

**Translation
as Event.
Performing
and Staging
Translations**

Brian O’Keeffe
Larisa Cercel
Marco Agnetta
[eds.]


3/2023

**Yearbook of Translational Hermeneutics
Jahrbuch für Übersetzungshermeneutik**

Journal of the Research Center
Zeitschrift des Forschungszentrums



Hermeneutics and Creativity, University of Leipzig
Hermeneutik und Kreativität, Universität Leipzig





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Introduction | Zur Einführung

On the Eventful Nature of Translations

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1 Introduction

Ton Naaijens has written that “there is a strong case to award translations the status of event” (Naaijens 2008: 311). Paradoxically, that strong case is based on what may seem to be a rather weak claim, namely that translations, when they are received by the host culture, have the capacity to alter that culture to some degree: translations can effect change, and that change can be called the event at issue. Moreover, the eventful moment of such change occurs at the time of a translation’s introduction and reception by that host culture. As Venuti puts it, replacing culture by ‘institution’: “The translation that sets going an event introduces a linguistic and cultural difference in the institution, initiating new ways of thinking inspired by an interpretation of the source text” (Venuti 2013: 4). Once there is a registration of difference, and the initiation of new ways of thinking, one may permissibly claim that there has been an

event caused by that translation. Or, as Venuti also puts it, it is a matter of agreeing that translations “initiate an event, creating new knowledges and values” (Venuti 2013: 185).

Evidently, such novelties, differences and changes can be modest, and thus sometimes it is a matter of a translatory microevent, but at other times, one can instead refer to a macroevent that would occur at the level of an entire cultural disposition or paradigm, an event that would accordingly have the impact of a paradigm shift, a deep alteration in the cultural *status quo*. In this latter case, “Die Übersetzung eines Textes ‚verändert‘, so dramatisch dies auch klingt, die Gesellschafts- und Weltordnung” (Agnetta 2021: 24). Agnetta’s observation is echoed by Venuti, insofar as we would be invited to measure the “exorbitant gain” (Venuti 2013: 4) of such a translation event. There is, however, a risk of exaggeration, as when Venuti also claims that “As a linguistic and cultural practice, translation is unique in initiating events on an international scale, potentially affecting the hierarchy of values, beliefs, and representations in the receiving situation” (ibid.). As a linguistic and cultural practice, perhaps that is true for translation, although of course it cannot be claimed that translation is unique in initiating events on such a scale—the dropping of the first atom bomb, for instance, was a unique event that decisively altered the world order. Whether it is fair to expect of a translation event to have the capacity to massively disrupt, or even overturn, “the global hierarchy of symbolic capital” (Venuti 2013) is very much a key question, moreover.

If exaggeration is one risk to be run when attempting to make the case for deeming translation an event, the other risk is the recourse to somewhat empty notions of an event as an occurrence, as something that just happens, or as the modification of a certain situation. In order to avoid the risk of empty, or indeed theoretically meager notions of eventhood, there

have been attempts, in Translation Studies scholarship, to invoke specifically philosophical concepts of the event. Venuti, for instance, looks to Alain Badiou's concept of the event, profiling that event as the occasion of an innovative form or praxis that effects a rupture with established cultural and social institutions (cf. Badiou 2001: 67; Venuti 2013: 4). However, the difficulty with the attempt to appropriate Badiou's concept of the event for the use of Translation Studies, or at least a thought of 'translation,' is that Badiou's criteria for what can be deemed an event are extremely stringent, and it is unlikely that any translation event would fulfill those criteria. At best, one might claim that the profile of a true event is that it cannot be translated into any other context where it might retain the same profile as an event. An event is thus untranslatable; it cannot be implanted into a different context or rather what Badiou, in *Logics of Worlds* (2019), calls a "world," without losing its own singularity as an event bound to the original context or world in which it occurred.

Moreover, the stringency of Badiou's criteria are rooted in what an event must be: first, it must be indisputable that it did occur, and second, the meaning of that event must also be indisputable. For only once its meaning is indisputable can the event become amenable to the philosophy Badiou espouses—a philosophy that is capable of speaking on behalf of *truth*. For him, there is no truth if meanings remain disputed. Hence his philosophy is highly resistant to hermeneutic approaches that debate and interpret the meaning of a given event. From Badiou's perspective, if there remains such debate and interpretation, then that event cannot be considered an event at all. For the history of translations, perhaps one can invoke "traductions marquantes" (Dayre 2017: 15) and consider them sufficiently impactful to claim that these translations actually do fulfill Badiou's criteria. Luther's translation of the Bible, one

might suggest, is an example: we can truly say that the event of that translation was seismic for the German language, for religious culture, and not just in Germany. Yet it is difficult to provide an extensive list of translation events such as the Luther translation event. Many translations were important to the host culture, to be sure: Chateaubriand’s translation of Milton was important for French literature, but it is debatable whether it was decisive. Once there is debate, then for Badiou, the notion of event is unjustified.

An equally vexing difficulty is that, prior to any theoretical contemplation of translation as an event, and which translations should enjoy that status, is simply that one should define what we mean by a translation. But as translation scholars know very well, despite the many attempts to define what is and what isn’t a translation, enormous problems emerge when the definition of what a translation properly is yields to the ambiguities of adaptation, parody, pastiche and even plagiarism. Take pseudotranslations, for instance: could a pseudo-translation ever elicit an event? Perhaps James MacPherson’s Ossian poems did have the Europe-wide impact of a true literary event, enthusiastically translated as they were in Germany, France, Italy and elsewhere. But that eventful impact was only possible because MacPherson’s poems were not the result of the event of his translation of Ossian, since they were his own and Ossian never existed.

It is as difficult to stabilize what we mean by ‘event’ as it is to stabilize what we mean by a ‘translation.’ But these are stimulating, productive difficulties, particularly if one is prepared to acknowledge the theoretical and methodological risks involved. One risk is almost supreme in its dangers. It is one thing to define a given translation event as an occurrence that introduces difference, or what Badiou says is “something other” (Badiou 2001: 67). Presumably one would be able to

register the degree of otherness involved while still recognizing that translation as relatively similar to all the other translations we are familiar with. Even a pseudo-translation remains sufficiently in touch with the term ‘translation.’ But what if there was a translation event of such radical otherness that it couldn’t be recognized as a translation at all? What if a text so thoroughly redefined the very notion of translation that we found it impossible to revert to any extant characterizations of translation? Policing the boundaries of eventhood is arguably the concept of impossibility: an event should be possible rather than impossible, recognizable rather than unrecognizable, realizable rather than utterly unrealistic and inconceivable. Hence the significant investment Derrida, in “Des Tours de Babel” (2007) and in “What is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” (2013) makes in the almost inconceivable event of Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*—a work one can very legitimately claim is a work so committed to translation that it textualizes Babel itself, and a work one can legitimately claim is untranslatable. A work that hence forbids the event of its translation into French, German, Portuguese and so forth. Yet, *Finnegans Wake* has been translated not once but twice into French! This, surely, is a translation event, since it overcomes what otherwise seems impossible. Perhaps that is the condition here: an event is only worthy of being called an event when it makes the apparently impossible possible.

Theoretical approaches to the notion of translation as an event oscillate between the invocation of extreme cases like *Finnegans Wake* on the grounds that the notion of an event, especially in philosophy, is itself conceptually extreme, and more moderate positions where it is enough to register a translation’s effects of change and alteration on the receiving culture. To adopt that moderate position, Translation Studies can assuredly ally itself with sociological approaches, reception-theories and indeed hermeneutics, since with the notion of ‘horizon,’

hermeneutics gives us a way to measure the impact of the translation event against the historically situated horizon of a receiving culture. Hermeneutics is methodologically equipped to assess both the “collective impact” (Agnetta 2021: 18) of a given translation and the specific effects of the translation practice on and through the individual translator.

The translator’s personality, status, and visibility within the target culture (see Cercel/Leal 2025) can—especially against the backdrop of extraordinary historical circumstances—bring about a genuine translation event. The publication of the Romanian translation of Goethe’s *Faust* by the poet Lucian Blaga (1895–1961) in 1955, for instance, was met with overwhelming enthusiasm: all 25,100 copies were sold out in just three days in the capital, Bucharest, and in just three hours in Cluj, Blaga’s hometown (see Cotter 2014: 48). When Blaga gave a lecture in 1957 titled *Întâlniri cu Goethe* [*Encounters with Goethe*] at the university library in Cluj, he addressed an enraptured audience. Photographs taken immediately after the event show “destroyed chairs and pieces of parquet ripped from the floor under the pressure of those trying to get from the corridors and stairways into the overcrowded hall” (Gruia 1981: 21), desperate to hear the poet-translator speak. Scholarly consensus holds that the remarkable success of the Romanian *Faust* is due to the prominence of Lucian Blaga: “It is the Romanian translator, not the foreign author, who drives the work’s reception” (Cotter 2008: 853). At the time of the translation’s publication in 1955, Blaga was already a major poet with considerable cultural authority: he was “a major presence in pre-World War II Romanian culture, a figure of breadth and balance” (Cotter 2014: 5). Having refused to support the new communist regime, he had been banned from publishing and effectively silenced in public life since 1948. Translation was the only activity he was permitted. The *Faust* translation and

the corresponding lecture, marked his first public appearances after seven and nine years, respectively, of politically enforced silence. Thus, it was not Goethe and his canonical work that drove the record-breaking sales of the Romanian *Faust*, but rather the high esteem in which Lucian Blaga was held: “The reputation of the translator, rather than the importance of the translated work, explains such a reception” (Ciobâcă 2019: 9). In the Romanian context, authorship of Goethe’s work was attributed to the translator himself: “The same people who rushed to buy copies of Blaga’s *Faust* [sc. not Goethe’s!] came to his lecture in droves” (Cotter 2014: 48). That this formulation was no accident or mere rhetorical flourish is made explicit: “*Faust* was received as Blaga’s work first and Goethe’s second” (Cotter 2014: 78). Contemporary accounts of Blaga’s lecture in Cluj mention Goethe only in passing; they unanimously attribute the event’s extraordinary success to the authority of the poet-translator (see Gruia 1981: 17–22). For many in the audience—especially the younger generation—this unforgettable lecture marked their very first opportunity to encounter Blaga in person after years of social and academic isolation. Agents of the *Securitate* (the then Romanian secret police) were also present and documented the event, as confirmed by Blaga’s now publicly accessible *Securitate* file. In short, this example strongly suggests that the “le pourquoi et le comment” (Dayre 2017: 14), namely the conditions of possibility and the manifestation of a translation event, are to be found in the subtle interplay between various actors and perspectives. The translator (as producer), the audience, the new sociocultural system, and the historical context in which a translation exerts its effect together form the constellation in which an event may occur. The individual (hermeneutic) and collective (sociological, historical) factors that constitute such an event must accordingly be understood in their interaction.

The question of whether translation *as such*—or any translation, for that matter—can be considered an event remains open. In this regard, some have recourse to theories of performance, and accordingly foster further developments in what Bachmann-Medick has called the performative turn in Translation Studies. Yet, if that recasts the translator as a performer, and envisages the event of translation as something that would resemble a musical event, or a dance performance, the difficulties concern whether the translator/performer is enjoined to be faithful to the event he or she has enabled. For Badiou, an event worthy of the name is something that has the compelling power to enforce postures of fidelity, ethical commitment and responsibility. But, as is well-known in Translation Studies, the matter of the translator’s fidelity is much debated, and indeed criticized. At issue, in any case, is whether a concept of translation as an event must be accompanied by an ethics that deems translators responsible for that event, or one rejects the necessity of providing that ethics. Certainly, in respect of the nature or quality of that event “there is no guarantee that change will be good or bad” (Pym ³2023: 125), but the question is perhaps whether to retain criteria of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ in any case or whether, instead, one claims that an event thoroughly removes, disrupts, or reinvents those very criteria. Translations, writes Venuti, “should not be faulted merely for exhibiting features that are commonly called unethical: wholesale manipulation of the source text, ignorance of the source language, even plagiarism of other translations” (Venuti 2013: 185). But the question remains whether translators might escape all notions of ‘fault,’ and not just the ones Venuti specifies, and hence happily find themselves always deemed innocent, absolved from any ethical considerations whatsoever, never deemed culpable of the event of abusive translation and indeed, immune from any le-

gal prosecution for the crime of plagiarism or breach of copyright either.

Once ethical and legal matters enter into the debate concerning translation as an event, then the options are these: one can take the position that such matters should not enter the debate at all, or one is forced to contemplate the consequences of the translation event on the source text and indeed the source author. Doubtless, it is possible to take the position that source text authors can be radically discounted, although invocations of Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" in Translation Studies scholarship perhaps risk identifying the very crime—a symbolic murder, so to speak—that translators wish to be exonerated for. In any case, there is scope to examine the event of translation in terms of a certain violence, namely "destruction of an original text form and its replacement by a new, target-language text" (Agnetta 2021: 24) by the person of the translator who performs the transition. Here the translation involves as much an outright destruction (*Zerstörung*) of the original text as it does a subtle dialectic. There is also scope to examine the many metaphors used to describe what translation is like, and to question whether the numerous metaphors describing translation as a violent activity can be envisaged as genuine events of violence.

That invites us to wonder whether the event of translation must be an event that really occurs, or whether there can be events that do not really occur, but only do so in the metaphorical realm where a good deal of translation 'theory' prefers to be—one thinks of George Steiner here (see O'Keeffe 2021). *Where* does the translation event take place? In the innocently figurative domain of mere metaphors for translation? To which we can add the corresponding question: *when* does the translation event happen? The time of an event might only be the time of the 'now,' or of the present moment of its eventual

occurrence in perhaps the same way the time of a dance performance is taken to be the time of present immediacy. Yet, these are not the only temporalities with which Translation Studies reckons, of course. At the very least, it reckons with notions of futurity, including the difficult events and advents of which Walter Benjamin, in “The Task of the Translator,” speaks—the events of *Fortleben* and *Überleben*, not to mention the event promised by a certain messianism, namely translation’s hoped-for presentation of *die reine Sprache*. Or consider the unpredictable future of an event of translation that is yet to come by way of Derrida’s French rather than Benjamin’s German: that would be an *événement* that is *à venir*, coming, that is to say, but one which has not yet arrived.

Perhaps it is not just a simple irony, therefore, that any approach to translation as an event has to begin with the various translations one must make of the very word ‘event.’ English and French can activate the Latin resonances of the verb *venire*—‘to come.’ The German *Ereignis* activates quite different resonances, however. Other languages, I am sure, present other translation difficulties, making of that very word ‘event’ a *mise en abyme* of the splendors and miseries of our theory and practice.

Many of the chapters in this volume adopt theoretical approaches that blend Translation Studies and Performance Studies. In that regard, it may be useful to elaborate in broad terms what, methodologically, is at stake.

2 Possible Synergies between Translation Studies and Performance Studies

The research fields of Translation Studies and Performance Studies are based on a multitude of sources that can be located in different disciplines and take on a variety of theoretical

forms (on the status of Translation Studies as an interdisciplinary field, see Kaindl 1999; on Performance Studies, see Hempfer/Volbers 2011). This plurality of sources can be seen as potentially enriching for the formation of one's own theory because it remains dynamic and open-ended.

One of the things the present volume wishes to bring to the fore is the action character of translation: Translation is a powerful act, it results from and causes other actions. It is transformative, because (non-)existence determines the actions of individuals and groups. This is evidenced, for example, by the many reflective texts surrounding the publication and dissemination of translational products, such as forewords and epilogues, footnotes, commentaries, translators' correspondences, etc., in which the legibility of the (first or new) translation is combined with a deontic assessment of its subsequent use.

Performance analyses always deal with ephemeral objects. This is also the case in Audiovisual Translation and Interpreting Studies. But even in translation-related research, performance-related variables can be considered: On the one hand, the performance of a translation subject (or translator collective) in the narrower sense, i.e. the actual translation process and its creation of the target text, can be analyzed. On this basis, translation has been described as a fundamentally creative activity (cf. the contributions in Cercel et al. 2017). However, the concept of performance is not just used in relation to human translation, but also—as even superficial web searches will confirm—and perhaps even more in assessments of the performance of machine systems in the execution of translation and other textualization tasks. However, the adequacy of the concept of performance to describe variables of translational activity can also be disputed (see Stolze in this issue). On the other hand, a performance-theoretical concept of transla-

tion also includes considerations relating to the performativity (in the linguistic sense) of the translator’s actions as a result of certain conditions—be they temporal or spatial constraints, the (non-)existence of parallel texts and previous translations, client and customer specifications, etc. These conditions supply points of departure for studying a translation’s effects and consequences both in the present context and also for the future, in the sense of the effects and consequences for posterity. Translation (qua product *and* process) is accordingly seen here as part of a more extensive chain of action, a discourse.

Non-translations also shape this discourse. Consider, for example, Kovács’ (2018: 123–129) account of the interpreter and translator Fritz Paepcke, who worked as a reporter during the Second World War and whose decision to withhold the information he received about the Allied landing in Normandy bears witness to how translators and interpreters can sometimes determine global political destinies. Donna Leon’s case is different: she does not want her Commissario Brunetti novel translated into Italian due to sensitive issues such as corruption, and this creates a telling blank space that gives fans and critics alike reason to exchange their views (see UEPO 2012).

Looking at translation under the auspices of performativity theory is not a far-fetched theoretical game resulting from a combination of two arbitrarily selected fields of research (although such a modern-day approach would certainly have its appeal). Rather, it is the logical and at the same time promising consequence of scholarship that has already been undertaken in translatology: If translation—as proponents of theories of agency and hermeneutic approaches always claim—is an (expert) activity to be taken seriously; if translation is subject to variables such as translational subjectivity, the purpose of translation and the situational context in general, and if we agree that its social relevance should not be underestimated,

then a performativity-theoretical approach invites us to grasp the practice of translation in terms of everything that secures its social effectiveness. This applies both to a synchronic approach, which aims to describe the interaction of translators' actions with other fields of action, and to a diachronic perspective according to which the history of translation is to be seen as an ongoing discourse between different networks of actors. In such a discourse, encompassing as it does multiple texts, cultural domains, and possibly generations to come, the emergence, existence, oblivion, non-existence and revival of a translation are equally significant events and inevitably form the components of a general cultural history.

3 Translatological Positions on the Eventfulness of Translations

The discussion of translations as “communicative events” (Alavi 2018: 170; Agnetta 2021: 9) or simply “events” (Pym 2018, 2019, ³2023: 123–125) is recent in Translation Studies and it is more a discussion amounting to an invitation, or even a plea to break new scholarly ground rather than a discussion that indicates an already established research field. This dimension of translations is thematized from two different perspectives, namely (1) the hermeneutic-performative and (2) the cultural-historical or cultural-sociological perspective. The starting points are different, but both meet in the common idea of the real or potential eventfulness of a translation.

Ad (1): In hermeneutic-performative terms, translations are recognized as fundamentally eventful due to the translator's individuality and the performative character of every translational approach to texts: The translator encounters the original text informed by his or her own presuppositions and these factor into the process of understanding or interpreting that text

and then the production of the target text—the entire process occurs, therefore, in the context of his or her own experiences, emotions and attitudes. Text comprehension is therefore “an event or a chain of events in which the information inferred from the text interacts with the recipient’s constantly changing knowledge and intentions” (Agnetta 2021: 14; our translation). The “very ‘event’ of understanding” (O’Keeffe 2018: 16), specific and individual as it is, leads to the production of the translation, a translation whose form and content is based on the prior “crucial chains of events” (ibid.: 24) culminating in the translation’s own address, dialogical in a sense, to the target readership. The performative assessment of the translation process, from the reception of the original to the production and effect of the translation, a process whereby the translator “performs for its authorship and invites their response” (Bermann 2014: 285), leads to the concept of (eventful) emergence: translation is thus “a phenomenon that occurs in specific historical and situational contexts. Translating is an event, a happening” (Agnetta 2021: 25; our translation).

Ad (2): From a cultural-historical or cultural-sociological perspective, it is also assumed that “all translations are events” —regardless of their quality (Naaijkens 2010: 7). This hypothesis is supported by examples such as the King James Version of the Bible, “which is surely not a very good translation,” but “a text that unquestionably is to be regarded as an event, since it generated considerable cultural change” (ibid.: 7). Rather, the decisive factor from this viewpoint is that translations provide “an impulse to change” (ibid.: 4). Translations change existing configurations, and translators are agents of change, not of preservation. According to this approach, translational events are viewed against the broad background of cultural dynamics. In contrast to the leveling perspective whereby translations are regarded as mere “incidents” (*incidens*) (ibid.: 5) in the diverse

and complex process of inter-cultural communication, this approach ascribes a key role to translations in the context of cultural transfer: they contribute decisively to the construction of the map of world literature and to the dissemination of major cultural revolutions. The focus here is accordingly on impact analysis and on the effects of translations on socio-cultural dynamics and processes (cf. *ibid.*: 8).

4 Hermeneutics and Semiotics as Methods of Performance Analysis

As mentioned above, scholars working in Translation Studies hope that approaching the phenomenon of translation and interpreting from the perspective of performance theory will provide a new impetus to the discipline. The question of whether translation can be understood as an ‘event’ or not, the question to which the present volume responds, is perhaps a matter of whether the activity of translation can be profitably approached by using the analytical categories of performance research and performativity theory. It is not possible to provide here a complete overview of performance theory and its analytical bases, but nonetheless, it may be instructive to briefly advert to Erika Fischer-Lichte, one of the central figures of (German-speaking) performativity research, and relate her work to the topic at issue in the present issue of the *Yearbook of Translational Hermeneutics*.

In *Ästhetik des Performativen* (2004), Fischer-Lichte expresses doubts concerning the utility of semiotic and hermeneutic theorems when studying performative art:

Such a performance [sc. like *Lips of Thomas* by Marina Abramović] eludes the grasp of traditional aesthetic theories. It stubbornly resists the claim of a hermeneutic aesthetics that aims to understand the work of art. For here it is less about understanding the actions that the artist

performed than about the experiences that she made and that she evoked in the spectators, in short: about the transformation of those involved in the performance. (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 17; our translation)

Although there are all sorts of things to interpret and evaluate as signs in a performance, it cannot be reduced to the reproduction of these semiotic structures (cf. Fischer-Lichte 2004: 18). After all, the performance constitutes “a new reality of its own. This reality was now not only interpreted by the spectators, but first and foremost experienced in its effects” (ibid.: 19; our translation). In short: Fischer-Lichte is pursuing two ideas here that deem hermeneutics and semiotics inadequate for analyzing performances. One is that the experience and emotionality of reception has little to do with understanding, and the other concerns the idea that signs are discrete set pieces that precede the performance and are removed from the circumstances of reception, and at any rate are materialized primarily as artefacts—as if semiotics had nothing to do with somatics (i.e. the somatics of the subject in the here and now of its existence). According to Fischer-Lichte, hermeneutic and semiotic methods of analysis are also inappropriate with regard to performances because they are usually applied to written texts, or at least to materialized works of art. It is precisely because of the fact that in the case of performances there is not an “artifact that can be detached from him [i.e. the author of the work], the artwork” (ibid.: 19; our translation), but rather an experience, that we arguably need a new research paradigm, one which other scholars (in Translation Studies) have described as a “performative turn” (ibid. 2004: 22; see also Bachmann-Medick 2016: 104–143).

Fischer-Lichte’s objections to hermeneutics and semiotics, her rather apodictic statements in that regard, run the risk of not being accurate, or no longer so. Contemporary hermeneutics is not a normative science prescribing how a work of

art or other phenomenon ‘is to be understood,’ rather, it is a descriptive approach that investigates how a work of art ‘is understood’ or ‘can be understood’—the latter formulation is not just aimed at the plurality of meanings of the work or phenomenon, but also at the processes and mechanisms of understanding in general. Hermeneutics, among other things, is a theory of human cognition, and it attempts to comprehend the activity of a recipient in absorbing and processing the phenomenon to be understood. Any separation of the operations of understanding and (bodily) experience is—as the cognitive model of 4EA shows (cf. the contributions published by Robinson in the *Yearbook of Translational Hermeneutics* 2, 2022)—an artificial one. Hermeneutics is interested in the process and the (provisional) culmination of these inwardly occurring processes of understanding whereby the consciousness is directed towards what is to be understood and in which—there is no other way—one’s own knowledge and one’s own wealth of experience are activated in equal measure.

Admittedly, in the main, the translations that are studied by Translation Studies scholars are textual artifacts. But they are also products bearing the traces of the translator’s work. In this respect, all (and even strongly modifying) methods of intertextual reference can be exploited. And it is precisely the fact that a translated work exists separately from its author that can lead to other performers of this text becoming involved, empowered indeed, and thus historically instantiating all of its effects, both good and bad. The separation of the work from its author is therefore no reason to assume a performance-independent hermeneutics and semiotics. On the contrary: every use of a text is a performance in itself and at the same time linked to others in a discourse. However, hermeneutics—here: translational hermeneutics—is not purely concerned with the texts themselves and a separation of subject and object, as Fi-

scher-Lichte states, but rather, and particularly in the form in which it has been pursued since the twenty-first century, hermeneutics affords a theory of action in which text, author, recipient and the situational context of production and reception are central in their dynamic relationship (cf. the contributions in Cercel 2009, Cercel/Stanley 2012, Stolze et al. 2015, Stanley et al. 2018 and 2021). Moreover, twentieth-century hermeneutics, since it repeatedly invoked the metaphors of the conversation with the text and the dynamic play of question and answer, foregrounded a relational event, and because of this hermeneutics is hardly an obsolete or antiquarian approach that amounts to a separation of production, work and reception aesthetics (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 22) and therefore cannot be used for performance analysis.

In *Performativität. Eine Einführung* (Fischer-Lichte 2012), the connection between an over-arching hermeneutics and a theory of performativity is almost a given. According to her, a practice is to be considered ‘performative’ if it can be classified as “self-referential” and “reality-constituting” (2012: 38, 133). However, it is not just performances in the narrower sense (in the theater, concert hall or museum) that can be understood as performative, but also a specific approach to speech acts, texts, images, etc. (cf. *ibid.*: 135) in all possible contexts of action. The categories of performance description already developed in her earlier book in 2004 are now somewhat expanded here in her 2012 volume and, in a large chapter (“Expanding the Field: Performative Studies”), that expansion makes matters fruitful for the analysis of texts (*ibid.*: 135–145), images (*ibid.*: 147–159) and things (*ibid.*: 162–178). (For initial applications to the object of study of Translation Studies and to public readings by translators, see Agnetta 2021 and Cercel 2025.)

For literary (and philosophical) texts, Fischer-Lichte (2012: 139), commenting on reception-aesthetic positions,

cites the distinction between ‘structural’ and ‘functional performativity’ resulting from the work of the Collaborative Research Centre *Kulturen des Performativen*. The former describes the way the text is made and draws attention to “how the text does what it talks about or, if necessary, does something other than what it claims” (Fischer-Lichte 2012: 139; our translation). The second is concerned with the ‘cultural impact’ of a text, i.e. what the text triggers in (overall) social and historical terms (cf. *ibid.*). Negotiations of the first form of performativity have always been relegated to the second in (normative and descriptive) translation discourse. Since translations are often understood as (implicitly) performative speech acts, namely as acts that must always be supplemented by the statement ‘I, the unsigned translator, hereby refer to what the author or sender of the source text has written in it,’ questions about the nature of the derivative can never be completely separated from a trans-textual discourse that also thematizes the pre-text and the changes that may have been made to it.

5 About the Volume

Brian O’Keeffe’s chapter, “The Events and Non-Events of Translation,” sets a tone common to a number of essays in this volume, namely a tone of critical hesitation or circumspection as regards whether the notion of an ‘event’ can be rigorously applied in Translation Studies. Partly, he argues, it is too easy to devolve to the suggestion that translation is *like* an event, and hence one reverts to over-convenient metaphors for translation, none of which properly describes what translation actually *is*. Partly, it is a matter of the difficulty of transposing philosophical accounts of eventhood into Translation Studies. Evidently, as some of the essays in this *Yearbook* demonstrate, utilizing insights from Performance Studies (since it too invokes

an idea of the event) can lessen the philosophical challenges, or even provide a warrant to ignore philosophers like Martin Heidegger, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Derrida. But challenges still remain, O’Keeffe argues. One challenge, set forth by Derrida, is whether a translation event worthy of the name is an occurrence that makes the impossible possible—a stringent requirement for an event, clearly, one which considerably narrows the number of case studies one might plausibly select in order to exemplify the translation event.

Radegundis Stolze’s contribution, “Die Metapher als hermeneutisch-performatives Sprachereignis,” also expresses doubts concerning the notion of the event. For if one takes the view that anything that happens at all is an event, then writing a book is an event, reading a book and being affected by it is an event, translating a book is an event insofar as that translatory activity happens. The risk is that the notion or concept of the event becomes too ubiquitous to be of any theoretical use. Yet, as Stolze’s discussion shows, there are degrees of eventhood—some are modest, some more consequential. Selecting Amanda Gorman’s poem “The Hill we Climb,” Stolze assesses a text that had considerable meaning, including political meaning, and her question is how that meaning is or is not retained in the German translations made of her poem. To make such an assessment, Stolze argues, requires a close reading of those German versions, and also a hermeneutic enquiry into translators and the holistic way they practice their craft. Nonetheless, Stolze’s notes of caution remain significant: while an event is often conceptualized as a one-time, unrepeatable occurrence, the practice of translation is processual, and this requires a different thought of the time of translation—it is the time taken by the translator’s mind and body, the time required to implement what Stolze calls “a cognitive movement.” Moreover, despite the theoretical utilities that may lie in de-

ploying notions of eventhood from Performance Studies, or indeed from Translation Studies's own performative turn, Stolze argues, however, that "the performance of an original or translated play on the theater stage is, of course, an event in which the content is conveyed as a performance. Here it is not the translation that is the event, but the performance." As O'Keeffe also argues in connection with performance artists like Marina Abramovic, it is clearly much easier to consider eventhood in theatrical or performance-art cases. Much accordingly depends on whether one can theorize translation in terms of the presentational immediacy of *Darstellung* in the same way one can apparently do in terms of a theatrical performance.

Besides considering the theatrical stage, or *skena*, the more general question, posed by O'Keeffe, is *where* a translation event occurs. What other locations might one propose? He suggests that one locale might be the page itself, assuming we are willing to restrict matters to the translation of written texts. But there are other sites one might select, however, and hence other translation events—and performative events—to take into account. Ralf van Bühren, Alberto Gil, and Juan Rego, in their essay "Performance as Translation. The Representation of the Sacred in the 'Sagrada Familia' (Barcelona) by the Interaction of Architecture, Visual Arts and Liturgy," are willing to start from the claim that "every communicative act is a kind of performance." The theoretical convenience of that idea of performance is that it enables, in their view, 'translation' to occur as that performance, and as that communication as well. The site the authors choose for their enquiry is the Sagrada Familia cathedral in Barcelona, an edifice that 'translates' Christian doctrine by means of its stained glass windows, its stone carvings, and its architecture in general. Furthermore, the authors inspect the significant event that occurred when the cathedral

was dedicated by Pope Benedict XVI, during which he delivered a homily. As they show, many performative and translatory events were happening at the same time, *inter alia* the homily, which they deem a liturgical translation of the Word of God, one that addressed the congregation there and then, and the rite of dedication which can be understood as a performance that effectively transmits faith itself, and indeed renders God present.

What emerges from their essay is the idea of “translation as performance.” Much depends on whether such a formulation—and the convenience of “as”—needs to be considerably caveated, however, lest both the idea of performance and the idea of translation lose conceptual specificity, or, on the contrary, one takes the view that there is much to be gained in regarding translation as performance and vice versa—the authors also speak of “performance as translation.” In a notable sense, perhaps one way of measuring that gain is by addressing expressions of religious faith, precisely. Priyada Padhye is also concerned with such matters: her contribution is titled “Translating Divinity in the Liminal Space. Performative Translations in the Medieval and Early Modern Period in India.” It is an extraordinary title, in a sense: how does one translate divinity? Wouldn’t that be a supreme event of translation? Erika Fischer-Lichte’s work proves useful for Padhye’s discussion, one notion of Fischer-Lichte’s being that of ‘emergence’ which, *per* Fischer-Lichte, concerns “all those phenomena that appear not as a consequence of specific plans and intentions but as unforeseen and, in this sense, contingent events.” Padhye cites Fischer-Lichte again: “Unpredictability constitutes a defining feature of emergence.” These quotations from Fischer-Lichte interestingly, but problematically resonate with O’Keeffe’s discussion of Derrida’s conditions for an event, particularly given Derrida’s theorization of how *radically* contingent such condi-

tions would have to be. Possibly, for Derrida, ‘emergence’ would, in that case, be preferably replaced by a term like ‘interruption’ or ‘rupture.’ Padhye studies two texts: the saint poet Dnyāneshwar’s 1290 *Bhāvārthadeepikā*, a Marathi language translation of the Sanskrit *Bhagwad Gitā*. The second is the *Discurso sobre a vinda de Jesu Christo* (“Discourse on the coming of Jesus Christ”), popularly known as the *Kristapurān*. The *Kristapurān* is a 1616 re-telling of biblical stories into the language spoken in Goa by the English Jesuit Father Thomas Stephens. Padhye’s question is whether these two works meet the conditions, some (but not all) of which are theorized by Fischer-Lichte, that must be met in order to be considered events, and indeed events not just of translation, but of religious, literary and cultural significance.

Padhye proposes a number of further conditions, one of which is highly interesting in this regard: ‘transgression,’ which suggests that a translation merits the name ‘event’ if that translation disturbs, in a significant way, the status quo. Invoking Doris Bachmann-Medick’s definition of the condition of transgression, namely “the practice of crossing over or dissolving boundaries, of carnivalization and breaking of codes,” one perhaps discerns the profile of translation in that movement of crossing-over, but a good deal depends on the codes at issue, and indeed, what one’s attitude is to Bachmann-Medick’s tacit recourse to Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of carnivalization. Padhye’s characterization of translation’s eventhood in terms of transgression is suggestive in that regard, particularly if the texts at issue are sacred texts, which one would normally think should not be subject to the transgressive licentiousness of Bakhtinian carnivalization.

Suggestive as well is Padhye’s reference to Sachin Ketkar, a scholar of the history of translations in the Marathi language, who says (as Padhye quotes him), that “when culture and semi-

otic systems change, they sometimes bring about explosive changes in the language.” “Explosive” is attractively vivid, of course, and one can see how philosophers like Derrida would endorse that characterization of the event and of its impact. Equally vivid is Padhye’s reference to Ketkar’s metaphor for translation: “For him translation of a text in another language is the birth of a text in a different *yoni*-vagina, it is a different species, it is a “new animal.” The issue O’Keeffe raises in his essay perhaps re-emerges here: what theoretical weight is one to place on such a metaphor, and on terms like “species” and “new animal”? Moreover, it would be interesting to wonder how Walter Benjamin, in “The Task of the Translator,” would have reacted to that. Given the extensive investments Benjamin made in notions of the life, but particularly the afterlives of texts in translation, one could possibly claim, following Padhye and Ketkar, that Benjamin neglected to think about that womb or vagina that births the source text into those new lives. Padhye tacitly issues a challenge to Benjamin, therefore, when she writes that “A performative translation too, in my opinion, is radically different from its source text, making its birth eventful.” “Radically” is the main thrust of the challenge put to Benjamin, clearly.

One problem Padhye draws attention to is that the notion of the event produces two different discursive and indeed philosophical registers. One is radical, almost hyperbolic, as when an event is taken to be ‘explosive.’ The other is more moderate in tone, as when one declares that an event takes place whenever a translation changes the status quo. This change does not need to be dramatically explosive or paradigm-shifting. It can be modest, and as long as one can register that change, then there will have been an event. Padhye’s essay, in that regard, resonates well with Marie Herbillon’s “Translation as Multi-Layered Performance: The Case

of “Le Feu au cœur,” Bertrand Belin’s French Cover of Bob Dylan’s “Ain’t Talkin’.” The event at issue is modest: Belin’s cover translated Dylan’s song into French. So doing, he evidently had to modify Dylan’s original. Yet, for all that a cover might seem modest in that way, the theoretical consequences Herbillon draws from that exercise are considerable. Here, one notes how Derrida is used to profile those consequences. At issue is his approach to iterability, which Herbillon transposes into a discussion of “the status of songs as intrinsically iterable events and their iterations in the form of actual performances or eventual occurrences.” Note “intrinsically,” which is perhaps the crux of the matter. Strikingly, Herbillon argues that a “song could possibly be conceived of as the performative *par excellence*, namely as the ‘most *event-ridden* utterance’ (Derrida 1988: 19; my emphasis) in discourse.” Herbillon’s quotation from Derrida’s *Limited Inc.* is accordingly very thought-provoking, particularly in view of Derrida’s reference to something that is “event-ridden.” Derrida’s notion of iterability invites us to contemplate another ‘ability,’ namely translatability. We might accordingly displace matters to Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” once more and recall what he has to say about translatability or *Übersetzbarkeit*. Samuel Weber’s *Benjamin’s-abilities* is worth reading for his commentary on that ‘-ability’ or that ‘-barkeit’ (see Weber 2008). Yet, in connection with Derrida, when iterability is put alongside his own thoughts concerning translatability, one should recall Derrida’s counter move, since he does not neglect scenarios of untranslatability. This is at issue in both “Des tours de Babel” and in “What is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” Thus it is perhaps important to consider Derrida’s reflection on what resists the events of iteration and translation. As O’Keeffe’s title suggests, it is worthwhile to consider the non-events of translation as much as the events of translation.

Translation Studies understandably embraces thoughts of translatability, however, and is more inclined to agree with Lawrence Venuti’s polemical exhortation that we “STOP asserting that any text is untranslatable. START realizing that every text is translatable because every text can be interpreted” (Venuti 2019: x). Nonetheless, one almost verges on outright untranslatability when one considers the challenge of translation in the context of sign language for the deaf or hard of hearing. Imagine the difficulty of transposing a song into sign language, for instance. This is the topic addressed by Angela Tarantini in her essay “When Performance is not a Metaphor for Translation: Translation as ‘Performative Event.’” Her text examines the practice of sign language interpreting in music, considering that practice as a translation and a performance. She accordingly expands the concept of performativity to encompass the evental and experiential aspects of translation. The demands are extremely strenuous: translating a song must adapt to the serial immediacies of a song—the translator’s decisions, as she puts it, must be made instantaneously in order to keep pace with the song as it is sung, and there must be a high degree of expressivity in order that the translator convey the emotional registers of that particular song. Tarantini therefore raises the key question: “But where is the emotion in a song? Is it an intrinsic feature of the song or is it something that is fostered in the listener by the song itself?” Her answer goes by way of another question: “So, how can an interpreter translate an element that is not in the text, but is their own experience of the text? I would argue that this is not dissimilar from any other work of translation. The work of the translator is to convey the meaning of a text, but that meaning will always be their own interpretation (i.e. their understanding) of the same text, their experience of the text.”

Translating songs and music is also the focus of Carmen África Vidal Claramonte's essay "Translation and Dance. The Case of Matthew Bourne." Bourne's ballets show us the expressive capacities of the body, and furthermore show how the *mise en scène* of a balletic performance, blending as it does music, images, colors and so forth, makes for a very complex performative event. In order to introduce translation into the discussion, Vidal Claramonte advocates for an "enlarged" definition of translation, one which clearly departs from Roman Jakobson's assertion that "interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language" (Jakobson 1992: 145). For her, that enlarged or expanded definition of translation should go "beyond the verbocentric tradition." Yet, as the second part of her essay shows in particular, when Bourne's *The Car Man* 'translates' Bizet's opera *Carmen*, it is notable that the term 'text' appears. For Vidal Claramonte, Bizet's opera can be considered a 'text' insofar as it affords many kinds of translations, adaptations and re-contextualizations: "Matthew Bourne's performative translations through the body," she writes, "will highlight that a text is always many texts and has many readings." Moreover, "*The Car Man* highlights the palimpsestuous nature of the original text, of any 'original' text. Bourne's translation highlights the plural readings inside any text."

As many of the essays in this volume demonstrate, the concept of 'text' is key to the various negotiations between event, performance and translation. As Vidal Claramonte rightly puts it, "Bourne is, in my view, a clear example of how [...] in our visual culture the definition of 'text' has been expanded." To what extent, then, would it therefore be important to engage (to mention only three relevant works) with Roland Barthes's "From Work to Text," Paul Ricoeur's "What is a Text?" or Stanley Fish's book *Is there a text in this class?* Or,

frankly, to engage with Derrida’s claim that *il n’y a pas de hors-texte*? For it is a revealing fact that Derrida is a key reference point in many of the essays in this volume. And if Derrida’s thoughts on iterability prove necessary to contemplate the event, and besides, a performative event, then when Vidal Claramonte cites Karen Emmerich’s *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* to buttress her claim that Bourne’s translations are iterations: “translation as iteration, as repetition-with-a-difference, a mode of textual proliferation rather than a mode by which semantic content is transferred,” then one is left to trace a path, once more, to Derrida’s *Limited Inc* (1988).

6 Conclusion

When Vidal Claramonte cites Emmerich in order to envisage “translation as a mode of iterative proliferation,” perhaps it remains for us to wonder if one might take a negative, or even anxious attitude to such proliferation. Should one try to stop such proliferations and translations from happening? Bourne’s engagement with Bizet’s *Carmen* (and by extension Prosper Mérimée’s text) is very innovative, to be sure, but is it merely provocative to wonder if classic texts should be immune from such translators, lest they take too much liberty with them? That might be a question for Hans-Georg Gadamer in view of what he calls “the traditionary text” (Gadamer 1996: 392). Or we might advert to Benjamin’s claim that “Translation is a form. To comprehend it as a form, we must go back to the original, for the laws governing the translation lie within the original, contained in the issue of its translatability” (Benjamin 2004: 254). But perhaps that law (the English translator, Harry Zohn, erroneously has “laws”), which permits so much, should be replaced by a law of untranslatability that prevents events of unauthorized or unsupervised translation from tak-

ing place. And indeed, might we even worry that such events would not exactly be translations, but perhaps pseudo-translations, pastiches, or even plagiarisms? Fernando Pessoa ironically said, in this regard, that “a translation is only a plagiarism in the author’s name,” adding that “a translation is a serious parody in another language” (Pessoa 2001: 222). But what if one took Pessoa seriously?

Anxieties about the license that events of translation enjoy (but perhaps shouldn’t) arguably have their roots in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, where Socrates expresses considerable anxiety about the unpreventable tendency of writing to drift and end up in the wrong hands. It may well be, therefore, that iterability and translatability are, from a Platonic point of view, damaging scenarios, and not to be welcomed at all. It is perhaps worth allowing some registration of anxiety into the discussion, as if allowing for a moment of Devil’s Advocacy for Socrates and his concern that writing drifts too much—it might drift into the unauthorized hands of translators who will do with that text what they choose.

But are we really sure that what such translators will choose to do with it will be recognizable as a *translation*? This is the issue Pessoa raises, but it is surely an issue for Translation Studies as well. If, instead of being a *translation*, it is now profiled as a *performance*, is Translation Studies thus forced into becoming Performance Studies, and is it precisely the notion of the ‘event’ that enacts that forcing? Is the consequence that Translation Studies surrenders its theoretical competence over its own master term, namely ‘translation’? What are the disciplinary risks Translation Studies is willing to take, given the many ‘turns’ Translation Studies has made (or been forced to make), *inter alia* the performative turn? When Vidal Claramonte observes, quoting Mieke Bal, that “Bourne is, in my view, a clear example of how translation is “a travelling concept” [Bal

2002],” one question is perhaps whether the concept of translation has travelled too far, and indeed so far that ‘translation’ is losing its conceptual and eidetic profile. Consider, for instance, Bachmann-Medick’s introduction to an issue of the journal *Translation Studies* devoted to “The Translational Turn” in this regard. She writes:

This broadening of the horizon of translation currently poses challenges both to translation studies and to other disciplines in the humanities, specifically cultural studies. Admittedly, the process risks diluting the concept of translation, and it seems important at this stage to delineate the concept more precisely. (Bachmann-Medick 2009: 2)

Contemplate the scenario where the *concept* (a term that might already be in doubt) of translation risks being “diluted” by the vagueness of usage when other disciplines invoke it. For Bachmann-Medick, it is specifically Cultural Studies that provokes that dilution. But given the considerable investment made by many of the contributors of this volume in Performance Studies (and in Fischer-Lichte’s work in particular), perhaps Performance Studies is also an agent in that “dilution.”

The alternative, less anxious view, is that it is intrinsic to the interdisciplinary nature of Translation Studies that it embraces other fields of academic enquiry. This is a view that willingly embraces ballets (Vidal Claramonte), songs (Tarantini), a cathedral (van Bühren, Gil, Rego) and Indian texts (Padhye) as case studies, as well as literary texts like Gorman’s poem analyzed by Stolze. For, in the end, this view is the hermeneutic view, whereby understanding the operation of translation begins from the proviso that translation is an operation of *interpretation*. Stolze’s essay valuably insists on this in particular. It is less important to police what is subject to interpretation so much as to embrace the challenge of understanding the very nature of understanding itself. This is the hermeneutical spirit

shared by all the contributors to this volume, a spirit the editors of the present *Yearbook* hope will be inspiring to its readers.

7 References

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Zur Ereignishaftigkeit von Übersetzungen

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1 Einführung

Ton Naaijens zufolge „there is a strong case to award translations the status of event” (Naaijens 2008: 311). Paradoxerweise stützt sich diese starke Aussage auf eine scheinbar eher schwache Behauptung, nämlich dass Übersetzungen, wenn sie von der Zielkultur rezipiert werden, die Fähigkeit haben, diese Kultur bis zu einem gewissen Grad zu verwandeln: Übersetzungen können eine Veränderung bewirken, und dieser Wandel kann als Ereignis, zuweilen auch als Event bezeichnet werden. Darüber hinaus tritt das Ereignis einer solchen Modifikation zum Zeitpunkt der Einführung und Rezeption einer Übersetzung in der Zielkultur ein. Wie Venuti es ausdrückt, indem er Kultur durch „Institutionen” ersetzt: „The translation that sets going an event introduces a linguistic and cultural difference in the institution, initiating new ways of thinking inspired by an interpretation of the source text” (Venuti 2013: 4).

Sobald eine Registrierung der Differenz und die Einführung neuer Denkweisen vorliegen, könne man mit Fug und Recht behaupten, dass es ein durch diese Übersetzung verursachtes Ereignis gegeben hat. Oder, wie Venuti behauptet, es geht darum, sich darauf zu einigen, dass Übersetzungen „initiate an event, creating new knowledges and values” (Venuti 2013: 185)

Offensichtlich können solche Neuerungen, Unterschiede und Veränderungen bescheiden sein und können insofern translatorische Mikroereignisse darstellen; u. U. kann man aber auch von einem Makroereignis ausgehen, das auf der Ebene einer Kultur oder eines Paradigmas geschieht und insofern die Auswirkungen eines Paradigmenwechsels, einer tiefgreifenden Veränderung des kulturellen Status quo hat. Im letztgenannten Fall verändert „die Übersetzung eines Textes [...], so dramatisch dies auch klingt, die Gesellschafts- und Weltordnung” (Agnetta 2021: 24). Diese Beobachtung wird von Venuti aufgegriffen, der uns auffordert, den „exorbitant gain” (Venuti 2013: 4) eines solchen Übersetzungsereignisses zu messen. Es besteht jedoch womöglich auch die Gefahr der Übertreibung, wenn Venuti behauptet, dass „as a linguistic and cultural practice, translation is unique in initiating events on an international scale, potentially affecting the hierarchy of values, beliefs, and representations in the receiving situation” (Venuti 2013: 4). Als sprachliche und kulturelle Praxis mag das vielleicht auf die eine oder andere Übersetzung zutreffen, obwohl natürlich nicht behauptet werden kann, dass eine Übersetzung allein Ereignisse von solchem Ausmaß auslöst wie beispielsweise der Abwurf der ersten Atombombe – ein einzigartiges Ereignis, das die Weltordnung tatsächlich entscheidend verändert hat. Die Frage, ob man von einem Übersetzungsereignis erwarten kann, dass es in der Lage ist, "the global hierarchy of symbolic capi-

tal” (Venuti 2013: 4) massiv umzugestalten oder gar umzustürzen, ist jedoch von entscheidender Bedeutung.

Wenn Übertreibung das eine Risiko ist, das man eingeht, wenn man versucht, die Übersetzung als Ereignis zu bezeichnen, dann ist das andere Risiko der Rückgriff auf leere Vorstellungen von einem Ereignis als ein Vorkommnis, das einfach passiert, oder als bloße Veränderung einer bestimmten Situation. Um das Risiko leerer oder gar theoretisch dürftiger Vorstellungen von Ereignishaftigkeit zu vermeiden, hat man in der Übersetzungswissenschaft versucht, sich auf spezifisch philosophische Konzepte zu berufen. Venuti beispielsweise rekurriert auf Alain Badiou's Konzept des Ereignisses, das er als Anlass für eine innovative Form oder Praxis beschreibt, die einen Bruch mit etablierten kulturellen und sozialen Institutionen bewirkt (vgl. Badiou 2010: 67; Venuti 2013: 4). Die Schwierigkeit bei dem Versuch, Badiou's Konzept auf die Übersetzungswissenschaft oder zumindest auf den Begriff der ‚Übersetzung‘ anzuwenden, besteht jedoch darin, dass Badiou's Kriterien für das, was als Ereignis gelten kann, äußerst streng sind, und es ist unwahrscheinlich, dass irgendein Übersetzungsereignis diese Kriterien erfüllen würde. Bestenfalls könnte man behaupten, dass das Profil eines wahren Ereignisses darin besteht, dass es nicht in einen anderen Kontext übersetzt werden kann, in dem es dasselbe Profil als Ereignis beibehalten könnte. Ein Ereignis ist also unübersetzbar; es kann nicht in einen anderen Kontext oder vielmehr in das, was Badiou in *Logiken der Welten* (2010) eine „Welt“ nennt, implantiert werden, ohne seine eigene Singularität als Ereignis zu verlieren, das an den ursprünglichen Kontext oder die Welt, in der es stattfand, gebunden ist.

Die Stringenz der Kriterien Badiou's beruht auf dem, was ein Ereignis sein muss: Erstens muss es unbestreitbar sein, dass es stattgefunden hat, und zweitens muss auch die Bedeutung dieses Ereignisses unbestreitbar sein. Denn nur wenn seine

Bedeutung unbestreitbar ist, kann das Ereignis für die von Badiou vertretene Philosophie – eine, die in der Lage ist, im Namen der *Wahrheit* zu sprechen – zugänglich werden. Für ihn gibt es keine Wahrheit, wenn Bedeutungen umstritten bleiben. Daher ist seine Philosophie sehr resistent gegen hermeneutische Ansätze, die die Bedeutung eines bestimmten Ereignisses zur Diskussion stellen und interpretieren. Wenn es Debatten und Interpretationen darüber gibt, kann das Ereignis aus Badiou’s Sicht gar nicht als Ereignis bezeichnet werden. Für die Geschichte der Übersetzungen kann man vielleicht auf „traductions marquantes“ (Dayre 2017: 15) hinweisen und sie als ausreichend wirkungsvoll betrachten, um zu behaupten, dass diese Übersetzungen tatsächlich Badiou’s Kriterien erfüllen. Luthers Bibelübersetzung, so könnte man meinen, ist ein Beispiel hierfür: Wir können ohne Bedenken sagen, dass diese Übersetzung für die deutsche Sprache, für die religiöse Kultur – und nicht nur in Deutschland – einschneidend war. Es ist jedoch schwierig, eine umfassende Liste von Übersetzungsergebnissen wie dem genannten zu erstellen. Sicherlich waren viele Übersetzungen für die Zielkultur von Bedeutung: Chateaubriand’s Milton-Übersetzung war wichtig für die französische Literatur, aber es ist umstritten, ob sie entscheidend war. Wenn es darüber eine Debatte gibt, dann ist für Badiou der Begriff des Ereignisses nicht mehr gerechtfertigt.

Eine ebenso ärgerliche Schwierigkeit besteht darin, dass noch vor jeder theoretischen Betrachtung der Übersetzung als Ereignis und der Frage, welche Übersetzungen diesen Status genießen sollten, definiert werden muss, was unter ‚Übersetzung‘ überhaupt zu verstehen ist. Doch wie Übersetzungswissenschaftler sehr gut wissen, entstehen trotz der vielen Bestimmungsversuche enorme Probleme, wenn die Definition dessen, was eine Übersetzung eigentlich ist (oder nicht ist), den Zweideutigkeiten der Begriffe ‚Adaptation‘, ‚Parodie‘, ‚Pasti-

che⁶ und sogar ‚Plagiat‘ weicht. Nehmen wir zum Beispiel Pseudoübersetzungen: Kann eine Pseudoübersetzung jemals ein Ereignis hervorrufen? Vielleicht hatten James MacPhersons Ossian-Gedichte, die in Deutschland, Frankreich, Italien und anderswo mit Begeisterung übersetzt wurden, tatsächlich die europaweite Wirkung eines echten literarischen Ereignisses, aber diese ereignishafte Wirkung war nur möglich, weil MacPhersons Gedichte nicht Ergebnis der Ereignishaftigkeit seiner Ossian-Übersetzung waren; es waren seine eigenen Gedichte und Ossian hatte nie existiert.

Die Bedeutung von ‚Ereignis‘ ist genauso schwierig festzulegen wie die Bedeutung von ‚Übersetzung‘. Aber das sind anregende, produktive Schwierigkeiten, vor allem wenn man bereit ist, die damit verbundenen theoretischen und methodologischen Risiken anzuerkennen. Ein Risiko ist in seiner Gefährlichkeit fast übermächtig. Man kann ein bestimmtes Übersetzungsereignis als ein Vorkommnis definieren, das eine Differenz einführt, oder als das, was Badiou als „etwas anderes“ bezeichnet (Badiou 2003: 91). Vermutlich wäre man in der Lage, den Grad der Andersartigkeit zu registrieren, während man diese Übersetzung immer noch als relativ ähnlich zu allen anderen uns bekannten Übersetzungen wahrnimmt. Selbst eine Pseudoübersetzung bleibt hinreichend mit dem Begriff ‚Übersetzung‘ verbunden. Was aber, wenn es ein Übersetzungsereignis von so radikaler Andersartigkeit gäbe, dass es überhaupt nicht als Übersetzung erkannt werden könnte? Was wäre, wenn ein Text den Begriff der Übersetzung so gründlich neu definieren würde, dass es unmöglich wäre, auf bestehende Charakterisierungen von Übersetzung zurückzugreifen? Die Grenzen der Ereignishaftigkeit werden wohl durch den Begriff der Unmöglichkeit abgesteckt: Ein Ereignis sollte eher möglich als unmöglich sein, eher erkennbar als unerkennbar, eher realisierbar als völlig unrealistisch und unvorstellbar. Daher

rührt auch die besondere Aufmerksamkeit, die Derrida in „Des Tours de Babel“ (2007) und „Was ist eine ‚relevante‘ Übersetzung?“ (2013) dem fast unvorstellbaren Ereignis von Joyces *Finnegans Wake* schenkt – ein Werk, von dem man mit Fug und Recht behaupten kann, es sei der Übersetzung insofern verpflichtet, dass es Babel selbst textualisiert; ein Werk, von dem man mit Recht behaupten kann, es sei unübersetzbar; schließlich ein Werk, das sich daher gegen das Event einer Übersetzung ins Französische, Deutsche, Portugiesische usw. sperrt. Dennoch wurde *Finnegans Wake* bspw. nicht nur einmal, sondern zweimal ins Französische übersetzt! Das ist sicherlich ein Übersetzungsereignis, denn es überwindet, was sonst unmöglich erscheint. Vielleicht ist das die entscheidende Bedingung: Ein Ereignis ist nur dann würdig, Ereignis genannt zu werden, wenn es das scheinbar Unmögliche möglich macht.

Die theoretischen Ansätze, die den Begriff der Übersetzung als Ereignis reflektieren, oszillieren zwischen der Berufung auf Extremfälle wie *Finnegans Wake* mit der Begründung, dass der Begriff des Ereignisses – vor allem in der Philosophie – selbst begrifflich extrem ist, und gemäßigten Positionen, die sich damit begnügen, die Auswirkungen einer Übersetzung auf die rezipierende Kultur zu erfassen, die durch eine solche Übersetzung Veränderungen erfährt. Bei dieser gemäßigten Position kann sich die Translationswissenschaft durchaus mit soziologischen Ansätzen, Rezeptionstheorien und auch der Hermeneutik verbünden, da die Hermeneutik uns mit dem Begriff des ‚Horizonts‘ eine Möglichkeit bietet, die Auswirkungen des Übersetzungsereignisses am historisch situierten Horizont der rezipierenden Kultur zu messen. Die Hermeneutik ist methodisch in der Lage, „eine kollektive Wirksamkeit“ (Agnetta 2021: 18) einer gegebenen Übersetzung ebenso wie die besonderen Auswirkungen der Übersetzungspraxis auf den und durch den einzelnen Übersetzer zu beurteilen.

Die Persönlichkeit des Übersetzers, sein Status und seine Sichtbarkeit in der Zielkultur (Cercel/Leal 2025) können – insbesondere vor dem Hintergrund außergewöhnlicher geschichtlicher Konstellationen – ein Übersetzungsereignis produzieren. Die Publikation der rumänischen Übersetzung von Goethes *Faust* durch den Dichter Lucian Blaga (1895–1961) im Jahr 1955 wurde enthusiastisch empfangen: Die 25.100 publizierten Exemplare waren in der Hauptstadt Bukarest in drei Tagen und in Cluj (Klausenburg), der Heimatstadt des Übersetzers Blaga, binnen drei Stunden ausverkauft (vgl. Cotter 2014: 48). Als Lucian Blaga 1957 einen Vortrag über seine *Faust*-Übersetzung mit dem Titel *Întâlniri cu Goethe* [dt. *Begegnungen mit Goethe*] in der Universitätsbibliothek in Klausenburg hielt, sprach er zu einem hingerissenen Publikum. Unmittelbar nach dem Vortrag geschossene Photographien zeigen „zerstörte Stühle und aus dem Boden gerissene Parkettstücke auf Druck derjenigen, die von den Gängen und Treppen in den überfüllten Saal gelangen wollten“ (Gruia 1981: 21), um dem Dichter-Übersetzer zuhören zu können. Es herrscht in der Fachliteratur Einigkeit, dass der hervorragende Erfolg des rumänischen *Faust* der Prominenz Lucian Blagas verschuldet ist: „It is the Romanian translator, not the foreign author, who drives the work’s reception“ (Cotter 2008: 853). Lucian Blaga, heutzutage ein Klassiker der rumänischen Literatur und Philosophie, war 1955 zum Zeitpunkt der Publikation seiner *Faust*-Übersetzung bereits ein bedeutender Dichter, der eine hohe kulturelle Autorität genoss: Er war „a major presence in pre-World War II Romanian culture, a figure of breadth and balance“ (Cotter 2014: 5). Da er sich geweigert hatte, das neue kommunistische Regime zu unterstützen, hatte er seit 1948 Publikationsverbot und jede öffentliche Präsenz war ihm verwehrt. Erlaubt war ihm nur zu übersetzen. Die *Faust*-Übersetzung und sein Vortrag darüber waren die ersten Auftritte

Blagas nach 7 bzw. 9 Jahren des vom damaligen politischen Regime erzwungenen öffentlichen Schweigens. Insofern waren nicht Goethe und sein klassisches Werk der Grund für den massiven Verkauf in Rekordzeit des rumänischen *Faust*, sondern das hohe Ansehen des Übersetzers Lucian Blaga: „The reputation of the translator, rather than the importance of the translated work, explains such a reception“ (Ciobâcă 2019: 9). Goethes Werk wurde in rumänischem Kontext dem Übersetzer auktorial zugeschrieben: „The same people who rushed to buy copies of Blaga’s *Faust* [sc. nicht Goethes! L. C.] came to his lecture in droves“ (Cotter 2014: 48). Dass diese Formulierung nicht dem Zufall oder bloß der Rhetorik verschuldet ist, sondern eine bewusste Wortwahl darstellt, wird explizit bestätigt: „*Faust* was received as Blaga’s work first and Goethe’s second“ (Cotter 2014: 78). Auch die Berichterstattungen der Zeitzeugen über Blagas Vortrag in Klausenburg erwähnen kaum Goethe und führen allesamt den massiven Erfolg der Veranstaltung auf die Autorität des Dichter-Übersetzers Blaga zurück (vgl. Gruia 1981: 17–22). Für viele der dort versammelten, vor allem jungen Menschen soll jener denkwürdige Vortrag die allererste Gelegenheit gewesen sein, nach Jahren der sozialen und akademischen Isolierung Blaga in Person zu erleben. Mitarbeiter der *Securitate* (d. h. der damaligen rumänischen Geheimpolizei) saßen ebenfalls im Publikum und dokumentierten das Ereignis, wie die nun öffentlich zugängliche *Securitate*-Akte Blagas belegt. Kurzum: Das vorgestellte Beispiel legt den Gedanken nahe, dass „le pourquoi et le comment“ (Dayre 2017: 14), die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit und die Manifestation eines Übersetzungsereignisses in der subtilen Interaktion verschiedener Akteure und Perspektiven zu suchen sind. Produzent (Übersetzer), Publikum, das neue soziokulturelle System und der geschichtliche Kontext, in dem eine Übersetzung ihre Wirkung entfaltet, bilden einen Zusammenhang,

in dem sich ein Ereignis ereignen kann. Die einzelnen ereigniskonstituierenden Faktoren – die individuellen (hermeneutisch) sowie die kollektiven (soziologisch und geschichtlich) – sind in ihrem Zusammenwirken zu betrachten.

Die Frage, ob die Übersetzung *als solche* bzw. ob *jede* Übersetzung als ein Ereignis betrachtet werden kann, gilt nach wie vor als offen. Neuerdings greifen manche verstärkt auf Theorien der Aufführung zurück und fördern insofern die Weiterentwicklung dessen, was Bachmann-Medick (2009) die performative Wende in der Übersetzungswissenschaft genannt hat. Wenn man jedoch den Übersetzer als Performer auffasst und sich das Ereignis der Übersetzung als etwas vorstellt, das beispielsweise einer Musik- oder Tanzaufführung ähnelt, stellt sich die Frage, ob der Übersetzer/Darsteller verpflichtet ist, dem von ihm ermöglichten Ereignis treu zu sein. Für Badiou ist ein Ereignis, das diesen Namen verdient, etwas, das die Kraft hat, eine Haltung der Treue, der ethischen Verpflichtung und der Verantwortung zu erzwingen. Doch die Frage der Treue des Übersetzers ist in der Übersetzungswissenschaft bekanntlich sehr umstritten. Jedenfalls stellt sich die Frage, ob das Konzept der Übersetzung als Ereignis von einer Ethik begleitet werden muss, die die Übersetzer für dieses Ereignis verantwortlich macht, oder ob man die Notwendigkeit einer solchen Ethik ablehnt. Sicherlich gibt es in Bezug auf die Art oder Qualität dieses Ereignisses „no guarantee that change will be good or bad“ (Pym ³2023: 125); aber die Frage ist vielleicht, ob man in jedem Fall Kriterien wie ‚gut‘ und ‚schlecht‘ überhaupt beibehält oder ob man stattdessen behauptet, dass ein Ereignis genau diese Kriterien weitgehend beseitigt oder neu erfindet. Übersetzungen, schreibt Venuti, „should not be faulted merely for exhibiting features that are commonly called unethical: wholesale manipulation of the source text, ignorance of the source language, even plagiarism of other translations“ (Venuti

2013: 185). Offen bleibt jedoch die Frage, ob ÜbersetzerInnen nicht nur den üblichen Vorwürfen, die Venuti aufzählt, sondern jeder Art von ‚Schuld‘ entgehen und sich somit glücklich schätzen können, immer als unschuldig zu gelten, von allen ethischen Erwägungen freigesprochen zu sein, niemals als schuldig im Falle einer missbräuchlichen Übersetzung angesehen zu werden und tatsächlich auch immun gegen jegliche rechtliche Verfolgung aufgrund eines Plagiatsverbrechens oder einer Urheberrechtsverletzung zu sein.

Sobald ethische und rechtliche Fragen in die Debatte über die Übersetzung als Ereignis eintreten, gibt es folgende Möglichkeiten: Man kann den Standpunkt einnehmen, dass solche Fragen überhaupt nicht in die Debatte einfließen sollten, oder man ist gezwungen, die Folgen des Übersetzungsereignisses für den Ausgangstext und sogar den Ausgangsautor zu bedenken. Zweifellos ist es möglich, den Standpunkt zu vertreten, dass der Autor des Ausgangstextes radikal abgewertet werden kann, obwohl die Berufung auf Roland Barthes’ „Der Tod des Autors“ (1984) in der Übersetzungswissenschaft vielleicht das Risiko birgt, genau das Verbrechen – sozusagen den symbolischen Mord – zu identifizieren, für das die Übersetzer entlastet werden möchten. Jedenfalls besteht die Möglichkeit, das Ereignis der Übersetzung im Hinblick auf eine bestimmte Gewaltausübung zu untersuchen, nämlich auf die subtile Dialektik von Zerstörung einer ursprünglichen Realität (Originaltext) und Erschaffung eines neuen (Übersetzungstextes) durch die Person des Übersetzers, der den Übergang vollzieht (Agnetta 2021: 24), wobei die Übersetzung sowohl eine regelrechte Zerstörung des Originaltextes als auch eine „subtile Dialektik“ beinhaltet. Es besteht ebenfalls die Möglichkeit, die vielen Metaphern zu untersuchen, die zur Beschreibung des Übersetzens verwendet werden, und zu hinterfragen, ob die zahlreichen Verweise, die das Bild vom Übersetzen als einer gewalttätigen

Tätigkeit zeichnen, als echte gewalttätige Ereignisse betrachtet werden können.

Dieser Umstand lädt uns ein zu hinterfragen, ob das Event der Übersetzung ein Ereignis sein muss, das wirklich stattfindet, oder ob es Ereignisse geben kann, die nicht wirklich, sondern nur im metaphorischen Bereich, in dem sich ein großer Teil der Übersetzungs-„Theorie“ bevorzugt aufhält – man denke beispielsweise an die Ausführungen von George Steiner (vgl. O’Keeffe 2021) – geschehen. *Wo* findet das Übersetzungsereignis statt? Im unschuldig figurativen Bereich der bloßen Übersetzungsmetaphern? Wir können parallel auch fragen: *Wann* findet das Übersetzungsereignis statt? Die Zeit eines Ereignisses kann nur die Zeit des ‚Jetzt‘, des gegenwärtigen Augenblicks seines Auftretens sein, so wie die Zeit einer Tanzaufführung gewissermaßen als die Zeit der gegenwärtigen Unmittelbarkeit angesehen wird. Doch dies sind natürlich nicht die einzigen Zeitlichkeiten, die die Translationswissenschaft anvisiert. Sie rechnet schließlich mit Vorstellungen von Zukunft, einschließlich der schwierigen Ereignisse und Vorstöße, von denen Walter Benjamin in „Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers“ (1923/1973) spricht, nämlich die Ereignisse von ‚Fortleben‘ und ‚Überleben‘, ganz zu schweigen von dem durch einen gewissen Messianismus versprochenen Ereignis, nämlich der erhofften Präsentation der *reinen Sprache* durch die Übersetzung. Oder man denke an die unvorhersehbare Zukunft eines noch zu erwartenden Übersetzungsereignisses in Derridas Französisch und nicht in Benjamins Deutsch: Das wäre ein ‚*événement à venir*‘, also ein Ereignis, das im Begriff ist zu kommen, aber noch nicht eingetroffen ist.

Vielleicht ist es daher nicht nur pure Ironie, dass jede Annäherung an die Übersetzung als Ereignis mit den verschiedenen Übersetzungen beginnen muss, die man für das Wort ‚Ereignis‘ findet. Das Englische (event), das Französische

(*événement*) und auch das Deutsche (*Vorkommnis*) können die lateinischen Resonanzen des Verbs *venire* – ‚kommen‘ – aktivieren. Das deutsche ‚Ereignis‘ löst jedoch ganz andere Resonanzen aus. In anderen Sprachen, da sind wir uns sicher, gibt es andere Übersetzungsschwierigkeiten, die aus dem Wort ‚Ereignis‘ eine *mise en abyme* des Glanzes und Elends unserer Theorie und Praxis machen.

Viele der Kapitel in diesem Band verfolgen theoretische Ansätze, die Übersetzungswissenschaft und Performance Studies miteinander verbinden. In dieser Hinsicht erachten wir als nützlich, summarisch darzulegen, was methodologisch auf dem Spiel steht.

2 Das Zusammenwirken von Translation Studies und Performance Studies

Die Forschungsbereiche der Translationswissenschaft und der Performance Studies speisen sich von einer Vielzahl an disziplinär unterschiedlich zu verortenden Quellen und zeitigen mannigfache theoretische Ausformungen (zu dem Status der Translationswissenschaft als Interdisziplin vgl. Kaindl 1999; zu dem der Performance Studies vgl. Hempfer/Volbers 2011). Diese Pluralität der Quellen kann als Potenzial für die eigene Theoriebildung aufgefasst werden, weil diese dadurch dynamisch und ergebnisoffen bleibt.

Was mit dem Heftthema in den Vordergrund gerückt werden soll, ist u. a. der Handlungscharakter von Übersetzungen: Übersetzen ist ein wirkmächtiges Tun, es resultiert aus Handlungen und bewirkt solche. Es ist transformativ, denn die (Nicht-)Existenz bedingt das Handeln von Individuen und Gruppen. Dies bezeugen zum Beispiel die vielen reflexiven Texte rund um die Publikation und Verbreitung translatorischer Produkte, etwa Vor- und Nachworte, Fußnoten, Kom-

mentare, Übersetzerkorrespondenzen etc., in denen die Legitimation der (Erst- oder Neu-)Übersetzung mit einer Deontik ihrer Nachnutzung verbunden wird.

Performanceanalysen (im Sinne von Aufführungsanalysen) haben es immer mit ephemeren Objekten zu tun. Das ist zuweilen auch in der Translationswissenschaft der Fall, deren gleichberechtigter Teil die Dolmetschforschung ist. Doch auch in der übersetzungsbezogenen Forschung kann die Berücksichtigung aufführungsbezogener Größen indiziert sein: Zum einen lässt sich die Performance eines Übersetzersubjekts (oder Übersetzerkollektivs) im engeren Sinne, d. h. der eigentliche Übersetzungsprozess, in dem es um die Erschaffung des Zieltextes geht, unter solchen Vorzeichen analysieren. Auf dieser Basis ist das Übersetzen als grundsätzlich kreative Tätigkeit beschrieben worden (vg. die Beiträge in Cercel et al. 2017). Doch wird der *Performance*-Begriff nicht nur in Bezug auf das Humanübersetzen, sondern – wie schon oberflächliche Websuchen bestätigen werden – in letzter Zeit vielleicht noch mehr in Einschätzungen zur Leistungsfähigkeit maschineller Systeme bei der Durchführung von übersetzerischen und anders gelagerten Vertextungsaufgaben gebraucht. Die Adäquatheit des Performance-Begriffs, um Größen der translatorischen Tätigkeit zu beschreiben, lässt sich aber auch bestreiten (s. Stolze in dieser Heftnummer). Zum anderen fallen unter einen performanztheoretischen Übersetzungsbegriff auch Beobachtungen rund um die Performativität (im linguistischen Sinne) des translatorischen Handelns als Resultat bestimmter Bedingungen – seien es zeitliche bzw. räumliche Einschränkungen, Vorgaben von Auftraggebern und Kunden, das (Nicht-)Vorhandensein von Paralleltexten und Vorgängerübersetzungen etc. – und als Ausgangspunkt für Auswirkungen auf Zeitgenossen und die Nachwelt: Die Übersetzung (*qua*

Produkt *und* Prozess) wird hier als Teil einer umfangreicheren Handlungskette, eines Diskurses, angesehen.

Auch Nichtübersetzungen prägen diesen Diskurs mit. Man denke etwa an die von Kovács (2018: 123–129) überlieferte Schilderung über den Dolmetscher und Übersetzer Fritz Paepcke, der als Berichterstatter im zweiten Weltkrieg tätig war und dessen Entscheidung zur Zurückhaltung der ihm zu Ohren gekommenen Informationen über die Alliiertenlandung in der Normandie ein Zeugnis darüber gibt, wie Übersetzer und Dolmetscher manchmal doch ganz offensichtlich weltpolitische Geschehnisse bedingen können. Anders gelagert ist der Fall von Donna Leon, die ihre Commissario-Brunetti-Romane aufgrund heikler Themen wie Korruption nicht ins Italienisch übertragen wissen will und damit eine vielsagende Leerstelle schafft, die Fangemeinde und Kritiker gleichermaßen Grund zum Austausch gibt (vgl. UEPO 2012).

Die Übersetzung unter performativitätstheoretischen Vorzeichen zu betrachten ist keine fernliegende theoretische Spielerei, die sich aus einer Verbindung zweier willkürlich ausgewählter Forschungsgebiete ergibt (obwohl ein solches heuristisches Vorgehen sicher auch seinen Reiz hätte). Es handelt sich vielmehr um die logische und gleichzeitig vielversprechende Konsequenz von in der Translatologie bereits vorangetriebenen Studien: Wenn das Übersetzen – wie Vertreter handlungstheoretischer und hermeneutischer Ansätze stets betonen – eine ernstzunehmende (Experten-)Tätigkeit ist, die Variablen wie der translatorischen Subjektivität, dem Übersetzungszweck und allgemein dem Situationskonnex unterliegt, und dazu noch in ihrer gesellschaftlichen Relevanz nicht unterschätzt werden sollte, dann verpflichtet ein performativitätstheoretischer Ansatz dazu, diese Praxis in ihrer gesamten sozialen Wirksamkeit zu erfassen. Dies gilt für einen synchronischen Ansatz, der eine Beschreibung des übersetzerischen

Handelns in Wechselwirkung mit anderen Handlungsbereichen bezweckt, genauso wie für eine diachronische Perspektivierung, nach der die Übersetzungsgeschichte als ein fortlaufender Diskurs unterschiedlicher Akteursnetzwerke anzusehen ist. In einem solchen mehrere Texte, kulturelle Bereiche und evtl. Generationen umfassenden Diskurs sind das Entstehen, die Existenz, das Invergessenheitgeraten, die Nichtexistenz und das Wiederaufleben einer Übersetzung gleichermaßen bedeutsame Ereignisse und unweigerlich Bestandteile einer allgemeinen Kulturgeschichte.

3 Übersetzungswissenschaftliche Positionen zur Ereignishaftigkeit von Übersetzungen

Die Rede von Übersetzungen als „communicative events“ (Alavi 2018: 170; Agnetta 2021: 9) oder schlicht „Events“ (Pym 2018, 2019, ³2023: 123–125) ist in der Übersetzungswissenschaft rezent und vielmehr ein Impuls und Plädoyer, d. h. indikativ für eine neue Forschungsrichtung, als eine bereits etablierte Perspektive. Thematisiert wird diese Dimension von Translaten aus zwei verschiedenen Blickwinkeln, nämlich (1) hermeneutisch-performativ und (2) kulturhistorisch sowie kultursoziologisch. Die Ansätze nehmen unterschiedliche Ausgangspunkte, treffen sich aber in der gemeinsamen Vorstellung von der realen oder potentiellen Ereignishaftigkeit einer *jeden* Übersetzung.

Ad (1): Hermeneutisch-performativ wird Translaten eine grundsätzliche Ereignishaftigkeit aufgrund der jeweiligen Individualität des Übersetzers und des performativen Charakters eines jeden translatorischen Umgangs mit Texten zuerkannt: Der Translator begegnet dem Original mit seinen eigenen Voraussetzungen, indem er den Ausgangstext versteht bzw. interpretiert und im Anschluss den Zieltext im Rahmen seiner ei-

genen Erfahrungen, Emotionen und Einstellungen produziert. Textverständnis ist demnach „ein Ereignis bzw. eine Verkettung von Ereignissen, in dem bzw. in denen die anhand des Textes inferierten Informationen in Interaktion mit den sich ständig verändernden Wissensbeständen und den Absichten des Rezipienten treffen“ (Agnetta 2021: 14). Das individuelle „very ‚event‘ of understanding“ (O’Keeffe 2018: 16) mündet in die Produktion des Translats, dessen Gestalt und Inhalt auf den jeweils vorgängigen „crucial chains of events“ (O’Keeffe 2018: 24) beruht und sich dialogisch an seine Rezipienten wendet. Die performative Auffassung vom Übersetzungsprozess von der Rezeption des Originals bis hin zur Produktion und Wirkung des Translats – der Translator „performs for its audience and invites their response“ (Bermann 2014: 285) – führt unweigerlich zum Begriff der (ereignishaften) Emergenz: Übersetzen ist somit „ein Phänomen, das sich in spezifischen historischen und situationellen Kontexten *ereignet*. Übersetzen ist ein Event, ein Happening“ (Agnetta 2021: 25).

Ad (2): In der kulturhistorischen bzw. -soziologischen Perspektive wird ebenfalls davon ausgegangen, dass „all translations are events“ – unabhängig von deren Qualität (Naaijken 2010: 7). Unterstützt wird diese These mit Beispielen wie der King James Version der Bibel, „which is surely not a very good translation“, jedoch „a text that unquestionably is to be regarded as an event, since it generated considerable cultural change“ (ebd.: 7). Entscheidend ist bei dieser Schwerpunktsetzung vielmehr, dass von Übersetzungen „an impulse to change“ (ebd.: 4) ausgeht. Übersetzungen verändern bestehende Konstellationen, und Übersetzer sind Akteure der Veränderung, nicht der Bewahrung. Translatorische Ereignisse werden in diesem Ansatz vor dem breiten Hintergrund der kulturellen Dynamik betrachtet. Anders als die nivellierende Perspektive über Übersetzungen als bloße „Vorfälle“ (*incidents*)

(ebd.: 5) in dem vielfältigen und komplexen Prozess der interkulturellen Kommunikation, schreibt dieser Ansatz Übersetzungen eine Schlüsselrolle im Rahmen des Kulturtransfers zu: Sie tragen entscheidend zur Konstruktion der Karte der Weltliteratur sowie zur Verbreitung von großen kulturellen Revolutionen bei. Der Fokus liegt hier auf Wirkungsanalyse und den Auswirkungen von Übersetzungen auf soziokulturelle Dynamiken und Prozesse (vgl. ebd.: 8).

4 Hermeneutik und Semiotik als Methoden der Performance-Analyse

Wie erwähnt, erhoffen sich Vertreter der translationswissenschaftlichen Forschung einen neuen Impuls davon, dass man sich dem Übersetzungs- und dem Dolmetschphänomen von der Seite performanztheoretischer Ansätze aus nähert. Die auch im Rahmen der vorliegenden Zeitschriftennummer diskutierte Frage, ob das Übersetzen als ‚Ereignis‘ begriffen werden kann – oder nicht (vgl. Stolze in diesem Heft) –, ist also auch daran festzumachen, ob sich die Tätigkeit des Übersetzens gewinnbringend mit den Analysekatégorien der Aufführungsforschung und Performativitätstheorie angehen lässt. Eine lückenlose Inventarisierung performanztheoretischer Theorie- und Analysebausteine und die Erprobung am translationswissenschaftlichen Untersuchungsgegenstand kann hier nicht geleistet werden. Es sollen nachfolgend jedoch einige Beobachtungen angestellt werden, die sich auf Aussagen von Erika Fischer-Lichte, einer der zentralen Figuren der (deutschsprachigen) Performativitätsforschung, zurückführen lassen. Insbesondere sollen diejenigen Äußerungen in den Fokus gerückt werden, die sich mit dem Anliegen des *Jahrbuchs für Übersetzungshermeneutik* in Verbindung bringen lassen.

In einem frühen Beitrag zur Performativitätsforschung, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (2004), bezweifelt Erika Fischer-Lichte die Aussagekraft semiotischer und hermeneutischer Theoreme für und die Anwendbarkeit entsprechender Termini und Methoden auf die performative Kunst:

Eine solche Performance [sc. wie *Lips of Thomas* von Marina Abramovic] entzieht sich dem Zugriff der überlieferten ästhetischen Theorien. Sie widersetzt sich hartnäckig dem Anspruch einer hermeneutischen Ästhetik, die darauf zielt, das Kunstwerk zu verstehen. Denn hier geht es weniger um das Verstehen der Handlungen, welche die Künstlerin vollzog, als um die Erfahrungen, die sie dabei machte und die sie bei den Zuschauern hervorrief, kurz: um die Transformation der an der Performance Beteiligten. (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 17)

Obwohl es in einer Performance allerhand zu interpretieren und als Zeichen zu werten gäbe, sei diese nicht auf den Nachvollzug dieser semiotischen Strukturen reduzierbar (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 18). Schließlich konstituiere die Performance „eine neue, eine eigene Wirklichkeit. Diese Wirklichkeit wurde von den Zuschauern nun nicht nur gedeutet, sondern zu allererst in ihren Auswirkungen erfahren“ (ebd.: 19). Kurz: Fischer-Lichte hängt hier zwei Vorstellungen nach, welche die Hermeneutik und die Semiotik als unzureichende Methoden zur Analyse von Performances klassifizieren: Nämlich der Beobachtung, die Erfahrung und Emotionalität der Rezeption habe wenig mit dem Verstehen zu tun¹, und der Idee, bei Zeichen handle es sich um der Performance vorgängige, rezeptionsituationsthobene, diskrete Versatzstücke, die sich vornehmlich in Artefakten materialisierten – als hätte Semiotik nichts mit der Somatik (des Subjekts im Hier und Jetzt seines Daseins) zu

1 Eine weitere Aussage lautet: „Es ging nicht darum, die Performance zu verstehen, sondern sie zu erfahren und mit den eigenen Erfahrungen, die sich nicht vor Ort durch Reflexion bewältigen ließen umzugehen“ (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 19).

tun. Hermeneutische und semiotische Analyseverfahren seien nach Fischer-Lichte im Hinblick auf Performances auch deswegen unangebracht, weil diese für gewöhnlich auf geschriebene Texte, zumindest aber auf materialisierte Kunstwerke, angewendet würden. Gerade die Tatsache, dass bei Performances nicht ein „von ihm [sc. dem Werkurheber] ablösbares, fixierbares und tradierbares Artefakt, das Kunstwerk“ (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 19) im Vordergrund steht, sondern ein Ereignis, spreche für die Etablierung eines neuen Forschungsparadigmas, den andere Forscher (auch in der Translationswissenschaft) als „performative Wende“ (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 22) oder „performative turn“ (Bachmann-Medick 2016: 104–143) bezeichnet haben.

Fischer-Lichtes Beobachtungen beinhalten klare Aussagen zum Anliegen von Hermeneutik und Semiotik, die in ihrem apodiktischen Charakter Gefahr laufen, nicht (mehr) zutreffend zu sein. Die zeitgenössische Hermeneutik ist nicht eine normative Wissenschaft davon, wie ein Kunstwerk oder ein anderes Phänomen ‚zu verstehen ist‘, sondern ein deskriptiver Ansatz, nach dem erforscht wird, wie ein Kunstwerk ‚verstanden wird‘ und ‚verstanden werden kann‘ – wobei letztgenannte Formulierung nicht nur auf die Sinnpluralität des Werks oder Phänomens abzielt, sondern auch auf den Prozess und die Mechanismen beim Verständnis im Allgemeinen. Die Hermeneutik, u. a. eine Theorie der menschlichen Kognition, versucht die Tätigkeit eines Rezipienten bei der Aufnahme und Verarbeitung des zu verstehenden Phänomens nachzuvollziehen. Jede Trennung der Operationen des Verstehens und des (leiblichen) Erfahrens ist – wie nicht zuletzt das Kognitionsmodell der 4EA zeigt (vgl. die die von Robinson herausgegebenen Beiträge im *Jahrbuch für Übersetzungshermeneutik* 2, 2022) – eine künstlich vollzogene. Die Hermeneutik interessiert sich für den Prozess und das (vorläufige) Ende solcher innerlich

ablaufender Verstehensvorgänge, in denen das Bewusstsein auf das zu Verstehende gelenkt wird und bei dem – das geht nicht anders – die eigenen Wissensbestände und der eigene Erfahrungsschatz gleichermaßen aktiviert werden.

Zugegeben: Übersetzungen, die Untersuchungen hermeneutisch und semiotisch arbeitender Forscher motivieren, sind textuelle Artefakte. Aber es sind Produkte, welche die Spuren des übersetzerischen Handelns in sich tragen. Bei diesem sind alle (auch stark verändernden) Verfahren der intertextuellen Bezugnahme ausschöpfbar. Und gerade der Umstand, dass ein übersetztes Werk separat von seinem Autor existiert, kann dazu führen, dass sich andere Performer dieses Textes bedienen oder gar ermächtigen und damit seine ganzen Wirkpotenziale, gute wie schlechte, historisch instanzieren. Die Trennung des Werks von seinem Autor ist daher kein Grund für die Annahme einer performanceunabhängigen Hermeneutik und Semiotik. Im Gegenteil: Jede Inanspruchnahme eines Textes ist eine Performance für sich und zugleich in einem Diskurs mit den anderen verbunden. Der Hermeneutik – hier: der Übersetzungshermeneutik – geht es aber nicht rein um die Texte an sich und um eine Trennung von Subjekt und Objekt, wie Fischer-Lichte konstatiert, sondern sie ist gerade in der Form, in der sie seit dem 21. Jahrhundert (aber auch davor) betrieben wurde und wird eine Handlungstheorie, in welcher Text, Urheber, Rezipient und Situationskonnex von Produktion und Rezeption in ihrem dynamischen Verhältnis im Mittelpunkt stehen (vgl. hierzu die Beiträge in Cercel 2009, Cercel/Stanley 2012, Stolze et al. 2015, Stanley et al. 2018 und 2021). Die Hermeneutik, die sich im 20. Jahrhundert immer wieder der Metaphern des Gesprächs mit dem Text und des Frage-Antwort-Spiels bedient, und damit ein Beziehungsgeschehen in den Vordergrund rückt, gehört eben nicht zu jenen antiquierenden und z. T. obsoleten Ansätzen, die auf eine Trennung

von Produktions-, Werk- und Rezeptionsästhetik hinauslaufen (Fischer-Lichte 2004: 22) und daher für die Performanceanalyse nicht zu gebrauchen sind.

In einem späteren Buchbeitrag, *Performativität. Eine Einführung* (Fischer-Lichte 2012), ist die Anschließbarkeit einer Übersetzungshermeneutik an einer Theorie der Performativität eher gegeben. Der Autorin zufolge ist eine Praxis dann als ‚performativ‘ zu werten, wenn diese als ‚selbstreferentiell‘ und ‚wirklichkeitskonstituierend‘ (2012: 38, 133) eingestuft werden kann. Aber nicht nur Aufführungen im engeren Sinne (im Theater, Konzertsaal oder Museum) lassen sich als performativ auffassen, sondern auch ein spezifischer Umgang mit Sprechakten, Texten, Bildern etc. (vgl. ebd.: 135) in allen möglichen Handlungskontexten.² Die bereits 2004 entwickelten Kategorien der Performance-Beschreibung werden hier etwas weiter gefasst und in einem Großkapitel („Ausweitung des Feldes: Performative Studien“) auch für die Analyse von Texten (ebd.: 135–145), Bildern (ebd.: 147–159) und Dingen (ebd.: 162–178) fruchtbar gemacht (für erste Anwendungen auf den Untersuchungsgegenstand der Übersetzungswissenschaft und auf die öffentlichen Lesungen von Übersetzern vgl. Agnetta 2021 bzw. Cercl 2025).

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- 2 Bei Fischer-Lichte (2012: 145) heißt es: „Literarische Texte unter der Perspektive des Performativen zu betrachten, heißt also, ihre Verfahren offenzulegen, mit denen sie eine neue, ihre eigene, Wirklichkeit konstituieren, und den Möglichkeiten nachzuspüren, wie sie durch diese Wirklichkeit auf ihre Leser einzuwirken vermögen, und vermittelt über die Leser ein kulturelles Wirkpotenzial zu entfalten. Wie sich gezeigt hat, sind literarische Texte – auch in dieser Hinsicht Sprechakten, symbolischen körperlichen Handlungen und Praktiken und Aufführungen vergleichbar – von Unvorhersehbarkeit der Lektüre, Ambivalenzen und transformativer Kraft gekennzeichnet, die den Leser für die Zeit der Lektüre und vielleicht sogar über sie hinaus nachhaltig zu verwandeln vermag.“

Für literarische (und philosophische) Texte führt Fischer-Lichte (2012: 139), rezeptionsästhetische Positionen kommentierend, die aus der Arbeit des Sonderforschungsbereichs *Kulturen des Performativen* resultierende Unterscheidung zwischen der ‚strukturellen‘ und der ‚funktionalen Performativität‘ an. Erstgenannte beschreibt die Machart des Textes und lenkt die Aufmerksamkeit darauf, „wie der Text das *macht*, wovon er spricht, oder gegebenenfalls etwas anderes macht, als er behauptet“ (Fischer-Lichte 2012: 139). Bei der zweitgenannten geht es um die „kulturelle Wirkmächtigkeit“ eines Textes, d. h. darum, was der Text in (gesamt-)gesellschaftlicher und geschichtlicher Hinsicht auslöst (vgl. ebd.). Nun sind Aushandlungen der ersten Form von Performativität im (normativen und deskriptiven) Translationsdiskurs schon immer an die zweite rückgebunden worden. Da Übersetzungen vielerorts als (implizit) performative Sprechakte begriffen werden, nämlich als solche, die stets um die Aussage ergänzt werden müssen ‚Ich, der unterzeichnende Übersetzer, referiere hiermit, was der Autor oder Sender des Ausgangstextes in diesem verschriftlicht hat‘, lassen sich Fragen zur Machart des Derivats nie vollständig von einem transtextuellen Diskurs trennen, der auch den Prätext und die an ihm womöglich vorgenommenen Änderungen thematisiert.

5 Zum Band

Den Auftakt zur vorliegenden Heftnummer macht Brian O’Keeffes Kapitel „The Events and Non-Events of Translation“. Er gibt den Ton vor, der sich durch eine Reihe von Aufsätzen in diesem Band zieht, nämlich ein kritisches Zögern oder eine gewisse Vorsicht in Bezug auf die Frage, ob der Begriff des ‚Ereignisses‘ in der Übersetzungswissenschaft rigoros angewendet werden kann. Zum Teil, so argumentiert er, ver-

fällt man zu leicht in die Annahme, dass Übersetzung *wie* ein Ereignis ist, und greift daher auf allzu bequeme Metaphern zurück, von denen keine richtig beschreibt, was eine Übersetzung eigentlich *ist*. Zum Teil liegt es an der Schwierigkeit, philosophische Konzepte von Ereignishaftigkeit auf die Übersetzungswissenschaft zu übertragen. Wie einige der Aufsätze in diesem *Jahrbuch* zeigen, kann die Verwendung von Erkenntnissen aus den Performance Studies (da auch sie sich auf eine Idee des Ereignisses berufen) die philosophischen Herausforderungen verringern oder sogar eine Rechtfertigung dafür liefern, Philosophen wie Martin Heidegger, Alain Badiou und Jacques Derrida zu ignorieren. O’Keeffe argumentiert, dass bestimmte Herausforderungen dennoch bestehen bleiben. Eine Herausforderung, die von Derrida formuliert wurde, ist die Frage, ob ein Übersetzungsereignis, das diesen Namen verdient, ein Ereignis ist, das das Unmögliche möglich macht – eine strenge Anforderung an ein Ereignis, die die Zahl der plausiblen Exempel, die man zur Veranschaulichung der Ereignishaftigkeit von Übersetzungen auswählen könnte, erheblich einschränkt.

Auch in ihrem Beitrag, „Die Metapher als hermeneutisch-performatives Sprachereignis“, äußert Radegundis Stolze Zweifel am Ereignisbegriff: Wenn man davon ausgeht, dass alles, was überhaupt geschieht, ein Ereignis ist, dann ist das Schreiben eines Buches ein Ereignis, das Lesen eines Buches und das Betroffensein davon ebenfalls ein Ereignis, das Übersetzen eines Buches schließlich auch. Die Gefahr besteht darin, dass der Begriff oder das Konzept des Ereignisses zu allgegenwärtig wird, um theoretisch noch von Nutzen zu sein. Doch wie Stolzes Diskussion zeigt, gibt es verschiedene Grade von Ereignishaftigkeit: Einige sind bescheiden, andere sind folgenreicher. Mit Amanda Gormans Gedicht „The Hill we Climb“ betrachtet Stolze einen Text mit einer beträchtlichen politi-

schen Bedeutung und sie stellt die Frage, ob diese Bedeutung in den deutschen Übersetzungen des Gedichts erhalten bleibt oder nicht. Eine solche Beurteilung, so Stolze, erfordert eine genaue Lektüre der deutschen Fassungen sowie eine hermeneutische Auseinandersetzung mit den Übersetzern und mit der Art und Weise, wie sie ihr Handwerk ausgeübt haben. Nichtsdestotrotz bleiben Stolzes Aufrufe zur Vorsicht bedeutsam. Während ein Ereignis oft als einmaliges, unwiederholbares Ereignis konzeptualisiert wird, ist die Praxis des Übersetzens prozessual, und dies erfordert eine Reflexion über die Zeit des Übersetzens: Es ist die Zeit, die der Geist und der Körper des Übersetzers benötigen, um das umzusetzen, was Stolze „eine kognitive Bewegung“ nennt. Darüber hinaus argumentiert Stolze trotz des theoretischen Nutzens, der in der Verwendung von Begriffen der Ereignishaftigkeit aus den Performance Studies oder sogar aus der eigenen performativen Wende der Translation Studies liegen mag, dass „die Aufführung eines originalen oder übersetzten Stücks auf der Theaterbühne freilich ein Ereignis ist, indem der Inhalt als Performanz vermittelt wird. Hier ist nicht die Übersetzung das Ereignis, sondern die Darstellung“. Wie auch O’Keeffe unter Hinweis auf Performance-Künstler wie Marina Abramović argumentiert, ist es in Fällen von Theater- oder Performance-Kunst natürlich viel einfacher, von Ereignishaftigkeit zu sprechen. Vieles hängt nämlich davon ab, ob man Übersetzung in Bezug auf die Unmittelbarkeit der *Darstellung* in der gleichen Weise theoretisieren kann, wie dies für eine theatralische Aufführung möglich ist.

Neben der Betrachtung der Theaterbühne oder *skena* stellt sich die von O’Keeffe aufgeworfene allgemeinere Frage, *wo* ein Übersetzungsereignis stattfindet. Welche anderen Orte wären denkbar? Er schlägt vor, dass einer davon die Seite selbst sein könnte, vorausgesetzt, wir sind bereit, uns auf die

Übersetzung von geschriebenen Texten zu beschränken. Aber es gibt auch andere Orte, die man sich vorstellen könnte, und damit auch andere Übersetzungs- und performative Ereignisse, die zu berücksichtigen sind. Ralf van Bühren, Alberto Gil und Juan Rego gehen in ihrem Aufsatz „Performance as Translation. The Representation of the Sacred in the ‘Sagrada Familia’ (Barcelona) by the Interaction of Architecture, Visual Arts and Liturgy“ von der Behauptung aus, dass „jeder kommunikative Akt eine Art von Performance ist“. Der theoretische Nutzen dieses Konzepts der Aufführung besteht darin, ein Verständnis von ‚Übersetzung‘ sowohl als Aufführung als auch als Kommunikation zu ermöglichen. Der Ort, den die Autoren für ihre Untersuchung wählen, ist die Kathedrale Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, ein Bauwerk, das die christliche Lehre durch seine Bleiglasfenster, seine Steinmetzarbeiten und seine Architektur ‚übersetzt‘. Darüber hinaus untersuchen die Autoren das bedeutsame Ereignis der Einweihung der Kathedrale durch Papst Benedikt XVI, bei der er eine Predigt hielt. Sie zeigen, dass dabei viele performative und übersetzerische Ereignisse gleichzeitig stattfanden, *inter alia* die Predigt, die sie als eine liturgische Übersetzung des Wortes Gottes betrachten, die sich an die Gemeinde vor Ort richtete, und der Einweihungsritus, der als eine Performance verstanden werden kann, die den Glauben selbst *realiter* überträgt und Gott tatsächlich gegenwärtig macht.

Was aus ihrem Aufsatz hervorgeht, ist die Idee der „translation as performance“. Vieles hängt davon ab, ob eine solche Formulierung – und die Bequemlichkeit des Wortes ‚als‘ – erheblich eingeschränkt werden muss, damit sowohl die Idee der Aufführung als auch die Idee der Übersetzung nicht ihre begriffliche Spezifität verlieren, oder ob man im Gegenteil der Ansicht ist, dass es viel zu gewinnen gibt, wenn man Übersetzung als Aufführung betrachtet und umgekehrt: Die Autoren

sprechen auch von „performance as translation“. Eine Möglichkeit, diesen Gewinn zu messen, besteht vielleicht gerade darin, sich mit Ausdrucksformen des religiösen Glaubens zu befassen. Auch Priyada Padhye beschäftigt sich mit solchen Fragen: Ihr Beitrag trägt den Titel „Translating Divinity in the Liminal Space. Performative Translations in the Medieval and Early Modern Period in India“. Es ist in gewisser Weise ein außergewöhnlicher Titel: Wie kann man Göttlichkeit übersetzen? Wäre das nicht ein herausragendes Ereignis der Übersetzung? Erika Fischer-Lichtes Werk erweist sich als nützlich für Padhyes Diskussion, allem voran der Begriff der ‚Emergenz‘, der nach Fischer-Lichte all jene Phänomene umfasst, „that appear not as a consequence of specific plans and intentions but as unforeseen and, in this sense, contingent events“. Padhye zitiert wiederum Fischer-Lichte: „Unpredictability constitutes a defining feature of emergence“. Diese Zitate von Fischer-Lichte stehen in einem interessanten, zuweilen auch problematischen Verhältnis mit O’Keeffes Diskussion von Derridas Bedingungen für ein Ereignis, insbesondere angesichts seiner Position dazu, wie *radikal* kontingent solche Bedingungen sein müssten. Möglicherweise wäre laut Derrida ‚Emergenz‘ in diesem Fall eher durch Begriffe wie ‚Einschnitt‘ oder ‚Bruch‘ zu ersetzen. Priyada Padhye untersucht zwei Texte: die *Bhāvārthadeepikā* des heiligen Dichters Dnyāneshwar aus dem Jahr 1290, die eine Übersetzung der *Bhagwad Gītā* aus dem Sanskrit in die Sprache Marathi darstellt. Das zweite ist der *Discurso sobre a vinda de Jesu Christo* („Diskurs über die Ankunft Jesu Christi“), im Volksmund als *Kristapurān* bekannt. Das *Kristapurān* ist eine 1616 von dem englischen Jesuitenpater Thomas Stephens verfasste Nacherzählung biblischer Geschichten in der in Goa gesprochenen Sprache. Padhyes Frage lautet, ob diese beiden Werke einige (jedoch nicht alle) von Fischer-Lichte aufgestellten Bedingungen erfüllen, um als Ereignisse zu gelten, und

zwar nicht nur als Übersetzungsereignisse, sondern auch als Ereignisse von religiöser, literarischer und kultureller Bedeutung. Padhye schlägt eine Reihe weiterer Bedingungen vor, von denen eine in diesem Zusammenhang sehr interessant ist, nämlich „transgression“, die darauf hindeutet, dass eine Übersetzung die Bezeichnung ‚Ereignis‘ verdient, wenn diese Übersetzung den Status quo in signifikanter Weise stört. Wenn man Doris Bachmann-Medicks Definition der Bedingung der Transgression heranzieht, nämlich „the practice of crossing over or dissolving boundaries, of carnivalization and breaking of codes“, erkennt man vielleicht das Profil der Übersetzung in dieser Bewegung der Überschreitung, aber vieles hängt von den Codes ab, um die es geht, und auch davon, wie man zu Bachmann-Medicks stillschweigendem Rückgriff auf Michail Bachtins Begriff der Karnevalisierung steht. Padhyes Charakterisierung der Ereignishaftigkeit der Übersetzung im Sinne der Transgression ist in dieser Hinsicht anregend, insbesondere wenn es sich um sakrale Texte handelt, von denen man normalerweise annehmen würde, dass sie nicht der transgressiven Zügellosigkeit der Bachtinschen Karnevalisierung unterliegen sollten. Suggestiv ist auch Padhyes Verweis auf Sachin Ketkar, einen Wissenschaftler, der sich mit der Geschichte der Übersetzungen in der Sprache Marathi befasst. Dieser behauptet (wie Padhye ihn zitiert): “when culture and semiotic systems change, they sometimes bring about explosive changes in the language”. „Explosiv“ ist natürlich sehr anschaulich, und man kann sich vorstellen, dass Philosophen wie Derrida diese Charakterisierung des Ereignisses und seiner Auswirkungen gutheißen würden. Ebenso anschaulich ist Padhyes Verweis auf Ketkars Metapher für Übersetzung: “For him translation of a text in another language is the birth of a text in a different *yoni*-vagina, it is a different species, it is a ‘new animal’”. Die Frage, die O’Keeffe in seinem Essay aufwirft, taucht hier vielleicht

wieder auf: Welches theoretische Gewicht soll man einer solchen Metapher und Begriffen wie „species“ und „new animal“ beimessen? Außerdem wäre es interessant, sich zu fragen, wie Walter Benjamin in „Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers“ darauf reagiert hätte. Angesichts der umfangreichen Ausführungen, die Benjamin den Vorstellungen vom Leben, aber insbesondere vom Nachleben übersetzter Texte gewidmet hat, könnte man, Padhye und Ketkar folgend, behaupten, dass Benjamin es versäumt hat, über die Gebärmutter oder Vagina nachzudenken, die den Ausgangstext in diese neuen Leben hinein gebiert. Padhye fordert Benjamin daher stillschweigend heraus, wenn sie schreibt: „A performative translation too, in my opinion, is radically different from its source text, making its birth eventful“. „Radically“ ist eindeutig der Kern der an Benjamin gerichteten Herausforderung.

Ein Problem, auf das Padhye aufmerksam macht, besteht darin, dass der Begriff des Ereignisses zwei unterschiedliche diskursive, ja philosophische Register hervorbringt. Das eine ist radikal, fast hyperbolisch, wenn ein Ereignis als ‚explosiv‘ angesehen wird. Das andere ist gemäßigter und geht davon aus, dass ein Ereignis immer dann eintritt, wenn eine Übersetzung einen Status quo verändert. Diese Veränderung muss nicht dramatisch explosiv oder paradigmenerändernd sein. Sie kann bescheiden sein, und solange man diese Veränderung registrieren kann, liegt ein Ereignis vor. Padhyes Aufsatz geht in dieser Hinsicht in Resonanz mit Marie Herbillons „Translation as Multi-Layered Performance: The Case of ‚Le Feu au cœur‘, Bertrand Belin’s French Cover of Bob Dylan’s ‚Ain’t Talkin‘“. Das Ereignis, um das es hier geht, ist bescheiden: Belins Cover übersetzte Dylans Lied ins Französische. Dabei musste er offensichtlich Dylans Original verändern. Doch so bescheiden ein Cover auch erscheinen mag, sind die theoretischen Konsequenzen, die Herbillon aus dieser Übung zieht,

beträchtlich. Dies wird z. B. dort deutlich, wo Derrida benutzt wird, um diese Konsequenzen zu profilieren. Es geht dabei um seinen Ansatz der Iterabilität, den Herbillon in eine Diskussion über „the status of songs as intrinsically iterable events and their iterations in the form of actual performances or eventual occurrences“ überführt. „Intrinsically“ ist hier der springende Punkt. Bemerkenswerterweise argumentiert Herbillon, dass ein “song could possibly be conceived of as the performative *par excellence*, namely as the ‘most event-ridden utterance’ (Derrida 1988: 19; unsere Hervorhebung) in discourse“. Herbillons Zitat aus Derridas *Limited Inc.* macht sehr nachdenklich, insbesondere im Hinblick auf Derridas Verweis auf etwas, das „event-ridden“ ist. Derridas Begriff der Iterabilität lädt uns ein, über eine andere ‚-Barkeit‘, nämlich die Übersetzbarkeit, nachzudenken. Wir könnten noch einmal zu Benjamins „Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers“ zurückkehren und uns in Erinnerung rufen, was er über Übersetzbarkeit zu sagen hat. Samuel Webers *Benjamin’s-abilities* ist lesenswert für seinen Kommentar zu dieser ‚-ability‘ oder ‚-Barkeit‘ (Weber 2008). Im Zusammenhang mit Derrida sollte man jedoch, wenn man die Iterabilität neben seine eigenen Überlegungen zur Übersetzbarkeit stellt, an Derridas Gegenbewegung erinnern, da er Szenarien der Unübersetzbarkeit nicht vernachlässigt. Dies wird sowohl in „Des tours de Babel“ als auch in „Was ist eine ‚relevante‘ Übersetzung?“ (1999/2022) thematisiert. Daher ist es vielleicht wichtig, Derridas Überlegungen zu dem, was sich den Ereignissen der Iteration und Übersetzung widersetzt, zu berücksichtigen. Wie der Titel von O’Keeffe andeutet, lohnt es sich, die Nicht-Ereignisse der Übersetzung ebenso in Betracht zu ziehen wie die Ereignisse der Übersetzung.

Die Übersetzungswissenschaft macht sich verständlicherweise Gedanken über die Übersetzbarkeit und ist eher geneigt, Lawrence Venutis polemischer Aufforderung zuzustimmen:

“STOP asserting that any text is untranslatable. START realizing that every text is translatable because every text can be interpreted” (Venuti 2019: x). Dennoch grenzt es fast schon an Unübersetzbarkeit, wenn man die Herausforderung der Übersetzung im Zusammenhang mit der Gebärdensprache für Gehörlose betrachtet. Man stelle sich nur einmal die Schwierigkeit vor, ein Lied in die Gebärdensprache zu übertragen. Diesem Thema widmet sich Angela Tarantini in ihrem Aufsatz „When Performance is not a Metaphor for Translation: Translation as ‚Performative Event““. Ihr Aufsatz untersucht die Praxis des Gebärdensprachdolmetschens in der Musik und betrachtet diese Praxis als Übersetzung und Performance. Dementsprechend erweitert sie den Begriff der Performativität um die ereignis- und erfahrungsbezogenen Aspekte der Übersetzung. Die Anforderungen sind extrem hoch: Die Übersetzung eines Liedes muss sich an die seriellen Unmittelbarkeiten eines Liedes anpassen: Die Entscheidungen des Übersetzers müssen sofort getroffen werden, um mit dem Lied Schritt zu halten, während es gesungen wird, und es muss ein hohes Maß an Ausdruckskraft vorhanden sein, damit der Übersetzer die emotionalen Register des jeweiligen Liedes vermittelt. Tarantini wirft daher die Schlüsselfrage auf: „But where is the emotion in a song? Is it an intrinsic feature of the song or is it something that is fostered in the listener by the song itself?“ Ihre Antwort erfolgt über eine andere Frage: „So, how can an interpreter translate an element that is not in the text, but is their own experience of the text? I would argue that this is not dissimilar from any other work of translation. The work of the translator is to convey the meaning of a text, but that meaning will always be their own interpretation (i.e. their understanding) of the same text, their experience of the text“.

Die Übersetzung von Liedern und Musik steht auch im Mittelpunkt von Carmen África Vidal Claramontes Aufsatz

„Translation and Dance. The Case of Matthew Bourne“. Bourne's Ballette zeigen uns die Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten des Körpers und darüber hinaus, wie die *mise en scène* einer Ballettaufführung, die Musik, Bilder, Farben usw. miteinander verbindet, zu einem sehr komplexen performativen Ereignis wird. Um die Übersetzung in die Diskussion einzubringen, plädiert Vidal Claramonte für eine erweiterte Definition von Übersetzung, die sich deutlich von Roman Jakobsons Behauptung abhebt, dass „interlingual translation or *translation proper* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language“ (Jakobson 1992: 145). Für sie sollte diese erweiterte Definition von Übersetzung „beyond the verbocentric tradition“ hinausgehen. Doch wie insbesondere der zweite Teil ihres Essays zeigt, taucht der Begriff ‚Text‘ auf, wenn Bourne in *The Car Man* Bizets Oper *Carmen* „übersetzt“. Für Vidal Claramonte kann Bizets Oper insofern als „Text“ betrachtet werden, als sie viele Arten von Übersetzungen, Adaptionen und Neukontextualisierungen ermöglicht: „Matthew Bourne's performative translations through the body will highlight that a text is always many texts and has many readings“. Außerdem: „*The Car Man* highlights the palimpsestuous nature of the original text, of any 'original' text. Bourne's translation highlights the plural readings inside any text“.

Wie viele der Aufsätze in diesem Band zeigen, ist der Textbegriff der Schlüssel zu den verschiedenen Verhandlungen zwischen Ereignis, Aufführung und Übersetzung. Wie Vidal Claramonte es treffend formuliert, „Bourne is, in my view, a clear example of how [...] in our visual culture the definition of 'text' has been expanded“. Inwieweit wäre es also wichtig, sich (um nur drei relevante Werke zu nennen) mit Roland Barthes „Vom Werk zum Text“ (1971/2006), Paul Ricœurs „Was ist ein Text?“ (1970/2005) oder Stanley Fishs Buch *Is there a text in this class?* (1980) auseinanderzusetzen? Oder mit Derridas

Behauptung, dass *il n’y a pas de hors-texte*? Es ist eine aufschlussreiche Tatsache, dass Derrida in vielen Aufsätzen dieses Bandes ein wichtiger Bezugspunkt ist. Und wenn sich Derridas Überlegungen zur Iterabilität als notwendig erweisen, um das Ereignis zu betrachten, das zudem ein performatives Ereignis ist, dann zitiert Vidal Claramonte Karen Emmerichs *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*, um ihre Behauptung zu untermauern, Bournes Übersetzungen seien Iterationen: “translation as iteration, as repetition-with-a-difference, a mode of textual proliferation rather than a mode by which semantic content is transferred“. Dann muss man noch einmal den Weg zu Derridas *Limited Inc.* zurückverfolgen.

6 Fazit

Wenn Vidal Claramonte sich auf Emmerich beruft, um „translation as a mode of iterative proliferation“ zu definieren, müssen wir uns vielleicht fragen, ob man eine negative oder sogar ängstliche Haltung gegenüber einer solchen Proliferation einnehmen sollte. Sollte man versuchen, solche Vervielfältigungen und Übersetzungen zu verhindern? Bournes Auseinandersetzung mit Bizets *Carmen* (und damit mit dem Text von Prosper Mérimée) ist sicherlich sehr innovativ, aber ist es nicht einfach nur provokativ, sich zu fragen, ob klassische Texte vor solchen Übersetzern gefeit sein sollten, damit sie sich nicht zu viele Freiheiten herausnehmen? Das könnte eine Frage für Hans-Georg Gadamer sein angesichts dessen, was er „den überlieferten Text“ (Gadamer 2010: 299) nennt. Oder wir könnten auf Benjamins Behauptung verweisen: „Übersetzung ist eine Form. Sie als solch zu erfassen, gilt es zurückzugehen auf das Original. Denn in ihm liegt deren Gesetz als in dessen Übersetzbarkeit beschlossen“ (Benjamin 1923/1973: 157). Aber vielleicht sollte dieses Gesetz, das so viel zulässt, durch

ein Gesetz der Unübersetzbarkeit ersetzt werden, das verhindert, dass es zu unbefugten oder unbeaufsichtigten Übersetzungen kommt. Und könnte man nicht sogar befürchten, dass es sich bei solchen Vorgängen nicht um Übersetzungen, sondern um Pseudoübersetzungen, Pastiches oder gar Plagiate handelt? Fernando Pessoa sagte in diesem Zusammenhang ironisch, dass „a translation is only a plagiarism in the author’s name“ und er fügt hinzu: „a translation is a serious parody in another language“ (Pessoa 2001: 222). Aber was wäre, wenn man Pessoa ernst nehmen würde?

Die Befürchtung vor der Freiheit, die Übersetzungsereignisse genießen (aber vielleicht nicht genießen sollten), haben ihre Wurzeln wohl in Platons *Phaedrus*, nach dem Sokrates beträchtliche Besorgnis formuliert angesichts der unabwendbaren Tendenz der Schrift abzudriften und in die falschen Hände zu geraten. Es könnte also durchaus sein, dass Wiederholbarkeit und Übersetzbarkeit aus platonischer Sicht schädliche Szenarien darstellen, die keineswegs zu begrüßen sind. Es lohnt sich vielleicht, ein gewisses Maß an Beunruhigung in die Diskussion einzubringen, so als ob man Sokrates und seiner Sorge, dass die Schrift zu sehr abschweift, einen Moment erlauben würde, des Teufels Advokat zu sein: Sie könnte in die unbefugten Hände von Übersetzern geraten, die mit dem Text machen, was sie wollen.

Wären wir dann wirklich sicher, dass das, was Übersetzer daraus machen, noch als *Übersetzung* erkennbar sein wird? Das ist die Frage, die Pessoa aufwirft. Sie ist sicherlich auch eine Frage für die heutige Übersetzungswissenschaft. Wenn die Übersetzung nicht mehr als *Übersetzung*, sondern als *Aufführung* bezeichnet wird, wird die Übersetzungswissenschaft dann gezwungen, sich in die Performance Studies zu verwandeln, wobei es gerade der Begriff des ‚Ereignisses‘ wäre, der diesen Zwang auslösen würde? Hat das zur Folge, dass die Überset-

zungswissenschaft ihre theoretische Kompetenz über ihren eigenen Oberbegriff, nämlich ‚Übersetzung‘, aufgibt? Welche disziplinären Risiken ist die Übersetzungswissenschaft bereit einzugehen, angesichts der vielen ‚turns‘, die sie bereits vollzogen hat (oder die zu vollziehen sie gezwungen war), unter anderem der performativen Wende? Wenn Vidal Claramonte, Mieke Bal zitierend, feststellt, dass „Bourne is, in my view, a clear example of how translation is ‚a travelling concept‘ [Bal 2002]“, dann stellt sich vielleicht die Frage, ob der Begriff der Übersetzung nicht zu weit ‚gereist‘ ist, und zwar so weit, dass er sein begriffliches und eidetisches Profil verliert. Man denke in diesem Zusammenhang zum Beispiel an Bachmann-Medicks Einleitung zu einer Ausgabe der Fachzeitschrift *Translation Studies*, die dem Thema „The Translational Turn“ gewidmet ist. Sie schreibt:

This broadening of the horizon of translation currently poses challenges both to translation studies and to other disciplines in the humanities, specifically cultural studies. Admittedly, the process risks diluting the concept of translation, and it seems important at this stage to delineate the concept more precisely. (Bachmann-Medick 2009: 2)

Man stelle sich das Szenario vor, in dem der *Begriff* der Übersetzung (ein Terminus, der bereits angezweifelt werden könnte) Gefahr läuft, durch die Unbestimmtheit des Sprachgebrauchs ‚verwässert‘ zu werden, wenn sich andere Disziplinen auf ihn berufen. Für Bachmann-Medick sind es gerade die Kulturwissenschaften, die diese Verwässerung hervorrufen. Angesichts der beträchtlichen Auseinandersetzungen, die viele der Autoren dieses Bandes mit den Performance Studies (und insbesondere mit Fischer-Lichtes Werk) vorgenommen haben, sind vielleicht auch die Performance Studies an dieser ‚Verwässerung‘ beteiligt.

Die andere, weniger sorgenbehaftete Ansicht ist, dass es dem Charakter der Übersetzungswissenschaft seit jeher eigen

ist, Erkenntnisse anderer akademischen Disziplinen in die eigene Reflexion miteinzubeziehen. Dies ist eine Sichtweise, die bereitwillig Ballette (Vidal Claramonte), Lieder (Tarantini), eine Kathedrale bzw. Kathedraleinweihung (van Bühren, Gil, Rego) und indische Texte (Padhye) als Fallstudien sowie literarische Texte wie das von Stolze analysierte Gedicht von Gorman berücksichtigt. Diese Sichtweise ist schließlich die hermeneutische Ansicht, die von der Voraussetzung ausgeht, dass die Übersetzung ein Vorgang der *Interpretation* ist. Darauf insistiert Stolze in ihrem Aufsatz in wertvoller Weise. Es ist weniger wichtig, zu ermitteln, was der Interpretation unterliegt, als vielmehr die Herausforderung anzunehmen, das Wesen des Verstehens selbst zu verstehen. Dies ist der hermeneutische Geist, der von allen Autoren dieses Bandes geteilt wird, ein Geist, von dem die Herausgeber des vorliegenden *Jahrbuchs* hoffen, dass er seine Leser inspirieren wird.

7 Quellenverzeichnis

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Essays | Aufsätze

The Events and Non-Events of Translation

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Abstract: The aim of this essay is to gain critical and theoretical purchase on the notion of an “event” as it may or may not relevantly apply to the practices of translation. The essay allows itself to be quizzical as regards the possibility that translation can be called an event at all, but it also inspects the ways in which, nonetheless, it is meaningful—and indeed useful—to consider the eventhood, or eventuality of translation. In that regard, I suggest that Translation Studies can avail itself of philosophical accounts of the “event,” and moreover relate translation to the ways in which reading has been called an event. This essay concludes on a set of observations concerning how one might widen the scope beyond considerations concerning the event of translation restricted to texts and consider other, multi-medial events of translation.

Abstract: Translation, Event, Non-Event.

1 Introduction

In the effort to construe translation as an event we are, from the outset, confronted with the vast field of research we call Translation Studies. If we described Translation Studies' sub-

fields, moreover, and then proposed a thought of the “event” for each subfield, we would face a gargantuan task. But, so as not to give up straightaway, let me deploy Antoine Berman’s *La Traduction et la Lettre, ou l’Auberge du lointain* (1991) in order to gain purchase on matters nonetheless. I’ll adduce my thoughts concerning the “event” to certain passages from his book. His book hasn’t yet been translated into English, so I’ll supply Berman’s French and then my own translations. Berman (1991: 20) writes:

[L]’ambition de la traductologie, si elle n’est pas d’échafauder une théorie générale de la traduction (au contraire, elle démontrerait plutôt qu’une telle théorie ne peut exister, puisque l’espace de la traduction est babélien, c’est-à-dire récuse toute totalisation), est malgré tout de méditer sur la totalité des “formes” existantes de la traduction.

[The ambition of traductology, if it isn’t to construct a general theory of translation (on the contrary, traductology would demonstrate, rather, that such a theory cannot exist since the translation space is Babelian, namely, refuses all totalization), is, despite everything, that of reflecting on the totality of the existing ‘forms’ of translation.]

Consider the Babel event. If that event happened to traductology, we arguably have two towers: one erected in the name of traductology’s unitary *logos*, a *logos* which some prefer to stabilize via empirical approaches and “scientific” enquiry in order to better serve the interests of a general theory of translation. The other tower is constantly subject to collapse, Babel being in this case the event that scattered the field traductology would otherwise prefer to weld into the rigorous compass, purview, or remit of a scholarly discipline. Berman continues by observing of traductology that “[e]lle peut, par exemple (et à la lumière des remarques de Derrida, cela serait essentiel), réfléchir sur la traduction du Droit” (ibid.: 20). [it can, for instance (and in light of Derrida’s observations, it would be essential to do so) reflect on Legal translation.] We’ll see later how Jacques Derrida con-

tributes to our thinking of translation as an event (albeit rather beyond *le Droit*).

There is more. Berman observes that traductology “peut (et elle doit) réfléchir sur la traduction technique et scientifique, sur la *traductive* qui, peu à peu, met en forme (informatique) cette traduction, dans la mesure où quelque chose d’essentiel se noue ici entre la technologie et l’acte de traduire” (1991: 20). [can (and must) reflect upon technical and scientific translation, on *traductics*, which, little by little, is realizing this kind of translation, insofar as an essential knot is being tied here between technology and the act of translation.] Consider the translation event in terms of *la traductive*, therefore. Would one event involve an *essential* knotting of the act of translation to the technical prostheses of machines and computers – prostheses which still imply human translators using such devices? Or must we now contemplate devolving the events and activities of translation to the inhuman operations of Google Translate and AI enabled translation platforms? At issue, to deploy Walter Benjamin’s German, would perhaps be human translators’ surrender of their task (the giving-up possibly described by *Aufgabe*) of *Übersetzen*, as if translation occurs by itself, like a machinic or computerized activity without needing the *Übersetzer* as a person.

There is yet more to consider. Berman acknowledges that some restrict the meaning of translation to an inter-linguistic negotiation (compare Roman Jakobson’s “translation proper”—see Jakobson 1992: 145) whereas others understand translation more widely. For Berman, George Steiner and Michel Serres count among those who embrace that wider sense, but then Berman remarks that “il est vrai qu’il faut ‘tenir’ à la traduction restreinte (inter-langues), en tant que c’est là, rigoureusement parlant, *qu’il y a* de la traduction” (1991: 20). [it is true that one must ‘tether’ oneself to restricted

(interlinguistic) translation, inasmuch as that's where, rigorously speaking, *there is* translation.] *Il faut*: one *must* limit matters to inter-lingual translation, since perhaps it's only there that the translation event, *rigorously speaking*, takes place. Berman's own italics stress *ily a*. Let's translate Berman literally: *it has there some translation*. It has there: the translation event involves place-having and place-taking, the taking or having *there* of the place previously occupied by the original text.

Berman, accompanied by my own remarks, gives us ways to broach the notion of translation as an event. The remainder of this essay is an attempt to further engage with these ways, and in the next section we will begin – again – with Berman's acknowledgement that efforts to restrict translation to inter-lingual events are always in tension with more expanded acceptations of the word “translation.”

2 Metaphors for Translation's Event

For attempts to define “translation proper” are constantly threatened by the tendency to relay translation to analogy and metaphor. Here, perhaps, is another event: the perpetual losing of the conceptual or eidetic profile one might wish for the idea of “translation.” At issue is the surrender of stable definitions of “translation” to metaphors, similes and analogies describing what translation is *like*, rather than what it *properly* is (Jakobson), or should be, *rigoureusement parlant* (Berman). The exercise to say what translation is *like* has given us a plethora of metaphors and it has given us many essays and books titled “Translation *as* this, Translation *as* that.” “Translation as Event,” if it were my title, would be yet another attempt to describe the art, craft, work and task of translation. Depending on one's point of view, however, either these metaphors have a certain heuristic utility if we wish to describe what happens when translation

happens, or else these metaphors steer us away from describing what translation actually *is*. At issue, to put it bluntly, is whether one grants the force of the literal-minded, or pedantic objection to all such metaphors: if the event of translation is described as cannibalism or vampirism, as it has been, then the objection is that translators neither eat texts nor suck their blood. When George Steiner, in *After Babel* (1975/1992: 314), describes certain hermeneutic operations of translation as akin to smashing eggshells or strip-mining, the objection is that the act or event of translation in no way resembles these activities: translators don't smash texts. Texts don't offer their ore-seams to a mining operation either – not *really*.

Pedantry, or literal-mindedness, in short, provides a bracing challenge to 'Translation Studies' metaphorology, checks, therefore, the serial bid to *liken* the event of translation to something or other when nothing of the sort actually occurs. Either pedantry enables a serious reflection on the translation event – if we wish to say what *does* occur – or pedantry disables any further reflection on what events translation *might* resemble. Either one grants the pedantic objection and hence ventures to accuse the long history of translation “theory” as being an active avoidance of that very objection, or one must ask translators whether they seriously do regard their practice as cannibalism or egg-smashing, or find some utility in at least countenancing those scenarios. The present essay can neither devolve itself to a series of interviews with translators, however, nor can it inspect that long history either, given the limited pages at its disposal. But in view of that history (its recent chapters, at least), let me focus on two attempts to profile the translation event – two examples of a non-event, in a sense.

In respect of the first example, consider Steiner's *Real Presences* (1991) where he says that encounters between literary texts and their readers or translators should be conducted in

the spirit of *cortesia*. So much for the spirit, but what—a pedant might ask—about the letter? How to show courtesy to a text? What in fact are we to do with accounts of translatory hospitality? How seriously to take Richard Kearney's "Linguistic Hospitality – The Risk of Translation" where he writes that "Translation serves as a paradigm for linguistic hospitality insofar as it involves a mediation between host and guest languages" (Kearney 2019: 1). This would presumably be an *ethical* mediation during which the rites and rituals of hospitality should be enacted (if they aren't, Kearney can speak of bad translations; if they are, of good translations). But the question is whether there is, or should be, any ethics governing translators' activities given that such an ethics presides over events that don't really occur. If there is ethical obligation here, modelled on hospitality's courtesies, perhaps another event involves the *invention* of ethical strictures in the minds or consciences of translators—an invention, since the pedantic point is that texts aren't something to which one can really show hospitality—written on paper pages, printed in books, they can make no realistic appeal for such hospitality and so the ethics of translatory hospitality is a figment of the translator's mind, a weight on the translator's conscience that original texts never asked, never *can* ask a translator to bear. The event of the invention of that ethics would perhaps involve various (silent) speech acts which *perform* that event of invention: "Here I am," "Be welcome," "I promise to shoulder my ethical responsibilities without alibi," "I can, I will, I respond." Perhaps these performative speech acts nonetheless do what they say, and this would be the event at issue: the saying makes it so, and hence *there is* ethical obligation, no matter what "constative" description one might pedantically provide concerning what happens to texts at the moment of their encounters with translators.

Let's turn to my second example. One metaphor for the event of translation that emerges with signal persistence concerns the sex event—oftentimes, sexual intercourse. Doubtless Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, or any sexologist will explain why sex thoughts are never far from anyone's mind, and so not far from translation theorists' minds either. I'm not about to write a psychoanalytic history of the translator, however, nor is my ambition to interpolate a chapter devoted to translators into Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1976ff.). It's a vast subject, in any case. It becomes vaster still once one agrees that the sexual activities at issue shouldn't necessarily be limited to heterosexual scenarios. Nor should the discussion be narrowed to the somewhat predictable example of George Steiner. I admit this, but I nevertheless consider Steiner particularly illuminating, and appreciate Douglas Robinson's (2021) discussion of Steiner's depiction of some of his translation events (the so-called hermeneutic motions) as acts that resemble sexual penetration. In *After Babel*, Steiner unabashedly countenances an erotics of translation, writing that "Ortega y Gasset speaks of the sadness of the translator after failure. There is also a sadness after success, the Augustinian *tristitia*, which follows on the cognate acts of erotic and of intellectual possession" (Steiner 1975/1992: 314). To be pondered is Steiner's use of the term "cognate," clearly. After translatory coitus comes post-coital melancholy, it seems. When he describes his four motions in terms of a "hermeneutic of trust (*élanement*), of penetration, of embodiment, and of restitution" (ibid.: 319), it's all too easy to deem "penetration," in this case, as sexual penetration. A violent one as well – an un-consensual ravishing, so to speak. Steiner writes: "The appropriate 'rapture' of the translator—the word has in it, of course, the root and meaning of violent transport—leaves the original with a dialectically enigmatic residue" (ibid.: 316). Leaving aside what Stei-

ner might mean by “enigmatic residue” (the scar, or wound attesting to the pain of that violence?), what apparently clinches the sexual interpretation is Steiner’s reference to Lévi-Strauss: Steiner avers that “the translator creates conditions of significant exchange” (ibid.: 318), and then adds, “the general model here is that of Lévi-Strauss’s *Anthropologie structurale* which regards social structures as attempts at dynamic equilibrium achieved through an exchange of words, women, and material goods” (ibid.: 319).

But, as Robinson (2021) observes in “George Steiner’s Hermeneutic Motion and the Ontology, Ethics, and Epistemology of Translation,” if one endorses Lévi-Strauss’s characterization of patriarchal societies and agrees that he realistically describes what such societies *are* and *do*, in view of the treatment of women, one still cannot then say that this is what the act of translation also *is* and *does*. The further consideration, for Robinson, concerns why Steiner’s analogy between the translation event and this sexual event has the force to offend some readers. Robinson asks “What is the *ontology* of that ‘certain violence,’ and why did it ‘offend some readers?’” (Robinson 2021: 103). Indeed: how can an event that cannot really take place (one cannot have sex with a book) nonetheless offend some readers?

Well, an event doesn’t have to be “real” for it to have the impact of an event: at issue, here, is the evental force of offence itself. In Robinson’s eyes, it’s female and feminist translation theorists who reacted with such offence. What “eventalized” Steiner’s sexual metaphor was its affective power to provoke vigorous reactions. At issue, for Robinson, though, is the “*ontologization* of metaphors” (2021: 111), namely the crediting of a metaphor as a description of what *is* happening as the event of translation. Robinson asks:

How does a vague affective response to this *talk* of violence first get channeled through a group (say, feminist translation scholars) then project onto the talk a negative valence as a harmful attitudinal and behavior action-potential associated with a group commonly associated with violence, especially against women (say, men), and finally come to identify and critique the theoretical model as a “truth” or “reality” (ontology)? (Robinson 2021: 112)

A non-event becomes an event when the metaphor describing that “event” is “ontologized” to the point that the metaphor becomes an apparently truthful or real depiction of what translation actually does. The translation of a metaphor into something other than a metaphor occurs if that metaphor has the power to provoke strong reactions in a particular group. Once it does, then an “event” or process of eventalization occurs to the metaphor itself: the acquisition of being, truth, or apparent literality. Sexual metaphors, particularly if they describe what can be interpreted as sexual violence, have that provocative power. Provocativeness, therefore, is a dimension of ‘eventalization’. In other words, some metaphors have the power to provoke us (or a particular group of theorists) into suspending our disbelief such that we provisionally believe that the metaphor in question is something other than a metaphor, and instead has the persuasive force of a true account of what occurs. For a translation event to have that force, it must have the performative power to provoke the suspension of disbelief. That suspension would be the event at issue.

Consider another view of translation as an erotic desire for sexual commingling, this time Derrida’s. In “What is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” he writes:

I believe I can say that if I love the word, it is only in the body of its idiomatic singularity, that is, where a passion for translation comes to lick it as flame or an amorous tongue might: approaching as closely as possible while refusing at the last moment to threaten or to reduce, to consume or to consummate, leaving the other body intact but not without causing the other to appear—on the very brink of this refusal

or withdrawal—and after having aroused or excited a desire for the idiom, for the unique body of the other, in the flame's flicker or a tongue's caress. (Derrida 1997/2013: 351)

The pedant will point out to Derrida that one neither kisses an original text *really*, nor can the contact between translation and text be described as a fiery consummation either. Doubtless Derrida would have granted the pedant's point (pedantry is undeconstructible), but there's more to say here. Thoughts of the event enjoin us to consider the time and space of the event. The time here is the time of Derrida's holding back, his tarrying on the brink. And with that brink, that threshold, we pass to thoughts of space: the place (or no-place) of the translation event – the borderline between text and translator maintained by the *noli-me-tangere* intactness of the idiom's alterity. Only the flicker of a fleeting kiss transgresses that boundary, but if the desirous Derrida draws back from the brink, tarries on the verge of a translation that would be an act or event of transgression, a step into sexual intercourse, then we might risk saying that the place at issue is the virginal womb, the borders of which are protected by the intact hymen.

Derrida relays this erotics of translation and its self-denying bid for sexual consummation to other ideas of consummation and consuming: eating is one idea, the other is the event of incineration. Doubtless Derrida knew Gaston Bachelard's *Psychoanalysis of Fire* (1938), and he might have been familiar with the following from Jean-Paul Sartre's *Existential Psychoanalysis* (1967), where Sartre describes appropriative, or possessive desire in terms of an urge to destroy the object of that same desire:

To destroy is to reabsorb into myself; it is to enter along with the being-in-itself of the destroyed object into a relation as profound as that of creation. The flames which burn the farm which I myself have set on fire, gradually effects the fusion of the farm with myself [...] I *am* this barn since I am destroying its being. (Sartre 1967: 101)

Note the symptomatic example of burning by fire. Here, for that matter, is Benjamin in “The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov” speaking of a reader reading a novel: “He is ready to make it completely his own – to devour it, as it were. Indeed, he destroys, swallows up the material as fire devours logs in the fireplace” (Benjamin 1936/2006: 156). At issue for Derrida, Sartre, and indeed Benjamin, are the metaphors—eating and burning—that characterize appropriative desire. It’s about the desire to make something completely one’s own. As for Derrida’s depiction of the *translator’s* appropriative desire, it concerns the desire to consume the idiomatic word, a desire entailing either eating or conflagration. In the latter case, it’s a matter of incineration in the fires of the translator’s ardent desire such that nothing remains of the original text, not even a flake of ash. We will return to the matter of ash and cinders later, as well as to the appalling resonances of the word “holocaust.” For now, we might wonder if Derrida is serious here. But that wonderment is somewhat otiose, since we might as well ask psychoanalysis whether the metaphorical and metonymic condensations and displacements of the desiring unconscious are “serious” either. Perhaps there is no expression of desire without metaphors doing some of that expressive work (if they didn’t, Freud and Lacan would be redundant). Desire has its metaphors. Appropriative desire—the appropriative desire of translators in this case—has its metaphors as well. What possibly triggers desire, indeed, is the allure of the unpenetrated core or kernel, that which is sealed inside, invisible, untouchable and *virginal*. Here is Sartre: “What is seen is possessed; to see is to *deflower*. If we examine the comparisons ordinarily used to express the relation between the knower and the known, we see that many of them are represented as being a kind of *violation by sight*. The unknown object is given as immaculate, as virgin, comparable to a *whiteness*?” (Sartre 1967: 67).

Violation, violence, virginity. An all-too familiar triad informing our (or just the male?) erotic imagination whenever appropriation and possession are at issue. In any case, Derrida expresses his desire, and we might prefer his last-ditch refusal to consummate the event of translation that his passion nonetheless looks forward to, compared to Steiner's depiction of translation's unhesitating violation of textual bodies.

3 The Events of Translation and of Reading

But, my pedantic objector might ask, isn't it time to desist from metaphors, whatever their relevance for an assessment of the translator's desire, violence, guilt, etc., and high time to speak of the events we can envisage? Yet if we contemplate those events in terms of what the interaction between translator and text causes each to actually *do*, we must consider what a text does to a translator, and what a translator does to a text. But surely the first thing a translator does is *read* the text at hand. If so, then can theoreticians of reading provide some illumination on the events, not just of reading, but of translation as well? Let's see.

Shall we invoke structuralists like Roland Barthes or Michael Riffaterre, though, or Paul Ricœur, or phenomenologists like Roman Ingarden, Wolfgang Iser and Georges Poulet? Let's prefer Stanley Fish. In *Is There a Text in this Class?* (1980) he describes the readerly and interpretive events at issue in terms of an equivocation "between a reference to the action of the text *on* a reader and the actions performed *by* a reader as he negotiates (and, in some sense, actualizes) the text" (Fish 1980: 3). Actualization is the event here, but at issue is also how the text *causes* the reader to perform the actions of that actualization. For Fish, these actions unfold over time (the time of reading), and the space of the page is discounted:

I challenged the self-sufficiency of the text by pointing out that its (apparently) spatial form belied the temporal dimension in which meanings were actualized, and I argued that it was the developing shape of that actualization, rather than the static shape of the printed page, that should be the object of critical description. (Fish 1980: 2).

But should one pass over the “static shape of the printed page” so quickly? I’m not sure, and I’ll return to this. Let’s continue. “[I]f meaning develops,” Fish writes, “and if it develops in a dynamic relationship with the reader’s expectations, projections, conclusions, judgments, and assumptions, these activities (the things the reader *does*) are not merely instrumental, or mechanical, but essential” (ibid.: 2–3). These appreciably hermeneutic activities contrast, for Fish, with “instrumental” and “mechanical” activities, though it’s not clear, to me, what those latter activities consist in. For Fish, at any rate, if one wants to see those interpretive doings, or events in action, one must slow down:

It is as if a slow motion camera with an automatic stop-action effect were recording our linguistic experiences and presenting them for viewing. Of course the value of such a procedure is predicated on the idea of *meaning as an event*, something that is happening between the words and in the reader’s mind, something not visible to the naked eye, but which can be made visible (or at least palpable) by the regular introduction of a “searching” question (what does this do?). (Fish 1980: 28)

Perhaps that’s what any engagement with translation as an event must do also: capture *meaning as an event* in the moment of inter-lingual transference. Such would be the *photographic* desire of our theoreticians of translation, besides that of our theoreticians of reading: to snapshot that meaning-event in the very moment of its occurrence. As I turn from readers and toward translators, in any case, I want to note that when Fish answers the objection that his account of reading is too generalizing, he writes, “I met this objection by positing a level of

experience which all readers share, independently of differences in education and culture. This level was conceived more or less syntactically, as an extension of the Chomskian notion of linguistic competence, a linguistic system that every native speaker shares” (Fish 1980: 4–5). Many theories of reading begin from the premise of native linguistic competence. One wonders how such theories would get on if they relinquished that premise and began instead with non-native speakers, or indeed began with the dual linguistic competence of translators. In any case, we can perhaps agree that translators are readers, but then we must mark the point where translators stop being readers, the point where, having read the text to be translated, translators actually translate.

Here, however, we confront other problems: is it that to *be* a translator is to subscribe to the ethical or deontological edicts that factor into the differentiation between what it is to be a reader or interpreter and a translator? Translators don't necessarily enjoy the interpretive license to offer a manifold variety of interpretations, and such license is effectively prohibited by the edicts of equivalence and fidelity. But if that translation achieves one-for-one equivalence, achieves “transparency,” then the translation event is as invisible as translators are themselves, as Lawrence Venuti (1995/2018) would doubtless observe. Hence Venuti's critique of doctrines of equivalence, transparency and instrumentalism, and his advocacy for strategies that force readers to notice that something *has* happened—the receiving language foreignized, that foreignization being the way in which the translation event is registered as having occurred at all

Nonetheless, the obdurate difficulty remains that of describing what translators actually do. An alternative approach, suggested by Hans-Georg Gadamer, is to discriminate terms by comparing reading and translating. The question for his

1989 essay “Lesen ist wie Übersetzen” (“Reading is like Translating”) is to what extent reading is like translating, and to what extent it isn’t. To better understand that essay, let’s first contemplate an anecdote Gadamer recounts in his 1984 essay “Hören-Sehen-Lesen” (Hearing-Seeing-Reading”). When he was a student in Breslau reading a text, he noticed “that when writing I always moved my lips, as if I were speaking. Perhaps this was an early intimation of my hermeneutic talent, given that when I read something, I still wanted to hear it. So what is at stake is the transformation-back [*Rückverwandlung*] of writing to speech and the listening associated with it” (Gadamer 1984/1993: 272, my translation). This lip-reading enables *Rückverwandlung*—writing turned back into speech. Now to “Lesen ist wie Übersetzen.” The parallel—reading is *like* translating—is strategically limited in Gadamer’s argument because a reader can convert writing into speech, whereas Gadamer claims that translators only translate *written* texts into other *written* texts. Translators only shuttle between the shores of *writing*. But readers—if they enact that silent murmur as Gadamer did in Breslau—can reach the shore of hearable speech. Translators cannot perform the *Rückverwandlung* Gadamer desires for writing. Hence the disappointment of translation: “Reading translated texts is generally disappointing. What is lacking is the breath of speech, which breathes-in (*anhauchen*) understanding itself” (Gadamer 1989/1993: 281, my translation).

This is not the place to rehearse the philosophical consequences of the deep-seated preference for speech over writing dating back to Plato’s *Phaedrus*, nor the place to reiterate Derrida’s *De la grammatologie* (1967) where that (phonocentric) preference, coupled with the desire to overcome writing, is countered by what Derrida regards as the irreducibility of the written mark. But Derrida raises, for me at least, curiously nagging questions: if one place where we encounter writing is on a pa-

per page, would it be possible to declare that translation happens on the very surface of that paper? Could we envisage matters in terms of the *on-ness* of that translatory event—the where-upon translation occurs, the place upon which we suppose *Übersetzen* (to speak German) supra-imposes or supra-positis itself over, above, and *on*? Why not?

It's difficult to speak of the materiality of books and paper pages. Many of our theories of reading and interpretation envisage the text as a phenomenon, a virtual entity untethered from the support of the page. Recall how quickly Fish refuses "the static shape of the printed page." In *The Implied Reader*, Iser says that "the phenomenological theory of art lays full stress on the idea that, in considering a literary work, one must take into account not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text" (Iser 1972/1974: 274). But I'm not sure that phenomenological theories do take into account the "actual text" since if they did, then the pages on which that text is written might have to be accounted for as well. A page isn't a phenomenon, it's a material subjectile (to invoke a term Derrida makes much of) that resists phenomenalization. Iser continues: "The work is more than the text, for the text only takes on life when it is realized" (ibid.: 274). Note the ontologization, to use Robinson's term in a different sense: the taking on of *life* itself. Iser again: "The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence, and this convergence can never be precisely pinpointed, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader" (ibid.: 275). Note how the language of "existence" (and "virtuality") is in tension with the material *reality* of the text. Life is the event phenomenologists of reading cherish and bestow on texts so that they become something *more* than texts—they become "works." Some are more auda-

cious with this kind of life than others. Here is Poulet, quoted by Iser: “And so I ought not to hesitate to recognize that so long as it [i.e. the literary work] is animated by this vital in-breathing inspired by the act of reading, a work of literature becomes [...] a sort of human being” (ibid.: 293). Compare Gadamer: he too offers a respiratory model of hermeneutic reading. And, in *Real Presences*, Steiner (1991) invites us to greet and hospitably host works of literature as (and not exactly *as if they were*) *real presences*.

It's not quite a matter of accusing certain theoreticians of hallucinating real presences where there is only writing, though it's tempting to do so. It's as if the event of their own theories is a matter of eliding the materiality of writing, paper pages, or books, even as they phenomenalyze texts in order to afford the possibility of an *ontology* of literary works (not “texts”). Consider Hans-Robert Jauss. He might observe that what confers “existence” upon a text (assuming “text” is the right word) is its adherence to a temporal horizon where the ongoing process of time ensures that its existence can be prolonged (if not necessarily “lived”), a process which can be called the text's reception history, and which Jauss describes as a fusion of successive horizons provided for that text as long as there is time enough for it to be received anew by succeeding generations of interpreters, readers, and surely also translators. Thus do texts live in time and outlive the time of their original horizon—they enjoy their phenomenality because that phenomenality is tantamount to their historicity. We don't need a mystique of real presences, or have to wonder if theorists too quickly confer *being* upon written pages and material books, as long as we advert to time and to history—this is Jauss's way and, to an extent, Gadamer's too. What makes translation an event, in short, is the same eventuality that makes all “receptions” of a given text an event: the event of interpretive horizons fusing at a mo-

ment in historical time and place. Hermeneutics can now situate the event of interpretation against these two temporal horizons. Those working in the field of Translational Hermeneutics can now envisage the translation event likewise.

Still, what if we insisted on the materiality of the paper page? What if we said that the translation event happens right there, right on the page? Consider Clive Scott's *The Work of Literary Translation*: he speaks, in connection with translation, of "the sub-arts of language *on the page*, or rather, the sub-arts of relating language and page as a creative reciprocity" (Scott 2018: 167). His insistence on the page, on the paginal art of the translator, offers a highly creative account of the literary translator's art. For "what the translator essays," Scott writes,

is the transformation of the indifference of the white paper into an energetic participation, and the transformation of language from something operating independently of any particular page into a specific typographical performance integrated into the stagecraft of a particular page. (Scott 2018: 167).

We are worlds away from Fish's "static shape of the printed page," since here, in the translator's engagement with paper pages, the language is of energetic participation, of stagecraft and typographical performance. Assuredly, Scott's engagements are with poetry, and we can appreciate that poetry (e.g. Mallarmé, Apollinaire or Michaux) solicits the reader's or translator's engagement with the paginal arrangement of writing to a far greater extent. Still, imagine translation as stagecraft and, moreover, as a *typographical* performance: at issue in this latter case would surely be the translator's creative play with the imprints of font and type-face—imprints or impressions on the surface of the very page. Scott continues:

When, therefore, we claim that translation is [...] a setting in motion of languages, a setting in motion such that the source of motion—the ST—itself becomes mobile and that there is no destination, we must

have strategies for outwitting hard copy. To say these things is to commit ourselves to re-designing and re-imagining the page, to undoing the rectangularity of the rectangle, to unframing the frame of the page's edge. (Scott 2018: 167)

Outwit “hard copy”: to do that, one has to work with the subjectile—with the paper page of the ST on which it's engraved, imprinted, stuck fast and hard. It's the *subjectile*, then, which now needs to be taken into account by translators—that page, not just the poem's “meaning.” The page must be re-arranged, its shape deconstructed, its margins or *paragons* deconstructed or otherwise made to blur and overflow. Scott provides illustrations of his own paginal art of rearrangement: translations as pictures, or pictures as translations, depicting a French poem translated into English, to be sure, but where “translation” works more radically to disassemble the lines, to alter type-faces, and to play with what would otherwise be the page's sharp edges. He also offers doodles and splotches of ink or paint—as if Jean-Michel Basquiat had “translated” Mallarmé. Acoustically, Scott's poems resemble DJ samples or mixes—sound-collages, resonating neither true nor false to the original, just differently.

But it's the insistence on the *page* that is strikingly new in Scott's account of translation. “How then is one to use the page,” he asks, “and indeed to use the translational process, to capture language in its formation and dissolution, in its constant circulation and re-circulation?” (Scott 2018: 168) This is the novel question here, and one which gives us a different set of translation “events” to consider: Scott's stagecraft, his typographical performance, his pictorial and sonic mixing, are all somehow enacted *there* on the surface of a paper page. There, and also then (the two terms we need to think the event). The “there” of space: “Translation is, in fact, the business of translating the page, translating the function of the space of the

page” (ibid.: 168). And the “then” of time: “The conditions of existence of the translational page are: (i) the page as instantaneous cross-section of temporal flux, dynamized by the reader’s sense of its constant precariousness” (ibid.: 169). The static fixities of pages cannot thwart this instantaneity, and the reader’s or translator’s opportunity lies in that un-fixed space-time, one which is significantly described as an awareness of “constant precariousness”: not even the stabilities of a bound *book* can prevent our sense of the valuable precarity of words on a page.

Translate the page. this is Clive Scott’s suggestion. It means that one has to engage with the materiality of that page, and also the impressed materiality of *typography*. And if translation is “a setting in motion of languages, a setting in motion such that the source of motion—the ST—itself becomes mobile and that there is no destination,” it means that one has to envisage a mobility or motion that can only be activated and impelled by a translator if the page to which that ST is affixed has fallen, as if at random, into the translator’s hands. The scenario, here, is perhaps that of the poem, or rather the *text* of the poem, sent without an intended addressee, sent to no specified destination. To think of “sending” in this way perhaps gives us a sense of textual mobility, or of errancy, such that the ST is always susceptible to ending up into the hands of a Clive Scott who proffers another page for that ST’s alternative inscription, staging, or performance. For Scott, therefore, it is possible to consider that translation happens right on a page. But given Scott’s insistence on “there is no destination,” then we have now to consider how pages, books, or texts liberate themselves from their ostensible destinations and hence make themselves available—intentionally or not—to the event of translation. It is the “ability” of such availability I wish to consider next.

4 Enabling and Disabling the Translation Event

The translation event is presumably an event that *can* happen to a text. But no sooner has one said that, then one confronts “ability” and “disability” talk in connection with the possibilities or impossibilities prescribed for that event. We might now ask whether speculations on what is untranslatable assist us in profiling that event, or rather its opposite, the non-event of translation. There are caveats to be entered, in respect of declarations concerning untranslatability, however, and I will enter these shortly. For now, we might consider (dis)ability talk by way of Benjamin (and moreover recall Samuel Weber’s *Benjamin’s-abilities* book—see Weber 2008). When Benjamin, in “The Task of the Translator,” says that “if translation is a form, translatability must be an essential feature of certain works” (Benjamin 1923/2004: 254), the difficulty concerns what Benjamin means by “form.” Is translation a form the source text could potentially adopt, another form or guise, that is to say, of the source text? But why deem that potential “essential” and then only in view of “certain works”? “Translatability is an essential quality of certain works,” Benjamin continues, “which is not to say that it is essential for the works themselves that they be translated; it means, rather, that a specific significance inherent in the original manifests itself in its translatability” (ibid.: 254). If we regard this as a claim reminiscent of Schlegel’s critical theory, then perhaps Benjamin means that a source text harbors a “theoretical” intimation of its capacity to become other to itself—other, but not necessarily different vis-à-vis its own originality. That other being would then be revealed by translation which now perhaps elevates the source text into the superlative existence of *Überleben*. But talk of “essences,” of what is “inherent,” and of the “quality” of certain works remains mysterious (to me, at least), and it’s tempting to wonder,

instead, if the ability at issue—the *Übersetzbarkeit*—is a matter of how a text makes itself *practically* available to translation: what makes a text able-to-be-translated is simply the way in which material things—books, or else the graphic, material traces of writing inscribed on paper pages—present themselves *there*, before translators undertake their tasks. Writing is unfixed and errant, as Plato feared it so in *The Phaedrus*, and thus what enables translation, just as reading and interpretation are enabled too, is that errancy—writing's escape from orality for one thing, and for another, from the parental supervision of original authors. Writing, supported by its page (or any other suitable subjectile) is able-to-be-translated, that is, as long as translators, or translation, can rendezvous with that errant writing, that orphaned letter, locate the place where writing disseminates or destinerr (to adapt Derrida's term) itself to. From this perspective, translatability is simply a condition of being written down. Writing is able-to-be-translated, iterated, disseminated etc., but able like this only if we locate the places where such graphic inscriptions are found: on paper pages like Scott's poems, for instance, or bound in books *available* in bookstores, libraries, or archives.

If Benjamin's "abilities" are too mysterious for some, or if my interpretation is too literal-minded for others, then in what alternative context might we address the "ability" of translatability? A different approach is to assess what some regard as a recent development in translation studies, namely untranslatability studies. Consider Jacques Lezra's *Untranslating Machines* (2017) and Barbara Cassin's *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (2014). But here, especially in connection with Cassin, is where caveats must be entered. For her, what is untranslatable is what solicits the ongoing effort to translate—untranslatability isn't a categorical claim for what can never be translated, but rather a characterization of what

persistently asks for the serial events of translation to occur. What interests me, however, is the format whereby “untranslatable” are proposed: for Cassin, the format is a *philosophical* lexicon. Could we not wonder why, when philosophy intervenes into the messy world of translation, it does so by speaking of words and concepts designated as untranslatables? Does philosophy have the final authority to designate such things?

Let those questions resonate with Derrida’s adoption of the philosophical discourse which proposes *theses*—in this case, theses on translatability and untranslatability. In “What is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” he writes “(1) Nothing is translatable; (2) Everything is translatable” (Derrida 1997/2013: 355). Attitudes to Derrida’s theses vary. In Venuti’s polemic against instrumentalism (which “conceives of translation as the reproduction or transfer of an invariant that is contained in or caused by the source text” (Venuti 2019: 1), an instrumental model comes into play once “the originary differential plurality in language constitutes an invariant that cannot be reproduced or transferred” (ibid.: 123). Venuti continues, “The same point can be made of Derrida’s assertion that “a given ‘formal’ quantity always fails to restore the singular event of the original”: the “event” in all its irreducible singularity, when facing the process of translation conceived as an economic equivalence, has effectively been turned into an invariant” (ibid.: 123). Two things are to be retained here: firstly, “invariant” suggests something that never changes, and, in view of translation’s “economic” desire for equivalence, never *should* change. But once translation is yoked to that economic task, then it’s faced with defeat since what is invariant is inevitably going to lose that invariance in the process of translation. It’s that inevitability Venuti resists, just as he resists economic models of translation. Secondly, however, we have to reckon with the “singular event of the original,” and this prompts me to claim that Derrida’s theses

cannot be properly understood without taking into account his thinking of the event.

In order to proceed with that claim, however, it's worth wondering if Derrida is *feigning* the philosophical strategies of thesis-proposing. One should be on one's guard when Derrida says "How can one dare say that nothing is translatable and, by the same token, that nothing is untranslatable?" (Derrida 1997/2013: 355) I think one needs to appreciate the rather archly performative discourse Derrida adopts—many of his texts are daringly performative in this way, self-ironizing and self-displacing, especially in view of the discursive conventions of "proper" philosophy. In any case, and to insist: these theses, feigned or not, cannot properly be understood without accounting for Derrida's reflection on the event. For what the notion of "event" focuses is the question of what is, or isn't possible—whether for translation or anything else. The event as such negotiates the eventualities of the possible and the impossible.

Let's approach Derrida's theses more patiently, therefore, and ask our philosophers "What is an event?" It's a question for Martin Heidegger, Gilles Deleuze, Alain Badiou, and Derrida. It can quickly become a question for translation as well: for Heidegger, *Ereignis* conveys a notion of own-ness, a sort of property secured by that event and shared with nothing else. But for Derrida, the Latinate implications of *événement* enjoin a reflection on the root verb *venir* ("to come"). This allows for the event to be envisaged as a *coming*. The event comes to pass, and indeed arrives from the horizon of the *avenir* ("future," or the "to-come"). Thus, on Derrida's account, one must countenance the happenstance of events in terms of their arrival, and also the semantic field of eventuality—*événement* and *avenir*, *aventure* ("adventure") and *invention* (strictly, "in-coming"), among others. Above all, since an event comes from the "to-

come,” then the eventuality of an event, the coming of its arrival, must partake of the unpredictability of chance—there’s no chance for chance if the future is forecastable or foreseeable. Hence Derrida’s disinclination to endorse the hermeneutic investment in interpretive horizons, since horizons, after all, are just about visible. Events, for Derrida, come from beyond visible horizons—their chance arrivals are unforeseeable, precisely. The French for “future” (*le futur*) is foreseeable in that way, but the *avenir*, the other French term for “future,” harbors the chancy potentialities of events that arrive quite unexpectedly. And it may be that the thwarting of what’s expected, possible, foreseeable or deemed practically feasible for translation (and its putative “economies”) is what characterizes the event of translation.

This is what I want to explore. But, for now, let’s continue asking “What is an event?” It should be identifiable as an occurrence or taking-place that suffers no interpretive dispute as to whether it merits that eventual status. An event should interrupt into predictable time. That interruption should have the time-signature of a *punctum*, a point-in-time intervening into the predicable course of time’s flow. It should occur but once, and suffer neither repetition nor iteration since otherwise the event loses its eventual integrality, diminishes instead into replicatory patterns that lose the utter difference an event should otherwise instantiate. The event should be indivisible and not share its eventhood with anything else—neither with the past nor with the predictable future. But how long can an event last—an instant, occurring in the blink of an eye? Is that still too long? If the event thwarts temporal capture, we might need technology to capture this: the photographic snapshot or cinematic freeze-frame that fix the event in its eventuality as an instantaneous point-in-time. We aren’t far from Fish’s desire for a photographic capture of the event of meaning, of course.

For translation to fulfill these conditions for eventhood, then besides that we might have to devolve our thoughts to the time of the millisecond, capturable only by camera technology, then firstly, we must contemplate the coming or arrival of translation. Secondly, translation's event must happen in partnership with chance, happen like an accident or an adventure, and perhaps moreover as an unexpected invention or reinvention of the original text, an invention of the text now suddenly, in the blink of an eye, invented as other to what it once was. Thirdly, that event must be unpredictable: the event must outplay the predictabilities of what was previously thought impossible. I stress my third point. An event shouldn't be predictable or forecastable according to any frameworks that "saturate" the horizons of what can and cannot come to pass. If the saturation at issue is a matter of determinations of what is and isn't possible, here and now and for all future time, then the event is what instantiates the impossible, what makes the impossible possible. Once the event arrives, it takes place (in French, the verb is *avoir lieu*), and hence takes a place previously not provided for it, a place peremptorily declared impossible for it to occupy. But it still does so, and hence possibilizes the impossible, so to speak, finds a *lieu* for itself despite the topical and topographical saturation of *all place* that hitherto delimited the knowable, the predictable, and the anticipatable—the fixed *horizons*, à la hermeneutics, circumscribing space-time itself.

This is philosophically complex. But let's say this: the translation event must disrupt the saturated field of translation "theory" that declares what can and cannot be translatable, declares what is possible and impossible for translation to accomplish. This "theoretical" field—which Venuti is right to consider is based on certain thoughts of "invariants"—is either translatability studies or (since it makes no difference) untranslatability studies. Consider how "poetry" is almost axiomatical-

ly declared to be untranslatable. Recall the dictum attributed to Robert Frost, cited by Venuti: “poetry is what gets lost in translation” (Venuti 2019: 83). So “poetry,” whatever that really means, whatever is rendered generic or generalizable by that term, perhaps saturates the field of translatory (im)possibility for every singular poem since if “poetry” is always lost in translation, then “poetry” determines the conditions for the event Derrida describes. “Poetry” names the event it forbids: a translation which would render the impossible possible—one that *does* translate a poem and *does not lose* its “poetry.”

My point is this: if we are to construe translation as an event, then it earns the name “event” if it makes possible what was previously deemed impossible. Translation faces the impossible (faces, for instance, “poetry”) and the translation event refutes that impossibility by possibilizing the impossible. For that’s what an event really is: the refutation of the saturated field of (im)possibilities in the enactment of what was previously deemed impossible, and thus the demonstration that the field wasn’t saturated at all. If we suggested a translation that did the impossible, consider James Joyce. We could claim that it’s impossible to translate *Finnegans Wake*. Yet it has been, and so we can regard those translations as events in the ways we’re trying to describe with Derrida: events that do the impossible, that show what is possible. Hopefully we’re now better able to understand Derrida’s “theses.” Consider:

It is necessary to imagine two extreme hypotheses, the following two hyperboles: if to a translator who is fully competent in at least two languages and two cultures, two cultural memories with the socio-historical knowledge embodied in them, you give all the time in the world ... there is no reason for him to encounter the untranslatable or a remainder in his word. If you give someone who is competent an entire book, filled with *translator’s notes*, in order to explain everything that a phrase of two or three words can mean in its particular form (for example, the *be war* from *Finnegans Wake* ...), there is really no reason,

in principle, for him to fail to render—without any remainder—the intentions, meanings, denotations, connotations and semantic over-determinations, the formal effects of what is called the original. (Derrida 1997/2013: 355–356)

Derrida forces the sober rigor of philosophical hypothesis into the risky embrace of hyperbole. The overcoming of untranslatability is envisaged as the gift of infinite space (“an entire, possibly endless book”), and infinite time (“all the time in the world”). The coming of the overcoming of untranslatability would therefore be a matter of the gift of time and space which alas is always rationed (by editors, including of the present essay!). Here, with that rationing, is what Derrida also means by “economy”—economies of time, and economies of space. Practically, one can ration time. *On principle* one cannot, since time is endless until the apocalyptic End-Time. *On principle*, time gives itself: such is time’s unpredictable generosity. That generous donation, when, where, and if it is given in the time to-come, would afford the time requisite for the event of the impossible, that which might take the time and space to overcome the challenge of untranslatability.

Is this fanciful? Well, it depends on what one’s attitude is to Derrida’s “in principle”—philosophy deals in principles, so why not? Is this instrumentalism? If it is, then it’s instrumentalism raised to a higher power, so to speak, since what is involved is nothing less than those two central philosophical topics, namely time as such and space as such. Need we invoke Heidegger here? Need we also add that these topics cannot be addressed, by Heidegger and Derrida at any rate, without thoughts concerning the giving of the gift? It also depends on the example of *Finnegans Wake*: the Anglo-German pun *he war* is untranslatable, but it isn’t inexplicable, which is why Derrida adverts to translator’s notes—(un)translatability is related to *explicitability*, an “ability” Derrida is unwilling to give up on: he

thinks (or feigns to think) that a “phrase of two or three words” can be so exhaustively explained that no linguistic opacity would remain. Derrida’s “theses” address the giving of space and time. It’s why the gift is put into opposition with the *economical* rationing of time and space Derrida considers to be the outcome of one-word-by-one-word translatory doctrine. Despite the apparently categorical pessimism of “nothing is translatable,” Derrida—for the sake of his im-possible event to come—is optimistic. That optimism is rooted in the way the event shares its eventality with the infinite unpredictabilities of the *avenir*, with chance’s temporal lottery (*un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard*, you might say), and with the gift of un-rationed time and space. Everything can be translatable, on principle, as long as one doesn’t foreclose on time’s eventualities and generous infinities, and hence avoids presumptuous forecasts concerning what the future can and cannot bring.

What of “nothing is translatable,” however? What is that “nothing” preventing the translation event from occurring (as a successful event, at least)? Consider poetry again, and Derrida’s essay on Paul Celan, entitled “Rams”: “The poem no doubt is the only place propitious to the experience of language, that is to say, of an idiom that forever defies translation and therefore demands a translation that will do the impossible, make the impossible possible in an unheard-of event” (Derrida 2003/2005: 137). *The* poem: at issue is the idiom that poem doesn’t share with any other poem, idiom being, therefore, that which protects the poem’s singularity. Yet, if such idiomaticity forever defies translation, then it’s precisely that defiance which primes the translation event: that defiance *instantiates* the seeming fact of translatory impossibility. That instantiation is what, in the passage cited by Venuti from “What is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” makes for “the singular event of the original.” The time of translatory impossibility is that of

“forever,” but impossibility is the paradoxical condition of possibility for an event to even occur. A poem must say (as I imagine it): ‘Nothing of my idiom is translatable, and it will be so *forever*.’ A translator resists the time of the “forever” and replies in the name of the *avenir*, since it’s the horizon from which the unheard-of translation event might come. When it does so, then we have an event worthy of the name: as Derrida says, that which makes the impossible possible.

5 The Saving Event: Translation and the Archive

Translators thus undergo the ordeal of the impossible in order to preserve the chance for the event of possibility. It’s the ordeal translators undergo in view of “poetry,” no doubt, and *vis-à-vis* the poem. But what does the poem want? Does it want to be translated? Or does it want to resist translation given its singular traits and (*à la* Celan) shibboleths? Does it want to protect its idiom from translation, since that’s how a poem’s singularity is seemingly secured? That poem might be mindful, moreover, of the violence—including sexual violence—that apparently accompanies the translation event. It might prefer Benjamin’s organic metaphor where the original text is likened to a fruit possessed of a kernel and skin, and it might therefore withdraw into the untouchable, intact core of itself, roll into a self-protecting ball like a threatened hedgehog (to change metaphors, and to allude to a certain *hérisson* deployed by Derrida in the course of his reflections on translation (see O’Keeffe 2016).

Benjamin asks us to consider a text, intimating mortality, and appealing for the translation that ensures its survival—the afterlife and superlative life of *Fortleben* and *Überleben*. True, one doesn’t have to read Benjamin’s essay as a meditation on tex-

tual mortality and translatory afterlives—one can translate *Fortleben* as “ongoing life,” this translation being one that doesn’t prompt thoughts of a text’s finitude. Still, if one reads “The Task of the Translator” in terms of life, death, and afterlife, then the issue is whether there are only three events in an original text’s life: the text’s birth, life, and death. Reception Theory might assess the evolution of a text’s lifespan, and one might claim that, for Gadamer, a classic text is well-nigh immortal, given the classic’s ability to secure its canonicity and core meaning against the vicissitudes of successive interpretive horizons (and perhaps retain what Benjamin calls its “fame”), despite the contingencies of changing tastes in literature. But if a text can die, then to what graveyard does it go, in what sealed archive is it laid to rest, immured in a tomb of unreadability or untranslatability?

While there are three events in an *original* text’s life, there is nonetheless a supplementary event that can happen to it, namely that of translation. Translation ensures the postmortem living-on of that text in sundry foreign languages. Here we can cite Berman, invoking a host of authors, including Marina Tsvetaieva, for whom

la traduction signifie non seulement le ‘passage’ interlangues d’un texte, mais – autour de ce premier ‘passage’ – toute une série d’autres ‘passages’ qui concernent l’acte d’écrire et, plus secrètement encore, l’acte de vivre et de mourir” (Berman 1991: 21).

[translation doesn’t just signify the interlinguistic ‘passage’ of a text, but also – in and around this first ‘passage’ – a whole series of other ‘passages’ that concern the act of writing, and, more secretly still, the act of living and dying.]

While Berman or Tsvetaieva aver that there is a “secret” relationship between textual life and death, and that this secret also concerns translation, it’s tempting (or pedantic) to declare, instead, that the secret is that there is no secret. Texts don’t die,

because they only live on paper (or, nowadays, live in the digital archives of *Google Books*). Still, let's feign to believe in that secret, and pretend that original texts live and die. But if an original text wishes to enjoy its translatory afterlife, then *while living*, while living out its own originality, that text must prepare for its survival to come—that preparation would perhaps be the text's embrace of its translatability, its *Übersetzbarkeit*. The text anticipates or hopes for its eventual translation, but it cannot forecast what will happen to it once translation occurs. The aftermath is a matter of what happens to the translated text rather than the original text whose life is now over, or at any rate is different from the life it lives on in translation.

Benjamin writes: "Will an adequate translator ever be found among the totality of its readers?" (Benjamin 1923/2004: 254). Imagine an anxious text asking this: if that translator is never found, if that translation never arrives or happens, the text might die as if sealed, as I just put it, in a tomb of unreadability and untranslatability—its secrets lost to reception history, its shibboleth or password unknown, its hieroglyph undecipherable. Faced with that doom, a text will tarry on the edge of its tomb, and find an alternative locale for itself, a place to await the translation event it hopes will come, one day. Where would that place be? I suggest the archive.

In archives, texts await, hoping to be resuscitated, perhaps thanks to translation. Consider that "ability" called *archivability*, therefore. What enables texts, but not just texts, to be deposited and made available in that way? Back to subjectiles—the "supports" enabling texts or videos to be preservable and conservable. In *Archive Fever*, Derrida asks, "Can one imagine an archive without foundation, without substrate, without substance, without subjectile? And [...] what of the history of substrates?" (Derrida 1995/1996: 27). Residing in archives, one imagines books and tape-recordings hoping their subjectiles

aren't biodegradable, hoping for the securer supports of non-biodegradable digital formats (whether such formats are amenable to the philosophical determination of "substance" I'm not competent to judge). Feared, therefore, is the archive's destruction. Feared is the (Freudian) death drive, whose "silent vocation is to burn the archive" (ibid.: 12). Feared is *holocaust*, a pyre that leaves no trace, ash, or cinder. Texts would like archives to preserve their traces in order that "translation" be one of the ways they survive their past. Archives preserve the future of the event (the event, say, of translation) and hence protect texts from being consigned to the "death" of an irretrievable past—a past without trace.

Derrida links the archive to translation:

The archive always holds a problem for translation. With the irreplaceable singularity of a document to interpret, to repeat, to reproduce, but each time in an original uniqueness, an archive ought to be idiomatic, and thus at once offered and unavailable for translation, open to and shielded from technical iteration and reproduction. (Derrida 1995/1996: 90)

Whenever Derrida's thoughts concern preservation and conservation, shielding and saving, it's about singularities—the irreplaceable document, the singular poem and its idiom, as in "Rams." The problem, however, is that to preserve such singularities, the archive would presumably have to close its doors and, likewise, translation would have to be forbidden, lest translation lose the idiom during the inter-lingual journey. But if Benjamin is right that translation ensures the text's survival or living-on, then the archive must remain open, just as texts must remain open to translation—this openness would imply their *Übersetzbarkeit*. Yet texts thereby remain open to the risk of loss-in-translation even as they hope for those future lives Benjamin characterizes for us. That's the loss to be risked, the loss that *cannot* be wagered against any gain in translation (a gain

in life itself) because that “economic” calculus is what Derrida deconstructs in the name of the incalculabilities of the “gift” and the “event.”

6 Performance and the Translation Event

Archives preserve documents in their repositories—books, tape-recordings, etc. But archives cannot capture the liveness, so to speak, of a performance: you had to be there and experience that performance yourself. In broaching the issue of performance and the translation event, we might recall Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of its Reproducibility”: “In even the most perfect reproduction, *one* thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence in a particular place” (Benjamin 1935/2006: 253). The here and now: archives cannot capture this, nor can our technologies of recording and digital capture it either—not quite. When Marina Abramovic, for instance, staged her “The Artist is Present” performance piece in 2020 at MoMA in New York, one had to be present in her company. That event took place, came to pass, and can never come again. Consider all those events which took place there and then, and which can never be re-captured in their original chronotopic eventality, whatever re-enactments, re-performances, or “translations” one might stage thereafter. One only reminisces about an event now gone, or reviews video recordings and photographic snapshots that caught the event in its momentary coming-to-pass.

Performance artists know this: their temporal context is that of the present. Yet, unlike Abramovic’s performance, where there was no prearranged script (hence what happened during that performance was subject to chance, fulfilled, therefore, the philosophical conditions for the pure event), other engagements with the performative circumstances of art-

events do come with scripts—with instructions, that is, for how to stage the event in question. Consider George Brecht, whose 1960–61 *Event Scores* blended the textual instructions of a script and those of a musical score to propose the means by which to stage his artworks—artworks whose “art,” however, was subject to the whims of the persons interacting with them (and indeed to the possibility that the event prescribed by those scores didn’t have to happen at all—one can always not interact, and an event can always not take place).

One of the most interesting attempts to recover artworks from the archive, and re-stage them as enactments of translation, was recently organized by Sébastien Pluot. In 1969, certain artists participated in an exhibition, curated by Jan van der Mark of the Contemporary Art Museum in Chicago, called *Art by Telephone*. The artists sent instructions for the realization of their works by telephone—museum staff or local craftsmen made, performed, or otherwise activated these works on the artists’ behalf. Mel Bochner proposed *Transduction*: he was to have called the museum, read a text which would have been transcribed and then passed along, via telephone, to a person in Italy—that person would have transcribed it again and then translated it into Italian. Another phone call was to have been placed to a person in Germany, and by telephonic relay Bochner’s text was to have circulated in various translations to various locations. The circuit would have been closed when the last translator called back to the museum in Chicago. But *Transduction* never happened. The event or events of translation it proposed didn’t take place. *Transduction* remained in the archive, its translatabilities remained latent (albeit, as Benjamin might say, still “essential” to the meaning of the piece), until Pluot and Dean Inkster asked Bochner, in 2009, about enacting the piece. Bochner only dimly recalled his original proposition, and indeed only gained access to the archives where the

documentation for *Transduction* was kept in 2012. *Transduction* then took place, with Pluot and others translating the text into multiple languages—English, French, Swedish, Italian etc. *Art by Telephone...Recalled* duly took place (or places) and it re-entered the archive, so to speak, in the form of an exhibition in Montpellier in 2014, and two books (see Pluot/Vallos 2014 and Pluot 2014).

Consider this event—or these events—of translation and transduction. They were possible thanks to the archive: while Bchner might have almost forgotten his proposal, the archive didn't, and hence permitted the proposed event's *recall*. The transductional event to-come, latent in the meanwhile since 1969, depended on archivability. But the events of translation and transduction were indeed plural: usually we think of a (performative) event occurring *one* time only, and in *one* place only as well. Yet thanks to the technology of telephony, the event became multi-situated and multi-lingual. Those events couldn't quite be restricted to the one-time, blink-of-an-eye *punctum* normally reserved for the event, as I said earlier. For the times of the event were blended: on the one hand, the time would have been the time it took to *place* a phone call (notice how we put it like that), the time of the millisecond “click” of telephone wires connecting. On the other, given the multiple locations at which this event of transcription and translation occurred, the alternative time evidently implies the delay caused by the *work* of doing those transcriptions and translations, not to mention the difference in time zones. Hence there was time for chance: the chance that the connection might be dropped, that noise interrupted the communication, or that the transmission/translation might have gotten garbled.

Here is translation partnered to the technologies of telephony (or teleportation). On this note, recall Berman declaring that traductology “peut (et elle doit) réfléchir sur la traduction

technique et scientifique, sur la *traductive* qui, peu à peu, met en forme (informatique) cette traduction, dans la mesure où quelque chose d'essentiel se noue ici entre la technologie et l'acte de traduire" (Berman 1991: 20). The import of *Art by Telephone...Recalled* is that Bochner, like the other participants in *Art by Telephone*, were also asking whether the knot or link between translation and technology—here, telephonic technology—is essential for the nature of art and the *event* of art, as well. They were asking that question from the archive, so to speak, and it's a lucky chance that Pluot and his colleagues recalled that *Transduction*, and the translatabilities it promised, remained in the archive, and hence realized that *Transduction* wasn't quite lost to history, nor had it suffered the fate envisaged by Derrida as that of the incinerated archive.

Still, *Transduction* wouldn't have emerged from the archive and entered into its translatory "afterlives" had it not been for the translators acting as switchboard operators, ready to plug in, listen in, and then transcribe, then translate, and then phone onwards. "Translator, Transponder!" you might say. The event or events of *Transduction* occurred thanks to translators who duly met the appointment with Bochner's text as it passed down the wires. Nonetheless, it's tempting to wonder if a translator might have hung up the phone, and thereby prematurely ended the event (or turned it into a non-event). As Avital Ronell asks, in an interview with Pluot and Dean Inkster, "Is it possible to *not* respond to a call?" (Pluot 2014: 19; transl.: B. O'K.). *Transduction's* reliance on translators for its serial eventhood illustrates—indeed performs—what has been at issue in the present essay more generally, namely an exploration of what translators do for the sake, and for the saving of the event as such.

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Die Metapher als hermeneutisch-performatives Sprachereignis

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Abstract: Translation is a performance in between collectivity and individuality. Literary translation as a social action in language combines knowledge and feeling of a person. It involves an informed openness towards the world and, as a result, responsible introspection as a reflection on one's own actions. Translation as performance does not happen without the mental framework of enculturation, and this in turn includes personal and collective knowledge of the world and language, as well as emotionality in individual creative writing. This problem is illustrated by comparing German translations of the poem "The Hill we Climb" by Amanda Gorman read at the inauguration of the new U.S. President Joe Biden in January 2021. Aspects of translation such as language imagery, spoken style, and emotional prosody in the text show how a personal identity that becomes meaningful is in tension with an author's collective identity brought in from the outside. In terms of translation hermeneutics, a translator will try to convey the message recognized as authentic.

Keywords: Event, Performance, Message, Scene, Semantics, Hermeneutics, Emotionality.

1 Wahrnehmen und Handeln

Die literarische Übersetzung ist theoretisch lange mit dem Stigma der Unübersetzbarkeit versehen worden,¹ weil eben die syntaktischen und vor allem semantischen Unterschiede zwischen den Einzelsprachen zu groß sind (vgl. beispielsweise Steiner 1975/2014: 183). Andererseits sind Gedichte natürlich immer übersetzbar, das beweist die jahrhundertealte erfolgreiche Interpretation und Übersetzung von Literatur. Entscheidend ist die wissenschaftliche Perspektive: ob man den Text als objektiven linguistischen Gegenstand betrachtet und quasi einen Sprachvergleich anstellt, der dann zu Inkompatibilitäten führt, oder ob man die Tätigkeit der Übersetzer untersucht, welche als jeweils historisch verwurzelte Personen Mitteilungen interpretieren und sprachmittlerisch handeln.

Und hier, im sprachlichen Handeln, kommen die Kognitionsforschung und die Hermeneutik einander näher. Es geht um das Denken der Menschen, die ihr gesellschaftliches Handeln reflektieren und begründen. Hermeneutik meint eine informierte Haltung der Offenheit zur Welt, wobei die Interpretation von Fremdem stets im Lichte der eigenen Erfahrungen erfolgt.² Jene Erfahrungen wurden ganzheitlich vor dem Hintergrund der eigenen Kultur erworben, denn der Mensch handelt als kognitives, soziales und emotionales Wesen (vgl. Stolze 2015: 31). Es geht darum, im menschlichen Leben Wissen und Emotionen zu verknüpfen, damit es zu einer gelingenden Re-

1 So stammt der bekannteste Beleg für diese Hypothese von Roman Jakobson: „Poetry by definition is untranslatable. Only creative transposition is possible“ (Jakobson 1959: 238).

2 Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1779: G135) sagte: „Ist es nicht sonderbar, daß eine wörtliche Übersetzung fast immer eine schlechte ist? und doch läßt sich alles gut übersetzen. Man sieht hieraus, wie viel es sagen will, eine Sprache ganz verstehen; es heißt, das Volk ganz kennen, das sie spricht.“

sonanz kommt (vgl. Rosa 2016). Demgegenüber ist die Kognitionsforschung daran interessiert zu beobachten, wie das Gehirn der Menschen funktioniert, wie bestimmte Reaktionen auf Stimuli ablaufen, wo das Sprachzentrum im Gehirn sitzt, wie das Wissen mental organisiert ist. Beide Bereiche geisteswissenschaftlicher Untersuchungen haben lange Zeit kaum voneinander Notiz genommen, was wohl am unterschiedlichen Forschungsansatz liegt. Auch ist Hermeneutik eher eine Philosophie der Reflexion als eine forschende Wissenschaft. Während in der Hermeneutik die Introspektion zum Tragen kommt, wenn eigene gesellschaftliche Handlungen in Verantwortung begründet werden sollen – eine Voraussetzung für Professionalität –, geht es in der Kognitionsforschung um die Beobachtung und Beschreibung von außen, anhand empirisch gewonnener Daten, verbalisierter Denkprotokolle, der Analyse von speziellen Reaktionen auf Input, von Fragebögen, bis hin zu Messungen von Gehirnströmen, Augenbewegungen, Tasteneingaben am Computer usw. Dieser Unterschied von Reflexion versus Observation führte auch zu einer unterschiedlichen wissenschaftlichen Ausdrucksweise, was das gegenseitige Verständnis nicht erleichtert hat. Auf die unterschiedlichen Paradigmen weist Stanley (2021) hin. Aber es gibt Verbindungen.

2 Übersetzung – ein Ereignis?

Neuerdings wird immer stärker betont, dass das Übersetzen oder die Übersetzung als Ergebnis eine Performanz, ein Handlungsereignis sein könne. Oder ist sie das von Natur aus? Waren Übersetzungen von jeher Ereignisse? Ein Ereignis ist zunächst ein Vorgang, etwas spielt sich ab. Dies ist für das Übersetzen als soziale Handlung, um Verständigung zu ermöglichen, in jedem Fall richtig, aber nicht sehr erhellend. Das

Schreiben eines literarischen Textes ist in diesem Sinne auch ein Ereignis, und wenn der Leser dadurch Einsicht und Erbauung gewinnt, ereignet sich für ihn ein Erkenntnisgewinn. Oft sind durch Übersetzungen neue Gedanken, auch politisch gefährliche Überzeugungen in ein Volk hineingetragen worden. Man kann dies ein Ereignis nennen.

Der translatorische Umgang mit Texten weise die Merkmale der Performativität auf (vgl. Fischer-Lichte 2012), heißt es (vgl. Agnetta 2021: 11). Als einmaliges, unwiederholbares, modifizierendes, verkörpertes Ereignis habe die Übersetzung Event-Charakter. Das stimmt aber nicht. Die Übersetzung ist ein autopoietischer Impuls (Stolze 2015: 201) der Suche nach stimmigem Ausdruck, und der Übersetzungsentwurf ist nicht einmalig, sondern unabschließbar. Dies ist als ‚verkörpertes Ereignis‘ eine kognitive Bewegung, aber kein Event.

Im Zentrum des Übersetzungsmodells von George Steiner steht zum Verhältnis von Übersetzung und Original als Ziel der Ausgleich und die Reziprozität zwischen den zwei materiellen Texten (vgl. Steiner 1975/²2014: 389). Dass freilich eine Übersetzung dieser Zielsetzung vollkommen genügt, sei ein äußerst seltenes Phänomen, ja „ein Wunder des menschlichen Geistes“, meint er (ebd.: 389). Die Beispiele, mit denen Steiner die Dialektik der „beiderseitigen Steigerung“ zwischen Original und Übersetzung (ebd.: 380) veranschaulicht, bleiben alle hinter dem formulierten Ausgleichsdesiderat zurück: Sie „betrügen“ das Original (ebd.: 383) nach unten oder nach oben, indem sie es schmälern oder verklären. Und zu Übersetzungen, die das Original größer und gewichtiger machen, meint Steiner: „Übersetzungen solchen Ranges sind die grausamsten aller Huldigungen“ (ebd.: 387). Wie das? Sie entsprechen eben auch nicht seiner Utopie einer quasi kongenialen Identität. Sie wären dann negative Ereignisse. In dieser Vor-

stellung werden Texte und Übersetzungen nur als sprachliche Körper gesehen.

Die Aufführung eines originalen oder übersetzten Stücks auf der Theaterbühne ist freilich ein Ereignis, indem der Inhalt als Performanz vermittelt wird. Hier ist nicht die Übersetzung das Ereignis, sondern die Darstellung. Das Vortragen eines Gedichts vor Publikum ist gleichfalls in seiner Performanz ein Ereignis: Es bewirkt Rührung bei der Zuhörerschaft. Dies liegt daran, dass hinter dem Gedicht eine Stimme steht, es ist wie im Drama ein gesprochener Text. Damit ein solches Gedicht bei den Zuhörern Ereignischarakter entfalten kann, soll auch die Übersetzung als ein gesprochener Text formuliert werden. Der Translator wird sich also an die Seite des ursprünglichen Autors stellen und sich dessen Sache zu eigen machen, sich damit in Empathie identifizieren (vgl. Stolze 2021: 85). Es geht nicht um Textanalyse oder Transfer, sondern um Rhetorik.

Rainer Kohlmayer (2019: 11) betrachtet in *Literaturübersetzen. Ästhetik und Praxis* das Literaturübersetzen aus eigener Erfahrung als eine „Kunst im Sinne des lateinischen Wortes *ars*, in dem Wissen und Können eine Einheit bilden“. Es verwundert daher nicht, dass er als Praktiker in seinen theoretischen Darstellungen überwiegend auf Ansätze „aus der sogenannten vor-wissenschaftlichen“ Ära zurückgreift und dabei Vordenkern wie Luther oder übersetzenden Dichtern der Romantik weit mehr Beachtung schenkt als der Translationswissenschaft unserer Zeit. Sein Buch erläutert die Ästhetik des Literaturübersetzens, wie sie seit dem 18. Jahrhundert praktiziert wird. Sie beruht auf den Prinzipien der *Subjektivität*, *Linearität* und *Oralität*, die in Novalis' Begriff der ‚schriftlichen Stimme‘ konvergieren. Der Weg zur lebendigen rhetorischen Schriftlichkeit des Übersetzens beginnt bei Leonardo Bruni und führt über Luthers Bibel zur performativen Übersetzung Herders, die von A. W. Schlegel bis in die Gegenwart das Gutenberg-Zeit-

alter prägt. Am Beispiel der Dialektübersetzung wird auch die elastische Grenze der (Un-)Übersetzbarkeit untersucht. Der zweite Teil behandelt exemplarisch die Übersetzung von Drama, Narrativik und Lyrik. Der dritte Teil feiert das narzisstische Vergnügen, das mit der Kunstform des literarischen Übersetzens einhergeht. Kohlmayers Prinzip der Subjektivität betont richtig, dass eine Person hinter der Übersetzung steht, und bei Gedichten und Bühnentexten gilt auch insbesondere die Oralität. Es gibt niemals eine ‚objektiv richtige Übersetzung‘. Die ästhetische Kompetenz des Übersetzers ist zentral. Subjektivität in der Translation bedeutet reflektiertes Handeln vor einem verständnisrelevanten Wissenshintergrund (vgl. Stolze 2021: 74). Der deutsche Romantiker Novalis nannte dies ‚geistige Mimik‘ (Novalis 1976).

Das ist bedeutsam für das Übersetzen. Der Philosoph Wittgenstein merkte einmal an:

[...] Wenn ich ein Gedicht oder ausdrucksvolle Prosa lese, besonders wenn ich sie laut lese, so geht doch beim Lesen etwas vor, was nicht vorgeht, wenn ich die Sätze nur ihrer Information wegen überfliege. Ich kann doch, z. B., einen Satz mehr oder weniger eindringlich lesen. Ich bemühe mich den Ton genau zu treffen. (Zitiert nach Schulte 2006: 231).

Joachim Schulte, ein Wittgenstein-Experte, erläutert dazu:

Man kann sich Mühe geben, den Ton genau zu treffen, und das zeigt, dass es sich hier um etwas handelt, was man *gut* oder *schlecht* machen kann. Das legt den Gedanken nahe, dass den Ton genau treffen eine erlernbare Fähigkeit ist, die mit dem Beherrschen bestimmter Verfahren einhergeht, die man lehren, erfassen und sich aneignen kann, wobei manche Menschen begabter sind als andere. (Schulte 2006: 232)

Die Entdeckung der Spiegelneuronen im menschlichen Gehirn gegen Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts war der Beweis dafür, dass die menschliche Empathie eine biologische Grundlage hat. Unser Gehirn ist durchaus in der Lage, die Gefühle anderer Menschen ganz spontan zu spiegeln. Der Mensch lebt in

Gruppen, das Lachen anderer Menschen bringt uns zum Lachen, die Tränen anderer Menschen berühren einen.

Die Linearität der Übersetzung, die Kohlmayer (2019: 41–64) stark betont, steht allerdings nicht auf derselben theoretischen Ebene. Hier wird schlicht das praktische Vorgehen in einem ersten Schritt des Übersetzungsentwurfs beschrieben. Dieser eher nüchterne und abstrakte Begriff verweist auf die Tatsache, dass literarische Übersetzungen immer mit einem Original verbunden sind und damit verglichen werden können. Linearität impliziert weder Literalität noch Äquivalenz. Es bezeichnet lediglich die Art und Weise, wie ein Originaltext Zeile für Zeile in einer anderen Sprache entfaltet wird.

Die Subjektivität des Übersetzers wird natürlich durch die Verpflichtung, einen fremden Text wiederzugeben, eingeschränkt. Wenn der Übersetzer sich weigert, dem Prinzip der Linearität zu folgen, werde er zum „Bearbeiter“ (Kohlmayer 2019: 11). Damit aber stellt Kohlmayer hier die Materialität des Ausgangstextes in den Vordergrund und nicht die Szene, das was hinter den Worten steht, das Gemeinte der Botschaft. Das ist es aber, was in der Intuition vom Übersetzer ganzheitlich erfasst und in der Übersetzung wiedergegeben wird. Das ist dann keine „Bearbeitung“ im Sinne einer nichtwörtlichen Textmodulation (vgl. Schreiber 1993: 33), sondern eine translatorische Performanz.

Allerdings zwingt die pragmatische Linearität zu einem genauen Hinsehen. Mit Blick auf den Text gibt Kohlmayer zu: „Die Arbeit eines literarischen Übersetzers findet auf der Ebene der Linearität statt.“³ Dies stellt eine ständige kreative Herausforderung dar, denn ein guter literarischer Text ist rheto-

3 So in einem Online-Vortrag am 1. September 2022 bei der Konferenz *Literary Translation – Language and Thought* an der Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

risch durch endlose Probleme gekennzeichnet, die von Metaphern bis zu kulturellen oder individuellen Konnotationen, von Dialekt bis zu Neologismen, von spezifischen Versformen bis zu eigenwilligen Rhythmen reichen. Die Linearität erzwingt das Paradoxon, dass sich das Detail in das Ganze einfügen muss, es soll eine holistische Szene entstehen. Ein falscher Ausdruck, sei er stilistisch vulgär oder präventiös, kann das Bild einer literarischen Figur verfälschen. Eine punktuelle Korrektur beeinflusst aber auch die Sprachform an anderer Stelle. Die Linearität des Vorgehens ist das Feld eines ständigen Konkurrenzkampfes zwischen zwei kreativen Subjekten, dem Originalautor und seinem Übersetzer. Um der Genauigkeit willen müssen die Übersetzer Selbstkritik üben und reflektieren. Sie müssen kreativ sein, aber immer im Interesse des Originalautors.

Diese Spannung zwischen dem Ereignis einer Texterfahrung, dem autopoietischen Impuls einer passenden Sprachform und der Performanz der erneuten Ausformulierung in einer anderen Sprache soll nun an einem Beispiel diskutiert werden.

3 Der Text – Botschaft und Szene

Am 20. Januar 2021 wurde Joe Biden als 46. Präsident der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika vereidigt. In seiner Rede an das Volk versuchte er den Brückenschlag zurück in die Geschichte, um den alten amerikanischen Traum von der vereinten Nation wiederaufleben zu lassen. In dieselbe Kerbe schlug auch Amanda Gorman mit ihrem Vortrag zum Ende der Veranstaltung. Dies war ein Ereignis, bei dem die Zuhörer die Rede begeistert aufnahmen, und die Autorin wurde weltberühmt. Leider wurde ihre Ansprache in der deutschen Fernsehübertragung von dem völlig überforderten Simultandolmetscher des

ZDF mit vielen Ähms, Satzwiederholungen und Phrasen wie „Wir Schwarzen wurden unterdrückt“, „Die Nation muss geeint werden“, „Wir stehen vor einer großen Aufgabe“ völlig eingeebnet. Der Zuschauer konnte nicht verstehen, warum die Rednerin als eine „Poetin“ bezeichnet wurde.

Hernach wurde deren Text veröffentlicht, und siehe da: Es war ein Gedicht in Strophenform, mit Metaphern, Alliterationen und sogar Reimen. Die eindrucksvolle Gestaltung des Gedichttextes hat mich sofort angeregt, den Versuch einer empathiegetragenen Übersetzung zu wagen. Im Internet wurde als Verständnishilfe dann auch eine deutsche Übersetzung veröffentlicht, die trotz ihrer Banalität immerhin die rhythmische Form wahrt. Sie führt aber nicht zu der Botschaft des Textes hin. Was ist da geschehen? Worauf kommt es bei der Gedichtübersetzung an? Später wurde im Zuge der aktuellen ideologischen Identitätsdebatte eine offizielle deutsche Übersetzung vorgelegt, die von drei Übersetzerinnen, die angeblich das Erfahrungskriterium der Farbigkeit, Fremdheit, Ausgrenzung kennen, gemeinsam erarbeitet wurde. Sie ist in ihrer hölzernen Diktion leider in keiner Weise gelungen.⁴ Nachstehend die Texte.

⁴ Vgl. Oliver Glaap und Katrin Kimpel, „Team von drei Frauen ringt um Amanda Gormans Worte“, Interview mit Hadija Haruna-Oelker, HR2 „Der Tag“, 30.3.2021.

<p>Originalversion, vorgetragen am 20.01.2021 bei Joe Bidens Amtseinführung von Amanda Gorman, geb. 1998 in Los Angeles</p>	<p>Übersetzung von R. Stolze, 24.01.2021, in begeisterter Empathie übertragen</p>	<p>Verständnishilfe. Aus: RND (Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland, Newsletter „Der Tag“, 21.01.2021) im Internet</p>	<p>Deutsche Übersetzung, erschienen im Hoffmann und Campe Verlag (zweisprachige Ausgabe März 2021), übersetzt und kommentiert von Uda Strätling, Hadija Haruna-Oelker und Kübra Gümüşay.</p>
<p>The hill we climb</p> <p>Mr. President and Dr. Biden, Madam Vice President and Mr. Emhoff, Americans, and the World:</p> <p>When day comes we ask ourselves: where can we find light in this never-ending shade? The loss we carry, a sea we must wade</p> <p>We've braved the belly of the beast. We've learned that quiet isn't always peace, And the norms and notions of what "just is" Isn't always just-ice.</p>	<p>Die Höhe, die unser Ziel ist</p> <p>Wenn der Tag anbricht, fragen wir uns: wo sehen wir Licht in diesem endlosen Dunkel? Mit den Verlusten in unserem Gepäck, ein Meer, das wir durchwandern müssen.</p> <p>Wir haben dem Bösen die Stim geboten. Wir haben gelernt, dass Ruhe nicht immer gleich Frieden ist, und die Normen und Begriffe dessen, was recht ist, nicht immer Recht ist.</p>	<p>Der Hügel, den wir erklimmen</p> <p>Mr. President, Dr. Biden, Madam Vice President, Mr. Emhoff, Bürger Amerikas und der ganzen Welt,</p> <p>Wenn es Tag wird, fragen wir uns, wo wir Licht zu finden vermögen, in diesem niemals endenden Schatten? Den Verlust, den wir tragen, ein Meer, das wir durchwatzen müssen.</p> <p>Wir haben dem Bauch der Bestie getrotzt. Wir haben gelernt, dass Ruhe nicht immer Frieden bedeutet. Und dass die Normen und Vorstellungen von</p>	<p>The Hill We Climb Den Hügel hinauf An inaugural Poem for the Country Ein Inaugurationsgedicht für das Land</p> <p>Mr. President und Dr. Biden, Madam Vice President und Mr. Emhoff, Bürger*innen Amerikas und der Welt:</p> <p>Ein neuer Tag, und wir fragen uns, wo wir Licht finden sollen im nicht enden wollenden Schatten. Unsere Verluste fassen, ein Meer durchmessen.</p> <p>Wir haben tief in den Abgrund geblickt. Wir haben gesehen, dass Ruhe nicht immer gleich Friede ist, unsere Anschauung und Auslegung dessen,</p>

Die Metapher als hermeneutisch-performatives Sprachereignis

<p>And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it. Somehow, we do it. Somehow, we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished.</p>	<p>Und doch – die Morgenröte ist unser, noch ehe es uns bewusst war. Irgendwie gelingt es uns. Irgendwie haben wir widerstanden und wurden Zeugen einer Nation, die nicht gebrochen ist, sondern einfach unfertig.</p>	<p>dem, was gerade ist, nicht immer Gerechtigkeit sind.*)</p> <p>Und doch gehört die Morgendämmerung uns, noch ehe wir es wussten. Irgendwie schaffen wir es. Irgendwie haben wir es überstanden und bezeugten eine Nation, die nicht kaputt ist, sondern einfach unvollendet.</p>	<p>was scheinbar recht ist, nicht immer gerecht.</p> <p>Unversehens gehört uns der Morgen. Irgendwie geht's. Irgendwie, gelitten und gelebt. Eine Nation, die nicht zerbrochen ist, nur unvollendet.</p>
<p>We the successors of a country and a time Where a skinny Black girl, descended from slaves and raised by a single mother, can dream of becoming president only to find herself reciting for one.</p>	<p>Wir, die Erben eines Landes und einer Zeit, wo ein dünnes schwarzes Mädchen, abstammend von Sklaven und aufgezogen von der Mutter allein, davon träumen kann, Präsidentin zu werden, und sich dann nur in der Rolle wiederfindet, für einen solchen vorzulesen.</p>	<p>Wir, die Nachfahren eines Landes und einer Zeit, in der ein dünnes, schwarzes Mädchen, das von Sklaven abstammt und von einer alleinerziehenden Mutter großgezogen wurde, davon träumen kann, Präsidentin zu werden, nur um sich selbst in einer Situation zu finden, in der sie für einen vorträgt.</p>	<p>Wir treten das Erbe eines Landes und einer Zeit an, da ein kleines, dünnes Schwarzes Mädchen, Nachfahrin von Sklavinnen, Kind einer alleinerziehenden Mutter, davon träumen kann, Präsidentin zu werden, und nun, hier, heute für einen Präsidenten vorträgt.</p>
<p>And yes, we are far from polished, far from pristine. But this doesn't mean we're striving to form a union that is perfect. We are striving to forge our union with purpose, To compose a country committed to all cultures,</p>	<p>Und ja, wir sind weit weg vom Glänzenden, weit weg vom Unverfälschten, Echten, aber das heißt nicht wir erstrebten eine Einheit, die vollkommen ist. Wir streben danach, unsere Einheit zu schmieden mit der Absicht,</p>	<p>Und ja, wir sind alles andere als lupenrein, alles andere als makellos, aber das bedeutet nicht, dass wir danach streben, eine Gemeinschaft zu bilden, die perfekt ist. Wir streben danach, gezielt eine</p>	<p>Sicher, es läuft längst nicht so prächtig, längst nicht perfekt, was nicht heißt, dass wir den vollkommenen Bund zu schließen suchen. Wir streben vielmehr nach Verbundenheit,</p>

<p>colors, characters and conditions of man.</p>	<p>ein Land zu formen, das für alle Kulturen, Hautfarben, Charaktere und Lebenswelten da ist.</p>	<p>Gemeinschaft zu schmieden. Ein Land zu bilden, das sich allen Kulturen, Farben, Charakteren und menschlichen Lebensverhältnissen verpflichtet fühlt.</p>	<p>gemeinsamen Perspektiven und Zielen. Ein Land für Menschen aller Art, jeder Kultur und Lage, jeden Schlags.</p>
<p>And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us. We close the divide because we know to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside.</p>	<p>Und so erheben wir unseren Blick nicht auf das, was zwischen uns steht, sondern auf das, was vor uns liegt. Wir schütten den Graben zu, denn wir wissen, um unsere Zukunft nach vorn zu stellen, müssen wir erst unsere Unterschiede abtun,</p>	<p>Und so erheben wir unseren Blick nicht auf das, was zwischen uns steht, sondern auf das, was vor uns steht. Wir schließen die Kluft, weil wir wissen, dass wir, um unsere Zukunft an erste Stelle zu setzen, zuerst unsere Unterschiede beiseitelegen müssen.</p>	<p>Und so lenken wir den Blick nicht auf das, was zwischen uns steht, sondern auf das, was vor uns liegt. Wir schließen die Gräben, weil wir begreifen: Soll an erster Stelle die Zukunft stehen, müssen wir erst von unseren Differenzen absehen.</p>
<p>We lay down our arms so we can reach our arms out to one another. We seek harm to none and harmony for all.</p>	<p>wir legen unsere Waffen nieder, so können wir unsere Arme ausstrecken zueinander, wir wünschen niemandem Schaden und Harmonie für alle.</p>	<p>Wir legen unsere Waffen nieder, damit wir unsere Arme nacheinander ausstrecken können. Wir wollen Schaden für keinen und Harmonie für alle.</p>	<p>Wir wollen nicht die Hand gegeneinander erheben, sondern einander die Hände reichen. Wir wollen ohne Hader in Harmonie leben.</p>
<p>Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true: That even as we grieved, we grew, That even as we hurt, we hoped, That even as we tired, we tried.</p>	<p>Lasst die Welt, wenn auch sonst nichts, sagen, dies ist wahr: sogar in der Trauer sind wir gewachsen, sogar unter Schmerzen haben wir gehofft, sogar in Ermattung haben wir uns angestrengt.</p>	<p>Lasst die Welt, wenn sonst auch nichts, sagen, dass dies wahr ist: Dass wir, selbst als wir trauerten, wuchsen Dass wir, selbst als wir Schmerzen litten, hofften Dass wir, selbst als wir ermüdeten, es weiter versucht haben.</p>	<p>Lasst die Welt wenigstens dies bezeugen: Bei allem Gram, wird sind gewachsen. Bei aller Not, wir haben gehofft. Bei aller Ermüdung, wir haben uns bemüht.</p>

<p>That we'll forever be tied together, victorious, Not because we will never again know defeat, but because we will never again sow division. Scripture tells us to envision that: "Everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree, And no one shall make them afraid." If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade, But in all the bridges we've made.</p>	<p>Für immer werden wir verbunden sein, siegreich, nicht weil wir nie wieder Fehlschläge sehen werden, sondern weil wir nie wieder Entzweiung säen werden.</p> <p>Die Schrift lehrt uns die Vision, dass jedermann unter dem eigenen Weinstock und Feigenbaum sitzen wird. Und niemand soll ihnen Angst machen. Wollen wir unserer Zeit gerecht werden, dann wird der Sieg nicht im Schwert liegen, sondern in all den Brücken, die wir gebaut haben.</p>	<p>Dass wir für immer verbunden sein werden, siegreich Nicht weil wir nie wieder eine Niederlage erleben werden, sondern weil wir nie wieder Spaltung säen werden. Die Heilige Schrift sagt uns, dass wir uns vorstellen sollen, dass jeder unter seinem eigenen Weinstock und Feigenbaum sitzen soll und keiner ihnen Angst machen soll. Falls wir unserer eigenen Zeit gerecht werden sollen, dann wird der Sieg nicht in der Klinge liegen, sondern in all den Brücken, die wir gebaut haben.</p>	<p>Wir bleiben verbunden, werden überwinden. Nicht weil keine Niederlagen mehr zu fürchten wären, sondern weil wir nie wieder Zwietracht säen werden. „Ein jeglicher wird unter seinem Weinstock und Feigenbaum wohnen ohne Scheu“, so steht es geschrieben. Wenn wir dem Gebot der Stunde genügen und ans Ziel kommen wollen, werden nicht Schlachten zu schlagen, sondern Brückenschläge zu schaffen sein.</p>
<p>That is the promised glade, The hill we climb, If only we dare it: Because being American is more than a pride we inherit – It's the past we step into, and how we repair it.</p>	<p>Das ist die Verheißung der Lichtung Die Höhe vor uns, auf die wir zugehen, sofern wir uns nur trauen. Denn Amerikaner zu sein ist mehr als ein ererbter Stolz – es ist die Vergangenheit, in die wir eintreten und wie wir sie heilen.</p>	<p>Das ist das Versprechen: Der Hügel, den wir erklimmen, wenn wir es nur wagen, denn Amerikaner zu sein, ist mehr als ein Stolz, den wir erben, es ist die Vergangenheit, in die wir treten, und die Art, wie wir sie reparieren.</p>	<p>So führt der Weg ins versprochene Licht, den Hügel hinauf, wenn wir uns trauen. Denn amerikanisch sein ist mehr als der uns überkommene Stolz – es ist die Vergangenheit, die wir beerben und wie wir gutmachen werden.</p>
<p>We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it,</p>	<p>Wir haben eine Kraft gesehen, die unsere Nation eher zersplitterte, als sie miteinander zu teilen,</p>	<p>Wir haben eine Macht gesehen, die unsere Nation eher zerschlagen würde, als sie zu teilen,</p>	<p>Wir haben Kräfte erlebt, die unsere Nation lieber spalten als teilen wollen.</p>

<p>Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy. And this effort very nearly succeeded. But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated.</p>	<p>die unser Land zerstören würde, wenn es hieße die Demokratie aufzuhalten, und dieser Versuch ist beinahe gelungen. Doch obgleich Demokratie immer wieder gehemmt werden kann, so kann sie niemals dauerhaft vereitelt werden.</p>	<p>die unser Land zerstören würde, wenn es dazu führe, Demokratie zu verzögern. Und dieser Versuch war fast erfolgreich. Doch auch wenn Demokratie von Zeit zu Zeit verzögert werden kann, kann sie niemals dauerhaft besiegt werden.</p>	<p>Unser Land zertümmern, um den Lauf der Demokratie zu bremsen. Fast wären sie damit durchgekommen. Aber die Demokratie mag sich zeitweise hemmen lassen, doch nie für alle Zeit verhindern.</p>
<p>In this truth, In this faith we trust. For while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us. This is the era of just redemption. We feared it at its inception. We did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour. But within it we found the power to author a new chapter, To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.</p>	<p>Auf diese Wahrheit Auf diesen Glauben trauen wir. Denn während wir unsere Augen in die Zukunft richten, hält die Geschichte ihre Augen auf uns. Dies ist die Ära der gerechten Wiedergutmachung, die wir so fürchteten an ihrem Anfang. Wir fühlten uns nicht bereit, die Erben einer so schrecklichen Stunde zu sein, aber gerade darin fanden wir die Stärke, ein neues Kapitel aufzuschreiben, uns selbst Hoffnung und Lachen zu schenken.</p>	<p>In diese Wahrheit, in diesem Glauben, vertrauen wir. Denn obwohl wir unsere Augen auf die Zukunft richten, die Geschichte hat ihre Augen auf uns gerichtet. Dies ist die Ära gerechter Wiedergutmachung. Wir fürchteten zu Beginn, wir fühlten uns nicht bereit, Erben einer solch schrecklichen Stunde zu sein, doch in ihr fanden wir die Kraft ein neues Kapitel zu schreiben, uns selbst Hoffnung und Lachen zu schenken.</p>	<p>Auf diese Wahrheit, diese Überzeugung bauen wir. Denn während wir den Blick in die Zukunft richten, richtet die Geschichte ihren Blick hier auf uns. Es ist die Zeit des gerechten Ausgleichs. Wir fürchteten ihren Anfang. Wir fühlten uns dem Vermächtnis dieser Schreckensstunde nicht gewachsen. Und fanden doch mit ihrem Anbruch die Kraft, neue Kapitel aufzuschlagen, uns Hoffnung und Heiterkeit zu gestatten.</p>
<p>So while once we asked: How could we possibly prevail over catastrophe? Now we assert: How could catastrophe</p>	<p>Also da wir uns einst fragten: wie könnten wir jemals der Katastrophe Herr werden? Betonen wir jetzt:</p>	<p>Also während wir uns einst fragten, wie wir jemals diese Katastrophe überstehen könnten, stellen wir jetzt fest:</p>	<p>Wo wir einst fragten: Wie sollten wir Katastrophen je beherrschen können?, rufen wir nun: Wie sollte die</p>

<p>possibly prevail over us? We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be: A country that is bruised but whole, benevolent but bold, fierce and free. We will not be turned around, or interrupted by intimidation, because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation. Our blunders become their burdens.</p>	<p>Wie könnte die Katastrophe jemals über uns herrschen?</p> <p>Wir kehren nicht zurück zu dem, was war, sondern bewegen uns hin zu dem, was sein soll – Ein Land, das angeschlagen zwar aber noch ganz ist, gütig aber kühn, wild und frei. Wir lassen uns nicht umdrehen oder aufhalten durch Einschüchterung, denn wir wissen, unsere Untätigkeit und Trägheit wird zur Erblast der nächsten Generation, unsere Fehler werden zu ihrer Bürde,</p>	<p>Wie könnte eine Katastrophe jemals uns überstehen.</p> <p>Wir werden nicht zurück zu dem marschieren, was war, sondern uns auf das zu bewegen, was sein wird. Ein Land, das zwar verletzt, aber dennoch intakt ist, gütig, aber kühn, kämpferisch und frei. Wir werden uns nicht umdrehen oder durch Einschüchterung unterbrechen lassen, weil wir wissen, dass unsere Untätigkeit und Trägheit unser Erbe für die nächste Generation sein wird. Unsere groben Fehler werden zu ihren Lasten.</p>	<p>Katastrophe uns jemals beherrschen?</p> <p>Unser Weg führt uns nicht zurück zu dem, was war; sondern voraus zu dem, was werden soll: Ein Land, das angeschlagen ist, aber ganz, guten Willens, aber gefeit, wehrhaft und frei. Wir werden uns von Störmanövern nicht auf- und nicht abhalten lassen, denn Trägheit und Untätigkeit gäben wir als Erbe an die Nachgeborenen weiter. Wir würden ihnen unsere Übel aufbürden.</p>
<p>But one thing is certain: If we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy, and change our children's birthright.</p>	<p>doch eines ist sicher: wenn wir Milde mit Macht paaren, und Macht mit Recht, dann wird Liebe zu unserem Vermächtnis, und Wandel das Geburtsrecht unserer Kinder.</p>	<p>Aber eines ist sicher: Wenn wir Barmherzigkeit mit Macht verschmelzen und Macht mit Recht, dann wird Liebe unser Vermächtnis und Veränderung das Geburtsrecht unserer Kinder.</p>	<p>Doch eines bleibt gewiss: Wenn wir Milde der Macht beimessen, der Macht das Recht, wird Liebe zu unserem Vermächtnis und Wandel unserer Kinder Anrecht.</p>
<p>So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left.</p>	<p>So lasset uns ein Land hinterlassen, das besser ist</p>	<p>Also lasst uns ein Land hinterlassen,</p>	<p>Lasst uns ein Land hinterlassen, das besser ist</p>

**With every breath
from my bronze-
pounded chests,
we will raise this
wounded world
into a wondrous
one.**

**We will rise from
the gold-limned
hills of the west!
we will rise from
the windswept
northeast,
where our
forefathers first
realized revolution!
We will rise from
the lake-rimmed
cities of the
Midwestern states!
We will rise from
the sunbaked
south!**

**We will rebuild,
reconcile, and
recover,
and every known
nook of our nation,
in every corner
called our country,
our people diverse
and dutiful.
We'll emerge,
battered but
beautiful.**

als jenes, mit dem wir
betrault wurden.
Jeder Atemzug aus
meiner
bronzefarbenen Brust
ruft:

Wir werden diese
verwundete Welt in
eine wunderbare
erwecken.
Wir werden
heraufziehen von dem
goldgezeichneten
Gebirge des Westens,
heraufziehen aus dem
windumtosten
Nordosten,
wo unsere Vorväter
einst die Revolution
gemacht haben,
heraufziehen aus den
von Seen umsäumten
Städten des Mittleren
Westens,
heraufziehen aus dem
sonnenverbrannten
Süden!

Wir werden wieder
aufbauen, versöhnen
und aufrichten,
und jeder bekannte
Winkel unserer Nation
in jeder Ecke, die
unser Land genannt
wird,
unser Volk, vielfältig
und pflichtbewusst,
wird hervorgehen,
übel zugerichtet aber
schön.

das besser ist als
das, welches uns
hinterlassen wurde.
Mit jedem Atemzug
aus meiner
bronzegelassenen
Brust
werden wir diese
verwundete Welt in
eine wundersame
verwandeln.

Wir werden uns von
den
goldbeschiedenen
Hügeln des
Westens erheben,
wir werden uns aus
dem
windgepeitschten
Nordosten erheben,
in dem unsere
Vorfahren zum
ersten Mal die
Revolution
verwirklichten,
wir werden uns aus
den von Seen
gesäumten Städten
des Mittleren Westens
erheben, wir werden
uns aus dem
sonnengebrannten
Süden erheben,

wir werden wieder
aufbauen, uns
versöhnen und
erholen,
und jeden
bekannten Winkel
unserer Nation und
jede Ecke, die unser
Land genannt wird.
Unser Volk, vielfältig
und schön, wird
aufstreben,
zerschunden und
schön.

als das uns
überlassene.
Mit bronzen
gestählter Brust,
mit ganzer Seele
wollen wir diese
verwundete Welt
zur wundersamen
erhöhen.
Wir werden uns
erheben von den
goldenen
Hügeln des
Westens!
Uns erheben im
stürmischen
Nordosten,
wo die Vorväter
erstmal eine
Revolution
ausriefen!
Uns erheben in den
seegesäumten
Städten
der Staaten des
Mittleren Westens!

Uns erheben im
sonnendurchglühten
Süden!

Wir werden
erneuern, einen,
genesen,
an allen Ecken und
Enden unserer
Nation,
aus jeder Lage, die
wir unser Land
nennen,
wir alle, so
verschieden, so
bewegt.
Werden wieder
auferstehen,
beschädigt aber
schön.

<p>When day comes, we step out of the shade, aflake and unafraid. The new dawn blooms as we free it, For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it, if only we're brave enough to be it.</p>	<p>Wenn der Tag anbricht, treten wir aus dem Schatten, glühend und furchtlos. Das neue Morgenrot erstrahlt, da wir es befreien, denn da ist immer Licht, wenn wir nur tapfer genug sind, es zu sehen, wenn wir nur tapfer genug sind, es zu sein.</p>	<p>Wenn der Tag kommt, treten wir aus dem Schatten heraus, entflammt und ohne Angst. Die neue Morgendämmerung erblüht, wenn wir sie befreien. Denn es gibt immer Licht, wenn wir nur mutig genug sind, es zu sehen, wenn wir nur mutig genug sind, es zu sein.</p>	<p>Ein neuer Tag, wir treten heraus aus dem Schatten, entflammt, unerschrocken. Ein neuer Morgen dämmt herauf, indem wir es sagen. Denn Licht ist immer, wenn wir es nur in uns zu finden wagen. Wenn wir uns zutrauen, es weiterzutragen.</p>
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Gedichte sind Mitteilungen, Anrufe an die Hörer und Leser, wie dies ja schon in der kurzen Adressierung der Sprecherin deutlich wird, gerichtet an *Americans, and the World*. Der Übersetzer benötigt also, um die Botschaft zu verstehen und adäquat wiedergeben zu können, Einfühlung wie in jedem Gespräch. Dies gelingt bei der Verständnishilfe, die wortgetreu dem Text entlang, wohl mit Crowd Sourcing erstellt wurde, nicht. Hier wurde der Text als Wörtergegenstand genommen, und man fühlte sich sogar bemüßigt, die Übersetzung des Wortspiels „just is“ und „just-ice“ zu begründen, was allerdings inhaltlich nicht überzeugt.⁵ Das ist nämlich ein Hinweis auf die Rechtslage in den USA und den Umgang damit, darauf was ‚mit dem Recht gemacht wird‘, auch wenn es formal ‚recht(ens)‘ ist.

5 In der Verständnishilfe (markiert durch „*)“ wurde folgende Erläuterung eingebaut, die wir aus Gründen der Übersichtlichkeit hier herausnehmen: [Die Übersetzung könnte auch lauten, „dass die Normen und Vorstellungen von dem, was gerecht ist“. Die Betonung legt aber die obige Interpretation nahe. Wahrscheinlich spielt die Lyrikerin hier aber bewusst mit der doppelten Bedeutung von „just“.]

Welches ist nun die Botschaft des Textes? Dies wird sinnvollerweise intuitiv vom Ganzen her erkundet. Die Situation des Gedichts bezieht sich auf die Lage in den USA, nachdem der Expräsident Donald Trump abgewählt war und es immer wieder Vorfälle von Rechtsbruch, übermäßige Strafaktionen gegen Schwarze, bis hin zur aufrührerischen Erstürmung des Kapitols, als Regierungssitz das nationale Symbol der Einheit, kurz vor der Inaugurationszeremonie gegeben hatte. Die Botschaft des Textes ist ein Aufruf an alle zum Aufbruch, zur Einheit des ganzen Volkes mit dem Ziel auf einer lichten Anhöhe („the promised glade“, „the hill we climb“, „we step out of the shade“). Das hohe Ziel ist die Rettung der Demokratie in Zuversicht.

Diese Botschaft wird versinnbildlicht mit biblischen und landschaftlichen Metaphern als Szene vom Auszug des Volkes Israel, vom Zusammenströmen aus allen Richtungen des Landes („a sea we must wade“, „every known nook of our nation“, „and every corner called our country“). Es geht nicht nur um die Ermächtigung der Schwarzen, wie die deutschen Übersetzerinnen offenbar meinen und es mit Signalwörtern anzeigen, wie „Bürger*innen Amerikas und der Welt“, „alleinerziehende Mutter“, „wir erheben uns, mit bronzen gestählter Brust“ usw. und dem Vermeiden von Wörtern wie „all cultures, colors, characters“.⁶

Das Gedicht nimmt diese Situation des gerade noch Entronnenseins auf („democracy delayed“), und zeigt es in biblischen Bildern von der Morgenröte der Hoffnung. Es weist einen gehobenen, etwas salbungsvollen Stil des Textvortrags auf, und dieser Vortrag steht in der Tradition der schwarzen Prediger im Gefolge Martin Luther Kings, die stets einige Bibelzitate im Hinterkopf haben. Das sehen wir auch hier.

6 Dies wird ausdrücklich auch so im Nachwort begründet.

4 Bildworte im dichterischen Text

Die Morgendämmerung bei Tagesanbruch, mit dem das Ganze einsetzt, kommt unmerklich, und wir gelangen aus der Finsternis heraus. Das ist tröstlich: „we do it“, *es gelingt uns*.⁷ Wir verspüren, dass sich da etwas verändert, weil eben die Wahl für Trump verloren ging.

Die Erfahrung einer gebrochenen Nation wird von der Sprecherin nun an ihrem eigenen Schicksal festgemacht. Dass sie von einer „alleinerziehenden Mutter“ (juristischer Ausdruck) großgezogen wurde, ist keine literarische Redeweise im Deutschen, weshalb man das auch ändern kann. Siebzehnjährig hatte sie in einem Interview zu ihren Zielen gesagt, „einmal amerikanische Präsidentin“ werden zu wollen, darauf spielt sie hier an. Aber ihr Schicksal steht stellvertretend für einen großen Teil des amerikanischen Volkes. Dieses ist unterwegs (biblisch „das wandernde Gottesvolk“), um eine Nation für alle zu schmieden. Die Metaphorik der Wörter „forge“, „blade“, „bronze-tampered“ usw. erinnert an die biblische Hoffnungstradition des „Schwerter zu Pflugscharen“, und da heißt es dann eben nicht „Klinge“, sondern „Schwert“ („victory won't lie in the blade“). Die Waffen sollen niedergelegt werden, damit das Miteinander eine Chance bekommt. Die biblische Vision der Gleichberechtigung aller Menschen „a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters“; „sit under their own vine and fig tree“ wird als Aufgabe gesehen, auf welche das Volk zumarschiert. Es ist wie beim Auszug aus Ägypten, was auch gleich zu Beginn angekündigt wird: „the loss we carry, the sea we have to wade, that quiet isn't always peace“.

7 Eine Formulierung wie „wir schaffen das“ ist im Deutschen allzu sehr an ein Zitat der Kanzlerin Angela Merkel von 2015 geknüpft, als dass es hier passend wäre. „Irgendwie geht's“ in der offiziellen deutschsprachigen Ausgabe ist zu sehr umgangssprachlich.

Diese Andeutung wird in der Verständnishilfe nicht sichtbar. Und „We’ve braved the belly of the beast“ ist eine Anspielung auf den Titel eines in den USA sehr bekannten Films. Eine wörtliche Übersetzung ins Deutsche ist unverständlich.⁸

Es folgt ein Verweis darauf, dass die Demokratie in Gefahr war, dass jetzt die Zeit ist für Neues. Es geht darum, den Nachkommen ein besseres Land zu hinterlassen. Ein Appell („merge mercy with might, and might with right“), wie er auch traditionell für den guten Fürsten galt,⁹ soll der Liebe zum Sieg verhelfen. Der Blick richtet sich auf die Zukunft, es geht darum, die Zertrennung zu überwinden, Brücken zu bauen. Gorman ruft zum Wagnis auf („if only we dare“) und beschwört den amerikanischen Traum, erinnert an die Vorväter, beschreibt die verschiedenen Gegenden des großen Landes in allen Himmelsrichtungen.

Diese symbolisieren auch eine unterschiedliche Gesellschaftsstruktur, verschiedene Lebenswelten. Aber sie werden szenisch mit spezifischen Naturphänomenen dargestellt: den Wortbildern der goldglänzenden Gebirge, von Sturm, Sonnenglut und Seenlandschaften. Der soziologische Begriff der „Lebenswelt“ meint einen Horizont der Selbstverständlichkeiten, die allen Setzungen wie auch allen Infragestellungen und alternativen Handlungsmöglichkeiten vorausgeht. Was zur Lebenswelt gehört, ist mehr als die ökonomischen Verhältnisse,

8 In dem Action-Film mit dem deutschen Untertitel „Im Zentrum des Bösen“ muss der Held seine Tochter aus den Fängen von Entführern retten. Dies dient hier als Metapher, die ursprünglich aus der Bibel stammt (und einen Walfisch meint). *Wir haben tief in den Abgrund geblickt* ist eine gute Formulierung, aber nicht aktiv in der Perspektive.

9 In den Fürstenspiegeln des Mittelalters wurde regelmäßig Klugheit, Gerechtigkeit, Großmut und Stärke von dem Herrscher gefordert.

es genießt einen Vertrauensvorschuss für die Identität.¹⁰ Es ist das Milieu, wo man sich zuhause fühlt. Der amerikanische Traum wird mit der biblischen Vision der Stadt auf dem Berge verglichen (*the hill we climb*), wo alle in Frieden leben, zu der alle Völker heraufziehen. Dieser Marsch in die Zukunft endet im biblischen Bild des Lichtes aus Jesaja Kapitel 60: 1: „Steh auf, werde licht!“¹¹ Darin steckt Zuversicht und Aufgabe zugleich. In der Verständnishilfe ist dieser religiöse Bezug nirgends zu sehen, weshalb der Text an vielen Stellen auch unverständlich wirkt. Und das Licht ist auch nicht „in uns“ zu suchen, wie die deutsche Übersetzung vermerkt, es erstrahlt über uns.

Hermeneutisch ist das Verstehen eines Textes durch Angespochensein ein „Wortgeschehen“, also ein Ereignis, und hier sind die metaphorischen Bildworte besonders wichtig. Auch wichtig sind die „Stimmen“ in literarischen Texten. Diese sollten auch in einer Übersetzung hörbar werden.

5 Mündliches Wortgeschehen

Das Gedicht ist ein gesprochener Text, der die Hörer ansprechen soll, was sich im Satzrhythmus oft mit Endbetonung ausdrückt. In der Übersetzung soll wieder ein sprechbarer Text entstehen. Dieser rhetorische Aspekt ist eminent wichtig. Hier

10 Die unmittelbare Gewissheit, wie sie der Lebenswelt eigen ist, macht aber auch ihre Anfälligkeit aus. Dringt Kritik in sie ein, so zerfällt sie, vgl. Jürgen Habermas (1992: 92). Eine Formulierung wie *Ein Land für Menschen aller Art, jeder Kultur und Lage, jeden Schlags*, wie in der deutschen Übersetzung, vermag diesen Gedanken nicht einzufangen.

11 Der ganze Vers lautet: „Steh auf, werde licht! Denn dein Licht ist gekommen, und die Herrlichkeit des HERRN ist über dir aufgegangen. Denn siehe, Finsternis bedeckt die Erde und Dunkel die Völkerschaften; aber über dir strahlt der HERR auf, und seine Herrlichkeit erscheint über dir (*Eilberfelder Bibelübersetzung*, Jesajah Kap. 60, Vers 1).

zeigt sich die emotionale Prosodie, wo das Verb am Ende steht. Beispiele: „descended from slaves and raised by a single mother; We will not march back to what was but move to what shall be; We will rise from...“, usw. Hier verwendet die Verständnishilfe jeweils umständliche angehängte Relativsätze und dass-Konstruktionen, die den Redefluss bremsen. Das ist auch in der deutschen Übersetzung so: „wo wir Licht finden sollen“ statt *wo sollen wir Licht finden*, „was nicht heißt, dass“ statt *aber das heißt nicht*. Außerdem wimmelt es von banalen, allgemein-sprachlichen Ausdrücken, die dem gehobenen Stil nicht entsprechen.

Und schließlich gehört zu einer überzeugenden Übersetzung auch eine paradigmatisch synsemantische Kohärenz im Ganzen. Die Verständnishilfe weist aber viele unidiomatische Formulierungen auf, die auch inhaltlich nicht erhellend sind, zum Beispiel: „wo wir Licht zu finden vermögen, in diesem niemals endenden Schatten?“, „ein Meer, das wir durchwaten müssen“, „wir sind alles andere als lupenrein“, „Wir schließen die Kluft“, „Die Heilige Schrift sagt uns, dass wir uns vorstellen sollen, dass...“, „Nachfahren eines Landes“, „aus meiner bronzegegossenen Brust“, „Der Hügel, den wir erklimmen“, „es ist die Vergangenheit, in die wir treten, und die Art, wie wir sie reparieren – In diese Wahrheit, in diesem Glauben, vertrauen wir“, „Ein Land zu bilden, das sich allen Kulturen, Farben, Charakteren und menschlichen Lebensverhältnissen verpflichtet fühlt“, „Wie könnte eine Katastrophe jemals uns überstehen“, „werden wir diese verwundete Welt in eine wundersame verwandeln“, „Wir werden uns von den goldbeschiedenen Hügeln des Westens erheben“, „wir werden uns aus dem windgepeitschten Nordosten erheben“ usw.

Die deutsche Übersetzung weist zahlreiche seltsame lexikalische Kombinationen auf, wie z. B. „Nachfahrin von Sklavinnen“ (als ob es nicht auch Männer gegeben hätte), „unsere

Verluste fassen“; „ein Land jeder Kultur und Lage, jeden Schlags“¹² oder auch verunglückte Metaphern, wo das Bild nicht stimmt: „es werden nicht Schlachten zu schlagen, sondern Brückenschläge zu schaffen sein“, „unser Land zertrümmern“, „Milde der Macht beimessen“, „wir werden uns erheben von den goldenen Hügeln des Westens“ (wo haben sie gegessen oder planen die jetzt den Aufstand?), „Aus jeder Lage, die wir unser Land nennen“ usw. Das ist nicht sehr erhellend. Es wurde rhetorisch die paradigmatische Synsemantik missachtet, und dies wurde auch schon in der Presse kritisiert.¹³

Die Metaphern des Textes sollen als hermeneutisch-performatives Sprachereignis geistige Szenen hervorrufen, und dies gelingt nicht bei wörtlich am Text klebenden gestelzten Formulierungen oder politisch intendierten Überzeugungen. Die Zielvorstellung des Textes – „The hill we climb“ – erscheint genau in der Mitte der Strophen. Eine Übersetzung ins Deutsche mit „der Hügel, den wir erklimmen“ entspricht weder der paradigmatischen Sprachnorm noch dem Bild der Stadt auf dem Berge, und ist auch nicht kreativ, sondern einfach nur unbeholfen wörtlich. Eine Überschrift wie „Den Hügel hinauf“ ist auch nicht sehr klar und der Translator ist frei, sich nicht mechanisch daran zu halten.

12 Natürlich wurden die entsprechenden Entscheidungen im Nachwort der Übersetzerinnen politisch begründet. Vielleicht ist aber Amanda Gorman so berühmt geworden, weil sie nicht nur Aktivistin ist, als welche sie in der deutschen Version bezeichnet wird, sondern lyrisch das große Ganze in den Blick nimmt.

13 Frank Heibert, „Alliteration sticht Rhythmus“, In: *Die Zeit online* (Paywall), 30.03.2021; Jürgen Deppe, „Verleger Tim Jung über die deutsche Übersetzung“ (Gespräch), In: *NDR Kultur*, 30.03.2021; Uda Strätling, Kübra Gümüşay, Hadija Haruna-Oelker u.v.a.: „Wer spricht in wessen Namen?“, In: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Paywall), 09.03.2021, und andere.

Schließlich ist es ein vielfach von Literaturübersetzern betontes Mittel der Aussageeleganz, Wortverkürzungen zu verwenden, prägnante Formulierungen, die natürlich oft nicht leicht und nicht auf Anhieb gelingen. Da sind die Relativsätze meist zuerst zur Stelle, aber das muss nicht sein. Beispiele sind: *Niemals endend* > *endlos*, *danach streben* > *erstreben*, *Stolz*, *den wir erben* > *erbter Stolz*, *ohne Angst* > *furchtlos*, *als wir Schmerzen litten* > *unter Schmerzen* usw. Solche komprimierten Ausdrücke müssen meist bewusst gesucht werden.¹⁴

Dies wurde in unserer beigegebenen Neuübersetzung versucht, und sie weicht sicher an manchen Stellen formal vom Text ab. Im Zentrum des Übersetzungsmodells von George Steiner steht ja das Verhältnis von Übersetzung und Original, das in die Herstellung eines Ausgleichs und der Reziprozität zwischen den zwei Texten münden soll (vgl. Steiner 1975/2014: 389). Dass freilich eine Übersetzung dieser Zielsetzung vollkommen genügt, sei ein äußerst seltenes Phänomen. Ob dies nun hier zutrifft, kann man nicht beurteilen. Jede Nachgestaltung eines Textes und Vergegenwärtigung von dessen Botschaft ist nämlich eine neue Interpretation. Manche sagen, eine

14 Wenn wir in einer Romanübersetzung lesen „kleine Platten aus Eisen auf seiner Ritterrüstung“, so denken wir, man hätte auch *eiserne Plättchen* oder *Pailletten* oder dergleichen sagen können. Es ist beispielsweise ein häufig zu beobachtender Fehler beim Übersetzen, dass ein entsprechender Ausdruck zergliedernd nachgebildet und nicht als semantische Einheit begriffen wird (vgl. *immagine di Maria* – **Bild der Maria* – *Marienburg*). Und noch ein Beispiel: „*Lo splendore avvolto nella nube*“ (Angelo G. Roncalli, später Papst Johannes XXIII., zu einem Heiligenbild). Schrittweise wird der Übersetzungsentwurf verdichtet: (1) *Der Glanz, der in eine Wolke gehüllt ist*; (2) *Der von einer Wolke umhüllte Glanz*; (3) *wolkerverhangenes Leuchten*. – Der 2013 verstorbene Russisch-Übersetzer Peter Urban erklärte zu seinen Nachtsitzungen: „Ich brauche Stille, um die Sätze zu hören“, und er folge dem Diktum von A. Puschkin: „Genauigkeit und Kürze“ (*Darmstädter Echo*, 04.12.2013).

Aussage und ein Translat haben eine je eigene Identität (vgl. Gil 2015: 146). Das mag wohl sein, denn jeder Mensch hat auch eine eigene Identität. Aber in der translatorischen Einfühlung versuchen wir, wie ein Schauspieler eine fremde Identität zu vergegenwärtigen, um sie mitteilbar zu machen. So bleibt Steiners Anmerkung eigentlich nur eine arrogante Behauptung eines Literaturwissenschaftlers. Übersetzer haben sich immer wieder erneut mit ihren Texten auseinanderzusetzen.

6 Identität und Verstehen

Gedichte sind also Mitteilungen an Andere, und auch wenn sie zunächst als reiner Selbstaussdruck gedacht waren, werden sie im Lesen, in der Interpretation zu solchen Mitteilungen. Das Verstehen eines solchen Textes ist dann individuell verschieden, weil eben jeder Mensch eine eigene Identität hat, auch wenn diese sozial eingebunden ist. Verstehen heißt sich angesprochen fühlen, doch dies ist niemals reine Emotion, was nur zu rein psychischen Reaktionen führen würde. In der Gedichtübersetzung führt es vielmehr zu dem Versuch einer Vergegenwärtigung der verstandenen Botschaft und Szene auf der Basis von Wissen und Gefühl. In der Reflexion des Verstandenen macht sich der Übersetzer klar, welcher kulturelle Hintergrund und vor allem welcher sprachliche Stil in dem Text vorhanden ist. Weltwissen und Sprachwissen kommen hier zum Tragen.

Das innere Ergriffensein beim Lesen eines Gedichts drängt dann zu einem emotionalen Ausdruck in rhythmischer Prosodie hin, die affektive Formulierung ist die Tätigkeit des kreativen Schreibens eines sprechbaren Textes. Der Aspekt der Oralität ist hier entscheidend, denn es werden Stimmen gehört. Doch es geht nicht um reine Emotion, sondern das Sprachgefühl des formulierenden Translators ist gekoppelt mit

dem Bewusstsein von der sprachlichen Norm als der Form des anerkannt Üblichen in einer Sprache. Nur so sind ja auch die viel beschworenen kreativen Abweichungen von der Norm im künstlerischen Schreiben, die Neuschöpfungen möglich. Der Translator muss wissen, wie bestimmte Affekte sprachlich stimmig zum Ausdruck gebracht werden können, und dazu braucht er Sprachvertrauen (vgl. Stolze 2015: 113) um auch kreativ Neues zu erschaffen.

Neben der Oralität, welche primär affektwirksam ist, ist die Bildhaftigkeit und Metaphorik ein besonderes Merkmal dichterischer Sprache. Szenische Vorstellungen ziehen entsprechende Wörter an, wie die Kognitionsforschung nachgewiesen hat (vgl. Fillmore 1977). Daher ist es sinnvoll, in Texten, auch Gedichten sein Augenmerk bewusst auf sprachliche Bilder zu richten. Dies wird gefördert durch den in der Hermeneutik geforderten holistischen Ansatz (vgl. Stolze 2015: 99), wo der Leser vom Ganzen ausgeht und sich zu den Einzelteilen hin vorarbeitet. Wortnetze und Sprachbilder im Textganzen werden dann sichtbar. An dieser Stelle werden kognitive und hermeneutische Vorstellungen harmonisiert. Und bei der Übersetzung eines Gedichtes ist dann darauf zu achten, dass auch in der zielsprachlichen Version die Ausdrucksweise mit der mentalen Szene übereinstimmt, ein kohärentes Bild ergibt und eben nicht in horizontalem Transfer nur Satzstrukturen übertragen werden.

Inzwischen ist allerdings eine neue Front der Auseinandersetzung aufgebrochen: die egoistische Identitätspolitik, welche die Empfindlichkeiten einzelner Gruppen herausstellt, um diese in der Gesamtgesellschaft sichtbar zu machen. In den Niederlanden wurde die von der Autorin gebilligte Übersetzerin ins Niederländische angegriffen, sie entspreche doch nicht der Lebenssituation der Autorin, woraufhin sie ihr Mandat zurückgab. Dies zeigt, wie eine sinnfällig werdende persönliche

Identität in Spannung tritt zu einer von außen herangetragenen angeblichen kollektiven Identität einer Autorin. In Deutschland hat der Verlag Hoffmann und Campe vorsorglich allein drei Übersetzerinnen dafür engagiert (für 25 Seiten Text). Deren Lösung wurde daher hier zur Diskussion mit aufgenommen.

Worum geht es aber bei den Übersetzungen? Ist allein die soziale Situation entscheidend, oder nicht doch eher die Fähigkeit des Translators, sich in die fremde Welt einzufühlen, sich an die Seite des Autors/der Autorin zu stellen und in Empathie deren Botschaft neu zu formulieren, wie ein Schauspieler auf der Bühne.¹⁵ Zu solchen Forderungen gehört auch viel Hintergrundwissen und Bereitschaft zum Gespräch, und es ist nicht klar, ob die Aktivist:innen darüber verfügen, oder ob sie nur ihr eigenes Programm verfolgen.

Die Selbstsicherheit darf nämlich nicht überhandnehmen. So hat Philippe Forget (2021) überzeugend dargelegt, wie Fritz Paepcke gelegentlich zu sehr den eigenen Überzeugungen folgte. Zum nötigen Sprachwissen gehört eben auch das Erkennen soziokulturell vorgeprägter Ausdrücke, wie zum Beispiel die Werbesprache in einem Text. Da kann man nicht eine ganze eigene Philosophie an einem Wort aufhängen. Forget stellt dar, dass Fritz Paepcke dem argumentierenden Gespräch nicht sehr zugeneigt war.

Ein Grund für diese Gesprächsabneigung mag bei Paepcke der wiederholte Rekurs auf die Vorstellung von einer ‚hermeneutischen Wahrheit‘ sein, die (meines Wissens) übersetzungshermeneutisch nie überzeugend definiert wurde, dafür aber umso effizienter als aprio-

15 Hier gibt es allerdings dieselben Probleme, wenn zum Beispiel einer lesbischen Schauspieler:in abgesprochen wird, auch die Rolle einer traditionell orientierten Frau und Mutter zu spielen, und Shakespeares Othello darf jetzt nur noch durch einen echten dunkelhäutigen Schauspieler verkörpert werden (vgl. Jungblut: 2021).

ratisch-implizite Abwehr gegenteiliger oder auch nur andersartiger Positionen dienen konnte. (Forget 2021: 399f.)

Paepcke hatte selbst nur selten einen literarischen Text übersetzt, obwohl er viele französischen Poeten ständig zitierte. Er vertrat „die unermüdlich wiederholte Vorstellung, man könne nur Texte übersetzen, die man verstanden habe, und der Übersetzungsprozess bestehe im Namen der ‚Einheit der Sprache als Ganzes‘ darin, ein wie immer auch definiertes ‚Gemeintes‘ als das *Verstandene* in einen neuen Horizont zu versetzen“ (Forget 2021: 401). Es stimmt, dass Paepcke immer betonte, der Verstehende müsse durch den Text ‚hindurchblicken‘, statt sich von der sprachlichen Textform leiten zu lassen. An verschiedenen Beispielen zeigt nun aber Forget auf, wie Paepcke sich dabei oft von eigenen vorgefassten Meinungen und Überzeugungen zur Semantik gewisser Leitwörter binden lässt, was dann eben auch zu objektiv falschen Übersetzungslösungen führen kann (vgl. ebd.: 417). Fachwissen ist beim Übersetzen gefordert, und nicht nur subjektive Vorstellungen. Entscheidend ist die holistische Wahrnehmung des jeweiligen Textes in hermeneutischer Offenheit und die Bereitschaft sich von der Textgestalt leiten zu lassen.

7 Fazit

Im Vorstehenden wurde der übersetzungshermeneutische Umgang mit Texten in der Literatur vorgestellt. Der Translator betrachtet solche Texte holistisch als Mitteilungen, die in einen kulturellen Kontext eingebettet sind. Im verstehenden Ansprechensein von der Mitteilung hat der Translator seinen eigenen Standort kritisch zu reflektieren, um eben die Überblendung von Ideologie gegen eine fremde Aussage zu vermeiden. Eigene Emotionen des Translators sollen nicht die Oberhand gewinnen. Vielmehr geht es um präzises Nachformulieren in

einer angemessenen kreativen Sprache. Besonderes Augenmerk richtet man hierbei auf die Metapher als Sprachereignis, da gerade darin besondere Gedanken präzise zum Ausdruck gebracht werden können.

Beim Übersetzen ist das Verstehen als Angesprochenwerden von der Botschaft ein kognitiv-emotionales Ereignis als Erfahrung, ein Wortgeschehen, und die Suche nach angemessenen Formulierungen in der Zielsprache ein zunächst intuitiver autopoietischer unablässiger Impuls, dessen Ergebnis dann bewusst aufgrund fachlichen und kulturellen Wissens reflektiert und ggf. korrigiert wird. Gelingt es dem Translator, dann wieder eine kohärente nicht befremdliche Botschaft in der anderen Sprache zu übermitteln, kann auch bei den künftigen Lesern das Ereignis des Ergriffenseins entstehen, die Übersetzung ist geglückt. Die Performanz in diesem Zusammenhang zeigt sich im mündlichen Vortrag der Übersetzung für die Hörerschaft oder im Abspielen einer auf Basis des Translats entwickelten Szene.

Das Wahrnehmen eines Textes vor dem Hintergrund der gegebenen Kultur hängt natürlich vom Vorwissen des Translators ab, weshalb eine Haltung der Offenheit und Lernbereitschaft unverzichtbar ist. Angesichts gesellschaftlicher Debatten wird aber auch dies in verschiedenen Regionen unterschiedlich aussehen.

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Performance as Translation. The Representation of the Sacred in the “Sagrada Familia” (Barcelona) by the Interaction of Architecture, Visual Arts and Liturgy

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Abstract: An instructive perspective of translatology is that of examining translation as performance. Here, key questions are for what purpose a translation is made and how it was prepared for that purpose. Regarding method, however, it would be an original move if one looked at the performance itself in its translational dimension. Following such a perspective, this essay examines how performative actions can translate the transcendent or invisible ‘sacred’ into an aesthetic experience. The authors explain their approach by looking at a significant event, the dedication of the church of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona (2010) together with the homily of Pope Benedict XVI. The main reason for that choice is that the liturgy is not only an issue of theological reflection, since it also allows one to examine translational processes in a polysemiotic-performative way. Indeed, in the liturgy the rite, text language, art and architecture work together harmoniously into an integra-

tive action that can shape the aesthetic experience of the “sacred”. As a transdisciplinary study, this essay seeks to provide further perspectives for future research in many areas of the humanities.

Keywords: Performance, Translation, Arts, Sacred architecture, Liturgy, Preaching, *Sagrada Família*, Barcelona.

1 Introduction

The relatively recent approach to translation as performance has already achieved good research results (cf. Agnetta/Cercel 2021). But the reverse approach, namely performance as a translational phenomenon, has not yet received much attention. This is not surprising, since “performance as translation” cannot be the domain of translation studies alone, since it is a research subject that needs the cooperation of several interacting disciplines.

This article, therefore, applies a transdisciplinary method. It deals with the Catholic liturgical rite as a paradigmatic event. Considered closely, liturgy is a multidimensional phenomenon of the interaction of ritual, text language and architecture that crosses the boundaries of individual disciplines. The issue of liturgical rite is one of the many complex problems that cannot be solved by a single discipline alone. For appropriate research, a transdisciplinary approach is necessary. Therefore, in this article an art historian, a liturgist and a linguist work together to shed light on translational processes of the liturgical celebration as a performative action.

As a starting point for their study, the authors have chosen a significant event on 7 November 2010 in Barcelona: the dedication of the church and altar of the *Sagrada Família*, together with the homily of Pope Benedict XVI (cf. Bonet i Armengol 2011/²2014: 94–95; Carlotti 2012: 6–7, 68–70). During that dedication Mass, the three following performances and

representations could have been experienced in an especially vivid concentration:

- a. the church architecture with its pictorial program,
- b. the meaningful homily of Pope Benedict,
- c. the particular rite of dedication of the church and altar.

In his homily Benedict XVI delivered a classical address as proclamation, at the same time referring to both the architectural environment in its artistic and religious dimensions, enacting the rite of dedicating the church, celebrated just after (cf. Benedict XVI 2010/2011). His homily was thus a performance and also a meta-performance. We therefore take this homily as a starting point and pivot of our considerations, because it allows us to set the focus of our research clearly. Two other reasons were important for our choice: the location of this homily was inside the church building itself and, according to Catholic understanding, “the homily is an integral part of the liturgy, it is not only an instruction, it is also an act of worship” (HD 2014: 532). Due to the latter reason, the performativity of the homily acquires new nuances: in fact, it possesses a “sacramental significance” by which “Christ is present in the assembly gathered to listen to his word and in the preaching of his minister, through whom the same Lord who spoke long ago in the synagogue at Nazareth now instructs his people” (ibid.).

The main question of this study is: How do the three elements (art, homily, rite of dedication) as performances interact with each other? That question concerns the visual communication of the architectural space with its pictorial program; the sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharistic celebration; the words of the homily, both proclaimed and listened to. Our interest is how exactly was *translatio* accomplished during the rite of dedicating the church together with the homily inside the artistic setting of the architecture?

To answer this complex question, we will proceed as follows: First, the terms *representation*, *performance* and *translation* are defined in more detail according to the authors' understanding (see section 2). Then the event of dedicating the *Sagrada Família* is analysed and contextualised in order to understand the multidimensionality of the homily (see section 3). Finally, a rhetorical analysis of the interaction between art, text language and rite in its performative-translational dimension is carried out (see section 4)

2 The concepts of performance, representation and translation

We start from the observation that every communicative act is a kind of performance. Performativity has a strong transformative potential: What is done does not stand as a sign for something, but is that something.

According to Fischer-Lichte (2015), there is a crossing of boundaries, such as the one between art and life. This is the case with the staging of political or sport events or (art) performances that are intended to have a political effect. Moreover, an aesthetics of the performative deals with the relationship between the arts to each other and to the different cultures. The border becomes a threshold.

While art and cultures (sports, politics, etc.) have been studied to some extent, less attention has been paid to the intertwining of art, preaching and liturgy. But it is precisely in this triangulation that one can clearly recognise a special feature of performance: in the liturgical action, the boundary between the sign and its realisation, so often drawn in performance studies, brings the tension between the physical medium, the interpreter and the ultimate referent to its peak because, according to the faith-guided conviction, the sign does not just refer to

an abstract meaning, it also mediates the invisible presence of the Risen Christ. As we will explain later, his hidden presence doesn’t dissolve the mediation of the sign, because the liturgy implies sacramentality (presence mediated through signs) and not physical evidence. The sign acts as a subtle veil that both conceals and reveals the non-empirical presence and action of someone who lives in a world that transcends the limits of human empirical perception.

In the following, when we speak of visual “representation” in artworks or architectures, we mean that persons, things, or ideas—which themselves are absent, transcendent, or abstract—are made substitutionally present (cf. Goeller 2005: 1177). In the liturgical performance, however, understood as a ritual mediation between the divine presence and the human response, the focus is on signs, and moreover: on the interrelation of several signs. The liturgical homily is a performative event. It is a particular act of speech intended to mediate the encounter between God and the faithful through the “reflection” on the ritual action in which the homily itself takes place. According to Catholic understanding, the performativity of the homily requires the gift of supernatural faith and its exercise by both the preacher and the faithful (listeners). Thus, liturgical preaching (the preaching event) is more than the verbalization of some religious ideas. In its interaction with the place where it is pronounced (polysemioticity), the homily is a “representation” that makes possible (but never automatically guarantees) the encounter between the living God and the faithful.

Representation is understood here as the process by which a subject A (in this case, the preacher) makes something perceptible through the activation of the senses and the personal interpretation of subject B (in this case, the faithful attending the preaching). Because representations are meant to

make something perceptible that is beyond the sensory level of perception, they require “signs”. Liturgical signs are understood here as performative actions that involve the interaction of physical mediums such as images, spaces, sounds, gestures, etc. (polysemioticity) in order to make accessible to the senses something beyond their natural object. In this sense, to produce a sign is to enact a process of selection and interpretation that can be called a “translational process”. Once the sign is given, its dialogical potentiality remains in the physical configuration of the medium (the building, the images, the recorded sound, etc.) and it is actualized and enriched each time a subject B enters into dialogical contact with it. That is why liturgical representation, as we understand it here, requires “realization”. Realization implies a hermeneutic process, namely an action by which (a) the “sign” is given to the subject and (b) the subject comes into contact with the “translated” reality through a process of disclosure of the “sign”. Only when this dialogical process is at work, can we speak of “representation”. In our case study, the reality that the subject encounters is not an idea, but a living person (God), the sign is the preaching event, and the subject B designates the faithful.

Therefore, the liturgical homily can be understood as a particular form of representation. Since representation is a particular translational process that includes the historical context, the personality of the preacher and the faithful, and the effects of transfer processes, and since we don't have access to the effects and interpretations of those who were present at the event, we will focus our study on the preacher's contribution to the process of interpretation. Philologically, the term “polysemioticity” is used to denote the interrelation of several sign systems. According to Agnetta (2019: 508–510), polysemioticity is the co-presence of different sign systems between which manifold sysemiotic relations exist, these being particularly

recognisable in the visual artworks. The polysemioticity of art, text language and ritual action in the light of faith helps discover fundamental aspects of the incarnate God and the mystery of man. It is an *evidentia* (cf. Gil 2022: 99–101) that, rhetorically speaking, leads to seeing with the inner eye what is heard, and also to grasping and penetrating more deeply what is signified by the ritual signs. Already art is *mimesis* in which both the matter and also viewers and listeners are involved (cf. Malo 2004: 46). But the polysemioticity of the liturgical action might even exceed the mere cultural dimension of the performance because the actors involved can encounter God, experience his beauty and sublimity, and thus open themselves more easily to the sanctifying grace of the sacraments.

This understanding of *performance* and *event* from the perspective of crossing boundaries leads to the concept of *translation* used in cultural transfer research. For this, reference should be made to the helpful overview by Poppe (2015) and to his detailed and well-documented monograph (2019), both of which are sources for the following considerations. According to Poppe (2015: 19–20), our current differentiated concept of translation contrasts with a very broad understanding of *translatio* deeply rooted in European cultural history. And this concept of *translatio* from cultural transfer research could complement, even enrich, today’s translation studies. In the different forms of *translatio imperii, studii, religionis* etc., the reception or rejection of elements from the various religions, denominations as well as political and economic systems is examined in detail for individual cultures.

The components of these creative processes of translation constitute and resume different phenomena (such as the historical context, the personality of the translator and his/her understanding of translation or the effect of these transfer processes). Through this, it is not just the final product of a con-

crete translation that is considered a *translatio*, it also concerns its historical importance.

In this regard, the present research will discern three translational dimensions of performance in the homily of Pope Benedict XVI during the dedication Mass in the church of the *Sagrada Familia*:

- Architecture and visual arts as translations of the transcendent “sacred” in its material and visible mediation.
- The homily as a liturgical translation of the Word of God into the here and now of those present and of the Eucharistic celebration.
- The rite of dedication as a translation of invisible persons or actions into visible forms.

In what follows (section 4), the performative-translational dimension of the homily will be examined. Its text is our reference point, because it includes proclamation and also reflections on art, architecture and rite. But first (section 3) the multidimensional contexts of the homily will be explained in detail

3 The multidimensional contexts of the homily for the dedication of the *Sagrada Familia* in Barcelona (2010)

In the text of the homily delivered by Pope Benedict XVI during the dedication of the church of the *Sagrada Familia* in Barcelona, we initially discern two aspects of the interaction between representation-performance-translation in the architecture, visual arts and liturgy:

- (1) Observations on how the church architecture represents the invisible “sacred”,
- (2) Reflections on the liturgical rite of dedicating a church.

We deal first with architectural issues because the location and reason of that homily was the church building itself. Even before the liturgy began, the visual performance of the *Sagrada Familia* was already effective by preparing for a better understanding of the homily and the rite.

3.1 Observations on how the architecture represents the invisible “sacred”

Benedict XVI called the church of the *Sagrada Familia* a “magnificent achievement of engineering, art and faith” (Benedict XVI 2010: s.p.). To understand the implicit meaning of this and other statements of the Pope’s homily, it is necessary to outline the history of construction and the artistic originality of that building.

3.1.1 Construction history and artistic originality of the Sagrada Familia

The *Sagrada Familia* is an expiatory church dedicated to the Holy Family (cf. Regàs 2009; Roe 2012: 181–204; Hensbergen 2017). Today it ranks as a landmark of Barcelona. Construction began in 1882. In 1883, when the first architect Francisco de Paula del Villar resigned, Antoni Gaudí took over as main architect. He presented his entire project in 1906, but by 1926 he had finished only a part of the huge building (Regàs 2009: 6–45; Carlotti 2012: 9–18; Bonet i Armengol 2011/²2014: 4–11; Lahuerta 2021). His original designs and the architecture built until today reveal that Gaudí invoked and paraphrased Gothic structure and style, especially that of churches in Northern Spain and of French cathedrals. At the end of the 19th century, these were seen by many as a culmination of the history of sacred architecture. Gaudí began to build the *Sagrada Familia* on

a cross-shaped ground plan with a five-aisled nave measuring about 90 m, a three-aisled transept, and finally a chancel surrounded by an ambulatory with seven radiating chapels. However, it is clear from the elevation that Gaudí implemented innovative construction principles, such as slanted, tree-like columns and bent surfaces (cf. Carlotti 2012: 51–58). Outside and inside, he designed the entire architecture with vegetal features (cf. Bonet i Armengol 2014). It reveals Gaudí's preference for stylized nature motifs and intertwined drop shapes (cf. Regàs 2009: 132–151). The exterior walls seem to be rock-like housings which hold sculptures as if in nests. Inside the *Sagrada Família*, the columns, walls and vaults seem to “grow together” and become a kind of one organic whole (Bühren 2008: 50–52).

Additionally, there are iconographic innovations. The crossing tower, 172 meters high, is flanked by seventeen other towers. Above each of the eastern, western and southern facades are four towers, which together represent the twelve apostles and have a golden cross with the name of the respective apostle. Four other towers symbolize the evangelists, two more symbolize Jesus Christ – as main tower above the crossing – and the Virgin Mary (cf. Regàs 2009: 112–131).

Gaudí projected a large pictorial program of the Christian history of salvation on the facades of the two transepts and the main facade. His architecture and sculpture should represent the Christian mysteries of faith and of the Church. In 1891–1900, Gaudí built the facade (*Fachada del Nacimiento*) of the eastern transept in front of four towers. Its detailed sculptural program (*Birth of Christ*) depicts realistic scenes from the life of Jesus, and the three portals represent faith, hope, and love (cf. Regàs 2009: 56–83).

In 1918, Gaudí designed the facade of the west transept with its sculptural program (*Passion of Christ*), but he could not

complete the west facade. In 1926, he died in hospital after being tragically hit by a tram in a Barcelona street. Many citizens accompanied the funeral procession of Gaudí’s body to its last resting place in the crypt below the *Sagrada Família*. In 1927–1930, the three last towers of the church’s eastern facade were completed. After construction was interrupted by the Spanish Civil War and World War II, work continued since 1952 following Gaudí’s plans. The architecture of the west facade (*Fachada de la Pasión*) with three portals was completed in 1954–1985. In 1978, the nave began to be built. In 1987–2009, Josep María Subirachs sculpted the *Passion of Christ* on the Passion facade, which is supported by six slanted and bone-shaped columns. In contrast to Gaudí’s sculptural program on the east facade, with its vegetal style, Subirachs designed the west facade in geometric and austere forms with large figures in a minimalist style (cf. Regàs 2009: 84–105). Some critics considered this stylistic change to be a clash with the original plan of Gaudí. In 2000, the main nave was covered and in 2010 the entire church. This allowed the dedication and liturgical use of the building. Since 2022 the “Glory” facade to the South is still under construction (cf. Regàs 2009: 106–111). The *Sagrada Família* was scheduled to be completed by 2026, the 100th anniversary of Gaudí’s death, but this plan has been delayed.

Regarding artistic originality, the *Sagrada Família* differs much from conventional neo-Gothic buildings. From far away, the round towers resemble termite mounds, and the interior looks like a forest of tree-like columns. As a source of inspiration, Antoni Gaudí used nature for both structure and ornament to develop an organic style of construction (cf. Oliveras 2003). In his homily, the Pope referred to these features (cf. Benedict XVI 2010). The *Sagrada Família*, as a major work of Catalan Modernism (1885–1920), can be rated as an original modification of the European *Art Nouveau* style.

3.1.2 “Per visibilia ad invisibilia” –

The spiritual meaning of the Sagrada Familia

In a second step we will understand that the organic construction style of the *Sagrada Familia* includes a spiritual meaning. Gaudí made this translational achievement, effectively that of rendering the transcendent visible, firstly by means of the iconographic program, secondly by using the verticality of space, and thirdly through the atmosphere of light inside the church.

In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI dedicated the *Sagrada Familia* in front of a liturgical assembly of 6,500 people, with another 50,000 people outside the church participating in the celebration (cf. Carloti 2012: 6–7, 68). During this ceremony the building was “dedicated”: it received a purpose which corresponds to the meaning intended by Gaudí and his institutional patron. We could accordingly say that the architecture and artworks hold an *intentio operis* which includes practical functions and a spiritual meaning. The spiritual meaning of the *Sagrada Familia* becomes evident in the metaphorical imagery, the Pope used in his homily (cf. Benedict XVI 2010/2011: s.p.). He followed a long tradition when he implemented the Roman Catholic rite of dedicating a church. In terms of this tradition, it was essential to use the analogy between heaven and earth, and also between church architecture and the hierarchically structured Church. This is already true for the first mention of a church dedication, the cathedral of Tyre in 314, by Eusebius of Caesarea. And it applies even more to the dedication ceremony for the new abbey church of Saint-Denis (1140–1144) described in the writings of Abbot Suger and recorded in the 13th-century anniversary liturgies for the feast of Saint-Denis’ church dedication (cf. Meyer 2003: 69–97). During the 18th century, homilies for church dedications (and their anniver-

saries) referred frequently to the “Heavenly Jerusalem”, as, for instance, in southern Germany: 1724 in Freising, 1739 in Dissen and 1766 in Ottobeuren (cf. Telesko 2016: 271–272).

The statement of Pope Benedict XVI that the *Sagrada Familia* “stands as a visible sign of the invisible God, to whose glory these spires rise like arrows pointing towards absolute light and to the One who is Light, Height and Beauty itself” (Benedict XVI 2010/2011: s.p.) should be considered in this tradition. It cannot be ruled out that Gaudí intended the *Sagrada Familia* to be a symbolic representation of the New Jerusalem (cf. Puig i Tàrrach 2011: 124–182). Regarding the history of Christian art, spanning 1700 years, we can see how architectures and pictures could grant aesthetic access to spiritual meanings. Christian art gives the transcendent or divine a visual form (cf. Bühren 2021). As regards the history of theology, the argument based on the Incarnation was decisive in discussions about the possibility of the visible representation of the invisible God. Since the divine Word became flesh in assuming human nature (John 1:14), the mystery of God could be represented visually. God’s self-disclosure in Christ himself was rich in imagery and parables. Hence, already the biblical and liturgical texts of early Christianity are full of metaphorical expressions enabling one to describe transcendent or spiritual realities. Since these texts were considered authoritative, they guided the faithful in the production and reception of their pictorial imagery, including the metaphorical figures of these texts (cf. Bühren 2021: 623–624).

Gaudí was aware of this tradition because he was a faith-based artist, taking great interest in liturgical questions (cf. Bergós Massó 1999: 42–44, 71; Puig i Tàrrach 2011: 30–44). Thus, using aesthetic references to transcendence were common for him. A core issue for theologians, since the Middle Ages in particular, was the spiritual movement from sensory perception to

comprehension of the invisible (cf. Rudolph 2014; Brodbeck/Poilpré 2019). Hugh of St Victor was a protagonist of the idea that from perceptions of the visible the invisible reality of the divine could be revealed (cf. Hamburger 2006: 397). During the Renaissance and the Baroque period, the visual rhetoric of pictorial revelation shaped the ways of viewing images as vehicles of imagination and devotion. 16th- and 17th-century artists deployed illusionistic forms to convey the experience of the invisible divine (cf. Bühren 2021: 630–633). As for our present time, the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) supported this approach (cf. Bühren 2008: 215–251). Artworks inside the liturgical space should be “suitable for sacred use”; they require transcendent references as “signs and symbols of things supernatural”, declared *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (nos. 111, 122, 124, 127), the council’s constitution on the sacred liturgy (cf. Flannery 1996: 152, 156–158).

Now, the decisive question is how the *Sagrada Familia* actually represents the invisible “sacred”. In his homily Benedict XVI spoke of “the three books which nourished” Antoni Gaudí “as a man, as a believer and as an architect: the book of nature, the book of sacred Scripture and the book of the liturgy. In this way he brought together the reality of the world and the history of salvation, as recounted in the Bible and made present in the liturgy” (s.p.).

First to be mentioned is the architecture’s spatial and material *verticality*. On the exterior and interior of the church we find towers and pinnacles, and the walls with pointed windows are vertical elements as well. Inside, the tree-like columns and other vegetal features suggest that somehow everything is “growing” upwards. All these *vertical* features correspond to the liturgical meaning of the “sursum corda” (“lift up your hearts”), the opening dialogue to the “Preface” of the Eucharistic Prayer. Secondly, outside and inside the *Sagrada Familia* we

find narrative and symbolic *pictures*, whose main source is the Bible. They represent the characters and events of the history of salvation, particularly on the exterior. Pope Benedict accordingly said that Gaudí “brought the sacred images outside so as to place before people the mystery of God revealed in the birth, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ”. The iconographic program of the *Sagrada Familia* we could call a “visual storytelling” or “visual performance” (2010/2011: s.p.). The pictures are intended to stimulate the memory and imagination of the viewers. Thirdly, at certain hours, the incidence of light “from above” transfigures the walls and vaults, indeed the whole church’s interior. Fourthly, and although this is perhaps not evident in our fast-paced times today, the whole architecture ‘embodies’ a time-transcending reality because it was projected to be, and in fact built as a large-scale project intended to last for many subsequent generations.

All these elements are visual “signs of transcendence”. They represent symbolically the celestial and divine. *Sagrada Familia* itself is not sacred, but it visually signifies and refers to the divine. It is this semiotic character and representative power that provide the performative potential of the *Sagrada Familia*.

3.2 Reflections on the liturgical rite of dedicating a church

The rite for the dedication of a church is considered to be among the most solemn of liturgical services. As the “Rites for the dedication of a church” state, the architectural building “stands as a special kind of image of the Church itself, which is God’s temple built from living stones” (The Rites 1991: II, 346). In his homily, Benedict XVI theologically clarified the dedication of the church by explaining two aspects.

Firstly, the dedication rite makes visible that *Christ is the foundation of the Church*: “He is the rock on which our faith is built.” This metaphor of Christ as the cornerstone constitutes the centre of the imagery of the “Rite of blessing and dedication of the first stone” (in use in 1882, when the first stone of the *Sagrada Familia* was laid). Christ is invoked as “*lapis angularis de monte sine manibus abscissus*” in reference to Daniel 2:34 (Pontificale 1997: 292 n. 468), “*lapidem probatum, angularem, pretiosum in fundamento fundatum, de quo dicit Apostolus, Petra autem erat Christus [1 Cor 10:4]*” (Pontificale 1997: 293 n. 469). The reference to the stone anointed by Jacob as the place of communication between heaven and earth in the antiphon that precedes the deposition of the blessed stone is also meaningful (cf. Pontificale 1997: 294 n. 474). In today’s rite of the Catholic Church, the image of Christ as cornerstone continues to occupy a central place: “Lord, you built a holy Church, founded upon the apostles with Jesus Christ its cornerstone (cf. The Rites 1991: II, 350). The text of the present blessing echoes the images of the book of Daniel and of 1 Cor 10 (cf. The Rites 1991: II, 355) underlining: (a) the *acheropita (sine manibus)* character of the liturgical space, namely the fact that it is a reality given by God to men, and not only the result of a human effort that tries to win the favour of the divinity; (b) and that the symbolic system of the building encompasses the whole history of salvation resumed by Benedict in a three-step revelation: the revelation of the Word of God, the humanity of Christ and the Church. For Benedict, “in this way he [Gaudì] brought together the reality of the world and the history of salvation, as recounted in the Bible and made present in the liturgy” (2010/2011: s.p.).

Secondly, the dedication rite *symbolises the friendship between Christ and the people*. Benedict recalled: “As we consecrate the altar of this church, which has Christ as its foundation, we are

presenting to the world a God who is the friend of man and we invite men and women to become friends of God” (2010/2011: s.p.). This friendship is the result of the divine initiative, and it is accompanied by human correspondence. To the gift of revelation by which God makes himself accessible to humankind and allows himself to be “expressed” through artistic language corresponds the human movement of self-giving to God. The people’s self-giving acquires “symbolic form” in the offering of the material edifice. Benedict underlined the character of the symbolic “offering” of the building as an expression of the gift of faith: “What do we do when we dedicate this church? In the heart of the world, placed before God and mankind, with a humble and joyful act of faith, we raise up this massive material structure, fruit of nature and an immense achievement of human intelligence” (2010/2011: s.p.).

The offering of the building through the rite of dedication “translates” the offer that the Church, and each member of it, makes of herself. For this reason, the celebration of the eucharist, in which the Church is offered in the offering she makes to God (Augustine: 310) is considered “the most important and the one necessary for the dedication of a church” (The Rites 1991: II, 362). Nevertheless, in accordance with the tradition of the Church in both East and West, a special prayer of dedication is said. This prayer *traduces* in ritual language the intention to dedicate the building to God and asks for his blessing. Benedict referred to the final part of this prayer when he explained the service this building will bring to humanity. There “the poor may find mercy, the oppressed true freedom and all men may take on the dignity of the children of God” (2010/2011: s.p.).

The rite of dedication includes some explanatory rites, i.e. the anointing, incensing, covering and lighting the altar. These rites “express in visible signs several aspects of the invisible

work that the Lord accomplishes through the Church in its celebration of the divine mysteries” (The Rites 1991: II, 362). The homily only refers directly to the anointing of the altar with chrism:

[...] as I dedicate this splendid church, I implore the Lord of our lives that, from this altar, which will now be anointed with holy oil and upon which the sacrifice of the love of Christ will be consumed, there may be a flood of grace and charity upon the city of Barcelona and its people, and upon the whole world. (Benedict XVI 2010/2011: s.p.)

According to Catholic understanding “The anointing with chrism makes the altar a symbol of Christ, who, before all others, is and is called ‘The Anointed One’; for the Father anointed him with the Holy Spirit and constituted him the High Priest so that on the altar of his body he might offer the sacrifice of his life for the salvation of all” (The Rites 1991: II, 362–363). The here mentioned priesthood of Christ has two dimensions: an ascending one signified by the rite of incense (“Incense is burned on the altar to signify that Christ’s sacrifice, there perpetuated in mystery, ascends to God as an *odor* of sweetness and also to signify that the people’s prayers rise up pleasing and acceptable, reaching the throne of God”; *ibid.*: 363), and a descending one signified by the dressing and lighting of the altar. Benedict alluded indirectly to this descending dimension when he prayed that “there may be a flood of grace and charity upon the city of Barcelona and its people, and upon the whole world” (2010/2011: s.p.). In fact, the dressing of the altar “signifies that it is at the Lord’s table at which all people joyously meet to be refreshed with divine food, namely, the body and blood of Christ sacrificed”, and the lighting of the altar “reminds us that Christ is ‘a light to enlighten the nations’; his brightness shines out in the Church and through it in the whole human family” (The Rites 1991: II, 363).

The last aspect to be emphasized is the position of the homily within the general structure of the rite for the dedication. The introductory rites are followed by the liturgy of the Word. After the proclamation of the Gospel the “bishop gives the homily, in which he explains the biblical readings and the meaning of the rite” (The Rites 1991: II, 376). The Prayer of Dedication and the explanatory rites happen after the Creed that concludes the Liturgy of the Word. This means that the homily has a decisive rhetorical function in activating the memory and the perceptive capacity of all the celebrants. By anticipating the meaning of some segments of the rite through language, the homily becomes a service to the celebrants’ receptivity for symbols because the rites of dedication are not a dramatized translation of the *message* of the homily. On the contrary, the homily prepares for the ritual gesture which, as a performative act, transforms a series of gestures and material elements (the building) into a *tangible translation* of the mystery of the Church.

In this sense, the homily has a double function. Firstly, it is a performative action, since it participates in the sacramentality of the Word: the homily partakes in the performativity of the event that is made present through the proclamation (cf. Benini 2020, 386–387). Secondly, the homily has a mystagogical function since it is designed to enhance the performativity of the rites of dedication. This mystagogical function is not limited to a mere anticipation of the *meaning* of the ritual gestures. In fact, it facilitates the subjective appropriation of the event (aesthetic experience of the liturgy) by influencing the expectations, dispositions and ultimate purposes of the action that the celebrants will perform (cf. Kerner 2020), and also by framing the imagination of the celebrants (cf. Rego 2012: 258–259).

4 Rhetorical analysis of the interaction between art, language and rite in its performative-translational dimension

Finally, to evaluate the multidimensionality of our research subject, namely the interaction between architecture, rite and language, we need to look at those aspects of the homily in which Benedict XVI referred to the means of visualisation—*evidentia* in rhetorical terminology. For this purpose, the research background will first be sketched out, based on Gil (2008).

Evidentia is not just a cognitive ability to imagine something that is well-expressed linguistically; it also involves performativity. In the classic handbook of rhetoric by Lausberg (1990), *evidentia* is classified under the “affective figures” (§ 808ff.): the vividly detailed description gives rise to “the simultaneity experience of the eyewitness: the speaker puts himself and his audience in the position of the eyewitness” (our translation). It is therefore not so much a narrative as a performance (§ 810). In the relevant scholarship, the several levels of these accounts are finely differentiated: Kemmann (1996: 40), for example, distinguishes the “procedures of vivification” or the visualisation of the absent under the Aristotelian concept of *enargeia*. The *enargeia* basically aims at achieving clarity and brilliance in order to move people to concrete action.

According to Lausberg (§§ 813–817), the important means by which to achieve *evidentia* in the broader sense are *isocolon*, *distributio*, use of the present tense, adverbs of place and pronominal stems, address of the persons appearing in the narrative, and direct speech (of natural persons or personified objects). Dachselt (1995/2003: 85) adds the *antithesis*, which represents “a movement from reflective thought into pathos” on the one hand, and, on the other, the repetitions (cf. *ibid.* 94).

The latter contribute to *amplificatio* insofar as the emotional effect is intensified by the stringing together of the same and similar. The recurrence makes a phrase more powerful, i.e. more appellative than denotative.

In the following, selected parts of the homily will be examined closely according to these and similar means of visualisation. Two strategies of visualisation can be identified: the cognitive activation of the listeners, and linguistic visualisation as such.

4.1 Cognitive activation of the listeners

The audience was encouraged to reflect by means of two following procedures:

Questions. The homily’s statements were not simply made, but rather first formulated as a question encouraging the listeners to reflect: “What do we do when we dedicate this church? In the heart of the world [...] we raise up this massive material structure, fruit of nature and an immense achievement of human intelligence which gave birth to this work of art” (Benedict XVI 2010/2011: s.p.).

Focusing strategies. The element that is important to the sender, the preacher, is prepared or introduced accordingly, i.e. excitingly: “In this he accomplished one of the most important tasks of our times: overcoming the division between human consciousness and Christian consciousness, between living in this temporal world and being open to eternal life, between the beauty of things and God as beauty” (Benedict XVI 2010/2011: s.p.). “Overcoming the division” is the more important statement for the preacher. This is focused, and hence made more visible, by the sender preparing it with the introductory phrase “one of the most important tasks of our times” and

then specifying it through repetition: “between (...), between (...)” (ibid.).

4.2 Linguistic visualisation as such

Several times the homily tries to visualise by way of two important linguistic devices: antitheses and metaphors (or comparisons).

Antitheses. The contrast has the effect of sharpening the profile of the concepts that are juxtaposed in a narrow space. A few examples will suffice. The church of the Sagrada Familia “stands as a visible sign of the invisible God”. Making the invisible present is illustrated by the antithesis *visible – invisible*.

He made stones, trees and human life *part of the church* so that all creation might come together in praise of God, but at the same time he *brought the sacred images outside* so as to place before people the mystery of God revealed in the birth, passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Benedict XVI 2010/2011: s.p.)

The longer juxtaposition linguistically reflects and theologically suggests what people inside and outside the church building see, or else it makes them aware of this visual reality they have perceived but perhaps have not yet recognised in its meaning. Mystagogically, Pope Benedict wanted to send out his audience to proclaim the correct image of God. He draws this all the more sharply through antitheses: “This is the great task before us: to show everyone that God is a God of peace not of violence, of freedom not of coercion, of harmony not of discord” (2010/2011: s.p.). Peace, freedom and harmony as attributes of God become more clearly comprehensible through their juxtaposition with their opposites (violence, coercion and discord).

Metaphors and comparisons are the most effective means of visualisation, because they make abstract concepts that are dif-

difficult to imagine concrete and accessible. Pope Benedict made frequent use of them, in fact. By comparing the church towers to arrows pointing upwards to the light, for instance, God becomes more imaginable as light, height and beauty: “to whose (of God) glory these spires rise like arrows pointing towards absolute light and to the One who is Light, Height and Beauty itself” (Benedict XVI 2010/2011: s.p.). Gaudí as an architect and artist depicted the beauty of God not with words but by his architectural and artistic work. Then, beauty as a natural necessity of human beings is made meaningful through metaphors in an isotopic chain: root – trunk – fruit: “Indeed, beauty is one of mankind’s greatest needs; it is the root from which the branches of our peace and the fruits of our hope come forth” (ibid.). Following the rite of dedication, Christ is metaphorically presented as the rock on which faith is based: “He is the rock on which our faith is built” (ibid.). The building itself is seen as a gift from God and a sign of the whole Church. The rite of dedication is perceived as a personal offering to God by the members of the Church, an offering that includes a cosmic dimension. The altar is seen as an image of Christ’s priesthood, through which God’s grace is bestowed on the people, and also man’s thanksgiving and praise are addressed to the Father. Inspired by the dedication rite’s language, full of metaphorical imagery as it is, and by the artistic beauty of the church building, the preacher interpreted the Church and its mission in the world with three metaphors (icon, flame, path): “to be an icon of divine beauty, a burning flame of charity, a path so that the world may believe in the One whom God has sent (cf. Jn 6:29)”.

In summary, we can say that during the examined dedication ceremony, the preacher used various procedures of *evidentia* to more vividly refer to the other semiotic elements of architecture, art and ritual that already translate the invisible into

the visible, thereby reinforcing their translational function of the “sacred”.

5 Conclusions and research perspectives

The present study was prompted by a question concerning whether the performance itself has an essential translational dimension. For Octavio Paz (1983/1985: 305), for example, using language is translating (“quien dice lengua dice traducción”). We have pursued this question by examining the performative aspects of Catholic liturgy, exemplified in the dedication ceremony of the church of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona on 7 November 2010, because in this event different sign systems interacted. We have tried to explain how this interaction of three performances did not work side by side, but complementarily together as a kind of semantic polyphony or *Gesamtkunstwerk*—to use Wagner’s term. Regarding the nature of that interaction, it can be said that it is precisely their translational function which connects art, ritual and language: Each contributes in its own specific way to the task of translating the invisible into the visible, the abstract into the tangible, the transcendent into the terrestrial. The homily is key to this, as our essay has demonstrated, because it is part of the liturgical action, and so has a sacramental character. Yet the homily is also a moral or doctrinal instruction: it is a performative sign by which Christ is present in dialogue with the Church.

Benedict’s homily explained the readings of the mass, and also some ritual segments of the dedication. By doing so, the homily facilitated the personal appropriation of the event and framed the imagination of the celebrants. By referring also to the spiritual meaning of the Sagrada Familia as architecture and artwork, the preacher put the translational achievements of Gaudí into words: the building and its pictures visually signify

the “sacred”. The fact that the homily dealt with the performances of both the dedication rite and the church architecture fits well with the purposes of our research. That is because the spoken word brings about a translation and meta-*translatio* at the same time and so potentiates the action of rite and art in their translational function.

The present study provides, we hope, new perspectives for future research in many areas of the humanities. First and foremost, the possibilities and limits of transdisciplinarity became evident: single disciplines interacting with each other initially speak their own language and follow their own method. It is difficult to avoid these differences even in the ways we write and conduct scholarship. Communicating with each other to solve a common question requires great openness and flexibility as well as active listening to the arguments of others. In that regard, our transdisciplinary essay dealing with the liturgy should have also included music, even though many liturgical ceremonies are celebrated without music. However, extending the disciplinary spectrum by including music is certainly a desideratum for future research. Additional aspects that would importantly contribute to our disciplinary interaction are, for instance, the difference between the precision of a ritual performance and the possible spontaneous actions of the celebrant, the difference between a Mass in a magnificent cathedral and a modest village church, or even in a natural setting, as on a mountain side with a dreamlike scenic backdrop. As regards the homily, there are other aspects that we could have explored in depth, e.g. the difference between a thoroughly prepared homily and spontaneous speech, the vocal expression of inwardly and liturgically felt solemnity and how that is related to one’s physical way of moving inside the architectural space.

Again, it should be emphasised that the homily has a mystagogical function. It introduces believers in the invisible mystery of God, that is, the God's ongoing plan of salvation. The whole liturgical celebration is seen as a performance in which that plan of divine salvation is translated and carried on. Art and architecture also follow a performative approach. The preacher therefore referred to the Sagrada Família as having been created—among others reasons—for mystagogical tasks. The building “tunes” the attending people to the “sacred” through the visual communication of its space and images. Here, the liturgical celebration includes a call awaiting a response from the believers. It therefore also has ethical implications. The moral life of the participants after the rite can edify the *real* Church of which the church architecture of the *Sagrada Família* is just a symbolic image. For this reason, our research will eventually have to complete itself in the study of the performative effects of the liturgy, which is a matter of exploring how the spiritual life of Christians can grow according to the structure and metaphorical imagery of the rite for the dedication of a church building.

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Translating Divinity in the Liminal Space. Performative Translations in the Medieval and Early Modern Period in India

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Abstract: This essay investigates the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* (1290) of the saint poet Dnyāneshwar and Father Thomas Stephens' *Kristapurān* (1616) in the light of the performative turn in the field of translation studies. The aim of this essay is to explore performativity in these medieval and early modern period Indian translations by culling academic discussion from existing scholarship in translation studies and theatre studies. Attempt will also be made to expand the existing notions of performativity by adding inputs from the Indian discourse on translation. The essay concludes with the finding that the dialogic form of the translations with the use of a quatrain folk meter called the *ovi*, appear to be the common elements which contribute largely to making the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* and the *Kristapurān* performative and eventful translations.

Keywords: *Bhāvārthadeepikā*, *Kristapurān*, Performativity, Liminality, *Ovi*.

1 An introduction to the works

The two texts, Dnyāneshwar's *Bhāvārthadeepikā* and Father Stephens's *Kristapurān*, emerge from *Bhakti* literature.¹ Hence they both exhibit a good deal of similarity. It is for this reason that the present essay attempts to apply aspects of performativity like unpredictability, emergence, autopoietic feedback-loop from the field of theatre studies and the translator's co-presence from the field of translation studies to both of these Marathi² works, one achieved in the medieval period and the other in the early modern period in India. Emergence is "all those phenomena that appear not as a consequence of specific plans and intentions but as unforeseen and, in this sense, contingent events" (Fischer-Lichte 2009: 5). "Unpredictability constitutes a defining feature of emergence" (ibid.). One can speak of an autopoietic feedback-loop when "all participants bring forth the performance together; however, no individual or group of people can completely plan its course and control it. All participants act as co-creators who, to different degrees and in different ways, are engaged in the process of generating and shaping the performance without anyone being able to

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- 1 "Literally translated as 'participation,' *bhakti* characterizes a form of piety that favors an intimate relationship with a personalized god and, to some extent, constitutes a demotic counter-current to certain aspects of Brahmanical theology and temple religiosity. In the field of literature, *bhakti* religiosity helped to boost regional languages against the claimed exclusivity of Sanskrit in religious writings, stimulating the production of a rich body of devotional literature in the various regional vernaculars. In Maharashtra, *bhakti* literature has especially deep historical roots, going back to famous poet-saints such as Jñāneśvara (c. 1275–96), and experienced a second heyday at the time and in the work of Ekanāth" (1533–1599) (Henn 2015: 15).
 - 2 Marathi is a language spoken in the state of Maharashtra in western India.

determine its course by her- or himself.” (Fischer-Lichte 2009: 4). The translator’s co-presence is defined as follows:

Faktoren wie die Persönlichkeit des Übersetzers, seine kognitive und emotionale Beziehung zum übersetzten Text sowie seine Fähigkeit, sich mit der Mitteilung zu identifizieren, erweisen sich als entscheidend für den Ablauf des Übersetzungsprozesses. (Cercel 2015: 118)

Factors like the personality of the translator, his cognitive and emotional connect to the translated text as well as his ability to identify with the message that the text conveys determines the course of the translation process. (My translation)

This essay also suggests three more aspects for performative translations. They are eventfulness and timelessness suggested by me and the third being, transgression which is defined as “the practice of crossing over or dissolving boundaries, of carnivalization and breaking of codes” (Bachmann-Medick 2016: 90).

To apply the above-mentioned aspects to translation studies, one would need to tweak them which is discussed in detail later. The aspects of eventfulness and timelessness too will be discussed later. The length of the two works does not allow an exhaustive analysis of them, but some key features, which could be considered as their defining and performative aspects, will be discussed at length.

The first work to be investigated here is Dnyāneshwar’s *Bhāvārthadeepikā* (1290), popularly called Dnyāneshwari, which he wrote at the tender age of fifteen. Dnyāneshwar is one of the most influential saint poets of Maharashtra. *Bhāvārthadeepikā* is a Marathi translation of the Sanskrit *Bhagwad Gītā*. The second work is the *Discurso sobre a vinda de Jesu Christo* [Discourse on the coming of Jesus Christ]. The work is also known by the title *Discurso sobre a vinda do Salvador ao mundo* [Treatise on the coming of the redeemer into the world] em língua bramana marastta [sic.] [in the Brahmanical Maharashtrian language].

This work is popularly called the *Kristapurān*. *Krista* means Christ in Marathi and *purān* is a genre of Hindu religious literature.³ The *Kristapurān* is a re-telling of biblical stories into the Marathi/Konkani⁴ language spoken in Goa, by an English Jesuit named Father Thomas Stephens (1616). It was a work written in the Roman script.

2 Performative translations and the translation landscape in India

In this section, I attempt to elaborate in more detail upon Fischer-Lichte's aspects of performativity, namely unpredictability, emergence, the autopoietic feedback-loop and the translator's co-presence. I will refer to these aspects as textual factors since in translation one deals with texts. This will be followed by a discussion on the extra-textual factors, eventfulness, timelessness, which have been added by me and transgression. These factors provide, in my opinion, the tools and a road-map, to achieve performativity in translation.

2.1 Emergence and unpredictability

At the outset one must admit that it is very difficult to discuss these two aspects separately. They are best described by the Lotmanian concept of 'explosion' as discussed by Ketkar in his article "Of Ravens and Owls: A Methodological Framework

3 There are traditionally 18 *Purānas* like the *Brahmāndapurān*, *Kurmapurān*, *Mākandeyapurān*, *Matsyapurān*, *Vāmanpurān*, *Varāḥpurān*, *Vāyupurān*, *Vishnupurān*, *Devipurān*, etc.

4 The people living on the western coast of India, which is called *Konkan*, speak *Konkani*. The *Kristapurāna* exhibits a mix of both the *Marathi* and the *Konkani* language.

for the Historiography of Translation in Marathi.” Ketkar says that when culture and semiotic systems change, they sometimes bring about explosive changes in the language. This means “unanticipated and abrupt changes” (Ketkar 2022: 14). If a translation brings about a sudden change in the practice of its craft, or has an unanticipated impact on society and people then one can say that it fulfils the condition of unpredictability and can be considered to be a performative translation.

The definition of “emergence” in the discipline of theatre studies has been discussed above. If this definition is to be applied to performative translations, however, one will have to modify it a little. Since translations will have already been achieved when one reads them, emergence and unpredictability will have to be defined from the reader’s perspective. When the reader picks up a translation, knowing it is the translation of a certain source text, h/she expects the target text to have a register, language style, genre, message, to name but a few features, similar to the source text. On reading, one finds that the translation has metamorphosed into a different text. It has become a “new animal” (Ketkar 2004: 1). This, for me, is emergence in translation. That this property becomes evident “only retrospectively” (Fischer-Lichte 2009: 4) makes its application to translation studies suitable, because the translation arrives in front of the reader as a finished product.

2.2 The autopoietic feedback-loop

According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, when a performer elicits a response from the audience and accordingly modifies his/her performance, one can speak of an autopoietic feedback-loop (Fischer-Lichte 2009: 3). Applied to translation studies, this would mean that the actual reader of the translation responds to it while the translation is being written and his response elic-

its a reaction from the translator whereby the translator, as one of the possible reactions, feels the need to explain his/her decisions, discuss the translation, modify the content etc. This is only possible if one finds evidence of a reader response documented in the translation. If such a joint venture between the translator and his / her readers can be ascertained in the translation, one can say that the translation fulfils this condition and hence is performative.

2.3 The translator's co-presence

The translator and his/ her translation is a product of his/her times. It often happens that while investigating a translation, one finds the translator's personality, identity and life reflected in the translation. It could be the examples cited in the translation, specific words or literary devices etc. that have been used in the translation and which are specific to his/her times. These are some of the many possibilities. In my opinion, the decision to translate a particular book and to modify its contents⁵ is also proof of the translator's co-presence, because it is only in light of knowledge about the translator's life that the rationale behind the modifications becomes clear.

Now I will elaborate upon the terms I propose should be added to the foregoing ones. These are: eventfulness, timelessness and transgression. Just as unpredictability is a defining fea-

5 The Panchatantra translations give a lot of evidence of modifications made by translators. At the time that Abdallah-ibn-al Mouqaffa translated the Sanskrit work "The Panchatantra" from Persian into Arabic he had been unjustly imprisoned. The Panchatantra ends with the victory of the cunning jackal and the death of the simple bull. Mouqaffa's own experience probably led him to change the ending of the first book of the Panchatantra. He added a chapter on the trial of the jackal to the first book which ends with the jackal paying for his misdeeds (cf. Padhye 2024: 118).

ture of emergence, so too is timelessness a defining feature of eventfulness.

2.4 Eventfulness

Performative translations constitute an event in the host culture. Here I borrow Sachin Ketkar's metaphor for translation. For him translation of a text in another language is the birth of a text in a different *yoni-vagina*, it is a different species, it is a "new animal" (Ketkar 2004: 1). By calling the translated text a "new" animal, Ketkar suggests that the source text and the translated text are radically different from each other. A performative translation too, in my opinion, is radically different from its source text, making its birth eventful.

Ganesh N. Devy's definition, which is based on the Indian practice of translation, can also be borrowed for the purpose of defining performative translations. For Devy

Translation is not a transposition of significance or signs. After the act of translation is over, the original work still remains in its position. Translation is rather a revitalization of the original in another verbal order and temporal space. (Devy 1997: 405)

Indian translators, especially of the Middle Ages, had the freedom to 'revitalize' the originals in a variety of ways, as becomes clear from Paniker's quote:

All through the Middle Ages, throughout the length and breadth of India, Sanskrit classics like the epics and puranas continued to be retold, adapted, subverted and 'translated' without worrying about the exactness and accuracy of formal equivalence. (Paniker 1994: 129)

A performative translation is thus a 'new text' that re-vitalizes the original, one which metamorphoses it in a different verbal and temporal space and which is radically different from its source text, in terms of its meter, length, message etc. Borrowing from Lotman's view concerning a 'new' text, Ketkar de-

finer a ‘new’ text as “that translated text that, when retranslated into the matrix code or the language, is not identical to the matrix text” (Ketkar 2022: 21), thus echoing what he himself says about translation being “a different animal altogether” (Ketkar 2004: 1). Agnetta calls this the irreversibility of the translation process (cf. Agnetta 2021: 15). That would mean that if one were to back translate the target to the source text, one would get a source text which is radically different, from the original source text. Hence a translation would have to be radically different from its source text if it has to qualify to be a performative translation.

Yet simply being born again is not sufficient to make the phenomenon of translation eventful. It should also have a long-lasting transformative effect on people, society and literature. As regards the effect on the reader, Agnetta defines eventful texts as those which, when received by the reader, change his state from an uninformed reader to an informed reader. (cf. Agnetta 2021: 23–24). As for Fischer-Lichte, there is a similar emphasis as we can see from the following quote which concerns the transformative power of reading a text, thus adding a temporal aspect to the impact of a text which can be applied for performative translations too.

Der Akt der Lektüre entfaltet so eine transformative Kraft, deren Wirkung auf die Dauer der Lektüre beschränkt sein kann, jedoch durchaus weit über sie hinaus noch längere Zeit anzuhalten vermag. (Fischer-Lichte 2012: 138)

The act of reading a text can be so transformative that it has a sustained impact on the reader which is not only felt while the text is being read, but also much after it has been read. (My translation)

This sustained impact is what I call timelessness.

2.5 Timelessness

A translation is performative if firstly, its relevance index and value for society, literature, culture and its own craft, the *Kalā*, as it is called in most Indian languages, does not diminish with the passage of time. It is like a collector's item. The translator then is an artist, a *Kalākār*. The word *Kalākār* is a composite noun that can be split into *Kalā* which means 'art' and *ākār* which means 'shape'. The one who shapes the art is a performer. There is another possibility of splitting this composite noun into *kal*, which means tomorrow, and in a broader sense, future, and *ākār*, which is shape. That means a performer is one who shapes the future.⁶ Both the meanings of *Kalākār* are relevant to performative translations. The latter has a temporal dimension to it. So, the translator's active involvement in shaping the translation and its impact on people, societal dynamics, literature or culture should be verifiable for any translation to be defined as a performative translation. This brings me to the last aspect of performative translations, namely transgression.

2.6 Transgression

The notion of transgression is best understood by the Lotmanian concept of "semiosphere". Where there are no identical codes, or a common linguistic experience, or an identical cultural memory, a heterogeneous space, the "semiosphere" (cf. Lotman 2005: 205–213) is created, which is important for the emergence of meaning (cf. Ketkar 2022: 21). A performative translation is one that transgresses the boundaries of these heterogeneous spaces to create new meaning in what I call a limi-

6 This etymology was mentioned by the famous singer *Kailash Kher* in his interview with the renowned journalist Smita Prakash (cf. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTsWNBshvcc>> (02.12.2023).

nal space. To use Chakravarti's terminology, this is the space where meaning between the source and target language systems is shared (cf. Chakravarti 2017: 366). The liminal space in my opinion is the space where translation takes birth. It is the space where the *tertium comparationis* is instrumentalised in order to create meaning, where boundaries of genres are crossed in order to create and re-calibrate new meaning for the target text readers. This re-calibration of meaning is the defining feature of transgression because re-calibrating demands novel ways of looking at something, a way never explored before. This is possible if the text is thought from the points of view of both, the source as well as the target text. That liminal space exists in the mind of the translator. Performative translations are born in such a liminal space. It is here that the translator "severs the material status from the semiotic status, so that the former can claim a life of its own" (Fischer-Lichte 2008: 22f.). This means that the translation process is not source text driven, instead it is reader-oriented.

The category of transgression can be best understood from the following quote:

The translation process is conceived a performative process, a process that on the basis of social action constitutes meaning, *transcends borders* and creates representation by deliberately exploring differences encountered during the process. (Wolf 2017: 32, my emphasis)

Difference, transcendence and creation of representation are important. A performative translation transgresses boundaries: boundaries of genre, targeted audience, an institutional practice, boundaries of content expression etc.

Transgression is a key property of one type of translation in the Indian practice of the craft, one which helps us understand the notion of transgression better. There are three terms for translation in most Indian languages: *anuvād*, *bhāshāntar* and *rupāntar*. *Anu*, means 'to follow', and *vād* means 'dis-

course'. Hence *anuvād* means following a discourse. It is 'stating something which is already known' and stands for repetition by way of explanation, illustration or corroboration (cf. Singh 2014: 8f.). In a translation of this type there is no room for the translator to perform. He or she simply follows the source text. He or she is a passive receiver of the message which is passed into another language. The second type of translation is *bhāshāntar*. *Bhāshā* means 'language' and *antar* means 'distance'. *Bhāshāntar* means 'the difference between two languages.' This act of translation operates on the lexical and syntactical level. From the etymology of these two types of translations it is evident that they leave no space for performativity, as defined above. So they do not qualify for performative translations. The third type of translation, which is the *rupāntar*, has the potential of being a performative translation.

The word *rupāntar*, "literally speaking (formal transference) includes all kinds of various *roops* (forms)-linguistic, thematic (*Ramakathā* from the *Rāmāyana* or elsewhere or narratives from the Mahabharata into the same or different language without adhering strictly to language or bothering about thematic preoccupations), formal (a novel or short story into a film), modal (a poem into a painting or a sculpture into a piece of literature or any other mode of expression) semiotic transference and appropriation including domestication. (Singh 2014: 9)

In a *rupāntar* there is transgression of boundaries which is one of the key elements of performative translations. A *rupāntar* also allows a translator room and freedom to perform by moulding the message of the source text in a way he/she deems fit for the new audience.

To sum up the discussion on performative translations, let me propose that performative translations are eventful, and give birth to what is 'irreversibly' a 'new animal'. They revitalize the original. They transgress boundaries. They are novel in their approach and have an impact upon the people, society, culture and the craft of translation for years to come.

Whether the two translations identified in this essay exhibit all of the above factors of performativity will be investigated under the section “Performativity”. In this section, the factors of unpredictability and emergence, transgression and novelty and eventfulness and timelessness will be considered jointly because of their complimentary nature. What I want to suggest for now is that both the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* and the *Kristapurān* are *rupāntars* and that is how they will be referred to in this essay. I now proceed to the third section called “Texts and Contexts” in which I introduce the two works, and situate them in their historical, socio-political and religious contexts in order that we might better understand, as well as justify their performativity.

3 Texts and Contexts

Dnyāneshwar’s reception of the *Gītā*, which is how the *Bhagwad Gītā* is often referred to, in the thirteenth century Maharashtra, his own experiences with the orthodoxy of the Brahmins, social inequality and his empathy with the people who were denied spiritual knowledge, are factors reflected in his translatorial decisions. Father Stephens’ work too can only be understood in the light of his desire to give a *purāna* to the neo-converts of Goa, something which had been denied to them by a political system of which he was an integral part. In what follows, I will therefore provide the reader with relevant information on the translators and their translations.

3.1 The *Bhāvārthadeepikā* also known as the *Dnyāneshwari*

In his English translation of the *Bhāvārthadeepikā*, the translator Rāmchandra Keshav Bhāgwat (1954/1979: xviii–xxiv)

gives an overview of the social conditions during the time of Dnyāneshwar. The *Bhāvārthadeepikā* was written in the thirteenth century when Maharashtra was under the *Yādava* kings, champions of art and learning. It was a prosperous and peaceful place. The economic conditions of the people were good, but there was inequality between the rich and the poor and rampant discrimination on the basis of caste. Society was marked by “social degeneration, degradation and moral decadence” (ibid.: 1954/1979: xxviii–xxix). The Brahmins were busy indulging in arcane discussions on spirituality which were of no use to the masses. Moreover, during Dnyāneshwar’s time there were many sects and philosophical streams of believers and non-believers. As for believers, there were followers of *Shankara*, *Mādhava*, *Mahānubhāv* and *Rāmānuja*, and as for non-believers, there were the *sunyavādins* (one who denies the existence of anything), and the *chārvākas* (one who believes that life is a matter of eat, drink and make merry). Consequently, “the real value of religion in its emotional development was lost sight of and its purpose was defeated” (ibid.: 1954/1979: xxxi). It was during these times of multiple philosophical approaches that Dnyāneshwar tried to find a middle path through *Bhakti*. In that respect, Dnyāneshwar was a “great reformer and a reconciliationist (*Samanvaya vādī*)” (ibid.).

Sanskrit was the preferred language of higher caste learned people and all important works were written in Sanskrit. But Dnyāneshwar decided to write the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* in the language of the people, namely Marathi, which was called *prākṛut*, using a novel meter derived from a folk meter called the *Ovi*.⁷

Now, a few words on the source text. The *Gītā* is a part of the epic *Mahābhārat*, which is a story of the war between

7 An *ovi* is a verse written in four lines of which the last syllable of the first three lines rhyme, while that of the fourth does not.

the *Kauravas* and their five cousins, the *Pāndavas*. The *Gītā* is that part of the *Mahābhārat* which contains the conversation between *Arjun* and his charioteer Lord *Krishna* on the battle-field before the big war begins. *Arjun* does not want to wage a war against his relatives and teachers and Lord *Krishna* explains to him that it is his duty. He tries to convince him by applying the logic of the various branches of philosophy. The *Gītā* is accordingly a highly philosophical text.

3.2 The *Kristapurāṇa*

Now let me turn to the *Kristapurāṇa*. Religion and politics were intertwined in the 17th-century Portuguese colonization of Goa. Father Stephens' missionary work and his re-telling of the *Kristapurāṇa* must therefore be viewed against this background of aggressive and violent Portuguese domination. Stephens' *Kristapurāṇa* exists in two printed reproductions. The original is extant. One of them, in the *Devānāgarī* script, is based on a handwritten manuscript found in 1925 in the Marsden Collection of the School of Oriental Studies archives in London. Another reproduction, in Latin script, was compiled and edited by Joseph L. Saldanha in 1907 in Mangalore. Since then, modern editions have appeared in 1956 and 1996 in Pune and Mumbai, respectively. The *Kristapurāṇa* has been considered an early form of "inculturation" by noted researcher Nelson Falcao (cf. Henn 2015: 9). Biblical stories are narrated in the *Kristapurāṇa* using the same quatrain meter *ovi* characteristic of Maharashtrian *bhakti* literature. Hence Stephens' work is associated today with that of famous Hindu *bhakti* saint poets and is believed to have stylistically borrowed above all from the work of the saint poet *Śrī Sant Ekanātha* (1533–1599), a contemporary of Stephens who lived and worked in Maharashtra (cf. *ibid.*: 3).

The *Kristapurāna* has a total of 10,962 strophes (*Ovi*). It has two sections: the *Paillem Puranna* dealing with the Old Testament, and which has 36 cantos (*Avaswaru*) and the *Dussarem Puranna*, dealing with the New Testament, which has 59 cantos. In order to understand Father Stephen's *rupāntar*, it is necessary to apprehend the church policies and politics existing at that time. Because of the *padroado* system, by which the Portuguese kings got the right and duty to deploy clerics and run the churches in their colonies, the Portuguese authorities controlled the Catholic mission in Asia throughout the early modern period. As a result, religion played second fiddle to the state apparatus. It was subject to the vagaries of administrative policies of the Portuguese. At the time that the *Kristapurāna* was written, there existed a Jesuit conversion policy that included a strategy known as *accommodatio*. This strategy allowed the continuation of certain local customs and cultural expressions in the religious culture and practices of Christian converts at the colonial frontier. *Accommodatio* was also practiced in Goa, where the missionaries adopted Hindu ceremonial styles (cf. Henn 2015: 3). An example here is the ceremony of *Jāgar*, an annual all-night ceremony in Hindu temples, which was also allowed in churches, with the difference that, in the songs and plays presented in these ceremonies "names, characters and costumes of Hindu Gods" were replaced by those of Christian saints (ibid.).

The *Kristapurāna* was written at a time when, on the one hand Catholic missionaries engaged with Indian philology, producing numerous Indian-language grammars and composing the Christian *purāna* literature, while on the other, the Portuguese-Catholic regime in Goa and other Portuguese-controlled areas in India launched a ruthless campaign of destruction and oppression against Hindu culture. This campaign destroyed all Hindu temples, shrines and images throughout

Goa, replaced the Hindu monuments with Christian churches, chapels and crosses, and also banned public performance of all Hindu ceremonies. Reading Hindu religious books like the *pu-rāna* was also banned. Hence there was a “coexistence and contiguity of translation and violence, hermeneutics and destruction” (ibid.: 4–5). The church policy of *accommodatio* gave birth to works like the *Kristapurāna*, but the contents and the form took shape in the deft hands of Father Stephens. Following a ban on the regional literature, even the *Kristapurāna* was banned by the Portuguese in 1684.

Having situated the two translations in their respective historical, religious and socio-political contexts, I now turn my attention to applying the above-discussed aspects of performativity to these two works in the following section.

4 Performativity in the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* and the *Kristapurāna*

4.1 The *Bhāvārthadeepikā*

4.1.1 Unpredictability and emergence

The decision to use the Marathi language for translating the *Gītā* in itself is a novel and revolutionary idea for 13th century Maharashtra. It was so revolutionary that the translator incurred the wrath of the “custodians” of the Hindu religion, the Brahmins. The next decision of Dnyāneshwar which in retrospect is considered as novel is the decision to make the life—negating *Gītā* life-asserting in his translation. Life-asserting means that the *Gītā* which preaches renunciation of worldly life for spiritual progress did not lay emphasis on the daily lives of people. According to the *Gītā* the world is an illusion. Dnyāneshwar changed this message and showed the path of achieving spirituality without renouncing worldly life.

The *Bhāvarthadeepikā* is a metric text, as all texts in those days were. The *Gītā* has the *anushtup* meter. Dnyāneshwar creates a new meter which came to be called the *granthika Ovi* (literary *Ovi*). It is taken from the *ovi* meter which was used by common folk: women, especially, sang songs in this meter while working. This meter is mutated to create the *granthika Ovi* (the literary *Ovi*) It is this mutated meter that works as a “liminal space” to pull the essence from the original for a new audience, which are the common folk. By creating a novel meter which neither belonged to the Sanskrit language nor to the songs of the common folk, his translation became literary and yet accessible to the common people. It is what Chakravarti refers to as “space of shared meaning”. It is the space where Dnyāneshwar enters into a dialogue with the *Gītā*, and connects the elite and educated class with the common folk. So, the *Bhāvarthadeepika* not only has a form different from the *Gītā* but also a different content and literary style. It propounds a different *Lebensphilosophie*. If one compares the Sanskrit *Gītā* to the *Bhāvarthadeepika* all these are unexpected modifications. Hence the aspects of emergence and unpredictability of performativity are fulfilled in the *Bhāvarthadeepika*.

4.1.2 The autopoietic feedback loop in the *Bhāvārthadeepikā*

Earlier, I suggested that if the translation is a joint venture between the translator and his or her readers, and it shows signs of the latter shaping the translation as it is being done, one can say that the performative factor of the autopoietic feedback loop has been fulfilled.

It is believed that Dnyāneshwar preached portions ‘already composed’ (Bhagwat 1954/1979: xxii). This clearly means that the translation was being discussed in its making,

giving scope for the potential reader to suggest comments. His circle of discussants comprised mainly of his brother and Guru Nivruttināth, the ‘*Maharashtra Mandalī*’ (the people of Maharashtra) as well as saints. The dialogue in the *Bhāvārthadeepika* is framed around Dnyāneshwar as the addressor and ‘*Maharashtra Mandalī*’, saints and his brother Nivruttināth as the addressees. These listeners take an active part in shaping the target text, for instance when Dnyāneshwar digresses from the topic at hand, his brother interrupts him saying “Suffice now: there is hardly any need for you to say all this: hasten up and turn your attention to the composition” (Bhagwat 1954/1979: 6; cf. Ketkar 2019: 12). That the *Bhāvārthadeepika* is a dialogue between Dnyāneshwar and the target readers/listeners is also evident at the beginning of the *Bhāvārthadeepika* itself when Dnyāneshwar welcomes the listeners to participate in the translation at hand, not only as passive listeners but also actively guide him in it, just like a puppeteer guides the puppets’ actions by pulling at the strings. The following quote expresses the same:

It is up to you to make good whatever is defective and to drop out whatever is excessive in my work. Now, therefore attend here. I shall be able to talk only if you could make me talk in the way the puppet’s movements depend upon the movements of the strings on which they are worked. (Bhagwat 1954/1979: 6)

The use of the vocative in sentences like Dnyāneshwar telling his listeners “Now hear with calm and patient attention” (ibid.) also brings the performance to life and allows space for the audience to participate.

Apart from the above-mentioned examples, the *Bhāvārthadeepika* is replete with such evidences of listener responses, be they from the Saint Nāmdev, or his Guru Nivruttināth of the people of Maharashtra making this dialogic translation a joint venture.

4.1.3 The Co-presence (*Kopräsenz*) of *Dnyāneshwar* (1275–1293)

Dnyāneshwar's father was an ascetic returning to family life which was considered a sin in those days by the orthodox Brahmins. Due to this reason the family was ostracised and the children were denied the privileges befitting to Brahmin families. The *Bhāvarthadeepikā* is to be viewed as Dnyāneshwar's response to such Brahmanical orthodoxy, of which his family had been a victim. He had experienced what it felt like to be banned from spiritual knowledge. Hence the decision to challenge the supremacy of the Brahmins and their exclusive rights to spiritual knowledge is in itself a decision that takes us back to his life and person.

Dnyāneshwar was a *Vārkarī*.⁸ The fact that he was a *Vārkarī* is reflected in many of his translatorial decisions. The dialogicity in the *Bhāvarthadeepikā* has its roots in the *Vārkarī*'s belief in 'adwait' i.e. non-dualism, which is intimate oneness between God and man, *Guru* and disciple as well as composer and audience (cf. Mancharkar 2000: 311). The decision of Dnyāneshwar to propose the easier path of *Bhakti* or devotion leading to deliverance rather than knowledge and Yoga as suggested in the *Gītā* which would have been well beyond the capacity of the common man (cf. Bhagwat 1959/1974: xxii) is expression of the empathy he felt for the common man. His decision to prefer the use of the poetic form of emotive and subjective expressionism (cf. Ketkar 2019: 22) is an attempt to make the dry knowledge of the *Gītā* more accessible.

As mentioned earlier, Dnyāneshwar was a reconciliationist. This personality trait is also reflected in the way he defines

8 *Vārkarīs* are householders who live a life of devotion. *Kar* means "to do" and *vāri* means a pilgrimage. Hence the one who does a pilgrimage is a *Vārkarī*.

his activity of translation and negotiates the Sanskrit–*Bhasha* (‘vernacular languages’) dichotomy. At a time when Sanskrit enjoyed a high literary status and literary activities in the vernacular languages were condemned to the fringes of the literary polysystem, Dnyāneshwar manages to reconcile the two by comparing his activity of translation to putting ornaments on a beautiful body. The beautiful body is the Sanskrit language and the ornaments are the young Marathi language. He describes it as follows:

both the Sanskrit text (the beautiful body) and the commentary (the ornament) are beautiful in their own right, independent of each other and yet have come together to bring out the knowledge in the *Gīta*. However, when they come together their beauty makes the difference between the original and the translation vanish in some sort of *advaita*. The ornament also brings out the poetic potential in Marathi and boosts its power as a literary language, and, on the other hand, it confers youth upon an aged language like Sanskrit. (Ketkar 2019: 16–17)

The two languages, Sanskrit and Marathi have come together in a beautiful alliance to access ‘the meaning’ of the *Gīta*. The translation of 700 odd *shlokas*⁹ of the *Gīta* is explained in 1000 odd *ovis* in Marathi. The first two-line verse in the 15th chapter of the *Gītā* is explained in 101 *ovis* in Marathi. The Sanskrit text contains the substance of the philosophy, but it is the act of translation into Marathi that has unpacked the complex substance to make it comprehensible. This is the lovely alliance of the two in translation, which explains the source text effectively. The reference to new ornaments probably refers to the updating of the old Sanskrit text for a new generation using a new language, because Marathi was not a very old language in the 13th century.

Hence the decision to select the *Gītā* for translation, the decision to use Marathi for his work, and the decision to bridge

9 A *shloka* is a verse of two lines.

the life-negating philosophy of the *Gītā* to the life -asserting philosophy of the *Vārkaris* are facts that lead us to the life and personality of Dnyāneshwar.

4.1.4 Eventfulness and timelessness

The writing of the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* is an event because it was the first of its kind in many ways. It was the first translation of a spiritual text in a vernacular language, it was the first ever philosophical text in the folk meter *ovi*, but most importantly it rang in a new era of democratisation of the religion, making religious and spiritual knowledge accessible to all. This translation led to the formation of a tradition of saints emerging from the lower castes like Saint *Sāwatā* who was a gardener, Saint *Gorā* who was a potter, Saint Narahari who was a goldsmith etc.

Though the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* was written a long time ago one sees the impact of its transformative power on the society even today. It is read and discussed in religious sermons which are broadcast on television in the form of a *kirtan* which can be loosely translated as a musical sermon in accompaniment to dance.¹⁰ It is relevant as study material in the academia. It is an integral part of the syllabus of the postgraduation programme in Marathi studies. The *Bhāvārthadeepikā* influenced the practice of translation because it became a model for “the long and seminal tradition of *bhashyakārs* (‘translators;’ my transl.) or commentators on the *Gītā* like *Dāsopanta* in the sixteenth cen-

10 These *kirtans* are broadcast daily on cable television in the mornings. The *Kirtankārs* generally select one verse or *ovi* from the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* and elucidate it by explicating with examples taken from the daily lives of their audience (cf. <<https://www.facebook.com/zeetalkiesofficial/videos/gajar-kirtanacha-sohala-anandacha-zee-talkies/816470395446708/>>).

tury, *Wāman Pandit* in the seventeenth century and *Amber Hussein* among others” (Ketkar 2019: 13). It also influenced the composition of the *Kristapurāna* (cf. *ibid.*), which is seen “as the initiating model and masterpiece of the Christian Purāna literature” (Henn 2015: 3). In short there is evidence of this translator shaping the craft of translation in another temporal space through his innovative model of translation. This is clear from the following quotation: “*Dnyāneshwar* is forging a new language for literary composition in Marathi which becomes a model for later ‘*bhashya-teeka*’ of the *Gītā*” (Ketkar 2019: 13).

Sachin Ketkar, who has worked extensively in the field of translation and Marathi literature, opens new dimensions of looking at the *Bhāvārthadeepikā*. He calls it a “performative *dharma kirtan*.”

Thus, the Sanskrit ‘*teeka*’ or ‘*bhashya*’ genre, typically involving commentary and gloss of philosophically ambivalent terms and meant primarily for the upper-caste elite reader, is transformed into performative ‘*dharma kirtan*’ using folk metres like ‘*ovi*’ meant for different ‘publics’. It is that this process is not a simple adoption of cosmopolitan models (*teeka/bhashya*) in the local languages in ‘top-to-bottom’ transmission but the creation of new models, genres literary languages, that are *functionally* and *contextually* different. (Ketkar 2019: 12)

So the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* transcended the two semiospheres, one, the upper caste elite reader and two, the general public. New models were ‘created’ which is proof of a third space, since it is neither the space occupied by the Sanskrit language nor the one occupied by Marathi. Using this concept of heterogeneous spaces Ketkar proposes that the works of the *Vārkaris* of which *Dnyāneshwar* was considered a founding member, “can be conceptualised as translations across asymmetrical and hierarchic languages and spaces, and creative innovations at the same time.” (Ketkar 2022: 24). The *modus operandi* for making these texts performative was to use the folk, oral and

performative meters and genres and “thus shifting the space of the elite texts into non-elite spaces” (ibid.).

Last but not the least, the two texts are irreversible. If one were to back translate the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* one would get a totally different text, meant for a different reader, with a different form as well as content.

4.1.5 Transgression

Everything about the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* is transgressive. The boundary of a philosophical text is breached to allow divine love to creep in, the boundary of a text for elites is breached to allow the common folk to partake and savour the spiritual knowledge in the text. The *granthik Ovi* is neither a meter used in Sanskrit texts nor a meter used in folk songs or folk poetry, but it is culled from both, which is proof of its liminality. The difference between the two meters is explained below:

While the ‘*ovi*’ was a free-flowing genre (*janapada ovi*) used by women for singing while working at a grinding stone (*jata*) or a water wheel (*rabat*), *Dnyāneswar* developed a more ‘literary’ form of rhythmic prose or ‘*granthika ovi*’ (literally, the *ovi* of the book). (Ketkar 2019: 12–13)

This meter is the factor that creates the space for liminality. It is the one that ‘creates’ new meaning of the *Gītā* intelligible to the new readers. This act of translation can be read as “Brahmanisation or Sanskritisation of the folk or as a democratisation of the spiritual canon” (Ketkar 2019: 24). This change democratized the *Gītā*. It was innovative and it transformed (cf. ibid.: 73) the Marathi literature.

After having applied the factors of performativity to the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* I will now attempt to do the same with the second work, the *Kristapurān*.

4.2 The *Kristapurān*

4.2.1 Unpredictability and emergence

If one were told that the *Kristapurān* is the Marathi translation of the biblical stories, one would find it difficult to believe because *purāns* are a typical genre of Hindu religious literature. The *Kristapurān* is one of its kind. It is a “different animal” when compared to its original. The title draws from Hindu literature, the language is Kokani/Marathi, but the script is Roman. This kind of combination is rare. The *Kristapurān* is a translation of biblical stories but Lord Jesus is referred to as *Vaikunṭharājā* (King of *Vaikumtha*, which is the abode of the Hindu God *Viṣṇu*) *paramesvara* (cf. Pär 2017: 4). The *Kristapurāna* has mutated most convincingly, staying within the close boundaries of a holy text of one culture to nonetheless become a holy text of another culture. The jaw-dropping title of its translation announces the mutation from the Bible of the Christians to the *Purān* of the Hindus. To use Fillmore’s terminology, the frame ‘*Purān*’ evokes the scene of a ‘holy book’ in the minds of the Hindus. By naming his Marathi/Konkani translation of the Bible as the ‘*Kristapurān*’, Father Thomas Stephens increases the potential of the target text to perform its function in the host culture, namely to convince the target readers of the faith that they had invested in Christianity. The decision to select a genre of the target culture has been one of the reasons for its success because

[i]t is neither the linguistic/literary text nor the culture only that is translated, but between these two, there is the category of the genre, which has the ability of passing from one language to another much more easily and becomes the site for cultural translation. (Chatterjee 2010: 158)

This translation, undertaken during the early period of religious conversions in India, exhibits an ingenious streak of appropri-

ation of the textual dynamics of the host culture to achieve its intention by cloaking the title in a partially misleading way. If one were to back-translate the *Kristapurān*, one would not get the biblical stories the translator translated from. The target text is a ‘different animal’ and the translation process is ‘irreversible’.

Father Stephens used two literary devices which were extremely unexpected. One was the genre of a *purāna* and the second was the use of the quatrain meter *ovi*. The *ovi* had been firmly established as the meter of the *Bhakti* tradition by his time and the familiarity of the genre as well as the meter served to make the text of a foreign religion more familiar to the neo-converts. The use of the *ovi* meter in the *Kristapurāna* is a reference to the past *Bhakti* literature of the Hindus at the same time as it influenced the later Christian Puranas. By referencing to the past and pointing to the future it fulfilled a performative characteristic (cf. Fischer-Lichte 2009: 7). Father Stephens borrows vocabulary from the Hindu religion and fills it up with Christian references. This unforeseen translation strategy “emerged” (ibid.: 5) through the dialogic nature of the genre.

4.2.2 The autopoietic feedback loop in *Kristapurāna*

Annie Rachel Royson writes in her article “Tell Us the Story from the Beginning” that “The neo-converts of Portuguese Goa were rarely passive recipients of the translations created for them by missionaries. They actively “translated back” these texts, bringing out unexplored meanings of the translated work, and in the process, creating a Christian narrative unique to their cultural landscape” (Royson 2019: 21). That the readers are actively involved in the birth of the text is documented in the translation itself. The following proves it.

In the first chapter, Stephens describes how a priest (probably himself) was teaching children in Salcete the catechism on a Sunday evening, when a Brahmin came to him with a request to give them a Christian *purāna* in Marathi. Now when the old *purānas* are forbidden, he says, people may otherwise resort to gambling for pastime. The priest was pleased with the request and promised to start telling what would become the *Kristapurāna* part by part every Sunday. (*Kristapurāna* I.1. 126–181; cf. Pär 2017: 73–74)

The relevant verse is being quoted below:

*Ha motta abhiprauo zi mhanne
Tumĩ tari varilĩ maguilĩ purannẽ
Tari pratipustaquẽ amã Caramne
Caissy nacarity tumĩ*

He said, Sir, this is an important suggestion,
Have you not refused us
the old Purānas?
Then why do you not compose similar books for us?
(Royson 2019: 24)

The *Kristapurāna* comprises of a question answer format, which functions as an autopoietic feedback loop (where the neo-converts ask the *Padre-Guru* i.e. the priest, to justify the biblical stories. Father Stephens wrote the Bible in the Hindu genre *Purāna* which was essentially a dialogic text. “The *Kristapurāna* is composed in a dialogic format, as a discussion between the narrator, *Padre-Guru*, who is a priest of the Catholic Church, and the neo-Christians in seventeenth century Goa” (cf. Royson 2019: 24). Christian Puranas were not ‘official’ Bible translations because of which there was space for dialogue between the convert and missionary (cf. *ibid.*: 22). According to Annie Royson, the translation process of the *Kristapurān* is “iterative, where the target audience of the translated work mediate and contribute to the way in which the work is finally shaped” (*ibid.*: 27). This illustrates that there is ambivalence between the active and passive role of the communica-

tion partners. The role played by them in the event of translation and the way the translator lets the translation happen are performative factors. Royson believes that “dialogue” is a critical aspect of the *Kristapurān*. The dialogue in this work is on two levels. One is the conversational tone and development of the narrative through the question-answer format and the second is the dialogic relationship where the tradition from the puranic texts “speak” to the biblical traditions. These dialogues introduced local cultural matters (matters concerning caste, for example) into the conversation. The translator was thereby forced to justify his narrative in the framework of local Goan culture. Since secret Hindu practices among neo-converts was significant for an understanding of the development of various religious identities in the region, they were addressed specifically at moments where the translator used biblical passages. As Royson observes therefore, “Cultural translation in Stephen’s work is, thus a two-way process: a) the translated work ‘speaks’ to the local culture in an attempt to christianize it, while b) the culture speaks to the translation and moulds it into a form unique to the region” (Royson 2019: 30).

4.2.3 The Co-presence (*Kopräsensz*) of Father Stephens (1549–1619)

Stephens, who was already fluent in Portuguese and Latin besides English, set himself to learn Marathi and Konkani, the two languages most commonly used in and around Goa. Stephens became proficient enough in the local languages to preach and hear confessions in them at a small village called Rachol, near Salsette (cf. *ibid.*: 148–149). Because of his knowledge of the languages Marathi and Konkani he was popular and close to the Indians to which one can attribute his success in proselytizing. Father Stephens was very well versed in the

ways of the Hindus. He knew exactly what appealed to them and how their minds worked. This is reflected in the strategies he uses to name “divine spaces” in the Bible, which is possible only because of his knowledge of languages and the people. He makes use of epithets, for which the Hindu repertoire was large enough to take from. He makes skilful use of it to denote the Christian God. Examples are *Devabāpa* (God the Father), *Devasutā* (God the Son) *Racanārā*, *Jeju Kristarāja* (Jesus the King) etc.:

In a similarly creative and poetic way, Stephens is noted for telling the story of Mary, for whose honorific description and devotional praise he used more than eighty different names and titles, such as *Bhāgyevanta Mari* (the Blessed Mary), *Devamātā* (Mother of God), *Vaikunthapaticē Māte Ankuvāri* (Virgin Mother of the Lord of Heaven), *Pavitra Mātā* (Holy Mother), *Sadevi Ankuvāri* (Blessed Virgin), *Devadutānci Rānī* (Queen of the Angels). (Henn 2015: 5)

Another example is the translation of baptism as *navā janma* (new life). By avoiding the use of the word *punarjanma*, which means re-birth in Hinduism Father Stephens avoids identifying the new faith with the Hindu idea of re-birth and by equating it with *navā janma* he introduces the Christian concept of baptism. Hence by avoiding one word and creating an alternative, he *kills* two birds with one stone. While appropriating the Hindu religious vocabulary he is careful not to cross the tenets of his faith.

While commonly using terms like *purāṇa*, *smṛiti*, or *śāstra*, all of which are designations for genres of religious scripture in the Hindu tradition, the English Jesuit, conspicuously, never uses the term *śruti* to designate any of the Christian textual corpora (cf. Falcao 2003: 72), although this term represents textual traditions that enjoy the highest theological appreciation and authority in Hindu understanding. This is because *śruti* translates as ‘heard’ and specifies among other things the oldest Hindu textual corpora of the Vedas, indicating that these were

directly revealed from divine origins to human sages and thus in contrast with other textual corpora qualified as *smṛiti*, that is, ‘remembered,’ or *purāṇa*, that is, ‘ancient,’ which are considered to be only of human origin. Christianity without the agency of Jesus Christ is unimaginable. Hence Father Stephens avoids a word which will suggest direct divinity without the intervention of a messenger. The translation for God Jesus Christ, heaven, baptism provide us with an insight into Father Stephens’s strategy. The absence of the words “*Vishnu*” and “*śruti*” are very telling.

4.2.4 Eventfulness and timelessness

The writing of the *Kristapurāṇa* is an event. It signifies a break from the tradition of Bible translations. That it has rung in a totally new model of Bible translations called the Christian *purāṇa* is clear from the following quote:

Stephens did not follow a method of translation adopted by the Protestants a hundred years later. Rather, he chose to retell the story in a form that was familiar and acceptable to the people of the region. As such, it is a symbol of the various levels of translation involved in making Stephens sufficiently Hindu in order to make his Hindu audience sufficiently Christian. (George/Rath 2016: 307)

Father Stephens not only lets his Bible be determined by the target culture’s literary norms, but also borrows heavily from the Hindu religious vocabulary to describe Christian concepts. That is the reason why the *Kristapurāṇa* signifies an eventful phenomenon.

By naming his Marathi/Konkani translation of the Bible as the ‘*Kristapurāṇ*’, Father Thomas Stephens increases the potential of the target text to perform its function in the host culture, which is to convince the target readers of the faith that

they had invested in Christianity. The decision to select a genre of the target culture has been one of the reasons for its success.

According to Ananya Chakravarti (2017: 370), “the continued performance of the text even today is at least partly due to the superior poetry of the *Discurso*, whose allusive depth and skilful versification suggests the deep involvement, if not outright co-authorship of indigenous collaborators.” The *Kristapurāna*, in her opinion, influenced the tradition of Jesuit writings in Marathi and Konkani throughout the seventeenth century (cf. *ibid.*). An example of a similar work is the Peter *Purān* composed by the French Jesuit Étienne de la Croix (1579–1643) (cf. Henn 2015: 7ff).

4.2.5 Transgression

As discussed earlier transgression and liminality are inseparable. Due to the violence unleashed by the Portuguese, and their policy of accommodation, missionaries like Father Stephens had to struggle to maintain the middle path between adhering strictly to the source text and modifying it to make the translation function effectively for his converts. This middle path is the liminal space where the translation happens. Father Stephens transgresses the genre of the biblical stories to *purāna*, makes use of the *ovi* meter, changes the language from Latin to Marathi / Konkani. He continuously re-calibrates the meaning of important biblical concepts. There is ample proof of transgression in Father Stephens’ translation. He could do so because there is a *tertium comparationis*, shared meaning, shared concepts between the two religions.

5 Conclusion

This essay began with identifying factors of performativity for translation studies where scholarship was culled from theatre studies as well as translation studies. The factors unpredictability and emergence, the autopoietic feed-back loop, translator's co-presence, eventfulness and timelessness and transgression were identified. Taking from theatre studies one can say that if in a translation 'explosive' changes emerge, if the translation documents reader response and reflects the personality of the translator it is performative. Translating a spiritual text in Sanskrit to a vernacular language is an explosive change. It was unheard of and sudden. All these factors were found in the *Bhāvārthadeepikā*. Changing the life denying philosophy of the *Gītā* to a life asserting text of practical philosophy, advocating the paths of knowledge as well as *bhakti* instead of the difficult paths of the *Gītā* are all explosive changes. Dnyaneshwar's co-presence is reflected in his use of the Marathi language and the *advait* philosophy of the *Vārkaris*. The dialogic format of the *Bhāvārthadeepikā*, with conversations between the translator's listeners and the translator which is well documented in the translation is proof of the autopoietic feed-back loop. The writing of the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* is an eventful phenomenon. The *Bhāvārthadeepikā* is a totally 'different animal'. It has been impacting the religion and society till date. The transformative effect of the *Bhāvārthadeepikā* is seen even today in the form of another *rupāntar* namely the *kirtan* which continues to educate and enlighten people. So it is also timeless. Its relevance for society and religion has not diminished. The use of the *grānthik ovi* in the *Bhāvārthadeepikā*, the use of examples from the daily lives of the people are proof of transgression which shifted the original source text from elite spaces to non-elite spaces.

The *Kristapurāṇa* exhibits unpredictability and emergence. Never before had Biblical translations taken the form of a Hindu religious text. Hence it is a ‘different animal’. This decision emerged from the situation in which Father Stephens found himself: convincing the neo-converts of Christianity on the background of the violence they faced at the hands of the Portuguese. If one were to back translate the *Kristapurāṇa* one would get a totally different text. Two personality traits of Father Stephens document the translator’s co-presence: one is his excellent knowledge of the language and two is his understanding of the local customs. The different words that he uses to name Jesus Christ, Mother Mary etc. showcase his language skills. The dialogic format of the *Kristapurāṇa* which has many instances of conversations between the *Padre-Guru* and the neo-converts shows that there is evidence of an autopoietic feed-back loop. The writing of the *Kristapurāṇa* is an event because it created a new genre called the Christian *Purān*. It had an impact on Jesuit literature throughout the 17th century. Transgression is also evident in the *Kristapurāṇa*. By using the *ovi* as a meter and naming his text a *purān* Father Stephens locates a Christian text in the Hindu religious tradition. By describing Christian concepts in Hindu vocabulary he skillfully transcends the borders of Christianity and Hinduism to tap into a shared space of Hindu *Bhakti* and Christian devotion.

I conclude that the dialogic nature and the use of the folk meter *ovi* are probably the norm for successful performative translations in the medieval and early modern period in India. Every performer needs a medium to express himself or herself. A painter needs paints, a stage artist needs a stage, a film actor needs the camera. In the same way a translator who wishes to perform, needs a liminal space. It is from this liminal space that the meaning is negotiated and the translation comes to life. Though performative translations, as a theoretical concept in

translation studies, is relatively new, the practice of this type of translation, as proven in this essay, dates back to the medieval and the early modern period. A similar thought is echoed in the following quote:

From the very beginning of the discipline's establishment process, the various shapes of communication which mould the issues dealt within the realm of Translation Studies call for us to go beyond disciplinary boundaries. This raises the question of whether there has in fact already been a "performative turn" in the discipline of Translation Studies. (Wolf 2017: 29)

The performative turn in translation studies offers the perfect theoretical framework for translation forms like the *rupāntar*. It has freed the translator from the role of a decoder of the source text message to take on the role of a creator of a new message, thereby making the activity of translation an impactful and sustained agency bringing about change in society and culture.

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Translation as Multi-Layered Performance: The Case of “Le Feu au cœur,” Bertrand Belin’s French Cover of Bob Dylan’s “Ain’t Talkin’”

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Abstract: Ten years before being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature (October 2016), Bob Dylan released the album *Modern Times* (2006). The album’s closing song, entitled “Ain’t Talkin’,” is an epic, dark and enigmatic eight-minute piece featuring a first-person narrator, more specifically a disillusioned ‘lone pilgrim’ figure that travels through defamiliarised, post-apocalyptic landscapes. On the second edition of his sixth album *Persona* (October 2019), French singer-songwriter Bertrand Belin published “Le Feu au cœur,” which, to this day, is the only existing French version of “Ain’t Talkin’.” This cover can arguably be considered a performance on at least two counts. Firstly, Dylan’s lyrics were translated by Belin, who is also an acclaimed writer and stylist. As he performed the act of translating Dylan’s words, Belin made them entirely his own, thus moving away from literalism and static structures of equivalence and producing, instead, a unique and highly personal text. Secondly, this translation was self-used by Belin, who also performed it as a studio recording and on stage, so that various electric and acoustic renditions of the French cover are now available. In this article, I propose to analyse how Belin, as a translator-performer, goes beyond

transposing “Ain’t Talkin’” as a purely literary text. As we will see, he never loses sight of the need to make “Le Feu au cœur” singable in French. Indeed, the oralised and embodied dimensions involved in the musical performing of the French lyrics determine most of his translational choices, not least those concerning the adaptation of rhyme schemes, which undoubtedly contributes to shaping the performed material and to turning his French translation of Dylan’s song into a thoroughly transformative work—a recreation in its own right.

Keywords: Belin, Dylan, Derrida, Iterability, Songs as performatives, Translation as performance.

1 Introduction: Translation as a Performative Trope

The notion of event, whose relationship with translation the theme this *Yearbook* volume seeks to investigate, and that of performance have in common that they involve forms of action that can, *inter alia*, apply to translation. In the *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary, an event is primarily defined as “something that happens” and, more particularly, as “a noteworthy happening,” i.e. as something whose occurrence can potentially change the course of things, or as “a social occasion or activity” (Merriam Webster 2023: s.p.). If this and similarly broad dictionary definitions adequately describe real-life events, they are less directly useful to scholars in linguistic, literary or translation studies, since they are more interested in understanding what an event might mean at the level of discourse and, therefore, in including non-real, or discursive, events in their definitions. Indeed, while an event can take place in the real world, it can also refer to an episode that unfolds in the realm of fiction, simulacra or mimicry, such as a fact narrated in a novel or *performed* on a theatre stage (cf. *La langue française* 2023: s.p.). Aware that relying on vague definitions would not suffice, translation studies, in particular, has attempted to advance the discussion

on these matters, notably by an appeal to notions of performativity.

In this context, translation itself has increasingly been depicted as a performative trope by scholars who strove to counter the historically dominant school of linguistics, one that views language as a static system and “a stable container of information” (Robinson 2003/2014: 29). In his 2003 book entitled *Performative Linguistics: Speaking and Translating as Doing Things with Words*, Douglas Robinson distinguishes between two branches of linguistics (and two different linguistic regimes), namely constative linguistics, which is based on “the idea that language is fundamentally communicative or informative” (i.e. “message-bearing, constative,” *ibid.*: 29), and performative linguistics, which results from the notion that “words *do* things” and are, on this account, “invested with the power to effect change” and “shape reality”: “I speak, and it comes to pass” (*ibid.*: 30), as Robinson puts it. The latter brand, which insists on the “*power* of words” rather than on their “*truth*” (*ibid.*: 33; original emphasis), originates from pioneering linguist “J. L. Austin’s distinction between ordinary, constative statements that ‘say,’ and performative statements that ‘do’ – that perform an action in themselves (cf. Austin 1962/²1975: 3–6)” (Bermann 2014: 285), more exactly “the action to which they refer” (*ibid.*: 287).

Just as an event can be said to occur on two different planes, it is possible to consider that translation, and more specifically literary translation, can be *performed* on at least two levels (the second of which similarly conjures up the theatrical sphere or, more generally, requires an artistic understanding of the term *performance*), as Sandra Bermann has argued in the footsteps of Edith Grossman:

What does it mean to “perform” translation? In one sense the verb “perform” simply means “to do or to complete.” But a semantic sub-

set of such “doing” is “to act, as in a play.” Literary translation has frequently been described with both these meanings in mind. Translation is definitely something one *does*. But as Edith Grossman has noted, it can also be considered a “kind of *interpretive performance*, bearing the same relationship to the original text as the actor’s work does to the script.” Like an actor, a translator may be said to “perform” a source text for her new public, hearing the “voice” of the author and the sounds of the text in her own mind and then interpreting through different words, in her own voice. (Grossman 2010: 11–12 as quoted in Bermann 2014: 285)

Readers may deem this analogy between translation and acting on a stage inadequate or unconvincing for at least two reasons. Firstly, they may find it unrigorous insofar as the stage on which an actor performs a script is far more literal than in the case of a translator, who will often—though not always—perform a text for an absent audience. Secondly, readers may feel that, as regards translators, the perils of simulation (consisting, for example, in passing off as your text what is actually a rendering of a source text the translator should preserve and whose authority should be identified) have been insufficiently acknowledged by translation studies scholars. Yet, even if this analogy may seem too vague or dangerous to be of use, it remains an interesting one in that it underscores the interpretive dimension inherent in the act of translation.

Similarly, Robinson (2003/2014: 41) has suggested that translation can “be thought of as performative” not only because it is unquestionably an “act,” but also—as “a good many translation scholars” have contended—because it can be “likened [...] to performing in another sense, the translator as performer, the translator standing in the same relation to the original as the musical performer to the score (cf. Wechsler 1998 for an overview).” Despite its potential shortcomings (cf. *supra*), the analogy between stage performers and translators ‘performing’ texts (as musicians would scores) is evocative in-

sofar as it highlights, once again, the work of interpretation translation involves. Interestingly, this analogy is doubly valid in the case of Bertrand Belin, who, as will be developed below, performs his translation of “Ain’t Talkin’” as both a translator-performer—one who translates, i.e. interprets, Dylan’s song for a French-speaking and initially absent audience—and a musical performer in a more traditional sense, one that will play variants of his translation on a real stage, in front of numerous audiences.¹

As Bermann briefly retraces the history of translation studies, she also identifies a ‘performative turn’ in the field, which is perceived to have

shifted its focus from the more formal and abstract strategies of linguistic equivalence towards a study of individual *acts* of translation and what they *did* in particular contexts. That is, if linguists first offered a view of translation in terms of *saying*, the attempt to restate in the receiving language what the source text said (and as accurately as possible), then later translation scholars, interested in the cultural and political *acts* and *effects* of translation, examined the *doing* of translation: in the doing of languages and texts; but also the doing of translators, readers, and audiences. In the process, this displacement signalled a move to a less essentialist or ontological view of translation, one less tied to the

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- 1 Incidentally, although the limited framework of this essay will not make it possible to elaborate on this aspect of Belin’s interest and active involvement in the performing arts, it should be noted that he also has some experience as a narrator (as in *Playlist*, a 2021 film by French cartoonist, screenwriter and director Nine Antico) and an actor, both in films (in 2021, for example, he appeared in *Tralala*, a ‘musical’ of sorts by French directors Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu, whose latest film *Le Roman de Jim* (2024) also features Belin; in 2023, he played a part in *L’Amour et les forêts*, French actor, screenwriter and director Valérie Donzelli’s film adaptation of French author Éric Reinhardt’s 2014 homonymous novel) and on stage. In 2018, he even played a part in *Calamity / Billy*, an opera staged by Jean Lacornerie (music by Gavin Bryars and les Percussions Claviers de Lyon, with which Belin subsequently released an album entitled *Concert at Saint-Quentin*).

hierarchy of an authentic, “original” and a “secondary” translation meant merely to mirror the source. Scholars became more interested in examining translation’s own productive and transformative potential, both in literary art and in what we call “real life.” As translation studies turned in this “performative” direction, it often engaged with distinctly theatrical metaphors that heighten awareness of the interpretive act of translation, its *citational* quality. (Bermann 2014: 288; my emphasis)

Again, although some readers may find this metaphorical likening of texts to theatrical plays or musical scores somewhat perplexing, the shift in translation studies towards performative approaches at least draws their attention to the act of translation’s interpretive quality. In other words, these approaches dismantle the twofold illusion that translators’ voices do not mix with those of the source authors they translate and, therefore, that a ‘secondary’ translation can simply mirror an authentic original. As we will see, the citational nature of language makes it impossible to iterate a source text, notably through translation, without altering it.

2 Discursive Events, Iterability and the Theory of the Performative

This crucial citationality of language is, in fact, of paramount importance in Jacques Derrida’s work, where the concept of iterability is discussed at length and contributes to a more thorough understanding of the performative. In *Limited Inc*, a book gathering a set of texts that are representative of Derrida’s engagement with the theory of the performative, of speech acts or discursive events (cf. Derrida 1988: 39),² the

2 Next to a foreword by editor Gerald Graff (pp. vii–viii), this book includes an essay by Jacques Derrida entitled “Signature Event Context” (pp. 1–23), Graff’s summary (pp. 25–27) of “Reiterating the Differ-

French philosopher “seeks to discover what an event [...] might be” (Derrida 1988: 37) in the discursive field and gestures towards “a differential typology of forms of iteration”—one that would “be dealing with different kinds of marks or chains of iterable marks and not with an opposition between citational utterances, on the one hand, and singular and original event-occurrences, on the other” (Derrida 1988: 18, 99). As will be explained below, a song, for instance, may initially appear as a pure and unique discursive event. However, *as a result of* this song’s inherently citational or repeatable character, only its individual performances (including those of the song’s translation(s)) will achieve the status of actual (or eventual—cf. section 5) occurrences, hence Derrida’s refusal to strictly oppose “citational utterances” from “singular [i.e. performed on a given date and localisable stage] and original event-occurrences.” Along similar lines, one of the leading experts on song translation, Peter Low, argues that a song cannot be tied to a specific performer, let alone reduced to a given performance: “many people associate a song with a particular performer – often a singer-songwriter – [...] yet... it has a notional existence independent of any individual performance or recording” (Low 2017: 7) and can “be ‘covered’ several times, that is, re-recorded by another artist with modifications to the music and sometimes the words” (Low 2017: 9).

ences” (American philosopher John R. Searle’s reply to Derrida’s article), Derrida’s rejoinder (pp. 29–110) to Searle (under the title “Limited inc a b c...”), as well as an afterword by Derrida titled “Toward an Ethic of Discussion” (pp. 111–160). Derrida’s texts were respectively penned in 1972 (French version published by Les Éditions de Minuit, in the wake of a 1971 lecture entitled “Signature, événement, contexte” and delivered in Montreal at the Congrès international des Sociétés de philosophie de langue française), 1977 and 1988, and translated by Samuel Weber in 1977 (together with Jeffrey Mehlman for *Glyph* 1), 1977 (*Glyph* 2) and 1988 (Northwestern University Press).

In the aforementioned seminal article, Derrida also questions the purity, or “pure reproducibility” (Derrida 1988: 20), of discursive events, or performatives—a performative being defined as “a ‘communication’ which is not limited strictly to the transference of a semantic content that is already constituted and dominated by an orientation toward truth” (Derrida 1988: 13–14)—, by virtue of “a structural characteristic of every mark” he calls “iterability” (Derrida 1988: 15). While referring to the repeatability of linguistic elements, i.e. the *possibility* of their being repeated, such iterability, which is viewed as being “indispensable to the functioning of all language, written or spoken (in the standard sense), and [...] of that of every mark” (Derrida 1988: 53), is more specifically characterised—as indicated by the prefix *iter*, which “probably comes from *itera*, *other* in Sanskrit”—by what Derrida describes as a “logic that ties repetition to alterity” (Derrida 1988: 7, 62), sameness to difference:

[I]terability supposes [...] that the identity of the *selfsame* be repeatable and identifiable *in, through* and even *in view of* its alteration. For the structure of iteration – this is another of its decisive traits – implies *both* identity *and* difference. Iteration in its purest form – and it is always impure – contains *in itself* the discrepancy of a difference that constitutes it as an iteration. The iterability of an element divides its own identity a priori [...]. (Derrida 1988: 53)

As this final sentence suggests, this logic of iterability can be defined as “differential” [*différentielle*] (Derrida 1988: 53) or *différente* (to use Derrida’s coinage, one that simultaneously echoes the terms “differing and deferring;” *ibid.*: 49, 56), insofar as it prevents any mark, linguistic sign or discursive event from ever “being fully present to itself in the actuality of its aim or of its meaning” (*ibid.*: 57):

[T]he possibility of its being repeated *another* time [...] breaches, divides, expropriates the “ideal” plenitude or self-presence of intention, of meaning (to say) and, a fortiori, of all adequation between meaning

and saying. Iterability alters, contaminating parasitically what it identifies and enables to repeat “itself”. (Derrida 1988: 61–62)

This utter impossibility of self-presence is “the *stigmè* of every mark, already split” (Derrida 1988: 49). Derrida’s groundbreaking concept of *différance* thus posits “spacing as a disruption of presence in a mark” (ibid.: 19), which, as a consequence, is “neither present nor absent” (ibid.: 53) in discourse. This is why Derrida endeavours to question—as previously submitted—the purity of discursive events: since “iterability [...] can only be what it is in the *impurity* of its self-identity (repetition altering and alteration identifying)” (ibid.: 65), this supposed “purity [of discursive events] does not emerge *in opposition* to citationality or iterability, but in opposition to other kinds of iteration within a general iterability which constitutes a violation of the allegedly rigorous purity of every event in discourse or every *speech act*” (ibid.: 59). He thus argues that “a successful performative is necessarily an ‘impure’ performative” (ibid.: 17, 90), one that “needs to repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable utterance, [...] that is identifiable as *conforming* with an iterable model” (ibid.: 18, 99). At the same time, Derrida makes an essential distinction between two pairs of related terms. On the one hand, he distinguishes between *iterability* (that “can be recognized even in a mark which *in fact* seems to have occurred only once [...] but] is in itself divided or multiplied in advance by its structure of repeatability;” ibid.: 48) and *iteration* (namely the actual occurrence of an event); on the other hand, between *possibility* (that is the “fact that performatives can always be cited;” ibid.: 86–87) and *eventuality* (or “the fact that such possible events [...] do indeed happen, occur;” ibid.: 87; “the *fact* or *facts* that transform [...] an] ever-present possibility into an event, making the possible come to pass;” ibid.: 88)—I will return to these differences when I discuss the status of songs as intrinsi-

cally iterable events and their iterations in the form of actual performances or eventual occurrences.

The aforementioned considerations also account for the fact that Derrida seeks to challenge the possibility of equivalence in translation. Indeed, what Derrida helps us understand in the context of translation is that because of the “distance, divergence, delay, [...] or] deferral” (Derrida 1988: 7) entailed by *différance*, “no single word [...] can by itself ever translate another word perfectly” (ibid.: 52). If a source text looks forwards to, and enables its translatability, it presumably calls for a translation that, as a form of iteration, will certainly alter it when it passes into another language: every mark being linguistically divided, translation will retain the selfsame at the level of meaning—and call that retention ‘fidelity in translation’—while preventing source texts from fetishising their identity as source texts.

Iterability, or the “reusability of speech acts,” as Robinson terms it (2003/2014: 61), is, above all, a phenomenon that occurs through time and should thus be approached diachronically. Building (rather freely) on Derrida’s theory, Robinson remarks in this regard that “iterability is most importantly a historical process” (ibid.: 68), which ties in with the performative:

Iterability is repeatability. Iterability is the repeat-performability of all speech. It is the quality of our speech acts that comes from having learned them through other people, from other speech acts – by learning to emulate what we have seen other people do. [...] It is] the quality every word we utter has of being saturated with every dialogue it has been used in. (Robinson 2003/2014: 63)

Although Derrida and Robinson respectively appear to insist on written communication and speech (“A *writing* that is not structurally readable – iterable – beyond the death of the addressee would not be *writing*,” the former states in “Signature Event Context [an essay Derrida abbreviates as *Sec*]” (Derrida

1988: 7; my emphasis), Derrida explicitly objects, in his rejoinder to John R. Searle's reply to his own article, to "imputing to *Sec* the intention of distinguishing between writing and speech, or even of opposing the two" (ibid.: 46). He goes so far as to declare that the "question [of] determining what distinguishes 'written from spoken language'" is "disqualified by *Sec*" (ibid.: 47). Derrida writes: "The demonstration of *Sec* moves in an area where the distinction between writing and speech loses all pertinence and where 'every mark, including those which are oral,' can be seen as 'a grapheme in general' (*Sec*, p. 10)" (ibid.: 46–47). Indeed, as Derrida proceeds to explain, "from the standpoint of iterability, there is no difference: precisely the thesis of *Sec*, if there is one" (ibid.: 46). Since iterability refers to the *possibility* of repeating linguistic elements, the latter *can*, but need not, be reiterated. As we will see, a song's lyrics are, however, very likely to be reiterated, be it through their oral (re)performances or through their translations which may themselves be orally (re)performed.

In Robinson's perspective, which elaborates on Derrida's, each supposedly original text is thus nothing but "an iteration of other words, other speech acts. Every reading of it, every performance of it is another such iteration" (Robinson 2003/2014: 67). Yet, it is crucial to note that even though "all language use is the reperforming of past performances [, ...] performances are always transformations, never pure reproductions" (ibid.: 66). In his detailed discussion of Derrida's work, Robinson points out the following:

In a 1971 article³ on Austin and related topics entitled “Signature Event Context,” Jacques Derrida argued that (to put it simply) an utterance must be performable, and thus distortable, in order to be spoken after all. This performability he called “iterability,” the capacity to be misused, misperformed, changed or twisted in some way. (Robinson 2003/2014: 19)

It is, therefore, “through its iterability, its capacity for being repeated in new contexts,” which tends to transform it, that “language becomes usable, speakable, writeable, performable” (Robinson 2003/2014: 20). Along the same lines, Bermann highlights the performative’s bond, in Derrida’s writings, with both iterability and the citationality of language, and the production of linguistic difference and novelty: she submits that “Derrida relates the performative not only to this ongoing citational quality, but also to inauguration, the making of something new” (Bermann 2014: 289). As Bermann adds, this “spectacular citationality” not only induces the mere reproduction of language sameness, but also “offers ongoing opportunities for productive interpretations” and “linguistic innovation” (ibid.: 290), which concern, among others, translation—a point which will be returned to below.⁴

3 Robinson is probably referring here to Derrida’s 1971 conference lecture rather than to the actual article published in 1972 by Les Éditions de Minuit—see Footnote 2.

4 As Derrida argues, “‘iterability’ can define citationality *in its possibility*” (Derrida 1988: 100), which is indeed spectacular insofar as every linguistic element can, potentially, be endlessly iterated or cited. The full scope of this reflection and its implications (not least for translation studies) nevertheless goes beyond the bounds of this essay, which will attempt to explore how iterability can be a way of celebrating translation as a productive and innovating practice but will not focus on questions of copyright or on the desire of the source text *not* to be re-made or innovated.

3 On Bob Dylan's "Ain't Talkin'"

3.1 Bob Dylan's Nobel Lecture: On Reiterating Archetypal Songs and Books

When the recipient of the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature was announced, *The New York Times* published, in this connection, a relevant article pertaining to Dylan's fascinating propensity for "sopping up influences like a sponge." From a very young age, Dylan indeed demonstrated an ability not only "to impregnate himself with all the musical styles that preceded him, assume their ownership, and transform them successfully into new creations" (Dehout 2019: 56), but also to achieve a more complex synthesis and confer a "more profound meaning" (ibid.: 57) on his songs by injecting literary (and more particularly poetic) influences into them. Here, the notion of novelty should thus not be understood as a form of 'pure invention' but clearly stems, instead, from a creative practice of citationality involving a reliance on intertextuality.

Interestingly, Bob Dylan's June 2017 Nobel Lecture offers what the 2016 laureate has styled a "roundabout" (Dylan 2017: s.p.) reflection on what Robinson has termed "the mutability of language in repetition, [or] difference in the repetition of the same" (2003/2014: 63), one that implicitly ponders the concept of iterability and the ways in which "a voice is transformed in and through a series of iterations" (ibid.: 20). In this Lecture, in which Dylan (2017: s.p.) attempts to articulate "how [his] songs relat[e] to literature," he explores his key aesthetic influences, be they musical or literary, and often insists on their archetypal or mythical quality. Indeed, all the artists and works he mentions have in common that they are one of a kind to the extent that they seem to carry with them a multitude of previous voices, which they both repeat and transmute. Dylan further expounds how, through a similar citational pro-

cess, he in turn kept circulating the archetypal and mythical voices that preceded him by *creatively* appropriating them.

For instance, Dylan opens his Lecture by recounting “the dawning of it all” (2017: s.p.), namely how the one time he saw Buddy Holly on stage when he was eighteen years old was decisive for his own calling as a musician. Despite his young age, Buddy Holly (who passed away shortly afterwards) seemed to embody, in Dylan’s eyes, this striking mixture of permanence and novelty that left an indelible mark on the latter, who notes, in retrospect, how iterating and blending archetypal genres enabled Buddy Holly to create something new:

From the moment I first heard him, I felt akin. I felt related, like he was an older brother. I even thought I resembled him. Buddy played the music that I loved – the music I grew up on: country western, rock ’n’ roll, and rhythm and blues. Three separated strands of music that he intertwined and infused into one genre. One brand. [...] And he sang great – sang in more than a few voices. He was the archetype. [...] He looked older than twenty-two. Something about him seemed permanent, and he filled me with conviction. Then, out of the blue, the most uncanny thing happened. He looked me straight dead in the eye, and he transmitted something. (Dylan 2017: s.p.)

A few days after Buddy Holly’s mortal plane crash, Dylan received a record by Leadbelly that “changed [his] life there and then,” as if “somebody laid hands on [him],” and started listening to other artists on Leadbelly’s label, such as “Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, the New Lost City Ramblers, Jean Ritchie, [and] string bands,” so much so that—at least momentarily—“[he] forgot about the music [he]’d grown up with.” Compared to popular hits of the day, folk songs have a thickness and depth that “makes them more vibrant and truthful to life,” and arguably comes from the repetition of previous voices, as the following quotation makes clear: “They were different than the radio songs that I’d been listening to all along. [...] With radio songs, a performer might get a hit with a roll

of the dice or a fall of the cards, but that didn't matter in the folk world. Everything was a hit" (Dylan 2017: s.p.). North American old-time music is an umbrella term designating these songs, which chiefly find their roots in English, Scottish and Irish folk tunes, but may also have African origins. The archetypality of their endlessly reiterated lyrics, which shaped Dylan's imagination—let us note in passing that his first album, *Bob Dylan* (1962), is mostly made up of folk and blues covers (except for two original songs, "Talkin' New York" and "Song to Woody," whose lyrics tellingly pay homage to Woody Guthrie, "Cisco and Sonny and Leadbelly / An' to all the good people that traveled with you")—, is also explicitly pointed to in a paragraph that both thematises and textualises it:

You know what it's all about. Takin' the pistol out and puttin' it back in your pocket. Whippin' your way through traffic, talkin' in the dark. You know that Stagger Lee was a bad man and that Frankie was a good girl. [...] You've seen the lusty Lord Donald stick a knife in his wife, and a lot of your comrades have been wrapped in white linen. (Dylan 2017: s.p.)

From the quotation's opening sentence, Dylan seems intent not only on thematically evoking some of the archetypal characters that tend to recur in folk songs, such as Stagger Lee,⁵ but also on producing feelings of *déjà-vu* that will remind the readers that they have seen or heard it all before. Dylan, who identifies in his young self "a natural feeling for the ancient ballads and country blues" (Dylan 2017: s.p.), unambiguously proceeds to explain how he worked hard towards making this ancient language (whose texture is made palpable in the previous

5 Other major contemporary songwriters and bands have spawned songs featuring one such bad man, for instance Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds on their 1996 album *Murder Ballads*, the second track of which is precisely titled "Stagger Lee."

quote) his own, both textually and musically, in a way that was in keeping with the *Zeitgeist*:

By listening to all the early folk artists and singing the songs yourself, you pick up the vernacular. You internalize it. You sing it in the rag-time blues, work songs, Georgia sea shanties, Appalachian ballads and cowboy songs. [...] None of it went over my head – the devices, the techniques, the secrets, the mysteries – and I knew all the deserted roads that it traveled on, too. I could make it all connect and *move with the current of the day*. When I started writing my own songs, the folk lingo was the only vocabulary that I knew and I used it. (Dylan 2017: s.p.; my emphasis)

Such internalisation of the folk rhetoric allows for a creative appropriation of all those sources, which—as will be shown below—are not always easily identifiable in the dense intertextual web of Dylan’s songs and can thus be regarded as having been successfully turned into his own idiom.

As regards his literary influences, Dylan mentions various classics from the Western canon, such as Miguel Cervantes’s *Don Quixote*, Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* and Charles Dickens’s *Tale of Two Cities*, which he refers to as “typical grammar school reading that gave you a way of looking at life, an understanding of human nature, and a standard to measure things by” (Dylan 2017: s.p.). He then discusses three of these texts in more detail, namely Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Homer’s *The Odyssey*. In this context, he firmly emphasises the importance of ancestral themes (e.g. the existential quest for meaning, the loss of innocence, the violence, suffering and essential loneliness of mankind, the voyage home epitomising the journey through life, etc.) that these often tale-like, highly symbolic and thus deceptively simple novels contribute to perpetuating. Somewhat more obliquely, he lays the emphasis on his own wish to take part in an iterative process that will allow him to reinvent and

renew this legacy: “the themes from those books worked their way into many of my songs, either knowingly or unintentionally. I wanted to write songs unlike anything anybody ever heard, and those themes were fundamental” (ibid.). As was the case with folk songs, what Dylan seems to value is a brand of literature that, as it keeps circulating timeless characters, topics and stereotypes, succeeds in entering the realm of myth and allegory. Interestingly, Dylan refrains from mentioning the names of the major writers associated with these books (i.e. Herman Melville, Erich Maria Remarque and Homer), as if works mattered more than their authors (or even authorship itself) and were part of a broader intertext in which each individual text only gains significance through a dialogue with other texts, and achieves originality despite lacking it at the outset. To some extent (and although a detailed exemplification of this phenomenon would exceed the bounds of this essay), his own text is a hybrid object that—as it did with folk song lyrics—not only thematises his interest in mythical and allegorical literature, but also textualises it, unlike more typically analytical Nobel Lectures.

In this Lecture, Dylan intriguingly concludes the section dedicated to the war novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* with a reference to a “Charlie Poole from North Carolina,” who

had a song [...] called ‘You Ain’t Talkin’ to Me,’ and the lyrics go like this:

I saw a sign in a window walking up town one day.
 Join the army, see the world is what it had to say.
 You’ll see exciting places with a jolly crew,
 You’ll meet interesting people, and learn to kill them too.
 Oh you ain’t talkin’ to me, you ain’t talkin’ to me.
 It may be crazy and all that, but I got good sense you see.
 You ain’t talkin’ to me, you ain’t talkin’ to me.
 Killin’ with a gun don’t sound like fun.
 You ain’t talkin’ to me. (Dylan 2017: s.p.)

In this song, whose title is partly echoed by Dylan's own "Ain't Talkin'," an I-persona's "good sense" induces the latter to turn down the insistent (and seemingly tempting) invitation to "join the army" extended by "a sign in a window." While, in "You Ain't Talkin' to Me" (for the full lyrics of Dylan's song, see section 4.2, table 1), the narrator's repetition of those words reflects a determination to ignore the war propaganda conveyed by the sign and, therefore, to avoid any confrontation with the war's brutality, the I-persona in "Ain't Talkin'" has gone almost silent, perhaps as a result of their inability to escape the violence of "this weary world of woe" (verse 2, line 6) through which they "Ain't talkin', just walkin'" (v. 2, l. 5; v. 4, l. 14; v. 6, l. 15; v. 8, l. 30; v. 10, l. 38; v. 12, l. 46; v. 14, l. 54; v. 16, l. 62; v. 18, l. 70). As will be discussed below, Dylan's title and important lines in his lyrics are also inspired, even more clearly, by "Highway of Regret" (1959), a country song by bluegrass band The Stanley Brothers. The fact that the letter -g is informally dropped in the verb *talkin'* (as in some—though not all—the lyrics' -ing forms) and the use of the contracted auxiliary *ain't* in Dylan's title may also be seen as a nod to the folk world and its oral tradition into which Dylan may seek inscription through reiteration—I will return to this point.

3.2 Reiterations of Lyrics and Literary Texts in "Ain't Talkin'" and on *Modern Times*

Although the "mystic garden" the narrator walks out in in the song's opening and second-to-last verse (v. 1, l. 1; v. 17, l. 66), with its "cool crystal fountain" (v. 1, l. 3) and "hot summer lawn" (v. 17, l. 67), seems relatively unstained, a sense of impending doom—suggested, from the outset, by "the *wounded* flowers [that] were dangling from the vine" (v. 1, l. 2, italics mine)—appears to permeate the "weary world of woe" (v. 2,

l. 6) they are walking through, as if it had been affected by various forms of violence. The latter quotation echoes “The Wayfaring Stranger,” a 19th-century American folk song “about a plaintive soul on the journey through life,” whose lyrics were published (though maybe not for the first time) “in 1858 in Joseph Bever’s *Christian Songster*, which was a collection of popular hymns and spiritual songs of the time” (Wikipedia, “The Wayfaring Stranger (song)”). In *The Makers of the Sacred Harp*, David Warren Steel and Richard H. Hulan “suggest that the song was derived from the 1816 German language hymn, ‘Ich bin ja nur ein Gast auf Erden’ by Isaac Nisvander” (ibid.; cf. also Steel/Hulan 2010: 234). As is the case of many traditional folk pieces, numerous versions of this song (involving alternative titles, such as “Poor Wayfaring Stranger” or “I Am a Poor Wayfaring Stranger,” and variants of the lyrics, which were often “linked to times of hardship and notable experiences in the singers’ lives” (Wikipedia, “The Wayfaring Stranger (song)”) have been performed and/or recorded over time by various artists and bands, including Burl Ives, Paul Robeson, Emmylou Harris, Johnny Cash, Jack White and Sixteen Horsepower. As previously indicated, Dylan’s very title, as well as the most repeated motif in his lyrics, namely “Ain’t talkin’, just walkin’ [...] Heart burnin’, still yearnin’,” also take their cue from The Stanley Brothers’ “Highway of Regret,” as this 1959 country song’s opening verse shows: “Ain’t talking, just walking / Down that highway of regret / Heart’s burning, still yearning / For the best girl this poor boy’s ever met.” The line “Hand me down my walkin’ cane” (v. 10, l. 39) similarly hints at a homonymous minstrel song turned into a folk song, for which James A. Bland has been credited (cf. Bland s.d.). A music critic aptly noted Dylan’s magisterial ability to appropriate material in “Ain’t Talkin’” and referred to this skill as

one of Dylan's greatest strengths in the twilight years of his career, using these elements as building blocks for something completely new, in the same way that producers in the golden age of hip-hop constructed beats from familiar samples. "Ain't Talkin'," *Modern Times*' bone-chilling closer, swipes lines from the traditional "The Wayfaring Stranger" and The Stanley Brothers' "Highway of Regret," then flips the songs' sentiments on their head: It's not deliverance that Dylan's yearning for, but vengeance, vowing to slit his enemies' throats in their beds. He's sung about the world's end before, but on "Ain't Talkin'," Dylan himself sounds apocalyptic, like he's the last thing his wrongdoers will see before they die. (Consequence Online Magazine 2021: s.p.)

By the same token, Dylan's song deliberately iterates a literary classic, in a more direct way than it does *Moby Dick*, *All Quiet on the Western Front* or *The Odyssey*. Richard F. Thomas, a Professor at Harvard University, has indeed traced several lines to the ancient Roman poet Ovid.⁶ In a 2017 interview, he has observed that the song's closing line "In the last outback, at the world's end" (v. 18, l. 73) is a

direct quote from Peter Green's Penguin translation of Ovid's exile poetry [Ex Ponto 2.7.66]. In case you think this is accidental, the same song has three or four other Ovidian lines or significant phrases, including: "Every nook and cranny/corner has its tears" [(v. 15, l. 59)...], "loyal and [...] much-loved companions" [(v. 11, l. 42)... and] "make the most of one last extra hour" [(v. 9, l. 36)], all on one song from *Tristia* 1.3 [24, 65, 68], Ovid's night of exile poem. (Thomas 2017: s.p.)

On *Modern Times* only, three other songs quote Ovidian texts almost exactly: in "Workingman's Blues#2," "The Levee's Gonna Break" and "Spirit on the Water," the lines "no one can claim that I ever took up arms against you," "Some people got barely enough skin to cover their bones" and "I cannot

6 These intertextual references to Ovid's work did not appear, however, on an earlier take of "Ain't Talkin'" from the *Modern Times* recording sessions, which featured on the 2008 Dylan compilation *The Bootleg Series Vol. 8 – Tell Tale Signs: Rare and Unreleased 1989–2006*.

believe these things could fade from your mind” respectively echo Ovid’s “No one can ever claim / That I took up arms against you” (*Tristia*, Book 2, l. 51–53), “there’s barely enough skin to cover my bones” (*Tristia*, Book 4, Section 7, l. 51) and “Can’t believe these things would ever fade from your mind” (*Black Sea Letters*, Book 2, Section 4, l. 24) (cf. Wikipedia, “*Modern Times* (Bob Dylan album)”).

3.3 Reading (without overinterpreting) “Ain’t Talkin’”

Like the song’s Ovidian conclusion and its apocalyptic undertones, other lines convey a sense of threat and danger. Even in the rather peaceful mystic garden, the I-persona feels “hit [...] from behind” (v. 1, l. 4) by an unidentified assailant. This attacker, who is occasionally addressed in the second person, is so menacing that the unnamed narrator seems ready to “burn that bridge before you can cross” (v. 4, l. 5) and even to go so far as to slay them, possibly “to avenge [their] father’s death” (v. 9, ll. 37) or the “dead man” whose “shield” they are “carryin’” (v. 14, l. 55), as the following verse suggests:

Now I’m all worn down by weeping
My eyes are filled with tears, my lips are dry
If I catch my opponents ever sleeping
I’ll just slaughter them where they lie (v. 5, l. 18–21)

While the narrator’s personal grief can hardly be denied and may result from the individual sacrifices their life as a (former?) warrior or at least as a current wanderer may have prompted them to make (in v. 12, l. 49, for instance, they are “thinkin’ ’bout that gal [they] left behind”), the enemy in question may equally be viewed as the personification of larger, perhaps historical, malevolent forces. For example, the “plague” (v. 6, l. 25) with which the cities the narrator is walking through are stricken may be a metaphorical way of designating capitalism,

which “crush[es]” human beings “with wealth and power” (v. 9, l. 34) in a world where “speculation” prevails over “contemplation” (v. 7, l. 26 and 28). Whatever its source, the pain that is visible everywhere is both very real and apparently boundless, as the narrator observes:

The sufferin’ is unending
Every nook and corner has its tears
I’m not playing, I’m not pretending
I’m not nursing any superfluous fears (v. 15, l. 58–61)

As a possible result of such intense and ubiquitous suffering, the spaces the narrator is silently wandering through are almost entirely devoid of human presence. In the second-to-last verse, a lady is addressed—“Excuse me, ma’am, I beg your pardon” (v. 17, l. 68)—but there appears to be “no one” to engage in dialogue, as if even “the gardener” (v. 17, l. 69) had deserted the seemingly preserved realm of the mystic garden. In this bleak, life-depleted world, a glimmer of hope nevertheless seems to persist for the I-persona thanks to both the presence-in-absence of “much-loved companions” (v. 11, l. 42) and the idiosyncratic, probably non-dogmatic, brand of faith they are driven by, as if they were sustained by a form of light that could never go out:

I practice a faith that’s been long abandoned
Ain’t no altars on this long and lonesome road (v. 11, l. 44–45)
[...]
The fire gone out but the light is never dyin’
Who says I can’t get heavenly aid? (v. 13, l. 52–53)

This faintly optimistic note is borne out by the fact that Dylan ends his song—performed in A minor throughout—with an A-major chord.

While this reading of “Ain’t Talkin’” may be deemed vague or slightly abstract, it is not unlikely that Dylan himself might reject more concrete or definite interpretations. In the

chapter of his recent *Philosophy of Modern Song* dedicated to Uncle Dave Macon's "Keep My Skillet Good and Greasy" (1924) (a song that may have been an old minstrel tune and "is all about the repetition – all the time, time, time, home, home, home," Dylan 2022: 241), he makes the tongue-in-cheek observation that "[s]ometimes people ask songwriters what a song means, not realizing if they had more words to explain it they would've used them in the song" (ibid.). In the opening paragraph of his Nobel Lecture's concluding part, Dylan similarly—and somewhat provocatively—challenges the need to interpret musical or literary artworks at all costs (as if the aesthetic emotions they spark were not self-sufficient) and condemns any vain obsession with rigid meaning:

So what does it all mean? Myself and a lot of other songwriters have been influenced by these very same themes. And they can mean a lot of different things. If a song moves you, that's all that's important. I don't have to know what a song means. I've written all kinds of things into my songs. And I'm not going to worry about it – what it all means. When Melville put all his old testament, biblical references, scientific theories, Protestant doctrines, and all that knowledge of the sea and sailing ships and whales into one story, I don't think he would have worried about it either – what it all means. (Dylan 2017: s.p.)

Significantly, Dylan concludes his Lecture with a crucial reminder, which aims to stress the distinction between songs and literature (with the exception of plays):

songs are unlike literature. They're meant to be sung, not read. The words in Shakespeare's plays were meant to be acted on the stage. Just as lyrics in songs are meant to be sung, not read on a page. (Dylan 2017: s.p.)

4 Bertrand Belin's Electric and Acoustic Reiterations of Other Artists' Works

“Le Feu au cœur,” Bertrand Belin’s cover of “Ain’t Talkin’,” implicitly aligns itself with both Dylan’s critique of ‘narrative rentability’ and his concern with ‘singability’ (cf. section 4.2). This cover is far from being a one shot for Belin: over the years, and singularly since the release of his first (eponymous) solo album (*Bertrand Belin* (2005)), prior to which he used to play with various bands, such as Stompin’ Crawfish or Sons of the Desert, and in the wake of which he published another six albums, i.e. *La Perdue* (2007), *Hypernuît* (2010), *Parcs* (2013), *Cap Waller* (2015), *Persona* (2019) and *Tambour Vision* (2022), as well as various books, including *Sorties de route* (2011), *Requin* (2015), *Littoral* (2016), *Grands carnivores* (2019) and *Vrac* (2020)), he has regularly covered French- and English-speaking fellow artists, either by himself (i.e. with an acoustic or electric guitar), with his own band, or in the form of featurings (like the recent “In Heaven”—from David Lynch’s *Eraserhead*’s soundtrack (1977)—on Swiss trumpet player Erik Truffaz’s 2023 album *Rollin*) or duets with other performers. His electric covers of French-speaking singers comprise “Ô Marie” (1989) by Daniel Lanois (which he also performed acoustically, either solo or as a duet with Arthur Téboul from French band Feu! Chatterton), “J’aime regarder les filles” (1981) by Patrick Coutin, “Quand t’es dans le désert” (1979) by Jean-Patrick Capdevielle (sung as a duet with Axel Bauer and aired in the French TV live music show *Taratata*, France 2, 25 March 2022), “La Ballade de Jim” (1986) by Alain Souchon (played in the wings of the same live show), “Épaule Tattoo” (1986) by (and with) Étienne Daho (*Taratata*, 29 September 2023), “Bijou, bijou” (1979) and “C’est comment qu’on freine” (1982) by Alain Bashung (the former was performed for the programme *Monte*

Le Son on 16 March 2016 while the latter was broadcast in a filmed tribute—entitled *Immortel Bashung*, France 5, 7 March 2020—to this respected French singer who passed away on 14 March 2009 and influenced many French musicians, including Belin),⁷ “Ah que la vie est belle” (1997) by Brigitte Fontaine (“Fucking Night” tribute, Printemps de Bourges, 20 April 2022) and “Lumières” (1984) by Gérard Manset (which was performed live on 3 July 2020 in Parisian venue Le Centquatre, as a duet with Dominique A, and recorded by French radio channel France Inter; this gig also allowed both to revisit songs taken from each other’s repertoires, namely Dominique A’s “Je suis une ville” (1999), “Le Bruit blanc de l’été” (2009), “Corps de ferme à l’abandon” (2018) and “Pour la peau” (2001) and Belin’s “Hypernuit,” “Sur le cul,” “Rien à la ville” and “Grand duc”).

As for his acoustic covers, they include “Salomé” by Jean-Patrick Capdevielle (aired on France 3 Bretagne, 30 December 2023, in Gaëtan Roussel’s TV programme *Abers Road*, where it was performed as a duet with Louise Attaque’s frontman), “Pour moi la vie va commencer” by Johnny Hallyday (France Inter, 2022), as well as three unreleased songs by French singer-songwriter Georges Brassens, titled “Je me rappelle,” “Quand tu m’auras quitté” and “Son corps au diable.” During the Covid-19 pandemic and, more specifically, during the first lockdown (which started in March 2020), Belin also performed and self-recorded various acoustic covers (in both English and French) from his Parisian home, which he then posted on his social media (i.e. Facebook and Instagram) accounts. In these unprecedented circumstances, he covered not only “La Limonade” (1999) by Dick Annegarn (Facebook and Instagram, 21

7 Together with French singer Bénabar, Belin also covered “Osez Joséphine” by Bashung (*Taratata*, 9 April 2005).

March 2020) and “La Tige d’or” (2009) by Jean-Louis Murat (Facebook and Instagram, 24 March 2020), but also “High on a Rocky Ledge” (1978) by Moondog⁸ (Facebook and Instagram, 30 March 2020), “Norman Fucking Rockwell” (2019) by Lana Del Rey⁹ (Facebook, 23 April 2020; Instagram, 24 April 2020) and “Rock Bottom Riser” by Smog (as part of a streaming session on Annie O’s live music channel on Instagram [@annieomusiclive], also posted on Facebook on 24 April 2020). Next to Bill Callahan, whose “art of silence” and singular writing Belin has long admired (cf. Facebook post, 24 April 2020), David Bowie ranks among the Anglophone artists he covered prior to the initial lockdown—the song “Where Are We Now?” (2013) in particular (an acoustic rendition of which is available on YouTube). Prior to the pandemic, Belin had also recorded “Leaving the Table” for *Le Pont des Artistes* (#19), together with artists who had been invited to pay their respects to Leonard Cohen by performing songs from the latter’s final album *You Want it Darker* (2016). More recently, in 2021, a version of Leonard Cohen’s “Avalanche,” featuring Belin and French singer-songwriter H-Burns (also known as Renaud Brustlein) was released on the latter’s *Burns on the Wire* (at least one live version of the song, recorded at the Trianon

8 Subsequently (25 May 2024, Musée Louvre-Lens), Belin coordinated “Looking for *H’art Songs*,” a tribute to Moondog which consisted in performing the latter’s entire eponymous album (including “High on a Rocky Ledge”), using some of his original instruments (like the trimba he created).

9 For the France Inter *Music & Co* podcast series, Belin also performed “Video Games” (27 May 2024) by Lana Del Rey, as well as similarly acoustic renditions of “L’Ennemi dans la glace” (28 May 2024) by Alain Chamfort, “All by Myself” (29 May 2024) by Eric Carmen (famously covered by Céline Dion), country classic “Jolene” (30 May 2024) by Dolly Parton (notably covered by The White Stripes) and “Le Grand Sommeil” (31 May 2024) by Étienne Daho.

in Paris, can be found on YouTube). As the title, which puns on that of one of Cohen's best-known songs ("Bird on the Wire," 1969), indicates, this record is a tribute to the Canadian icon's early work, also involving the likes of Pomme, Lou Doillon and Kevin Morby.

4.1 Performing Translation: Bertrand Belin's "Le Feu au cœur" as a Transformative French Iteration of "Ain't Talkin'"

While Jean-Louis Murat had written and recorded his own Francophone version of Cohen's classic, under the title "Avalanche IV," on the 1991 tribute album *I'm Your Fan: The Songs of Leonard Cohen* (produced by French magazine *Les Inrockuptibles* and echoing, again, one of Cohen's songs, "I'm Your Man," 1988), Belin's rendition of "Avalanche"—just as his aforementioned covers of Anglophone artists—is performed in the English language. In this sense, "Le Feu au cœur" is already quite unique insofar as it is, to this day, the sole Anglophone song he chose to cover in the French language.¹⁰ If only for this reason, the song arguably occupies a remarkable position in Belin's repertoire, too. Here is what he had to say about this cover in the Facebook post that complemented Simon Vanrie's live session (recorded at Bozar's Henry Le Bœuf room in Brussels):

J'habitais à Porto lorsque l'album *Modern Times* de Bob Dylan est sorti. Il est vite devenu une sorte de compagnon qui m'aidait à supporter la solitude dans laquelle je m'étais moi-même plongé, venu chercher les conditions nécessaires à l'écriture de mon premier livre *Sorties de route*. La chanson « Ain't Talkin' » en particulier me transportait par la grâce

10 In English, this song was covered by a couple of artists as well, like Julie Felix (on her 2008 album *Highway of Diamonds*) and Bettye LaVette (on her 2018 album *Things Have Changed*).

et la profondeur obscure de son propos. Une épique clameur du monde. Une chanson-monde. C'est à l'invitation de Syd Matters à chanter au concert de la Philharmonie de Paris à l'occasion de l'expo Dylan que j'ai eu l'idée de cette adaptation. Depuis, je n'ai cessé de songer à l'enregistrer. C'est chose faite. (Belin, *Facebook*, 5 February 2020)

Although the terms 'translating' and 'translation' have been generically applied to Belin's French cover of Dylan, the previous quotation makes it quite clear that Belin himself conceives "Le Feu au cœur" as an 'adaptation', an operation which Vinay and Darbelnet define as being poised on the outer edge of translation insofar as it involves a measure of re-creation in the target text (cf. Vinay/Darbelnet 1958/1977: 52). This creative iteration, which first took place when Belin was invited to sing his version of "Ain't Talkin'" on the specific occasion of a Parisian exhibition around Dylan's work, then took the form of an even more concrete event-occurrence, namely an actual recording (for the full lyrics of Belin's song, see section 4.2, table 2). Importantly, in this excerpt, Belin foregrounds aspects of the song that—as we have seen—also matter much to Dylan himself, such as its 'obscurity' and related 'depth', which the former allows himself to be carried away by instead of attempting to unravel them. Moreover, he pinpoints the 'epic' quality of the song, whose lyrics echo the 'clamour of the world' or even microcosmically encapsulate a world—as the phrase "chanson-monde" suggests—through which a heroic figure moves, as was the case in traditional epic poems. Unsurprisingly, "Le Feu au cœur" can then be seen as a continuation of "Ain't Talkin'" as it seeks, on the whole, to preserve the song's mystery and poetic atmosphere, especially its somber and enigmatic tonalities. In the Facebook post that accompanied his acoustic cover of Daniel Lanois's "Ô Marie," Belin further verbalised—like Dylan before him—a taste for the ageless themes and 'ancestral pulse' that characterise folk songs, which also go

hand in glove with an ‘unknown’ realm conjured up by this song’s rhetoric and its obscure ‘referents’:

Ô Marie, de Daniel Lanois, je la chante depuis de nombreuses années. J’aime ce qu’elle réveille en moi d’étranges réminiscences. Travail rude, exil, espoirs éternels de lendemains meilleurs, une part d’inconnu aussi, liée à un vocabulaire aux référents obscurs ; et sa forme que caractérise une pulsation ancestrale. (Belin, *Facebook*, 4 May 2020)

In this perspective, translators are iterators, insofar as “they reiterate a text written in one language in another” (Robinson 2003/2014: 66) but their iterations also performatively contribute to transforming the voices they translate and investing them with new meanings. By contrast, when Belin performs the act of translating “Ain’t Talkin’,” he achieves linguistic innovation without compromising a relative degree of stability by preserving Dylan’s overall *voice* (hence blatant thematic similarities between the two songs), while entirely appropriating his *words*. As he does so, he radically departs from word-for-word translation—a move that might be expected from someone adapting lyrics meant to be sung in a different language (see section 4.2 for a more extensive discussion on the notion of ‘singability’)—and gestures towards more dynamic forms of equivalence, thus producing a uniquely personal text. As will be detailed in the next section, the need to make “Le Feu au cœur” singable in French obviously shapes Belin’s formal treatment of Dylan’s literary and musical citations, as well as his rhyme schemes. Even at the thematic level, various shifts in perspective, such as a different approach to spirituality or divergences regarding the chosen musical register, are noticeable beyond the above-mentioned similarities.

In what follows, I will endeavour to put forward some of the main differences in point of view, as well as their chief implications in terms of language use. The shift in perspective is perceptible as early as in the title (and not simply because it

transposes, quite typically, English verb forms into French substantives): while Dylan's "Ain't Talkin'" drew attention to his I-persona's silence when walking, Belin's "Le Feu au cœur" lays the emphasis, from the outset, on the inner flame that guides the walker—the phrase, which may mirror the source song narrator's ongoing yearning, explicitly recalls Dylan's "Heart burnin'" and is also repeated nine times in the lyrics (v. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 and 18), just like the motto "Je me tais, j'avance" (a more literal rendition of "Ain't Talkin', just walkin'"). Although Belin's phrase emerges as an even more powerful leitmotif in the French version as a result of its strategic use as a title, it should nevertheless be remarked that the translation "Le Feu au cœur" somehow fuses the two distinct English units "heart burnin'" and "still yearnin'," which might suggest that the target song narrator's yearning is more indefinite and, perhaps, distinct from religious faith (cf. *infra*).

Dylan's focus is shifted in other ways, too. The sense of doom that was apparent from Dylan's first verse onwards is strengthened, in Belin's version, by the removal of religious references that had the potential to comfort the traveller: for instance, the "mystic garden" that was featured in Dylan's opening line and second-to-last verse is simply translated into "ce jardin" (v. 1, l. 1; v. 17, l. 65) by Belin. Some of these references are nonetheless retained: in the third verse, where a (supposedly) benevolent mother is addressed by the narrator in the hope of being prayed for, a biblical precept, consisting in "a-tryin' to love [one's] neighbor and do good unto others" (v. 3, l. 12), is relied on, but the difficulty for any human being to remain morally upright in life is simultaneously emphasised, as "in the human heart an *evil spirit* can dwell" (v. 3, l. 11; my emphasis). As Belin puts it in an even more metaphorical way: "Il faut aimer son prochain mais tu vois comme / Un *oiseau noir* niche au cœur de l'homme" (v. 3, l. 11–12; my emphasis). Later

on, the comforting prospect of faith and the refuge with which it might provide the believer also appear to recede into the background, as if no brand of faith—let alone a religious or dogmatic one—could ever satisfy the narrator’s ongoing spiritual hunger. In this context, Dylan’s lines “I practice a faith that’s long been abandoned / Ain’t no altars on this long and lonesome road” (v. 11, l. 44–45) are, more neutrally, translated into “il n’y a pas ici de chapelles / Pour déposer le fardeau de nos âmes” (v. 11, l. 43–44); indeed, “d’aucuns disent que le ciel est vide” (v. 13, l. 52).

Predictably, the echoes of (untranslated) folk songs are collapsed into Belin’s lyrics: as we have seen, the first line Dylan quoted from The Stanley Brothers, the first half of which gave “Ain’t Talkin’” its title, is—despite its repetition in the lyrics—given less prominence and translated more literally by Belin, who, in parallel, makes the second cited line fully his own and gives it pride of place in the French title. The lines referring to “The Wayfaring Stranger”’s “weary world of woe” (v. 2, l. 6) and to “Hand Me Down My Walking Cane” (v. 10, l. 39) are respectively turned into a metaphor involving a “jardin noir de bleu” (v. 2, l. 6) and into a noun- (rather than verb-)based phrase, “Le pas mal assuré dans la pente” (v. 10, l. 38), which underscores the wanderer’s difficulty in moving forward (or even downward). The song’s Ovidian lines are not immediately recognisable either: again, Belin chooses to appropriate them instead of using official translations of *Tristia*. In this way, “I’ll make the most of one last extra hour” (v. 9, l. 36), “All my loyal and much-loved companions” (v. 11, l. 42), “Every nook and corner has its tears” (v. 15, l. 59) and the final line “In the last outback at the world’s end” (v. 18, l. 73) respectively became “Quant à moi, au bout je suis” (which rhymes with the following “Je veux venger mon père à tout prix” but semantically diverges from the English line), “Mes compagnons de route, mes

sœurs, elles” (which authoritatively ascribes a female gender to the wanderer’s companions, thus allowing this line to rhyme with the word “chappelles” in l. 43), “Partout de quoi pleurer, partout” and “Au bout du bout, dans le haut du paysage.” These translational choices differ from an official French version of the text in which these lines were rendered as “L’heure qui me reste est une heure de gloire,” “vous que j’aimai comme des frères” and “De quelque côté qu’on tournât les yeux, on ne voyait que des gens éplorés et sanglotants” (cf. Ovid s.d.). Understandably, Belin may have found the register of these (and similar ‘poetic’) translations too solemn and may have attempted to aim for less formality (for example by avoiding past subjunctive forms like *tournât*). Additionally, ‘singability’ (cf. section 4.2) required more concision in these (and other) cases.

Another notable difference between the two songs has to do with Belin’s decision, in verse 3, to clarify the notion of at least one of the dangers facing the narrator. Whereas Dylan rather vaguely alluded to the world of “speculation” (l. 26), Belin relies on a metaphor that more explicitly identifies capitalism as a threat to human beings, whose potential responsibility in their own downfall is suggested by the use of the second-person pronouns and determiner *te, toi-même, tu* and *ta* (as opposed to Dylan’s more passive third-person *they*):

Le loup capital veut ta peau
 Le monde cupide veut ta peau
 Il *te* fera lâcher tôt la lutte
Toi-même tu guideras *ta* chute (v. 7, l. 25–28; my emphasis)

More than in Dylan’s version, Belin’s metaphor induces us to equate “le loup capital” with “l’ennemi dans mon dos” (v. 1, l. 4), namely the wild and malevolent force the narrator feels chased by from the first verse onwards.

Last but not least, Belin introduces an exhausted or perhaps even dying dog (“Mon chien est à bout, à bout,” v. 12,

l. 46) as the speaker's four-legged companion, where Dylan had settled for a "sick" "mule" and a "blind" "horse" (v. 12, l. 47), which—in spite of appearances—may contribute to further darkening the song's atmosphere. Indeed, Belin has recognised a sustained interest in dogs,¹¹ which appear on all his albums. While he defines dogs as his "totem" animals, he also sees them, in keeping with Pier Paolo Pasolini's film *Teorema*, as embodiments of trouble-making figures and even as "psychopomps," namely creatures that belong to "a parallel realm" and have, consequently, the power to guide human beings towards death.

Musically, too, it can be argued that "Le Feu au cœur" sounds slightly more threatening and pessimistic than "Ain't Talkin'" as the former—unlike the latter—ends with an A-minor chord in all of Belin's renditions of the song. This is far from being the only musical difference between the two versions. Even though Belin preserves a number of crucial elements, such as the A-minor key (including, in his case, in the final chord), the overall tempo and most of the original orchestration (including drums, guitars and violas, as well as a very discreet piano), he introduces differences that point to a darker mood. For instance, the drums are much more audible in his version than in Dylan's, marking each beat as if to underline fate's inescapability. In both versions, the length of the song and its repetitive character are compensated for by instrumental and rhythmic variations with each return of the theme, although those variations appear within an unchanging harmonic and rhythmic framework. These slight variations concern the bass (transitional notes added between those marking the

11 An entire programme aired on French channel Radio Nova on 28 March 2023 and entitled "Bertrand Belin et ses 30 millions d'am.i.e.s" was even dedicated—on a funny and slightly surreal mode—to this canine obsession.

base of the chord, on the beat) and the guitar accompaniment (small rhythmic and melodic variations in the arpeggios). In Dylan's case, the drums also introduce small variations from verse to verse, whereas in Belin's case their use is more monolithic. A recurring rhythmic difference in the first words of the refrain ("ain't talkin'" in Dylan's version, "je me tais" in Belin's) reflects a difference in verb use between French and English. While there are three syllables in both linguistic versions, in Dylan, the first syllable is on the off-beat (also called upbeat or unaccented beat) and the second and third syllables are on the on-beat (also called downbeat or accented beat), whereas in Belin, the first two syllables are on the off-beat and the third syllable is on the on-beat. Thanks to this, the main verb (in English) or element of the verb (in French) is stressed (by being set on the accented beat) in both versions, even though the English verb has two syllables ("talkin'") while the French verb has only one ("tais"). Other musical differences concern the orchestration. While keeping its overall structure, Belin uses electric instead of acoustic guitars, and a bass guitar instead of a double bass. Besides, an echo effect amplifies the words "j'avance" in the refrain. On top of being darker than Dylan's, Belin's version can thus also be said to be more 'electro'. More strikingly, rather than just keeping the viola, known for its rich, deep sound, Belin uses a group of several violas, whose ornate polyphonic motifs give the song extra gravity. Finally, a sense of narrative is provided by musical means, as Belin removes Dylan's instrumental introduction and gets off to a barer, more direct start, before gradually making the orchestration richer and more dense throughout the song.

4.2 Towards Singability: Belin's Adaptation of Dylan's Rhyme Schemes

Because Belin knows, of course, that “Le Feu au cœur” will be repeatedly performed on stage, his adaptation of “Ain’t Talkin’” seeks to transcend any purely literary transposition of the original song. In his Nobel Lecture, Dylan convincingly submitted, in this regard, that “our songs are alive in the land of the living. [...] They’re meant to be sung, not read” (Dylan 2017). Yet, he does not seek to clarify—nor does Belin—what is regarded as ‘singable’. Although the concept of ‘singability’ has been addressed in various studies on music-bound texts (and their translation), it remains a slippery one. Marco Agnetta contends that with these texts, language, music, as well as scene in certain cases, “form a unified and supersummative poly-semiotic artifact (‘co-text’),” which implies that none of these genuine “work constituents” can operate as mere context (Agnetta 2024: 35). He further argues that “texts can be characterised as singable, i.e. suitable for a vocal performance, in different respects depending on whether the term of singability is primarily considered in terms of structure (a), distribution/reception (b), or performance (c) (Agnetta 2019: 342ff).” Agnetta furthermore writes:

- a. [...] from a structural point of view [, a text or its translation are singable if] they can be performed simultaneously with the original music (Dürr 2004, 1036).
- b. From a medial and physiological perspective, [...] the concrete question [...] is to what extent a translator has to consider the singers who are to perform this translation. [...].
- c. Finally, it is also possible to speak of singability where the suitability of a vocal piece is discussed in relation to the abilities of a very specific singer or ensemble. A text intended for vocal performance, possibly a translation, can be considered singable if it can be sung by a particular

intended performer, whether that performer is a mediocre or an outstanding singer. (Agnetta 2024: 23–25)

The specificity of our case study is that Belin is both the translator of “Ain’t Talkin’” and the performer of his own translation. He is, therefore, the one who guarantees “signifier unity between language and music” (Agnetta 2024: 23) and, ultimately, the production of French lyrics suiting his vocal skills, which he knows better than anyone else.

According to Low, singability, which he defines as “*relative ease of vocalisation*” (Low 2017: 81), is one of the five variables—next to sense, naturalness, rhyme and rhythm—on which his Pentathlon Principle is based, i.e. a translation tool in which none of these individual features is sacrosanct: the translator following these guidelines simply “attempts to score highly in the overall effect of the text, without insisting on unbeatable excellence on any single criterion” (ibid.: 109) since “the objective is a *high aggregate score across all these five events*” (ibid.: 80, original emphasis). Clearly, Belin strives to preserve the main structural traits of the source song. Indeed, both “Ain’t Talkin’” and “Le Feu au cœur” are strophic songs (in which each verse, or strophe, is “sung to the same music”) that include “a refrain – the same words repeated at the end of each verse” and a chiefly¹² “syllabic setting” (ibid.: 14) in each strophe (where every syllable corresponds to a note). In addition, both are narrative songs, in which “the story is carried by the words” (ibid.: 12), and more specifically first-person character ones. Moreover, both are rather logocentric, i.e. word-focused, songs even if they arguably “shift” between the logocentric and musico-

12 Melisma, which “is when one syllable is sung to more than one note” (Low 2017: 14), is used sparingly by Belin but it is generally applied to significant words (most strikingly and systematically to the term *cœur* in the refrain, in some renditions also to the terms *ean* in l. 3, *bleu* in l. 6, *suis* in l. 35, *bout* in l. 46 or *miens* in l. 54).

centric poles of the continuum, not only because the music does matter in each case, but also because “the verses (the varying stanzas) have more verbal content, whereas the repeated refrains add little to the meaning” (ibid.: 13). As a result, “Le Feu au cœur” potentially ranks among “the songs that benefit most from performance in the language of the audience,” as “logocentric” and particularly “narrative” ones do (ibid.: 74). Quite logically, in this context, Belin places a premium on Low’s third criterion, namely naturalness of language, producing “a text that could have been spontaneously created in the TL [target language]” (ibid.: 88)—which does not rule out stylistic sophistication. However, it is worth observing that Low’s other three criteria of sense, rhyme and rhythm have all been adapted to varying degrees. As has been expounded in section 4.1, aspects of verbal meaning have been “willfully modified” by Belin: this brings the target song closer to “a typical adaptation,” namely “a derivative text” that “mixes genuine transfer with forms of unforced deviation,” as opposed to “a translation,” which refers to “a ‘TT’ [target text] where all significant details of meaning have been transferred” (ibid.: 116). As will be shown in what follows, other elements, including rhyme and rhythm, have been adjusted, too. In both cases, Low advocates flexibility, claiming, on the one hand, that “the original rhyme-scheme is seldom crucial to the song” (ibid.: 105) as long as “similar frequency of rhyming” (ibid.: 78) is maintained and, on the other, that “rhythm is certainly an area where ‘tweaks’ (small adjustments) are often possible” (ibid.: 100) instead of retaining the original rhythm, i.e. the exact syllable-count, intact (see comments on Belin’s approach to metrical patterns at the end

of this section). All in all, Low defends the view that such modifications are necessary to preserve singability.¹³

With—presumably—this idea of ‘singability’ in mind, Belin does not attempt to replicate Dylan’s most unmistakable quotations. As we have seen, he decides, for instance, against providing literal translations of well-known Anglophone folk songs’ lines, which a French-speaking audience would be hard-pressed to recognise anyway; likewise, he refrains from reproducing ‘poetic’ translations of Ovidian lines, whose inadequate formality may have disrupted the French lyrics’ fluency. While a form of continuity with Dylan’s work is maintained through the preservation of rhyme schemes, the latter are, inevitably, thoroughly adapted by Belin, as the following demonstrates:

Bob DYLAN, “Ain’t Talkin’”

1	As I walked out tonight in the mystic garden	A
2	The wounded flowers were dangling from the vine	B
3	I was passing by yon cool crystal fountain	A
4	Someone hit me from behind	B
5	Ain’t talkin’, just walkin’	C
6	Through this weary world of woe	D
7	Heart burnin’, still yearnin’	C
8	No one on earth would ever know	D

-
- 13 In Low’s theory, singability loosely rests on four principles: (a) *try to have open-ended syllables*, (b) *avoid consonant clusters*, (c) *be sparing with plosive consonants* and (d) *pay close attention to vowels* (cf. Low 2017: 82–84). Drawing on Heinzelmann (2004) and Drinker (1950), Agnetta nonetheless notes that “considerations of singability are usually overrated, since not even the originals adhere to [... general] principles and since the interpreters should be credited with the ability to master or compensate the respective challenges” (Agetta 2024: 24).

Translation as Multi-Layered Performance

9	They say prayer has the power to <u>heal</u>	E
10	So pray from the mother	F
11	In the human heart an evil spirit can <u>dwell</u>	E
12	I am a-tryin' to love my neighbor and do good unto <u>others</u>	F
13	But oh, mother, things ain't going <u>well</u>	E
14	Ain't talkin', just <u>walkin'</u>	C
15	I'll burn that bridge before you can <u>cross</u>	G
16	Heart burnin', still <u>yearnin'</u>	C
17	There'll be no mercy for you once you've <u>lost</u>	G
18	Now I'm all worn down by <u>weeping</u>	C
19	My eyes are filled with tears, my lips are <u>dry</u>	H
20	If I catch my opponents ever <u>sleeping</u>	C
21	I'll just slaughter 'em where they <u>lie</u>	H
22	Ain't talkin', just <u>walkin'</u>	C
23	Through the world mysterious and <u>vague</u>	I
24	Heart burnin', still <u>yearnin'</u>	C
25	Walkin' through the cities of the <u>plague</u>	I
26	Well, the whole world is filled with <u>speculation</u>	J
27	The whole wide world which people say is <u>round</u>	K
28	They will tear your mind away from <u>contemplation</u>	J
29	They will jump on your misfortune when you're <u>down</u>	K
30	Ain't talkin', just <u>walkin'</u>	C
31	Eatin' hog-eyed grease in a hog-eyed <u>town</u>	K
32	Heart burnin', still <u>yearnin'</u>	C
33	Some day you'll be glad to have me <u>around</u>	K
34	They will crush you with wealth and <u>power</u>	F
35	Every waking moment you could <u>crack</u>	L
36	I'll make the most of one last extra <u>hour</u>	F
37	I'll avenge my father's death then I'll step <u>back</u>	L
38	Ain't talkin', just <u>walkin'</u>	C
39	Hand me down my walkin' <u>cane</u>	M
40	Heart burnin', still <u>yearnin'</u>	C
41	Got to get you out of my miserable <u>brain</u>	M
42	All my loyal and my much-loved <u>companions</u>	J
43	They approve of me and share my <u>code</u>	N
44	I practice a faith that's been long <u>abandoned</u>	J
45	Ain't no altars on this long and lonesome <u>road</u>	N

46	Ain't talkin', just walkin'	C
47	My mule is sick, my horse is <u>blind</u>	B
48	Heart burnin', still yearnin'	C
49	Thinkin' 'bout that gal I left <u>behind</u>	B
50	Well, it's bright in the heavens and the wheels are <u>flyin'</u>	C
51	Fame and honor never seem to <u>fade</u>	O
52	The fire gone out but the light is never <u>dyin'</u>	C
53	Who says I can't get heavenly <u>aid</u> ?	O
54	Ain't talkin', just walkin'	C
55	Carryin' a dead man's <u>shield</u>	P
56	Heart burnin', still yearnin'	C
57	Walkin' with a toothache in my <u>heel</u>	P
58	The sufferin' is unending	C
59	Every nook and corner has its <u>tears</u>	Q
60	I'm not playing, I'm not pretending	C
61	I'm not nursin' any superfluous <u>fears</u>	Q
62	Ain't talkin', just walkin'	C
63	Walkin' ever since the other <u>night</u>	R
64	Heart burnin', still yearnin'	C
65	Walkin' 'til I'm clean out of <u>sight</u>	R
66	As I walked out in the mystic <u>garden</u>	A
67	On a hot summer day, a hot summer <u>lawn</u>	S
68	Excuse me, ma'am, I beg your <u>pardon</u>	A
69	There's no one here, the gardener is <u>gone</u>	S
70	Ain't talkin', just walkin'	C
71	Up the road, around the <u>bend</u>	T
72	Heart burnin', still yearnin'	C
73	In the last outback at the world's <u>end</u>	T

Table 1: Verse structure and rhyme scheme
of Bob Dylan's, "Ain't Talkin'"

With the exception of the third stanza, which includes five lines (EFEFE), Dylan uses four-line stanzas (17 in all) and relies, throughout the song, on alternate rhymes, in which the first and third lines respectively rhyme with the second and fourth lines, thus following the pattern ABAB. In total, the lyrics thus feature 73 lines (1 five-line and 17 four-line stanzas) and 19

different rhymes (A-S, including the imperfect rhyme E-E'¹⁴), which change until the final stanza. Indeed, few rhymes are re-used. With the notable exception of rhyme C, only rhyme A recurs (with *garden-fountain* in stanza 1 and *garden-pardon* in stanza 17). As for rhyme C (*walkin'-yearnin'*) it is repeated nine times in the refrain (stanzas 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 and 18, where it also operates as an internal rhyme since *walkin'* and *yearnin'* respectively rhyme with *talkin'* and *burnin'*) and a variant of it (based on the *-ing*, rather than *-in'*, sound) appears in stanzas 9 and 15 with the words *weeping-sleeping* and *unending-pretending*. In addition, three rhymes may be said to echo each other through a similar *-ai-* sound, namely rhyme B (*vine-behind* in stanza 1 and *blind-behind* in stanza 12), rhyme H (*deny* and *lie* in stanza 5) and rhyme R (*night* and *sight* in stanza 16).

By contrast, Belin, whose lyrics include 72 lines (18 four-line stanzas), regularly oscillates between alternate rhymes and coupled rhymes, that is dual rhyme schemes following the pattern AABB—at least in the first half of the lyrics (v. 1–9). In the second half of the song (v. 10–18), this pendular movement is interrupted and the overall rhyme scheme shifts to al-

14 In *Translating Song: Music and Texts*, Low pleads “for tolerance of flexible rhyming” (2017: 107): while this generally involves “a willingness to accept a word as rhyming merely if the vowel is correct” (ibid.: 106), Low’s plea should be understood as “a call to extend the acceptance that has long been given to a few imperfect rhymes (e.g. time/mine in English) to the acceptance of many others” (ibid.: 107). In this broader understanding, imperfect rhymes (also called partial rhymes or near-rhymes) could include, for instance, a similar vowel type (e.g. closed vowels) used “alone or in combination with other devices like assonance or alliteration” (Apter 1985: 309–310 as quoted in Low 2017: 106), as is the case in the third stanza, where closed vowels are combined with the same final consonant (*-l(l)*). Since the main vowel sounds remain different (*i:* and *è* respectively), I have still referred to these rhymes with the distinct notations E (*i:* + *-l*, as in line 9 with *beal*) and E’ (*è* + *-ll*, as in lines 11 and 13 with *dwel* and *well*).

ternate rhymes, as in Dylan's lyrics, except that three verses prove slightly more irregular in this regard, i.e. verses 12 and 17 (where the second and fourth lines in the first case and the first and third lines in the second case do not rhyme, ending as they do with *bout-hante* and *jardin-madame*); moreover, v. 13 is partly based on coupled rhymes (as its third and fourth lines end with the words *rides* and *vide*) but the first two lines (ending with *s'ouvre* and *soulagé*) do not rhyme. However, Belin attempts to compensate for some of these losses through a perceptible reliance on repetition: for example, although v. 12's fourth line fails to rhyme with its second line (cf. *supra*), it deliberately reproduces v. 10's final line ("Toujours ton image qui me hante"), which creates its own kind of assonance, one that differs from the original but may attempt to textualise the haunting the narrator is subjected to when the image of an unnamed being recurs in their mind's eye. In the second-to-last stanza, the first line does not rhyme with the third, which nevertheless echoes a previous rhyme (N) in the eleventh stanza (indeed, *madame* rhymes with *âmes* and *flammes*, with which lines 42 and 44 respectively end). Similarly, the final stanza's alternate rhyme is based on the repetition of *j'avance* (first and third lines, as in the previous occurrences of the refrain) and the full phrase *dans le haut du paysage* (second and fourth lines). While these repetitions reduce the total number of rhymes (15 in Belin's version, against 19 in Dylan's, which may lead some to consider that this somehow 'impoverishes' the original version), they do contribute to generating a new form of regularity, reinforced by Belin's exclusive use of four-line stanzas.

Bertrand BELIN, “Le Feu au cœur”

1	Comme la nuit, je m' <u>avance</u> dans ce <u>jardin</u>	A
2	Aucune fleur debout, pas de <u>parfum</u>	A
3	À la fontaine, au chant glacé de son <u>eau</u>	B
4	Je sens l'ennemi dans mon <u>dos</u>	B
5	Je me tais, j' <u>avance</u>	C
6	Dans ce jardin noir de <u>bleu</u>	D
7	Le feu au cœur, j' <u>avance</u>	C
8	Tous ignorant tout de ce <u>feu</u>	D
9	On dit, prie et tout va <u>mieux</u>	D
10	Ô mère, prie pour moi si tu <u>peux</u>	D
11	Il faut aimer son prochain mais tu vois <u>comme</u>	E
12	Un oiseau noir niche au cœur de l' <u>homme</u>	E
13	Je me tais, j' <u>avance</u>	C
14	Passé, je brûlerai ce <u>pont</u>	F
15	Le feu au cœur, j' <u>avance</u>	C
16	Les pauvres ne portent même plus de <u>nom</u>	F
17	Je suis las, las de pleurnicher	G
18	Les larmes ne m'ont rien apporté	G
19	Si je devais les trouver endormis	H
20	Je tuerais un à un mes ennemis	H
21	Je me tais, j' <u>avance</u>	C
22	Parmi les fourberies et les tromperies	H
23	Le feu au cœur, j' <u>avance</u>	C
24	Par les villes foutues, vidées, endormies	H
25	Le loup capital veut ta <u>peau</u>	B
26	Le monde cupide veut ta <u>peau</u>	B
27	Il te fera lâcher tôt la <u>lutte</u>	I
28	Toi-même tu guideras ta <u>chute</u>	I
29	Je me tais, j' <u>avance</u>	C
30	Parmi les on-dit, dans les commérages	J
31	Le feu au cœur, j' <u>avance</u>	C
32	Il est temps de faire <u>équipage</u>	J
33	Leur mépris bientôt te <u>cloue</u>	K
34	Un beau matin, tu ne te lèves plus du <u>tout</u>	K
35	Quant à moi, au bout je suis	H
36	Je veux venger mon père à tout <u>prix</u>	H

37	Je me tais, j' <u>avance</u>	C
38	Le pas mal assuré dans la <u>pente</u>	L
39	Le feu au cœur, j' <u>avance</u>	C
40	Toujours ton image qui me <u>hante</u>	L
41	Mes compagnons de route, mes sœurs, <u>elles</u>	M
42	N'ont pas moins que moi le cœur en <u>flammes</u>	N
43	Mais il n'y a pas ici de <u>chapelles</u>	M
44	Pour déposer le fardeau de nos <u>âmes</u>	N
45	Je me tais, j' <u>avance</u>	C
46	Mon chien est à bout, à <u>bout</u>	K
47	Le feu au cœur, j' <u>avance</u>	C
48	Toujours ton image qui me <u>hante</u>	L
49	Maintenant le ciel s' <u>ouvre</u>	K
50	On veut se sentir soulagé	G
51	Honneur, sagesse et <u>rides</u>	O
52	D'aucuns disent que le ciel est <u>vide</u>	O
53	Je me tais, j' <u>avance</u>	C
54	Sur mon dos, le reste d'un des <u>miens</u>	A
55	Le feu au cœur, j' <u>avance</u>	C
56	Dans le talon, un mal de dents de <u>chien</u>	A
57	La peine semble sans <u>fin</u>	A
58	Partout de quoi pleurer, <u>partout</u>	K
59	Qui pense que cette peine est <u>feinte</u>	A
60	N'à qu'à venir ici prendre le <u>pouls</u>	K
61	Je me tais, j' <u>avance</u>	C
62	Voilà bien longtemps que je <u>crains</u>	A
63	Le feu au cœur, j' <u>avance</u>	C
64	De n'être plus qu'un point dans le <u>lointain</u>	A
65	Comme la nuit, j'avançais dans ce <u>jardin</u>	A
66	Dans la soirée d'été, dans l'herbe <u>chauffée</u>	G
67	Pardon madame, j'ai dit pardon <u>madame</u>	N
68	Il n'y a plus personne, plus de <u>jardinier</u>	G

69	Je me tais, j' <u>avance</u>	A
70	Me voilà dans le haut du <u>paysage</u>	J
71	Le feu au cœur, j' <u>avance</u>	A
72	Au bout du bout, dans le haut du <u>paysage</u>	J

Table 2: Verse structure and rhyme scheme
of Bertrand Belin's, "Le Feu au cœur"

Arguably, an all-too-detailed analysis of metrical patterns may nevertheless prove fruitless or even irrelevant insofar as they do not display the type of strict regularity—either within the lyrics of each song or between the English and the French versions—one might expect to find in a poem (in a formally well-defined or categorised one at least). As regards song translation and more particularly rhythm, the fifth and last criterion of the previously discussed Pentathlon Principle, Low aptly recalls that “*when translators of strophic songs make minor adjustments from verse to verse, they are simply claiming latitudes that are a normal part of songwriting*” (Low 2017: 101). Indeed, Belin does not seek to match Dylan’s lines as regards the exact number of syllables, just as neither singer strives, in their own lyrics, to produce perfectly regular stanzas. As Dylan pointed out in his Nobel Lecture (2017: s.p.), “songs are unlike literature” and give a kind of metrical leeway formal poetry cannot offer, one that may be strengthened by live performances during which the performers may take more liberties with their material and rhythmic patterns in particular. One noteworthy exception to this is, unsurprisingly, the refrain: as it provides the rhythmic backbone to the song, its unchanging lines (i.e. the first and third lines: “Ain’t talkin’, just walkin’ / Heart burnin’, still yearnin’” in Dylan’s lyrics, “Je me tais, j’avance / Le feu au cœur, j’avance” in Belin’s) are metrically regular and include the smallest, as well as a near-identical, number of syllables in both versions (six syllables in the first line and six in the third for Dylan’s, against five in the first and six in the third for Belin’s).

4.3 The Performance(s) of Translation: Belin's Reiterations of "Le Feu au cœur"

As proposed above, the specificity of this translation, which may now be more productively envisioned as an adaptation, is that it was also self-used by Belin. As a translator-performer, he performed not only the act of adapting Dylan's "Ain't Talkin'," but also the song itself in a more traditional sense, as musical performers generally do. While an electric studio recording of "Le Feu au cœur" was released in October 2019 on the second edition of Belin's sixth album *Persona*, the song was also performed and recorded as an acoustic live session, which was posted on social media (Facebook and Instagram) on 5 February 2020 (cf. section 4.1). More informal recordings of the French cover are available on online platforms like YouTube. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the suspension of cultural activities for many months, only seven (solo acoustic and electric) renditions of the song can currently be found, which were respectively performed—with minor yet noticeable variations¹⁵—on the stages of the following six French venues:

15 For example, the lyrics may be slightly modified: a word may be changed, as in "Ô mère, prie pour moi si tu *veux* [instead of *peux*]" in l. 10 (Casino de Paris, 4 December 2019; FNAC Live festival, 1 July 2022), or "Dans la *chaleur* [instead of *soirée*] d'été, dans l'herbe *coupée* [instead of *chauffée*]" in l. 66 (Casino de Paris, 4 December 2019, and Marciac, 14 December 2019, in the first case, FNAC Live festival in the second); a syllable may be added, as in "*Et* toujours ton image qui me hante" in l. 48 (Marciac); a specific term may be stressed, such as *chien* in l. 56 (Cassuejouis, 27 May 2023) or *peine* in l. 57 and 59 (Casino de Paris, 4 December 2019, and Marciac respectively), or the final line (l. 72) may be repeated (FNAC Live festival). At the musical level, some guitar parts may be added, lengthened and/or transformed: for instance, Belin may improvise more or less extensively after certain stanzas (after stanza 16 in Marciac and Cassuejouis) or at the end of the piece (Marciac and Cassuejouis).

Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris (5 October 2019, *Le Monde* Festival), Casino de Paris (4 and 5 December 2019), Marciac's L'Astrada (14 December 2019), Alfortville's !POC! [Pôle Culturel] (15 January 2020), Paris's Grand Salon de l'Hôtel de Ville (1 July 2022, in the framework of the 2022 edition of the FNAC Live festival) and Église Saint-Cyr and Sainte-Julitte in Cassuejous, Aveyron (27 May 2023, "Bon Esprit de Clocher" Micro Festival). These unofficial recordings do not consider potentially unrecorded and—by definition—unrepeatable variants that may have been, and will be, performed live.¹⁶

As Robinson asserts in his reading of Derrida (cf. section 2), each of these performances can be regarded as an iteration which "is simultaneously *repeating* something that went before and *adapting* that thing to the current speech situation, localizing it" (Robinson 2003/2014: 67). In other words, not only is Belin's translation (or adaptation) a performance that takes part in an iterative process but it is also the case that every *embodied* performance of that translation (or adaptation) actually participates in that very same process. In Robinson's "physicalist approach" (1991: xiii), translation (and adaptation) "take place under the aegis of body" (ibid.: xiii–xiv). Through, firstly, the *act* of translating (or adapting) a seemingly singular discursive event like a song and, secondly, through its subsequent stage performances, the body arguably plays, then, a crucial part in turning *iterability* into *iterations*, i.e. in materialising the ever-present *possibility*, for discursive events, to come to pass and—in that 'taking-place'—morph into actual (or *eventual*, to use Derrida's terminology) and embodied occurrences. Bodily experi-

16 For instance, a French website specialising in gig setlists (www.setlist.fr) references that the song was also performed on 18 December 2019 in Lille (Théâtre Sébastopol).

ence thus conditions translation in at least two ways. Indeed, “somatic intuition” not only “guides the performance of the translator’s task” (Robinson 1991: xv)—often “past fictions of equivalence” (ibid.: xvi) that have repeatedly been called into question, not least by Derrida whose concept of *différance* leads every linguistic mark to be essentially split (cf. section 2)—, but it also shapes all the following reiterations of a given translation (or adaptation).

5 Conclusion: Songs as ‘Event-Ridden’ Performatives, Translation as Performance and the Performance(s) of Translation

In this essay, what has been at stake is a thorough reexamination of the extent to which the Derridean concept of iterability and its implications can help us gain a better understanding of the performative. Iterability, which theoretically enables the repetition of a linguistic mark, is indeed intimately interconnected with performability insofar as language’s ability to signify depends on its capacity to be performed and reperformed, cited and recited or even misperformed and miscited through all kinds of iterations (or actual event-occurrences). As we have seen, iterability and the related concept of performability also concern translation studies since every apparently singular discursive event can be (re)iterated, i.e. both preserved *and* changed, by individual acts of translation whereby the translators’ voices mix with the source authors’.

In this context, we have explored how a song could possibly be conceived of as the performative *par excellence*, namely as the “most ‘event-ridden’ utterance” (Derrida 1988: 19; my emphasis) in discourse. Located in-between written and spoken

language due to its typical alliance between lyrics and musical (or sung) features, a song is indeed characterised by its absolute singularity but also by the impossibility of pure reproducibility. As a unique artwork, it might appear as a singular and original event-utterance (cf. Derrida 1988: 18) but as a result of language's intrinsic structure of iterability, namely the *possibility* of a linguistic mark being repeated, "an allegedly original 'event' [...] is itself divided and multiple" (ibid.: 33): as we have seen, even if a discursive event "seems to have occurred only once [...], it] is in itself divided and multiplied in advance by its structure of repeatability" (ibid.: 48) and is, therefore, "capable of being reiterated as though it were the first time" (ibid.: 50). Moreover, as Derrida insistently recalls, iteration involves difference-in-sameness in that it alters "whatever it seems to reproduce" (ibid.: 40). This is illustrated by the multiple individual performances of a single song: every time the latter is performed, "something new takes place" (ibid.: 40). In this way, the song, as a structurally iterable and thus necessarily impure event—i.e. one that need not but can, in essence, be reiterated and consequently altered—, achieves "eventhood" (ibid.: 99) or the status of an occurrence, i.e. a seemingly singular, actual, datable event that, in fact, might be endlessly reiterated in slightly different (and infinitely diverse) shapes.

In this sense, the concept of iterability is "never pure" or "safe from all contamination" (Derrida 1988: 119). According to Derrida, iterability is "an aconceptual concept," one that is "heterogeneous to the philosophical concept of the concept" insofar as it "marks both the possibility and limit of [...] all conceptualization" (ibid.: 118). As this essay has shown, "iterability" does not simply signify [...] repeatability of the same, but rather alterability of this same idealized in the singularity of the event" (ibid.: 119). The apparent singularity of the discursive event is, therefore, illusory to the extent that language's

structure of “repeatability itself ensures that the full presence of a singularity thus repeated comports in itself the reference to something else, thus rendering the full presence it nevertheless announces” (ibid.: 129). For this reason, iteration can never be equated with sheer repetition.

In the performative perspective of iterability, Dylan and Belin can both be regarded as iterators, whose localising acts and idiosyncratic modes of iteration reflect something of their approach to art. For Dylan, iteration seems to be part and parcel of the creative process. As I have argued, quotations in “Ain’t Talkin’”—be they excerpted from traditional folk songs or literary classics—are too numerous and too obvious not to be deliberate and are fused, with the rest of Dylan’s lyrics, into a new work of art. Folk music, as a genre whose origins can be traced back to the roots of popular music, perhaps just like music as a more general category, is a language that is both historical and out of time, one that becomes universal by dint of being repeated—and yet endlessly renewed. This is precisely what Dylan suggests in the final paragraph of his *Philosophy of Modern Song*:

music [...] is of a time but also timeless; a thing with which to make memories and the memory itself. Though we seldom consider it, music is built in time as surely as a sculptor or welder works in physical space. Music transcends time by living within it, just as reincarnation allows us to transcend life by living it again and again. (Dylan 2022: 334)

As a form of iteration, translation involves change rather than a mere repetition of the same, as Belin’s “Le Feu au cœur” doubly evidences. On the one hand, the performance of translation in “Le Feu au cœur” emerges as a creative act, which Belin himself defines as an adaptation. This adaptation,

through which Belin, as a translator-performer,¹⁷ creatively mixes his words with Dylan's and others', thus making those entirely his own, is further embodied, oralised and transformed by its various performances, whether acoustic or electric, on record or on stage. While its live performances ensure a form of continuity with Dylan's work, if only because the original version of "Ain't Talkin'" has not been performed on stage since 7 November 2013 (in Rome),¹⁸ they also contribute to adapting and localising what they appear to reiterate since we modify whatever we somatize and alter whatever we repeat. Translation as performance *versus* the performance(s) of translation: the possible coexistence of these reciprocal phrases ultimately serves to confirm language's mutability-in-sameness in the performative realm. As this case study has hopefully demonstrated, translation, in this understanding, merely extends a supposed original which is itself, in fact, but a derivative

17 It should be noted that the terms 'performer' and 'performance' have been understood and applied in diverse ways to translators and translation. As a performer, a translator is, for instance, supposedly also able to perform "the fictional world depicted in a literary piece" in their mind, "leading to *cognition*" (Piecychna 2021: 46). As Beata Piecychna points out in her essay entitled "Translational Hermeneutics Meets Cognitive Science: On the Notion of Performance, Intersubjectivity and Space in the Translational Process," "translation here is understood [...] as the act of performing the storyworld depicted in the source text" (ibid.: 47). In this so-called "paradigm of embodied simulation," the translator also makes it "possible for the reader to visualize the experience described": in this way, the former has the power to shape the latter's mental—not least spatial—perceptions and representations, "as if the reader performed or observed the actions themselves" (ibid.: 50).

18 According to The Official Bob Dylan Site (www.bobdylan.com), the song was played 118 times on the Never Ending Tour between 20 November 2006 (its live debut at New York City Center) and 7 November 2013 (its last performance to date at Rome's Atlantico).

intertext. In the concluding lines of his aforementioned Lecture, the 2016 recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature seemed well aware of this when he stated:

I hope some of you get the chance to listen to these lyrics the way they were intended to be heard: in concert or on record or however people are listening to songs these days. I return once again to Homer, who says, “Sing in me, oh Muse, and through me tell the story.” (Dylan 2017: s.p.)

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When Performance is not a Metaphor for Translation: Translation as “Performative Event”

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to theorise translation as a performative event (term coined by Stuart Grant 2013). Theories on translation and performativity in Translation Studies have historically been developed from Linguistics or from Performance Studies. Perhaps less known among Translation Studies scholars is the work of performance theorist and philosopher Grant, who recognises the need for a clearer definition of terms related to performance theory and practice. He therefore draws a clear distinction between “*the performative event, performance, the moment of performance, and the theatrical as opposed to the performative*” (Grant 2013: 127). These concepts provide a starting point for my theoretical analysis of sign language interpreting of popular music and live concerts. In my research I have demonstrated that in the work of sign language interpreter-performers, the performative event as intended by Grant (2013, 2015) is itself the translation, and the moment of performance is itself performative not in a metaphorical sense, but in its tangible embodiment and in its very essence (see Tarantini 2023). In this article I will look at how Grant’s theories are applicable to translation more broadly, and can be functional to theorise translation as an event: a performative event.

Keywords: Translation, Sign-language-interpreted music, Performance.

1 Introduction

This article¹ starts from an analysis of the performativity of sign-language-interpreted music to demonstrate how in the practice of song signing, the actual “performative event” (as intended by Grant 2013, 2015) is itself the translation (cf. also Tarantini 2023). The conclusions drawn from this theoretical investigation are then applied to the work of the translator more broadly in order to verify whether the act of translation, understood in the broadest sense of the term, can be considered a performative event. Before delving into the theoretical aspects, however, it is necessary to define the object of my analysis. There are different types of songs in sign language, ranging from original compositions by deaf song-signing artists to amateur signers who attempt to translate a song into a sign language, to professional interpreters, either deaf² or

1 This study is part of a larger and recently-concluded project titled “When Accessibility Becomes Performance: Sign Language Interpreting in Music and Live Concerts as ‘Performative Rewriting’”, which was carried out at Cardiff University with funding received from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 101024733.

2 Scholars in Deaf Studies (see e.g. Kusters et al. 2017) have put forth the proposition that we should move away from the d/Deaf and hard of hearing nomenclature and use ‘deaf’ as umbrella term. Until recently, the convention was to use the lower-case ‘deaf’ to refer to the physiological condition of hearing loss, and the capital D in ‘Deaf’ to indicate a person who belongs to a sign language community and whose cultural identity is connected to their deafness (see Ladd 2003). Some scholars (see e.g. Morêdo Pereira 2021) maintain that the distinction d/Deaf is still relevant, and in some countries (like Australia or the Netherlands) the definition ‘hard of hearing’ (*slechthorend* in Dutch) is commonly and extensively used. In this article I will use ‘deaf’ as broad umbrella term as suggested by Kusters et al. (2017). However, when

hearing, who translate music for accessibility purposes or for self-expression. The most recent and comprehensive classification of signed songs is provided by Morêdo Pereira (2021: 101).³ In this article, and in my work in general, I focus exclusively on songs signed by professional interpreters, whether hearing or deaf, with the aim of facilitating access to music for deaf signers, whether as a live interpretation service or as a recorded video. Working from the premises theorised in Tarantini (2023), this article examines the practice of sign language interpreting in music as a translation and performative practice, and expands the concept of performativity to encompass the evental and experiential aspects of translation. In order to do so, I will apply the definitions by performance theorist and philosopher Grant (2015, 2013) to the work of the sign language interpreter-performers first and then, more broadly, to the work of the translator in general. I will then combine this new perspective of the ‘performance’ of the translator with the theories currently being formulated amongst scholars who conceive of translation as experiential (see Campbell/Vidal 2024a, Blumczynski 2023, among others).

In this article I use the term ‘translation’ as an umbrella term, in the awareness that there are differences between interpreting and translation. The term ‘translation’ is often used “for a written target-language reformulation of a written source text” whereas “interpretation or interpreting [is used for] a non-written re-expression of a non-written source text” (Gile 2004: 11). However, there are many areas of overlap between the two, and particularly in the practice of song signing. Some

quoting the work of other scholars verbatim, I will use their words and therefore their nomenclature/spelling.

- 3 Other classifications have been put forth by Bahan (2006) and Maler (2013).

signed songs are a form of interpreting (e.g. live interpretation services) while others can be classified as sign language translation rather than interpretation. For examples, videos where the interpreter-performer has the time to translate the lyrics, prepare the performance, film it and share it on social media can be considered a form of sign language translation, whereas a live concert would be a form of sign language interpreting (depending on how much preparation time the interpreter-performer had, though). I will therefore use the term ‘translation’ as an umbrella term to refer to any practice which entails the transposition of the lyrics and other nonverbal elements of the musical text into sign language in the context of song signing.

2 Sign-Language-Interpreted Music, or Song Signing

In recent years, a number of practitioners have started to translate popular music and live events (such as concerts and musical theatre) into sign language as a way to facilitate access to music to deaf signers. Among the organisations that provide this type of service are *Performance Interpreting* in the UK, *Auslan Stage Left* in Australia, *Muziektolken* in the Netherlands, and interpreter-performers such as Giulia Clementi in Italy, and Amber Galloway Gallego and Holly Maniatti in the USA (among others). This practice, also known as ‘song signing’ in the UK, and ‘sign dancing’ or ‘muziek tolken’ (music interpreting) in the Netherlands, has been object of analysis in disciplines such as Deaf Studies (cf. Cripps 2018, Cripps et al. 2017) and Musicology (cf. Maler 2015 and 2013, Mangelsdorf et al. 2021, Holmes 2017), but so far has received very little attention from Translation Studies scholars, with some noticeable exceptions (e.g. Desblache 2020, Tarantini 2025). There are a number of reasons why this practice may have been over-

looked in Translation Studies. One could be that in order to conduct an analysis of the translation of songs into sign language it is vital to adopt an interdisciplinary approach, as this practice cannot be scrutinised without drawing on a wide range of disciplines. Interdisciplinary work always brings limitations and challenges with it, as a scholar cannot possibly master all the different disciplines this practice draws upon (Translation Studies, Performance Studies, Music, Musicology, Sign Language, Accessibility Studies, Deaf Studies, etc.). Another reason could be the one put forth by Desblache, a scholar in Music and Translation, who claims that the reticence to investigate accessibility practices in music is due to the fact that:

for many, in many contexts [...], music is still considered as separate from other forms of expression, and best left to specialists. In some case, it is true. [...] But in most situations, basic knowledge of song form, prosody and musical genre suffices. (Desblache 2020: 725)

Another reason why this practice has been overlooked in Translation Studies could be the fact that song translations are not always welcome by the deaf community (cf. Cripps et al. 2017: 3; Fisher 2021: 2; Holmes 2017: 200). While acknowledging the importance of the issue, an in-depth discussion thereof is beyond the scope of the present study, but also beyond my limitations, given that I am a hearing Translation Studies scholar. I do, however, believe that more cross-/interdisciplinary work is required to fully understand the practice of translating songs into sign language. A theoretical perspective from Translation Studies, which has thus far been lacking in most work on this topic, could be useful to other disciplines and increase our understanding of these practices in the context of the global entertainment industry and the current translation landscape. Moreover, the study of sign-language-interpreted music functions as a case study whose premises, and

possibly the conclusions, can be applied in Translation Studies more broadly.

3 Grant's classification of the elements of 'performance'

After Robinson first analysed translation as a performative activity with perlocutionary effect (cf. Robinson 2003), a number of scholars have engaged with the notion of performativity in translation in some form or another, so much so that Bigliuzzi et al. (2013: 1) started talking about a “performative turn” in Translation Studies. This has led to a view of translation “*as performance*” (Aaltonen 2013: 386, original emphasis, see also Agnetta 2021). The performative turn in Translation Studies has bred two distinct yet related notions of performativity. Performativity can be seen as related to the performance of the translator, thus related to the effect of the work of the translator on the actual ‘text’ (cf. Cheetham 2016), or, more broadly, to the actual “*acts* of translation and what these *did* in particular contexts” (Bermann 2014: 288, original emphasis), thus related to the effect of translation on society at large. According to Bermann the discipline of Translation Studies has broadened its focus to encompass “the cultural and political *acts* and *effects* of translation” and to examine “the *doing* of translation [...] but also the doing of translators, readers, and audiences” (Bermann 2014: 288, original emphasis). Similarly, Michela Baldo understands performativity “in terms of an activist translation, understood as a political activity aimed at achieving social transformation” (Baldo 2019: 74).⁴ Theatre translation scholar Marinetti (2013) also views the notion of performativity as re-

4 On the topic of translation and activism, cf. also Tymoczko (2010).

lational to the audience, rather than an intrinsic feature of the work of the translator.

The notion of performativity in Translation Studies has been developed working either from Austin's linguistic notion of performativity (cf. Austin ²1975), as did Robinson in *Performative Linguistics: Speaking and Translating as Doing Things with Words* (2003), or from performance theorists such as Schechner (³2013, 2003) and Worthen (2003), as did Aaltonen (2013) and Marinetti (2013, 2018). However, I believe that the theories mediated from Performance Philosophy could contribute to the discussion, as also noted by Campbell/Vidal (2022). According to performance theorist and philosopher Grant there is:

a persistent confusion in performance studies, caused by the historical accident that, in English, the word 'performance' can be used to designate a number of different phenomena. No doubt the collapse of sign and referent in Austin's performative utterance contributes to this situation (1975, 5-6). (Grant 2013: 127–128)

Grant (2015) states that with theorisation of the performative utterance in linguistics, in which “the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action” (Austin ²1975: 5), “the boundaries between the *saying* and the *doing* have collapsed” (Tarantini 2023: 101, original emphasis). Despite it being “a founding moment in the discipline of performance studies” (Grant 2015: 214), this collapse has caused terminological and conceptual confusion. The confusion identified by Grant in Performance Studies has been somehow ‘transposed’ into the discipline of Translation Studies. As a matter of fact, when talking about ‘performativity’ in Translation Studies, scholars feel the need (and rightly so) to provide a working definition of the term, and that could be the consequence of this ‘original’ confusion identified by Grant (2013, 2015). Grant’s proposes a distinction between “*the performative event, performance, the moment*

of performance, and the theatrical as opposed to the performative?” (Grant 2013: 127, original emphasis), which stems from the need to clarify the confusion surrounding the vague notion of performance. While Grant’s classification has already been applied to the work of song signers (cf. Tarantini 2023), in this article I argue that his distinction could be functional to clarify the notion of performance and performativity in Translation Studies more broadly.

In his article titled “What if? Performance is Risk” Grant claims that the *performative event* could be “a ritual, a theatre show, a sports game, a ceremony, a rehearsal, a social occasion such as a date or a job interview, a presidential inauguration speech, the cooking of a meal, the painting of a picture, a prayer” (Grant 2013: 128–129). Instead, the word *performance* “refers to that moment of the performative event in which it performs, in which it is performed [...] performance is understood here as a kind of essence which makes performative events performative” (Grant 2013: 129). In another research output Grant (2015: 216) defines this as “the essence of performance”, which in my opinion is even clearer. Grant then moves on to the notion of the *performative moment* (or *moment of performance*): a moment irremediably bound in time:

the moment of *decision*. This decision is not to be understood as the decision of the will of a subject choosing among pre-existent options, but of the complex set of forces at play which necessitate and determine the actions of the performer giving themselves over in the coming forth of the absolutely singular instance of the improvisation. The decision offers itself to the performer. (Grant 2013: 129–130, original emphasis)

Grant (2015) works from Heidegger’s notion of *Augenblick* which translates literally into “the blink of an eye” and “describes a ‘decisive moment’ in time that is both fleeting yet momentarily eventful” (Ward 2008: i). Using the Heideggerian concept of *Augenblick*, “the moment of vision, which tempo-

realizes itself in a resolution” (Heidegger 1962: 394, as cited in Grant 2015: 220), Grant theorises and defines the concept of “moment of performance”: that performative moment in which the performer “chooses amongst the range of possibilities open to them in that instant” (Tarantini 2023: 102, working from Grant 2013, 2015). According to Grant, that moment is always, at least in part, improvisational, regardless of how ‘well-rehearsed’ a show is. To further clarify the notion of the performative moment, which is tied to its fleeting nature and its temporality, Grant (2013) draws another distinction, i.e. that between the *theatrical* and the *performative*.

The *theatrical* dimension of the performative event is the showing-to, the attempt to represent, make predictable and repeatable, to communicate with or affect another, the endurance of the sign, the material, the temporal. The *performative* dimension is the flash of the moment of the coming-forth, the almost imperceptible, unencompassable, and inexperienceable inceptive occurrence, the doing, which, in its apprehension, ceases to function as what it was, and joins the apparatus of the theatrical, the enduring. The performative temporalises, the theatrical is already in time; in the theatrical, the representational gap of metaphysics has already opened, the performative occurs as the unfolding of Being. A performative event is always, in these definitions, a combination of the theatrical and the performative. The two dimensions always work together as complementary axes of the temporality of performance. In the performative event, the theatrical and the performative cannot exist without each other. (Grant 2015: 216–217, original emphasis)

Grant’s theorization of the performative event, the essence of performance, the performative moment⁵ and the theatrical vs the performative is functional to a discussion of the practice of sign-language-interpreted songs but also, more broadly, is ap-

5 Grant (2013, 2015) uses the terms *performative moment* and *moment of performance* interchangeably, as well as *performance event* and *performative event*. In this article I do the same.

plicable to the work of the translator in general. I will start from the specific case study and then move on to the broader context of translation.

Let us apply Grant's definitions to the specific case study of song signing. The *performative event* would be a concert, a musical theatre performance, or the filming of an interpreted song which is then sometimes, but not always, uploaded on YouTube or other social media. Whether the event is live or recorded is irrelevant for the purpose of this analysis. There are, of course, differences between the two practices, most importantly that with a live performance the interpreter-performer gets immediate feedback from the audience, and their performance is ephemeral. The *moment of performance*, or *performative moment*, is when the interpreter has to choose between the vast array of options available to them to transfer what they consider 'the message' of the original 'text' (I will go back to the notion of 'message' and 'text' later). It is what Grant defines "the moment of *decision*" (Grant 2013: 129, original emphasis), and that moment is always, at least in part, improvisational, even if a performance is well-prepared and rehearsed. As scholars who have often given lectures and seminars and/or presented at conferences, we know all too well that, no matter how much we write and prepare and rehearse a presentation or a lecture, the moment of performance, the moment in which we give the presentation or lecture, will be at least in part improvisational. According to Grant, that moment will be a combination of *the theatrical* and *the performative*, the theatrical being what is rehearsed and 'scripted' and the performative being what is improvised in the performative moment. It is in the *moment of performance* that the *essence of performance* manifests itself, and makes the moment of performance, in fact, performative. If we understand performativity as both an attribute of performance and as the potential to achieve social transformation, we can

see how in sign-language-interpreted music, performativity is an element and a carrier, if not the main vector, of accessibility.⁶

Grant's distinction clarified different concepts that until then had been vaguely classified under the umbrella term 'performance.' I believe that this vagueness contributed to the development of different definitions of performativity in Translation Studies. By applying Grant's classification, we can see that performativity is attributed to the essence of performance, which manifests itself in the performative moment, during a performative event. Performativity is then irremediably linked to the event itself, and to the moment of performance. A performative understanding of translation, then, must necessarily entail the conceptualisation of translation as an event.

4 Translation as an event

Grant's clarification of what was once ambiguously classified as 'performance' sheds light not only within Performance Studies and Performance Philosophy, but also in Translation Studies, for those scholars working across disciplines and/or adopting and adapting terms and concepts mediated from Performance Studies and Performance Theory. The fact that the notion of performativity was elaborated working from a vaguely defined notion of 'performance' and 'performative' may have contributed to the multiple and sometimes blurry definitions of performativity within Translation Studies. If we apply, as we have, Grant's nomenclature to the work of sign language interpreter-performers, we can say that:

6 An extensive discussion on the topic goes beyond the scope of the present article. For a more detailed insight of the notion of performativity as a vector of accessibility, and of the combination of performativity intended as 'relational to performance' and as 'relational to the audience', I refer to Tarantini (2023).

- the performative event is the concert, the musical theatre show, the video where the interpreter-performer provides their signed interpretation of a song;
- the performative moment is when they choose amongst the range of possibilities open to them;
- the essence of performance is what makes that moment performative;
- the theatrical vs the performative is what is ‘scripted’ and rehearsed vs what is improvised in the performative moment.⁷

Can Grant’s terminology in relation to performance be applied to the work of the translator more broadly? If we adopt a performative understanding of translation (cf. Cheetham 2016), and we consider translation as a performative action (cf. Robinson 2003) with an impact both on the text and on society at large (cf. Bermann 2014, among others), then it is not only possible, but also functional to clarifying what we mean by the ‘performance’ of the translator, “the *doing* of translation [...] but also the *doing* of translators, readers, and audiences” (Bermann 2014: 288, original emphasis).

In the practice of ‘simple’ interlingual translation, or “translation proper” as defined by Jakobson (1959: 233), the performative event would be when the translator is sitting at their desk, translating a text of any kind. In the context of live interpreting, it would be when the interpreter is providing their live interpretation service, be it in person or remotely. The performative moment is the moment when the translator chooses among the various options available to them while translating or interpreting. As practicing translators and/or interpreters, we know that those choices are hardly ever straightforward.

7 As I argue elsewhere (cf. Tarantini 2023), that is the moment when accessibility becomes performance.

The essence of performance is what makes that moment performative. If we understand the practice of translation and interpreting as a performative practice, we can see how performativity manifests itself through the essence of performance, which is what will ultimately make the performative moment performative. In this sense ‘performative’ means that the practice of translation, or rather, the event, will have an impact both on the work (i.e. the translated text) and on the recipient (i.e. the reader or the audience). The moment of performance will be a combination of the theatrical and the performative, i.e. a combination of what has been ‘prepared’ and what is ‘spontaneous’ at the moment of performance. While it is easier to see how this is applicable to a live event, like a live interpreting job, even in the practice of a written translation, the translator finds themselves in the position to choose among the range of possibilities available to them. Despite the preparation they may have put in translating a certain passage or certain terminology, and the amount of research carried out on a specific topic or semantic area to translate a specific word or sentence, at the moment of performance, i.e. while translating, they might decide to go down a different route. The difference between the two is a fundamental one: while the moment of performance in a live show is ephemeral and irreversible, a translator working on a text sitting at their desk can always go back and revisit their decision. Yet, the “moment of performance” is the moment of decision, much like Grant claims. Even though in the case of the translation of a written text, that moment of decision can be re-winded and re-enacted, the decision made in that moment when the translation is ‘performed’, i.e. the performative moment, is ultimately what the audience will read. Translation, then, can be seen as an event, and a performative one at that.

At this point, two considerations need to be made: the first is related to the performative moment, and the second is related to the theatrical vs the performative. When defining the performative moment as “the moment of *decision*” Grant (2013: 129, original emphasis) specifies that:

[t]his decision is not to be understood as the decision of the will of a subject choosing among pre-existent options, but of the *complex set of forces at play* which necessitate and determine the actions of the performer [...]. The decision offers itself to the performer (Grant 2013: 129, my emphasis).

Scholars working in Sociology of Translation claim that the translator also has to take into account “a complex set of forces” (to use Grant’s words) such as agents, structures, “culturally connotated value systems and ideologies” (Wolf 2007: 4). Much like the performer operates within a complex semiotic system, the translator works within a multi-layered social structure and, to use Grant’s phrasing, the decision offers itself to the translator, and the decision will be the outcome of that complex set of forces at play, where the issue of power is of vital importance, and the agency of the translator is only one of those forces. The second consideration is related to the distinction between the theatrical vs the performative in translation. The notion of the theatrical and the performative as theorized by Grant is easily applicable to the performative event of live interpreting jobs. Grant notices how in a performative event “[t]he performative temporalises, the theatrical is already in time” (Grant 2013: 130-131). In the case of the translation of a written text, the audience (in this case the reader) will not witness the performative moment in ‘real time’, because the decision will have been made, and will already be temporalized. This, however, does not mean that the performative moment did not take place. While “the performative occurs as the unfolding of being” (Grant 2013: 131), what the reader experi-

ences is already “temporalize[d] in a resolution” (Heidegger 1962: 394, as cited in Grant 2015: 220).

So far, I have discussed the application of Grant’s theories to the practice of sign-language-interpreted music, and to the work of the interlingual translator in general. However, more recently there has been a tendency in Translation Studies to broaden the focus of investigation to encompass more and more cross-disciplinary and intersemiotic practices that focus on the experience of translation.

5 Translation: from performative to experiential?

Recently, a group of scholars, artists, and practitioner-researchers have gathered in the *Experiential Translation Network* led by translation scholars Ricarda Vidal and Madelaine Campbell.⁸ The network epitomises the shift from a performative to an experiential understanding of translation that we are currently witnessing, and an enhanced interest in the notion of intersemiotic translation. This was already evident in the chapters included in the book edited by Campbell/Vidal (2019). However, the more recent work carried out by the members of the network (but not only) seems to further transcend the classic, Jakobsonian idea of intersemiotic translation (Jakobson 1959), as we shall see. The work of Karen Bennett (2024), investigating soundscapes and intersemiotic translation, and that of Irene Fiordilino (2022), dancer, choreographer and scholar who researches mapping as a method to translate kinaesthetic experience, are just examples of the work carried out by scholars working in translation and the arts, either in collaboration with artists (see Perteghella/Clausen 2022) or cross-disciplinarily,

8 URL: <<https://experientialtranslation.net/>> (05/01/2024).

using art as a medium but with a theoretical framework mediated from Translation Studies (see Vidal Claramonte 2022). Similarly, a collection edited by Tarantini, Fiordilino & Chojnicka (in progress) looks at multimodality and the arts in themselves as forms of intersemiotic translation inherent in artistic practice and research. In the introduction to the recent collection edited by Campbell/Vidal, the editors claim that:

the translator's subject position in relation to the semios and materiality of the 'original' is transformed by the role of experimentation, creativity and play [...]. Experiential translation views translation as a holistic, co-creative process of discovery and renewal in a dynamic ecological context where Western anthropocentric discourse is displaced by a pluriverse of local and global, analogue and digital, (dis)embodied voices. (Campbell/Vidal 2024b: 2–3)

The whole collection revolves around this notion. Along the same lines Blumczynski, going back to the original understanding of translation as the transfer of relics, explores “translations of bodies, living and dead, from a semiotic and experiential perspective” (Blumczynski 2023: 37). Despite this distinct and recognisable trend, much like Blumczynski I will refrain from talking about another ‘turn’ in Translation Studies. First and foremost, because the notion of performativity and that of experientiality are not mutually exclusive, but quite the contrary, as we shall see. Rather than a ‘turn’, I would say that the notion of performativity is being integrated with that of experientiality, and I will explain how in the following section. Secondly and perhaps most importantly because I echo Marais’ notion that while the various turns in Translation Studies:

had the aim of expanding the conceptualization of translation [...] on the one hand, many of these broadening efforts did not broaden the conceptualization of translation itself, but just broadened the context in which interlingual translation is studied. On the other hand, I do not think that the turns, jointly, have provided us with the broadest possible conceptualization of translation. (Marais 2019: 7)

In his *(Bio)Semiotic Theory of Translation*, Marais (2019) argues that translation should be viewed as a process of meaning-making involving different codes, not necessarily verbal. Marais makes his claim starting from the assumption that the great misnomer in Translation Studies has been an understanding of intersemiotic translation working from Jakobson, according to whom “intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of *verbal signs* by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (Jakobson 1959: 233, original emphasis). According to Marais, instead, scholars should adopt a Peircean conceptualisation of intersemiotic translation, where both sign systems can be nonverbal. Marais goes on to state that an understanding of translation as a meaning-making process involving any kind of sign systems would, indeed, provide scholars with the broadest possible conceptualization of translation, without the need for further ‘turns.’ Moreover, as Blumczynski (2023) has cautioned us to remember, the very notion of “translation proper” is what delimited an originally broader concept of translation which already entailed an experiential and a material and corporeal component.

6 Meaning-making in sign-language-interpreted music

A meaning-making process involving different sign systems, not always and not necessarily verbal, is epitomized in the work of song signers, i.e. those professional interpreters (or interpreter-performers, as I call them) who incorporate nonverbal elements of the text in their signed interpretation. Sign language interpreter-performers translate the lyrics (i.e. the verbal element of the text) into a sign language, which is another verbal sign system. A first and superficial glance would make us believe that the practice is nothing but a form of interlingual

translation: a translation from a natural language (e.g. English) to another natural language (e.g. British Sign Language). Even though there is an obvious change of modality, from aural to visual, one could be led to believe that the translation would still be between two natural languages only, and that the process would entail the mere translation of one verbal code into another verbal code. However, simply by watching the performance of a professional song signer we can see that nothing could be further from the truth. A detailed analysis of the performance by Dutch song signer Hanneke de Raaff when interpreting into Dutch Sign Language the song *Shum* by Ukrainian band Go_A is not necessary to understand the extent to which elements other than verbal are embodied in her interpretation (De Raaff 2021). If we look at the YouTube video, from min. 00:37 to min. 00:52 we see how she uses a depicting sign, an iconic gesture which reminds the audience of a person playing the flute. From min. 01:40 to min. 02:07 she resorts to a series of different strategies to embody the sound of a synthesiser first (min. 01:40), and then a creative way to combine the depiction of the sound of the flute (with her mouth) with the movement of the dancers we see in the video behind her. This is just an example, and an extensive analysis of different strategies utilized by different interpreter-performers in different sign languages is beyond the scope of the present article.⁹ In this specific instance the interpreter combines the depiction of how the sound is made (through the synthesizer and through the mouth in the case of the flute) with elements from the original videoclip to translate as many elements as possible, both aural and visual, into a performance art, intersemiotically. This

9 For a more extensive discussion on the different translation strategies interpreters utilise to embody nonverbal elements of a song, see Fisher (2021) and Tarantini (2025).

makes her translation a performative event which unfolds on a plurisemiotic level.

One of the scholars who have analysed song signing, Vicky Fisher (2021), scrutinising the practice of what she calls “embodied songs”, maintains that a song

is a gestalt—an integrated entity (object, structure or *experience*) in which the whole is *experienced* as something greater than, or different from, the sum of its parts. Meaning and affect are established through the specific combination of patterned words, rhythm, melody, harmonies, and instrumentation, supplemented by a range of non-acoustic features such as gestural body movements and dance, performers’ personalities, and visual elements including clothing and lighting. (Fisher 2021: 2, my emphasis)

Vicky Fisher works with an interdisciplinary perspective integrating “dance, cognitive psychology, multimodal linguistics, education theory and embodied cognition” (2021: s.p.). Given that she does not work from a Translation Studies perspective, Fisher does not explicitly engage with the debate of whether intersemiotic translation should be considered from the perspective of Jakobson, as most translation scholars have done until recently, or from Peircian semiotics, as Marais (2019) suggests. While according to Jakobson intersemiotic translation “or *transmutation* is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (Jakobson 1959: 233, original emphasis), Marais (2019) posits that intersemiotic translation can be between two nonverbal sign systems. This position seems to be prominent in the contemporary Translation Studies landscape (see Campbell/Vidal 2024a, among others). Going back to the issue of the translation of songs, the notion that a song is a gestalt, and that it is experienced, as suggested by Fisher (2021) can be useful to analyse the translation of songs into sign language from the perspective of Translation Studies as it addresses the need to redefine what we understand as ‘text,’ as advocated by translation semioticians Sütiste and To-

rop (2007). According to Translation Semiotics, it is essential to establish “the boundaries of the translation text, which in semiotic analysis is one of the first procedural moves towards understanding something in its wholeness or as a whole” (Sütiste/Torop 2007: 193). In semiotics, a *text* is characterized by its material form, defined by boundaries such as a frame, beginning, and end, and can be made of any substance: it does not necessarily have to be verbal but can instead (or in addition) be musical, pictorial, multimedial, multimodal, and so on. A *message* is a form communication from the sender to the receiver transmitted by means of words or other signals. From the viewpoint of semiotics, any text performs three main functions: it conveys information, carries cultural memory, and generates new meanings (Lotman 1990: 18). In translation semiotics we can speak of predominantly *discrete* and predominantly *continuous* types of text generation mechanism: the former produces texts in which the “basic bearer of meaning is the segment (= the sign), while the chain of segments (= the text) is secondary”; in the latter, the basic meaning carrier is the text as a whole, and it would be difficult to isolate its component signs (ibid.: 36). Given these premises, one of the questions that I wished to address in my research on sign-language-interpreted music is: what are the elements of a ‘musical text’ that sign language interpreter-performers strive to convey in their interpretation?

To answer this question I have carried out interviews with interpreters from different countries working with different sign languages. I interviewed nine sign language interpreter-performers: three from the Netherlands, one from Italy, one from Australia, and four from the UK. During the interviews, all the interpreters said that for them the most important element to convey about a song is ‘the emotion.’ This response somehow confirms Fisher’s notion of a song as a gestalt: an

item which is more than the sum of its single components. To put it in a semiotic perspective, the basic meaning carrier in a song is not a single segment (a single sign) but the chain of segments, i.e. the text as a whole, where the meaning is generated in a continuous form, and it is difficult to identify single components as meaning carriers. However, while ‘emotion’ is not, in itself, a discernible element (or segment) of a song like rhythm, key, or tempo, it is what the interpreters I interviewed identified as the core ‘message,’ the most important part of the ‘text’ to convey. But where is the emotion in a song? Is it an intrinsic feature of the song or is it something that is fostered in the listener by the song itself? According to music scholar Minors “[t]here is a long history of music and emotion, not least in music intended to produce emotive response. It facilitates the production of emotions in the listener via association. Aristotle (BC 367–347) observed: ‘hearing alone among the objects of sense... affects the emotional temperament of the hearer’” (Minors 2022: 339). Minors goes on to state that “[m]usic itself does not hold emotion” (Minors 2022: 340), but rather, the emotion is a response of the listener to the music. Following Larsen, Minors maintains that “music is able to express emotions” but “a distinction ought to be made between music itself and the *experiencing* of it” (Larsen 2007: 71, as cited in Minors 2022: 339, emphasis added). So, how can an interpreter translate an element that is *not* in the text, but is their own *experience* of the text? I would argue that this is not dissimilar from any other work of translation. The work of the translator is to convey the meaning of a text, but that meaning will always be their own interpretation (i.e. their understanding) and their experience of the same text. Once more, a Peircian understanding of the meaning-making process can contribute to the discussion. According to Peirce’s triadic model of semiosis, any semiotic act requires an interpretant, which is

an intermediary between a sign vehicle and its object, contextually qualifying a sign's meaning by situating it within a web of signs (CP 1.339, 1905). In other words, signs signify with the translative support of interpretants, thus rendering meaning intelligible in the context of interpretants that serve as proxy 'translators.' (Melanson-Ricciardone 2022: 146).

Viewing translation as a process of meaning-making, as suggested by Marais (2019), as a process of semiosis where the interpretant is "an intermediary between a sign vehicle and its object", i.e. its target audience, allows us to take the word 'translator' outside the quotation marks. The translator is the interpretant which renders the meaning of signs intelligible, without the need to draw a line between verbal and nonverbal signs in the case of intersemiotic translation.

7 Conclusions

The idea of a song, and consequently of its translation, as something to be experienced suggests that a signed song is a *performative event* (or *performance event*), intended both as an act to be carried out on the part of the interpreter, and as an *event* to be experienced, both by the interpreter and by the recipient of the translation, i.e. the audience. However, as I hope to have demonstrated, Grant's notion of performative event is applicable to the broader context of translation, and not only to the case of sign-language-interpreted music. If we understand translation as a performative practice (cf. Robinson 2003, Cheetham 2016) and apply Grant's (2015, 2013) distinction and definitions, then a performative understanding of translation allows us to see any act of translation as a *performative event*, and any act of reception as an experience. While in the case of a live interpretation gig the two happen simultaneously, and one might influence the other, in the case of a written translation or a recorded interpretation, such as a signed song filmed

and uploaded on social media, the production and the reception take place in discrete moments. Even where there is a gap between the *moment of performance* and the moment in which the audience experiences the *performative event*, translation is both a performative act to be carried out by the translator, and an event to be experienced, both by the translator and by the audience or readership.

An understanding of translation as a performative event combines the theories put forth by scholars within the “performative turn” with the current trend of understanding translation as ‘experience’, and thus confirms Blumczynski’s notion of translation as “a cultural phenomenon and a social practice [which] involves a holistic, psychosomatic engagement traceable to corporeal transfer” (Blumczynski 2023: 4). Blumczynski (2023: 179) states that translation is “a shared, material experience [...] mediated by the senses.” To that, I would add that translation understood as a performative event allows us to expand the potential range of objects and phenomena that can be analysed as an experience of translationality (to use Blumczynski’s words) both in Translation Studies and in Reception Studies, but also in Accessibility Studies related to translation.¹⁰

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10 For an extensive discussion of translation and accessibility, see Greco (2018, 2022) and Di Giovanni (2018), among others.

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Translation and Dance. The Case of Matthew Bourne

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Abstract: This chapter takes Matthew Bourne's *The Car Man* as an example of today's enlarged definition of translation, following the new approaches to contemporary translation. Taking this expanded way of seeing translation, I will analyze many of his choreographies as performances of previous literary and operatic works. He translates through embodied performances, through bodies, understood here as semiotic systems that transmit meaning. Bourne's ballets translate the classics through dance. He uses bodies to re-translate in order to update old meanings. The second part of the chapter will concentrate on how Matthew Bourne's ballets offer an up-to-date version of Bizet's world, of Cinderella and other. Using the body, he retranslates by performing the classics through movement and music: he deconstructs genres and genders by subverting opera and dance, but also straight and gay binary oppositions, thus creating richer and more ambiguous identities and characters.

Keywords: Identity, Intersemiotic rewritings, Ideology, Queer translation theory, Gender.

1 Introduction

This chapter takes Matthew Bourne's *The Car Man* as an example of today's enlarged definition of translation, following those new approaches to contemporary translation which argue that communication that takes place not only through words but through other nonlinguistic media, through images, sounds, movements, the olfactory, etc. Following this research avenue (see for instance Bassnett/Johnston 2019, Campbell/Vidal 2019, Bennett 2022, Meylaerts/Marais 2023, Blumczynski 2023, Dam et al. 2019, and many others), I will understand translation as a task to be addressed from an interdisciplinary perspective, beyond the verbocentric tradition. Taking this expanded way of seeing translation, Matthew Bourne's choreographies are translations of previous literary and operatic works.

Bourne is, in my view, a clear example of how translation is "a travelling concept" (Bal 2002) and how in our visual culture the definition of 'text' has been expanded. So, the first part of this chapter (cf. section 2) will analyze the new views on translation and the new definition of 'text.' In the field of dance, bodies will be understood here as semiotic systems that transmit meaning. Therefore, they translate and need to be translated. Bourne's ballets translate the classics through dance. He uses bodies to retranslate in order to update old meanings. The second part of the chapter (cf. section 3) will concentrate on how Matthew Bourne's ballets offer an up-to-date version of Bizet's world, of Cinderella's, of Dorian Gray's, and others. Using the body, he retranslates the classics through movement, rhythm, gesture, clothes and music: he deconstructs genres and genders by subverting opera and dance, but also straight and gay binary oppositions, thus creating richer and more ambiguous contemporary identities and characters.

2 Towards an enlarged definition of translation

Translation is always a mirror of the society in which it is inscribed. Today we live in a multimodal context where meaning is constructed not only with words but through many other semiotic systems. Translation is no longer the mere substitution of one linguistic system for another. We communicate through nonlinguistic systems of representation. We do things with words but we also perform with bodies, sounds, images, colors, silences. Translation today underwrites all cultural transactions (cf. Brodzki 2007: *passim*). Translation is ubiquitous (cf. Blumczynski 2016). It is the precondition under which all communication is based (cf. Gentzler 2017). Translation will be understood in this article as a way of being-in-the-world:

What if translation is an adventure not in meaning but in readerly consciousness and the *experience* of language? What if reading is looked upon not as a process of interpreting, or extracting meaning from, text but as a process of existential/experiential self-coordination or self-orchestration? What if translation is not a test of comprehension but of the fruitfulness of our inability to comprehend? [...] experiences evaporate unless we know how to name them; language becomes the indispensable repository of our collective experience [...] Translation must be allowed to open up and develop its own multimedial discursive space. It ceases to be a discipline ('translation studies') and becomes a philosophical enquiry into its own functions and possible relationships with the translator's being-in-the-world. (Scott 2019: 88)

The idea of what is translation has changed because the concept of what a 'text' is has also changed. Stories are no longer constructed with words alone but also employ a wide range of semiotic resources.

Translation scholars need to look beyond the linguistic and literary to music, lights, set, costumes, gestures, make-up, and facial expressions to better understand this new intercultural and intersemiotic age of translation. As the media changes, so too do the performance options

increase, and more dynamic theories of translation and internationalization are needed for the future (cf. Gentzler 2017: 217).

The body is one of these channels. We communicate through our movements. There are contemporary dance pieces that translate, for instance, Gertrude Stein (cf. Aguiar/Queiroz 2015). We also have Wayne McGregor's dance translations of Virginia Woolf's novels, and traditional ballets that translated Greek pastorals like *Daphnis and Chloe*, Shakespeare's plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, novels like *Don Quixote*, and folktales like *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty* (cf. Smith 2003; Bennett 2007; Desblache 2019). All these movement-based corporeal texts embody communication (cf. Maiorani 2021) and translate previous originals outwards by understanding dance as a language. Translation is today "experiential." We translate with our whole body, as Madeleine Campbell/Ricarda Vidal (2019) have demonstrated in a brilliant book in which each chapter shows how to translate through and with our senses.

This is what many scholars argue today in Translation Studies: this *Yearbook* is a good example. Translation is a "travelling concept" (Bal 2002). Our discipline is beginning to look outwards (cf. Bassnett/Johnston 2019) in order to erase the limits of purely linguistic communication. Many scholars see translation in this light, as a broad process which needs to be problematized (cf. Gambier/van Doorslaer 2021: 3). Translating is a dynamic, "ludic," process, which works "*alongside an original work*" (Lee 2022: 2):

Hence, translation is not subservient to a source text in a vertical hierarchy but articulates the latter sideways to develop a more expansive intertextual network [...] the potential of translation to transgress and transcend the source text. That is, translation subjects an original work to experimental play replete with contingencies and idiosyncrasies, furnishes it with performative resources for aesthetic expression in excess of the linguistic signs, and extrapolates it toward multiple trajectories and plural media. (Lee 2022: 2)

Translation is performative in so far as it reinterprets reality with forms, colors, images. Languages are not confined to linguistic borders but “open up a myriad of possibilities to carry form and sense from one culture into another beyond the limitations of words. At the same time, such processes impact on the source artefact enriching it with new layers of understanding” (Campbell/Vidal 2019: xxvi). Translation mediates in communication, which is seen now as an experiential process which performs meaning with all our senses.

Understanding translation “outwards,” as an “experiential” process, means challenging the word-based model of reading reality (cf. Apter 2007: 149). It implies assuming that “the purely verbal text is something of a chimera and that in even the most banal and everyday kind of text, multiple semiotic codes conspire in the generation of meaning” (Bennett 2022: 61). Matthew Bourne’s performative translations through the body will highlight that a text is always many texts and has many readings.

3 Matthew Bourne: performing translation through the body

Matthew Bourne is a performative creative translator who brings texts to new contexts and values. Therefore, in his translations “the final product is going to be very different from the starting point” (Bassnett 2020: 14). He thus participates “in powerful acts that create knowledge and shape culture” (Tymoczko/Gentzler 2002: xxii). Bourne’s dance productions, dance theater, choreographies and performances are translations which incorporate questions of race, gender and ideology. He is a fluid, non-universalist and post-positivist translator against the binary oppositions which used to be taken for granted (man/woman, majority/minority, black/white, visi-

ble/invisible). His translations show that these binarisms are no longer universal but turn out to be socially constructed narratives.

Part of his goal is political—to make homosexuality acceptable, as he said in an interview à propos of his *Swan Lake*—and he achieved it. The DVD of his *Swan Lake* is now part of the syllabus for the college-entrance exams in dance in Britain (cf. Bourne 2007: 42), with his bare-chested male swans. Bourne’s *Swan Lake* is one of several queer translations of the classical ballet:

Two contemporary renditions in particular—the versions by Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, an all-male American troupe that dances in drag, and the British choreographer Matthew Bourne, whose swans are male—dramatically alter the strict conventions of gender and sexuality that make up the ideological and formal structure of classical ballet. As gender and sexuality become more like shifting sands than granite pillars, these ballets open up in ways surprising and revelatory with respect to both aesthetics and cultural politics. Yet what is “queer” about these two renditions is not the same, alerting viewers that the contemporary concept of queer is not monolithic, that its possibilities and contributions are multiple. (Juhasz 2008: 54)

Bourne’s swans translate with the body. They perform “a modern setting, a sendup of the British royals, a psychoanalytical slant, and, most notably, swans danced by male dancers. Bourne’s swans are not in drag as women, but on the other hand they are not exactly ‘men’ either” (Juhasz 2008: 57) because they are half men half animals. Another great bodily, performative and experiential translation of *Swan Lake* is that of Dada Masilo in 2010. Masilo includes African dances and rhythms, a black swan and aids, within an infinite process of contemporary references. These translations through different bodies imply an ideological rewriting of dominant Western views:

The body, like all other things, cannot be thought, as such [...] As a body, it is a repetition of nature. It is in the rupture with Nature when it is a signifier of immediacy for the staging of the self. As a text, the inside of the body (imbricated with the outside) is mysterious and unreadable except by way of thinking of the systematicity of the body. It is through the significance of my body and others' bodies that cultures become gendered, economicopolitic, selved, substantive. (Spivak 1993: 20)

The body is a *topos* through which one can communicate and thus overcome what Marais (2019) calls the “linguistic bias”. It is a space of representation, and representations are fictitious and contradictory constructions that give rise to social relations and different forms of subjectivity: identities are linked to the representations of cultures, and the discursive codes we use are nothing but arbitrary orders historically constructed, apparently fixed and immutable, but biased by specific ideologies and through which we apprehend the world, because reality does not exist outside representation. From this point of view, the representation of the body by Power in the West has never implied making a neutral representation of reality, but rather it means re-presenting, from a concrete point of view. Bourne's translations of the body implies a rewriting of perspectives, plans, direction of thought, pre-existing discourses. Translating the corporeal implies

Perceiving through the eyes, ears, tongue or body of another opens the willing recipient (performer or spectator) to unfamiliar affects and sensory experiences, a “disorienting” event that can, if enacted in a safe environment, lead to personal growth and greater levels of awareness and understanding of the other, and thereby enhance cultural literacy. (Campbell/Vidal 2019: xxxiv)

Bourne has also rewritten Prokofiev's *Cinderella*, shifting the fairy tale from the land of fantasy to London during the German Blitz of 1941 (cf. Tokofsky 2000). In his translation of *Dorian Gray*, he finds “physical and visual ways to translate

words on a page into the three-dimensional, present, visual, physical, musical form of dance” (cf. Smart 2012: 180).

Without using words, his dance theatre is a form of drama and many of his choreographies are rewritings of previous literary and operatic works. He translates the classics using a new iconoclasm:

In “Cinderella,” the Fairy Godmother figure, a man, saves Cinderella, but he is also an angel of death. In “Nutcracker!,” the Nutcracker abandons Clara, the heroine, for another woman—indeed, marries the other woman. This scene is anguishing to watch, and finding out later that it was all a bad dream does not entirely salve the pain. Life is nasty; Bourne shows it. (Bourne 2007: 40)

Bourne has also produced a homosexual version of *Romeo and Juliet*, to the Prokofiev score, and named it “Romeo, Romeo.” Again, projects like these have an ideological content, they try to overcome traditional binary oppositions, the barriers of acquired conventionality, of what we have been taught is ‘normal.’

It’s more to do with dancing than with sexuality. A male dancer, whether he’s gay or straight, fits into a relationship with a female partner very happily. It’s something you’re taught, and it fits, it feels right, the lifting and all that stuff. Getting away from that, making a convincing love duet, a romantic, sexual duet, for two men that is comfortable to do and comfortable to watch—I don’t know if you can (Bourne 2007: 44).

One of his best well-known translations is *The Car Man* (2000). This ballet is a re-vision and re-writing of different genres and different works: *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (both Cain’s novel and the two Hollywood movies) and Bizet’s score for his opera *Carmen*. Bourne translates the novel, the films, and *Carmen*’s music and content into a rewriting, into *The Car Man*. In fact, *The Car Man* offers a new treatment of Bizet’s score for the opera *Carmen*: the music has been not only rearranged but also reordered. *The Car Man* highlights the palimpsestuous na-

ture of the original text, of any ‘original’ text. Bourne’s translation highlights the plural readings inside any text and the multiple voices (of his dancers, of many agents in his company, cf. Smart 2012: 181–182) introduced in his translations.

The Car Man includes many layers, many texts, like for example *The Birds*, by Hitchcock (cf. Macaulay 2000: 198), which Bourne performs in the scene through allusions where the swans climb on the Prince’s bed in Act Four, *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960), by Visconti, and other films like *Fight Club* (1999), *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) or *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) (cf. Macaulay 2000: 371–373).

Bourne’s translations are political. Gender reversal as a translation strategy with regard to Bizet’s opera appears several times throughout the ballet: Seville is translated into Harmony, USA in the 1950s, the tobacco factory becomes an auto repair shop and the diner is populated by women waiting for the men to come out of work, whereas in *Carmen* Act One the men of Seville are waiting for the female workers to come out of the cigarette factory. The Carmen–José axis in the opera is rewritten into the Lana–Luca–Angelo triangle in *The Car Man*, although “Angelo’s character has no aspect of Carmen—he’s entirely on José’s side, and like José, he will come back from prison obsessed, a transgressor” (Bourne in Macaulay 2000: 659). Contrasting with Bizet’s binary dichotomy, Carmen is here a double identity, both male (Luca) and female (Lana). Whereas Micaëla, Don José’s childhood sweetheart, represents the stereotypical Angel in the House, with a musical discourse which accordingly is simple, lyrical, diatonic and sweet, Carmen is the dissonant Other, with the music which represents her grounded in the physical impulses of exotic dance, the Habanera and the Seguidilla, and marked by its chromatic excesses (cf. McClary 1991/2002: 56–57).

Thus, Bourne rewrites gender dichotomies. But he also rewrites ethnic representation. Bourne's dancers are a mixture of sizes, shapes, races and genders (cf. Macaulay 2000: 210). His Italian-American community in *The Car Man* highlights the hybrid character of our global society and his rewriting is also polyphonic: Luca and Angelo are rewritings of Simone and Rocco in Visconti's *Rocco and his brothers* (1960). Other intertexts used by Bourne are James Dean and Sal Mineo in *Rebel without a Cause* (1955), among others, for instance *Blood Simple* (1985) and *Midnight Express* (1978).

Bourne's translations in *The Car Man*, *Cinderella*, *Romeo, Romeo*, *Dorian Gray*, *Swan Lake*, therefore exemplify the new way of looking at translators, the new expanded definition of translation:

The intersection of translation and music can be a fascinating field to explore. It can enrich our understanding of what translation might entail, how far its boundaries can be extended and how it relates to other forms of expression. Research into this area can thus help us locate translation-related activities in a broader context, undermining more conservative options of translation and mediation. It can also offer us a new perspective on who may act as a "translator" under different circumstances. (Susam-Sarajeva 2008: 191)

Bourne is a performative translator who does things with words, bodies, movement, music, gestures and many other semiotic systems. His translations are performances which rewrite through all the senses. He is a visible translator who re-contextualizes texts rewriting them within new social values:

Since Antoine Berman (1984) and Lawrence Venuti (1995), many modern scholars have posited the two-voiced nature of translation, i.e., that the translator is no longer invisible, but that his or her voice can also be heard in addition to the author. In the post-Venuti world of translation, rather than the translator's visibility being a negative trait, it has become a to-be-expected, if not entirely positive, aspect of any translation [...] translation is much more than double-voiced;

rather, the voices are multiple, a translation of a translation of a translation, extending back diachronically. (Gentzler 2017: 223)

His translations are iterations: “translation as iteration, as repetition-with-a-difference, a mode of textual proliferation rather than a mode by which semantic content is transferred” (Emmerich 2017: 161). They are beyond any traditional binary opposition:

STOP thinking of source texts in terms of translatability and untranslatability and of translation as involving loss or gain;
START thinking of translation as an interpretive act that can be performed on any source text (Venuti 2019: 175).

These are translations in movement,

STOP using moralistic terms like “faithful” and “unfaithful” to describe translation.

START defining it as the establishment of a variable equivalence to the source text.

STOP assuming that translation is mechanical substitution.

START conceiving of it as an interpretation that demands writerly and intellectual sophistication. (Venuti 2019: ix)

Bourne’s Bizet, Shakespeare and others, are examples of “translation as a mode of iterative proliferation” (Emmerich 2017: 162). This is a clear example of the new avenues taken today by translation. Translation is transformative and interrogative:

it sets going a deconstruction of the foreign text [...] A translation is never quite “faithful,” always somewhat “free,” it never establishes an identity, always a lack and a supplement, and it can never be a transparent representation, only an interpretive transformation that exposes multiple and divided meanings in the foreign text and displaces it with another set of meanings, equally multiple and divided (Venuti 1992: 8).

As observed by Jorge Luis Borges in “On William Beckford’s *Vathek*” (1943), translation completes the original. Borges ar-

gues that a translation is not inferior to the original and suggests that the concept of the ‘definitive text’ is a fallacy:

...I think you are enriching me. Because after all reading is an elaboration. Every time I read something, that something is being changed. And every time I write something, that something is being changed all the time by every reader. Every new experience enriches the book. (in van Wyke 2012: 95)

These performative ways of addressing translation turns our task into a creative gesture which is as important as its original:

to argue for translation as a creative endeavour and translations as original artefacts that bring something new into the world, and whose relationship to their sources, although involving a degree of copying, includes sufficient novelty vis-à-vis their sources to qualify as original creative works. (Malmkjær 2020: 49)

Bourne’s translations question the dominant paradigm of reading the world through “intense looking [...] which includes the full immersion of the translator in the text, with eyes, ears, skin, nose, limbs and heart” (Campbell/Vidal 2019: 3). These new ways of looking at translation exemplify how translation “remains a decisive event, a performance,” as Marco Agnetta, Larisa Cercel, Brian O’Keeffe, the editors of this *Yearbook of Translational Hermeneutics* 3/2023, say in their Call for Papers: translation is “a unique, unrepeatable, transformative and embodied occurrence.” During the structuralist paradigm, “there was skepticism about the capacity of nonverbal codes like music, painting or dance, to transmit a message with the accuracy and precision of verbal language. Now, however, the exceptionality of the verbal is no longer taken for granted” (Bennett 2022: 61).

These new avenues in Translation Studies encourage autonomy for the translation

not by turning away from the ST, but by conceptualizing it, that is to say, by endowing it with virtuality, by treating it not as something recuperable from the TT, but as something which the TT is taking forward, *and only taking forward* [...] the ST can never properly come to itself in a rematerialization. Of course, there will continue to be a product, a TT, but this TT is no more than a token, asking to be treated putatively, an instigation, an invitation, a provocation, a relay, pushing the ST on its way. Translation transforms the ST as percept into the ST as concept. In such circumstances, we cannot desire to be accurate about, or faithful to, the ST. We can only desire that the ST continues to live its literariness differently, in a sequence of constant self-differentiations, of constant perceptual renewals. (Scott 2006: 41–42)

Seen in this light, translation is not subservient to the original text but an event in its own right. Not a repetition but a (re)creation:

To repeat is to produce and to alter, to make and to make anew. Repetition is a principle of irrepressible creativity and novelty; it would be impossible to repeat without making and without altering what is already made. Even to repeat “exactly the same thing” is to repeat it in a new context which gives it a new sense. (Caputo 1987: 142)

4 Conclusions

Mathew Bourne’s performances exemplify a new avenue in translation studies which insist in the idea that words are not enough to achieve “the full semiotic scope of translationality” (Marais 2019: 43). Far from being a mere substitute of words, Bourne’s translations as performance have shown how these new ways of translating changes the components of a sign system and the relationships between them. This means “that if the code is changed, a translation has taken place” (Marais 2019: 141). As shown above, Bourne exemplifies new venues in Translation Studies which Bassnett describes very well: “[t]ranslating a text means reconfiguring it [...] No translation can ever be the ‘same’ as the original, for translation involves

so much more than the linguistic, though obviously language is a crucial element [...] translators have to deal with more than just words which may or may not have dictionary equivalents” (Bassnett 2022: vii). Bourne’s performative interactions translate previous stories through the bodies of his performers, including difference, not equivalence, in his new queer translations. Thus, he problematizes any binary regime typical of Cartesian dualism, any supremacy of the mind over the body.

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Review Articles | Rezensionenartikel

Translation as a form – A new Guide to Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator”

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Review Article on: ROBINSON, Douglas (2023): *Translation as a Form. A Centennial Commentary on Walter Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator”*. London / New York: Routledge. 216 pp. ISBN 9781032161389.

Last year marked the centenary of Walter Benjamin’s groundbreaking essay, “The Task of the Translator,” a seminal work that significantly shaped the theory and philosophy of translation. In this context, the renowned translation scholar Douglas Robinson has offered a timely contribution with his book, *Translation as a Form: A Centennial Commentary on Walter Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator.”* Before delving into some of its numerous intriguing proposals, it might be useful to consider a context that readers less acquainted with the text might have appreciated reading in an introduction, especially the ex-

tensive history of reception, translation, and continuous re-translation that Benjamin's essay has undergone. Originally, it was published as the preface to Benjamin's German translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux parisiens* (1923). According to Benjamin, Baudelaire not only served as the linchpin of modern literature but also stood out as a pivotal figure within the psychosocial and intellectual fabric of modernity in Europe.¹ "The Task of the Translator" encapsulates various facets of Benjamin's experiences up to that point: his role as a literary translator of Baudelaire and Marcel Proust, his pursuits as a literary and art critic, philosopher and historian, and his keen observations of urban life in early 20th-century Paris.

Robinson's examination of "The Task" occasionally touches upon this broad context and it is understandable that his *Centennial Commentary* primarily focuses on the English translations of Benjamin's essay. Nevertheless, there is a diverse and extensive history of translations of "The Task of the Translator" in various languages, each complemented by indispensable commentaries. It seems imperative to briefly acknowledge and reference this rich tapestry of translations and associated insights. Exclusively within the realms of Romance languages and English, I've identified a remarkable 31 translations of "The Task" since 1962, 27 in romance languages, with a strong likelihood of there being more as yet undiscovered (cf. Baltrusch 2018: 41ff.). If we broaden our scope to include the Euskera language, which hails from the Iberian Peninsula, our tally reaches 32 translations, spanning a mere nine languages. Seven translations are already in existence for Spanish, six for

1 Cf. the texts and fragments „Das Paris des Second Empire bei Baudelaire," "Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire," "Zentralpark," "Notes sur les Tableaux parisiens de Baudelaire" (in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann / Hermann Schweppenhäuser. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1991).

Portuguese, and five for English, leaving just two languages with a solitary translation, with the baseline being a minimum of three. Considering that this is a philosophical and poetic text, really challenging even for those well-versed in its original German, and composed in Benjamin's quite idiosyncratic language, this narrative of success proves not just surprising but underscores its profound importance and enduring significance.

The very first translation of "The Task" dates back to the 1960s in Italy, with Renato Solmi (1962)², followed by another in 2007, and recently a third rendition. However, in the 1960s, a parallel story unfolded with the initiation of seven Spanish translations, beginning with Argentine writer Héctor Álvarez Murena, recurrently reissued since 1967. It remains the most widely recognised and disseminated version, albeit laden with various issues. In the 1990s there emerged another three Spanish translations, and in this century at least three of them can be documented.

The saga of translating "The Task" into English also started in the 1960s, and all versions can be found discussed in many key issues by Robinson. Mirroring the Spanish scenario with Murena, Harry Zohn's initial English translation, first published in 1968, persists as the one with the broadest reach. Despite its numerous drawbacks (and which have sparked significant debates), it has managed to overshadow other versions through its continuous reedition, virtually consigning most of those others to an exclusively academic realm.³ In comparison, Douglas Robinson offers now a new and fascinating proposition by offering a complete paraphrasing (cf. *infra*).

2 Except Robinson's, all translations are referenced in Baltrusch (2018).

3 The three versions are: Hynd/Valk (1968), Rendall (1997), and Underwood (2009). For the references see Baltrusch (2018).

This brief and partial overview touches upon the recent history of the translation of “The Task.” Considering the essay’s importance not only in Translation Studies but also in shaping modern hermeneutic theory, it is intriguing to look at the myriad versions produced in various languages since the 1960s, although they offer only a limited glimpse into the intricate tapestry of the essay’s reception history, which is always also a history of its critique. This pattern seems to reveal a profound and evident need for a continuous process of translation and retranslation of a text deemed essential in diverse cultural spheres.⁴ But it is also a text seemingly resistant to achieving satisfactory ‘equivalence’ in the specified target languages—ultimately proving this endeavour to be elusive. It will be fascinating to see how Robinson will add to this rich history of translations and commentaries in Romance languages. These translations are interwoven with a highly intense theoretical debate on translation spanning decades, particularly within the Brazilian context (with already 6 translations since 1979).⁵

Nevertheless, Robinson adeptly synthesizes crucial elements from English, German, and French language critique. This makes his study a standout and arguably the most comprehensive guide for those seeking to interpret Benjamin’s essay today, especially from an anglophone perspective. The work provides a rich repository of materials and insights that clarify Benjamin’s arguments in “The Task.” In essence, we

4 Creating interconnected realms of exegesis, a strange notion, but one that aligns quite well with Benjamin’s perspective.

5 E.g., a brief acknowledgment of the pivotal importance of Haroldo de Campos’s studies on “The Task of the Translator,” including his important reception of Derrida’s thoughts on Benjamin’s essay. Some examples might be his essays “Para além do princípio da saudade. A teoria benjaminiana da tradução” (1984/2013) and “A língua pura na teoria da tradução de Walter Benjamin” (1997).

might say, Benjamin argues that a translator's role transcends the mere conveyance of the original text's meaning; it encompasses capturing and preserving its "ongoing life" (Robinson, p. 36). And literary translation should strive to reveal the linguistic uniqueness of the original in philosophical, metaphysical, and messianistic dimensions. Since the 1960s, "The Task" has profoundly influenced translation theory, making it essential reading in hermeneutical translation studies.

Robinson has conducted a meticulous analysis of Benjamin's text, dissecting it into 78 thematically coherent passages, which are then organized into 19 sections, each assigned a corresponding title. Regrettably, these passages and sections are exclusively detailed in the Introduction rather than the Contents.⁶ Essentially, Robinson provides readers with two translations of the original text: the first, a line-by-line rendition presented alongside the original, is a precise, specifically interlinear, or philological translation. The second is an excellent paraphrase and could be regarded as a high-quality translation in numerous instances. For each segment, both the interlinear translation and paraphrase are complemented by a commentary that thoroughly documents and discusses the nuanced aspects found in the specialized literature corresponding to each translated text segment.

The commentaries predominantly draw from critical literature published in English, supplemented by key studies in German and French. It might have been beneficial to take into account also some of the substantial contributions in German by Alfred Hirsch (1995), however, or the significant commentaries provided by Laurent Lamy and Alexis Nouss (1997) in

6 Particularly in the case of a book that, alongside its Index, could serve as a practical handbook for studies in English, French, and German on "The Task."

their translation of the essay. Naturally, it is unreasonable to expect that even a work titled *A Centennial Commentary* would encompass the entire spectrum of critical literature on a subject which enjoys such a global reception and influence across diverse disciplines such as philosophy, linguistics, theology, history, or translation studies. Nevertheless, it is somewhat intriguing to emphasize the statement that “like every other reading of Benjamin’s essay, mine too is somewhat personal and idiosyncratic” (p. 5). While it seems to be clear that certain interpretations of Benjamin’s ideas in “The Task” resonate across various cultural fields of its reception, adopting a more transversal approach might have offered valuable perspectives to enrich the discussion.⁷

In the Introduction, Robinson underscores his primary contribution to the scholarly discourse on Benjamin’s essay, emphasizing the significance of the author’s view that the Platonic forms of both the original and the translation serve as “vitalistic agents” propelling “sacred history” (*Heilsgeschichte*) toward the messianic culmination of pure language (p. 5).⁸ Robinson’s contributions to various aspects of “The Task” prove to be truly inspiring. Particularly noteworthy are his insights into Benjamin’s establishment of a “*trans*phenomenology of the

7 Acknowledging the extensive debates and studies on “The Task” in Spanish (e.g., Andrés Claro 2012), Portuguese (e.g., Haroldo de Campos 1987, 2006 and 2013, or Susana Kampff Lages 2002), partially accessible in German through Michaela Wolf’s edition of *Übersetzungswissenschaft in Brasilien* (1997), and, of course, in Italian (e.g., Carlo Salzani). Recognizing these and others as significant arenas of academic debate on the subject would undoubtedly enhance the volume.

8 Andrés Claro had already put forth related ideas in his monumental commentary, *Las vasijas quebradas. Cuatro variaciones sobre ‘la tarea del traductor’*, back in 2012.

phenomenon”⁹ (p. 21–22, 36–41, 81), his commentaries on the Benjamin’s intertwining of translation and life (cf. p. 36–41), and his examination of Benjamin’s “Gefühlston” through the lens of Bakhtinian dialogism (cf. p. 129–130). These, along with numerous other lucid and original interpretations, add a commendable dimension to the commentaries.

The emphasis on messianism, mysticism, and “sacred history” in Robinson’s commentaries, although they might be permeating Benjamin’s work, might be somewhat less captivating.¹⁰ Especially for those interested in the ongoing significance of “The Task” in today’s hermeneutical debates on translation theory, this is a facet that I would appreciate seeing further explored by the author. I’m thinking, for instance, on Benjamin’s ideas concerning translatability and the overarching complementarity among languages. His notion of languages converging towards an imagined pure language, supposedly bringing them all together, prompts the question: could these ideas be related to an evolutionary perspective, one that sees languages and cultures as ecosystems? In his early essay, “Über die Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen” (1916), Benjamin breaks away from anthropocentric perspectives by disentangling the concepts of language, speech, and

9 Robinson defines it as “turning an actual embodied, embedded, extended, enactive, and affective experience into a revelation, or at least intimation, of a transcendental and therefore disembodied truth” (p. 5).

10 Nonetheless, exceptions exist to my personal (and undoubtedly also idiosyncratic) reservations regarding the interest of the theological dimension of “The Task.” A notable instance is Robinson’s thought-provoking proposal to connect Benjamin’s concept of the “aura” (as discussed in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”) with the idealized conception of translation as a tangent, fleetingly touching a circle at only a single point, drawing inspiration from Kabbalistic texts (cf. pp. 154–156, 167–168).

translation from the human condition. He presents a vision of continuous linguistic and semiotic evolution where the notion of originals becomes elusive. This perspective, echoed in “The Task,” aligns with Haroldo de Campos’ insightful characterization: originals are essentially “translations of other translations.”¹¹

Robinson adheres closely to Benjamin’s ideal of carrying literalness into the syntax of the target language, without fear of distorting it. This approach mirrors what Hölderlin did when translating Pindar and Sophocles—his versions were considered exemplary, even ‘archetypal’ by Benjamin. Robinson dissects the syntax of English in a way that reproduces Benjamin’s German with the utmost possible literalness. Naturally, English readers will find it profoundly unfamiliar to encounter a sentence like this:

Only the superficial thinking will, in that it the self-sufficient sense of the last denies, both for synonymous explain. To it opposing, is thereupon to point out that certain relational concepts their good, indeed perhaps best sense keep if they not from outset on exclusively to the humans tied become. (Benjamin transl. by Robinson, p. 28)

Certainly, Robinson consistently pairs his interlinear versions with the original, breaking down each sentence into typographic units. This meticulous presentation allows for the alignment of German and English words whenever possible. However, it also adds to the difficulty of reading the word-by-word translation with its unfamiliar and foreignized syntax (cf. Figure 1).

11 And furthermore, we could ask: what if Benjamin didn’t see Hölderlin’s translations as a process that renders sense completely unintelligible? Instead, he might have approached this concept differently. What if we interpret Benjamin’s perspective through the lens of what Haroldo de Campos termed anthropophagic translation (see footnote 18)?

9 Translatability (3): the value of excluding the human

Nur das oberflächliche Denken wird, indem es den selbständigen Sinn
 Only the superficial thinking will, in that it the self-sufficient sense
 der letzten leugnet, beide für gleichbedeutend erklären. Ihm gegenüber
 of the last denies, both for synonymous explain. To it opposing
 ist darauf hinzuweisen, daß gewisse Relationsbegriffe ihren guten,
 is thereupon to point out that certain relational concepts their good,
 ja vielleicht besten Sinn behalten, wenn sie nicht von vorne
 indeed perhaps best sense keep if they not from outset
 herein ausschließlich auf den Menschen bezogen werden.
 on exclusively to the humans tied become.

Paraphrase: Given a choice between defining translatability in terms of the capabilities of human translators and in terms of the transcendental Form of translation, only the superficial thinker will deny the independence of the latter and claim that both come to the same thing. Certain relational concepts are best served by pulling back from an exclusive focus on human beings.

Figure 1: Philological translation and paraphrase in Robinson (2023: 28)

Robinson's philological translation seeks to embody what Benjamin admired in Hölderlin's versions, endowing translation with an almost equal status to the original. Creation and translation become comparable through the ideal of interlinearity and the pursuit of what Benjamin termed the "pure language." This concept embodies the presence of shared essential elements across all languages, bringing the idea of translation into closer association with the realm of sacred texts. I prefer to think that this is not necessarily a mandatory approach to translation; instead, it serves as a guiding principle.

Robinson tackles Benjamin's assertion that "translation is a form" by presenting two translations that are fundamentally contrastive. One version is profoundly alienating due to its adherence to a syntactically interlinear structure, while the other, described as a paraphrase, seeks to maintain the hermeneutic

complexity of the original, albeit rendering the text in a much more accessible form:

Given a choice between defining translatability in terms of the capabilities of human translators and in terms of the transcendental Form of translation, only the superficial thinker will deny the independence of the latter and claim that both come to the same thing. Certain relational concepts are best served by pulling back from an exclusive focus on human beings. (Benjamin transl. by Robinson, p. 28)

In this paraphrase, the priority is given to expanding the first sentence at the expense of the second. However, this achieves a clear unity of meaning, assigning a conclusive function to the second sentence. As a philosophical text in the English language, it serves as a valid translation, aligning even with what functionalists term as the *skopos*. I think that most of Robinson's paraphrases of the German version of "The Task" could easily serve as an exemplary instance of functionalist translation within an educational and informative context. It is regrettable that he chose not to compile and present them as a cohesive text in an annex to his book.¹² Such an approach could have broadened the reach of this *Centennial Commentary* to a much wider audience, not exclusively academic, as Benjamin's arguments inherently pose challenges in communication, already requiring multiple readings or intratranslations in German. Of course, the question remains whether Benjamin's dismissal of the communicative value of translation should be 'translated' in a comprehensive, functionalist manner.

Considering this complexity, Robinson, via his paraphrases, always manages a nearly lossless philosophical explanation. But commencing with a philological, syntactically interlinear translation was, of course, essential. It illustrates the ideal of

12 It would have been also fascinating to read the interlinear translation as a complete text.

translation advocated by Benjamin in his essay from an evolutionist standpoint, emphasizing the importance of understanding historical continuities and discontinuities. There might not be a widespread audience that fully appreciates a syntactically reorganized sentence that deviates from conventional norms. But philological translation is always the method if one wishes to initiate the translation of highly complex, philosophical, or poetic texts. An active engagement with the source language allows a maximum approximation to the target language, thereby deepening the understanding of the text.

Benjamin recognized a limitation in interlinear translation, as indicated in a passage from “The Task:” “To the nineteenth century Hölderlin’s translations of Sophocles stood as monstrous examples of such literalism” (Benjamin transl. by Robinson, p. 131).¹³ Robinson connects Benjamin’s mention of the risk associated with this form of translation insofar as it results in the “incomprehensible” to the notion that not only does “literalism threaten to impede understanding,” but it also hinders “the sacred development of languages toward the messianic culmination of pure language” (p. 131).¹⁴

The German term “monströs” in the original, akin to the English “monstruous,” conveys a notion of deformity, evoking a certain fear of the extraordinary while also bearing a distinct power and significant presence. The practice of a literal and syntactically interlinear translation, as a form of monstrosity, compels the target language to merge with the source language. Simultaneously, it leads to the linguistic decomposition

13 The original reads: “Dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert standen Hölderlins Sophokles-Übersetzungen als monströse Beispiele solcher Wörtlichkeit vor Augen” (apud Robinson, p. 131).

14 Once again, I find it excessive to emphasise the theme of messianism from what I consider to be a necessary, actualising perspective.

and deconstruction of the original text, as the translated text intricately intertwines with the structure of the original work. Benjamin aimed to explore a foreign language through the lens of his own, treating it as a form and trying to attain stability through the dynamic process of change.¹⁵ He sought an essence, fully aware of its elusive nature—something he referred to as “pure language,” suggesting thereby a fundamental commonality akin to the shared elements that all languages possess by virtue of being languages. It’s as if we are to conceptualize languages on an ontological level, almost in a materialistic sense, especially when Benjamin sees translation coming near to poetry (cf. p. 121–122).¹⁶ And it’s worth remembering here that “The Task” was crafted in connection with the experience of translating poetry—specifically, the poetry of Baudelaire, the embodiment of modernity in *poiésis* for Benjamin.¹⁷

Regarding Hölderlin’s translation, which Benjamin idealized as a form, a closer examination of Benjamin’s use of the term “das Unverständliche” (apud Robinson, p. 131) might suggest an interpretation that would allow us to set aside messianic undertones. In the Kantian sense, the German term ‘Verstand’ signifies the power of thought, namely intelligence prevailing over sensuality. This power is denied by ‘Un-Verstand’ or ‘un-verständlich,’ which emphasizes the sensible and the subjective. What if Benjamin did not perceive Hölderlin’s translations as an incomprehensible “flipping the reproduction

15 A kind of allostasis.

16 “Mallarmé’s idea that a pre-Babelian and thus pre-translational truth would have been material, materializable, seems to suggest also that a post-Babelian return to ‘pure language’ might restore that state” (p. 122).

17 Although it is of course true that there is an “astonishing gap between Benjamin’s practical experience of translating and his understanding of translation theory” (p. 127).

on its head” (p. 132), but rather as the opposite—something Haroldo de Campos referred to as an “anthropophagic” or “luciferian” translation? Or Erin Mouré as “transelation”?¹⁸

Translation as a Form lacks a formal conclusion, but the final commentary on the last two sentences of “The Task” could be regarded as a substitute. Robinson paraphrases them in this way:

When it comes to Holy Writ, such boundless trust is required of the translation that, just as in the source text language and revelation are united without tension, so too must literalism and freedom be united in the form of the interlinear version. For to some degree all great writings harbor their own virtual translations between the lines—and this is true in the very highest degree of scripture. The interlinear version of Holy Writ is the prototype or ideal of all translation. (p. 187)

The biblical (Hebrew) foundation of “The Task” seems to become unmistakably clear when Robinson concludes by stating that “Perhaps the deepest and most ancient reason for the sense that ‘we’ ‘commonsensically’ have that the claims Benjamin makes in the ‘Task’ are counterintuitive and even bizarre is that ‘we’ tend to take Christian body–spirit (word–sense) dualism as the ‘true’ ‘nature’ of translation” (p. 189). Robinson asserts that “Benjamin’s essay requires midrashic commentary to emerge into clarity” (*ibid.*). Unlike a literal interpretation

18 Influenced by the modernist Brazilian cultural metaphor of ‘anthropophagy,’ Haroldo de Campos introduced the concept of ‘anthropophagic translation.’ This term encapsulates a transformative approach to translation, wherein source texts are reinterpreted in ways that are innovative and culturally enriching within the context of the translator’s culture and language. Anthropophagic translation celebrates the creative possibilities inherent in translation, seeing it as a dynamic form of cultural exchange and artistic expression (cf. e.g. Campos 2006; cf. also Mouré 2004). Seeking to clarify the “incomprehensible” primarily by attributing it to Hölderlin’s struggle with a presumed schizophrenia (p. 132–133) may prove to be insufficient.

(also known as *peshat*), the term midrash denotes a profound exegesis aiming to unveil potential revelatory spaces, encircling, scrutinizing and revealing interpretations not apparent in the superficial reading of a text.

Throughout the book, Robinson adeptly clarifies how the Christian discourse, affirming the complete translatability of its Holy Texts, directly contradicts Benjamin's premise of an ideal translation grounded in the Jewish belief that their Bible exists solely in Hebrew. Consequently, he suggests, "Benjamin's essay would have been considerably easier to read had he explained all this as he went along. As this and other commentaries on the essay show, for clarity, his argument truly necessitates a book-length exposition" (p. 190).

For those contending with the perceived mystical inclinations in Benjamin's theories on language and translation, especially in light of Antoine Berman's perspective as referenced by Robinson, solace may be found in the concluding paragraph of *Translation as a Form*.

Full disclosure: I don't trust it fully either. More specifically, I don't surrender total ontological belief to it. I don't trust it to represent the true nature of translation, or literature, or the universe. I trust it as a narrative, a story about mythical and mystical forces at work and at play in the universe. I trust it in the way I trust Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, or any other amazing and enjoyable story. It doesn't have to be true to be amazing. (Robinson, p. 190)

However, Robinson's assertion that there is no "need to go beyond [Benjamin] or hold back from him, because I am writing a commentary, not a credo— and a commentary on a tantalizing but cryptic story" (ibid.) is also somewhat disheartening. The conclusion of the book appears to leave many questions unanswered, conveying the impression that much of the preceding discussion is being undervalued.

Does this profoundly influential essay, deliberated and commented upon extensively in nearly all world languages, deserve to be reduced to nothing more than a “tantalizing but cryptic story”? Does this suggest that the commentary, as beneficial and elucidating as it may be, is the only approach to this epoch-making text? The reader is left contemplating why several crucial suggestions for interpreting and updating Benjamin’s essay were introduced but not further explored.¹⁹ Most importantly, those acquainted with research in the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking cultural field might miss certain interpretative approaches, especially those influenced by Haroldo de Campos. Could interlinear translation be perceived as one language appropriating another? After all, Robinson has defined freedom in translation as “the translational counterpart to source-textual revelation” (p. 187).

I may have overlooked a lot of intriguing details from Robinson’s valuable and insightful exploration of Benjamin’s seminal essay and its criticism. However, I am confident that his *Centennial Commentary* will continue to stimulate engaging discussions in the future. In summary, it stands out as an evolving, comprehensive, and thorough guide to “The Task of the Translator”—a reference work, particularly within the linguistic domains scrutinized by Robinson. Lastly, in my opinion, the paraphrases of Benjamin’s text could potentially offer a comprehensive and innovative translation. It would be highly beneficial and fascinating to consider releasing them separately.

19 E.g., Pratt’s [2008] ‘social spaces’ and ‘contact zones,’ Mudimbe-Boyi’s [2002] ‘in-between,’ Emily Apter’s [2006] ‘translation zone,’ Lydia Liu’s [1995] ‘middle-zone of interlinear translation,’ or Bhabha’s [1994] ‘third space,’ where ‘hybridisation’ takes place, and ‘newness’ is generated” (Robinson 2023: 189).

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Sondierungen und Reflexionen. Translationsgeschichte als methodologische Herausforderung

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Ein historisches Phänomen,
rein und vollständig erkannt
und in ein Erkenntnisphänomen
aufgelöst, ist für den,
der es erkannt hat, tot [...].

Nietzsche (1874/1988: 257)

Translationsgeschichte ist zumindest im deutschsprachigen Raum ein relativ junges, methodisch und theoretisch offenes

interdisziplinäres Forschungsfeld, das einerseits einem schier unendlichen unerforschten empirischen Bereich entgegenblickt, andererseits aber im Fahrwasser und im Schatten ihrer ‚Stammdisziplin‘ Translatologie agiert, deren diskursive und habituelle Prägungen nicht ohne Einfluss bleiben auf die Art, wie Translationsgeschichte ‚gemacht‘ wird, sowie darauf, was von ihr erwartet wird. Die von Larisa Schippel und Julia Richter herausgegebene, bei Frank & Timme in der Reihe *Transkulturalität – Translation – Transfer* (als Band 52) erschienene Aufsatzsammlung *Translation und „Drittes Reich“ II* lädt dazu ein, über diese Prägungen nachzudenken und mögliche Pfade in der künftigen Entwicklung dieses Feldes in den Blick zu nehmen.

Thematisch schließt der Band an seinen 2016 ebenfalls bei Frank & Timme erschienenen Vorgänger *Translation und „Drittes Reich“* an (hrsg. von Dörte Andres, Julia Richter und Larisa Schippel, Band 25 der oben genannten Reihe) und geht indirekt auf die von der Forschergruppe um Larisa Schippel (Universität Wien, i. R.) an der Humboldt-Universität Berlin organisierte Tagung zu dieser Thematik zurück. Während den ersten Band eine stark deskriptiv-explorative Ausrichtung¹ angesichts eines translationshistorisch „völlig unterbelichtete[n] Zeitraum[s]“² (Andres/Richter/Schippel 2016: 9) auszeichne-

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- 1 Im Klappentext heißt es dort u. a.: „Die Autorinnen und Autoren *zeichnen* einige dieser Entwicklungen *nach*, berichten von Akteuren, *erzählen die Geschichten* von verfolgten, geflohenen, sich unsichtbar machenden oder unsichtbar gemachten Übersetzerinnen und Übersetzern, *beschreiben* Überwachungsmaßnahmen und Professionalisierungsbestrebungen sowie die Entstehung einer neuen Riege von Translatorinnen und Translatoren“ (Hervorh.: A. T.).
 - 2 Dieser Einschätzung zum Stand der Forschung im Jahr 2016 kann man durchaus widersprechen, denn immerhin liegt seit 2004 mit Kate Sturges Studie *„The Alien Within“: Translation into German during the Nazi Regime* eine erste systematische monographische Studie zur Transla-

te, entstand der vorliegende Band aus der Wahrnehmung heraus, dass, so die Herausgeber, „Translationsgeschichte an sich, aber Translationsgeschichte für den Zeitraum 1933 bis 1945 in ganz besonderem Maße einer gründlichen Reflexion ihrer Methoden bedarf“ (S. 11). Offenbar entstand dieses Bedürfnis aus dem Unbehagen an der bisherigen Partikularität des translationshistorischen Feldes heraus, welches bereits im Vorwort zum ersten Band zu spüren war:

Die Geschichte der Translation besteht bisher aus einzelnen Teilen, Episoden, Mikrogeschichten, die aus verschiedenen Perspektiven und mit unterschiedlichem Forschungsinteresse geschrieben sind, so dass sie sich nicht ohne weiteres zu einem Ganzen fügen. Translationshistoriographie ist noch auf der Suche nach den passenden Kategorien zu ihren Fragestellungen. (Andres/Richter/Schippel 2016: 9)

Um es vorwegzunehmen: auch der vorliegende Band liefert noch kein „Ganzes“ zur Translationsgeschichte des ‚Dritten Reiches‘ und es lässt sich auch nicht *der* theoretisch-methodologische Forschungspfad abstecken, über den ein solches Ganzes (re)konstruiert werden könnte. Man kann sich ob des obigen Zitats nicht des Eindrucks erwehren, dass hier ein bestimmtes, platonisch anmutendes Vorverständnis des Geschichtlichen mitschwingt, welches das historische ‚Einzelding‘ als etwas epistemisch Inferiores in einem Subordinationsverhältnis zu dieses ‚Einzelding‘ transzendierenden ‚größeren‘ Entitäten – Systemen, Modellen, epistemischen Formationen etc. – aufgegangen, in ‚Erkenntnisphänomenen aufgelöst‘ wissen möchte. Die facettenreichen Beiträge der Sammlung werfen indes in ihrer Gänze die Frage auf, ob ein solches ‚Ganzes‘

tion im ‚Dritten Reich‘ vor, was für andere Zeitabschnitte der deutschen Geschichte insbesondere im 20. Jahrhundert nicht gilt. Weit aus „unterbelichteter“ scheint da z. B. die Geschichte der Translation in der DDR oder um die Jahrhundertwende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert zu sein.

vom wissenschaftlichen, genauer: vom *geisteswissenschaftlichen*, idiographisch ausgerichteten Standpunkt aus überhaupt möglich oder wünschenswert wäre.

Einzelne Facetten der Translationsgeschichte im ‚Dritten Reich‘ liefern zunächst einmal Beiträge, die, ohne explizit auf eine systematischere Betrachtungsweise abzielen, charakteristische Topoi des NS-Chronotopos, bis hin zu den Orten des Grauens, auf ihre Translationsrelevanz befragen. Das ist eine naheliegende Vorgehensweise, wenn man die *differentia specifica* von Translation unter den Bedingungen des Nationalsozialismus herauszuarbeiten sucht. Denn das NS-System erzeugte während seines 12-jährigen Bestehens spezifische Konstellationen, in die Translatoren involviert waren und die Translation erforderten bzw. induzierten: in Ghettos, in Konzentrations-, Vernichtungs- und Gefangenenlagern, an Kriegsfronten und in besetzten Gebieten mit ihren jeweils charakteristischen administrativen Strukturen, aber auch im ‚Reich‘ selbst, etwa in während der NS-Zeit entstandenen neuen Institutionen im soziokulturellen Bereich usw.

Ausgehend von der Prämisse, dass translatorische Berufe im ‚Dritten Reich‘ systemrelevant waren und dass „das Regime mit seinen Expansionsbestrebungen auf kompetente Sprachmittler angewiesen war, die zudem ideologisch mit der Führungsspitze an einem Strang ziehen sollten“ (S. 83), befasst sich RAPHAELA WILTSCHE in ihrem Beitrag (S. 83–104) mit dem 1933 gegründeten, dem Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda unterstellten NS-Berufsverband für Dolmetscher „Reichsfachschaft für Dolmetscherwesen“ und analysiert u. a. die russische Ausgabe der von dem Verband herausgegebenen Lehrhefte *Dolmetscher-Bereitschaft*, die in erster Linie Dolmetscher im Kriegseinsatz zu Adressaten hatten. Das Ziel dieser Korpusanalyse ist, textuelle Manifestationen von nationalsozialistischem Gedankengut im Sinne der NS-Propa-

ganda festzustellen. Dabei kommt die Autorin zu Ergebnissen, die den vorempirisch erwarteten Niederschlag der NS-Ideologie in analysierten Texten, gerade in Bezug auf die Sowjetunion, nicht oder nur teilweise bestätigen. So konnte sie z. B. das Konzept des „jüdischen Bolschewismus“, ein „grundlegendes Element der NS-Propaganda gegen die Sowjetunion“ (S. 90) in den Textbeispielen aus den Heften nicht finden. Einen direkten Einfluss der Rassenideologie stellte sie bei Themen fest, die die Anwendung nationalsozialistischer Ideologeme quasi unumgänglich machten, etwa wenn es um die Beschreibung ethnischer Besonderheiten der sowjetischen Bevölkerung ging. Hier war von „Turk-Blut“, „Mischungen“ usw. die Rede. Dennoch haben etliche Beispiele, die Wiltsche als Ausdruck „subtiler Indoktrinierung“ deutet, eigentlich nichts mit der NS-Ideologie zu tun, sondern stellen Diskursfragmente dar, die ganz allgemein für die Kritik an der Sowjetunion typisch und in verschiedensten politischen Kreisen und Milieus – unter Sozialdemokraten, Liberalen, russischen Emigranten usw. –, auch unabhängig von der Zäsur 1933 verbreitet waren, etwa die Kritik an der „technischen Rückständigkeit“ oder der gewaltsamen Kollektivierung der Landwirtschaft.

Translatorischen Vorgängen bzw. translatorisch Handelnden an Orten des Grauens sind die Beiträge von Malgorzata Tryuk, Marta Borning und Michaela Wolf gewidmet. MALGORZATA TRYUK beschreitet in ihrem Aufsatz (S. 29–42), der das Agieren von Lagerdolmetschern zu rekonstruieren sucht, einen geschichtswissenschaftlich ungewöhnlichen, aber durchaus überzeugenden Weg und lenkt damit zugleich die Aufmerksamkeit auf die methodologische Herausforderung, mit der das Studium der Translationsgeschichte im Allgemeinen, besonders aber der Translationsgeschichte im ‚Dritten Reich‘ einhergeht: Was tun, wenn zu nachweislich stattgefün-

denen historischen Vorgängen keine im translationshistorischen Sinne aussagekräftigen Primärquellen überliefert sind – eine Situation, mit der ein Translationshistoriker nicht selten konfrontiert wird? Tryuks Beitrag ist dem Spielfilm *Ostatni etap* (1948, dt. *Die letzte Etappe*) der polnischen Filmregisseurin und Holocaustüberlebenden Wanda Jakubowska gewidmet und behandelt die Figur der Lagerdolmetscherin Marta Weiss. Genauer: Der Film fungiert als empirische Quelle für die Rekonstruktion realer historischer Vorgänge. Seine Machart, die Verwendung authentischer Aufnahmen aus dem Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau, die Tatsachen, dass ehemalige Häftlinge als Darsteller einbezogen wurden, die Dreharbeiten am tatsächlichen Ort des Geschehens stattfanden und die fiktive Figur Mara Weiss der realen Lagerdolmetscherin Mala (Malka) Zimetbaum (1918–1944) nachempfunden wurde, all das macht aus dem Film noch kein authentisches Primärdokument. Dennoch lässt er sich als translationshistorische Quelle verwenden, da dessen Analyse es ermöglicht, so etwas wie eine prototypische Rollenposition eines Dolmetschers nachzuvollziehen, wie sie an „extremen Orten“ des NS-Regimes womöglich nicht selten anzutreffen war: „[The] uneasy position as a go-between, acting in a space between the oppressors and the oppressed, used as an instrument to convey horrific information related to life and death in the camp, or as a mouthpiece to issue degrading insults and humiliating orders“ (S. 40) – eine Position, aus der eine extreme, historisch, so scheint es, einmalige Mischung aus Einflussmacht und Selbstgefährdung des translatorisch Handelnden resultierte.

Während Tryuks Schwerpunkt auf einer einzelnen Dolmetscherfigur liegt und Wolfs Beitrag sogar einer ausführlichen Analyse einer einzigen Dolmetschszene im Lagerkontext gewidmet ist (S. 67–81) – womit beide Beiträge von ihrer empirischen Basis her ‚episodisch‘ bleiben – unternimmt Marta

Borning in ihrer Studie (S. 43–65) einen Versuch, translatorische Vorgänge an ‚exemplarischen‘ NS-Orten systematisch zu beschreiben bzw. die involvierten Akteure, deren Motivationen, Handlungsweisen und -spielräume zu rekonstruieren. Im Zentrum ihrer Untersuchung stehen kommunikative Vorgänge im Warschauer und Lodscher Ghetto. Ghettos bildeten seit 1939, als Polen von den Deutschen besetzt wurde, eine Art Zwischenstationen in der Vernichtungsmaschinerie der Nazis: Zunächst als ‚Judenviertel‘ für polnische Juden aus den betreffenden Städten und umliegenden Gemeinden eingerichtet, fungierten Ghettos zunehmend als Sammelunterkünfte für Juden aus den westlichen Teilen des Deutschen Reiches, bevor diese in die Vernichtungslager deportiert wurden. Die Nazis errichteten in den Ghettos jüdische Selbstverwaltungseinheiten, sog. ‚Judenräte‘, deren Aufgabe darin bestand, Verordnungen und Bekanntmachungen der deutschen Behörden umzusetzen und an die gemischtsprachige Ghettobevölkerung zu kommunizieren; dies machte den Einsatz von Translation auf verschiedenen Ebenen und zwischen verschiedenen Sprachen erforderlich.

Indem translatorische Vorgänge an solchen extremen Orten thematisiert werden, wird auch eine Dimension des Translatorischen angesprochen, die nicht in klischeehaften, stets Positives transportierenden Kategorien der ‚interkulturellen Verständigung‘ oder des ‚Brückenbauens‘ ausgedrückt werden kann und sozusagen jenseits von Gut und Böse liegt. Die Reflexion darüber ist insofern von Bedeutung, als solche abstrakten Vorstellungen letzten Endes ‚narrative Folien‘ bilden, die das, was man in der historischen Empirie beobachtet, als überraschend und kontraintuitiv erscheinen lassen. Eine narrative Folie dieser Art begegnet z. B. in der eben erwähnten Monographie von Sturge: Wenn Translation einen Dialog, eine Verständigung zwischen Kulturen und damit auch die Anerken-

nung des anderen impliziert, so müsste im Rahmen einer völkischen, xenophoben Ideologie ein grundsätzliches Misstrauen gegenüber bis Ablehnung der Translation dominieren. Doch Sturge stößt immer wieder auf empirische Funde – wie etwa die Zunahme der Zahl übersetzter Bücher gegen Ende der 1930 Jahre –, die im Kontrast zum von ihr rekonstruierten NS-Diskurs über „undesirability of translation“ stehen (Sturge 2004: 58).

Damit ist auch ein grundsätzlicheres hermeneutisches Problem in der Erforschung der Translationsgeschichte angesprochen: Welchen kontextuellen Bezugsrahmen wählt man, um translationshistorische Einzelbeobachtungen überhaupt deuten zu können? Welches ist das je Allgemeine, auf das man im – durchaus verständlichen – Streben nach Generalisierung das jeweils beobachtete empirisch Konkrete bezieht? Und: Ist bzw. muss dieses Allgemeine etwas Translationsbezogenes, gar ein von der Translationstheorie bereitgestelltes Allgemeines sein? Lassen sich z. B. allgemeine Charakteristika der Translation (etwa als ‚interkulturelle Verständigung‘) angeben, die zur Beschreibung und Deutung konkreter historischer Phänomene herangezogen werden können oder sollen? Es ist klar, dass von der Beantwortung dieser Fragen die methodologische Vorentscheidung abhängt, auf welchem Wege man zu weiteren Einzelbeobachtungen vordringen wird.

Es sind verschiedene Szenarien denkbar, die bis dato in unterschiedlichem Maße in der bereits vorliegenden Literatur zum Thema durchgespielt wurden und auch in diesem Band zur Anwendung kamen bzw. einer kritischen Befragung vor dem Hintergrund der jeweiligen Empirie unterzogen wurden.

Das naheliegende Szenario, dessen zusätzlicher Vorteil darin besteht, dass es allgemeinhistorische Narrative mit den dominanten Deutungsmodellen der Translationswissenschaft, etwa dem zielkulturellen Ansatz von Toury (1995/2012), – zu-

mindest auf der Ebene abstrakter Reflexion – relativ leicht in Einklang zu bringen erlaubt, besteht darin, das NS-System selbst als Bezugspunkt zu wählen, sei es als etwas „geschichtlich Einmaliges“ (Mann 1958/¹²2009: 863), sei es als ein Beispiel für politische Systeme des 20. Jahrhunderts, die etwa unter dem Stichwort ‚Totalitarismus‘ subsumiert werden. Wenn im kulturalistischen Modell von Toury die zentrale Rolle dem Kultur-Totalen der sog. ‚Zielkultur‘ mit ihren jeweils herrschenden ‚Normen‘ zukommt³, so scheint es durchaus naheliegend, ja sogar geboten, dasjenige Partikulare, das auf der Ebene von einzelnen Translaten oder im translatorischen Tun einzelner Akteure beobachtet wird, durch Rückgriff auf die unterstellte Totalität des ‚Totalitären‘ zu deuten. Wo, wenn nicht im Totalitarismus, so die zugrundeliegende Annahme, würden translatorisch Handelnde gemäß den aufoktroierten und mit harschen Sanktionen verbundenen ‚Normen‘ des ‚Regimes‘ handeln müssen?

Der epistemologische Zusammenhang zwischen dem NS-Regime als der Ebene des Allgemeinen und konkreten zu untersuchenden translatorischen Prozessen und Produkten in dessen ‚Orbit‘ lässt sich in weitere Fragestellungen ausdifferenzieren: Soll dieser Zusammenhang als ein *instrumentelles* bzw. *funktionales* Verhältnis gedacht werden, d. h. soll die Translation, die im NS-Chronotopos stattfand, als etwas aufgefasst werden, das bestimmte im NS-Kontext wurzelnde Skopoi realisiert hat, etwa die Perpetuierung der nationalsozialistischen Ideologie? Oder soll dieses Verhältnis *kausal* begriffen werden? Dann würde man in der Translation eine Art Reflex oder Spiegelung dessen sehen, was den NS-Kontext im Allgemeinen charakterisierte. Mit anderen Worten: Erzeugte der National-

3 Zur Kritik dieses Kulturalismus vgl. ausführlicher Tashinskiy (2018: 28–48).

sozialismus eine spezifische Art von Translation? Kann man den Translaten im Besonderen und translatorischen Handlungen im Allgemeinen ihren Ursprung im NS-Kontext ansehen? Herrschte in Nazi-Deutschland eine Art ‚antidemokratische‘, ‚totalitäre‘ usw. ‚Translationskultur‘ (Prunč)?

Von einer solchen ‚Rück-Verwurzelung‘ des textuell oder translationsbiographisch Partikularen in der Totalität des ‚Totalitären‘, über möglichst direkte Transmissionsriemen hegemonialer translatorischer Normen und Politiken, geht zumindest teilweise LIEVEN D’HULST aus. In seinem Beitrag (S. 15–27) entwirft er auf einer allgemeinen methodologischen Betrachtungsebene mögliche Untersuchungsobjekte und Herangehensweisen in der Erforschung der Translationsgeschichte im ‚Dritten Reich‘. Einen wichtigen Fokus seiner Überlegungen bildet dabei der Zusammenhang zwischen Translaten und ‚translatorischen Normen‘ des nationalsozialistischen „hegemonic regime“ (S. 17f.), wobei D’hulst auf die breite Expertise setzen möchte, die in der Untersuchung von Normen in den *Descriptive Translation Studies*, speziell bei Toury akkumuliert wurde (S. 18). D’hulst geht davon aus, dass es „norm-driven“ „translation techniques“ gegeben hat, die während des ‚Dritten Reiches‘ entwickelt („developed“) wurden (ebd.), ferner dass zumindest ein Teil der im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland geltenden ‚translatorischen Normen‘ sogar eine direkte Ausprägung der im literarischen Bereich wirksam gewesenen „nazi norms“ (was immer diese sein mögen) darstellte. Als Beispiel verweist er auf die Untersuchung von Ine Van linthout (2018) zu Übersetzungen flämischer Literatur ins Deutsche bzw. die Bevorzugung niederländischer und flämischer Literatur gegenüber der französischen. Tatsächlich stellte VAN LINTHOUT in ihren Studien, auch in ihrem im vorliegenden Sammelband enthaltenen Aufsatz (S. 215–232), eine ideologisch motivierte Favorisierung der flämischen Literatur als einer „blutsver-

wandten“ während der Nazi-Zeit fest, eine Favorisierung, die auch durch Sturges Zahlen teilweise untermauert wird (vgl. Sturge 2004: 60). Dennoch erscheint es fragwürdig, hier von einer ‚Norm‘ zu sprechen oder generell ein Wirksamwerden von irgendwelchen Normen anzunehmen, nur weil man eine über das entropisch Homogene hinausgehende Verteilung von Quantitäten beobachtet. Im Gegenteil demonstrieren Van linthouts Befunde eher die translationshistorische Untauglichkeit des Norm-Konzepts. Zu Recht kommt dieser Begriff in ihrer Untersuchung aus dem Jahr 2018, auf die D’hulst verweist, kein einziges Mal vor. In der Tat, wie soll hier eine ‚Norm‘ am Werk gewesen sein, wenn die flämische bzw. die niederländische Literatur in der Nazizeit zwar einen temporären Aufschwung zu Beginn des Krieges erlebt haben, die benachteiligte, also durch die angeblich ‚herrschende Norm‘ ins Abseits gedrängte französische/französischsprachige Literatur dennoch insgesamt quantitativ überwog? Laut Sturge (2004: 60⁴) gab es zwischen 1933 und 1945 438 belletristische Buch-Übersetzungen aus dem Französischen gegenüber 152 aus dem Niederländischen und 142 aus dem Flämischen. Was Sturges und Van linthouts Daten vielmehr zeigen, ist dass das übersetzerische Aufkommen der Nazizeit ein diachron ungleichmäßig verteiltes Ergebnis eines komplexen und widersprüchlichen Zusammenspiels zwischen verschiedenen, politischen und privatwirtschaftlichen, Akteuren und Faktoren war, die in unterschiedlichem Maße als systemisch bzw. kontingent betrachtet werden können: (1) die erst nach und nach vollzogene Etablierung und Verschärfung des Literaturkontrollapparates; (2) der von konfligierenden ideologischen und ökonomi-

4 Sturges Daten sind allerdings auch begrenzt aussagekräftig, da in ihrer Untersuchung keine Zahlen für die Zeit vor 1933 enthalten sind und somit eine essentielle Vergleichsgrundlage fehlt.

schen Interessen und ‚polykratisch‘ erlassenen, sich teilweise widersprechenden Vorgaben geprägte Buch- und Literaturbetrieb (vgl. Van linthout 2018: 10 und – im besprochenen Band – S. 228f.); (3) nicht zuletzt der Beginn des zweiten Weltkrieges und die damit einhergehenden Einschränkungen in Bezug auf die Publikation der Literatur ‚feindlicher Länder‘, was zu „Kompensationseffekten“ bei der flämischen/niederländischen oder skandinavischen Literaturen geführt hat (vgl. Sturges 2004: 61; Van linthout 2018: 24).

Ein für die Rekonstruktion dieses komplexen Zusammenspiels besser geeigneter Ansatz scheint die Beschäftigung mit der Politik der Translation zu sein (D’hulst, S. 20), denn immerhin kann dabei unterschieden werden zwischen der Ebene offizieller Vorgaben und dominierender Diskurse auf der einen und der tatsächlichen translatorischen Praxis auf der anderen Seite, die gerade im Falle des nationalsozialistischen Literaturbetriebs teilweise stark auseinanderklaffen konnten. Obwohl D’hulst in seinen Überlegungen zunächst erneut ein Bild der totalen Durchdringung des kulturellen Feldes durch die nationalsozialistische Macht entwirft:

As all regimes, hegemonic regimes devise language and translation policies that initiate and regulate communication and translation activities in all spheres that they consider relevant to the exercise of power, notable international politics, justice, education, army, economy, literature, press and propaganda. (S. 20)

warnt er zugleich vor einem „one-sided determinism“ (S. 22), der sich einstellt, wenn man Translation einseitig als durch das jeweilige historische Regime geformt auffasst. In der Tat können bestimmte Charakteristika von Translation auch auf Faktoren zurückzuführen sein, die aus früherer Zeit stammen und trotz der Zäsur von 1933 fortbestehen, wie etwa bestimmte Traditionen oder Lektürepräferenzen des Publikums – Fakto-

ren, die auch Van linthout mit Verweis auf Sturge in ihrem Aufsatz thematisiert (vgl. S. 220).

Neben dieser Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen sollte generell die Reichweite einer spezifischen ‚translation policy‘ angesprochen bzw. hinterfragt werden. Denn, obwohl Translation zwischen 1933 und 1945 auf vielen Ebenen Spuren des Nationalsozialismus offenbart, ist es nicht ausgemacht, dass das, was man im translatorischen Bereich beobachtet, Folge von administrativen und politischen Entscheidungen gewesen ist, die gezielt bzw. strategisch Translation zum Gegenstand hatten. Es muss also kein translatorisch spezifischer Zusammenhang zwischen vermeintlich zugrundeliegenden Einflussfaktoren und beobachteten Effekten, also keine translationsbezogene Kausalität vorliegen. Vielmehr ist es möglich, dass die vermeintlichen translatorischen *differentia specifica* Ausdruck von Veränderungen sind, die gleichermaßen auch Nicht-Translatorisches betrafen.⁵

5 Ein gutes Beispiel für eine solche vorschnelle Annahme eines translationsspezifischen Zusammenhangs zwischen beobachtbaren Veränderungen der translatorischen Empirie und dem politischen Umbruch von 1933 findet man wieder bei Sturge, obwohl ihre Monographie insgesamt einen präzise differenzierenden und tentativen Analysestil praktiziert. Verglichen mit dem Jahr 1933 stellt sie für 1934 einen deutlichen Rückgang der Übersetzungen fest (von 342 auf 251) (vgl. Sturge 60f., 56), und vermutet als Ursache „an over-anxious reaction to the onset of literary control“ (ebd.: 58.). Wie den Ausführungen des Buchwissenschaftlers Jan-Pieter Barbian jedoch entnommen werden kann, war dieser Rückgang bis 1934 erstens nicht translationsspezifisch, da er den Buchmarkt insgesamt betraf, und hatte zweitens nur zum Teil mit der politischen Zäsur von 1933 zu tun: Viele Verlage wurden zerschlagen und die Verleger mussten ins Exil gehen, darüber hinaus zeigten sich aber noch bis in das Jahr 1934 hinein Folgen der Wirtschaftskrise, von der gerade mittelständische Verlage und andere Unternehmen, die an der Buchproduktion und Distribution einen wich-

Vom Zusammenhang zwischen translatorischen Vorgängen und den Spezifika des Nationalsozialismus kann man auf eine noch allgemeinere Reflexionsebene steigen und das generelle Verhältnis zwischen Translation und Geschichte problematisieren. Verrät das translationshistorisch Beobachtete etwas über die Geschichte in diesem oder jenem konkreten historischen Abschnitt, d. h. fördert das Studium der Geschichte der Translation eine neue Facette, eine neue, von Historikern vielleicht übersehene Nuance im Verständnis der Geschichte im Allgemeinen zutage oder soll Translationsgeschichte ‚wie im Brennglas‘ zeitunabhängige, universale Facetten der Translation offenbaren, wie es im Klappentext zum vorliegenden Band heißt? Auf unseren Fall bezogen: Verhilft die Erforschung der Translation im ‚Dritten Reich‘ letztlich dazu, die Zeit 1933–1945 besser nachzuvollziehen oder leistet sie einen Beitrag zum allgemeinen Translationsverständnis? Es handelt sich um durchaus unterschiedliche Bezugsrahmen für die translationshistorische Forschung, über die in der Translationswissenschaft diskutiert wird.⁶

Einen Versuch, den zweiten Weg zu beschreiten und translationshistorisch Partikulares aus translationstheoretischer Perspektive zu deuten sowie diese Deutung selbst zugleich translationstheoretisch zu ‚verwerten‘, unternimmt TOMASZ ROZMYŚLÓWICZ in seinem Beitrag „Translation und kollektive Exklusion“ (S. 105–129). Den Gegenstand seiner Überlegungen bildet die siebente der insgesamt zwölf Thesen, die die nationalsozialistisch gewordene Deutsche Studenten-

tigen Anteil hatten, besonders betroffen waren (vgl. Barbian 2015b: 161ff.).

6 Vgl. z. B. Christopher Rundles Positionsbeitrag im Forum „Translation and history“ in der Zeitschrift *Translation Studies* (2012) sowie verschiedene ‚responses‘ darauf.

schaft am 12. April 1933 als Auftakt der Aktion „Wider den undeutschen Geist“ per öffentlichem Anschlag verbreitet hat. Darin wird u. a. gefordert, die auf Deutsch verfassten Werke ‚jüdischer‘ Autoren als Übersetzungen aus dem Hebräischen zu kennzeichnen. Den spektakulären Tiefpunkt dieser Aktion bildete bekanntlich die Bücherverbrennung am 10. Mai 1933 in mehreren deutschen Städten. Unter Rückgriff auf Tourys Konzept der „assumed translation“ (vgl. Toury 1995/2012: 93f.) sowie den differenztheoretischen Ansatz von Naoki Sakai (vgl. 2009, 2018) ordnet Rozmysłowicz nun diese Forderung sowie und vor allem deren ausgebliebene Umsetzung translationstheoretisch ein.

Beim Rezensenten hinterließ dieser Einordnungsversuch einen gemischten, teilweise verwirrenden Eindruck. Zum einen war nicht nachzuvollziehen, warum der Verfasser das besagte translatorische Ereignis unter Verwendung des von Toury eingeführten Konzepts der Pseudotranslation näher zu fassen versuchte. Als *Pseudotranslation* definiert Toury einen Text, der „im Inneren“, d. h. in seiner Wirkung auf die Beobachter einer Zielkultur wie ein Translat funktioniert bzw. funktionieren soll (etwa weil es sich aufgrund tradierter Editionspraktiken als solches ausweist: Durch explizite Markierungen im verlegerischen Peritext vom Typ „Übersetzt von XY“ o. ä.), „objektiv“ gesehen aber, also vom in der Toury’schen Definition notwendigerweise angelegten Standpunkt eines außenstehenden Beobachters (den wiewohl auch Akteure ‚im Inneren‘ einnehmen können), kein Translat sei (Toury 2012: 47: „[producers of texts] may [...] offer texts, often even actually compose them, as if they were translations“). Im vorliegenden Fall hat man in der Innenperspektive im Gegenteil eher mit ‚Pseudooriginalen‘ zu tun. Die Werke jüdischer Autoren funktionieren zunächst einmal wie Originale, sie weisen sich – auf der Ebene der Produktion, des Vertriebs, der bibliothekarischen Aufbewahrung,

letztlich sogar als Einträge auf den „Schwarzen Listen“, die bei der späteren Verbrennungsaktion verwendet wurden (vgl. Barbian 2015a: 9) – als Originale aus, sie sind nicht als Translate markiert. Erst im – logisch, nicht unbedingt chronologisch gesehen – zweiten Schritt tritt die Deutsche Studentenschaft auf die Bühne und will in einer ‚entlarvenden‘ Geste diesen ‚unwahren‘ Zustand korrigieren und diese Originale als Übersetzungen ausgewiesen wissen. In deren Perspektive hat man hier also nicht mit Texten zu tun, die wie Übersetzungen ‚funktionieren‘, in Wirklichkeit aber keine seien, sondern umgekehrt mit Texten, die als Originale erscheinen, aber ‚in Wirklichkeit‘ (in den Augen der Deutschen Studentenschaft) Translate darstellen würden, wobei nicht nachzuprüfen ist, ob die Urheber der Thesen daran glaubten oder nicht.⁷

In seinem Beitrag legt Rozmyslowicz trotzdem überzeugend dar, welches Translationsverständnis und die damit einhergehende Intention diesem Aufruf zugrunde lag: nämlich Exklusion. In der Tat wäre die Kennzeichnung von ‚jüdischen Werken‘ als Übersetzungen eine Möglichkeit gewesen, „die Juden‘ aus dem ‚deutschen‘ Innen in dessen Außen“ zu verweisen (S. 117), mithin ein Beitrag zur Säuberung der „deutschen“ Kultur von allem „Undeutschen“. Die endgültige Schlussfolgerung bezüglich der Frage, warum der Aufruf der Deutschen Studentenschaft nicht in die Tat umgesetzt wurde, d. h. der Versuch des Verfassers eine historische Kausalität für das Nicht-Zustandekommen eines Ereignisses aus translationsinhärenten, dazu auch „notwendigen“ (S. 119) Gründen herzuleiten, überzeugt dennoch nicht und zeigt zugleich eine

7 Warum der Verfasser diesen Widerspruch offenbar nicht wahrnimmt, bleibt umso unerklärlicher, als er selbst korrekterweise ausführt, dass es in diesem Fall nicht darum ging „Autorschaft zu *verbergen*, sondern [die angebliche] Übersetzerschaft zu *enthüllen*“ (S. 111; Hervorh. i. O.).

prinzipielle „Bemühtheit“ konstruktivistischer Herangehensweisen an geschichtlich Konkretes. Wäre die Forderung umgesetzt worden, hätte dies, so Rozmyslowicz, eine Unterminierung der herrschenden NS-Ideologie nach sich gezogen, was natürlich nicht passieren durfte (S. 120f.). Wie das? Unter Verweis auf Klaus Holz' (1998) Herausarbeitung ‚des Juden‘ innerhalb der NS-Ideologie als Symbol einer ‚ortlosen‘ Nicht-Identität, dessen Funktion darin bestehe, das Prinzip der nationalen Identität als solches in Frage zu stellen bzw. zu bedrohen (und somit durch die Oppositionalität zu bekräftigen), hätte die Markierung der ‚jüdischen Werke‘ als Übersetzungen deren Verfasser zu ‚bloßen‘ Ausländern gemacht und ihnen damit eine prinzipielle nationale Identität verliehen, sie als Vertreter einer Nation ‚konstruiert‘:

‚Der Jude‘ hätte damit seine Ortlosigkeit und seine Funktion, verloren, die Ungewissheit über die Möglichkeit von nationaler Gemeinschaft und Identität zu absorbieren. [...] Denn i[m] Begriff [der Übersetzung] steckt ja auch eine gewisse Anerkennung von anderen als eine andere Kultur- und Sprachgemeinschaft und damit die Unterstellung ihrer prinzipiellen Gleichartigkeit (wenn auch nicht unbedingt) Gleichheit. (S. 121).

Der simpleren, von Rozmyslowicz ebenfalls angeführten Deutung anderer Autoren, die Nicht-Umsetzung sei mit der Absurdität der Forderung zu erklären, ist in diesem Fall Vorzug zu geben. Denn die in sich widersprüchliche, von „wühlender Konkurrenz“ (Mann 2009: 868) geprägte Maschinerie der Nationalsozialisten zur Vernichtung von Kulturgut und zur „Säuberung“ des deutschen Schrifttums von allem „Un-deutschen“ hätte einer solchen Ausweisung von ‚jüdischen‘ Originalen als Übersetzungen gar nicht erst bedurft. Die einfache Verfasserschaft und die Etikettierung als ‚Feinde des deutschen Volkes‘ aus rassistischen oder politischen Gründen waren für die Nationalsozialisten vollkommen ausreichend, um Buchtitel von unerwünschten Autoren in ‚Schwarze Listen‘

aufzunehmen und durch Vernichtung sowie subtilere Formen von Gewalt (etwa durch Aussonderung aus den Beständen des ‚Deutschen Schrifttums‘) aus dem öffentlichen Verkehr zu ziehen. Umgekehrt war die Literaturpolitik der Nationalsozialisten diachron gesehen keineswegs homogen. Die Reichspogromnacht war in vielerlei Hinsicht eine ‚innere‘ Zäsur, vor der durchaus „eine gewisse Anerkennung von anderen als eine andere Kultur- und Sprachgemeinschaft“ zu beobachten war, freilich ohne dass daraus eine „prinzipielle Gleichartigkeit“ resultieren würde. Um nur ein (wenn auch frappantes) Beispiel zu nennen: Bis 1938 existierte in Berlin der Schocken Verlag, ein von den Nazis ‚offiziell‘ tolerierter Verlag, in dem belletristische Werke jüdischer Autoren und auch Übersetzungen erschienen, freilich ohne die Möglichkeit über den traditionellen Buchhandel vertrieben zu werden. Allein dieses Beispiel relativiert die Generalisierbarkeit der Holz’schen Konstruktion und der daraus resultierenden Schlussfolgerungen.

Offenbar stoßen Versuche, translationshistorische Empirie, zumindest in diesem historischen Abschnitt, mit Hilfe ‚zielkulturell‘ ausgerichteter Modelle oder auf ähnliche Art (etwa indem man von einem ‚translatorischen Feld‘ oder einer ‚Translationskultur‘ ausgeht) zu rahmen, an ihre Grenzen: die Ebene des Allgemeinen ‚proliferiert‘, wird plural und lässt sich nicht durch ein bestimmtes ahistorisches Konzept einfangen. Wie D’hulst zu Recht in der *Conclusio* zu seinem Aufsatz anmerkt, können Ergebnisse empirischer Studien mitunter deutlich von dem abweichen, was man bei der Applikation eines „pre-existing and quite familiar frame“, etwa der DTS, erwarten würde (S. 25). Besonders deutlich wird es, wenn man sich translatorische Vorgänge anschaut, die zwar nicht unmittelbar in der ‚Zielkultur‘ des ‚Dritten Reichs‘ stattfanden, aber als mittelbare, nicht beabsichtigte Folge der Machtübernahme der Nationalsozialisten angesehen werden können: nämlich die

vielfältigen translatorischen Prozesse im *Exil*. Dem Thema ‚Translation im Exil‘ sind gleich mehrere Aufsätze im Band gewidmet, von denen der Beitrag von LARISA SCHIPPEL (S. 349–365) einen interessanten Vorstoß in der kritischen Reflexion auf die angesprochenen Problematiken des zielkulturellen Denkens darstellt. In ihrer Studie befasst sich Schippel mit der im Exil stattgefundenen translatorischen Dissemination des ebenfalls im Exil entstandenen antifaschistischen Romans *Fontamara* (1933) von Ignazio Silone. Der methodische Ansatz, den sie dabei benutzt, besteht darin, zunächst das empirische Material ihres ‚Falles‘, d. h. bibliographische Daten zu Ausgangstexten und Übersetzungen sowie rekonstruierbare biographische Verflechtungen zwischen den in das Übersetzungsgeschehen involvierten Akteuren mit ihren jeweiligen Motivlagen und Interessen zusammenzutragen und als Netzwerk gewissermaßen zu kartieren. Diese transkulturelle Zusammenschau führt zu Beobachtungen des translatorischen Geschehens, die im Rahmen einer zielkulturellen Betrachtungsweise nicht möglich gewesen wären. Denn weder der Genfer Freundes- und Bekanntenkreis um die Übersetzerin Nettie Sutro Katzenstein als kollektiver Initiator und ‚Ausführer‘ der deutschen *Fontamara*-Übersetzung (S. 259f.), noch die Tatsache, dass bei der weiteren Verbreitung des Romans via Translation nicht nur das italienische Original, sondern auch die deutsche Übersetzung eine maßgebliche Rolle spielte (S. 360f.), lassen sich adäquat im Rahmen von translationswissenschaftlichen Konzepten abbilden, die Translate und Translatoren einer bestimmten ‚Zielkultur‘, einer national(staatlich) begrenzten ‚Translationskultur‘ oder einem ‚translatorischen Feld‘ zuordnen und damit potentiell essentialisieren. Vielmehr entsteht hier das Bild eines translatorischen Geschehens, das sich in einem nicht-behälterhaften, quasi rhizomartigen translatorischen Raum einer „endlosen Semiose“ (S. 262) entfaltet, in

dem Akteure nicht so sehr aufgrund ihrer „nationalen Zugehörigkeit“ (ebd.), sondern in diesem Fall aufgrund ihrer von Anfang an internationalistisch vermittelten sozialistischen Haltungen und Motiven handeln.

Ein anderes, aber nicht weniger gewichtiges methodisches Problem, das nicht das Verhältnis zwischen Translationsgeschichte und translationswissenschaftlichen Theorieangeboten, sondern das Verhältnis zwischen Translationsgeschichte und ihrem Primärmaterial betrifft, stellt das Ausmaß und die Notwendigkeit von plausiblen Spekulationen und indirekten Hermeneutiken angesichts einer intrinsisch bedingten ‚Quellenmangelage‘ dar. Die letztere ist zum einen auf die nach wie vor zu beobachtende relativ geringe Archiwürdigkeit von Übersetznachlässen und generell von Dokumenten, die translatorische Vorgänge betreffen, zurückzuführen. Wie bereits oben im Zusammenhang mit dem Beitrag von Malgorzata Tryuk angesprochen stellt sich das Problem der lückenhaften Überlieferung von Primärquellen, mit der prinzipiell jeder Historiker konfrontiert werden kann, für den Translationshistoriker, zumal in Bezug auf solche ‚turbulenten‘ Abschnitte der deutschen Geschichte wie die NS-Zeit, verschärft dar. Zum anderen wird seine Arbeit durch die relative Unsichtbarkeit von Translatoren in gedruckten Zeugnissen erschwert, sei es in verlegerischen Peritexten, sei es in inhaltlicher Hinsicht, etwa in Autobiographien. Was sie verrichten, wird oft als infrastrukturelle Selbstverständlichkeit wahrgenommen, was zur Nicht-Thematisierung ihrer Arbeit, zur Nicht-Erinnerung an ihre Namen usw. führt. All das erschwert oder verunmöglicht unter Umständen eine sichere Zurückverfolgung von Spuren translatorischer Handlungen und damit letztlich die Rekonstruktion von Translationsgeschichte. Gleich mehrere Beiträge im Band zeigen aber, dass es durchaus möglich und legitim ist, Lücken im Primärmaterial durch plausible Vermu-

tungen zu ‚überbrücken‘. So spekuliert z. B. Raphaela Wiltsche in ihrem oben bereits erwähnten Beitrag, ob Beispieltexte in den Lehrheften der *Dolmetscher-Bereitschaft* von Angehörigen der Wlassow-Armee verfasst wurden, die „innerhalb des russischsprachigen soziokulturellen Kontextes“ sozialisiert wurden und mit den sowjetischen Gegebenheiten vertraut sein mussten (S. 95). Mit Fragmentarität des Materials bzw. teilweise gänzlichem Fehlen von direkten Hinweisen auf translatorische Vorgänge sieht sich auch Marta Borning in ihrer ebenfalls oben erwähnten Studie zur Translation in polnischen Ghettos konfrontiert. Aufgrund der überlieferten Informationen bzgl. anderer Tätigkeiten der involvierten Akteure bzw. aufgrund der Tatsache, dass bestimmte Dokumente in den von ihr untersuchten Archivbeständen in verschiedensprachigen Ausfertigungen vorlagen, schließt sie auf die Notwendigkeit von Translation.

In dieser Hinsicht besonders instruktiv ist der Beitrag von BARBARA REITZ „Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer Übersetzerbiographie Stefan I. Kleins – ein Praxisbericht“ (S. 171–193), auch wenn von allen im Band enthaltenen Aufsätzen dieser am wenigsten mit dem Thema des Bandes „Translation und ‚Drittes Reich‘“ zu tun hat. (Man erfährt nur im ersten Satz, dass Stefan I. Klein im Exil in England gestorben ist, dass er also ein Exilierter, ein vom Nationalsozialismus Betroffener war. Welche Auswirkungen dies auf seine übersetzerische Tätigkeit hatte und ob die Beantwortung dieser Frage womöglich ein spezifisch auf die historische Formation ‚Drittes Reich‘ zugeschnittenes methodisches Instrumentarium erfordert, wird im Beitrag nicht thematisiert.) Jedoch macht er wie kein anderer im Band deutlich, dass die Translationsgeschichte einen reflektierten methodischen Umgang mit überlieferten Quellen, dem primären Stoff ihrer Arbeit, benötigt. Die Verfasserin stellt sich der Frage, wie sie mit dem unsicheren und fragmen-

tarischen Charakter der Quellen umgehen kann oder soll, und greift hier gekonnt auf den methodischen Erfahrungsschatz der Geschichtswissenschaft zurück (Quellenkritik, Quellenstrukturierung, Umgang mit Datierungslücken usw.). Darüber hinaus problematisiert Reitz die oben angesprochene, nach wie vor vorhandene relativ niedrige Archivwürdigkeit translations- und translatorbezogener Primärquellen und knüpft daran durchaus verallgemeinerbare methodische Überlegungen. Der informative Wert des Beitrags wird bedauerlicherweise dadurch gemindert, dass er stellenweise eine Zusammenfassung woanders publizierter Recherche- und Analyseergebnisse bar konkreter Analysebeispiele darstellt, so dass der Leser selbst nicht immer die Möglichkeit hat, nachzuvollziehen, wie die Autorin zu diesem oder jenem Schluss gelangt. Er ahnt, dass das Material, die theoretische Modellierung und die durchgeführten Analysen weit über den Rahmen eines Aufsatzes hinausgehen, und wäre besser damit bedient, einen kleineren, aber mit nachvollziehbaren Beispielen untermauerten Ausschnitt aus dem Übersetzerbiographischen Projekt „Stephan I. Klein“ präsentiert zu bekommen (man hätte sich z. B. auf die vielversprechend wirkende Applikation des *Grounded-Theory*-Ansatzes beschränken können. Im Beitrag nennt die Autorin nur die Ergebnisse des Kodierens; was genau und wie damit kodiert wurde, bleibt aber unerwähnt).

Beschließen möchte ich diese Rezension mit der Besprechung der materialgesättigten und zu methodologischen Reflexionen anregenden Studie von MAGDALENA PARTL. In ihrem Aufsatz „Hermen von Kleeborn – eine Kulturvermittlerin und der Nationalsozialismus“ (S. 299–328) demonstriert sie überzeugend den Nutzen der biographischen Methode in der Translationsgeschichte, d. h. die Rekonstruktion und Betrachtung translationshistorischer Vorgänge durch das Prisma eines einzelnen übersetzerischen Schicksals. Durch Auswertung un-

zähliger Archivadokumente, vor allem aus dem Nachlass der Übersetzerin im Literaturhaus Wien, rekonstruiert Partl den verschlungenen Werdegang der Wienerin Kleeborn als Übersetzerin und Verlagsmitarbeiterin vor, während und nach dem Ende des ‚Dritten Reichs‘, ihre Zusammenarbeit mit Verlagen sowie ihr literarisches Netzwerk. Zugleich führt die Autorin vor Augen, dass eine intensive Beschäftigung mit translationsbezogenem Archivmaterial zu einer tentativen Haltung bei der Beurteilung des Verhältnisses zwischen der partikularen Empirie und naheliegenden ‚Verallgemeinerungsdiskursen‘ führt, ob diese nun aus der Translatologie oder aus der Geschichtswissenschaft stammen:

War Kleeborn eine überzeugte Nationalsozialistin? Wahrscheinlich nicht. War sie eine Widerstandskämpferin und den Ideen des Nationalsozialismus vollkommen abgeneigt? Diese Vermutung scheint ebenso wenig nahezuliegen. Möglicherweise war Kleeborn – wie viele ihrer Zeitgenossen – eine einfache Opportunistin. (S. 318)

Der Beitrag zeigt, dass Translation unter der NS-Herrschaft eben nicht nur unter den ‚Ausnahmebedingungen‘ stattfand. Bzw., differenzierter: Wenn man die NS-Herrschaft als einen einzigen Ausnahmestand betrachtet, so waren die in dieser Zeit und in diesem Herrschaftsbereich erfolgten translatorischen Handlungen und Ereignisse in sehr unterschiedlichem Maße von diesem Ausnahmestand betroffen. Das Spektrum reichte von Translation, die direkt an spezifisch nationalsozialistische Gegebenheiten und Topoi gekoppelt war: spazial, temporal und kausal, und auf existentiell extreme Art davon geprägt war, bis hin zu Translation, die auf die gleiche Art und mit vergleichbaren Ergebnissen auch in völlig anderen Kontexten hätte stattfinden können und auch stattgefunden hat, einfach weil bestimmte Dinge nach 1933 trotz des zivilisatorischen Bruchs nicht aufgehört haben zu existieren, zu wirken, ihre Gültigkeit zu haben. Die 1908 in Wien geborene Kleeborn

wurde 1940 zu Übersetzerin, unter Umständen, die nichts spezifisch Nationalsozialistisches hatten, wenn man von der Tatsache absieht, dass ihr biographischer oder politischer Hintergrund sie nicht automatisch zur Feindin des NS-Regimes machten: Sie bewarb sich schriftlich auf eine Anzeige bei einem 1924 in Naunhof bei Leipzig gegründeten F. W. Hendel Verlag, der für eine geplante Balzac-Edition nach Übersetzern suchte. Auch ein solches übersetzerisches Projekt – Neuübersetzungen ‚zeitloser‘ Klassiker in Form einer Edition ‚ausgewählter Werke‘ – war für die erste Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts nichts Ungewöhnliches. Zu dem Verlag selbst finden sich keine Angaben im dem ‚Dritten Reich‘ gewidmeten Band der *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Fischer/Wittmann 2015). Eine schnelle Recherche im DNB-Katalog zeigt, dass der Verlag schwerpunktmäßig Autoren wie Dickens, Dumas, Fontane usw. herausgab. Die (im Übrigen nicht realisierte) Balzac-Ausgabe, an der Kleeborn als Übersetzerin beteiligt war, stand in einem indifferenten Verhältnis zum NS-Regime: Sie schadete ihm nicht und ließ sich auch umgekehrt nicht als ‚völkisch‘ oder sonst wie instrumentalisieren.

Welchen Stellenwert Kleeborns Geschichte im künftigen Narrativ über die Translation im ‚Dritten Reich‘ auch einnehmen wird – eins zeigt Partls Beitrag und auch der von Larisa Schippel und Julia Richter herausgegebene Band insgesamt ganz deutlich: Translationshistorische Sondierungen und Reflexionen bleiben eine Herausforderung und zugleich eine reiche Quelle von Anregungen für methodische Ansätze und theoretische Konzeptionen der „Gegenwartswissenschaft“ (Dizdar 2015) Translatologie.

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Reviews | Rezensionen

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Review of: HRNJEZ, Saša / NARDELLI, Elena [a cura di] (2020): *Verifiche XLIX/1–2: Hegel and/in/on Translation*. 333 pp.

Addressing one of the more interesting problems of our philosophical present, namely, the philosophical issue of translation in comparison with Hegelian philosophy, is a challenging endeavor explored by this thought-provoking publication: *Hegel and/in/on Translation*, edited by Saša Hrnjez and Elena Nardelli. As a programmatic manifesto, the three perspectives encapsulated in the title—and/in/on—introduce the formidable undertaking shouldered by the editors and contributors: Hegel and translation, Hegel in translation, and Hegel on translation. That is: Hegel within the realm of translation, Hegel translated, and Hegel's perspectives on translation all converge, each perspective raising a huge number of implications for this intellectual enterprise.

The volume consists of three sections: 1. On Translation: Theoretical Perspectives; 2. Effects of Translation; 3. Hegel in Translation. These three directions of investigation, almost akin to three research trajectories, serve to unveil additional

quandaries and new fields of analysis, thereby offering distinct approaches to the topic of translation. Primarily, they seek to underscore the interconnections between Hegel's philosophy and the potential determination of his specific understanding of the *Übersetzungsbegriff* (the concept of translation). Additionally, they delve into the perennial question of what it truly means to translate Hegel and whether such a feat is genuinely feasible. Furthermore (and this is perhaps the most intriguing aspect), they attempt to present and analyse Hegelian thought as a profound and articulated expression of a translational 'dispositif.' Given the wide-ranging and interdisciplinary nature of the topic at hand, it is essential to approach it from multiple and diverse perspectives. With this objective in mind, the volume presents a substantial collection of contributions authored by scholars well-versed in Hegel and classical German philosophy. Additionally, the volume includes contributions from translators and scholars who have extensively researched the intricacies of translation.

From this perspective, the enquiry into the prospect of discovering a theory of translation within Hegel's philosophy also (and above all) entails questioning the very notion of translation itself. Thus, it necessitates discarding predetermined, vague or hasty definitions that have been attributed to translation—definitions that often diminish this concept to imply the mere semantic or linguistic 'transferability' from one language to another. As the editors write in *Is it possible to speak about a Hegelian theory of Translation? On Hegel's Übersetzungsbegriff and some paradigmatic practices of translation*, their impressive essay opening the volume:

Such flexibility can be noted through a frequent figurative usage of the notion of translation in theoretical discourses that aim at designating various processes of transferring, transporting, mediating, and transforming or simply changing passages from something to some other. In these cases, translation lends itself perfectly well as a metaphor for

a special kind of processuality, especially when this processuality also embraces the semiotic or linguistic dimension. (p. V)

At stake, on the one hand, is the very meaning of translation as metaphor, which cannot simply imply or refer to another metaphor without losing its concreteness. On the other, the impossibility of an empty reference to another in place of the same is precisely what the Hegelian dialectic would intend to deny or dismiss (whether it succeeds in its intent is clearly another point of discussion, as some of the contributions in the volume will show).

Hence this is undoubtedly the primary philosophical goal of this dense volume: to critically examine the notion of translation by interrogating Hegel with the aim of redefining the fundamental meaning of the concept of translation and its underlying functioning. The outcomes arising from this endeavor are manifold and, to some extent, even at odds with each other, yet they all converge on a shared element that permeates the pages of the volume. By virtue of its inherent translational nature, every Hegelian enquiry into the status of translation becomes a meta-philosophical reflection, namely an investigation that questions its own possibilities. In a nutshell: within the realms of “and/on/in” translation, philosophical thought discovers its own potentiality to extrofect itself (what I mean by extrofection is the double movement to expression contained into dialectical thought: to show its content and to expose itself to risk of reality). Indeed, is not Hegelian philosophy, at its core, a huge endeavor to extrofect thinking into the tangible realm of reality and *as* reality? However, setting aside rhetorical questions or an over-enthusiastical and uncritical adherence to this translational perspective, a pertinent query arises: what challenges does philosophy encounter in undertaking such a venture? As Hrnjez and Nardelli explicitly affirm, the main challenge arising from their own theoretical proposition pre-

cisely resides in the endeavor “to grasp the very significance of the concept of translation without again falling into the trap of its flexibility” (p. VI).

However, I would like to pose an initial question of my own, one that enables us to delve into the intricate historical, theoretical, hermeneutical, and critical propositions presented within the essays in this volume: Why specifically focus on Hegel? As previously mentioned, the act of investigating translation and investigating Hegel are interconnected acts of thinking, as is evident in many essays included in this volume. However, this does not imply that these two issues are interchangeable. On the contrary, the trap of flexibility lies precisely in attempting to simply *translate* Hegel into the problem of translation, since this would entail substituting or interchanging Hegel with another object of enquiry. Instead, the crux lies in the potential to consider both the concept of translation through the analytical framework provided by Hegelian philosophy and also Hegelian philosophy itself as inherently intertwined with the problem of translation. This raises another question: Why exactly does Hegelian philosophy enable us to engage in a metaphilosophical reflection on the concept of translation? There are multiple ways to approach this question. Despite the diverse perspectives presented in the essays in this volume, it appears that a shared understanding or common ground emerges regarding one crucial aspect, namely the *linguistic* nature of Hegelian philosophy. In this regard, Hrnjez and Nardelli explain that

Hegel’s concepts are linguistically embodied, residing in the living organism of the language, so that rather than being abstract and expressionless, they express too much, putting in relation different and often opposing meanings and semantic allusions. (p. VI)

In my view, the crux of the matter lies in that “too much”: we can assume this supra-significance or over-significance of

philosophical language as soon as we consider the linguistic field beyond its mere reduction to the semantic dimension; according to Hegel, language is first and foremost action, activity, praxis, and not just “meaning”). Consequently, Hrnjez and Nardelli argue that “Hegel’s approach to the language of philosophy is already translational in its essence” (p. VI–VII). This statement encapsulates a broad range of implications, many of which are thoroughly explored by the diverse articles included in the volume. It establishes the foundational framework that underlies the entire publication, in fact. It asserts that the process of reflection, which occupies a central position in the *Doctrine of Essence* (a key focus of many contributions to the volume), cannot be simply equated with or reduced to a movement or a process of *flexibility*. In other words, the concept of translation is more closely aligned with the work of reflection rather than being a mere interchangeability of meanings. Translation should not be regarded simply as a straightforward transfer from one language to another if that means refraining from critically examining the significance of the passage and the underlying factors that enable and shape this passage. Hence, it is crucial to emphasize that translation extends beyond a mere process of “transferring, transposing, mediating, and transforming or simply changing passages from something to some other” (p. III). From these initial insights, it becomes evident that the challenge posed by this volume is to fundamentally rethink the very concept of translation. This philosophical endeavor begins with an exploration of Hegel’s perspective but extends beyond it, encompassing broader philosophical horizons.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide an in-depth analysis of all the contributions or delve into the intricacies of the various topics addressed within such a richly articulated volume. I will only provide a concise overview of the volume’s

structure, primarily highlighting the essays found in the first section. In doing so, I aim to highlight the underlying thread that runs through the challenging issue of the flexibility of translation, in line with the editors' caveat regarding the potential pitfalls associated with it.

The volume opens with the essay "The Untranslatable in translation: A Hegelian dialectic" (pp. 1–18) by ANGELICA NUZZO. Drawing upon her extensive and fundamental studies on the topic of translation, she addresses one of the central and contentious themes concerning the issue of translation: the question of the untranslatable. This notion immediately poses challenges in its definition when considered in relation to Hegelian thought. Thinking of the Hegelian dialectic as a "dialectical translation" implies conceptualizing translation as a movement encompassing both "alienation and appropriation" (p. II). Therefore, our primary focus will be on understanding the sense of the negative and the meaning of *negation*. Nuzzo formulates the problem in the following terms:

Given the necessary determinateness of dialectical negation, what is the negative (or the contradictory opposite) that specifically confronts translation, and what is the negative at work within translation? What happens to the negative in the process of translation? (p. 3)

Thus the issue at hand revolves around comprehending the *untranslatable*. Nuzzo eliminates any ambiguity by clarifying (and hence notably departing from the Derridean perspective) that the untranslatable should not be understood "in a substantive or substantial sense, but rather in an active and dynamic sense that encompasses the impossibility of translating, the act of resisting or refusing translation" (p. 4). Additionally, Nuzzo highlights how Derrida conceives of the untranslatable solely as "the untranslatable thing", whereas it is essential to consider "the practice of non-translating, the act or the injunction not-to-translate" (p. 6), if one truly pursues a dialectical approach

to the subject of translation. At this juncture, Nuzzo presents a particularly convincing demonstration of how, in Hegel's philosophy, the untranslatable lies precisely in *Das Logische*, which signifies the monolingualism of the absolute idea. Nuzzo asserts, "The original word is not a determinate utterance about determinate things; it is not an address to anyone" (p. 16). Unlike Derrida, who identifies an unsurpassable contradiction between Logic and world, between the assertions that "we only ever speak one language" and "we never speak only one language" (suggesting that *Das Logische* should maintain its purity separate from any multilingualism), Nuzzo argues that it is precisely here that the truly dialectical character of the Hegelian Logic emerges. The untranslatability of *Das Logische* is an activity: the dialectical activity, that is to say, originally operating within the multilingual horizon, that signifies the possibility of a continuous translation as nature and multiplicity.

"*Das Fremde in der Sprache: Hegel e la sfida dell'estraneo*", by SILVIA PIERONI, undertakes an exploration of Hegel's underlying speculative conception of translation, grounded in the concept of *das Fremde* (the Other). Pieroni argues that this notion of foreignness encompasses both linguistic (intra- and infra-linguistic) elements and the intercultural dimension, thereby shedding light on the intercultural implications of translation within Hegel's meta-philosophical framework. Pieroni's analysis is anchored in Hegel's critique of Humboldt's lectures on the Bhagavad-Gita, the well-known Sanskrit epic poem from ancient India. By meticulously examining the Indological aspect that underlies the Humboldt-Hegel debate (especially in comparison with Goethe's perspective) and examining Hegel's rejection of translation as a mere act of 'translation' in his review of Humboldt, Pieroni fundamentally reassesses the Hegelian stance on Oriental thought. Rather than

understanding translation as a form of appropriation that aims to exhaust and assimilate the foreign element, Pieroni argues that the Hegelian act of translation compels the thought to transcend itself, encouraging it to contemplate the “foreigner” and “the foreign language while also apprehending their diversity” (p. 27). Expanding on this premise, the second part of the essay seeks to demonstrate how the thought recognizes itself precisely within this transformative movement of translation, constantly enhancing its ability to faithfully interpret the “original and constitutive otherness of life” (p. 35). Certainly, at least one question remains open: that is, whether the assumption of this exteriority that Pieroni makes coincide with the image of the other, can be translated completely to the otherness of life; that is, whether there is something of irreducible to the concept, something of ‘untranslatable’. In other words: can *Das Fremde* really be translated—hence conceptualized—without losing its own exteriority? And whether, precisely because of this resistance, the Hegelian concept of translation does not risk falling back into the reductionist outcome that Hegel himself had criticized in Schleiermacher (I am thinking, for example, of Hegel’s violent translation of Judaism in his youthful writings, where he does not seem so concerned with reducing the “oriental principle” embodied in Judaism to the sameness of the concept).

In “L’*Übersetzen* comme articulation interne du système encyclopédique: Hegel et Novalis en perspective” (pp. 37–54), GUILLAUME LEJEUNE offers a contrasting perspective, arguing against categorizing Hegel strictly as a thinker of translation. According to Lejeune, Hegel’s interest in translation theory is more circumstantial, as is exemplified by the aforementioned Humboldt review. On a systematic level, Lejeune asserts that “the technical problem of the plurality of languages and their mutual translation is overshadowed by the issue of

the reflexivity of language” (p. 38–39). He posits that Hegel is primarily concerned with the “intralinguistic reflexivity” (p. 39) that translation invokes. Lejeune’s analysis aims to demonstrate how Hegel’s focus lies in revealing the inherent logical structure within this reflexivity, while rejecting the romantic perspective that reduces translation to a mere “rhetoric of poetic effect” (p. 40). In this regard, Lejeune’s analysis seeks to illustrate the immanent coexistence of the logic of reflection within the act of translation. By tracing the articulation of reflection in the *Doctrine of Essence*, Lejeune elucidates how translation, akin to reflection, becomes “the matrix of all activity” (p. 45). He further explains that translation transcends the discursive boundaries that initiate it and embodies the aspect of “performativity” (p. 45). This distinction clearly distinguishes romantic translation from the performative conception of Hegelian language, as is effectively demonstrated by Lejeune in the second part of his essay. Indeed, this raises a pertinent question about the implications for language and its inherently dynamic nature if a unified logical structure underlies every linguistic form. In other words, how can the Hegelian framework adequately account for the existence of multiple languages if language itself is considered the supreme domain of reason?

“Critique of the ‘pure region’. *Übersetzung* and Representation in Hegel by GIANLUCA GARELLI, examines the profound significance of the transition from the notion of *Vorstellung* (imagination-presentation) to the notion of *Darstellung* (representation) as an act of translation. Garelli draws inspiration from a crucial section of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, particularly focusing on paragraph 5 of the preface in the later editions from 1827 and 1830, where the concept of *Übersetzung* is introduced. In this passage, it is asserted that “the real import of our consciousness is retained, and even for the first time put in its proper light, when translated into the form

of thought and the notion of reason”. Through an intricate and captivating exploration of the complex relationship between representation and concept in Hegel’s lectures on aesthetics, Garelli sheds light on how the transition from representation to concept (and the equally significant movement in the opposite direction) fundamentally takes on a metaphorical nature. Garelli explains that translation is essentially a “self-referential” metaphor (p. 74), serving as the sole means for the multifarious forms that permeate the world to assume a philosophical form without losing their essence as mere images of another realm. The conclusion of the essay raises the question of what can be ascertained regarding the status of this metaphor and whether it poses a risk of translation succumbing to the pitfalls of flexibility. Indeed, when the concept itself becomes a metaphor for something else, it raises the question of how this metaphorical character can be ‘conceptualized’ without resorting to yet another metaphor.

“Translation as Form. Hegel, Benjamin and the Romantic Workshop” by MICHELE CAPASSO, offers a meticulous and interesting analysis of the theme of translation within the context of Hegel and Benjamin, situating it within Romantic debate. According to Capasso, Hegel adamantly rejects the Romantic concept of translation as form, while Benjamin, in contrast, draws inspiration from this very notion of criticism as translation. That means according to Benjamin, a translation is already a critical activity that involves the interpretation of a work. Capasso emphasizes that criticism, as discussed by Benjamin (in particular in his essay, *On Language as Such and on the Language of Man*) and referencing Schlegel, generates an image of the work—a revitalizing and transformative image that confers upon it a renewed form (p. 79). Capasso illustrates how Benjamin perceives this type of criticism as a particular form of translation, wherein translation serves to bring forth the vi-

tality of the works (a key concept of the essay the *Task of the Translator* which Capasso deeply analyses). Having established this premise, Capasso proceeds to demonstrate how the divergent understandings of translation between Hegel and Benjamin stem from their fundamentally different conceptions of language. Capasso states: “where the philosopher [Hegel] recognized in language a logical instinct [...], Benjamin refers to the symbolic character of the word, to those immaterial similarities that have been transferred into writing” (p. 94). The essay concludes with an intriguing reflection that, similar to Garrelli’s contribution, scrutinizes the status of Hegelian logical language. Capasso suggests that even “the word that governs the entire Hegelian logic, the *Aufhebung*, is itself a translation” (p. 94), thereby raising questions about the nature of Hegelian philosophical language and its ‘metaphorical’ connotation.

“The Activity of Translating in Hegelian Psychology: Transformation and Liberation of the Finite Subject” by ALESSANDRO ESPOSITO, focuses on Hegelian psychology and highlights the significance of the notion of ‘translation’ in understanding the processes of liberation of the finite subject. The essay provides an in-depth analysis, drawing upon both the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, thereby incorporating a notable level of argumentative complexity. Esposito adeptly builds upon Nuzzo’s insights, employing a skillful hermeneutic approach to demonstrate that translation is not merely a formal or abstract act, but a transformative process that fundamentally alters its own praxis. In this regard, translation prompts a profound reevaluation of the very concept of ‘doing’ or, more precisely, the Hegelian understanding of ‘acting’ (*Handeln*). Expanding on this interpretive trajectory, Esposito goes so far as to emphasize that “the activity of translating thus realizes, through the dialectical movement between knowledge and reason, the very freedom of the subjective spirit” (p. 111). This

process, as Esposito further highlights, enables a radical re-assessment of both human action and thought.

“Pure Translation in Hegel’s Phenomenology” by MICHAEL MARDER raises questions regarding the somewhat ambiguous concept of purity in translation, as expounded by Hegel in a passage of the *Phenomenology*. Marder explores the process of translation as a movement that uncovers the profound, the hidden, and the as-yet-unseen, a movement that lies at the core of Hegelian dialectics. However, Marder demonstrates how this process of actualizing what is brought into the light ultimately undermines its own objective each time. Through a compelling interpretation of the Hegelian dynamics of concealment and revelation, particularly evident in the transition to reality, Marder reveals how the opposition generated by any dialectical mediation is always and exclusively a “semblance of opposition” (p. 122). Marder argues that this semblance of opposition poses a serious flaw within the dialectical process. Consequently, the purity of the concept of translation is called into question. In fact, he asserts:

Whereas every translation betrays the translated in translating, pure translation is a perversion (*Umkehrung* or *Verkehrung*) of translatability lacking the opposing pole of a straightforward and faithful rendering, which is this same betrayal or perversion simply unaware of itself as such. (p. 123).

Consequently, “the work unworks (delaborates) itself in the working and the working dissolves in the work” (p. 123). Marder emphasizes that this outcome does not signify the failure of the Hegelian concept of pure translation; rather, it exemplifies the polymorphic nature of translation, wherein its most genuine purity is found in contamination and deformation.

“La filosofia come traduzione in Hegel” by FEDERICO ORSINI inspects the speculative significance of translation in Hegel, approaching the question from both a metaphilosophi-

cal perspective and offering an interpretation of the *Science of Logic* as “a translation understood as a conceptual reconstruction of the history of metaphysics” (p. 141). This proposition presents a compelling argument for how the metaphilosophical nature of translation allows Hegel to transcend the trap of flexibility. According to Orsini, translation possesses an essentially generative quality: by “not assuming the preexistence of its object” (p. 141), it creates it. Consequently, the history of metaphysics is conceptually translated and reconfigured within a new logical framework, namely the Hegelian concept. However, Orsini also highlights that this act of translation represents the very vitality of the concept rather than its final closure or attainment, thereby critiquing interpretations that perceive Hegel’s logic as a closed or achieved system. This aspect continues to be a subject of debate. While it is undoubtedly persuasive to reject any ‘conclusive’ interpretation of Hegelian philosophy, it remains problematic to conceive that, in Hegel’s view, his own translation of the history of metaphysics was merely one among many possible translations rather than the unique and necessary one.

The second part of the volume is dedicated to exploring the effects of translation. The first contribution, “The Reception and Translation of Hegel in Japan”, by AYUMI TAKESHIMA, focuses on Hegel’s presence in the Japanese philosophical debate, highlighting the inseparable connection between the history of Hegel’s reception in Japan and the translation of his works. MARIANA TEIXEIRA, on the other hand, in “Kojève’s «Dialectique du maître et de l’esclave». Notes on the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of a Traitorous Translation”, investigates the interpretation of the master-slave dialectic, pointing out how Kojève’s complete departure from fidelity to the Hegelian text resulted in a profound misunderstandings of Hegel’s philosophy in France. While Kojève openly acknowledged his infideli-

ty to the Hegelian text, presenting his reading as an “ideological gesture” without claiming fidelity to the original, Teixeira’s contribution definitively sheds light on the history of this significant philosophical misunderstanding. “A quoi ressemblerait une philosophie hégélienne de la traduction? Réflexions à partir des traductions françaises de la *Phénoménologie de l’esprit*” by EMMANUEL RENAULT, in turn, focuses on French translations of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, providing both philological and speculative comparisons. A similar examination, but within the realm of Aesthetics, is conducted in “Translating Hegel’s *Aesthetics* in France and Italy: A Comparative Approach” by FRANCESCA IANNELLI and ALAIN PATRICK OLIVIER, who offer a comprehensive and detailed overview of translations of the *Aesthetics* in France and Italy. On the other hand, “By-Play in Hegel’s Writings” by JAKUB MÁCHA explores a curious and intriguing translation connection between ‘Beispiel’ and ‘By-play’, through which Mácha presents an interesting critique of Derrida’s own critique of the Hegelian dialectic. This analysis provides another opportunity to reflect on how the performative and generative nature of translation often becomes the arena in which various philosophical positions are debated and played out. “Some Dimensions of Translating or Writing about Hegel in Urdu” by ASHFAQ SALEEM MIRZA, offers an original perspective (especially for those unfamiliar with the subject) on the translation, reception, and philosophical debate surrounding Hegel in Pakistan. The debate in Pakistan is relatively recent, and therefore particularly compelling (the first translation of Hegel into Urdu is from 2019), allowing Mirza to contemplate the very experience of constructing the philosophical canon through the translation issue.

The third part of the volume, characterized by the almost autobiographic experience of its authors gathers contributions from several translators and interpreters of Hegel, including

“In conversation with Hegel: A Translator’s Story” by GEORGE DI GIOVANNI, “Hacerse lenguas de ‘Hegel’” by FÉLIX DUQUE, “Hegel en Grec” by GEORGES FARAKLAS, “Come si può tradurre la *Scienza della logica*?” by PAOLO GIUSPOLI, “Translating Hegel into Slovenian” by ZDRAVKO KOBE, and “Translating Hegel’s *Logic*. Absolute Negativity and the Crisis of Philosophy as an Institution” by MARCIN PANKOW. They reflect on the significance of their work in translating Hegel into their respective native languages, considering both methodological and philosophical-cultural aspects. Their reflections once again pose the timeless (and perhaps irresolvable) question of what the translator’s task should entail.

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Recension de: MESCHONNIC, Henri (2007/2021): *Ethik und Politik des Übersetzens*. Aus dem Französischen von Béatrice Costa, mit einem Nachwort von Hans Lösener und Vera Viehöver. Berlin: Matthes & Seitz. 256 pp. ISBN: 978-3-7518-0349-6.

Près de 15 ans après sa première édition paraît en allemand l'un des derniers ouvrages de Henri Meschonnic (1932–2009), *Ethik und Politik des Übersetzens*, dont la version française était parue en 2007 chez Verdier (Paris). Il s'agit du premier ouvrage complet de Meschonnic traduit en allemand. Il est très utilement accompagné d'une postface de Hans Lösener et Vera Viehöver qui introduisent aux principes fondamentaux de la théorie de Meschonnic (p. 215–234), ainsi que d'une brève biographie et d'une bibliographie.

On peut se demander à quoi tient ce délai dans la réception allemande, quelles théories du langage ou du traduire concurrentes permettent de rendre-compte de ce que Meschonnic appelle « la politique du traduire » précisément caractérisée par « les retards ou les vitesses de la traduction » (p. 113 [90] ; cf. p. 133 [113]¹) ? Nous ne forgerons pas sur ce point des hypothèses, mais il était sans doute temps qu'une traduction de son œuvre voie le jour. Relevons qu'en raison de cet écart dans la réception, l'ouvrage traduit et sa traduction ont un statut différent : d'un côté nous avons un recueil qui vient terminer un parcours intellectuel ponctué par de nombreux ouvrages (la bi-

1 Les références vont au texte allemand ; entre crochets, la référence au texte original français (cf. Meschonnic 2007).

bliographie (p. 237–247) donne une idée de l’ampleur de l’œuvre de Meschonnic), de l’autre une traduction de ce même ouvrage comme ouverture à une œuvre encore inconnue. Il va de soi que ce n’est pas la même chose. Le choix de ne pas commencer par les volumineux ouvrages que sont la *Critique du rythme* (1982, 732 pp.), la *Poétique du traduire* (1999, 473 pp.) ou même le dernier recueil *Dans le Bois de la langue* (2008, 546 pp.) nous paraît tout à fait judicieux. Les essais réunis dans *Éthique et politique du traduire* permettent en effet de se faire une idée précise de la manière dont Meschonnic pense le traduire, suivant une théorie du langage qui tient tout ensemble la poétique, l’éthique et le politique, en même temps que ces textes donnent de nombreux exemples pratiques, principalement à même la traduction de la Bible. On y découvre entre autres la pensée agonistique de Meschonnic, que ce soit le combat du signe et du poème, qu’il appelle parfois guerre, la guerre du langage (p. 60 [50]), ou les nombreuses critiques des théories du langage qui en découlent. Cette guerre sur fond d’une théorie transformée du langage sert en effet de soubassement à ses analyses et permet de remettre en question bien des fausses évidences, en particulier les pensées de la traduction qui s’inscrivent dans la lignée de la phénoménologie herméneutique de Heidegger, comme Ricœur, Steiner, Berman (dont Meschonnic avait dirigé la thèse) ou même Pym, dont la déontologie reste assujettie à ce que Meschonnic appelle l’herméneutique, à savoir « une pratique du sens qui ne connaît que le signe – rien que les questions du sens » (p. 38 [31]), c’est-à-dire une pensée binaire du signe qui oppose la forme et le sens. C’est ainsi au nom du seul sens que Heidegger par exemple méprise le langage ordinaire (p. 20 [17–18]) comme inauthentique, le réduisant au bavardage [*das Gerede*] pour sacraliser et essentialiser par contraste la poésie qui serait détentricesse du sens. C’est d’après Meschonnic méconnaître la poésie dont l’essence est d’abord ce qu’elle fait,

ce qu'il appelle le « poème ». L'herméneutique conduit à de fausses évidences comme la thèse suivant laquelle « comprendre, c'est traduire » (p. 247 [8 note] ; 98 [83]), formule qui a donné le titre de la première partie de l'ouvrage de George Steiner *Après Babel* et que Paul Ricœur a répétée dans *Sur la traduction*. L'herméneutique allemande du 20^e siècle – Béatrice Costa corrige à juste titre un lapsus de Meschonnic qui écrit « 19^e » (p. 50 [41]) – a identifié la traduction à une phénoménologie du comprendre ce qui la conduit à assimiler comprendre et traduire. Meschonnic réplique : « Non, comprendre c'est comprendre, ou croire qu'on comprend. Traduire suppose comprendre, mais c'est tout autre chose. Élémentaire, docteur Bon Sens » (ibid.). Confondre l'herméneutique avec la traduction, c'est réduire la traduction à la restitution du sens en ignorant une véritable théorie d'ensemble du langage. C'est en effet la continuité entre la langue et le corps, l'écrit et l'oral qui permet à Meschonnic d'envisager le langage comme une forme de vie, ce qui est l'enjeu de la compréhension tant du langage que de la traduction. Le langage ne se réduit pas à la forme de la représentation, où un discours pourrait être remplacé par son sens, car ce qui fait le discours, c'est sa continuité avec la vie, ce que Humboldt avait saisi à sa façon en opposant l'*énergeia* à l'*ergon* (p. 124 [105]). C'est pourquoi, dit Meschonnic, « au lieu du dualisme interne du signe, de la forme et du sens, penser le continu c'est penser la force dans le langage » (p. 112 [94]). Il oppose ainsi la continuité du corps et du langage au discontinu représenté par la discrétion des signes et les dualismes classiques, celui du corps et de l'esprit, de l'esprit et de la lettre, de l'œuvre originale et de la traduction (p. 61 [51]). Plus même qu'une différence, cette opposition entre le discontinu et le continu est, pour Meschonnic, une « guerre du signe et du poème » (p. 60 [50]). C'est là que l'herméneutique ordinaire qui, nous le disions, pense que traduire consiste simplement à ren-

dre le sens, méconnaît la force de la parole, autrement dit la poétique du discours. Cette « herméneutique traduisante » ne tient pas compte de « ce qu'un corps fait au langage » (p. 40 [33]) : les mots ne disent pas simplement leur signification, il faut les comprendre dans la forme de vie à laquelle ils participent, ou plutôt il faut les saisir comme acte de vie. C'est pourquoi, nous dit Meschonnic, « l'éthique du traduire, c'est de traduire la subjectivation maximale d'un système de discours que fait un poème. Autrement, c'est le signe qu'on traduit. Laissez le poème actif, sinon, traduire c'est détruire » (p. 42 [35]). Aussi la question n'est-elle pas celle de la fidélité au texte, puisque ce n'est pas ce dernier, mais le « faire » qui doit être rendu, la source étant ce que fait le texte et la cible faire ce qu'il fait. C'est pourquoi fidèle et infidèle, « c'est tout comme », sourcier et cibliste, « c'est pareil ». Mais faire ce que fait le discours, c'est faire faire à la langue ce qu'elle n'a jamais fait. Il s'agit donc de sauver la vie de la langue, l'« unité du dire et du vivre » (p. 156 [134]) qui est le « travail du langage » (ibid.).

À partir d'une telle théorie d'ensemble, critique, du langage, Meschonnic veut aborder la question de l'éthique et de la politique du traduire (p. 9 [7]). Celle-ci doit être envisagée à partir d'une « poétique » du traduire qui ne se comprend elle-même qu'à partir de ce que Meschonnic entend par « poème » :

J'appelle poème la transformation d'une forme de vie par une forme de langage et la transformation d'une forme de langage par une forme de vie, toutes deux inséparablement, où je dirais encore une invention de vie dans et par une invention de langage, ou encore un maximum d'intensité de langage. Vie au sens d'une vie humaine. (p. 32 [27] ; voir p. 64 [53] et 101 [85]).

C'est à ce titre qu'un poème est un acte éthique, qui transforme à la fois la vie et un langage (p. 10 [8] ; 32 [28]) : le sujet est présent dans la langue et est transformé par elle en même temps qu'il la transforme, il fait et se fait par la langue, il est

entendu, et si l'éthique « est le lieu même du rapport entre le langage et le vivre » (p. 29 [24]), l'agir même du discours est politique et la théorie critique du langage, qui pense l'interaction entre le langage, le poème, l'éthique et le politique, est à proprement parler une « poétique de la société » (p. 90 [76] ; cf. p. 210 [180]). Car c'est dans cette activité qui transforme la pensée que l'éthique se joint aux politiques en agissant sur la société sans se réduire à une traduction qui serait simple « maintien de l'ordre » (p. 44 [36]). La réflexion sur la traduction s'inscrit ainsi dans le cadre d'une réflexion plus large qu'il ne faut pas penser indépendamment de la « transformation des rapports entre les cultures au XXe siècle, liée aux diverses décolonisations et à la planétarisation de ces rapports » (p. 50 [43]). Elle force à penser, et c'est là l'un des enjeux majeurs de la traduction, le rapport à l'universel, à l'altérité, au pluralisme ; elle engage notre rapport à l'autre, à la possibilité et à la volonté de le comprendre, à la manière de le comprendre, en évitant les écueils que sont l'indifférence et la domination ou, comme le dit Meschonnic, l'« annexion » (p. 36 [29]).

Cette approche qui permet de comprendre la théorie qui insiste sur la continuité de la forme de vie et d'une forme de langage est soutenue par des contributions qui montrent par le détail comment elle est aussi une pratique. C'est ainsi que près de la moitié des contributions expliquent non seulement pourquoi Meschonnic retraduit la Bible, mais encore comment il s'y prend pour faire entendre la voix originale, à savoir ce qu'il entend par « embibler » la voix... Et à chaque fois il cherche à montrer « ce qu'une œuvre fait à la langue » (p. 37 [30]) et donc, au plan de la traduction, ce que traduire fait à la langue d'arrivée.

On ne peut s'empêcher de penser, en lisant Meschonnic, que sa critique de l'herméneutique, si elle s'applique partiellement à certaines approches du XXe siècle, concerne moins

d'autres herméneutiques plus anciennes. Schleiermacher peut être pris pour exemple, lui qui réfléchit aussi l'acte de traduire à partir d'une théorie générale du langage. On trouve chez ce dernier des thèses qui ne sont pas entièrement étrangères à Meschonnic. Schleiermacher, qui travaillait d'abord et avant tout sur la Bible, certes pas sur l'Ancien, mais sur le Nouveau Testament, défendait une approche vivante tant du langage que de la traduction. Ainsi dans *Des différentes méthodes du traduire*, il précise l'interaction et donc la continuité de la langue et du sujet :

Chaque homme, pour une part, est dominé par la langue qu'il parle ; lui et sa pensée sont un produit de celle-ci. [...] Mais, par ailleurs, tout homme pensant librement, de manière indépendante, contribue à former la langue. [...] c'est la force vivante de l'individu qui produit de nouvelles formes dans la matière ductile de la langue, initialement avec pour seul propos momentané de communiquer une conscience passagère ; mais ces formes demeurent dans la langue, à un degré plus ou moins grand, et, recueillies par des tiers, étendent leur effet formateur. On peut même dire que c'est seulement dans la mesure où un individu agit de la sorte sur la langue qu'il mérite d'être écouté au-delà de son domaine immédiat et singulier. Tout discours pouvant être reproduit de la même manière par mille organes disparaît très vite ; seul peut et doit durer celui qui forme un nouveau moment dans la vie de la langue elle-même. (Schleiermacher 1813/2002, 71, trad. : C. B.)

Ce qui pourrait être complété par ce passage des leçons tardives sur *l'herméneutique* de 1826–1827 où Schleiermacher dit, reliant herméneutique et traduction :

Chaque homme qui discourt [...] ajoute certes quelque chose au langage. Chaque langue se transforme tant qu'elle est utilisée, elle s'élargit et se modifie : cela n'est fondé que par la production dans la langue, je ne peux comprendre ce qui n'est pas encore sanctionné par l'usage commun qu'en pénétrant l'acte de celui qui expose. (Schleiermacher 1827/2012, 466–467, trad. : C. B.)

C'est en ce sens que Schleiermacher relevait dès 1805 : « Le christianisme a fait œuvre de langage. Il a été dès le début, et est encore, un esprit linguistique potentialisateur » (1805ss./

2012, 17). Si Humboldt, comme le souligne Meschonnic, a mis en lumière la force du langage, son *energeia*, Schleiermacher avait bien développé l'idée que ce qui importe ce n'est pas seulement ce que la langue fait à un individu, mais aussi ce que l'individu fait à la langue, utilisant au demeurant comme Meschonnic le terme de « discours » (*Rede*) et non pas de texte, ce qui est une prise en compte de ce que Meschonnic appelle le « poème ». C'est bien pourquoi, d'après Schleiermacher, « [c]haque moment de la vie a plus ou moins de force pour déterminer l'avenir ; et je ne comprends pas complètement un discours lorsque je ne comprends pas sa force déterminante pour l'avenir » (1822/2012, 383). Autrement dit, Meschonnic permet malgré ses critiques de relire une certaine herméneutique de la traduction.

Quelques mots maintenant sur la traduction par Béatrice Costa. Traduire Meschonnic n'est pas chose aisée et les auteurs de la postface reviennent sur cette activité ici rendue spécifique dans la mesure où il s'agit d'une traduction d'un texte sur le traduire, qui expose une théorie de la traduction tout en traduisant. Jusqu'où peut-on alors appliquer les principes même de la traduction de Meschonnic ? A s'en tenir à Meschonnic, traduire ne consiste pas à se contenter de transposer des contenus, mais, comme le rappellent les auteurs de la postface (p. 230), à rendre l'activité spécifique du texte. Meschonnic lui-même affirme, nous l'avons vu, que « plus que ce qu'un texte dit, c'est ce qu'il fait qui est à traduire ; plus que le sens, c'est la force, l'affect » (p. 65 [55]). Il faut donc inventer à nouveau la voix étrangère que l'on entend dans le texte traduit, faire entendre la force du discours. Et pour faire entendre sa voix, il s'agit d'être à la fois libre et fidèle, au plus près de l'oralité de l'écriture. Cela invite à éviter ce qu'il appelle le « mot à motisme », puisque ce ne sont pas les mots mais l'« enchaînement des mots entre eux » (p. 136 [115]) qui importe, à savoir la re-

stitution du rythme dont la tâche consiste à rendre le mouvement même de l'acte du langage, le « sens de l'organisation du mouvement de la parole » (p. 112 [94]), autrement dit le poème du texte.

Cela n'est pas toujours facile et les exemples que nous donne Meschonnic, notamment dans ses traductions de la Bible, que présentent ici plusieurs essais, inviteraient à penser à un certain littéralisme pour éviter d'effacer le travail de la langue dans ce qu'il a d'âpre et de revêche, au plus près de l'acte de la langue, et pour éviter de l'aplanir. Et de fait, les exemples de traduction de la Bible qu'il donne insistent, par exemple, sur les césures (les virgules), les conjonctions de coordination etc. D'où ses jugements sévères sur ceux qui ne les respectent pas et, cassant ainsi le rythme, ne rendent pas la vie du texte. En même temps, nous le disions en ouverture, il s'agit de traduire un texte qui en français est au terme d'un long parcours alors qu'il est initial en allemand. Ce qui peut d'un côté être supposé comme familiarité du lecteur, ou du moins possibilité de se référer à d'autres textes fondateurs, ne peut l'être de l'autre côté où l'effet du discours de Meschonnic doit être produit. On comprend alors que l'on ne peut pas verser dans le littéralisme en reprenant tel quel le langage que Meschonnic a forgé au fil de ses œuvres, donnant des formules pas immédiatement intelligibles. Ainsi par exemple de ce terme central qu'est le « signe », souvent rendu par Béatrice Costa par « *Zeichendenken* », la pensée du signe. On pourrait dire que le terme isolé « signe » est difficile même en français et que l'explicitation risque de l'aplanir, ce qui serait une manière de « françaiscourantiser » (p. 136 [115]). Mais comme nous l'avons dit, ce choix, qui ne concerne pas que le « signe », s'explique dans la mesure où cette traduction vise à introduire la pensée de Meschonnic dans la langue allemande. Si donc Meschonnic insiste dans ses traductions sur certains éléments comme les disjonctions, la prosodie,

mais aussi les « violences syntaxiques » qu'il cherche à faire entendre, notamment dans ses traductions bibliques (p. 138 [117]), peuvent-elles être maintenues comme telles lorsqu'il s'agit d'introduire à sa pensée ? Pouvait-on faire autrement alors qu'il s'agit d'ouvrir à cette pensée ? Il nous semble que cela aurait été difficile et l'on perçoit la finesse dont a dû faire preuve Béatrice Costa pour articuler la théorie de la traduction et la traduction effective sans trahir ni l'une ni l'autre. Sans parler des termes qu'il est presque impossible de traduire, comme par exemple le « poème » qui joue un rôle théorique central. Là où nous avons en français « poème », « poésie », « poétique »... , nous avons en allemand « *Gedicht* », « *Dichtung* », « *Poetik* », « *Lyrik* »... Or il y a une réelle difficulté insurmontable ici en l'occurrence à rendre « poème » par « *Gedicht* » : le « *Gedicht* » porte en lui davantage une chose faite qu'un faire, alors que le poème dit tout aussi bien l'activité de la « *Dichtung* ». Nous n'avons pas de solution et Béatrice Costa a dû s'en arranger suivant les contextes. Mais cela peut conduire à quelques difficultés, lorsque par exemple, au nom du « poème » comme acte, Meschonnic critique « la vieille sottise qui oppose la poésie à la prose » (p. 158 [135]) : « En ce sens un roman n'est un roman que s'il a du poème en lui » (p. 33 [28]) est rendu par : « *So kann ein Roman kein Roman sein, wenn er etwas vom Gedicht in sich hat* ». C'est un lapsus de la traduction qui lui fait dire l'inverse de l'original, mais qui tient sans doute à une inférence du terme « *Gedicht* ». Béatrice Costa corrige au demeurant immédiatement, puisque la seconde occurrence de « poème » dans ce même alinéa est rendue par « *poetische[r] Akt* ». C'est là que la traduction explicite trouve sa légitimation.

Il faut incontestablement saluer cette première traduction en allemand d'un ouvrage d'Henri Meschonnic : non seulement il est très bien choisi pour introduire à la pensée de Me-

schonnic, mais encore sa traduction élégante et nuancée permet de véritablement entendre sa voix.

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Review of: SIMON, Sherry (2019): *Translation Sites. A Field Guide*, London / New York: Routledge. 282 pp. ISBN 978-1-131-53110-9 (eBook).

Readers have expectations, naive and professional alike. Academic researchers and scholars are no exception. And this truism, I would argue, is ever more indicative when it comes to

Translation Studies. Depending on the subfield of TS the reader is most fond of, or is more invested in, it still remains the case that a book on translation is expected to have a theoretical framework, one preferably infused by a practical aim. It should contain at least some excerpts of contrastive analysis and is supposed to offer a few guidelines on how to translate better while refraining from blunt criticism of previous translations and/or translators. An approach, to put it short, that is descriptive or prescriptive.

Translation Sites follows a different path, one that would perhaps be more familiar to a Comparative Literature or a Cultural Studies reader by proposing an itinerary, rather than a perspective, a creative setting rather than a methodological scaffold. By means of intellectual speculation, and by carving out textual and visual evidence, Sherry Simon identifies “translation sites” (p. 1) or “polyglot places” (p. 1), as she refers to them in the Introduction. These places could potentially be any site that is, or has been, “shaped by conversations across languages”, where “words and histories meet – in modes of coexistence, rivalry or conquest”: “a hotel in Sarajevo, an opera house in Prague, a memorial in Lviv, a bridge in Mostar, a museum in Ottawa, a garden in Ireland, a market in Hong Kong and a church in Toledo, among others” (p. 1). And this intriguing potentiality of “polyglot places” is explored in accordance with their volatile and polymorphic nature by means of a perspicacious instrument, as sensitive as is required by such an object of enquiry, namely translation.

Besides an Introduction and a Conclusion, the “guidebook” (p. 1) is presented in five sections, “Architectures of Memory”, “Transit”, “Crossroads”, “Thresholds”, and “Borders, control, surveillance”, each of which is divided into a variable number of chapters. As the author warns us, “Each of the short chapters of this book examines place through a different

facet of translation”, but “neither place nor translation is a reliable touchstone: each explodes into fragments. What kind of place? What kind of translation?” (p. 8) To get a sense of what is peculiar to Simon’s quest, it suffices to read the names of some chapters: “The Monument. The Struggle for memory: Space of Synagogues, Lviv”; “The Opera House. Languaged architecture: The Neues Deutsches Theater in Prague”; “The Hotel Between place and non-place, difference and indifference: The Grand Budapest Hotel and the Tokyo Park Hyatt”; “The Mountaintop. Translation changes you: The language of heptapods”; “The Translator’s Study. Picturing translation from Saint Jerome to Nurith Aviv”; “The Garden. Replication: The Japanese garden in Ireland and the German garden city in Turkey”; “The Checkpoint. The Shibboleth and Ellis Island”; “The Edge of Empire. Far from where? Joseph Roth and Brody” (just to mention my favourites). Simon’s itinerary is an exercise in unfolding mental spaces that converge in the ‘translational site’ metaphor.

To my understanding, these mental spaces are built in a similar manner to Mark Turner’s blended spaces, as creative blends from which meaning arises (cf. Turner 1996: 57). That is, if you agree, as I do, with Turner’s way of considering concepts in the sense of “something conceived by the mind”, as not being something already present in our minds in the form of “packets of meaning”, and the meaning we give to what we experience as something other than “localized and stable” (ibid.: 57). From a cognitivist standpoint, the ways in which Simon experiments with the semantic potential of the ‘translational site’ metaphor in *Translation Sites* constitutes the perfect illustration (or the textual embodiment) of Turner’s characterisation of our mind’s generative mechanism of sense-making: “Meaning is not a deposit in a concept-container. It is alive and active, dynamic and distributed, constructed for local purposes

of knowing and acting. Meanings are not mental objects bounded in conceptual places but rather complex operations of projection, binding, linking, blending, and integration over multiple spaces. Meaning is parabolic and literary” (ibid.: 57). ‘Literary’ is to be intended here as an attribute of the ‘everyday mind’ since, according to Turner, we “mistakenly classify” as ‘literary’, that is to say specific to literature and literary works, “*story, projection, and parable*” (ibid.: v), which are principles of mind indispensable to human cognition (cf. also ibid.: 5–7). In other words, all human minds are ‘literary’ once they use stories and parables to make sense of the world.

So, just to give an example of Simon’s metaphoric exploration and interpretation, two opera houses, one Czech, the *Národní divadlo* (Czech National Theatre, opened in 1881, reopened in 1883) and the other one German, the *Neues Deutsches Theater* (New German Theatre, which opened in 1888) built in nineteenth century Prague, are envisaged as protagonists of “languages disputes” (p. 30), as “linguistic rival[s]” (p. 31), and as instances of “Languaged architecture” (p. 30). In the late nineteenth century, theatre and architecture became powerful instruments of national self-determination, involved as they were in the conflicting process of cultural and political transfer (and translation) that contributed to the construction of the Czech identity. In Simon’s words “The stones of both theatres were designed to deliver messages as eloquent, as meaningful and as ideologically tinted as the musical languages played within them. The Czech National Theatre translated the glorious Czech past into the present. The New German Theatre, built as an expression of the Habsburg Empire, was later translated out of its German origins into the Czech-speaking *Státní Opera* (Prague State Opera House). These structures show how architectural forms can be “languaged” (p. 31) when they are as-

sociated with specific tongues at the time of their construction or through subsequent layerings of meaning and memory”.

Simon’s book is “working at the intersection of translation studies, memory studies, urban geography, architecture and history” (Meschia 2020), so an attempt to summarize *Translation Sites* would undoubtedly result in a stylistic reduction of that multifaceted display the author creates out of textual, visual, historic and literary products and events, much like a 3D mandala. I will, nonetheless, refer the reader interested in more perceptive considerations on the textual architecture and content of Simon’s book to one I have already quoted (cf. Meschia 2020) and other reviews available, like Purvis (2020) and Duval (2021), for instance. My interest lies elsewhere, namely in the displacement of the order of things, rather than the encapsulation of content. More precisely, my aim is to observe Simon’s techniques when dealing with the complexities of translation, as well as the devices she resorts to, like filmic representations. It is no longer a novelty that cinematic products, thanks to their appealing versatility, were appropriated by other domains of study and that they were given a somewhat more ‘practical’ employment in developing language and cultural competence, for example. However, the use of movies as heuristic devices in translation theory is done in such a way by Simon that her insightful analysis benefits both Film and Translation Studies: interdisciplinarity at its finest. Cinematic products as a means of knowledge would sound familiar to film historians and theorists, since Jean Epstein’s written works are all about that, for instance, although the French-Jewish-Polish filmmaker, film theorist, literary critic, novelist, and occasional translator, intended it in a different way and expressed not only distrust, but also dislike for translation per se (cf. Epstein 1947/2002: 21–23):

Rival de la lecture, le spectacle cinématographique n'est assurément pas incapable de la dépasser en influence. Il s'adresse à une audience qui peut être plus nombreuse, plus diverse qu'un public de lecteurs, car elle n'exclut ni les demi-lettrés, ni les illettrés : car elle ne se limite pas aux usagers de certaines langues ou de certains dialectes ; car elle comprend même les muets et jusqu'aux sourds ; car elle n'a pas besoin de traducteurs et ne craint pas leurs contresens ; car, enfin, cette audience se sent respectée dans la faiblesse ou la paresse intellectuelle de son immense majorité. Et, parce que l'enseignement qu'apporte le film va droit au cœur, parce qu'il ne laisse guère de temps ni d'occasion à la critique de le censurer au préalable, cet acquis devient tout de suite passion, c'est-à-dire potentiel ne demandant qu'à travailler, qu'à se décharger en actes à l'imitation de ceux au spectacle desquels il est né. (Epstein 1947/2002: 23)

My mention of Epstein is not an intellectually gratuitous reference. It constitutes an attempt to take Simon's journey even further, as if to supply a mini spin-off of her book, and indeed to suggest a plausible by-product, one which brings us to my second point of interest: the translative worlds she entangles by summoning and giving textual body to Central and Eastern Europe figures, both animated and non-animated: writers and translators like Ivo Andrić, Israel Ashendorf, Joseph Roth, Bruno Schulz, Debora Vogel, rivers like Drina and the Danube, cities like Chzernowitz/Chernivtsi, Brody, Lemberg/Lwów/Lvov/Lviv, or buildings like *The Neues Deutsches Theater* in Prague and the Grand Hotel Pupp in Karlovy-Vary.

The presence of these spaces is arguably one of Simon's most important contributions to translation scholarship. Translation theorists and historians are justifiably wary of Eurocentrism and seem to consider, as Duval's critique of Simon not including any reference to Latin America suggests (cf. Duval 2021: 233–234), that the only way of exorcizing this demon is by scholarly migration towards other parts of the world: Asia, India, Africa, Central and South America. A legitimate endeavour, undoubtedly. However, Europe is not just England, Ger-

many, France, Italy, or Spain. There is a Europe that, I claim, is more peripheral in Translation Studies than the Global South, a space in the geographical heart of Europe described by patches of multicultural and multilingual zones where culture, in the broadest sense of the word, is translation born and translation bound. The Europe that Simon, unlike most, sees and makes seen in her book. The Europe I was born into.

Many leads are opened by Simon, some of which are not extensively followed up. And this could leave the reader rather puzzled, or wanting for more, if not frustrated, much like Italo Calvino's main character in *If On a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979, translated into English in 1981 by William Weaver). We recall that the reader, whose expectations of completing the reading of the novel he began (his copy seemed to have a manufacturing fault) are constantly renewed and postponed by the intromission of other incipits. But we should not forget Simon's caveat: it is a risk willingly taken. In order to understand, you must explore from different angles, and this may very well lead you to make excursions of various duration and depth in different spaces (and places), real and imaginary, literary, scholarly or geographic. The interpretative process is fueled by curiosity and intuition: to have answers, one must first pose the questions. The right ones, which is to say the complex ones: the ones that emerge from the displacement of (b)order(s).

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