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Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus, Vol. 43, 2014, 43-67
doi: 10.5842/43-0-212

The multiple possibilities of interpretation in products of bilingual writing: André Brink's *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan* as a total text[1]

Lelanie de Roubaix

Department of Afrikaans and Dutch, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
Email: lderoubaix@sun.ac.za

Abstract
This paper explores the concept of 'bilingual writing' by examining two products of André Brink's bilingual writing process, namely *Praying Mantis* (2005) and *Bidsprinkaan* (2005). After a brief overview of Brink's oeuvre, a theoretical perspective on bilingual writing is provided, along with a discussion of related concepts such as 'translation' and 'self-translation'. Following the theoretical perspective, a stereoscopic reading of the two versions of the novel aims to show how multiple possibilities of interpretation are opened up by the use of two languages of production, and how the two versions, when read together, form a total text that travels beyond traditional conceptions of both writing and translating. In *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan*, Brink employs magical realism to challenge various traditional boundaries, such as between reality and fiction, history and myth, etc. Situating both versions of the novel in a sphere of magical realism, where boundaries are constantly transgressed and where even the ordinary is given "a sense of the extraordinary" (Brink 1998:31), Brink confronts his readers with different perspectives and provides them with an almost endless range of possibilities of interpretation that leads to various possible readings of the text. Not only is the magical as well as the real world opened up in the text, but also the magical and the real world as conceptualised in two different languages and cultural environments.

Keywords: André Brink, Bidsprinkaan, bilingual writing, Praying Mantis, total text

1. Introduction

South African literator André Brink is best known as a novelist, in South Africa as well as internationally. He is the author of some 25 novels to date, of which his latest, *Philida*, was published in 2012. Brink has received literary awards in various countries and has been nominated for prestigious international prizes such as the Booker Prize and the Nobel Prize in Literature. His works have been translated into more than 30 languages, and prominent English-language newspapers in the United Kingdom and the United States, such as *The New York*

[1] This paper is based on research for a PhD in Translation at the Department of Afrikaans and Dutch at Stellenbosch University.

Times, *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph* and *The Economist*, continue to publish reviews of Brink's novels as well as interviews with the author (cf., for instance, Dovey 2013, Day 2012, Flanery 2012, and Author Unknown 2012).

During the 1970s and 1980s especially, Brink was a well-known anti-apartheid political activist, and the novels he published during this time were mostly of a political nature. In 1973, Brink published *Kennis van die Aand* (lit. "Knowledge of the Evening"), a novel that tells the story of Joseph Malan, a black South African man awaiting his execution after having been found guilty of murdering the white woman with whom he had a relationship. The book was banned in South Africa under the Publications Act of 1962 due to, among other things, the depiction of a sexual relationship between a black man and a white woman, which was illegal in South Africa during that time. After it was banned, Brink decided to translate the novel into English and to approach an international publisher in order to enable him to keep writing and publishing. This decision resulted in the novel *Looking on Darkness* (1974), Brink's own English translation of *Kennis van die Aand*. This translation represents a new phase in Brink's writing process, given that after translating *Kennis van die Aand*, he has produced an English as well as an Afrikaans version of all of his novels. Although Brink initially self-translated (in the traditional sense of the word) his works, by first completing the Afrikaans version of a novel and subsequently translating it into English, this process started to evolve into one of simultaneous bilingual writing. Brink now writes both the Afrikaans and English versions of a novel at the same time, and creating the work in both languages has become part of his writing process[2].

Brink continues to be one of the most respected figures in Afrikaans literary circles and enjoys international esteem as an award-winning author. His significant contribution to Afrikaans literature and his role as an anti-apartheid activist played important parts in establishing his privileged position, and many critics are of the opinion that Brink continues to add important works of literature to an impressive oeuvre. In a review of Brink's Afrikaans novel *Bidsprinkaan*, Painter (2005) states that Brink deserves all the attention that this novel, as well as Brink's career in general, has received. According to Painter (2005), Brink not only helped shape Afrikaans literary prose, but, through his creative works, reviews and translations, he significantly broadened the frame of reference of his readers by consistently challenging the political imagination and sensitivity of white Afrikaans readers in particular. In his novels, Brink has not only challenged his readers with regard to political and social issues, but also Afrikaans literary conventions. Constantly reinventing his literary and narrative styles and techniques in order to challenge and explore limits and possibilities of writing and fiction, Brink has employed various literary styles in his novels over the years.

This paper will focus on Brink's *Praying Mantis* (2005) and *Bidsprinkaan* (2005), the English and Afrikaans versions of his novel, both of which are products of a bilingual writing process[3]. Firstly, a theoretical perspective of bilingual writing will be provided, focusing on experiences of bilingual writers and common features of bilingual texts, such as hybridity and multiple

[2] For accounts of Brink's writing process as well as his own perspective on how he writes, see, for instance, Brink's account in Viljoen (2005), as well as De Roubaix (2012).

[3] Brink's texts *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan* are viewed and published as two autonomous novels. For terminological consistency however, since it is my argument in this paper that these two novels should be considered one "total text", I refer to *Praying Mantis* as the "English version" of the novel and to *Bidsprinkaan* as the "Afrikaans version".

possibilities of interpretation. Following the theoretical perspective, *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan* will be read stereoscopically with the aim of showing, by discussing examples from both versions of the text, how multiple possibilities of interpretation are opened up by the use of two languages. A discussion following the textual examples indicates how the two versions, when read together, form a total text that travels beyond traditional notions of both writing and translating and that challenges readers to do the same. The paper concludes with final remarks on bilingual writing and the notion of a 'total text'.

2. Theoretical perspective

Krause (2007:150) argues that "the very possibility of self-translation demands certain socio-cultural attributes", citing bilingualism and biculturalism as preconditions for self-translation. The term "self-translation", as used by Krause and as it will be used in this paper, refers to a process by which "the author of a literary text completed in one language subsequently reproduces it in a second language" (Whyte 2002:64)[4], or the product resulting from such a process. Krause's argument, that self-translation as a process requires a bilingual and bicultural author, could also be said to hold true for bilingual writing. Bilingual writing can be defined as the practice of writing in which an author creates two versions of a text in two languages at the same time. The term can be likened to the notion of 'dual creation', used by Beaujour (1989) to refer to Samuel Beckett's bilingual works. According to Beaujour (1989:112), Beckett "practiced something that is in fact a kind of dual creation" when he translated his own works. The term "dual creation" emphasises the idea that both texts are autonomous creative works produced by the author, rather than one being a translation of the other (also cf. Krause 2007:161). Dual creations or products of bilingual writing therefore "render the distinction between original writing and translation impossible" (Krause 2007:161).

Although emphasising bilingualism and biculturalism with reference to self-translation and bilingual writing might appear redundant at first glance, focusing on these characteristics of self-translators and bilingual writers becomes particularly important when studying products of self-translation or bilingual writing. The notions of 'bilingualism' and 'biculturalism' also accentuate various problems faced by self-translators or bilingual writers, and these problems or challenges often find their way into the texts produced by these authors. Anita Desai (2003:13), for instance, recounts her initial reactions to life in America as a state of continuous confusion: "I found it hard to understand what was said to me, and people found it equally hard to understand me. […] Also I found that I laughed at things others considered serious and that they spoke at length of matters I would not think of divulging in public. I was a foreigner". Many other self-translators or bilingual writers recount similar experiences of displacement and feeling lost in a new linguistic and cultural environment, especially initially.

For some authors who negotiate bilingualism and biculturalism, a more positive experience of living in two languages and cultures seem to arise eventually. Ursula Hegi (1997), who has written about her experience of being German in America, says that being bilingual is "a deeper way of seeing". This sense of heightened awareness of cultures, languages, identities, and all of the interplays between them, is often alluded to by self-translators and bilingual writers, as

[4] Providing a detailed account of self-translation and/or bilingual writing falls beyond the scope of this paper. For a comprehensive overview of the history and theory of self-translation, see, for instance, Hokenson and Munson (2007) and Grutman (2009). For recent accounts of the study of self-translation and bilingual writing, see, for instance, Boyden and De Bleeker (2013) and Cordingley (2013).

well as by migrant writers. According to Ariel Dorfman (2003:30), for instance, "all migrants through history have invariably transferred with them the syllables and significances enclosed in the language they learned as they grew". The constant challenge of having to negotiate their entire existence and their identity in (at least) two languages and two cultures not only causes various problems and crises in the lives of bilingual authors, but it can also sharpen their awareness of languages and cultures. Perhaps one of their biggest challenges can be said to eventually become one of their most valuable abilities.

Assia Djebar (2003:20), an Algerian novelist writing in French, has come to think of language and writing as part of her identity:

> I present myself first as a writer, a novelist, as if the act of writing, when it is daily, solitary to the point of asceticism, might come to modify the weight of belonging. Because identity is not made up of only paper or blood but also of *language*. And if it seems that language, as is frequently said, is a "means of communication," it is above all for me as a writer, a "means of transformation," insofar as I practice writing as an *adventure*.

The multiplicity of identity, and especially the fluidity of it, is also discussed by Nayak. According to him, any notion of identity, whether it be cultural, political, national, etc., in a postmodern, postcolonial world "is a fluid one and is in a constant state of flux" (Nayak 2010:43). This also holds true for the identity of the writer, and Nayak (2010) emphasises that "the postcolonial critic needs to be aware of the fluidity of identities and the constant mingling of identities which leads to an "in-between" identity that challenges the notion of an authentic national/cultural/literary identity". For Nayak (2010:43):

> [i]t is when such a postcolonial perspective is brought forth that the importance of a bilingual writer in a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic framework […] can be properly understood. The bilingual writer, by his very linguistic choice is a testimony to the postcolonial experience of hybridity that deconstructs the notion of polarities and binaries and embodies the existence of a 'third space' (Bhabha 1994:37) that is not limited by historically ill-informed identity politics.

It is not the aim of this paper to delve into postcolonial or cultural theories of translation, but Nayak's (2010) assertion is of particular significance. Bilingual writers, occupying spaces between two languages and cultures, create texts that call for readers, especially critics, to be aware of their in-between positions. Perceiving an "original" or "translation" created by a bilingual writer as the sole or as an autonomous version of a text fails to recognise the multicultural and multilingual framework within which the text was created and is situated.

According to Gaddis Rose (1997:7), a translation "proclaims that this is what the work in question meant to that translator on the date he or she declared the translation finished. It marks an understanding that is time-bound or ideology-cued."[5] The finished translation product

[5] The notion of translation as interpretation comes to mind here, as well as considerations of agency and the power of the translator.

represents the translator's interpretation of (the meaning of) a text, and that product is likely to be marketed and read as the original author's work in the new language. In the case of self-translation and bilingual writing, the situation is altered; the new version of the text created by the author represents the author's interpretation of (the meaning of) the text in a different language.

Gaddis Rose (1997) uses the notion of 'stereoscopic reading' to emphasise the importance of reading a source text alongside its translation(s). She ascribes the term "stereoscopic reading" to Joanne Englebert, and defines it as follows: "It means simply using both the original language text and one (or more) translations while reading and teaching. Stereoscopic reading makes it possible to intuit and reason out the interliminal" (1997:90). For Gaddis Rose (1997:7), stereoscopic reading is essential, since:

> [i]f we do not juxtapose a work and the translations it elicits, we risk missing many a gift inside the borders. Each phrase, each sentence, each paragraph has a boundary that is more a threshold than a barrier. Those are the boundaries of the original, the text as first composed and those of its counterparts in translation. Each boundary can be crossed inasmuch as a threshold provides an entry.

These "thresholds", as Gaddis Rose describes the possible interpretations of a (part of a) text, creates a space for readers to bring their own worlds of experience and frames of reference to the text and to construe their own interpretations. When considering stereoscopic reading in the case of self-translation or bilingual writing, the question arises as to how the author's interpretation of the text in a new language influences the possibilities of interpretation. Gaddis Rose (1997:36) uses Baudelaire's translation of Poe as a case study to examine how the presence of an authoritative translator influences the reader's response:

> As a reader, Baudelaire has so much authority that we may feel initially that this is the only authentic expansion of Poe's text. But what Baudelaire has provided in fact is another set of bornes [sic] for our own interliminal spaces.

Translators, as readers, bring to the text their worlds of experience and frames of reference which form the basis of their interpretations of the text. A translator's version of a text could thus present the reader with an additional interpretation – it could open up the text to more possibilities and expand the original. Even in the case of an authoritative translator, as Gaddis Rose argues, this is possible as a translation produced by a well-known translator will not limit readers' interpretations of a text, but could rather create for the reader additional possibilities of interpretation.

With reference to self-translation and bilingual writing, the question then arises as to whether a "translation"[6] created by the author could equally achieve this opening up of the text for the reader, or whether an author's own translation deprives the reader of an interpretation by

[6] I use the word "translation" here, but I am referring to any version(s) of a text created by the author, such as two products of a bilingual writing process, even if they may not be viewed as "translations" in the traditional sense of the word.

another person – a translator – that would stem from a different world of experience. This is linked to the question of whether authors are the best or ideal translators of their own work (cf. Krause 2007:167). This question is examined further in section 4 but, in my opinion, the (rare) stereoscopic reader can in fact gain from reading two versions of a text created by the author, since such readers become privy to another interpretation imagined and intended by the author him-/herself. Since self-translators and bilingual writers are generally believed to take more liberties with their own texts than translators will with the works of other authors (cf. Boyden and De Bleeker 2013:180), products of self-translations and bilingual writing often constitute significantly different versions of the same text. In this regard, the stereoscopic reader gains access to a broader story-world than the one represented in one version of a text.

Cordingley (2013:3) emphasises the hybridity of cultures and claims that writers who self-translate are especially aware of "both the hybridity of the culture(s) s/he is writing within and of her or his own writing". The same can be said of bilingual writers. Because self-translators and bilingual writers are able to expertly function in more than one language and culture, they are constantly aware of the interplay between the two languages and cultures. Consequently, Cordingley (2013:3) argues that "self-translators share with many other writers from the margins the tendency to subvert the possibility that their writing affirms a singular national culture or literature". This heightened awareness of hybridity is often also textually realised in the works of self-translators and bilingual writers whose literary scenarios typically include "wanderers and their confrontations with the limits of language(s), characters who are faced with their doubles, identities which morph with the use of different languages, the mystery and frustration of the untranslatable or that which falls between the cracks when two cultures meet" (Cordingley 2013:3). This description is particularly relevant with reference to *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan*, since the main character is challenged with almost exactly these problems, as will be discussed in following sections.

It becomes evident, then, that hybridity characterises not only the external and textual environments of self-translators and bilingual writers, "but the internal bilingual and bicultural space out of which their creativity emerges" (Cordingley 2013:3). Fitch (1988:158) phrases it as follows: "The bilingual writer is not merely aware of the existence of a multiplicity of tongues but lives in the continual presence of this awareness during the very act of writing". In the case of Brink, he frequently explores such multiplicities in terms of the limits of narration. Brink's novels often have different voices telling different versions of the same stories, especially when he employs fiction to write or rewrite history. The "typically postmodern phenomenon" of "[the] blurring of borderlines between history and storytelling" is also considered one of the key features of Brink's post-apartheid novels (Kauer 2007:57).

In *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan*, Brink employs clashing narrative perspectives, and some stories in different parts of the two versions contradict one another. For Brink, these conflicting stories, and especially the possibility of conceiving of them, are of essential importance (cf. Brand 2005:15). In the opening sentence of the novel, the reader is told that Cupido Cockroach, the main character, was not born but "hatched from the stories" his mother told about him. Different accounts of his birth are then provided, and already in the very first sentence of the novel, the reader is prompted to consider various alternatives in the interpretation of an event. Burger (2007:82) points out that the possibility that everything can be called into existence by narration is often addressed throughout Brink's oeuvre.

According to Bowers (2004:57), "[…] the need to reconsider [South Africa's] history and its mythologies in the light of the nation's new post-apartheid political conditions provide a motivation for Afrikaner writers to employ magical realist techniques". Bowers (2004) claims that Brink has played an important role in establishing magical realism in both Afrikaans and English literature. She argues that Brink's novels *Imaginings of Sand* (1996) and *Devil's Valley* (1998), specifically, "are attempts to rethink the position of Afrikaners in the new cross-cultural South Africa, particularly in relation to the denial of influence of indigenous African myth in a mainly strict protestant Christian context". *Bidsprinkaan* and *Praying Mantis* can, in my opinion, be added to this list, even though they might not have been written in a period when "cross-cultural South Africa" could be said to be "new". The relationship between the Christian missionaries and the indigenous African inhabitants not only forms the basis of the storyline, but in the magical realistic narrative style it becomes the story used by Brink to address complex interplays between religion and tradition, history and myth, truth and fiction, etc.

One of the effects of the use of magical realism in the novel is that there is a constant interplay between the real world and the supernatural world, and between what is real and what is imagined. As such, a shadow of the supernatural world seems often to be present in references to the real world, and depictions of the real world frequently carry with them a hint of the supernatural. An example from the English version that depicts this presence of the extraordinary in the ordinary is where the reverend, James Read, after a conversation with Cupido about faith, describes Cupido walking away from him as follows (Brink 2005:157):

> He walked away, into the sun. It was shining directly in my eyes, so I could only see his slight, angular silhouette – resembling some stick insect, a grasshopper or a harvester cricket or a mantis perhaps – as it dwindled into the distance, a small cloud of dust surrounding his head like a halo. A most curious impression, as if he did not so much move towards the sun as right into it. Until he disappeared in the blinding blaze.

Brink's use of magical realism in *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan*[7] provides almost endless possibilities for narration as well as for interpretation. One of the key features of magical realism, the "matter-of-fact, realist tone of its narrative when presenting magical happenings" (Bowers 2004:3), is a common narrative strategy used in *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan*. By creating a text that "naturalises the supernatural, integrating fantastic or mythical features smoothly into the otherwise realistic momentum of the narrative" (Warnes 2009:151), Brink blurs the boundaries between real and imagined, story and history. According to Burger (2007:85), the magical-realistic narrative style in which the unbelievable combines with the believable and is narrated in a tone of realism, leads to an increased awareness of the possibilities of narration. Furthermore, magical realism in the text undermines the notion that rationality is the only way in which the world can be investigated and understood (Burger 2007:85). In addition to the multiple layers of interpretation created by Brink's use of magical realism, simultaneously writing the text in two languages is likely to add further possibilities of meaning and interpretation, a possibility that will be investigated by stereoscopically reading *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan*.

[7] Brink's use of magical realism has received mixed reviews (cf., for instance, Visagie 2005, Roos 2007).

3. A stereoscopic reading of *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan*

3.1 Background of the story

Praying Mantis (and *Bidsprinkaan*) is the story of the colourful character Cupido Cockroach, a historical Khoi native. The novel recounts his life story, from his magical birth – he wasn't born, but "hatched from the stories" told about him (Brink 2005b) – and early years to his first encounter with Christianity, his struggles with the oppositions between his culture and Christianity, and his experiences after becoming the first Hottentot to be sworn in as a missionary. Brink employs magical realism and, at times, an almost surrealist style (cf. Painter 2005) to emphasise various dichotomies, such as between fact and fiction, reality and imagination, scientific historiography and oral tradition (cf. Brand 2005:15), and history and memory. In the novel, constant tensions between local spirituality and Christianity, between oral tradition and the written word, between native and colonial (cf. Painter 2005), form the central themes that challenge the characters as well as the reader.

A stereoscopic reading of the Afrikaans and English[8] versions of the novel proves to be a functional experiment that highlights a number of particularly interesting aspects of both versions as well as the creative process[9]. Starting with the paratexts[10], the titles of the two versions of the novel, specifically the subtitle of the Afrikaans version, represents one of the first and most notable differences between the two versions. The main titles, *Bidsprinkaan* and *Praying Mantis*, are the Afrikaans and English names of the insect to which they refer. Both words have a religious connotation: "praying" in English and "bid" in Afrikaans[11]. The Afrikaans version then has the subtitle, *'n Ware storie* ('A true story'), which does not occur in the English version. Brink has said that he had originally wanted the subtitle *A true story* to be included in the English version as well, but his publishers discouraged this. Apparently, they were worried that the committee awarding the Booker Prize would not accept the novel as fiction if it had the subtitle of *A true story* (cf. Brand 2005). The English version has the phrase "a novel" as a kind of metatextual subtitle instead. The subtitle of the Afrikaans version, even with the paradox of "true story", immediately frames this version as historical fiction and lends a sense of reality to the events in the text. A reader examining the titles of both versions of the novel, who might not be familiar with the reasoning behind excluding the subtitle *A true story* from the English version, might wonder about this considerable difference between the two versions. This then leads to the question of whether the subtitle influences the perspective from which the reader approaches the text, and if a reader confronted with both versions of a subtitle might look for differences between the two versions that point back to the differences between the subtitles.

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[8] The specific editions of *Bidsprinkaan* and *Praying Mantis* used for the analysis are listed in the bibliography. It did not fall within the scope of this paper to compare different editions of both versions of the novel, but further research on the topic might provide interesting insights, especially with reference to paratextual elements.

[9] Due to limitations of space, the stereoscopic reading will not be conducted as a systematic analysis of both versions. Instead, the titles of and relevant examples from both versions will be discussed in order to give an indication of some of the differences in the two versions of the text. The focus is especially on differences between *Bidsprinkaan* and *Praying Mantis* that could give rise to different interpretations, as the main aim of this article is to establish whether the two versions could be said to constitute a total text that is "more than the sum of its parts" (Brink 1998:31).

[10] See Genette (1997) for a definition of "paratext".

[11] The name of the praying mantis alludes to the physical appearance of the insect – its front legs are often folded together in a prayer-like fashion.

The sense of reality and historical factuality alluded to by the Afrikaans subtitle (*'n Ware storie*) is reinforced by the text on the blurb of the Afrikaans version, of which the first sentence reads "Dokumente vermeld dat Kupido Kakkerlak omstreeks 1760 tot 1825 geleef het" ('Documents state that Cupido Cockroach lived from approximately 1760 to 1825'). Conversely, the blurb of the English version focuses on summarising the rather dramatic life of Cupido Cockroach, and does not include a reference to historical documents. In the final paragraph of the blurb, however, the reader is made aware of the historical basis of the novel: "In a heady mixture of comedy and tragedy, the real and the mystical, *Praying Mantis* explores through the historical figure of Cupido Cockroach the origins of racial tension in the shadowlands between myth and history" (Brink 2005b). This last sentence effectively introduces the reader to the magical realist style of the novel, where the "shadowlands", the boundaries between myth and history, fact and fiction, etc., become the space in which everything takes place.

According to Beaujour (1989), self-translation "makes a text retrospectively incomplete" and therefore "both versions [of a text] become avatars of a hypothetical total text in which the versions in both languages would rejoin one another and be reconciled". This idea could also be applied to bilingual writing, and a stereoscopic reading of *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan* will serve to explore the notion of a 'hypothetical total text'. In the following section, a stereoscopic reading of *Bidsprinkaan* and *Praying Mantis* will be conducted. This reading will focus on comparisons of the portrayal of cultural customs, characterisation and the recounting of events in the two versions of the novel. The aim here is not to conduct an in-depth micro-level analysis of word choices, syntactic patterns, style, shifts, etc. Rather, the goal is to attempt to establish whether a stereoscopic reading of the two versions of the text is functional, whether it can lead to insights regarding the relationship and interplay between these parallel versions, and whether it can be said that a "hypothetical total text" exists.

3.1.1 Cultural customs and beliefs of the Khoi

Cupido Cockroach is a Khoi native and the customs, beliefs and traditions of the Khoi play an important role in the novel. One of the central tensions in the narrative rests on the contrast between the Khoi culture and traditions, and western – especially Christian – religion. Cupido grapples with abandoning his traditional cultural customs and beliefs in favour of Christianity, and the implications that his conversion to Christianity has not only for himself, but also for his family. Brink's use of magical realism highlights the mystical nature of the Khoi culture and constantly challenges the reader to adjust to new perspectives – different ways of looking at the world, religion, history, etc. The novel begins with the story of how Cupido Cockroach was born, a story of which multiple accounts exist. According to one account of his birth, Cupido was a twin – the weaker one – and in keeping with Khoi custom, he was left out in the veld after birth so that wild animals could dispose of him. While lying in the veld, an eagle snatched him up and later dropped him somewhere far away. When the eagle dropped him, Cupido fell into the lap of the woman who would become his mother.

> *Praying Mantis* (2005:3-4)
> Many of her listeners favoured the version that Cupido had been one of twins and, being very obviously the weaker of the two, had been laid out in the veld **according to the immemorial custom of the Khoikhoin** (or, as they were commonly known late in the eighteenth century where it happened, the Hottentots). At some stage, the story goes, an eagle came diving down from the heavens, a magnificent bateleur

from the distant mountains, scooped up the barely wriggling infant in its talons and then, in the way these birds would kill a tortoise, lost – or dropped – it very far from there, in the godforsaken upper reaches of the Great Karoo known as the Koup, where distance loses all meaning and pure space takes over. The baby landed in the lap of the woman who was sleeping in the veld, and when she woke up, the child was there, and hers.

Bidsprinkaan (2005:10)
Party van haar toehoorders het verkies om haar te glo as sy vertel dat Kupido een van ’n tweeling was. Synde die swakste van die twee, is hy volgens ou Khoikhoigewoonte op die veld uitgelê **waar die wilde diere van hom ontslae kon raak**. Op die een of ander tydstip, so loop die storie, het ’n arend, ’n pragtige bergarend uit die verste verte, die bloedjie uit sy kloue opgeraap en met hom weggevlieg asof hy ’n skilpad was en hom baie ver daarvan laat val, bokant die godverlate haaivlak van die Koup in die dorte van die Karoo, waar afstand nie meer sin maak nie en daar nog net pure ruimte oor is. Die baba het op die skoot van ’n vrou beland wat daar op die vlak gesit-slaap het, en toe sy wakker word, toe was die kind daar, en hare. *Al wat sy geweet het – hoe, sou niemand kon sê nie – was dat die arend weer eendag, eendag, sou terugkom om die skepseltjie saam met hom terug te neem na waar hy ook al vandaan gekom het.*

[‘Some of her listeners chose to believe her when she told them that Cupido was a twin. Being the weaker of the two, he was laid out in the veld, according to the old Khoi tradition, **where the wild animals could dispose of him.** At one stage or another, so the story goes, an eagle, a beautiful bateleur from the furthest far, snatched up the little creature in his claws, flew away with him as if he were a tortoise and dropped him very far from there, above the godforsaken plains of the Koup in the drought of the Karoo, where distance no longer makes sense and where only pure space is left. The baby landed on the lap of a woman who sat sleeping on the plain, and when she woke up, the child was there, and hers. *All that she knew – how, nobody could say – was that the eagle would return someday, someday, to take the little creature back with him to wherever he came from.*’][12]

The Afrikaans version mentions that the Khoi custom according to which Cupido had to be left in the veld because he was the weaker twin, entailed that wild animals were meant to dispose of him – a detail that is absent in the English version. The addition of the specifics of the custom, the appalling act of leaving a newborn baby out in the veld for wild animals to most likely kill and eat, adds to the reader’s perception of the Khoi people as they are portrayed in the Afrikaans version. The matter-of-fact style in which this custom is related by the narrator leads to an almost factual, textbook-like account that points back to the subtitle of the Afrikaans version, *’n Ware storie* (‘A true story’). The reader is immediately and almost shockingly made aware of the interplay between story and fact that will continue throughout the Afrikaans version.

In the English version, in contrast, the custom is described by saying that the newborn would be “laid out in the veld according to the immemorial custom of the Khoikhoin”. The more subtle, almost ritual-like depiction of the custom seems to lend a quality of dignity not only to

[12] Back-translations into English of all Afrikaans examples are provided below the Afrikaans examples.

the ritual itself but, by extension, to how the Khoi people are portrayed in the English version. This quality is enhanced by the use of the word "immemorial", which stands in contrast with the adjective "ou" ('old') used in the Afrikaans version. The narrator's portrayal of the Khoi tribe in the two versions of the text thus differs significantly, and readers who read either one of the two versions would likely have different initial perspectives on the Khoi people. In a stereoscopic reading, however, the reader is presented with both options, as it were. The contrasting depictions of the Khoi people in the two versions not only allow for the reader to unconsciously "choose" their own perspective, but they also hint at one of the central themes of the novel itself, namely the interplay between versions of a story – whether it be a story, a factual description, a version of history or a true story – and the questionable reliability of factual accounts and histories.

The excerpts provided above also show differences between the two versions which are not directly related to cultural customs, but are nonetheless important to mention here. One such difference that can be seen concerns additional, mostly explanatory, information presented in the English version. For example, the information about the name of the Khoikhoin people is included in the English version – most probably for the benefit of English readers outside of South Africa who might not be familiar with the country's historical background. An indication of the date ("late eighteenth century") is also provided for further contextualisation.

In this paragraph, the Afrikaans version, as shown in the excerpt above, ends the account of Cupido's birth with a prophetic vision that Cupido's mother had had about an eagle that would eventually come to take Cupido away. This vision points toward the end of the novel when Cupido leaves with a character named Arend, the Afrikaans word for "eagle". This sense of the unknown mixed with the supernatural – Cupido's mother knew he would be taken away by an eagle (or Arend), but she did not know how she knew it – emphasises the magical element in the novel. In the same way that the stories surrounding Cupido's birth contain an element of uncertainty and magic, this prophesy of his eventual departure with an eagle is vague and seems to be the result of a supernatural or magical vision. Cupido's mother seems to somehow know that an eagle will take Cupido away to wherever it is that he came from. It is thus not certain where Cupido came from, or where he will go when he eventually departs, only that an eagle is instrumental in both these events. Thus, the addition of the prophesy of the eagle in the Afrikaans version points to a full circle of Cupido's life – he was picked up and dropped into the lap of his mother by an eagle, and will be taken away by an eagle at the end. In this way, Cupido's character, his entire life, is situated within a sphere of magic and uncertainty in the Afrikaans version from a very early stage in the story. The prophesy of the eagle is absent in the English version, and the account of Cupido's birth in this version ends with the eagle dropping him into the lap of the woman who adopts him as her own son. There is thus no foretelling of the eagle's role at the end of Cupido's life and, as such, the symbolism of the eagle as a figure instrumental in Cupido's birth and death – almost a kind of a guide – is not as strong as in the Afrikaans version. The English version presents the reader with mysterious accounts of Cupido's birth but then leaves the reader to discover the rest of Cupido's story for him-/herself.

A stereoscopic reading of this last section of the paragraph illustrates how readers can be pointed towards different possibilities of approaching certain aspects of the novel. For instance, the Afrikaans version, with its symbolic representation of the circle of life and the figure of the eagle central to it, encourages the reader to envisage not only Cupido's birth or his arrival, but

his death, or rather departure, as well. As such, the Afrikaans version almost seems to create an expectation that the novel will also deal with Cupido's death or departure, and that the reader will be confronted with it. In this paragraph, the English version focuses on the magical nature of Cupido's birth or arrival. The reader is given the opportunity to view Cupido's life as more open-ended, without mention of an ending. The sense of the unknown adds to the mystery of reading – the reader is not given any hints about which aspects of Cupido's life the novel will deal with, or where in Cupido's life the novel might end, for instance, but rather has to discover it for him-/herself. Reading both versions allows the reader to access both options of approaching Cupido's life story – as a symbolic full circle filled with mystery and uncertainty, or as an open-ended possibility equally alive with mystery and uncertainty.

Another custom of the Khoi described in the novel is the way of paying tribute to the god Heitsi-Eibib by adding a stone to a pile of stones in his honour. As a result of this custom, piles of stones erected in honour of Heitsi-Eibib were visible throughout the landscape as monuments to the god. After his conversion to Christianity, whenever Cupido would come across piles of stones built for Heitsi-Eibib, he would destroy them. In the excerpts below, Cupido's mother takes him to one of these piles of stones shortly after his birth and adds a stone to it.

> *Praying Mantis* (2005:10)
> After the birth […] the woman […] took him […] into the veld […] where there was a pile of stones erected by her people, a *heitsi-eibib*, one going back to the beginning of time […]. Because those were the days when the hunter-god Heitsi-Eibib was still going about freely among the people, **dying many times and in many ways**, and getting reborn all over the place. And whoever passed such a mound was required to add a stone to it, so that one could form part of the people who had lived before, and those still living, and those yet to come, united in the death and life of Heitsi-Eibib.
>
> *Bidsprinkaan* (2005:16)
> Ná die kind se geboorte […] het die vrou die kind […] die veld in geabba […] tot waar daar 'n klipstapel van haar mense was, 'n heitsi-eibib, een wat ver in die tyd teruggegaan het […]. Want dit was in die vroegtyd toe **die jagter-god Heitsi-Eibib, die maan-god Heitsi-Eibib, die boodskapper-god Heitsi-Eibib**, nog los onder die mense geloop het, en orals doodgegaan het en orals weer opgestaan het. En soos jy by so 'n stapel verbykom, **tot vandag toe**, sit jy nog 'n klip op die stapel, sodat jy saam met al die mense wat al was en wat nou nog is en wat later sal wees, deel kan hê aan die dood en die lewe van Heitsi-Eibib.
>
> ['After the child's birth, the woman carried the child on her back into the veld to where there was a pile of stones of her people, a heitsi-eibib, one that went far back into time. Because it was in the early time when **the hunter-god Heitsi-Eibib, the moon-god Heitsi-Eibib, the messenger-god Heitsi-Eibib**, still walked freely among the people, and died everywhere and rose again everywhere. And as you pass such a pile, **to this day**, you add another stone to the pile, so that you can have part of the death and the life of Heitsi-Eibib with all the people who have been and who are and who are yet to be.']

The English version of the text describes Heitsi-Eibib as a hunter-god who walked freely among the people. He died “many times and in many ways”, and was “reborn all over the place”. The Afrikaans version describes him as a hunter-god, a moon-god, a messenger-god who walked freely among the people, and died everywhere and rose again everywhere. When reading the two versions stereoscopically, a more complete description of Heitsi-Eibib arises that is not accessible by reading only one of the two versions. Such a complete description of Heitsi-Eibib would include his various roles or embodiments (hunter-god, moon-god and messenger-god), and that he died everywhere, many times and in many ways, and was reborn everywhere. A complete description of Heitsi-Eibib and the link between him and the custom of adding a stone to a pile in his honour would also include the observation from the Afrikaans version that this custom is still upheld today. This statement seems to anchor the narrator’s description of a cultural custom in the real world, pointing towards the boundaries between the real world and the story world, between fact and fiction.

Along with their various cultural customs, many superstitions govern the daily activities of the Khoi. One of these superstitions, related to hares, is mentioned when Cupido is taught to hunt by the god Heitsi-Eibib.

> *Praying Mantis* (2005:25)
> But it is when it comes to hunting that Heitsi-Eibib really takes him in charge. It begins with small buck – oribi, grysbok, suni, steenbok (**never a hare, as this repulsive creature with its split lip is the messenger of death**).
>
> *Bidsprinkaan* (2005:25)
> Dit is veral wanneer dit by jag kom dat Heitsi-Eibib hom onder hande neem. Eers is dit net klein bokkies – oorbietjie, soenie, steenbok, grysbok (**nooit hase nie, want dié ding met sy lip wat deur die Maan self gesplyt is, bring die tyding van die dood**).
>
> [‘It is especially when it comes to hunting that Heitsi-Eibib takes him in charge. First it is only small buck – oribi, suni, steenbok, Cape grysbok (**never hares, because that thing with its lip split by the Moon itself, brings the tiding of death**).’]

The belief that hares are messengers of death keeps Cupido from hunting them. Here again, combining the depictions of the hare in both versions of the text creates a more detailed, complete portrayal. The hare is viewed as a repulsive creature (as mentioned in the English version) whose lip was split by the moon (as the Afrikaans version recounts). The addition of the belief that the moon split the hare’s lip adds to the myth surrounding the creature. The references to the moon and its being a messenger of death also hark back to the description of Heitsi-Eibib discussed above, namely him being a hunter-god, moon-god and messenger-god. Furthermore, the two different versions can lead to different interpretations of how the hare and death are related. In the English version of the text, it is stated that the hare is “the messenger of death”, which could be interpreted as the hare delivering messages on behalf of death. The hare would thus work with or even for death, an interpretation that adds to the “repulsive” nature of the creature as depicted here. According to the Afrikaans version, the hare brings the tiding of death. Although this description could be interpreted in the same way as the English version, it seems as if in the Afrikaans version the hare is portrayed as a messenger who has to bring the

tiding of death and is not necessarily instructed or employed by death itself. Naturally, the interpretation would depend on the reader, but a stereoscopic reading of this description of the hare shows how considering even the slightest differences between two versions of a text can open up possibilities of interpretation that might not have been equally obvious or accessible when only one of the versions was read.

3.1.2 Characterisation

An investigation of how characters are portrayed in the text, by reading the two versions stereoscopically, can be particularly insightful. Cupido Cockroach is characterised by using various narrative techniques[13]. One of the most common narrative techniques of characterisation, namely a description of the character by the narrator, is shown in the excerpts below:

> *Praying Mantis* (2005:8)
> What was more, as the mother approached the bundle for the second time, it stirred. As if to make quite sure that they would not be mistaken, it even uttered a feeble little sound of whining. And when the black tatters of the scarecrow's tailcoat were unfolded, **the baby** was alive and staring up at them in mild amusement.
>
> *Bidsprinkaan* (2005:14)
> Wat meer is, toe die ma weer buk om die bondeltjie op te tel, toe roer dit. En asof **die dingetjie** wil seker maak dat niemand hom vergis nie, uiter hy 'n kermgeluidjie. En toe die swart doodskleed van die **apiegesiggie** wegggevou word, lê hy daar met die sweem van 'n glimlaggie na hulle en kyk, behoorlik asof hy geamuseerd is.
>
> ['What was more, when the mother bowed again to pick up the little bundle, it stirred. And as if **the little thing** wanted to make sure nobody thought they were mistaken, he uttered a small whimpering sound. And when the black shroud was folded away from the **little monkey face**, he lay there looking at them with the hint of a smile, almost as if he were amused.']

In the Afrikaans version, baby Cupido is described as a creature-like little thing with a face resembling that of a monkey. He is portrayed as barely being human, which refers back to the mysterious accounts of his birth as well as to the opening line of the novel which states that Cupido was "hatched from" the stories told about him (Brink 2005b:3), rather than being born in any natural way. The English version of the text, on the other hand, refers to him as "the baby", making the figure seem more human, and makes no mention of his face resembling that of a monkey. The Afrikaans version therefore seems to depict Cupido as more creature-like than human-like through detailed references to his features that are not present in the English version. The following excerpts serve as further examples:

> *Praying Mantis* (2005:14)
> For his mother always keeps him close to her, scared that something might happen to him. One never knows, with **a little thing as frail as that**, when someone might just give him a shove in passing – and what would happen to him then?

[13] This paper does not aim to provide a narratological analysis of the novels, and therefore a discussion of narratological elements will not be provided here. Terms such as "characterisation", "narrator", etc. are used here in their most common senses. For a detailed account of narratology, see, for instance, Bal (1999).

Bidsprinkaan (2005:20)
Want sy ma probeer hom altyd naby haar hou, bang hy sal iets oorkom – hy is so **’n tingerige skepseltjie met sy stokkiesdun arms en sy graatjiebene**, netnou gee iemand hom in die verbygaan sommer ’n oorveeg of ’n trap en wat word dan van hom?

[‘Because his mother tries to always keep him close to her, scared that something might happen to him – he is such **a frail little creature with his stick-thin arms and fish-bone legs**, what if someone just smacked or kicked him in passing, what would become of him then?’]

Here, the Afrikaans version refers to Cupido as a frail little creature, with arms as thin as sticks and equally skinny legs[14]. The imaginative use of language results in a vivid and even comical image created of the young Cupido (a ‘frail little creature with his stick-thin arms and fish-bone legs’). In a stereoscopic reading, this image would be accessible to all readers, along with the effect of using rich descriptive language, especially when comparing the above-mentioned description of Cupido in the Afrikaans version with the English version’s less colourful description of him as “a little thing as frail as that”.

Brink also employs various other narrative strategies to enable readers to construct an image of a character, such as characterisation through dialogue and the direct words of the characters. The owner of the farm on which Cupido and his mother lived when he was a young boy, for instance, is portrayed as an ill-tempered man prone to violence. These characteristics are emphasised by the expletives that the farm owner uses.

Praying Mantis (2005:6)
[A]ll he could do […] was to mutter, “These **goddamned** creatures multiply like **bloody** cockroaches, they must be drawn by the smell of food.” Whereupon the farmer turned on his heel and left, peevishly slapping the virgin whip against the bottoms of his mole-skin trousers.

Bidsprinkaan (2005:12)
Al wat hy deur sy baard gebrom het, was: “Die goed teel ook aan nes kakkerlakke. Kom al agter die ruik van kos aan.” Klap-klap met die nuwe sweep teen sy molvelbroek se pype, is hy daar weg […]

[‘All that he muttered through his beard was, “These things breed like cockroaches. Keep following the smell of food.” With the new whip slap-slapping against the legs of his mole-skin trousers, he left.’]

The farmer’s use of expletives in the English version makes him seem more callous and ill-tempered than he does in the Afrikaans version. A reader examining both versions is confronted with two quite different images of the farmer, and the contrast between the images leads to questions about the creative process and particular decisions made by the author while composing the text. For instance, the reader might be led to question whether or not it was a deliberate decision by the author to portray the character differently in the respective versions,

[14] The Afrikaans word *graatjie* is often used to refer to an exceptionally thin person (mainly a child). The word can also refer to a small fish-bone or to a meerkat.

or whether the target audience was a motivation for the differences. The stereoscopic reader is thus presented with two different versions of a character, but is also drawn in to consider the creative process and the impact that word choice or style can have on characterisation, for instance, as this example has shown.

Another important difference between the two versions of the novel that influences the portrayal of a character is the narrator's description of Cupido's sexual prowess.

> *Praying Mantis* (2005:63)
> There is no need to enter into more embarrassing detail, except to mention that in the course of the following years Cupido also availed himself of every **willing** girl-child on the farm. **As well as of a selection of ewes from the goat and sheep flocks, the three turkeys, and whatever else it pleased the heavens to place within his reach.**
>
> *Bidsprinkaan* (2005:61)
> Oor verdere ontugtige besonderhede is dit beter om nie uit te wei nie, behalwe om te vermeld dat Kupido in die loop van die volgende jare toegang gevind het tot **al wat vroutjieskind** op die Baas se werf was.
>
> ['On further immoral details it is better not to expand, except to mention that Cupido, in the course of the following years, found access to **every girl-child** in the Boss's yard.']

Cupido is portrayed here as a virile man who had his way with many different women, but not only women – also sheep, goats, turkeys, etc. Cupido's sexual encounters with animals are only mentioned in the English version, and this refers back to the blurb thereof where it is said that "Cupido Cockroach became the greatest drinker, liar, fornicator and fighter of his region". The Afrikaans version seems to address this aspect of Cupido's characterisation with more modesty, and merely mentions that Cupido found access to all females within his reach. A stereoscopic reader, faced with two different images of Cupido, might be drawn in to consider motivations for and implications of including or excluding such details from the two versions.

3.1.3 Textual accounts of events

The final category of examples that will be discussed is the textual accounts of events, described either by the narrator or by particular characters. In the first example, both versions of the novel provide a brief account of battles fought between white farming communities and Xhosa tribes.

> *Praying Mantis* (2005:82)
> As the Xhosa incursions from across the Great Fish River became more and more unstoppable, **the general feelings of apprehension and open distress were aggravated** by stories of San raids in the north and even a slave rebellion at Stellenbosch.
> …
> Entire farmer families were massacred, **all their names duly recorded in official registers.** Numerous Khoi and Xhosa were shot, **unrecorded.**

> *Bidsprinkaan* (2005:78)
> Terwyl dit by die dag moeiliker was om die Xhosas se invalle oor die Visrivier te keer, was daar stories van Sanstrooptogte uit die noorde en selfs 'n slaweopstand by Stellenbosch.
> …
> Hele boerefamilies is uitgemoor. Tallose Khoi en Xhosas is doodgeskiet.
>
> ['While it became more difficult each day to stop the Xhosas' invasions across the Fish River, there were stories of San raids from the north and even a slave rebellion at Stellenbosch.
> …
> Entire farmer families were massacred. Countless Khoi and Xhosas were shot dead.']

According to the English version, reports of raids by the San and slave uprisings in Stellenbosch contributed to increased apprehension and distress during the time. The Afrikaans version mentions the reports of the San raids and the slave rebellion, but does not comment on the emotional impact of these reports. The incursions had many casualties among farmer, Khoi and Xhosa families. The English version states that after the battles, historical records showed that the names of the farmer families who died were recorded, but the names of the Xhosa and Khoi families who died, were not. This allusion to the questionable reliability of history and the subjectivity of historiography links to one of the central themes of the novel, as well as a common theme in many of Brink's works. The description of the battles in the English version seems to be more emotional – especially with the focus on the injustice of history in recording the casualties. The Afrikaans version does not refer to the historical records of these battles. Instead, it is stated matter-of-factly that farmer families as well as Khoi and Xhosas were killed. In a stereoscopic reading, the reader is made aware of different approaches to relating historical events in a novel – either by using a more emotional approach likely to evoke stronger feelings from the reader, or a more matter-of-fact approach. The difference between these two approaches becomes clear to the stereoscopic reader, and allows them to consider on a metatextual level why the author used these different approaches to recount these events to his different audiences.

Details of events in the narrative, even small events in the lives of characters with no obvious significance, as seen from the perspective of various characters, enable readers to form their own interpretations of the events. Where the details of events differ between the two versions of the novel, readers' interpretations of the event as well as their image of a particular character, in some cases, could be different. In the example below, Reverend James Read speaks of his daughter and mentions that Cupido built her cradle.

> *Praying Mantis* (2005:136)
> It is gratifying to note here that it was Brother Cupido who **insisted on making** the child's cradle.
>
> *Bidsprinkaan* (2005:124)
> Dit verskaf my heelwat genoegdoening om hier te vermeld dat broeder Kupido **die kind se wiegie gemaak het**.

['It gives me considerable satisfaction to note here that brother Cupido **made the child's cradle**.']

Reverend James Read's account of the event differs in the two versions of the text: in the Afrikaans version, he merely mentions that Cupido made the cradle, but in the English one, he emphasises that Cupido "insisted" on making the cradle. Not only does this difference portray two different accounts of Cupido's involvement in making the cradle – a pronounced desire to do so versus something that merely happened – it could also cause readers to construct different versions of Cupido's character.

A similar situation arises in the following example, where two different accounts of an event influence the construction of a character's image. In this example, a description of the skies at nightfall includes a reference to a past event, namely when the evil god Gaunab fled from the good god Tsui-Goab after losing a battle. According to this tale, the Milky Way marks Gaunab's trail across the skies.

Praying Mantis (2005:7)
By that time the moon was out, a mere sliver of light in the sky, the Milky Way strewn with star dust that marked the route followed by the evil god Gaunab as he fled from the spot of the last in his long line of battles with the good god Tsui-Goab, **to die out of sight in peace**.

Bidsprinkaan (2005:13)
Die maan was al uit, skaars 'n blinkerige skerfie in die donker, die Melkweg bestrooi met sterstof soos die bose god Gaunab vanslewe die aftog geblaas het ná die laaste in sy lang reeks gevegte teen die goeie god Tsui-Goab, toe hy gevlug het **om eenkant moerig dood te gaan**.

['The moon was already out, merely a shiny shard in the dark, the Milky Way strewn with star dust as the evil god Gaunab once beat a hasty retreat after the last of his long series of fights against the good god Tsui-Goab, when he fled **to die alone and angry**.']

According to the English version, Gaunab fled from Tsui-Goab to be able to "die out of sight in peace". The Afrikaans version, however, says that Gaunab fled to die alone, out of the way, and "moerig" (an Afrikaans colloquialism meaning "angry"). In comparison with the English version that has Gaunab die in peace, him dying "moerig" in the Afrikaans version leads to two markedly different interpretations of the event, and the stereoscopic reader – faced with both possible interpretations – is invited to consider them both.

4. Discussion

Central to many theoretical explorations of the phenomenon of self-translation is the question of whether authors are the best or ideal translators of their own work (cf. Krause 2007:167). Whyte (2002:68) quotes Paul Valéry, who argues that:

> [t]here is no such thing as 'the real meaning' of a text. The author has no special authority. Whatever he may have wanted to say, he

> has written what he has written. Once published, a text is, so to speak, a mechanism which everyone can use in his own way as best he can: it is not certain that its constructor uses it better than the next man. Besides, if he really knows what he wanted to do, this knowledge always interferes with his perception of what he has done.

With regard to bilingual writers such as Brink, it could be argued that they have double the chance to write what they want to say, to paraphrase Valéry. Producing two versions of the same text that are not meant to be viewed as translations sets these authors free from any (possible) constraints that fidelity to an original might have imposed on a translation or subsequent version of a text. The freedom to compose two (or more) texts that, in theory at least, could be completely different from one another enables bilingual writers to pursue potential avenues of interpretation or exploration that might not have been possible when producing only a single text or even when self-translating. Bilingual writers are free to change the courses of their stories, the characteristics of their characters, the portrayal of events and whatever they want to in the different textual versions. Evidence of such differences is clear and can be seen in the examples from *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan* provided above.

Stereoscopic readers are transported by the two parallel versions to an "interliminal space" (Gaddis Rose 1997) between two languages where they are made aware that "there is no meaning transfer as such" (Pym 2009:112). Constructing meaning is based on interpretation, which remains a personal and subjective activity influenced by a reader's entire world of experience, including their own experience of the text. Authors thus create texts that lead readers to various and varying interpretations. Features of these texts, such as the genre, style and setting, as well as textual elements such as word choice, metaphors, imagery and sounds, lead readers toward certain possible interpretations to which they are always free to add their own. Accordingly, versions of a text, such as *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan*, written in the style of magical realism with a strong focus on the blurring of boundaries between reality and fiction, history and myth, real and imagined, etc., lead readers to interpretations that might otherwise have seemed far-fetched or impossible.

The subjective nature of interpretation makes it a particularly difficult phenomenon to address scientifically. With reference to the differences between *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan*, one is continuously tempted to speculate how certain omissions or additions might influence a readers' interpretation of an event or image of a character. Without studying real readers' responses, however, implications of differences between the two versions of the text remain speculations.

Just as every time a storyteller tells or retells a story to different audiences s/he might tell it somewhat differently (on account of, for instance, the audience, the place, the context, even the mood of the storyteller), the bilingual writer creates an alternative version of his story for various readers in two different languages. Reading these versions stereoscopically reveals how the two versions point to one another. It highlights the similarities and the differences not only between the versions themselves – the stories told, events recounted, characters described, and the language and style used to do so – but also between the two contexts or cultural environments for which each version was created. The stereoscopic reader is thus granted insight into the author's creative process, and also into the larger contexts surrounding both

versions. Additional explanatory information, for instance, is often included in one version of a bilingual work (such as in the first example in section 3.1.1) in order to clarify something for readers of that version. In the other language version, where the author feels that readers would not require additional clarification, it would be left out. Reading the two versions stereoscopically and perceiving these differences thus make the readers aware of different audiences reading the text from perhaps different perspectives or worlds of experience. Stereoscopically reading both versions of a bilingual text highlights the dual existence of the text not only in the use of two different languages, but also by making the reader aware of various contexts in which the text is situated. The reader is thereby also made aware of differences or gaps between the two versions, the two languages and the two cultures (Gentes 2013:269).

According to Anker (2008:7), *Praying Mantis* provides detailed accounts of both the magical and the realistic to the extent that an in-between magical-realistic space is created in which the magical is described realistically, almost matter-of-factly, and the exaggerated description of the realistic at times acquires magical qualities. Situating magical elements in realistic spaces such as the Karoo, Anker (2008) argues, places further emphasis on the magical elements in and possibilities of the text. In some cases, elements or objects in the text that combine both the magical and the realistic hold special significance. One example is Cupido's experience of the traveller Servaas Ziervogel's mirrors. The mirrors, along with music and stories, represent one kind of magic used by Ziervogel to control Cupido and his people. Cupido's experience with the mirrors highlights the experience of the magical *in* the realistic (Anker 2008:7) to the extent that the mirrors become a metaphor for the two worlds Cupido finds himself in, and for his hybrid identity. Cupido's use of the mirror becomes symbolic of how the mystical world of Cupido's Khoi culture and the Western world of Servaas Ziervogel come into contact and eventually blur and merge. The excerpts below provide a glimpse of the magical bond between Cupido and the mirror(s):

> *Praying Mantis* (2005:46):
> From each of the frames the same face looks back at him. He starts scurrying from one to the next, trying to surprise the stranger, but every time the face is there, imitating him, moving away when Cupido does, returning on cue. Whenever he steals round to the back, there is nothing. In the front, the face keeps on returning.
> After a long time Cupido dares to ask, 'Who is this thing with the many-times face?'
> 'Don't you know him then?'
> 'Never seen him, Baas. He cannot be from these parts. He came with you on the wagon, didn't he?' He shakes his head. From where he is standing, he can see six or seven of the strange faces also shaking their heads […] 'They must belong to the grey-feet,' he says. 'The *hai-noen*. Perhaps they are shadow people from the other side. *Sobo khoin*. But they don't look dangerous. Only, one can never be sure.'
>
> (2005:61)
> One event softens the blow of parting, and that is Servaas Ziervogel's decision, as he takes his final leave, to present Cupido with one of his miraculous mirrors. With this artefact in his possession, Cupido is prepared to face whatever the future may hold for him. Through many years he will keep the mirror carefully wrapped in its shroud of black crape, removing it only on very special occasions to confer with that ubiquitous stranger who also, inexplicably, turns out to be another self.

This object that Cupido was initially suspicious of eventually became his trusted advisor. When the mirror accidentally broke, Cupido explained his grief to the Reverend James Read by saying "I was in that mirror, Brother Read. Now I left myself behind. What will happen to me?". Cupido cannot conceive of a future without his "other self", pointing to the hybridity of his identity. The image of the two Cupidos, the real one and the one in the mirror, that portrays his hybrid identity corresponds with how Ariel Dorfman (2003:33) views his own bilingual existence: "Though what I finally arrived at was not the victory of one tongue over the other but rather a cohabitation, my two languages reaching a truce in order to help the body they were lodged in to survive".

5. Conclusion

St-Pierre (1996:233) argues "that translation cannot be divorced from writing, that originality and creativity are not characteristic only of the latter, that translation is not mere reproduction". Loffredo and Perteghella (2006:4) agree with this view and even criticise the concept of 'originality'. According to them, "'translation' as a form of writing is always already inherent in the source text. Texts do not occur out of nothing, but recur as altered forms of pre-existing texts – as intertexts" (Loffredo and Perteghella 2006:4). This idea is echoed by Bassnett (2013), who argues that many authors who live bilingually and biculturally, and whose literary works are created from these spaces, do not necessarily produce an "original" and subsequent "self-translation". Often their texts are hybrid works themselves, rewritings of one another (cf., for instance, Brink in Viljoen 2005, and wa Thiong'o 2009). For Bassnett (2013:23-24), self-translation and bilingual writing is *rewriting*, and she suggests that translation/rewriting should be considered, in the Borgesian sense, "as one of many drafts or readings of a text". This emphasis on considering products of bilingual writing and self-translation as hybrid works that all constitute many drafts or readings of the text, is at the centre of the argument for this paper. The different linguistic versions of a text represent different drafts or readings of a text which, when read together, form the total text that exists in different mediums, has different audiences, evokes different images, etc.

A stereoscopic reading of *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan* shows how the two versions, when read together, make up a total text in which differences between the two versions make readers aware of alternative perspectives on various aspects of the novel itself and the contexts within which the novel is situated. According to Gaddis Rose (1997:75), an important advantage of stereoscopic reading is the way in which it can be used to "show how translating and translations make the reading of literary texts richer. 'Richer' includes more complex, more problematic, more troublesome". In between the two versions of a text, she argues (1997:75), the "'interliminal text'[15], unwritten but paraphrasable [emerges, and this] interliminality is the gift translation gives to readers of literature".

For Nayak (2010:48), referring to the identities of bilingual writers, it is imperative that boundaries are "made flexible to the extent that they become permeable and no longer remain the rigid markers of identities. Once the boundaries are dismantled or blurred, then an effort can be made to bring the two seemingly separate identities of the bilingual writer together and

[15] According to Pym (2009:112), the concept "interliminal space […] remains in need of clear definition". An investigation of the relationship, if any, between this concept and Bhabha's (1994) notion of a 'third space' might be instrumental in this regard, as would an investigation of how the concepts of 'interliminal space' and 'third space' relate to what Beaujour (1989) has termed a "hypothetical total text".

see them as part of a larger whole”. Extending this idea to Brink’s case, it becomes important not to view him as an Afrikaans writer, an international writer, a self-translator, etc. Rather, boundaries between these multiple roles should be dismantled in order to see them as part of a larger whole (also cf. De Roubaix 2012). Accordingly, boundaries between different versions of bilingual texts should be dismantled in order to view them as one total text existing in versions in two languages. Of course, one cannot assume that every reader is able to or interested in reading both versions of a bilingual text[16]. Stereoscopic reading remains a rare activity employed by very few readers. However, Nayak (2010:48) argues that even for readers who do not have access to both versions of a bilingual text, or prefer to read only one version, “the reception of the text will be a more informed one if the concerned text is not seen as belonging to only that linguistic literary tradition, but as belonging to an altogether different literary tradition that is outside the binary and belongs to a hybrid ‘third space’”.

In an essay entitled *Stories of history: Re-imagining the past in post-apartheid narrative*, Brink (1998:31) proposes “a transgression of the boundaries of an originary sensual perception” with the objective of “infusing the ordinary with a sense of the extraordinary, the everyday with a sense of the fantastic, producing a result in which the whole is decidedly more than the sum of its parts”. Brink has realised this vision in *Praying Mantis* and *Bidsprinkaan* by simultaneously creating two versions (in two different languages) that form a whole, total text – one that travels beyond the traditional notions of writing and translating and that challenges readers to do the same. Situating this text in a sphere of magical realism, where boundaries are constantly transgressed and where even the ordinary is given “a sense of the extraordinary” (Brink 1998:31), Brink creates a text that invites readers to participate in constructing meanings and imagining different interpretations. Furthermore, when reading both versions of the text, readers are made aware of differences related to the languages themselves, and are also made aware of other readers and of different environments within which the versions will be received. The stereoscopic reader not only gains access to one story written in two languages and for different audiences, but is also provided with an insight into the creative process of the bilingual writer. Considering these different elements in and surrounding the two versions of a text and their creation allows stereoscopic readers to construct a richer total text that occupies an interliminal space.

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[16] See Gentes (2013) for an exploration of publishing bilingual editions of self-translations.

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