The AALITRA Review

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AALITRA

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The AALITRA Review

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Milan Orlić: Postmodernist Longing for Sense

ZDRAVKA GUGLETA

Milan Orlić is a distinguished contemporary Serbian poet. The recipient of many literary awards, he is known both in critical circles and the wider reading public in Serbia, as well as in central and eastern Europe where his poetry has appeared in a number of anthologies and literary magazines. As for English translations, only a small number of Orlić's poems have been translated and published to date: in 2001 *International Poetry Review* featured six poems from his first collection *From the Polar Night*, while in 1999 *World Literature Today* published a review of Orlić's second volume of poetry *The Hum of Millenia.* The present translations aim to reintroduce this important poet, whose poetics situate him on a par with two south Slavic poets already known to the English-speaking reader: the Serbian poet Jovan Hristić and the Slovenian poet Aleš Debeljak.

From the start, Orlić's lyrical poetry has attracted critical attention with its display of an erudite, essayistic style, sophisticated classical sensibility and conscientious devotion to developing a palimpsest or synthetic poetics. Orlić entered the Serbian literary scene with the publication of a "storynovel" (*pričoroman*) *About the Un/real* (1987) (*O ne/stvarnom*), which for the first time in Serbian (or Former Yugoslavian) literature introduced pastiche as an integral part of its poetics. Then came a multi-genre trilogy, the first and up till now the only trilogy of the kind in Serbian literature: a little poetic novel *Momo in the Polar Night: A Fairytale for Grown Ups* or *Momo u polarnoj noći: bajka za odrasle* (1992), a book of poetry *From the Polar Night* or *Iz polarne noći* (1995), and a book of essays *Notes from the Polar Night* or *Zapisi iz polarne noći* (1997). In each of these three texts, Orlić develops a unique symbolism of the polar night, which is transformed into the mythopoeic space of the polar City in the next volume of poetry, *The Hum of Millenia* (1998) (*Bruj milenija*). The City figures as an ever-expanding totality of civilization, with past and present coexisting in a chaos which the Poet transforms into sense. Such a metaphor of the City is explored in Orlić's two volumes of poetry, *The City, Before I Fall Asleep* (*Grad, pre nego što usnim*) published in 2006, and the latest, *Longing for Wholeness* (*Žudnja za celinom*), published in 2009.

Critics have already situated Orlić within the "vertical tradition" of Serbian poetry which includes, retrospectively, the eminent Serbian poets: Jovan Dučić, Momčilo Nastasijević, Vasko Popa and Miodrag Pavlović. As in these Modernist and postmodernist authors, the poetic opus of Milan Orlić represents an open, ever-growing structure, within which poems are carefully placed in a sequence, and the sequences into *books*. Orlić's poetry, however, further radicalizes the poetic composition by having it grounded in citation and self-citation, allusions and reminiscences, effecting multilayered and ramified intertextuality. The motifs and themes move from one context into another, a word or a syntagm, a motif and whole poems shift from one book into another, acquiring a fresh, unexpected meaning. Moreover, Orlić's poetry relates to the poetic or literary heritage as a whole: his text enters into a dialogue both with Serbian poetry and literature (especially Crnjanski, Miljković, Pavlović), as well as with the world literary "canon" (ancient writers, Borges, Yeats). And not only poetry and literature but other discourses are assimilated in this poetry: philosophical, religious, and even popular culture discourse. Orlić's succinct and highly stylized poetic idiom also includes an idiosyncratic alligning of the text on the right and the innovative use of parataxis *à la* Crnjanski.

Aware of the responsibility of the act of writing, the trace of the written word, and its place in the literary tradition, Orlić remains indifferent to a hackneyed poetics which manifests a simplistic interpretation of Pound's motto "Make it new!" His poetry puts into relief the

iterability of the trace or sign (Derrida). Taking out of the orginal context and recontextualizing the poetic motifs, citing and re-citing them, detaches these from the superimposed meaning, historical or aesthetic relevance. This process of composition points to the non-origin of sense or the non-essence of the trace and the possibility of its being repeated again and again, attesting to the transformative force of language. Orlić's poetry dramatizes the fact that there is no originality or unmediated meaning. Meaning is not grounded but is prone to repetition and perpetual recontextualisation.

Below are two poems from Orlić's latest volume, *Longing for Wholeness* (an allusion to Plato), taken out of the context of the sequences within which they acquire a richer meaning. The first, "A Birthday Poem: The Shadows of Absent Guests", is a part of the aesthetically rounded first sequence "Birthday Poems" ("Rođendanske pesme") in which, as it progresses, the lyrical persona ages, speaking first as an eleven-year-old child, then as a youth of twenty-two "who can do anything", then as a man in the middle of the Road (thirty-three), and so on, following an eleven-year interval pattern up to the moment of his death, and beyond. In the translated poem, the lyrical persona reflects on his forty-fourth birthday. In a characteristically melancholy voice, typically punctuated by idyosyncratic pauses, often tinged with good-natured humour, a now mature man meditates in the solitude of a drawing-room. The last lines are particularly evocative, juxtaposing the beautiful image of the falling snow *from a Huston movie* and the gesture of *mildly* stroking, not *faraway hills and icy mounts* like in Crnjanski's well-known poem "Sumatra", but *faraway cities* – and of holding *an arrow pulling the bowstring tight* – another allusion to Crnjanski's motif. Crnjanski's expressionist metaphysical longing for distant and snowy landscapes is widened in Orlić into the longing for the urbane, and by taking into account a mediated, aestheticised version of the wintry scenery.

The second poem, "Sitting in Front of the Castle, Waiting (a contribution to palimpsest poetry)", is the fifth poem of the sequence "Eternity and A Day" ("Večnost i jedan dan"). The land surveyor-poet is writing an addendum to "palimpsest poetry", an ironic reference to the syntagm with which Orlic's poetry has been qualified by critics. The poem thematises the "real" and "fictional" within this *unfinished manuscript* of the poem: Godo is evoked as an actor and motifs from Kafka's novel, as well as Kafka as the author. The "author" abruptly and emphatically ends his little narrative, parodying the "genre" of "an unfinished manuscript". Not surpisingly, perhaps, this author, in line with the play of interchanging the "real" and "fictional", anticipates his own death and conceives the idea of critics, exegetes (tranlators?) and editors furhter improvising and *contributing* to, or better, *constructing* the manuscript of the poem. This seemingly parodic gesture in the end offers an affirmative view of or *contribution* to poetry as a an open-ended palimpsest structure of meaning.

In fact, the very next poem in the sequence "Eternity and A Day", "A Letter to an Unknown Female-Reader", thematizes the active role of the reader. The poem is characteristically "transferred" from Orlić's previous book, *The City, Before I Fall Asleep*, where it appears juxtaposed to other poems – letters to various poets, writers, and fictional characters, comprising the sequence "A Letter to Friends" ("Pismo prijateljima"). The poet-persona apostrophizes the female reader. The poet realizes the idiomatic "love for poetry", as he looks with *a lover's eyes* on his verse, as well as on the *tenderness* of the *beautiful reader's* gaze as she reads his lines, or on *the softness* of her fingers, *her slender fingers* that embrace *the poem's body*. The text seduces this imagined female reader into an eroticized love for reading, an encounter with the text that induces search for the nuanced richness of meaning in *the secret chambers* of poetry.

ROĐENDANSKA PESMA:

SENKE ODSUTNIH GOSTIJU

Četrdeset četvrta mi je, eto, sedim u toploj

beržeri, čitam.

Žaračem, povremeno, razgorevam vatru

A BIRTHDAY POEM:

THE SHADOWS OF ABSENT GUESTS

There, I am forty-four, sitting in a warm bergère

chair, reading.

I poke, at times, and kindle the wood in the fireplace.

u kaminu. Čitam
svoju omiljenu knjigu, u crvenom safijanu.
Kroz prozore,
gledam, žmirka zvezdano nebo. Kao božanski
Gang, Grad izvire
na nebu ali, ipak, postoji samo da bi živeo
u pesmi. Nekada
rog izobilja, mirisao je na retku petolisnu
ružu. Sada ga
nastanjuju požuda Večite Eve: Crne Madone:
carice tame
i tajne milosti. Još večeras, sedeo sam u
Reform-klubu i
iz klupskih čaša ispijao porto, pomešan sa
cimetovom korom.
Koliko juče, bio sam dečak, samosvesni očev
princ. I kad bolje
razmislim – od četvrte do četrdeset četvrte –
svaki dan mi je
praznični poklon. Između prvog poletanja na
Mesec i prvih
naseljavanja, stao je sav moj život. Ovako
živahan, kao da
dolazim iz muzeja Madam Tiso, mogao bih
sanjariti bar još
hiljadu godina. A da nikada ne ostarim.
Pomešan sa senkama
odsutnih gostiju, iz malog salona, širi
se miris muskatnih
oraščića. Božjom milošću, večeras nisam
jedini anahoret u
gradskoj pustinji. Velike oči mojih prozora,
bistre kao sveta
jezera Himalaja, izgleda da podstiču jednu od
poslednjih zabava:
Istraživanje ontološkog dokaza za postojanje
Pesnika. Ako bi,
na primer, konji, volovi ili lavovi imali
pesnike, da li bi ih
zamišljali po svom obličju? Ali do jutra,
utihnuće i ta
zabava. Zvezdane mirise neba, rasteraće gnev

I am reading
my favorite book, covered in red saffian.
Through windows,
I see, the starry sky is winking. Like the godly
Ganges, the City
springs in the sky but, still, exists only to dwell
in a poem. Once
the horn of plenty, smelled of the rare five-leaved
rose. Now
it harbors the lust of Eve Eternal: the Black Madonna:
the empress
of the night and secret grace. Only tonight, I sat in
the Reform-club
sipping red port from the club glasses, mixed with
cinnamon peel.
Only yesterday, I was a boy, a conscientious father's
prince. And when I
think about it – from my fourth to forty-fourth –
each day
has been a festive gift. Between the first flight
to the Moon
and the first colonies, my whole life fitted. So
vivacious, as if
coming from Madame Tussauds' museum, I could
daydream for at least
another thousand years. Yet never grow old. Mixed
with the shadows
of absent guests, from the little parlour, spreads
the scent of fragrant
nutmegs. With God's grace, this evening I am not
the sole anchorite
in the City's desert. The big eyes of my windows,
clear like the holy
lakes of the Himalayas, seem to invite one of
the last pastimes:
The search for the ontological proof of the Poet's
existence. If,
for example, horses, oxen or lions had poets, would they
imagine them
in their own image? But by morning, this pastime
will cease too.
Starry scents of the sky, the wrathful storm will

oluje što besni
kao da u Gradu ionako nema dovoljno gneva.
Kada se gnev
stiša i teške kiše uminu, dugo ću jahati
peskovitom obalom.
Udisaću morske šumove, krotiti talase i
radovati se kao
da mi je prvi put. Kao da se prvi put po mom
licu razvejava sneg
iz jednog Hjustonovog filma. I da daleke
gradove blago
milujem, rukom. Dok u drugoj držim strelu
sa zapetim lukom.

dispel, raging
as if the City hasn't had its fill of wrath.
When the rage
subsides and heavy rains abate, long will I ride along
the sandy shore.
Bathe in the marine sounds, tame the waves and
feel joy as if
for the first time. As if for the first time in my face
snow scatters
from a Huston movie. As if faraway cities I caress
gently, with my hand.
While in the second I hold an arrow pulling the bow-
string tight.

SEDIM PRED ZAMKOM I ČEKAM
(prilog palimpsestnoj poeziji)

Čekam godinama i decenijama, čekam da se
konačno dogodi
nešto važno. Čekam onako kako se nekada
čekao Godo
koji je, oduševljen mogućnostima interneta
ostao kod kuće
i, bez predumišljaja, zaboravio da stigne na
pozorišnu predstavu
čiji je glavni junak. Čekam u nekakvoj večitoj
sadašnjosti, evo sada,
na putovanju do Zamka u koji, ni sa mapom
puta, najboljom,
kartografskom veštinom i ličnom Kafkinom
rukom izrađenom
− ne uspevam da doprem. Sedim, ovde i sada,
u stalnoj vezi sa
stalnim sekretarima za vezu, geodetski óbučen:
ali bez posla i
zemlje koju bih merio u ovom sve globalnijem
Gradu. Gledam
kroz kapiju Zamka kao što sobar, znatiželjno,
viri kroz ključaonicu
gospodara, ljubazno se pozdravljam u velikom
tuđem prostoru,
sa još većim i još više tuđim ljudima, veoma

SITTING IN FRONT OF THE CASTLE, WAITING
(a contribution to palimpsest poetry)

I've been waiting for years and decades, waiting for
something special
finally to happen. I'm waiting the way they
waited for Godot
who, excited by the possibilities of the Internet
had stayed at home
and, without premeditation, forgot all about
the show in which
he was the hero. I'm waiting in some kind of
eternal present, just now,
on my journey to the Castle that, even with the map
of the road, the best,
drawn with cartographic skill and in Kafka's
own hand
− I'm unable to reach. I'm sitting, here and now, in
permanent connection
with permanent secretaries for the connection, versed
in geodesy: with
no job and land to survey in this ever more globalised
City. I look
through the Castle's gate the way a valet peers,
inquisitively, through
his master's peephole, and kindly exchange
a greeting in
the big strange place, with still bigger and stranger

raspoložen
da primim bilo kakvu, makar i neizvršivu
obavezu, ali eto,
rukopis pesme se na ovom mestu prekida,
što nesumnjivo
ostavlja prostor svakoj vrsti kritičara,
tumača i
priređivača kritičkih posthumnih izdanja.

people, very
well-disposed to take on any kind, even impossible
responsibility, but alas,
the manuscript of the poem breaks off at this point,
undoubtedly leaving
space for all kind of critic, exegete and editor of critical
posthumous editions.

PISMO NEPOZNATOJ ČITATELJKI

O tome je reč: da u pesmi, pored lepote ima
mesta i za zamišljenost.
Čak i malo staromodne melanholije, pobede
tzv. ljudskosti nad
podsmehom sudbine. Krasna čitateljko. I stoga
na stihove
gledam očima ljubavnika, kao i na nežnost
Tvog pogleda
dok čitaš ove redove. Ili na blagost prstiju
kojima listaš
knjigu. A na sebe – kao na psihijatrijski
slučaj, nepopravivi:
u gradu širokih travnjaka i uskogrudih
pogleda, u trenucima
dok troši poslednju nadu, radost životnu
i trezvenost – još uvek
izgubio nisam. Kao slučajni prolaznik,
u večitom neznanju
zatečen, polja Umbrije posmatram, u odrazu
Paundovih očiju.
Udubljenih u beskrajnu daljinu, daleko iza
zlatnog kaveza.
Priznajem da je ljubav prema prozi sasvim
prirodna, ali
voleti poeziju – otmeno je. Najvažniji je lični
primer. To je jedino
što, nedužno, možemo učiniti za bilo čiju
besmrtnost. Ili
spasenje. Na probi je svačiji smisao za humor

A LETTER TO AN UNKNOWN FEMALE-READER

It's about this: that a poem has, beside beauty, room
for thoughtfulness.
Even a bit of old-fashioned melancholy, the victory of
so-called benevolence
over fate's mockery. Beautiful reader. And therefore
I regard verse
with a lover's eyes, as I do the tenderness of Your
gaze while
You read these lines. Or the softness of Your fingers
browsing the book.
And myself – as a psychiatric case, incurable: in a city
of open lawns
and narrow views, in moments of wasting its last
hope, the joy
of life and soberness – are my forte still. Like a random
passer-by, with eternal
ignorance caught, I contemplate Umbria' meadows, in the
reflection of Pound's
eyes. Engrossed in an endless distance, far beyond
the golden cage.
I admit, a love of prose is natural indeed, but
loving poetry –
is noble. Most important is the personal example. Only
that can we,
innocently, do for anyone's immortality. Or
salvation.
Everyone's sense of humor is on probation and, like
all things of value,
is unevenly and unfairly bestowed. Your reading,

koji je, kao i sve
važno, neravnomerno i nepravedno raspoređen.
Tvoje čitanje,
vitki prsti što grle telo pesme, na stihovima
smireni pogled
što odmara, naslućivanje je velikog blaga u
tajnim odajama
knjige. U trenutku prvog saznanja. Sve ozbiljno
u pesmi, počiva
u Tvom posvećenom čitanju. I zamišljanju
tog blagostanja.
Jedina možda još Ti znaš put do Prosperovog
ostrva i biblioteke.

the slender
fingers embracing the poem's body, the calm gaze
on the lines
that relaxes – a premonition of unbound riches in secret
book's chambers.
In the moment of the first intuition. Everything significant
in a poem
rests in Your dedicated reading. And imagining
that fortune.
Perhaps only You know the way to Prospero's
Island and library.

Translating *The Second Sex*: Lived Experience

CONSTANCE BORDE and SHEILA MALOVANY-CHEVALIER

Editor's Note

Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier's English translation of Simone de Beauvoir's groundbreaking work *The Second Sex* has for the first time given English-speaking readers access to the full book, unabridged and unsanitized. The British edition, published by Jonathan Cape, came out in 2009, followed by the US edition by Knopf in 2010. Both editions are now available in paperback (distributed in Australia by Random House). In twenty days in November 2011, Borde and Malovany-Chevallier toured five Australian cities, speaking at eight universities, the Alliance française, and the Lyceum Club, with the final event of the tour being their plenary address at the 2011 conference of the Australian Society for French Studies. They also gave several media interviews including ABC Radio National's *The Book Show*
(podcast available on the AALITRA website at
http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bookshow/translating-the-second-sex/3674356).

The tour was organized by Associate Professor Bronwyn Winter (French Studies, University of Sydney), who wrote in her report in the *Carnet austral* (the newsletter of the Australian Society for French Studies): "At each event they not only wowed the crowds, but more importantly, renewed interest in Australia in this foundational work for so-called 'second wave' feminism as well as reminding us of Beauvoir's great talent and versatility as a writer and her extraordinary intellectual reach. For their varied audiences, Connie's and Sheila's talks brought new discoveries: of the mistranslations in the first English translation (such as lack of distinction between flesh-and-blood 'women' and the ideological construct of 'Woman') and the challenges in producing the new one, of the enormous intellectual research that went into both writing and translating the work, of its immediate and enduring impact among a range of women of all socioeconomic and national backgrounds, and, of course, of the linguistic and political importance of the semi-colon! Perhaps the most intriguing discovery for many was that *The Second Sex* not only provided inspiration—and, for the first time, a comprehensive theoretical basis—to generations of twentieth and twenty-first century feminists, it also, paradoxically perhaps, brought Beauvoir herself to feminism. The tour certainly proved, as Sheila and Connie put it themselves, that 'this book is as germane and relevant today as it was in 1949, when it came out in France and was a bestseller. Indeed, this is the book that changed the way women thought and talked about themselves because Beauvoir's philosophy showed the way.'"

In Melbourne Sheila and Connie spoke at RMIT and at the Alliance française – an event co-organized by the Alliance, Monash University, and AALITRA. After this event, Sheila and Connie kindly agreed, at my invitation, to send to *THE AALITRA REVIEW* a slightly modified version of the Translator's Note used in the introduction to their book.

** ** **

We spent three years – from 2006 to 2009 – researching *Le Deuxième Sexe* and translating it into English—into *The Second Sex*. It was a daunting task and a splendid learning experience during which this monumental work entered our personal lives and changed the way we see the world. Questions naturally arose about the act of translating itself, about ourselves and our roles, and about our responsibilities to both Simone de Beauvoir and her readers.

Translation has always been fraught with such questions, and different times have produced different conceptions of translating. Perhaps this is why, while great works of art seldom age, translations do. The job of the translator is not to simplify or readapt the text for a modern or foreign audience but to find the true voice of the original work, as it was written for its time and with its original intent. Seeking signification in another's words transports the translator into the mind of the writer. When the text is an opus like *The Second Sex,* whose

impact on society was so decisive, the task of bringing into English the closest version possible of Simone de Beauvoir's voice, expression, and mind is greater still.

Ours is not the first translation of *Le Deuxième Sexe* into English, but it is the first complete one. H. M. Parshley translated it in 1953, but he abridged and edited passages and simplified some of the complex philosophical language. We have translated *Le Deuxième Sexe* as it was written, unabridged and unsimplified, maintaining Beauvoir's philosophical language. The long and dense paragraphs that were changed in the 1953 translation to conform to more traditional styles of punctuation—or even eliminated—have now been translated as she wrote them, all within the confines of English. Long paragraphs (sometimes going on for pages) are a stylistic aspect of her writing that is essential, integral to the development of her arguments. Cutting her sentences, cutting her paragraphs, and using a more traditional and conventional punctuation do not render Simone de Beauvoir's voice. Beauvoir's style expresses her reasoning. Her prose has its own consistent grammar, and that grammar follows a logic.

We did not modernize the language Beauvoir used and had access to in 1949. This decision precluded the use of the word "gender", for example, as applied today. We also stayed close to Beauvoir's complicated syntax and punctuation as well as to certain usages of language that to us felt a bit awkward at first. One of the difficulties was her extensive use of the semi-colon, a punctuation mark that has suffered setbacks over the past decades in English and French and has somewhat fallen into disuse.

Nor did we modernize structures such as "If the subject attempts to assert himself, the other is nonetheless necessary for him". Today we would say, "If the subject attempts to assert her or himself . . ." There are examples where the word "individual" clearly refers to a woman, but Beauvoir, because of French rules of grammar, uses the masculine pronoun. We therefore do the same in English.

The reader will see some inconsistent punctuation and style, most evident in quotations. Indeed, while we were tempted to standardize it, we carried Beauvoir's style and formatting into English as much as possible. In addition, we used the same chapter headings and numbers that she did in the original two-volume Gallimard edition. We also made the decision to keep close to Beauvoir's tense usage, most noticeably regarding the French use of the present tense for the historical past.

One particularly complex and compelling issue was how to translate *la femme.* In *Le Deuxième Sexe,* the term has at least two meanings: "the woman" and "woman". At times it can also mean "women", depending on the context. "Woman" in English used alone without an article captures woman as an institution, a concept, femininity as determined and defined by society, culture, history. Thus in a French sentence such as *Le problème de la femme a toujours été un problème d'hommes,* we have used "woman" without an article: "The problem of woman has always been a problem of men."

Beauvoir sometimes uses *femme* without an article to signify woman as determined by society as just described. In such cases, of course, we do the same. The famous sentence, *On ne naît pas femme: on le devient,* reads, in our translation: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman." The original translation by H. M. Parshley read, "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman."

Another notable change we made was in the translation of *la jeune fille.* This is the title of an important chapter in Volume II dealing with the period in a female's life between childhood and adulthood. While it is often translated as "the young girl" (by Parshley and other translators of French works), we think it clearly means "girl".

We have included all of Beauvoir's footnotes, and we have added notes of our own when we felt an explanation was necessary. Among other things, they indicate errors in Beauvoir's text and discrepancies such as erroneous dates. We corrected misspellings of names without noting them. Beauvoir sometimes puts into quotes passages that she is partially or completely paraphrasing. We generally left them that way.

We did not, however, facilitate the reading by explaining arcane references or difficult philosophical language. As an example of the former, in Part Three of Volume II, "Justifications", there is a reference to Cécile Sorel breaking the glass of a picture frame holding a caricature of her by an artist named Bib. The reference might have been as obscure in 1949 as it is today.

Our notes do not make for an annotated version of the translation, yet we understand the value such a guide would have for both the teacher and the individual reading it on their own. We hope one can be written now that this more precise translation exists.

These are but a few of the issues we dealt with. We had instructive discussions with generous experts about these points and listened to many (sometimes contradictory) opinions; but in the end, the final decisions as to how to treat the translation were ours.

It is generally agreed that one of the most serious absences in the first translation was Simone de Beauvoir the philosopher. Much work has been done on reclaiming, valorizing, and expanding upon her role as philosopher since the 1953 publication, thanks to the scholarship of Margaret Simons, Eva Lundgren-Gothlin, Michèle Le Doeuff, Elizabeth Fallaize, Emily Grosholz, Sonia Kruks, and Ingrid Galster, to mention only a few. We were keenly aware of the need to put the philosopher back into her text. To transpose her philosophical style and voice into English was the most crucial task we faced.

The first English-language translation did not always recognize the philosophical terminology in *The Second Sex*. Take the crucial word "authentic", meaning "to be in good faith". As experts have pointed out, Parshley changed it into "real, genuine, and true". The distinctive existentialist term *pour-soi,* usually translated as "for-itself " (*pour-soi* referring to human consciousness), became "her true nature in itself". Thus, Parshley's "being-in-itself" (*en-soi*, lacking human consciousness) is a reversal of Simone de Beauvoir's meaning. Many other examples have been unearthed and brought to light, such as the use of "alienation", "alterity", "subject", and the verb "to posit", which are by now well documented. One particularly striking example is the title of Volume II; "*L'expérience vécue"* ("Lived Experience") was translated as "Woman's Life Today", weakening the philosophical tenor of the French.

The Second Sex is a philosophical treatise and one of the most important books of the twentieth century, upon which much of the modern feminist movement was built. Beauvoir the philosopher is present right from the start of the book, building on the ideas of Hegel, Marx, Kant, Heidegger, Husserl, and others. She developed, shared, and appropriated these concepts alongside her equally brilliant contemporaries Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Lévi-Strauss, who were redefining philosophy to fit the times. Before it was published, Beauvoir read Lévi-Strauss's *Elementary Structures of Kinship* and learned from and used those ideas in *The Second Sex*. Although the ideas and concepts are challenging, the book was immediately accepted by a general readership.

Throughout our work, we were given the most generous help from the many experts we consulted. In every area Simone de Beauvoir delved into, whether in psychoanalysis, biology, anthropology, or philosophy, they helped us to produce the most authentic English version of her work. But the final translation decisions were our own.

Our goal in this translation has been to conform to the same ideal in English: to say what Simone de Beauvoir said as closely as possible to the way she said it, in a text both readable and challenging.

Translating Just For Fun

KIERAN TAPSELL

In 2007 I walked into the airport bookshop in Bogotá to find something to read on my way home to Sydney. Instead of the usual tawdry airport collection, this was a real bookshop. I bought *El Olvido Que Seremos*[1] by Héctor Abad Faciolince, a writer whose columns I occasionally read in the Colombian magazine, *Semana*. I was fascinated and enthralled by his book, practically finishing it in one sitting on the plane. I wanted my friends to read it, but they couldn't read Spanish, and there was no translation available – it had not yet become a No.1 bestseller. I had at that time been teaching myself Spanish for about ten years and was always looking for more interesting ways to improve my vocabulary. I wrote to Héctor Abad seeking his permission to translate *El Olvido Que Seremos* so that I could give it to my friends. Héctor replied that this was a most unusual request because translating is a lot of hard and often tedious work. He knew, because for many years he worked as a translator from Italian to Spanish. I knew too, but thought that burying my head in a dictionary for a few months was a good way to expand my Spanish vocabulary. I told him he could have the copyright in my translation, for what it was worth, but if he wanted to use it for publication, he should have someone look at it, because I was not even confident that it would be accurate, let alone well written. He very graciously agreed.

Several months later I gave him the translation. My friends were also enthralled by the book. Several used it for their book club discussions. Héctor was amused and flattered to think that someone in "las Antipodas" had translated it "por puro deporte", just for fun.[2] A year later I picked up my translation and leafed through it again and immediately saw that parts of it didn't read well. So I revised it completely. Early in 2010, Héctor told me that an English translation of *El Olvido Que Seremos* was finally going to be published in October and that the publishers had commissioned two distinguished translators, Anne McLean from Canada and Rosalind Harvey from Great Britain. I anxiously awaited *Oblivion: A Memoir*[3] to see how mine fared against theirs. I had a few more disappointing moments comparing the two versions, but they were far fewer and less anguished than would have been the case with my first version.

In my professional life as a lawyer, I always received feedback on whatever I wrote, be it an advice to a client or a submission to the Court. It might be positive, or I might be told it was a load of rubbish – whether by the judge, my opposing lawyers or my client. But there was always feedback. Then I was appointed a part-time judge. I wrote judgments and handed them down, and unless the matter went on appeal, I never received any feedback. No one came up to me in the street to say that my judgment was dripping with wisdom and wit, or that it was a load of codswallop. It just floated out into the ether and disappeared. I really missed that feedback, even the negative stuff, like a lonely child needing attention. I sometimes think that translators are like that because their names are hidden in small print at the front of the book as if they were just typists. Book reviews rarely comment on the translation and, if they do, the comments are usually anodyne, "beautifully translated by…" or something even more banal. Part of the reason has to be that the reviewer will rarely be competent to comment on the translation. In Anne McLean's view, "[w]hen an author's prose is praised by a reviewer who

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[1] Editorial Planeta Colombiana, SA, Bogotá 2006.

[2] Interview with Héctor Abad in the Colombian daily, *El Tiempo*, 4 March 2008. He also mentioned that someone else had done the same thing, translating it into Danish, just for fun.
http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-2849939

[3] London: Old Street Publishing Ltd., 2010.

doesn't think to mention, or maybe doesn't even notice the fact that it was originally written in another language, that means I've done my job".[4] While not being noticed may be a virtue, translators must still feel like abandoned orphans from time to time. As I compared the two translations, and without wishing to be too presumptuous, I passed on my comments to Anne McLean and Rosalind Harvey. Their response was gracious, grateful, and their comments most helpful.

Boyd Tonkin considered that Abad's family memoir deserved classic status.[5] Mario Vargas Llosa writes on the cover jacket: "It is very difficult to summarize *Oblivion: A Memoir* without betraying it, because, like all great works, it is many things at once". Having thus been warned, let me try to summarize it without betraying it. It is essentially a biography of the author's father, Héctor Abad Gómez, a Professor of Public Health at the University of Antioquia who was assassinated by right-wing paramilitaries in August 1987 at a time when, as head of a Human Rights organization, he was condemning the violence on both sides of the conflict in Colombia. Being a biography of the author's father inevitably means it is also an autobiography and, to quote Vargas Llosa again, it is "a true story that is also fiction due to the way it's written and constructed and one of the most eloquent arguments written in our time or any time against terror as an instrument of political action". All autobiography is fiction to some extent because our memories pass through filters. Memories become distorted with time so as to be coherent with our own ideas and image before they become, in author Antonio Vélez's words, "pickled".[6] In chapter 24 of his book, Héctor Abad accepts the fact that all memories are "pickled" versions – a topic to which he returned in a later work, *Traiciones de La Memoria*.[7] But this element of the personal viewpoint also makes an autobiography interesting.

Oblivion: A Memoir has the suspense of García Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*.[8] You know a murder is going to take place, and little bits and pieces are dribbled out in the course of the narrative. It became the No.1 bestseller in South America, much to the author's surprise because he thought it was just a "Colombian story".[9] But clearly it had universal appeal, not the least for Héctor's description of the extraordinary relationship he had with his father. The book's title comes from the first line of a poem by Jorge Luis Borges, "*El olvido que seremos"*, which was scribbled out in his father's handwriting on a piece of paper found in his pocket on the day he was assassinated, together with the paramilitaries' hit list on which his name appeared. The piece of paper had the words "JLB" at the bottom. The poem itself became the reason for another book by Abad, because after the publication of *El Olvido*, a Colombian poet, Harold Alvarado Tenorio, claimed it was not written by Borges but by Tenorio himself, imitating Borges's style, six years after the assassination. In other words, the story about the Borges poem in his father's pocket was pure fiction. *Traiciones de La Memoria*[10] is a wonderful literary detective story about how Abad finally tracked down the poem to the authorship of the blind Borges who died in 1986, the year before the assassination. The book is a non-fiction literary thriller with a touch of Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind.*[11]

The McLean and Harvey translation of *El Olvido Que Seremos* is exquisitely written. I only have to go back to my original translation to realize how easy it can be to butcher a great book. My second attempt has not fared so badly, but almost invariably the flow of their

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[4] Personal correspondence, 28 November 2010.

[5] http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/oblivion-a-memoir-by-hector-abad-6256582.html

[6] Antonio Vélez, *Homo Sapiens* (Bogotá: Villegas Editores, 2006), Ch. 7.

[7] Bogotá: Alfaguara, 2009.

[8] Gabriel García Márquez (Vintage, 2003).

[9] Interview with Héctor Abad in the Colombian daily, *El Tiempo* 4 March 2008. http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/MAM-2849939

[10] Alfaguara, 2009.

[11] Weidenfeld & Nicolson (2001), original title *La Sombra del Viento* (Editorial Planeta S.A., 2002).

language is still better than mine. There were times when I fell into what Anne Pasternak Slater described when reviewing Volokhonsky and Pevear's new translation of her uncle's Dr. Zhivago, "[the translator's] main pitfall is to drift unconsciously into the linguistic aura of his original – in this case, to write a kind of Russified English".[12] In the example below, I drifted right into this pitfall by following the Spanish too closely, while McLean and Harvey neatly sidestepped it with a very concise rendition.

HAF La idea más insoportable de mi infancia era imaginar que mi papá se pudiera morir, y *por eso yo había resuelto tirarme al río Medellín si él llegaba a morirse.*

AMHR As a child the most unbearable idea was that my papa might die, *and I resolved to throw myself into the River Medellin if he did.*[13]

KT The most unbearable thought of my childhood was to imagine that my father could die, and for that reason, *I had resolved to throw myself into the Medellin River if it ever happened that he died.*

There are, of course, many other examples. I subjected my second version to a kind of blind literary tasting by giving some well read friends a collection of some thirty passages from the two translations (including the one above) without identifying which was which and asked them for their preference in terms of ease of reading. The results confirmed my own belief. It was not a clean sweep, but they were two to one in favour of the McLean and Harvey version.

The book presents many of the classic challenges that translators have to face, as well as the normal issues of tone and flavour. For example, it is always difficult to decide whether to leave in some foreign words to keep some of the atmosphere of the original. I first translated "mama" and "papa" to "mum" and "dad" and occasionally dropped into "mother" and "father" in longer paragraphs. When I gave a copy to some friends, they asked me why I had not left it as "mama" and "papa", because every English speaker has heard of "The Mamas and the Papas". So, in the revised version, I took out all the mums and dads and threw in the mamas and the papas. McLean and Harvey opted for my first choice, while generally preferring the more formal "mother" and "father". Anne McLean told me that the reason for their choice was because the author told her that "'papa' is absolutely standard in Medellin and that 'mi papa' is the equivalent of 'mi padre' in Madrid or as far away as Bogotá". Local knowledge always helps in making such choices. McLean and Harvey do occasionally keep some Spanish words to create the local flavour.

HAF —¡*Niñas*! Mi mamá decía siempre «*niñas*» porque las niñas eran más y entonces esa regla gramatical (un hombre entre mil mujeres convierte todo al género masculino) para ella no contaba.

AMRH *Niñas* – !' My mother always called us *niñas* because the girls were a clear majority so therefore the grammatical rule (one man among a thousand women turns the whole group masculine) didn't count for her. (p. 4)

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[12] Anne Pasternak Slater, "Re-reading Dr. Zhivago", *The Guardian*, 6 November 2010. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/nov/06/doctor-zhivago-boris-pasternak-translation

[13] *Oblivion: A Memoir*, p. 2. All subsequent page references to this translation will be given in brackets in the body of this article. The initials "HAF" refer to the original Spanish version of Héctor Abad Faciolince, "AMRH" refers to the Anne McLean and Rosalind Harvey translation, and "KT" to my translation.

KT "*Girls*." My mama always said, "*Girls*", because there were more girls, and then the Spanish grammar rule (one man amongst a thousand women, turns all into the masculine gender), counted for nothing.

"Niña" (girl) is not a word with which many English speakers would be familiar except as a nickname for one phase of the Southern Oscillation Index currently causing havoc in Australia. However, the narrative makes it clear what it means.

It is inevitable that one's own life experiences and cultural background come into play in the choice of language in any translation.[14] The author describes a Colombian shock jock, a Catholic priest, Father Fernando Gómez Mejía who used to attack Héctor Abad Gómez vehemently for his supposed left wing views.

HAF Tenía una columna fija en el diario conservador *El Colombiano*, y un programa radial los domingos, «La Hora Católica».Este presbítero era un fanático botafuegos … que en todo sospechaba pecados de la carne, repartía anatemas a diestra y siniestra, con un sonsonete atrabiliario tan alto y repetitivo que su programa acabó siendo conocido como «La Lora Católica».

AMRH He had a regular column in the Conservative daily *El Colombiano*, and every Sunday presented the radio programme 'Catholic Hour'. This priest was a fanatical troublemaker… He suspected everyone of committing terrible sins of the flesh, and dealt out anathemas left and right, in an irritating drone so high-pitched and monotonous that his programme became known as "Sour-Hour". (p. 40)

KT He had a regular column in the conservative daily, *El Colombiano*, and a radio program on Sundays, called the "Catholic Hour". This priest was a fanatical firebrand… who suspected the sins of the flesh in everything and spewed out anathemas to the left and to the right with a troubled drone so high pitched, that he finished up being called, "The Catholic Parrot".

This passage presents one of those insoluble problems for translators. There is the obvious play on words in the Spanish, "La Hora Católica" with "La Lora Católica", which cannot be reproduced in English. The McLean and Harvey solution was to preserve the word play as best they could with "Sour Hour", although "the Catholic Cockatoo" would also have maintained some alliteration. But for me the most natural solution was to call him "The Catholic Parrot", abandoning the word play, but introducing an allusion for Australian readers to the radio shock jock Alan Jones, who sounds like the secular equivalent of Mejía, droning on in the same monotonous fashion, spewing out his own anathemas through his peculiarly shaped mouth, which earned him the nickname, "The Parrot". The "Catholic Parrot" fitted like a glove as well as being an accurate translation of "La Lora Católica".

The problem of a translation being too literal was a trap, into which I often fell, but there was one occasion when I thought McLean and Harvey did too. The author describes how a resourceful uncle paid for his architecture studies by playing his violin at "serenatas", which McLean and Harvey translate as "serenades" and which I translated as "by busking". My image of a serenade is of a love-sick poetry student, starving in a garret, playing his guitar to his beloved under her window while her parents keep the front door firmly locked in the hope that she might show some interest in her other suitor, the ambitious young stockbroker with a Porsche. The idea that anyone would be paid for "serenades" seemed to me to reduce it to the

[14] For an interesting and more detailed discussion of the influence of a translator's background on a translation, see Peter Bush, "The Centrality of a Translator's Culture: Fernando de Rojas's *Celestina* and the Creation of Style in Translation", *The AALITRA Review*, 2 (November 2010), 21-36.

level of the bordello. I thought "busking" was not only more contemporary, but stopped the serenade from being wrenched from the realm of the romantic into the world of the bottom line.

The following passage is another illustration of a classic conundrum in translation. The author writes about their maid from Medellin who came to live with them in Mexico where his father was the cultural ambassador. As a result of the trip, the maid adopted Mexican idioms which she still uses today.

HAF	No dice «a la orden», como nosotros, sino «mande»; y no dice «¡cuidado!» sino «¡aguas!», ni «vamos», sino «ándele».
AMRH	She doesn't say "a la orden" for "how can I help you?" like we do here but "mande"; she doesn't say "cuidado!*"* (look out!) but "aguas!*"*, and not "vamos!*"* (let's go), but "ándele!*"*. (p. 178)
KT	She does not say, "at your service", like we do, but "it's a pleasure". She does not say, "take care" but "keep calm", she does not say, "let's go", but "let's hit it".

My "Mexicanisms" are entirely and necessarily fictional and I am not sure which solution is better.

Another problem that arises these days in translation is what might loosely be termed "politically correct" language. In Chapter 8 the author tells the story about an adversary of his father at the University, whose nickname was "El Tuerto Jaramillo", "tuerto" meaning "one-eyed". I translated this as "One-Eyed Jaramillo", without missing a beat. If Dr. Jaramillo had lived in Australia, he might well have been called "Cyclops", and I would have used it in my translation had I thought of it at the time. However, McLean and Harvey make no reference to the nickname. The same thing happens in Chapter 41 when the narrator is talking about his exile in Madrid where he meets up with the slightly mad Alberto Aguirre who recites the poetry of "El Tuerto López". McLean and Harvey use his given name, Luis Carlos López,[15] whereas I went for the "One-Eyed López" again. These omissions may have been an editor's concession to political correctness. But if the editors were inclined to succumb to political correctness there, it did not happen in Chapter 21 where a black swimming coach, referred to as "el negro Torres" in the Spanish, becomes a nickname "El Negro Torres" in the McLean and Harvey translation. "Negro" in South America is a common enough nickname without having the pejorative overtones that it has in the English-speaking world. I was the one to succumb this time to political correctness by calling him "a black man named Torres". I also suspected that McLean and Harvey had succumbed to avoiding gender bias when translating "sobrinos" in a chant by a madman in an asylum: "Yo tengo unos sobrinos bananeros que viven en Apartadó" ("I have some nephews, banana growers, who live in Apartadó") (pp. 172 and 174). "Sobrinos" means nephews, but it can also mean nephews and nieces following the Spanish grammar rule that if one member of a group is male, then the masculine form is used.[16] In the McLean and Harvey version this becomes "cousins" which is gender neutral in English, but I simply translated it as "nephews", with the understandable excuse that if they were growing bananas in Apartadó, they were more likely to be male anyway. However, Anne McLean told me that they were not being politically correct at all. It was a genuine mistake which will be corrected in the next edition.

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[15] It seems he was popularly known as "Tuerto López".
http://www.encolombia.com/medicina/academedicina/academ25161-comentariotuerto.htm

[16] This is the same rule referred to earlier, where the author's mother always called the children "girls" ("niñas"), ignoring the rule that just one boy would turn them all into "niños".

Another problem that frequently arises in translation is whether or not one should try and imitate the author's style. Abad is a great admirer of Proust[17] and in chapter 18 there are hilarious descriptions of people attending some Catholic devotions, where ten sentences contain between seventeen and twenty-eight lines each, imitating the French master. I did the best I could to preserve that, but sometimes had to cut it in a few places for it to flow in English. One sentence of twenty eight lines which I did manage to preserve, McLean and Harvey (p. 106) cut into six shorter sentences. Anne McLean explained the reason for this:

> In general, I almost always try to translate into sentences as long as those of the authors I translate, even though it's very conventional in Spanish and not so in English. But there are lots of serious writers in English who do write long sentences. In this case, however, our editor persuaded me that we should aim for clarity above all else. The story had to have every chance to come out as simply as possible, which really isn't easy for readers in English with page-long sentences. So, we all agreed he was right to chop up quite a few of our long sentences we'd sweated over.

I have to admit, their translation of these sections is much easier to read.

One word that is repeated throughout the book when describing Héctor Abad Gómez's reactions to something is a "carcajada". The Academia Real Española says it means "risa impetuosa y ruidosa", or an "impulsive, noisy laugh". The Oxford Spanish Dictionary says it means a "guffaw" which generally appears in English dictionaries as a "loud and hearty laugh" or something similar. The English word lacks the onomatopoeic attraction of the Spanish and maybe for this reason is not often used. There does not seem to be much doubt that "carcajada" means something more than just laughter. However, McLean and Harvey translate it in three places (pp. 10, 13, 20) as a "chuckle", and in one place, when Héctor's sisters laugh at the way he parts his hair, it becomes a "chorus of giggles" (p. 5). In eight other places (pp. 28, 39, 42, 47,102, 114, 142, 241) McLean and Harvey raised the decibel level from a "chuckle" to a "laugh" but no further. And in one place (p. 238), but not in relation to Héctor Abad Gómez, it is not translated at all. Four times McLean and Harvey give it the dictionary meaning where it could not be avoided: "riéndose a las carcajadas" becomes "roaring with laughter" (p. 29), soltó una carcajada becomes "bursting with laughter" (p. 127) and "laughed out loud" (p.181), "estruendosas carcajadas" becomes "resounding laughter" (p.114). But most of the time, the decibel level in their translation has been reduced. I also reduced "carcajada" to a "laugh" on five occasions, sometimes to avoid repetition and sometimes where "roaring with laughter" or something similar did not seem to fit in with the mood. But in the rest of my version, Héctor Abad Gómez is laughing loudly, roaring, bursting, cackling, cracking up, splitting his sides or letting out streams of it. This would not matter in the overall context of a superb translation, except that the word "carcajada" occurs fifteen times throughout the text and in all but two instances it refers to Héctor Abad Gomez's reaction to many of the situations he confronted. Here some examples of the differences in tone and volume:

HAF —¡ Muy bien! —decía mi papá con *una carcajada de satisfacción*, y me felicitaba con un gran beso en la mejilla, al lado de la oreja. Sus besos, grandes y sonoros, nos aturdían *y se quedaban retumbando en el tímpano, como un recuerdo doloroso y feliz, durante mucho tiempo*.

AMRH "Very good", my father would say with a *satisfied chuckle*, and congratulate me with a big kiss on the cheek, next to my ear. His kisses, large and resounding, deafened us and *rang in our ears for a long time afterwards, like a memory at once happy and painful.* (p.10)

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[17] "Some people find Proust boring and Joyce fascinating; for me it is the exact opposite" (pp. 179-80).

KT "Very good", my papa used to say, with a *satisfied roar of laughter*, and he congratulated me with a big kiss on the cheek, close to my ear. His big and noisy kisses used to deafen us, and *they hung about booming in our eardrums for a long time, like a painful but happy memory*.

In chapter 10, the author states how a gynaecologist friend of his father's made quite a handsome living out of removing the wombs of nuns on the basis of an outlandish and concocted theory that unused wombs gave birth to fibrous tumours.

HAF Mi papá, con una picardía que ni mi mamá ni el arzobispo ni la madre Berenice aprobaban, decía que este doctor no hacía eso como negocio, ni mucho menos, sino para evitar problemas con las anunciaciones de los ángeles o del Espíritu Santo. Y soltaba *una carcajada blasfema* mientras recitaba unas coplas famosas de Ñito Restrepo:

> Una monja se embuchó
> De tomar agua bendita
> Y el embuche que tenía
> Era una monja chiquita.

AMRH My father, with a mischievous impiety neither my mother nor Mother Berenice, let alone the archbishop, approved of, would joke that the doctor's motive was not to make money, but to avoid any awkwardness between the angels of the Annunciation and the "Holy Spirit". Then he'd *laugh blasphemously* and recite some famous lines by Antonio José "Ñito" Restrepo:

> A nun swelled up
>
> After drinking holy water
>
> And the swelling she had
>
> Was a little holy daughter. (p.47)

KT My papa made a mischievous comment that my mama, the Archbishop, and Mother Berenice did not appreciate, when he said that this doctor was not performing these operations so much for his medical business, but to get around the problems that arose when the nuns were visited by the angels or the Holy Spirit. And he *let out a blasphemous cackle* while he recited a famous verse of Nito Restrepo

> A nun grew a gut
>
> From holy water she sup't
>
> But the gut was so often
>
> A little nun in the oven.

This is one of the very few times when I think the McLean and Harvey version does not accurately reflect the meaning of the Spanish text. The point about the limerick is a reference to the Annunciation where Mary was visited by the Angel and the Holy Spirit and she becomes pregnant, "to the Holy Spirit", and not to her husband, Joseph. The awkwardness was not "between the angels of the Annunciation and the 'Holy Spirit" – there never was any

awkwardness between them according to Luke's Gospel. They were colleagues of the Incarnation. The awkwardness (or "problems" in my version) was convincing everyone that once again a nun had become pregnant to the Holy Spirit. The removal of the womb removed the problem because they couldn't get pregnant, something which is made obvious in the next paragraph. As to the limerick, well, mine doesn't quite rhyme in the last line, and the metre (so far as my poetic deafness can detect it) in theirs is better. But mine sounds a bit more blasphemous and disrespectful. And I think a "blasphemous cackle" is a bit closer to the "carcajada" mark than "laughing blasphemously".

Another example of more restrained language occurs in this passage:

HAF Cuando mi papá llegaba de su trabajo en la Universidad, podía venir de dos maneras: de mal genio, o de buen genio. Si llegaba de buen genio —lo cual ocurría casi siempre pues era una persona casi siempre feliz— *desde que entraba se oían* sus *maravillosas, estruendosas carcajadas, como campanadas de risa y alegría.*

AMRH When my father got back from the university, he would arrive in one of two states: in a bad mood, or a good mood. If he arrived in a good mood – which was almost always as he was a generally happy person – *you could hear his wonderful, resounding laughter, like the chiming of joyous bells*, *from the moment he came through the door.* (p.114)

McLean and Harvey's "resounding laughter" hit a similar decibel level to my "thunderous laughter" for "estruendosas carcajadas", but I had other visions of that belfry.

KT When my papa came home from work at the University, he could be in a good mood or a bad one. If he arrived in a good mood, - which normally happened as he was generally a happy person, *–his amazing thunderous laughter rang out from the time he came in, like a belfry gone bonkers with happiness*.

McLean, Harvey and I are agreed on one thing: none of us wanted to use "guffaw" for "carcajada", despite the dictionary meaning. Most of the time I thought "bursting with laughter" or something similar did fit, and that is what the Spanish said. It was this exuberant characteristic of his father that I felt the author wanted to get across. As I read the book, Héctor Abad Gómez didn't just laugh, let alone chuckle. He nearly wet himself. And not just a couple of times, but regularly and sometimes inappropriately. The whole book is an impressionistic painting of Héctor Abad Gómez, and everywhere it has been beautifully painted in English by Anne McLean and Rosalind Harvey. But in one tiny corner of this Colombian painting, I saw a brilliant red, the "carcajada". In their version, in all other respects as good as the original and maybe even better, this brilliant red has been photoshopped into a reddish brown.

This toning down of "carcajada" is consistent with the whole McLean and Harvey translation, which uses much more restrained language than mine. There are other indications of a more restrained mood. In chapter 3, the author describes how he used to ask his father to let him see a dead body in the anatomy room at the University. Finally his father relented but the effect on the young Héctor was to terrify him so that he became aware "que en el pecho me palpitaba el corazon". For McLean and Harvey that became, "of my heart beating in my chest", whereas in my version it was "of my heart belting away in my chest". In chapter 6, the author writes about the general Colombian stand offish attitude amongst males in showing affection to each other, except by grandes palmadas. This becomes in their version, "backslapping" (p.241), whereas I thought the Spanish was stronger and preferred "vigorous backslapping". In

chapter 7, the Spanish is "las barriadas más miserables de Medellín". McLean and Harvey translate this as "the poorest neighbourhoods of Medellín (p.31) whereas my version is "the most miserable slums of Medellin" (and having seen some of them, this is not too strong.) Again, in another place, the softer "poor neighbourhoods" is used in preference to "slums". In chapter 11, the author describes his holiday employment in his mother's strata management business where he had to deal with such thorny issues like "excrementos de perros", which in the McLean and Harvey translation is "dog excrement" (p.61) whereas in mine it is "dog shit". Likewise, where Héctor describes moving to an all boys school where the only objects of sexual desire were other boys, McLean and Harvey have, "the most libidinous of us could not help being turned on" (p.52), whereas mine, more concise for a change, is "We horny ones got turned on." Anne McLean told me that their original version used "horny", but the editor decided to tone it down. In chapter 9, the author describes the Archbishop of Medellín as having a "barriga…prominente", which, for McLean and Harvey becomes "prominent belly" (p.41). I was less flattering, describing it as a "huge beer gut". When Héctor is talking about the school he attended he says that the teachers followed "las sutilezas mentales del doctor de la Iglesia, Santo Tomás de Aquino", which for McLean and Harvey became "the intricate intellectual pathways laid by the Church's doctor, Saint Thomas Aquinas" (p.81). My translation, influenced partly by a personal view of the Angelic Doctor, and partly because I thought Abad was being ironic, is somewhat harsher: "following the mental gymnastics of St. Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Church". Another example of the restraint is where the author is talking about a family member who was the Consul in Havana. He is described as "un poco más vividor que sus hermanos". McLean and Harvey translate this as "a little livelier than his brothers" (p.91). The dictionary meaning of "vividor" is of a playboy or bon vivant, the word which I chose. That is not to say that "vividor" could not have their extended meaning, but it is another instance of choosing the more restrained of a choice of meanings. In chapter 33, the author describes being handed over to the "loqueros" in a lunatic asylum after a car accident. McLean and Harvey describe them as "attendants" (p.172), but I could not resist the more colloquial "loony bin nurses". I have already mentioned the shock jock priest who, according to the original Spanish "repartía anatemas…". In McLean and Harvey's translation, the *priest "dealt out anathemas"* (p.40), whereas for me, he "spewed" them out.

These comments about Anne McLean and Rosalind Harvey's more restrained and gentler translation are not meant to be a criticism, but an indication of a preference in interpretation. I can't help thinking that mine, stereotypically, is a more aggressive, masculine translation and theirs is a gentler, more lyrical and feminine one, and therefore, for some people, more attractive. The difference reflects very well Edith Grossmann's view in *Why Translation Matters*,[18] that translation is an interpretative act: just as there will be different interpretations of Bach's Goldberg Variations, so there will also be in choosing translated text for a foreign language. One has to expect that there will be differences in tone, texture and colour. And likewise different people will warm to those differences in different ways, or be turned off by them. And just as a pianist in playing the Goldberg Variations can hit a wrong note, where it is not really a matter of interpretation, so too can the translator. I hit several "wrong notes" and I found a couple of McLean and Harvey's rare ones. Where the right notes have been hit, but are played differently, they reflect the different choices of interpretation that we have made.

But leaving aside any wrong notes, there is an interesting difference in tone, texture and colour that seems to be consistent throughout both translations. Part of the reason for this may be that McLean and Harvey had the advantage of discussions with the author, whereas once he gave me permission to do the unofficial translation, I did not feel like bothering a busy man. That does not make my stronger version any less valid, any more than Stravinski's conducting

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[18] Yale University Press, 2010. See the reviews by Brian Nelson and Jorge Salavert: *The AALITRA Review*, 2 (November 2010), 48-56, and a somewhat more critical review by M.A. Ortofer at http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/translate/grossme.htm.

his own *Firebird Suite* has set his music in concrete. But I think most people would find – as my friends in the blind literary tasting did – that the McLean and Harvey version is more attractive, even for those who might prefer my stronger language, because theirs is much more concise. One of the things I most admired is their taking the meaning from the Spanish text and reducing it into very simple, concise English. It is not surprising that a word count reveals that their version is ten percent shorter than mine with no loss of meaning. Perhaps my verbosity derives from the lawyers' practice of charging by the folio.

At the end of many months buried in dictionaries on two separate occasions with *El Olvido Que Seremos*, I came away with a much expanded vocabulary – I learned a lot about hitting the right notes. Another few months spent comparing the McLean and Harvey version with mine did not add so much to my vocabulary – the lure of those translation sirens, the "false friends", entrapped me only a few times, and there was the occasional miss of an idiomatic saying. I had, by and large, hit the right notes. But Anne McLean and Rosalind Harvey showed me how to avoid the "linguistic aura of the original Spanish" and to wean myself off four decades of legalese and the osmotic habits accumulated from reading thousands of generally dreary court judgments. They gave me some great lessons in how to write simple, concise, and exquisite English, even when it is just for fun.

Translation of Contemporary Chinese Literature in the English-speaking World: An Interview with Nicky Harman

LI HAO

Nicky Harman is a well-known London-based Chinese-English literary translator, who has been doing the job for more than ten years. Her major works include *K: The Art of Love*[1] by Hong Ying,[2] *Banished!*[3] by Han Dong,[4] and most recently *Gold Mountain Blues*[5] by Zhang Ling,[6] which was published at the end of 2011. Beyond her work in translation itself, she is very active in promoting Chinese literature to the English-speaking world. She helped to develop Paper Republic, a website aimed at making Chinese authors and Chinese-English translators visible to Western publishers. She is the Chinese-to-English Workshop Leader of the International Literary Translation Summer School administered by the British Centre for Literary Translation, and she organizes bimonthly book club meetings in London, reading contemporary Chinese fiction and discussing translation techniques and theories with other translators. Recently she gave up her job as a lecturer in Scientific Translation at Imperial College London and became a freelance translator. This interview was conducted after the annual Awards Ceremony of *The Independent* Foreign Fiction Prize in London in May 2011.

Translation of Chinese Literature in the English-speaking World: The Current Situation

Li Hao (LH): Why did you decide to leave your teaching job at the Imperial College and become a full-time freelance translator?

Nicky Harman (NH): I'm fully aware that as a freelancer you can never guarantee that you'll have enough work. But one thing I realized was that I wanted to do as much literary translation as I could. I have fewer financial commitments now and a very supportive husband, so I thought it was time for me to take a leap into the unknown. It's quite an unpredictable business, and whether you can actually make a living out of it, well, some people do, but many people don't. They just do it as a sideline. I thought now it's time for me to stop doing it as a sideline. That means not only doing the translation, but also talking about it to people, running courses about it, and committing myself completely to Chinese to English translation.

LH: Are there many translators working full-time?

NH: No, not many people work as full-time translators from Chinese to English. I know one, Howard Goldblatt.[7] In a way, that inspired me, though my decision was personal. I know a few Chinese to English translators who really try to fit in as much as they can, but they do need to do other work.

LH: What role does translated literature play in British literature? Do you think Chinese translated works are an important part of it?

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[1] Hong Ying, Nicky Harman and Yiheng Zhao, *K: The Art of Love* (London: Marion Boyars, 2002).
[2] Hong Ying is a Chinese writer and poet, best known for her autobiographical novel *Daughter of the River* (1998).
[3] Han Dong and Nicky Harman, *Banished!* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009).
[4] Han Dong is a Chinese Avant-Garde poet, essayist, novelist and short-story writer.
[5] Published simultaneously by Penguin Canada and Atlantic Books (UK).
[6] Zhang Ling is a Canadian-Chinese writer.
[7] Howard Goldblatt is a research professor at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, USA. He is a translator of numerous works of modern and contemporary Chinese literature, including *Wolf Totem* (2008) by Jiang Rong and *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out* (2008) by Mo Yan.

NH: That is a very good question since we are here today at *The Independent* Foreign Fiction Festival. On the face of it, the answer is very little. But if you dig a little bit down below the surface, you'll find that some languages are becoming incredibly influential in translation, like French, Russian, Italian, and Latin American writings. Most of them are European languages. As for Chinese writers, I think it's a slow process for them to enter the English literary world. One major reason is that Chinese writing is very different. It's not so much that it's untranslatable, but the writers and readers have different concerns. Many Chinese writers focus on life in the countryside, because that's been important in Chinese culture. It's less appealing in the industrialized West. There's a growing and very interesting trend of overseas writers like Zhang Ling and Yan Geling,[8] who maintain every link with China, win prizes in China, write in Chinese, but actually don't live in China. Their styles of writing have subtly taken on some of the concerns that Western readers look for in writing. I'm not saying that they've become Westernized, but I think that they are rather more outward-looking in their writing style, so it's easier for them to appeal to Western readers.

LH: So you think it's very important for Chinese writing to appeal to Western readers? Don't you think it's much more important for them to remain different?

NH: I don't mean Chinese writing should try to appeal to Western readers. But if they want to be popular in translation, there's got to be a sense of cultural oneness, or shared concerns. You might ask why that should matter to Chinese writers. Why should they change? It's an interesting problem to argue about. But I'm certainly not saying that Chinese writers should change in order to appeal.

LH: Considering the current situation of Chinese-English translated literature, what has been done to raise its profile? I remember you used to talk about Paper Republic, which is a very good website, not only for translators, but also for publishers and readers.

NH: I can only talk about what has happened in the UK. Newspapers like *The Independent* and *The Guardian* have done quite a lot. And arts organizations like the Arts Council in England have given money. If you give money you make lots of things possible. Eric Abrahamsen,[9] who is the founder of Paper Republic, and I spent a whole year working on the website, and we put in many hours, far more than what we got paid for, and developed it. It's very successful as a website and far more influential than it used to be. There was a period when I was working almost full-time on it. That could not have been done without getting any payment.

LH: So Paper Republic is getting more influential in the UK. Are there many publishers coming to the website looking for information?

NH: I would say it is becoming more influential all over the world, because it's a website. More and more publishers are going there, either to look for what books might be available or to look for translators. This was always something that we hoped might happen, that the website would lead publishers to translators. And it did: I got a commission when someone looked at my profile on Paper Republic, and the same happened to Anna Holmwood.[10]

LH: I know you are Anna's mentor in Chinese-English translation. Would you say something about this program?

NH: Yes, I was her mentor on a very good scheme run by the British Centre for Literary Translation, which is a part of the University of East Anglia, and The Translators' Association. That is another initiative which has done something to improve the situation of translators. So you see many things have happened since I started translating ten years ago. But it's a slow process.

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[8] Yan Geling is an American-Chinese writer whose most famous novels include *The Banquet Bug* (2006) and *The Lost Daughter of Happiness* (1996).

[9] Eric Abrahamsen is a Beijing based Chinese-English translator.

[10] Anna Holmwood has an MA from Oxford University and SOAS, University of London. She has been working as a freelance translator since 2010.

Translation Technology and Literary Translation

LH: Since you used to teach scientific translation to MSc students at Imperial College, do you think literary translation is similar to that? Is literary translation more of a talent or a skill? Can it be taught as technical translation?

NH: I think there are certain issues in Chinese to English translation which cross over between technical and literary translation. There are certain issues of style, which affect any kind of translation from Chinese. I would say it's both a skill and a talent, and it helps if you love your own language as passionately as you love the other language. So, yes, it's a skill which can be taught and which you have to work on very hard. But on the other hand, if someone doesn't have a 'feel' for language, and they are not prepared to work on it, then I don't think they are likely to be good literary translators.

LH: Did your teaching have any influence on your practice of literary translation?

NH: Yes, in a minor way. In a sense it made me analyze just what it was about Chinese which made it difficult to render into English, not from the grammar point of view, but from the style point of view.

LH: To what extent does translation technology influence literary translation?

NH: Very little. Perhaps only when you need to make your terminology consistent in a very long work. Translation technology programs are sophisticated forms of database, which enable you to remember how you translated certain words or sentences before, and remind you to do it the same way the next time, so that your translation is consistent. Now that I'm getting to do longer and longer works, I find it necessary to remember just how I translated a certain term. Having said that, I don't use a database myself because a database is such a complex thing and I worry about it crashing and losing my translation. But what I do do is create a simple glossary and add to and consult it as I go along. The other main function of translation technology programs – to reproduce the same or similar sentences in a repetitive text – is really irrelevant as basically you're not going to get repeated sentences in literary translation.

LH: Even if there are repeated sentences in literary works, they may have different meanings in a different context. Do you think so?

NH: Yes, I do.

Translators and Their Role in the Industry

LH: Who are the translators working on Chinese-English literary translation? Do they all have related academic backgrounds?

NH: Some do, but most come from very varied backgrounds and some have special areas of expertise, like film subtitling, and so on. If you look on Paper Republic, you'll see where they come from. Some do consultancy work as well as translation. Another is a journalist, and likes translating sci-fi. So you get different people from different backgrounds. In London, there's Julia Lovell,[11] who's an academic. One problem is that as a UK academic, your translation work is rarely recognized or valued by your institution, but she still does it because she's committed to it.

LH: Do you think translation theories are important for translators to learn?

NH: To a certain extent, yes. Personally, I think that translation theory has enriched my outlook on translation. For example, Christiane Nord[12] talks about honoring the intention of the author. What was the author's intention when he or she wrote that? I find that's a very useful

[11] Julia Lovell is a lecturer in modern Chinese history and literature at Birkbeck College, University of London, and also a translator of contemporary Chinese fiction.

[12] Christiane Nord is the former chair of Translation Studies and Specialized Communication at the University of Applied Sciences, Magdeburg, Germany. She is the representative of the second-generation Skopos theorists in translation studies.

concept. For example, if you have a Chinese author who you know is trying to be funny, then you must make that paragraph funny because that's the author's intention. So rather than focusing solely on the actual words of the text – though they are of course important – it's important for the translator to consider the author's intention.

LH: So you think it's important for translators to communicate with authors if possible?

NH: That's ideal. I have had very fruitful working relationships with authors. Either they check the whole book from beginning to end, or chapter by chapter. Of course that assumes that they understand enough English to read your translation. On the other hand, one of my favourite authors, Han Dong, doesn't understand English, so I can't consult him.

LH: Do you think translated literature has its own life in the target culture? Is it independent from the original work?

NH: Yes, I think it does. Translated literature is like a son or daughter and the original work is the mother or father, if you like. It has an independent existence, but it couldn't have existed without the mother or father.

LH: Do you think the "son" or "daughter" should be different in some ways in order to appeal to the target readers since they are in a different world and the target readership is always different from the original?

NH: I don't know. Personally I've never done what is called "rewriting". This is particularly common with children's books. A friend of mine in Nanjing translated *Alice in Wonderland* into Chinese, and she was asked to rewrite it. Actually when I compared her version to the original, I discovered that she hadn't "rewritten" it very much. She carried lots of original concepts and words over, even though they were very "English".

LH: Do you think the translators play an important role in the whole industry?

NH: In Chinese to English translation, yes. One reason is that most publishers and editors can't understand Chinese. They are very dependent on the translator, unless the authors are able to present themselves sufficiently well and convincingly.

LH: So translators do a lot of work in addition to translating itself.

NH: Yes. Chinese to English translators do. They sometimes have to be promoters, and agents as well, often without payment.

LH: Do publishers and editors interfere with the work?

NH: "Interfere" sounds negative. But editors can improve a translation too, by polishing it. I try not to get too possessive about "my" words, and in fact I've been lucky with my translations. Either almost nothing has been changed, or editorial changes have been largely positive. Even with my newly translated work *Gold Mountain Blues* by Zhang Ling, which is pretty long, they didn't cut it. I was happy with that, because I feel it's such a well constructed story that it shouldn't be cut.

LH: I've noticed that in Britain, there are far more women translators than men. What do you think are the reasons? Is it because women are better at languages or because it's a part-time job?

NH: I have no idea. On the whole, in humanities subjects there are a lot of women, but I don't think it has anything to do with women's different abilities. It's also not because it's a part-time job because many translators I know work more than full-time. I really don't know the reasons.

LH: How do you choose the works to translate?

NH: I'd love to say that I choose the best writing and publishers pay me to translate it! But on the whole it's not true. I realize I'm not very good at selling my personally preferred authors. Some of the authors I most admire probably won't ever be best-sellers in the West. So, mainly,

I translate what publishers offer me. And how they choose their books can be a bit random and down to personal contacts. After all, there are so many books in print in China.

LH: So you think your standards are different from publishers' standards? What are your standards then?

NH: I'm very aware that I don't really know how publishers choose books. After all, I'm not a publisher or an agent. My standard is that the work must be well-written and well-crafted. And it must appeal to me personally.

LH: I remember in our last book club meeting you mentioned that Han Dong is a good author because his language is very simple.

NH: Yes, his language is apparently simple but incredibly carefully chosen. It's clear but in a really beautiful way. He is very subtle and ironic. He has very much his own style but it's interesting that he greatly admires certain authors who have been translated into Chinese like Raymond Carver and Kafka.

LH: I also remember you mentioned that authors like Yu Hua[13] wrote a lot of "crap", is that right?

NH: No, I don't mean "crap" in the sense that he wrote rubbish. He wrote a lot *about* "crap", much of his language is what we call scatological.

LH: So you think that's quite different from the Western style of writing?

NH: Yes, I think so. I think on the whole Western writers don't tend to write very much about things like toilet functions, the way that Chinese writers, especially men, do.

LH: So you won't choose writers like Yu Hua to translate?

NH: I wouldn't say that at all. It's fine that he wrote about "crap". Han Dong writes a lot about "crap" as well. I just regard that as a theme or a style. It's the quality of their writing that counts, while the theme can be anything.

LH: Do you think works related to women are more attractive to publishers?

NH: Perhaps, but I think it also very much depends on the writing and the story.

LH: I've also noticed that publishers seem to be more interested in political issues in China, so books related to the Cultural Revolution and so on are more popular.

NH: I think that's really past. I think most publishers don't expect to get yet another book about the Cultural Revolution now. There was the "Wild Swans"[14] effect, which meant that lots of writers got their memoirs from that period published.

LH: But you think it's not the case now?

NH: It was the case about twenty years ago, but we have moved on a bit. We've realized that China is a more complicated place.

LH: But Han Dong's novel *Banished!*, which you translated, is also about the Cultural Revolution, isn't it?

NH: Yes, it was set in the Cultural Revolution, but it really was about other things. It was about a boy growing up, about his relationship with his father, about a writer's relationship to literature and politics. It had a lot to say about those things. It wasn't a "misery memoir", not at all. It was actually quite funny.

LH: Why hasn't the novel been published in the UK? Why aren't the publishers here

[13] Yu Hua is one of China's best-known novelists, whose major works include *To Live* (1993) and *Brothers* (2005, 2006).
[14] *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*, published in 1991, is a family history recounting the hard lives of three female generations in China by the Chinese-British writer Jung Chang. The book has been translated into 30 languages and sold over 10 million copies.

interested?

NH: Well, I did try very hard to get publishers interested. Perhaps publishers in the UK go for something that really grabs the readers' attention, like Yu Hua's *Brothers*.[15] Han Dong's book is much quieter, and much more subtle.

LH: So the situation has changed but not much, is that right?

NH: It has changed, but yes, China and the West are still two very different worlds, in literary terms.

LH: Since Chinese to English translators play a very important role in the translation industry, do you think some of them may take the opportunity to manipulate the translated works?

NH: "Manipulating" implies "rewriting" and changing. I can't see that happening without the writer and the publisher being involved at the outset.

LH: Do you think translators greatly influence the choice of works to be translated?

NH: We translators would love to think that we've influenced the choice, but very often it's completely random. It can just be because the author is in the right place at the right time, or speaks English, or the publisher has been told about a single author.

LH: Do you think translators should be creative in their translation?

NH: I think they have to be. Unless they are creative, they are not honouring the intentions of the author. If the author wants their writing to be emotionally engaging, and uses a particular style of language to get that over, then you've got to do the same. Since Chinese as a language is so different from English, you have to be creative.

LH: So you think the translators shouldn't put their subjective intentions into the translation project, as did the Canadian feminist translators, is that right?

NH: That's a difficult one. I very much sympathize with the theory and practice of the feminist translators. I've never actually been in a position to carry it out myself. I think it would be fascinating to do, but I haven't done it. The most subversive I get is to make someone female when the original Chinese doesn't specify a gender but the English requires it!

Personal Experience as a Translator

LH: How did you cooperate with Henry Zhao[16] in translating *K: the Art of Love*?

NH: Henry had done a translation himself, but that was a translation by a non-native English speaker, which was not appropriate for publishers. It just wasn't English enough. So then I translated the book and he acted as a kind of mentor. It was my first novel, and he checked each chapter as I did it. That's one kind of collaboration.

LH: When you say it wasn't English enough, do you mean if the translator is Chinese, his or her language may be too foreignized for English readers to accept? Is it a rule that translators should always translate into their mother tongues?

NH: That's the general rule, and I think that's pretty important for Chinese to English translation. You've got to consider the reader of the target language translation. Why should they read a book that's written in poor English? And it doesn't do the original writer justice either.

Going back to collaborative translations, there are many different kinds. I've done very interactive collaborations with Chinese people who've been interested in literary translation, and we actually sat down and debated the text and produced the translation together. That's

[15] Yu Hua, Eileen Cheng-yin Chow and Carlos Rojas, *Brothers* (New York: Pantheon, 2009).

[16] Henry Zhao is a scholar in Comparative Literature and a translator of many works by Hong Ying, the Chinese novelist and poet.

very creative but it's also time-consuming.

LH: Like the China Fiction Book Club you organize bimonthly here in London?

NH: Yes, the Book Club, where we do collective translations, though not for publication. And I also did a short story together with Pang Zhaoxia, a Chinese teacher here in London. She is a very good person to work with, always helping me to see some of the underlying meanings.

LH: Do you think collaboration is the best model to do Chinese to English translation?

NH: I enjoy it but I wouldn't go as far as to say it's the best model. It might inhibit you as an individual translator, interrupt the flow if you know what I mean! Also sometimes you're not given enough time. I like discussing my translation with others, but I do need to be given enough time by the publisher to do that. At the very least I'd like a Chinese person to have checked it, because we all make mistakes.

LH: Do you think there is a gender difference in the language of translation?

NH: I don't think so. But I know a Chinese female writer Xue Xinran,[17] who strongly believes there is, and she always wants a woman translator. I can't quite see where the differences lie between men and women translators. I think there are far more differences between American English and British English.

LH: You've translated some works by female writers and some by male writers. Have you noticed any gender differences in their languages?

NH: No. It entirely depends on the writer.

LH: Do you find women's works or the female characters in the works easier to identify with?

NH: Sometimes. In my recent translation *Gold Mountains Blues*, I think Zhang Ling, the author, has done a fantastic job of creating a matriarchal figure, telling her story from her girlhood to her old age. She is a very complex and sympathetic character, more so, to me, than her husband.

LH: In the translation of *K: The Art of Love*, what do you think of the two main characters Julian and Lin?

NH: I didn't particularly feel I was drawn to either of them. What I liked in *K* was that I thought Hong Ying had done a great job in describing just how an upper class young English male writer would perceive and react to 1930s China.

LH: Do you think Lin in the book appeals to the western readers as an erotic oriental woman?

NH: Perhaps. I was satisfied in the way the character was drawn. In a sense the book is about Julian rather than about her.

LH: Do you think this novel is feminist in a certain way? Some people think it's a story of a May Fourth new woman's sexual liberation.

NH: No. I think that to find it feminist I would have to find her a more engaging character. I didn't find myself drawn to her.

LH: Do you think there are stereotypes of Chinese women in the West?

NH: Yes. You can see that through the eyes of Julian Bell. And I'm quite sure there are still Western men who would just love the idea that oriental women are compliant, attentive, delicate, not too dominating, etc.

LH: Do you think translated literature will strengthen these stereotypes?

NH: I don't think so. I really don't see that as the main problem. Actually what I see as the

[17] Xue Xinran, also known as Xinran, is a British-Chinese writer, whose major works include *The Good Women of China: Hidden Voices* (2003) and *China Witness: Voices from a Silent Generation* (2008).

main problem is that Westerners know so little about China, and it takes them a long time to learn.

LH: Do you think the stereotypes will influence translators in their translation of the image of women?

NH: Personally, I can only speak for myself. No. I translate what's in front of me. I'm not in the business of creating a different slant on a work. That comes back to the author's intention. I'm the servant of the author.

REVIEW

James St André (ed.), *Thinking through Translation with Metaphors* (Manchester and Kinderhook: St Jerome, 2010)

JORGE SALAVERT

On the numerous occasions – mainly at social gatherings – that I have been asked by people who do not speak or write a second language to explain how I translate literature, I have always felt the temptation (or rather the need) to explain literary translation by means of an analogy. The fact is that metaphor is fundamental to the mental structuring we apply to our abstractions of the world. We only have to consider how often we resort to an analogy when we need to explain complex concepts or new words to young children, whose mastery of language is still being developed. In reality, what we often do is translate those new words for them into smaller or parallel conceptual units to help them to understand. I approached this collection of essays with a certain degree of anticipation, as the concepts of metaphor in translation and the translation metaphor are undoubtedly at the core of literary translation. As the volume editor, James St André, observes in his introductory piece, the choice of metaphor used to think (or explain) the concept of translation may heavily "influence how translation is viewed in terms of process, status of the translator, and status of the translation" (p. 6).

St André has divided the essays into four distinct sections: something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue.

Something old

The first essay deals with the history of the translation metaphor. Ben Van Wyke's essay is an interesting reflection on the influence of Platonism on the traditional theory of translation in the West as well as an informative account of the concept of translation as metaphor. He uses Nietzsche's critique of the metaphor of dress to propose a radical recasting of our conception of translation. "Translation", he writes, "cannot be defined without recourse to metaphors of transporting solid objects … from one place, position or condition to another. We can never describe translation … without recourse to… metaphor" (p. 37).

For his part, Yotam Benshalom explores the potential of using the metaphorical tool of (theatrical) performance for discussing translation along two different pathways. In the first, he discusses the possible utilisation of time in translation based on the continuity and spontaneity found in performance, as proposed by Diderot. Yet this is a dead-end road, it seems, for the benefits performers can gain from them will not necessarily be applicable for translators. The second is Method acting, the bottom-up approach proposed by Stanislavski, whose relevance to translation lies in the unique way it balances the usage of the external (the source text) and the internal (the performer's – i.e., the literary translator's – personality). Benshalom makes some valid points about the various criss-crossing facets of performance and literary translation, but the fact is they are such vastly different processes that any glimpse of similarity is misleading in many senses. His essay, in any case, should have been edited more thoroughly. There are far too many errors, and frankly, the oft-repeated use of the apostrophe to indicate decades ("In the 1850's") is unacceptable in academic writing.

Celia Martín de León bases her analysis on conceptual metaphor theory, in an attempt to identify the basic structure underpinning the various metaphors of translation that have been

used throughout history. She identifies up to five different metaphorical mappings and analyses their communication models and the relations they imply between the source text and the target text. Interestingly, such a theoretical frame may be useful for research into significant issues for translation studies and translation practice, in particular any tangible interactions that may be observed to occur between theoretical models and actual translation practice.

Something new

The new approaches are represented by Maria Tymockzo and Valerie Henitiuk. The former argues that the discipline of translation studies has until now been too closely fixated on Western European concepts of translation, while the latter draws our attention to the remarkable prejudice and ignorance that prevailed in many Western translations of Japanese literature. What both essays show is that Eurocentric conceptions are not necessarily ideal for founding an international discipline of translation studies. For many reasons: to begin with, contemporary Western European thinking about translation is entrenched in the written text, and neglects oral practices that are prevalent in many parts of the world; secondly, Eurocentric ideas about translation have been distinctly shaped by biblical translation and the tight links between language and nation in Europe; history shows that the European concept of translation is strongly connected with imperial and colonial practices. Moreover, Tymockzo demonstrates that the metaphors for translation that appeared towards the late Middle Ages reflected pressures from the Western Christian church: the identification of Christ with the Latin concept of *verbum*. This gave ascendancy to a literalist conception of translation: "At once grammatical and holy, the word *per se* assumed central significance in translation processes in part because of the metaphorical religious meanings for the *verbum* in the scriptures of the Western church" (pp. 134-35). The Western concepts of translation prevalent in current translation studies tend to shape insights into others' cultural processes and others' cultures, thus continuing to perpetuate the ascendancy of narrow, exclusionary conceptualizations over local forms of knowledge.

Something borrowed

The third section comprises three essays on the mutual borrowings between metaphor and translation. Rainer Guldin explores the ways in which metaphor and translation share a political and cultural dimension. The relationship between the literal and the figurative goes back to the rhetoric of the classical tradition, which saw the literal as the proper and severed the figurative from the literal in an attempt at naturalization. However, the literal and the figurative are in a reversible and reciprocal relation, the basis of the continuous process of translation within language and between languages. "Metaphor and translation represent a rift," Guldin explains, "an internal and external split, respectively, and, simultaneously, the very solution to overcome it" (p. 177). Thus, the concept of translation expands into the realm of intercultural communication, and cultural and social negotiations are viewed as acts of translation, processes of interpretation.

Enrico Monti analyses the metaphors used to define metaphor translation. As the basic premise seems to be that metaphor is a central problem, because it defies any strictly linguistic perspective on translation, Monti examines the corpus of translation studies literature. His scrutiny reveals that "translation has indeed elicited a wild imagery on the part of its earlier practitioners and theoreticians" (p. 196). Certainly, the puzzlement metaphor translation has caused (and continues to cause) seems to justify the "wild" tag. There are qualitative metaphors that attempt to describe the issue in a confrontational perspective ("a searching test of translator's powers", "a challenge", the ever-present "problem", "traps", or "dangers") or place the issue of metaphor at the limits of translatability (obviously related to the dangers and obstacles mentioned above, which need to be overcome by crossing or transgressing boundaries). Fluid (less constrained by limits) spatial metaphors for metaphor translation include the "gradient", the "spectrum", the "continuum" and the "fluctuation" between

polarized "extreme positions". Quantitative perspectives, however, rely on dimensions and forces. These perspectives are based on mathematics (translatability in an inverse proportion to the amount of information contained in a metaphor) and physics (the metaphor as a force capable of "compressing a … large amount of information into little lexical matter" (p. 206)). Monti argues that, be it as it may, translation may be seen as "a vantage point to understand the functioning of metaphor itself" (p. 207).

Stéphanie Roesler writes a stimulating essay exploring the metaphors used by French poet and translator Yves Bonnefoy to describe translation, and draws important conclusions about the translation of poetry: "translating poetry essentially consists in writing a new piece of poetry" (p. 230). Roesler points out that Bonnefoy's metaphors of translation invite a view of the translation process as "a relationship between … two individuals" (p. 238) rather than between a source text and a human being, that is to say, a process that fulfils itself by means of a continuum established between two authors, two poets.

Something blue

The final section consists of two essays on metaphor, gender and translation. Sergey Tyulenev identifies "smuggling" as another metaphor that could describe certain processes undertaken by translators whereby "translation may become a vehicle for venting otherwise unacceptable sentiments and concerns" (p. 242). This metaphor implies the primary role translation may have in channelling the translator's own ideas, thoughts, or anxieties. The metaphor is clearly at variance with Venuti's position on the translator's invisibility, since translators-smugglers "cannot be said to be either only 'invisible' or only 'visible'. They are both at the same time."

In his final essay, St André makes a bold proposal to reconsider many aspects of translation studies research with the help of a specifically performative metaphor: translation as cross-identity performance, where cross-identity is an umbrella term under which "the crosser is representing the Other through a set of learned practices" (p. 284) that require bicultural expertise. St André draws our attention to the fact that there is a regrettable tendency to dichotomize many notions in translation studies into opposed, binary pairs, and he calls for a radical overhaul of approaches. While the metaphor of cross-identity has its flaws and poses many problems in its broader application, this is a bold move, and one that deserves further consideration, as it certainly opens up innovative lines of inquiry and represents a significant challenge to long-held assumptions in translation studies, in particular the notions of equivalence and faithfulness.

Thinking through Translation with Metaphors is somewhat uneven. While some of the essays instantly capture your attention because of their originality and the insights they provide, others have too specific and narrow an appeal. However, it is a valuable and motivating volume for literary translators, and particularly for translators of poetry. As a whole, the book helps to move translation studies debates towards new lines of approach, radicalizing the complex and interrelated subjects of translating metaphors and the metaphors that help us to conceptualize translation. As a small bonus, St André has included an annotated bibliography of works on the metaphors of translation, which anyone who wishes to explore the subject further will find useful.

CONTRIBUTORS

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