Mirror, Fragment, Repetition: Using Metaphor to Read Twentieth-Century French Poetry in English Translation

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text.

The thesis does not exceed the regulation length of 80,000 words, including footnotes, references and appendices but excluding the bibliography.

Abstract

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Reading translation theory, we note that it is nearly impossible to say anything about translation without comparing it to something else. Too rarely, however, is metaphor itself the focus of the theory. As French poetry takes more experimental forms in the twentieth century, emphasising the materiality of language, the difficulty of describing its translation becomes greater and the recourse to metaphor more urgent.

Matthew Reynolds' book on metaphor and poetry translation has a wide temporal and geographical range, drawing its metaphors from the texts themselves and the writings of translators. Clive Scott focuses on avant-garde French poetry from a translator's perspective, aiming to collapse the distinction between translators and readers. Their emphasis is on the practice of translation; mine is on the relationship between original and translation.

My project explores three metaphors which centre the ways this textual relationship is triangulated by a reader, pairing them with three American translations of twentieth-century French poetry. First I read Anne Hyde Greet's translation of Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* through the metaphor of a mirror image, with a focus on its parallel text presentation. The second metaphor

is fragmentation, for which I explore Walter Benjamin's image of a broken vessel and its critically-neglected Kabbalistic source to write about Edmond Jabès' *Book of Resemblances*, and its English translation by Rosmarie Waldrop. Finally, I rely on Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* and Clive Scott's response in *Translating Apollinaire* to understand translation as a form of repetition. Through this lens I read *The Translation Begins* by Jacqueline Risset, translated by Jennifer Moxley.

It becomes clear that temporality is at stake in the relationships between text, translation and reader. By focusing on these metaphors, we perceive not only how translation comes 'after', but how it participates in simultaneity via parallel text, in a teleological Messianic time, and in the challenge to linearity posed by Deleuzian repetition.

Conventions of style

This thesis has been formatted in accordance with the third edition of the Modern Humanities Research Association Style Guide, published in 2013 and reprinted in 2015 with corrections.

Footnotes instead of endnotes have been used, but regard has been given to the style guide's advice on limiting notes (section 10.1, page 56). Texts are cited in full in footnotes when first quoted or paraphrased. All further references are given parenthetically in the text, authors being named before quotations and page references given after. Bible quotations are from the Authorised King James Version.

dedicated to the memory of Audrey Larcombe, who would be so proud

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Introduction

In Kate Briggs' recent book about poetry translation, she tells an anecdote about the translator Anthea Bell being asked to describe, without using any metaphors, what translation is:

> There's a panel discussion you can watch on YouTube, a London Review of Books event on translating Kafka, where Anthea Bell, the celebrated translator from the German, French and Danish, describes once trying very hard to talk about her work in concrete terms, without making an image out of it. It was in conversation with the winner of a book prize, she recalls: a very good Italian author; very fluent in English. They were discussing the translation process and she proposed to try saying something about it without recourse to metaphor.
>
> You see, she said, it's like this: after the first reading, that particularly close, intensive reading that for me is the preliminary stage for all translation, the translator's mind dwells somewhere, for a little while, in a place where there isn't any language at all.
>
> And then, with luck, she comes down with an English draft.
>
> The young Italian writer received her description, thought about it. Then turned to her good-humouredly and asked: okay, but tell me. Where exactly—where concretely, that is, where literally—is this place you're talking about?

And she laughed, because of course she realized what she'd done.[1]

My project offers no solutions for how to do without metaphor when talking about translation, but it does suggest that the metaphors we choose are worthy of critical examination in their own right. I propose three metaphors which address some of the nuances of poetry translation, but which are not the most ubiquitous of translation metaphors, and thus can be used to generate some new insight into twentieth-century poetry translation. My metaphors are mirror, fragment, and repetition.

METAPHOR IN TRANSLATION STUDIES

French translation scholar Antoine Berman sums up many of the principal concerns which continue to preoccupy the field of translation studies in this dense and pithy fragment:

> Parler de traduction, c'est parler des œuvres, de la vie, du destin et de la nature des œuvres; de la manière dont elles éclairent nos vies; c'est parler de la communication, de la transmission, de la tradition; c'est parler du rapport du Propre et de l'Étranger; c'est parler de la langue maternelle, natale, et des autres langues; c'est parler de l'être-en-langues de l'homme; c'est parler de l'écriture et de l'oralité; c'est parler du mensonge et de la vérité, de la trahison et de la fidélité; c'est parler du mimétique, du double, du leurre, de la secondarité; c'est parler de la vie du sens et de la vie de la lettre; c'est... être pris dans un enivrant tourbillon réflexif où le mot « traduction » lui-même ne cesse de se métaphoriser.[2]

> To speak of translation is to speak of works: of life, the destiny and the nature of the works; of the way in which they illuminate our lives; it is to speak of

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[1] Kate Briggs, *This Little Art* (London: Fitzcarraldo, 2017), p. 290.
[2] Antoine Berman, 'Au Début Était Le Traducteur', *TTR : Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 14.2 (2001) <https://doi.org/10.7202/000566ar>.

communication, transmission, tradition; it is to speak of the relationship between Self and Other; it is to speak of the mother tongue, of natal language, and of other languages; it is to speak of humankind's being-in-languages; it is to speak of the written and the oral; it is to speak of lies and truth, of betrayal and fidelity; it is to speak of mimesis, of doubles, of decoys, of secondariness; it is to speak of the life of meaning and the life of the letter; it is… to be caught in an intoxicating reflexive whirlwind where the word 'translation' itself does not cease to make itself into metaphor.

Here, Berman provides us with various metaphors, images and points of comparison which he considers indispensable when discussing translation. He also brings together various ways in which translation and literary criticism might be considered closely related. I intend to use this quotation to explore some of the ways in which the field of translation studies already uses metaphor, and to suggest that my approach has something new to add.

Matthew Reynolds' recent book, *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer & Petrarch to Homer & Logue*, begins with an account of how metaphor suffuses the field of translation studies, and indeed all writing and discussion of translation. He begins by reflecting on the fact that the word 'translation' itself is a translation metaphor: etymologically it means 'carrying across' (Latin 'trans' = 'across' plus 'ferre' = 'to carry or bear'). In fact, it is worth observing that the word 'metaphor' has an identical etymological significance, but in Greek rather than Latin ('meta' = 'across', 'phorein' = 'carry').

But the metaphor contained within the word 'translation' itself cannot fully account for the phenomenon it describes — like all metaphors, according to Reynolds, it can 'offer only provisional and angled images of what they are metaphors for.' [3] Reynolds cites philosopher Max Black on the necessity of

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[3] Matthew Reynolds, *The Poetry of Translation: From Chaucer & Petrarch to Homer & Logue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Kindle eBook.

metaphor: 'As Max Black has argued, people reach for metaphors when "the available literal resources of the language" are "insufficient".'

Here we find the term 'literal' skimmed past in order to think further about images, figurative language. This relies on the notion that there is a possibility of using language in a literal way, although not perhaps when translating. The idea is that because it is impossible to say what translation is, one must instead say what translation is like. And likeness is an extremely important concept in itself when talking about translation. I would argue, along with Reynolds, Briggs and Berman, that the gap between literal and figurative language when talking about what translation is and what it can do, barely exists. There is not much language can do without relying on analogy, likeness, and patterning, which is conditioned by repetition. However it is true, as Reynolds argues, that the inherent metaphor in the word 'translation' is not sufficient to account for the activity of translation — in particular it does not satisfy translators who wish to give an account of their activities, and it does not satisfy theorists who attempt to describe the same thing. For this reason, metaphors and analogies proliferate when talking about translation.

Reynolds goes on to describe various metaphors that have been used to talk about translation:

> Through the centuries, translation has been said to give a work new clothes or place a jewel in a different casket; to conquer, or enfranchise or bring home. It has infused, transfused, refined; and mirrored, and copied, and opened the window. It has been thought of as preserving fire, or suffering from disease, or bringing the dead to life […] As we have seen, apparently placid terms like 'transcribe' and 'transpose' can flower into metaphorical life, taking on descriptive richness and power. Metaphors too can assume consistency and precision, and come to define with some fullness processes that, although they may be referred to as 'translation', do not follow the assumptions of translation rigidly conceived. [eBook]

Of the particular metaphors he has chosen to discuss, Reynolds writes:

> They are the products of distinct imaginative encounters with their source texts. If we are to grasp their particularity, we need to approach them, not as 'examples' that prove or disprove a theory, but as texts that ask to be read.' […] [Translators] can find themselves—like readers of a novel—face to face with doubles of themselves, elements in the source which can become metaphors of the imaginative work they are engaged in. Such doubles may supply self-images which translators adopt; or they may harmonize or clash with figures that are already implicit in the translators' own practice. [eBook]

So while he wishes to draw his metaphors from the texts themselves, he will not look for proof of the metaphors: they are not overarching theories, indeed they may only apply to their own texts. My project differs insofar as I am providing the metaphors, and have selected texts to work with that highlight their potential as ways to discuss translation, and poetry translation in particular.

SOURCE AND TARGET

To return to our quotation from Berman, given that to speak of translation is 'to speak of communication, transmission, tradition' and 'of the relationship between Self and Other', it is not surprising that a lot of scholarship in translation studies focuses on the act of translation, and particularly how it might be done ethically, as in Paul Ricœur, or Gayatri Spivak, or indeed Jacques Derrida.

 This can be linked back to the fact that a lot of translation studies comes through theorising the teaching of translation to translators. This is how translation theorists such as Michael Cronin began working, though he now looks more at the historicity of translation practices, and also Anthony Pym, who teaches translation and writes about his translation theories.

This is also how one of translation studies' favourite metaphors, the expressions 'source text' and 'target text' gained popularity. These expressions are commonly used (by Cronin and Pym but also by Venuti, Ricœur, Bassnett among many others), and are useful insofar as they describe the space of translation as dynamic, and, crucially, as directional. The terms appear to seek to avoid creating hierarchy between the two texts, but their very directionality appears to imply a gradient, an ease of movement from the elevated 'source' (the source of a river in a high mountain?) downwards to its destination. The 'target' mixes the metaphor quite suddenly, and aptly. It implies agency on the part of the translator – this 'target' cannot be reached without somebody to point and shoot, and more subtly manages to indicate that translation itself is similar to a mixed metaphor – an attempt to mediate between two incommensurable systems, which can be a space for jarring shifts, but also for creativity. It also manages to convey the unidirectionality of translation with total certainty — an arrow can't shoot itself back to the bow; neither can a river flow backwards to its source. Spatially, the use of these terms in translation studies positions our theorist alongside the translator, drawing inspiration from the source and aiming at the target. Translation is in this case figured as a kind of Oulipian *dispositif* or device by which one text is generated out of another text.

Once the 'target text' has been written, however, it seems strange to me to think of it in these directional terms. In opting to call the two texts involved instead the 'original text' and the 'translated text', I attempt to shift the perspective from the translator to that of a reader of one or both of these texts, after both are in existence, and indeed in circulation. Thus the gradient from the source to its destination is no longer obvious; neither is the translated text a target which demands that we take aim. For the purposes of my thesis, the two texts are as equally present as texts can be.

There is also a problem with the idea of a 'target text', which is that it supposes some pre-existing, Platonic translation that is being aimed at by the

translator, which they may hit or miss. As Ricœur puts it, 'But a fantasy of perfect translation takes over from this banal dream of the duplicated original. It reaches a peak in the fear that, being translation, the translation will only be bad translation, by definition as it were.'[4] This 'fantasy' translation, the 'target text', can never in fact be reached, but the translator still cannot abdicate their responsibility to produce a text of some kind.

This spatial and temporal shift of focus from source and target to two generates some new questions for translation studies, which my thesis will explore. Where theorists such as Lawrence Venuti focus on the editorial curation of translated texts, for example when considering the 'translator's invisibility', one aspect that appears to be taken for granted is the automatic existence of a relationship between the original and the translated text, which varies qualitatively according to the power dynamics in play in the publication context, which are often postcolonial in origin. My thesis, however, wishes to step back from this assumption, and question what the nature of the relationship between these two texts could also be. I want to ask whether it is possible to avoid assuming an automatic connection between the two texts, which are not contemporaries, do not use any of the same words, and are indeed in two different languages. Their readers for the most part are different people, from different cultures who speak different languages. Indeed, if you were to rip off the cover, which has the original author's name in large print on the front and the translator's name in small print on the back, the two texts might enjoy a completely independent existence.

Perhaps instead of attempting to circumscribe a necessary, always-already type of relationship between the original and translated texts, we might instead observe them rubbing against each other and see whether any sparks are

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[4] Paul Ricœur, *On Translation*, trans. by Eileen Brennan (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. 5.

produced. Of course, even stones very rarely produce sparks without human intervention, so we will look at where and how text and translation are made to rub against each other, with an awareness that they come with a performance of unmediatedness which is staged editorially, just as I will show (in Chapters 1 and 3) how the repetitiveness of translation is hidden and recast as sameness.

Parallel text, which is the presentation of both texts on facing pages, is usually assumed to stem from the already-existing always-already relationship between the two texts. I am keen to step back from this assumption and look instead at how this relationship is sparked, is created, by readers, out of this facing-page staging of the two texts.

IDENTICALITY AND EQUIVALENCE

From the ways in which translation studies has focused on the practice of the translator, I will now move on to a discussion of some views which are more based in an analysis of the demands of readers of translated texts. To return to Berman, we are now at a stage where to speak of translation 'is to speak […] of doubles, of decoys, of secondariness; it is to speak of the life of meaning and the life of the letter.'

Translation scholar Michael Cronin discusses identicality and some potential historical influences on the demand for it in his book *Translation in the Digital Age*. For Cronin, one of the lasting consequences of the Renaissance was an attempt to establish authoritative versions of classical texts out of variant manuscript sources, so that they might be translated into English: so, for the perception and dissemination of these texts, 'elusive fluidity gives way to recognisable stability.' [5] Cronin points out how, as with all considerations of translation, this desire for

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[5] Michael Cronin, *Translation in the Digital Age*, New Perspectives in Translation Studies (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 77.

stability and recognisable identity extends both backwards and forwards in time. He cites Renaissance architect Leon Battista Alberti, who developed a system of notation and architect's drawings that would give precise enough instructions to construction workers that any building he designed would be recognisable and mappable back onto the plans, and thus traceable to his ultimate authorship. As Cronin explains, this then became the paradigm of design and manufacture in modernity:

> It is the advent of printing […] that will provide the regime of identicality with a powerful impetus. It now becomes possible to produce countless numbers of identical copies of the same text. The Industrial Revolution and the later introduction of assembly-line production allows for the mass-production of standardized goods. More costs less. The Albertian engagement with identicality as a firm basis for individual, authorial identity becomes the matrix for modernity as printing presses and production lines proclaim the triumph of identicality over variability. (p. 78)

Cronin goes on to argue that this has been the demand made also of translators: in the 'semantic regime of modernity', translations are only worthwhile if they produce something sufficiently 'identical' that 'authorship can clearly be identified' (p. 78). The idea is that what readers desire from a translated text is a text that can easily be mapped back onto the original — as a mechanically produced product can be matched to its mould, or its prototype — and that a translation, like a branded product, can only be declared 'authentic' if it meets this condition. Success comes, in theory, if many copies could be made that were all identical — as in the story of the seventy-two translators of the Septuagint who miraculously produced seventy-two identical, divinely inspired translations of the Hebrew scripture into Greek.[6]

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[6] Theo Hermans, *The Conference of the Tongues* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 3–4.

It is easy to perceive this discourse in the ways translations are commonly discussed — the desire that readers should 'experience the text as an original, in the full force of its expressive design' (Cronin, p. 83) is identified as a common preoccupation with notions of identicality evident in both sides of the polarised binaries that have preoccupied translation studies. For instance, it informs Schleiermacher's opposed model of taking the writer to the reader, or the reader to the writer – as he writes, 'Either the translator leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace as much as possible and moves the writer toward him'[7] — an idea which is then echoed by Venuti's concepts of 'domesticating' and 'foreignising' translations.[8]

Dutch translation theorist Theo Hermans attempts to give an account of 'equivalence', a term which is highly reminiscent of Cronin's 'identicality', because he says that translations claim to have equivalence but the value of that claim is something like a suspension of disbelief:

> Many translations […] work hard to look like originals and to be able to function like the originals they re-enact. The more successful they are, the more effective the belief system, that is, the suspension of disbelief. The really successful ones, be they intricately rhymed poems or microwave oven manuals, look every bit the part of an original, and of the original. But it does not take much to puncture the

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[7] Friedrich Schleiermacher, 'On the Different Methods of Translating', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, trans. by Susan Bernofsky, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 43–63 (p. 49).

[8] To argue thus is somewhat to flatten Venuti's political objectives, but it is nonetheless true that the aim of reproducing either a reading experience similar to that of a native reader of the original, or one which allows the original language to come across as unknowable, and does not colonise it, is one that focuses the act of translation on meeting or thwarting the demands of hypothetical readers. There is more to be said about identicality and identity, and particularly about the demands of readers and markets and the allocation of the work of meeting them, most of which is outside the scope of this project.

For domesticating and foreignising translations, see Lawrence Venuti, 'Translation, Community, Utopia', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 482–502.

illusion. The trigger does not even have to be textual, it may be paratextual or extratextual. Any reminder that the text in question is in fact a translation threatens the assumption of equivalence and tells the reader: oh yes, this is only a translation, not quite the same thing as the original, certainly not fully as authoritative as the original. (pp. 23–4)

'Equivalence' — the idea that the original and translated texts must be weighed in the balance and found equal, or that they cannot be — also functions as a translation metaphor. Here we have a description — something that poetry translation very rarely claims to provide, and which is entirely impossible in a parallel text format. It is true, however, that the way translations are commonly published, with the name of the author of the original on the front in big letters, and the translator's name in much smaller print and probably on the back cover, does seem to play into the expectation of equivalence or of substitution: that you are reading Proust, even if all the words in the book are by, for example, Lydia Davis. This paradigm remains in place even for the parallel text translations I discuss in chapter 1: 'Guillaume Apollinaire' is prominently printed on the front cover, and 'Anne Hyde Greet' relegated to the back cover, even though the two sets of poems appear side by side.

MODERNISM AND QUESTIONS OF REPRESENTATION

Following on from Cronin's discussion of the 'semantic regime of modernity', I now wish to give some context to my choice of twentieth-century French texts to explore the metaphors of mirror, fragment and repetition. In Berman's quotation, we are now considering the ways in which to speak of translation is 'to speak of mimesis'.

Modernism is, as Michael Levenson points out, nearly impossible to define.[9] However, many people characterise it in terms of its relationship to representation, among them Michel Foucault and David Harvey. These writers describe a 'crisis of representation', a moment of rupture in art and literature with the idea that the aim of art or literature might be in some way to represent things in or about the world.

Levenson refers to a 'milieu of crisis' when discussing modernism (p. 4) Foucault writes about the way that, 'from the nineteenth century onwards', the 'coherence that existed, throughout the Classical age, between the theory of representation and the theories of language, of the natural orders, and of wealth and value', began to break down:

> It is this configuration that, from the nineteenth century onward, changes entirely; the theory of representation disappears as the universal foundation of all possible orders; language as the spontaneous tabula, the primary grid of things, as an indispensable link between representation and things, is eclipsed in its turn; a profound historicity penetrates into the heart of things, isolates and defines them in their own coherence, imposes upon them the forms of order implied by the continuity of time; […] above all, language loses its privileged position and becomes, in its turn, a historical form coherent with the density of its own past.[10]

Foucault is referring to the way in which 'representation', the ability of anything to stand in for any other thing, begins to break down as a system, and becomes seen as untrustworthy. This has a profound effect on art from the nineteenth century onwards, and can certainly be seen in the texts discussed in this thesis.

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[9] *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. by Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1–2.

[10] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*, Routledge Classics (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p. xxv.

The questions provoked in this crisis are: is representation possible? What kinds of representation are possible or desirable? It is hard to get away from representation, but easy to complicate it, and translation necessarily does this. Indeed, I argue that, via my three metaphors, translation is ideally placed to problematise the idea of representation. In its own way, translation might itself be characterised as a 'crisis of representation'.

MIRROR, FRAGMENT, REPETITION

The three metaphors I have selected are not covered by Antoine Berman's fragment, except insofar as they form part of his 'intoxicating reflexive whirlwind where the word 'translation' itself does not cease to make itself into metaphor.'

My project wishes to encompass a general discussion of poetry translation through the lens of my three central metaphors, and will do so by considering specific texts. The poetic texts I have selected are all by French poets from the twentieth century, and their translations are all from the United States. French poetry in the twentieth century is highly experimental, and had a significant influence on US poets such as Stein and Ashbery. I have chosen these poets as examples because in their own ways each of them troubles narrative, and their poetry for the most part proves impervious to paraphrase. This means it is necessary to look at what translation can do when retelling and paraphrase are denied to it: when only the words and their spacing and their patterns are available.

However, acknowledging that the relationship between language and nationality is by no means straightforward, and that the twentieth century was a time of significant international upheaval and migration, the middle section of the thesis will focus on an essay by Walter Benjamin, who spent the 1930s in Paris, and texts by Edmond Jabès, who was born in Cairo and settled in France after being expelled from Egypt with other Jews during the 1956 Suez crisis. His

experience of exile and his Jewish identity are crucial to his writing. Indeed, both Guillaume Apollinaire and Jacqueline Risset, the other two poets on whom I have chosen to focus, have international backgrounds. Risset is a translator as well as a poet, particularly from Italian, while Apollinaire is of Polish–Belarusian descent and was born in Italy and raised speaking French, Italian and Polish.

The poetry I have chosen to analyse is also implicated in different ways in Modernist questions about representation and its limitations.

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

My discussion of my three metaphors will be organised into three chapters, Mirror, Fragment and Repetition. I will use them to explore different kinds of resemblance, and different ways that poetry and translation make use of both time and space.

Mirror, fragment and repetition all have in common the fact that they question the idea of representation, and make space to consider the ways in which translation might do something other than represent an original text. They also, in my analysis, present three distinct temporalities.

In all my chapters, there is originality in the analysis of the translated texts — those by Greet, Waldrop and Moxley — none of which have been specifically subjected to critical scrutiny before.

Mirror

The first chapter is about parallel text and temporalities of reading and visuality. It will consider simultaneity and representation in the parallel text translations of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* by Anne Hyde Greet. Having the two texts side by side creates new relationships between them which are triangulated

by the reader. I will consider the visual resemblance between the two texts in a parallel text edition and consider the effect of this on the reading process.

The particular temporality of this chapter involves a consideration of Apollinaire's account of simultaneity, and I will also be using the idea of the asymptote, the effect of two facing mirrors which reflect each other into eternity, to consider the plural, perhaps unending, reading possibilities of the parallel page.

Clive Scott's *Translating Apollinaire*, with its discussion of 'tabular text', will inform my consideration of the spatial aspects of this reading experience, but Scott's analysis does not encompass the idea of parallel text translation, and in this way I am supplementing his work.

Fragment

There is something fragmenting about translation: it refracts a text, it makes one into many. The sum of what the text is becomes multiple as soon as translation is begun. In 1921, the German Jewish philosopher and essayist Walter Benjamin wrote an introduction to a collection of German translations of Baudelaire which has become a key text in the study of translation. 'The Task of the Translator', 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers', is a highly complex, not to say difficult, text, weaving together a number of metaphors for translation and finishing with an attempt to set out the theological notion of the Pure Language, which is closely linked to his mystical thought. My second chapter considers translation and fragmentation via Benjamin's metaphor of the broken vessel.

I argue that fragmentation in Benjamin's thought is overdetermined, and consider it in the light of the Classical, archaeological image of a broken vase, Schlegel's Romantic fragment and, of course, modernist fragmentation exemplified by an examination of a translation by Ezra Pound. I also review the critical reception of 'The Task of the Translator'. However, the hidden origin of

Benjamin's metaphor is to be found in his reading of the texts of the Kabbalah, as we shall see, in a story which is about the possibility of redemption and repair.

The history of translation studies in Western academia, as we shall see, owes a lot to Christianity and the history of hermeneutics and Bible translation. My thesis is not primarily focused on this history, but touches on it in this chapter. Because of Christian views of scripture as translatable, of language as redeemed by Pentecost, of the Reformation which saw an explosion in Bible translation, reading the hermeneutic approaches of Schleiermacher and Ricœur feels comprehensible and familiar. Readings of Jewish writers on translation like Benjamin and Jacques Derrida need to take this very different textual tradition into account. In this chapter I will consider fragmentation through a reading of Benjamin's essay alongside Rosmarie Waldrop's translation *The Book of Resemblances* of Edmond Jabès' *Livre des Ressemblances*. These texts are both concerned with likeness in the sense of the creation myth, where humans were made 'in God's image', and the consequences of this for both art and translation.

In terms of temporality, Benjamin and Jabès are both concerned with multiplicity and monism: this is a Jewish perspective at least in part because the Oneness of God is so important in Judaism. This is apparent, for example, in Jabès' determination that he is writing 'the book' of which all the actual books he writes form different parts. Benjamin's Kabbalistic metaphor also activates a teleological, even eschatological idea of time, one that concerns itself with the coming of the Messiah and the ending of the world.

I believe that my arguments here bring a fresh perspective to the extensive critical reception of 'The Task of the Translator', and incorporating discussion of Derrida and Jabès adds to the impression that there is a unique, Jewish history of translation studies waiting to be written.

Repetition

The final chapter wishes to investigate whether translation can be seen as a kind of repetition. In it I return to the spatial and temporal questions opened in Chapter 1, and consider the limitations of a model that focuses on representation, via a reading of *The Translation Begins*, Jennifer Moxley's translation of Jacqueline Risset's *La Traduction commence*, alongside Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*.

I discuss repetition in terms of the threat it poses to meaning, the Deleuzian idea of repetition as a kind of difference, and the impact of repetition in the form of rhythm, and finish by returning to Scott's work to discuss spatial and temporal repetition and the implications of Deleuzian repetition on the space of the page. In my analysis of *The Translation Begins*, I discuss myth in relation to repetition (the poem is based on the story of Diana and Actaeon from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), and analyse the changing use of space, as well as considering the impact, repetitive and variant, of specific translation choices made by Moxley.

The temporality invoked in this chapter is a non-teleological time, based on Bergson's *durée*. My focus on Deleuzian repetition as a possible translation metaphor is original, and my analysis of *The Translation Begins* provides an example of how reading translation alongside original text might illuminate such an analysis.

In my conclusion, I will return to the ideas of spatiality and temporality, in particular the potentially fractal space of the page and the relationship between translation and teleology, and finish by turning back to the figure of the reader and reconsider how our view of representation and mediation has been developed through the three metaphors.

Chapter 1: Mirror

'[…] it only takes two facing mirrors to construct a labyrinth.'[1]

Mirrors are very important to mechanical printing, which until very recently was almost all of printing. Once the printer has arranged their blocks of type backwards, they need to check in a mirror to make sure the image will print out correctly, all the letters appearing the right way round. For this reason the printed part of the page in German is called the *Satzspiegel*, or mirror set. The image of pages as mirror images, and indeed as reflective mirrors themselves, is one that I find apt for exploring parallel text, or facing page, translations. The mirror faces the potential printing surface, and displays an image of the book that will, or could, be created.

Mirrors are not a common metaphor for translation. The feature of a mirror image is identicality: although the mirror image is reversed, it corresponds perfectly in every detail to the original image, such that you can map every part of the mirror image back to its original. This is the one thing translation can never provide, however much its readers demand it. However, aspects of mirrors and reflection provide interesting ways to think through the dynamics of translation, and particularly those of parallel text, for example the idea of recognition, and, as

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[1] Jorge Luis Borges, *Seven Nights*, trans. by Eliot Weinberger (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), p. 33.

we will see, the different patterns and possibilities that come into play when more than one mirror is involved.

In this chapter I will begin with a discussion of mirrors, and a few different ways in which reflection and mirroring might be applied to translation as a metaphor: identicality, recursion and *mise en abyme*. I will then discuss simultaneity as a feature of mirror-reflections, and begin an examination of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, in which he puts into practice his theories about simultaneity and poetry. This will be combined with a consideration of parallel text translation, specifically the translations of the *Calligrammes* by Anne Hyde Greet. I will look at the poem 'Heart Crown Mirror' in order to consider the different ways the two sides of the parallel page can be said to 'mirror' each other, and the ways this relationship is triangulated by the reader. I will then examine Clive Scott's book *Translating Apollinaire*, with a particular emphasis on his analysis of 'tabular text' and possible ways of translating Apollinaire's use of page space. Finally, I will turn briefly to the Canadian poet Anne Carson, and her translations of Sappho, in order to enrich the discussion of parallel text and begin to consider a more mystical angle on translation.

MIRRORS AND IDENTICALITY

Cronin's notion of identicality versus variability shows us that one link between mirrors and translation is the idea of what it means to recognise something. A mirror image, for Lacan, is the first time humans are forced to acknowledge the boundaries of their bodies and selves, as discrete entities in space and time. We recognise the mirror child as an image of ourselves and thus begin the process of self-consciousness. In an analogous way, the parallel text pages appear to mirror each other, forcing the reader to acknowledge that their own language is but one among many, having that language, or that poem, appear stranger and less recognisable for its capacity to reflect and be reflected by

a poem in a foreign language. The reader might look for identicality between pages, identifying cognates and loan-words, scrutinising the shapes of the two poems, the line-lengths, looking for end-rhyme, even if they are entirely unfamiliar with one of the languages. It is clear that the identicality of a translation which would provide a mirror image of the original will not be found here. However, the potential for this representation of the pages as mirrors arises only with parallel text, and it is constructive to consider the notion of visual recognition and the layout of the page as a map for reading, which is confused on this double page, forcing us to pay greater attention to the space between the poems. This is part of the process of defamiliarisation set in motion by the parallel text format, taking the printed page and demanding that the reader engage with it in an unusual way.

Matthew Reynolds gives a different perspective on mirrors and translation when he quotes Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

> In the Preface written for her first attempt at the work [*Prometheus Bound*], published in 1833, the then Elizabeth Barrett suggests that translation continues the inspiration that had given rise to the original. Translations, she writes, are like mirrors 'held in different lights by different hands': 'according to the vocation of the artist, will the copy be'. Usually there is an element of dismissiveness in calling a translation a copy. But not here, for Aeschylus's writings too, like all beauties, whether in nature or art, are themselves 'reflections, visible in different distances, and under different positions, of one archetypal beauty'. In this chain of reflections reflected there seems to be at least the possibility that a translator might capture 'archetypal' beauty no less well, and perhaps even better, than the first mirror off which it has bounced: a reflection reflected is after all the right way round. (*Poetry of Translation*) [eBook]

In this analogy, the author of the original as well as the translator holds a mirror, and both are trying to make a reflection of 'one archetypal beauty'. This

question of the careful positioning of the mirrors and the influence of ambient effects such as light quality is important for thinking about the figure of the translator, and also about the positioning of the reader, who in this model can see the reflections in the mirrors without themselves being reflected there. The idea of a chain of reflections is also interesting from the point of view of multiplicity: many hands holding up mirrors in an attempt to reflect something that is found in the original but did not originate there. The notion of translation as trying to connect with something transcendent and beyond language is one to which we will return in Chapter 2 with a detailed consideration of the implications of Benjamin's 'pure language', and Chapter 3 will go on to discuss multiplicity in terms of variant repetitions.

MIRRORS AND RECURSION

This idea of multiple mirrors leads us to think about the effect of two mirrors facing one another. When the two mirrors in question are mapped onto facing pages in translation, the two poems form mirrors of one another, rather than the translation appearing as a reflection of the original, with the secondariness that this view would imply. When two mirrors are placed opposite each other, a space of recursion is opened, where the mirrors reflect each other in a *mise en abyme*. *Mise en abyme* is a term from literary and art criticism which describes the effect achieved when a picture or a text incorporates a smaller version of itself, which in turn also incorporates a yet smaller version, and so on into infinity in the manner of *matryoshka* dolls, with smaller and smaller images embedded within one another. It is recursive in that each stage of miniaturisation necessarily implies and provokes a further stage, because no version of the text can exist (or be supposed to exist) which does not also contain a smaller version. In its literary critical use, the term is an analogy, referring to the visual effect: the text included is not literally smaller, although it may be briefer in each iteration.

This image of recursion is comparable to translatability and can help us understand something about how the text and translation interact, and the ways in which they can refuse to interact, in particular in this parallel context. Firstly, like a translation and its original at the time of reading, there is no touching or contact between the two texts — they are separate texts existing in different kinds of space, just as it is impossible to shake hands with a reflection in a mirror.

After the act of translation, where one text is generated from another, the two texts are not linked by any invisible force such as 'meaning': they are separate texts. However in parallel translated texts, they are linked in the page spread, and this link, and the recursivity that it can generate, is activated by the reader. This reader may experience frustration in the face of the parallel page, upon understanding fully the ways in which the translation is inadequate to account for the original, being as it is in a different language, using different words with different shapes and sounds. It becomes clear that the two texts do not touch one another: there is no passage from one to the other that is obvious and unmediated, and the one cannot properly explain the other, even in a pedagogical edition such as Anne Hyde Greet's Apollinaire, which comes with copious endnotes glossing aspects of the French poems, as we will see, in terms which disguise the asymptotic nature of the text and translation. Just as recursion never reaches its endpoint, so the horizon of the meanings of the text and translation never quite meet, but exist in a state of approach.

This image of an asymptotic curve, a line on a graph which tends eternally towards a limit that is unreachable, is reminiscent of Derrida's account of meaning in language. In the essay 'Signature, Event, Context' and elsewhere, he describes language, and meaning in language, as something that reaches backwards towards an unidentifiable point of origin. The meaning is disseminated across the space of all the possible and past uses of a word and thus never present in any one instance of the use of that word, but rather constantly deferred, absent and just out of reach:

Let us consider any element of spoken language, a large or small unity. First condition for it to function: its situation as concerns a certain code; but I prefer not to get too involved here with the concept of code, which does not appear certain to me; let us say that a certain self-identity of this element (mark, sign, etc.) must permit its recognition and repetition. Across empirical variations of tone, of voice, etc., eventually of a certain accent, for example, one must be able to recognize the identity, shall we say, of a signifying form. Why is this identity paradoxically the division or dissociation from itself which will make of this phonic sign a grapheme? *It is because this unity of the signifying form is constituted only by its iterability, by the possibility of being repeated in the absence not only of its referent, which goes without saying, but of a determined signified or current intention of signification, as of every present intention of communication.* This structural possibility of being severed from its referent or signified (and therefore from communication and its context) seems to me to make of every mark, even if oral, a grapheme in general, that is, as we have seen, the nonpresent *remaining* of a differential mark cut off from its alleged "production" or origin.[2] [phrase emphasis added]

Here, Derrida sets out the conditions under which meaning occurs: it is not possible for any unit of meaning, either in spoken or written language, to have any powers of signification without iterability, or indeed without iteration, which is to say that it is only by being repeated multiple times in different contexts that a 'unit' of meaning acquires its 'unity' or 'identity'. The 'wholeness' we wish to attribute to words or signs is in fact a function of their multiplicity, their repetition. Thus it is both impossible and undesirable to attempt to find a single origin for a word or sign or unit of language: we are always reading them as if written down (as the 'grapheme' or written sign to which he refers, which denotes absence), as a trace of many repetitions, never reducible to one origin, one usage, one meaning. There is no possibility of being in the presence of meaning because

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[2] Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 307–330 (p. 318).

without reference to many iterations which cannot all be present at one time (a group of people in a room all shouting a word together would still only constitute one iteration), there is no meaning. In this way, meaning in language is a kind of asymptote, something which can never be pinned down to an identicality, a unity, a presence. This kind of asymptotic meaning collects in the facing page, which is an image of the way languages never quite map onto each other, never quite meet, however close together they may find themselves.

Recursivity can be described as a potentially infinite recurring series of loops, but it can have two spatial meanings. Derrida's asymptote recedes infinitely without reaching its origin, in a form of recursion that seems to create endless depth. The other kind of recursion creates its effect endlessly outwards, generating exponentially more instances of itself into an expanding space. Walter Benjamin argues, in his essay 'The Task of the Translator', that a literary text is never a recipe or a set of instructions which must be communicated, asserting that art does not have explanation as a function, although translators often see explanation as their role.[3] By making the text into a translatable object, by reading the text as a pattern which could generate more texts, a translator reads profoundly against the grain of normative paradigms of reading, and often of the text itself. When text and translation are presented together, the reader is also made to confront the text as pattern, as paradigm, as translatable.

But there are two recursions in facing mirrors, and two ways in which translation is also recursive. We have discussed its spatial recursion; the second recursion is temporal: it projects forwards, and points out how translation itself has the possibility to be a recursive operation, one which takes its output for an input. Translation produces a text, and a text can be translated. English versions of

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[3] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's "Tableaux Parisiens"', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, trans. by Harry Zohn, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 75–83.

the Latin Vulgate Bible are examples of such double translations, as are translation practices such as that of Ted Hughes, who would ask for a 'literal' rendering of a poem in a language he did not speak from a bilingual contact, then retranslate the translation into 'poetic' English. As Susan Bassnett recounts,

> When Ted Hughes translated the poetry of Janos Pilinszky, he worked with a Hungarian native speaker, Janós Csokits. What came out of this collaboration was Csokits' recognition that while he produced versions in good basic English, Hughes would then work to deconstruct them, opting for a process of defamiliarisation.'[4]

Hughes was effectively retranslating Csokits' translations. This also applies to translators who use machine translation to produce a draft which they then edit into the finished translation. The original text, as well as each translation, is made into one member in a series of texts. We will return to the implications of the series and the multiple for translation in Chapters 2 and 3, but it is a clear example of how translation changes an original, and how translation creates a space which cannot be definitive or even, perhaps, finished.

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE AND ANNE HYDE GREET

The notions of recursion and *mise en abyme* are revealed to be particularly pertinent models for thinking about poetry translation when brought to bear on an examination of parallel text translations. The way in which text and translation are bound together in this format, with a particular focus on the way in which the space of the page, and the difference between looking and reading, are opened up by considering the pages in terms of facing mirrors. I am going to examine a

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[4] Susan Bassnett, 'Translation', in *The Handbook of Creative Writing*, ed. by Steven Earnshaw, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 367–73 (p. 372).

translation of Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* by Anne Hyde Greet.[5] Apollinaire's *calligrammes* were written mostly during the First World War. They are typically playful and experimental, comprising pictures made out of words which make up poems. In these picture-poems, notions of the temporality and spatiality of reading, and the interplay between them, are explicitly at stake already, even before a parallel text comes into play.

Faced with a *calligramme*, a reader must see the picture in one go, and also read the poem from start to finish. This creates a dual temporality in which there is both the time-frame of viewing a picture, and that of reading a poem – both an instant and a duration of shifting attention. In Apollinaire, this trait can be linked to his championing of Cubism and avant-garde visual art in the immediately pre-war period, and Cubism's preoccupation with the process of seeing as both the subject and the method of representation.[6] I argue that a similarly plural perception also applies to the parallel page, such that even relatively straightforwardly typeset parallel pages are subject to this double or rather multiple view. So in the *calligrammes*, the direction of the reader's attention is already in question, and the presentation of a parallel translation only serves to open this up further, doubling and redoubling the possible pathways through the poems.

Apollinaire himself wrote critically about the idea of simultaneity and temporality in the context of visual art and Cubism, but also in literature:

> L'idée de simultanéité préoccupe depuis longtemps les artistes ; en 1907, déjà, elle préoccupait un Picasso, un Braque, qui s'efforçaient de représenter des figures et des objets sous plusieurs faces à la fois. Elle a préoccupé ensuite tous les cubistes et vous pouvez demander à Léger quelle volupté il éprouvait à fixer un visage vu

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[5] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War, 1913-16*, trans. by Anne Hyde Greet (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

[6] David Cottington, *Modern Art: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 47–48.

à la fois de face et de profil. Cependant, les futuristes étendirent le domaine de la simultanéité et en parlèrent nettement mettant le mot lui-même dans la préface de leur catalogue.[7]

The idea of simultaneity has long preoccupied artists; already in 1907, it preoccupied Picasso and Braque, for example, who attempted to represent bodies and objects from more than one angle at a time. It was then a preoccupation for all the Cubists, and you can ask Léger what delight he experienced in representing a face seen at the same time face on and in profile. However, the Futurists extended the domain of simultaneity and spoke of it clearly, putting the word itself in the preface of their catalogue.

This quotation is from his essay 'Simultanisme – Librettisme', published alongside some of the first *calligrammes* in the June 1914 issue of the review *Les Soirées de Paris*, in which Apollinaire identifies 'simultaneity' as part of a broadly modernist project and sets out two different ways in which it might be achieved artistically. The first is theatrical: more than one voice speaking at once, or body moving at once, for which he says one would need to resort to many people reciting, or to a '*phonographe*' or record player to create sounds simultaneously. However the type of simultaneity generated by this method is, in his view, less valuable because it is necessarily also sequential: a performance takes place in a particular time frame and plays from the beginning to the end, and cannot be truly disruptive while it leaves alone the visual sequence of words on the page, as he explains when he writes of Henri-Martin Barzun's poetry that 'tant qu'il se servira d'accolades et des lignes typographiques habituelles, sa poésie restera successive' (p. 323) — 'As long as he makes use of conventional typographical lines and page spacing, his poetry will remain successive.

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[7] Guillaume Apollinaire, 'Simultanisme – Librettisme', *Les Soirées de Paris*, n° 25, 1914, pp. 322–25 (p. 324).

The second, more disruptive simultaneity exists in visual art and can also be made to function in a poem. When Apollinaire writes about this he refers to the experimental visual collaboration by poet Blaise Cendrars and artist Sonia Delaunay-Terck, *La prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France.*[8] This consists of a poem accompanied by patches of colour, such that it is simultaneously a text and a piece of visual art (see Figure 1).

> Blaise Cendrars et Mme Delaunay-Terck ont fait une première tentative de simultanéité écrite où des contrastes de couleurs habituaient l'œil à lire d'un seul regard l'ensemble d'un poème, comme un chef d'orchestre lit d'un seul coup les notes superposées dans la partition, comme on voit d'un seul coup les éléments plastiques et imprimés d'une affiche (Apollinaire, p. 324).

> Blaise Cendrars and Mrs Delaunay-Terck have made a first attempt at written simultaneity, where the contrasting colours could accustom the eye to read the whole of the poem in one glance, like the conductor of an orchestra reads every line of a score at once, like we see the artistic and typographical elements of a poster in one go.

It is interesting that he chooses the example of a poster, because the type of representative and typographical elements he makes use of in the *calligrammes* might be usefully compared to poster design precisely because of the instant and combined impact they appear to aim to make. The idea of poster design as poetry is something Apollinaire himself uses in 'Zone': 'Tu lis les prospectus les catalogues les affiches qui chantent tout haut | Voilà la poésie ce matin'[9] — 'You

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[8] Blaise Cendrars and Sandra Delaunay-Terck, *La Prose Du Transsibérien et de La Petite Jehanne de France* (Paris: Éditions des Hommes Nouveaux, 1913).

[9] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Poèmes* (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1962), p. 29.

read handouts pamphlets posters sing to you from up high | There's your

morning poetry'.[10]

[figure not reproducible in electronic deposit version, but available online]

Figure 1. Final section of *La prose du Transsibérien et de la Petite Jehanne de France*, by

Blaise Cendrars and Sonia Delaunay-Terck.

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[10] David Lehman, 'Apollinaire's "Zone"', *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 89.2 (2013)
<https://www.vqronline.org/translations/apollinaires-zone>.

Indeed, Katherine Shingler has undertaken experimental research in order to further explore Apollinaire's ideas about simultaneity in relation to his own *calligrammes*. She used a super-fast eye movement tracking camera to look at how native and fluent non-native French speakers read 'La Cravate et la Montre', a *calligramme* with images of a tie and a watch made out of the words of the poem (see Figure 2). Without any evidence of how these same readers, or indeed any readers, would approach a conventionally typeset poem or a piece of prose, it is hard for her findings to be conclusive, but she does state that:

> The findings […] support the intuition that a single perceptual model, specifying the experience of a particular *calligramme*, will be impossible, and that one can only aim to establish some rough parameters regarding what it is possible for readers to do in terms of attending to visual and verbal aspects of these poems.[11]

So different readers, she concludes, tend not all to read in the same way, or in the same order. She also speculates about the switch between looking at the shapes and reading the words, as although the eye tracking camera cannot exactly pinpoint this, it is something the readers reported experiencing.

I suggest that this plural perception or simultaneous spatial reading also applies to the parallel page, because presenting a text with its translation on the same page spread invites a more active or unconventional reading technique, with readers having the opportunity to look from one line of the original to the corresponding line in its translation. These thoughts invite speculation as to what an eye-tracking study might reveal about readers of different linguistic competencies and their interactions with the parallel page. It seems highly unlikely that many readers would simply read the original poem followed by the translation. In this way, even relatively straightforwardly typeset pages in

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[11] Katherine Shingler, 'Perceiving Text and Image in Apollinaire's Calligrammes', *Paragraph*, 2011, 66–85 (p. 75) <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/para.2011.0006>.

Calligrammes, like 'At Nimes', and indeed more complex limit cases such as '2d
Gunnery Driver', which mix *vers libre* with elements of shape poetry in
alternation, are subject to this double or rather multiple view, where they can be
viewed simultaneously as a spatial, pictoral whole, and read through from start to
finish. This is further complicated, as we will see, by the way that it is not always
completely clear where in the *calligramme* is the start, and where the end.
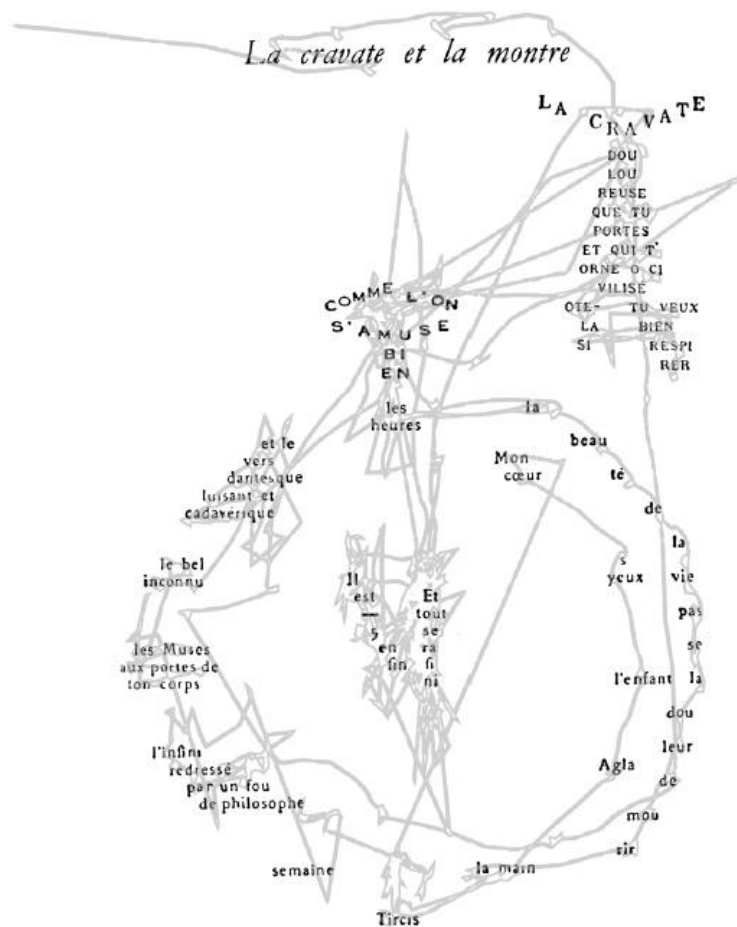
Figure 2. Eye-tracking figure from Shingler (p. 74).

Parallel text translation denies readers their illusion of identicality and forces
them into a triadic relationship, situating them between two texts in a way that
precludes their ordinary reading practice and disrupts their illusion of mastery
over the form of the text. Readers react to this apparent loss of power in various
ways, and indeed the loss of power itself will occur to different degrees and for
different purposes depending on how much knowledge the reader has of the

language of the original, or what their relationship to that language is. In the example of Greet's translation of Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*, we can discern a pedagogical focus. The introduction and extensive endnotes suggest that this edition is intended to help English-speaking readers who do not have enough French to read the French poems on their own, but who are perhaps studying them at university, for example as part of a comparative literature course.

This view is encouraged by the way the book has been reviewed and especially by the way in which later editions have endorsed certain of these readings. In the quotations on the back of the 2004 paperback printing, we find, 'Greet's English is an excellent guide to Apollinaire's French', and even more tellingly, 'The enduring value of this edition will derive from […] the tools it offers the competent but inexpert reader of French for fuller understanding of Apollinaire's rich, but often abstruse vocabulary and imagery.' These reviews, selected for presentation to potential purchasers, assume that the readers of this book are likely to be native English speakers who have learned some French, which provides more evidence for the pedagogical focus of the text.

Of course this is not the only possibility for reading these translations, but it is striking how they embody the notion of translation as explanatory, as secondary and intended at least in part to gloss the original. In *Translation and the Digital Age* Michael Cronin writes about the Loeb Classical Library and its translation stylistics, but somewhat glosses over the specific effect of the fact that all those translations are intended to be seen in parallel text, and usually for use by students of Latin or Greek, or, for more rarely-translated works, as a reference for students of comparative literature attempting to get to grips with the texts in translation.

For linguistically competent students, Greet's translations, which serve as a crib, a reminder of vocabulary and grammar, are an addition, secondary to the French text. The poetry they are looking for is to be found in the left hand side of the double page, and can only be appreciated by carefully reading the French.

However, for these students, who will also be translators in the sense that language learning (at least in a classroom setting) almost universally involves some exercise of translation, the English-language side of the page forms an additional interpretative resource, a reservoir of possible meaning which can be mapped onto the French text more or less to the student's satisfaction (although never fully). At first it may seem that the parallel translation is like the answer at the back of the textbook – you can cover it up with your hand and see whether you can get all the words right. However, we can also tell that the fact of being a student of languages and having translation experience can result in a critical attitude toward the translation. This again highlights the difference in status across the parallel page: the original is authoritative, whereas the translation is open to direct criticism.

In the Cambridge University Library copy of Greet's *Calligrammes* there are a number of grumpy marginalia from students who felt she would have been better off choosing a different English word (say, 'painful' instead of 'sorrowful' to translate 'douloureux' in 'La Cravate et la Montre', see Figure 3). This proves, if any further proof were needed, that it is not the case that the translations are equivalent to dictionary definitions of the French words, to be used as a resource to 'understand' the French poems, but are instead governed – and are perceived as having been governed – by artistic and aesthetic choices which depend on both interpretation and creativity (reading and writing, insofar as an easy distinction can be made between them). The students' critical attitude towards the choices hints at parallel translations as encouraging a mode of reading which invites greater than usual participation from readers.

Some other readers may be approaching the poems, which have considerable cultural capital accruing to them, without the ability to speak French, and rather looking to read an English translation that just happens to contain the original French as a supplement. This reverses the kind of reading described above, as the right hand side of the page becomes the real focus of reading, where the sought-

after meaning resides, while the left side is a sort of visual aid, an object that the English translation attempts to represent or describe. Its unreadable primacy, as the incomprehensible but prized originator of the translation, can also serve to call into question the authority of the interpreter – how does this reader know the text they are accessing is really similar to the foreign one? Partly the answer is in the shape on the page, as I will discuss presently, and this is a particularly important factor in the *calligrammes*, where shape is explicitly part of the purpose of the poems, and functions in an unusually direct and pictorial way. However there is still a layer of unknowability which is inevitable in translation, and the reader's demand for a provable identicality, which can never be adequately met, is increased by the presence of the original text on the page, regardless of how well each reader can interpret the foreign language. So this is a reading experience where the reader is primed to experience frustration with regard to the translation, and thus feels invited, or even compelled, to join in with the activity of translation themselves, or else more alienated from the original text by virtue of having it in front of them without being able to read it.
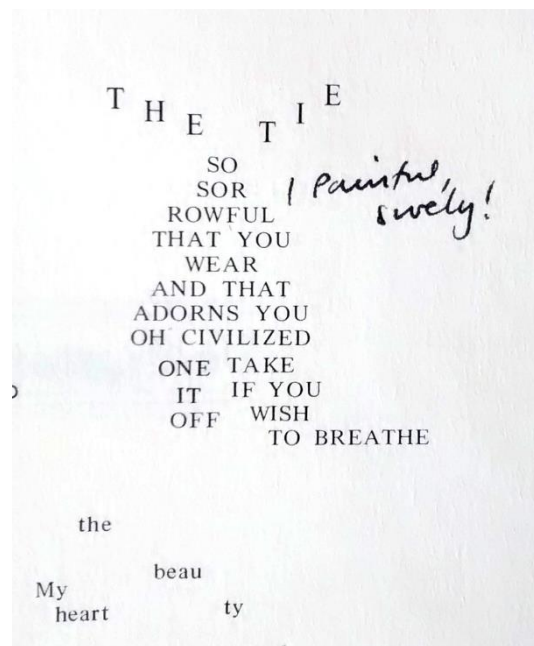
Figure 3. Reader annotation in copy of *Calligrammes* (p. 79).

GUILLAUME APOLLINAIRE AND CLIVE SCOTT

Clive Scott explicitly states that he is uninterested in the monolingual reader when making his own translations of poems by Apollinaire. He writes:

> My own wishes for translation are motivated, as must already be apparent, by the desire to break the monopoly of a translation geared to the monoglot reader, in the belief that this kind of translation, against its own will perhaps, not only perpetuates monoglottism but is an implicit argument for the dispensability of knowledge of foreign languages, produces a disempowered reader, endorses fossilized notions of national cultures and prevents translation from prosecuting its own distinctive literariness/literature.[12]

This is perhaps a unique perspective, and it is at the root of Scott's experimental translation style. In order to practice a translation which expresses the experience of reading a text, rather than anything essential about the text itself, Scott needs to forgo the demand both for identicality and for any kind of mediation of the meaning or essence of the original text. Indeed, he refers to the 'monopoly of a translation geared to the monoglot reader', arguing that bilingual readers should be prioritised in order to encourage there to be more of them. Reviews of Greet's translations, however, suggest that they are seen as useful to readers who are learning French, or who have some familiarity with it. This does not seem to be 'an implicit argument for the dispensability of knowledge of foreign languages'. Indeed, I would argue that a parallel presentation will always make the opposite case. To read the translations alongside the originals, understanding both languages, is perhaps a uniquely rich reading experience, but to shut out the possibility of other readings of these texts, including misreadings,

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[12] Clive Scott, *Translating Apollinaire* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2014). Kindle eBook.

inventions and incomprehension, equally sparking creative responses and generating their own complex phenomenology, seems to me incomplete.

To return to Scott's question of empowerment, we might ask: is a frustrated reader a disempowered reader? Scott is very keen explicitly to empower the reader, while my observations above, particularly regarding marginalia, might indicate that readers will find ways to empower themselves. For Scott, the question of empowerment is linked to the idea of transformation, the power to alter and intervene:

> The distinction between metaphor and metamorphosis […] highlights a distinction between two models of translation. Metaphor is a form which relates to knowledge. I put target text (TT) against source text (ST) in order to measure a greater or lesser degree of identity. This identity can be arrived at only by processes of interpretation: what does the ST mean? What does the TT mean? What does it mean that the TT is identified with the ST? The relationship between ST and TT is, in this model, essentially spatial: juxtapositional and static. Metamorphosis, on the other hand, is a force which relates to empowerment. I put a TT in the line of flight of the ST in order to create a relationship of 'and'. [eBook]

This idea of a spatial, 'juxtapositional' relationship versus a 'relationship of "and"', is useful for a discussion of parallel texts. We will return to them in a discussion of Clive Scott's concept of 'tabular' text, and the important distinction he makes between the tabular and the linear. What is clear is that for Scott the power to intervene, to change and transform a text is the form a reader's empowerment should properly take.

Scott might see the marginalia in Figure 3 as an attempt to 'overwrite' or overtranslate the text, or collaborate with the translator. In his translations of poems by Apollinaire, he frequently has recourse to writing on the text of his translations:

My use of handwriting has several functions: I count graphology as the art of discovering in styles of handwriting the timbres and intonations of a voice; handwriting is the graphic equivalent of the voice. Handwriting introduces into text the activity of time, the pressure of time, the ongoingness of response. These handwritten marginalia and annotations are the very quick of reading. But, above all, handwriting is the agent of metamorphosis: in its very cursivity it declares its desire to pursue joined-up change, a graphic choreography of lexical shape-shifting. This desire, this capability, traces the modulations of the text in the reader's imaginary, the kinds of things that 'thicken out' the experience of text: variations on the sounds of words, homophones, homonyms, paronomasia, the signifying impulses of morphemes, real and false, the impulse of phonemes or graphemes to summon up related words and ideas, all kinds of involuntary association. [eBook]

Of course, Apollinaire himself uses handwriting in his poems, which is surely part of what inspires Scott to do so. In the case of the 'collaboration' above, the reader has clearly become dissatisfied with and decided to intervene in the text of the translation, using their own handwriting to mark the page. Scott uses handwriting as a bridge between orality and textuality, a way to create a text which is sonorous and multivocal, although his sense of the equivalence of handwriting and voice is idiosyncratic. His desire for an 'ongoingness of response' is in contrast to Apollinaire's emphasis on simultaneity, but writing on the printed page also creates a new simultaneity, as the textual object of the overwriting and the handwritten part appear against the same white page.

1915

In contrast to Scott's playful engagement with handwriting as readerly empowerment, Greet, when translating Apollinaire's handwriting, uses a handwriting which is neither always obviously a copy of his nor obviously her

own handwriting. In the poem '1915' (pp. 152–53), which is very short and presented as a scribbled note in a mix of upper and lower case letters which reads 'Soldats de faïence et d'escarboucle ô amour' (see Figure 4), Greet has notably decided to imitate Apollinaire's handwriting and to keep the circumflex on the 'o', where you would never find it in English writing. Here it is as if she is quoting Apollinaire, the circumflex serving as a direct visual mirroring of the French.

These direct mirrorings are influenced, I suggest, by the parallel text format and the way it accommodates a reader who can see both texts at once. In the act of apparently forging Apollinaire's handwriting, Greet offers us a merging of the two texts, such that at a glance they could be a continuation of the same poem, or indeed an imprint of the same poem printed twice — there is a symmetry around the vertical axis indicated by the repetition of 'ô'. She also effectively erases her own subjectivity as a writer of a text who might herself choose to write by hand, and subsumes her own identity to Apollinaire's, as we shall see further elsewhere, with important implications for our textual mirrors. Greet is attempting to assume the 'same' character, to take on the characteristics of Apollinaire's text.

In fact, this preoccupation with symmetry is a theme throughout the book, even in poems that are not particularly calligrammatic or representative/mimetic of objects in their form and shape. In 'At Nimes' (pp. 118–19, Figure 5 below), for example, her use of two-line groups leads to a very similar shape on the page. However, an important distinction throughout the book between shape poems or *calligrammes* and poems whose typesetting is of the more common sort, is that in the ordinary poems, the French is presented in italics and the English upright, so as to preserve some visual differentiation between them. In 'At Nimes', in contrast to the 'ô' in '1915', the circumflex in the French spelling of 'Nîmes' has been omitted, even though it is more usual to expect that a place name should retain its 'original' spelling. Here, unlike in the handwriting, the fact of the English language in the translation is more important than creating a visual mirror to the French text, perhaps because the visual is presumed to be a less important

dimension in poems that do not explicitly use typesetting and mimesis to make visuality the primary way to receive the poem.
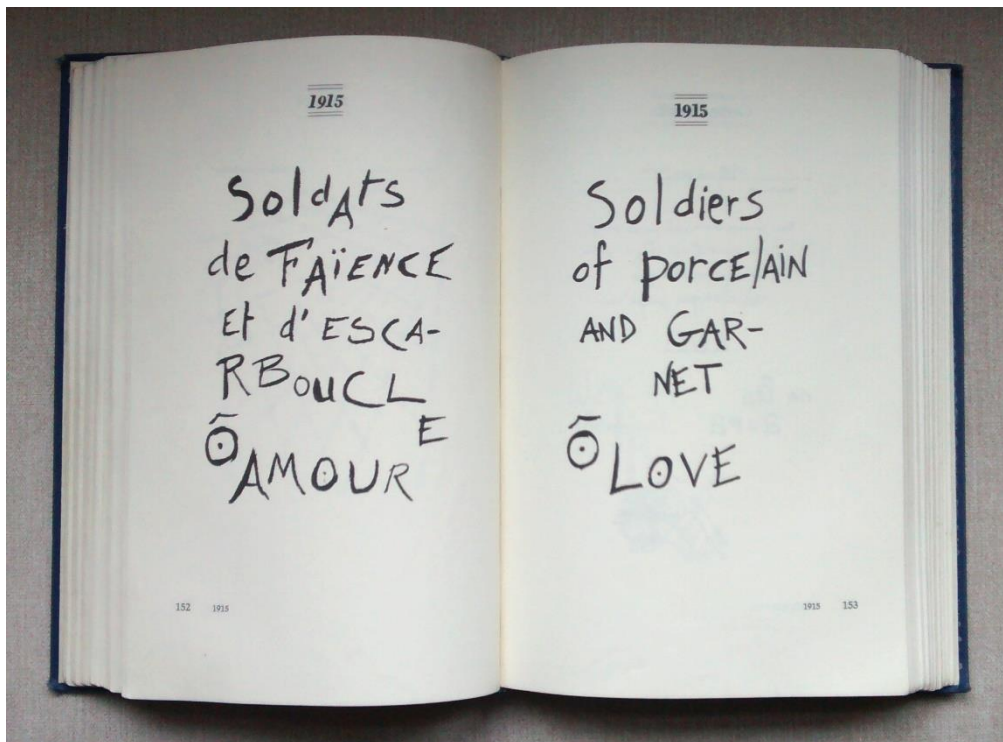
Figure 4. '1915'.
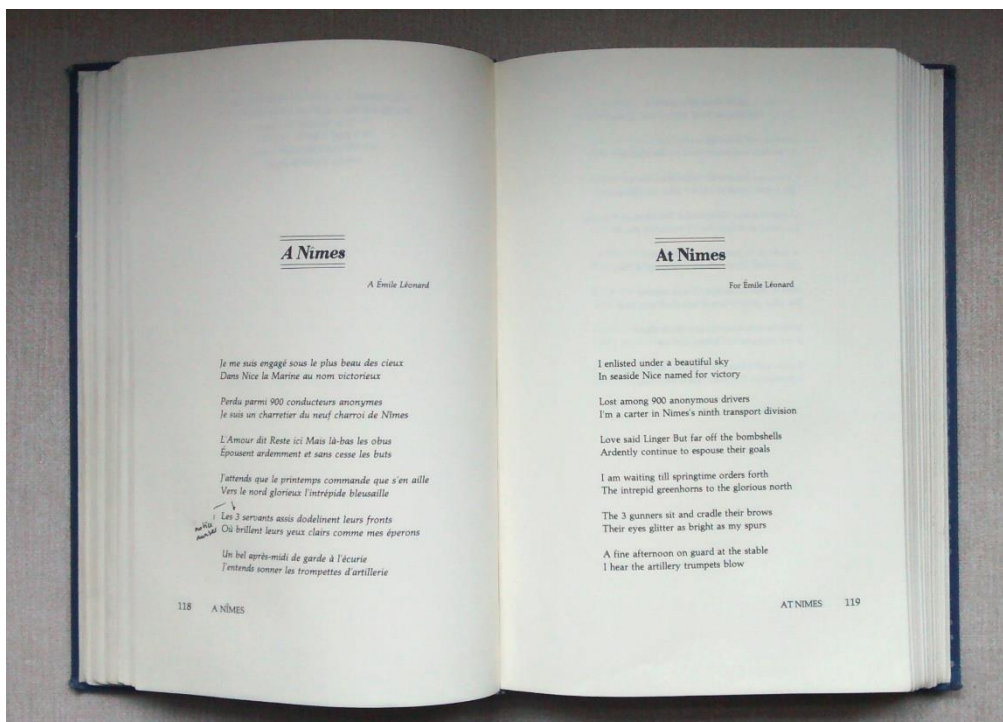
Figure 5. '*A Nîmes*'/'At Nimes'.

CŒUR COURONNE ET MIROIR | HEART CROWN AND MIRROR

It will now be useful to engage in a sustained close-reading of one poem and translation. 'Cœur Couronne et Miroir' and 'Heart Crown and Mirror' are *calligrammes* which represent heart, a crown and a mirror using the words which make up the poem. (As such, it is difficult to type out quotations correctly, so a photograph appears in Figure 6 below and I will quote the words of the original and translation here without their formatting.) This poem calls for particular scrutiny because of the ways it thematises and represents mirrors within the text, and can therefore be productively examined in the light of its performance of the *mise en abyme* that I attribute to the parallel page in general.
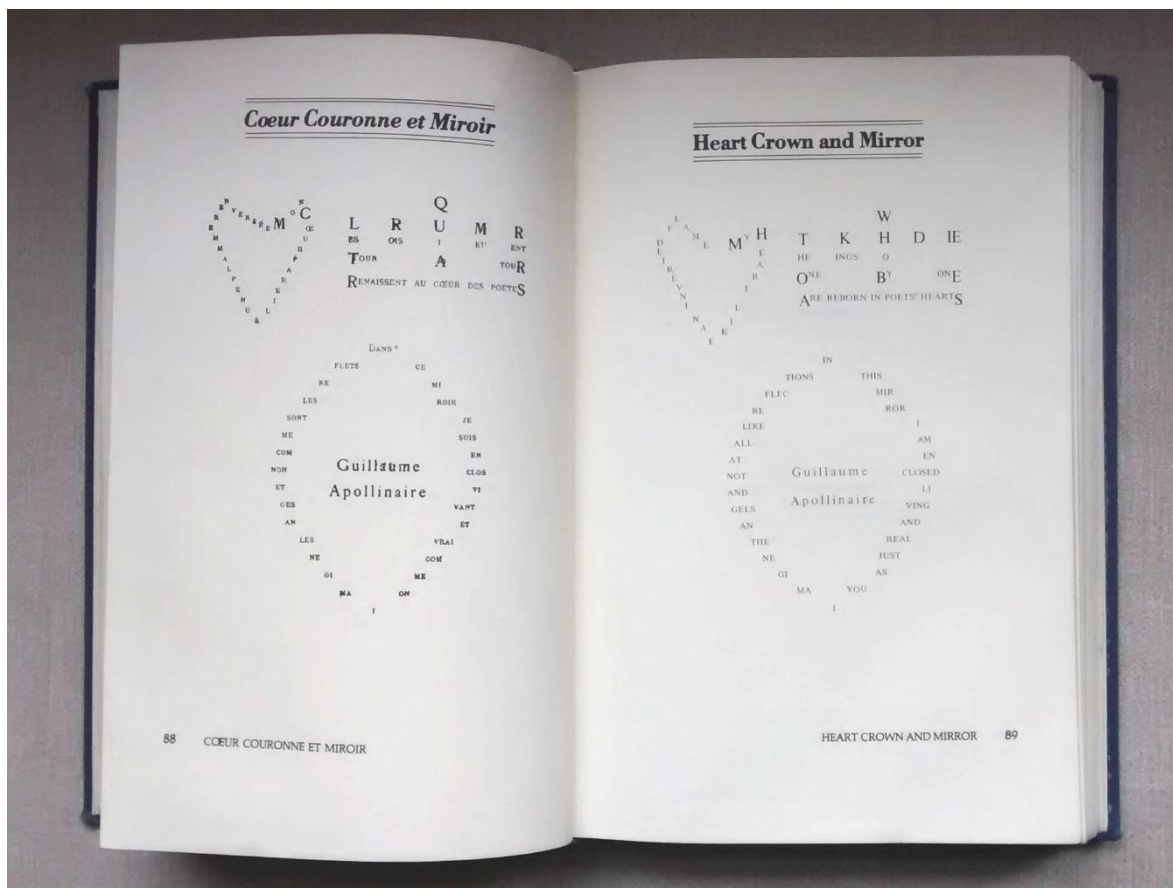
Figure 6. '*Cœur Couronne et Miroir*'/'Heart Crown and Mirror'.

In Greet's endnotes to this poem, which propose to gloss and explain aspects of the poem, we find – as throughout her endnotes – a total flattening of the

translation process and refusal to differentiate between original and translation in terms of meaning and indeed text (pp. 392–93). That is to say, it quotes and comments on the poem in both French and English, as if they were fused into one text with identical meaning. For example, the notes to 'Heart Crown and Mirror' quote extracts from Mallarmé and other Apollinaire poems in French, and refer to the arrangement of capital letters in the crown in the French text, but when quoting the text from the mirror frame, do so in English. This constitutes a striking refusal to treat the French and English as two separate texts, and insistence on rather seeing them as coextensive in meaning, as though the act of translation is truly an act of repetition, and involved no additional creative input.

The heart shapes, spelled out by the words 'Mon cœur pareil à une flamme renversée' and 'My heart like an inverted flame', highlight the possibility of different ways to read these shapes – upside down, the heart looks like a flame, playing on the metaphor of love as fire which occurs in ancient Greek poetry onwards. The endnotes point out that the reverse motif is found in another poem – 'A reverse image of "Cœur" is to be found in *Vitam Impendere Amori* (1917), V, 6: "La flamme est mon cœur renversée" (OP, p.191)' (p. 392). So we see how Apollinaire's poetry can create a system within which playful self-referentiality is possible, but also how scholarly apparatus and its ability to draw out meanings by looking outside the text can function analogously to the parallel translations in this book, providing glosses and interpretation with which the reader can engage and subtly determining possible interpretations while opening new avenues for meaning.

This format encourages plural regards — switching from one side of the page to the other, and to the back to check a reference and then back to one or the other of the poems (the notes quote in French and English interchangeably, so may send a non-Francophone reader back to Greet's English to make sense of them). For example, reading in the notes the reference to the quotation 'la flamme est mon cœur renversée' from another poem in the collection, one might go back quickly to

check how this is different in the French of this poem, and then make sure by glancing at the English, and then wonder what the English of the other one is and skip off to check that. Endnotes give yet another route through the book, doubling and redoubling the possible paths of reading.

These plural regards – the heart that looks like a flame if you turn it over, the page spread where the right side purports to both repeat and explain the left, in a different language, and the book that tells you more if you read the back – are all part of the multiple readings that any poetry can have, but which are particularly brought to the fore in this collection of texts. The way the French sends you to the English which sends you to the back of the book which sends you back to the French, and back to the English again, or other permutations of this loop (say, starting with the English then going to look at the French then back to the notes and back to the English to look up the quotations), is a kind of recursion loop, in that each turn prompts another turn, and the outcome of the function provokes another iteration of the same kind of function. This loop would normally appear to have an end at the end of the poem — the temporality of reading the words in sentence order from beginning to end. However in 'Heart Crown and Mirror' this is complicated again by the final image, that of the mirror.

The mirror frame, in what the notes claim is a reference to Mallarmé ('[his] *angelisme:* "Je me mire et me vois ange!"', p. 393), states: 'IN THIS MIRROR I AM ENCLOSED LIVING AND REAL JUST AS YOU IMAGINE THE ANGELS AND NOT AT ALL LIKE REFLECTIONS'. The problem here is not only that it is impossible for a living poet or any person to be enclosed in a mirror made of print, nor that the reader is addressed in such a manner as to presuppose that the poem knows how I specifically imagine an angel. (We observe, however, that this is not so in Apollinaire's French, which reads 'comme on imagine les anges' — 'as one imagines angels', referring to a more general, collective image of angels than Greet's 'you'.) The recursivity is in the literal loop of the mirror frame, and in the possibility of continuing to read around perpetually, because, in both Apollinaire

and Greet, the 'sentence' of the mirror text does not end, and it is possible to parse it differently if you do not start at the top with 'dans' or 'in' but rather with 'je' or 'I' — here a contradiction arises around the status of 'this mirror' (the one represented on the page). In the first reading, which I have quoted, 'this mirror' does not reflect like other mirrors but rather encloses a living and real poet. It is exceptional among mirrors, because instead of being made of glass it is made of paper and ink, and it has powers of preservation mirrors do not usually have — it can preserve the poet even when faced with the reader instead; its reflectivity, once used, becomes a fixed image. The second possible reading would be 'I AM ENCLOSED LIVING AND REAL JUST AS YOU IMAGINE THE ANGELS AND NOT AT ALL LIKE REFLECTIONS IN THIS MIRROR' — here the mirror remains reflective but the poet, unlike what the mirror shows, which presumably is the reflection of whoever is looking at it, is preserved 'living and real' and enclosed presumably elsewhere in the text. Both these options are possible readings of this mirror, and they cast the reflection inside in different lights, as does the fact of the facing translation.

The 'living and real' 'I' that is enclosed in the mirror in the first possible reading is in fact the name 'Guillaume Apollinaire'. For Walter Benjamin, to whom I will return later and especially in Chapter 2, this name (in the same way as any text or any thing) is 'living and real' insofar as it has its own history, and is 'not merely the setting for history'. It is difficult to realise what it might mean for a name to have a history, a life, outside of the history of the living person to whom it belongs, but it is helpful to contrast here the gloss given in the notes, which attributes the sense of 'living and real' to a Mallarméan poetics: 'the poet's name, by replacing his reflected features, suggests the absence of all the Apollinaires of every moment in time and, in their place, the presence of an ideal Apollinaire who dwells in the Absolute, beyond change' (p. 393).

According to Yves Bonnefoy, Mallarmé's conception of poetry is such that language is a better means of access to beauty than the actual world is.[13] Thus, for him, language in poetry goes beyond mimesis and rather activates, by means of allusion and suggestion, a more perfect kind of aesthetic experience, which recalls Plato's world of forms. The quasi-religious notion of the possibility of transcendent things which are beyond change or decay is also activated here. Thus the name 'Guillaume Apollinaire' in the mirror allows us to experience something about the essence of Apollinaire that no meeting with the real Apollinaire on any given day, or glimpse of his reflection at any temporal moment, could have done. This suggests in fact that reading, while it is an activity in time which encompasses multiple temporalities, might have at its root the capacity or the aim to acquire knowledge or experience of something beyond time. In fact, the acquisition of transcendent knowledge maps well onto Benjamin's ideas about the possibilities of translation which we will encounter in the next chapter. I argue, however, that for Apollinaire the shifting and multiple temporalities of reading are a subject for poetry in their own right.

The notion of finding a name written in a mirror recalls Derrida's writing on the signature. For Derrida,

> By definition, a written signature implies the actual or empirical nonpresence of the signer. But, it will be claimed, the signature also marks and retains his having-been present in a past *now* or present [*maintenant*] which will remain a future *now* or present [*maintenant*], thus in a general *maintenant*, in the transcendental form of presentness [*maintenance*]. […] In order for the tethering to the source to occur,

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[13] Yves Bonnefoy, 'The Poetics of Mallarmé', trans. by Elaine Ancekewicz, *Yale French Studies*, 1977, 9–21 <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2929985/>.

what must be retained is the absolute singularity of a signature-event and a

Signature-form: the pure reproducibility of a pure event.[14]

With a written signature, with a name, the point is to validate the person when that person is absent. A signature is something that you make and leave behind. In this way it is the opposite of a reflection in a mirror, which is a guarantee of presence and vanishes as soon as the reflected subject moves out of range of the mirror. Indeed, the idea of 'tethering', that a signature is tethered to its source, is specifically challenged by the fact of Greet's writing Apollinaire's name in the English mirror. One reading of this is that it untethers Apollinaire's name from his hand entirely. Another would be that it rather serves to rope the poem and the translation together, via the signing of Apollinaire's name. Nevertheless the 'absolute singularity' of the event of signing his name is rendered plural by the parallel text, by Greet's repetition of the name in the mirror.

It becomes clearer, then, how a word or a text might have a history, if this historicising involves erasing its claim to a time-free existence. For Benjamin, the 'pure language' in which the totality of meaning could be expressed is not in a linguistic realm beyond the temporal world, but rather it comes into fullness only in the fullness of time. He writes of 'ripening the seed of pure language in translation', and it is by means of translation, not in the space between languages but within them in their plurality and 'in the evolving of languages themselves' (tr. Zohn, p. 81), within which translation occurs and to which it contributes. The 'pure language' is the sense of translation loss in that it represents the immediacy of communication that is impossible when more than one language exists, but it is also something awaited, the Messianic idea that at some time all languages might

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[14] Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', in *Limited Inc*, trans. by Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), pp. 1–23 (p. 20).

be tending towards the greater ability to be language. Benjamin insists that this 'pure language' is not a world of forms, or meanings beyond language, but is instead the most intense form of language itself.

This is also to some extent the place Mallarmé's poetics tends towards, although his is less hopeful and more perplexed by the possibilities of language. For Bonnefoy, 'Although always incomplete because of the richness of any sensation, the verbal suggestion of the object is nonetheless not established as a lack, since it calls forth an integrity forgotten in its usual manifestation in this world of chance' (p. 11). So poetry, aiming at a kind of aesthetic perfection, is more successful than real life at capturing it even though it can never present a complete experience — indeed, it is because of the incompleteness that the possibility of perfection can be glimpsed in the gaps in the description, and things hinted at are more perfect or beautiful than things more fully described. However, Bonnefoy notes Mallarmé's frustration:

> Nevertheless [...] words in their own way betray us as much as empirical existence, and they do so for essentially the same reason, which is that they also exist, caught as they are in the contingency of sound when seemingly determined by the necessity of the Idea. [...] Then, since no necessary link attaches the sound of a word and the notion it evokes, the elucidation is clouded as by a dark drop of ink, in itself nothingness; and the "jouissance" that was glimpsed turns out to be, in fact, a mirage (p. 12).

This is 'l'arbitraire du signe' — words cannot simply signify, they must also exist, totally independently of any meaning that might adhere to them. It leads Mallarmé to experiment not only with sound but also with the position of the words on the page, an experimentation that Apollinaire continues in the *calligrammes*, indeed he goes so far as to use words to represent things dually — both in their shape, which makes a recognisable image, and in their power to represent or suggest meaning in the traditional way. So both Mallarmé and

Apollinaire make use, rather than 'pure language', of all the contingencies of shape and sound that contribute to poetry. This is a question about representation and how to transcend it: language making a picture is a mode of representation that calls into question the ability of the words themselves to represent or attach themselves to things in the world. Indeed, the words are in fact things in the world in themselves. Later in the twentieth century, Francis Ponge would take this further by determining to construct a thing out of words — 'Comment une figue de paroles et pourquoi?'.[15]

It is significant that Bonnefoy describes the illusion of becoming lost in imagery or narrative before once again being reminded that the very words used to create that image are themselves made of phonemes and ink on the page, and are thus themselves subject to the frustrating imperfection of reality, as a mirage. The word 'mirage' comes from the same root as both 'mirror' and 'admire', as well as 'miracle', and implies something wonderful but ultimately intangible, like a reflection. Here, of course, we are talking about Apollinaire's mirror, in which he sees his name, and where the artifice of making a picture of a mirror out of words (those dark drops of ink that may as well enact mimesis through their shape as through their own encoded forms made of letters that we learn to understand as phonemes) interacts with the reflective potential of the printed page to reflect back in the act of reading, and the question of what words do besides mean things and make shapes. In terms of translatability, the shapes of the specific words used by the poet need to change in order for the poem to be in English, but the calligrammatic shapes they form on the page can be replicated, and are, by Greet. In their desire to elucidate encoded meaning in the poem, the endnotes point out that in the crown, reading downwards, we see the Latin word 'QUIA', which means 'because'. Here, the shapes of the letters and the different ways they can be

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[15] Title of his book published by Flammarion in Paris, 1977.

read, facilitated by their pictoral arrangement, come together in another layer of readability. This Latin word could be read by a reader with no French who happened to glance at the French side of the page. It will not be found in the English side, but thanks to the parallel text it remains available.

However none of this speculation about the name 'Guillaume Apollinaire' in the page-mirror has yet accounted for the presence of the translation-mirror, in which it is reflected. For Greet, having refashioned Apollinaire's mirror in English, has so closely identified with the experience of the reader, rather than the poet, that she sees only a copy of his reflection, rather than her own name or face reflected there. Apollinaire makes a mirror of words, looks into it and sees his own name. A reader approaches his mirror and is unsure whether what they see is a picture of a mirror, or rather that their own voice or inner monologue has become so identified with that of the poetic persona that when they look into the mirror they see his own name reflected back. Greet, the translator, pen in hand, remains a reader here, to the extent that she does not identify the poetic voice or word-stream in the English translation as hers, but rather, consistently with the way the notes quote in English to interpret the French, perceives a necessary continuity between the French text and the English, a seamless linguistic transition which would make her imitations of Apollinaire's handwriting into more than copying, something more like channelling of his own voice in the afterlife — she is a supernatural translator, a medium rather than a writer, and she has no reflection of her own, but the mirror on this page uncannily reflects her conception of translation — she becomes Apollinaire, and her reflection in the mirror shows his name. This is the type of translation that could most simply be called repetition. The English literally repeats the shape and content of the words on the page, purporting once and for all to satisfy the readerly demand, identified by Cronin, for identicality.

There is one key question here which remains to be answered: what does the reader see in the mirror? A feature of the two mirrors on the double page is the

way in which they reflect one another. We have discussed how the facing pages can be described as two mirrors, but here we have a much more literal representation of that idea, as the French mirror and the English mirror face each other, mapping onto one another exactly when the book is closed. Indeed, when the book is closed, we might fancifully imagine a recursive space opening between these two mirrors: a space where an infinite number of iterations of the name 'Guillaume Apollinaire' appear. A space which is like translation, or at least like translatability, and which if we believe Benjamin is made of pure language without signification, and if we believe Mallarmé, is made of emptiness. But poetry, and in particular the temporalities of reading which make up both Apollinaire's poetry and the complexity of parallel texts, are only activated once the book is opened and a reader begins to engage with the text.

TABULAR TEXT

In *Translating Apollinaire*, Clive Scott writes extensively about Apollinaire's use of space on the page; he makes experimental translations which play with that space and attempt to push the effects created in the *calligrammes* to their extremes. For Scott, the important feature of the page space as used by both Mallarmé and Apollinaire is that rather than being 'linear', composed of lines of verse, it is 'tabular', making use of the function of the keyboard that allows you to navigate to any space on the page in order to write in it. This shift profoundly affects the nature of that space, opening it up to fluidity and uncertainty of perspective in the manner of the Futurist and Cubist art Apollinaire favoured. Scott writes:

> Force-lines, the Futurist painters tell us, are what involve the spectator in the picture, are what put the spectator at the centre of the picture's action, at the centre of the ambient. This is very much the effect of the concentric circles, the 'spherical expansions' of Apollinaire's 'Lettre-Océan' and, one might argue, of all

calligrammatic enterprises: because immediately it ceases to be linear and becomes tabular, we have to think of writing itself as the creation of lines of force and the page as that which allows their self-development, their radiation, their infinite extension. While the linear continues to pursue the perspectival, to set its sights on a teleology, the full-stop, the horizon of its ambitions, while it aims to keep everything within a hierarchy of scale (main clause and subordinate clauses, clauses and phrases) with its elements syntagmatically related, the tabular develops non-syntagmatic relationships, undoes hierarchy, plays with parataxis or ataxia, lets text re-imagine its relative proportions, lets its elements create new ties both with each other and with items beyond the text, or with associations, memories and fantasies passing through the text. In this sense, the tabular page has both infinite depth and infinite extension into its blind field. [eBook]

We will return to the role of teleology and non-teleology in future chapters, but it is very much worth noting that this idea of the horizons of the page must, I argue, in the case of parallel text translation, be read as crossing over the gutter and across the double page spread. The parallel page has a different kind of horizon, one constituted not by the edge of the page but by the relationship between the two halves of the page. If, as Scott suggests, disrupting the linear in terms of page spacing frees a text to project into what, quoting Apollinaire, he terms a 'fourth dimension', to destabilise the 'perspective' of the reader and create what he calls a 'blind field' in which many more textual possibilities are opened up, then to have a parallel page must affect this. The 'hierarchy of scale' might exist between the two pages but if so then it is in a way that is unclear: each text, in a sense, entails the other. The translation would not exist without the original but the book itself, published in this format, in this country, would not exist without the translation. In any case, the tabular nature of the pages, for Scott, might prevent hierarchies becoming stable or established.

Scott's notion of the 'ambient' is part of his emphasis on the phenomenology of reading. Like Valéry, whom we shall consider later, he considers that the poetic

can come from one's surroundings, from background noise and overhearing and features of the room one is reading in, and argues that these things can be incorporated into a translation that is about representing the experience of reading. This means that when reading one text out of two parallel ones, the other could become a part of what is ambient, potentially a distraction or just a small part of the general context of reading. Scott's writing about the act of translation and what it feels like to code-switch between English and French also speaks to the experience of a bilingual reader reading in parallel text:

> As I shift from French to English, I in effect change bodies. I am not looking at the source language (SL) and the target language (TL) as at a pair of objects, as a mute spectator; I am not performing tasks which are essentially visual tasks: consulting a dictionary, running my eyes over the alternatives provided by a thesaurus. I am shifting from one manifestation of my voice's physiology and temperament, of its habits and variables, to another, a task made complex by the cross-interferences— translation is a dialectical process both in terms of uttering and listening—the palimpsestic audibilities, the linguistic memories. [eBook]

Even if a reader is mainly looking in the book for either the English or the French texts, the presence of the other on the facing page creates the conditions for this kind of experience of a duality that is not only linguistic but also in a sense personal. In this way, the reader's presence triangulates the two texts in a similar manner to the translator's, and the experience of duality is given over to the reader, undeniable because both texts are available as the eye sweeps across the page. In this sense, parallel text brings us closer to the experience of a translator, and with it this sense of split identity: reader, translator; English and French.

As we have seen in the discussion of Katherine Shingler's work, there has been interest in what eye movements can tell us about how readers engage with text that is presented in different ways. Scott also contests that tabular text, of which *calligrammes* are examples, must make the reader behave differently, with

consequences for their experience of reading a text. He contrasts linear with tabular text:

> The linear text seems designed for an eye which, as it were, obediently follows the text—though this may not, of course, be the case—falling into the rhythm of the lines' back-and-forth; and this in turn establishes assumptions about the consistency of the eye's speed, the steady purposefulnesss of its trajectory, the evenness of its assimilation of text. In the tabular text, eye movement necessarily becomes heterogeneous, qualitatively variable, distractable, improvised. What we find difficult to imagine or understand is that tabular reading turns text from something which exists and is waiting to be read, by any number of readers, in more or less the same way (the isotropic version of reading and reading-space, the version of linear reading) into something which exists only in its very being read, by a particular individual, in its eye-activated movement, where the very rests and distractions of the eye are part of that movement and not a momentary opting out; reading, as this engaged and endlessly provoked activity, deepens, diversifies and singularizes itself. Linear reading is the reading of decipherment and construal; tabular reading is an exacerbation of the phenomenology of reading. [eBook]

I would certainly argue that to read *Calligrammes* in parallel text translation is to eschew linear reading twice over. Many of Scott's examples, including in *Translating Apollinaire*, involve translating a text he characterises as 'linear' into one which is tabular. For translations of the *calligrammes*, however, a tabular text must be translated into a tabular text. This invokes questions about the ways in which the two texts frame each other, the limits they place on each other's tabular space, or whether in fact they combine into one overall tabular 'blind field' in which perspective and linearity are almost entirely absent.

On tabular space, Scott writes:

> In rejecting perspective, we tend to reject notions of space as an empty container, pre-formatted, waiting to receive its consignment of objects and features, and

favour instead space generated by mobility, projected by moving bodies, constructed by moving bodies, constantly re-configuring itself. [eBook]

With parallel text translation, even in the most linear and perspective-rich format, the 'pre-formatted' container of the page is formatted very differently, and the texts it waits to receive are locked into a dynamic that mandates more flexibility and movement on the part of the reader than would a typical book of poetry. The idea of a text which is 'projected', which is thrown forward into the future rather than statically representing or standing in for something absent or past, is one we will return to in Chapter 3 when considering repetition as a figure for translation. It introduces a temporal aspect and, particularly, insists on a dynamic page, and a mobile translation, which puts a focus on the aspect of translation which is about potential: the limitless configurations and choices that could potentially translate a work, and the possibility of multiple translations across time. It is true that tabular space introduces an element of the unpredictable to every page, allowing the configuration of the space itself to become expressive.

We have seen that simultaneity is valued by Apollinaire, and for Scott it is the tabularity of his poetry that foregrounds this aspect:

> What is clear […] is that the notions of simultaneity and ubiquity also play a part in this vision of fourth-dimensional extendability. Both of them depend on the active participation of montage which helps establish the principle of synchronic polymorphous readability. Metamorphosis, as has been clear throughout, is more to be found in readerly processes than in text, and it is a paramount purpose of tabularity to translate textual being into readerly being, to embody and dramatize the readerly interrogation of language and improvisation with language and to create a free heterogeneity of tempo and spatial disposition which allows the readerly to re-imagine the writerly. [eBook]

Scott writes about montage and film as ways to conceive of the difference tabularity makes to a page: it is as though it has gone from a static to a moving

image. In terms of 'dramatiz[ing] the readerly interrogation of language and improvisation with language', I would argue that the parallel page adds to the general freedom inherent in tabular texts. Scott sees the reading experience as a site of dynamism, movement, variability and creation. The montage is created by the reader as they run their eye over the text. However in his own translations, he attempts to manifest these dynamisms as writing techniques, since for him the boundary between reading and writing is necessarily blurry. Greet's translations do not have this aim of representing the dynamics of reading, and instead appear to wish to represent the original poems. However as with all translation, they do blur reading and writing, reception and production, particularly as we have seen with the copying of Apollinaire's handwriting. We will return in the final chapter to the question of Scott's theorisation of spatiality and tabularity, when we come to consider Deleuzian repetition.

Scott expands on his ideas about a 'pre-formatted' space, writing about the effect specifically of the framing provided by the status of a text as a translated text:

> What, then, for translation, are the crimes of the frame? In the standard presentations of linear printing, the source text (ST) comes to us pre-packed, defined by the space in which it is set, anchored to its margins. The target text (TT) will usually consolidate this frame and in so doing endorse it as a guarantor of significance. Consequently, the TT will justify itself as an interpretative practice. Consequently, too, the TT will consolidate the ST's being as a text, something whose very transferability seems to depend on the maintenance of its textual integrity. [eBook]

This discussion of printing takes us back to Cronin's ideas of printing practices as participating in a societal view of how meaning is constructed and transferred. Scott is not writing about parallel text translation when he writes this way about the ways texts are framed, but his observations are arguably

heightened by the format. The idea that the translation justifies itself 'as an interpretative practice' is certainly present in this edition, with the translation and the endnotes coming together to form an interpretative apparatus for the edification of primarily student readers. Parallel text, much more than other printing options for translated texts, yokes the two texts together and demands equivalence, seeming to weigh the translation in the balance of the original.

CODA

In order to enrich my discussion of the possibilities of parallel text, I now turn briefly to a translation that is not from French, nor from the twentieth century. *If Not, Winter*, contemporary Canadian poet, classicist and translator Anne Carson's parallel text translation of Sappho fragments from Greek, poses some particular problems with establishing not only the translation, but also the original texts. Sappho's works are preserved only on papyri or through quotation from other authors. Carson writes:

> On a papyrus roll the text is written in columns, without word division, punctuation or lineation. To read such a text is hard even when it comes to us in its entirety, and most papyri don't. Of the nine books of lyrics that Sappho is said to have composed, one poem has survived complete. All the rest are fragments.[16]

This is clearly a very different visual language of poetry than mass publishing can make possible now. Carson is also at pains to stress that the language of Sappho's poetry is not primarily visual, but aural, and specifically musical. At the very beginning of her introduction, she writes about Sappho as a musician, albeit one whose music is entirely lost to us. So the papyri already constitute a kind of translation from the aural to the visual, though they can

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[16] Anne Carson, *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho* (New York: Vintage, 2003), p. ix.

encompass some of both. Carson has then translated the papyri into English and into print, attempting to find a visual language to express the experience not of hearing the music of Sappho, but rather of reading a papyrus:

> When translating texts read from papyri, I have used a single square bracket to give the impression of missing matter, so that [or] indicates destroyed papyrus or the presence of letters not quite legible somewhere in the line. [...] Brackets are exciting. Even though you are approaching Sappho in translation, that is no reason you should miss the drama of trying to read a papyrus torn in half or riddled with holes or smaller than a postage stamp — brackets imply a free space of imaginal adventure (p. xi).

Here we see that not only has Carson created the translation, she has also in a sense created the original — there is no one obvious way to display the result of transcribing papyrus on a printed page, and she has selected a unique means of gesturing toward the papyrus without being able to show us that. In published translations the square brackets are not conventionally used in this way, singly, for showing omissions — they are more associated with the language of an editor.

This appropriation of different textual languages, as well as the use of tabular space, is again reminiscent of Scott's experiments in *Translating Apollinaire*. Translations always create their originals in a sense, by fixing the version (the edition, the manuscript) to be translated as in some way definitive.

This idea of translation as a mystical practice, one that involves communing with the dead, perhaps, or at least allowing yourself to be guided by some force outside of the translator's control, recurs in Carson's performance essay *Cassandra Float Can* where she discusses translation in terms of the mythical prophet Cassandra. She writes:

> Sometimes I feel I spend my whole life rewriting the same page. It is a page with "Essay on Translation" at the top, and then quite a few paragraphs of good strong prose. These begin to break down towards the middle of the page. Syntax decays,

perforations appear. By the end there's not much left but a few flakes of language roaming near the margins looking as if they want to become an art of pure shape.[17]

This quotation is concerned with the connection between meaning, language, writing and the shapes the ink makes on the page, which we have seen preoccupied Mallarmé, and which we have also seen translation call into question. The 'art of pure shape' and the black ink Bonnefoy uses to describe Mallarmé's poetry, and indeed Apollinaire's *calligrammes*, are all related. For translation does indeed push language to its limits. For Benjamin, as we will see, this limit is also at the centre of language itself (as opposed to different languages), and is the place where meaning and representation matter least, and language matters most. It is also interesting that for Carson the attempt to describe translation goes from looking like prose on the page, to looking more and more like a Mallarmé poem, or another concrete poem. In the essay, Carson's concern with the limits of language takes the form of a discussion of the translation of a metrical cry Cassandra makes in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.

This notion of flakes of language suggests that the impossibility of writing coherently about the translation process should manifest itself in a visual language that uses the space on the page to communicate its sense of running out, of disintegration. Indeed the idea that what happens to words when they run out of meaning is becoming 'an art of pure shape' provides us with a way into reading what is going on in the Sappho translations, as well as describing the core tension in the *calligrammes* — the forcing of language into an art of shapes, of pictures, but having it simultaneously remain as language.

Disintegrating and perforating is what has happened to the papyri containing the poetry of Sappho, and Carson's attempt to communicate that to us via her

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[17] Anne Carson, 'Cassandra Float Can', chapbook 3 of 23, in *Float* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016).

curation of the Greek texts on the parallel pages can also be seen to be, at least somewhat, an 'art of pure shape'. For readers with no Greek and no notion of the Greek alphabet, they are already more or less illustrations, providing an opaque origin onto which to project the translations — this role of unreadable original doubles the role of the papyri, the difference being that we can see these.

When reading, it often seems to be the case that there is extra Greek that was not translatable into English (reminding us always of how much of the Greek itself is missing) — sometimes it is single letters that Carson left out, sometimes a single line containing a sentence particle that cannot really be translated on its own because its function is more like punctuation in a language without punctuation — like finding a single comma from a poem, or one of Emily Dickinson's dashes all alone — without anything to hang on it, the sentence scaffolding becomes untranslatable, or translatable only by punctuation, by the square bracket, and sits on the left half of the page, perhaps achieving 'an art of pure shape.'

Even the square brackets find their echoes in the papyrus. If we examine the front cover (see Figure 7), we see precisely the disintegration of the fabric of the papyrus, how it breaks off in little square shapes, which come to be represented by the square brackets — a kind of material illustration of the process of reading a papyrus, one which represents them as Apollinaire's word-pictures represent a crown, a heart or a mirror.
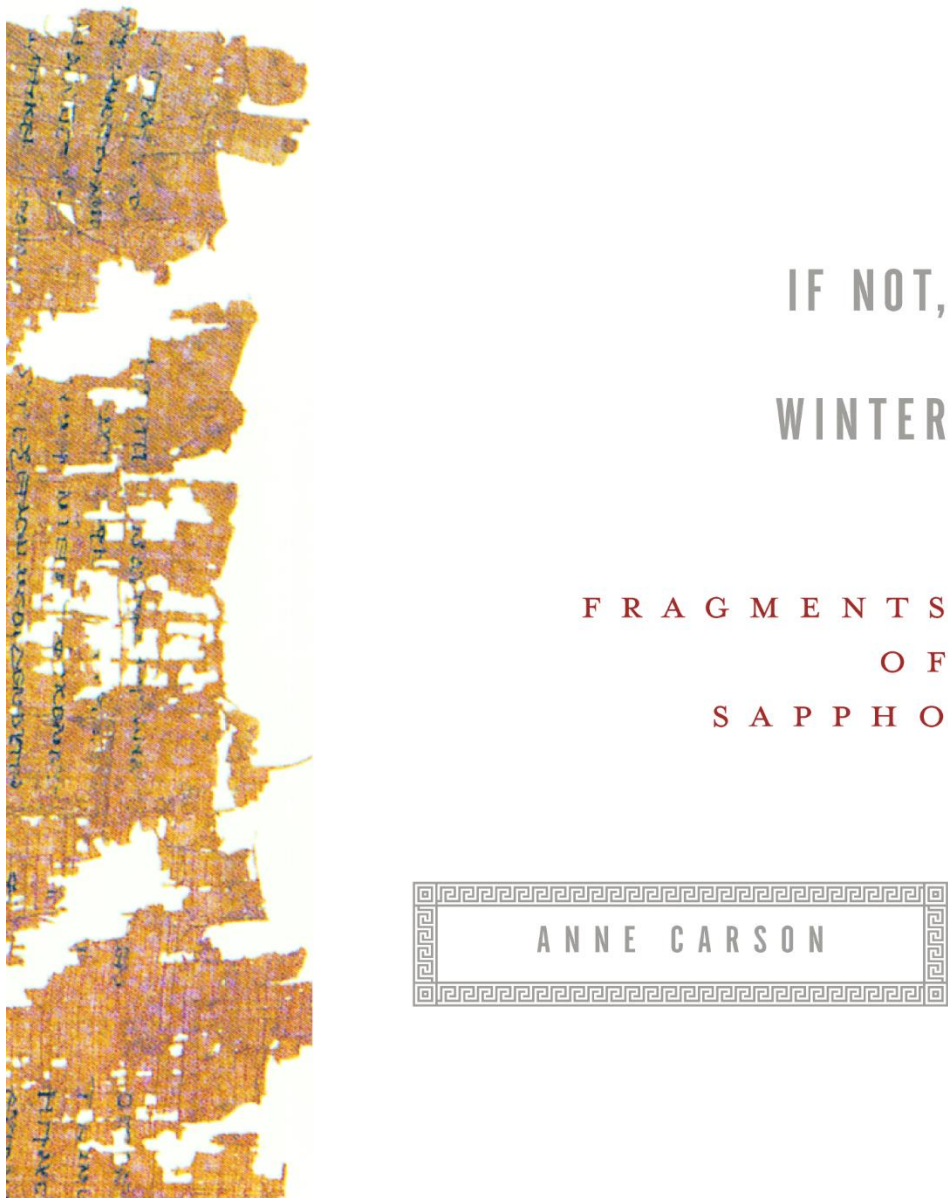
Figure 7. Cover of *If Not, Winter*, showing papyrus.

We can clearly discern responses in these two translations to very different kinds of challenges, but what they have in common is that they show us how parallel text translation is necessarily a situation of comparison, a kind of visual

language of its own that encompasses both texts and their relationships with each other. Whether this is in Greet's mirror strategy, or Carson's careful curation of gaps and unknowables, these two parallel text translations force the poem to be an image by showing it a picture of itself — re-presenting it on the facing page means creating a representation in dialogue with the original. This in turn creates opportunities for a triangulated dialogue with readers — whether as readers we dig into the double-language page, doubling the translation process in our attempt to tease out the nuances of the original by arguing with the translation, or whether we receive the parallel original as a pictogram, to be pored over in order to achieve a small sense of the difficulty of reading something as fragmentary as a papyrus. The presence of two texts that purport to be the same thing troubles us, and forces us to confront, comparatively, the border between text and image.

Greet appears to be playing a trick on us here, the trick of translational transparency — she attempts to disappear behind the mirror, like a magician, but in fact the presence of Apollinaire's original gives the game away. The parallel translation, in its claim to sameness, going as far as a claim to the same 'original' author, Guillaume Apollinaire in the mirror, here serves as a truly uncanny double of the French text. It traps Apollinaire in its facing mirror, reflecting him back at himself so that it becomes impossible to point to an original 'living and real' poet, 'enclosed in the mirror' or elsewhere in the text. As Apollinaire seems no longer to be looking out towards the reader, but rather looking across at his reflection in the translation mirror, he could indeed be said to be more completely textually 'enclosed' than he was when he only had the mirror frame as a device of enclosure.

The issue of a living poet in a book, combined with the question of mysticism, leads us on to Walter Benjamin and his preoccupation with textual lives and afterlives, his insistence that the life of texts is literal and tangible. Benjamin and his mystical approach to translation will be the subject of the next chapter. I have included two translations of the same text here, because it is

interesting to contrast Harry Zohn's 'afterlife' with Steven Rendall's 'continuing life' to translate Benjamin's 'Fortleben':

> The notion of the life and continuing life of works of art should be considered with completely unmetaphorical objectivity. Even in ages of the most prejudiced thinking it has been suspected that life must not be attributed to organic corporeality alone. […] Rather, it is only when life is attributed to everything that has a history, and not to that which is only a stage setting for history, that this concept comes into its own. For the range of the living must ultimately be delimited on the basis of history and not of nature, without mentioning such unstable notions as sensitivity and soul. (tr. Rendall, p. 154)

> The idea of life and afterlife in works of art should be regarded with an entirely unmetaphorical objectivity. Even in times of narrowly prejudiced thought there was an inkling that life was not limited to organic corporeality. […] The concept of life is given its due only if everything that has a history of its own, and is not merely the setting for history, is credited with life. In the final analysis, the range of life must be determined by history rather than by nature, least of all by such tenuous factors as sensation and soul. (tr. Zohn, p. 76)

Thus for Benjamin, the famous 'afterlife of the text' which translation can constitute is very much the same kind of life as the life of the text; it is a life that comes afterwards in time, rather than a less corporeal or more mystical life than the first life of the text, where both life and afterlife (and it is hard to tell the difference) are already not determined by any of the regular criteria for biological life but rather by their place and part in forming history.

And although this will lead to some very different conceptions of the act and products of translation, it can still be seen as closely related to mirroring, as here again we find the potential for recursivity, for surely an afterlife-text might also have its own afterlife, as when a translation becomes so canonical that it is possible to translate it forward into another language, such as Hölderlin's

Sophocles translations. Indeed, Benjamin mentions Hölderlin in this essay as an example of translation so excellent it tends to silence, because Hölderlin himself did not write anything after his translations of Sophocles. However, those translations have themselves been granted an afterlife or continuing life in translation by David Constantine, who translated them into English, not as a way of translating Sophocles, but as a way of translating this specific translated text.[18]

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[18] Friedrich Hölderlin, *Friedrich Hölderlin: Selected Poetry*, trans. by David Constantine (Hexham: Bloodaxe Books, 2018).

Chapter 2: Fragment

In 'The Task of the Translator', Walter Benjamin uses disruptive metaphors to push his own ideas about what translation is like. In particular, I am concerned here with the metaphor of fragmentation, of translation and original text as two parts of a larger whole, which we could consider to be the cultural life of that text. The specific idea that is disrupted in this metaphor and which Benjamin tries over and again to dispense with, is the notion of mediation, of the translator as a figure who stands between the original text and the reader and explains the former for the benefit of the latter. In a general sense, this notion of mediation is very hard to escape in the history of translation studies — from Schleiermacher to Venuti we find the figure of the translator choosing how to reveal the text to the reader. Indeed, in order to get outside it, Benjamin has recourse to an understanding of language that is quite different from that of other theorists and of his contemporaries. In order to get around the image of mediation, for which language is the tool or object which is acted upon by translation, and potentially a cloak for concepts or meanings which can be conveyed from one language to another in different ways, Benjamin sees language itself as the subject of translation, rather than the medium:

> Dennoch könnte diejenige Übersetzung, welche vermitteln will, nichts vermitteln als die Mitteilung — also Unwesentliches. (p. 9)

> However, a translation that seeks to transmit something can transmit nothing other than a message — that is, something inessential (tr. Rendall, p. 151)

> Yet any translation which intends to perform a transmitting function cannot
> transmit anything but information — hence, something inessential. (tr. Zohn, p.
> 76)

Language is more than information — literature in particular has more in it than information, and information is an inessential part of it. In this chapter I intend to show how Benjamin uses his theological understanding of language, informed by his study of Jewish mysticism, to form an idea of language as something which is or has the potential to be part of the divine, and by which translation could be a process of refining or purifying language itself, rather than mediating information, abstracting thoughts and ideas. Benjamin's rejection of abstraction is a notion to which I shall return.

According to Benjamin, translation is a kind of work on language rather than a way of mediating information. It should aim to see between the cracks of language in search of the divine, it should recombine things surprisingly. Translation is grappling with the otherness of language itself, rather than attempting to pass a message. The notion of unmediated experiences here derives from mysticism, and I am going to try to describe how this works and then consider the same ideas through the lens of materialism (if possible) to see how that can also be affecting them.

In this chapter I will discuss the ways in which Benjamin's discussion of fragments as a metaphor for translation is overdetermined, and the reasons why his critics have often identified Classical, Romantic and modernist sources for it (and combinations thereof). Following on from this, I will consider in more detail his Jewish imagery and, via Gershom Scholem, how Kabbalah and Kabbalistic thought can help us to understand parts of the essay that appear very difficult to grasp, but also how they underlie aspects that at first seem familiar or easy to understand. Then, continuing to think about wholes, fragments and Jewish thought, I will read the *Book of Resemblances*, and Waldrop's book on translating

Jabès, in order to more fully think through Benjamin's metaphor and gesture towards the notion that translation studies, which is very influenced by Christian hermeneutics, might usefully be enriched by considering Jewish ones.

I will now quote from Eliahu J. Klein's translation of the teachings of Rabbi Isaac ben Solomon Luria Ashkenazi, a mystic known as the father of modern Kabbalah, teaching in Palestine in the 16th century, as written down by his disciple Rabbi Hayyim ben Joseph Vital. I do this in order to set out the story of the broken vessels, the understanding that the light scatters and that it is the task of humanity to gather them back together. However it also has the effect of introducing the hermeticism of the text, the experience of reading something which can partially be made sense of as it is, but which equally taps into a network of concepts and ideas (the 'klipot' or 'shells', the realms of Action, Formation and Emanation, and indeed the 'shattering of the Kings', which refers to a story about seven conquered kings of Edom whose names appear in the Book of Genesis 36. 39) which are profoundly unfamiliar. This, I argue, is also the experience of reading 'The Task of the Translator', an essay which is highly allusive but extremely idiosyncratically so, which evokes many concepts which do not inhabit the familiar discourses of literary criticism or translation theory, and which certainly do not seem to belong in an introduction to translations of Baudelaire (the 'pure language', for one, and the reference to this story, as well as the insistence that talking about texts as having a 'life' is in fact perfectly literal and 'unmetaphorical'). Reading this passage from Luria should remind us that Benjamin's frame of reference expands way beyond the essay, and that each word and image he chooses can send us off in a diversity of directions.

> All seven vessels shattered and collapsed,
> for they were not able to contain the light
> expanding *and emanating from*
> within them from sphere to sphere.

[…]

And now, an explanation of the shattering of the Kings:

when all the lights reverberated back to their origins,

there were still sparks within all these vessels;

they collapsed into broken shards and

from these were created the Shells *(Klipot) or external energy*.

Even though food has been clarified

from the Shells, or residue,

and it disappeared above,

there are still sparks of the sacred

left within the vessels,

this is what is left for us to complete,

through our prayers and good deeds and

through saintly souls when they depart from this world.

When saints leave this world and

pass through the realm of Action (Asiyah),

they raise up with them

sacred sparks from the Shells

to the realm of Formation (Yetsirah);

in the same way,

when they ascend toward

the world of Formation

to the world of Creation,

and from the world of Creation

to the world of Emanation,

they *transform* and raise

these sparks and return

this great light to the sublime

and noble place where it originated.[1]

BENJAMIN'S FRAGMENTS

Benjamin's essay is effectively a meditation on a series of metaphors for translation and for the role of the translator, and this structure tends to lead scholars who wish to refer to it to fragment it — a desire to remove one metaphor from the set as though taking it off a shelf to make use of, while leaving the others be.

This type of engagement with Benjamin's work is arguably a consequence of the way it is written. Susan Sontag writes of Benjamin's style:

> His sentences do not seem to be generated in the usual way; they do not entail. Each sentence is written as if it were the first, or the last. […] Mental and historical processes are rendered as conceptual tableaux […] It was as if each sentence had to say everything, before the inward gaze of total concentration dissolved the subject before his eyes.[2]

To write an essay in which each sentence could be the first or the last is to write aphoristically. Some of Benjamin's most famous work, including the 'Theses on the Philosophy of History',[3] is written in small pieces or fragments, and 'The Task of the Translator' participates in this preference, which comes at least in part from his love of the Jena Romantics such as Schlegel, who also preferred to write in a fragmentary or aphoristic style.

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[1] *Kabbalah of Creation: The Mysticism of Isaac Luria, Founder of Modern Kabbalah*, trans. by Eliahu J. Klein, 2nd revised (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2005), pp. 17–20.

[2] Susan Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Vintage, 1981), p. 129.

[3] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Pimlico, 1999), pp. 245–58.

Antoine Berman also comments on Benjamin's style:

> All Benjamin's texts are written at a level where the language is magical, which is
> to say unmediated by reason or illumination. They deal with concepts first by
> rendering them opaque, by withdrawing them from the communal sphere of use.
> In a second step, they render them more discursive, or more illuminating.
> Benjamin borrows almost all of his categories from tradition, but works them over
> in such a manner that they become almost undecodable or hermetic.[4]

In this chapter I intend to attempt to see the metaphors in the essay as a
curated collection which belong together — particularly if they are a collection of
fragments. Even though they do not seem to lead on from one another in a
conventional argument, they contribute to a whole piece which does have
something coherent to say about translation, through this mechanism identified
by Berman of rendering things opaque or obscure in order to use them in new and
original ways. I hope to show how one in particular has its origin in Benjamin's
preoccupation with Jewish mysticism and the stories of the Kabbalah, and to
interrogate how the methods developed by Rabbis and mystics for reading Jewish
scripture can be applied to poetry, as Benjamin seems to imagine. This is certainly
the source of some of the hermeticism that Berman points out. In particular,
Benjamin's insistence that translation is something other than mediation — that to
treat it as mediation or the conveying of information is somehow a betrayal of its
essence — will be central to my reading.

Translation studies — and particularly the ways translation has been written
about in the twentieth century — often has a very Christian undertone, based in
biblical hermeneutics: beginning with St. Jerome and moving through
Schleiermacher and Ricœur. Christianity can be seen as an ultimately translatable

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[4] Antoine Berman, *The Age of Translation: A Commentary on Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator'*, trans. by Chantal Wright (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), p. 29.

religion. In the story of Pentecost, when the Apostles receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues, they are able to be understood by everyone even though their listeners have many different native languages. This can be seen as a reversal of the story of the Tower of Babel, to which we shall return, in which God scatters the people and confuses their language so that they can no longer understand one another. The Bible, according to Christian tradition, is infinitely translatable, and Christian liturgies are not generally in the original scriptural languages of Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew (even Roman Catholicism traditionally used Jerome's Latin translations). With the Reformation the idea developed that the Bible should be available to everybody in the vernacular. This was not a contradiction of the previous view on its translatability but it was an expansion of it, in particular with regard to the development of vernacular liturgies, and missionary activity which has involved translating scripture into more or less every language on earth.

Christian theologian Willie James Jennings in his book *Christian Imagination, Theology and the Origins of Race* criticises 'supersessionism', the Christian belief that Judaism has been 'superseded' by the coming of Christ and that therefore Jews should convert to Christianity.[5] He refers to Jonathan Sheehan's work on the 'Enlightenment Bible', and writes this of the canonical Martin Luther and King James translations of the Christian Bible.

> In Germany and England, the cultural Bible becomes the sacred text of a nation and a people. The cultural Bible is fruitful for the cultivation of society and the formation of civilization; the Bible becomes, especially in Germany, the Ur-text of civilization. Central to the creation of a cultural Bible was the dismissal of Judaism and Jewish people from any claim, not only to the Bible, but to any cultural heritage which might undermine the articulation of the Bible as Christian

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[5] Willie James Jennings, *Christian Imagination, Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

literature. The presence of Jewish people was hermeneutically sealed off from the vision of the Bible as a national treasure, as the cultural expression of the national spirit, and, in the case of Germany, the German soul. [eBook]

Christian textual and hermeneutical practices, including translation, became absolutely hegemonic, and their influence is still felt both directly and indirectly in literary criticism.

In Judaism, however, Hebrew, the language of scripture, is always present in liturgy, although in many traditions it is accompanied by vernacular translation. Learning Hebrew and learning to read scripture in Hebrew is a vital part of Jewish religious education, which, considering that Hebrew was not the primary spoken language of any Jewish community for approximately two thousand years (it was revived as a literary and spoken language during the nineteenth century), means that language difference is a much more everyday part of encounters with sacred texts. The redemption of language, in Judaism, along with the coming of the Messiah, is at best a longed-for future event. Benjamin's attitude to futurity, particularly in his earlier works among which is 'The Task of the Translator', can be properly characterised as messianic, and this chapter will examine how this is borne out in his writing about language and translation. This means that some of the readings of 'The Task of the Translator' which erase its specifically Jewish perspective, particularly the most selective uses to which its fragmentary metaphors are put, risk at least inaccuracy, if not appropriation.

The nature of an essay which goes through a series of metaphors or symbols around one topic is that almost any of them could be used as a hermeneutical key to 'unlock' the text. I have chosen to read this fragmented essay in the light of one metaphor which comes right in the middle, which Derrida punningly refers to as a 'metamphora' because it concerns a broken vase:

> Just as fragments of a vessel, in order to be fitted together, must correspond to
> each other in the tiniest details but need not resemble each other, so translation,

instead of making itself resemble the meaning of the original, must lovingly, and in detail, fashion in its own language a counterpart to the original's mode of intention, in order to make both of them recognizable as fragments of a vessel, as fragments of a greater language. (tr. Rendall, p. 161)

Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another. In the same way a translation, instead of resembling the meaning of the original, must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification, thus making both the original and the translation recognizable as fragments of a greater language, just as fragments are part of a vessel. (tr. Zohn, p. 78)

Wie nämlich Scherben eines Gefäßes, um sich zusammenfügen zu lassen, in den kleinsten Einzelheiten einander zu folgen, doch nicht so zu gleichen haben, so muß, anstatt dem Sinn des Originals sich ähnlich zu machen, die Übersetzung liebend vielmehr und bis ins Einzelne hinein dessen Art des Meinens in der eigenen Sprache sich anbilden, um so beide wie Scherben als Bruchstück eines Gefäßes, als Bruchstück einer größeren Sprache erkennbar zu machen.[6]

According to Benjamin, then, fragments are not so much archaeological artefacts, telling us something about the past, but rather they can be used to make something in the future, or something that will turn into the future. Without that word 'fragment' — say if he had used 'pieces' instead — this quotation might not be about reconstitution at all, but rather about construction — mass production even — about building a vessel from previously manufactured parts, rather than painstakingly gluing together an image of the past.

In fact, of course, Benjamin does not use the word 'fragment' or 'piece' at all, because those are English words and he wrote the essay in German. And the two

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[6] Walter Benjamin, 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers', in *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, ed. by Tillman Rexroth (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1972), pp. 9–21 (p. 18).

German words he employs, both of which Rendall translates as 'fragment', make it abundantly clear that we are looking at a vessel which has been broken and is now in fragments. The first is 'Scherbe', which could also be translated as 'potsherd', and the second is 'Bruchstück', which means a fragment — literally a broken piece. These words indicate what Benjamin is not explicitly mentioning — that in order to have fragments of a vessel, the vessel must once have been whole, and have been broken at some time in the past.

This is what Benjamin refers to as 'recognisable as fragments of a greater language' — they do not even need to be put together, but it should be perceptible how they fit together, and in this way the vessel itself also becomes more perceptible, more recognisable.

The word 'Scherben', potsherds, next to the word 'Gefäß', 'vessel' or 'vase', leads us inevitably to images of classical archaeology. However as the first section of this chapter hopes to delineate, there are other possible ways of interpreting this image, and the overdetermination of Benjamin's use of fragments is a major reason why one particular interpretation, the Kabbalistic one, has been somewhat critically overlooked.

What the translator must do with these fragments, lovingly and in detail, is 'sich anbilden', a word which, at its core, seems to mean 'to fashion oneself onto something' 'build oneself adjacent and joined onto something'. Rendall has translated this expression as 'fashion a counterpart', Zohn uses 'incorporate', neither of which are quite the same image as Benjamin's. And what they must build themselves adjacent to is the 'Art des Meinens', the 'mode of intention' or 'mode of signification' of the original. We have seen in the previous chapter how translations often find themselves adjacent to their originals in parallel text format, but Benjamin's adjoining of original and translation, we will discover in this chapter, occurs on a more mystical level.

MODERNIST FRAGMENTATION

Modernism is a collection of works and ideas that are broadly agreed to have something in common, but what that thing is is definitely more of a Wittgensteinian 'family resemblance' than any kind of coherent category, as there is no single characteristic that makes a text modernist. One thing that critics agree is among the characteristics that signal modernism is the use of fragmentation.[7] However modernist writers write about and use fragmentation in very different ways. We have already seen how Guillaume Apollinaire broke his pages up into tabular space and picture symbols, incorporated his handwriting, and used typefaces to imitate a kind of collage technique. There is also the filmic technique of montage. Clive Scott writes extensively about montage and collage in Chapter 3 of *Translating Apollinaire*, comparing the space of the tabular page to the dynamic space of montage, and chooses in his own translations to cut out photographs and insert parts of them into his pages, the better to create an effect of montage, cutting, fragmentation and reconstitution that he sees as central to his reading of Apollinaire's modernist poetry.

When we consider modernist fragmentation as a literary trope, we very often associate it with objectives which are quite different from Benjamin's. One of the kinds of genealogy that modernist fragmentation has is a deep concern with canonicity, with making something out of the fragments of the past. The modernist fragment points to a wholeness which has been lost. It is also often citational. In T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land', the use of fragments from many texts presents itself as 'a heap of broken images' and yet also serves to anchor the text in the Western lyrical tradition, complete with its Orientalism in the Sanskrit words at the very end.[8] 'These fragments have I shored against my ruin', another

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[7] See, for example, Rebecca Varley-Winter, *Reading Fragments and Fragmentation in Modernist Literature* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2018).

[8] Thomas Stearns Eliot, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961), pp. 51–68.

line from 'The Waste Land' often quoted in the context of modernist

fragmentation,[9] introduces the idea of the ruin, as well as fragments as a way to

preserve something which would otherwise be entirely lost. There is a nostalgia to

these fragments, the idea of a past in which things were whole and unfragmented,

which is now only accessible via these fragments. This nostalgia, which could be

seen to be provoked by rapid changes in social structure and technological

possibilities, also participates in right-wing rhetoric of purification and restoration

of that impossible golden age. An example where this happens in a translation

context is Ezra Pound's translations, to which we will now briefly turn.

Pound effects a kind of double looking back in his translation (c. 1914) of

Joachim Du Bellay's 1558 poem, 'Nouveau Venu, qui cherches Rome en Rome'.

Du Bellay's poem is already a translation of a 1554 neo-Latin poem 'De Roma' by

Janus Vitalis, and it caught on very quickly after it was written and was translated

into many European languages, including into English by Spenser.

> Nouveau venu, qui cherches Rome en Rome
> Et rien de Rome en Rome n'apperçois,
> Ces vieux palais, ces vieux arcz que tu vois,
> Et ces vieux murs, c'est ce que Rome on nomme.
>
> Voy quel orgueil, quelle ruine: & comme
> Celle qui mist le monde sous ses loix,
> Pour donter tout, se donta quelquefois,
> Et devint proye au temps, qui tout consomme.

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[9] For example, as in David Tracy, 'Fragments: The Spiritual Situation of Our Times', in *God, the Gift and Postmodernism*, ed. by John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, Indiana Series in the Philosophy of Religion (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 170–84 (p. 174).

On Eliot, Benjamin and fragments, Tracy also notes that 'Incarnation becomes in Eliot the "hint half guessed, the hint half understood," and it is that that returns an eschatological, even messianic notion to Eliot's use of fragment. That exactly parallels Benjamin's messianic, which insists upon the disruption of eschatology'. (p. 183)

Rome de Rome est le seul monument,

Et Rome a vaincu seulement.

Le Tybre seul, qui vers la mer s'enfuit,

Reste de Rome. O mondaine inconstance!

Ce qui est ferme, est par le temps destruit

Et ce qui fuit, au temps fait resistance.[10]

O thou newcomer who seek'st Rome in Rome

And find'st in Rome no thing thou canst call Roman;

Arches worn old and palaces made common

Rome's name alone within these walls keeps home.

Behold how pride and ruin can befall

One who hath set the whole world 'neath her laws,

All-conquering, now conquered, because

She is Time's prey, and Time conquereth all.

Rome that art Rome's one sole last monument,

Rome that alone hast conquered Rome the town,

Tiber alone, transient and seaward bent,

Remains of Rome. O world, thou unconstant mime!

That which stands firm in thee Time batters down,

And that which fleeteth doth outrun swift Time.[11]

Du Bellay's poem concerns a Renaissance traveller looking at contemporary Rome in an attempt to envisage the magnificence of Classical Rome — 'Celle qui mist le monde sous ses loix' — 'she who put the world beneath her laws', but

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[10] *Lyrics of the French Renaissance: Marot, Du Bellay, Ronsard*, trans. by Norman R. Shapiro (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 184.

[11] Ezra Pound, *Personæ: Collected Shorter Poems*, revised edn (London: Faber & Faber, 2001), p. 39.

cannot find any trace of it — 'Et rien de Rome en Rome n'apperçois' — 'and finds nothing of Rome in Rome'. The poem's main conceit appears to be to come as close as possible to superimposing two instances of the word Rome in order to show how Ancient Rome and sixteenth-century Rome take up the same physical space, despite having nothing in common. We see this in the first two lines with the repetition of 'Rome en Rome' — Rome in Rome, one Rome embedded within the other, and in the ninth and tenth lines, at the turn, where we find a couplet, we have 'Rome de Rome', reversing the embedding relationship by declaring modern Rome to be the only monument of Ancient Rome, then in the next line bringing them even closer — 'Rome a vaincu seulement'. Here French scansion insists on an extra syllable, the 'e' which is usually silent in speech is all that comes between the two Romes.

Pound's translation selects an archaising approach — he writes in an imitation of Renaissance English, seemingly disavowing modernity in an attempt to convince the reader they are reading sixteenth-century Du Bellay rather than twentieth-century Pound (for once, he appears to have decided to 'make it old'). However, there is a moment in the seventh line of Pound's translation which brings the archaic language into tension with modern pronunciation of English — 'All-conquering, now conquered, because'. Pound, unlike say Spenser, is writing in a time when it would be pretty unusual to pronounce 'conquered' with three syllables, and this line has the potential to create a jarring, non-scanning effect. The reader must decide whether to nostalgically imitate the Renaissance or read against it — a moment where past and present are layered on top of one another as surely as Du Bellay layers Rome on Rome.

Here we become aware that Pound is looking back with almost as much nostalgia on Du Bellay's Renaissance attempt to reconstruct Rome among its ruins as Du Bellay is on the Classical Rome he fails to reconstruct. The Renaissance project of rebuilding and reconstituting classical knowledge, architecture and culture could not succeed in doing exactly that. Pound is looking back twice — on

a moment of reassessment of classicism, an attempt at reconstruction — and to the past which that was trying to reconstruct.

The future contained in this double nostalgia is one that would attempt to rebuild the Rome of Ancient Rome's own nostalgia — the Golden Augustan age which had up to this point nearly always been taken at face-value, its artists not considered propagandists. Although this translation is too early in Pound's career to be directly referring to them, there is a foreshadowing of the way Mussolini in particular, but also Hitler, considered Augustan Rome a model for their own regimes.

Translation can often be interpreted as an intervention in a struggle to possess the past, an attempt to claim the fragments, to become the subject of the archaeological exercise as well as the excavator. Pound can be seen to be claiming Du Bellay's nostalgia, to position himself at one end of a straight line that runs from Virgil and Augustus through Du Bellay and the Renaissance.

We can see that this approach to ruins and fragments, highly modernist even as it is disconcertingly archaising, is very different to Benjamin's, and in fact has very different influences. Benjamin offers a mode of engagement with fragments of the past which is future-oriented, at a time when the classical future, and the question of what it means to assimilate a past, would soon be disastrously reenvisaged as part of a fascist project. One key difference is that Benjamin does not pretend to own his future, or indeed to be able to understand what it looks like: there is no blueprint, the form of the vessel once rebuilt remains a mystery until enough fragments have been fitted together to reveal its shape.

Modernist fragmentation is highly overdetermined in that it has many possible origins and points of departure. It also refuses to be tied down to a single politics: although for Pound and Eliot it appears to be rooted in nostalgia, Benjamin engages with fragmentation in a very different way, and one which is not at all incompatible with his commitment to Marxism. Although he is influenced by classical fragments, his source for them is mostly to be found in the

thinkers of German Romanticism, particularly Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel and the circle of thinkers from Jena University, about whom he wrote his Ph.D. thesis. Indeed, as we shall see, Benjamin's preoccupation with fragments is usually traced to these figures.

ROMANTIC FRAGMENTS

One key set of intertexts for Benjamin's view of fragments is the writings of the circle of writers who practiced German Romanticism at Jena University between about 1798 and 1804. Indeed, later in the translation essay, Benjamin refers to classical translations by Hölderlin, who was at one time a member of the Jena circle. Most central to the connection between Jena Romanticism and fragments is Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel.

Fragments were the preferred mode of expression for Schlegel. He seems to have treated them rather like the ruins that used to be constructed in Romantic gardens, to manufacture melancholy and nostalgia, but he also saw fragments as a way to say things which were not worked-through ideas but rather, as we will consider, 'seeds' which relate more to the future than the past. Fragments for Schlegel are a stylistic choice, rejecting the coherence of the essay with its expectation of a clearly set out dialectic or argument.

In particular, Schlegel rules out any bringing together of fragments to form a larger unit, using this memorable image of a porcupine:

> 206. A fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine.[12]

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[12] Friedrich Schlegel, 'Athenäum Fragments', in *Philosophical Fragments* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 18–93 (p. 45).

> 206. Ein Fragment muß gleich einem kleinen Kunstwerke von der umgebenden Welt ganz abgesondert und in sich selbst vollendet seyn wie ein Igel.[13]

But here we have a small translation mystery to solve — in versions of this fragment, the German word Igel tends to be translated as 'porcupine', but it does not only mean a porcupine: it can also be a different small spiky animal native to Europe, and according to an extremely informal poll of native modern German speakers, the image evoked by the word 'Igel' is not a porcupine, but a hedgehog.

Like porcupines, and also like fragments, hedgehogs are all about their edges — they cannot be approached too closely, nor can they approach one another (at least, not from the sides). A hedgehog's spines are for protection, and its particular skill is to roll into a small spiky ball when threatened. Schlegel's image suggests this defensive ball, which he sees as being 'entirely isolated from the surrounding world', resisting any contact with the outside.

However the reason for insisting on a hedgehog is not simply translational correctness. In fact the hedgehog leads us to an intertext for Schlegel — a certain fragment of Archilochus concerning the Hedgehog and the Fox.

> πόλλ' οἶδ' ἀλώπηξ, ἀλλ' ἐχῖνος ἓν μέγα ("a fox knows many things, but a hedgehog one important/big thing").[14]

In Erasmus's Adagia from 1500, the expression is recorded as 'Multa novit vulpes, verum echinus unum magnum'.[15]

By invoking this fragment, Schlegel's statement appears to insist upon applying itself not only to his own influential fragments, published in the Jena

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[13] Friedrich Schlegel, 'Athenäums-Fragmente', in *Schriften Zur Literatur*, ed. by Wolfdietrich Rasch (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1972), pp. 25–83 (p. 45).

[14] Archilochus, Semonides, and Hipponax, *Greek Iambic Poetry*, ed. & trans. by Douglas E. Gerber, Loeb Classical Library 259 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 216.

[15] Desiderius Erasmus, *Adages, Volume 2*, trans. by Margaret Mann Philips, Collected Works of Erasmus (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), XXXI, p. 397.

journal, the classically-titled Athenaeum, but also to classical fragments that were not written as such, but have become fragmented over the course of history. For Schlegel, there is a singularity to a fragment, a one-ness — fragments cannot be put back together because their edges are too prickly, they would encroach painfully upon one another, damaging each other by their nearness. Fragments also possess this oneness in their ability to know, or to tell, 'one important thing' or 'one big thing'.

Simon Critchley in his book *'Very Little...Almost Nothing'* asserts that the Jena Romantic view of fragments is naive, and forms part of an ultimately failed philosophical project, and it is useful to examine his view in the light of the question of whether fragments can or should be fitted together. He writes:

> The naïveté of romanticism is the faith in fragments as seeds of the future, in fragments as the possibility that the future might have a future, in fragments as the possibility of possibility. This is very little...this is almost nothing.[16]

To have faith in fragments as seeds, it is necessary to admit the possibility that they might grow into something. This is different from Benjamin's image, which is of labouring at the fragments in order to fit them together, exploring the edges in order to make edges that correspond. Translation is not an organic process like growing a seed, it is a creative endeavour like writing a poem. For Benjamin, hoping to grow a future out of fragments will not do — the fragments must first be revealed as such — 'recognised as fragments' by being made to fit together. For Critchley, instead of one big thing there is 'very little...almost nothing'. The multiplication of the word 'possibility' — 'the possibility of possibility' — serves as a retreat from the future: perhaps the future appears small

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[16] Simon Critchley, *Very Little...Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature*, Warwick Studies in European Philosophy (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 117.

because it is far away? This sense of distance from the future, and extreme uncertainty, will return to haunt us presently.

Romantic fragments as fragments of future rather than of past, however, are the opposite of Pound and Eliot's modernist fragments, and to recognise Benjamin as influenced by Schlegel is one route to seeing how his fragments come to be so much about the future, the putting-together. Romanticism is also obsessed with the notion of transcendence, and for Schlegel this comes with his thought on the subject of irony.

For Schlegel, irony has the possibility of opening a text up to infinity. In a literary work, narrative or dramatic irony works by adding an extra layer of awareness, forcing the text to operate on more than one level for the audience and with a new layer or level there is the consciousness of the possibility for even more layers of irony to emerge. Manfred Frank summarises Schlegel's concept of irony as follows:

> In order to become comprehensible, that which is pure must limit itself; any border contradicts the essential infinity of that which is pure, however; therefore it must always overstep the limits which it sets to itself, and then limit itself again, and then overstep these limits, and so on and on. This is Schlegel's model of irony. He speaks of "a divided spirit," which emerges from "self limitation, therefore as a result of self-creation and self-destruction" (KA II: 149, Nr. 28). This happens in the following way: the limits conflict with the infinite activity, which itself dismisses any limit imposed upon it. Precisely this surpassing of all self-imposed limits is what Schlegel calls irony.[17]

By 'surpassing all self-imposed limits', irony allows the text to tend towards infinity.

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[17] Manfred Frank, 'Lecture 12: On Schlegel's Role in the Genesis of Early German Romantic Theory of Art', in *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, trans. by Elizabeth Millán-Zaibert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), pp. 215–16.

For Benjamin, language also tends towards the infinite or transcendent, and, importantly, as with Schlegel, it does so by multiplying — just as for Schlegel it is the way one extra layer of meaning lays open the possibility of many, for Benjamin the opening out of one text into multiple translational afterlives is the main way the multiplicity of languages can approach the transcendent wholeness of the pure language.

> "Philosophy is the true home of irony, which might be defined as logical beauty," Schlegel writes in *Lyceumfragment* 42: "for wherever men are philosophizing in spoken or written dialogues, and provided they are not entirely systematic, irony ought to be produced and postulated." The task of a literary work with respect to irony is, while presenting an inherently limited perspective, nonetheless to open up the possibility of the infinity of other perspectives: "Irony is, as it were, the demonstration [*epideixis*] of infinity, of universality, of the feeling for the universe" (KA 18.128); irony is the "clear consciousness of eternal agility, of an infinitely teeming chaos" (*Ideas* 69).[18]

If we look at these quotations, it becomes slightly clearer that translation might work a bit like irony — with irony there is always a gap, a chasm — it creates layers, and makes the singular multiple. Translation also does this. So does fragmentation. According to Simon Critchley:

> Irony is the expression of the double bind at the heart of the human condition. It is the recognition of the simultaneous necessity and impossibility of complete communication, 'Whoever desires the infinite doesn't know what he desires. But one can't turn this sentence around' (CF 47 — a wonderful example of ironical bathos).. (p. 114)

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[18] Allen Speight, 'Friedrich Schlegel', ed. by Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2016 <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/schlegel/>.

Here again we can see a link to translation — the layering of meaning and the emphasis on plurality do the same work as translation in refuting definitive or singular meaning. Another aspect of Schlegel's irony that we see here is that it introduces a new temporality — a tending towards the infinite and universal as opposed to the specific moment, and the bathetic pull of the banal or everyday.

So for Schlegel, irony both rejects immediacy in favour of a higher level of mediation, of pulling a reader out of their sense of oneness in text or in language, and in this expresses both a desire for the infinite and the thwarting of that desire. The way this view figures transcendence as both only available via mediation and unavailable because of mediation is the irony of ironies. For Benjamin, as we will see, in his essay 'On Language as Such and the Language of Man', the ultimate purpose of language is the communication of the essence of humanity to the infinity of God through the naming of things in nature, however since the Fall that purpose has been obscured in favour of using language to communicate among ourselves. The desire for transcendence has a fulfilment in a Messianic event which has to be imagined in the future.

BENJAMIN'S CRITICS

Having discussed some possible origins and significances for Benjamin's use of fragmentation, it will now be useful to return to 'The Task of the Translator', and to consider the views of some critics who have written about this puzzling essay.

German critic Rainer Rochlitz, in his book *The Disenchantment of Art*, argues that there has been a lack of attempts to read Benjamin's works as expounding a particular coherent philosophy of language and aesthetics, and that this book sets out to fill that gap. In the chapter on philosophy of language, he splits Benjamin's works into two periods: the first, which is dominated by theology, and the second

phase which he characterises as materialist. The first period is also the time when Benjamin was most preoccupied with language.

In attempting to understand Benjamin's philosophy of language, Rochlitz turns to the early essay 'On Language as Such and the Language of Man', which was published posthumously in English (translated by Edmund Jephcott) in 1978 in the collection 'Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings' though it was written in 1916, and concerns a reading of the creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2.[19]

Rochlitz's main criticism of Benjamin stems from his desire for Benjamin's philosophy of language to be coherent and apply in multiple contexts —Adamic naming, that is, Benjamin's assertion that human language has its origin in Adam's having named all the creatures in the Garden of Eden, is difficult to apply to most kinds of communicative language and conversation, and Benjamin is not concerned with this. Rochlitz points out the way that Benjamin, in 'The Task of the Translator', mixes (he says 'confuses') two kinds of writing: literary or poetic language, and scripture:

> In a manner characteristic of his entire aesthetic, Benjamin confuses the level of the imperative inherent in artistic activity with that of its function in the historical process; he confuses "good translation" with what contributes to the "growth of languages" toward their messianic end, the effacement of Babelian confusion. These two merits can coincide only indirectly, through the growing suppleness of a language that is more and more "welcoming" of foreign ways of signifying.[20]

Rochlitz's critiques make it clearer how Benjamin's theory attempts to hold in tension the universalising aim of translation and the specificity of languages — he

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[19] Walter Benjamin, 'On Language as Such and the Language of Man', in *Selected Writings 1913–1926*, ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), I, 62–74.

[20] Rainer Rochlitz, *The Disenchantment of Art: The Philosophy of Walter Benjamin*, trans. by Jane Marie Todd (New York: Guilford Press, 1996), pp. 29–30.

does this by attempting as far as possible to disregard instrumental uses of language, its mediating and communicative functions, and focus on the words themselves, the languages in their entire specificity. Thus when he compares scripture to poetry, it is clear that for him both these kinds of texts participate in the pure language, but there does seem to be a melding of categories.

Two essays attempt to give an account of 'The Task of the Translator' more or less on its own; one is the published lecture by Paul de Man, 'Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator"';[21] the other Carol Jacobs' chapter 'The Monstrosity of Translation' in her book *In the Language of Walter Benjamin*.[22] Perhaps inevitably because of the sensitivity to loss that comes with close-reading a translation of a text about translation, they are both critical of Harry Zohn, albeit in different ways: de Man points out several moments where both Zohn's and the French translation by Maurice de Gandillac appear to say the opposite of the German:

> Even the translators, who certainly are close to the text, who had to read it closely to some extent, don't seem to have the slightest idea of what Benjamin is saying; so much so that when Benjamin says certain things rather simply in one way —for example he says that something is not — the translators, who at least know German well enough to know the difference between something is and something is not, don't see it! (p. 79)

For de Man, the moments where the translators fail are telling in themselves. They are not merely moments of inevitable translation loss but actual mistakes, failures to transmit things which, he feels, should be easy to convey, such as negation. De Man wishes to interpret these errors as particularly telling about the

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[21] Paul de Man, '"Conclusions": Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator"', in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 73–105.

[22] Carol Jacobs, *In the Language of Walter Benjamin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

essay as a whole, and what about it eludes readers in general as well as translators in particular.

For Jacobs, Zohn's failure comes under the more inevitable category of translation loss, and can be understood through Benjamin's own framework:

> In [this] passage, […] Harry Zohn remains far less "true" to the original, far less "literal" than the text demands. This is because he retains a significant respect for his own linguistic usage, and traditionally, that is to his credit. Understandably then, his translation results in phrases such as "the same thing," "the same object," where the German speaks neither of objects nor things. (p.81)

So Zohn misses the mark because he is insufficiently literal, according to the meaning of 'literality' set out by Benjamin — he is failing to transform English to account for the specificity of German. Holding the translators to Benjamin's own standards seems a useful way to critique them, although this first involves establishing what those standards might entail.

De Man begins with an account of modernity that extensively quotes Gadamer, then appears to criticise Benjamin for not living up to it, referring to messianism as 'regressive' and criticising its 'naïveté':

> The first impression you receive of Benjamin's text is that of a messianic, prophetic pronouncement, which would be very remote from the cold critical spirit which, from Hegel to Gadamer, is held up as the spirit of modernity.
>
> […] at first sight, Benjamin would appear as highly regressive. He would appear as messianic, prophetic, religiously messianic, in a way that may well appear to be a relapse into the naivete denounced by Gadamer. (p. 76)

Although it is not entirely clear why he is so insistent that Benjamin measure up to the standards of modernity proposed by Gadamer, it is at least certain that de Man does not consider reading this text through a theological or mystical lens to be particularly valid or interesting. Here I strongly disagree. De Man's reading

stems from a certain kind of atheism which regards theism and religion as naive and regressive, resulting in a reading of the essay as a whole which requires that it say one particular kind of thing and misses the ways in which it says the opposite of that.

What he proposes instead is a reading that would make Benjamin into a proto-deconstructionist (as opposed to a reading that aims to deconstruct Benjamin's essay). Arguing that 'Translation is also, says Benjamin, more like criticism or like the theory of literature than like poetry itself.' (p. 82), he says:

> They [critical philosophy, literary theory, history] disarticulate, they undo the original, they reveal that the original was always already disarticulated. They reveal that their failure, which seems to be due to the fact that they are secondary in relation to the original, reveals an essential failure, an essential disarticulation which was already there in the original. They kill the original, by discovering that the original was already dead. (p. 84)

This seems an extraordinary assertion, considering how forceful Benjamin is in his insistence that the original text is unmetaphorically alive, as is the translation. However it is easier to understand if we notice that de Man is using the deconstructionist technique of reading the text against itself; for de Man, Benjamin's images are not what they seem:

> generally Benjamin gets praised for the magnificence of his images, and so on and so forth; but they are quite perverse in the way in which they undo the claim that is associated with them. (pp. 97–98)

Since de Man regards the explicit claims of the essay's theism to be 'naïve', it is not surprising that he wishes to read its claims as self-negating. However I argue that this is not dissimilar to the error he identifies in Gandillac's translation, of reading a negation where none exists. Benjamin's images are complex and their sources are multiple. They do not always work with one another but each is worth

serious consideration on its own merits before deciding that it contradicts itself. Additionally, some images, such as the broken vase, have a deeper layer that belies their surface simplicity to point elsewhere for interpretation, in this case Luria's story of the shattered vessels.

De Man often refers to language as being 'non-human' or 'inhuman', as indeed according to deconstruction as conceived by Derrida, language is beyond the individual, but he does not at any point engage with Benjamin's claim that language is transcendental or divine. It is clear that he has not read or is not interested in engaging with Benjamin's 'On Language as Such and the Language of Man'. In this essay Benjamin claims that language is not restricted to humans — all kinds of things can have a language, but the capacity to name other things before God is unique to human language. De Man writes:

> The translation is a way of reading the original which will reveal those inherent weaknesses in the original, not in the sense that the original is then no longer a great work or anything, or that it wouldn't be worthy of admiration or anything of the sort, but in a much more fundamental way: that the original is not canonical, that the original is a piece of ordinary language, in a way —prosaic, ordinary language — which as such belongs as much to that category as [to the category of original]. It is desacralized. De-canonized, desacralized, in a very fundamental way. (p. 98)

This is not what Benjamin's essay says on the surface; although he is concerned with the status of the original and the translation, the preoccupation with canonicity is entirely de Man's. Benjamin's notion of translation as a mode indicates that he sees translation as transforming the status of the translated text and the original text — the latter gains an afterlife, the former constitutes that afterlife. It is undeniable that existing in different versions affects the status of the original text. However it is not clear that for Benjamin the nature of this difference has anything to do with disenchantment or desacralization, as de Man suggests. In

order for this to be the case, language would need to be sacred to begin with and then fall in time. For Benjamin, human language is always already an earthly thing shot through with sparks of the divine, and in time can be caused to tend towards its messianic redemption in the form of the 'pure language'. Of course de Man here is trying to read the essay itself, rather than the author's intentions. However without taking the theology of the essay seriously in any way, it is difficult to see how any conclusions could be reached about 'pure language'.

Indeed, when de Man does come to consider the 'pure language', he is drawn to the image of the broken vessel:

> What we have here is an initial fragmentation; any work is totally fragmented in relation to this *reine Sprache*, with which it has nothing in common, and every translation is totally fragmented in relation to the original. The translation is the fragment of a fragment, is breaking the fragment — so the vessel keeps breaking, constantly — and never reconstitutes it; there was no vessel in the first place, or we have no knowledge of this vessel, or no awareness, no access to it, so for all intents and purposes there has never been one. (p. 91)

This image of endless fragmenting of fragments reads into Benjamin's image his earlier images of plurality and after life, such that each translation further fragments the original, resulting in an endless process of fragmentation with none of Benjamin's Messianic sense of futurity and wholeness. Indeed he seems to make this into a Derridean image in which we would be mostly concerned with the lost original, and have it denied to us, only to discover that it is a fabrication. This is how Derrida describes the origins of words and signs, which only come about through repetition and are thus necessarily fragmentary although not part of some greater whole that existed in the past. But this is simply not what Benjamin's image is doing. Contrast Beatrice Hanssen's more sympathetic reading of this same passage in her essay 'Language and Mimesis in Walter Benjamin's Work':

Benjamin's symbol pointed to a harmonious participatory relation among fragments and the whole of which they were a part. All languages existed in a symbolical intentionality toward pure language, which in turn shone forth through multiple languages, much as the kabbalistic Zohar, or book of splendor, exalted the luminous presence of the creative Word in the vessel of language-shards.[23]

Firstly, rather than a metaphor she understands the vase as a 'symbol', standing for something else. Secondly it is a reversal of de Man's nihilism. Hanssen refers to the Zohar, the book on which most Jewish mysticism is based. Instead of there being no vessel, the fragments form a container for the 'luminous presence of the divine' even in their broken state.

Hanssen's reading reveals the weakness of approaches which do not take into account the Jewish context of the essay. While Rochlitz seems to make the error of overly systemising Benjamin's thought into a type of philosophical programme it may have aspired to but did not attain, de Man abstracts it beyond usefulness into a vehicle for his own version of deconstruction and forecloses its many possibilities in service to this project.

Again, in contrast with Rochlitz and De Man, Carol Jacobs' reading is much more concerned to get to the heart of Benjamin's thought. She summarises his essay as follows:

For Benjamin, translation does not transform original foreign language into one we may call our own, but rather, renders radically foreign that language we believe to be ours. (p. 76)

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[23] Beatrice Hanssen, 'Language and Mimesis in Walter Benjamin's Work', in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin*, ed. by David S. Ferris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 54–72 (p. 57).

She also writes about Benjamin's essay in terms of Schlegel's irony, identifying two structuring 'ironies', the first being that although the essay is called 'The Translator's Task', it barely talks about the translator as a human agent at all, but rather focuses on things that happen in translations, and on texts as living things, on the level of language and the 'pure language':

> The translatability of the text excludes the realm of man and, with him, the translator, the figure to which Benjamin's essay is devoted. The *Aufgabe* of the translator is less his task than his surrender: he is *aufgegeben*, "given up", "abandoned." This is the essay's initial irony. (pp. 87–8)

Jacobs goes on to write about scripture as the 'second irony', insofar as it is ironic than an essay purportedly about poetry translation should conclude by saying that the best subject for translation is scripture. However, she only mentions Benjamin's quoting of John's Gospel and not Jewish scripture at all. Indeed she claims that 'The Task of the Translator' can be read as a 'translation' of the first passage of John's Gospel, 'the text to which Benjamin's clearly refers when it speaks of the Holy Scriptures' (p. 89), and in a way it can, but only insofar as the passage of John must also be read as a translation of Jewish ideas about the Messiah and what it means for God to exist on earth — in Judaism this is as Word and as text, and the Word is in Hebrew and the letters and texts are Hebrew letters and texts. In Benjamin's essay, John's Gospel is quoted in Greek. Transliteration is important for the interlinear scriptures, indeed perhaps as important as translation.

Jacobs' close-reading of Benjamin's German draws attention to his organic metaphors, in particular the idea of the 'kernel' or 'seed' of the pure language, which he defines as 'that in translation which, in its turn is untranslatable', and which translation is supposed to help 'ripen'. Jacobs points out, however, that:

for all this apparently abundant flourishing, at no point does translation relate organically to the text that precedes it. […] Translation denies the linear law of nature in order to practise the rule of textuality. […] Nowhere in the essay does translation develop into the future promised by the germ, the kernel, the seed.' (p. 77)

This presents a more pessimistic view of the possibility of Benjaminian translation than Hanssen's. It also recalls Critchley on 'fragments as seeds of the future', and for Jacobs these seeds also fail to germinate. This view points to something fundamentally abstracting about the practice of translation, and we will return to this question of abstraction in our discussion of Benjamin's philosophy of language in the essay 'On Language as Such and the Language of Man'.

Andrew Benjamin has a chapter on Benjamin's use of Kabbalah in his book *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy*. In it he has this to say about the image of the broken vase:

> Within 'the world of tikkun' the futural vessel posits the possibility of unity and totality in which the parts of the vessel remain as parts but within a generalized belonging together. Fundamental to such a totality is the presence of difference. In other words instead of redemption demanding or giving rise to a similitude — a thematized or synthesized sameness — it involves a harmony which is the belonging together of differences. […] Their difference is not effaced in the totality. And yet the fragments are recognizable as part of a larger or greater vessel.[24]

The way this account combines the idea of totality with the possibility of internal difference is very convincing as regards Benjamin's ideas about

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[24] Andrew Benjamin, *Translation and the Nature of Philosophy: A New Theory of Words* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), pp. 101–2.

translation. 'The world of tikkun' is a reference to *tikkun olam*, 'repairing the world', the theological idea that comes from Isaac Luria's story of the broken vessels, that the fragments are indeed concerned with the future more than with the past, because humanity is tasked with gathering the fragments and fitting them together. When Benjamin evokes this image, he is bringing into play all these ideas of similarity, resemblance, difference and unity which are inherent in the concept of fragmentation. It is important to Andrew Benjamin that even in their abstracted state, the fragments do not merge into an indistinguishable mass: even in the repaired vase, the cracks show, and the pieces remain in their different shapes and sizes as they form parts of a not-undifferentiated whole.

In addition to Rochlitz, Jacobs, de Man, Hanssen and Andrew Benjamin, two French writers have written extensively and specifically about 'The Task of the Translator'. Antoine Berman, the noted French translation theorist, wrote a book-length commentary, *L'age de la traduction*, which has recently been translated into English by Chantal Wright as *The Age of Translation*. Jacques Derrida's essay *Des tours de babel* also engages at length with Benjamin's essay.

One striking thing in these two French receptions of Benjamin is their use of the word 'amphora' to describe the vessel. This is taken from the Maurice de Gandillac translation. Derrida is clear that he is working with Gandillac as much as with Benjamin, and Berman quotes him alongside the German text throughout, leading Wright to include English translations of Gandillac's French alongside her own English translations of Benjamin's German. The quotation of this passage in *The Age of Translation* thus appears in four versions:

> anstatt dem Sinn des Originals sich ähnlich zu machen, die Übersetzung liebend vielmehr und bis ins Einzelne hinein dessen Art des Meinens in der eigenen Sprache sich anbilden, um so beide wie Scherben ein Bruchstück eines Gefäßes, als Bruchstück einer größeren Sprache erkennbar zu machen.

instead of making itself similar to the meaning of the original, the translation should rather lovingly adopt the way of meaning that the original has within its own language to the very last detail so as to make both broken pieces recognisable as fragments of a greater language, just as shards are fragments of a jug.

au lieu de se rendre semblable au sens de l'original, la traduction doit bien plutôt, dans un mouvement d'amour et jusque dans le détail, faire passer dans sa propre langue le mode de visée de l'original : ainsi, de même que les débris deviennent reconnaissables comme fragments d'une même amphore, original et traductions deviennent reconnaissables comme fragments d'une langue plus grande. (Gandillac 1971: 271–272)

[Literal translation of Gandillac's French translation: instead of making itself similar to the meaning of the original, the translation should rather, in an act of love and in detail, make the mode of intention of the original pass into its own language: thus, in the same way that the broken pieces become recognisable as fragments of the same amphora, the original and the translations become recognisable as fragments of a greater language.] (p. 189)

Wright's use of 'literal' to describe her translation from Gandillac, we must conclude, is to signal that this is a retranslation: simply to translate Benjamin into English will not entirely suffice to read what Berman is commenting upon in his text. And indeed this turns out to be the case, as we can see from the very different translations the two versions give of the German word 'Gefäß'. The closest corresponding word in English to the semantic boundaries of this word would be 'vessel', as 'Gefäß' is a word for a container, particularly a pot or a vase, and is used analogously with the English 'blood vessel' ('Blutgefäß') although unlike the English word 'vessel' it does not appear to be used to mean a ship or boat. In other words it is a broad word with varied connotations, and the specific image of Benjamin's 'vessel' in the reader's mind will depend on how they understand the metaphor. Wright has chosen 'jug', which is slightly more specific than 'Gefäß' but

still fairly general — not all jugs look alike, or are made of the same material. Gandillac, meanwhile, translates the word as 'amphore', which is vastly more specific than the German text: an amphora is a specific type of vessel: it is ancient (amphorae are found across the ancient world, though the name is Greek, meaning 'carried on both sides', due to the characteristic two handles) and it is almost certainly ceramic. Amphorae are among the pots used for Greek vase painting, and the image evoked is decidedly archaeological. In this way, Gandillac's translation forecloses the variety of interpretations available: instead of the overdetermined image of a broken vase or vessel, which I have shown can be interpreted through a variety of different lenses, Gandillac has chosen to elevate one interpretation above the others, and as a result French critics of Benjamin, even ones like Derrida and Berman who can read German, have tended to follow suit.

Derrida is clear that the vase is an archaeological image, a figure of the German reception of classics through romanticism. He makes a pun out of 'metaphor' and 'amphora' — 'metamphora' — and mentions that other German thinkers have used the image of an urn, amphora or vessel to stimulate their own thinking:

> Like the urn which lends its poetic topos to so many meditations on word and thing, from Hölderlin to Rilke and Heidegger, the amphora is one with itself through opening itself to the outside — and this openness opens the unity, renders it possible, and forbids it totality. Its openness allows receiving and giving. If the growth of language must also reconstitute without representing, if that is the symbol, can translation lay claim to the truth? Truth — will that still be the name of that which still lays down the law for a translation?[25]

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[25] Jacques Derrida, 'Des Tours de Babel', in *Difference in Translation*, ed. & trans. by Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 165–207 (p. 190).

In his reading of this image, however, Derrida emphasises the fundamental characteristics of a vase or a vessel: that it is hollow and open to the outside — rather than the specifics of a classical amphora. For him the most interesting thing about this image is the way in which it has the potential to relate to things outside itself. We can see this preoccupation with relationship in his discussion of the word 'lovingly', which for Benjamin describes the manner in which the translator must work on bringing the fragments together:

> Let us accompany this movement of love, the gesture of this loving one (*Liebend*) that is at work in the translation. It does not reproduce, does not restitute, does not represent; as to the essential, it does not *render* the meaning of the original except at the point of contact or caress, the infinitely small of meaning. (p. 190)

This is interesting because it takes seriously the idea that Benjamin's essay might be giving the translator something to do (rather than abandoning them, as Jacobs suggests). And what a translator is supposed to do is to use small gestures, with love. This focus on the affective and active aspect of what it means to make a non-representative translation, one which does not try to communicate the text but instead takes 'sich anbilden', to make something adjacent to or joined to the original, as a prompt for a loving gesture or a caress.

In Berman's commentary on this passage, he also comments on the possible consequences for a translator of Benjamin's assertions:

> From Benjamin's perspective, if the purpose of translation is the creation of pure language, no matter how important the original, it is nonetheless not as important as the purpose of the fulfilment of language. If we attribute this Messianic aim to translation, then we have to say that for the translator, the original is just a pretext to give free flight to the language that it would like to create. This may look like exaggeration on Benjamin's part but it makes sense within the framework of his assertions. (p. 191)

In Berman's reading, the Messianic aim of the 'fulfilment of language' might liberate a translator from a primary fidelity to the original, pointing out the fundamental shift in Benjamin's theory from a translator's obligation to the original text, to their obligation to language itself, and the Messianic redemption of language through the discovery, via translation, of elements of the 'pure language'. Thus the 'free flight' of language Berman envisages is less an act of freedom for the translator, and rather an abstraction or expansion outwards of their field of obligation.

Derrida summarises his own view of this lofty aim of translation as follows:

> It extends the body of languages, it puts languages into symbolic expansion, and symbolic here means that, however little restitution there be to accomplish, the larger, the new vaster aggregate, has still to *reconstitute* something. It is perhaps not a whole, but it is an aggregate in which openness should not contradict unity. (p. 190)

One thing about Isaac Luria's story is that while the image of vessels of light is in one sense strong and clear, it is also a mystery. In this sense it is comparable to the 'pure language' in Derrida's reading: something both extremely material and also fundamentally distant, even untouchable. However, here he is also at pains to emphasise the reconstitution of fragments, in a way that recalls Andrew Benjamin's observation that differentiation is maintained even after the Messianic *tikkun*. For Derrida, the sum of the fragments of the 'greater language' in Benjamin's essay may not be a 'whole', a totality, at all, but the crucial aspect of it is that it remains open, as a vase, to the outside, even as it constitutes a 'unity' made from all of its fragmented parts.

The desire for the infinite and unknowable is key to religious mysticism, as well as being a major trope of Romanticism. It is also linked to fragmentation, as Critchley realises, both in that fragmentation is a figure for the fallen nature of the world and the unattainability of wholeness, and with the idea of faith in

fragments or that fragments can be put together again or used to seed another kind of future.

Benjamin has two sources for his views on fragmentation, as we have seen: the first is Schlegel's Jena Romanticism, with its relationship to classical texts and fragments. The second is Jewish tradition, in particular the mystical stories of the Lurianic Kabbalah, and the influence of his friend Gershom Scholem. Scholem's definition of mysticism is as follows:

> A mystic is a man who has been favored with an immediate, and to him real, experience of the divine, of ultimate reality, or who at least strives to attain such experience. His experience may come to him through sudden illumination, or it may be the result of long and often elaborate preparations. From a historical point of view, the mystical quest for the divine takes place almost exclusively within a prescribed tradition.[26]

We recognise here elements of the Romantic quest for transcendence, but Scholem's insistence on a religious tradition is important, as he wishes to explore mysticism in a historically situated manner, as it operates and claims its authority simultaneously within and outside a tradition and its orthodoxy. Mystics spend their lives meditating in the hope of revelation, or they are transformed into mystics by sudden and unexpected visions. Judaism is a religion in which the central revelation is in the form of a book — the Torah, the Laws of God, given to Moses on Mount Sinai — so Jewish mystics spend their lives reading, and finding new ways to read and find fresh revelation in this book in order to acquire 'immediate […] experience of the divine'.

This notion of immediacy, of relationship with a singular infinite (fragments are plural by definition but they point to a singular whole) is also common to

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[26] Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: Shocken Books, 1969), p. 5.

Romanticism and Jewish mysticism (and mysticism in general). It is also directly adjacent to ideas about translation, which is an act of mediation by definition. Indeed, 'The Task of the Translator' is deeply engaged in an attempt to read translation as something other than mediation, and reading it next to Scholem's work on the Kabbalah (the body of Jewish mystical texts and the practice of Jewish mysticism) can help us understand this preoccupation with mediation and how to avoid or read around it.

BENJAMIN AND JUDAISM

Benjamin's way of thinking about language as a whole can be viewed as an extension of the way practitioners and scholars of Kabbalah, or Jewish mysticism, view the Torah. The Torah is the first five books of the Jewish scripture, also known as the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). The Kabbalistic view of these texts is that, being given by God, they constitute a part of God, specifically the Word of God. Kabbalah is about how God is mediated into the world and how to have an im-mediate access to that process. Linguistically, it requires a version of language in which connections between symbols are allowed to have significance as great or greater than the apparent literal meaning of a text. Benjamin's good friend, the renowned scholar of Jewish mysticism Gershom Scholem writes:

> The Torah, as the Kabbalists conceived it, is consequently not separate from the divine essence, not created in the strict sense of the word; rather, it is something that represents the secret life of God, which the Kabbalistic emanation theory was an attempt to describe. (p. 41)

'Emanations' is a word that describes things that flow from God, a very different process from that by which things are created by God. Isaac Luria writes extensively about how God who filled the world has to withdraw from part of

it/'contract' Himself in order to make room for creation, which is separate from God — a process called *tzimtzum*. The Torah, a kind of divine emanation, is a moment of God reaching out and making contact with creation. For this reason the idea of divine emanations is strongly linked to language. They are also a site of plurality in an infinite and singular God that comes about because of the need for that infinity to come into contact with the material reality of creation.

The process which the Kabbalists described as the emanation of divine energy and divine light was also characterized as the unfolding of the divine language. This gives rise to a deep-seated parallelism between the two most important kinds of symbolism used by the Kabbalists to communicate their ideas. They speak of attributes and of spheres of light; but in the same context they speak also of divine names and the letters of which they are composed. (pp. 35–36) There exists the notion that the Torah, as well as containing sentences and stories, is made up of, or encodes, names of God.

It is time to return to Luria's story about the vessels containing divine light at the creation of the world. This story is told partly to solve the problem that in Genesis 1 God creates first light and afterwards the sun and moon. Luria's story is that God created light as a way to emanate divinity into creation, and poured this light into clay vessels. On their way to earth, the vessels were broken and sparks or shards of light were scattered all over the earth, but especially in the Holy Land. The mission of the Jewish people, therefore, is to gather these sparks because when enough of them have been gathered together the world will be redeemed by the coming of the Messiah. He refers to this act of gathering sparks as *tikkun olam*, the *mitzvah* or commandment to repair the earth.

This image says something unusual about redemption, and indeed about diaspora, at a time when the Jewish people were being expelled from the Iberian peninsula, exiled and uprooted once again. Scholem writes:

> Thus for all its setbacks the history of mankind in its exile is looked upon as a
> steady progress toward the Messianic end. Redemption is no longer looked upon
> as a catastrophe, in which history itself comes to an end, but as the logical
> consequence of a process in which we are all participants. To Luria the coming of
> the Messiah means no more than a signature under a document that we our selves
> write; he merely confirms the inception of a condition that he himself has not
> brought about. (p. 117)

So while all the pieces necessary for redemption come from God, it is up to
people to put them together, to create the necessary conditions for the coming of
the Messiah. This image of the shards of light which must be recuperated in order
to redeem the world is precisely the one Benjamin employs when discussing the
image of the broken vessel. Benjamin performs a classic Kabbalistic leap from
considering light to talking about language — in his image, it is the divine
language that must be recuperated rather than the divine light, but they are two
ways of saying the same thing.

Benjamin writes:

> this pure language — which no longer signifies or expresses anything but rather,
> as the expressionless and creative word that is the intended object of every
> language — all communication, all meaning, and all intention arrive at a level
> where they are destined to be extinguished. (tr. Rendall, pp. 162-3)

Scholem contends:

> the Torah is an absolute and has primacy over all human interpretations, which,
> however deep they may penetrate, can only approximate the absolute
> 'meaninglessness' of the divine revelation. (p. 43)

We can see in these two quotations how meaning is not a concern — the
priority is to transcend meaning. The ultimate identity of the Torah for Kabbalists
is simply as a group of consonants of the Hebrew alphabet. This was the first form

it took — a heap of letters. When the world was created it formed words, but, the scholars reason, they must have taken more than one different form since creation. As evidence for this they cite the various commandments in the book of Leviticus which could not possibly have applied at the time of Adam — for example, we know Adam and Eve were naked in the garden, so the passage in Leviticus forbidding the wearing of mixed fabrics would not have any meaning at that time. Given that the Torah is eternal and yet elements of it have not been applicable for all time, there must be an esoteric essence of the Torah which changes outward form. So at the redemption of the world the Torah will again say something different again, but remain composed of its main elements.

What does this teach us about fragments? It appears to confirm Critchley's assertion that fragments are 'seeds of the future', and contradict Schlegel's that fragments are complete and can stand alone. Letters of the alphabet are fragments. Each alone can stand for anything, and they can be infinitely combined and recombined. For Benjamin, translation is the work of pushing language into new forms, of working at the edges which separate one language from another until they can be seen as part of an original whole. When referring to the translator's work in relation to the fragments of the broken vessel, he uses the expression 'sich anbilden', a coinage which has the meaning 'to form onto something else', ''to fashion oneself onto something' 'build oneself adjacent and joined onto something'. As a model for what translation is doing, this is oriented entirely towards the future. Much like Luria's story, there is very little curiosity about how the vessel came to be broken: things just break sometimes. The task of the translator is to participate in recuperating the loss, in putting the vessel back together, just as for Isaac Luria it is the task of the Jewish people in their diaspora to repair the world.

ON LANGUAGE AS SUCH AND THE LANGUAGE OF MAN

In Rosmarie Waldrop's translation of *Le Livre des Ressemblances* by Edmond Jabès, which will form the basis for discussion in the next part of this chapter, we may read a poetic paraphrase of Genesis 1, in which God creates the universe by speaking into the void:

> The void is waiting for vocabulary.
>
> In being said—or not said—the void is voided.[27]

It is useful to read 'The Task of the Translator' through the lens of Benjamin's previously-mentioned essay 'On Language as Such and the Language of Man'. In this essay, Benjamin sets out his view of the true nature of language, eschewing the common understanding that language is for 'communicating factual subject matter to other men' as 'bourgeois', and instead proposing that language requires 'no means, no object, and no addressee of communication. It means: *in the name, the mental being of man communicates itself to God.'*(p. 65).

Hanssen summarises the aims of this essay when she writes:

> Neither scientific, political, nor ordinary linguistic communication captured Benjamin's imagination but an entirely different magical communicability, which manifested itself in an organic language movement that transpired among God and humans, humans and things, nature and God. The name of this magical communication among various layers, registers, realms, states of existence, and levels of intentionality, was translation, or translatability. (p. 58)

So translation is fundamental not only to human experience of language but to language itself in its most universal and abstract sense.

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[27] Edmond Jabès, *The Book of Resemblances*, trans. by Rosmarie Waldrop (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1990), p. 54.

Benjamin's theological account of language and meaning-in-language in this essay is brought out through a reading of Genesis 1 and 2. He discusses the difference between naming and creating, positing that the language of God is all about verbs, which is how the world was created. Adam is made in God's image and with some of God's creative powers but a limited version — Adam's language is all about nouns and naming, and specifically, as above, naming things before God, communicating humanity's interiority directly to God in names — 'it is therefore the linguistic being of man to name things' (p. 64). When accounting for human language Benjamin views the Fall as a movement from concreteness to abstraction. Good and Evil, being abstract nouns, and indeed tending to name actions rather than natural objects, are the thing that breaks language:

> the origin of abstraction, too, as a faculty of the spirit of language, is to be sought
> in the Fall. For good and evil, being unnameable and nameless, stand outside the
> language of names, which man leaves behind precisely in the abyss opened by this
> question. (p. 72)

Abstraction, then, a little like Schlegel's irony, is what removes us from immediacy and adds layers of mediation to communication with God. Benjamin links this to judgement, which in Kabbalistic thought is seen to be an important feature of God only in the context of fallen Man — in the prelapsarian time, and in the future Messianic time, judgement will not appear as an important characteristic of God. Hence judgement, abstraction, mediation (which are all characteristics of translation) come about in the language of the Fall, which makes translation necessary:

> This immediacy in the communication of abstraction came into being as judgment,
> when, in the Fall, man abandoned immediacy in the communication of the
> concrete—that is, name—and fell into the abyss of the mediateness of all
> communication. (p. 72)

Hanssen points out that this fall into abstraction is also connected to the idea of mimesis:

> At bottom, Benjamin concluded, the Fall initiated an idolatrous practice of
> mimesis (here: inauthentic similarity), the spectacle of parody, in which fallen,
> mediate language imitated original immediacy. Abstraction now ruled in logical
> and philosophical propositions no less than in the judgments and sentences
> dispensed in the name of the secular law. (pp. 61–62)

Imitation as a way of experiencing some kind of similarity and attendant closeness to the divine is explored extensively in the *Book of Resemblances*, to which our discussion will shortly return.[28]

Interestingly from the point of view of mediation and translation, Benjamin appears to see mourning in the experience of being named, as though to be named is to be circumscribed and denied other possibilities:

> That which mourns feels itself thoroughly known by the unknowable. To be
> named—even when the namer is godlike and blissful—perhaps always remains
> an intimation of mourning. (p. 73)

So naming and being named have a relationship with knowing, and specifically with a kind of knowledge that comes from outside the self. Naming, the act of selecting a referent and tethering it to an object, also parallels the process

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[28] It is interesting to note at this juncture that a common interpretation of *tikkun olam* involves repairing the world by removing every hint of idolatry, such that God is at no point and in no place being misrepresented, allowing God then to become present. This comes from the use of the phrase (לְתַקֵּן עוֹלָם, *letaken 'olam*) in the congregational prayer the Aleinu — 'Therefore we put our hope in You, Hashem our G-d, that we may soon see Your mighty splendor, removing detestable idolatry from the earth, and false gods will be utterly cut off, when the world will be perfected (*letaken 'olam*) through the Almighty's sovereignty.' Rabbi Doran Lazarus, 'Will the Real Tikkun Olam Please Stand Up', *Sefaria*, 2018 <https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/124763.47?lang=bi> [accessed 1 August 2019].

of translation, which is that of selecting words, and, faced with the limitless possibilities of possible combinations of choices, brings one text into being.

AFTERLIFE AND ABSTRACTION

From considering mourning as part of naming and translation, it is apt to move to a discussion of Benjamin's textual 'afterlives'.

> The notion of the life and continuing life of works of art should be considered with completely unmetaphorical objectivity. Even in ages of the most prejudiced thinking it has been suspected that life must not be attributed to organic corporeality alone. [...] Rather, it is only when life is attributed to everything that has a history, and not to that which is only a stage setting for history, that this concept comes into its own. For the range of the living must ultimately be delimited on the basis of history and not of nature, without mentioning such unstable notions as sensitivity and soul. ('The Translator's Task', tr. Rendall, p. 154)

> The idea of life and afterlife in works of art should be regarded with an entirely unmetaphorical objectivity. Even in times of narrowly prejudiced thought there was an inkling that life was not limited to organic corporeality. [...] The concept of life is given its due only if everything that has a history of its own, and is not merely the setting for history, is credited with life. In the final analysis, the range of life must be determined by history rather than by nature, least of all by such tenuous factors as sensation and soul. (tr. Zohn, p. 76)

> In völlig unmetaphorischer Sachlichkeit ist der Gedanke vom Leben und Fortleben der Kunstwerke zu erfassen. Daß man nicht der organischen Leiblichkeit allein Leben zusprechen dürfe, ist selbst in Zeiten des befangensten Denkens vermutet worden. [...] Vielmehr nur wenn allem demjenigen, wovon es Geschichte gibt und was nicht allein ihr Schauplatz ist, Leben zuerkannt wird, kommt dessen Begriff zu seinem Recht. Denn von der Geschichte, nicht von der

> Natur aus, geschweige von so schwankender wie Empfindung und Seele, ist
> zuletzt der Umkreis des Lebens zu bestimmen. (p. 11)

My reason for including both English translations again here is clear from the first few words: to translate Benjamin's German word 'Fortleben', Zohn uses 'afterlife', whereas Rendall uses 'continuing life'. A continuing life, it hardly needs to be stated, is very different from an afterlife. Already the text begins to fragment, and we begin to see how translation offers the possibility of proliferating versions of one essay. A continuing life implies the same kind of life, but going on longer than we might expect – an extended life, but not a qualitatively different one. Afterlife implies a change of state.

However, one point on which both translations converge is the word 'unmetaphorical'. According to Benjamin, textual life, afterlife and/or continuing life are not a translation metaphor, but rather a translation fact. In order to understand this, we must have recourse to some theology, if not mysticism, because how else are we to conceive of a literal life in a non-biological sense?

The reason anything with a history has a life, is that the history that those things live out is tending towards something: either it is striving towards a revolution, or a Messianic 'here and now' that can redeem all things. For translation, according to Benjamin, the ultimate goal of all this language is 'die reine Sprache' or 'the pure language'.

In explaining what this 'pure language' refers to, we really do need to turn to theology, for Benjamin quotes, somewhat surprisingly, the beginning of the gospel of John, in Greek: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος [En archē hēn ho logos], in the beginning was the word', saying that this applies also to translation. For John the Gospel writer, this 'logos' unites two theological concepts into one person, the person of Jesus. However, to read Benjamin, it is well worth separating them back out again.

On the one hand there is the Word of God. In Jewish tradition, the Word of God (Hebrew 'Dabar'), is both the speech of God which caused the world to be

created (Genesis 1. 3: 'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light', etc.), and also the Torah, the words of God given to Moses, and the words God uses to communicate with humankind. The word of God is necessary and nourishing, as we read in Deuteronomy 8. 3: 'man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.' Scholem writes that 'The principle that the Torah is a living organism falls in with several lines of Kabbalistic thought.' (p. 44)

For Christians, and stemming from this quotation from John's Gospel, the Jewish 'word' of God has come to refer to one of the persons of the Holy Trinity, specifically the one that was incarnated as Jesus. In this way, when John talks about the 'Word' that was in the beginning, he is also talking about the Messiah, and when Benjamin quotes him it is as if to unite these two concepts in the practice of translation, although for Benjamin, the Messiah, and the advent of the 'pure language', are absolutely future events.

So we understand that the 'pure language' is essentially a theological concept, linked to the coming of the Messiah in the fullness of time, when the Word of God will be manifest, or fully revealed, to humankind. But there is slightly more to it, because Benjamin believes that there are slivers of 'pure language' everywhere, and we need to reassemble them slowly but surely in order to precipitate this revelation. The method for reassembling the 'pure language', fragmented so famously in the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel, is to be found in translation.

But how can we recognise or characterise this pure language? How will we know it when we see it? Benjamin writes:

> In this pure language — which no longer signifies or expresses anything but rather, as the expressionless and creative word that is the intended object of every language — all communication, all meaning, and all intention arrive at a level where they are destined to be extinguished. (tr. Rendall, pp. 162–63)

Here again he expresses the notion of the creative Word of God, which speaks the universe into being in Genesis 1, without needing to communicate with it. When he describes it as 'the intended object of every language', we are to recognise again this link between language at creation, and language at the end of time, at the fullness of time, when human language reaches its teleology. This does not help us recognise it, but it may help us understand why Benjamin so values translation as an activity.

Benjamin writes that 'the poet's intention is spontaneous, primary, concrete, whereas the translator's is derivative, final, ideal' (tr. Rendall, p. 159) Here again we find this idea of abstraction, translation moving a text towards a plane where language is not directed towards things, but towards language. 'Derivative' is easy to understand – a translation derives from its original, and comes afterwards in time. The notion of translation as 'final' seems contradictory, as by its nature translation can be redone, whereas an original has, more or less, only one 'final' form, the form of its reception in its original language. However here again it is more helpful to think about 'after'-ness, this afterlife, 'Fortleben', and also 'Überleben' by which a translated text does transcend and transform its original, and also the fact that Benjamin contends that translations are not themselves translatable — for him each translation branches out from its root but cannot then branch further, as they do not hold their subject in the same way an original can.

As for 'ideal', this should absolutely lead us to the notion of translation as abstraction, again this transcendence, reaching another plane of existence, much as discussed in the previous chapter with reference to Mallarmé. This recalls us to Hegelian *Aufhebung*, another theological concept which has become more easily associated with the realms of history and politics — another meeting between Marx and God. *Aufhebung*, usually translated into English as 'sublation', is a word which means to raise up or transcend, to preserve, and to abolish, and in this triple meaning was used by Hegel to describe a Christian theology whereby the singular Christ can come to stand as an example of humankind in general, his

suffering is abstracted and universalised by a movement Hegel describes as 'sublation' or 'Aufhebung'.[29]

Derrida in his lecture 'Qu'est-ce qu'une traduction relevante?' also links the abstraction he perceives as inherent to translation with Hegelian *Aufhebung*.[30] Indeed his principal move in this essay is to propose 'relever' as a translation of 'aufheben', in its triple meaning of lifting up, relieving and seasoning as in adding salt to food. These different kinds of intervention or mediation are included together as the three definitions of 'aufheben' in German.

Derrida goes on to discuss specifically Judaeo-Christian translation theory in talking about the translations within and also the translation of the trial scene in *The Merchant of Venice*. In particular he talks about mercantile ideas of exchange and theological ideas of conversion, and the ways in which these different layers of abstraction are not entirely incommensurable systems, brought together as they are in this scene from Shakespeare and more broadly in the ways Christians have treated Jews across centuries.

> This impossible translation, this conversion (and all translation is a conversion: *vertere, transvertere, convertere,* as Cicero said) between the original, literal flesh and the monetary sign is not unrelated to the Jew Shylock's forced conversion to Christianity, since the traditional figure of the Jew is often and conventionally situated on the side of the body and the letter (from bodily circumcision or Pharisaism, from ritual compliance to literal exteriority), whereas St Paul the Christian is on the side of the spirit or sense, of interiority, of spiritual circumcision. This relation of the letter to the spirit, of the body of literalness to the

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[29] As in, for example, Ryan Krahn, *The Sublation of Dialectics: Hegel and the Logic of Aufhebung* (Guelph: University of Guelph, 2014).

[30] Jacques Derrida, 'What is a "Relevant" Translation?', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. & trans. by Lawrence Venuti, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 423–46.

ideal interiority of sense is also the site of the passage of translation, of this
conversion that is called translation. (p. 431)

In the same way that translation links incommensurable linguistic systems, forcing them to be measured against each other, so here religious conversion also forms a moment of contact, and importantly of exchange, between two systems of values. Using this analogy also makes clear the power gradient that can be invisible in both conversion and translation — the religious conversion under discussion is a forced conversion from a minority religion to the state religion. The move described here from the literalness of the body and the word, to a spiritual, analogic, internalised plane, is a figure for the abstraction of translation. The one thing you cannot keep, as a translator, is the actual words themselves. We have seen that the words themselves and the letters that make them up are very important to Jewish mystical thought as well as Jewish reading practices more generally. Coming from this tradition, I argue, led Benjamin to pursue a theory of translation that is very un-Hegelian, that in fact refuses to rely on this abstraction, which is necessarily a model of mediating something of a text across a boundary, and rather insisted that languages be materially transformed by one another in as literal a manner as possible.

THE BOOK OF RESEMBLANCES

In order to approach some of what Benjamin is saying about the absolute, it will be useful to examine the work of a poet who was also strongly influenced by Jewish mysticism and the Kabbalah: Edmond Jabès, translated by Rosmarie Waldrop. Waldrop has also written a book, *Lavish Absence*, on her relationship with Jabès as a friend and a translator.[31] I will be drawing on her observations and

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[31] Rosmarie Waldrop, *Lavish Absence: Recalling and Rereading Edmond Jabès* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002).

ideas later in this section. It is a work which is both fragmentary and full of love, and as such recalls Benjamin's injunction for translation to build 'lovingly and in detail' a work which will sit adjacent to the original.

The first of two large segments in *The Book of Resemblances* is called 'Ed, or the First Mist', which refers yet again to the creation narrative, this time Genesis 2 verse 6, 'But there went up a mist, *Ed*, from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.' In both Jabès' French and Waldrop's English, the translation of Genesis is supplemented by the addition of the word 'Ed' in Hebrew. The epigraph from Genesis is also supplemented by rabbinical commentary — not a fictional rabbi this time, but Rashi, a medieval French rabbi who compares the mist that God makes to rise before creating Adam to 'the way a baker adds water and kneads the bread' (p. 25).

Benjamin also refers to this verse — and arguably to Rashi's commentary — in one of his recently (and posthumously) published short stories aimed at children, in which he sets forth an alternative creation narrative which very strongly emphasises the dampness necessary for life to be created. The title of the story is translated as 'Funny story from when there were not yet any people' and it describes a time when 'the earth was not yet firm and everything was boggy, like wet dough.'[32] In the story, first the earth dries out and then 'God sprayed something very wet again onto the earth and everything turned to bog and lake and sea once more'. Humans are then made from the melted wings of an angel — 'They formed themselves — they simply became. The angel, who had become a human, only needed to watch. They made themselves in his image' (pp. 175–76). This rather sweet story displays Benjamin's continuing preoccupation with Genesis 1 and 2, the creation narratives, and also his willingness to play with and recombine the elements of those narratives. This could be seen as participating in

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[32] Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller: Tales out of Loneliness*, ed. & trans. by Sam Dolbear, Esther Leslie, and Sebastian Truskolaski (London: Verso, 2016), p. 175.

the Jewish tradition of *midrash*, a method of reading the Torah which can involve expanding verses or episodes in the text to add interpretive details. Isaac Luria's story of the broken vessels growing out of the gap between the creation of light and the creation of sun and moon is another example of this. In any case the ongoing fascination with the book of Genesis in both Benjamin and Jabès will be worth returning to.

Linked to this is the fact that beginnings and the detail of where the book starts is very important to Jabès. The 'Ed' segment of the book consists of various passages which deny their part in the book itself, and are labelled 'Moment outside the book' 1, 2 and 3, followed by 'Before the first moment of the fore-book' and 'Next to last moment of the fore-book'. In French these titles resemble each other much more closely, being the 'Avant-premier moment de l'avant-livre' and the 'Avant-dernier moment de l'avant-livre', as though because it is the 'avant-livre' even its first and last moments must be characterised by its adjective 'before'.

The book itself begins with a section which references the previous book Jabès, had written, *Le Livre des Questions* or the Book of Questions. The notion that the current book is incorporated into a larger cycle of works is emphasised by the first segment which is titled 'Thus, the Cycle', which asks of the seven volumes of the Book of Questions, 'Is this book their sequel?' Then the segment 'The … of … or the Absent Book' continually refers to the Book of Questions, which is absent from this text. Indeed, it consists of what Waldrop translates as 'Jacket notes', in French 'prière d'insérer', to the Book of Questions. These notes are presented in two columns on each page, with notes for each of the seven volumes. We note that the final volume of the Book of Questions is called 'El, or the last book', causing us to ask whether this is the same as El-book in the *Book of Resemblances*, and wonder about how they resemble each other.

One major difference between the English and French editions, in accordance with publishing conventions in each culture, is the placement of the contents page.

The English book has it at the front, a key part of setting up expectations for the contents of the book as you begin turning the pages, providing a sense of the terrain ahead. It also allows you to measure your reading against the total amount of sections in the book. This particular contents page confounds any reader who was attempting to avoid paratext or cut to the chase, however, beginning as it does with the full half of the book concerned with the 'absent book' and the moments 'outside the book'. Indeed the final section of 'Ed' is named 'Next-to-last moment of the fore-book'. If this is the penultimate thing before the book proper, does this mean the 'El' section is also part of the 'fore-book'? That would leave the fifteen or so pages of the final section entitled 'The Trial' as the only part of the book that is 'officially' part of the book. The threshold between outside the book and inside is drawn out so long as to become a long passageway, setting up large parts of the content as possible paratext in a way that should draw our attention to other aspects of paratext such as the contents page. But the French edition of course has the contents page at the back, and in contrast to the English one which is clearly titled 'CONTENTS', it has no heading, only a list of sections and page numbers. This reflects different assumptions about the behaviour of readers — of course, if a French reader wishes to find the contents they would know to look in the back. However, it is true that to begin this (or any) book without first consulting the contents page is to display a great deal of trust in the text itself or the authority of its arrangement to draw one through it in a particularly curated journey. And this book in particular is uniquely set up to discomfit such a trusting reader, beginning as it does with 'jacket notes' to a completely different book, referring offhand to characters without introducing them, then leading us through this potentially nearly endless set of putative paratexts.

Given that the Torah, the Tanakh and the Talmud constantly lie behind this book, which seems to try to resemble them, I suggest that having the contents at the back is overdetermined by being both the regular French practice and an echo and resemblance of these Hebrew books which are of course read from right to

left, beginning on what feels to exclusive readers of the Roman alphabet like the last page.

In the context of a book which is determined to thwart our desire to read the actual book itself, it is also worth noting that what I am writing about is Volume 1 of 3 in the *Book of Resemblances*. In this way also it is a whole book, bound and shelved, but at the same time part of a larger book that is the 'actual' book. Of course a book made up of many books echoes the form of the Bible, the other book (after the Book of Questions) continually referred to throughout this one.

The El-book section forms most of the second half of the *Book of Resemblances*. The word 'El' in Hebrew, spelt aleph-lamed, is the digrammaton, the two-letter name of God. In French and English it is the pronunciation of the letter L. In French but not in English, L is the first letter of the word for book. So El-Livre has a sound of alphabetic doggerel about it — L is for Livre — in a way that Waldrop's English translation cannot.

The fundamental question of this book appears to be what it means for human beings to be made in the 'likeness' of God, and in particular the Kabbalistic concern that what we have of God is a book, written words, and this book is somehow an exiled part of the divinity, and contains hidden or esoteric information about God — in particular, that it may be different ways of naming God, and that these names of God have a particular power. Judaism, of course, forbids the name of God to be written out or spoken in full, usually preferring even in English to write 'G-d', and in Hebrew using the Tetragrammaton, usually transliterated YHWH. This is interesting because Hebrew has consonantal stems for words, and in some written forms of Hebrew vowels are omitted in any case (and the most they are shown with is 'vowel pointings' or diacritic marks rather than whole characters). A lot of the literature of the Kabbalah focuses on the consonants of the Hebrew language — counting them, combining and recombining them, looking for hidden meanings and codes.

'OUR LANGUAGE', RESEMBLANCE AND MULTIPLICITY

Jabès has Reb Arbib say:

« Tous les mots de la langue étant le nom de Dieu, notre ressemblance avec Lui, ne serait-elle, où nous nommons, où nous parlons, que la ressemblance de notre nom avec le Sien ? » (p. 75)

"since all words in our language are the name of God, is our resembling as we name, as we speak, not simply a resemblance of our name and His?" (p. 53)

For one thing, this quotation raises the question of what is meant by 'our language' — in Waldrop's translation, of course, the Rabbis argue in English. In Jabès' original it is French. However there is also a suspicion that 'our language' here, the language of Rabbis, of the Law, of Judaism, might instead be Hebrew. Benjamin's answer is that all languages contain shards of the divine, and in fact that translational moments such as this are where that divinity in language is made apparent.

Furthermore, here is again the preoccupation with naming as a function of human language, and a way in which we resemble but are not, of course, identical to God. Benjamin's early linguistic theory as set out in 'On Language as Such…' places the notion of naming and nouns as central to human language as opposed to divine language, which is all about verbs and creation as action. This idea comes from the creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2, where God speaks the world into being: 'He said 'Let there be light' and there was light'', and Adam names the creatures and plants and is made steward of them. God, however, cannot be named by man, both in that it is a sin to utter God's name, and in that God in the Kabbalah is said to have names that are not known to man, but which might be discovered through careful reading of God's revealed Word in the Torah. The particular textual status of the Torah as words which come directly from God and are legible by humans, writing as the medium of the divine self-

revelation, is the central concern of the Kabbalah, and also highly relevant to the *Book of Resemblances*, which refers frequently to The Book, which is both the Torah, and the book itself, and also at some points the Book of Questions, Jabès' previous work which this one in many places responds to. These shifting levels of signification, where 'book' refers to several things and one of them is God, performs the view of language ascribed here to Reb Arbib, that every word in language designates more than one thing and one of the things is God.

Benjamin insists that resemblance is not essential for commonality. He writes:

> 'If the kinship of languages manifests itself in translation, it does so otherwise than through the vague similarity of original and copy. For it is clear that kinship does not necessarily involve similarity [...] Wherein can the kinship of two languages be sought, apart from a historical kinship?' (tr. Rendall, p. 156)

When describing the relationship of languages between each other, Benjamin considers kinship a more useful model than resemblance or similarity. For Benjamin writing about translation, the name or nature of God in language is fragmented or refracted across many languages. In fact, rather than one word being polysemic, he writes about several words for one thing, but naming in a simple sense fails to describe how translation reveals language to work: the 'way of meaning', or the 'mode of intention' is more important. He writes (and this is key to the whole essay):

> All suprahistorical kinship of languages consists rather in the fact that in each of them as a whole, one and the same thing is intended; this cannot be attained by any one of them alone, however, but only by the totality of their mutually complementary intentions : pure language. […] It is necessary to distinguish, within intention, the intended object from the mode of its intention. (tr. Rendall, p. 156)

The example he gives is of the word for bread in various European languages:

> In "*Brot*" and "*pain*", the intended object is the same, but the mode of intention differs. It is because of their modes of intention that the two words signify something different to a German or a Frenchman, that they are not regarded as interchangeable, and in fact ultimately seek to exclude one another; however, with respect to their intended object, taken absolutely, they signify one and the same thing. (tr. Rendall, pp. 156–57)

This is a little difficult to follow, but the separation it makes between a simple kind of naming, which apprehends an object or concept and attributes a single signifier which has the power to designate it, and the actual function of human languages in their multiplicity, surely has implications for his theory of language as a way of naming.

Jabès introduces multiplicity in the multivocality of the different commenting rabbis, as well as an authorial voice and also italicised passages. He is very much concerned with the limits of the book, including passages labelled 'Moment outside the book' and 'Moment outside the book II'. The notion that human language and naming produces multiplicity ('go forth and multiply'?) is common to Benjamin and Jabès — for Jabès it is more a question of dialogue, but we can easily read into the translation the multiplication of this text outside of itself. In both cases the multiplicity is contrasted with the oneness of God, but can also be an expression of the fact that (in the Kabbalah) God has many names and many facets or qualities in God's oneness.

Another approach to the question of resemblance in *The Book of Resemblances* is the idea of creativity, and what the powers and limits of human creativity are in the face of their resemblance to the original creation of the universe by God in Genesis. Derrida is concerned about this, as we will see, when he writes about creative freedom and how to be a poet means in some sense to embrace one's

separation from the divine, because to create is to imitate God, and always to skirt the edge of idolatry. For Benjamin, who quotes John's Gospel in the middle of his essay and returns to the interlinear Hebrew Scriptures at the end, in an essay which is on the face of it 'about' translations of Baudelaire, there is less of a clear distinction to be made between poetic language and revealed scripture: they are both ways in which we learn about language itself and the limits of it, and in which we might hope to discern a small trace of its ultimate purpose in the Messianic reconciliation with God.

The question posed by Reb Arbib, then, makes sense in the context of this thought about resemblance — he appears to be positing that while humans resemble God in the creative action of naming things with language, the fact that language is the medium for this creation resembles God in another way — since all of language can in some way designate God, the real resemblance is not the action of naming as much as the names themselves.

THE QUESTION OF THE BOOK

The binding together of Jewish identity with the book is a constant theme for Jabès. In his essay on Jabès, Derrida writes:

> The Poet and the Jew are not born here but elsewhere. They wander, separated from their true birth. Autochthons only of speech and writing, of Law. "Race born of the book" because sons of the Land to come.
>
> Autochthons of the Book. Autonomous too, as we said. Which assumes that the poet does not simply receive his speech and his law from God. […] Poetry is to prophecy what the idol is to truth.[33]

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[33] Jacques Derrida, 'Edmond Jabès and the Question of the Book', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), pp. 77–96 (pp. 80–81).

Language and writing are the native medium of the Jewish people because according to Genesis they were created through God's speech, and according to Exodus they were given the Law inscribed on two stone tablets on Mount Sinai. Derrida in this essay goes on to discuss another essential fragmentation in Jewish tradition, this one described in the Torah but also concerning it: the breaking of the tablets of the Law. This is a reference to the story of the Golden Calf, told in Exodus 32. Moses goes to Mount Sinai to collect the tablets of the law but he is gone a long time and the Israelites become impatient. With Aaron's encouragement they build an idol in the shape of a golden calf and begin to worship it. God sees this and tells Moses he will destroy them all, but Moses persuades him not to. However when Moses sees the idol he too is enraged and smashes the tablets of the Law.

Derrida writes:

> Between the fragments of the broken Tables the poem grows and the right to speech takes root. […] The breaking of the Tables articulates, first of all, a rupture within God as the origin of history. […]

> God separated himself from himself in order to let us speak, in order to astonish and to interrogate us. He did so not by speaking but by keeping still, by letting silence interrupt his voice and his signs, by letting the Tables be broken. In Exodus God repented and said so at least twice, before the first and before the new Tables, between original speech and writing and, within Scripture, between the origin and repetition (Exodus 32:14; 33:17). (pp. 81–82)

Derrida reads into Exodus and into Jabès his own ideas about writing as absence or rupture, or rather he draws those ideas out of the texts. The notion of God's self-withdrawing is a central feature of the Lurianic Kabbalah. The Torah is the figure of this self-withdrawing, and indeed it is interpreted as a part of God exiled into the world from which the single and infinite God has withdrawn. The vessels of divine light are ten in number like the commandments of the Law. The

first tablets, written on by God, are never repaired. In their place Moses carves two new tablets, containing the Ten Commandments. Here again we see fragmentation linked to divine revelation.

Derrida goes on to articulate a vision of Jabès' 'Book' that is apparently all-encompassing:

> The exit from the book, the other and the threshold, are all articulated *within the book.* The other and the threshold can only be written, can only affirm themselves in writing. One emerges from the book only within the book, because, for Jabès, the book is not in the world, but the world is in the book. (p. 93)

The idea here is that the written word can be considered as totalising, encompassing alterity and the 'threshold' where it is encountered, all inside the totality of the book. This is reflected in the *Book of Resemblances* in the way that all the parts of the book which claim to be a 'moment outside the book', as well as all the 'Rabbinical' commentaries which supplement the text, even the 'jacket notes' for the previous book in the cycle, are in fact written down and found between the covers of this book.

For Derrida, one very important thing about Jabès' view of the book is that 'the world is in all parts a cryptogram to be constituted or reconstituted through poetic inscription or deciphering; that the book is original, that everything *belongs to the book* before being and in order to come into the world' (p. 94)

The idea of the book as an origin, as coming before anything else, and also of a cryptogram which can be limitlessly decoded and reconstituted, is familiar from Kabbalistic reading techniques. But in Derrida's philosophy, there can be no system that does not contain its own self-contradiction, so his final point is about the illegibility at the heart of this cryptogram:

> The radical illegibility […] is not irrationality, is not despair provoking non-sense, is not everything within the domains of the incomprehensible and the illogical

that is anguishing. […] Original illegibility is not simply a moment interior to the book, to reason or to logos; nor is it any more their opposite, having no relationship of symmetry to them, being incommensurable with them. […] The Being that is announced within the illegible is beyond these categories, beyond, as it writes itself, its own name. (p. 95)

Or, as Jabès writes in the epigram to the *Livre des Ressemblances*, 'L'illisibilité est au bout de la lisibilité perdante.'[34] — 'The illegible lies in wait where legibility falters' (p. 1). This idea of incommensurability is one that might bring us closer to thinking about translation. There is in fact an alterity which cannot be contained by written text, and Derrida's insistence that there is no despair in it seems to correspond to Jabès' non-despairing, non-nihilistic atheism. For Jabès, it seems, there may be a 'void' at the centre of things but that does not make the framework around it worthless: being one of the 'People of the Book' is still a heritage worth immersing oneself in. Indeed Derrida's use of 'Being', 'Etre', with a capital letter, suggests that for him it is indeed God, or the space God might occupy, which is this exterior, ulterior illegibility in all of literature, or scripture.

THE SHOAH

Looking at 'The Task of the Translator' next to the *Book of Resemblances*, we are not allowed to forget one event that separates them historically. Indeed, Jabès opens his book by writing about the Shoah. To read Benjamin is always a poignant experience, that can risk being overshadowed by the knowledge of his death. To read Jabès is to read a book which must always be overshadowed by the first chapter, in which a woman called Sarah looks at her naked body in the mirror.

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[34] Edmond Jabès, *Le Livre Des Ressemblances* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 7.

All around Sarah, women and men are arrested for bodies labeled "of Jewish race" in police files. No passport is needed for the soul. […]

We are in France, in 1942.

What are you doing, Sarah, in front of your mirror, thirty-two years later? As if disaster had spared you? (pp. 5–6)

Autour de Sarah, les femmes et les hommes de sa race sont appréhendés pour leur corps désigné dans les registres de la Police comme « corps d'appartenance juive ». Il n'y a pas de cartes d'identité pour les âmes. […]

Nous sommes en 1942, en France.

Que fais-tu, Sarah, devant ton miroir, trente-deux années après? Et comme si le désastre t'avait épargnée? (p. 12)

It is unclear whether disaster actually has spared Sarah in terms of sparing her life (it certainly has not spared her from significant trauma), unless we have already read the Book of Questions — either way the 'Jacket notes' section reveals the answer to us only a couple of pages later by referring to 'Yukel's suicide and Sarah's death'. But we continually hear their voices throughout this book. Time and meaning are bent around this defining event. The book only gives us fragmentary glimpses of the protagonists Sarah and Yukel. Mostly it consists of rabbinical commentary on the nature of resemblance and Jewish identity.

The experience of fragmentation or a fragmented self or identity is very often a product of or image for trauma. Jabès' fragmentation both does and does not fit into this model, because for him Jewish identity is fragmentation, both traumatic and creative. In *Lavish Absence*, Waldrop refers to Marcel Cohen's book of interviews with Jabès:

> Against Adorno's "After Auschwitz, one can no longer write poetry," Edmond
> Jabès declares — and practices: "Yes, one can. And, furthermore, one has to." But
> as he explains to Marcel Cohen, in *From the Desert to the Book*, we cannot write in
> the same manner as before: "One has to write out of that break, out of that
> unceasingly revived wound. (pp. 9–10)

In line with the fragmentary, aphoristic style of her book, Waldrop declines
to editorialise or comment on this quotation. The 'unceasingly revived wound'
that fragments identity cannot be talked back to, it can only be written out of. The
presence of the Shoah in Jabès' text must remind us that 'redemption' and 'repair'
are not terms that can be taken lightly, and that fragmentation is a condition that
needs to be faced head on. Jabès' remarkable insistence on the monistic capacity of
the Book to encompass the whole of reality must be read against this backdrop.

GENESIS AND THE FRAGMENT

'The Task of the Translator' and the *Book of Resemblances* have something very
important in common: they are both absolutely in dialogue with the first two
chapters of the book of Genesis: the narrative of creation. For Benjamin, as we
have seen, this comes about through his engagement with the Lurianic Kabbalah
and the shattered vessels, and his idea of translation as a possible way to
contribute to the redemption of language which is fallen from its perfect state of
naming things before God. For Jabès it comes about through the preoccupation
with resemblance — humankind having been made in the image and likeness of
God, what does it mean to be a likeness? As the book's epigraph states, 'God only
repeats God: but man? Ah, man also repeats God' (p. 1). This is also absolutely a
question about translation, a process in which one text can be said to be made in
the image and likeness of another.

Waldrop's *Book of Resemblances* closely resembles Jabès' *Livre des
Ressemblances*. However they are of course not identical. As well as the small

matter of all the words being different, there are subtler differences too, like the one previously pointed out about the contents page. The French edition has larger type, so the page numbers do not match up. A lot has been kept very similar, however — the large section titles are in italics and subsections are in all caps in both books.

In fact Jabès is very strict about bringing the entire title into consideration — not only 'resemblance' but also very importantly the notion of a book and, connected to this, Jewish identity through being the people of the book, the people to whom God's law was revealed as the five books of the Torah. However the first section of the book is even called 'The … of …', drawing attention to the fact that the small words are not unimportant, in a way that recalls Kabbalistic exegesis, which insists that every part of the Torah contains the name of God, and no part of it is superfluous.

There are moments, when reading the two books of resemblance simultaneously, of startling lacks of resemblance, or times the reader is transported in two different directions by the different versions. For example, in 'Moment outside the book III', Waldrop translates '(God apes God for the benefit of man who apes Him.)' (p. 44) for Jabès' '(Dieu imite Dieu pour l'homme qui l'imite'.) (p. 61) The former, placing 'God' next to 'ape' next to 'man', has strong resonances of the nineteenth century conflict between the biblical creation story and Darwin's evolutionary theory, which in certain regions rages to this day. In French there is none of this resonance. Indeed, the word 'imitate' in English would resemble much more closely the word 'imite' in French. Waldrop, then, does not imitate Jabès here. Imitation is linked to resemblance, as it is a way to become similar. It is also the way in which idolatry is risked — there is a danger to imitating God. There is also an endpoint to it. Jabès' French contains the word 'limite', as if to remind us of the limitations inherent in mortal humanity as compared to God, or perhaps the possibility for humanity to in some way 'limit'

God, recalling the *tzimtzum*, the contraction of divinity to make room for creation in the void.

The way the *Book of Resemblances* is composed can itself be described as fragmentary, insofar as it is composed of scraps of narrative from an unnamed narrator interspersed with commentaries from the fictional rabbis, and at times apparently extradiegetic comments in parentheses. There is not really a sense of a central diegesis at all, but rather of a book that is self-reflexive and multivocal. This multivocality reflects one of the uses of fragmentation described by Simon Critchley:

> However, if the fragment enables a plurality of topics to be treated in a single text, it also allows the possibility of a plurality of voices and authors. The fragment opens up the possibility of collective and anonymous writing, the possibility of genius as a multiple personality. (p. 107)

Critchley is discussing Schlegel's aims in creating fragmentary writing, which he argues he does not succeed in living up to. However, it is also an apt description of the composition of the Talmud, in particular the notion of genius or inspiration as multiple. Supremely important to Jabès is the idea of an open book, composed of many fragments, as opposed to a finished and internally complete one. Waldrop in *Lavish Absence* writes:

> "The fragment, the exploded book, is our only access to the infinite," Edmond Jabès says in conversation after conversation. And writes: "Only in fragments can we read the immeasurable totality" (p. 18)

Here is the idea that we can resemble God but only partially, in a fragmentary way, via multivocality and in the cracks between the things we make.

NOSTALGIA AND THE VOID

In order to have a better idea of what Jabès means by an exploded book, let us examine one parenthetical passage from the section of the *Book of Resemblances*' 'El-Book' entitled 'The Highest Challenge', 'Le plus haut défi'.

> ("You said: 'Truth is the void. Ah, how the void is devoured by change.'
>
> Where would the Messiah enter, tell me, if the book were a closed universe?" Reb Nahman had written.
>
> "The Messiah is the condition of change, condition incarnate," said Reb Akkad.) (p. 93)

> (« Tu disais : « La vérité c'est le vide. Ah combien le vide est dévoré de changement.
>
> « Par où donc entrerait le Messie, ah réponds! si le livre était univers clos? », avait écrit reb Nahman.
>
> « Le Messie est condition du changement; incarnation de cette condition », disait reb Akkad.) (p. 122)

One thing which is immediately obvious is that even in this short passage, bracketed off from the rest of the chapter as one intruding thought or statement, we have at least two voices, in two modes. Reb Nahman 'had written', referring to a 'you' who 'said', which may or may not correspond to Reb Akkad, who also 'said'. (These differences are preserved precisely from the French, which has 'disait' and 'avait écrit'.) Indeed, the writing of Reb Nahman demands a reply, both in English 'tell me' and yet more forcefully in French, 'ah, réponds!' Already we are in a space where utterance is not simple, where what is recorded and the

responses to it form part of one literature, as in the Talmud, and where orality versus what is written is not a clear or obvious distinction.

We have seen a preoccupation with the void, the emptiness before creation, before. Previously it was 'waiting for vocabulary'; here it is 'devoured by change' — creation is change, and that thing that is creative change nullifies the void. Then we have an equating of the world with the book, which is constant in Jabès. Both are the object of creation — the poet's creation of the book mirroring God's creation of the world — but the book of the Torah is also the part of God that is in the world, and all books resemble this original book: as Waldrop notes in *Lavish Absence*, 'According to Kabbalistic tradition this pure spiritual light of the first day *was*, but did not remain. Where did it go? Into the Torah. That is, into the word' (p. 151). So the book also contains God's creative word, which means it cannot be finite, or 'a closed universe'. The reply or commentary spoken by Reb Akkad is a very Benjaminian interpretation of scripture. The notion that the Messiah is change itself, or change incarnate, is very much in keeping with Benjamin's interpretation of Messianism as the ultimate mechanism for historical change, as found in the *Theses on the Philosophy of History*.[35] Waldrop's translation is more elliptical than Jabès' French, seemingly suggesting that 'condition' itself rather than 'condition of change' might be another description of the Messiah, where Jabès unambiguously uses 'incarnation de cette condition'.

The notion that truth is the void, and is thus devoured by change, might be linked to Derrida's observation that poets need the first set of tablets to have been smashed, to gain their autonomy. The book is apparently always in flux, and has the impression of always being added to by further commentaries — indeed of having plenty of cracks and gaps, even in this small parenthetical segment, where

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[35] In this cryptic text, Benjamin discusses the nature of historical change from a Messianic perspective, writing: 'A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad. In this structure he recognises the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past.' (p. 263)

the void of truth might be glimpsed, or where the Messiah might enter, where change might be effected. Of course at the level of the printed book, the possibilities to change and extend are more limited — student practices such as pencil annotations into the white space, or copyings-out elsewhere are one possibility. Extending the book outwards through more volumes is another, and one which Jabès puts into practice, with this book following on from the *Book of Questions*, and two further volumes pursuing the cycle deeper into the *Book of Resemblances*. Another way is translation, and I believe this way of seeing translation, as an extension of the book that is the Book, the Oral Torah, the Word of God, through its fragments into an eventual wholeness, is a point of real convergence between Jabès and Benjamin.

In drawing Jabès' and Benjamin's thought together, we must remark that resemblance and fragmentation are not so dissimilar. Benjamin bases his entire fragmentation metaphor on the fact that the pieces have to resemble each other enough to fit together, as parts of the same vessel. Resemblance implies separation: to resemble God, to be in God's image, implies separation from God, which in Kabbalah is interpreted as the withdrawing of God from God to make room for the world. Separation creates the need for translation. It also fragments, and leaves wholeness as an inaccessible ideal.

Waldrop writes in *Lavish Absence*: 'I tend to think the fragment is our way of apprehending not just the infinite, but anything at all. Our inclusive views are all mosaics. The shards catch light on the cut, the edges give off sparks.' (pp. 18–19) Benjamin and Jabès are concerned about origins in that they are inspired by the book of Genesis, and the story of the creation of the world, as well as Isaac Luria's interpretation of this. Derrida emphasises the search for origin as being something futile, an absence which can be taken to be originary in itself.

This is in contrast to the nostalgia we saw with Pound, how his translation indicated a desire for an original to underwrite the present and give structure and meaning by being something to look back to, the requirement for what is now

fragmented once to have been whole, and the focus on that wholeness as
something lost, something to be mourned. As an origin story, Luria's
fragmentation looks forward as well as back: it is concerned with a future which
might be characterised as Messianic, but which is also participatory. When Vital
describes Luria's thought, in Klein's translation:

> there are still sparks of the sacred
>
> left within the vessels,
>
> this is what is left for us to complete,
>
> through our prayers and good deeds and
>
> through saintly souls when they depart from this world.
>
> When saints leave this world and
>
> pass through the realm of Action (Asiyah),
>
> they raise up with them
>
> sacred sparks from the Shells (pp. 19–20)

it is far from a nostalgic view of things. Despite the broken vessels and scattered
light, there is the possibility, for the Jewish people, of doing something good, and
affecting the future positively. Even for Benjamin, who in the end appears
pessimistic about our ability to do more than sift through the detritus of history,
sees translation as contributing to this raising up of the sparks. A fragment is not
only good and interesting, and a way to avoid false systemisation, as it is for
Schlegel, but also something sacred, and the place where sacred work can be
done.

For Jabès, nostalgia is replaced by a response to trauma and a reliance on
writing. Rather than considering there to have been a 'golden age' upon which to
look back, he sees in Jewish history layers of exile and separation, but through
writing there is a connection with repetitions off into the future, resemblances and
multiplicity. There is still a sense of the fragment as containing the possibility of
engaging with the world, as an opposition to the void.

BLACK FIRE ON WHITE FIRE

Isaac Luria's story about the broken vessels exists to plug a hole which exists in the Genesis narrative — a gap between the creation of light and the creation of the sun that can be made fertile to produce meaning. (Instead of fragments as seeds, here gaps are seeds.) This kind of addition and filling out of biblical narrative as a means of interpreting it is known as a midrash, and is common in rabbinical exegesis. The idea that there are blanks and holes in text and scripture in particular comes up in one particular Kabbalistic reading of the Torah, which emphasises the white space on the page as much as the space of the ink. Scholem writes:

> What we call the written Torah has itself passed through the medium of the oral Torah, it is no longer a form concealed in white light; rather, it has emerged from the black light, which determines and limits and so denotes the attribute of divine severity and judgment. Everything that we perceive in the fixed forms of the Torah, written in ink on parchment, consists, in the last analysis, of interpretations or definitions of what is hidden. *There is only an oral Torah*: that is the esoteric meaning of these words, and the written Torah is a purely mystical concept. It is embodied in a sphere that is accessible to prophets alone. It was, to be sure, revealed to Moses, but what he gave to the world as the written Torah has acquired its present form by passing through the medium of the oral Torah. The mystical white of the letters on the parchment is the written Torah, but not the black of the letters inscribed in ink. In the mystical organism of the Torah the two spheres overlap, and there is no written Torah, free from the oral element, that can be known or conceived of by creatures who are not prophets. (p. 50)

The Oral Torah includes the Talmud — not only the Hebrew text but also centuries of rabbinical commentary on it. In this passage, Scholem is describing an approach to an ongoing disagreement in Judaism about the precise status of the Oral Torah.

This notion of invisible parts of the Torah which will one day be made manifest endured for centuries in a number of variants and was taken into the Hasidic tradition. Rabbi Levi Isaac of Berdichev, one of the most celebrated mystics of this movement, gives a particularly daring and impressive formulation of this idea. He starts by feigning surprise at the Midrashic interpretation of Isaiah p : 4: 'A Torah will go forth from me,' taking it to mean: 'A new Torah will go forth from me.' How is this possible when it is an article of Jewish faith that there is no other Torah beside the one given to Moses, which cannot be exchanged for any other? Why, it is even forbidden to change so much as a single letter. 'But the truth is that also the white, the spaces in the scroll of the Torah, consist of letters, only that we are not able to read them as we read the black letters. But in the Messianic Age God will also reveal to us the white of the Torah, whose letters have become invisible to us, and that is what is meant by the statement about the "new Torah". (pp. 81–82)

This reading for white space is reminiscent of reading modern poetry in which the white space on the page also holds significance. Indeed, in *The Book of Resemblances* Jabès frequently has recourse to 'tabularity' in the form of italics, indentation, line breaks and quotation marks, and in one section of the book a structure in columns. He is also concerned above all with what does and does not form part of the book, and the blurred boundary between this book and the book which preceded it, *The Book of Questions*.

Waldrop comments on this use of blank space in *Lavish Absence:*

The breaks are tangible, not only in the shifts from prose to verse or from one voice to another. They are there in the layout of the page. Gaps. Blank spaces that are perhaps what hold the books together, what replace the narrative thread. They let the book show through, the white of the page, of space. (p. 8)

In fact, this reading of white space adds a great deal of significance to Benjamin's concluding paragraph in 'The Task of The Translator', in which he

speculates that the perfect form of translation is an interlinear version of scripture, in which both the perfection of the Torah and the redemptive bringing together of languages in translation are presented in one place. In this reading, not only the black ink of the original and translation would be interspersed and assembled together, but also the white space of the limits of our knowledge, which is far exceeded by God's.

Reflecting Scholem's distinction between the written and the oral, Waldrop quotes Jabès twice on the Kabbalistic idea of black fire and white fire, once recalling what he said about it in person, and secondly finding the same ideas reflected in a passage from the *Book of Margins* (a later work by Jabès).

She first quotes a passage from an essay by Scholem called 'The Oral and the Written', in which he quotes an early Kabbalist called Isaac the Blind, who describes the Torah as 'engravings' on God's right hand. He writes: 'The form of the written Torah is that of the colors of white fire, and the form of the oral Torah has colored forms as of black fire' and Waldrop recalls: 'This is the passage [of Scholem] Edmond keeps talking about one whole summer. *What if the black of fire wrote on the white of fire*' (p. 109). She then quotes this passage from the Book of Margins:

> I came across the answer proposed by a kabbalistic rabbi…an answer that I would divert from its original mystical sense and submit to your literal reflection: that the Book is "what the black of fire carves into the white of fire." Black fire on white fire. Endless consuming of sacred parchment and profane page given over to signs, as if what is consigned — co-signed — to writing were only a play of flames, fire of fire, "word-fires" (pp. 109–10)

The idea of black fire on white fire is an expression of the monism of the Kabbalists: the notion that the oneness of God means that not only the writing but the page that is written on is sacred and significant, and that the page is not the blank receiver of writing, but a container of limitless, if invisible and

indistinguishable, possibilities. Reading white space as part of the 'play of fire' as opposed to the absence of text rejects dualism and insists that even when something is apparently fragmented — letters of the alphabet as fragments, or words and sentences spaced out on the page — there exists a point of view from which it is still part of an encompassing whole. It also validates the 'reading between the lines' of midrash, and of interlinear versions.

In *Lavish Absence*, Waldrop quotes from the start of the *Book of Resemblances*, what appears to be the epigram, but it is not a quotation, it is the very beginning of the beginning of the book: 'God only repeats God: but man? Ah, man also repeats God' (p. 1); 'Dieu ne répète que Dieu : mais l'homme? Ah l'homme répète aussi Dieu.' (p. 7) She comments:

> This sounds like Plotinus's "One" from whose self-contemplation emanate intellect (*nous*) and ideas. The latter are immersed in contemplation, not of themselves, but of the One. Whence emanates the soul immersed in contemplation of Intellect, etc.
>
> But there is a crucial difference. Jabès is no mystic. He is not even a religious writer in the narrow sense. In Jabès, the transcendence is empty. His "God" is a metaphor and does not exist. Man invents God in his likeness so he can consider himself created by God in His likeness.
>
> On the other hand, Jabès shares the mystics' view that linear logic has its limits, and that beyond those, paradox becomes an epistemological tool. It takes an ambiguity in perception to make us conscious of perception. (pp. 127–8)

Jabès' atheism is of a very specific, and specifically Jewish, type. He is deeply concerned with absence, emptiness and void, and connects those ideas with the idea of God. Waldrop writes about how translating Jabès, in particular Jabès in his ambivalence and insistence on writing about God, has given her a space to write about things she does not feel entitled to address in her own writing: 'I am still

(always!) fascinated by the way Edmond Jabès could use the word "God," could engage the whole metaphysical complex. So that translating him becomes a way of "writing" what I cannot write.' (p. 129)

To claim that he is 'no mystic' because his contemplations centre on a void rather than a divinity, is perhaps overly simplistic, considering how much he is influenced by mysticism and the form of religious writing. In fact, this notion of the ineffable, '"writing" what I cannot write', and translation as the vehicle for that writing, a figure for neither overcoming ineffability nor entirely giving up in the face of it, is familiar from Benjamin's essay.

As a figure for Jabès' atheism, Waldrop more than once cites a passage from *The Book of Questions* about mirrors: 'A double mirror separates us from the Lord so that God sees Himself when trying to see us, and we, when trying to see Him, see only our own face.' She parses this as follows:

> The meaning of the double mirror is clear. It embodies the paradox of creating our creator. There is a difference though: God sees "Him*self*," whereas we see only "our *face*." Complete self-knowledge is only possible for a god. We remain with appearance. (p. 129)

This image leads us back to the idea of translation as a mirror which we have discussed in the first chapter. The *Book of Resemblances* also begins with a woman looking in a mirror. Waldrop's analysis in which God sees the whole but man only sees the face is apt, in particular because it is a reference to the fact that in Jewish thought the Face is the site of encounter with the Other (as in for example Lévinas)[36] — the holiest figure in the Tanakh (in the Torah, in fact) is Moses because he has been allowed to look upon the face of God. To behold a face is to

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[36] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), passim.

meet a person. It is a metonym that is not quite a metaphor, and it signifies the fullness of alterity. God is not other to God, but a human is other to themself.

Waldrop continues:

> Note also that this double mirror completely separates the two planes. If we cannot see God, God cannot see us either. There are two self-contained sets of reflection. But at their midpoint, a maddening vertigo kindles the desire to transcend them. So that God together with His mirror image (man) is a reflection of man aspiring to the condition of godhead, i.e., self-knowledge. (pp. 129–30)

Translation might also be seen as a mirror in this way, as a place of 'maddening vertigo' and, most of all, a desire to transcend difference or alterity in language and between languages. The withdrawal of God from creation to make room for creation is also figured in this image.

The Kabbalistic idea of black fire on white fire, joined with the reference Waldrop makes to Plotinus, leads us to an important commonality between Benjamin and Jabès: their shared interest in monism. For both writers, fragmentation, via the Kabbalistic image of the broken vessels, and the Biblical one of the shattered tablets of the law, becomes a way of accounting for both oneness and separation, both unity and loss or absence. A fragment is both different and separate, and also part of a whole, with no contradiction between those two states. It is important to remember that for Benjamin, the translator's task is to labour at the join between fragments: to create correspondence where it may not already have existed, to cause languages to fit together even when resemblance is not possible, and to do so with love.

CODA

In *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, Scholem tells a story about a mystical practice which involves repeating a fragment of text:

There is an ancient midrash to the effect that anyone who spends the whole day reading the verse (Gen. 36. 22): 'And Lotan's sister was Timna,' which strikes the reader of the Torah as particularly meaningless and irrelevant, will attain eternal beatitude. Azulai offers the following explanation of this aphorism:

'When a man utters words of the Torah, he never ceases to create spiritual potencies and new lights, which issue like medicines from ever new combinations of the elements and consonants. If therefore he spends the whole day reading just this one verse, he attains eternal beatitude, for at all times, indeed, in every moment, the composition [of the inner linguistic elements] changes in accordance with the condition and rank of this moment, and in accordance with the names that flare up within him at this moment.' (H. J. D. Azulai, Devarim 'Ahadim, Livorno, 1788, 52c—d).

Here again the unlimited mystical plasticity of the divine word is taken as a principle, illustrated in the present case by what would seem to be about the most insignificant words of the Torah. All in all, this is perhaps the only way in which the idea of a revealed word of God can be taken seriously. (pp. 75–76)

There are various ways to read this passage, which Scholem describes as a 'radical' thesis (p. 75). It is a bold way to assert that the fact that the text is revealed, rather than its content, is the thing that makes it valuable to contemplate. It is also a description of a meditation practice using a mantra, which exists in various traditions including Buddhist and Christian ones, and through which many people have described their experience of entering a state of self-transcendence. In that way it may not be as outlandish a claim as it first appears. This is a radical way to read: to be stopped in the text at one point and refuse to progress, or rather to assert that a whole text can be contained in a fragment, or that it does not need to be.

To repeat a fragment or verse or mantra for a whole day will necessarily cause the words themselves to be drained of meaning, to become sound, and then

perhaps to go back to meaning again. The force of repetition turns the fragment into a whole, while maintaining its status as one part, holding its two realities in tension.

Chapter 3: Repetition

In this chapter I turn to the question of whether it might be useful to consider translation as a type of repetition, or an activity adjacent to repetition. We have seen how repetition can be a reading strategy, a means of contemplating a text or part of a text, or using a text to aid contemplation of something beyond itself, both via mirrors and identicality, and via mantra meditation. The sacred readings we have been considering also suggest that looking at a small segment of a text can be a way to access the whole thing, by means of Benjamin's idea of the fragments of a vase which need not resemble each other exactly but are nevertheless identifiable as parts of the same whole. This idea of small segments is one which I intend to bring into my close reading for this chapter. Translation has also been described as a way of reading, in particular by Clive Scott who will feature prominently in my analysis, and as a means of engaging deeply with a text. My exploration of repetition will encompass discussion of Gilles Deleuze, repetition and meaning, repetition in music, and, centrally, the translation by Jennifer Moxley of a book of poetry by Jacqueline Risset: *The Translation Begins* and *La Traduction commence*. All these are types of repetition which, far from the first chapter's reflectivity and recursion, foreground variation and multiplicity.

The topic of repetition is extremely broad, and the number of things it would be possible to discuss in relation to it is almost limitless. When thinking of translation and repetition, I began with the idea that to translate is potentially to repeat, and that to publish a book in translation could be considered as, or at the very least compared to, a repetition of the original publication. Continued

reflection led to the idea of repetition as one of the main mechanisms by which meaning is itself produced, or rather the means in which it can be infused into a particular word or sign. Repetition obviously participates in similarity, which translation must also do, and this has led to a consideration of Deleuze's notion that repetition is itself a kind of difference.

Translation always takes us from one text to two, but much like Benjamin's notion of textual afterlives, and the recursive between-mirrors effect discussed in Chapter 1, translation as repetition takes us beyond two and into the possibility of many. In her book *On Repeat*, musicologist Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis writes this about repetition and multiplicity:

> Part of the issue is clearly the way that functions and responses change as repetitions continue—threefold repetition (when the punchline normally appears in American jokes—see Zinoman, 2012) is different from twofold, but six times is different yet again, and thirty times still more different. From a discursive perspective, a single repetition is enough to establish a pattern, but from a musematic perspective, many more may be desirable. Perceptual changes across repetitions are often nonlinear—enjoyment, for example, seems to peak after a moderate number of repetitions, but decrease thereafter.[1]

For Margulis, whose main concern is repetition in music, repetition is an aesthetic act. It is pleasing to us at least partly because it is orienting, it creates a structure in which we might understand where we are as listeners within a piece, but, Margulis argues, it is also highly attractive to listeners in itself, and a specific feature of music, to hear a part of a piece played many times over. Indeed, she notes that repeating a spoken phrase a sufficient number of times will have the effect of its being perceived as a phrase of music:

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[1] Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis, *On Repeat: How Music Plays the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 51.

> Perhaps the most dramatic evidence for the special role of repetition in music comes from Diana Deutsch's speech-to-song illusion (hearable at http://deutsch.ucsd.edu/psychology/pages.php?i=212). In this well-known example (Deutsch, Lapidis, and Henthorn, 2008; Deutsch, Henthorn, and Lapidis, 2011), a sentence of ordinary speech is presented, followed by the excessive and temporally regular repetition of a single clause from the utterance. Finally, the original sentence is played again. For the majority of listeners (approximately 85 percent in most studies), a radical change in perception occurs: although the rest of the sentence sounds normal, the segment that had been repeated has shifted phenomenologically, such that it seems the speaker has suddenly burst into song. (pp. 16–17).

This phenomenon, like the meditation based on a mantra described at the close of Chapter 2, is about the concentrated and multiple repetition of a small unit of language. Poetry can be a thing that breaks up language into such small units, and can cause them to be repeated in much this way, as we will see in discussions of William Wordsworth and Gertrude Stein. When we think about translating a whole work, there will be moments of repetition within that, where an identical or very similar word is used to the original, but also the work as a whole, in terms of its narrative if it has one, in terms of the shapes and spaces occupied on pages, in sounds or simply in the existence of many different versions of the 'same' book.

We know repetition as a function that creates patterns and categories, that causes meaning to be discernible, that conditions our understanding of the world. For Deleuze, however, repetition is itself a kind of difference, and it is most important to pay attention to the ways in which difference is generated and embodied by repetition, quite in opposition to the notion of repetition as creating categories, opposites, meaning or destinations. Repetition conditions both time and space and, for Deleuze, does so in a way that is non-linear and, particularly, non-teleological. It is this non-teleological repetition that I intend to explore and

eventually contrast with Benjamin's extreme teleology, whereby translation participates in the messianic destiny of all of history.

I am going to consider translation and repetition through a reading of Jennifer Moxley's translation of Jacqueline Risset's book *La Traduction commence, The Translation Begins*, placing the two texts alongside one another. This longer poetic text takes the form of a meditation on the myth of Diana and Actaeon, as told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In it, Risset configures translation as an act of transformation analogous to the metamorphosis of Actaeon, who in the story is transformed into a stag and eaten by his own hunting dogs because he chances to look upon the virgin goddess of hunting as she bathes naked. This moment of looking is returned to again and again in the text. The text itself can also be seen as a creative transformation of Ovid, a formal translation between Latin hexameters and a contemporary French poetic text. I intend to explore the ways in which Risset's text and Moxley's translation reflect some of Deleuze's ideas about non-teleology, a difference that does not categorise but rather pervades everything, repetition as difference and as a transformative practice, and the link between temporality and non-linearity.

REPETITION AS STRUCTURE

One important factor to note about repetition is that it is such a strong drive that it can lead to things that are in fact different in many of their particulars being acknowledged to participate in the same thing. Margulis uses the example of Happy Birthday, arguing first that it proves that the intervals between the notes are more salient to the vast majority of listeners than their absolute pitches (we can recognise the tune instantly regardless of pitch, because of the intervals), but going on to go even further, because singers of Happy Birthday frequently fail to reproduce the exact the intervals as much as they select different pitches and tempi:

> People recognize renditions of *Happy Birthday* as such despite all manner of idiosyncrasies in execution—not just idiosyncrasies in pitch, but also idiosyncrasies in tempo, rhythm, and articulation. (p. 34)

This is evidence that repetition can be repetition without being exact, and indeed that it is the aspects of the work which are repeated that cause us to understand which aspects are most salient, and also, importantly, which are inessential. We only learn to distinguish a signal amid the noise via the mechanism of repetition, by understanding what returns and what can vary without making a difference. This is reflected in a certain conception of the translation process, in which a translator must decide from an entire poetic work and all its context, which aspects are the most vital, the most salient to be translated — Clive Scott writes about 'preservation', and it is, arguably, via repetition that the interpretive strategies of translators are honed, and certainly repetition within the work to be translated will have a great influence on what is perceived by the translating reader, or the reading translator, as being most salient, and what may, in their reading, be discarded.

Margulis goes on to cite David Lidov, who writes that:

> 'We know that musical repetitions we call identical may actually presuppose a great deal of culturally determined listening and prior systematization of materials. […] Nevertheless, when we are dealing with conscious musical experience, repetition is one of the first and most solid elements of that experience, and we are still entitled to recognize repetition as holding a privileged status among formal devices on the basis of its at least relative if not absolute concreteness (Lidov, 2004, p. 26). (p. 34)

The idea of relative if not absolute concreteness in repetition leads us to consider the idea that repetition creates a kind of structuring concreteness in itself, or indeed that what we consider to be concrete and structuring, we often consider to be so on the basis of its having been repeated a lot of times. Repetition is

perceivable because we agree upon what is salient, and repetition structures perception because we discover salience through discovering what is repeated. Babies learn language by listening for repeated units of sound which they begin to interpret as words, units of communication. New words in a language gain their currency through wide repetition.

Repetition and patterns are aesthetically pleasing to humans, representing the possibility of order and comprehensibility. Indeed, Margulis conducted the following experiment:

> In a 2012 study, I asked participants without special musical training — everyday music listeners — to listen to excerpts from challenging contemporary art music (atonal pieces by Luciano Berio and Elliott Carter) and rate on a 7-point scale how much they'd enjoyed each excerpt, how interesting they'd found it, and how likely they thought the excerpt was to have been composed by a human artist rather than randomly generated by a computer (Margulis, 2013). Unbeknownst to the participants, mixed in with the original excerpts were adaptations of them. In these adaptations, segments of music had been extracted and reinserted to add repetitions of some material; repetitions that could occur immediately or after some other music had intervened.
>
> Listeners rated the immediate and delayed repetition versions as reliably more enjoyable, more interesting, and more likely to have been composed by a human artist rather than generated randomly by a computer. (p. 15)

This points to the possibility of uncanny repetition — a version of repetition where it is impossible to tell whether it is being produced mechanically or by humans. We have seen how the idea of recursion produces this kind of uncanny sensation, and some of how mechanistic reproduction comes to serve as a dominant cultural metaphor for translation, via the work of Michael Cronin, and we will see how repetition can be a threat as much as a container for meaning and structure. However, the results of Margulis' experiment principally point to

repetition as a powerfully human impulse, something experienced as desirable and structuring.

In poetry, repetition operates on both a micro and a macro level. On the one hand, poetic techniques constitute many kinds of patterning based on repetition, that can make poetry an object of aesthetic pleasure — rhyme, alliteration, assonance, are repetitions of certain sounds. Many poems will repeat words or even whole refrains. Indeed, I will later discuss how rhythm is a form of repetitive patterning that conditions how poetry is read. Much like the avant-garde music Margulis describes, however, twentieth-century French poetry often experiments with the absence of pattern, or with excesses of repetition, or the complex and irregular rhythmic patterning of free verse. Allusion and intertextuality are repetition across poetic texts, and often serve to construct a context in which a particular text participates.

On the other hand, poetry exists in a publication context determined by norms and trends that themselves come about through a mechanism of repetition, and begin to prompt questions about how repetition creates or enforces power structures. For example, it is agreed upon in the publishing industry that a translated text is sufficiently similar in sufficiently salient ways that it is acceptable to put the name of the author of the original text on the front of the book in big letters. This is one factor which leads me to the consideration of a translated text as a kind of repetition.

REPETITION AS A THREAT TO MEANING

As much as repetition can create structure and meaning via the mechanism of salience and categorisation, it can also threaten to dissolve them. Even on the level of a single word, to repeat three times will result in emphasis, whereas to repeat ten times seems to drain the word of meaning and render it an empty sound.

Experimental art in the twentieth century very often plays with the possibility of repetition to establish and dissolve regimes of meaning. An example is Gertrude Stein — in her poem 'Sacred Emily' she repeats words many times, at first highlighting and then effectively stripping them of their poetic associations, everyday uses, literary allusions, and asking the reader to consider what is left:

> Next to barber bury.
>
> Next to barber bury china.
>
> Next to barber bury china glass.
>
> Next to barber china and glass.
>
> Next to barber and china.
>
> Next to barber and hurry.
>
> Next to hurry.
>
> Next to hurry and glass and china.
>
> Next to hurry and glass and hurry.
>
> Next to hurry and hurry.
>
> Next to hurry and hurry.[2]

This repetition of 'next to' causes the spatiality of the poem to become absurd — it appears to be a description of where things are in space but this reading becomes impossible after eleven repetitions. 'Next to' suggests juxtaposition or series, pointing to parallel texts like those from Chapter 1. Later in the same poem, the famous line, 'Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose' takes a word laden with centuries of symbolic baggage and forces it to put it down. By means of this repetition, Stein has converted the words into sounds, and then, as Margulis suggests, perhaps given them the possibility of becoming melodies. Meaning becomes only one of the things language can do, particularly in poetry, and the pleasure and danger of the pattern, of the repetition itself, is brought to the fore.

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[2] Gertrude Stein, *Geography and Plays* (Boston: Four Seas Company, 1922), p. 181.

Paul Valéry in 'Poetry and Abstract Thought' makes a very similar observation when he construes the poetic as the thing that remains after words have been stripped of their pragmatic functionality in the world:

> Poetry is an art of language, Language, however, is a creation of practice. […] *I ask you for a light. You give me a light:* you have understood me.

> […] But the matter does not end here. A strange thing: the sound, like the figure of your little phrase, returns in me and is repeated in me, as if it delighted in me; and I like to hear it said over again, that little phrase which has almost lost its meaning and has ceased to serve, yet wants to live a whole new life again. It has assumed a value *at the expense of its finite significance.*[3]

For Valéry, it is not only that a poet can manipulate language via repetition, but also the other way around: that a piece of language, by force of repeating and becoming rather like an earworm, or a tune that you get stuck in your head, manipulates the poet into a new understanding of its value. Ordinarily words are discarded after they have served their semantic or pragmatic function, but by virtue of repetition they can come to resemble poetry, or become poetic in themselves, very much in the manner that Margulis describes when a repeated phrase begins to be perceived as a melody.

To me, this recalls the part of *Difference and Repetition* where Deleuze writes about repetition as rule-following versus repetition as 'working to rule' — this is a different relationship between rules and repetition where repetition can expose what seems like a universal or unquestionable rule as in its own way arbitrary:

> By adopting the law, a falsely submissive soul manages to evade it and to taste pleasures it was supposed to forbid. We can see this in demonstration by

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[3] Paul Valéry, 'Poetry and Abstract Thought', trans. by Charles Guenther, *Kenyon Review*, 1954, 208–33 (p. 218) <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/4333487>.

absurdity and working to rule, but also in some forms of masochistic behaviour
which mock by submission. […] Repetition belongs to humour and irony; it is by
nature transgression or exception, always revealing a singularity opposed to the
particulars subsumed under laws, a universal opposed to the generalities.
which give rise to laws.[4]

So not only can verbal repetition dissolve meaning via semantic satiation,
Deleuze suggests that by following a rule in an exaggeratedly repetitive manner,
or by following it as though it is a mechanistic law rather than one subject to social
convention, it is possible to expose the absurdity of that rule. A work-to-rule strike
is one where workers protest by only working according to the exact terms of their
written contract, thus demonstrating how much work they usually do over and
above what they are paid for. By insisting on the individual and the universal
(these are Hegelian terms to which we shall return shortly) and eschewing the
particular and the general, Deleuze is appealing to a sense that repetition can get
beyond the everyday social categories in which life is lived, and reveal an
ontological space that operates by a different logic. Politically here, the particular
is the idea that people might be generalised to a role or a function, and that may
be the result of having a particular set of rules applied to them. By repetition, by
insisting on the capacity to create outwards, to make difference, Deleuze insists on
the individuality of the person, and of the specificity of an individual instance of
repetition, as opposed to a generalised notion that things or people will follow
certain rules in the expected way. Translation is always in this manner specific.

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[4] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia
University Press, 1994), p. 5.

REPETITION AS A KIND OF DIFFERENCE

We must now turn to *Difference and Repetition* in more detail, and tease out Deleuze's definition of repetition in order to see how it can be applied to the act of translation as well as the product of that act. Paraphrased by Cliff Stagoll:

> Difference is usually understood either as 'difference from the same' or difference of the same over time. In either case, it refers to a net variation between two states. Such a conception assumes that states are comparable, and that there is at base a sameness against which variation can be observed or deduced. As such, difference becomes merely a relative measure of sameness and, being the product of a comparison, it concerns external relations between things. To think about such relations typically means grouping like with like, and then drawing distinctions between the groups.[5]

Looking at this characterisation of difference provides us with an apt framework to critique certain modes of thought common in writing about translation — as we have seen in Chapter 1, it is by comparison between original and translated text, particularly the direct comparison invoked by a parallel text presentation, that readers assess the translation, using metrics such as 'accuracy' which closely parallel this idea of measuring variation against the ultimate desire for sameness. To put a translation beside an original is in one sense to group 'like with like' — the two texts are expected to have certain things in common, to tell the same story or to 'mean' the same — but it is also very much to play 'spot the difference': it is when they are beside each other, at their most coextensive, that it becomes most apparent that these are two separate texts.

However, as Karen Emmerich points out in her book *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*, the notion of a stable 'original' from which translations

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[5] Cliff Stagoll, 'Difference', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr, Revised ed (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 74–76 (p. 74).

proceed is problematic once we take into account the amount of editorial work that very often goes into establishing an edition of a particular work, the existence of multiple manuscripts or editions in the source language, and, as she goes on to discuss, the existence of oral texts and manuscripts, like those of Emily Dickinson, never intended for publication.[6] This idea is familiar to us from the discussion in Chapter 1 of Anne Carson, who not only translated Sappho but also curated the Greek text on the facing page, emphasising its lacunae. Indeed, the situation of parallel text acts to stabilise an original in order for the translation to sit beside it. This phenomenon of the unstable original supports Deleuze's critique of the 'base sameness' against which comparisons might be drawn. Rejecting the stability of the original, or at least viewing it as contingent, constructed by the translation itself, leads us into a territory where 'difference from the same' might give way to 'difference-in-itself' while looking at a single text as well as two texts together.

John Protevi writes that 'In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze insists that individuation precedes differenciation. Individuation is real material development; differenciation is the relation of differences to each other, that is, how one individuation relates to another.'[7]

What Deleuze proposes is that instead of subordinating difference to sameness by means of 'resemblance, identity, opposition and analogy' in order to sort concepts or things into groups, we must consider 'difference-in-itself'. This is a radical shift in the way difference is configured conceptually — instead of being categorically different from something else, comparable in terms of both similarity and difference, Deleuze notes that similarity itself is differentiating, and wishes to pay attention to the transformation of each thing into other versions of itself. Instead of points in time, Deleuze is interested in Bergsonian 'duration', which is

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[6] Karen Emmerich, *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*, Literatures, Cultures, Translation (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017). Kindle eBook.

[7] John Protevi, 'Creative Transformation + Biology', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr, Revised ed (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 61–63 (p. 63).

the flow of time, a view which gives room for 'becoming' rather than 'being' to be the inherent state of the world and the things in it.

Deleuzian becoming does not tend towards a determined end-state but is open-ended. In this idea we can see shades of the translation process, in which a text is made with reference to a previous text, not merely as a re-presentation of the same but in the indeterminacy of a creative act — there is not one correct translation per text, but many possible ones. Indeed, resisting 'individuation' and the very concept of categorisation might lead us to consider treating the two texts — 'original' and 'translation' — as potentially coextensive.

Deleuze is clear that repetition is part of the process by which things 'become', and as such can be a creative process: 'In this way, repetition is best understood in terms of discovery and experimentation; it allows new experiences, affects and expressions to emerge. To repeat is to begin again; to affirm the power of the new and the unforeseeable.'[8]

Parr's articulation of Deleuze's repetition shows us how the concept of 'repetition' might be applied to translation. Because a translation must 'begin', but in a sense what it is doing is beginning 'again'. When we read *The Translation Begins* we know we are in a beginning but it is not the first beginning. Indeed, with a myth such as Diana and Actaeon, the origin is not retrievable. The nature of myth is retelling and retelling is a Deleuzian type of repetition, in that it embraces variation and, by taking a story onwards into fresh contexts, 'the unforeseeable'.

In the preface to the English edition of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze discusses his choice of these two concepts to focus on:

> We tend to subordinate difference to identity in order to think it (from the point of
> view of the concept or the subject: for example, specific difference presupposes an
> identical concept in the form of a genus). We also have a tendency to subordinate

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[8] Adrian Parr, 'Repetition', in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. by Adrian Parr, Revised ed (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 225–26 (p. 225).

it to resemblance (from the point of view of perception), to opposition (from the
point of view of predicates), and to analogy (from the point of view of judgement).
In other words, we do not think difference in itself. […]

The situation was perhaps no better with regard to repetition: in another manner,
this too is thought in terms of the identical, the similar, the equal or the opposed.
In this case, we treat it as a difference without concept: two things repeat one
another when they are different even while they have exactly the same concept.
Henceforth, everything which causes repetition to vary seems to us to cover or
hide it at the same time. Here again, we do not reach a concept of repetition. (pp.
xv–xvi)

The terms in which Deleuze differentiates repetition from generality are
useful for elucidating some of the categories which are sometimes used to talk
about translation. For example, Reynolds talks about 'substitution' as the logic of
translation, while Derrida mentions the 'economy' of translation as being
approximately the exchange of 'one word for one word', before problematising
that economy of exchange between two non-commensurate value systems using
the example of the Merchant of Venice. Deleuze sees exchange as belonging to the
realm of 'generality' — the same idea as a replicable experiment in science, the
'point of view according to which one term may be exchanged or substituted for
another.' (p. 1) We have seen how economic metaphors and ones of exchange are
commonly applied to translation, for example in the way Michael Cronin writes
about our ideas of what translation can do being dictated by the technologies of
reproduction which are available.

Indeed, Deleuze goes on to discuss the 'economics' of repetition, and I will
now discuss a passage from *Difference and Repetition* in order to approach his
perspective on this and tease out how it might be applied to thinking about
translation:

> Generality presents two major orders: the qualitative order of resemblances and the quantitative order of equivalences. Cycles and equalities are their respective symbols. But in any case, generality expresses a point of view according to which one term may be exchanged or substituted for another. The exchange or substitution of particulars defines our conduct in relation to generality. That is why the empiricists are not wrong to present general ideas as particular ideas in themselves, so long as they add the belief that each of these can be replaced by any other particular idea which resembles it in relation to a given word. By contrast, we can see that repetition is a necessary and justified conduct only in relation to that which cannot be replaced. Repetition as a conduct and as a point of view concerns non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities. Reflections, echoes, doubles and souls do not belong to the domain of resemblance or equivalence; and it is no more possible to exchange one's soul than it is to substitute real twins for one another. If exchange is the criterion of generality, theft and gift are those of repetition. There is, therefore, an economic difference between the two. (p. 1)

Various potential categories or concepts are opened up in this quotation. It becomes clear that in the 'process ontology' favoured by Deleuze, categories, equivalence and exchange, which make up so much of the discourse around translation, are not particularly meaningful or relevant. Like Benjamin with his teleological vision of fragmentation and repair, Deleuze is attempting to articulate an alternative (and, he argues, more accurate and useful) way to perceive and divide up reality. Unsurprisingly, this ontology throws into question certain common assumptions about what it means to translate and what the horizon of possibility for translation may be.

He delineates two ideas about repetition to which his own conception of it is opposed, both of which have featured prominently in discussions of translation: 'resemblance' and 'equivalence'.

With Deleuzian repetition, we enter 'a point of view [which] concerns non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities', stating that 'reflections, echoes, doubles and souls do not belong to the domain of resemblance or equivalence'. (p. 1) He rejects the idea that repetitions can be interchangeable or exchangeable or equivalent: 'If exchange is the criterion of generality, theft and gift are those of repetition. There is, therefore, an economic difference between the two.' (p. 1) Exchange and substitute, theft and gift are all elements of metaphors which have been used to talk about translation. Deleuze insists that repetition does not produce equivalence, but rather that 'To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent.' (p. 1) Certainly a poem is usually seen as something unique and singular, and if we are to count translation among the different ways in which a poem can be 'repeated', we must surely admit the possibility that the much-lamented 'failure' of translations to adequately substitute or present themselves in exchange for the 'original' would, in Deleuze's view, make them a good and interesting example of repetition.

Deleuze goes on to write more specifically about poetry:

> Generality, as generality of the particular, thus stands opposed to repetition as universality of the singular. The repetition of a work of art is like a singularity without concept, and it is not by chance that a poem must be learned by heart. The head is the organ of exchange, but the heart is the amorous organ of repetition. (It is true that repetition also concerns the head, but precisely because it is its terror or paradox.) (pp. 1–2)

The particular and the universal are Hegelian terms. Indeed, the movement between different levels of Hegel's schema of being, *Aufhebung*, often translated 'sublation', has been used by Derrida as an image of translation, as we have seen. Derrida's idea is that translation involves moving between two non-commensurate planes, and the mediation of the translation induces a kind of

abstraction — going from the specific words of the original work to the translated work by means of a generalising of the language into sense, from the individual of one work to the particularity of language. This kind of 'abstraction', however, does not interest Deleuze, who draws on the work of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and wishes to account for movement outside the (he feels) static and generalising framework of mediation:

> Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are among those who bring to philosophy new means of expression. In relation to them we speak readily of an overcoming of philosophy. Furthermore, in all their work, movement is at issue. Their objection to Hegel is that he does not go beyond false movement — in other words, the abstract logical movement of 'mediation'. They want to put metaphysics in motion, in action. They want to make it act, and make it carry out immediate acts. It is not enough, therefore, for them to propose a new representation of movement; representation is already mediation. (p. 8)

This is striking in terms of thinking about translation, in which the notion of mediation seems unavoidable. Indeed, the claim that 'representation is already mediation' can be well illustrated by translation, whereby the idea that the translated text reproduces, or acts as a representative of the original text in the target language involves a thorough mediation via the actions of the translator. However despite the distances that texts often travel, Deleuze considers mediation to be a 'false movement': Hegelian *Aufhebung*, the movement between levels from the particular toward the universal, characterised by Derrida and here by Deleuze as a movement of abstraction, is not sufficient to account for the concrete spatial and temporal shifts that occur in repetition, and also in translation. In fact, movement itself, rather than the representation of movement, is already at stake when texts physically move through the world, and the idea of a translation theory that accounts for movement between languages without recourse to abstraction is one I hope to use this chapter to consider.

Deleuze goes on to describe what he interprets as the desired effect of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard's philosophies:

> Producing within the work a movement capable of affecting the mind outside of all representation; it is a question of making movement itself a work, without interposition; of substituting direct signs for mediate representations; of inventing vibrations, rotations, whirlings, gravitations, dances or leaps which directly touch the mind. (p. 8)

In the literary discussion which follows, I wish to examine whether it can be helpful to think of translation that involves 'substituting direct signs for mediate representations', considering the kind of repetition that translation is as a Deleuzian repetition which is dynamic and principally concerned with the creation of difference as opposed to categorisation, generality, sameness or representation. In particular, the spatial and rhythmic aspects of the 'dances or leaps' by which the poetry moves, and the relationship between patterning and movement in *La Traduction commence* and *The Translation Begins*, will be a focus of my analysis.

LA TRADUCTION COMMENCE

In order to proceed with this chapter it now becomes necessary to give a summarising account of *La Traduction commence*, so that we can undertake an analysis of particular sections of it in the context of the whole. In some ways this is a relatively simple task of recounting the narrative of the text, and outlining the way it is structured: it is divided into four sections, 'CORPUS *{HISTOIRE}*', 'COR *{DISCOURS}*', 'TIMOR *{ROUGE}*' and 'LA TRADUCTION COMMENCE'. The first three are concerned mainly with the narrative and the final one is a transformation of them. Moxley leaves the Latin titles alone and translates the French into English as 'Story', 'Discourse', 'Red' and 'The Translation Begins'.

'COR' is French for horn as well as Latin for heart, and in the context of the hunt this is an important pun. Moxley leaves it as it is, which does not deactivate the pun but it does add a layer of difference, having to delve into two languages rather than one to access it.

However, in attempting to go on to summarise the contents of each section, as they unfold aspects of the story of Diana and Actaeon, mingling the points of view and abstracting and refracting the narrative into a piece of contemporary poetry, we discover a problem that strikes at the heart of an attempt to create a Deleuzian translation studies. The only way to work out what is salient to put in a summary is to look at what recurs, what themes are developed, where the text directs the reader's attention, and the only way to find these things is to pay attention to repetition. However, the problem here is that as we have seen, this kind of structuring repetition which allows us to orient ourselves in a space is the very kind that Deleuze considers to be the lesser kind. Instead of looking at how the text differs from itself at every point, thinking structurally requires us to write about sameness.

Deleuze is interested, though, in repetition that encompasses development. In a passage with telling implications for the use of his ideas for translation studies, he remarks:

> When we are confronted by a repetition which proceeds masked, or comprises displacements, quickenings, slowdowns, variants or differences which are ultimately capable of leading us far away from the point of departure, we tend to see a mixed state in which repetition is not pure but only approximative: the very word repetition seems to be employed symbolically, by analogy or metaphor. (p. 24)

This certainly appears to be the case for my use of the term 'repetition' as a figure which might be applied to translation: because of the transformation inherent in translation, to call it repetition is to invoke repetition metaphorically,

to consider its features, the idea of sameness (rather than sameness itself) with added spatial and temporal distance, but not to literally consider a translation as a repetition of a text. This 'approximative' repetition might apply to translation, adaptation of a text into different media, summary, exegesis, and different kinds of transformative textual practices which might lead us 'far away from the point of departure' in both literal and figurative distance. However, symbolic repetition, or repetition as metaphor, does not satisfy Deleuze as a way of describing these textual practices. In fact, for him, this introduction of various kinds of difference only serves to intensify their embodiment of the centre of the concept of repetition:

> We therefore suggest that this other repetition is in no way approximative or metaphorical. It is, on the contrary, the spirit of every repetition. It is the very letter of every repetition, its watermark or constitutive cipher. It forms the essence of that in which every repetition consists: difference without a concept, non-mediated difference. It is both the literal and spiritual primary sense of repetition. (p. 25)

This is a startling assertion, particularly from the point of view of translation studies. The very things that we claim to make something 'not repetition', echoing the ways we draw boundaries around what constitutes 'translation' (translation as opposed to adaptation, the Derridean economy of — approximately — 'one word for one word'), actually cement the identification. The idea that difference and repetition, far from being opposites, are in fact centrally part of the same process, almost invariably found together, comes into startling focus. By changing aspects of a text, a translator allows for repetition to occur, because the insertion of difference is a key characteristic of repetition, rather than a contradiction of it.

Thus in offering any kind of summary of Risset's text and Moxley's translation, I am also engaging in a transformative textual practice which is comparable to translation, centred in my reading of the text. This picks up my

argument in Chapter 1 that the practices of comment, interpretation and translation are closely aligned and can at times make use of the same textual mechanisms. And insofar as there is repetition in the text itself, it must be taken to be part of the development of the whole, and the structuring it provides is also a transformation of the text, as seen as a temporal reading process from start to finish, or a spatial one in the context of its pages.

And indeed, this is exactly how the work proceeds: it is a progressive transformation or dissolution of its source narrative, beginning with lines that run or appear to run into the ends of pages, moving in the direction of tabular space, large amounts of white space and very short lines of text, into small amounts of text occurring inside rectangles or separated off by long vertical and horizontal lines of ink, to the insistent end-of-line punctuation of the final section, with every line of text ending in a line in the form of a slash or a dash.

ÉCLATE

```
par places        trame et trace
fil fil           passage
toi seul                    toit

dans ce fauteuil        : me manges
couteau fumée repas     : dans les entrailles

commente        : « ciel calme, es-tu

content ? »
```

37

L'AFFIRMATION

```
┌─────────────────────┐
│ et oui j'ai dit oui je │
└─────────────────────┘

        « les voir sombrer »

        ┌──────┐
        │ Sᶦ TU │
        └──────┘

        ma → s → mor

        m'as      moi
              lu↗

                   tour à tour
        suis-je
```

43

M.P. 1908

```
donc tu vois que mort/
on est presque en vie/
tricots brûlés tu devrais/
rêve, suivre rapidement des/

voix qui me : « mais tu as/
du monde à/
le double six/

plumer des œufs, éclairer/
le feu/
congé dire : la porte, votre/

et de vent sur/
grands espaces de marbre/
grandes tentures Venise/

place carrée/
que la figure, le poids/

rêves érotiques avec/
sujet rétroactif/
```

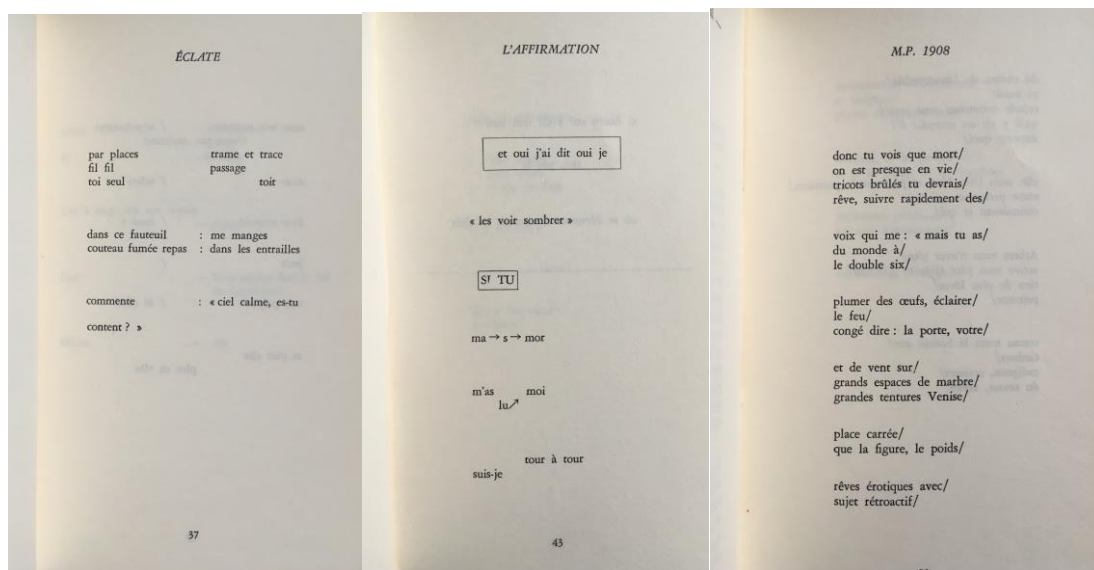91

Figure 8. Some stages of transformation of use of space in Risset.

In terms of the contents of the poetry, it begins identifiably in a narrative world in which Actaeon meets Diana, though their names are never used, only 'il' and 'elle'. A line from near the beginning of the book, 'trouver une loi fausse de la succession' — 'find a false law of succession', should trouble us when trying to

summarise, as it seems that to make the details or the words here entail one another or follow from one to the next would in some way be to falsify them. The text, however, does not absolutely insist upon this non-entailment; rather, it plays with it.

In attempting to summarise the actions and effects of the text in her translator's note, Moxley writes:

> Whenever language is present, semantics will attempt a takeover. Jacqueline Risset's *La Traduction commence* engages and subverts this attempt. In her book, meaning springs from the page as though it were a pattern not previously seen. But, as in the myth of Diana and Acteon, as soon as the significance of the pattern is *recognized*, the pattern itself is transformed and torn apart.[9]

The idea of a 'pattern not previously seen', of making language do something other than semantic, is both interesting from the point of view of repetition and difference, and also recognisably part of a pattern or tradition in modern French poetry running through Mallarmé's experiments in tabularity, Apollinaire's use of words as a medium to make pictures and Ponge's 'Figue de paroles'. The notion of recognition as the instigator of dissolution comes from the story of Diana and Actaeon but also highlights the role of repetition: as Margulis points out, not very much repetition is required for the recognition of a pattern, so indeed it is not long before the narrative begins to show signs of being disrupted, not to say dissolved.

The dissolution begins in earnest in the section 'TIMOR *{ROUGE}*'. Here on page 65:

ou bien il se dissoudra dans les choses

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[9] Jacqueline Risset, *The Translation Begins*, trans. by Jennifer Moxley (Providence, RI: Burning Deck, 1996), p. 96.

je ne —

que tu—

or rather it will dissolve into things

I don't —

that you — (p. 66)

Here we note several things. Firstly that Moxley has translated 'il' as 'it' when it could equally be 'he', which is an example of repetition forcing us to take a certain direction away from the point of departure. It is also a moment of choosing the closest resemblance, 'il' and 'it' look much more similar on the page than 'il' and 'he'.

Secondly there is a self-awareness about the theme of dissolution, and the action that this has on language. Dissolution here produces fragments, ungrammatical pieces of language that cannot complete themselves.

On the topic of fragments, in the same section, page 82, under the subheading '*MORS*', the text uses citation to appear to detranslate, to dissolve back into Latin:

tout s'achève

memini me pavom fuisse
en pourrissant en éclatant
et —

et toi ? (p. 82)

everything finishes off

memini me pavom fuisse
in spoiling in bursting
et —

and you? (p. 84)

If we trace this Latin however, it does not originate in Ovid's story of Diana and Actaeon. Rather it is about metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, and it is a quotation from Ennius, a Roman poet whose work only survives in fragments. His 'Annales', an epic poem about the history of Rome, begins with an account of a vision in which he discovers that he is the reborn spirit of the Greek poet Homer. Homer's spirit also remembers having been a peacock in the interim before becoming Ennius, and that is what this fragment is about: 'Memini fieri me pavom', 'I remember that I became a peacock'. Risset's slight misquote substitutes 'fuisse' for 'fieri', puts the line from the historic present into the perfect tense, and changes the verb from 'become' to 'be, a subtle shift resulting in something that might rather be translated 'I remember that I was a peacock', although of course for Deleuze being and becoming are the same thing.

It is striking that this line should appear, in Latin, in this section of Risset's text. For a start, it is about authorship and inscribing oneself into a tradition, but in rather an extreme way. Metempsychosis is an intriguing example of the repetition of difference. In one way it embodies the mind-body dualism that leads to a long thread in translation studies that theorises that the 'spirit' of the text can be removed from one text and transplanted into another — what Reynolds describes as 'transfusing' the 'spirit' of the original:

> There are, then, two kinds of process in literary translation that might be thought of through the metaphor of 'carrying across'. One is the everyday lining-up of salient elements, rough similarity of function, and overlapping of descriptive meaning which operates in all translation. The other is this bringing-across that is inseparable from seeing in the first place, this reading-making-sense-translating all in one, this re-rendering of an 'ur-poem'. It is only by moving away from 'Ähnlichkeit' that the poetry to be felt or heard or transfused or given can be discovered. This is why literary translators can think of themselves as 'giving' the original, or transfusing its spirit, or making it audible or immediate. And this is how a translation can in fact claim to 'give us Horace': just as much, and just as little, as any other piece of writing. [eBook]

However the insertion of Ennius into *The Translation Begins* is also about a claim on Risset's part not only to be 'transfusing' a text but embodying, being a repetition of an author. It also recalls Greet's refusal to put herself in Apollinaire's mirror in Chapter 1, subsuming her identity in his. It is significant that this quotation occurs at the point where Actaeon is killed, so it is also his soul which, it is suggested, may transmigrate, or may at the point of death be able to recall past lives. Metempsychosis is being used as a translation metaphor: it is a process whereby, even though everything about a thing can change (a different body, different memories, a different species) yet something essential, the 'soul' remains mysteriously the same.

Metempsychosis is also a kind of afterlife, however, and it depends on a transcendent notion of identity: unless Actaeon is still himself, as well as being the stag he has been transformed into, the story does not have its full emotional impact. Ennius' claim to be Homer, and also to have been a peacock, implies that he shares something fundamental with them which endures across time. The implication of course is that he shares writing ability with Homer, though what he shares with the peacock is perhaps more difficult to say for certain. This information, however, has to be revealed to Ennius in a vision because it is not

normally accessible. We do not generally remember past lives, although they may have great narrative importance. Translation requires complete transformation of a text, and any 'sameness' is, arguably, either illusory or barely relevant, and yet it is insisted upon, either as a sort of justification (Ennius can write an epic poem because he in some sense *is* Homer, the father of epic poetry), or as an alternative, magical genealogy, one which might, for example, include a peacock.

The book finishes with a page titled in Italian, '*O MEI DOLCI ANIMALI*', which is divided into four sections crosswise, with a horizontal line dividing the upper two columns from the lower two, and in which the type is smaller than all the rest of the book (Figure 9). In the four segments we find lists of phrases in Latin and in French, and a few in Italian, and authors they appear to be attributed to. It does not look like part of the same book and it looks as if it belongs to a translator. In it we see languages transforming into one another and an attempt to impose a system on this, or to derive a system from it, in the same way Risset uses the *I Ching* as an attempt to impose a system on the very end section of the narrative.

One important route into an analysis of this text is to consider Risset's use of narrative space, or rather, her conversion of a linear narrative into a three-dimensional space within which her work moves, alerting the reader's attention to switches of perspective as spatial acts and referring to events along a linear timeline only to thwart and confuse that linearity, since the story is familiar and exists in the repetitive, or reiterative space of oral storytelling and poetic recitation.

Some of this is evident on the very first page of the text, which begins by talking about 'la démarche', which Moxley translates 'the course':

> la seule démarche serait la plus rapide et régulière à
> présent — couvrant et remplissant sans s'arrêter, du
> moment où a été touché le lieu des mélanges, en bas

O MEI DOLCI ANIMALI

1		2	
se vuole può		s'il veut	
non ha		peut	
« tu pur fuggi »		« pourtant tu fuis »	(*Pétrarque*)
videt		il voit	(*Lucrèce*)
vestigia risus		traces de rire	(*Lucrèce*)
apre/ chiude		ouvre/ ferme	
vedi/ siamo		tu vois nous sommes	
o miei dolci animali		o mes doux animaux	
odo		j'entends	(*Joyce*)
cupo corpo		corps sombre	(*Joyce*)
cade		tombe	(*Joyce*)
venire vuoi		venir tu veux	
ille modis/ somnus		et lui ainsi/ sommeil	(*Lucrèce*)
oggetto nelle tenebre		objet dans les ténèbres	(*Lucrèce*)
or poserai		maintenant cesseras	(*Leopardi*)
mio cor		mon cœur	(*Leopardi*)
quicquam		quelque chose	(*Lucrèce*)
teneris abradere membris		arracher aux tendres membres	(*Lucrèce*)

3		4	→
s'il veut			
peut			
« pourtant tu fuis »			
videt			
vistigia risus		→	
ouvre/ ferme			
tu vois nous sommes			
o mes doux animaux			
j'entends			
corps sombre		→	
tombe			
venir tu veux			
ille modis/ somnus			
objet dans les ténèbres		→	
maintenant cesseras			
mon cœur			
quicquam			
teneris abradere membris			

Figure 9. 'O MEI DOLCI ANIMALI'.

> the only course may be the most uniform and quick to
>
> date — endlessly recovering and replenishing, from the
>
> moment the idea of union draws near, on down

From the idea of only one possible course 'la seule démarche', we immediately move to qualifiers for what it 'serait' — 'would be' or 'may be' — 'à présent' — 'at the moment' or 'to date', and what it would be is 'la plus rapide et régulière'. So although there is an 'only course', it is contingent upon time and can be compared with others and found to be 'the most uniform and quick' according to Moxley's translation, which drops the alliteration of 'rapid and regular' in order to explore more places those words can go in English. 'Uniform' in particular is an interesting choice for 'régulière'. Both words can describe repetition in Deleuze's sense of a rule-following pattern, but 'uniform' seems more static while 'régulière' is more dynamic. (It is also the case that the English cognate 'regular' has a much larger set of meanings attached to it than the French 'régulière', which I speculate Moxley may have wished to avoid: a regular coffee, a regular day, etc.). This pattern, or at least this course, continues 'sans s'arrêter', without stopping, or 'endlessly'. However, the way in which the 'only course' can be qualified rather works against the idea of one inexorable linear mode for this story.

One consideration about spatiality and linearity that I have had to make when transcribing examples from this text is the fact that in the French text where there is a longer passage of continuous justified text where the lines are not separated by large gaps, the text appears very much like prose poetry: that is, it could be argued that the exact positioning of line breaks is unimportant, so there is no need to press the enter key so frequently when typing out quotations. However, Moxley seems strongly to disagree about this, and reading her translation helps us understand why this might be. Her text tends to break the lines at a point that is very semantically similar to the French, leaving her with less room to move the order of clauses around within Risset's sentences, but also

allowing her to preserve effects such as that seen above with 'à | présent', 'to | date', where the final word of the first line in each case would lead us to expect a verb is coming, but in fact presents us with a noun, and one concerned with temporality. The two expressions 'à présent' and 'to date' are not used in exactly the same way as each other, 'à présent' has the sense of 'right now' whereas 'to date' means more 'up to this point', but they do function in the same way in this line split, both leading us to expect a verb and then offering us instead an indication of temporality, and more significantly of immediacy. Whatever will happen with the 'démarche', it is happening now, not necessarily for all time or since the beginning, but at the moment, and indeed the first word of the third line in both texts is 'moment'. So both these texts are concerned with their positioning in time, and in the space of the page, and with the place of those things in the 'démarche', the 'course'.

Throughout the poem, the idea of a particular course or line through the narrative comes up often, and is often troubled by another image of the story as a space. In these first lines, this can be seen in the idea of a 'lieu de mélanges', a place of mixing or mixture, situated 'en bas' or 'below'. To me 'en bas' suggests the way in which to say 'below' in a piece of writing implies the text that is to come, underneath this text as your eye moves down each page. However that is not the only interpretation and Moxley has used a very different image to translate this line: 'the idea of union draws near, on down'. Union and mixing are not the same image, and Moxley has chosen to emphasise the aspect of mixing which means 'to bring disparate things together in the same place', and also translated 'toucher' (touch) as 'draw near'. It is spatially that Risset's metaphors are troubled, drawing near or touching, mixing or uniting, are differentiated by the space they do or do not leave between things, and it is as if having removed the differentiation in changing 'mix' to 'unite', Moxley added it back in by changing 'touch' to 'draw near'.

All of this is quite familiar from the ideas of Deleuze, firstly due to the emphasis on what happens in time, as opposed to in an abstract, atemporal way, which also draws attention to the 'present' of the time in which it is read. Secondly, the question of whether things which come together are ontologically made into one new thing (united) or rather retain their former identities in a new configuration (mixed) is an expression of the idea of multiplicity to which we shall return.

The poem then goes on to further describe the 'course':

> la démarche la plus commune — celle qui
> marche et court en parlant, ayant à faire

> the most common course — the one that while
> talking walks and runs, feeling compelled

I am struck by Moxley's translation of 'commune', which means 'common' but also 'communal', by its most obvious cognate in English, in particular when 'common' is very polysemic, and 'communal' is not the most obvious thing for it to mean in English, while in French both meanings are very apparent here. In particular, this is the opposite of the choice she made with 'régulière', above.

> — commence directement à l'intérieure de l'histoire
> (c'est la lutte contre la déperdition)
> (elle commence là — après : elle verra…)

> — begins right in the middle of the story
> (it's the struggle against loss)
> (she begins there — afterwards : she shall see…)

There are several interesting things here. Firstly, the idea of beginning *in medias res*, in the 'interior' or the middle of the story, chimes with this idea of non-teleology, or at least of a kind of translation that does not focus on the point of

departure or on the destination, but rather on the things in between. The 'course' or 'démarche' — has to 'begin', and this course which has been chosen as 'la seule', and yet needed to be argued for in the first lines of the piece, begins 'à l'intérieure de l'histoire'.

Secondly, there is the word 'déperdition', which Moxley translates as 'loss'. The French word 'déperdition' is more specific than 'loss': it is the word used for heat radiating from a poorly insulated house; it means waste, leakage, a gradual loss. 'La déperdition' is being used here also to match 'intérieure' metaphorically, because leakage implies a space where the thing is on the inside, and an outside space to which it might leak out.

By translating 'intérieure' as 'middle' rather than 'inside' or 'interior' — 'middle' can mean those things but it covers a wider semantic field: a straight line can have a 'middle' but it cannot have an 'interior', to begin 'in the middle of the story' still has room for the idea that the narrative might be linear, might go from A to B, whereas to begin in the interior rejects that linearity, figuring the story as a space with more than one dimension, a bounded space with an inside and an outside, from which something (meaning?) could seep out, however much we may wish to prevent that. However, in translating 'la déperdition' with the word 'loss', a choice which seems to represent a 'translation loss', a loss of the specificity of Risset's spatial metaphor, Moxley is also opening up the space to a whole new metaphoric field. While translation loss is fairly often considered metaphorically to be like waste or leakage, like loss on a signal, the word 'loss' in English has a much broader meaning, and suggests a death or an absence, something concrete missing that might be mourned or searched for, which is very different to the gradual loss suggested by 'déperdition'. While the sense of 'leakage' is also encompassed by Moxley's translation choice, it is not the most obvious meaning from a reader's point of view.

There is also the choice of 'right in the middle' to translate 'directement à l'intérieure' — here Risset's adverbial expression, with 'directement' modifying

'commencer', is replaced by an adjectival one, with 'right' modifying 'the middle'. This is another indication that Moxley's translation has some very different spatial and temporal ideas to Risset's text.

The next line, which is also in parentheses: '(she begins there — afterwards : she shall see…)' again creates a space within linearity with its building up of different tenses and time markers, noting that a future tense — 'she shall see' — implies after-ness, an 'afterwards', much as a translation does: in order to do something in the future, a past is created. But the space within the parentheses cannot be defined as either before or after, although it is a beginning. The space is literally punctuated, and quite heavily. We may note that the French punctuation convention of a space before the colon has been copied by Moxley, just as we discovered that the pagination and line-breaks had been, suggesting that she also believes the space of the page is an important feature of Risset's work, and one that is mirrored in the spaces created in the words of the poetry. It could be argued that this leaves the space of the page more in French than in English; there is no way for it to be a neutral ground when something as simple as a space before a semicolon can send it to one location or another.

The story of Diana and Actaeon takes place in a mythic forest space: Actaeon in his hunt has ventured into a zone where a goddess is bathing. Risset's evocation of the 'space' of the story is influenced by this. Another example of configuring the story spatially comes on page 13 of both editions:

> — Sauf si je saute en face — alors je redescends avec
> lui : alors ni lui ni moi n'y sommes, puisque nous aurions
> été seulement dans le retard à chaque fois

> — Unless I should wheel around to face him — then
> together we'd step down : then neither of us are there,
> both having been late every step of the way

The idea that in the story space one might 'wheel around' and face a different direction echoes the idea of the 'intérieur' above, but here when it happens, when the narrator 'face[s]' 'him' (Actaeon, we assume), it results in neither of them being 'there'. Of course, it is Diana who 'faces' Actaeon, whose return of his gaze determines his doom. For a narrator to be in that position nullifies the story. And again talking about translation, we find here the idea of lateness, of delay, and of the original text here as already participating in this aspect of translation. And the lateness is 'every step of the way', an attempt by Moxley perhaps to reinsert the 'démarche' metaphor from above, in a place where Risset has not used it ('à chaque fois' is only 'each time'). So this lateness or delay is pervasive, and also, significantly, repetitive. It also modifies the 'now'ness of the first lines: what is now is also in reference to other times (otherwise it is not possible to be late or delayed). Like translation, this text has a sense of being afterwards, even as it begins.

We can see that in this narrative space which is a space of translation, the kinds of repetitions we are concerned with are far from simply iterative: the repetition or recurrence of lateness is both contextual and transformative of its context. I am also highly suspicious of my own desire to find exact symmetry between Risset's and Moxley's books, or to find a focus on the specific kinds of metaphors which I personally consider to be important in the French. Deleuze is suspicious of symmetry as a facet of repetition, writing:

> The negative expression 'lack of symmetry' should not mislead us: it indicates the origin and positivity of the causal process. It is positivity itself. For us, as the example of the decorative motif suggests, it is essential to break down the notion of causality in order to distinguish two types of repetition: one which concerns only the overall, abstract effect, and the other which concerns the acting cause. One is a static repetition, the other is dynamic. One results from the work, but the other is like the 'evolution' of a bodily movement. One refers back to a single concept, which leaves only an external difference between the ordinary instances

of a figure; the other is the repetition of an internal difference which it incorporates in each of its moments, and carries from one distinctive point to another. One could try to assimilate these two repetitions by saying that the difference between the first and the second is only a matter of a change in the content of the concept, or of the figure being articulated differently, but this would be to fail to recognise the respective order of each repetition. For in the dynamic order there is no representative concept, nor any figure represented in a pre-existing space. There is an Idea, and a pure dynamism which creates a corresponding space. (p. 20)

L'expression négative « manque de symétrie » ne doit pas nous abuser : elle désigne l'origine et la positivité du processus causal. Elle est la positivité même. L'essentiel pour nous, comme nous y invite l'exemple du motif de décoration, est alors de démembrer la causalité pour y distinguer deux types de répétition, l'un concernant seulement l'effet total abstrait, l'autre, la cause agissante. L'une est une répétition statique, l'autre, dynamique. L'une résulte de l'œuvre, mais l'autre est comme « l'évolution » du geste. L'une renvoie à un même concept, qui ne laisse subsister qu'une différence extérieure entre les exemplaires ordinaires d'une figure ; l'autre est répétition d'une différence interne qu'elle comprend dans chacun de ses moments, et qu'elle transporte d'un point remarquable à un autre. On peut tenter d'assimiler ces répétitions en disant que, du premier type au second, c'est seulement le contenu du concept qui a changé ou la figure qui s'articule autrement. Mais ce serait méconnaître l'ordre respectif de chaque répétition. Car dans l'ordre dynamique, il n'y a plus ni concept représentatif, ni figure représentée dans un espace préexistant. Il y a une Idée, et un pur dynamisme créateur d'espace correspondant.[10]

What Deleuze is saying here is that a repetition of a pattern which focuses on representation, which 'refers back to a single concept', that is, the founding

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[10] Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), pp. 31–32.

instance of the pattern, such that every iteration within the pattern is in theory identical, relies on a 'representative concept' to which every iteration refers equally. However, even in this kind of repeating pattern he distinguishes a second way to conceive of repetition, which he favours: by looking the repetitions dynamically, in terms of their 'acting cause', he finds a way to conceive of them as 'the repetition of an internal difference which it incorporates in each of its moments, and carries from one distinctive point to another.' What is dynamic is also temporal, and non-static. 'Internal difference' is the way Deleuze characterises the thing that is repeated. The repetition of difference itself is the type of repetition that most interests Deleuze.

The repetition of translation is *par excellence* one of 'the acting cause', since the cause of a piece of writing is that it has been written down, and the action of translating involves repeating that cause by writing also. Here specifically, a repetition of the 'overall abstract effect' of the words is something we often expect from translation, can be compared to the effect given by a repeated pattern rather than the force of repeating it. If we pay attention to that dynamic cause of translation itself, we cease to expect identicality from translation. Indeed, translation has very often (including in this thesis) been understood spatially, both in terms of the space of the page and the figurative space within cultures that a translated text can occupy. If we follow Deleuze's logic, we might come to understand that a translated text creates its own space within which to exist, via the dynamism of the translator's work.

Indeed, this notion may help us to understand how Risset and Moxley's texts function spatially — Risset's text is already identifying itself either as a translation or as participating in an act of translation, as we can tell from the title *La Traduction commence*. As such, when it identifies the space of the story, which has an interior and can be entered, but which also contains things that may try to leak out, we can understand this text as an originator of that particular space. Moxley's text, meanwhile, as a translation of Risset's, both occupies a different physical

space, a different book, and also has an interesting relationship to the space occupied by Risset's text. On the one hand, its pagination and line spacing appears to attempt to mirror Risset's, and yet a Deleuzian reading will point to the unique effects these choices have in the English text, for example by following the spatiality of Risset's punctuation and including a space before a colon, Moxley creates a moment of alienation for readers of English, a dynamic gesture which need not be seen as a representation of Risset's choice.

Additionally, her spatial vocabulary does not recreate Risset's: choosing 'middle' over 'interior', 'uniform' over 'regular' (being a less spatial choice), 'wheel around' instead of 'jump', 'loss' instead of 'leakage'. These choices create spatial understanding very differently from Risset's. In interlingual translation there will always be the problem that languages do not 'map on' to each other, that words which translate one another in one context also bring with them a large amount of extra semantic content which has no correspondence in the original — 'régulière' and 'uniform' being a good example. For Benjamin, this fact is key to the notion of bringing languages together and allowing this linguistic difference to converge specifically at the point of the translation. In this Deleuzian world, it is more important that the dynamism of translation should open up a new space, which will be a monolingual one, and the ways Moxley's spatial vocabulary differs from Risset's is characteristic of this creation of a new space.

Deleuze's model as applied to translation also suggests a radical shift in the status of the original text. We have contented ourselves to see the original as both a poem and a 'representative concept' — the model on which translations are patterned. This links directly to Michael Cronin's work on brands and the regime of identicality. For Cronin, until very recently the main way to look at translation was to see the original as a kind of prototype on which translations modelled themselves. In the digital age, however, he sees a new regime of multiplicity taking over, with the death of fixed type printing meaning it is much easier to make small alterations in a text, and consequently the idea that authenticity means

something that is identical to its prototype is becoming less prevalent. (p. 5) This idea of small differences appears much closer to Deleuze's difference in itself, though this is somewhat deceptive. For Deleuze, following any kind of representative pattern or prototype results in the first kind of repetition, which cannot be dynamic or 'like the 'evolution' of a bodily movement'. A bodily movement happens spatially but it also inscribes a space. It also has a fluidity: it might change direction or choose an unexpected path.

This is definitely interesting to think about with respect to *La Traduction commence*, which offers itself as a kind of translation of a Greek myth or a Latin poem into a piece of French poetry, but which creates for itself a space which does not, unlike the identical pagination of Moxley's translation, commit itself to any source text in particular.

RHYTHM AND REPETITION

To add texture and depth to my analysis of rhythm and repetition I will now turn to *Lyrical Ballads*. William Wordsworth wrote a poem called The Thorn, in which certain words, including the word 'Thorn', are repeated often enough that it becomes somewhat jarring, an effect not unlike Stein's repetition but with less obviousness that it is being done for the sake of the repetition itself. Wordsworth, in order to justify his choices to his critics, somewhat in the manner that translators often feel obliged to do (Moxley's translator's note at the end of *The Translation Begins* being one example), writes a note to his readers. In it he writes:

> For the Reader cannot be too often reminded that Poetry is passion: it is the history or science of feelings: now every man must know that an attempt is rarely made to communicate impassioned feelings without something of an accompanying consciousness of the inadequateness of our own powers, or the deficiencies of language. During such efforts there will be a craving in the mind,

and as long as it is unsatisfied the Speaker will cling to the same words, or words of the same character.[11]

This is quite similar to Valéry's point in 'Poetry and Abstract Thought' about everyday words and phrases that become poetic by echoing, repeating themselves in the mind of the poet. However in this case the repetition, instead of being a function of sound, is rather about grasping for a way to express a particular meaning and needing to create a small parameter of language in which that description may begin to take shape.

Wordsworth also justifies his repetitiveness with reference to storytelling, and the satisfaction produced by repetition in the context of auditory experience:

> There are also various other reasons why repetition and apparent tautology are frequently beauties of the highest kind. Among the chief of these reasons is the interest which the mind attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as *things*, active and efficient, which are of themselves part of the passion. And further, from a spirit of fondness, exultation, and gratitude, the mind luxuriates in the repetition of words which appear successfully to communicate its feelings. The truth of these remarks might be shewn by innumerable passages from the Bible and from the impassioned Poetry of every nation. (pp. 38–39)

He follows this with several quotes from the book of Judges in the King James translation, as if to prove beyond doubt that repetition of individual words does indeed create a poetic effect:

> 'Awake, awake Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.
>
> At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet be bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead. Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why

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[11] William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by Michael Mason, 2nd edn (2013: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), p. 38.

tarry the wheels of his chariot?' — *Judges*, chap. 5th. verses 12th, 27th, and part of 28th. See also the whole of that tumultuous and wonderful Poem. (p. 39)

It is particularly interesting to me in the light of the end of the previous chapter that Wordsworth should choose a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures as evidence of the efficacy of repetition, specifically of individual words, as a poetic technique. It certainly echoes the closing of the gap between scripture and literature with which Benjamin ends his essay. It also highlights the aurality/orality of both kinds of text: the King James translation was made with a particular concern for being read aloud in church; the Hebrew texts of the scriptures were also intended for recitation. Wordsworth is perhaps saying that we must recite 'The Thorn' in order to understand its full effect.

Deleuze writes:

> Take the example of rhyme: it is indeed verbal repetition, but repetition which includes the difference between two words and inscribes that difference at the heart of a poetic Idea, in a space which it determines. (p. 21)

So for Deleuze, the repetition of sounds which constitutes rhyme in poetry opens up a space of differentiation. This repetition of one aspect of the words allows a space to be opened up in the difference between their other aspects (meaning, appearance) which both links them and holds them apart.

Margulis also considers how repetition configures aurality specifically, both in music where she writes:

> Music takes place in time, but repetition beguilingly makes it knowable in the way of something outside of time. It enables us to "look" at a passage as a whole, even while it's progressing moment by moment. But this changed perspective brought by repetition doesn't feel like holding a score and looking at a passage's notation as it progresses. Rather, it feels like a different way of inhabiting a passage—a different kind of orientation. (p. 7)

And also in speech where she notes that repetition has two different effects which we have already discussed: firstly, semantic satiation, where the word or phrase repeated too many times loses all meaning, as in Gertrude Stein above, and also a musicalising effect exemplarised by the experiment in which she described a segment of recorded speech which was played on repeat in isolation to experimental subjects, and then played again in context, which, when returned to its context, sounded to the subjects as though the speaker had suddenly burst into song.

So in music, repetition can give us a way to divide up a piece, the repeated section becomes like a landmark on a map, orienting the whole piece by its position. And repetition in language can cause language to become more like sound, and more like music.

Rhythm is a pattern in sound which is formed by the action of repetition. Deleuze identifies it as a limit case between the rule-following type of repetition which he does not favour, and the differentiating kind he is interested in. Questions about how rhythm operates, and where it is generated, are asked by students of both text (particularly but not exclusively poetry) and music. Elizabeth Margulis devotes a chapter of *On Repeat* to understanding the passage 'from acoustic to perceived repetition', which includes asking this question about rhythm, and Clive Scott has written extensively about rhythm and prosody in translation. David Huron in his book *Sweet Anticipation* also writes about how expectation, and its fulfilment or failure to be fulfilled, conditions a lot of what makes music pleasurable:

> The story of expectation is intertwined with both biology and culture. Expectation is a biological adaptation with specialized physiological structures and a long evolutionary pedigree. At the same time, culture provides the preeminent environment in which many expectations are acquired and applied. This is

especially true in the case of music, where the context for predicting future sounds is dominated by cultural norms.[12]

I.A. Richards, writing about rhythm in both verse and prose, makes the same observation as Huron when he attributes the effects of patterning to the creation and either fulfilment or thwarting of expectation:

> Rhythm and its specialized form, metre, depend upon repetition, and expectancy. Equally where what is expected recurs and where it fails, all rhythmical and metrical effects spring from anticipation. As a rule this anticipation is unconscious. Sequences of syllables both as sounds and as images of speech-movements leave the mind ready for certain further sequences rather than for others.[13]

This idea of readiness definitely anticipates readers with a level of cultural similarity, sharing a language and most likely a canon of texts which would programme the expectations, much in the way that exposure to a general background of Western music gives one the general musical vocabulary to listen to Mozart or any other composer in particular with a more or less unconscious understanding of the expectation of a cadence or rhythm and the interest provoked when the music thwarts that expectation. This positions rhythm as deeply embedded in cultural context, even as music and poetry themselves appear to be universals. To consider this further, we can look at Richards' example and discussion of prose rhythm, in a piece of prose that he finds particularly beautiful or effective:

> Let us take Landor's description of a lioness suckling her young—

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[12] David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2006), p. 3.

[13] Ivor Armstrong Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 122.

On perceiving the countryman, she drew up her feet gently, and squared her mouth, and rounded her eyes, slumberous with content; and they looked, he said, like sea-grottoes, obscurely green, interminably deep, at once awakening fear and stilling and suppressing it.

After 'obscurely green' would it be possible (quite apart from sense) to have 'deeply dark' or 'impenetrably gloomy'? Why, apart from sense, can so few of the syllables be changed in vowel sound, in emphasis, in duration or otherwise, without disaster to the total effect? As with all such questions about sensory form and its effects, only an incomplete answer can be given. The expectancy caused by what has gone before, a thing which must be thought of as a very complex tide of neural settings, lowering the threshold for some kinds of stimuli and raising it for others, and the character of the stimulus which does actually come, both play their part. (pp. 123–4)

This quotation brings up some interesting observations as regards translation, because a translated text is in a sense a chance to try again, to have the same text with different words and therefore different effects. Indeed, the extraordinary sensitivity of the reading demanded of the translator is as a result of her being expected to understand these effects before attempting to find a way to repeat them in the entirely different context of a different language. It is nearly impossible to do what Richards does not attempt, and catalogue the network of expectations embedded in an entire literary culture, if such a thing exists discretely at all in any place or time. Clive Scott helps us to understand why, in his conception of reading as an absolutely idiosyncratic activity, phenomenologically different in every occurrence. However, it is generally agreed upon that this expectation, itself partly caused by a familiarity with cultural conventions that is only gained by repeated exposure, does constitute the background against which patterns can be discerned and developed or refused.

The similarities and differences between poetic rhythm and musical rhythm are brought to the fore in one passage in *Difference and Repetition*, and in particular the way that it has been translated:

> Cadence-repetition is a regular division of time, an isochronic recurrence of identical elements. However, a period exists only insofar as it is determined by a tonic accent, commanded by intensities. Yet we would be mistaken about the function of accents if we said that they were reproduced at equal intervals. On the contrary, tonic and intensive values act by creating inequalities or incommensurabilities between metrically equivalent periods or spaces. They create distinctive points, privileged instants which always indicate a poly-rhythm. Here again, the unequal is the most positive element. (p. 21)

> La répétition-mesure est une division régulière du temps, un retour isochrone d'éléments identiques. Mais une durée n'existe que déterminée par un accent tonique, commandée par des intensités. On se tromperait sur la fonction des accents si l'on disait qu'ils se reproduisent à intervalles égaux. Les valeurs toniques et intensives agissent au contraire en créant des inégalités, des incommensurabilités, dans des durées ou des espaces métriquement égaux. Elles créent des points remarquables, des instants privilégiés qui marquent toujours une polyrythmie. Là encore, l'inégal est le plus positif. (p. 33)

'Cadence' is a word that is used in both a musical and prosodic context, though it is not entirely limited to describing sound — the 'repetition cadence' of weightlifting describes the rhythm of the repetitions — how many are completed in a specific amount of time, and in cycling it measures the revolutions of the wheel corresponding to those of the pedals. In music it does mean a repeated rhythm made of beats, but it also denotes the pattern of beats and of chords that ends a piece of music, or a section of music, or transitions from one musical key into the next. In prosody, 'cadence' is used to mean the idiosyncratic rhythms of a

specific piece of prose. Etymologically, it comes from the Latin for 'fall', implying perhaps regular footfalls or the fall of a drumstick onto the skin of a drum.

'Cadence' is the word chosen by Patton to translate Deleuze's 'mesure'. To me, 'mesure' has a much more obviously musical than prosodic resonance: it refers to a musical bar, the set of time whose length in beats of a specified note value is determined by the time signature, marked on a stave by vertical lines, which delimits the unit of repeating rhythm in a piece of music. It also simply means 'measure', as a noun and a verb. As Deleuze points out, the 'isochronic' beat of a metronome does not fully account for musical rhythm in performance. Instead, it is necessary to look at the 'accent tonique' ('tonic' here, like cadence, is another word that refers to elements related to both rhythm and harmony, denoting both the strong beat and also the most important note in the chord, e.g. the C in a C chord). In fact, 'accent tonique' is specifically a prosodic feature, referring to the most prominent syllable in a word or phrase.

Since it appears that we are in fact talking about prosody, it is very much worth noting that the notion of an 'isochronic' rhythm, and indeed an 'accent tonique', works extremely differently in English and in French. Indeed, the exact nature of the 'accent tonique' or stress accent in French has been much debated by linguists. In English there is a definite stress accent in every polysyllabic word, and secondary stresses in longer words. In French, there are no minimal pairs where the movement of the 'accent tonique' changes the meaning of a word (unlike in English: an example would be 'content' meaning 'happy' versus 'content' meaning 'that which is contained'). Linguists Peter Auer, Elizabeth Couper-Muhlen and Frank Müller note that 'in English speech, rhythmic patterns appear to be articulated primarily by the timing of stressed syllables'.[14] In English

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[14] Peter Auer, Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen, and Frank Müller, *Language in Time: The Rhythm and Tempo of Spoken Interaction*, Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 36.

metrical poetry, then, the unit of measure is the beat, and as long as there are the right number of strong beats in a line there is room for manœuvre in the number of syllables that come in between. French poetic metres are strictly syllabic, and involve counting units of syllables.

> It seems possible, on the above evidence and adopting the currently orthodox French view, to argue that a syllabic metre like French has, metrically, periodicity but no rhythmicity. It lacks rhythmicity, because syllabism reflects the fact that French is an accentuable language but not an accented one. Accents are created by syntactic configurations, processes of phrasing and grouping (linguistic), and by paralinguistic and vocal input (*accent oratoire*, *accent d'insistance*, etc.). But agreement about the principles of application of accent is so difficult to achieve that no metrical rule can be based upon it.[15]

For Clive Scott, rhythm and metre form part of his phenomenological framework for understanding poetry, and this gives them a particular relationship to translation:

> [H]ow do we achieve an account of the metrico-rhythmic nature of verse which does not merely describe what the language of the printed text makes available, but which takes into consideration the readerly experience of text? The simple answer is to pass the text through a process of translation, itself understood as an account of readerly consciousness. […] [T]he real question is not what is there on the page to be read, but what is activated by reading, what resources the reader brings into play. And the task of the translator is, equally, a participatory one: actively to read the source text into another language. (p. 68)

So not only is rhythm created in the reader, and activated only by the reading process, but describing accurately it can only take the form of translation. Scott's

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[15] Clive Scott, 'Free Verse and the Translation of Rhythm', *Thinking Verse*, 2011, 67–101 (p. 71) <http://thinkingverse.org/issue01/Clive Scott, Free Verse and the Translation of Rhythm.pdf>.

'task of the translator' here recalls Benjamin's insofar as it involves the bringing together of the two languages, resulting in the potential transformation of at least one of them.

Specifically, following a similar line of reasoning to Deleuze, he rejects the 'isochronic' as an effective descriptor for how rhythm in poetry operates:

> Metrical analysis tends to equalize values because its underlying interest is quantitative, and because it is driven by the iso-principle (isochrony, isosyllabicity, isoaccentuality); thus the relative relationships of weakness/strength of stress are converted into absolute ones, to ensure a binary contrast. (p. 68)

For Scott, the relative is much more important than the absolute when it comes to syllabic stress (and indeed the 'accent tonique'). Much like Deleuze, for Scott it is the 'incommensurabilities between metrically equivalent periods or spaces', the unique patterns created by and between these specific words, that constitute poetic rhythm. He is very critical, as we can see, of metrical analysis that attempts to distil the rhythmic experience of reading poetry into something like a musical score with bar lines and a metronomic beat. In particular, he writes about rhythm in *vers libre*, where isochronic metre is a particularly irrelevant consideration, but rhythm nonetheless exists. For Scott:

> First, and most fundamentally, such an analysis would acknowledge that rhythm is a negotiation of dialectical inputs between text and reader, between the linguistic and the paralinguistic, between the metrical and the rhythmic, between chronometric time and the inner duration of reading, and that, in performance, this negotiation of dialectical inputs will tend to supersede the metrical givens, however much it might initially be guided by them. (p. 69)

The distinction 'between chronometric time and the inner duration of reading' strikes me as particularly important, and particularly of interest from the point of view of Deleuzian repetition. For Deleuze, the dimension of time or

'durée', an idea he took from the work of Henri Bergson, describes an undifferentiated stream of time which can be perceived intuitively but, instead of being made up of things happening one after another, rather forms the encompassing current of time, which flows things into one another without being chopped up into categories or events. There is no periodicity in 'la durée'; rhythm can exist within it but will not cause it to be rhythmed. For Deleuze, this means that everything that happens can be seen from this dual perspective, either from the point of view of a categorising gaze, or from the point of view of 'la durée', and he favours the latter.

According to Margulis' reading of Deleuze:

> Since two iterations are never precisely repetitions in their deepest essence—they're composed of different atoms or occur at different time points—it is perception that abstracts both a relationship of shared identity and a relationship of difference. (p. 35)

This obtains equally in free verse, such that Moxley's and Risset's lines condition temporality very differently from each other based on the different rhythmic possibilities of the two languages.

Huron also compares English and French speech rhythms:

> Given the importance of speech sounds in our lives, it is theoretically possible that common speech rhythms influence the experience of musical rhythm. For centuries, music scholars have speculated that music from different cultures might reflect in some way the manner in which people from that culture speak. Linguists have established that people from different cultures do speak with different rhythms. English and French, for example, provide a useful contrast. To English ears, French sounds like a smooth engine, with successive syllables all roughly the same duration, with very little stress or dynamic emphasis. French sounds like a smoothly pointillistic sewing machine. To French ears, English sounds very rugged. Some syllables are smacked hard, and these syllables tend to alternate

with other syllables that nearly disappear because they are so quiet. There is some acoustical truth to the French characterization of English as sounding like a fly buzzing near one's ears. Looking at just the duration of successive syllables, linguists have shown that French syllables tend to show relatively little variation in duration. But in English, there is a strong tendency for long and short syllables to alternate. (pp. 188–9)

He goes on to apply this observation to the music produced by these two cultures:

> Patel and Daniele simply measured the variability in the durations of successive notes. Assuming that a note corresponds in some sense to a syllable, one might speculate that French melodies would tend to be more isochronous, and that English melodies would tend to alternate long and short notes. That's exactly what Patel and Daniele found in a sample of three hundred melodic excerpts from instrumental music. Intrigued by this result, Joy Ollen and I carried out a replication study involving roughly ten times the number of musical passages. As in the Patel and Daniele study, we examined only instrumental works since we assumed that vocal works would surely reflect the language used in the vocal text. Our study exactly replicated Patel and Daniele's results. Instrumental melodies by English composers are more likely to alternate long–short durations than are melodies by French composers. (p. 189)

The direct comparison is interesting, and can certainly contribute to our understanding of why the translation of rhythm, which Scott always holds in tension with scansion, is both difficult to accomplish and challenging to analyse. Scott criticises metrical analysts who write about free verse in terms of feet and number as not understanding that free verse must be read 'projectively' rather than 'retrospectively' — that is, with a view to the rhythmic context it is creating for itself rather than with reference to the prosodic world of metrical verse.

SPATIAL RHYTHM

As we have already considered in Chapter 1, Scott's answer to these questions depends on the regime of the tabular text, and, like Deleuze, his thought is influenced by Henri Bergson:

> The tabular pushes time almost exclusively in the Bergsonian direction. Time is no longer teleological, forward-driven, but is made up of digression, distraction, unresolvability. The unicursal labyrinth of the linear gives way to the multicursal labyrinth of the tabular. The linear page is the page we pass through; the tabular page is the page we spend time in. (p. 78)

So to translate tabularity, and, he argues, also to translates linearity into tabularity, is to partake precisely in the non-teleological temporality Deleuze would argue repetition can create. Indeed Scott's view of the possibilities of tabular translation is so atemporal that in his example of a line from 'Chant d'automne' by Baudelaire he manages, via back-translation, to translate himself into a completely different season, going from 'froides ténèbres' (cold dark shadows) to 'ombres fraîches' (cool shade), unmooring language so much from its context as well as its rhythm that it loses all sense of being about anything. Perhaps in the mode of Deleuzian repetition it does not matter that autumn has become summer, because synonymy, as a form of repetition, necessarily introduces significant difference. The seasons themselves, of course, also form a cycle which encompasses both difference and repetition.

This aside, Scott's view of tabularity as a spatial rhythming of the page is only one aspect of translation's possibilities with rhythm: 'translation operates as a process of rhythmicisation, or enrhythming, of the text (not necessarily at the expense of the metrical background)' (p. 81).

So in any case by paying close attention to the text to be transformed, it is possible to find a rhythmic translation that either echoes or consciously departs

from the rhythms of the original. He insists that free verse is rhythmic, and the way its rhythms work is often via tabularity and use of the page space, but also because line lengths are always variable and line ends are based on considerations other than metrical ones: 'Free verse certainly needed to find its way out of metrical assumptions, but only to establish itself as a real perceptual alternative, not as an absence of rhythm, or as a subversive rhythmicity, but as a relocated rhythmicity' (p. 84).

Indeed, in his own translations, Scott often inserts tabularity where it was not present in the original and also plays with use of typefaces, since his often-stated aim is to indicate or map out his own personal reading of the text, not in terms of its semantic content but rather in terms of the rise and fall of vocal inflection. He writes:

> The buccal cavity and the mechanisms of articulation add up to actualisations of the voice in shapes, volumes, intensities, structures. In the end, we may dream of the whole family of fonts as an intricate system of diacritics, conveying voice quality and phonetic values. (p. 96)

This method is seriously flawed not only in that attempting to represent the aural on the page by inventing a new visual language to describe it is not so much a Deleuzian insertion of difference into repetition as a falling back on representation, but mainly because typefaces already have a lot of semantic content that is expressed visually, has nothing to do with sound, and to ignore this makes the resulting translation extremely confusing.

When it comes to translating Risset's use of rhythm, as we have seen Moxley chooses to keep the tabularity very visually similar, and choose line lengths to match Risset's. We have also noted how the rhythmicity of Risset's poetry often relies on the tabular and the spatial, and indeed on the productive tension between the spatial and the temporal.

I.A. Richards similarly insists that the patterning caused by repetition, which he calls rhythm, can exist in space as well as time:

> But the rhythmic elements in a picture or a building may be not successive but simultaneous. A quick reader who sees a word as a whole commonly overlooks misprints because the general form of the word is such that he is only able at that instant to perceive one particular letter in a particular place and so over- looks what is discrepant. The parts of a visual field exert what amounts to a simultaneous influence over one another. […] The parts of a growing response mutually modify one another and this is all that is required for rhythm to be possible. (p. 126)

We have seen in the first chapter that spatial patterning and the use of the page can itself create temporal features, such as the double time of the *calligrammes*, where they contain both an image that is to be taken in all at once and a text that must be read from beginning to end. Here Richards begins to granulate that view, suggesting that the unit of the word might be consumed either at a glance or letter by letter.

Spatial patterning features extensively in *La Traduction commence* both in terms of the space it opens up but also the internal divisions and marks that it creates within that space, to form a kind of rhythmed experience. In the final section, which is itself entitled 'La Traduction commence', indicating that translation can begin and begin again at all levels, the titles of groups of pages, perhaps intended to be read as individual poems, are references to the *I Ching*, and punctuation is the main way in which the pages are patterned. There is a huge amount of repetition: on one page, every short line ends with an em dash, on another with a forward slash. This reflects the way in which the *I Ching* is used as a way to impose a system on, or derive a system from, the story of Diana and Actaeon. Although it is itself an aleatory system, indicating an element of chance

and randomness, the spatial patterning of this section reflects a desire to impose order, to change idiom, to translate into something.

We have noted Deleuze's rejection of static abstraction via mediation in favour of a dynamic view of space and the movement of bodies within it (their 'whirlings, dances and leaps'). Risset and Moxley, also, employ a dynamic sense of spatial and rhythmic patterning.

BERGSON AND MULTIPLICITY

Deleuze was influenced by the work of Henri Bergson and Maurice Merleau-Ponty on phenomenology, so it is perhaps unsurprising that we see some of these ideas resurface in Scott's work on the phenomenology of translation and reading. For Scott in *Translation and the Rediscovery of Reading*, one of the possible aims of translation is to represent the absolute individuality of readers' experiences of a literary text. In *Translating the Perception of Text* he takes this argument further, wishing to tease out the methodological implications of a phenomenological approach, and suggest new ways to translate on the basis of his redefinition of the act of translation. Scott writes:

> I see the task of the translator as that of translating not an *interpreted text* but the *phenomenology of reading*, that is to say the kinaesthetics, the psycho-physiological responses of reading, the dynamics of readerly perception, as it addresses linguistic structures, morphology, acousticity.[16]

This approach takes the notion of translation as a 'reading', an individual response by a translator to a text, to an extreme, by insisting that the semantic content of a text is by no means the only factor in a response to that text, and that

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[16] Clive Scott, *Translating the Perception of Text: Literary Translation and Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2012), p. 1.

in fact 'meaning' is created just as much in the specifics of the reading experience of that one reader on that one day — the physical position of the reader, their individual accent, their own private associations and idiolect, and indeed everything that is happening around them as they read. This insistence on reinserting absolutely specific temporality and spatiality into the experience of translation echoes Deleuze, who wishes to reinsert these things into philosophy. Deleuze, broadly, differs from Scott in that he mistrusts the notion necessary to phenomenology of the singular consciousness which perceives.

According to Deleuze,

> From *Time and Free Will* onward, Bergson defines duration as a multiplicity, a type of multiplicity. This is a strange word, since it makes the multiple no longer an adjective but a genuine noun. Thus, he exposes the traditional theme of the one and the multiple as a false problem. […] Bergson moves toward a distinction between two major types of multiplicities, the one discrete or discontinuous, the other temporal, the one actual, the other virtual.[17]

This distinction between the temporal and the spatial is very important to Deleuze, but on the written page it can become merged in a reading experience that takes both time and space to carry out. Translations open up a new space for the text but also recondition its temporality: partly by virtue of coming 'after', they are making their originals into a 'before'.

We will return in the conclusion to the idea of a multiplicity, but Deleuze, like Bergson and also like Benjamin, is interested in the idea of the one versus the multiple, and not at all in the idea of two. Bergson folds the one and the multiple into one another by talking about 'a multiplicity', which is a singular thing containing the multiple. This points back to the question of Risset's 'lieu des

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[17] Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 117.

mélanges' and Moxley's 'place of union'. When things are mixed they remain distinct, even as they form 'a mixture' as a new item in itself. 'Union', however, implies a joining together that is not so easy to reverse. Bergson also makes a distinction, according to Deleuze, between the 'discreet or discontinuous' and the 'temporal' multiplicity.

In the conclusion to *Translating Apollinaire*, Scott engages at length with Deleuzian repetition and the type of translation, as detailed in Chapter 1, which he uses this book to advocate. He writes:

> Our first supposition is that a text repeats itself as it constantly affirms its singularity across space and time. A text repeats itself in new editions, in quotations, in allusions, in adaptations, in imitations and in translations. In Deleuzian terms, repetition belongs neither to the order of resemblances nor to that of equivalences, and thus is susceptible neither to exchange nor to substitution. In other words, it is wrong to think of textual repetition (or indeed translation) in terms of a side-by-side, a juxtaposition, which might be imagined as a superimposition; repetition is a body's movement through its own self-renewing singularity. [eBook]

Firstly this is interesting because it posits translation as one among a whole set of textual practices which involve repetition: a new edition, quotation, allusion, imitation, pastiche, all participate in the same kind of repetition that translation does.

The idea that 'juxtaposition' is in some way a wrong approach to thinking about translation and difference seems to ignore the existence of parallel texts, where juxtaposition is always in play alongside the other kinds of difference. However, a refusal of the logic of exchange and substitution, and an insistence on the change of repetition being a renewal, an internal self-difference, resonates with Risset's project. Exchange and substitution are, as we have seen looking at Reynolds, Cronin and Derrida, very common types of translation metaphor.

Deleuze's ideas constitute a refusal of this economy of language and meaning. For Derrida, the incommensurability of translation can be expressed by referring to *Aufhebung* or 'sublation', an abstraction to a different plane of meaning. For Deleuze there are no other planes, but the factor of time is all-important, creating the conditions in which everything is constantly becoming different from itself. In this model of reality, exchange, which is based on a certain stability of matter and value, is meaningless.

If translation is to be imagined as 'a body's movement through its own self-renewing singularity', then the nature of a text will have to be radically redefined. In the same way that Benjamin's fragments posit text and translation as parts of a larger whole, here the nature of a text itself must be destabilised and broadened to include all of its afterlives in the textual practices cited by Scott. This is part of Deleuze's emphasis on multiplicity over duality, which necessarily creates a counter-intuitive way of thinking about translation, that practice which seems to make one into two. Deleuze writes:

> […] every time we find ourselves confronted or bound by a limitation or an opposition, we should ask what such a situation presupposes. It presupposes a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences; a properly differential and original space and time; all of which persist alongside the simplifications of limitation and opposition. […] Oppositions are roughly cut from a delicate milieu of overlapping perspectives, of communicating distances, divergences and disparities, of heterogeneous potentials and intensities. Nor is it primarily a question of dissolving tensions in the identical, but rather of distributing the disparities in a multiplicity. (p. 50)

This is key to the reading of translation as repetition that I have been attempting to articulate through this chapter. In this view, oppositions, opposites, are seen to be arbitrary, differences cut from a context of endless difference and given salience above other differences, overshadowing the intricate overlapping

and dynamic field of difference that constitutes reality. With translation, the dualities seem glaring: two texts, two writers, two languages. But as we have seen in this and other chapters, texts and translations can productively be read in terms of multiplicity and dynamism.

Conclusion

FRACTALS AND MONISM

In his short story, 'Pierre Menard, author of the Quixote', Jorge Luis Borges writes about an author who wishes to write *Don Quixote*, again.[1] The comical result of this rewriting is that his text must be placed into a context entirely alien to that of the original, made contemporary with texts which are not considered the contemporaries of Cervantes' novel:

> Menard, a contemporary of William James, does not define history as an inquiry into reality but as its origin. Historical truth, for him, is not what has happened; it is what we judge to have happened. The final phrases — exemplar and adviser to the present, and the future's counselor — are brazenly pragmatic.
>
> The contrast in style is also vivid. The archaic style of Menard — quite foreign, after all -- suffers from a certain affectation. Not so that of his forerunner, who handles with ease the current Spanish of his time.
>
> […]
>
> Menard (perhaps without wanting to) has enriched, by means of a new technique, the halting and rudimentary art of reading: this new technique is that of the deliberate anachronism and the erroneous attribution. This technique, whose

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[1] Jorge Luis Borges, *Fictions*, trans. by Andrew Hurley, Penguin Modern Classics (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 33–43.

applications are infinite, prompts us to go through the Odyssey as if it were posterior to the Aeneid and the book Le jardin du Centaure of Madame Henri Bachelier as if it were by Madame Henri Bachelier. This technique fills the most placid works with adventure. To attribute the Imitatio Christi to Louis Ferdinand Céline or to James Joyce, is this not a sufficient renovation of its tenuous spiritual indications? (pp. 42–43)

One function of this idea of repetition as recontextualisation is clearly to make a comment on translation. When discussing the attribution and the false attribution of texts, it is impossible not to be reminded of the common translation phenomenon of the translator's name being printed in small letters on the back of the book, and the author of the original's name in large print on the front, despite having specifically written none of the words contained within. The idea that it would be possible to read the words of Don Quixote as contemporaneous with William James becomes much less ridiculous if we are discussing a translation of Cervantes, even though the name 'Cervantes' would be printed on the front of this early twentieth century book. In this case, of course, Borges' game is to make the opposite happen: the words written by Cervantes are repeated but with the name of Pierre Menard attached.

Exploring the results of his joke, in the passage quoted, he goes on to suggest that anachronistic attribution could constitute a new reading strategy. David E. Johnson, in his book on Borges and translation, points out that 'the technique of deliberate anachronistic attribution is possible only if the text is constitutively out of context,'[2] and argues along poststructuralist lines that any act of attribution involves an act of faith:

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[2] David E. Johnson, *Kant's Dog: On Borges, Philosophy, and the Time of Translation* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2012), p. 84.

It is only because the text is *never present* to itself or *in itself*, that it is possible to attribute Mme Henri Bachelier's *Le jardin du centaure* to Madame Henri Bachelier as if she had authored it; that is, as if we *believed* it were so.' (pp. 84–85)

Borges is thus seen to pre-empt, and perhaps pre-emptively satirise, debates about authorship and attribution associated with Barthes, Foucault and Derrida, as if to prove that recontextualisation is inherent to the act of reading itself, with or without any change in attribution. It is also reminiscent of the 'absent book' of Edmond Jabès, the way his text is filled with paratextual apparatus and Talmudic-style commentaries to the point where the 'actual text' of the book becomes increasingly hard to discern, causing us to problematise the difference between text and paratext, between the frame and the thing which is framed by it. In this way the 'book' becomes an expression of monism, the inclusion of everything in the One.

Susan Petrilli makes a more Deleuzian observation in her article *Text Metempsychosis and the Racing Tortoise: Borges and Translation*, when she compares the effect of this attributional uncertainty to Zeno's temporal and spatial paradox of Achilles and the tortoise.[3] In the catalogue of the works Pierre Menard has done apart from the Quixote translation, a series of literary jokes, Borges includes:

preface to the Catalogue of an exposition of lithographs by Carolus Hourcade (Nîmes, 1914). m) The work Les problèmes d'un problème (Paris, 1917), which discusses, in chronological order, the different solutions given to the illustrous problem of Achilles and the tortoise. Two editions of this book have appeared so far; the second bears as an epigraph Leibniz's recommendation "Ne craignez point, monsieur, la tortue" and revises the chapters dedicated to Russell and Descartes. (p. 35)

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[3] Susan Petrilli, 'Text Metempsychosis and the Racing Tortoise: Borges and Translation', *Semiotica*, 140.1/4 (2002), 153–67.

As far as I can tell, the quotation from Leibniz is a fabrication. However, the inclusion of his name points towards the monism implied in the paradox itself. Petrilli writes:

> Why should we fear the slow tortoise? Because of his advantage, because of the time-lapse separating it like an abyss, in space and time, from swift Achilles. To fear the tortoise is to fear the original in translation, with its advantage of always being first. The text that translates it inevitably comes second. (p. 157)

Here we find ourselves in a zone of Borgesian spatial paradox: although Achilles (here representing the translator) is faster than the tortoise, yet he is never able to catch up. He will always come second, much as we contemplated in Chapter 1 the way a translation might asymptotically approach an original without managing to catch it up. In Chapter 1 we were considering mirrors as the source of that asymptote, but here it is temporal rather than spatial and simultaneous: whatever the translation does, it cannot precede the original, it must always come afterwards, limited to the infinitely subdivided space defined by the original, by the movement of the tortoise.

Mathematically, Zeno's paradox is about fitting an infinity into a finite space — there is always a smaller and smaller division. It is a paradox because focusing on the infinity (the tiny distances travelled by a tortoise in smaller and smaller amounts of time, as the fractions of both time and distance are halved and halved again) appears to negate the finitude of the total distance. This is very similar to the idea behind fractals, geometrical figures in which the same shapes can be repeated infinitely by being nested inside one another, much in the manner of a *mise en abyme*.

We have seen each of our three metaphors take on the recursive characteristics of a fractal or a *mise en abyme:* the facing mirrors, the vase which can be broken infinitely into more and more fragments, and the repetition which can go on infinitely yet never be self-same.

Zeno's tortoise in some ways recalls Archilochus' fox, which knows many things, alongside the hedgehog, which knows one big, or important thing. Perhaps the tortoise knows that one big, important thing is only big and important because it contains many things, nested within it to infinity.

In Deleuze's book on Leibniz, he writes about folds as a source of multiplicity and monism:

> A flexible or an elastic body still has cohering parts that form a fold, such that they are not separated into parts of parts but are rather divided to infinity in smaller and smaller folds that always retain a certain cohesion. Thus a continuous labyrinth is not a line dissolving into independent points, as flowing sand might dissolve into grains, but resembles a sheet of paper divided into infinite folds or separated into bending movements, each one determined by the consistent or conspiring surroundings.[4]

This concept of the fold follows from his ideas about repetition: the very paper on which text could be written is an expression of the potential of fractal, nested oneness containing endless variation.

Deleuze's locution about grains of sand recalls a passage from *The Book of Resemblances*:

> « Je dis la fausse ressemblance du grain de sable avec le grain de sable, écrivait reb Chermouli ; la fausse ressemblance de la douleur avec la douleur et de la joie avec la joie. Rien ne ressemble à rien : la ressemblance de l'univers avec Dieu est la ressemblance du Tout avec le Rien ; comme si le Rien faisait figure du Tout et le Tout, de rien. » (p. 114)

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[4] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. by Tom Conley (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 6.

> "I speak of the false resemblance of one grain of sand with another grain of sand,"
> wrote Reb Chermouli, "the false resemblance of pain with pain and joy with joy.
> Nothing is like anything else: the universe's resemblance with God is the
> resemblance of All and Nothing, as if Nothing were posing as All, and All as
> Nothing." (pp. 86–87)

Although two grains of sand, two sorrows, two joys, may resemble another, they are not identical, and so their resemblance, not being exact, is described as 'false'. Deleuze would argue that it is the inherent difference that exists between every grain of sand or emotional experience which allows them to resemble one another: if they were identical, they would not be distinct at all.

In common with Jabès, Risset's text is also concerned with multiplicity. In the section titled '*LA PETITE MARQUE SUR L'ESTOMAC*', which, I suggest, refers to the pivotal moment of Actaeon's transformation from man to stag. As we will see, the poetry deals with multiplicity in terms of a crowd, the alphabet and the idea of doubling. One repeating element between different sections of the text which is present in this passage is the use of the letters 'j' and 'm' instead of, or to comprise, a word. The 'j' occurs at moments where the text considers the violence of the killing of Actaeon. The 'm' tends to appear when the two characters meet. An alternative way to read them would be to say that these are, or represent, the two characters of Diana and Actaeon. This use of the alphabet as fragments of language, of letters not to stand in for words but to suggest readings, to break down the dynamic in these poems, recalls the Kabbalistic idea of the monism of the alphabet:

> Appuyé au comptoir —
> allongé en l'air —
> emmené par son tourbillon

foule —

petite marque —

m. (p. 73)

Leaned on the counter —

stretched out in the air —

transported by its vortex

multitude —

little mark —

m. (p. 75)

The 'j' could be 'gît', lies, as in 'here lies' — 'ci-gît' — on a tombstone, pointing to Actaeon's death. It could be J for Jacqueline or representing 'je', 'I'. 'M' is pronounced like 'aime', meaning 'love', which is quite a common French pun. Here the 'm' seems to correspond with 'marque'. The alliteration has perhaps encouraged Moxley's choice of 'multitude' instead of 'crowd' to translate 'foule'. Both words imply a singularity made up of many individuals. It is not clear who is leaning on the counter, whose 'estomac' reveals the 'petite marque'.

THE TELEOLOGY OF TRANSLATION

What is translation's teleology?

In this section I hope to draw together some of the threads of temporality and spatiality which have woven through each section of this thesis. In each chapter, a new perspective on temporality has been introduced, and we have seen the implications of these differing temporalities on a view of the white space of the page: in Chapter 1 we examined Apollinaire's idea of simultaneity, and its relationship with the experience of reading calligrammatic text on a parallel page, as well as touching on Clive Scott's 'blind field' of tabular text. Chapter 2

introduced the idea of Messianic time, a way of viewing time and the world which is fundamentally teleological, and saw how the Kabbalistic, monist conception of 'black fire on white fire' affected the way we conceptualised a page of text. In Chapter 3 we explored the non-teleological, open-ended 'durée' of Deleuzian repetition, in which individual events are barely discernible against the field of endless difference-in-itself, and thus a different kind of monism is generated on the written page, not a transcendent mystic fire but an open-ended space of dynamism where difference is produced outside and beyond the idea of categories or binaries.

Time and space are what is at stake in Zeno's paradox: how much space can be covered by which creature in how much time. We have seen how the resulting asymptote is linked to Chapter 1's mirrors, but Benjamin's Messianic time is also in its way asymptotic: for all that the task of the translator is to prepare for the Messianic age, a time which most likely will not occur in their lifetime. Indeed, however much the coming of the Messiah might be prepared for, those preparations will never be in themselves entirely sufficient to trigger the Messianic age; that only occurs on God's timetable.

Deleuze's conception of repetition, however, refutes the boundaries or categories that an asymptote requires, since the Bergsonian 'durée' encompasses the real-time flux of reality without prioritising particular moments of difference over others, in the way that, say, drawing an asymptotic line on a graph would require.

This refutation of narrative boundaries can also be experienced in a reading of *La Traduction commence.* To read this text knowing the myth on which it is based is to spend time trying to map the story of Diana and Actaeon onto Risset's text. The teleology implied by narrative suspense, by knowing the story ends in a death, is simultaneously encouraged and thwarted by the sheer ambiguity of the text, and its insistence on opening out rather than resolving at the end. The final section the one which is called 'The translation begins', as if to remind us that the

space of translation, like the space of myth, is open-ended and available to infinite retellings and reworkings, such that the beginning of a new one could occur anywhere at all.

The subtitle of the book *Calligrammes* is 'Poèmes de la paix et de la guerre (1913-1916)' — 'Poems of Peace and War (1913-1916)'. For a book which aims for simultaneity, it is also highly contextualised temporally by its title, and some of the poems contained within it also have reminders of the date — we have looked at '1915', but there are also '14 juin 1915' and 'La nuit d'avril 1915'.

In the mirror, the simultaneity of the reflection seems to render teleology irrelevant, but in Apollinaire's mirror of text his name is fixed. Teleology here might refer to the stopping of time, as we see even more clearly in 'La Cravate et la Montre' (pp. 78-79). In this *calligramme* the words form the shape of a tie and a watch. We have seen them used as an eye-tracking example by Katherine Shingler (Figure 2), and as the subject of a frustrated student's marginalia (Figure 3), but in terms of considering Apollinaire's attitude to teleology, we only need look at the hands of the watch, stopped still at five to twelve.

The long hand reads: 'Il est — 5 enfin', 'It's — 5 at last'. The short hand which points directly upwards but is read from top to bottom reads: 'Et tout sera fini' — 'And all will end'. It is interesting to note that the long hand is more obviously the longer of the two in the French, in Greet's version they are closer to the same length. But of course the reader is able to look at both pictures simultaneously.

A clock face is a form of spatialised time: in order to tame and order the stream of Bergsonian 'durée', we have subdivided and visualised it on the clock face. We have seen that in Jewish thought, the Face is the site of encounter with alterity. On the watch face, we encounter the alterity of time through the domestication of space. On Apollinaire's stopped watch, we are brought face to face with teleology, as we are warned by the hour hand that 'tout sera fini' — 'all will end', presumably when the watch reaches twelve o'clock. However, of course, that hour will never arrive. The hands on this watch do not move, they are

fixed in print. There is an ambiguity with the minute hand which is caused by the parallel presentation, and concerns the dash in 'Il est — 5 enfin'. In Greet's English version, this appears pretty straightforwardly as a dash. In the French, however, it is a minus sign, indicating 'il est moins cinq enfin' — 'it is five to at last'. This makes sense with the position of the hand at five to twelve, but if the English were to reflect the sense, it would have to lose the visual of the line that forms the dash, because 'it is minus five' does not make much sense as a reading, and does not indicate 'five to'.

Part of the element of teleology here comes with the expectation that we will count down from five, stopping at zero, instead of numbers going endlessly off towards infinity. But the stopped watch, like the name in the mirror, provides a kind of immortality in the form of a freeze frame: by being still forever, by stopping the count of seconds and minutes, by fixing the watch inside the book. It recalls the mirror frame from 'Cœur Couronne et Miroir', 'in this mirror I am enclosed living and real just as you imagine the angels and not at all like reflections'. We have discussed in Chapter 1 the potentially continuous nature of this circle, but here I would like to reflect on the 'angels' specifically. We might be expected to imagine these angels existing outside the ordinary flow of time, as does the print reflection 'Guillaume Apollinaire'.

Apollinaire's angels might lead us to consider Benjamin's 'Angel of History', an ambiguously teleological figure:

> His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm […] irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. ('Theses', p. 249)

Far from being outside of time, Benjamin's angel embodies a particular relationship to eternity, a vision of the world in which the concept of 'progress' is so alien to the idea of *tikkun* (repairing the world, 'mak[ing] whole what has been smashed') that it utterly precludes any attempt to put it into practice. This is not an angel 'comme on imagine les anges', but a being which can comprehend the monism of history: instead of the categorising differentiation provided by a list of events, we find a Deleuzian vision of infinite, accruing variation. The angel cannot see the future, but rather witnesses the whole of the past all at once.

Jabès also writes about time in a way that can be characterised as monistic:

> « Nombreux sont les lieux de ma mort, disait-il. Je parle, j'écris de chacun de ces lieux. »

> « Tu parles, tu écris d'un seul lieu qui les renferme tous, comme la seconde est habitée de toutes les secondes qui l'ont précédée et le livre, de tous les livres conduits, avant lui, à leur terme », lui fut-il répondu. (p. 114)

> "Many are the places of my death," he said. "I speak, I write of each of them."

> "You speak, you write of one single place that contains them all, just as a second is inhabited by all the preceding seconds, and the book, by all the books completed before it," he was answered. (pp. 86–87)

Here time collapses into eternity: the speaker articulates his own death from outside its limitations, and the method by which he does so is explained in the reply — one single place, second, and book is both inhabited by and contains within itself all the ones that precede it. The seconds which contain each other are again reminiscent of the final fragment of Benjamin's *Theses*, in which he rejects the notion of the future as 'homogeneous, empty time' on the grounds that 'every second of time was the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter'. (p. 255) Here is a mix of the immediate and the teleological which is more familiar from

'The Task of the Translator'. For Benjamin, even when time is perceived as a monad from the point of view of the Angel of History, there is still the possibility of 'the present as the "time of the now", which is shot through with chips of Messianic time' (p. 255). 'Time' and 'language' can both be considered in this way: translation appears to offer the possibility of an abstraction from the specificity of the present, the original text, into a generalised space of multiplicity. But translation must work on 'the time of the now', 'lovingly' operating on fragments of language while believing that its work is shaping the future. This is its teleology.

MEDIATION AND MAGIC

We now turn our attention to the figure who experiences textual space and time: the figure of the reader. Readers can activate the temporal and spatial dimensions of the text, via the act of reading. In each chapter we have seen a different idea of the position of the reader in relation to text and translation. Firstly, we saw how a reader was necessary to triangulate the parallel page, and to activate the links between the two sides in varied possible reading strategies. In Chapter 2, the reader was invited into an understanding of sacred reading practices and the possibility of immediacy, but also caught in the irony pointed out by Carol Jacobs that although the 'translator' appears in the title, the essay is far more concerned with the lives and afterlives of texts and the things that the concept of translation could and should achieve, rather than focusing on individual translators. Chapter 3's reader is required to participate in the dissolution of categories and the uncertainty and freedom of the page.

In the *calligrammes*, Apollinaire explores representation via the pictorial aspect of his tabular pages: the images can be said to 'represent' a watch, a heart, a mirror etc. But the text which forms these images often plays with that

representational dynamic, for example as we saw with the heart and the flame that reverse each other and refer to each other.

Scott, in the final section of *Translating Apollinaire,* is offering us a fairly polemical vision, along Deleuzian lines, of what the ambition of the translator, or of the text in translation, can and cannot aim towards. He follows Deleuze in presenting a critique of 'representation' as an aim of translation. Deleuze opposes representation to 'repetition-in-itself'. Scott describes 'the representational' in terms of a set of rules and categories that put limits on textual interpretation, on the 'free, wild or untamed differences' that Deleuze valorises:

> But any text also drifts towards the representational inasmuch as it is a machinery to produce certain effects, inasmuch as it treats language mediationally, inasmuch as it embraces certain aesthetic codes (generic, rhetorical, etc.) and inasmuch as it seeks a certain unanimity of interpretative response. With the representational, we submit to the rules of the game in order to earn the rewards that the text offers us on that condition. [eBook]

So representation is bad, or inauthentic, because it gives the reader too much to work with, too much of what they expect. This recalls Benjamin's contempt for the 'message', or in Zohn's translation the 'information' that he feels translators wrongly believe they owe to readers. For Benjamin, of course, the translator's primary debt is not to the reader at all but rather to language itself. And language as a mediator is mediating between the world and the divine or the Messianic.

Deleuze believes representation to be fundamentally undesirable, as it is a form of repetition that divides the world into categories, and Scott claims to agree, although Scott's own work can be characterised as representation in various ways, in that he is always trying to represent sound, both in terms of his own experience of reading and in terms of instructions for how others should sound out his translations.

For Jabès, 'representation' is aligned with 'resemblance':

« Ce n'est pas l'image qui est l'objet de l'interdiction divine ; mais la ressemblance que toute image inaugure. Dieu Se veut sans vis-à-vis », disait-il.

Se reconnaître dans… Multiplier sa ressemblance.

Fatale représentation ! Comme si, cherchant à être – à me montrer – je ne livrais à la vue que le néant. (pp. 49–50)

"The divine prohibition is not against images, but against the likeness every image introduces. God wants no face-to-face," he said.

To recognise yourself in … To multiply your likenesses.

Fatal representation! As if trying to be — to reveal myself — I only brought nothingness to light. (p. 35)

The 'divine prohibition' is against the making of graven images, i.e. representations, on the basis that they are idolatrous. Jabès interprets this meaning that likeness, resemblance itself is to be treated with suspicion. Representation is the mediation of likeness, the creation of an image which could stand in for something else, but nothing must stand in for God. There is a danger, for the reader, to recognising one's likeness, and while this recognition can also be a form of self-revelation, representation ultimately only brings 'nothingness to light'.

For Benjamin, writing in 'On Language as Such and the Language of Man', mediation, and the necessity for representation, is the result of the fallen nature of language. Reading itself is part of the mediation which characterises this fallen language, and the desire is always to overcome representation and reach immediacy:

Mediation which is the immediacy of all mental communication, is the fundamental problem of linguistic theory, and if one chooses to call this immediacy magic, then the primary problem of language is its magic. (p. 64)

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