, ses sœurs et ses jeunes nièces, une de leurs filles sur les genoux, l'autre se faisait câliner par une vieille tante qui lui tressait les cheveux, les jeunes garçons s'étaient regroupés autour du four avec les hommes debout et les discussions allaient bon train. Lui, il avait été à la hauteur, il avait accueilli les uns et les autres avec ce qu'il fallait de grandeur et d'humilité, trouvant le juste mot pour la juste relation, il n'avait ni tremblé, ni bafouillé et chacun avait pu voir qu'il tenait sa place. Voilà pourquoi Jéhovana riait, soulagée. Il tenait parole.

Il rentra dans la maison et se dirigea vers la chambre des filles, ferma la porte et étancha sa soif, juste quelques gorgées, de quoi continuer à se sentir bien. Au retour, il s'arrêta dans la cuisine et souleva un à un les torchons posés sur les *'ūmete*. De la salade de poisson au coco à la macédoine de légumes, toutes les salades avaient été déclinées. Il repéra sa préférée, une salade russe, bien rouge, avec beaucoup d'œufs durs et de mayonnaise, dans un saladier en plastique jaune fluo. Il aurait pu parier qu'elle avait été réalisée par sa cousine germaine, la corpulente Mickaella. Ils

bit more and everything would return to normal. Come on, everything would be all right, he was the boss at home, they owed him respect.

Finally, thinking himself ready, he confronted the others.

All the family were there for this big day.

Sitting under the *mohokoï*, Jéhovana was laughing with her mother, sisters and young nieces, one of their daughters on her knees, the other getting a cuddle from an old aunty who was plaiting her hair. The young boys had gathered around the oven and were standing with the men, joining in the animated discussions. He had proved himself capable; he had welcomed people with appropriate dignity or humility, finding the right word for the right relation. He had neither trembled nor stammered and each guest had been able to see he was behaving as he should as the head of his family. That's why Jéhovana was laughing, relieved. He was keeping his word.

He went back into the house and headed straight for the girls' room, closed the door and quenched his thirst, just a few mouthfuls, something to keep him feeling good. On his way out he stopped in the kitchen and, one by one, lifted the tea towels placed over the *'ūmete*. From the fish salad with coconut to the vegetable macédoine, a full range of salads had been prepared. He picked out his favourite, a Russian salad, very red, with plenty of hard-boiled eggs and mayonnaise in a fluorescent yellow plastic salad bowl. He could have bet it had been made by his first cousin, the corpulent

avaient été élevés ensemble à Tonghoué et elle connaissait ses goûts. Adolescente, elle était mince comme une liane mais depuis son mariage, elle mangeait toute la journée. Une façon de faire honneur à son mari en montrant à la ronde qu'il avait réussi. On ne discernait presque plus ses yeux posés sur des joues rebondies et sa démarche était devenue difficile, mais elle avait toujours les plus beaux *savalalo* et des colliers en or reposaient sur ses seins et s'enroulaient autour de ses bras. Une très belle femme disait-on en parlant d'elle. Il était d'accord.

Le repas commença dans la liesse.

Il faisait beau, et la chaleur était tempérée par une petite brise fraîche. Les femmes avaient sorti leurs éventails. Le petit Rénato, le fils premier-né, était fêté de tous. Il se promenait de groupe en groupe, sans participer aux jeux turbulents des autres garçons de son âge, piochant dans une assiette, acceptant un verre de sirop, une patate douce, un morceau rosé de cochon, de plus en plus serré dans sa belle chemise, le nœud papillon décalé sur le côté et les cheveux en bataille. Tout allait bien.

Lui, il avait vidé la première bouteille de whisky.

Il élevait la voix de temps en temps mais guère plus haut que les rires et les interpellations s'entrecroisant de groupe en groupe. Et Jéhovana qui jetait parfois un œil inquiet de son côté se rassurait bien vite. Il tenait sa promesse, il n'avait pas encore touché au vin qui circulait sur la table des hommes. Elle le vit se lever et rentrer

Mickaella. They had been brought up together at Tonghoué and she knew his tastes. As a teenager she was as skinny as a rake, but since her marriage she ate all day long. A way of honouring her husband by showing everyone around that he was successful. Even if her eyes were now hard to discern above her chubby cheeks and if moving about had become difficult, she always had the most beautiful *savalalo*, and gold jewellery lay over her breasts and coiled around her arms. A very beautiful woman they said when speaking of her. He agreed.

The meal began in celebratory mood.

It was a beautiful day, the heat tempered by a fresh little breeze. The women had taken out their fans. Everyone was celebrating in honour of young Rénato, the first-born son. Without joining in the boisterous games of the other boys his age, he strolled from group to group, digging into a dish, accepting a glass of cordial, a sweet potato, a rosy morsel of pig, his beautiful shirt getting tighter and tighter, bow-tie shifted to the side, hair dishevelled. Everything was going well.

He had emptied the first bottle of whisky.

He raised his voice now and then but hardly louder than the people laughing and calling out to each other from group to group. And Jéhovana who sometimes cast a worried look in his direction was pretty quickly reassured. He was keeping his promise, he hadn't yet touched the wine being passed around at the men's table. She

dans la maison, en passant il lui fit un petit signe et plaisanta avec Mickaella.

Il ressortit quelques minutes plus tard, une boîte de Coca à la main. Sa démarche semblait moins assurée et il sembla à Jéhovana qu'il s'asseyait plus lourdement sur la natte, prenant appui sur l'épaule de Lolo. Rénato se faufila près de son père et n'en bougea plus.

Le repas continua sans encombres.

Il était quatre heures lorsque le gâteau traversa la rue. Il avait été entreposé chez Rosetta qui avait une chambre climatisée. C'était un gros gâteau tout blanc, trois étages de biscuit, de crème et de chantilly, surmontés d'un petit personnage. Un très joli gâteau que tout le monde applaudit.

Jéhovana appela Rénato et son nom fut scandé par tous les participants.

Rénato se leva en titubant, un rire douloureux modelé sur son visage d'enfant et ne put avancer davantage. Il avait bu. Les applaudissements cessèrent peu à peu et la consternation remplaça la joie. Jéhovana se précipita. Elle saisit Rénato, le prit dans ses bras et le porta à l'intérieur de la maison. Ses sœurs et ses nièces la suivirent mais elle s'isola dans la salle d'eau avec lui. Dehors des voix s'élevèrent puis des invectives, c'était lui le responsable, il avait donné de l'alcool à son propre fils, ça l'avait fait rire de le voir s'étrangler en buvant le whisky dissimulé dans la boîte de Coca. Devant le mécontentement général il voulut se lever mais sans succès et deux jeunes, sur un ordre du chef de clan, le saisirent

saw him get up and go back into the house. On the way he gave her a little wave and joked with Mickaella.

He came out a few minutes later, a Coke can in his hand. His movements seemed less steady and to Jéhovana it looked as though he sat down too heavily on the mat, grabbing Lolo's shoulder to lean on. Rénato slipped in next to his father and didn't move from there.

The meal continued without any problems.

It was four o'clock when the cake came across the street. It had been stored at Rosetta's in her air-conditioned room. It was a big cake, all white with three layers of biscuit, cream and chantilly, topped with a figurine. A very beautiful cake that drew applause from everyone.

Jéhovana called Rénato and all at the party chanted his name.

Rénato stood up staggering, a distressing laugh on his baby face, but couldn't come any further. He had been drinking. The applause gradually ceased and dismay replaced joy. Jéhovana rushed over and grabbed Rénato, took him in her arms and carried him inside the house. Her sisters and nieces followed her but she shut herself in the washroom with him. Outside, voices were raised then a stream of abuse: it was him who was responsible, he had given alcohol to his own son, it had made him laugh to see Rénato choking while drinking whisky concealed in the Coke can. Faced with this general discontent he wanted to get up but didn't succeed, and two young men, on an order from the clan chief,

sous les aisselles et l'emportèrent de l'autre côté de la cour où ils le laissèrent adossé à un arbre. Plus tard Rénato avoua qu'il lui avait glissé à l'oreille : « Si tu veux être un homme, bois, écoute ton père. »

Il avait obéi.

Jéhovana avait lavé son fils comme un bébé et des larmes de honte et d'effroi coulaient sur son visage, honte parce qu'il faudrait assumer devant toute la famille l'alcoolisme déclaré de son mari, effroi parce qu'il s'était attaqué à leur fils. Elle sortit de la salle d'eau le visage exploré mais l'enfant douché à l'eau froide reprenait ses esprits. Une tante lui fit boire un fond de café et le fit cracher dans l'évier. Une autre le parfuma et le coiffa. Tandis qu'une à une les femmes ôtaient leurs colliers d'ylang-ylang pour les mettre au cou de Jéhovana, l'une d'elles posa même sa couronne sur ses cheveux défaits.

Rénato pouvait enfin couper son gâteau.

Les mensonges et les cachotteries ne seraient plus de mise.

La sollicitude des siens avait, malgré l'infamie omniprésente dans son esprit, réconforté Jéhovana mais elle craignait désormais que le pire soit à venir.

Pourtant le destin lui accordait une pause, depuis la communion son mari avait disparu. Elle commençait à revivre doucement et la maison, sans lui, était devenue plus sereine, Léonora et Malaiiana semblaient moins

grabbed him under the armpits and carried him away to the other side of the yard where they left him leaning against a tree. Later Rénato admitted that his father had quietly spoken to him: "If you want to be a man, drink, listen to your father."

He had obeyed.

Jéhovana had washed her son like a baby and tears of shame and fright ran down her face: shame because, in front of all the family, she would have to bear the consequences of her husband's declared alcoholism; fright because he had attacked their son. She came out of the washroom, her face tear-stained, but the child after a cold shower was starting to sober up. One aunty made him drink some dregs of coffee and cough it up into the sink. Another aunty put some perfume on him and did his hair. While, one by one, the women were taking off their garlands of ylang-ylang to put them around Jéhovana's neck, one of them even placed her wreath on Jéhovana's dishevelled hair.

Rénato could finally cut his cake.

Lies and secrets would no longer be necessary.

The concern of her friends and family, despite the disgrace ever-present in her mind, had comforted Jéhovana but now she feared the worst was to come.

Yet fate granted her a break; since the Communion her husband had disappeared. She was starting to live easily again, and the house without him had become more peaceful. Léonora and Malaiiana seemed less timid, more

craintives, plus détendues, Rénato jouait à fond son rôle de grand frère et elle, libérée du fardeau qu'il représentait, était plus disponible, plus proche que jamais de ses enfants. Elle leur avait expliqué combien l'alcool était dangereux, combien leur père était différent, avant ! Bien qu'elle se souvienne dans le secret de son cœur d'événements qui auraient dû l'inquiéter. Et puis ils avaient décidé de ne plus en parler.

Jéhovana changeait elle aussi, prenant du temps pour elle, souriant à la vie. Sa bonne humeur lui allait bien, l'embellissait. Et le médecin français pour lequel elle travaillait n'y était pas insensible. Elle lui céda, sans minauderies excessives, le jour même où elle eut des nouvelles du père de ses enfants. Elle n'aurait su expliquer pourquoi : la peur de savoir, de le revoir, les yeux bleus du docteur, ses petits cheveux coupés en brosse, un besoin de douceur, une façon de se rassurer, l'opportunité ou le manque d'homme tout simplement. Une seule raison ou toutes ensemble, confuses. Ce n'était qu'un petit papier quadrillé, plié en quatre, qu'on lui avait porté le matin même, quelques lignes écrites avec soin par une main inconnue, un nom, une adresse, un appel à l'aide.

Que faire ?

Elle tourna cette pensée girouette toute la nuit dans sa tête mais au matin elle savait qu'elle se rendrait à l'adresse indiquée. Elle prévint le médecin de son absence en laissant, hypocritement, un message sur son répondeur, confia la garde de ses enfants à Rosette et prit le car jusqu'à

relaxed, Rénato was embracing the role of big brother, and she, freed from the burden that their father represented, was more available, closer than ever to her children. She had explained to them how dangerous alcohol was, how different he was, before! In a secret place in her heart, though, she remembered some incidents that should have disturbed her. And then they had decided not to talk about it any more.

Jéhovana was changing too, taking some time for herself, smiling at life. Her good mood suited her well, made her look beautiful. And the French doctor she worked for wasn't blind to it. She gave in to him without much reluctance the very day she had received some news about the father of her children. She couldn't have explained why: the fear of knowing, of seeing him again, the doctor's blue eyes, his cute crew cut, a need for gentleness, a way of reassuring herself, the opportunity, or very simply missing a man. Only one reason or all of them together, confused. It was only a little piece of grid-ruled paper folded in four that someone had brought to her that very morning, a few lines written carefully by an unknown hand, a name, an address, a call for help.

What should she do?

All night she went over and over this capricious thought in her mind but by morning she knew that she would go to the address given. She let the doctor know of her absence by leaving, hypocritically, a message on his answering machine, entrusted the care of her children to Rosette and took

Nouméa, le bus jusqu'à Tindu, jusqu'au squat du bord de mer. Elle n'eut aucun mal à trouver le drapeau jaune et vert, la cabane posée sous le flamboyant et la femme Kanak qui lui avait écrit et qui lui indiqua sans question inutile le chemin à suivre jusqu'à la mangrove.

Il était là, sous deux tôles dans un enfer de détritiques, de canettes et de bouteilles vides. Malpropre. Ivre à mort. À moitié nu. Elle s'assit sur une racine de palétuviers et contempla le gîte ou plutôt la tanière, le trou dans le sol pour ses besoins, la planche servant de lit, les quelques habits suspendus, et se mit à trembler de froid.

– On l'aide souvent, lui confia la femme qui l'avait suivie, on le nourrit, mais il va trop loin, il n'y a plus que l'alcool qui compte pour lui. Tu vas faire quelque chose ?

Jéhovana hocha la tête.

– J'ai besoin d'une voiture pour le ramener, tu peux m'aider.

– Tu as de la chance, répondit la femme, c'est le jour de congé de mon fils, il a une voiture.

Jéhovana mesura sa chance à l'aune du poids qui venait de s'abattre sur sa tête. Mais sa décision était prise, elle ne le laisserait pas crever comme une bête.

Le soir même, lavé et drogué, il dormait dans son lit.

— Pourquoi, lui avait dit le médecin ulcéré, en lui donnant les premiers soins, pourquoi être allée le chercher ?

— Pourquoi, pourquoi l'as-tu

the coach as far as Noumea, the bus as far as Tindu, as far as the squat beside the sea. She had no trouble at all finding the yellow and green flag, the shack set up under the poinciana and the Kanak woman who had written to her and who showed her, without useless questions, the path to follow to the mangrove.

He was there, under two metal sheets in a hell of refuse, cans and empty bottles. Unclean. Dead drunk. Half naked. She sat down on a mangrove root and looked around at the lodging, or rather the hovel, the hole in the ground for his business, the plank serving as a bed, the few clothes hanging up, and started to shiver from cold.

“We often help him,” the woman who had followed her confided, “we feed him, but he's too far gone, nothing but the drink matters for him now. Are you going to do something?”

Jéhovana nodded. “I need a car so I can take him back. You could help me.”

“You're in luck,” the woman responded, “it's my son's day off, he has a car.”

Jéhovana judged her luck compared to the weight that had just come crashing down on her head. But her decision was made, she wouldn't leave him to die like an animal.

That very night, washed and medicated, he slept in his bed.

“Why,” the rankled doctor had said to her while giving him first aid, “why did you go and get him?”

“Why, why did you bring him

ramené ici, questionnait Rénato à son tour, on était bien sans lui.

C'est mon mari, c'est ton père, avait-elle répondu à l'un et à l'autre, le cœur serré dans un étau de doutes.

Elle attendrait quelques jours qu'il se remette, qu'il se sécurise et se repose. Avait-il seulement conscience de ce à quoi il venait d'échapper ? Il restait troublé, choqué, dans un léthargie provoquée, elle l'espérait, par les médicaments.

Le médecin parlait d'une hospitalisation nécessaire, d'un sevrage obligatoire, elle suivrait ses conseils à la lettre.

On lui avait parlé des bienfaits de la Croix bleue, elle l'accompagnerait.

Où trouverait-elle tout ce courage ?

Dans la prière, lui dirait sa mère.

Elle soupira bruyamment.

Elle avait aimé cet homme, il fallait seulement qu'elle s'en souvienne.

back here?" Rénato, too, was questioning her. "We were okay without him."

He's my husband, he's your father, she had answered each one, her heart pressed in a vice of doubts.

She would wait a few days for him to recover, for him to feel secure and rest. Had he even been aware of what he'd just escaped? He remained disturbed, in shock, in a lethargy that was caused, she hoped, by the medication.

The doctor was talking about the necessity of hospitalisation, of a compulsory detoxification; she would follow his advice to the letter.

They had talked to her about the benefits of the Blue Cross. She would go with him.

Where would she find all this courage?

In prayer, her mother would say to her.

She sighed loudly.

She had loved this man, all she needed was to remember that.

### Lexique

*fala* : mot wallisien ; désigne une natte  
*kié* : vêtement des habitants de Futuna ;  
*manou* en Nouvelle-Calédonie ; *pāreu*,  
paréo à Tahiti  
*mohokoī* : mot wallisien ; ylang-ylang  
(*Cananga odorata*)  
*savalalo* : (en langue de Wallis)  
tunique, souvent brodée  
*'ūmete* : mot tahitien ; récipient creusé  
dans le bois et utilisé principalement  
pour des usages domestiques

### Glossary

*fala*: Wallisian word; a mat (straw, rush)  
*kié*: garment of the inhabitants of  
Futuna; *manou* in New Caledonia;  
*pareu* in Tahiti; also called *sarong*  
*mohokoī*: Wallisian word; ylang-ylang  
(*Cananga odorata*)  
*savalalo*: Wallisian word; tunic, often  
embroidered  
*'ūmete*: Tahitian word; container cut  
from wood and used mainly for  
domestic purposes



# The Beggars (“Les Mendiants”) by Emile Verhaeren

TRANSLATED BY WILL STONE

Emile Verhaeren (1855 – 1916) was a French-speaking Flemish poet, and one of the chief founders of the Symbolist movement. He was one of the most prolific and widely read poets of his era. He narrowly missed the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1911 (awarded to his friend Maurice Maeterlinck). “The Beggars” is taken from his 1893 collection “Les Campagnes hallucinées” (“The Hallucinated Countryside”).

## Les Mendiants

Les jours d'hiver quand le froid serre  
Le bourg, le clos, le bois, la fange,  
Poteaux de haine et de misère,  
Par l'infini de la campagne,  
Les Mendiants ont l'air de fous.

Dans le matin, lourds de leur nuit,  
Ils s'enfoncent au creux des routes,  
Avec leur pain trempé de pluie  
Et leur chapeau comme la suie  
Et leurs grands dos comme des voûtes  
Et leurs pas lents rythmant l'ennui ;  
Midi les arrête dans les fossés  
Pour leur repas ou leur sieste ;  
On les dirait immensément lassés  
Et résignés aux mêmes gestes ;  
Pourtant, au seuil des fermes solitaires,  
Ils surgissent, parfois, tels des filous,  
Le soir, dans la brusque lumière  
D'une porte ouverte tout à coup.

Les Mendiants ont l'air de fous.  
Ils s'avancent, par l'âpreté  
Et la stérilité du paysage,  
Qu'ils reflètent, au fond des yeux

## The Beggars

Winter days when cold grips  
the burg, the fold, the wood, the muck,  
posts of misery and of hate,  
through open country that never ends,  
the beggars have the look of madmen.

In the morning, heavy with their night,  
they sink in the holes of roads,  
their bread sodden with rain  
and their hat like soot  
and their great backs like vaults  
and their slow step in rhythm with boredom;  
noon in the ditches stops them  
for their meal or their doze;  
one would call them immensely weary  
and resigned to the same gestures;  
yet, on lonely farms' thresholds,  
they sometimes spring up, like rogues,  
at evening, in the abrupt light  
of a door suddenly opened.

The beggars have the air of madmen.  
They advance, through the harshness  
and sterility of the landscape,  
reflected in the depths of

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Tristes de leur visage ;  
Avec leurs hardes et leurs loques  
Et leur marche qui les disloque,  
L'été, parmi les champs nouveaux,  
Ils épouvantent les oiseaux ;  
Et maintenant que Décembre sur les  
bruyères  
S'acharne et mord  
Et gèle, au fond des bières,  
Les morts,  
Un à un, ils s'immobilisent  
Sur des chemins d'église,  
Mornes, têtus et droits,  
Les Mendiants, comme des croix.

Avec leur dos comme un fardeau  
Et leur chapeau comme la suie,  
Ils habitent les carrefours  
Du vent et de la pluie.

Ils sont le monotone pas  
– Celui qui vient et qui s'en va  
Toujours le même et jamais las –  
De l'horizon vers l'horizon.  
Ils sont l'angoisse et le mystère  
Et leurs bâtons sont les battants  
Des cloches de misère  
Qui sonnent à mort sur la terre.

Aussi, lorsqu'ils tombent enfin,  
Séchés de soif, troués de faim,  
Et se terrent comme des loups,  
Au fond d'un trou,  
Ceux qui s'en viennent,  
Après les besognes quotidiennes,  
Ensevelir à la hâte leur corps  
Ont peur de regarder en face  
L'éternelle menace  
Qui luit sous leur paupière, encor.

the sorrowful eyes of their face;  
with their old clothes and their rags  
and their walk which breaks them,  
summer amidst the new fields,  
they terrify the birds;  
and now when December on the moors  
tears and bites  
and freezes the dead,  
to the depths of caskets,  
one by one, they stop still  
on the roads to the church,  
bleak, stubborn and upright,  
the beggars, like crosses.

With their back like a load  
and their hat like soot  
they inhabit the crossroads  
of wind and rain.

They are the monotone step  
– that which comes and goes  
ever the same and never weary –  
from horizon to horizon.  
They are anguish and mystery  
and their sticks are the hammers  
of misery's bells  
that toll for death on the earth.

So, when they finally fall  
parched with thirst, pierced by hunger,  
and like wolves go to earth,  
at the bottom of a hole,  
those who come  
after the daily labour,  
to bury their body in haste  
are scared to look in the eye  
the eternal threat  
which shines on, beneath their lid.

# Reminiscing about Antiquity at Red Cliff (“Chibi Huaigu”) by Su Shi

TRANSLATED BY LI WANG

The author, Su Shi 苏轼 (1037 – 1101), is regarded by many as one of the greatest poets in Chinese literary history. He was also a writer, artist, calligrapher and statesman of the Song Dynasty (960 - 1279). Su Shi excelled in *shi*, *ci* and *fu* forms of poetry, as well as prose, calligraphy and painting. Thousands of his poems and hundreds of his letters have survived. His 350 *chi* (style) poems have been regarded as the summit of his poetic achievements.

The *ci* poem *Chibi Huaigu* 赤壁怀古 is one of his most famous poems. In this poem, the poet borrowed the event of the naval battle in the Three Kingdoms era, the battle at Red Cliff in 208, to express his deep feelings about life. Su Shi has a reputation for his free and powerful style in writing, and this poem is considered an excellent example.

A *ci* poem is a lyric composed to a certain tune. The tune of the translated poem is *Niannu Jiao* 念奴娇. *Niannu* is the name of a maiden singer. The original meaning of the tune title can be translated as “Charm of a Maiden Singer”. During the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907) the subject matter of a *ci* lyric used to correspond to the meaning of its tune title, but after the late Tang the subject of a *ci* poem gradually lost its thematic connection with the tune pattern. As the tune has no connection thematically to the translated *ci* poem, I chose to use the *pinyin*, *Niannu Jiao*, instead of “Charm of a Maiden Singer”, to avoid a misleading meaning, though both of them would represent the original Chinese tune title 念奴娇 in characters.

Due to its long history, the *ci* poem has two versions with some words different. I use the version given in textbooks in mainland China with 乱石穿空，惊涛拍岸，rather than 乱石崩云，惊涛裂岸，and 人生如梦 rather than 人间如梦.

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念奴娇

赤壁怀古

*Chibi Huaigu*

苏轼 (1037-1101)

大江东去，  
浪淘尽、千古风流人物。

故垒西边，  
人道是、三国周郎赤壁。

乱石穿空，  
惊涛拍岸，  
卷起千堆雪。  
江山如画，  
一时多少豪杰！

遥想公瑾当年，  
小乔初嫁了，  
雄姿英发。  
羽扇纶巾，  
谈笑间、  
檣櫓灰飞烟灭。  
故国神游，  
多情应笑我，  
早生华发。  
人生如梦，  
一樽还酹江月。

Tune: Niannu Jiao

**Reminiscing about Antiquity at Red Cliff**

by Su Shi (1037-1101)

Eastwards the Great River flows,  
Waves wash away all the gallant heroes  
Through thousands of bygone years!  
West of the ancient rampart they call it Red Cliff  
Of the Three Kingdoms the battle field,  
Remembered by the name of General Zhou.  
Jagged rocks pierce the clouds,  
Tempestuous waves lash the shore,  
Whipping up thousands of layers of snow.  
What hosts of heroes once there were  
In such a splendid painting of mountain and river!

Imagine young General Zhou in those days,  
Having Xiao Qiao, the bride so fair,  
Majestic and spirited himself,  
With a silk kerchief binding hair,  
And a plume fan in hand,  
Laughing and jesting,  
While Cao Cao's fleet was destroyed as planned.  
Were I to visit the ancient Kingdom,  
Sentimental, I would be laughed at,  
And my hair turned grey earlier.  
Life is but a dream,  
Let me pour a libation  
To the river with moonlight gleam!

# The Centrality of a Translator's Culture: Fernando de Rojas's *Celestina* and the Creation of Style in Translation

PETER BUSH

Fernando de Rojas started his story of passion and social conflict when he was studying law at Salamanca University in his early twenties, around 1496. In various prologues and epilogues, he gives self-deprecating, ironic glimpses of how it all happened and what the context was for reading literature at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Apparently he came across a manuscript chapter lying around in a lecture theatre, read it, liked its style and, as he had a few weeks' holiday, decided to finish it himself. The volume was published in 1499 in sixteen chapters. De Rojas then submitted it to the scrutiny of student friends who recommended he should develop it further as they liked the characters so much. He duly did this and added five chapters. The final version of *Celestina* was published in 1500.

De Rojas's publisher, Alonso de Proaza, introduced notes at the beginning of each chapter explaining the scenario and the characters and gave it the framework of a medieval humanistic comedy, that is, the appearance of a theatrical dialogue on the page. However, it was not written for the stage. De Proaza appeals to the professional readers who will read the work to vary their expression for the different roles and capture the attention of their listeners by putting on "a show of accents and banter".

Neither de Rojas nor his publisher can have realised that *Celestina* would in time be seen as a key work in the development of European prose fiction and Spanish as a literary language: an experiment in the novel form almost a hundred years before Cervantes, before the genre existed as such. More immediately, they must have been astonished to see it become a bestseller in Europe, translated into numerous languages, including Italian, English, Hebrew and Latin, with a stream of sequels by other Spanish writers hoping to cash in on its success. De Rojas went off to be a lawyer in a provincial town and wrote no more.

His masterpiece remains largely unknown and unread in the English-speaking world. Could I as a translator do anything about that? And why should I want to? And how would I even attempt to re-recreate stylistic originality from the sixteenth century into an English style that could sound at all original over five hundred years later?

First I will sketch in the historical context in which de Rojas lived and wrote. The 1490s was a tumultuous decade for the Iberian peninsula, a watershed when

Ferdinand and Isabel, the Catholic monarchs, launched into their forging of a pure-blooded nation-state: crusading, imperial Spain. In 1492, Granada, the last Arab kingdom, fell, thus ending over seven centuries of Muslim government in some part of the peninsula. The decree expelling the Jews was promulgated and Columbus embarked on the voyage that would lay the cornerstone for future imperial expansion. The Catholic monarchs had already revamped the Inquisition, which quickly grew into a form of national police particularly keen on rooting out heretical converted Jews – *the conversos* – and Muslims – the *moriscos*, whose final expulsion was decreed in 1611 – as well as any other individual deemed to be engaged in “impure” activities.

The turbulent changes promoted by the state met with opposition from Catholic citizens used to and happy with forms of rough-and-ready coexistence, those drawn to more Erasmist theological positions, and the *moriscos* and *conversos*. At the same time, the spread of printing presses and the movement to establish Spanish as a vernacular language that could challenge Latin meant that reading matter was becoming more available for individuals, diminishing the control of ideas and interpretation of the faith that were no longer a monopoly of the Church. De Rojas belonged to a *converso* family that had converted at the end of the fourteenth century. Members of his family had suffered persecution and been burnt at the stake and had property confiscated. His father-in-law lost status and property for heretical remarks. Salamanca and its university were home to clerics and professors of conflicting tendencies, astrologists, mystics and linguists. Old Castile was soon to be one of the centres of the *comunero* peasant rebellions. The mood of his novel reflects the vigour and turmoil within the old, doomed world through the language of the rebellious whores and servants who employ a Shakespearean flamboyance in rhetorical debate and alcoholic banter.

The act of translating de Rojas confronts his and his work’s historical context with those of the translator: the factors leading him to become a literary translator, his own reading of the novel and the existing tradition of translating *Celestina* into English, his own culture and historical context.

I first read de Rojas when I was at a provincial grammar school in Spalding, Lincolnshire, in 1963 when the welfare state was firmly established in the United Kingdom and enabled me to enter a university territory unknown to my family. My teacher was preparing me for the Oxbridge entrance examinations and one possible topic in Spanish literature was Golden Age fiction. Inevitably, England being England, I was hypersensitive about social class and my ambivalent relationship with standard English. My father was a print-worker and active trades-unionist whose father had been a shepherd. In the daytime he was constantly using two forms of English: standard in the pages he was making up and with the journalists and non-standard with his “mates”; at home, our conversations were always in non-standard, though standard was present in the numerous newspapers we read and the radio and any conversations we had with those who spoke standard. My mother

had journeyed from Sheffield to Lincolnshire in the 1920s to pick strawberries, met my father and never returned, an atypical migration from the city to the country. She brought a third element to the conversation – what remained of a Yorkshire working-class accent.

For me, this linguistic shifting was never an issue and always seemed “natural” until I entered formal schooling at five and was told, much to my surprise, that I didn’t speak proper English and again when I passed the 11+ examination that was the gateway to higher education and a professional career that only became available to children from working-class families after the Second World War with the expansion of the welfare state and education for all. Grammar School brought me into a world largely comprising sons of the local bourgeoisie who didn’t live on council estates and didn’t speak non-standard *and* standard. I thrived on learning Latin, French and Spanish where we started *tabula rasa*.

I also came to *Celestina* after intensive exposure to the writing of the Angry Young Men of the 1950s like John Osborne and the social realists like Stan Barstow, Alan Sillitoe and Shelagh Delaney in Sixth-form General English lessons that were notable for their focus on class and language and for the universal hostility to literature of those specialising in sciences, a hostility that expressed itself in verbal violence towards the teacher. Such exposure, nevertheless, allowed a space for the experience of class to be debated, if always as something exotic and other, and was an antidote to a combination of public school high-mindedness (rugby not football, pray Church of England, *The Times* not *The Daily Mirror*, the Third Programme not Radio Luxemburg)) and a Leavisite civilizing mission that left out of account anything that wasn’t “high” culture.

Being by now a budding member of the bourgeoisie, I glimpsed some of the history of social conflict as related in innumerable stories by my parents through my own experience of local hypocrisies, for example, a local pillar of the establishment, a scoutmaster and school governor, I knew also as the manager Dad had to face in his union activities.

I was immediately struck by de Rojas’s description of life in a small town, living as I did in a market town where people are known by the street where they live, family histories are common knowledge, and there is a rich and powerful class of landowners and a large class of extremely poor, mainly agricultural, labourers. Never mind it was five hundred years ago, the fear felt by *Celestina* and her friends and the stable-boys before the power of magistrates, police and rich reminded me of the tone of family stories: the eviction of Granddad and his family from his tied-cottage one Christmas, the imprisonment of a local twelve-year old girl reported by the Church of England parson for picking flowers from the gardens of the Alms Houses and , the “tramp-hands”, unemployed print-workers who used to turn up in busy seasons hoping to pick up some casual work, the landowners who fought against the introduction of industry into the local economy in order to maintain a docile labour-force dependent on the land.

De Rojas's characters from the fourth estate made an impact: they feared power but were not cowered and spoke up for their rights, the language they used in extremely lively oral exchanges was in a different literary vein to the peasants of Lope de Vega or even Sancho Panza who didn't seem so contemporary.

My own explorations of dialects of English and English society was then forever broadened as I went to Cambridge and was influenced more by English Faculty members like Raymond Williams (oh, the structures of feeling), then Oxford, became a '68 revolutionary (oh, the dialectic of history) and then taught in London schools (oh, comprehensive mixed ability), before turning to literary translation (oh, the challenge to write) or teaching in university (oh, translation theory and practice).

At university I re-read *Celestina* and met scholarship that was obsessed about authorship – did de Rojas really write the whole book? The Spanish edition from the 1920s I used had large sections italicised that were viewed as additions by another hand. Modern Spanish scholarship has continued largely in this vein, such textual anguish obfuscating the impact of characters and language. Conversely, English Hispanic scholarship preferred to see the work as promoting moral poetic justice – the lovers deserve to die because they stooped to use a bawd as a go-between. Criticism focussed on the star-crossed lovers and relegated the other characters, after demonising them, to medieval tradition. Both camps relished, still relish, the tracing of influences, stacking their pages with erudite, often prudish footnotes. Social conflict and historical context barely get a look in. After all, the leading UK Hispanists veered from high Catholicism and Anglicanism to liberal elitism in their beliefs. A complementary vein has been to read the novel simply as an amusing book where nothing is to be taken too seriously, eschewing moral high ground or social relevance. The more socially and politically sensitive interpretations and research of American scholars Stephen Gilman and Dorothy Severin were treated with benign paternalism by figures such as the late Sir Peter Russell, Alfonso el Sabio Professor of Hispanic Literature at Oxford University, champion of the “funny book” approach and himself now resurrected and lionised in literary form by Javier Marías as Sir Toby.... In other words, scholars have tended to help marginalise this Renaissance masterpiece which, one can be sure, would be recognised as a masterpiece worthy of Cervantes and Shakespeare if it weren't so socially critical, had been originally written in English or had enjoyed a different tradition of scholarship and translation.

My move into literary translation was inseparable from a connection I made in the early 1980s, a connection that also helped eventually to restore *La Celestina* to my horizons. I prepared and published in 1981-82 a critical edition of *Campos de Níjar* by Juan Goytisolo and soon after that I translated the first volume of his autobiography, *Forbidden Territory*, and became, by and large, his translator into English. Goytisolo has been a writer in exile since 1956, a champion of the Muslim roots of Spanish culture and defender and interpreter of a literary canon of works



that have been either forgotten or sanitized by the Spanish literary establishment, a tree of literature on to which he had grafted his own. A central work in his alternative canon is de Rojas's novel. He wrote an essay to celebrate its five hundredth anniversary that I translated for the *Los Angeles Times* (in the days when that newspaper had a weekend literary supplement). While translating the essay I re-read the novel and thought about the project of a new translation and even began using extracts from various translations as material for translation seminars I was giving at the British Centre for Literary Translation, of which I had become the Director. However, being director of a national literary translation centre meant I had minimal time for actual translation. It was only when I left Norwich to become a full-time freelancer in Barcelona in 2004 that the idea became feasible. I took it to Dedalus Books, which has a good record of publishing European classics in translation. Coincidence would have it that I re-translated in tandem *Celestina* and Goytisolo's *Juan the Landless*. Goytisolo had re-worked the final part of his trilogy and insisted that his American publishers commission a new translation. Both projects encouraged me to be bold stylistically: a late modernist destruction of conventional literary language and nationalist myths and a first vernacular novel creating a new literary language, a new genre and in rebellious mode. In neither case, as translator, did I simply want to defer to what had been done before.

Reading *Celestina* almost forty years after my initial late teenager tussle with de Rojas's Spanish, I brought a quite different intellectual and existential baggage to the process. The acute class-consciousness had receded slightly into the background and the playful exuberance of language and the immense energy of *Celestina* as the protagonist, a woman of seventy, who relishes her intelligence, power and scheming imagination while she bewails the waning of all that as well as her opportunities for sexual pleasure. Any fixation I might have had for the Romeo and Julietish figures of Calisto and Melibea under the influence of 1960s' scholarship was blown away by the rhetoric of the servants and whores. I now saw that one of the original features of the novel was the latter's brazen humour and sense of independence and worth: de Rojas created an equality of rhetoric across the social classes, and in fact tips the balance in the favour of the subaltern who outscheme their masters.

I took two strategic decisions as translator. First, I would get rid of the framework of the humanistic comedy and restore for the English reader a narrative that was closer to the voice of a single professional "performance" reader in the inflections of the interpretive translator. Secondly, I decided I would not attempt to create a form of cod-Shakespearean English (the conventional translation tradition), for if the genius of de Rojas's language derived from its original blend of street Spanish and literary registers, then his "shock of the new" demanded an English that attempted to create an original blend of street English and a variety of literary registers. Whatever it was, the language of the translation couldn't be bland and should be driven by a strong sense of orality. This was something reinforced by my

experience of translating Juan Goytisolo and, in parallel now, *Juan the Landless*: however difficult the imagery, the discontinuous, anti-linear narrative, the immense repertoire of references, the language must be driven by an oral musicality to hook the reader: the art is in the rhythm.

Changing the physical presence of the prose on the page was relatively simple. The only adjustments I had to make were the addition of names or a “he mumbled” or “she muttered” to ensure it was clear who was saying what to whom. Creating the style I was after took me over twelve drafts in just under three years. It involved a number of literary researches (from Chaucer to eighteenth-century Madames) and the releasing of various voices from my past for the subalterns.

I will give below an example of the translation of a monologue by Celestina from the beginning of chapter five as she walks along the street after her first encounter with Melibea from which she gets a firm sense of the young lady’s hypocrisy – she wants to meet Calisto but her social status won’t allow her to admit she does – and of her success in implanting the idea of an eventual encounter. She is on her way to tell Calisto about the good prospects.

I have listed the different changes from draft to draft as material evidence of how style is created in translation, how the interpretive art of the translator draws nearer and nearer to an intense literary language, the verbal expression of a strategy that can only be wrought from such a drafting and research process. The art is informed holistically by the translator’s history, experience, scholarship, subjectivity: all that can be drawn on rationally and irrationally in the course of re-writing and moving forwards and backwards in terms of the original Spanish. The translation is in effect burnished on the translator’s consciousness as a writer to the point that it takes on an existence independent of the original and the translator has to release himself from the latter, let himself/herself go in the writing: the unique form of writing that constitutes literary translation.

In this particular excerpt of 300 words, there are some 120 actual changes. In a novel of some 60,000 words, that means in the region of 24,000 changes of words. And these are changes always in terms of an overall re-writing, on the path towards the desired style. I highlight this in case any publisher thinks literary translators are overpaid or any university administration or literary critic thinks that literary translators are fly-by-nights on Grub Street.

Apart from a few gleanings from previous translations for seminars, I had never read thoroughly previous translations into English and would only do so once I was happy that my own translation was more or less where I wanted it to be. In order to illustrate the tradition of translating de Rojas, I include here translations of the excerpt by James Mabbe, John Clifford, Margaret Sayers Peden and, in French, Aline Schulman. All maintain the theatre dialogue framework. The English translations are all in archaic English. Mabbe’s is archaic because his translation is from 1631 and so he is much closer in time to de Rojas and his English is his contemporary literary English. Following the practice of his period, he expands in

translation and his riffs on de Rojas are usually italicised in modern editions. John Clifford's translation is an example of the many translations for the stage that start from the premise that the "play" isn't performable and must be cut back until it is. Clifford cut the text by over 40% for the Calixto Bieito production at the 2004 Edinburgh Festival and Bieito made further cuts in the process of production. As a producer, Bieito is reputed for his fondness for nudity and shock-value; the translation, however, is firmly in archaic mode. The 2009 translation by Margaret Sayers Peden is a tour de force in this manner and was published in September 2009 three months after Dedaus published mine in the UK. She wanted the English to resemble as far as possible the Spanish even at the expense of being annoying. Both Clifford's and Peden's translations, by opting for the archaic, translate in the Mabbe tradition, doing the opposite of what de Rojas achieved, that is, a shockingly new Spanish for his time. Aline Schulman, Juan Goytisolo's French translator, opts for a contemporary tone but avoids using words that entered the French language from the second half of the nineteenth century.

1.

¡Oh rigurosos trances! ¡Oh cuerda osadía! ¡Oh gran sufrimiento! ¡Y que tan cerca estuve de la muerte, si mi mucha astucia no rigiera con el tiempo las velas de la petición! ¡Oh amenazas de doncella brava! ¡Oh airada doncella! ¡Oh diablo a quien yo conjure, cómo cumpliste tu palabra en todo lo que te pedí! En cargo te soy.

CELEST. O cruel encounter! O *daring and* discreet attempt! O great *and singular sufferance*! O how near had I been to my death, if my much subtlety and *cunning craft* had not shifted in time the sails of my suit! O braving menaces of a gallant lady! O angry and enraged damsel! O thou devil whom I conjured! O how well has thou kept thy word with me in all that I desired! I am much bound unto thee!

JM

CELESTINA. O cruel encounter! O subtle daring! O great sufferance! And how near I was to death! What cunning subtlety to trim the sails of my petition in her angry gale! O the threats of the roaring girl! O angry virgin! O devil I conjured up, how you fulfilled the promise I made you give me! I am in debt to you!

JC

SCENE 1

CELESTINA (*alone*) O such danger! O cunning daring mine! O great suffering! I was very near death had my cleverness not known to trim the sails of my petition! O threats from that fiery maiden! O wrathful maiden! And you, Devil, you I conjured, how faithfully you kept your word in everything I asked of you! I am in your debt!

MSP

CÉLESTINE. – Dans quel mauvais pas je m'étais mise! Quelle audace, quelle astuce il m'a fallu! Et quelle patience! Si je n'avais pas change de cap au bon moment et parlé d'une prière, c'était la mort qui m'arrivait dessus! Comme elle m'a menacée, cette pucelle en colère! Une vraie furie! Et toi, démon que j'ai conjuré, comme tu as su tenir parole, tu as fait tout ce que je t'avais demandé! Je te dois beaucoup.

AS

That was a close shave! Cunning wins cunny! How I sweated! I was close to death but my quick wits trimmed my sails to the breeze! What threats from that short-tempered young girl! What a short fuse! Devil that I invoked, you granted me all I asked for! I am in your debt.

PB

The numbers below denote the sequence of drafts on screen and those on paper, marked by "p". The edits provide a snapshot of how the final style arises out of drafting that is driven by a strategy that is consistent but is realised in fits and starts. The style becomes sharper and denser.

2	What a close shave.	3	That was a close shave.
2	What cunning daring.	2p	Cunning and daring win!
3	Cunning daring wins!	4	Cunning wins cunny!
2	How I suffered.	3	How I sweated.
2	I was so close	3	I as close
2	trimmed the souls	3	trimmed the sails
2	such threats	3	what threats
2	bad-tempered	3	irritable maiden
3p	that bad-tempered young girl	10	that short-tempered young girl
9	What a quick temper!	10	What a short fuse!
3	Devil invoked by me, you granted all I asked for!		
3p	You granted all I asked for, devil that I invoked!		
11	I owe you one.		Dedalus editor: I am in your debt.
2	I asked of you	3	I asked

The two contemporary translations keep the “O”s and thus follow in the Mabbe mould. JC’s has a close echo in “cruel encounter”. Neither JC nor MSP decide to retain “thee”, “thou” etc. that would have made their archaic style more authentic; it is therefore a modified archaism they are seeking. (However, it’s all very relative to where you stand in the English-speaking world – I had Yorkshire aunts and uncles who used “thee” and “thou” all the time as part and parcel of their Yorkshire dialect.) AS creates a more conventional conversational rhythm and even includes explanatory remarks about Celestina’s prayer. PB’s is radically different at several points, aiming to create an English that reflects the chattering of the old woman as she walks along in a hurry. It is hybrid. “close shave” and “sweat” belong to a contemporary colloquial/almost cartoon register; “cunning wins cunny” introduces a play on words inspired by the eighteenth-century Madame’s tag of “Cunny is money”; obviously the original is playful as well in its combination of daring and cleverness. “Short-tempered” eventually prompts “short fuse”, which introduces the idea of explosion. In this way, the style is honed over many drafts.

Publisher, Eric Lane, made a few helpful suggestions concerning the asides, and some turns of phrase he felt were too contemporary. Sometimes PB agreed as in the case where he removed the “I owe you one”, noting now in this comparison how that brings in a more conventional solution and wondering whether he shouldn’t have responded by creating something sharper or whether he was right to add this conventional touch to Celestina’s mutterings. Does the formally more equivalent or “correct” translation add a neutral tone which this interpretation is not simply trying to avoid but is actually writing against? Obviously, it stands out in this focus on one of Celestina’s monologues and is less noticeable in a once-through reading of the whole book.

## 2.

Así amansaste la cruel hembra con tu poder y diste tan oportuno lugar a mi habla cuanto quise con la ausencia de su madre. ¡Oh vieja Celestina! ¡Vas alegre! Sábeta que la meitad está hecha, cuando tienen buen principio las cosas. ¡Oh serpentino aceite! ¡Oh blanco hilado! ¡Cómo os aparejastes todos en mi favor! ¡Oh yo rompiera todos mis atamientos hechos y por hacer, ni creyera ni en piedras ni palabras!

So handsomely hast thou appeased this cruel dame by thy mighty power, and afforded me so fit a place and opportunity, by reason of her mother’s absence, to utter my mind unto her. O thou old Celestina, cheer up thy heart, and think with thyself that things are half ended, when they are well begun! O thou oil of serpents! O thou *delicate* white thread! how have you bestirred yourselves in my business! *Whose favourable furtherance if I had not found*, I would utterly have broken and destroyed all the enchantments which either I have already, or hereafter are to be made; nor would I ever any more have had any belief in herbs, stones or words.

JM

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Old Celestina! Are you happy? Think how, now the beginning's gone so well, the whole job is as good as accomplished.

JC

You tamed that cruel female with your power, and with her mother's absence provided the opportune opening for my words, as I wished. O Celestina, old girl. Are you happy? You know that with a good beginning half is done. O my snake oil! O my white thread! How well you worked in my favor. If not, I would have broken all my bonds, now, past, and future, and never again had faith in herbs or stones, or words.

MSP

Ton pouvoir a dompté cette femelle farouche et m'a donné l'occasion de lui parler autant que j'ai voulu, en l'absence de sa mère. D'autant qu'un bon début, c'est une moitié du chemin parcourue. Et l'huile de serpent, et le fil, comme ils étaient bien disposés en ma faveur! S'il en avait été autrement, j'aurais rompu toute alliance avec toi, faite et à faire, et n'aurais plus voulu croire ni aux plantes, ni aux pierres, ni aux mots magiques.

AS

Your power softened that cruel female and gave me all the time in the world to say what I wanted to, in her mother's absence. Dear old Celly! Aren't you happy? You know the battle is half won when you get off to a good start. Snake oil! White thread! How well you both worked for me! If you hadn't, I'd have broken all my ties – present and future – with the nether world and stopped believing in magic herbs, stones and spells!

PB

- |    |                                    |    |                                   |
|----|------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| 2  | You mollified ... with your powers | 3  | Your powers mollified             |
| 3p | Your powers softened               |    |                                   |
| 3  | what I had to                      | 2p | what I needed                     |
| 3  | Dear Old Celestina!                | 4  | Dear old Celly!                   |
| 2  | gave me plenty of time             | 3  | gave me all the time in the world |
| 2  | all I had to                       | 3  | what I had to                     |
| 2  | when things get off                | 3  | when you get off                  |
| 2  | That snake oil!                    | 3  | Snake oil!                        |
| 2  | That white thread                  | 3  | white thread                      |
| 8  | White thread, how well             | 8p | White thread! How well            |
| 2  | words                              | 3  | spells                            |

JM here may seem excessively wordy and loses pace but he remains playful in his additions with the alliteration in “favourable furtherance ...found”. JC drastically cuts for the stage. AS also uses alliteration: “femelle farouche”, “plantes...pierres”, “mots magiques”. PB makes three additions: “all the time in the world” and “with the nether world” in pursuit of naturalness for the character and “the battle is half won”, developing the military flavour, and alliteration: “softened... female”, “stones and spells”. A key move was to decide to have the bawd and sometimes her entourage refer to her as “Celly”. This was first suggested by a need to reflect her constant use of diminutives and by a desire to create a more familiar, affectionate side to her character too often interpreted as distant, cruel or plain evil. “Celly” also echoes “cunny” and is short, thus helping to maintain orality, pace and tension, a breathlessness to which the spare exclamations “Snake oil! White thread!” also contribute.

### 3.

Pues, alégrate, vieja, que más sacarás de este pleito, que de quince virgos que renovarás. ¿oh malditas haldas, prolijas y largas, cómo me estorbáis de llegar adonde han de reposar mis nuevas! ¿Oh buena fortuna, cómo ayudas a los osados, y a los tímidos eres contraria! Nunca huyendo huye la muerte al cobarde. ¿oh, cuántas erraran en lo que yo he acertado! ¿Qué hicieran en tan fuerte estrecho estas nuevas maestras de mi oficio sino responder algo a Melibea, por donde se perdiera cuanto yo con buen callar he ganado?

Be merry then, *old stinkard, frolic with thyself*, old wench, for thou shalt get more by this one suit than by soldering of fifteen cracked maidenheads. A pox upon these long and large *plaitings in my petticoats; fie how they rumple and fold themselves about my legs*, hindering my feet from hasting hither, whither I desire my good news should come! O good fortune, what a friend art thou to the valiant! What a foe to those that are fearful! Nor by flying doth the coward fly death. O how many have failed that which I have effected! *How many have struck at, but missed that nail, which myself only have hit on the head!* What in so strong *and dangerous* a strait as this would these young graduates in my art have done? Perhaps have bolted out some foolish word or other to Melibea, whereby they would have lost as much *by their prattling* as I have gained by my silence.

JM

So be happy, old woman, for you will earn more from this account than from fifteen renovated virgins. O curse these long trailing skirts for rumpling and folding themselves about my legs and preventing me from giving my good news! O good fortune, how you favour the bold and disfavour the timid! The coward can run but can never outrun death! O how many would have erred where I acted right! How many novices in my profession would have answered back her ravings and so lost all I gained through good silence.

JC

So be cheerful, old woman; you will take in more from this transaction than from fifteen patched maidenheads. Curse these long skirts, you keep getting in the way of my reaching the place where my new ones are to be found. Good fortune, how you aid the daring and belay the timid! Never by fleeing has a coward fled death. How many would have failed in what I have achieved! And what would many of these new mistresses of my trade have done in such narrow straits but say something to Melibea that would have lost way I, with clever silence, have gained?

MSP

Réjouis-toi, la vieille, tu vas tirer davantage de cette affaire qu'en restaurant quinze virginités! Maudites jupes dans lesquelles je m'empêtre, à cause de vous je ne vais pas assez vite là où ces bonnes nouvelles sont attendues! Et toi, la chance, comme tu souris aux audacieux, comme tu es contraire aux timides! Jamais le lâche en fuyant n'a fait fuir la mort! J'en connais beaucoup qui, à ma place, auraient échoué. Qu'aurait fait une de ces nouvelles que se disent maîtresses dans le métier, si elle s'étaient trouvées en pareil danger? Elle aurait répondu à Mélibée n'importe quelle sottise et perdu tout ce que moi j'ai gagné en me taisant.

AS

Rejoice, old girl, you'll make more from this job than from mending a dozen maidenheads. Blast these long skirts of mine that hold me back as I rush to spread the good tidings! Lady Luck, how you favour the brave and spurn the timid! A coward can run but he'll never outpace death. So many have missed while I hit bull's eye. If the new women plying my trade had been in such a cleft they'd have argued with Melibea and lost everything I gained by keeping silent.

PB

3	Rejoice, old girl	3p	Rejoice, you old girl
2	from this case	3	from this job
2	repairing fifteen virgins	3	repairing a dozen virgins
8p	mending a dozen maidenheads		
2	delaying me	2p	holding me back
		3	hold me back
2	on my way to spread my good news	3	as I go to spread the good news
4	to spread the good tidings	6	as I go to spread
		7	as I rush to spread
3	how you like to favour	4	how you favour
2	ignore the timid!	2p	scorn the timid
		4	spurn the timid!



7	In flight death never flees the coward	7p	D????	Death never flees the coward
8	A coward can run but he'll never outpace death.			
8p	A coward runs but never outpaces death.			
2	so many missed	3		so many have missed
9	when I hit			Dedalus editor: while I hit
3	target	4		bull's eye
2	if these new women	3		if the new women
2	in such straits	3	in such a strait	3p in that cleft
2	and thus lost	3		and lost
2	I got by keeping quiet	2p		I gained by shutting up
4	by keeping silent			

The forcefulness of JM's version is apparent in his underlining of the sexual vein in Celestina's ramblings – "frolic with thyself" – and the inventiveness of his vocabulary ("soldering", "prattling", "graduates in my art") and his more conversational colloquial gambits as with "A pox upon" and the reference to hitting the nail on the head. JC again echoes JM with the "rumpling and folding" and plays with repetition as in "favour...disfavour" and "run ... outrun". MSP's Celestina sounds increasingly stately and mellifluous, confident and mature. MSP interprets "nuevas" as new clothes rather than as the news to which the other translations refer, and that is a valid reading. Her translation highlights what may be an intended pun by Celestina. AS has the alliteration "maîtresses dans le metier". PB persists with the colloquial register, "Old girl", "job", "Blast", "Lady Luck", "bull's eye" (and the military), alliteration in "mending...maidenheads" and the naturalisation by changing the "fifteen" to "a dozen".

#### 4.

Por esto dicen quien las sabe, las tañe; y que es más cierto médico el experimentado que el letrado; y la experiencia y escarmiento hace los hombres arteros; y la vieja, como yo, que alce sus haldas al pasar el vado, como maestra. ¿Ay, cordón, cordón! Yo te hare traer por fuerza, si vivo, a la que no quiso darme su buena habla de grado.

And therefore it is an old saying, 'Let him play that hath skill': and that the better physician is he that hath experience than he that hath learning: for experience and *frequent* warnings make men artists in their professions; and it must be such an old woman as I am, who at every little channel holds up her coats, *and treads the streets with leisurely steps*, that shall prove a proficient

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in her trade. O girdle, *my pretty girdle, let me hug thee a little! O how my heart leaps in looking upon thee!* If I live, I will make thee bring her to me by force, who is unwilling to *come* to me of her own accord, that I had much ado to get a word from her.

JM

O cord, cord, with your help I will drag along by force the young woman who would not willingly give her word.

JC

That is why it is said: “Let him play who knows the tune?”, “Better the physician with experience than one who learned from books”, and also, “Experience and hard knocks make a man skilful”, as it has me, an old woman who knows how to lift her skirts when she wades across the stream. Ah, girdle, girdle, I hold in my hand! If I live I will make you drag her to me by force, this pretty one who did not want to speak to me with courtesy!

MSP

On a raison de dire: “Il faut connaître la musique pour en jouer”; et aussi: “Jeunes barbiers, vieux médecins: s’ils sont autres, ne valent pas un brin”; ou encore: “L’expérience et l’usage rendent l’homme sage.” Une vieille comme moi sait qu’il faut retrousser ses jupes pour passer le gué! Ah cordon, je te tiens! Si Dieu me prête vie, je te ferai amener de force celle qui n’a pas voulu me donner sa réponse de bon gré.

This is why people say, “Who thinks, drinks.” Or “Better a hands-on doctor than one well-read”, or “Practice makes perfect”, and this old lady, lifting her skirts to cross this ford, is a past mistress at the cunny arts. Cord, sweet cord, I’ll make sure you’re the downfall, if I ever live to see the day, of that damsel who refused to give me a pleasant word!

PB

- |    |   |    |   |
|----|---|----|---|
| 2  | This is why they say                              | 3  | This is why people say                        |
| 2p | Who knows, plucks proper                          | 3  | Who knows, plucks the bird.                   |
| 4  | Who thinks, plucks.                               | 7p | Who thinks, drinks.                           |
| 2  | The doctor with experience who’s read             | 3  | A doctor with experience                      |
| 4  | A well-honed doctor                               | 7  | Better a well-honed doctor than one well-read |
| 8  | Better a hands-on doctor than one well-read       |    |   |
| 3  | one who reads books                               | 4  | one well-read                                 |
| 2  | make a skilled man                                | 3  | make for a skilled man                        |
| 3  | Experiment and experience make for a skilled man. |    |   |
| 4  | Practice makes perfect.                           |    |   |

3	lifting her skirts	3p	and lifting her
2	is a past mistress	3	is a past mistress at the cunny arts
2	Cord, dear cord	2p	Cord, sweet cord
2	if I live	2p	if I ever live to see the day
3	bring perforce	4	to bring down
3	I'll get you to bring down		
5	I'll make sure you're the downfall of the woman		
	Dedalus copy-editor: of that damsel who refused		

JM further underlines Celestina's preoccupation with sexual desire and lesbian sex as she fondles the cord ("let me hug thee a little" and "oh, how my heart leaps"), though these cries may be equally prompted by the prospect of earning money. JC again drastically reduces the text. MSP sticks close to the wordiness of the original. Celestina and her companions are fond of proverbs and lapidary remarks, and in his whole translation PB will use the English equivalent if it exists or invent one in a style that fits his characterisations through language. Generally, the proverbs become snappier and their humour is heightened (elsewhere Celestina laments "A house without males pales" and here also reinforces the sense of the confident old woman walking quickly to her appointment with Calisto. The development of the English for "quien las sabe, las tañe", a proverb from the musical world – "he who know how to, plays well" – is instructive. The first stab introduces the word "pluck", prompted by the idea of plucking a stringed instrument. In the course of drafting, the sense of "pluck" drifts over to the idea of plucking a bird, until the transformation is one hundred per cent into a novel English proverb, "Who thinks, drinks". This translation underscores the rhythm, the notion of Celestina as an intelligent wheeler-and-dealer fond of a glass of wine. PB also gives another twist to the "cunny" leitmotif by adding that she is "a past mistress at the cunny arts". The Dedalus copy-editor suggested a few edits; one here that I accepted was the use of the archaic damsel that gives the final sentence a more ironic twist.

Here is the whole monologue, so it can be read as a piece.

That was a close shave! Cunning wins cunny! How I sweated! I was close to death but my quick wits trimmed my sails to the breeze! What threats from that short-tempered young girl! What a short fuse! Devil that I invoked, you granted me all I asked for! I am in your debt. Your power softened that cruel female and gave me all the time in the world to say what I wanted to, in her mother's absence. Dear old Celly! Aren't you happy? You know the battle is half won when you get off to a good start. Snake oil! White thread! How well

you both worked for me! If you hadn't, I'd have broken all my ties – present and future – with the nether world and stopped believing in magic herbs, stones and spells! Rejoice, old girl, you'll make more from this job than from mending a dozen maidenheads. Blast these long skirts of mine that hold me back as I rush to spread the good tidings! Lady Luck, how you favour the brave and spurn the timid! A coward can run but he'll never outpace death. So many have missed when I hit bull's eye. If the new women plying my trade had been in such a cleft they'd have argued with Melibea and lost everything I gained by keeping silent. This is why people say, "Who thinks, drinks." Or "Better a hands-on doctor than one well-read", or "Practice makes perfect", and this old lady, lifting her skirts to cross this ford, is a past mistress at the cunny arts. Cord, sweet cord, I'll make sure you're the downfall, if I ever live to see the day, of that damsel who refused to give me a pleasant word!

Students and young literary translators, emerging from universities with their MAs in Translation, often ask which translation theory has most influenced me. I say that many have but that the relationship between theory and practice isn't mechanical, and that any reading of translation theory is an extension of a subjective critical consciousness that was formed by interacting with many other theories – from which translation theory derives – and by the whole process of living, reading and writing in a particular historical context. Translation scholars, like Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldana, have studied my style as a translator through corpus analysis and have made relevant comments but most of these are conclusions based on repetitions that are disembodied and peripheral to what I think is key in the translations themselves. When there is such a vogue for concepts like "the agency of the translator" or "the voice of the translator", perhaps translation scholarship should take a turn towards the study of the lives of translators, their artistic re-writing of the original (not the endlessly reductive attempts to identify what is "domesticating" or "foreignising"). There are now, at least in the USA, in the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana in Bloomington or the Harry Ransom Library at the University of Texas in Dallas collections of translators' archives with drafts, correspondence with authors, editors, contracts, etc. This is the raw material that speaks about the practice of translation.

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# Translation and Dictatorship: the Case of Ismail Kadare

PETER MORGAN

In 1986 Ismail Kadare finished his great personal reckoning with the Albanian dictatorship in *The Shadow*, begun two years before. The dictator had died the previous year and the manuscript of the novel remained secreted in the writer's apartment. But the writer was exposed and vulnerable in the environment of morbidity and transition as various figures vied for power in the interregnum. Disguising the manuscript as a translation, Kadare managed to smuggle it out of the country on an official trip to Paris. The names were rendered German throughout and the location switched from Paris to Vienna. On the cover was the title, *The Three K's*, along with the byline, "translated from the German of Siegfried Lenz". But as Kadare notes, the disguise was thin, and was designed primarily for the inspectors at the airport, should his hand-luggage be searched.<sup>1</sup> Even the German title is ironic with its play on the ubiquitous Kafka, and its reference to the three central figures of the novel as one, the writer himself. In Paris, the manuscript was consigned to the safety of a bank vault by Claude Durand, the French publisher and helmsman of the Fayard press, with the authorization to re-open it when he thought it appropriate.<sup>2</sup> The subtext of the agreement was, however, that the novel should not be published until after Kadare's death, as Kadare notes in his interview with Alain Bosquet: 'mon contrat avec lui était clair: le roman ne devait être publié qu'après ma mort' ('my contract with him was clear: the novel should only be published after my death').<sup>3</sup> Claude Durand confirms that this included the possibility of "accidental" death in Albania or France.

*The translation as the cover for a powerful and deeply subversive work of literature?* The irony was not lost on Kadare. He owed his life to translations and, indirectly, to the act of translating. The story of the mock translation of a novel by Siegfried Lenz, the slightly left-of-centre spokesman for middle-class West Germany, allows us to focus our attention on the fragility and the strength of the written word in the dictatorial environment and on the importance of translation to the writer's survival in such an environment. Translation did indeed become a metaphor of survival for Kadare. He came to recognize that his literary mission to

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<sup>1</sup> Ismail Kadaré, *Dialogue avec Alain Bosquet*, trans. Jusuf Vrioni (Paris: Fayard, 1995), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Claude Durand, "Note de l'éditeur", preface to Ismail Kadaré, *La Fille d'Agamemnon* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), pp. 7-9.

<sup>3</sup> Kadaré/Bosquet, p. 52. Durand, p. 8, confirms that this included "accidental" death in Albania.

speak on behalf of Albania from inside his native land under the Hoxha dictatorship *depended*, ironically, on translation.

Translation, literally “moving” of a text “from one place to another”, can be traced throughout Kadare’s work as a metaphor for the process of moving back and forth between Albania and Moscow in the early works and, after 1970, between Albania and Europe, the centre of gravity for literature, narration and, ultimately, life. In the battle of the literary word against the dogmatic word, translation becomes the means of saving the literary word, of saving one’s life in Kadare’s second chronology, the literary-cultural chronology of the writer. In the works from the seventies onward, Albania is imagined as a place of death. Through translation, Kadare could stay in touch with the world of the imagination (outside Albania’s borders) from the world of the dead letter (of Albanian communism). He could continue to speak as though he were alive.

But translation was not just a metaphor, an image for the recognition of the necessity of communication with the outside world in order for him to survive as a writer – and, indeed, literally to stay alive in an environment where writers were killed by the hundreds for the most trivial transgressions. Translation became a part of the chess-game, the battle of wits to speak, on behalf of his nation, both to his compatriots and to the world.

In the tiny, closed Albanian environment, translation was part of a huge literary-political undertaking to convince the world of the truth of Enverism, the dictator’s personal amalgam of communism and nationalism. The Hoxha regime supervised an ambitious propaganda network, broadcasting and translating material globally in an astounding range of languages. Kadare’s work, *The General of the Dead Army* was officially translated into French *in* Albania by the bilingual ex-prisoner and member of the Albanian landed gentry, Jusuf Vrioni, and was published in Paris in 1970. Hoxha’s strategy at this time was still to keep Kadare under control, allowing him the freedom to publish selected works, but making sure that his influence in Albania itself was strictly supervised. The events of 1970 surprised him, no doubt. For Kadare’s novel was much better received than Hoxha expected, and while Hoxha was deeply flattered by the attention paid to his favored writer by the French literati, demonstrating to the world that he was not some thug from the backblocks of Eastern Europe, the move backfired. As a result of the publication of *The General* in France in 1970, Kadare became a name on the world stage of Eastern European dissidents. He could not be summarily executed like the hundreds of other unknown writers in communist Albania. Kadare had gained a margin in which to operate. His texts were potentially dangerous outside Albania, and Enver Hoxha came to realize that he, the dictator, too was playing a dangerous game, fighting with fire. The myth of Prometheus is never far from Kadare’s literary-political imagination.

In this very specific dictatorial environment, however, translation took on a further role for Kadare. Undertaken by trusted practitioners, in particular Jusuf

Vrioni and later, Tedi Papavrami, it became for him the only way of safeguarding his work in the versions that he wanted.

In Albania Ismail Kadare's works were published in various forms and formats. While publication of important manuscripts was withheld for political reasons, many of the works were drafted and redrafted as short stories, censored, revised, confiscated, reworked and passed through the complex filters of comment, feedback and revision of the communist state. Given the nature of the regime, the absence of pre-publication censorship, and the complexity of the assessment and publication process, the progress of works towards publication could take years and involve substantial revisions. It was dangerous and incriminating to keep drafts and copies. In a country where all forms of mechanical reproduction were guarded, Kadare could not always keep copies. Not only was transmission by no means assured; the very existence of manuscripts was fragile. Kadare claimed that the manuscript of his dissident poem of 1975, "The Red Pashas", for example, had disappeared into the vaults of the security police after being submitted for publication. Others asked whether it had ever existed, suggesting that Kadare, like Christa Wolf some time earlier, was attempting to gain dissident status in retrospect. The poem *was* discovered in the vaults of the national Archive of Albania by the (ex-)director Shaban Sinani in 2002.<sup>4</sup> The controversy over this work reveals the extent to which texts were vulnerable in an environment of secrecy, seizure and confiscation.

While some works could be altered superficially for the literal-minded dogmatists of the regime without substantially altering their critical content, others could not. *The Great Winter*, Kadare's controversial socialist realist novel of 1973, underwent numerous readings and revisions by members of the highest echelons. Its idealization of Enver Hoxha at the Moscow conference of 1961 ensured its survival in one form or another. The original title was changed from *Winter of Great Isolation*, and episodes were inserted to emphasize the heroic deeds of the partisans in the late years of the war. The ending was changed to include a cosmic view of the flow of Albanian history. But with each change, the critical content just became more and more obvious to any close reader. The novel begins with a snowstorm in which people are struggling to survive and it ends with a snowstorm in which people are struggling to survive. Nevertheless the novel's ironies somehow remained lost on those responsible for censoring them. One of the keys to understanding Kadare is to accept that he at some level enjoyed the battle of wits. One is reminded of the German poet Heinrich Heine's famous lampoon on the censorship of the German Restoration period in *Ideen. Das Buch Le Grand*:

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<sup>4</sup> Maks Velo, *La Disparition des "Pachas rouges" d'Ismail Kadaré: Enquête sur un "crime littéraire"*, trans. Tedi Papavrami (Paris: Fayard, 2004), p. 201.

Die deutschen Censoren [The German censors] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Dummköpfe [idiots] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Kadare's translator, Jusuf Vrioni, scion of one of Albania's oldest and grandest families, captured and imprisoned after unwisely returning to his native land in search of a lost love, chose translation as his profession. This gifted bilingual had escaped execution and subsequently was able to survive as a translator because of his linguistic ability. Chosen to translate Enver Hoxha's memoirs into the language par excellence of European culture, Jusuf Vrioni became merely the anonymous conduit for this Balkan dictator and snob. For Kadare, however, Vrioni lifted the heavily guarded borders of Albania, enabling the writer's passage to the havens of France. Kadare closely supervised the translations, especially later on, but he did not have the linguistic capacity to undertake them himself.

Kadare in fact had greater control over the translated texts, especially once they were safely housed in France, even if still unpublished, than he did over his texts in their original language. He deliberately used France and his network of friends there to store manuscripts that were interfered with and over which he had less control in his native land. In a curious way, the translations became the works proper, the *Ausgaben letzter Hand*, safe from the last-minute changes, additions and deletions of editorial hands, and a more reliable document than the Albanian originals.

The years from 1982 until 1986 were particularly fraught with danger for Kadare. In 1982 Kadare had been put before a large open tribunal and tried on account of *The Palace of Dreams*, his most blatantly critical novel. Subsequently, he was harassed in ways that presaged no good. While Hoxha was alive, Kadare was protected, used by the dictator as a pawn in the game of divide and rule, while he himself, the writer, focused on the greater game of who would speak with the true voice of the Albanians. At this time Kadare was urged by the regime to undertake a visit to Paris. While he was there he was advised indirectly that he would be tried on his return for pro-Western activity. The feint failed and Kadare returned in spite of his government's attempt to expel him to a country where he was known, but not in the public eye, and where his death would pass relatively unnoticed, as had so many others. According to Claude Durand, Kadare did not believe that he would live to see the end of the regime. The well-known and respected literary commentator Bernard Pivot, remarked pointedly in the influential French magazine, *Lire*, "It's Kadare himself that we want to see on French



television, not his decapitated head.”<sup>5</sup> Even at this late stage of Eastern European socialism, Albania was hermetically closed to the outside world: it had not participated in the changes that rendered most of the other socialist countries more or less porous to influences from the West. Albania never experienced post-totalitarianism. In April 1985 Hoxha died from advanced diabetes, a demented blinded amputee, screaming at the ghosts parading through his darkened chambers. Not Lear, but Macbeth, was for Kadare, the image of the corrupted ruler. During this period the Albanian dictatorship was at its most closed, with the hawkish wife, ex-partisan, and Director of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, Nexhmije, the last of the old guard, watching closely over the process of transition. The other remnants of the wartime partisans had been eliminated over the previous years.

*The Shadow* defied Aesopian expression or censorship and had to remain secret. Its publication, even in translation, would have meant the end for Kadare. Here Kadare turned his critical vision inward, observing mercilessly the degrading and corrupting effects of political dictatorship and of his own decision, taken decades earlier, to remain in the country of his birth, to do what needed to be done, in order to keep writing for his countrymen and women. In *The Shadow* Kadare observes his own divided consciousness under the dictatorship. The narrator is a privileged but untalented member of the artistic *nomenclatura* who secretly loathes the Party and who lives for his trips to France. His friend, a gifted writer, held at a certain distance by the Party as a result of the brilliance and the independence of his work, plays an important role as a narrative *alter ego*. Both reflect aspects of Kadare’s existence, the cynical apparatchik and the creative dissident. The evocation of the demented fantasies of the supreme leader whom Kadare had observed so closely for the duration of his life, gives this complex and difficult work of introspection a powerful political force.

Ironically, this work marked the end of the era of translation as a life-saving strategy for Kadare and the first, premonitory move towards reassertion of the primacy of the original text. Perhaps the writer intuited that nothing would ever be the same after Hoxha’s death.

Kadare’s novels and stories are now becoming better known outside Albania primarily through the French, and more recently, the German and English translations. The Australian writer and academic, Nicolas Jose, has suggested that neglect of literary translation might be “a symptom of a deeper failure to engage constructively with the rest of the world”. The story of Ismail Kadare represents a stark reminder that engagement can, in some contexts, be a matter of life and death. Far from lost, Ismail Kadare was saved in translation.

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<sup>5</sup> Ismail Kadaré, *Invitation à l’atelier de l’écrivain, suivi de Le poids de la croix*, trans. Jusuf Vrioni (Paris: Fayard, 1991), p. 529. Cf. Élisabeth Champseix and Jean-Paul Champseix, *L’Albanie ou la logique du désespoir* (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 1992), p. 209; Ismail Kadaré, “La Vérité des souterrains”, interview with Stéphane Courtois, *Le Dossier Kadaré*, ed. Shaban Sinani, trans. Tedi Papavrami (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2006), pp. 168-169.

# Hermann Lenz's novel *Der Kutscher und der Wappenmaler:* Translator's Note

EDUARD STOKLOSINSKI

For most of his writing life Hermann Lenz remained on the side lines, an author largely unrecognised; it was not until his early sixties that Peter Handke, the much younger, rising star of the German literary establishment at that time, discovered and warmly recommended the Swabian outsider. Lenz's main body of work is, in scope and technique, a memory project in which remembering and forgetting constitute a similarly integral part. Underlying and informing his narrative are the minute documentations of a chronicler who, refraining from simply recording events, exposes them instead to the vagaries, the ingenuities of memory and imagination, the solitary scratching of a steel nib on single sheets of paper.

Born in pre-war Germany in 1913, Lenz spent his childhood years in Künzelsau, a small town in the Hohenlohe/Württemberg, before his family (his father was a visual arts teacher) moved to Stuttgart in 1924. After the *Gymnasium* he enrolled at the theological seminar in Tübingen but withdrew after four semesters and, between 1933 and 1940, studied art history, philosophy and German literature in Heidelberg and Munich, without ever completing a degree; instead he began writing poetry and short prose. From 1940 onwards he was enlisted and served as a soldier, taking part in the German invasion of France, and then, at the eastern front, in the Wehrmacht's assault on the Soviet Union. After the war he was interned as a prisoner of war, first in the USA and later in Le Havre, France, until 1946, when he returned to his family home in Stuttgart. Here, in the parental home in Birkenwaldstraße he moved into the attic room and decided to become a writer:

You want to try it differently. And after all you still have some money ... although it wasn't worth much, as good as nothing, to be precise. But the mechanism kept going, and these were lean years into which he had stumbled. It seemed to him as if he had only ever lived in meagre times (certainly not in abundance). And actually it didn't matter because for years you have lived in the woods and open fields ... now you'll make good use of what you've got here, and you'll stay upstairs in your attic ... now and for the time to come you only want to write ... As if you could only relieve the load stuck in your head through writing'.

(Lenz c, 17)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All translations in this text are mine.

In the following years Lenz led, as far as literary life in West Germany was concerned, an obscure existence as a writer and part-time secretary of the southern German writer's association, although, thanks to the support of the publisher Paul Hegemann in Cologne, he managed to publish small editions, both shorter prose (e.g. *Das stille Haus*, 1947; *Das doppelte Gesicht*, 1949; *Die Abenteurerin*, 1952) and novels (e.g. *Der russische Regenbogen*, 1959; *Die Augen eines Dieners*, 1964; *Der Kutscher und der Wappenmaler*, 1972). He even received an invitation to read at the pivotal Gruppe 47, the avant-garde of postwar literary production in West Germany, but was met with consternation and disapproval for his ambiguous, seemingly disengaged inwardness and subjectivism. Yet, he is not an apolitical writer and, throughout his work, engaged with recent German history - with a dreamy eye on the Imperial past and a critical one on the rise and the catastrophe of Nazism, but from up close and introspectively, like an attentive, though naively detached, bystander. Only after Peter Handke published his invitation to read Hermann Lenz ("Tage wie ausgeblasene Eier") in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in 1973 did he gain wider recognition, a late acknowledgment, which culminated in the Georg Büchner Prize, the most prestigious German literary award, in 1978. Handke wrote:

It had been a season like on an ice floe, bottomless and dark all around, and at times I suffered panic attacks, on passing empty rooms my ears were stabbing, but as soon I read *Der Kutscher und der Wappenmaler* the objects around me stopped being precursors of the horrid and stood unshakably in the friendly electric light I was able to look at again. While reading, I got the feeling that all the missing people were home at last. When the silence at night threatened again with premonitions, I simply read more closely, word for word, and the premonitions let up; the book didn't distract me but strengthened me against them; hardly ever have I felt safer.

(Handke, 36)

By the time *Der Kutscher und der Wappenmaler* was published in 1972, Lenz had written the first two instalments of his so-called "Swabian Chronicle", the *Eugen Rapp* novels, a quasi-autobiographical memory project that opens with the life of his grandparents in Künzelsau at the very beginning of the twentieth century in *Verlassene Zimmer* (Abandoned Rooms) and concludes with *Freunde* (Friends) in the early 1990s, nine books in all, published between 1966 and 1993. The opening lines of *Verlassene Zimmer* describe the grandparents' inn *Goldener Hase* with a reference to the poet Christian Wagner:

His wife fitted a new mantle in the gas lamp that hung above the oval table at which the poet from Warmbronn, a peasant, sat every once in a while. He remembered him as a small man, with white hair that fell over his neck, and with a furrowed, sharpened face.

(Lenz b, 9)

There are two other nineteenth-century German writers who have a recurring presence in Lenz's work: Eduard Mörike and Adalbert Stifter. Certain aspects of Stifter's writing, particularly the rigid panorama, the schematic, wooden descriptions and the arduous, disconcerting exactitude echo subtly in Lenz's prose. In *Der Kutscher and the Wappenmaler* imaginings and memories assemble like still life scenes, pictures pass by, illuminated by a tinge, a whiff in the air, both sound and light. As if the novel was built from a magnified relief - a series of photographs of fleeting immediacy - each frame is shifting, lingering, fading in amended, recurring versions, a gasping for air, a "displacement of events as if seen through the wrong end of a telescope" (Schlant, 126).

In the first part of the novel set in Stuttgart in the 1910s, a coachman imagines the life of a heraldic painter he fleetingly meets, and looks at his own, overshadowed, inspired by the omnipotent promise of the unfamiliar, the lure of an imagined world, reveries of an idealised Habsburg empire, of Vienna. He ponders his dreams and failings, unable to step out of his "stale destiny" (Lenz a, 11), which, in his monologues, is negotiated in alternating voices between second and third person narrative. The self-reflective, recurring "you", the most peculiar aspect in Lenz's writing, creates a personal, singular tone. It is the fault line of an inner dialogue, an inner district where reassurances are not claimed but contemplated, places not settled but approached with an eye on the light above the landscape.

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

(Lenz a, 14)

Lenz's outsider status, both personally and professionally, did not advance his prominence in Germany or, of course, abroad; so far, none of his books have been translated into English. The introduction to an English audience of this outstanding German author and chronicler is long overdue. His is, despite conservative affinities and musings, a concerned and original, autarkic voice. He is a writer who sees himself from a distance, a voice unencumbered by tendentiousness. Schlant (147) noted that "in this landscape of the mind and of memory, the narrated events emerge like islands in the sea of silence, but they are connected at their base by a memory adverse to surface".

Lenz's prose, particularly in the *Eugen Rapp* novels, does not work primarily through plot or structure but rather through observation, through a subtle probing

into the seemingly forgotten, the abandoned and disappearing. In an interview with Jane Fröhlich he said that "... in my prose I'm increasingly abstaining from arrangements and this is what I find so fascinating about Proust, that he manages without effects. And that way the inconstancy of life becomes evident" (88). There is silence, a breath-taking emanating from the visual surroundings in which his remembrances and imaginations are immersed.

He scribbled again into the black notebook that had a stiff cardboard binding, an octavo, handy and threadbare. He was surprised that he never took note of the stories he was imagining. It didn't belong here as it was only worthwhile to record events, how the air was, the light, and what other people had said. Life's raw material had to remain palpable. The treatment showed the grain of the timber, no more was to happen. Even the elegance of language didn't matter, it only had to be right what Eugen wrote.

(Lenz d, 41)

Writing so distinctly and personally accentuated demands to be rendered like an artefact, with minimal imprint and impositions on the part of the translator. It is essential to settle into the text's rhythm and tempo, its narrative threading, to follow and to make transparent, if only fragmentarily and provisionally, the original's representation, its undertone, its force and effect. A close proximity to the original text foregrounds a formal mutuality between both texts, German and English, which is accomplished at times, visually at least, when the original and a translation are juxtaposed – documenting, supplementing the original.

Wie ihm alles zusammenfloss in dieser Nacht; es wurde hergeschwemmt und er konnte sich nicht dagegen wehren. Der Zug flog an einer Station vorbei, und auf dem Schild stand Cincinnati; der Urwald rückte an die Fenster, und er sah den Mississippi, als ob ein Arm des Meeres durch die Bäume stiesse. Der Mississippi war auf einmal nahe da. Er ging der Heidehofstraße entgegen und dachte, dass sei ein sonderbarer Name. Vielleicht war hier mal ein heidnischer Hof gestanden, ein Gutshof wie draußen in Heimerdingen, wo sie jetzt wieder gegraben hatten; nicht weit vom Römerstein ist es gewesen, und du hast's aus der "Schwäbischen Chronik", denn dumm bist du nicht.

How it all flowed together that night; it was swept along and he could not fend it off. The train flew past a station and on the sign he read Cincinnati; the primeval forest moved closer to the windows and he saw the Mississippi, as if an arm of the sea was pushing through the trees. Suddenly, the Mississippi was close by. He walked towards Heidehof Straße and thought that it was a peculiar name. Perhaps a heathen homestead had stood here in the past, a farmstead like over there at Heimerdingen, where they started digging again; not far from the Römerstein it had been, you've read about it in the "Schwäbische Chronik", you're not stupid after all. Or did you hear it from the poet

Oder hast du's von dem Dichter der  
in Warmbronn Bauer ist und der es  
dir am runden Tisch unter der  
Gaslampe erzählt hat? Und wie der  
schmunzelt und wie ihm verästelte  
Falten auf den Backen zucken, wie  
sie auseinander fahren, wenn er lacht

who's a peasant in Warmbronn and  
who told you about it at the round  
table under the gas lamp? The way he  
smiles and knotted wrinkles twitch  
on his cheeks, how they scatter when  
he laughs ...

(Lenz b, 12)

There is a space between two languages, an interstice, where translation pauses, where elusiveness and incompatibility, a momentary volatility of imagery and texture lie bare; it is an instant of “insignificance”, of indecision, a fixture not quite released and not yet reassembled, an uncertainty. This is the place where the text is set, the original constituted as an original in a sense, created vis-a-vis the translation. Translation is about this space, it is the text and also the manifestation of the text, its documentation.

Antoine Berman claimed that “translation is a trial of the foreign ... by aiming to open up the foreign work to us in its utter foreignness”, and that “translation is a trial for the foreign as well, since the foreign work is uprooted from its own *language-ground*” (284). This uprootedness manifests itself most distinctly and transparently in translating from the first language, a mode of translating with its own propositions and tendencies. The “foreign” translator is by necessity closer to the original and therefore less inclined to employ normalising or interpretative strategies, less tempted to clarify and embellish. The ubiquitous notion of “good style” and “fluidity” so prevalent in contemporary translation practice is based on the directionality maxim – translators are to work into their first (better?) language, its ambition being to dress up the original text in an equivalent adaptation, an exercise in puzzling together pieces or filling apparent gaps, of re-dressing and over-writing.

In contrast, the foreign translator is perhaps not as constricted or bound by the scaffolds of language conventions that constitute “good style” or other established aesthetic principles. Working from the first language seems to facilitate a pausing in the space of insignificance, an awareness of the text's instability and potential. In the interstice of languages the foreign translator tends to drift back towards the source; the translating language does not as easily develop its own momentum, that is, its own banalities, for the sake of fluency.

On the intricacies of writing in a foreign language, Libuse Monikova, a Czech author who wrote in German, commented:

Thanks to my preoccupation with Kafka I came to realise that a lack of language can possibly turn to strength, a strength of expression, because no word is taken for granted or appears secure in its significance, each word is new, and the author carries the responsibility, I write, by feeling through language, approaching meanings sometimes that remain subconscious until

## *Hermann Lenz's novel Der Kutscher und der Wappenmaler 47*

they are written down: this search originates in the foreignness of language,  
now it identifies me as an author.

(In Alms, 138-151)

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An excerpt from *Der Kutscher und der Wappenmaler* in translation will be published in our next issue.

# REVIEWS

Edith Grossman's valuable little book, *Why Translation Matters* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010) has, happily, attracted much attention. Below are two reviews, by Brian Nelson and Jorge Salavert. Nelson's review (which appeared in the *Australian Literary Review*, November 2010, as "The great impersonators") also considers Umberto Eco's *Experiences in Translation*, translated by Alastair McEwan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008 [paperback], 2001 [hardback]) and Antoine Berman's *Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne*, translated and edited by Françoise Massardier-Kenney (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2009).

"When we learn to speak, we are learning to translate." Thus wrote Mexican writer Octavio Paz, whom Edith Grossman cites. She also might have cited George Steiner: "To understand is to decipher. To hear significance is to translate," a statement that places translation at the heart of perception itself and thus at the centre of all intellectual processes.

Historically, however, translators have not had a good press. Jerome was forced to flee Rome when he decided, at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, to translate the Bible into everyday Latin. John Wycliffe, who produced the first English Bible in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, also believed the Bible should be made available to his countrymen in their own language. The Anglican Church responded by arranging for his corpse to be dug up and his bones burned for heresy. In the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, William Tyndale's translation of the Bible appeared. Tyndale was sentenced to death: first strangled and then burned at the stake. His last words were: "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century a Bible commissioned by James I was authorised by the Church of England. It is worth recalling that the King James Bible, which appeared in 1611, is a work of translation.

Punishment through death and exile has tended to diminish over the years as a critical response to the work of translators, but the way translation is viewed, especially in the English-speaking world, remains quite negative. Translation tends to be seen as an unfortunate necessity at best and, at worst, as a terrible form of treachery.

Grossman's aim in her valuable little book is "to stimulate a new consideration of an area of literature that is too often ignored, misunderstood, or misrepresented". She argues eloquently for a greater understanding of the cultural importance of translation and a more nuanced appreciation of the translator's role. She knows what she's talking about, for she is the American translator of García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes and other Spanish language texts. Her



translation of Cervantes's *Don Quixote* was widely praised when it was published in 2003.

Grossman has some acerbic things to say about all those who fail to recognise the value of translation. She targets mainstream commercial publishers for their reluctance to publish translations despite their commercial success and the cultural cachet enjoyed by titles such as Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, and anything by Roberto Bolaño. Most American and British publishers, she argues, "resist the very idea of translation and persistently hold the line against the presence of too many translated works in their catalogues". She flagellates reviewers for their ignorance: "many reviewers write as if the English text had somehow sprung into existence independently. What these same reviewers do would be iniquitous if it did not have its own kind of lunatic humour: they are fond of quoting from the translated text in order to praise the author's style without once mentioning the fact that what they are citing is the translator's writing – unless, of course, they do not like the book or the author's style, and then the blame is placed squarely on the shoulders of the translator."

She marvels at the academic world for its blindness: "There are still promotion and tenure committees that do not consider translations to be serious publications." And she laments the naivety that informs popular notions of translation: "We read translations all the time, but of all the interpretive arts, it is fascinating and puzzling to realize that only translation has to fend off the insidious, damaging question of whether or not it is, can be, or should be possible. It would never occur to anyone to ask whether it is feasible for an actor to perform a dramatic role or a musician to interpret a piece of music."

Are these charges well grounded? Unfortunately, despite the fact that the case for translation is obviously compelling, they are. Though translation plays an indispensable role in creating a space of real cultural encounter, less than 3 per cent of works published in the English-speaking world are translations, whereas the corresponding figure for most European countries is at least 10 times greater. That pitiful statistic is fraught with danger: the danger of consolidating the global domination of English, accelerating the ever-dwindling number of world languages taught and impoverishing non-anglophone cultures by encouraging them to write in English in order to be heard by the rest of the world.

The cultural importance of translation, as the circulatory system of the world's literatures, cannot be overstated. That importance is particularly pronounced, of course, in relation to works written in less widely spoken languages. Without translation, Orhan Pamuk, Imre Kertész, José Saramago and Naguib Mahfouz, all Nobel Prize winners, would not be known outside their native countries of Turkey, Hungary, Portugal and Egypt respectively.

The most ingrained popular stereotype about translation is that it always entails loss, is somehow always inadequate. As for the academic world, despite the mushrooming of programs in translation studies during the past few decades, and a

corresponding rise of interest in translation (which was a major focus of last year's 2009 Modern Language Association conference in the US), it has hitherto failed to give full recognition to literary translation, though such translation combines creative and scholarly work.

Literary translation is an intrinsically creative activity, involving a multiplicity of exact choices about voice, tone, register, rhythm, syntax, echoes, sounds, connotations and denotations: all those factors that make up style. In that sense literary translation can be seen as a form of close reading of a text in its totality; translators are first of all readers, and no other readers will penetrate the original text as deeply. Moreover, translation is the result not only of critical interpretation and scholarly research, but also in many cases (particularly with regard to the classics) of scholarly reappropriation and recontextualisation.

Grossman is at her most eloquent when she discusses, on the basis of her own practice, what a translator does (or should do), and communicates some of the joy of that experience. She rightly stresses the translator's creativity. The words we read in translation, she asserts, are the translator's as much as they are the author's:

One of the brightest students in a seminar I taught recently asked whether, in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, we were reading [translator Gregory] Rabassa or Garcia Marquez. My first, unthinking response was "Rabassa, of course," and then a beat later, I added, "and Garcia Marquez." The ensuing discussion of how difficult it is to separate the two, and what it meant to us as readers, writers, and critics to make the attempt, was one of the liveliest and most engrossing we had that semester.

Grossman describes as follows the characteristics of a good translation:

[...] the most fundamental description of what translators do is that we write – or perhaps rewrite – in language B a work of literature originally composed in language A, hoping that readers of the second language – I mean, of course, readers of the translation – will perceive the text, emotionally and artistically, in a manner that parallels and corresponds to the aesthetic experience of its first readers.

This leads Grossman to make some incisive remarks about the key question of fidelity. Fidelity to the original text should be the translator's ultimate goal, but not in any literal sense. A translation is not made with tracing paper laid over the original, the translator mechanically transposing what the dictionary says rather than making creative choices of their own. Translation is anything but a mechanical process, for it is an act of critical interpretation, the result of a series of creative decisions.

A translation can rarely be faithful to words or syntax, for these are peculiar to languages and are not transferable; but it can (and should) be faithful to tone and intention, to meaning: Jorge Luis Borges, as Grossman reminds us, reportedly told his translator not to write what he said but what he meant to say. To re-create

significance for a new set of readers, translators must make the effort to get into the mind of the author through the text and to find the voice in English that matches the author's voice in another language.

The translator's challenge is "to impersonate his author". Grossman endorses the analogy used by the great translator from German, Ralph Manheim, who compared the translator to an actor who spoke as the author would if the author spoke English. The better the original writing, the more exciting and challenging the process. And there is of course no "correct" translation (just as it would hardly be useful to describe, say, Ian McKellen's wonderful performance as Estragon in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* as "correct"), which is why great works are translated so many times. Each translation is different because each translator brings an individual sensibility and a particular literary experience to the task.

One way of redressing negative or naïve views of translation is to foster a clearer appreciation of the fact that every translation of a text is, as Grossman and Manheim argue, a performance of that text as reflected in the selection and sequence of words on a page. If we are able to appreciate the dimension of performance in relation to music or theatre, why not also in relation to translation? The more good translations and retranslations are produced, the easier it will be to effect an appreciation of translation as performance. An encouraging sign in recent years is that retranslations of Proust, Tolstoy, Cervantes and others have engendered extensive and sometimes heated debate about the prowess (or otherwise) of the translators.

It is certainly the case that, in relation to the classics, there is an increasing willingness to discuss the translator's performance. The translators of Proust, for example. Scott Moncrieff in the 1920s, Terence Kilmartin in the 80s, D.J. Enright in the 90s, Lydia Davies, James Grieve and the other members of the Penguin team a decade ago, have all been compared in their ability to deal with the intricate twists and folds, the carefully modulated rhythms and shapes, of Proust's long sentences, his cadences, his register, his inflections. And the stakes could not be higher, in the sense that form translates thought: style is vision; if you don't get the style, you miss the vision.

Where literature exists, translation exists. Grossman shows how the notion of literature would be inconceivable without translation, citing Goethe's belief that without outside influences national literatures rapidly stagnate. Authors have always borrowed and been influenced by writers in other languages. Grossman celebrates the way literary traditions traverse national and cultural borders. When Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote* 400 years ago, he created "the form and shape of modern fiction". Cervantes's novel was translated almost immediately into English, where it changed the course of English literature, influencing writers, directly or indirectly, all the way to William Faulkner.

Faulkner, for his part, was hugely popular in Latin America during the post-war period. Márquez was such a big fan that he and his young family

travelled through the south of the US by Greyhound bus in 1961 as a kind of pilgrimage. His novels were, in turn, translated into English, influencing English-language authors such as Toni Morrison, Salman Rushdie, Don DeLillo and Michael Chabon.

The argument could be pushed a little further: the entire history of literature, we might say, is informed by a process of transmission; a great work of literature, indeed any text, is able to enrich itself by generating new meanings as it enters new contexts. Translation can be seen in this perspective as the secret metaphor of all literary communication. A proper consideration of the art of literary translation is, then, a claim for the value of literature itself. Translators are engaged in much the same activity as their authors; they are, indeed, writers themselves.

The more attention is paid to translation, and the more translators are treated as creative writers whose work can greatly enrich the texts they translate, the more recognition there will be of the vital role translation plays in literary culture.

Translators should not only be given due credit for their work but should also be empowered. By this I mean that translators are able to play a valuable role within a given literary culture as prominent spokespeople for texts in other languages, not just by enlarging, through their own translations, the readership of books deemed to be important but by proposing texts for translation and by talking publicly and writing critically and sympathetically about texts from other languages.

To take a local example: Julie Rose, the Sydney-based translator whose new translation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* was reviewed in these pages last year ("Invisible labour", May 2009) has clearly made a significant contribution in these terms to a reevaluation of Hugo as a writer.

*Experiences in Translation* is based on a series of public lectures given by Eco in 1998. The book is divided into two parts: Translating and Being Translated deals with Eco's experiences and practice in translation, as a translator (of Gérard de Nerval's *Sylvie* and Raymond Queneau's *Exercices de style*) and, especially, as a novelist who has been translated; Translation and Interpretation considers theoretical aspects of translation.

The theoretical part of Eco's book contributes little to discussion of the issues that have concerned Translation Studies in recent decades. His discussion of translators' choices in rendering his novels in foreign languages is far more interesting, and is well illustrated by concrete examples. By showing a variety of approaches, depending both on language and translator, Eco helps to make clear some central translation issues: the cultural differences between languages, "foreignization" v "domestication", the general absence of complete synonymy of words, the sacrifice of a literal translation for the sake of preserving an appropriate style, and so on.

Like Grossman, Eco appeals to the principle of fidelity (“the intention of the text”). Equivalence in meaning cannot be taken as a satisfactory criterion for a good translation, he argues. The translator rewrites a text “on the basis of the whole history of two literatures. Therefore translating is not only connected with linguistic competence but with intertextual, psychological, and narrative competence.” A good translation “must generate the same effect aimed at by the original”, which implies an act of interpretation on the part of the translator and the variability of interpretative hypotheses that can be made about the same text. Eco’s book is illuminating and witty, and converges with Grossman’s as an introduction to the process of translation.

Whereas Grossman’s *Why Translation Matters* is a passionate personal introduction to translation, conversational and unsystematic, Antoine Berman’s *Toward a Translation Criticism* is a theoretically sophisticated exploration of the ways in which translation is a critical process as well as a creative one. Grossman uses striking and apposite metaphors (tracing paper, acting, impersonation) to convey the nature of translation and she wonders whether one of the reasons why translations tend to be overlooked or even disparaged by reviewers, critics and editors is because they simply do not know what to make of them, in theory or in actuality.

“We really are lacking in an adequate vocabulary for discussing translation intelligently,” she writes. She mentions the suggestion made to her by an academic friend that the next great push in literary studies may be to conceptualise and formulate the missing critical vocabulary pertaining to translation.

If this is so, then Berman would be considered, in this context, a major pioneer. A foundational text in translation studies, *Toward a Translation Criticism: John Donne* (published in French in 1995) argues for the development of translation criticism as a specific genre within the broader field of literary criticism. Berman develops an original methodology for such criticism through a detailed comparative discussion, combining hermeneutic and stylistic analysis, of the French translations of John Donne’s elegy *To His Mistress, on Going to Bed*. To treat the work of the translator as seriously as the best criticism treats non-translated literature, he contends, will rescue translators from invisibility and give them the recognition they deserve.

To return to the question of why translation matters: it matters, Grossman argues, for the same reason and in the same way that literature matters – because it is an expression of our humanity. Translation “always helps us to know, to see from a different angle, to attribute new value to what once may have been unfamiliar. As nations and as individuals, we have a critical need for that kind of understanding and insight. The alternative is unthinkable.”

BRIAN NELSON

For those of us familiar with English translations of Spanish-language literature, Edith Grossman needs no presentation. Her numerous high-quality translations (her *Don Quixote* is the best modern translation of Cervantes' immortal novel) speak for themselves and are probably the best credentials one could refer to in order to prove (if it were necessary) her status as a truly knowledgeable professional.

*Why Translation Matters* is a welcome addition to the ever-increasing supply of books on translation. In the preface, Grossman declares her intention "to stimulate a new consideration of an area of literature that is too often ignored, misunderstood, or misrepresented". This is in itself significant. For too long literary translation has been wrongly placed outside the realm of literary activity. I often despair at the oft-encountered ill-founded notion that literary or scholarly translation cannot stake a claim to (or as) research, for instance. As Grossman says, translation is "a kind of reading as deep as any encounter with a literary text can be". If anything, I would go so far as to suggest there might be numerous cases where literary translation surpasses other kinds of textual research in a myriad of ways.

Yet it is unfortunately true that translation has had a bad name throughout history. Also, translators have been persecuted. Let us not forget that interpreters and translators have been and continue to be murdered in current conflicts around the world for the sole reason that they were helping people communicate with each other.

Moreover, the practice of literary translation has been generally derided as treason to the original work. Yet translation as a discipline has extended over the restrictive area it was once confined to, and that is in itself a good thing for translators. That derisive labels continue to be applied to translation and its practitioners is a sad predicament in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Grossman's book is sound evidence that the discipline of translation has many compelling arguments with which to defend itself. It is also a necessary book: it is not at all like the many arid, insipid, vacuous and impractical volumes that deal with theoretical aspects of translation. It is nevertheless a modest yet significant essay on translation.

And of course it had to be modest, like the author: in 2006 I had the pleasure of meeting Edith at a dinner-cum-event an overambitious Dean of Arts organised to curry favour with a foreign embassy, and she struck me as one of the most honest, down-to-earth persons I had ever met.

For all her modesty, Grossman can still ask some very crucial questions: "Why does [translation] not matter to most publishers and book reviewers? ... What is its contribution to the civilized life of the world?" While she does not have all the answers (and who does?), Grossman does point out that, as a consequence of the publishing world's resistance to translation, we are being denied access to an extremely large part of the world's literature. That is impoverishing us all.

The book comprises an introduction and three fairly brief chapters. The introduction and the first two chapters are based on lectures Grossman gave at Yale. The delicious final chapter deals with the translation of poetry. Because the first two chapters are based on lectures, they are occasionally repetitious; Grossman does at times stray from her main purpose, that is, to account for translation and why it matters, but the general thrust is one of purpose and self-confidence.

Grossman provides the reader with invaluable insights into the translation process. Her ample experience as a renowned professional translator endorses not only the validity of her appreciations but also the strong reasoning that backs her opinions, in particular on the dreadful treatment translators still receive from critics, from unwarranted criticism to invisibility.

By far the most revealing are her comments on her own translations of Spanish poetry, which she began as a university student for the campus literary magazine – an experience many of us are likely to have had. Grossman acknowledges the aesthetic pleasure that can (or I should say, should) be derived from translating poetry.

She presents her interesting choices and bravely defends the reasons why she made such choices; it is thus one of the most honest accounts we can find on the eternally challenging subject of the arduous process of translating poetry in recent times. Grossman argues that the most important poetic element when translating poetry is rhythm. “[I]f the translation succeeds—English-language readers have the opportunity to read a convincing poem in their own language, repeating an experience comparable to that of their Spanish-speaking counterparts.”

Giving more importance to rhythm over other poetic elements may have its downside, though. Her translations of Golden Age sonnets renounce rhyme for the sake of rhythm as a principle. I would however counter that in quite a few cases—to my mind comes Lope de Vega’s famous and many times anthologised *improvised* sonnet, truly a little gem of poetic skill, which ironically exemplifies how to write a sonnet—not reproducing a rhyming scheme might let down the poetic essence of the original. Naturally, Grossman is quite right in identifying the musicality of poetry as the fundamental aspect to carry over in any translation of poetry, but discarding rhyme on the grounds of expediency might also deprive readers of other possibilities just as exciting.

Throughout the book Grossman defends the importance of translation and translators *a capa y espada* [tooth and nail], a phrase from the Golden Age of Spanish literature she loves so much, one she would no doubt recognise immediately and to which, I believe, she would subscribe.

Equally significant for practising translators are her views on fidelity: “a translator’s fidelity is not to lexical paintings but to context—the implications and echoes of the first author’s tone, intention, and level of discourse”. Hers is one of the lengthiest professional careers, throughout which she has encountered innumerable dilemmas and complexities, and *Why Translation Matters* bears

witness to this. It is hardly surprising that her acumen brings out little gems like this one: “I have been intrigued by the idea that literary language may, in fact, be a form of translation. And here I mean translation ... as a living bridge between two realms of discourse, two realms of experience.” I suspect she may be closer to the truth than most of us even stop to consider.

JORGE SALAVERT



# CONTRIBUTORS

**Peter Bush** now lives and works as a literary translator in Barcelona. He was formerly Professor of Literary Translation and Director of the British Centre for Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia, UK. Recent translations include Leonardo Padura's *Havana Fever* and Najat El Hachmi's *The Last Patriarch*. His translations of Juan Goytisolo's *Nijar Country* and *Exiled from Almost Everywhere* and Teresa Solana's *A Shortcut to Paradise* will be out in 2111. Current projects are Ramón Valle-Inclán's *Tirano Banderas*, Josep Pla's *The Gray Notebook* and Alain Badiou's *In Praise of Love*.

**Peter Morgan** is Foundation Professor and Director of the European Studies Program at the University of Sydney. Publications include *The Critical Idyll: Traditional Values and the French Revolution in Goethe's "Hermann und Dorothea"* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1990) and *Ismail Kadare: The Writer and the Dictatorship 1957-1990* (Oxford: Legenda, forthcoming), numerous articles and chapters on classical, nineteenth-century and contemporary German and Austrian literature, on comparative French, German and English literature, and on the teaching of German and European Studies in the Australian context.

**Jorge Salavert** is an accredited translator in Spain and Australia. A former member of the Universitat de València's Shakespeare Institute, his annotated translation of a satirical sonnet by Spanish Golden Age poet Francisco de Quevedo was published in Monash's *Colloquy* in 2008 ([www.colloquy.monash.edu.au/issue15/salavert.pdf](http://www.colloquy.monash.edu.au/issue15/salavert.pdf)). His latest publication is *Lalomanu*, a book of poems. He works as Programme Manager at the Australian Academy of the Humanities in Canberra.

**Eduard Stoklosinski** was born in Stuttgart, Germany, and currently lives in Sydney, where he works as a literary translator and teacher. He has translated *Prosa*, a collection of prose texts by the Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard and he is currently working on a translation of the novel *Der Kutscher und der Wappenmaler* by Hermann Lenz. He is also editing and translating an anthology of German authors of non-German backgrounds as part of a doctorate at the University of Sydney.

**Will Stone**, born 1966, is a poet and literary translator who divides his time between England and Belgium. His first poetry collection *Glaciation*, published by Salt, won the international Glen Dimplex Award for poetry in 2008. His published translations of poetry include *Les Chimères* by Gérard de Nerval (Menard Press, 1999) and *To The Silenced: Selected Poems of Georg Trakl* (Arc Publications, 2005). Two landmark collections of translations of the Belgian symbolist poets Emile Verhaeren and Georges Rodenbach are forthcoming (2010) along with *Stefan Zweig - Journeys*, a first English translation of the renowned Austrian writer's travel essays (Hesperus Press, 2010). *Drawing in Ash*, a second collection of poems, will appear in 2011.

**Li Wang** grew up in China and was among the first university graduates in 1981 after the Chinese National Higher Education System recovered from the cultural revolution. Before that she was a school teacher. Afterwards she worked as an academic for fifteen years in China and became associate professor of English at Jiangxi Normal University in 1994. She has lived in Australia for the last 15 years, gaining a masters and a PhD in Chinese Culture and Language. She is currently teaching Chinese at the University of Sydney.

**Patricia Worth** lives in Canberra and is currently writing a thesis for the Masters in Translation Studies. She works as a tutor to children and adults, in French and English.