TRANSLATING THE FORM

A Process-based Approach to

Translating the Poems

of

Martinus Nijhoff (1894–1953)

and

Gerrit Achterberg (1905–1962)

by

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the poetic works of two major Dutch modernist poets, Martinus Nijhoff (1894-1953) and Gerrit Achterberg (1905-1962), from the point of view of translation. Both poets created their poems with a strong attention to formal qualities, with consequent stylistic effects which may be difficult to translate. Through a combination of critical analysis and translation-based creative practice the thesis examines which aspects of form seem most salient in the work of each poet and which aspects, therefore, the translator-poet might attempt to convey in translation.

In Chapter 1 the guiding notion of the thesis is examined. Since both poets placed a strong emphasis on process as central to their poetics, a similar process-based approach is proposed as a route into the translation of their poems. This is followed by an initial commentary which examines some of my own earlier, and problematic, translation strategies. The study is then structured so that the specific aspects of form explored in each of the main chapters, rhythm (Chapter 2), phrasing, pausing and breath (Chapter 3), and sound and iconicity (Chapter 4), are inter-punctuated with further commentaries in which these aspects are approached through practical experiments. The commentaries are intended not only to exemplify my own translation process, but also to suggest several innovative models for a psychophysiological approach to formal poetic translation.

My aim has been twofold: to find ways of representing formally salient aspects of Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poetry in translations which are also poems, and to make their work better known beyond the Dutch literary system. I conclude that a whole-body attention to the aspects of form explored in this study, coupled with a non-schematic approach to rhyme, may help the translator find a way out of the blind alley created by the opposition between free and formal translation.

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For my father

Thomas Joseph Fawcett

1930-2006

‘de lezer moet de tweede dichter zijn’

the reader must be the second poet

Gerrit Achterberg 1953

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1. Aims of study

This study investigates, through a combination of creative practice and critical analysis, issues arising from the study and translation of the work of two Dutch modernist poets, Martinus Nijhoff (1894-1953) and Gerrit Achterberg (1905-62). Their collected poems were published by the Huygens Institute in new historical-critical editions in 1993 and 2000 respectively, an honour shared to date with only eleven other Dutch-language writers (KNAW n.d.). These relatively recent dates of publication indicate Nijhoff's and Achterberg's continuing importance for the Dutch-speaking world, whilst their canonicity is signalled by the name of the series, *Monumenta Literaria Neerlandica* [Dutch literary monuments], the lavishness of production, and investment of scholarly effort expended on these editions. Moreover the very fact of publication by the Huygens Institute, devoted to making 'the Dutch literary heritage accessible to a wide readership' (GVN n.d.), is a sign of a writer's perceived importance. Works selected for publication in historical-critical editions are, according to Marita Mathijsen's handbook of editorial science, rarely chosen by the editors themselves, but by the commissioning research institute (2010:34). Such works, therefore, are already perceived as possessing high literary status and Mathijsen emphasizes that the editions are not only important in reflecting an existing canon but are also critical to their formation (2010:35).

If we apply these insights to the historical-critical editions of Nijhoff's and Achterberg's works, coupling that with bibliographical information about the publication histories of both poets[1], we can indeed see not only that these poets were already an important part of the Dutch literary canon, but that such editions ensure their continued canonicity. Yet this canon has had little impact on the world outside the Dutch-language area. Although the recent translation of

[1] See Nijhoff 1993b:495-6 and Achterberg 2000b:711-4 for full publishing histories.

Nijhoff's long poem *Awater* by David Colmer (2010) may contribute towards changing this situation, there is still no substantial collection of Nijhoff's poetry in English, whilst in Achterberg's case the few slim collections of English translations barely scratch the surface of his extensive oeuvre.

Since these poets wrote in highly formalized verse, that is verse using metre, rhyme, and other methods of acoustic patterning, it may be precisely these formal aspects that have been an obstacle both to widespread translation and the critical reception of these poets outside the Dutch-speaking world, even though Dutch formal poetry has a metrical basis similar to English poetry, since the metrical line is traditionally formed on a stress-syllabic basis[2]. Nevertheless all formal poetry is difficult to translate because of the unquantifiable impact on the reader of the very features which make it formal: sound-patterning, rhythm and metre. Yet if aural devices in poetry carry both expressiveness and meaning (cf. Bernstein 1998:12-23; Hrushovski 1980; Tsur 2008, 1998, 1992), and are not simply decorative, how might these essential qualities be translated to maximize the impact of the work? Can strong rhyming and metrical effects still be used in contemporary translation practice? These are questions this study probes.

Building on Roman Jakobson's insight that in translating poetry '[o]nly creative transposition is possible' (2004:143), recent debate in Translation Studies has focused on poetic translation as a creative act founded on deliberate choices. This has formed a particular strand in translation theory and practice informed by stylistics, as in, for example, Boase-Beier and Holman 1999 and Boase-Beier 2006. This strand emphasises the fact that although aspects of poetic translation, including form, may constrain the translator's choices, no translation of a poem *as a poem* can ever be taken to be automatic. The interplay between constraint and creativity in both original writing and literary translation has also been discussed by Bassnett (2006:174), Loffredo and Perteghella (2009:13-20, 2006:1-11), Robinson (2010:46-7), and Reynolds (2011:28-31). Peter Robinson locates the 'art' of translating poetry in the greatest constraint of all, its 'strict impossibility', adding that this is 'at the same time the condition making poetry need to be

[2] There is also a shared Germanic heritage of strong-stress rhythms, and remnants of an alliterative tradition.

translated and what makes its translation an activity that can practically be done, […] and done practically' (Robinson 2010:82). Similarly, Boase-Beier and Holman have highlighted the important part played by constraints in both limiting and enabling *all* creative acts (1999:1-17), centring their arguments on the essential likeness of translation to creative writing, in that both modes operate most fruitfully when subject to the pressure of constraint. Moreover, the 'added burden of constraint' (Boase-Beier and Holman 1999:13) the translator carries in comparison to the originating writer is one that may demand even greater creativity in the translated text than in the original.

Lawrence Venuti (1995:290-6) places emphasis on the necessarily creative nature of the translation of poetry, particularly in the case of 'resistant' translations. Indeed a recent article takes Venuti's well-known arguments about resistance and foreignization a step further, claiming that poetic translation 'tends to release language from the narrowly defined communicative function that most translations are assumed to serve' (Venuti 2011:128). Thus the translation of poetry is viewed not only as a potentially creative act in its own right, but as one which may liberate translation, and language itself, from a purely 'instrumental model' (ibid.). Venuti not only argues for a view of poetic translation which emphasizes the creative nature of translation *per se*, but also implies that such acts of translation, when carried out with an ethically restorative consciousness, are able to lay bare the originally creative nature of all language. This takes us beyond arguments about foreignization and resistance into an ethical aesthetics in which 'the good is the creative and the innovative' (Venuti 2011:131).

All these perspectives go further than classic arguments about free and faithful translation, enabling us to recognize that the translation of poetry *as poetry* is, of its very nature, creative. As someone who also writes poetry, I am interested in exploring the tension between translation as a self-expressive creative act and the desire to remain true to the essence of Nijhoff's and Achterberg's individual poems. This aim seems especially important because Nijhoff and Achterberg are not well-known outside the Dutch-speaking world.

Further constraints may be placed on my translations by my relationship to the literary practices of the receptor culture. This kind of constraint is explored by Gideon Toury (1995) who lays emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects of translation, and on the fact that the cognitive apparatus of the translator is itself shaped by such aspects, making translation – and poetic translation – far more than the question of 'systemic differences between languages' (1995:54). Toury suggests that there is a continuum of constraint with absolute rules at one end and idiosyncratic constraints at the other, with 'a vast middle-ground occupied by intersubjective factors commonly designated *norms*' (1995:54). The kinds of constraint Toury is interested in exploring, therefore, include not only those influencing the individual translator, but the broader, more generalized norms operating within a system as a whole, both synchronically and diachronically (1995:63-4). These would include translation policies, overt and covert, of editors, publishing houses, and critics (Toury 1995:58) and their effect on what may or may not be published in translation.

Any attempt, therefore, to have the translated poems which are the subject of this study published would require an awareness of what might fit with current tastes both in current target language (TL) practice and in poetic translation itself, and yet in my view the creative act itself, however pre-shaped by issues of culture, tends towards the condition described by Walter Benjamin in 'The Task of the Translator': 'No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener' (2004:75). This non-instrumental view of the nature of creativity in shaping works of art may initially appear to be opposed to theories which stress the role of the receiver in co-creating, or bringing to life again, the final product (see e.g. Attridge 2004a; Fish 1970; Iser 1980), but in fact there is no such contradiction, since Benjamin's statement points not to that final product but to the process itself, the 'lonely impulse of delight' (Yeats 1950:152) which propels the maker into the act of making[3]. An emphasis on the creative nature of translation, in keeping with this Benjaminian insight, should prevent the translator from moving into a position in which too much account is taken of a potential

[3] Yeats's poem 'A Irish Airman foresees his Death' does not, of course, take as its subject the matter of poetry-making or translation, although clear parallels can be made between the airman's commitment not to his country nor to the law but to the actual act of flying itself, and the poet's, or translator-poet's, commitment to the act and process of creation.

readership and in which, therefore, domestic norms may predominate. The work of art, from the creative perspective, is always Other, and may not of its very nature be reduced to give the audience exactly what is already familiar to it, and this is doubly so in the case of the translated work. An awareness, therefore, of the irreducible otherness of the source text (ST) should produce a type of translation, as argued by Venuti (1995), which refuses to adapt itself to domestic norms in order to avoid assimilation, to prevent it being drowned, for example, in the oeuvre of the translating poet, as if it were a text fully originating from that poet's own mind. The work of Don Paterson may be seen as an example of this kind of assimilation. Paterson (1999, 2007a) deliberately subsumes poets such as Machado and Rilke into his own work, refusing in the case of Machado even to acknowledge that his work is translation at all (1999:55-8). Nevertheless, Paterson's emphasis on process and dialogue, and his versions of the Machado and Rilke poems as a record of these, is important and inspiring, modifying the apparently assimilative mode of his translation-strategies.

The way in which constraints and consequent translational choices can be traced within the translated text, the *metapoem*, was first analyzed in pragmatically descriptive terms by the poet and theorist James S. Holmes (1988) in several articles foundational for Translation Studies[4] in which, interestingly, he engages his thought quite specifically with Nijhoff's work. Because my own engagement with Nijhoff is significant for my developing thinking about the nature of translation and, especially, of form in poetry, Holmes's translations and theories also play an important role in the underpinning of this project, not only by giving guidance as to how practice can inform theory and vice versa, but also as a contrast to the kind of work I wish to carry out. This is discussed further in 2.4.3.

In contrast to Holmes's pragmatic approach, in which no pronouncement is made on the most effective method of translating formal verse, the translator and theorist Clive Scott, in his exploration of Baudelaire's poetry through acts of translation (2000), proposes that the best choice in translating formal poetry is to use free-verse means. This is not a dogmatic assertion but is arrived at after

[4] Originally published between 1968 and 1984 (Broek 1988:1).

exhaustive experimentation with a range of translational approaches in order to discover something about the inter-relationship of reading and translation. Since Scott's argument is that poetry is not read for a message, but as part of a dynamic process of self-discovery, his view of its translation is that it should be viewed primarily as a psycho-physiological readerly act. Because free verse, according to Scott, gives the best means of expressing both the self and the persona (the mask which the ST allows the target text (TT) to wear; the 'pretence of translation', as Boase-Beier names it (2006:108-10)), an ideologically responsible approach to the translation even of formal poetry would avoid regular metres and fixed forms (Scott 2000:249-50). In coming to this conclusion Scott follows the example of the French poet and translator Yves Bonnefoy whose translation of Shakespeare into free verse is discussed by Bonnefoy in an article directly responding to Jakobson (Bonnefoy 1964; see also Bonnefoy 1979).

Scott's view of the possibilities of free verse is based on a well-trained ear and a sensitive response to the effects of acoustic, metrical and rhythmic patterning in both French and English verse over the full extent of their independent and inter-linking traditions, yet, as will be argued in Chapter 2, in the course of the 20th century a mode of poetic translation came into dominance which, calling itself free *verse*, nevertheless lost sight of the power of rhythmic and acoustic patterning. Scott's version of free verse, still lying close to its Modernist ancestors, by contrast values, and even flaunts, its expressive prosodies. Since 20th-century mainstream Western poetic practice has tended towards a flattening out of such expressivity within a culture more attuned to the visual and mental rather than the oral and aural[5], the radical energizing values which imbue Scott's version of translational free verse may not be easy to assimilate to one's own practice, or necessarily be the mode in which the translator-writer is best able 'to assume ideological responsibility for his writing' (Scott 2000:249).

Other practitioners, such as Francis Jones, have re-assessed their translational practices from the opposite standpoint to Scott's, feeling that the free-verse route over-homogenizes the translated poem. Jones, translator of the Serbian poet Ivan

[5] This is argued in detail in Chapter 2 of this study; see also Perloff 1991 and Racz 2013.

V. Lalić, describes in his introduction to *A Rusty Needle* (Jones 1996) how his attitudes to translating rhyme and rhythm have changed over time. In explaining why he has decided to translate with rhyme-scheme and metre, he tells us that, whilst his earlier versions of Lalić were in free verse, he has now come to feel that such an approach is a 'degradation' of the 'original intention' (1996:24). Jones uses the word 'degradation' here in its root sense of 'flattening out' or 'levelling', displaying a realization that the effects of the original poem lie in more than its images or apparent meaning. Since the acoustic and rhythmic elements of poetry are, as Amittai Aviram (1994:223, 227-8) argues, beyond referential meaning, Jones's change of heart takes him into similar territory as Scott's, though by a different, apparently less radical route.

We can distinguish, then, several approaches to the translation of poetry in general, and formal poetry in particular: the assimilative (Paterson); the co-creative (Boase-Beier); the pragmatic (Holmes); the experimental (Scott); and the stylistically and formally re-creative (Jones). None of these approaches precludes overlap with the others, and all may produce equally fine results. This study, at different points, will experiment with aspects of each approach with a specific emphasis on process and not on the merits or de-merits of the final product, although critical analysis of the ensuing product does feed into future translation decisions, and can, therefore, be seen as part of a progressive cycle of growth.

As a final preliminary to outlining the major intentions of this study, I will briefly examine the notions of 'process' and 'experiment'. I have used the term 'process-based' to entitle this study rather than 'practice-based' because 'process' implies other concepts such as change, open-mindedness, self-reflection, and widening spirals of dialogic feedback between self and text (both ST and TT), between text and reader, between reader and translator, between theory and practice. Although the term 'practice-based' could also imply some, or all, of these concepts, it seems to me that a practice-based approach should reflect on and theorize an already-established practice. By choosing the term 'process-based' I am indicating not only that my practice is still evolving, but also that the special conditions of the academic study of one's own practice enable one actively to put it under the pressure of critical appraisal, in my case by setting up experiments which unsettle

former habits. This deliberate opening-up of the translating self to change, to the actual *process of process*, I relate to radical Eastern philosophical practices, such as those encouraged by Zen Buddhism, which stress notions of discipline or submission to tradition, as well as ideas of a breakage with tradition, a break-through, and a 'going-beyond' (Shusterman 2008; Suzuki 1953; Suzuki 2010; Wright 1998). The parallels I see between such an awareness of process and certain ways of thinking which in the West have traditionally been seen as being 'Eastern', will be explored at several points in the course of this study, and specifically in Chapter 3: Translating Breath.

In choosing the term 'experiment' to describe some of the translation approaches tested in this study I do not intend to imply that the work has strict scientific foundations. By 'experiment' I mean the design, testing and careful analysis of self-invented or self-developed methods of translating certain aspects of the poems I am working with in order to cast light on the original, and to become a less rigid, more responsive translator. As Scott has stressed in a recent article, not only do experiments imply that there will be multiple trials or tests, but the nature of experimentation means that 'the experimenter does not know exactly what s/he is going to do' and 'the outcomes are unpredictable' (2008b:73).

The notion of an active experimental approach to, and even interference in, the translation process is one I also relate to an apprenticeship-model of poetic translation. Just as the apprentice in historical times worked on test pieces, often of a challenging nature, and perhaps even in a form not fully employed again in later work as a journeyman or master of the craft, so too my experiments with particular methods I would not otherwise use can be seen as part of a deliberate estrangement from an old life and self, and a gradual 'putting on' of a new (cf. Ephesians 4, 22-24[6]): an apprentice-work which will enable me, with all the academic resources afforded by a university, to make conscious progress in both the craft and art of poetic translation. The model I have in mind here is the system of apprenticeship which flourished in the pre-modern period, and in some crafts well beyond this era, which involved working in bond to a specific master for a

[6] All biblical references are to the King James Version (1611), unless otherwise indicated.

specified period of time, during which the apprentice received training and subsistence in return for his or her labour (Wallis 2007:4). At its best, a strong relationship developed between the master and apprentice, almost paternal and filial in nature. The work produced under such circumstances may be said to be aspirational, although it may also represent the very best the 'apprentice' is capable of achieving, since at no other period of his (or her) life will the spirit with which the work is imbued be so consciously directed towards learning and mastery, towards gaining the approval of the Master, in fact (cf. Sennett 2008). The fact that there is no 'master' as such in the kind of apprenticeship this study charts does not make it less of an apprenticeship. The mastery to which the translator-poet aspires is present in the very material with which she or he works: the poetry itself, the poetics from which it sprang. Only metaphorically and symbolically can the poets whose work will be translated be perceived as the masters; yet the translator-poet must place him- or herself in a new apprenticeship with each new body of poetry to be translated.

The concept of an apprenticeship in translation is mentioned by Scott at the outset of *Translating Baudelaire* (2000) as an unexpected bonus in what set out to be a theoretical enquiry into the kinds of approaches that might be used in the translation of Baudelaire's work. In my case, the journey proceeded from the opposite direction: a conscious desire to try out different practical translation approaches led me into parallel enquiries into certain kinds of theory or methodology.

This study, therefore, charts and examines some of the processes by which I translated Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poetry over the course of my doctoral studies. When I commenced this work my primary aim was to use a combination of creative practice and critical analysis to examine issues arising from such translations, in particular to test whether aspects of form might present obstacles to translation. The reasons for this focus are briefly examined in 1.2.3 and in 1.3 and fully explored in the course of this study. Chapter 2, which considers issues of metre and rhythm, may be considered the foundational chapter of my exploration, then each of the following chapters examines in greater depth both

the place of certain formal qualities within the work of these two poets and how these have been, or might be, translated.

A secondary aim was to examine the nature of the translation process itself as one of natural growth and change in which matters such as the translator's own knowledge and experience alter approaches to and methods of translation, and in which the translator may actively provoke growth and change by heightening awareness of aspects of the ST through seeking out and developing new methods. A method of, or an approach to, translation may be new to the translator without being entirely self-invented. Again, an increase of knowledge plays a part here in choosing and applying insights which may derive from other fields, such as Zen Buddhism, philosophy, psychology, cognitive poetics or stylistics, for example. The specific role that such fields have played in the development of the translation process described in this study is cyclically examined in the course of the study as a whole.

The overarching aim of this study, however, has been to make the work of both Martinus Nijhoff and Gerrit Achterberg better known, through the translated poems themselves and through using acts of translation as acts of reading and critical attention (see Boase-Beier 2006:4, 31-35), to deepen appreciation of the oeuvre of both these poets.

1.2 Reasons for choice of poets

1.2.1. Nijhoff and Achterberg's place in the Dutch literary canon

As already partially discussed in 1.1, both Nijhoff and Achterberg are well-known and well-studied in their own language-area, and considered by Dutch speakers to be important and influential 20th-century poets. Nijhoff's work is regarded as the first truly modern poetry to be written in the Netherlands and he himself is thought of as a significant modernist poet, the conscious rival of T.S. Eliot (d'Haen 2009; Goedgebeure 2009:539; Sötemann 1976, 1985). Achterberg, as will be discussed in the course of this study, may be harder to situate. Indeed the English poet and translator James Brockway believed Achterberg was so much an

individual phenomenon that his work was difficult to place within the context of western literature as a whole, contributing to its untranslatability (Brockway 1962, 1980). Nevertheless, this strong individuality has not made Achterberg's work less popular in the Dutch language-area, in spite of controversies based on certain facts of his life. The bibliography of his works (Achterberg 2000b:711-14), and the huge number of critical studies of the same (2000b:742-813) attest to that, as does the large number of hits which a search for Achterberg's poetry on the Internet will provide. Andries Middeldorp's study *De wereld van Gerrit Achterberg* [the world of Gerrit Achterberg] makes similar claims for Achterberg's importance and continuing popularity, and devotes a full chapter to considering his broader impact, demonstrating that many lines of Achterberg's verse have become almost proverbial (1985:187-94). Moreover, for the experimental Dutch poets of the 50s and later, Achterberg was the only older contemporary poet whose work was wholeheartedly admired, largely for its concern with language itself, its conscious recognition of the artificial nature of the craft of poetry (Anbeek 2009:598; Bruijn 2006:243; Jager 2008:44).

1.2.2. Brief biographical overview

The biographical facts relating to both Nijhoff and Achterberg will be discussed in the body of this study only where necessary for argumentation and exemplification, and in particular where these facts have clear relevance to their poetics, the reception of their works, or the literary-historical context, and especially where these have some bearing on the translation strategies I will examine. However, since this is not a biographical study, I do not present these facts systematically or exhaustively and have relied primarily on secondary sources to obtain a picture of these poets' lives.

In fact, there is no full biography of Martinus Nijhoff, simply memoirs written by friends and colleagues, summaries given in reference sources such as the *BWN*, the Biographical Dictionary of the Netherlands, or partial accounts such as those

given in Bokhove (2010), Bregman (2007) or Pruis (1994, 1999)[7]. The main facts of his life may be very briefly summarized. Martinus Nijhoff was born in 1894, the eldest child of Wouter Nijhoff (1866-1947) and Johanna Alida Seijn (1870-1927). The family was both wealthy and cultivated, the father being a publisher, book-seller, and bibliographer, whilst the mother became known first as a Salvationist[8], and then for her conversion to Roman Catholicism (Ornée n.d.b.), at a time when bourgeois elements of Dutch society were still rather hostile towards Catholicism (Bank and Van Buuren 2004:384-8). According to writer and pastor Kees Bregman, the dual influence of Nijhoff's parents played an important part in shaping his character and future as a poet. On the one hand, Nijhoff felt bound to Dutch society and wanted to carry out genuine duties and services for it, as represented by the social position his father occupied; on the other, he was drawn to his mother's spiritual quest, and to the deep concern she displayed for the poorer and weaker elements of society. According to Bregman (2007:97), it was the mother's socially-oriented mysticism which shaped his future as a poet, whilst the desire to serve his country would lead to service as a soldier in both world wars, to editorial work for several literary journals, and to advisory work for the Ministry of Education, Arts and Science (2007:100), perhaps sapping his productivity as a poet.

Nijhoff's first book of poetry was published in 1916, when he was barely 22 years old, on the occasion of his marriage to Antoinette Wind. The marriage, in one sense, was not successful: the couple had a son, Stefaan, but Antoinette felt stifled by Nijhoff's bourgeois family and soon separated from her husband, although remaining married to him until 1950, in a writerly companionship important to both (see Nijhoff 1996). Soon after his divorce, Nijhoff remarried, dying in 1953, at the age of 59, of an unexpected heart attack. Apart from the somewhat unconventional nature of Nijhoff's relationship with his first wife, the facts of his life seem both plain and uncontroversial, in contrast to Achterberg whose life, as will be discussed below, had certain elements which have attracted an unhealthy

[7] According to information given me by Nijhoff expert Wiljan van den Akker, the reason no complete biography of Nijhoff has been written is to do with issues concerning the literary estate (Van den Akker 2011).

[8] The Salvation Army (founded 1856) is a worldwide Christian Church, of evangelical Protestant heritage (Salvation Army n.d.).

interest in the biographical facts at the expense of the poetry. Moreover, Nijhoff's own poetics suggest that whilst his life played a part in shaping his work, it was the work, the artistic form itself, which was most important for him.

Achterberg's case is different. The authorized biography, by Wim Hazeu (1989), is extensive and wide-ranging, and there are also many supplementary materials which help fill out the picture (e.g. Amerongen 2010; Keilson 2003a, 2003b; Jong 2000). But since I agree with the opinions of many Dutch critics that the facts of Achterberg's life should not be confused with the poetry itself (Fokkema 1964; Keilson 2003b; Middeldorp 1985:195-207; Stolk 2002), there will be very little emphasis in this study on what has been perceived by some as being the major problematic of Achterberg's writing[9]. Nevertheless, in order also to make it clear that the persona of the poet cannot be entirely detached from his work, if only because the reader often reads an implied author into it (Boase-Beier 2006:38, 2004:279; Booth 1961:71-6, 86; Kindt and Müller 2006), perceiving the lyric-I as if it were indeed an un-fictionalized authorial voice, the main issue which continues to tax some critics (e.g. Colmjon 2002a, 2002b; Jong 1971, 2000) will be dealt with briefly here.

The facts of Achterberg's life which still provoke controversy are that, after a long history of depression, strong suicidal tendencies, frustrated love-relationships, and psychiatric illness, he shot and killed his landlady, Roel van Es, and wounded her daughter, Bep. This took place in December 1937 in Utrecht, in a country deeply affected by the economic depression of the thirties, twelve years after the publication of his first collection, later repudiated by Achterberg, and six years after his real debut with the collection *Afvaart* [sailing out/departure] (1931). The lack of success of the latter, Achterberg's inability to make a name for himself as a poet, his relative failure as a school-teacher, the monotonous state-directed work he had obtained during the economic crisis, as well as his apparently unreciprocated feelings for both his landlady and her daughter, must also have contributed to a state of extreme tension and mental distress. The fatal gun may have been intended for his own suicide.

[9] But see Ruitenberg-De Wit (1968) and Van de Doel (1995). The psycho-biographical approach of both has been helpful in shaping aspects of my translations.

After turning himself in to the police, an hour or so after the incident, Achterberg was imprisoned pending a trial, and then, as a result of psychiatric reports, was not tried for murder, but made a Ward of State and committed to a series of asylums (see Hazeu 1989:233-5). The State Order would remain in operation, after several reviews, until 1955, only seven years before his death[10]. As the first sentence of the general introduction to Achterberg on the *Koninklijke Bibliotheek* (Dutch National Library) website[11] the reader will find a bare summary of these facts as their introduction to Achterberg and his work:

> De populaire dichter Gerrit Achterberg staat bekend als de man die zijn hospita vermoordde en dichtte over een gestorven geliefde.
>
> KB n.d.

> The popular poet Gerrit Achterberg is known as the man who killed his landlady and wrote poems about a dead beloved.

After decades of literary-critical unwillingness to discuss this crucial fact of Achterberg's life, the tide has turned and, if the KB website is to be regarded as representative, the poet's unfortunate psychological condition and its consequences seem to be the first thing mentioned about him. Clearly this is not helpful for his continuing literary reputation, and may be one of the reasons why no collection of translations into English has recently been attempted. Indeed, when Achterberg is discussed in English at all, this controversy once again becomes a major focus of attention (see Bruijn 2006 for a summary of the current situation); nevertheless as is also clear, and as described in 1.2.1, Achterberg's work continues to be well-loved and popular amongst a highly diverse readership.

1.2.3. Further reasons for choice of poets

Both Nijhoff and Achterberg have importance and relevance for literary history beyond their own language and culture yet it is rare to encounter references to their oeuvres in any standard Anglophone literary histories of 20th century

[10] This information is primarily derived from Hazeu (1988). A summary of the major facts of Achterberg's life is also available from BWN-online (Ornée n.d.a.) and on the KB website (KB n.d.d).
[11] Henceforth KB.

European or World Literature. For example, although they are listed in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (EB 2005a, EB 2005b, EB 2012a, EB2012b) and in *Who's Who in Twentieth Century Poetry* (Willhardt and Parker 2002:4, 233-4), neither of them appear in the majority of important literary histories or guides to literary movements such as modernism, even when these claim to give a perspective beyond the Anglo-American. For example, the literature of the Low Countries is hardly mentioned in Bradbury and McFarlane's seminal *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890–1930* (1976), as also commented on by Van den Berg and Dorleijn in Eysteinsson and Liska (2007b:970-1). Whilst in the case of Achterberg's work this may not be at all surprising since his first publication of note, *Afvaart* [sailing out] (1931), was published after Bradbury and McFarlane's cut-off date of 1930, the fact that the Dutch modernist movement was largely ignored in this volume sets the tone for the almost complete lack of notice it receives in other standard works, including those of supposedly wider scope, such as Peter Nicholls' *Modernisms* (1995). This fact was highlighted by the Dutch academic Frank Bulhof at a symposium in Oldenburg in 1995:

> This most radical modernist revolution in the European literature of the *fin de siècle* isn't mentioned at all by Bradbury [and McFarlane]. Once more, the chance to integrate Dutch literature in the wider European context has not been utilised. This first modernist wave was followed around World War I by a second, in which avant-garde movements like imagism, futurism, expressionism, dadaism and surrealism dominated. But here too, the Dutch input in the international debate in literary studies is minimal, although Dutch and Belgian contributions can be found in abundance.
>
> Bulhof 1995:239, cited in Berg and Dorleijn 2007:971

A similar point was made in 1988 by Frank J. Warnke who complains that although Bradbury and McFarlane deal with

> all the larger Western literatures and many of the smaller, there is no mention of Paul van Ostaijen, the great Flemish experimentalist; of Hendrik Marsman, the Dutch expressionist poet; of Simon Vestdijk, the incredibly prolific novelist, poet and essayist, whose fiction some critics rank with that of Proust, Joyce and Mann; of Gerrit Achterberg, whose lyric cycles are comparable to the best modernist poetry in the larger languages.
>
> Warnke 1988:53

More surprisingly still, the most recent standard guides and handbooks to literary modernism(s) which have as their express intention to expand the field of critical enquiry, and to recognize the previously excluded as forming an important part of a long-lasting global movement, also fail to acknowledge the part played by Dutch writers and artists in responding to the modern age. The Introduction to the 2010 *Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, for example, states that the 'field of modernist studies has changed enormously over recent years' and that 'the aim of this Handbook is to take the measure of that new terrain' (Brooker et al 2010:1), emphasizing that this 'is a question not just of including once forgotten (or marginalized) writers, texts, and movements but of rethinking the frames of reference according to which such forgetting and marginalizing occurred in the first place' (ibid). Thus the handbook carefully explores new themes in modernist studies (e.g. gender, class, sexuality, race, cosmopolitanism, colonialism), and national and transnational modernisms which may previously have been excluded from consideration, including Welsh, Nordic, African, Indian, Chinese, Antipodean and Japanese modernisms, but no mention of any kind is made of modernism in a Dutch or Belgian context, in spite of the large role which Theo van Doesburg and artists connected to De Stijl[12] played in the wider movement of Constructivism, and in radical architecture and interior design. Although the Dutch artist Piet Mondrian receives a fleeting reference in this book as one of a number of émigrés who brought modernist art and architecture to Britain in the 1930s (Brooker et al 2010:560) and as one of several artists influenced by Eastern spiritual traditions (Brooker at al 2010:945), nowhere in this otherwise comprehensive handbook is serious attention given to the Low Countries as any kind of player on the modernist stage.

A similar story is told in a wide range of volumes on literary and artistic modernism published in the first and second decade of the 21st century. Neither *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Levenson 2011) nor *The Cambridge Companion to European Modernism* (Lewis 2011) pays any attention to modern

[12] De Stijl was also a journal and produced, promoted, and critiqued avant-garde art in a variety of modes, as recognized by a recent exhibition displayed both in Leiden (2009) and in London (Tate Modern 2010). Although the *Handbook of Modernisms* devotes a chapter to the analysis of the role of key journals, no analysis is made of *De Stijl* and its role in both Dutch and international modernism.

Dutch literature, art, or applied arts, although Lewis specifically divides his book into two parts: Core and Peripheral Modernisms. Whilst France, Germany, the Habsburg Empire, Italy, Great Britain, and Russia provide the core European modernisms in this account, and peripheral modernisms cover Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Eastern Europe, Greece and Turkey, there is no attempt to deal with modernist phenomena in the Low Countries. Lewis, in fact, stresses in his Introduction that he is interested in the concept of 'Europe as the other' (2011:5) and that

> [a] number of the essays in this volume suggest that apparently "peripheral" regions, such as Spain or Eastern Europe, offered particularly salient contributions to the development of modernism because of their special relationship to the question of modernization.
>
> ibid.

The Netherlands and Belgium, it seems, are neither sufficiently 'core' nor sufficiently 'other', and as such the Dutch-speaking contribution to modernism is overlooked. Yet the Netherlands, largely agricultural in terms of its economic basis until the mid 19th century, and with a social and political system based, until the 1960s, not on class or economic but on religious distinctions, with equality through so-called 'pillarization' (Fokkema and Grijzenhout 2004:58, 104; Dorleijn 2003:187-8), can also be said to have had a 'special relationship to the question of modernization' (Lewis 2011:5). Indeed there is much historical evidence to bear witness to the fact that Dutch society was particularly conscious of its own modernization in several spheres, including the theological and spiritual, educational, industrial, political and economic, legal, and artistic, and in terms of gender roles, animal rights, and so forth. Aspects of these questions were still in ferment, and hence a living force, throughout the period from approximately the 1850s through to, and well beyond, the 2nd World War (see Kloek and Mijnhardt 2004; Bank and Van Buuren 2004[13]). It is rather difficult to understand, therefore, why Lewis has cut considerations of Dutch modernism from his volume, particularly given the important and well-known role it has played in art and architecture. Since Dutch is not a widely-known foreign

[13] These volumes form part of a series charting the social and cultural history of the Netherlands from 1650 through to 2000. They make it clear how vital 'the question of modernization' was in the Netherlands, particularly from 1848 onwards.

language, it is perhaps understandable that the part played by Dutch modernist writers has been ignored, and yet, given the internationalization of academe and the cross-Europe cooperation of academics on important projects, it is quite puzzling to see that the modernization of the Netherlands and the part that the Low Countries played in modernism is so rarely tackled in the most recent general or literary introductions to the movement.

As Bulhof remarks in 1995 (as quoted in Berg and Dorleijn 2007:970): 'Anyone only slightly familiar with Dutch literature will be amazed about its absence...'. Or more pointedly, and again focusing on the important role of the Bradbury and McFarlane book in laying the ground for future academic discussion of modernism:

> Geographically speaking, beyond the cultural centre of Paris, Bradbury and McFarlane introduce a Northern European modernism which they term 'Germanic', and by which is meant Germany and Scandinavia. The Netherlands does not exist in this geography.
>
> Bulhof 1995:238 (tr.)[14]

Book after book on modernism seems to confirm this judgement[15], although there are exceptions to this rule. These are usually to be found in scholarly works focusing on the visual rather than literary arts, where the role of the Netherlands is both better known and more generally accepted.[16]

One important exception, however, is the 2007 two-volume collection edited by Eysteinsson and Liska, which argues in several places that the concept of modernism should not be limited to the well-known 'culture capitals of Europe' (Paris, London, and Berlin) (e.g. Friedman 2007:36), but that a different vision of modernism would include other localities, not just other 'culture capitals' in Europe and the United States, but on other continents too. This underlying editorial vision, which seeks to expand the range of modernist themes, texts,

[14] All translations, of both prose and poetry, signified by 'tr.', are my own, unless otherwise indicated.
[15] I have also checked the following: Armstrong (2005); Childs (2008); Kolocotroni et al (1998); Tew and Murray (2009). None of these mentions Dutch or Flemish modernism.
[16] e.g. Witkovsky 2011 and White 2003.

authors and contexts, is clearly based on *The Concept of Modernism* (1990), Eysteinsson's previous theoretical work on this topic, in which he states that:

> It is not hard to demonstrate that canon formation has been both highly arbitrary and of prime significance in Anglo-American modernist studies.
>
> 1990:86

Whilst the guides and handbooks reviewed above claim to have similar ambitions, it is only Eysteinnson and Liska who include Dutch or Belgian academics in their collection, which has a full chapter on 'Modernism(s) in Dutch Literature' (Berg and Dorleijn 2007:967-90). This careful discussion makes it clear that one reason why Dutch writers may have been excluded from consideration as modernists in the past is the fact that the term itself played a different role in Dutch literary criticism to that which it played in the Anglo-American sphere. Berg and Dorleijn stress that 'modernisme' had a) religious and theological overtones (see also Buitenwerf-van der Molen 2007:14-35) in the 19th century and b) negative connotations throughout much of the 20th century. Preferred terms were simply 'modern' or 'avant-garde'. Moreover, authors were generally discussed for their own sake, and not in terms of some larger movement. It was only with the work of Sötemann (1976), Fokkema (1984) and Fokkema and Ibsch (1987) that the term began to be used more widely by Dutch scholars and critics in a literary context. Thus the fact that Nijhoff, Achterberg and other Dutch writers were only belatedly recognized as 'modernist' in the Dutch-speaking world may also have caused their importance to not be fully recognized outside this area, resulting in the widespread critical silence I have described.

If we contrast this critical silence about Nijhoff and Achterberg in Anglo-American works of comparative criticism on modernism with the placing of these writers in the Dutch canon, as discussed in 1.1 and 1.2.1, and the recognition of their work as distinctively modern as well as specifically modernist by Dutch critics and academics (see e.g. Akker 1997; Anbeek 2009:598; d'Haen 2009; Goedgebeure 2009:538-40, 563-5; Halsema 1991; Rodenko 1991; Sierksma 1948; Sötemann 1976; Warnke 1988), then it becomes apparent that a translation project focused on their oeuvres may help broaden the comparative critical discussion of modernism through making their works available to a new readership. This has

particular importance for scholarly discussion of the place of tradition within modernism, for the important question of form and formal innovation, and for consideration of the place of the quotidian in modernist discourse (cf. Olson 2009; Sim 2010).

Of particular interest for Anglo-American scholarship is the fact that Nijhoff translated Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* (1951) and several of his poems, including 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'The Journey of the Three Magi' (Nijhoff 1990:359-63, 375-5), and that both JM Coetzee and Adrienne Rich have translated poems by Achterberg. In the case of Nijhoff's awareness of Eliot's work, essays by d'Haen have explored this aspect of his modernist practice (d'Haen 2000, 2009, 2012), although the reverse interest of Eliot in Nijhoff is not so often noted[17]. David Colmer's new translation of *Awater* (2010) will lend support to comparative critical work in this respect, but without a more complete view of Nijhoff's oeuvre it may nevertheless be difficult for the non-Dutch specialist to fully understand what kind of a modernist Nijhoff was and what his place might be in a transnational canon.

In the case of Coetzee's involvement with Achterberg's oeuvre it has already been noted by a number of critics that his 1976 translation of *The Ballad of the Gasfitter* was seminal to Coetzee's own development as a writer (Attridge 2004b; Attwell 1993; Attwell and Coetzee 1992; Geertsema 2008; Poyner 2009). Again, for the critic to weigh up the importance of Achterberg's poetry for writers such as Coetzee, one would hope that a more representative sample of Achterberg's work would be drawn on than this cycle alone.

Thus, although my primary interest in translating both Nijhoff and Achterberg is aesthetic, (re-)creative and literary, a secondary intention of this project is to extend the range of critical interest in their work beyond the Dutch-language domain into the much wider and influential field of Anglophone scholarship, for

[17] Eliot is supposed to have commented favourably on Nijhoff's work, particularly on the poem *Awater* (Polet 1989:164). Thomas Möhlmann refers to this in his preface to the Colmer, Holmes and Van der Vat translations: 'Apparently T.S. Eliot, whom Nijhoff admired, said that if he only had written *Awater* in English rather than in Dutch, Nijhoff would have been world-famous' (Möhlmann 2010:8). I discuss this further in Chapter 2.

reasons of redress, and because I firmly believe in the real relevance and interest of this work.

1.3. Translating the form

1.3.1 Form: fixed or free; closed or open?

The title of this study, 'Translating the form', not only places emphasis on the formal nature of Nijhoff and Achterberg's poetry, but also highlights the fact that questions of form, and the relationship of form to meaning, will be central to the explorations and processes described and analyzed in this study. A consequence of this exploration will be the placing of the question of the translatability of poetic and linguistic form at the heart of each of the experimental translation methods I will test. This implies a certain degree of circularity: the emphasis on form in this study can be seen as a response to the explicit and implicit poetics of the ST authors; this in turn generates experimental approaches which explore the nature of the formal aspects of this poetry, whilst at the same time forming new works in the target language. Rather than seeing this as a closed circle, however, I would perceive it as a spiral in which experimental translation approaches may cast light on stylistic aspects of the original texts, where the original texts help explain the choices made in the translations, and where the translated texts again cast light on the originals. In this way, reading, experimenting, creating and translating may all be seen as elements in a dynamic process in which each approach and mode gives life to the others.

Although writers such as Judith Moffett have emphasized the puzzle-like and imitative aspects of 'formal translation' (1989, 1999), this is not an approach I will be taking, since the risk then would be that the emphasis falls on the 'exterior' aspects of form, its grid-like schematic qualities. Nor will my approach be modelled on that of Robert Bly, whom I perceive, in a sense, as Moffett's adversary, since Moffett, in the text of her lecture at the Nobel Symposium on the translation of poetry, places such stress on the fact that she disagrees with Bly's advice to ignore metre and rhyme completely (1999:84). This polarization of attitudes to translating formal poetry is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 2.

A more flexible way perceiving form and its possibilities in translation is suggested by a careful reading of Furniss and Bath's 2007 version of their *Reading Poetry: An Introduction*. Part One is focused on the nature of poetry and of poetic form. The authors state that 'a particularly rewarding and challenging way of reading poetry is the careful analysis of the interplay between the language and form of individual poems' (2007:11) and that one important aspect of poetic form is the way in which it 'shapes' elements already existent in a language 'in order to achieve certain effects' (2007:45). This shift of attention from the 'fixed' nature of a particular form to the 'effect' it has upon the reader is important for the translator too, in that it suggests a possible route out of the dead end of arguing about whether the translator has betrayed the original because he or she has not been faithful to its formal qualities (cf. Moffett 1989, 1999), or has betrayed it because the imagery and meaning of the original have been mangled to fit the form chosen for the translation (Bly 1983; Moffett 1999; Burnshaw 1989). Bath and Furniss, in a mode of close reading which builds on and extends the different critical approaches of Structuralism, Russian Formalism, New Criticism, and Reader-Response Criticism, stress that forms, and the poems embodying those forms, are not static objects but aspects both of the originating poet's stylistic choices, and of the reader's time-structured readings, readings constantly shifting in interpretation and response, not only within the specific temporal act of reading, but also across long periods of time, through memory, and through renewed readings:

> ...literary texts are not static objects – like paintings or sculptures – but consist of sequential patterns that are experienced by the reader in a temporal fashion as he or she moves from word to word and sentence to sentence. Clearly, whether we think of a poem as a static object or a temporal process has consequences for the way we think about poetic form and its effects.
>
> Furniss and Bath 2007:84

One could easily change the last sentence into one about translation: 'Clearly, whether we think of a poem as a static object or a temporal process has consequences for the way we **translate** poetic form **for** its effects' [changes signalled in bold type].

This emphasis on the fluidity of the text, and the active nature of the relationship between text and reader, with consequent implications for issues of form and meaning, is stressed also by Derek Attridge in his book *The Singularity of Literature* (2004a). In this work Attridge discusses questions of form and content in literature, as well as, briefly, issues of literary translation, in an illuminating manner which, by placing the emphasis on process, on aspects of doing, becoming and feeling within a work and its readers, opposes the traditional split between form and content. This split, Attridge states, exists implicitly even in a traditional category such as 'organic form' which, although seeming to imply a 'perfect fit between form and content [...] nevertheless relies on a prior theoretical separation' (2004a:108). Attridge argues that to perceive form and semantic meaning in this way is to make the literary work into 'a static object', whilst to 'think of the work as an act-event' (ibid.) enables us to see and understand the performative aspects of reading and, with crucial implications for the translation of poetry in particular, to realize that

> '[f]ormal inventiveness is not merely a matter of finding new ways of constructing sentences or managing verbal rhythms. The possibility of creating an otherness [...] springs not just from the fact that words consist of certain sounds and shapes, but also from the fact that these sounds and shapes are nexuses of meaning and feeling, and hence deeply rooted in culture, history, and the varieties of human experience. The formal sequence therefore functions as a staging of meaning and feeling: a staging that is realized in what I have called a performative reading [...] Without the crucial functioning of form in the sense I have given it here, there would be no sense of staging, of a playing out in time.
>
> Attridge 2004a:108-9

Attridge clearly takes a similar position to Furniss and Bath with regard both to the importance of formal qualities in literary and poetic texts, and to the lack of fixity in the meaning and impact of a particular work. Similarly, Boase-Beier in her books on literary translation (2006, 2011), places emphasis on the role of the reader-translator in searching for meaning, on the 'openness' of the text and its unfixity of meaning (2011:100), on the importance of formal elements in contributing to these, and on the consequent desire of the translator 'to allow for this open-ended process of searching for meaning that triggers further effects'

(Boase-Beier 2011:105)[18]. Boase-Beier, then, goes further than both Furniss and Bath and Attridge in her exploration of the interplay between formal elements of the poetic text and its translation, arguing that 'literary translation enhances both creative writing and creative reading' (2011:170).

This theoretical view of literary translation as performative, open-ended, and, in spite of the constraints of allegiance to the formal aspects of the ST, as essentially creative, allows the translator to work his or her way out of the kind of impasse experienced by James Brockway, one of Achterberg's earlier translators. In Achterberg's own lifetime Brockway (1916-2000) was his best-known translator into English, in spite of misgivings he felt about translating the work at all, reservations based on what he perceived as the perfect unity between form and content in Achterberg's work. These reservations obviously weighed deeply for him since in text after text he tries to explain why he has not translated more of it. He has argued that the material aspects of Achterberg's poetry – its sounds, rhythms and shapes – are so important that it seemed to him 'an essential imposition on the translator to preserve these forms, or imitate them as closely as he can' (Brockway 1980:52). This exacting enterprise finally leaves him 'at a loss for words', meaning that of the more than one thousand poems which Achterberg wrote, Brockway translated only fifteen or so (Brockway 1980:52). His advice to future potential translators is, in effect, not to translate them at all, to 'love 'em but leave 'em be' (1980:51). The literary work (that which works upon the reader), as Brockway seems to view it, does indeed become a 'static object', counter to the position taken by Attridge, Furniss and Bath, and Boase-Beier; and the translation of such a work becomes an exacting duty in which *all* the original properties of that object must be carried across into the new language. Instead of perceiving the act of translation, as Attridge's liberating view of the literary work enables us to do, as one in which the reader-translator can both stage and re-stage his or her own response to the ST within a necessarily new arrangement of words, a new set of '*relatings*' (Attridge 2004a:73), Brockway's baffled and yet admiring reaction to the essential energies of Achterberg's work could not find full

[18] Furniss and Bath do not examine translation as such in their book; Attridge does, succinctly but rather suggestively. He feels that it is exactly the 'literary singularity' of the literary work which not only makes it translatable but which goes 'hand-in-hand' with its translatability (Attridge 2004:73).

expression in translation. The reasons for this will be further explored in Chapter 2.

It seems clear, therefore, that paying attention to the formal qualities of both Nijhoff's and Achterberg's work, not in the literal manner which Brockway demanded of himself, but open-endedly, should result in translated texts which are more literary than translations which simply seek to convey the plain meaning and imagery of the source. An example of an effectively non-literary approach to translation would be the various prose translations in Burnshaw's *The Poem Itself* (1989) which, in spite of the name of that volume, do little to convey in a direct and immediate manner what 'the poem itself' is[19]. To emphasize that to do full justice to Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poetry a literary mode of translation is indicated does not, however, solve the problem of how to translate the formal elements, but simply indicates that it is desirable *in some manner* to do so.

1.3.2. Poetic form as process in Nijhoff and Achterberg

Chapter 2 examines both Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poetics in some detail, and should be seen as foundational for the approaches to translation described and analyzed in the further chapters of this study. I will not, therefore, pre-empt the arguments of Chapter 2 by covering the same ground here. However, it is important at this stage to signal that both Nijhoff and Achterberg tussled with questions of form and process throughout their writing lives. Angela Leighton in her essay entitled 'Form's Matter' (2007:1-29) has shown that such questions have absorbed poets, artists, philosophers and critics from the time of Romanticism through to the present day, but that the relationship between form and content took on a particular connotation in the work of the modernists, which raised 'form' to the level of abstraction, of pure, almost geometrical 'planes' or 'lines' (2007:140). In discussing Pound's use of the word 'form' in his critical writings, Leighton tells us that '[t]he word inflects easily to this hard, sculptured quality, to the sense of art as an almost mathematical defiance of reality, rather than a copy of it' (ibid.). Leighton argues that this theoretical perception of form,

[19] For further discussion of Burnshaw's volume see 2.2.

which takes its 'bearings from the visual arts' (2007:16), lacks the kind of complexity which brings 'human interest, and human needs, into the picture' (2007:17). The one theoretical work of this period she singles out as defining form in the capacious manner I have already discussed is Henri Focillon's study *The Life of Forms in Art* (1934) (ibid.). The emphasis on metamorphosis, movement and energy which Leighton highlights in Focillon's theory of form is very much cognate with Nijhoff's emphasis on *form as forming* and on *process*, and with Achterberg's emphasis on the *formative energy of the word*, and *the provisional nature of the poem*.

Nijhoff's second volume of poems was, significantly, named *Vormen* (1924), an ambiguous title which plays with the plural noun 'vormen' [forms] and the active participial verb 'vormen' [to form/forming]. Thus whilst at first sight this title may be read as a reference to the philosophical and ideal Platonic Forms, or to the so-called fixed forms of poetry, a re-assessment of the title in the light of Nijhoff's well-known interest in the process of writing (Akker and Dorleijn 1994:9; *VW*II:338-42), puts an emphasis on the activity of making, rather than on the 'static object'. This same emphasis can be seen in the fact that Nijhoff was reluctant to perceive even the published poem as final, leading to a number of different, equally valid, versions of the same poem in his oeuvre. Nijhoff's most recent editors have reflected this by allowing these versions to co-exist within the same collection, particularly in the historical-critical edition (Nijhoff 1993a) which charts all variants, whilst the 'reading' editions (Nijhoff 1990, 2001) quietly allow the most important of these variants to stand[20].

Although Achterberg never made his concern with poetic form as explicit as Nijhoff did, his continuous drive to re-examine and re-form his most vital personal myths within his poems can be seen as leading to the protean fertility of image and metaphor in his work. The majority of Achterberg's poems are concerned with a single theme: the attempt to rescue the beloved from death and give her life in the form of the poem. It is, in fact, the masterly, constantly varied and surprising manner in which Achterberg developed this theme throughout his

[20] See e.g. the two versions of the famous 'kitchen' sonnet (Nijhoff 1990:216, 264).

oeuvre that is the basis for his reputation and one of the reasons why his work continues to fascinate. This lifelong exploration of theme and variation in Achterberg's work places emphasis both on the nature of poetic form, the interplay between the specific formal qualities of the specific poem and the meaning towards which it reaches, and on the poem's provisionality, the sense that it is less important than the quest itself, and the ever-unreachable object of that quest:

> This poem has deposed the last one.
> I stay faithful to my serfdom.
>
> Till at last it is apparent
> who is master and who servant.
>
> Achterberg 1988:90 (tr.)

The Dutch academic Fabian Stolk in an article on Achterberg's poetics stresses:

> ... just as the reader must constantly weigh up and deliberate to arrive at an (not: the) interpretation, so the poet has to puzzle things out in order to bring the poem to completion. The completion itself, or the eventual interpretation [of the poem], are less important than the sincere attempt to arrive at a conclusion. So that Achterberg could react to an interpretative suggestion along the lines of: I hadn't thought of that myself, but I find that a striking thought.
>
> Stolk 1994:27 (tr.)

This provisionality of the poem extended for Achterberg also to the provisionality of his own status as a poet: 'I am not a poet, only in the next poem will that be so. The next poem is always the most important' (Jessurun d'Oliveira 1977:34, tr.). In other words, it is only in the act of writing the following poem that Achterberg can perceive himself as a poet. As soon as the writing-process stops he can no longer call himself so.

As discussed in section 1.2.3. there are strong arguments for the fuller translation of both Nijhoff's and Achterberg's work to expand the current Anglo-American modernist narrative, and the creative response of both these poets to questions of poetic form should be part of this debate, not only because Nijhoff was consciously setting his practice against that of Eliot, Cocteau, and other

modernists (*VW*II:1150-74), but also because the formalist poetics of both these poets, as stressed by Sötemann (1985, 1976) would tell the story of modernism in a somewhat different manner.

To call these poets formalist is in itself perhaps a misnomer, since this would attach a term which has certain overtones to poets who certainly would not have used it, or its Dutch equivalent, to describe themselves. If we perceive form in the active, process-based, language-oriented, effect-producing, dialogic, and protean manner outlined above, then it must be clear that it is part of the domain of the poet, and of poetry, to be interested in form as such, yet to perceive Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poetry as therefore necessarily 'formalist' in nature would be to subject it to an Anglo-American narrative which has created controversy of an extra-literary nature around the work of those late 20th-century poets who have been described, or have chosen to describe themselves, as formalists, neo-formalist, or New Formalists (see Steele 1990, 2006[21]). A formal poet is not the same as a formalist poet; just as formally aware poetry need not necessarily be non-innovative by nature.

Nevertheless, to translate the poems of Nijhoff and Achterberg as if they were writing Anglo-American free verse, either of their own period, or of ours, would, in my opinion, fail to convey the full strangeness or unfamiliarity of their poetic technique, which was so closely allied to what their respective work appears to be saying, and to the emotional and aesthetic impact their poems had, and still have. My aim as a translator, therefore, has been to find ways into making a creative representation of the formal aspects of their writing, whilst at the same time finding my way out of the impasse created by the strict opposition between free or formal translation. As Heaney has stated, in a discussion with Robert Hass:

> And I think that in a verse translation there is a similar attempt at restitution. It is an homage, an attempt to redo the cabinet. You are given a shape and you try to shape up.
>
> Heaney 2000:30

[21] For some, primarily American, poets and critics, to write formal poetry is to be anti-democratic. The term 'neo-formalist' is sometimes an insult as powerful and denigratory as 'neo-fascist' (cf. Byers 1992).

My attempt to ‘shape up’ to both Nijhoff and Achterberg’s work is the motivation for this study.

1.4 The structure of this study

The study is structured so that it can reflect both the (co-)creative and critical nature of my process-based approach to translation. The argument of the study develops in conjunction with an account of this process, revealing more and more coherence in the approach as the study progresses. Each chapter will be punctuated with an ‘inter-chapter’ – a commentary in which practical approaches to translation are discussed and carefully exemplified, both with reference to the methods used, and with respect to the poems themselves. Since the methods are, I believe, innovative with regard to the translation of formal poetry, these have been described in detail, with supporting documentation based on my audio-recordings of the process, and related as appropriate to the theories, concepts, and poetics discussed in the preceding chapter(s). The intention is not only to exemplify my own translation process but to produce several possible models with pedagogical implications for the teaching of poetic translation. The first commentary, however, is of a different nature, in that it examines my approach to translation at an earlier period. It serves as a contrast to the later translation work, and a measure against which that work can be judged.

The background methodological approach of this study is that of critical analysis, both broad and deep, influenced by stylistic and formalist approaches to a text, although not only based on these. At times, and especially where content, form, and context are not easily separated from each other, which in any case they always are only as a convenience, formal analysis has been leavened with thematic analysis, sometimes of a broadly descriptive nature, sometimes computational. Of necessity this will mean that translation-based questions are sometimes postponed whilst the details of the analyses are presented; however, the aim of these analyses has been to deepen my knowledge of each writer’s poetics in order to approach the translation-work with greater confidence.

The most important formal features I investigate are those of rhythm, pausing and phrasing, sound and iconicity in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The aspect of poetic form which might present most difficulty in translation, that of schematic rhyme, has been subsumed into my discussion of these other formal features. The reasons for this are discussed throughout the study and are centred on aspects of the poets' own poetics. In the case of Nijhoff I argue that rhyme-schemes are made less noticeable either by the characteristic use of strong enjambements, intricate syntax and long sentences, all interacting with the breath-pause, whilst in Achterberg's poetry the iconic use of sound effects, and the singing quality of the voice, is dominant over regularity of rhyme, even in his adaptation of set forms[22] such as the sonnet.

The angle of approach I have taken in the practical aspects of this investigation is a psycho-physiological one, primarily influenced by the poetics of both the poets under consideration, as will be shown throughout this study, but also, and especially as the study developed, informed by work in cognitive poetics, by traditions of drama-training, especially that of the later Stanislavski, experiential approaches to education, pragmatic philosophy, and experimental psychology. The main focus, however, has been on the work of the poets themselves – an approach fully justified by the act of translation which is primarily an act of co- and re-creative reading. Reading, as will be seen in the inter-chapter commentaries, and as argued and exemplified in a number of works by Clive Scott (e.g. 2000, 2011, 2012a, 2012b), can also be approached psycho-physiologically, and made more active by exercises designed to bring the acts of imagination and bodily activation which reading naturally provokes to the forefront of the translator's consciousness, with the ultimate aim of strengthening the translator-poem relationship so that the quality of the translation of the poem *as a poem*, as an artistic artefact, may improve. My hope is that this kind of self-training, informed also by more traditional forms of critical analysis and by in-depth

[22] A set form in poetry is one which has been handed down by tradition and follows a set and recognizable pattern of metre and /or rhyme. In the Western tradition set, or fixed, forms would include not only the sonnet but also the ballade, rondeau, rondel, sestina, and villanelle, most of which Nijhoff in particular experimented with. These set forms, in spite of the term, are not unchangeably fixed throughout their history, the sonnet in particular having been subject to much variation and development. Nevertheless, a set form would be expected to retain some elements of the form to be recognizable as such.

knowledge of the context of the poet's work, may help overcome the notion that certain aspects of form in poetry present obstacles to effective translation.

My thesis question put simply, therefore, is can a (co-)creative, critical process-based approach to translating formal poetry improve the quality of translation? Are the methods developed within the course of this study likely to prove useful to other translators? The study by implication also probes the question: what does it mean to approach the translation of formal poetry by a psycho-physiological route?

snow-white on the slender shoots...

Nijhoff (tr.)

COMMENTARY I

Before reflective process-based work: problems in translating a Nijhoff poem

> *... translation is also [...] part of the spiritual autobiography of a relation with an ST.*
>
> *Scott 2000:181-2*

I.i Introduction

In 1.1 I presented some questions this study will explore, that is, if the formal aspects of a poem, its sonic and rhythmic structures, are not simply decorative, but essential to the poem and its affective and cognitive impact on the reader, how might these qualities be translated? Can strong rhyming and metrical effects still be used in contemporary translation practice? This introductory commentary, focusing on aspects of my practice more than sixteen years ago, is intended to set the context for my later work, developed during my doctoral studies. It examines my translation of a single Nijhoff poem, reconstructing my translation strategies, in order to show how I struggled at that point with aspects of form.

I.ii Translating Nijhoff's 'Liedje'

Nijhoff's 'Liedje' [little-song], was first published in the Dutch literary journal *De gids* in 1924, then in *Vormen* (1924), before appearing in the *VG*[23] of 1954 and of 1990 (Nijhoff 1990:429). Within the collection *Vormen* it appears as one of seven 'Kleine liederen' [little songs].

This was not the first Nijhoff poem I translated, but the first of a group translated in February 1997 in an attempt to re-familiarize myself with Nijhoff's work. Over a period of two days I translated five poems, 'Liedje' [little-song]; 'De kreupele' [the cripple]; 'De wolken' [the clouds]; 'De tuinman' [the gardener]; 'Moeder' [mother], to add to three translated in March 1992 ('Het kind en ik' [the child and I]; 'Twee reddeloozen' [two unsaveable-ones]; 'Impasse') and one in 1987 ('De twee nablijvers' [the two remaining-behind-ones]. I started with 'Liedje' because

[23] *Verzamelde gedichten* [collected poems].

of its apparent simplicity and musicality, and the ease with which I could understand its vocabulary. I still carry a strong memory of working with the poem throughout a bright wintery day; my excitement at feeling I had 'cracked' the formal problems of metre and rhyme; and my disappointment at my husband's adverse reaction to the translation when I read it to him some days later.

'Liedje' is important in Nijhoff's oeuvre because it succinctly presents some of the major themes which concerned the poet throughout his writing-life: the process by which purity and clarity of form (poem, child, new blossom) emerge from impurity and mess, the inter-relationship of life and art, and how the continuous cycle of life and death are aspects of the same process.

The poem and its gloss appear below as (1). An analysis of the verse-form appears as (2). The first translation I made of this poem appears as (3). A line-by-line commentary on some of the translation issues follows the translation.

(1)

LIEDJE

Er staat in mijn hart een boompje gegroeid,
there stands in my heart a little-tree grown
De wortels zijn bloedig rood,
the roots are bloody red
Maar de bloesems zijn, als het boompje bloeit,
but the blossoms are when the little-tree blooms
Sneeuwwit langs de tengere loot.
snow-white along the tender shoot

's Nachts droom ik van vogels en laaiend vuur
at-night dream I of birds and blazing fire
En hoor verward gekras,
and hear confused scratching
indistinct (bird-cries)
Maar een lied rijst in het morgenuur
but a song rises in the morning-hour
Als een feniks uit asch.
like a phoenix from ash

En van de liefde verbleekt het rood
and from the love bleaches the red
pales
Tot de smetteloosheid van het kind –
to the flawlessness of the child
stainlessness
Er is een zuiverheid van den dood
there is a purity of the death
Die reeds in het leven begint.
which already in the life begins

(2)

LIEDJE	rhyme*	syllable -count	comments
x / x x / x / x x / Er staat| in mijn hart| een boompje| gegroeid,| x / x x / x / De wor|tels zijn bloe|dig rood,| x x / x / x x / x / Maar de bloe|sems zijn,|| als het boom|pje bloeit,| / / x x / x x / Sneeuwwit| langs de teng|ere loot.|	a b a b	10 7 10 8	The mixture of triple and duple beats gives the rhythm a song-like, almost rocking quality; the same combination of long and short can be found also in the alternation between longer and shorter line-lengths. Note the flexibility with which Nijhoff treats the metre: • Variable line length • More emphasis on beat than on foot-measure • The pattern of stress is rarely repeated
/ / x x / x x / x / 's Nachts droom ik| van vogels| en laai|end vuur| x / x / x / En hoor| verward| gekras,| x x / / x x / x / Maar een lied| rijst| in het mor|genuur| x x / x x / Als een fen|iks uit asch.	a b a b	10 6 9 6	
x / x / x x / x / En van| de liefde| verbleekt| het rood| x x / x x / x x / Tot de sme|tte|loosheid| van het kind| – x / x / x / x x / Er is| een zui|verheid| van den dood| x / x x / x x / Die reeds| in het le|ven begint|.	a b a b	9 9 9 8	

* the rhyme-scheme abab – interlaced rhyme – is repeated for each stanza, but the b-rhyme [/o:t/], highlighted in red above, reappears as the a-rhyme in the final stanza.

(3)

	LITTLE SONG	rhyme	syllable-count
	x / | x x / | x / / | x /		
1	There stands in my heart a young tree which grows	a	10
2	And blood, blood-red are its roots,	b	7
	x x / | x x / | x x / x x /		
3	But the blossoms are white when the little tree blooms,	c	12
4	Snow-white on the slender shoots.	b	7
5	At night I have dreams of fire and birds,	a	9/10
6	Confusedly hear something scratch,	b	8
7	But when the day breaks a song rises up	c	10
8	Like a phoenix from ash.	b	6
9	And out of love the red becomes bleached	a	9
10	To the stainlessness of the child —	b	8
11	There is a cleanliness, part of death,	c	9
12	Already rooted in life.	b	7

tr. 1997

I.iii. 'Liedje': translation commentary

It is hard to look at this 1997 translation dispassionately, not only because it is so deeply rooted in my consciousness, but also because I now have a different vision of the ST. Nevertheless, to be aware of one's own changes, both as reader and translator, seems to me an essential aspect of a process-based approach to translation. The following comments, therefore, are an attempt to objectively analyze aspects of my TT. I begin with a line-by-line detailed analysis of stylistic and linguistic aspects of the translation, followed by a reconstruction of the translation strategies used.

Stanza 1

1. *There stands in my heart a young tree which grows*

The first line of stanza 1 mimics the Dutch syntax so closely that the English seems rather unnatural. This is not a question of deliberate foreignization (cf. Venuti 1995), but is caused by being willing to use more archaic diction and phrasing than I would now. Stylistically speaking, it does not match the ST diction which is simple and follows natural Dutch speech patterns, although the word-collocation, as discussed below, is somewhat unusual.

More seriously, the line misrepresents the Dutch: the tree is not necessarily 'young', although the diminutive might imply that; and 'which grows' is a poor representation of 'gegroeid', the past participle of 'groeien', 'to grow'. The diminutive cannot be translated into English as such, and a choice would have to be made to interpret that diminutive as denoting affection, familiarity, size, or indeed age. The issue with 'gegroeid' seems more complex still: the tree 'stands grown', a combination of words as unusual in Dutch as in English (cf. Dorleijn 1989:7). My 1997 translation fudges the issue by choosing for a relative clause, 'a young tree which grows', normalizing the original, and at the same time maintaining the rather stiff, archaic syntax initiated by 'There stands in my heart…'.

I may have precluded the word 'little' as a translation of the diminutive because of its sentimental overtones, however since it is used in line 3 the reasoning here, as far as I can reconstruct it, is more likely to have been to do with avoiding repetitions in English, or because of rhythmic considerations.

Yet the clumsiness of the translation is barely compensated for by the fact that it is rhythmically close to the original, maintaining 10 syllables, and a similar stress-pattern: (Fawcett) ^{1}x / $|^{2}$ x x / $|^{3}$ **x / / $|^{4}$** x /|; (Nijhoff) ^{1}x / $|^{2}$ x x / $|^{3}$ **x / x $|^{4}$**x /$|^{24}$; but the overall rhythmic effect of the TT is rather different to the ST, damaging the serious lightness of tone, the song-like qualities of the ST.

[24] My TT third foot is a bacchius where Nijhoff has an amphibrach.

2. *And blood, blood-red are its roots*

In line 2 the main fault is one of over-emphasis through the repetition of 'blood': 'blood, blood-red'. This changes the tone substantially, from the relatively neutral Dutch which allows the image of the blood(y)-red roots to work on the reader's imagination, to something more dramatic, over-highlighting the blood. It is as if the Dutch poem subconsciously suggested a folk-mode to my mind, since the repetitions are similar to those used in the Scots-English Border Ballads[25]. Therefore, the archaic tone of the translation of the first line of this stanza is compounded by this inappropriate – and inconsistent – historicizing domestication.

A smaller issue is that of the order of image-presentation, which in the Dutch moves from the roots to their qualities (bloody-red), reversing that order in the English. Both word-order and word-choice in the English were largely determined by considerations of rhythm and rhyme. The effect is to diminish the impact of the image, since the element of surprise achieved by postponing 'bloedig rood' to the end of the phrase disappears. However, it may be that if the rhyme is to be retained there is no solution in English which does not reverse the image-presentation.

The rhythmic patterning is again close to the original (seven syllables, three main stresses), whilst the end-word 'roots' was chosen to rhyme with 'shoots' – thus producing further problems of emphasis and interpretation later in the stanza.

3. *But the blossoms are white when the little tree blooms*

Line 3 seems to have fewer problems. The word-order does not sound archaic in English and the translation of 'bloesems' and 'bloeit' as their cognates 'blossoms' and 'blooms' seems reasonable, especially as this retains the ST alliteration.

[25] cf. 'The Ballad of Young Johnstone': 'How can I live? How shall I live?/ Young Johnstone, do not you see/ The red, red drops o my bonny heart's blood / Rin trinkling down my knee?' (Motherwell 1873:193-200). Although my 1997 translation does not quite use a stock epithet, the pattern clearly comes from the ballads and from folk songs related to these.

However, the translation's rhythmic aspects are less satisfactory: the movement of three has, as it were, overcome the movement of two. Where the Dutch has an alternation of triple and duple feet [x x / | x / || x x / | x / |], with a definite central pause, the English has become a succession of triple feet only [x x / | x x / | x x / | x x / |] – all anapaestic. The effect in English is to make the movement more sing-song than in the ST and the tone more naïve.

4. *Snow-white on the slender shoots*

Line 4 again seems to have fewer problems. The word-order, and therefore the order of image-presentation, is exactly the same as in the Dutch, and since this is also acceptable in English, there is none of the archaism which mars the opening of the translation. 'Snow-white' is clearly a straightforward translation of 'sneeuwwit', yet since the image of whiteness has already been introduced in line 3 of the translation, there is the same fault of colour over-emphasis as in line 2. In line 3 'white' was added to the clause because it seemed a more natural way of expressing the idea in English. Instead of postponing the idea of whiteness, as Nijhoff does, with a subordinate when-clause, my translation avoided what seemed to me to be the awkward: *'But the blossoms are, when the little-tree blooms,/Snow-white...'. The postponement of the adjectival complement would sound pedantic in contemporary English, I felt. The consequence for my translation of line 4 is a loss of surprise, as well as the over-emphasis on white, weakening the clarity of the original image.

More problematic is the translation of 'loot' as 'shoots'. The Dutch is in the singular, and could just as easily signify the whole small tree – the sapling – as its shoots, or little branches. The plural form 'roots', of line 2, and my decision to use this as a rhyme-word, has driven the choice of 'shoots' here. Rhythmically, however, this line is reasonably satisfying: although one syllable has been lost, this does not damage the movement of the line.

Stanza 2

Within this stanza as a whole there are fewer flaws than in stanza 1, and at first sight there is nothing which an English-speaking reader, unaware of the Dutch, would question. However, there are still some translation problems, as will appear from the analysis.

5. *At night I have dreams of fire and birds*

The literal translation of the Dutch is 'At night I dream of birds and blazing fire'. The difficulty for the translator wishing to translate formally is how to fit all the information contained in the ST within a metrical and rhyming pattern. Although, thinking of the speech stresses, I have marked the metrical pattern in (2) in the following way:

/ / x | x / x | x / | x /|
's Nachts droom ik van vogels en laaiend vuur
[antibacchius] [amphibrach] [iamb] [iamb]

the stresses could equally well be marked thus:

x | / x x | / x x | / x /
's Nachts droom ik van vogels en laaiend vuur
[off-beat] [dactyl] [dactyl] [cretic]

or: | / x | / [x]
[trochee] [trochee] (with silent beat) [26]

or even:

x / x | x / x | x / x | / [x x]
's Nachts droom ik van vogels en laaiend vuur
[amphibrach] [amphibrach] [amphibrach] [dactyl with two silent beats]

[26] The beats are similar to this in Antoine Oomen's setting of 'Liedje': ♪ | ♩ ♪ ♪ | ♩ ♪ ♪ | ♪. ♪ | 𝅗𝅥 ·. See Oomen n.d.

Rhythmically speaking the closest translation would be the rather odd:

x / x x / x x / x
*Nights dream I of fire and blazing birds

where the colloquial dialect use of ‘nights’ to mean ‘at night’ or ‘during the nights’ could, in the right context, be an interesting translation choice, and where the ‘blazing’ of the fire is transferred (perhaps too obviously) to the birds, linking these to the later phoenix-symbol. Yet the inversion ‘dream I’ would make such a version unacceptably archaic, and therefore had to be rejected both at the time of initial translation and now.

The solution I chose – ‘At night I have dreams of fire and birds’ – compromises the specificity of the imagery, dropping ‘blazing’ [laaiend] altogether, in order to achieve a reasonably smooth rhythmic effect:

x / | x x / | x / [x] | x / [x]

or

It could be argued that the literal translation of the line would have been acceptable, yet this would not be metrically satisfying within the context of the poem, since it scans as pure iambic pentameter, and thus loses the lilting song-like qualities the triple rhythms give to the Dutch:

x / x / x / x / x /
At night I dream of birds and blazing fire

The metrical effect of this alternative translation is rather deadened and mechanical, thus, in spite of some stylistic and informational loss in the translation, the gain in terms of rhythmic flow may justify the original translational choice.

6. *Confusedly hear something scratch*

The translation problem here lies in the use of the adverb 'confusedly' to translate the adjectival[27] use of 'verward' in 'verward gekras' [confused scratching], since the word-order in English, determined once again by metrical considerations, means that the reader is likely to attribute the confusion to the 'I' rather than to the noise, which may either be a scratching sound, as I interpreted it in 1997, or a croaking or screeching sound, linking in to the bird imagery of this stanza. The noise is 'verward' because the individual cries, or scrapes, within it are so intermingled as to be indistinguishable, and the dual application of 'gekras' in the ST both to scratching and harsh bird-calls is fortuitously polyvalent, since it is left to the reader to imagine whether this points to a bird being born from a shell (scratching to get out), or whether it signifies the kind of call made by crow- or raven-like birds, creating an atmosphere of foreboding, or even symbolizing thought, memory and creativity[28].

The translation decision also affects the tone of this line which becomes vague and rather lofty, instead of direct and simple, as in the Dutch (literally: and hear confused scratching/croaking).

x / | x / | x /
En hoor verward gekras

x / |x x / | x x /
Confusedly hear something scratch

This is a similar issue to the one I described in my analysis of stanza 1, line 3. The strong triple rhythms of the original have been 'over-interpreted', to produce something close to the underlying template of the poem (see stanza 1, line 2) but far from the actual effect of this line, which is slightly out of the norm in the ST, and which should, therefore, make the reader pay greater attention to what the

[27] Dutch adverbs and adjectives are formally indistinguishable. The translation 'fault' was not that I mixed up two forms, but that I deliberately chose to use an adverb in English because it could be placed in a position in the line which gave a similar rhythm to the original, without seeing that this created real ambiguities about what, or who, was confused.

[28] WNT-online gives as the third definition of 'gekras': *Scratching* in the sense of *bringing forth a raw and cutting throat-noise*, as some birds do, in particular ravens, crows, owls etc. (tr.). Ravens are commonly linked to death. They are also Odin's birds of thought and memory (Huginn and Muninn), as well as being associated with creation in many North American myths.

words are saying. Indeed, a musically sensitive scansion of the ST line may look like this:

x / [x] | x / [x] | x / [x]

where the [x] may stand either for a short pause, or for the prolongation of the sound:

My rhythmic reading, therefore, like some of my lexical and syntactical readings has filled in the gaps, closing off the possibility of flexible readerly response.

7. *But when the day breaks a song rises up*

It could be argued that 'when the day breaks' is an over-interpretation of 'in het morgenuur' [in the morning-hour], although the context of the stanza (night followed by day; struggle followed by birth) makes clear that the 'morning-hour' is the point when night changes to morning.

Again, the order of the presentation of the images in this line is changed: in the Dutch the song rises in the morning hour; in the English day breaks and the song rises. In both, however, the action is meant to be understood as being simultaneous, and the change of syntactic order does not seem so significant. In fact, it could be argued that the English is more mimetic, in that the 'rising up' of the song occurs at the climax of the line, its end-point, and exactly at the point of strongest stress.

As before, the translation decisions were guided by the sonic and rhythmic qualities of the line.

x x / | / | x x / | x /[29]
Maar een lied rijst in het morgenuur
[anapaest] [ ] [anapaest] [iamb]

x / | x x / | x / | / x /
But when the day breaks a song rises up
[iamb] [anapaest] [iamb] [cretic]

or: x x /
[anapaest]

As can be seen from the scansion, my line follows the same basic model of mixed iambs and anapaests, but somewhat reverses the movement, in the same way that the image-presentation has been reversed. Much of the effect of the ST line, in imagistic and sonic terms, and in terms of what is made salient for the reader within the reading experience, seems to have been retained in my 1997 translation, and thus this is a line which I am, after consideration, not so unhappy with.

8. *Like a phoenix from ash*

Likewise, this line, which is both a literal translation from the Dutch, and a rhythmic matching of the original line, does not displease me. Since the aim of my translation-work – both then and now – is not to use the ST as a springboard for my own poetic work, but rather to represent as carefully and artistically as I can the work of the SL poet for a new audience, the approach I classified as co-creative in 1.1, then it does not seem to me that I should strive to translate away from the text. Dutch and English, in spite of being closely related languages, often diverge substantially in terms of syntax, sound, and lexis, as will be apparent from the foregoing analysis. But when the artistic needs of the TT are met by a literal translation, I see no need to search for a different solution. In this case, not only is the line rhythmically the same as the ST, but I was able to retain a (near-)rhyme with line 6 of the poem.

[29] Nijhoff works so flexibly with metre that there will always be other interpretations of the scansion of his lines. However, if my interpretation is accepted , there is also great iconicity in the Dutch, since 'rijst' will stand out in the line, as it is quite likely that the reader will either prolong the word slightly, or will pause before or after it. The effect will be of a 'rising' – effortless song after the struggle of the night.

Stanza 3

9. *And out of love the red becomes bleached*

This line I now consider to have been mistranslated. The issue lies in 'van' in 'En van de liefde verbleekt het rood'. The preposition 'van' has many possible significations, translated into English by 'of'/'from'/'with'/'for'/'off'/'by' and so forth. The problem was that I understood 'van' as meaning 'from' in the sense of 'because': 'En van de liefde verbleekt het rood' -> and from (the) love fades (or bleaches) the red; and that I saw this clause as signifying something like 'because of love (in general) red (signifying passion) changes to white (signifying purity)' or: Love transforms red to white. My translation 'out of love' was intended to convey something like 'out of love for such-and-such, so-and-so happened'. This interpretation is different to my present one. I now read 'van' as meaning 'from' in sense 6 of the OED definition of 'from': 'denoting removal, abstraction, separation, expulsion, or the like', which the Dutch WNT also confirms for 'van': 'bij de aanduiding van een verwijdering' (when designating a removal). The difference is rather subtle, but crucial to any translation. If my present interpretation is correct, then the clause means that the red within love fades away and becomes something else, so that 'rood' rather than 'liefde' becomes the subject of the clause. My present solution, therefore, would be simply: 'And the red of love fades away', where 'away' conveys both 'van' and the 'ver-' element of 'verbleekt' [fade/pale/bleach...].

The word 'bleached' in my original translation was chosen because of the etymological relationship to 'verbleken', but I would now prefer the simpler 'fade', partly because of possible negative associations with the *bl* vocable (Boase-Beier 2006:42), and partly because, especially linked to the following line, an irresistible image of laundering springs to mind, creating, potentially, an unintentionally comical image in the TT.

10. *To the stainlessness of the child*

Line 10 of the translation follows the Dutch syntax quite closely, and also the formal poetic properties of the line, in that this and the preceding line exactly mimic the enjambement effect of the ST, and in that the metre is similar, though not the same. However, as pointed out in my analysis of line 9, the choice of 'stainlessness' as a translation for 'smetteloosheid' is unfortunate when taken together with the 'bleached' of the previous line. To my mind there are further connotations of 'stainlessness' in English, primarily religious and associated with the Virgin Mary, born without stain of sin[30]. This may skew any TT interpretation in a particular direction. I would, therefore, now translate 'smetteloosheid' as 'flawlessness', or more simply, in the context of the whole phrase, as 'flawless'.

11. *There is a cleanliness, part of death*

The image-chain of the TT of stanza 3 in this line now tends (inappropriately) towards 'laundering' with 'bleached'/'stainlessness'/'cleanliness' chosen in lieu of, for example, 'fades away'/'flawless(ness)'/'purity'. The word in question here is 'zuiverheid', which carries connotations of 'being free from something' which would otherwise adulterate its essential properties (e.g. gold, vegetable oils, butter) or, in the case of love or virtue, a completeness, free from guilt or lower passions (WNT). Thus, whilst 'zuiverheid' can certainly be translated as 'cleanliness', it seems that in the context of the poem as a whole a better translation would have been 'purity'.

Again, the 1997 translation decisions were driven by formal considerations, particularly of metre. This line matches the Dutch exactly in rhythmic terms, but at the expense of precision of image, and there is a certain stiffness in phrasing caused by matching the ST 'er is...' to the TT 'there is...'.

[30] See e.g. Salve Maria Regina n.d. and Korošak 2012 for the use of 'stainlessness' in images associated with the Virgin Mary.

12. *Already rooted in life.*

The ST here is simpler than the TT, simply saying ‘die reeds in het leven begint’ [which already in the life begins]. The temptation to link this line in the TT back to the image of the first stanza, the tree growing in the heart with bloody roots, must have been too strong to resist, and perhaps was made unconsciously, to compensate for some quite severe losses in this and the previous stanzas. The TT line as such is a reasonably strong one, both in terms of image and sound, and yet it goes well beyond the ST, making explicit and particular what is vaguer and more generalized in the ST. Thus the decision may also have been shaped by an awareness of target culture (TC) expectations since a range of creative writing courses and handbooks advise specifically for explicitness and particularity and against generalizations and vagueness. However, within the context of Nijhoff’s poem with its simplicity of tone and diction, and general clarity of image, the less explicit ‘which already begins in life’ allows the reader to make the connection back to the previous two stanzas, and permits a larger application than my 1997 translation.

I.iv ‘Liedje’: translation strategies

The main strategy of the 1997 translation, as demonstrated in the above commentary, was driven by formal considerations, primarily of metre, but also of rhyme, and was damaged by an incoherent approach to tone, diction, syntax, and networks of imagery, and by a lack of knowledge of the context within which Nijhoff was working, his poetics, and the body of his work as a whole. The translation attempted to remain close to the ST, yet introduced inappropriate techniques of repetition which exaggerated the emphasis of the original, damaged the clarity of the image and changed the tone, bringing the TT into the ambit of the Scots-English Border Ballads, without a clear or deliberate strategy of historicization or domestication. At the same time, as I have shown, even the metrical aspects of the translation were rather poorly handled, reducing the ST’s subtle effects.

In 1.1 I described several approaches to poetry-translation: the assimilative, co-creative, pragmatic, experimental, and stylistically and formally re-creative. My 1997 TT does not clearly fall into any of these categories, being partially, though not entirely assimilative, and only so by accident, not as a matter of will, and certainly not as an assimilation into the kind of poetry I was writing in the 1990s, which was different in style and theme both to the ST and the TT. My conscious intention was to produce a co-creative TT, through a re-creative approach to form, but the overall effect of the TT falls short of this ideal.

Looking back at my former approach to translation, I feel that the faults stem from a non-holistic approach to the text and the poet's oeuvre, from poor stylistic analysis and from a lack of reflection both on the product and process of translation. This study attempts to remedy these faults.

The following chapter explores aspects of rhythm and metre in order to provide a foundation for the process-based work intended to sensitize myself, as an apprentice-translator, to the ways in which these work generally, and in Nijhoff's and Achterberg's work in particular. The key to this, I feel, is to activate the whole body – the body-mind – in response to the poetic text and within the complete translation process. The term 'body-mind' is deliberately used to avoid the Cartesian mind and body split (Descartes 1996:50-62; Kirk 2003:30-7; Robinson 2012), and is discussed more fully in the following chapter. It is a term derived from Buddhist philosophy, also used in Western philosophy (Dewey 1928a, 1928b), psychology, psychotherapy and certain medical practices, and is clearly related also to the terms 'mind-body', 'psychosomatic' and 'somatopsychic'. I will generally use 'body-mind' in preference to the other terms, including 'embodiment', primarily because the emphasis seems clearly to be placed on the body as being absolutely unified with the mind, and indeed the spirit (cf. Chan, Ho and Chow 2002; Ozawa-de Silva 2002; Shusterman 2008). In particular, Sheets-Johnstone's and her co-writers' work on how the body is integral to artistic thinking, language and thought, and human and ecological interconnectedness (1992), has provided important pointers to the necessity of working with the to-be-translated text in a way very different to my previous norms. This emphasis on the somatic links to cognitive poetics which, especially

in the work of Reuven Tsur (1992, 1998, 2008, 2012), Michael Burke (2011) and Peter Stockwell (2002) has recognized that literary communication, including poetry, intimately involves the body, not only of the originating writer, but also that of the reader. Stockwell, in particular, in discussing a greater need for literary analysis to pay attention to emotion, has stated that it should become 'less coldly rational' and more emotionally engaged (2002:173). Although Sheets-Johnstone has criticized the 'penchant' of cognitive linguists such as Johnson (1987), Lakoff and Johnson (1999), and Lakoff and Turner (1989) for using the term 'embodied' in such a way that the dualistic split between body and mind continues to dominate (Sheets-Johnstone 2009:215), her criticism seems inappropriate when placed against Stockwell's own work, and that of Tsur and Burke, for example, whose insights I will draw on at several points within this study, particularly in Chapter 4, which is concerned with sound and iconicity. Nevertheless, her point that terms such as 'embodiment' and 'embodied' can imply a rift between mind and body, or between form and concept (2009:221) seems valid, and chimes with Nijhoff's much earlier claim that contemporary poets place the accent on 'form not as […] an embodiment, but a body in itself' (*VW*II:340).

Rhythm, the ground-bass of poetry, is intimately connected with the body, and is, I believe, the basis of the effectiveness of Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poems. My research has, therefore, started at this point. Other aspects of the poem's engagement with the whole body – the body-mind – will be explored in later chapters, and in their related translation-based commentaries, and will include the part that breath plays in Nijhoff's and Achterberg's work, the effects, scope and intention of sound iconicity in Achterberg's work in particular, and the relationship between iconicity and gesture. I do not, however, attempt to explore all the possible ways in which the body-mind creates and interacts with a poem – not exploring, for example, the intimate emotional and cognitive effects of particular phonemes, nor the actual physical placing of particular sounds within the mouth and the body as a whole. Instead, I have focused on those aspects of Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poetics which have had most impact on shaping and changing my own translation practice.

We feel our way along the damp walls...

Nijhoff (tr.)

CHAPTER 2

Exploring rhythm

2. 1. Modernism and rhythm

In his introductory comments to *Poetry in Theory*, an anthology of 20th-century poetics, Jon Cook focuses on rhythm as the major area of controversy, and hence also of renewing energies, in the poetries of the twentieth century (Cook 2004:6-7). Cook notes a range of attitudes amongst the modernists and their successors, from the fierce rejection of traditional metres to the desire for compromise of those who perceived new prosodic forms as evolutions of traditional practices and whose 'sense of poetry was capacious enough to allow old and new rhythms to coexist alongside each other' (Cook 2004:7).

Cook further notes that the tensions apparent in statements by Pound and his followers, between a desire for impersonality and a need for authenticity, are also grounded in the struggle to define what rhythm means for the modern poet: 'what is most a poet's own, what is least borrowed, what is more his than he perhaps knows, is rhythm. It interprets him' (Cook 2004:7). He points out that rhythm, which may well up from the deepest part of the creating poet, can also be something that comes into the poet from outside, its 'origins in the external world' (Cook 2004:7). This paradoxical locating of rhythm as both within and without the poet, within and without the text, finds, according to Cook, its most strenuous theorizing in D.H. Lawrence's Preface to the American edition of his *New Poems* which identifies 'rhythm as the junction point between an absolute order and a particular moment of experience' (Cook 2004:8).

Nijhoff and Achterberg were just as concerned with finding rhythms both new and an evolution of traditional practices, both impersonal and deeply authentic, both exterior and interior. In Nijhoff this is displayed not only in his developing poetics, but also in his metapoetics, his writings on the poetic practices of others and reflections on his own poetic practice, both in prose and in the self-reflexive

awareness of his poems. In Achterberg's case that awareness about the function and effect of rhythm is encoded within the poems themselves, poems that are extraordinarily conscious of the powerful energies locked within their own formal qualities. There is also a wealth of anecdotal evidence regarding the conscious manner in which this poet worked with the material of language (Hazeu 1989), as well as the comments of a number of Dutch critics, many contemporary with Achterberg, who based their insights not just on their readings of the texts, but also on the light shed on these by personal communication with the poet. This was particularly the case for influential writers such as Ed Hoornik and Paul Rodenko (see e.g. Hoornik 1950; Rodenko 1991) who mediated between Achterberg and his first audiences, providing map and compass for a kind of poetry hardly encountered before in Dutch literature.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the status of these two poets in the Dutch-speaking world is unquestioned, both being considered vital to the development of Dutch 20th-century poetry, and both in different ways being perceived as having a renovating function in that literature. Nijhoff's oeuvre has been compared to Eliot's, in terms of its thematic material, range and scope, and because it seems to answer and challenge Eliot's most seminal works (Akker 1997:213-4; d'Haen 2009; Goedgebeure 2009:539; Sötemann 1976, 1985)[31]. Achterberg, on the other hand, is generally seen as being a phenomenon in his own right, harder to place with regard to other major 20th-century poets (Hoornik 1950:421; Brockway 1962, 1980)[32]. At the same time, with his intense focus on the power of language, it is clear that he is writing within the Modernist stream and it is possible to find a deep similarity in his work to that of other modernist poets, Rilke, for example, or Celan.

The two poets relate to and contrast with each other. Nijhoff, like Eliot, can be seen as the purifier of the tongue[33], whilst Achterberg may be seen as being more

[31] For fuller discussion see 2.4.1.
[32] See Heide (2006), however, which compares elements of Achterberg's allegorizing to that of Eliot and Montale.
[33] Eliot's lines from 'Little Gidding', 'speech impelled us/To purify the dialect of the tribe', are derived from Mallarmé's Sonnet on Edgar Allan Poe. Just as Eliot recognized Mallarmé's importance for modern poetry, but rejected his view that poetry should use a language set apart from the everyday (Shiach 2007:26-30), so too Nijhoff paid respect to Mallarmé as a 'poète pour

of an innovator and a renewer (Rodenko 1956:100) – although any implication of judgement on the relative merits of their work should be discounted in this comparison. Achterberg said of Nijhoff that he would, from his small village in the eastern part of the Netherlands, go on his hands and knees to The Hague (where Nijhoff lived) to pay honour to his near-contemporary and great forebear (Hazeu 1989:540). Nijhoff too recognized the extraordinary qualities in Achterberg's work at an early point, calling his 1931 debut collection *Afvaart* [sailing out/departure] one of the best of the year (*VW*II:695). He singles out aspects of Achterberg's form as being highly refined, in particular its rhythmic and sonic features, and feels that this sensitive handling of the language-material gives a guarantee that the poems are not simply expressions of personal feeling but are hidden in and arise from the language itself (ibid).

2.2 Rhythm or metre?

Before moving on to consider how the rhythmic qualities of poetry have been treated in translation, both in general terms and in the translation of Nijhoff and Achterberg's oeuvres, it is important to specify what I understand by the terms 'rhythm' and 'metre'. Both these literary terms, in spite of their apparent simplicity, are in fact extraordinarily difficult to define in such a way that general agreement may be reached on their scope, relationship, overlap, and difference. As Haili You has remarked in the medical-anthropological paper 'Defining Rhythm', 'there never will be "a precise and generally accepted definition of the term"' (You 1994a:373 quoting Fraisse 1982:149). It nevertheless seems worthwhile to clarify how I perceive the interrelationship of rhythm and metre in verse since the term 'rhythm' is often used in the discussion of poetry and either opposed to or assumed to be an effect of metre (e.g. Simpson 2004:15). You's explanation that in desiring such a definition we are mistaking a *category* of human experience for 'a concept in a particular sense' (You 1994a:373) is also useful to bear in mind.

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les poètes' (*VW*II:313), whilst centring his own poetics on the potential depth within the everyday word and image.

Rhythm, to my mind, is the more encompassing category within which metre falls. It is primary, metre is secondary. Indeed, rhythm as the more encompassing category contains within it the sub-category of poetic rhythm of which metre is a further sub-category. Far from rhythm being an effect of metre, metre is, rather, an attempted formalization of something greater than itself. Whilst the movements of rhythm are readily apprehensible by the feeling body, they are less easily subject to the analysis of the mind, less easily reduced to, as You (1994a, 1994b) implies, complete conceptualization[34].

On the other hand, metre, 'measure', as the etymology of the word itself tells us[35], is readily available to analysis, by a variety of methods and systems, though its specific movements within a larger rhythmic structure may be open to several kinds of descriptive interpretation, and always within the bounds of the laws of the particular language and its specific metrical system(s) (i.e. quantitative, syllabic, stress-syllabic, strong-stress, tonal[36] and so forth). A simple definition of metre within both the Dutch and English poetic systems would focus on the use of recognizable patterns, based on stressed and unstressed syllables, and the division of the poetic line into smaller units, known as 'feet' [versvoet]. It is the repetition of the foot-pattern, traditionally labelled by classical Greek names such as the iamb [x /] or the trochee [/ x], which gives the broader metrical pattern its name (e.g. iambic metre). Both in the case of the poet composing within a specific metre and in the case of the reader reacting to it, the psycho-physiological capacity of rhythmic perception is vital to its function. This will be discussed further in 2.3 which examines the psychologist Nicholas Abraham's understanding of rhythm and applies his insights to questions of translation.

What is of interest in the perception of metre is how far a poem both conforms to and varies, for particular stylistic purposes, the ground of its predominant metrical scheme. According to many theorists (e.g. Lotman 1976:46-8), this

[34] Scott makes a similar point in *Translating Baudelaire* (Scott 2000:31-2).
[35] According to the OED the etymology of the word 'metre' derives ultimately from 'an extended from of an Indo-European base meaning "to measure"'. The ancient Greek '*μέτρον*' referred not only to poetic metre but also to 'measure, rule, length, size', whilst the classical Latin 'metrum' also referred to 'a vessel or other object used for measuring'.
[36] The Chinese metrical system is based on contrasts and similarities amongst the lexical tones of the language (Liu 1962:20-38; Lu 1986:10-12).

foregrounding of deviance is where the real interest and poetic function of metre lies, making it clear that metre is indeed a formalization of rhythm and that the urge to conform to metrical schemes is only felt to be poetic when that urge returns us to the greater complexity of rhythm. The building of waves and their falling and breaking onto a shore are seen, for example, as being paradigmatically rhythmic, yet clearly each wave is distinctly different, or deviant, in terms of speed, build, height reached, actual point of breakage and final spread. Rhythmic repetition is then not an exact reproduction of phenomena, but *a similarity of process*. This has clear translation implications since to perceive rhythm in this way would free the translator interested in form from the perceived necessity of exact reproduction of the ST rhythms, allowing instead the similarities between ST and TT to evolve rhythms comparable to but not the same as in the ST.

Another way of looking at the relationship between rhythm and metre is to think in terms of perceived time and actual metronomic time, between lived duration and precise cyclical repetition, a tension made use of by Hopkins in his invention, or rediscovery, of Sprung Rhythm (cf. Wimsatt 2006), and quite possibly also the basis on which late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century free verse was constructed. Because, therefore, we have a variety of systems as schemata in our bodily and mental representations of both rhythm and metre, the translator can usefully exploit elements of all of these to solve problems in the translation of the movement of the verse. In other words, the insights of a Hopkins, a Pound, or an Eliot on how language can move within verse can inform the translation of a poem which in its original works in a somewhat different mode.

Since this study will examine the specific processes involved in my own translation-work, clearly my main aim here is not to enter the theoretical arenas of prosody or versification and fight on behalf of newly-invented or traditional methods of metrical or rhythmic analysis. The field is both too rich and too complex to do it proper justice in this study. Nor is it necessary, in my opinion, for the translator to use a complicated analytical system such as that proposed by Cureton in several works, but principally in *Rhythmic Phrasing in English Verse* (Cureton 1992). Although there are elements of his theory which are important, for example the recognition that poetic rhythm and poetic metre are distinct from

each other (Cureton 1992:123), that rhythm, as argued above, encompasses metre, and not vice versa, the system as a whole is too unwieldy for the translating poet to use effectively. Cureton's systematizing of rhythmic effects into as many as thirteen hierarchical levels, whilst clearly useful in one sense for the technical description of what might be happening in a poem, is not a tool which sharpens lived rhythmic response, nor is it truly helpful in understanding the actual impact of the rhythmical movement of a poem, that is, its stylistic effect. This is not the case in Attridge's form of analysis, most succinctly presented in *Meter and meaning* (Carper and Attridge 2003), where a system of promotion and demotion of stressed and unstressed syllables in combination with the basic patterns of the beats makes for a much more flexible sense-oriented method of analysis. One can disagree with some of the details of Attridge's interpretive analyses, but the system allows for personal interpretation, a sensitive reader-response, which Cureton's, it seems, does not[37].

More helpful to the translator is Cureton's emphasis on the features of poetry which make it poetry as opposed to prose: 'an art of linguistic form rather than linguistic meaning' (Cureton 2002:41) and his search for a mode of poetic criticism which sees 'poetic meaning in poetic form rather than the other way round' (ibid.). That search for a different mode of poetic criticism has also led him in his recent work to place a strong emphasis on the body, on the underlying physically perceived pulse of verse, a theory similar in some respects to Attridge's recognition of 'beat' rather than foot-based stress as a formative principle in metrical verse. These perceptions, Cureton's and Attridge's alike, can give clues as to how to approach the translation of metre, and in this respect all reading of theory can prove useful for grounding the working insights of the translator (cf. Boase-Beier 2006:111).

What is particularly useful to the poetry-translator, however, is to train the ear through wide and close reading in both source (SL) and target languages (TL),

[37] More recent work by Cureton (e.g. 2002, 1997) includes interpretive analysis. However a full understanding of Cureton's system cannot be derived from these short articles, nor from chapters in textbooks devoted to the interface between language and literary studies (e.g. Cureton 1993), so that one is inevitably thrown back on Cureton's *Rhythmic Phrasing in English Verse* (1992) to grasp his analytical methods.

through active poetic practice, and through specific methods, examples of which I shall discuss in Commentaries II, III and IV. The translator should also be aware that an over-analytical approach can actually dull the bodily response, making it less likely that rhythmic effects will be conveyed in the translated poem, as shown in Commentary I. The perception of such effects is a matter as much of the whole body as of the mind and a holistic approach to rhythm is therefore likely to work better for the translator than one which is purely mental[38]. This again accords with the emphasis which Attridge has placed on 'different rhythmic domains' being 'registered in psycho-physical performance' (Attridge 1990:1032).

Such holistic approaches may have their foundation in instinct but can also be placed against somaesthetic theory, a philosophy developed by Richard Shusterman from that of Western thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty, Wittengenstein and Dewey, and from Eastern philosophies, particularly that of Zen Buddhism (Shusterman 2008). A deeper exploration of the mind-body[39] approach in the Zen tradition can be found in the work of Dale S. Wright whose post-modernist reading of the *Huang Po* tradition of Chinese Zen Buddhism investigates the relationship of text and traditions to the mind-body in the question of awakening, or enlightenment, the 'great matter' of Buddhist thinking (Wright 1998). The potential influence of a body-mind approach on translation practice, particularly with respect to translating rhythm, is examined in Commentary II.

As Alan Holder has shown in *Rethinking Meter: A New Approach to the Verse Line* (Holder 1995), phrasing and intonation also play a large part in the perception of rhythm in the verse line, and this holds good in all kinds of poetry, whether metrically structured or freely cadenced. Again, whilst not necessarily following Holder's system of analysis, the translator can take clues from his emphasis on the importance of phrase-boundaries and intonation, to help make decisions about where to place keywords in positions of natural strength. This is something I will return to in Commentary III.

[38] Such an approach, however, would not preclude more analytical approaches to either the ST or the TT, and could easily work in conjunction with these as will become clear from my own analyses in Chapters 3 and 4 and in their accompanying commentaries.
[39] Wright uses the term 'mind-body' whereas I have preferred 'body-mind' for the reasons outlined in I.iv.

Aviram's study *Telling Rhythm: Body and Meaning in Poetry* (1994) reinforces the notion that bodily apprehension, instinct, intuition and the psyche are the true seats in which poetic rhythm has its effect. The study goes further still and proposes that instead of rhythm strengthening poetic meaning, poetry is the means by which rhythm itself 'tells' the physical world to us. The emphasis here is laid on rhythm as a 'sublime force' which does not of itself 'participate in the process of signification' (Aviram 1994:223) but is beyond rationalization. The physicalizing of rhythm into the language of a poem is, paradoxically, an account of the poem's failure to penetrate the unrepresentable: 'rhythm is beyond its reach' (ibid.). Like Cureton, Aviram sees the rhythmic qualities of poems as being music-like, but unlike Cureton he does not then use a model derived from musical theory to explain how the rhythmic elements of a poem are constructed and what laws they follow. Instead of this, and with some parallels to the somaesthetic and Eastern theories mentioned above, his emphasis is on the philosophical and psychological implications of non-signification. At the core of the subject's being is a nothingness [no-thing-ness] which is not empty, but rather full – filled with rhythm. This full emptiness can never be brought into consciousness, into words, because as a basic psychic drive it would then collapse. There would be nothing more to attempt to represent in the rhythms of a poem. Fulfilment of the drive, in that sense, would lead to its death. Therefore Aviram's interpretations of the poems he analyzes are not of the rhythm as such, which he claims cannot be interpreted, but readings of the poem's drive to symbolize the ineffable power of rhythm, whose symbols always fall short of the object, rhythm itself (1994:224).

This turning upside down of the conventions of poetic interpretation can seem shocking and, at first sight, reductive. Can every poem in truth have as its aim the symbolizing of that which cannot be symbolized? Can every poem be concerned only with 'telling rhythm'? Can every poem simply be an '*allegory of the sublime power of rhythm*' (Aviram 1994:228)? This is not the place to fully engage with Aviram's surprising theory, but parallels will be drawn later in this chapter with Nijhoff's own attempts to understand the nature of poetic rhythm and with the actualizing of such rhythms in his work. As a temporary answer to the questions I have posed, I would offer the thought that if rhythm can be seen as 'the local

manifestation of the infinitude of physical reality', whilst words, images and concepts are finite pointers used to grasp that physical reality (Aviram 1994:228), then one can perhaps assent that in poetry language is being used to try to penetrate the infinitude through the use of a medium, rhythm, which is the one aspect of that infinitude to which we have access, because we live it in it, and it lives in us. That this rhythmic poeticizing process is one which, according to Aviram, at one and the same time attempts to make sense of the nonverbal, non-social and ahistorical, and is dependent on and shaped by historical and social forces (1994:230), is an interesting way of reconciling tradition and innovation, transcendence and immanence, and points both to the reasons why poets such as Nijhoff and Achterberg resisted tendencies to efface the differences between poetry and prose, and why their poetry still continues to be powerful in its effects, perhaps precisely because of their attempts to give shape to such finely balanced and ultimately unresolved tensions.

Aviram's theory also highlights why in reading, and giving oneself to, the rhythmic qualities of the poem, something important seems to happen which is more than can easily be analyzed and yet, at the same time, constitutes the very power of the poem. Clearly, for the translator, it is that power which is desired in the translation and which so often is simply not there. This is felt, for example, in some of Pound's renditions of Chinese poetry (1970), or in Robert Fagles' translations from Classical Greek[40], or in Keith Bosley's translation of the *Kalevala* (1989), and not, whatever the promise of the title, in Burnshaw's anthology of original poems accompanied by prose-cribs and commentaries, *The Poem Itself* (1989). The reason for the success of the former is not because the translator-poets followed the same metrical or rhythmic structures as their originals, but because they listened to, felt, and conveyed a rhythm lying behind and beyond the words both in the ST and in the TT, that is, to use Aviram's terms, they felt the infinite life and ungraspable plenitude beyond either language. The reason for the comparative failure of the latter is caused by an apparently mechanistic and functional view of language that believes that A+B (where A is

[40] See Fagles' translations of Sophocles' *Three Theban Plays* (1984). The translated rhythms here are not a direct representation of Greek metres as such, but an exquisitely tuned mapping-out of their effect, restoring a sense of dance to the choruses.

the crib and B is the critical commentary) = C (the ST). This, in fact, kills 'the poem itself', since instead of re-creating it and allowing a new translation-as-poem to work on the reader's sensibilities as a work of art, the approach tries to work on the reader's intellect, expecting an imposed critical insight to produce a similar response in that reader as the original would do within its own culture[41]. Although Aviram never addresses the question of translation in his study, his situating of the rhythmic drive both within the psyche and as the ground-force of physical reality itself, manifesting itself to the human being beyond words and language, does, at least to me, explain why translations which fail to re-create this mode can fall flat.

Although I will not discuss Jakobson's theories regarding poetic rhythm and metre in detail, his elegant theory of equivalence (Jakobson 2004:356[42]), especially as further explicated and developed by Aviram (1994:89-106), is a helpful adjunct to the work of the translator-poet, in that it makes clear that at every level of language (rhythmic, metrical, phonic, morphological, lexical, semantic, syntactic) a deep principle of similarities and contrasts is in operation, not only at each level, but between levels. Once the reader recognizes that in the translated poem he or she is reading an *actual* poem, then that principle could trigger, for example, the recognition that in a metrical position at which a rhyme is expected, a particular word which is not actually a rhyme-word is equivalent to one that is, so that there *is* some kind of relation of similarity or contrast between a pair of words. That is, the effect may continue to work, even though the cause of that effect has weakened or disappeared. This point, which fuses a concern with rhythm with a concern for all the many levels at which poetry works, is the basis for my discovery, discussed in Commentaries III and IV, that a non-

[41] This point has been stated in extreme terms for clarity of argument. In fact, for the reader partially competent in the languages of the originals the prose cribs and commentaries do work as Burnshaw intends: they take the reader back into the original with a renewed confidence in understanding. Burnshaw's intention is clearly *not* to impose critical insights on the reader, and many of the commentaries attempt to offer more than one reading of a particular word or phrase in the poem under discussion, but the combination of constraints of space, which limit the amount of attention that can be paid to a single poem, the fact that the reader is presumed to be more or less ignorant of the language and culture in which the poem was written, the magisterial tone and the expert guidance, make this very much a second-hand manner of reading.

[42] First published 1960.

schematic approach to rhyme may, especially when coupled with clear rhythmicity, still function in a manner stylistically analogous to the ST.

Finally, perhaps the simplest way in which to think of the relationship between rhythm and metre is in Blakean terms: rhythm being the energetic, propulsing and constantly renewing force underlying all life, the 'eternal delight' Blake speaks of; and metre, at least as traditionally conceived, being 'Ratio' (Blake 1972:97-98). Curtis White's definition of Blake's 'Ratio' is useful in this respect: 'the tendency to divide the world from the self, the human from the natural, the inside from the outside and the outside itself into ever finer degrees of manipulable parts' (White 2005:n.p.), as is the simpler definition of the Blake Dictionary as 'a limited system founded on what facts are available, and organized by reason' (Damon 1979:344). A quotation from Haili You's wide-ranging studies of rhythm can serve as the final contrast: 'Skill is second nature yet rhythm is nature proper – the very cut of spontaneity that is always one notch higher than the perfection of one's second nature' (You 1994b:465). How one might achieve the effects of spontaneity, and avoid the excesses of Ratio is the thrust of the process-based work described in the inter-chapter commentaries of this study[43].

2.3 20th-century approaches to translating rhythm

The philosopher and psychoanalyst Nicolas Abraham has made a penetrating and useful distinction between rhythm as an 'object' which grips and fascinates the one who receives it (Abraham 1995:84) and as an 'action', something created by a consciousness working in play with a phenomenon not of itself rhythmic, but simply there.

The first type of encounter places the receiver in a passive mode; it is imposed on the consciousness from without; it does not advance; and, under certain

[43] As initial discussion at the start of this section shows, and the detailed accounts of my translation work will show, I do not wish to make a binary distinction between metre and rhythm, but believe that metre is a specific manifestation of rhythm within a particular poetic system. It is the difficulty of subjecting the rhythmic and emotive effects of metre to full intellectual analysis to which I am pointing here, and the consequent difficulty of applying such an analysis to practical issues in the translation of formal poetry.

conditions, can abolish consciousness entirely, to the point of 'catalepsy or ecstasy' (Abraham 1995:84). This is the literally mindless, repetitive beat which Abraham identifies with, for example, monotonous tribal drumming, and which underlies deliberate shamanic practices. It is the rhythm feared and perhaps subconsciously avoided by poets actively seeking to break free from the constraints of past poetic practices. But this kind of rhythm should not be confused with a conscious and creative rhythm-making, which, according to Abraham, is what happens when rhythm is formed in either the composition or reading of a poem.

This second type of rhythm is *created* by the 'rhythmizing consciousness' (Abraham 1995:70-4) and is defined by Abraham not as an 'object' but as an 'act', an act which takes place in the psychosomatic responses of the one who apprehends it. Furthermore that act is always an act of creation, constantly incorporating accidents into what has been commanded, constantly modifying that which was expected. It is spontaneous, intentional, anticipatory and kinaesthetic. Where the first phenomenon may, under certain circumstances, be perceived as being dangerous, the second is so much at the heart of free human consciousness and the creative and aesthetic nature of being human that the translator who fails to offer the reader the possibility of rhythmizing the reading response is missing an opportunity to enable the full co-creation of the text by the reader. This is not a question so much of opposing strict metre against free rhythm, but of making clear that *all* rhythm formed creatively is an act of mind.

It is in the confusion of the two ways of rhythmizing that some of the difficulties of poet and translator lie. The possibilities offered by rhythm both to quell individual will and consciousness and to give it full delighted play lie at the heart of a problem struggled with in literary theory and practice for the past century and more: the problem outlined briefly in Section 2.1 of this chapter, the tension between inner and outer worlds, between individual authenticity and external authority, and in all likelihood the problem I struggled with in 1997 in my translation of Nijhoff's 'Liedje' (see Commentary I). In the bluntest of terms, and I paraphrase here, free rhythms, unsubjected to the dominance of strict metre, have been associated with democratic principles, whilst metrical verse has been

equated with conservatism and a reactionary form of politics (see Byers 1992:397-8; Holder 1995:14; Shapiro 1987:211-12). This last point has particularly been made after the 2nd World War, when strong repetitive rhythms came to be associated with goose-step marching and political sloganeering[44]. These associations made it increasingly common for 20th-century mainstream poetic translation practice to favour free-verse, prose, or prose-like translations over translations concerned with aspects of form. It also made it more likely that translators and their publishers would favour the work of those source authors whose style was already amenable to free verse, or even to prosaic and literalistic translation practices[45]. Needless to say, both the extremes which I have sketched here strike me as being overly dogmatic.

This is not the place to sketch out a history of free verse in the 20th century and beyond[46] but, in order to place 20th-century approaches to translating rhythm in a proper context, it is useful to understand the interplay between the growth of free-verse modes in that century, the translation of poetry, especially from the Far East, and the increasing reluctance on the part of many translators to pay attention to the formal qualities of the ST in their translations.

In *Translation: theory and practice: a historical reader* Weissbort and Eysteinsson speak of 'poetry translation in the modern period as either pre- or post-Poundian' (2006:271). Eliot, at a much earlier date, described Pound as 'the inventor of Chinese poetry for our time' (Pound 1961:14)[47]. Whilst these

[44] Although describing the effects of the life-rhythms imposed by the Nazis on the German population, the phrase 'a "uniformly stereotypical rhythm"' (Trommler 1992:S94) is significant in this respect. Trommler suggests that 'the small and big rituals' of the *Heil Hitler* salute, the parades and rallies, helped suspend a sense of time, allowing German subjects to live in a continuous present in which the rhythms 'engendered a sense of normalcy amid the controlled excitement' (ibid.). These rhythms are seen as part of the process of habituation by which reason and ethics are subdued, a point similar to Abraham's, as discussed above. Nevertheless, the fact that certain kinds of rhythms can subdue reason does not mean that poetic metres as such can be regarded as reactionary. Such metres are value-free until they are placed within a specific meaning-based context and are responded to by the human psyche within that context.

[45] Literalism as a translation strategy for poetry has had a powerful defender in Daniel Weissbort, editor of *Modern Poetry in Translation* and Professor in the Translation Workshop programme of the Writers' Workshop of the University of Iowa (see Weissbort and Eysteinsson 2006:521-33, 609-12; Gentzler 2001:5-6).

[46] See Kirby-Smith 1998 for such a history.

[47] Eliot does not mean that Pound was the ideal, only, or even major translator of Chinese poetry in the first decades of the 20th century. He means that the vision English-speaking readers have of Chinese poetry has been created by Pound's work.

judgements recognize the vital importance of Pound's practice and theoretical pronouncements on the development of the translation of poetry in the 20th century, it is important both to clearly distinguish between Poundian theory and Poundian practice, and to allow for other, less showy influences, for example that of Arthur Waley.

Pound, in theory, emphasizes that what can be translated is the image-basis of a poem, its '*phanopoeia*' as he terms it in 'How to Read':

> *Phanopoeia* can [...] be translated almost, or wholly intact. When it is good enough, it is practically impossible for the translator to destroy it save by very crass bungling, and the neglect of perfectly well-known and formulative rules.
>
> 1954:25

He also emphasizes the same point in advice to the neophyte poet:

> That part of your poetry which strikes upon the imaginative eye of the reader will lose nothing by translation into a foreign tongue; that which appeals to the ear can reach only those who take it in the original.
>
> 1954:7

What Pound considers less easy, or even impossible, to translate are *'melopoeia'* and *'logopoeia*', terms he uses to describe types of poetry in which, in the first case, the musical properties of the verse direct 'the bearing or trend' of the meaning (Pound 1954:25) and in the second where 'the dance of the intellect among words' (ibid.) is of primary importance, in other words all aspects of word-play, connotation, context, ambiguity, symbolism and allegorical meaning, as well as of syntactic effect. Of this last 'kind' (one should perhaps say 'mode' or even 'level', since clearly a single poem can display all three qualities) Pound says firmly that it does not translate, at least not locally, although the general cast of 'the original author's state of mind' may be paraphrased or else 'a derivative or an equivalent' may be found (1954:25).

Pound's theory of *phanopoeia*, 'the casting of images upon the visual imagination' (1954:25) in the course of the 20th century hardened into a dogma which has caused many mainstream English-medium poets to focus on what is seen at the

expense of what is heard[48]. Yet Pound, in practice, and in his theoretical writings, was intensely interested in verse-rhythm and metre and recommended that the neophyte poet should 'fill his mind with the finest cadences he can discover, preferably in a foreign language, so that the meaning of the words may be less likely to divert his attention from the movement' (1954:5). More strongly, in his 'Credo', Pound insists that the artist should master 'all known forms and systems of metric' (1954:9). This intense interest in sound and form explains Pound's lifelong concern with translation, in particular from the Chinese, little known to the Western world, except to specialists, before the 20th century. It also explains why, in contradistinction to the impression that the general reader (and perhaps even the practising poet) may have of Pound's translation practice (an impression formed, perhaps, by the haiku-like simplicity and directness of the original short poems of Pound's Imagist phase and some of the 1915 *Cathay* translations), the actual practice is often language- and sound-oriented, to the point of baroqueness, and quite different to the concrete simplicity and austerity of effect of Waley's translations[49]. For Pound translation was part of a larger poetics which intended a renovation of English poetry, not simply in his own work, which he perceived as a form of experiment, but in the future, when 'after a long struggle', poetry, rather than the work of the individual poet, would 'attain such a degree of development, or, if you will, modernity, that it [would] vitally concern people who are accustomed, in prose, to Henry James and Anatole France, in music to Debussy' (Pound 1954:5). For Waley the concern was much more with the source literature as such.

[48] See Perloff 1991 for a discussion of the over-emphasis on the visual in poetry, and radical reactions to that.

[49] Compare Waley's translations from the *Shi Jing* (The Book of Songs/The Confucian Odes) with Pound's (Waley 1927; Pound 1976). Waley's are the plainer of the two, Pound's consciously, and at one and the same time, archaizing and anachronistic, producing effects far from Apter's description of Pound's translations as being in a 'neutral modern, semi-formal diction' (Apter 2006). Pound's language is idiosyncratic; Waley's closer to neutral. Even the first lines of Pound's translations hint at their odd diction and grammatical inversions e.g.: 'Lies a dead deer on yonder plain' (1976:10); 'What a man! with a bamboo flute calls me out' (1976:34); 'Hep-Cat Chung, 'ware my town' (1976:37); 'Be kind, good sir, and I'll lift my sark' (1976:42) etc.. Today's emphasis on relatively natural diction and word-order is more likely to have derived from Waley's practice than Pound's.

In the introduction to his *170 Chinese Poems*, first published in 1918, Waley tells the reader both why he believes the book stayed continuously in print[50] and what kind of influence it was felt by others to have had on the development of English poetry throughout the 20th century. He attributes the comparative popularity of the book to the fact that its poetry was not '"special and difficult"' (Waley 1986:7). The influence of this book (and the many others which followed it) he describes in somewhat bemused terms as follows:

> I have sometimes seen it said that my translations have had a considerable effect on English poetry. Concrete examples were never cited and I myself am unable to supply any. This view, however, was evidently held by Edward Shanks, the poet and critic, for when someone tried to introduce us at a party he turned away saying: "That man has done more harm to English poetry than anyone else." [...] I suppose he meant that I had encouraged poets to abandon traditional metres and, in particular, not to use rhyme.
>
> 1986:7-8

This judgement, however modestly expressed, is not Waley's alone, although it does run counter to received opinion, which focuses on Pound's influence as a renovating force in poetry translation and original poetry. A relatively recent historico-critical work by H.T. Kirby-Smith, *The Origins of Free Verse* (1998), makes no mention of Waley, although Pound's work features strongly in the account, with a particular emphasis on his fascination with the Chinese ideogram. Nevertheless, Waley's influence on a line of poets writing in English is acknowledged by, amongst others, Willis and Tony Barnstone (1992:xxv), David Hawkes (1966:146), Qian Zhaoming (1995:1), and John de Gruchy, who calls Waley 'a key figure of the English modernist movement in literature' (2008:248). De Gruchy makes it clear that not only was Waley *not* influenced by Pound's Chinese translations, but that his work probably preceded Pound's and was certainly translated completely independently of it[51].

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[50] The book was reprinted ten times between 1919 and 1947 and has been re-printed in a new edition several times between 1962 and the present day.

[51] Pound's *Cathay* was published in 1915, Waley's *One Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems* in 1918, but Waley's private printing of *Chinese Poems* ('about forty short poems' (Waley 1986:6)) appeared in 1916, too soon after *Cathay*, according to de Gruchy, for Waley to have been influenced by it. According to Waley's own account (1986:4-6) and to de Gruchy, 'Waley had been working independently on Chinese since 1913, and *Chinese Poems* was the first fruit of his labours' (Gruchy 2008:251). Waley himself states that his 'sprung rhythms' developed from his translation decisions and were not influenced by Hopkins since his work was not generally

Whatever the case may be, both Pound and Waley, and other influential practitioners of free verse, for example Carlos Williams (Williams 2003), were deeply involved with the translation of Chinese poetry into forms which were not an imitation of the originals, dependent as these were on metrical and sonic qualities determined by syllable-count, tone parallelism and contrast, as well as end-rhyme (Liu 1962:20-38; Lu 1986:10-12), but were rather an interpretation of those forms into new structures in English in which the formal qualities would be freer, more flexible and, in the case of Waley's translations, more closely related to common speech than had been usual in the Victorian era.

I have discussed these translation practices and their implications for the translation of traditional metres because, as Hawkes implies in his obituary of Waley (Hawkes 1966:146), the imitation, whether conscious or not, of Waley's practices, can lead to insipidity or flatness, a flatness often specifically praised in the practice of his inheritors[52]. It may also be the case that what works well in the rendition of poetic practices very different to Western traditions is less effective in the translation of works, such as Nijhoff's and Achterberg's, which situate themselves in and question those traditions in radically different ways than those of the Anglo-American modernists.

More to the point, techniques which were formally innovative in the opening years of the 20th century may have played themselves out, becoming conventions which themselves need to be renewed. This was the argument of the New Formalist movement in North American poetry (see e.g. Steele 1990, 2006) but has also been emphasized by Kirby-Smith who believes that free verse can only work as a reaction to formal verse, agreeing with Eliot that 'the ghost of metre' should still 'lurk behind the arras' (Eliot 1965:187). More strongly still, Kirby-Smith believes that many practitioners of free verse have so much lost their ear for rhythm through the cumulative effect of more than a century of free-verse practice, that there is almost nothing now to measure the departure against. According to Kirby-Smith, older forms of poetry are, broadly speaking, not read,

available at the time (1986:8). Both de Gruchy and Waley himself lay stress on Waley's own inventiveness in terms of form.

[52] See, for example, comments on Kenneth Rexroth's translations on the New Directions website (Jin 2009:n.p.).

and very few practising poets would take seriously Pound's advice that the ear should be trained on 'all known forms and systems of metric' (Pound 1954:9). Even the attempts of the New Formalists to return to metre are characterized by Kirby-Smith as clumsy and wrong-footed (Kirby-Smith 1998:135).

It is not my intention to produce a full survey of 20th- and early 21st-century practices in the translation of formal verse into English, which are highly varied, and form a continuum from Burnshaw's pure literalism, through every kind of free-verse response, to strongly rhymed and metrical versions and to experimental translations of a highly diverse nature (see e.g. Bernstein 2005; Lightman 2004; Loffredo and Perteghella 2009; Scott 2000; Zukofsky and Zukofsky 1969). Instead, I wish to indicate that mainstream 20th-century poetic writing and translation favoured practices which increasingly downplayed the aural in favour of the visual. As discussed above, the translation of poetry in itself influenced and shaped 20th-century original writing, so much so that the American poet A.E. Stallings has complained that it too reads like: 'homogenized translation—that is, the ideas for poems, the metaphors intact, but with the networks of sounds and rhythms, the native autochthonous texture, leached out of them...' (Stallings 2008).

All the reasons and accidents of history and perception outlined above – the misunderstanding of the nature of rhythm (that is, an inability to see that even within set metres, the rhythmizing consciousness acts creatively); the influence of modernism, especially in selectively remembered Poundian dicta; the influence of translated poetry, especially that of Waley and his successors, on forming the ear of 20th-century poets; the atrophying of what was initially formally inventive; the lack of prevailing metrical and rhythmic forms against which free verse now can be free; the politicizing of the formal-free divide; the influence of the mainstream and ignoring of margins; the question of which mode of translation will best sell – all these may stand in the way of the translator-poet choosing to translate with an emphasis on rhythmic or other sound-based qualities.

These issues come to a head in the 110th Nobel Symposium, held in 1998, when the question of translating formal verse was discussed with some intensity (Allén

1999:83-131). In particular two poet-translators were chosen to represent radically different approaches. Judith Moffett, translator of poetry from the Swedish, defended the position that in translating formal poetry one should also translate the formal elements, which she defined as *metre* and rhyme-*scheme* (my emphasis) (Moffett 1999:83-100). Lyn Hejinian, an experimental poet and translator, took issue with Moffett's definition of formality, pointing out that form is not simply a question of schematized aural features, but also concerns the shaping of the thought of a poem, word-choice, ambiguities, and so forth (Hejinian 1999:101-17).

What interests me in this discussion is that it splits into two such obvious extremes, with Moffett's position being that one should search for exact equivalences for the formal features of a poem, and Hejinian's being that schematic features are external to what is actually going on (Hejinian 1999:101-2). She emphasizes that the foregrounded formal properties of a poem are not limited to rhyme and metre, but, on the contrary, are likely to show 'roughening', dissonance, and 'impediments' in order to 'make strange' (1999:104-5). In particular she stresses that the inventiveness and subtlety of English poetry in our present time uses many devices other than pure rhyme (ibid.).

Since Hejinian's discussion is not only a riposte to Moffett but also includes a discussion of her translations of poems from the Russian, I feel unable to make comments as to her method, since Russian is not a language I can read. Moffett's translations, however, seem old-fashioned in diction and jog-trot in the metrical effects created[53], displaying some of the characteristics of my own translation of 'Liedje', as discussed in Commentary I.

[53] Moffett in her Nobel Symposium essay, discussed above, gives examples of her own translations of 19th-century poems, including Tegnér's *Frithiof's Saga*. Analysis of the original poem shows that Tegnér's use of the trochaic heptameter is far more varied than in Moffett's translation. Tegnér varies the position of the caesurae, makes use of reversed feet – iambic instead of trochaic – and sways between cadenced and non-cadenced line-ends. By contrast, Moffett is quite rigid in sticking to a basic trochaic heptameter pattern, making almost no variation in the metre, and placing her caesurae in a regular position after the eighth syllable, thereby creating the well-known effect of the 'fourteener', that it splits into an eight/six common ballad metre line. My judgement that lines such as these have a 'jog-trot', or uniform and monotonous, effect is based on a comparison between the effects of the original poem and that of the translation. In this task I was aided by a Swedish friend, Pär Boman, who provided glosses and checked my metrical analysis of the Swedish original.

Moffett started her career as a translator of Swedish poetry with the express intention of finding formal poets to translate because she felt that the kind of poetry she enjoyed writing was difficult to publish in the mid-twentieth century (1999:83-4). In other words, she did not set out to translate poets whose work meant a great deal to her, but rather to translate the abstract concept 'metre', or the abstract concept 'rhyme-scheme', in order to fulfil a need within herself to do battle for this style of writing (1999:87-8). Similar urges are also touched on in an interview in which Moffett, brought up as a Fundamentalist Baptist, says:

> I've internalized the fundamentalist approach to life, in such ways as thinking that some things are critically important, and in feeling a kind of missionary urge to change people's minds. I tried to do that in poetry...
>
> Moffett 1994

In the course of her Nobel Symposium essay Moffett draws on her correspondence with Robert Bly, whose advice she sought as a young poet-translator. The letter she received from Bly, taken together with *The Eight Stages of Translation*, Bly's monograph on translating poetry (Bly 1989), illuminates in a lucid fashion why the translator might not choose Moffett's route:

> Frankly, translating in such a way that rhymes and rhythms go into English hell or high water has proved to be such a disaster in the past – it has been abandoned by all living translators – that I wouldn't recommend it to anyone. That way will just result in a massacre. If the translator keeps rhyme & rhythm, image and meaning will suffer, since you must lose something. I don't think that any poet, no matter how conservative, wants to see his meaning and images mangled.
>
> in Moffett 1999:84

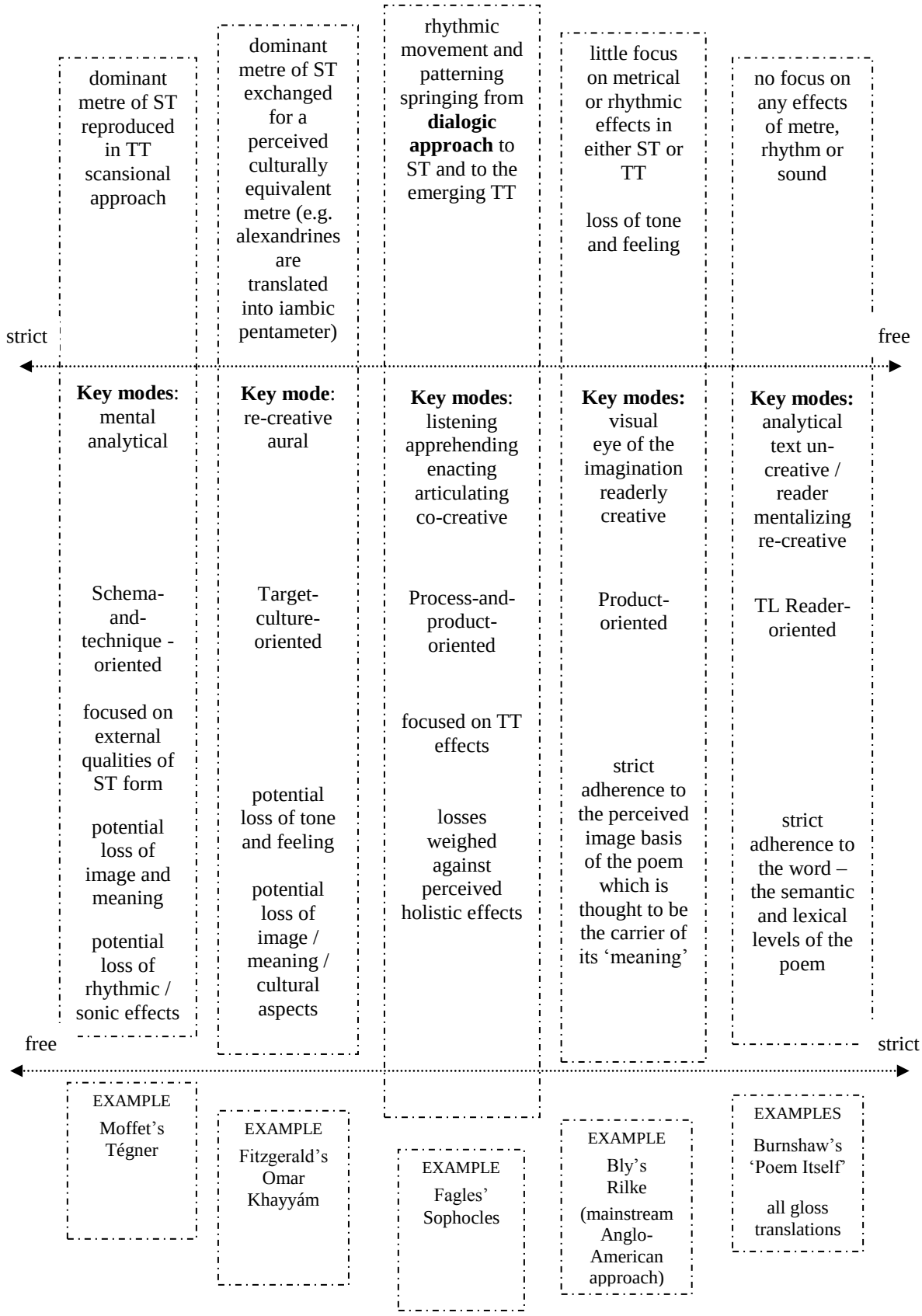
Bly states here exactly what Pound stressed almost a century earlier, the translatability, and therefore the precedence, of the image, but without Pound's conscious attraction to and experimentation with all systems of metrics and rhythm. It is significant that in *The Eight Stages of Translation*, Bly's primer of poetry translation, mention is not made of rhythm until the sixth stage, by which time the main elements of the translation have long been framed. For all Bly's talk then of tuning the body to the 'oceanic rhythms' of the original text (1983:36), since his understanding of rhythm relates it to the correction process

and not to the process of (re-)creation, questions of sound and rhythm cannot play an important role in his notion of poetic translation.

As I have argued throughout this section, the mainstream focus in the translation of poetry in the 20th century has been on image and meaning. That this should be so is a commonplace I wish to challenge, not by following Moffett's example, but by learning from the poets whose work is my study and from the creative and often opposing practices of other translator-poets.

Figure 1 summarizes the various kinds of approaches to formal poetry translation, as discussed in this section.

Figure 1: Strict/Free Continuum of Approaches to Translating Rhythm



2.4 Nijhoff's poetic rhythms: context; text; translation

2.4.1. Nijhoff's search for rhythm: the context

As discussed in Chapter 1, Nijhoff's work is rated by Dutch-speaking critics as amongst the greatest 20th-century Dutch poetry. Although there have been on-going arguments as to where to place his work in terms of that century's literary movements, the consensus now is that it makes most sense to think of Nijhoff as being a modernist, perhaps of the 'non-spectacular' kind (Sötemann 1976), but certainly not as a writer aridly locked into past traditions. Nijhoff sought to extend the boundaries of his poetics and was a highly conscious developer of the formal aspects of poetry, searching for new ways of working within old forms: the folk-ballad, epic, song, sonnet, carol, idyll, ode, rondel, and rhapsody. Additionally, he wrote for the stage in the form of libretti, musical dramas, tableaux, and mystery plays, and translated widely from classical Greek, from Shakespeare, and from the modern Europeans, including, amongst others, Eliot and Gide.

Although Nijhoff was immersed in the currents of European literature from an early age, and was particularly conscious of what was happening in French, German, and English literature, collaboratively translating Wilde's 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' whilst still a teenager, for example (Nijhoff 1993a:17; d'Haen 2009:30), he was independent-minded enough to wish to break into new ways of writing by discovering his own paths, stating:

> I had no examples. There was something for me in the brilliant early poems of the French poet, Jean Cocteau, and something in the American T. S. Eliot. But these had, in contrast to the surrealists, perceived their metier, their craft, in too limited a way. In their search for abstraction and multiplicity they had broken the forms of their verse like panes of glass. I too felt that the emotional verse-forms were no longer valid. But for what I wanted I had to look for the

origin, rather than searching at the far edges[54].

VW:1166-1167 (tr.)

These thoughts come from *Over eigen werk*[55], the script of a talk Nijhoff gave in Enschede in 1935, a year after the publication of his collection *Nieuwe gedichten*[56]. He is looking back not only at the origins of his masterwork *Awater* (1934), but also at more than twenty years of poetic writing. In the margins of the manuscript he notes 'briefly mention and characterize Lawrence, Proust and Joyce here' (*VW*:1166, tr.) – but later in the manuscript where Nijhoff does mention these writers, it is clear that in the case of Lawrence it is the novels and prose that are meant rather than the poems. For what Nijhoff wanted, a fusion of old and new in terms of formal qualities, I believe he genuinely felt he had no real models.

The search for 'abstraction' and 'multiplicity', however, is one he felt he shared with Eliot and other modernist writers. In *OEW* Nijhoff devotes a good deal of time to discussing what he means by these terms. One of the ways he describes the two poles is like this:

> The leaf of a tree, any leaf at all, is beautiful, not because it has a beautiful form, as people used to say, but because it is the representative product of the woods, the sun and the rain, the soil and the present moment. The whole sea moves in every wave, the whole mass of humanity lives in every human being, however, whoever, as long as he doesn't place artificial borders around himself and become enslaved to his own personality.
>
> *VW*II:1166 (tr.)

Nijhoff's emphasis on abstraction here is related to the representativeness of the part to the whole, the leaf which is not only itself but represents the woods, sun, rain and so forth, whilst multiplicity is found in the countless individuality of leaf,

[54] There are controversies surrounding Nijhoff's statement here which d'Haen (2009) examines in detail, arguing that the former consensus, that Nijhoff was *not* directly influenced by Eliot's work, is not necessarily correct. We do not know when Nijhoff made his translations from Eliot, although Van den Akker and Dorleijn, and a previous editor, Gerrit Kamphuis, believe these date from 1949 to 1950, in preparation for his translation of *The Cocktail Party* (1951). d'Haen argues that Nijhoff may have tried his hand at translating Eliot long before then, possibly even in the 1920s (d'Haen 2009:29-36) and 'certainly before 1948' (d'Haen 2009:33). I am, however, inclined to take Nijhoff at his word, which implies that he was involved with Eliot's work from an early point, but wished to take a distinctly different route.

[55] Henceforward *OEW*.

[56] Henceforward *NG*.

wave and human. The two poles are then seen to be not poles at all, but interpenetrative of each other. Yet their interpenetration does not cancel out the tension between them. The term 'abstraction', therefore, as Nijhoff uses it, can be related to terms used in discussion of the work of other modernist writers, such as objectivity, impersonality, and timelessness (ideal form) whilst 'multiplicity' relates to individuality, change and the actual moment, a dichotomy symbolized by Nijhoff as 'sea' and 'human walking by the sea' (*VW*II:320, tr.). It is no wonder that these preoccupations also marked the very basis, the sound-world, of Nijhoff's verse.

To summarize: what can be seen from the above quotation, read in conjunction with the poetry itself, the fruit and consequence of that long search, is that Nijhoff was not a traditionalist, that he could see that the old ways of writing poetry no longer worked, but that he wanted, by going to the original source of forms in Western poetry, to create these anew in language and with themes that would suit the modern world. Part of this search for origins was connected to a search for new rhythms, that is, a search for the meaning and nature of rhythm, a search, as he points out, both for the representativeness of abstraction and for the individual characteristics of multiplicity. Contextual clues like this are important to the translator because a) mind in general 'is concerned with culture and context' (Boase-Beier 2006:9); b) the writer's life-search and interests are part of the way that mind is impressed on or finds expression in the style of the text (cf. Boase-Beier 2006:16 – speaking of the psychological background to a text or texts); and c) because meaning is created by the reader (in this case the reader-translator) not only from the individual text, but from the context perceived as surrounding that text (Boase-Beier 2006:32). Evidence, both internal (based on the poetic texts themselves) and external (based on writings about poetic practice and related interests, by the author him- or herself and by a range of critics) can only be helpful to the translator in enabling informed translation choices based on what is distinctive about the work with which he or she is engaging. This is why it is of vital importance when making decisions about how to rank, for example, the translation of aspects of form in a writer's work, in this case metre and rhythm, that the translator should use every kind of contextual evidence, both internal and external to the poetic oeuvre, to come to an informed decision. If the internal and

external evidence suggest that, after all, the formal elements are not an important aspect of the original, but are being used mechanically, then it would be logical to rank them as being of lesser importance in the translation. But in such cases the writer's work might not be worth translating at all.

2.4.2. Nijhoff's search for rhythm: the detail

Right from the outset in *De wandelaar*[57], the collection published in 1916 when Nijhoff was just 22 years old, a strong emphasis is placed on the sense of hearing (either negatively, in stressing that isolation closes off the sense of hearing, or positively when what is heard signifies a breakthrough in consciousness). In fact, a rough frequency analysis of the poems in the *VG* shows that about 45% of them contain some kind of reference to music, usually in contexts relating to creativity, perception, and instinctual life, or as a bridge between one form of perception and another. Nijhoff seems to have been acutely aware of the sense of hearing and of the related sense of touch which in consort with each other are not only intimately connected to rhythm, but are both connected to emotion (Connor 2004:153).

Many of Nijhoff's musical references are to do with song, linked both to his representation of the poet as singer and the poems as songs, and to the mother-figure, who sings with and to the child in nearly all the poetic contexts in which he places her. These kinds of references clearly relate to Nijhoff's search for origins[58], an affective and cognitive search which still continues to fascinate, as can be seen from present-day studies which relate the growth of language to its origins in song in primitive man (Levitin 2008; Mithen 2005). However, the most striking of Nijhoff's musical references are found in poems in which rhythm itself is the theme, bringing to mind parallels with Aviram's theory of 'telling rhythm'. Often it is a readerly deduction that it is rhythm as such that interests Nijhoff, for example in those poems which connect insight to dance, trance, and stillness

[57] Henceforward *DW*.

[58] Note, for example, that the deliberately colourless and anonymous Awater-figure in Nijhoff's modernist epic, *Awater*, sings a translation of a Petrarchan sonnet in an expensive restaurant as if he were a great and well-known jazz-artist, or a medieval troubadour, rather than being merely the bank-clerk or accountant he is portrayed as near the start of the poem. Of interest also is the fact that the form of *Awater* is a modern interpretation of the *Chanson de Roland* stanza.

within movement[59]; or in those poems which link images of the dancing blood, the beating heart, with madness, death and alienation[60]. At times though, and most obviously in the 1924 collection *Vormen*, Nijhoff speaks clearly about his wish to break away from 'rocking' rhythms, perhaps associated with childhood, or a lulling of consciousness, into something stranger, wilder and more primitive. In using the term 'primitive' here I do not wish to align Nijhoff's thinking either with an overly strong individualism, in the sense of each man or woman finding his or her own entirely self-created rhythms, something he clearly rejected, nor with the kind of rhythm that overpowers consciousness and melts individuality into mass, as defined by Abraham and discussed in 2.3 above. The difficulty for Nijhoff was to go with full awareness into the kingdom where the unconscious reigns, to find the place, enter it, and come back with something both individually new and generally valid. This 'place', both inner and outer, as he also discusses in *OEW* is not somewhere else, but in the here and now. Forces of nature and the unconscious are not of themselves portrayable, but it is possible to be aware of their presence, and through apparently ordinary, but in fact highly crafted, means (such as those used in Surrealist painting) to share that awareness with others (*VW*II:1165-6). Similar ideas are discussed in Nijhoff's prose fable *De pen op papier* [*VW*II:1063-80] and scattered through the many reviews and essays written over the course of his writing-life. The fruit of twenty years of critical, poetic, and finally also academic, depth of thought and practice[61] can be seen in *NG*, *Voor dag en dauw* (1936) and *Het uur u* (1942), but the struggle itself is most clearly presented in the section of *Vormen* (1924) entitled 'Stenen tegen den spiegel' [stones against the mirror]. The following poem 'Levensloop' [life-course] portrays the actual struggle and in its humility justifies Nijhoff's otherwise seemingly arrogant words about Eliot[62/63]. What I wish to focus on here is the second quatrain together with the sestet:

[59] e.g. 'Lente', [Spring] 'Tempo di menuetto', 'De Chineesche danser' [Chinese dancer], *DW* (1916).
[60] e.g. the sonnet cycle 'De vervloekte' [the accursed] (*DW*) or the 'clownish' rhapsody 'Pierrot aan de lantaarn' [Pierrot by the lamp-post] (written 1916).
[61] Between 1932 and 1937 Nijhoff left the relatively comfortable life he was leading as a recognized critic and poet to take up postgraduate studies as a mature student in Dutch Literature and Philology at the University of Utrecht (Miskotte 1958:71; Ornée n.d.b.).
[62] Nijhoff, whilst respecting Eliot's work, certainly saw himself as a poet of equal stature. It is only the accident of the dominance of English over the past 160 years or so which has made it difficult for great writers from small languages to gain a name in World Literature. This is why

(7)

Levensloop
life-course

Quatrain 1

Steeds dupe van toegeeflijke intriegen,
always victim of indulgent plots
dupe intrigues

Bewust behaagziek en melancholiek,
consciously coquettish and melancholy

Weet ik, zonder scrupule, als voor publiek,
know I without scruple as-if for public
before

In iedre oogopslag een ernst te liegen.
in every glance a seriousness to lie

Quatrain 2

O schaduwen die, 's nachts en bij muziek,
o shadows who at-night and during music

Met donkre vleugels aan mijn schouder wiegen,
with dark wings at my shoulder rock/cradle

Zal ooit mijn ziel uw vreemd wild rijk in vliegen
will ever my soul your strange wild kingdom in fly

Baanbrekend naar uw mythe en uw rythmiek?
ground-breaking towards your myth and your rhythmic-system
pioneering rhythm

Sestet
Couplet 1

Moest ik tot zoo'n verlatenheid geraken:
Was-forced I to such-an abandonment arrived

Oud worden, aan eenzame tafels zitten,
Old become at lonely tables sit

Couplet 2

Werken, om 't werk niet, maar om tegen 't zwijgen
work for the-work not but for against the-being-silent

En twijf'len argumenten te verkrijgen,
And doubting arguments to obtain

Couplet 3

Het hart tot de onvruchtbare plek omspitten,
The heart as-far-as the unfruitful spot to-dig-up

Pooltochten droomen en gedichten maken.
Polar-expeditions to-dream and poems to-make

Since the word-order and syntax of the stanzas are difficult to follow in the gloss translation, I have also translated this extract into a prose version to show more clearly what I believe Nijhoff is pointing towards here:

Nijhoff was keen to be translated and wrote a letter to Daan van der Vat, translator of *Awater*, asking him to solicit Eliot's help to have the poem published in England (Vat 1954:112).

[63] The 'Stones against the Mirror' include 'De danser' [the dancer], which opposes animal rhythm against the mask of an over-civilized artistic consciousness, presenting this conflict of inner and outer, true and false, as a source of pain. In these poems Nijhoff enacts his confrontation with fin-de-siècle decadence and the 'art-for-art's sake' movement in a highly individual and personalized manner.

(8) **Prose version of 'Levensloop'**

> Always the victim of [self-]indulgent schemes, consciously [acting as if I were] coquettish and melancholy, I know, without [any] scruples how to pretend to be serious in every glance, as if I were before a public [as if I were doing this in public/as if for a public show].
>
> O shadows, you who stand by my shoulder at night, or during music, rocking with your dark wings [as if you were rocking my/a cradle], will my soul ever fly into your strange wild kingdom, breaking a new path towards your myth[ical structures] and your system of rhythm [your kind of rhythmic system]?
>
> Was I forced, having reached such a state of abandonment [loneliness] – becoming old, sitting at lonely tables – to work, not for the sake of the work, but in order to obtain [win] arguments against the state of being silent and of doubting, to dig up the heart as far as the infertile spot, to dream polar expeditions and to make poems.[64]

This poem is extremely powerful in the original partly because of the way the complex thought, mirrored in the syntax, both pulls against and works in conjunction with the metrical structure. In a collection called *Forms*, in a section called 'Stones against the Mirror', eight years after his first collection of poems, Nijhoff puts his own poetics under such doubt and pressure that, especially in the sestet, the sonnet almost falls apart.

As I read these lines (against the poem as a whole and against the whole of Nijhoff's poetry), the poet sees his task as being more vital, more primitive and primary, than the self-indulgent show he castigates himself with having put on till now. The task is not to act out art via the persona, in the dilettantish manner of the fin-de-siècle poet which Nijhoff almost is, though self-consciously so, in his first book *De wandelaar*, but to explore, without guidance, the shadow-side of origin, to start anew by digging deep into one's own heart (one source of rhythm), to find out what is infertile there. There is a profound cry of pain in this sonnet, once the mask of bitterness drops and the reader sees the effort involved in trying to break

[64] The words in square brackets are either my extrapolations from the sub-text (arrived at often by reading the multiple implications of words such as 'wiegen' [rock/cradle /lull]) or alternative translation possibilities. See Appendix 2 for my translation.

open a new path, coupled with, in the bald conclusion, a genuine fear of continued aridity.

What Nijhoff seems to be saying here strikes me as having strong parallels to Aviram's theory of rhythm, discussed in 2.2: firstly that the body and the psyche are the seats where rhythm has its effect; secondly that rhythm 'tells' the physical (and ideal) world to us; and thirdly, and most importantly, that each poem is an attempt, which ultimately fails, to penetrate into what is finally not representable. The search for rhythm, therefore, both guarantees authenticity, as Cook discusses in *Poetry in Theory* (2004:7-8) and is almost inevitably an ultimate failure, as Aviram points out. The similarities with Aviram's theories in particular are rather striking, but this may be because Aviram draws on a range of European philosophy, including the work of Nietzsche, with which Nijhoff was certainly familiar.[65]

It is not, however, necessary to look to Nietzsche for the origins of Nijhoff's thinking about rhythm and rhythmic system, but rather to his intensely thoughtful practice as a poet, and his concern as a critical writer to engage with the best modern poetry being written in the Dutch language and beyond, not only shaping his own thinking as to what modern poetry was and could be, but also the thinking of his readership. In the reviews, especially those dealing with the poetry of his own generation, one can see a continuous focus on what the rhythms of the poems are doing: some poets are perceived as being held back by their over-traditional sense of metrics (*VW*II:207-20), others redeemed by their expressive rhythms (*VW*II:212). Moreover, what attracted Nijhoff, rather surprisingly, to the work of the Flemish avant-garde poet Paul van Ostaijen – on the surface at least, a more obviously experimental writer than Nijhoff – and enabled him to recognize his opposite as a great writer, were the melodic, lyrical and rhythmic qualities of that work (*VW*II:625-34, 1056-60).

Finally, the importance of working with rhythm in new ways, without breaking the forms of poetry, finds interesting expression in *OEW*, Nijhoff's 1935 Enschede

[65] In *VW*II, Nietzsche is mentioned ten times, at several points during Nijhoff's reviewing life, but not after the late 1930s, when Nietzschean thought was associated with Fascism.

lecture, mentioned above. In this talk, which ranges over aspects of language, the role of poetry in a time of crisis, the origins of his poem *Awater*, and elements of his own struggle to be a writer fitting to the modern age, Nijhoff also touches on the difference between rhythm in prose and in poetry: '... but poetry, I suddenly realized, pays attention to the in-breath [...] it makes you breathe in on the living places' (*VW*II:1157).

The distinction Nijhoff makes between the effects of prose- and poetic rhythm is something I find extremely interesting. The emphasis he places on stillness, silence, and the in-breath offers a possibility of finding a middle way into the translation of rhythmic effects in poetry (and not only in Nijhoff's work), neither by following an approach that formal aspects of a poem should be solved in translation by taking a mental route that emphasizes the crossword-like nature of translation (Moffett 1989) nor by more or less ignoring these effects altogether as being impossible to capture effectively (the whole Pound-Waley-Bly continuum[66] discussed in detail in 2.3 above). Nijhoff's insights form the basis for Chapter 3: Translating Breath, and for one of my practical experiments in translation discussed in Commentary III. Further discussion on the points raised in *OEW* will, therefore, be postponed.

2.4.3 How the rhythmic qualities of Nijhoff's poems have been treated in translation

The poetics of a writer such as Nijhoff cannot be taken for granted by the translator. Certainly, close stylistic analysis of a single poem may yield insights into the philosophical, psycho-physical and creative implications of Nijhoff's tussle with the kinds of meaning that rhythm in verse has[67]. However, to ignore the context of such a poem, both within Nijhoff's oeuvre and the period as a whole, could result in a translational focus which gazes entranced (or revolted) at what seems to be traditional in the poem with a decision either to concentrate on

[66] This approach has produced marvellously sensitive translation, including work by Merwin, Stryk and Snyder, and, by a slightly different route, by Weissbort and Hughes. In all these cases, however, the inner ear of the poet-translator plays a part in protecting against flatness or, to use Hawkes' description, 'insipidity'(Hawkes 1966:146).

[67] By using the term 'meaning' here I do not intend the concept of referential meaning, but as Aviram indicates, something more 'sublime', or beyond the reach of referential meaning.

the inessential decorative aspects of form which Nijhoff spent all his writing life struggling against, or to discard aspects of sound and rhythm completely. I would argue that the deeper the understanding of Nijhoff's critical attitudes to rhythm and metre, the more likely it is that the translator will understand what is truly essential, leading him or her to find ways of conveying that essence to the new audience, not necessarily by using Nijhoff's methods, but by understanding what lies behind these. If the decision is, finally, to ignore the rhythmic basis of the poems, then at least such a decision would be based on knowledge and understanding[68]. This holds good for the translation of any poetic body of work if the translation is a serious project rather than a casual venture.

One of the aims of my study is to understand why writers of Nijhoff's (and Achterberg's) stature are not widely known outside the Dutch-speaking world and to test, through my own translation-experiments, whether the problem could lie in a misperception of their poetics. Such a misperception could have several consequences: firstly, that the poet is not, or is barely, translated; secondly, that the translations, in some sense, fail to do the original justice; thirdly, that the translated poems are not well-accepted by the TC. Since my approach in this study is two-pronged, relying both on stylistic analysis and on my own developing translational practices to test how successfully the work might be translated, it is not within my scope to consider other aspects of the literary polysystem which may also play a part in the selection of translation projections and their reception and dissemination, although these were considered in my article 'The Third Bridge' (Fawcett 2009a:19-42). However, it is interesting to note at this point that Nijhoff's work has indeed barely been translated into English, and that some of the few translations which do exist either may not have been able to convince their audiences of Nijhoff's stature, or have not taken account of important elements of Nijhoff's practice[69].

[68] I very much have tried to avoid this kind of solution myself, as should be apparent from the translation examples I discuss within the course of this thesis.

[69] The historical-critical edition (1993b:505-13) lists all known translations of Nijhoff's poems up to 1993. His work has been translated into fourteen languages – an apparently impressive spread. Yet careful analysis of the list shows that only in German and Slovenian has the work appeared in a book dedicated to Nijhoff's poetry. Up to 2010 publication in English was only in anthologies and journals. David Colmer's new translation of the long poem *Awater* appeared in May 2010, a month after I completed my own draft translation of the poem. Other than this single-poem book,

Individual translations of Nijhoff's oeuvre in English are scattered throughout several journals appearing over a wide spread of time. Many of these translations are now almost impossible to locate, especially for the general reader. This makes it hard for Nijhoff's work to find a readership outside the Dutch-speaking world and difficult to assess with any degree of accuracy what strategies Nijhoff's English translators have used in approaching the formal features of his work, specifically its rhythmic qualities. Broadly speaking, however, the translations that do exist, and which I have been able to trace, fall into the two major camps discussed in 2.3 above: either they treat formal features, specifically metre and rhyme-scheme, as being of central importance, at the expense, of 'images and meaning' (Bly in Allén 1999:84), or they fail to recognize the nature of Nijhoff's poetics, translating only for semantic and lexical features, and excluding the sonic and rhythmic levels of the poetry. To make a very broad generalization: native speakers of Dutch translating into English have tended to focus on the formal features: native speakers of English have generally, but not always, modified the formal features to accommodate their translations to TC expectations.

The long poem *Het uur u* (1936/1941), translated for this study between November 2008 and February 2009 (Appendix 2), has been translated twice before, firstly by the Dutch-American academic and translator Adriaan J. Barnouw (1948) and secondly by the English academic and translator P.K. King (1986). Barnouw's version, in *Coming After*, his anthology of translations of Dutch poetry from medieval times to the 20th century, is prefaced by a short introduction to both the poet and the translated poem. Nothing is said here of the poet's poetics; the focus is entirely on the poetry as an aspect of Nijhoff's biography. The biographical details are few but intended to be telling:

> Nijhoff's poetry is the expression of a complicated, self-contradictory nature. Cynicism and despair were the moods in which his early verse was written. But he retained throughout the darkest moments of those years the bright memory of the child he had been and a tender interest in all child life. That alone preserved for him his faith in God. The

there is still no collection of Nijhoff's work in English. Colmer's translation, however, is highly convincing and is further discussed below.

> innocence in a child's eyes could not be, if it were not the reflection of a higher life.
>
> Barnouw 1948:249

This account gives an over-simplified view of the poet's relationship to his work, and confuses moods portrayed in some of the early poems with actual biographically-verifiable moods (which according to Barnouw assailed the poet over a number of years). It fails to recognize the self-conscious masquerading quality of the earlier work, the continuous search for objectivity and detachment, and specifically the need for 'abstraction' and 'multiplicity' Nijhoff described as being central to his search for ways of renovating the forms of poetry.

Barnouw's remaining introductory sentences then give an interpretation of *Het uur u*, making no reference to the deeply ambiguous nature of the narrative and its layers of allusion, or to any formal aspects of the poem. Barnouw instead focuses on the poem's message, which contrary to his interpretation is not singular, but manifold (nor even a message at all, in any straightforward sense of the word). In particular, his comments place no emphasis on the richness of tone which interacts very clearly and coherently with the poem's unusual rhythmic qualities. The highly flexible rhythms Nijhoff works with relate to his interest in the 'folk-tongue' (Nijhoff 1990:61), in Dutch and European medieval verse, and to his experimentation with strong-stress verse, producing a kind of relaxed and laconic sprung rhythm whose tension can be tightened for specific effects. This allows Nijhoff to mix line-lengths with great expressiveness.

In fact, Barnouw does a generally decent job of work. His translation clearly accommodates to the irregularity of beat and line-length. His focus on a specific message, however, and on the poem's most obvious formal feature, its couplet-rhyming, means that the unusual metrical qualities of the original are subordinated to rhyme-patterning in the translation. Since the search for rhymes drives Barnouw's version, and his use of rhyme often draws attention to itself, the reader's focus is inevitably on the line-end. This can give an abruptness to the rhythm, the opposite of the natural flow of the ST, creating an effect of squeezing or stretching the line between the stresses, rather than of counterpointing a

narrative speaking voice against a rhythmic system unfolding in long waves over the course of several lines. Indeed, a defining stylistic feature of this poem, and many others of Nijhoff, is the play of syntax against the line, further examined in Chapter 3. One example of Barnouw's strategy will suffice (1948:257-8):

(9)

Then they pour oil, as a last
Resort to which sailors **turn**,
On the waves **to still their churn**.
For one indivisible
Moment the sea is still.
The ship lies motionless now.
But presently over the bow
Rolls an oil-sated wave
And the oil that was meant to save
Pours into the fire below deck,
Explodes, and the water-filled wreck
Sinks **like a mud-laden dredge**.
Thus behind each window **ledge**
Sank a man in the mirror-smooth sea
Down towards his own effigy,
His own disabled frame. –

Since both original and translation are long poems, over sixteen printed pages, it is difficult to show the full effect of the rhythm through examples, as the text works cumulatively and by building on expectations set up at the outset. However, the above example, even without comparative reference to the ST, shows a manipulation of language not for poetic effect, but to fit the rhyme-scheme ('turn'/'churn', for example, where the conventions of English grammar would require, at the least, 'churning' – a gerundive action – rather than 'churn'; or 'dredge'/'ledge', where the usual word in English would be 'dredger' and where 'ledge' has been added to 'window' in order to find a rhyme[70]). This in its turn has an effect on the rhythm creating an abruptness caused by unpredictable line-lengths and a lack of counterpointing between verse-line and narrative voice.

[70] 'Zo zakte, achter elk raam,/ in de spiegelgladde vloed/ een mens zijn beeld tegemoet,/ zijn eigen ontredderd beeld. –' [so sank behind each window/ in the mirror-smooth flood/ a person his image toward/ his own disjointed/shattered image]. The chain of imagery linking window-mirror-sea is weakened in Barnouw's version, since the people are described as being behind ledges, not windows. Nijhoff's precise and careful placing is disturbed: the scene loses some of its clarity and dramatic reality. (The image of the sinking ship in the extract is a metaphor, not a reality.)

For a long time Barnouw's anthology would have been the only place where an English-speaking reader could consult Nijhoff's poetry in book form and since only two examples of the poetry are given, this long poem and a single sonnet, it is difficult to see how a fair judgement of the qualities of Nijhoff's poetry could have been conveyed. Barnouw's project, however, was not so much focused on the work of individual poets, but on making Dutch literature known to the English-speaking world, and on translating some works of English literature hitherto neglected by the Dutch, for example Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, for the Dutch-speaking world. Although Barnouw's scholarship was of a high order (Duncan 2001:vii) and his translations from Dutch poetry have been rated highly by some critics (see e.g. Daalder 1976:17-22), Nijhoff himself emphasizes in his review of Barnouw's Chaucer the labour in the work, rather than the poetry, agreeing with Huizinga's opinion, cited in the review, that it is 'conscientious mosaic-work' (*VW*II:647, tr.). What Huizinga probably intended as a positive judgement, Nijhoff intends negatively. This phrase 'conscientious mosaic-work' must have resonated with Nijhoff, as it recalls the closing image of the opening poem of his first book, *De wandelaar* (1916), in which the poet's obsession with patterning the world into form is presented as something which closes him off from reality, giving him instead: 'A quiet mosaic-game with no perspectives' (tr., see Appendix 2). As I see it, the mosaic element in poetry was something Nijhoff recognized he was attracted to from the start, but also perceived as a trap. Nijhoff's developing poetics are absorbing because they show how he resisted his own clear talent for traditional form, trying to transform that, as discussed above, into something more vital. As for Barnouw's translation of Chaucer into Dutch, so for his translation of Nijhoff into English – the reader's focus will often be on the laboriousness of the translation, rather than on the sweep of images, changing tone and feelings, and the tightening of tension as the poem moves to its psychological climax.

P.K. King's translation of *Het uur u* ('Your Zero Hour'), first published in a Festschrift for the Dutch academic Francis Lulofs (Kroon 1986:383), includes a translator's introduction, in Dutch, which displays a much more conscious awareness of important stylistic features of the original, discussing the kinds of problems these present for the translator:

> What are the most obvious characteristics of *Het uur u's* language which are stumbling-blocks for the translator? […] The four most characteristic and also the "cleverest" aspects of Nijhoff's poem, and therefore often the ones most difficult for the translator to handle are (in order of difficulty): 1 the well-known use of a completely simple spoken language, with one single exception, and coupled with this 2 the shortness of the verse-lines; 3 the regular application of paired masculine rhymes; 4 the fact that the couplets bridge over the pointing of the sentences rather than the other way round.
>
> Attempting to remain faithful to these stylistically essential aspects of the poem, the translator is rather swiftly inclined to drop a rhyming version, instead going for a blank-verse translation. But then he is immediately confronted with Nijhoff's simplicity of language, which has the effect of swiftly transforming a prose or blank-verse translation into something unavoidably over-prosaic. [...]
>
> There is little to say about my [...] rhymed translation. Those places in Nijhoff which were evidently peculiarly difficult, are all too evidently apparent in the jog-trot English. In particular the rhythm of the original (rather than the simplicity of language) turned out to be difficult to handle, so that the harsh demands of faithfulness to the original meaning often cause the paired rhymes to be forced, because they no longer, as with Nijhoff, emerge spontaneously out of the natural speech-rhythms.
>
> King 1986:383-4 (tr.)

This analysis strikes me as masterly. King succinctly presents the major stylistic features of *Het uur u* in particular, relating these to Nijhoff's work in general, and at the same time focusing on what makes them problematic for the translator. He highlights his main aim, faithfulness to the meaning, considers the usefulness of translating the poem into blank verse (thereby showing he is not focused on an unthinking imitation of the formal features of the poem), and explains that choosing for a rhyming version (as in the original) is intended to counteract the otherwise over-prosaic effect of Nijhoff's simplicity of language in translation. This last point also implies that a further aim is to present the TT in the same mode as the ST, that is, *as a poem*. This, coupled with the precision of the stylistic analysis, demonstrates that King's focus must also be on achieving similar stylistic effects, placing a very different weight and emphasis on what Barnouw and King think they are doing when they translate. Barnouw, as is clear from his introductory material, is concerned with conveying through translation an impression of the major poetic figures in Dutch literature and the 'nature' of the

poet, a traditional critical approach influenced by Romanticism; King is much more concerned with details of language and style, the effects the poem creates.

Particularly interesting in King's analysis is his focus on the difference of effect in the use of rhyme in the ST and in his translation, the fact that he locates the source of the rhyming in Nijhoff in the natural speech-rhythms of the language in contrast to his own which arise from the tussle between being true to his interpretation of the ST and having to find rhymes in English to fit the exact meaning. This, he feels, produces jog-trot rhythms and makes the rhyme forced. The relationship of rhyme to rhythm is well-known and discussed in precise and systematic detail by Scott in *The riches of rhyme: studies in French verse* (1988), but what King highlights here is not so much the obvious or self-conscious artistry in Nijhoff's use of rhyme, but its natural relation to speech-rhythms rather than stiff metres.

Also interesting is the humility with which King recognizes that his version has fallen short of the original, that by choosing to use couplet-rhyming, as in the ST, his version conveys a very different rhythmic effect. That this will have consequences for tone, and even in some places, for the meaning to which King primarily wishes to remain faithful should also be apparent. However, I do not intend to examine either King's or Barnouw's versions exhaustively, but will indicate that different aims and purposes in translation, coupled with different contextual backgrounds, may move the translator towards making very different translational choices.

The section of the poem which Barnouw handles rather laboriously (Barnouw 1948:257-8), King translates with far greater fluency as:

(10)

Such is the distress
that, so faith has **taught, a**
man pours oil on the **water**:
for one split second
there is peace, peace unreckoned:
the rudderless ship floats true:
but already a wave breaks through
oil-fouled over **deck B**,
and what was meant for **the sea**

explodes in the fires and **the hulk**
with its filthy seawater **bulk**
sinks like a dredger full of mud.
Even so in the mirror-smooth flood
behind every window
a person smiles into
his own crippled portrait. –

King 1986:316

Because King has perceived that major stylistic features of the original are that the sentence-construction (the 'pointing of the sentences') flows across the couplets, that pausing is rarely end-stopped, that the rhyme is therefore de-emphasized, and that the rhythm is a speech-rhythm which interacts naturally with the rhyme, his rhyme-choices usually do not strike one as having the awkwardness of Barnouw's. This means too that the uneven line-lengths are generally smoothly handled, disappearing into complete sentences flowing across the lines, an effect counterparting the original, and particularly successful in the last four lines of the extract. Far from being jog-trot, in this section at least, both the rhythm and the lightly counterpointing rhyme are well-handled. Even the rhyme-pair 'taught, a'/'water' does not seem excessively forced because of the sensitive use of punctuation here. Quibbles I might have with certain word-choices are merely quibbles: specifying 'deck B' to rhyme with 'sea', for example, does strike me as being somewhat forced, but because, in the main, the voice glides over the line-ends in King's version, as in the original, this is perhaps not over-noticeable since the long narrative already encourages an onward reading motion, rather than a pausing over details, as might be the case with a shorter poem[71].

King's version then, which I had not yet come across when making my own translation[72], strikes me as being successful primarily because it is based on careful stylistic analysis: the project is to do with Nijhoff's art and conveying aspects of that to the English-speaking reader, and not, as in Barnouw's case, primarily to give representative tasters of the main figures of a complete literary culture. King's stylistic focus makes his translation not more or less correct than

[71] 'seawater bulk', to rhyme with 'hulk' seems more forced, but does not twist English grammar into unnatural contortions, as does Barnouw's version. My own translation is in Appendix 2.
[72] I translated *Het uur u* between November 2008 and February 2009, obtaining a copy of Barnouw's translation in January 2009.

Barnouw's but it is, in my opinion, generally more readable, more nuanced and more successful at conveying 'the attitudes, emotions and interactional possibilities of [...] the source text', as Boase-Beier (2006:110) points out is often the case for 'stylistically-aware translation' (ibid). His approach, therefore, offers an example of a third way between the 'mosaic-work' of the translator who sees the form but has neither analysed its function, nor thought of alternatives to what is immediately perceived, and the domesticating approach of the translator who discounts aspects of the form, simply because on a surface reading they do not fit with TC fashions in either the writing or translation of poetry.

I will briefly examine the main approach taken by Nijhoff's other major translator, James Holmes, whose rendition of the long poem *Awater* (1934) was published in *MPT* 27-28 (1976). *Awater* is a poem of about ten pages and concerns the search of the narrator to find a travel-companion after the deaths of his brother and mother. That search focuses on the figure of a man, Awater, not known to the narrator as such, but, in effect, picked from a crowd. The action of the poem takes place over a few hours in the course of an evening during which the narrator follows Awater and portrays him in several settings. The poem has been compared to Eliot's *The Waste Land* both in terms of its densely allusive nature and its importance in Dutch literature.

Holmes was one of the few writers who did make a project of translating Nijhoff's work in the couple of decades following Nijhoff's death. In addition to his translation of *Awater*, supposed to have been commented on favourably by both Eliot and Brodsky (Polet 1989:164[73]), several Holmes translations of shorter

[73] According to Cora and Sybren Polet in their obituary of Holmes, cited above, Eliot commented that if Nijhoff had written in English, he would be world-famous. The implication is that he made this remark after reading Holmes's translation: 'na lezing van het gedicht' [after reading the poem]. However, since Eliot died in 1965 and the Holmes translation appeared in an English journal (*MPT*) in 1976, this seems odd. Perhaps Eliot knew of Holmes' earlier publication of his *Awater* translation in the Dutch academic journal *Delta* (1961) (Polet 1989:164). It is possible that Eliot's judgement was based not on the Holmes translation but on Van der Vat's (Vat 1949, 1954). Although this was finally published in a Dutch journal, to which Eliot would probably not have had access, Van der Vat recounts that Nijhoff intended to approach Eliot to obtain help in having the work published (Vat 1954:112). I have attempted to check whether there is mention of Nijhoff in the Faber archive, in case either Van der Vat or Nijhoff contacted Eliot by letter. According to e-mails from Robert Brown, Archivist for Faber, no trace of correspondence with or regarding Nijhoff, appears in either the authors' index, or in Eliot's own letters (Brown 2010a). After checking the archive, Brown contacted the team transcribing the Eliot correspondence and

Nijhoff poems appeared in a variety of journals (see Levie 1991:55-63)[74]. Moreover, as a practising academic as well as a translator-poet, Holmes was involved enough with Nijhoff's work to make it the basis, on several occasions, for his developing translation-theories (Holmes 1988:45-52, 55-8).

In Holmes's translator's note for the *MPT Awater* he stresses his inability to match the technical tour-de-force of assonantal rhyming in this poem. This technique is something Nijhoff borrowed from the *Chanson de Roland*, an aspect of his urge, discussed in detail above, to return to the source. Each long section (*laisse*) of *Awater* rhymes assonantly on only one vowel sound, in the order: ee [/eː/]; aa [/aː/]; oo [/oː/]; ei or ij [/ɛi/]; oe [/u/]; ie [/i/]; au or ou [/ʌu/]; uu [y]. The full-throated use of these recurring vowels (for up to 47 lines at a time) gives a singing quality to a language which, like English, is usually weighed down by a welter of consonantal sounds. It seems likely, then, that not only was Nijhoff borrowing a technique from an early European vernacular poem, but that he was also using these sounds to say something about the expressive origins of language in the song of the voice in the vowel. Furthermore, the use of assonantal rhyme in Dutch poetry prior to the 20th century tended to be in ballads, folk-songs, psalm translations, and medieval verse rather than in 'art' poetry (see e.g. Verkruijsse et al 2002), so that Nijhoff in his self-conscious and virtuosic rhyme-scheme in *Awater* was innovating as well as renovating – moving what might otherwise have seemed a rough-and-ready form of rhyming into high literature. Holmes is clearly aware of the virtuosity and artfulness of Nijhoff's technique here, but seems less aware of its possible thematic, linguistic, and poetic functions.

Moreover, Holmes emphasizes the end-stopped qualities of the verse-line, which he also sees as having been borrowed from the *Chanson de Roland*:

> ... three-fourths of the lines in *Awater* concluded with a punctuation mark of some kind, and more than half of them have a full-stop. The result is a stress on the isolated individual line that is unequalled even in neo-classical English verse. I have tried to keep as many of these end-stopped lines as I could, the more willingly because in the absence of Nijhoff's rhyme scheme they would help me to avoid the

comments on 7 July 2010, 'The Eliot estate have unfortunately confirmed that there is no trace of a correspondence' (Brown 2010b).

[74] Holmes has made about twenty Nijhoff translations in addition to *Awater*.

> pitfall of easy traditionalism characteristic of much emjambed [sic] blank verse.
>
> Holmes 1976:4

In fact, the neo-classical end-stopping which Holmes perceives in *Awater* is not necessarily the rhythmic feature most apparent here. On the one hand, the continuous play of assonantal rhyming on the same sound in a series of controlled changes works against any stopping qualities, in that the ear hears sustained notes sounded over remarkable distances. On the other hand, the contrast in sentence-lengths, structure, and phrasing work against potential monotony. Where King, in his translation of *Het uur u* is perfectly aware that a blank-verse translation strategy could have the effect of making the simplicity of Nijhoff's language seem over-prosaic in English, Holmes seems less aware of this. His strategy here is based on three facts: first, that the assonantal end-rhyming cannot be done in English without 'writing a new poem' (ibid); secondly, that he wishes to retain an aspect of Nijhoff's technique he locates in end-stopping (and, by implication, the iambic pentameter); and thirdly, that he does not wish to translate in a manner which will make it seem easily traditional. Using Holmes's own analytical terminology for describing his approach, one could say that it is neither entirely *retentive* nor truly *re-creative*, neither *naturalizing* nor *exoticizing*, and that though it has an expressed aim of avoiding traditionalism, the actual language use at times does shift it into the *historicizing* mode (see Holmes 1988:47-50 for an explanation of the terms). The overall effect, at more than forty years distance, is of a rather respectful translation that at times lacks a transforming energy. In particular, the focus on end-stopping can create a rather deadly monotony:

(11)

> His hands that drum the table-top encourage
> the vision that goes raging through his forehead.
> A snowflake flutters amidst drops of blood.
> He shifts the chessmen to a new arrangement.
> His glass frosts over, still untouched before him.
> In the ashtray, his cigarette creates
> a hollyhock that blooms along the ceiling.
> He sits there quite alone and undisturbed.
> He has the thing a flower has, and a planet,
> an inward impetus that transports far.
>
> Holmes in Nijhoff 2010:40-1

This kind of balance of line against line, without a feeling for the varied ways in which the rhythm unfolds in the original and how that interplays with the internal and line-end sound-effects, to my ear sounds overly monotonous, unlikely to convince the reader that Nijhoff was formally innovative, or that the imagery is lived and vital. In particular, the last two lines of this passage are dulled in effect since, as a result of Holmes' effort *not* to enjamb the lines, the English becomes overly abstract. Van der Vat (1954:121) tries to avoid abstraction here, and succeeds in creating verse-movement, but a) does not translate closely and b) gives the lines a conventional poeticism far from Nijhoff's image: 'His is the inner urge of flowers and planets/ Which stirs the heart to dream and ecstasy.' The Dutch is: 'Hij heeft wat een planeet heeft en een bloem,/ een innerlijke vaart die diep vervoert.' [he has what a planet has and a flower/ an inner speed/journey that carries deep(ly)]. The word 'vaart' links to ships, to journeying across water, to forward motion or drive; 'vervoeren' is a transitive verb meaning 'to carry/convey/transport' (from one place to another). It is the strange use of the transitive verb ('transports far') in Holmes's translation that gives it such an abstract character. My translation is: 'He has what a planet has, or a flower,/ an inner motion, ferrying the deeps'. I think this brings out the link between 'vaart' and 'vervoeren' and conveys the image-aspect of the original with a word ('ferrying') which links both to travelling across waters and to carrying something. Colmer goes for a plainer solution than mine, but one which allows the reader to perceive a link between the inner movement of Awater's creative life and the hidden forces which produce life: 'He has a deeply moving inner force,/ like that within a planet or a flower' (2010:29).

Holmes, therefore, has taken the first step in breaking away from a formal feature of the original, the rhyme-scheme, in order to focus on another formal feature, the metrics of the poem, but has, in his concentration on end-stopping, missed many of the rhythmic, energizing qualities of the original. Sound and rhythm work in consort with, not separately, from each other, and in consort also with the imagery, word-play, and thematic implications of a poem, as touched on earlier in my discussion of Aviram's theory of rhythm and Jakobson's theory of equivalence (Aviram 1994:89-106), and as emphasized also by Scott at several points in *The Riches of Rhyme* (Scott 1988).

Holmes's approach to *Awater* is not at all extreme and gives a perfectly workable translation which maps the subject-matter, meaning, and some aspects of the verse-technique in a readable if somewhat flat manner. On the continuum between an over-reliance on form ('melopoeia') and an over-reliance on image ('phanopoeia'), this approach sits somewhere in the middle, and yet has not completely caught the effect of the rhythmic interplay between stress, line, rhyme, and syntactic units in the original. A more radical approach, less tied to the perceived line-length and end-stopped techniques could have worked better. Colmer's translation is much more sensitive aurally and rhythmically than Holmes's, and perhaps obviates the need for further translation, but, as noted above, my own work on this poem was completed before his version was published. My solution (Appendix 2) was to use internal sound-echoes and to make the rhythm somewhat syncopated, a move away from a literal reproduction of the form, which none of the translators I have discussed have, in any case, attempted for this poem.

By the time Holmes came to write his essay 'On Matching and Making Maps: From a Translator's Notebook' (1988:53-64) his position had slightly changed. He talks of seeking counterparts and matchings, rather than equivalences, and speaks pragmatically about the fact that searching for counterparts for one element of a poem will almost inevitably mean losing the possibility of making matches to others (1988:54-5). This clarification of his translation theory derives from his attempt to translate Nijhoff's verse. Holmes explains that during the 1950s he had become fascinated with the complexities of translating Nijhoff's 'strict form' combined with its simplicity of diction (1988:55). The technique he initially employed to solve this is the one he is clearly using for *Awater*, that is, to drop the rhyme but keep within the constraints (as he reads them) of the metre. Later, in the mid-60s, Holmes tells us, he wished to translate another Nijhoff poem for a specific issue of *Delta* on the theme of 'the Netherlands during the German occupation' (ibid). He chose to work with Nijhoff's poem 'De grot' [the cave]. This time the strategy did not work and Holmes found he was forced not only to dispense with rhyme but also to drop any attempt to retain the iambic pentameter (1988:57). The resulting translation could certainly be described as *modernizing* and *naturalizing* (in that he has consciously fitted the translation to the norms of

another period and culture), though still *retentive* in terms of keeping close to the meaning and images of the original (cf. Bly's advice to Moffett discussed in 2.3 above). Holmes tells us that he

> [...] suddenly realized that by dropping my attempt at metrical matching and concentrating on other aspects, I could produce a poem that might be effective in a quite different manner. The result is, in one way, not Nijhoff – he would have been taken aback by it, as I'm confident he would not have been by the experiment of the rhymeless sonnets. But in another, very real way it is him: a kind of younger, latter-generation Nijhoff liberated from the shackles of received forms, paradoxically applying the free-verse techniques of the post-war Dutch poets to give expression to the dark predicament of caged and fettered man in the midst of the war.
>
> ibid.

There are many points which can be made about Holmes's own poetics here and his understanding of Nijhoff's. Firstly, and positively, Holmes's perception that Nijhoff would not find rhymeless sonnets overly strange, but would be taken aback by the free-verse sonnet, shows that Holmes, too, feels that the rhythmic movement of a poem was essential for Nijhoff (where Holmes's interpretation would differ from mine is that his seems, by implication, to emphasize metre rather than rhythm as such). Secondly, and less positively, Holmes's claim that his translations modernize Nijhoff demonstrate several misunderstandings: a) Nijhoff, as discussed throughout section 2.4, did not perceive form as a shackle in any negative sense, nor b) did he regard his use of forms as a passive receiving of tradition, rather he struggled both to renovate and innovate within the traditions; and c) he was completely conscious of the possibilities of free verse well before the post-2nd World War years, as there were models both in Dutch (Gorter (1864-1927), Verwey (1865-1937), Van Ostaijen (1896-1928)) and other languages (Cocteau, Eliot, Edgar Lee Masters, Whitman, Laforgue, Rimbaud) with which he was intimately familiar[75], and yet he chose to reject this approach as not fitting his search for 'abstraction' and 'multiplicity'.

I would not wish it to be thought that Holmes's translations are unsuccessful. In fact, as pointed out above, he is one of the few translators seriously engaged in the project of translating Nijhoff's poetry after his death in 1953, and throughout the

[75] All these poets, and many more, were written about by Nijhoff. See *VW*II.

1960s and 1970s (although as Holmes matured both as a translator and academic, it is clear he never returned to Nijhoff's verse with the will he had shown in translating the handful of shorter poems, and in particular the epic poem *Awater*, otherwise there would be more than scattered evidence of his labours). As Holmes himself points out, there are many ways of translating a poem, and no single one of them will or even should be perfect: 'there are no "perfect" translations, few that even approach "perfection"' (1988:58). Holmes finally argues not only for multiple translations, but also for multiple approaches to translation (ibid.), stating that whilst the original is a 'territory', the translation is a 'map'. There are, naturally, many ways in which a territory can be mapped. In statements such as these he not only displays his pragmatism but is well before his time in actively envisaging the necessity for multiple approaches to poetic translation.

To sum up, Holmes, who to date is Nijhoff's major translator, in spite of the fact that no collection of his Nijhoff translations has appeared[76], approaches Nijhoff's work with the same pragmatism as informed his theory. In the final instance, the translation-work, especially in its later overtly free-verse stage, is broadly speaking in the Pound-Waley-Bly mode, that is, apart from his interest in metre, it is focused on aspects of meaning and image rather than form. In its sweep, its macro-structure, there is nothing at all objectionable in the work, but I would contend that a misunderstanding of Nijhoff's poetics has led to a certain flatness in the rhythmic energies of these translations. Barnouw's work represents the opposite extreme, the valuing of form over image and meaning, whilst his poetics are influenced by Romanticism and the cult of the poet. Of the three translators I have considered in detail in this section King, in his translation of *Het uur u*, in spite of his own criticisms of the work, seems to come closest to recognizing and trying to convey something of the vital rhythmic effects of the original. As far as I can ascertain, however, this is King's only Nijhoff translation. Finally, the most recent Nijhoff translator, David Colmer, whose work I touched on briefly in the foregoing section, chooses an approach closest to my own, in which the image-structure and semantic meaning are important, but where rhythm and sonic effects are also vital. Yet his translation of Nijhoff's oeuvre is unlikely to go further than

[76] His translation of *Awater* is in Nijhoff 2010.

his work on *Awater* and a couple of other poems (Colmer 2012: private communication), meaning that there is still room for a collection of Nijhoff's poetry aimed at an English-speaking audience.

2.5 Achterberg's poetic rhythms: context; text; translation

2.5.1. The rhythmic qualities of Achterberg's work

In sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 I unfolded the significance of rhythm for Nijhoff, based on evidence gathered from the poems and from his critical and self-reflective writings, relating his search for new rhythms to his lifelong struggle to find a way of writing that combined 'abstraction' and 'multiplicity'. I also emphasized Nijhoff's awareness of currents of poetry, in Dutch and a number of other European languages, and stressed the fact that although he was consciously 'modern', he chose not to take the route of other major modernist writers of his generation, believing that to transform his poetics he should search for origins and at the source. In particular his judgement, expressed as late as 1935 (when he had been writing poetry for more than 20 years), that Cocteau's and Eliot's work had broken the forms of their verse, as if they were window-panes, shows that he consciously wished to take his poetry in a different direction, especially in formal terms. This search finally found its blossoming in *NG* (1934) and later books, within verse that binds two systems into one: natural speech-rhythm and poetic rhythm.

When I turn now to Achterberg, the case is in one sense much less clear-cut, in another radiantly obvious in the rhythms of the work itself. Achterberg only published poetry and rarely made critical comments on his own poetry or poetic quest. On the contrary, for example, in the context of a short Whitsun holiday spent in Germany with the express intention of helping his prospective translators to come to a deeper understanding of his work, he fled from the intellectual probing into meaning, and told his friend, the poet Willem Diemer:

> We're all exhausted. And obviously they are too. And they keep on at it.... And they don't stop talking. [...] They're all wrong you know, Willem. They think that I'm it. But I'm not it. I myself am nothing.
>
> Hazeu 1989:568-9

For Achterberg the poetic oeuvre itself was the only place where the problems and (non-referential) meaning of rhythms were worked out and developed, and from the fully conscious perspective that he was an 'instrument', nothing in himself. This is not to say that he did not enjoy talking about the technical details involved in the making of poetry (see e.g. Brockway 1980:51). Nor should it imply that Achterberg wrote as some kind of idiot-savant, or primitive shaman-figure[77]. He certainly knew what he was doing, but his stance was that he worked on behalf of something outside himself (language itself, perhaps: the word and the word made flesh). This does not make him any less a poet[78]. As Brockway notes in his discussion about meeting Achterberg, again with the objective of making translations of his work, Achterberg was focused on questions of rhythm and metre, telling him that the problems Brockway faced in translating the poetry, the whole craft-work, were exactly the same as in writing poetry (Hazeu 1989:567), that in fact Brockway *was* writing poetry.

Similarly Nijhoff, in his article about Achterberg's poetry (*VW*II:1021-8), lays stress on the fact that Achterberg did not like to talk about the poems he had written, but wanted to speak about poetic art as such, placing the emphasis on the poems that would come, rather than those that had been (cf. Dinaux 1964:752). Nijhoff's insights are worth citing to perceive the important place that rhythm has in Achterberg's poetics:

> Achterberg speaks with the clarity of someone who thinks a lot but expresses himself with difficulty. Writing poems, he says, is a 'blind occupation'. We never see face to face, because everything is twofold. The sea is flood and ebb, mankind is man and woman, creation life and death, the universe atom and infinite space, time

[77] Achterberg has been accused of both. Hazeu details several occasions on which Achterberg's poetry was spoken of as the product of a psychopath (e.g. 1989:308-9). For a younger generation of critics, the shaman-mask Achterberg sometimes wore in his work was taken as biographical actuality and the work was actually *valued* as the magical acts of a 'medicine man' (Hazeu 1989:491-2). This aspect of Achterberg's work is further discussed in 4.6.

[78] The insistence on being nothing also protected his poetry from being linked to himself as a person.

> moment and eternity, the deed good and evil. The only thing that is One is Energy which binds everything together, creates tension and movement. God is Son and Father, love and law, mercy and vengeance. But these Two are not One except through the Third Person, the Holy Ghost, the binding vibration. Only Threefoldness is truly One [here Nijhoff cites a stanza from *Triniteit* – trinity[79]]. How can human consciousness, divided twofold between subject and object, ever understand Oneness? Only in the 'verse' which is to come, only in the high-tension vibrating word. The word is sound and concept, is both real and unreal medium and factotum, is agent and indicator of all things. But it 'does' nothing, if it is not brand-new, if it has not been enflamed by fiery spirit, if it shows no resemblance to the language spoken by the apostles at Pentecost.
>
> *VW*II:1026-1027 (tr.)

This account of Achterberg's poetics is presented as reported speech, the result of several visits Nijhoff made to Achterberg when the latter was living in the hamlet of Hoonte (Hazeu 1989:460-8), but probably also shades into Nijhoff's own interpretation of the poems. What is important in helping the translator to understand the role that rhythmic and acoustic qualities play in Achterberg's poetry is that Nijhoff relates these to the whole underlying philosophy of the poetry, its subject-matter, thematic focus, and raison d'être.

This same element of vibration and tension is spoken about by Dr. Hans Keilson, German-Dutch psychiatrist and writer, in an interview given on 2nd October 2003 about the publication of letters between himself and Achterberg (Keilson 2003b), and related, exactly as Nijhoff does, to the word and to rhythm, to the musical 'meaning' of the language of the poems, but also to the mystery of creativity and the fact that Achterberg seemed deliberately to work at the border of consciousness and unconsciousness. Keilson specifically rejects, however, a psycho-analytical approach to Achterberg's life, his internal conflicts, as a way of understanding the nature of the poetry: 'grote poëzie kan je niet zo benaderen' (you can't get close to great poetry like this) (ibid).

When Keilson came across Achterberg's first collection *Afvaart* (1931) in about 1937/8, a year or so after fleeing to the Netherlands as a German Jew, it spoke to him as being different in tone from the work of other contemporary Dutch poets he

[79] See Appendix 1.

was familiarizing himself (Keilson 2003a:22-3). The fascination which Keilson, just beginning to make his way in the Dutch language, felt for what he could hear in Achterberg's poetry would continue, as his 2003 testimony shows. That attraction to what could be sensed in the sounds of Achterberg's poems is, I feel, equivalent to my own recognition of something I felt called to the deepest parts of my self, and which is almost impossible to catch in translation, and yet, if not attempted, challenges the whole notion of what it is to translate. The translation of Achterberg's poetry has occupied me for more than 20 years now, although only recently have I begun to imagine that I am coming close to that 'something'.

At the risk of becoming over-personal in this account of the effect of Achterberg's rhythmic and sonic qualities on his readers, I should say that what I believe I had in common with Keilson in my first encounters with Achterberg's work was an imperfect grasp of the Dutch language. My bilingualism is of a type often found when the education of an initially bilingual child is carried out purely in one tongue, and not in the other. In my case, English was to become the dominant language, a fact exacerbated not only by having no schooling in Dutch, but in effect by never being immersed in a Dutch-speaking environment. This meant, and to an extent still means, that my passive or receptive skills are stronger than my active skills, and that listening is probably the strongest skill of all.[80] It is well known that children acquiring their first language do not literally comprehend all the elements of the adult spoken language but understand holistically, and especially through the medium of intonation and speech rhythm (Rose 2005:130-1; Nazzi et al 1998:757). The retarded nature of my Dutch, coupled with an existing sensitivity to poetic rhythms, meant that I responded deeply to Achterberg's 'voice' which I could feel talking to me in the rhythms and sounds of the poems, without necessarily fully comprehending what these poems meant. More than this, the level at which I responded to the words was, I believe, similar to the way they were being used by Achterberg, in that these words had not hardened into set expressions and collocations, but were present for me in their naked and basic meanings, so that without needing to re-activate a deeper level of meaning, that level was there for me, because that is how the words appeared. For

[80] See Grosjean 2008 for a plea to see bilingualism 'wholelistically' and as different in kind to both monolingualism and acquired foreign languages.

example, a phrase such as ‘ik noem je naam’ (Achterberg 1988:573), probably most usually translated by ‘I say your name’, to me seems more like ‘I name your name’, where the relationship between ‘noem’ [/num/] and ‘naam’ [/na:m/] still vibrates with a primal energy that reveals the way a language makes itself (or is made), by slight shifts of sound which change the signification and use of the word. For me, as I believe for Achterberg too, ‘noem’ and ‘naam’ are still livingly connected in a process of becoming. More than this, since the primary function of humankind is to name, to give names to all that is, the poet stands for humankind most purely in this function of naming. At one and the same time, a phrase like this used in a poem is absolutely simple and colloquial, part of the everyday language, and absolutely core to what it means both to be human and a poet. This is the place in poetry where the literal and symbolic merge into one, where the poet reveals the metaphorical roots of language within the literal words and re-vivifies them by binding them into the rhythms and sound-structures of the poem. This is also, I would contend, what happens when foreigners from a related language, such as myself and Keilson, see through into the building blocks of language as they are used in the work of a poet such as Achterberg – one is suddenly confronted by the deep meaning of a word that could otherwise be a mere counter. This is, I believe, why Keilson speaks of the ‘vibrato in zijn poëzie’ [the vibrato in his poetry] (2003b).

The poem I refer to above is fairly typical of Achterberg’s oeuvre in that it is short, rhythmically complex (although loosely playing on a ground-bass of iambic pentameter), and relatively simple in its language use, though highly charged on certain key words. It instantly plunges the reader into a primal I-thou situation both familiar and utterly strange. It is less tense in terms of the mood conveyed and less unusual in its range of imagery or use of neologisms than some of Achterberg’s other poems, but these aspects make it more instantly approachable. It was the first Achterberg poem I read, and it made me want to know and understand more and more of his work.

The rhythmic complexity of this poem may be seen (although not fully heard) in *Figure 2*. *Figure 3* provides a gloss translation of the poem.

My objective here is not to fully analyze the poem rhythmically but rather to present some initial effects of Achterberg's rhythmic vocabulary, effects that are so entwined with every aspect of the poem that it becomes almost false to detach the rhythmic qualities from the totality.

Rhythmically, what immediately may be noticed from the schematic representation of *Figure 2* is that there is a lot of space in the poem, not conveyed through layout, as might be the case with a more visually-oriented poet but through the use of punctuation, line-endings, and implied pauses or light caesuras (e.g. in lines 7 and 8). Highly apparent is the fact that in such a short poem no line is enjambed, that line 3 contains three short sentences, that line 5 contains two sentences, and that two further lines (4 and 6) are interrupted by commas. This by itself might produce an effect that each short sense-unit is somehow sharply independent of the others, focusing the reader's attention on the individual words, yet combined with the unequal line-lengths, and subtle balancings and unbalancings within the internal movement of the lines, the rhythm gives a feeling not so much of abruptness but of free-floatingness. The words, the sense-units gust, as the wind does which blows against and shifts the window (line 5). The independent sentences and phrases flow into each other, so that it is not at all clear in the central section where the words rise from and who is speaking. Again, the fact that the lines are both end-stopped and coupled in masculine rhyming might lead one to believe that the poem conveys closedness rather than openness, but the alternation of a longer line with a shorter (lines 1 and 2), or a movement of three against a movement of two (lines 3 and 4, lines 5 and 6), destabilizes the closed effect, and makes us read the rhythm as a representation of a dialogue in which entities draw together, merge, draw apart, and flow outwards into an alive but indefinite universe. The couplet which ends the poem, which in rhythmic terms seems to behave most like conventional iambic pentameter, with light caesuras after the fourth (line 7) and sixth (line 8) syllables, is, in fact, both a closure (in the sense of an achievement – the poet achieves, at least temporarily, what he desires) and an opening, signalled by a loss of tightness in the rhyme (<u>uit</u>/oneindig<u>heid</u> [/œyt/ /ɦɛit/]), and by a loss of 'beat' (line 8 lacks one beat compared to norm). All these features suggest that rhythm works iconically for Achterberg, that it is a level totally unified with everything the poem is. It ought to be clear then that the

translator should try to find ways of consciously translating rhythm in such a way that it has a similar effect in the TT. This is something I examine in further detail in Commentaries II and IV.

Vervulling	syllable-count	stresses	pauses
x / x x x / x | / x / x x x / ||| **/** **1** Het beste van voor jaren dringt vanavond tot mij door.	14	5	| |||
/ x x / x / x | / x / x / ||| **2** Al je gewone vragen vinden weer gehoor.	12	6	| |||
/ x x || / x / x || / x / || **3** Regent het. Ja het regent. Goede nacht.	10	5	|| || ||
/ x x / x / x || / x / ||| **4** Laten we nu gaan slapen, zeg je zacht.	10	5	|| |||
x / x x x / x ||| / x / x / ||| **5** Wij luisteren en liggen. Wind beweegt het raam.	12	5	||| |||
/ x x / x | / x | x x / x / ||| **/** **6** Blijf zo maar liggen, zeg ik, en ik noem je naam.	12	5 (6)	| | |||
/ x x / x / | / x x / ||| **7** Alles wat antwoord is gaat van mij uit.	10	5	| |||
x / x / | x x x / x / ||| **8** Je wordt vervuld van de oneindigheid.	10	4	| |||
The strength of the pause is here indicated by | (light), || (medium), and ||| (heavy or more prolonged). Alternative scansion is given below the main scansion marks.			

Figure 2: Rhythmic aspects of 'Vervulling'

Vervulling
fulfilment
realization
coming-true

1	Het	beste	van	voor	jaren	dringt	vanavond	tot	mij	door.
	The	*best*	*of*	*for*	*years*	*registers* *pierces* *penetrates*	*this-evening* *tonight*	*to*	*me*	*through*

doordringen = separable verb: to penetrate
het dringt niet tot hem door = he doesn't realize it . ˙. without the negative (as here) = I realize...
dringen door (verb + preposition) = push, force through

2	Al	je	gewone	vragen	vinden	weer	gehoor.
	all	*your*	*usual* *normal*	*questions*	*find*	*again*	*hearing* *audience*

3	Regent	het.	Ja	het	regent.	Goede	nacht.
	rains	*it*	*yes*	*it*	*rains*	*good*	*night*

4	Laten	we	nu	gaan	slapen	zeg	je	zacht.
	Let	*we*	*now*	*go*	*sleep*	*say*	*you*	*softly*

5	Wij	luisteren	en	liggen.	Wind	beweegt	het	raam.	
	we	*listen*	*and*	*lie*	*wind*	*moves*	*the*	*window*	
6	Blijf	zo	maar	liggen,	zeg	ik,	en	ik	noem	je	naam.
	stay	*like-* *this*	*simply*	*lying*	*say*	*I*	*and*	*I*	*name* *say*	*your*	*name*

7	Alles	wat	antwoord	is	gaat	van	mij	uit.
	all *everything*	*that*	*answer*	*is*	*goes*	*from*	*me*	*out*

uitgaan van = originates from emanates from
uitgaan = go out; leave

8	Je	wordt	vervuld	van	de	oneindigheid
	you	*become*	*fulfilled* *filled*	*of* *(with)*	*the*	*infinity* *unendingness*

Figure 3: Glossed version of 'Vervulling'

Just as the apparent conventionality of the metre is belied by an actual rhythmic complexity deriving from the poem's subject-matter, so the apparent simplicity of the vocabulary is belied by somewhat unusual collocations. To return to the example discussed above, the apparently simple words 'Ik noem je naam' are rather uncommon in daily use. Very few people would say 'Ik noem je naam' [I name your name] but, rather, 'Ik zeg je naam' [I say your name], or possibly, 'Ik noem je bij je naam' [I call you by your name]. To name someone's name is to make the name existent by the act of naming, to call the name into being, even to call the object or concept into being. The act has connotations which are ritualistic and almost magical: the evoking into life by the naming of the name[81]. In this respect, Achterberg's work, not only in this poem, is highly performative, in the sense given this term by J.L. Austin (1975:6). That performativity is highlighted within this poem by drawing attention to the act of naming. That same aspect of performativity, using utterance to do something as it is spoken, is the feature most commented on by Achterberg's early critics (although not given this name by them) and led to a sometimes negative association of Achterberg's work with the kind of primitive shamanism noted above .[82] This is further discussed in Chapter 4.

Other unusual collocations combine abstract notions with strong bodily realization (line 1), make what is bodily and communicative (speech/questions/listening)

[81] 'And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day' (Genesis 1.5 KJV). Here the verb translated into English as 'called' is in the Dutch Statenbijbel (1637) translated by the verb 'noemde': 'En God noemde het licht dag, en de duisternis noemde Hij nacht. Toen was het avond geweest, en het was morgen geweest, de eerste dag' (my emphasis) [And God named the light day, and the darkness he named night. Then it had been evening, and it had been morning, the first day]. Achterberg uses the verb 'noemen' with this kind of force.

[82] Just as Austin came to realize that the distinction between constative and performative ultimately breaks down and that all language is, in fact, performative (see e.g. Davis 2001:54), so too Achterberg seems to have realized this and worked this problem out within his poems. If all language is actually performative, then all poetry is also performative. What distinguishes Achterberg's poetry from that of others in this respect is that the act of utterance as performance becomes the very subject of his poems, an even more major theme than the recovery of the beloved from death into life (see e.g. 'Druïde', 4.6.2). Austin felt that the conditions of being a poem (i.e. of fictionality) of itself excluded its performativity – made the performative aspect of the utterance null and void (Austin 1975:22). Achterberg attempts to enact the exact opposite in a poetry which does not accept its own fictionality. This absolute seriousness of expectation as to the potential efficacy of language, at its highest level in poetry, was also noted by Achterberg's early critics (see e.g. Hoornik 1950:408-9; Rodenko 1959) and contrasts absolutely with Austin's declaration that 'Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously, but in ways *parasitic* upon its normal use…' (Austin 1975:22).

almost disembodied (line 2), disorientate the body spatially (line 5), and generalize the individual into the literally universal (line 7). Conversely, Achterberg uses the most colloquial expressions in such a manner as to activate the reader's awareness that there may be a second layer of meaning closer to its literal origin as, for example, in line 6 'Blijf zo maar liggen' [stay so just lying = just carry on lying (there) = don't get up] where an ordinary tender exchange between two lovers vibrates with the possible knowledge that what is not alive (what lives only in the mind, in the imagination) cannot get up, has to stay 'zo' [so/like this] in order to be filled with infinity (line 8): death is the necessary condition for the infinite and eternal. Alternatively the same words may be read as a plea for the 'you' to stay with the speaker in a position of private intimacy forever. The total effect of this kind of language-use is to make the reader look carefully at each word, to see and hear it as if used for the first time, as if each word had its own highly active energy-field which by being spoken out within the at-once bounded and unbounded poem enables (or gives the illusion of enabling) a primary, performative enactment rather than a secondary re-enactment. The second important characteristic then of Achterberg's language and rhythms, is that not only is it often iconic, but it is also full of a primary enacting force, the same force, or *spirit*, noticed both by Nijhoff and Keilson and discussed above.

These effects, of iconicity, primal word-energy, performativity, and ritualism are not only inherent in the original texts but are aspects of my psycho-physiological readerly response to them, something that with twenty more years of knowledge of Achterberg's work since I first met this poem, and of a concomitant incremental knowledge of critical responses to that work, I now realize is not simply *my* response to this particular text, but is shared in some form by many readers to the work as a whole. It was to convey an account of this response and these specific effects that I was drawn into translation in the first place, and drawn into poetic translation in particular, since to write my response to the ST in the form of poems would then put my dialogue with the original in its own mode. As Clive Scott points out:

> ... translation is also [...] part of the spiritual autobiography of a relation with an ST. Translation is not only an account of a text, but an account of a response to a text, of cohabitation with a text. We

> read translations not only to understand the ST better, but also to come to know another reader, and to come to know about the process of translation.
>
> Scott 2000:181-2

Being in the same mode, that of poetry, and that of a specific kind of poetry, in this case Achterberg's, does not imply that the translation should be an exact imitation of the original but that the translator should approach the poems freshly, without preconceived notions as to what specific stylistic features, including metre and rhythm, do within poetry in general, instead feeling a way into what it is exactly that *this* poem, *this* writer's oeuvre, is doing to the specific reader who is or will be the translator, in order to convey to a new reader effects which are also poetic. Similar points are made by Scott in his study of the processes involved in the translation of Baudelaire's poetry where he advocates the reading by the translator of 'metre as expression rather than as knowledge, or convention aptly handled' (Scott 2000:30). Boase-Beier also makes it clear that a translator taking a stylistic approach to the translation of literary texts will not be mimicking the original so much as conveying its effects, foregrounding relationships and patterns cognitively important in the ST, but often by using different means (Boase-Beier 2006:127-33). Likewise, a recent article by Amrollah Hemmat stresses the importance of enabling the translator to see the specificity and mutuality of his or her own encounter with a particular text, and warns against a reliance 'on stereotypes and generic assumptions' (2009:161). It is these same notions of particularity and mutuality that will be explored further in the experimental sections of this thesis.

2.5.2 How translators have approached Achterberg's rhythms

Achterberg's poetry, although not extremely well known outside the Dutch-speaking world, has been more widely translated than Nijhoff's, not only into English but into a wide range of other languages, including Arabic[83]. In the English language he has had several important translators including James Brockway, James Holmes, Adrienne Rich, J.M. Coetzee and Michael O'Loughlin.

[83] The historical-critical edition lists all translations of Achterberg's poetry up to 2000 (2000b:814-38).

However, apart from O'Loughlin's slim 1987 volume *Hidden Weddings* and Pleuke Boyce's equally slim 1989 volume *But this land has no end*, very little has been published in the form of a collection devoted entirely to Achterberg's work[84]. Thirteen of Brockway's translations appear in *Singers behind Glass* (1995), an anthology of his translations from eight modern Dutch poets; Rich's translations appear in her *Collected Early Poems* (1993) where they will primarily be read as original work; Holmes's translations, again of thirteen poems, appear in an extensive anthology of Flemish and Dutch post-war poetry, *Dutch Interior* (1984) and Coetzee's version of the *Ballad of the Gasfitter* first appeared in 1977 in the PMLA, more recently being published in *Landscape with Rowers* (2004) as part of a selection of Coetzee's translations from several Dutch poets. Additionally, individual translations of particular poems by a number of translators, including myself, have appeared in journals and magazines, as well as on the worldwide web.

The chronological spread of these translations demonstrates a continuing interest in Achterberg's work amongst English-speaking writers and poets who have the ability to read Dutch, or who have by special circumstances spent sufficient time in the Netherlands to have been introduced to Achterberg's work[85]. It is too early to determine what the publication of Coetzee's *Ballad of the Gasfitter* will mean for Achterberg's reputation, although it seems from the date of its appearance in book form (2004), as opposed to its first publication in an academic journal (1977), that Coetzee's 2003 Nobel Prize helped him find a publisher for work that might otherwise have been regarded as obscure and unlikely to sell. Yet since 2004, as discussed in 1.2.3, academics have understood that Coetzee's translation of and commentary on the *Ballad of the Gasfitter* played an important part in developing his philosophy, style, and subject-matter as a novelist (see e.g. Attwell 1992; Atwell 1993:59, 65, 67; Attridge 2004b; Geertsema 2008; Poyner 2009). It

[84] There is also an earlier set of translations, Stan Wiersma's *A Tourist does Golgotha and other Poems* (1972), which I have consulted in typescript in the Dutch Literary Museum (LM). As far as I can ascertain, it is not publicly available in book form in the UK. It is not listed in the British Library catalogue, nor is it available at any UK university library. I have recently (2012) been able to consult the actual book at the Dutch Poetry Centre in Bredevoort.

[85] Adrienne Rich spent time in the Netherlands in the early 1960s after her husband, Alfred Conrad, obtained a Guggenheim Fellowship (O'Mahoney 2002). There are three Achterberg translations in her *Collected Early Poems* (Rich 1993). Rich also translates a single Nijhoff poem.

is thus likely that Coetzee's Achterberg will very much be the version the English-speaking reader will know in the future. Previous to the re-publication of Coetzee's *Ballad of the Gasfitter*, O'Loughlin's translations are most likely to have been known, especially in Europe, whilst Boyce's translations, published in Canada, may have been better known in North America (see Kingstone 1989:37-8). However, all these translations represent only a small fraction of Achterberg's extensive oeuvre; moreover, there is little overlap between them, unlike, for example, with Rilke's work where multiple translations make it much more possible to determine the approach taken by the translator in translating formal aspects of the poems.

Nevertheless, the same general trends I identified in the translation of Nijhoff's poetry are apparent in these translations too, although with some important differences: firstly, Achterberg's poetry has rarely been translated by native Dutch speakers, but either by full bilinguals (Wiersma and Boyce) or by near-bilinguals (Coetzee, Brockway, and Holmes); secondly, it has, as far as I can ascertain, not been the domain of the academic translator (as was the case for Nijhoff in the work of Barnouw and P.K. King); and thirdly, many, if not most, of Achterberg's translators have been poets and writers in their own right. It should be stressed then that each distinct translation approach practised by Achterberg's translators has clear merits.

O'Loughlin's route is primarily that of *phanopoeia*, a concentration on the image-basis of each poem with little apparent focus on rhythmic or sound-qualities[86], an approach I identified in 2.3 as being the mainstream 20th-century practice of translating formal poetry. This seems to work best in the tiniest, most imagistic, of Achterberg's poems, for example 'Trumpet', 'Syllables', and 'Emptiness' in *Hidden Weddings*, commissioned by the composer Margriet Ehlen for her song-cycle *Eurydice* (O'Loughlin 1987:72). That these translations work well is attested by positive reviews (see e.g. Pilling 1993:59-60) and by the fact that they

[86] There are vestigial uses of sound-echoes in some line-ends, but usually without clear rhythmic pointing.

still seem to be well-known and well-discussed in Irish literary circles[87]. Nevertheless, the very fact that they tend to work on the inner eye rather than the inner ear means that the same poems could profitably be re-translated with a different emphasis to reveal both a different Achterberg and a different kind of response to the originals.

Coetzee's translations of the *Ballad of the Gasfitter*, a sonnet-cycle, interprets Achterberg's form relatively loosely, but translates both for rhythmic and sonic effects, clearly keeping to a version of the sonnet structure. Coetzee's critical and writerly awareness is too refined for him to fall into the traps I felt that translating for rhyme (rather than rhythmic and syntactic features) had led Barnouw into in his Nijhoff translations. Coetzee is also alert to the religious, metaphysical and, especially, linguistic implications of the cycle, which he discusses with tremendous sensitivity in his 1977 essay 'Achterberg's "Ballade van de Gasfitter": The Mystery of I and You' (Coetzee 1977). Nevertheless, there is a certain stiffness of tone in some of these translated sonnets which I feel *has* been produced by metrical and rhyming needs, by a sound-patterning which is line-end focused and not directed towards the needs of the energized word shaping and re-shaping itself behind apparently ordinary speech:

(12)

line		rhyme	pauses and run-overs	syllable-count
1	But just as I am sitting down at home x / | x / x || x / | x / | x / |||	a	➡	10
2	to eat my dinner, I hear the telephone.	a	|| |||	11
3	I pick it up and from the other end	b	| ➡	10
4	without ado am issued a new command.	b	|||	11

➡ = enjambement

Coetzee 2004:11

[87] In 2008 O'Loughlin was Writer Fellow at the School of English, Trinity College, Dublin. The bibliographical and biographical notes on the web-page for his term of office mention his translation work from Achterberg (O'Loughlin 2009).

The persona of the gasfitter, which the I-speaker of this 'ballad' consciously takes on in the Dutch original, speaks in an everyday language, charged on certain words by the activating of clichéd idioms into their true, and even frightening, signification. The Dutch quatrain is as follows:

(13)

line		rhyme	pauses and run-overs	syllable -count
1	Maar als ik thuisgekomen, goed en wel *but when I home-come, good and well* x / | x / || / x | x / | x / |||	a	|| ➡	10
2	te eten zit, rinkelt de telefoon. *at eating sit tinkles the telephone*	b	|| |||	10
3	Ik pak de horen op en doodgewoon *I pick the horn up and dead-normally* *death-normal* *quite-simply*	b	| ➡	10
4	klinkt aan de andere kant een nieuw bevel. *sounds on the other side a new order rings*	a	|||	10

Points to notice in the Dutch are i) internal sound-patterning, particularly on rinkelt/klinkt; the /k/ sound which runs through every line finishing on 'kant' [side]; and the repeated /o:/ sound, culminating in 'doodgewoon' [absolutely normally/dead-normal]; ii) the reactivated idiom 'doodgewoon' [dead-normal]; the mysterious implications of 'de andere kant' [the other side], especially when linked to 'dead', or 'death' in 'doodgewoon'; iii) the fact that although no particular person is mentioned as speaking to the gasfitter from the other side, the 'bevel' [order/injunction/charge/command] actively sounds or rings from there to the hearer, and that by implication the telephone line forms a sound-connection between one state and another (life and death; the mortal and the immortal; the everyday life where usage overlays the extraordinary nature of language and the actual living spring where everything is new); and iv) that in relation to the 'I' who is actually quite colourless, the objects have an active life of their own (secretly invested with the life of the 'you' for whom the gasfitter is searching in the sequence as a whole). Rhythmically, Achterberg's line-movement here achieves a similar effect to many of Nijhoff's lines, counterpointing speech-rhythm against the basic iambic line, using pausing, reversed feet, enjambement and end-stopping to great effect, whilst never losing the sense of the iambic pentameter. Note in

particular in line 2 the way in which the reversed third foot (trochaic rather than iambic) interrupts the flow of the line, drawing attention to the sound of the telephone, and interrupting the gasfitter's prosaic dinner, just as the telephone itself does, alerting the reader to the unusualness and importance of the call.

Coetzee's version picks up on the surface of the ST but, I feel, does not fully activate its underlying reality (although the commentaries in his 1977 essay show he is perfectly aware of the layers of implication in these poems[88]). This is because, I believe, he reads the rhythmic and sound patterns as 'sonnet-form', and tries to fit, generally rather well, his interpretations into a grid, which admittedly he treats flexibly in terms of what he permits himself as rhyme-sound (home/telephone and end/command), as to where the rhymes fall (altering the scheme), and in terms of metrical variation or loosening (see lines 2 and 4 of (12) above). His practice, therefore, is not at all conformist to the most extreme models of translating for external form. However, because he does not attempt to tie key concepts together through their phonic and rhythmic qualities, the rhythmic effect in the TT at times becomes somewhat mechanical. Note in particular, line 2 of Coetzee's translation which not only does *not* iconically represent the sound and interruptive qualities of the telephone through the rhythm and through the near-onomatopoeic word-choice ('rinkelt'), but transfers agency from the telephone to the hearer. In these translations, as shown in the short example here, Coetzee generally does not allow the sounds to call each other up, a factor Achterberg clearly felt was the ground of his own verse, and which he regretted his French translators had been unable to fully catch (Hazeu 1989:544).

My version of this quatrain attempts to retain the colloquial language of the original, with a livelier tone than in Coetzee's version. I have tried to keep the sound-references ('ring/singing' for 'rinkelt/klinkt' [tinkles/sounds]), tying them together with internal rhyme. Like Coetzee, I have not kept to Achterberg's rhyme-scheme (abba) but where Coetzee uses couplets (aabb), giving a somewhat closed effect, I have used alternate rhyme (abab), very loosely interpreted on the

[88] The essay is a brilliant analysis of the Achterberg ST, and also an enquiry into the nature of language and of translation. The versions given in *Landscape with Rowers* (Coetzee 2004:2-29) are slightly different to those published in the PMLA essay (Coetzee 1977).

b-rhymes. I have retained the reference to death in the idiom 'doodgewoon' [dead-normal], have maintained the agency of the telephone in line 2, and have kept the last clause active, rather than making it passive, as Coetzee does. I have lost the clear reference to 'the other side' [de andere kant], which Coetzee translated as 'from the other end', but I hope that this concept is implied in the image of the 'order' singing its way down the line into the ear of the listener:

(14)

But once I'm h**o**m**e** again, in the **m**i**dd**le
of my **d**inner, the ph**o**ne begins to **ring**.
I pick it up – and like it was dead nor**m**al
a fresh order's **sing**ing down the line.

In the final analysis, the point is not that one translation is preferable to the other, but that side by side they show different ways of reading the ST. Coetzee's version of Achterberg is highly intellectualized, mine more sensually-oriented. Only once in Coetzee's illuminating essay are aspects of sound or rhythm mentioned, and that is in a discussion of the imitative effect and rhetorical meaning of certain enjambements and movements within a particular poem and of Coetzee's translation in comparison to Wiersma's (Coetzee 1977:294). On the whole, it seems that Coetzee reads the poems more as a form of existential philosophy and less as unpredictable, effect-creating constructs.

Holmes's approach to translating Achterberg links closely to what he discovered in translating Nijhoff, that he could break away from notions of rhyme and strict metre, and translate into blank or even free verse. An example of his blank-verse version of Achterberg's sonnet-cycle 'Ballade van de winkelbediende' [ballad of the shop-assistant], 'Ballad of the Store Clerk', can be read in *Dutch Interior* (Holmes 1984:11-13). Since I have already discussed Holmes's approach to the translation of formal features such as metre/rhythm and rhyme in 2.4, and since he does not seem to vary his approach to these two poets (although there is a general growth and change in his translations methods), it appears unnecessary to examine his work in detail here.

James Brockway, the translator most associated with Achterberg's work, well before O'Loughlin's versions were published, and before Coetzee's rendition of

the *Ballad of the Gasfitter*, is the most interesting of all. Brockway knew Achterberg personally, firstly as the translator of Achterberg's poem 'Wichelroede' [divining-rod], which he discussed with Achterberg as early as 1952 (Hazeu 1989:566) and then as a friend, the last person Achterberg visited on the very day of his death (Hazeu 1989:606-7).

Brockway's translations of Achterberg amount to about fifteen poems (Brockway 1980:52), initially scattered through several publications over a period of several years, but finally collected in *Singers behind Glass* (Brockway 1995:28-42[89]). For Achterberg, Brockway *was* his prime English translator and yet everything Brockway wrote about this poetry suggests that he believed it to be essentially untranslatable. His comments show a deep sensitivity to the formal aspects of the poems, but he comes to the surprising conclusion that it is better to "'Love 'em but leave 'em be'" (Brockway 1980:51). In particular, speaking of the poem 'Glazenwasser' [window cleaner] Brockway more or less prohibits translation, not only for himself but for others:

> So much depends on the use of Dutch sounds here that a translator would need to combine an insensitivity to words with self-overestimation of truly elephantine proportions to wish to, to attempt to, make another poem of it in another language.
>
> Brockway 1962:67

In 'Trumpets of the Word', the typescript of which I was able to read in the LM, Brockway makes clear his judgement about the greatness and uniqueness of Achterberg's poetry:

> I will confine myself, therefore, to saying, firstly: that Achterberg is a master; secondly, that he is unique not merely in the way that all true poets are unique but also in a very special way: with his poetry he has created a new Ultima Thule; and thirdly, that, were he writing in a widely-spoken language, he would, I am convinced, long ago have been recognized as one of the greatest poets now living.
>
> Brockway n.d.:1

Brockway's response to Achterberg's sound-world is exactly the opposite to O'Loughlin's: he is literally so enchanted by the formal aspect of the poems, their

[89] Only thirteen of Brockway's Achterberg translations are collected here.

fine metric, rhythmic, and aural balance (Brockway n.d.:3), that he regards 'it as an essential imposition on the translator to preserve these forms, or imitate them as closely as he can' (Brockway 1980:52). But because he could not always re-create the originating form in this manner, Brockway decided to translate no more of Achterberg's poetry. That Achterberg kept hoping he would is apparent from Brockway's own account of Achterberg's visits and the fact that Achterberg sent him all his volumes as they appeared (Brockway 1980:51-2). It is quite likely that it was in order to discuss the possibility of a collection of his work being translated into English that Achterberg made his last visit to Brockway on the day he died, since plans were already being made for a Collected Poems in Dutch.

As I commented in my Master's dissertation (Fawcett 2008:25), Brockway's notion that the translation of poetry entails the exact preservation of the formal features of the original is not one I share, not only because it is a counsel of perfection which eventually leads to decisions such as Brockway's not to translate at all, but also because reproductive exactness is not, and cannot ever be, translation. Jakobson's insight, that in translating poetry one is aiming for 'creative transposition' or re-creation (1987:434), and not a mirror-image of the original, is still valid, as is Willis Barnstone's insistence that all true translation is a form of metaphor-work, a symbolic, rather than a literal, carrying across from one language and culture into another (Barnstone 1993:15-16).

Jakobson's point, as I read it, is not that the translation of poetry should wear its creative credentials on its sleeve, but rather that any translation of a poem *as a poem* is of necessity a creative transposition. By implication, anything less than this creative transposition is not translation either. In refusing to translate any more of Achterberg's poems because of the extreme honour in which he held them, Brockway was essentially saying that he could find no further routes into creative transposition. Paradoxically, since Brockway was considered to be the major translator of Dutch poetry from the 1940s through to his death in 2000, his love of Achterberg's poetry may have held back its translation into the world-language of English by several decades. Certainly he must have disappointed Achterberg's hopes of seeing a collection of his work appear in English in his lifetime. Wiersma's relatively short selection *A Tourist does Golgotha and other*

Poems did not appear until 1972, ten years after Achterberg's death. To lament these facts does not, however, remedy them. The following inter-chapter, a commentary on the translation process of a single Achterberg poem, is a move towards such a remedy, in which rhythm and its working on the body-mind is taken as starting-point and basis.

'encased in glass..'
Achterberg (tr.)

COMMENTARY II

Experiments with rhythm: 'Sneeuwwitje'

> Once the poem is set cool, hard and shining in the mirror-bath, then you can still see the poet's movements within it. Movement is, therefore, not just the sum total of the various factors which determine a poem, it is the determining factor of all the form-facets of the poem. The poem is in movement and is made from movement. This movement has its own rules and its own logic, on which the form-rules of poetry are based. It is a bodily movement, a movement which arises from the organism's biological necessity. It's a movement, therefore, which isn't motivated by meaning, nor is it even interested in that meaning. The meaning is a by-product of the movement.
>
> Han van der Vegt (tr.)

II.i Introduction

The previous chapter, 'Exploring Rhythm', examined the proposition that rhythm is the most important formal element for a translator to consider if that translator wishes to convey the 'feel' of the ST, its emotional impact, and the way it forms the warp-threads through which all other aspects are interwoven. It also considered how rhythm has been treated by poet-translators working in English in the course of the 20th century in general, and with respect to Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poetry in particular. I have shown that rhythm is not an empty carrier of their poems but that it forms one of the most important aspects of their individual poetics. The search for new rhythms linked to Nijhoff's search for renewal of form, to 'abstraction' and 'multiplicity', and his interest in process. In Achterberg's case, as discussed, the interest in rhythm can be related to his over-riding concern with the primal creative energies of the Word, energies expressed in a continuous poiesis.

In both cases, rhythm, in the fullest sense of the word, can be taken to include sonic patternings – rhyme, assonance, alliteration and so forth – and should, as Van der Vegt suggested in an article on Achterberg's poetry, be seen as 'the determining factor of all the form-facets of the poem' (Vegt 2002:15, tr.). This commentary explores a single Achterberg poem, following an intense audio-recorded translation process, to show how the physicalization of rhythm in the translator's body may help solve issues of both form and meaning.

Achterberg's poem 'Sneeuwwitje' was composed before 19th November 1949 – probably after September 1949, but certainly not before April 1948, when Achterberg, still officially a psychiatric patient and Ward of State[90], wrote to a friend asking where he could find a book on Sneeuwwitje [Snow-White], Doornrooschje [Briar Rose/Sleeping Beauty] and Goud-Elsje [Gold-Elsie[91]] (Achterberg 2000d:681).

At first sight 'Sneeuwwitje' seems to be a simple re-telling of the traditional fairy-tale. In fact, in spite of its surface simplicity and fairy-tale qualities, it is a rich and complex poem, of vital importance to the Achterbergian oeuvre in that it both tells and enacts, through split viewpoints, the psychodrama which absorbed Achterberg throughout his poetic life. A close reading reveals that this poem is deeply concerned with the boundaries between life and death, and that the compression of the original story[92] into poetic form highlights that theme. In particular, this poem takes as its unspoken premise the notion that the highly charged language of poetry can make what was dead alive again.

The poem fascinated me because of its ballad-like qualities, its quick shifts of voice, perspective, and time-frame, and because of the masterly way Achterberg adapts the tale and makes it his. The tightly controlled rhythms, four beats to a line, with a clear stop-and-start action accentuated by the tercets, mimic the processes described: Snow White faces death four times, is saved three times, before the final rescue of the Prince preserves her in story and mental image, whilst at the same time confirming that she is already and for always preserved in pre-existent archetypal form.

[90] Achterberg was now married and resident in the isolated hamlet of Hoonte in the east of the Netherlands.
[91] Goud-Elsje is the heroine of a series of books (1946-1960) by Max de Lange-Praamsma (dbnl n.d.).
[92] I am using the phrase 'original story' loosely here. In folktale scholarship the concept of origin is more complex than this phrase suggests. For the purposes of this study, however, it can be assumed that Achterberg was familiar with the most widespread version of the Grimm Brothers' SW tale, KHM53, in the 1857 revised version, on which most Dutch translations have been based (KB 2011).

The ST and gloss-translation appear below, followed by an analytical description of the experimental process I developed to bring the text more closely into the translating body.

stanza	Sneeuwwitje *Snow-white*
1	Sneeuwwitje ligt in glas gekist, *Snow-white lies in glass coffined* bij alle spiegels uitgewist *by/at/in all mirrors wiped-out* en opgegeven als vermist. *and given-up stated as missed (missing)*
2	Omdat zij van de appel at, *because she of the apple ate* de mooiste die zij ooit bezat, *the most-beautiful that she ever possessed* ligt zij in dit gestolde bad. *lies she in this congealed bath*
3	De jager, die haar in het bos *the huntsman who her in the wood* ombrengen moest, liet haar weer los; *to-kill had-to let her again loose free* de jager met zijn vederdos. *the huntsman with his feather-dress feather-attire plumage*
4	Gifsnoer en haarkam konden niet *poison-string(-of-beads?) i.e. necklace? poison-cord (of stay /laces?) and hair-comb could not* bewerken dat zij ons verliet: *bring-about that she us forsook left* de dwergen joegen door het riet. *the dwarves hunted chased hurried through the thatch rush*

5	Alleen	een	appel	is	te	zoet,						
	only	*an*	*apple*	*is*	*too*	*sweet*						
	dan	dat	een	dwergenmond	vermoedt							
	than	*that*	*a*	*dwarf-mouth*	*suspects/guesses*							
	wat	hier	de	dood	Sneeuwwitje	doet.						
	what	*here*	*the*	*dead*	*Snow-white*	*does*						
6	Zij	droegen	haar	tot	op	een	berg.					
	they	*carried*	*her*	*to*	*on*	*a*	*mountain*					
	Onderweg	struikelde	een	dwerg								
	Underway	*stumbled*	*a*	*dwarf*								
	tegen	de	kist	aan,	zonder	erg.						
	against	*the*	*coffin box*	*on*	*without*	*damage harm*						
7	Zij	ligt	met	hoge	kleur	totdat						
	she	*lies*	*with*	*high*	*colour*	*till*						
	de	prins	haar	twee	ijshanden	vat,						
	the	*prince*	*her*	*two*	*ice-hands*	*grasps*						
	diep	met	zijn	armen	in	het	nat.					
	deep	*with*	*his*	*arms*	*in*	*the*	*wet*					
8	Dan	schiet	de	appel	uit	haar	keel					
	then	*shoots*	*the*	*apple*	*out*	*her*	*throat*					
	en	stroomt	het	bloed	weer	als	fluweel					
	and	*streams*	*the*	*blood*	*again*	*like*	*velvet*					
	door	lichaams	fonkelend	juweel.								
	throug h	*body's*	*sparkling*	*jewel*								
9	Hij	zet	haar	voor	zich	op	het	paard				
	he	*her*	*in-front-of*	*before*	*himself*	*on*	*the*	*horse*				
	sets											
	Als	zij	hem	in	de	ogen	staart					
	if	*she*	*him*	*in*	*the*	*eyes*	*stares*					
	ziet	ze	haar	beeld	daarin	bewaard.						
	sees	*she*	*her*	*image*	*therein*	*preserved*						
10	Nu	gaat	het	in	gestrekte	draf.						
	now	*goes*	*it*	*in*	*stretched*	*trot*						
				= at full pace at a gallop								
	Op	vuurpantoffels	danst	voor	straf							
	on	*fire-slippers*	*dances*	*for*	*punishment*							
	de	boze	koningin	naar ' t	graf.							
	the	*wicked*	*queen*	*to-the*	*grave*							

Figure 4: 'Sneeuwwitje': gloss

Most of the poems I translated in the course of this study were translated for the first time within this period. 'Sneeuwwitje', however, is a poem I had already translated in 2005 and put aside because of my dissatisfaction with the outcome. This meant that when I returned to the poem in 2009 I could begin to develop a translation approach in which a concern for understanding the precise wording of the ST could give way to a more holistic apprehension, letting the body-mind work physically and imaginatively with the movements and image-structure of the poem. I should stress that the poem was re-translated in 2009 and not revised.

The two processes, in summary, were as follows:

19/10/2005	total time spent on translation
conventional approach to translation of poem[93]:	
• preliminary reading of ST • careful dictionary work • analysis of metre and rhyme-scheme • analysis of other stylistic features of ST • word-by-word/line-by-line translation focus • several drafts • continuous comparison to ST (focus on meaning) • TT ('final' product)	approximately 4h
• further corrections (14/2/2006)	approximately 30m
	= 4½h (estimate)

Figure 5: conventional approach

Since none of my 2005 drafts have survived my estimate of timings is based on evidence from the recorded 'properties' of the electronic documents relating to this work, and on comparisons with similar and more recent translation work of my own. Jones finds that 'On average, translators spent 2h 16m translating and revising [an] 86-word text' (2011:118). 'Sneeuwwitje' totals 176 words, just over double the number of words in Jones' ST, so my timing of 4½h is very similar.

[93] I mean my own, pre-doctoral study, 'convention'. This is what Jones defines as a 'pure line' approach (2011:92). The 'experimental' approach is intended to be deliberately more 'wholeistic' (cf. Jones 2011:91).

February – May 2009					
body-mind approach to translation					
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
image-frame	finding the rhythms recorded on OneNote and Audacity (3 recordings)	incorporating the rhythms recorded on OneNote and Audacity	adding the words (ST) recorded on Audacity	working with feeling and emotion recorded on Audacity	draft translation using image-frame not ST noted in OneNote
Stage 7	Stage 8	Stage 9	Stage 10	Stage 11	Stage 12
further drafts (4 in total) emphasis on oral nature of text noted in OneNote	recording translated text	2nd recording of translated text	listening to interaction of rhythmic and vocal interpretation of ST and TT	gloss translation (a month after main work on text)	further adjustments to translation May 2009 -> 2012
Total time (stages 1 to 10): approximately 9 hours (including 4 hours 47 minutes working on TT)					
Total time (stages 11 to 12): approximately 3 hours NB this process is ongoing					
Total time (all stages): at least 12 hours					

Figure 6: Body-mind (experimental) approach

The most immediate differences apparent between the two approaches will be clear from the above figures: firstly, in the experimental translation approach the time working directly with the texts has at least tripled; secondly, the stages are more clearly defined in the experimental approach; and thirdly, the use of audio-recording has greatly oralized the process. Finally, it should be clear that the kind of stylistic analysis which many poetry translators rely on when translating poems (see e.g. Beaugrande 1978; Boase-Beier 2006:117-19; Jones 2011:91), has *not* been consciously incorporated into the experimental approach. This was a deliberate decision and does not, as should be clear from the remainder of this

commentary, preclude stylistic awareness but approaches style by another route which recognizes that translating poetry is not only a question of analyzing the 'mind style' expressed in the poem (Boase-Beier 2006:18, 116-119; Fowler 1977:103; Leech and Short 1981:263ff) but also of acknowledging the fact that mind and body cannot easily be separated from each other, and hence that a kinaesthetic appreciation of the physical movement of a poem may be an equally valid route into stylistic awareness. This is not to value one mode above the other, and indeed this study as a whole has made use both of stylistic analysis and of direct corporeal experience of the poem.

What is not apparent either in *Figure 5* or *6* above is how much (incalculable) time was spent in familiarization with Achterberg's oeuvre as a whole, and how much influence knowledge of that oeuvre, and of critical responses to it, has had on either translation[94]. Certainly at both times there was good preliminary knowledge of the oeuvre, but my experience of Achterberg scholarship was minimal until my academic studies enabled me to access a wider range of materials than previously possible. Crucially, and paradoxically, as has been exemplified in the previous chapters, it is the increased insight into the poet's poetics which has encouraged a less mentalized, more holistic approach to the task of translation.

Figure 5 does not represent an accurate presentation of the translation stages, which can be assumed to interpenetrate each other; for example, a concern with ST lexis is not only limited to preliminary 'careful dictionary work'. Although my common practice is to identify problematic or ambiguous lexical items early in the process, I would make use of reference sources throughout if these might help me find alternative solutions to a potential translation. Similarly, the careful reading, or 'run-through' (Jones 2011:116) of the ST will happen on more than one occasion. However, only generalized retrospective and introspective statements can be made about my previous approaches to poetic translation, since

[94] Jones also, indirectly, acknowledges that familiarity with a poet's oeuvre and with the source and target systems are incalculables with respect both to the time it takes to translate a specific poem from such an oeuvre and the ensuing 'quality' of the translation (2011:46, 110-11).

prior to my studies I rarely recorded or made notes on the process, although some drafts of my earlier Achterberg translations do exist.

The stages detailed in *Figure 6*, which represents the 'experimental' approach to the translation of 'Sneeuwwitje', will now be analyzed in further detail.

As discussed in 1.1, the decision to approach aspects of the translation process experimentally was taken to help me change more or less habitual elements of my practice. I related this to aspects of Zen philosophy which stress both the importance of submission to and breakage with tradition (1.1) – and ingrained habit – in order to 'go-beyond' (ibid.). In deepening my awareness of what exactly rhythm is, as discussed in Chapter 2, my conclusions led me to believe that it was important to break the habit of pre-analysis of metre and rhyme-scheme, which in any case, as I have shown in Commentary I, did not necessarily lead to a full awareness of rhythmic and aural effects, their interplay with each other and with the text as a whole.

In exploring body-mind aspects of the translation process in this and other translation experiments, I have not only been influenced by certain non-dualistic aspects of Eastern philosophies but also by Scott's insistence that translation should be concerned with the 'phenomenology – the whole-body experience, the kinaesthetics – of reading, rather than the interpretation[95] of texts' (Scott 2011:213, 2012a). Where Scott, however, in work after work of experimental translation product (see e.g. Scott 2006, 2000, 2008b, 2012b) has attempted to make that whole-body experience visible in the TT through a variety of techniques which 'multiply obstructions to a fluent, linear, recapitulative kind of reading [...] by various processes of linguistic provocation' (Scott 2011:216), and which, by virtue of their difference to the ST clearly do not replace it, but rather through 'ramification' and 'variation' lead the reader back to the ST, my aim throughout my experimental work has been to reach towards a product which, of necessity, will stand in for (though not replace) the ST. That this is 'of necessity'

[95] The analytical work in this thesis will demonstrate that I feel that a whole-body approach to reading does not preclude an interpretative approach to a text. On the contrary, I feel that the two approaches can complement and support each other, grounding a translation in a total response to the ST.

for both Nijhoff's and Achterberg's texts should be clear from the foregoing discussion in 1.2.3, which detailed not only how little impact their work has had outside the Dutch literary system, but also how little known its literature is.

Scott is not the only practising translator or translation theorist to place emphasis on the psycho-physical. Robinson too, in *The Translator's Turn* (1991) and *Who translates?* (2001), lays emphasis on the 'somatic', rejecting the binarisms of over-rationalized theories of translation. Similarly Nikolaou and Kyritsi in their introductory essay to *Translating Selves*, consider 'how a whole sensibility is mobilized in translation', and express their belief that current developments in Translation Studies are 'constituted by a synergy of 'creative', 'experiential', 'cognitive' and 'subjective' turns which [...] proceed to trace [translation's] manifold private events and expressive releases' (2008:7). Both the specific example of Scott's experiments in translation and the interest of theorists such as Robinson, Nikolaou and Kyritsi in the psycho-physiological, encouraged me to believe that a consciously developed whole-body approach to working with the translation of a poem would be worth investigating.

'Sneeuwwitje' was neither the first nor last poem I translated using kinaesthetic, imagic, memory-based, and whole-body techniques, but the approach analyzed below is representative of the methodology as developed in the first stages of my doctoral research.

II.ii Description and analysis of experimental approach

Aim of experiment

The main aim of the experiment was to discover whether intensive kinaesthetic work with the aural, oral, imagic and, in particular, rhythmic elements of a poem might help the translator produce a satisfyingly artistic TT which would have a similar impact on the TT reader as the ST would on a ST reader. In order to achieve this I felt that the ST should be restored to its pre-textual condition[96],

[96] I recognize that this is a fiction, since the text emerges in the act of writing. Nevertheless, as suggested by Muldoon, many translator-poets do feel that they are reaching through the ST to 'some ur-poem' of which 'both "original poem" and "poetic translation" are manifestations' (Muldoon 2006:195, also cited in Reynolds 2011:30).

before being returned to text in the TL. This aim implied that the activation of visual and bodily memory would play a large part in developing the translation method. A secondary aim, therefore, was to attempt to translate the ST as much from memory as possible. These aims were intended as a corrective measure to the kinds of faults detailed in Commentary I, caused by an over-literal response to ST lexis and an over-analytical, yet stylistically inept, response to the formal elements of the ST.

Stage 1: the image-frame

Since my aim was to work kinaesthetically with the poem, and to incorporate essential elements of the text into the body-mind, so that I would eventually be able **to translate the ST without recourse to the written text**, I felt it would be important to create a skeleton outline of the main images in the poem, as an aide-memoire for the later translation-work. This, as illustrated in *Figure 7* below, simply entailed extracting key-words from the text and very occasionally jotting down a possible English equivalent for something I found puzzling. This meant that I consulted a dictionary rather less than I would have done in previous approaches to translation[97]. It also substituted analysis of poetic techniques, as detailed in *Figure 5* above, for a direct involvement with the word-material of the poem, in a first move from the intellectual to the more directly perceptual.

What should be stressed is that the power of the 'image-frame' is stronger than suggested by the simple figure below, in that the text as such 'disappears' and is replaced by a series of images with which the mind works. The image-frame becomes even more powerful when the images are deliberately placed in the memory and no written aide-memoire is used, as will be discussed in my conclusion (Chapter 5). In my discussion of Stage 6 below I return to the part played by the image-frame in the present translation exercise.

[97] Seven times in total for a 176-word poem. The dictionary consulted was the monolingual *WNT-online*. The word in Figure 7 which puzzled me was 'gifsnoer'; this does not appear in the dictionary as such, since it is an invented compound word [poison-cord]. I discuss this further in my analysis of Stage 12.

Figure 7: 'Sneeuwwitje' – image-frame (stanzas 1-4)

Stage 2: finding the rhythms

Once the image-frame was established, I set this aside and focused on the poem as a complete rhythmic unity, working my way through the whole text by beating out the rhythms with a set of improvised tools, further described below.

I have called this stage 'finding the rhythms' to emphasize the exploratory, tentative nature of the bodily work. Metrical analysis, by contrast, would have involved a mentalization of the rhythms, something I tried to avoid here. As already emphasized, one of the aims of conscious process-based work is to interrogate and even break with former habits, and so a more physical approach to the work seemed appropriate. It might be argued that I could have substituted another analytical system for the metrical scansion I had previously used, for example Cureton's musically-derived hierarchical system of temporal analysis (Cureton 1992, 1997, 2002) or Attridge's beat-based system (Attridge 1995, Carper and Attridge 2003), and I have indeed found the thinking behind both helpful in enabling me to see why rhythm is so important in poetry, and how it might be formally described. Cureton's insistence that '[p]oetic meaning depends on poetic form through their mutual dependence on rhythm' (Cureton n.d.) is important, whilst Attridge's system helped me devise a graphic presentation of rhythms in Nijhoff's work (see Commentary III) and encouraged me to work physically with the beats of 'Sneeuwwitje'. The point of this experiment was not

to make a formal descriptive analysis of the rhythmic properties of the poem, but rather to teach the body what these rhythms are in performance, so that a rhythmically effective translation might ensue from the practice. A secondary outcome, however, as will be discussed below, was to draw the mind's attention to the interaction of the rhythms with aspects of semantic meaning and to suggest that the rhythms not only underpin but help create these.

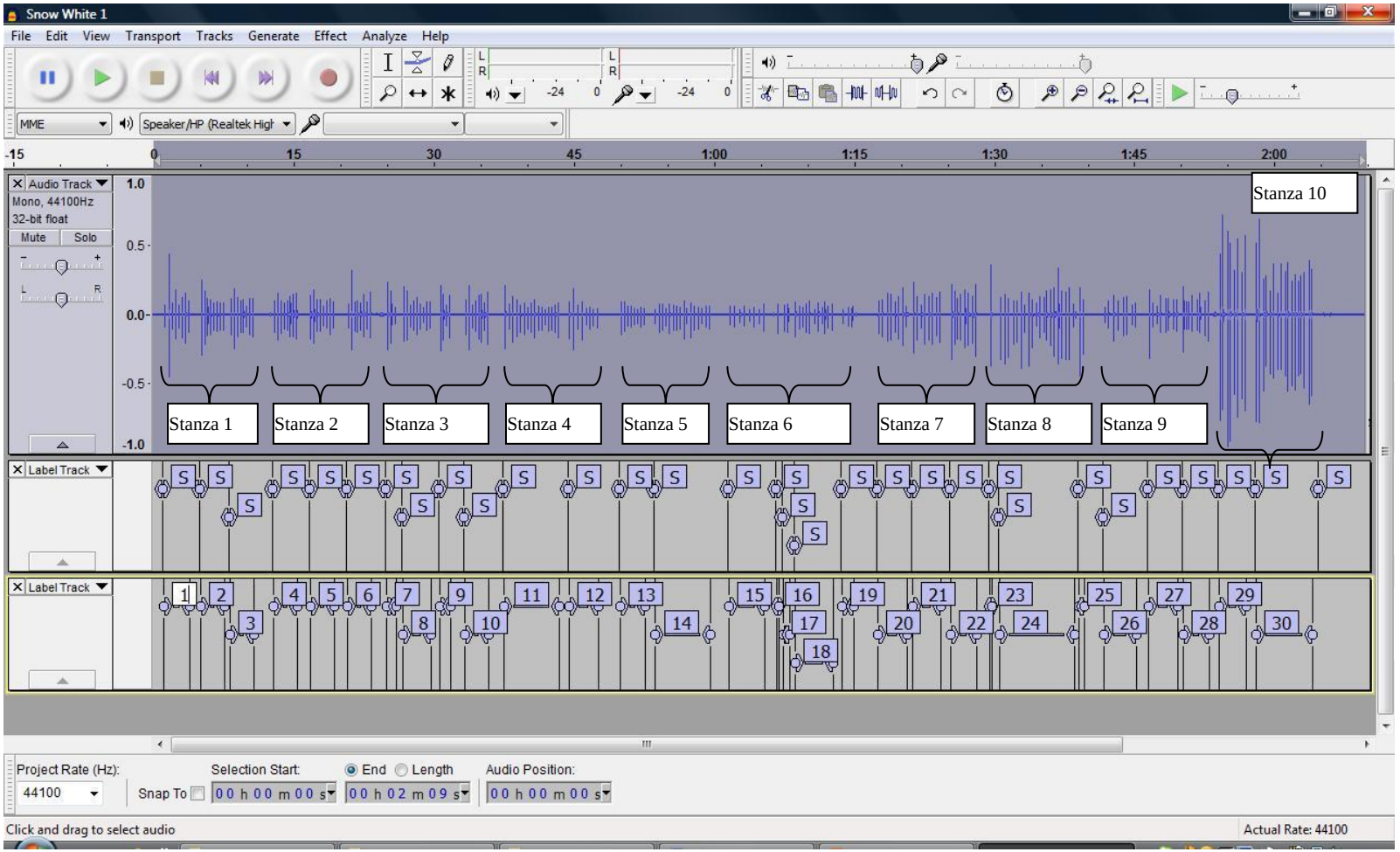
As in constructing the 'image-frame', the work seems deceptively simple since it consists of beating through the poem using, in this case, simple improvised tools, with the text acting as a performance score. However, there is no other way I can imagine in which non-verbalized textual rhythms can change from a mental construct to full activation in the body: some kind of beating through the rhythms has to occur in order to explore physically what that rhythm is. By doing so the text is moved from the linguistic to the pre-linguistic, the rhythmic patterning which, as many poets have testified, insists on finding expression in words well before the ideas of the poem begin to take shape (e.g. Skelton 1971:108; Roberts 1991:36; Valéry 1964:80).

The tools were two pen-boxes and corresponded to 'claves', the percussion instruments used in Cuban and other Afro-Caribbean music. In later work I used a Chinese muyu, a small handheld wooden slit drum, to achieve the same effect. *Figure 8* is a photograph of the set of 'claves' I used for the present work, simply snatched up from my work-desk on the spur of the moment to enable me to produce a recordable percussive sound.

The emphasis of Stage 2 was not only on doing – the performativity of rhythm – but also on receiving – carefully listening to the beat-out rhythms in audio-recordings of my performance. The recordings were made first on OneNote and then on the Audacity recording programme, once I realized that Audacity would provide a better record of the process, enabling me to see, as well as hear, my interpretation of the rhythmic basis of the poem. The programme also allows the user to analyze certain aspects of the audio-recording, in this case units of sound and silence.

Figure 8: improvised 'claves'

Figure 9 shows in waveform the recording of the beaten-out rhythms for the full poem. The taller the blue lines are, the louder the sound produced by the improvised claves. Other features that can clearly be seen are the distinct pauses between stanzas and the somewhat shorter pauses at the ends of lines, or for a light internal pause. Labels show where each stanza begins and ends, making it clear that the rhythms for stanzas 3 and 6 were slightly more prolonged in duration than for the other stanzas, due to internal pauses in each case. This is clearly visible in the figure, both in the waveform image and in the analysis of units of silence.



Track 1: full poem (slowish, careful rhythms)

pauses of 0.66s or more = silence (S)

units of sound

Figure 9: working with the rhythms (24/02/09)

Stanza 3 has two internal pauses marked by commas,

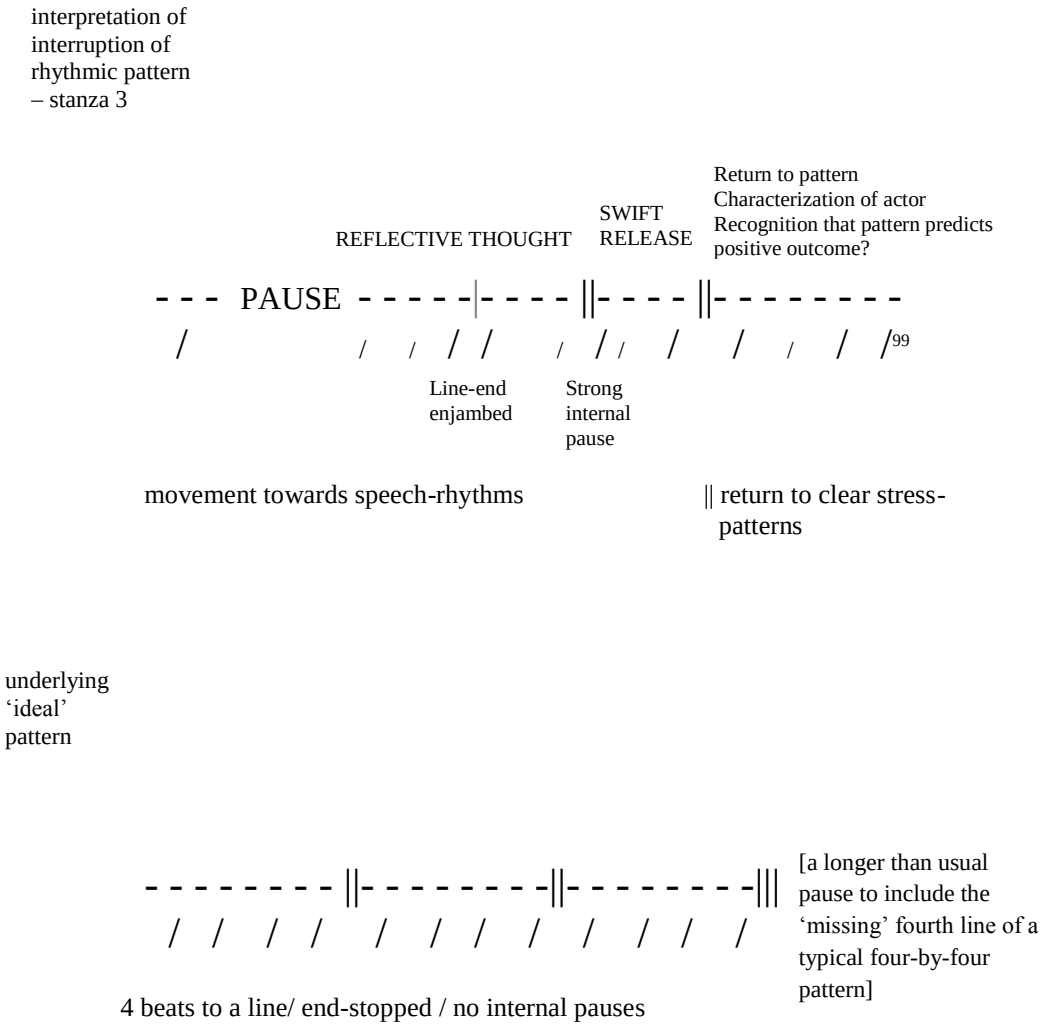
> De jager**,** die haar in het bos
> ombrengen moest**,** liet haar weer los;
> de jager met zijn vederdos.[98]

interrupting the pattern of 8 syllables of sound to one or more units of silence [8||8||8|||]; the measure instead becomes 3|9|4||8|||, counterpointing the still-existent underlying measure.

Although I deliberately did not subject the physicalization of the rhythms to any kind of intellectual analysis at the time, later reflection, with the help of the audio-recordings, led me to feel that the patterns of inevitability declared by the 8-8-8 pattern (with a 4-4-4 underlying beat) are interrupted at key points in the re-telling of the story, where what is apparently fated to occur does *not* occur. In stanza 3 the intention is that Snow White must die, but the hunter in fact gives her freedom. The overlay of a different rhythmic pattern on top of the underlying one seems to enact the pause for thought of the actor in this stanza, the awkwardness of the duty of murder for the hunter and his essential unwillingness to carry out the action.

Figure 10 shows how I believe the rhythms to be working in enacting the broad movement of the story and the thought-processes and actions of the actor. The interruption of the rhythms here, and the breaking away from strong stress-based to looser, more speech-like, rhythms, is interesting in the light of Abraham's contrast between rhythm as object and rhythm as action (Abraham 1985:84), with the first type of encounter, as discussed in 2.3, able to abolish consciousness entirely and underlying certain kinds of shamanic practices, and the second being creative, spontaneous, intentional and conscious. It is precisely when the poem breaks out of the underlying rhythmic template that interesting and, in the context of the story, freely chosen actions occur.

[98] Gloss translation: the hunter who her in the woods/kill had-to, let her again free/the hunter with his plumage.


interpretation of interruption of rhythmic pattern – stanza 3
Return to pattern
Characterization of actor
Recognition that pattern predicts positive outcome?
SWIFT RELEASE
REFLECTIVE THOUGHT
- - - PAUSE - - -

Again, a simple counting of syllable movement can help us see what is happening here, bearing in mind the underlying iambic 8||8||8||| syllable-pattern; here we have 8||13|3, whilst the stress pattern becomes:

struikelde
x / x / x / x /|| / x / **/ x x** x / / x x / x | / x /|||.

enjambement

The clear interruption of the stress-pattern in line 2 of this stanza, particularly obvious on the word 'struikelde' [stumbled/tripped] forces the voice to enact the same stumbling movement, but, more importantly, fulfils a similar purpose to that operative in Stanza 3: what was supposed to have happened has not happened. The SW template story (KHM53 1857) has the poisoned apple dislodging from the Princess's throat when the Prince's servants carry away the crystal coffin and one of them stumbles 'on some brush' (Ashliman 1998-2011), or 'over a tree-stump' (Taylor 1884)[101]. In this stanza, although the stumbling occurs, crucially this does not lead to the resuscitation (or resurrection) of Snow White. The action of stumbling is transferred from one of the servants to a dwarf. This does not seem especially important, other than thereby limiting the narrative action to the major actors in the story, and therefore making the story more compact, as appropriate for a ballad-like poem. What does seem significant, however, is the fact that this 'prevention' of something occurring is of a different order to that in stanza 3 which is part of the original pattern of the template story. In stanza 6 the narrative voice tells the story more or less as it occurs in the template with the one significant change that the apple does not dislodge, allowing a new element to be introduced later in the poem: that the Prince will be directly responsible for resuscitating Snow White. This twist of the tale does not occur as in the classic Disney cartoon film (1937)[102] with the Prince's kiss reviving the girl, but with the Prince-figure in the poem 'grasping' or 'gripping' her 'ice-hands', and thereby physically raising her up, in an action reminiscent of Christ's in Mark

[101] 'Da geschah es, daß sie über einen Strauch stolperten, und von dem Schüttern fuhr der giftige Apfelgrütz, den Schneewittchen abgebissen hatte, aus dem Hals' (KHM53 1857).
[102] The film was premiered in Dutch on the 11th November 1938. Achterberg was in the psychiatric asylum in Avereest by that time (Hazeu 1989:236ff) and is unlikely to have seen it. The movement towards making the Prince the direct saviour of Snow White seems, therefore, to be Achterberg's own.

5:41, when he raises Jairus's daughter from the dead, through words of power and through taking her by the hand[103]. The change of rhythm in this stanza is, therefore, extremely important as it signals not only that what was fated (in the template story) to occur did not occur in this version, but also prepares the reader for the potential actions of the Prince, the actor who can most closely be identified with the implied author, the poet whose creative use of language (words of power) may also give life to the beloved. This is why, I feel, the words which follow the stumbling of the dwarf against the coffin are 'zonder erg' [without evil/hurt/damage = without evil intentions = accidentally]: the dwarf stumbles accidentally, but also causes no evil or hurt to the willed outcome of the story for which the agency of the Prince-figure in resuscitating Snow White is essential. The idiomatic usage of 'zonder erg' would suggest only that the dwarf does not stumble deliberately, but the re-activated literal meaning suggests both the fact that the coffin is not damaged by the fall, and that the story can now take a new direction. If the stumble had been smoothed over by the immediate resuscitation of Snow White, then the Prince would have no agency in her resurrection. This, I feel, is the 'erg' [evil] which has been averted by the narrative change, signalled and tied into the whole by the rhythms.

Without the intensive play with rhythm enacted and recorded in this and the following stage, I think it unlikely that I would have been so aware of the iconic role of the rhythm here, its intimate link to the narrative movement of the poem and its symbolic and psychological implications. This obviously has implications for the translation too.

Likewise, the most salient feature of the rhythmic movement of the poem, the triadic line-structure of each stanza which conceals a hidden fourth line – a prolonged period of silence between the stanzas when the body-mind continues the expected pattern (4 beats or stresses in a stanza of four lines: Attridge's 4 x 4 pattern) – is noticeably given attention in the 'beating out' of the rhythms, not by audibly continuing the beat, but by giving the expected four beats of the

[103] The Dutch Statenvertaling of the Bible uses the same verb for this action as Achterberg does in 'Sneeuwwitje': 'vatten' [to grasp/grip/take hold].

missing line full weight in the silent pauses between the stanzas. *Figure 9* shows that the inter-stanza pauses are about 3s to 3.5s, as is each line of the poem, except when affected by the rhythmic changes analyzed above. This 'hidden' line also has possible iconic implications relating to tension, expectancy and fatefulness, as the mind is left to imagine what is happening in the silence and, since the story is already known in its main outlines, to wonder when and how the expected resurrection may occur. Possibilities both of complete closure (death) or of release lurk within that silence.

Stage 3: incorporating the rhythms

It should be remembered that the aim of this experimental approach to translating 'Sneeuwwitje' was to work intensively and kinaesthetically with the sensual aspects of the poem, to place the poem as fully as possible in the translating body, before attempting a translation. In Stage 3, therefore, I wanted to carry the work to a point where the rhythms were as fully incorporated as possible, so that kinaesthetic memory would be more completely activated. In developing my approach at this stage I was not only influenced by Scott's work, as already detailed above, on the part played by the kinaesthetic and psychosomatic in reading and translation, but also by Sheets-Johnstone's emphasis on the corporeal and her conviction that 'kinesthetic awarenesses are overlooked as a form of knowledge' (2011:xviii), that bodily movement is 'meaning-directed' (2011:xxx) and that 'thinking in movement' is 'our original mode of thinking' (2011:xxxi). Similarly, my background in teaching drama and theatre studies was an important influence, in particular my awareness of Stanislavski's 'Method of Physical Actions' which works from the premise that physical and psychological processes are one, and that 'conscious work' on physical technique can lead the actor to the truthful and artistic portrayal of emotion (Moore 1965). My reading in these authors led me to the conviction that further work on the rhythms of the poem was essential for full body-mind apprehension, to achieve an artistically truthful translation.

In order to 'incorporate' the rhythms, that is place the rhythms of the poem within the kinaesthetic and aural memory systems, I approached their 'beating

out' with the claves more freely than in Stage 2, and also moved the body in time to the rhythms, with freely improvised movements, effectively dancing through the poem, in keeping with the ballad-like aspects of its form. I repeated this exercise several times, practising before recording.

Figure 11 shows the audio-recording of this stage in wave-form. The main point to notice here is that the number of periods of silence (pausing) has reduced in comparison to the more exploratory rhythmic work of Stage 2. There is also a greater dynamic range, because the feelings and emotions are more activated, whilst speed of performance has increased tremendously from 2m.09s in Stage 2 (*Figure 9*) to 1m.44s in Stage 3, suggesting that the rhythmic work has progressed from the preparatory and exploratory to the spontaneously performative. The performance speed of the rhythmic patterns of the poem is very similar to Track 3, the first spoken performance of the ST (1m.36s) and to Track 5, the first spoken performance of the TT (1m.42s) (see *Figure 16* below). This suggests that the incorporation of the rhythms had an effect on the later spoken performances, in particular of the English translation, and, in all likelihood, on the translation itself.

Figure 12 gives a close-up view of the recordings of the rhythmic work in both Stages 2 and 3, focusing on stanza 1. I have added the words of the stanza beneath the waveform to show how the beats, or taps, relate to the words. As in Stage 2, I listened to the recording several times, both with and without the text, but also noted the syncopated effects produced by dual tracking. The further possibilities of syncopated rhythms were not explored in this translation but the exercise helped me move away from a too literalistic approach to metre once the translation-stage was reached.

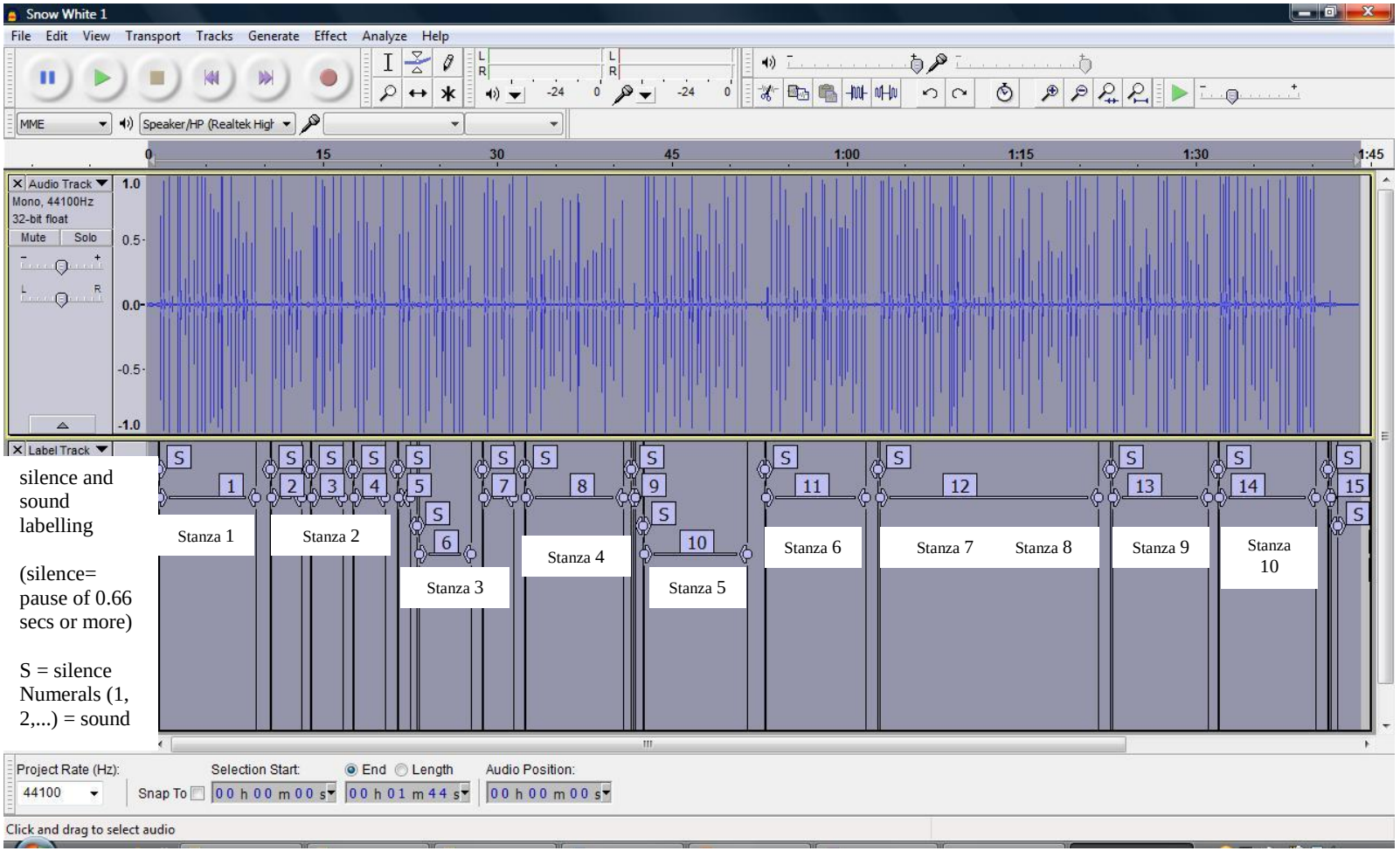


Figure 11: working with rhythm: SW Track 2 – dance-like, more incorporated, freer use of pausing and timing

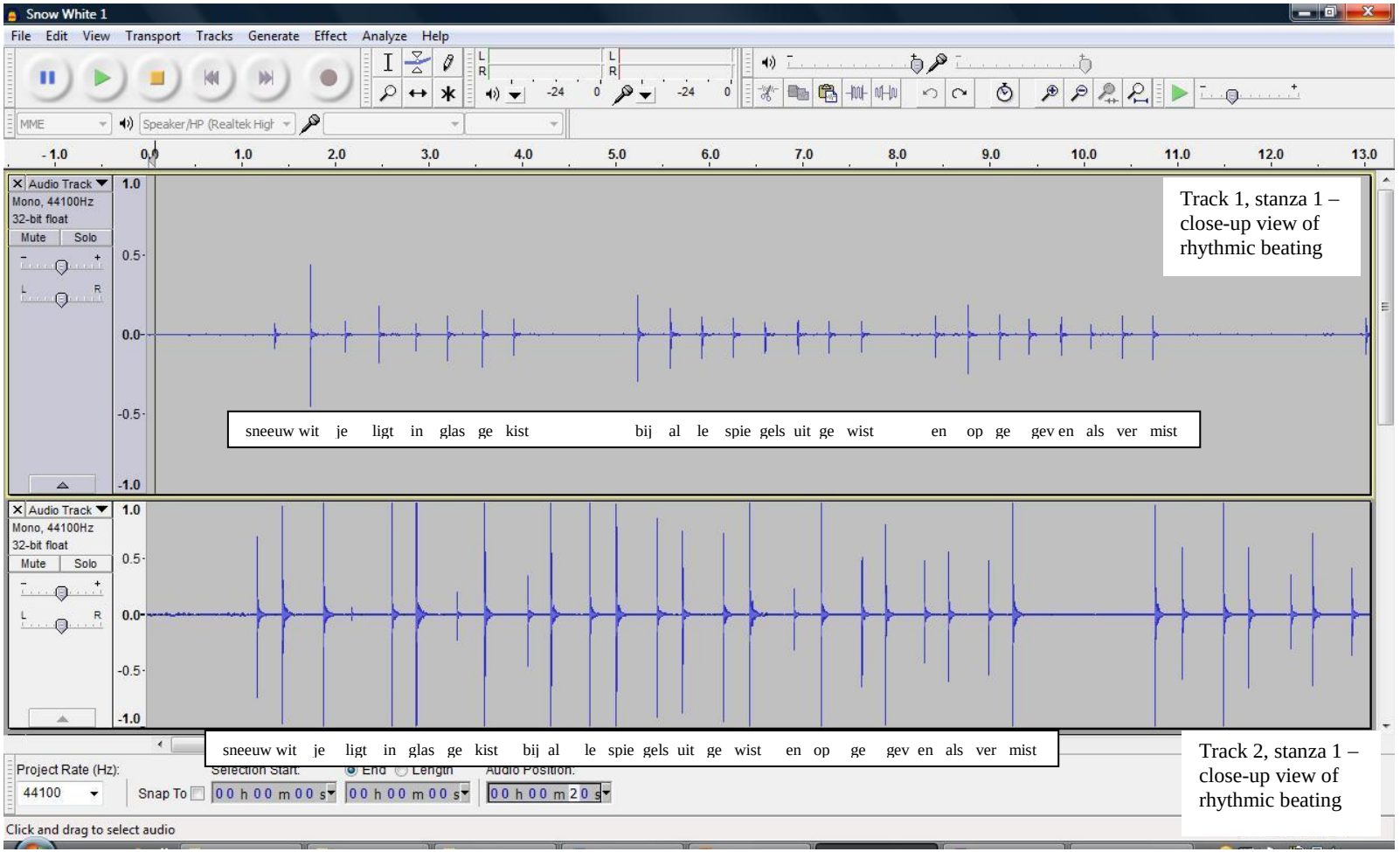


Figure 12: working with rhythm: stanza 1 SW – dual tracking syncopated effect

Stage 4: adding the words

After intensive work with the rhythmic structures of the poem – approximately 3 hours, according to the record in OneNote – I moved on to recording the words of the ST, retaining one audio-recording as an example.

My first readings were somewhat hesitant, lacking in fluency and fully expressed feeling, but the tentativeness reflects something of the way in which words enter the mind and fit themselves to a pre-existing rhythm. In other words, I was re-creating some of the effect of composition on the originating author. This can be viewed as akin to the notion, as described by Jones, that translators 'perform the identity or identities of the poet' (2011:196). *Figure 16*, referred to in detail in my description of Stage 12 of this translation experiment, includes the waveform screenshot for Track 5 of my work with 'Sneeuwwitje', which represents this stage of the process.

As with Stages 2 and 3 an important element was to listen to the recording, allowing the text to sink further into the mind as an aural/oral artefact. Similarly, playing with the multi-tracking capabilities of Audacity allowed me to hear the poem in conjunction with the rhythm tracks, and hence perceive it as a highly performative entity.

Stage 5: working with feeling and emotion

This stage mirrors Stage 3: incorporating the rhythms in that the aim of Stage 5 was to work as spontaneously as possible with the spoken text to let the emotions suggested by the words be expressed.

I focused on producing a good quality recording which would again help set the ST in my auditory memory and which would pay attention to the rhythmic and other formal properties of the text.

Stage 6: draft translation using image-frame

After about four hours of play with the rhythmic and sonic qualities of the original, a much longer process of consciously working with these aspects of a poem than previously used, I started to make the first translation, based on the Dutch (ST) image-frame, not on the text of the poem as such. As noted above, the image-frame was intended as a simple aide-memoire and the previous stages had set the ST pretty well in my memory, without any deliberate form of memorization. I used the image-frame only to jog my memory of the order of the stanzas and simply glanced at it from time to time.

The emerging English translation was constantly tested by being spoken aloud, once again not checking back to the ST since the intensive preparatory work had made me fairly sure I had incorporated its way of moving and meaning. In this manner I had already, as suggested by my reading of Benjamin, turned my 'attention [...] away from meaning' so that I could 'lovingly, and in detail [...] fashion a counterpart to the original's mode of intention' (Benjamin 1997:161).

Stage 7: further drafts

In total there were four written drafts, each spoken aloud but not yet recorded.

The changes made at this point can be seen in *Figure 13* where the 2009 translation may be compared to the 2005 draft. I should stress that I made no reference at all to the previous translation during this process, and had not looked at it for several years. However, as can be seen in *Figure 13*, some 2005 translation solutions were retained in my memory, mostly unconsciously, and were re-used in 2009. Some of these similarities can be accounted for by the fact that the TT remained the same and the same person was translating it.

	2005 translation (pre-doctoral study)	February 2009 (draft) translation
	Snow White	Snow White
1	Snow White lies enclosed in crystal, she's been wiped out of every mirror, is on the Missing Persons' List.	Snow White lies encased in glass. Every mirror has wiped her out. She's on the Missing Persons List.
2	Because she ate a bite of apple, the loveliest she'd ever handled, she lies inside this congealed bath.	Just because she took a bite ~~she'd ever tried~~ from the fairest apple ever made ~~congeal~~ she has to lie congealed in ice.
3	The hunter, who was meant to dispatch her in the woods, has let her loose; the hunter with his feather-dress.	The huntsman told to murder her in the woods, let her go free; the huntsman in his plumed attire.
4	Necklace and hair-comb couldn't make their poison work so that she'd leave us; dwarves hunted for danger in the rushes.	~~poison-comb and poison-beads~~ Poison-beads and poison-comb could not make her leave our home – ~~chased through the reeds~~ ~~tracked evil in the reeds~~ the dwarves checked for evil in the thatch.
5	But an apple is too sweet for a dwarf mouth to suspect what dead Snow White is doing here.	Only an apple is so sweet that not a dwarf could suspect why dead Snow White is lying here.
6	They carried her right up a fell. One of the dwarves stumbled and fell against the casket. Nothing cracked.	They carried her to a mountain-top. A dwarf stumbled on the path against the casket, but nothing broke.
7	She lies with rosy cheeks until the prince grips her hands of ice, deep with his arms inside the wet.	~~She will lie with rosy cheeks until~~ With rosy cheeks she will lie in state ~~the prince grasps her two ice-hands~~ until the prince grasps her hands of ice, ~~deep in the~~ plunging his arms in the deep wet.
8	Then the apple will shoot out of her throat, her blood will flow like velvet in the body's sparkling jewel.	~~out of~~ Then the apple will shoot from her throat, and once again the velvet blood ~~shining jewel~~ will stream in the body's diamond.
9	He sets her in front upon his steed. If she will look him in the eye she'll see her image there preserved.	He sets her before him on his horse. If she turns and looks inside his eyes she'll see her image, still life-size.
10	Now the story gallops away. The wicked queen in fire-slippers dances her punishment to the grave.	~~quickens pace~~ Now the story gallops away. On fire-shoes the wicked queen dances her punishment to the grave.
	19/10/05	24/02/09

Figure 13: Draft translations of 'Sneeuwwitje'[104]

[104] The 'clean' text represents the last draft; the crossed-out text represents previous ones. Where there is more than one crossed-out phrase, the first above the line represents the first draft. The final translation is in the Appendix.

What is clear is that the intensive work with rhythm has greatly improved the movement of the 2009 version and that the imagination, through working with the image-frame, and by activating memory and emotions, is much more fully engaged.

Stanzas 3 and 6, whose rhythmic movement I commented on in Stage 2, showing how closely this interacted with the poem's deeper meanings and symbolic implications, now move in ways closer to the ST. Stanza 3 in the 2005 TT was quite inept in its movement and phrasing, particularly in the handling of the long central phrase 'die haar in het bos/ombrengen moest' [who her in the wood/kill had-to] (9 syllables) which in the ST does not break the iambic tetrameter line. Although I identified this as interrupting the rhythmic pattern set up in the poem as a whole, it still allows the original pulse to be clearly felt. My 2005 translation 'who was meant to dispatch/her in the woods' (10 syllables) falls away from the rhythmic template altogether and is mealy-mouthed about the intended murder where the Dutch is not[105]. The 2009 translation shows a greater understanding of the way the stresses work, retaining exactly four stresses to the line, even when, as in the 2nd line of stanza 3 the syllable-count is shorter (7 instead of 8), where the shorter count is not so obvious since the pause, in a sense, masks this. In stanza 6 the stumbling effect I commented on in Stage 2 is retained by the 2009 TT, in a somewhat different fashion (through slightly shortening line 2 and slightly lengthening line 3, by a syllable in each case) and once again the underlying 4-beat, lost in the 2005 translation, is retained.

In the 2009 translation both stanzas also use acoustic elements more artistically. Stanza 3 has a near-rhyme pattern of aba in the 2009 version, closer to presenting a kind of repetitious inevitability than abb, the 2005 version, since a couplet has a closing rather than cyclical effect, especially

[105] The primary connotation of the verb 'ombrengen' which, admittedly, feels rather abstract in comparison to 'murder' [vermoorden], is 'to kill'. In 2005 I felt it was important to keep close to the text in this respect but failed to realize that what *I* perceived as abstract would not necessarily be seen as such by a native speaker.

when placed at the end of a stanza[106]. Technically speaking, my 2009 translation of Stanza 6 uses no rhyme at all, though the vowel sounds 'top'[ɒ], 'path'[ɑ:], and 'broke'[oʊ], are close enough to each other to function as near-assonance, but the acoustic effect is stronger in 2009 since the end-words are clearly stressed. Moreover, the 2005 homonym rhyme ('fell'/'fell') draws too much attention to itself to be effective in this context. The interlinking of sounds in 2009 is also more effective, with repeated m's and d's in the first line of stanza 3 (hunts**m**an tol**d** to **m**ur**d**er her), and repeated consonance and assonance in stanza 6 compensating for the weakened rhyme-pattern:

They **c**a**r**ried her **t**o a moun**t**ain-**t**o**p**.
A dwarf s**t**um**b**led on the **p**a**t**h
against the **c**a**s**k**e**t**, **b**ut nothing **b**ro**k**e.

This highlighting of the interlinked sounds in this stanza should also make it clear that the apparently non-rhyming end-words are tied together not only by assonance, but also by consonance, whilst the heavy use of plosive consonants (/p/ /b/ /t/ /k/), which have to be strongly articulated, links to the iconicity of stumbling and interruption of pattern, before the next stanza picks up the threads of the story again.

The greater imaginative and emotional engagement with the text can best be seen in stanza 2 where the choice of 'the fairest apple ever made' to translate 'de mooiste die zij ooit bezat' [the loveliest/most beautiful that she ever possessed] shifts the emphasis to the false nature of the apple (made by the Queen as a poisonous trap) and calls forth memories of the use of the word 'fairest' in standard English translations of KHM53: 'who is the fairest of them all?'. This in turn identifies the apple with both Snow White and the Stepmother-Queen and helps the reader see it as an analogue of their beauty and sexuality in a similar manner to the verb 'bezat' [possessed] in the ST. The work with image, memory and rhythm I feel allowed me to break away

[106] The triadic rhyming of the original aaa, bbb, ccc etc., conveys both a cyclical and a progressive effect. This is lost in both my translations, but careful work with line-end stresses in the 2009 version, gives an effect which is rhythmically close to the ST; moreover if assonance and consonance, more subtle versions of rhyming, are taken into account, the 2009 TT *does* manage quite often to produce a (muted) triadic rhyme.

from the literal words of the ST into the underlying meanings, and to find solutions that had the potential to 'vibrate' with the TT reader.

Stanza 7 again shows an increase in imaginative and emotional identification with the ST, particularly in the first line, 'Zij ligt met hoge kleur totdat…' [she lies with high colour until...], which was translated in 2005 as 'She lies with rosy cheeks until...', a quite close translation except for the rather apt solution of 'rosy cheeks' for 'high colour'[107]. In 2009 the TT line, translated from memory with the help of the image-frame, became: 'With rosy cheeks she will lie in state...', where 'in state' is an addition to the original image but which again is apt for the underlying meaning, which is that the Princess will lie in the glass coffin as a perpetual *royal* maiden until her condition, her congealment, is changed by the actions of the Prince. The phrase 'to lie in state' precisely depicts a condition in which after death a person of high status is placed on view in a coffin which allows the corpse to be seen. The change made here was motivated by sound and rhythm, since the fricative /s/ sound in the phrase 'in state' continues to pick up sounds from stanza 6 and predicts the /s/ in 'ice' in the following line, whilst the plosive 't' again picks up important sounds from stanza 6 and predicts the 't' in 'wet' in the final line of stanza 7. The detailed preparatory work with rhythm, sound, and image has therefore had a holistic effect on solving some of the translation problems.

The most remarkable translation-decision in the 2009 TT is to substitute 'diamond' for 'jewel' [juweel] in a move mainly motivated by sound and rhythm, enabling line-end plosive consonantal repetitions on 'throa**t**'/'bloo**d**'/'**d**iamon**d**', /t/ and /d/ being voiceless and voiced versions of each other, and thus giving strong rather than weak endings, as in the 2005 'out'/'flow'/'jewel'. Moreover, in imagistic and symbolic terms, 'diamond' fits extremely well both with Achterberg's and the folkloric Snow White. Not only does 'diamond' clearly pick up on the white/red symbolism of the archetypal story[108], the crystalline nature of this specific jewel links well to the

[107] The word 'rosy' is associated with English translations and re-tellings of the SW story. See e.g. Edwardes 1912:206, 213, 214, which specifically uses 'rosy' for both the apple and SW.
[108] See Silva 2007 and Girardot 1977 for discussions of colour symbolism in the SW stories.

ice-crystal aspect of winter and death, referenced throughout the poem, and in particular in the preceding stanza. The diamond look like ice but is also the gem which seems to contain a frozen fire, holding energy in a state which may predict resurrection and renewal. Like light itself, it contains the whole spectrum within it, in its prismatic qualities, and thus signifies both infinity and eternity. Furthermore, it is the gemstone most associated with spring, innocence, and purity[109]. The choice of 'diamond' to translate 'fonkelend juweel' [sparkling jewel] is not only apt, therefore, in terms of its symbolic and imagistic weight, but also obviates the need to translate 'fonkelend' [sparkling], since the word 'diamond' already evokes qualities of glitter and sparkle within the reader's imagination.

I believe, therefore, that my reliance on the body-mind and on memory in this translation-work, with the use of the image-frame as an occasional aide-memoire, helped me reach the essence of the image as used by Achterberg to shape a phrase more startling in its effect than the one used in 2005:

	2005	2009	
	/ / / /	/ / / /	
7	Then the apple will shoot out	Then the apple will shoot from her throat,	9
	/ / /	/ / / /	
7	of her throat, her blood will flow	and once again the velvet blood	8
	/ / / /	/ / /	
11	like velvet in the body's sparkling jewel.	will stream* in the body's diamond.	8
		* 'stream' is a prolonged sound, compensating for a 'lost' stress	
syllables			syllables

Figure 14: Stanza 8 SW – draft translations

The stress-marks and syllable-count in the example above also show that the 2009 rhythmic movement is more satisfying. The beat is maintained, even though an extra syllable is squeezed into the first line, and the last line loses a stress. The 2005 version has a rhythmically lame first line, in that the stresses emphasize the wrong words ('will' and 'out' rather than 'shoot'), and then moves into speech rhythms at a climactic point when the template rhythms

[109] See Vries (2004:167) which discusses the symbolism of the diamond including 'invulnerable faith', 'purity', 'life', 'the month of April' (i.e. Spring), 'constancy', 'immortality', 'eternity' etc.

should be predominant (lines 2 and 3 of this stanza). The extra syllables in the final line are too much to bear, and the effect is not of rhythmic counterpointing as in stanzas 3 and 6 of the ST, but of disarray. Once again, the psycho-physical work with rhythm and image helped overcome many of the translation problems I had previously faced.

Other 'gains' in the 2009 translation may be dealt with briefly. In 2005 the 2nd and 3rd lines of stanza 9 were translated, more or less literally, as:

> If she will look him in the eye
> she'll see her image there preserved.[110]

After working with rhythm, sound and image in the approach described above the 2009 translation became:

> If she turns and looks inside his eyes
> she'll see her image, still life-size.

This has the advantage of preserving part of the rhyme-effect of the ST, using a more natural English word-order and a better and more vividly dramatic order of tenses in the conditional (present -> future), closer to the effect of the Dutch (present -> present understood as conditional or hypothetical future). The strong and deliberately ambiguous image 'life-size' derives from my memory of other Achterberg poems where I had used the same or a similar solution as a translation for 'levensgroot' ('Comptabiliteit' *VG*:923[111]; 'Mimicry' *VG*:977). The use of 'life-size' here not only interlinks this translation, therefore, with other poems in the translated collection, but should also activate the sense that Snow White has been given life again, not only through the actions of the Prince, but within the poem itself, the locus of the poet's internal eyes, his imagination, which preserves her image for ever, *as if she were truly alive*.

Figure 13 (above) shows that I retained the 2005 translation of the first line of stanza 10, 'Now the story gallops away', but not before considering the alternative 'Now the story quickens pace'. The reasons for rejecting this alternative were partially to do with sound (I preferred an assonantal rhyme,

[110] Gloss translation: If she him in the eyes stares/ sees she her image therein preserved.
[111] In 'Comptabiliteit' [Accountability] I translated 'levensgroot' as 'large as life'.

'away'/'grave', to a near-miss rhyme, 'pace'/'grave', at this crucial point, when a clumsiness right at the end of the poem would be very obvious) and partly caused by my awareness of the origin of the Dutch idiom 'gestrekte draf' [stretched trot/full trot=at a fast pace] and of the link, therefore, to the imagery of the preceding stanza, in which the Prince sets Snow White on his steed. I felt fairly certain that the idiom had been reactivated in the ST and that it was a better choice to revert to 'gallops away' in the translation. This enabled me to make the link between the pre-existent story, which must come to its rightful conclusion with the death-dance of the Stepmother-Queen towards which the poem-story now 'gallops', and the rescue and resuscitation of the Princess through the means of both poem (image) and Prince (poet on the steed of rhythmic form and poetic formulation).

On balance, then, it seems that the intensive work described and analyzed in the above stages, was beneficial to the overall translation of the poem. The remaining problem of stanza 4 will be discussed in my analysis of Stage 12 of this process.

Stage 8: recording TT

This stage replicates the work of Stage 4: adding the words in which the ST was recorded. Here I recorded the TT as it stood at this point. The emphasis was on testing the sounds and rhythms of the translated text and was as exploratory, though less tentative, as Stage 4, since the emerging TT had been spoken aloud throughout the translation process.

Stage 9: second recording of TT

This stage replicates the work of Stage 5: working with feeling and emotion but with the TT rather than the ST. The aim was to produce a flexible performance of the TT, paying attention to the narrative and the feelings evoked, rather than exclusively to the rhythm, although the rhythmic qualities of the text were so incorporated by now that these also played a part in the performance.

Figure 15 shows a screenshot of Tracks 4 (ST) and 6 (TT), corresponding to Stages 5 and 9, both 'performance' versions of the audio-texts, and demonstrates that the timings of each are remarkably close to each other. Track 4 (ST) ends at 1m.46s and Track 6 (TT) ends at 1m.47s.

Stage 10: listening to recordings of ST and TT

Once again I was able to use the multi-tracking capacities of Audacity to listen to the two recordings of the TT together with those of the ST and the two rhythm tracks, in various combinations and as a unity. The closeness of timing between the ST and TT has already been commented on directly above, and in my discussion of Stage 3, and can be seen in *Figure 16* below. The recordings were all made independently of each other, i.e. I did not time my performance in any way to match the other performances, yet the preliminary 'body-work' had clearly placed the rhythmic structure in my kinaesthetic memory. It is the kinaesthetic element of this approach to poetic form which I think offers powerful solutions to aspects of translation that might otherwise prove to be problematic, as discussed in Stage 7, above.

Stage 11: gloss translation

The use of a gloss translation in translating a poem will be discussed in Commentary III: working with breath. In this case its main use was to act as a final check on the poetic translation. This stage could easily be omitted, although it does help draw the translator's attention back to the word-material of the ST after intensive physical work.

It should be noted that for this particular translation the gloss was made a month after the rhythmic and oral/aural work, well after the main translation process. Under 'normal' translation circumstances if I were to use a gloss translation, I would produce this at an early stage in the process. In this work, I was motivated to produce the gloss as an aid to discussing some aspects of the translation process in an academic conference, discovering, however, that it highlighted the need to continue with the process beyond the stages described above.

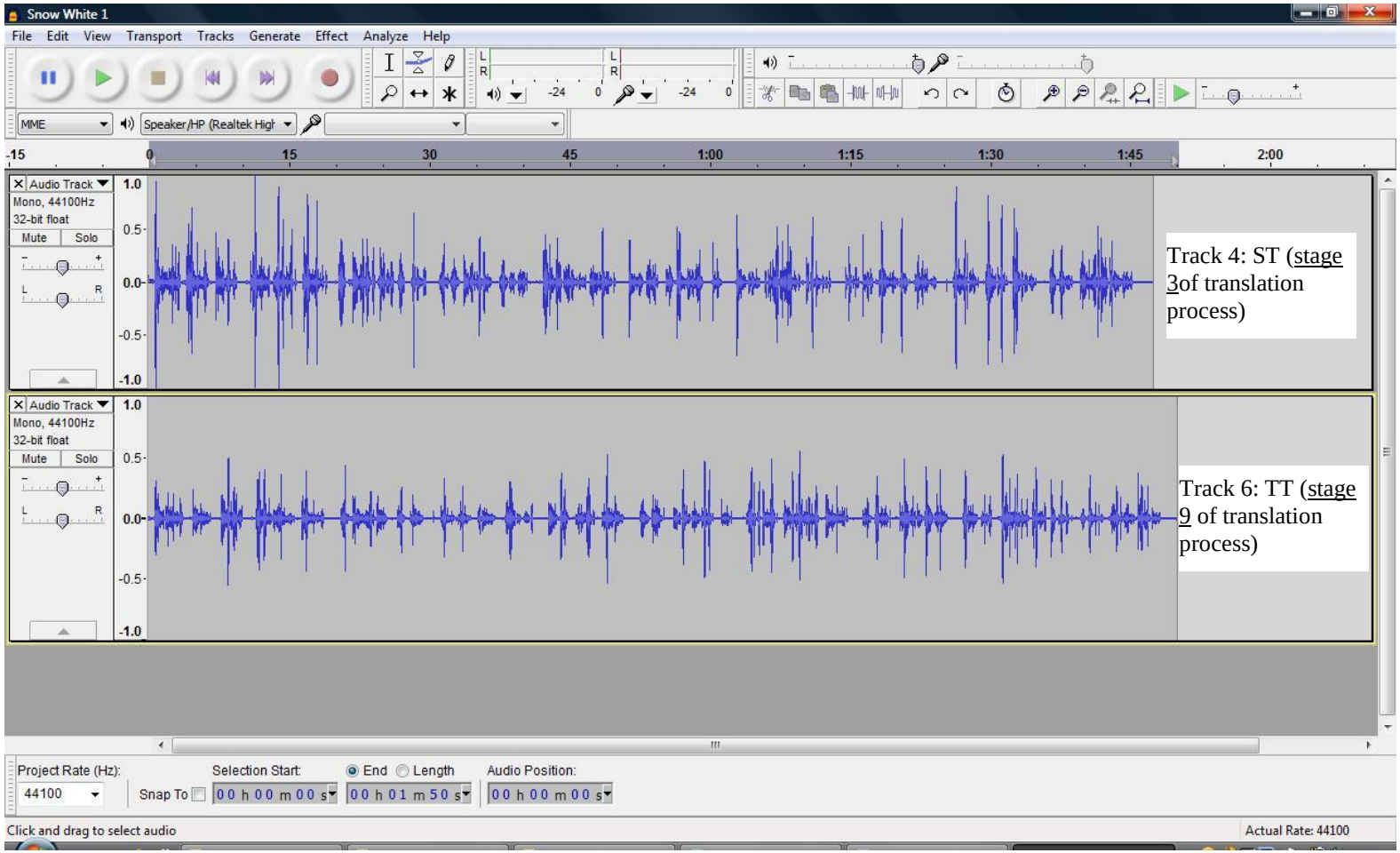


Figure 15: comparison of ST and TT recordings in 'performative' versions

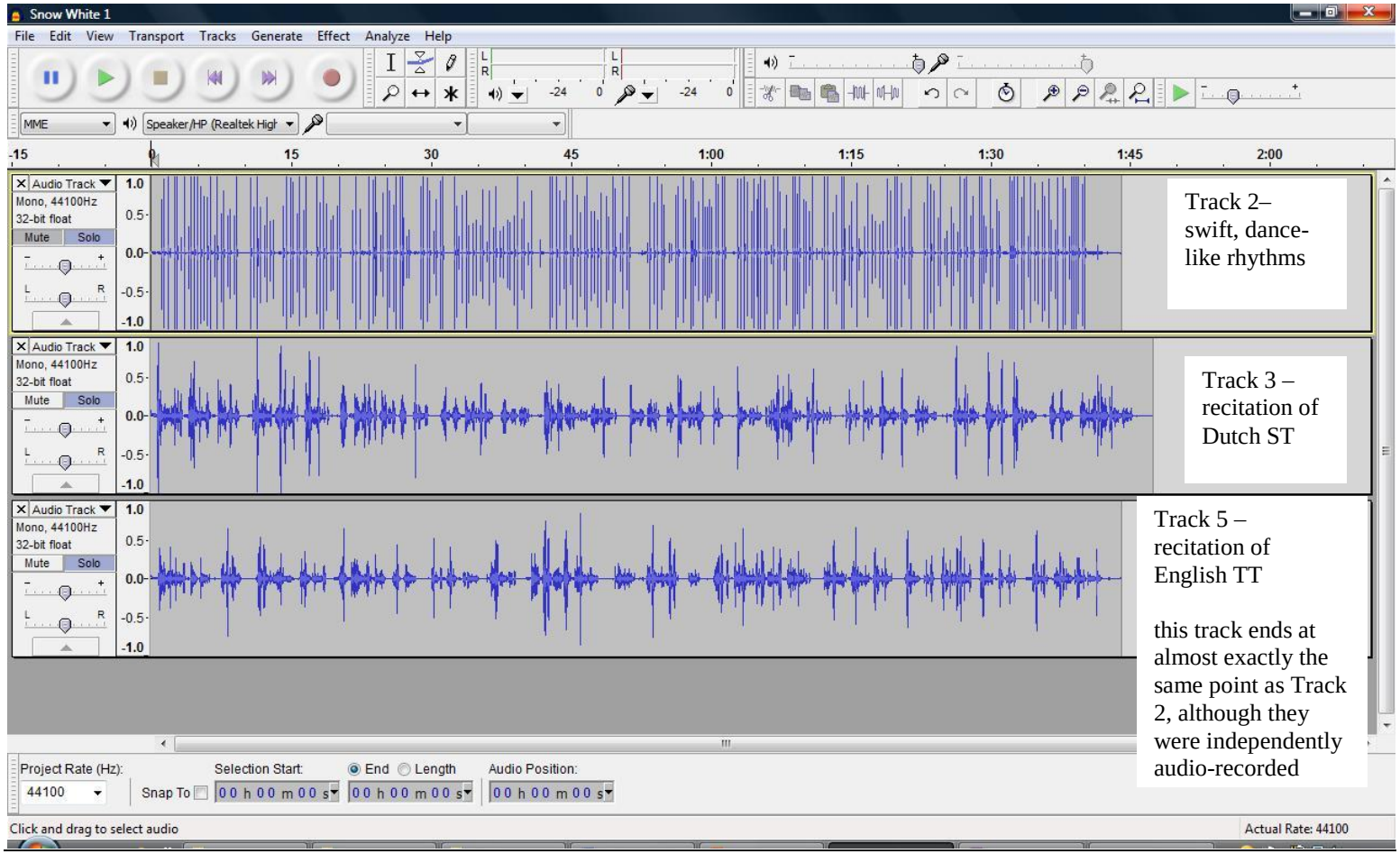


Figure 16: working with words and rhythm

Stage 12: further adjustments to TT

Achterberg and Nijhoff, as discussed in 1.3.2, were both fascinated by the actual process of poetic creation, but solved the problem of when to move from process to final product in rather different ways. For Nijhoff, it was clearly difficult to let go of a poem: not only did he work slowly, revise frequently, and publish infrequently, but he felt free to alter poems after their first publication, and to allow several versions of a poem to co-exist (see 1.3.2). Achterberg by contrast seemed to write swiftly, especially as a younger writer, though with constant revision of his work, but most importantly saw the poetic process as a continual exploration and re-presentation of creative energies set against the void, the death-drive, in which the individual poem as such became less important than the actual act of making (see 1.3.2).

The translator of poetry faces the same problem. When does the process of 'creative transposition' (Jakobson 1987:434) stop and the text 'become' the TT, hopefully in print, but certainly no longer subject to major alterations? When should the translator start thinking, instrumentally, of the reader, as opposed to focusing on translation itself, non-instrumentally, with the whole creative body-mind, as all good translators already do, whether or not they use a method as consciously aware of kinaesthetic processes as the one described and analyzed throughout this chapter?

Robert Bly's short but influential book *The Eight Stages of Translation* (1976) suggests that the 'eighth stage' is the stage at which the final version is reached and final adjustments are made, although the enumeration of stages is as arbitrary as the twelve I have detailed here. Bly does not estimate how much time would be spent on this final stage, and neither will I for the twelfth stage in my own approach, but it should be clear from *Figure 6* above that the final stage, when creative involvement with the text has cooled, and the critical mind can verify the resulting translation (Stage V of Wallas's model of the creative process: 1931:10, 81, 211), is one which may be prolonged, as with Nijhoff, over a substantial period of time, and which may include its own creative insights in a cyclical movement back to an earlier, apparently more creative,

stage (cf. Pope 2005:79, 84, 87). Clearly also, the amount of time spent on this stage, whether consciously working with the text, or sub-consciously allowing the text to sink into long-term memory and continue to work there (so-called 'drawer time', cf. Jones 2011:91), will vary not only between translator and translator but between poem and poem translated by the same person. In the case of SW, excluding the first 2005 translation, the basis for comparison with the present approach, the twelfth stage can be said to have taken three to four years, since small adjustments have been made throughout this period. Alternatively, as estimated in *Figure 6*, the eleventh and twelfth stages combined may have taken three to four hours, time spent actually working with the text anew.

Much more interesting than estimating the amount of time spent in verification is to look carefully at which aspects of the poem are still resistant to translation after such an intensive process. My work with SW has shown that issues of movement, rhythm, sound, and even image, were solved by a kinaesthetic approach to the ST, but that some aspects of the poem are still difficult to convey in English. These are partly linguistic and partly contextual in nature.

Figure 17 below shows that I worked directly with the text on minor revisions at three separate points, and that the main remaining problem lies in stanza 4. The first two revisions took place on the same day, but at different times, three months after the original translation exercise. The latest revision took place whilst writing up the present analysis of this kinaesthetic translation process.

stanza	19/05/09 (11.12 a.m.)	19/05/09 (14.44 pm)	15/11/12
4	Poison-beads and poison-comb could not make her leave our home – **the dwarves rushed back through marsh and reeds**	the dwarves **hurried** through the reeds.	Poison-**stays** and poison-comb
7			**till** the prince grasps her hands of ice
9			He sets her before him on his **steed**.

Figure 17: further changes to the SW TT

I will deal first with the minor revisions of stanzas 7 and 9. The 2009 TT Stanza 7 was:

> With rosy cheeks she will lie in state
> **until** the prince grasps her hands of ice,
> plunging his arms in the deep wet.

The change to 'till' was made for the sake of the rhythm, bearing in mind that a reader not myself might not glide over the 'un' in 'until' as I had been doing in my recorded readings. The number of stresses remains the same and the syllable-count is thereby regularized to eight.

In stanza 9, after further reflection, I reverted to my 2005 translation of the word 'paard' as 'steed' rather than 'horse', as decided in February 2009. This change was motivated by the fairy-tale and medieval qualities of the archetypal Snow White story and not by the connotations of the Dutch word. At first it may seem that this substitution weakens the sound-patterning of the TT ('horse'/'eyes'/'life-size'), however 'horse' neither fully rhymes with the 'eyes'/'life-size' pair, nor does it form a pure consonance since the 's' sound in the rhyme-pair is /z/ and not /s/. The word 'steed', however, has the /s/ at its start, and thus forms an alliterative pair with 'size', whilst the vowel sounds /i:/ and /aɪ/ are more closely related than /ɔ:/ ('horse') and /aɪ/ ('size'). The effect is to make a more intricate and satisfying rhyme-pattern in this climactic stanza of the poem. Where the ST has the pattern aaa, as it does throughout the poem, the rhyme-pattern here, as a result of the revision becomes $a^{allit.}b^{asson.}{}_{asson.}b^{a:allit}$, which helps create an impression of a triadic rhyme-structure without actually being so, and which also modifies the sense of closure which a pure abb pattern would effect.

These minor modifications to rhythm and sound patterning were made possible not by cold and deliberate verification, but by the re-immersion in the translation process which its analysis demanded, and, in particular, by intensive re-listening to the original audio-recordings at a time-distance of more than three years. This work allowed me to make small adjustments to aspects of the text I had not realized were problematic at the time of translation.

Stanza 4, however, has given me problems at all stages of the process and was the one stanza where I felt the need to draw on 'text helpers' (Jones 2011:3), and yet their input failed to resolve the problem.

The ST and gloss translation appear below as a reminder of the detail of this stanza:

4	Gifsnoer	en	haarkam	konden	niet
	poison-string(-of-beads?) i.e. necklace? poison-cord (of stay /laces?)	*and*	*hair-comb*	*could*	*not*
	bewerken	dat	zij	ons	verliet:
	bring-about	*that*	*she*	*us*	*left forsook*
	de dwergen	joegen	door	het	riet.
	the dwarves	*hunted chased hurried*	*through*	*the*	*rush(es) thatch*

Figure 18: ST and gloss translation of Stanza 4 SW

I have highlighted the words which gave me difficulty, and which have, in the gloss, been given alternative translations.

The first word, 'gifsnoer', is not especially difficult as it is compounded of two other words, both common in Dutch. The compound, however, seems to be Achterberg's invention. The problem lies with the second element of the compound, 'snoer', which essentially means a cord or string, and is a common way of denoting a necklace, i.e. a string of beads, pearls in particular. In 2005 I had simply translated the word as 'necklace', without checking the range of meanings in any kind of dictionary, but being perfectly aware that I had missed out the important first element of the compound, 'gif' [poison]. This was simply because to add 'poison' to 'necklace' would have affected the rhythm of the line too much, but the image was greatly weakened as a result.

In 2009 I was much more aware that 'gif' was the essential element of the compound, especially as it also modifies, by implication, 'haarkam' [hair-comb]. All three traps set by the Stepmother-Queen in the template story are

poisoned, and therefore this concept must not be missed out of the translation, particularly as convergence with and deviation from the template are so important to the overall effect of the poem, which is to do with fate and ill-will, and the turning of fate by propitious actions. The solution I arrived at after the intensive rhythmic work, described above, was 'Poison-beads and poison-comb', where the 'necklace' becomes an implied string of beads, and where the threat of murder is fatalistically played out in the heavy four-beat rhythm, emphasized also by the repetition of 'poison' and the strong rhyme between 'comb' and 'home', an effect which had eluded me in 2005[112]. In 2009, however, I had not re-read the Grimm template story (KHM53), nor any critical works in folklore scholarship, so that although I knew that 'snoer' could also be a string or cord of a kind other than a string of beads, I failed to link the word with the poisoned laces or stays with which the Stepmother-Queen, in her witch-aspect, over-tightens Snow White's bodice, literally taking her breath away, as well as poisoning her body. Although the sound of 'poison-beads' is stronger than 'poison-stays', with 'beads' opening and closing on a plosive consonant, and, therefore, in context, sounding more threateningly violent than 'stays', as I think that Achterberg was following the logic of the template story at this point, I now feel it is better to substitute 'stays' for 'beads' because of the symbolic implications of taking the breath, and the link of the 'stays' to burgeoning womanhood (see Girardot 1977:291)[113].

The line that gave me most trouble, and continues to do so, however is the apparently straightforward: 'de dwergen joegen door het riet'. The difficulty lies both in the verb 'joegen', which can signify 'to hunt', 'to race, rush, hurry' or even 'to chase', and in the noun 'het riet', which can signify (collectively) reed(s) or rush(es) or, by extension, thatch (of a roof), or even wickerwork. The question is, therefore, did the dwarves hurry back to Snow White **through a marshy or riverine landscape**, to avert the danger of the first and second

[112] In 2005 the TT rhyme-pattern was abb in this stanza, with the final couplet producing a weak closing effect, weak because the rhyme 'leave us'/'rushes' was approximate. In 2009 the pattern was aab.

[113] Briggs (1970:494-5), however, records a British oral version of 'Snow White' in which the Stepmother-Queen poisons the girl with a 'necklet', so my first translation was, perhaps, not so far off the mark.

trials, in order to rescue her, or did they hunt for something which caused the apparent death of Snow White, in order to reverse the action of the poisoned object? The template story tells us that the second possibility is the answer, in that the dwarves find the object which has poisoned the girl, thus releasing her from death. Yet these objects are found on Snow White's person, laced around her chest, or in her hair, and not within thatch, or in a basket. In 2005 my imagination supplied the answer as follows: after finding the cause of death, the dwarves *hunted* for the Stepmother-Queen in the riverine landscape in order to prevent her causing further damage to Snow White, hence: 'the dwarves hunted for danger in the rushes'. By February 2009 I was very unhappy with this solution which did not seem to fit the logic of the story, and was also rhythmically and acoustically an inept line. My first and second thoughts were still in line with the answer I had attempted in 2005: that after two failed attempts on Snow White's life, the dwarves had tried to prevent further attacks by looking in the reedy landscape for the ultimate cause of the danger: 'the dwarves chased through the reeds'(1); 'the dwarves tracked evil in the reeds'(2). It was only on the third attempt that my thoughts shifted to the idea that 'het riet' might signify 'the thatch', and hence might mean that the dwarves were searching for the cause of the death within the home itself: 'the dwarves checked for evil in the thatch'(3). However, this was still only a provisional and rather unhappy solution, since 'evil' is far too abstract a word, and 'checked' is weak in comparison to 'joegen', making the dwarves sound as if they are about some kind of a spring-cleaning task.

In May 2009, as shown in *Figure 17* above, I had turned to the idea that the final clause of this stanza represented the reason why the poisonous gifts were unable to work their evil on Snow White, and that the colon stood for a kind of 'because'. In my imagination now the dwarves had rushed back to the house, through the marshy landscape, to *avert* the danger of the trials, reaching the house too late to stop the attempts on her life, but not too late to prevent the objects killing the girl. Hence: 'the dwarves rushed back through marsh and reeds'(1); 'the dwarves hurried through the reeds'(2). The first solution, whilst retaining the four-beat line, over-explicates, whilst the second one loses a

syllable from the octosyllabic line[114], and is perhaps too mystifyingly matter-of-fact to quite work. Nevertheless, for the time being, it is the solution I have retained.

After discussing this stanza with several 'text helpers', I am still not sure that I have imagined the import of this line correctly. Even if my present solution is 'correct', then the TT reader may still be as mystified as I was, since reeds or rushes are not a feature of the template story, which is set in a forested mountainous landscape, and not in a flat, marshy, or riverine setting, as I have imagined here. If I am right, then Achterberg transformed the template landscape of the SW story into one very like his home region, particularly that of the landscape of his youth, where fairytale castles, marshland, canals, ditches and riverine features abound, and where reeds and rushes grow tall and thickly.

A little thatched farmhouse on the Gerrit Achterberg path in the domain of the Van Lynden-van Sandenburg family, now under restoration (my photograph: 18/06/2012). Achterberg lived in this area from his birth in 1905 till 1924.

[114] The stress pattern **x / / x / x /** forces a slight pause after, or syllable prolongation on, 'dwarves', compensating for the lost syllable.

Kasteel Sandenburg, the fairytale castle, reeds in the foreground, where Achterberg's father worked as coachman till 1912 (Amerongen 2010:13; my photograph: 18/06/12).

The riverine landscape of Achterberg's youth, originally deep marshland, but drained in 1126AD (Hazeu 1989:25). Did the dwarves of his imagination have to rush back through a landscape like this to rescue their Snow White? (My photograph: 18/06/12).

Norfolk has its reedy landscape too, and this picture shows more clearly than those above how thickly and deeply they may grow (my photograph: 25/4/10).

My photograph: Middelburg (Netherlands) 18/12/09

II.iii Conclusions

The most recent version of my translation of 'Sneeuwwitje' has changed very little since the intensive kinaesthetic approach to translation I developed in 2009 and may be read in Appendix 1. The break-through in solving the translation problems of poor interaction between form and content, as detailed in Commentary I, came as a result of developing this method, and of giving myself fully to the ST, in a bodily and imaginative sense, before attempting the translation. Elements of this method hereafter became an important part of my preparation when translating and were further developed in later work with Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poetry, as will be discussed in Commentaries III and IV.

The advantages of the method as it stands are, I believe, as follows:

- rhythmic movement is given full attention and made the main focus of the translating act: in doing so some of the worries about equivalence of lexical meaning and syntactic effect disappear; the body is asked to provide the answers rather than the over-analytical mind;
- the method is highly dialogic and uses many modes of thinking (vocalizations, verbalizations, aurality, writing, reading, kinaesthetic enactment, visualizations) to solve translation problems;
- it teaches the body-mind to resist easy interpretation of meaning; there is no clear 'message' which the rhythm tells – rather it puts the translator in the right mode of receptivity, and allows the TT to develop a natural and unified conjunction of form and content;
- it is holistic – the poem is treated as an artistic unity rather than as a puzzle to solve;
- bearing in mind Jakobson's dictum that poetry can only be transposed and not translated, this method is a genuine

transposition in an almost musical sense: the pitch, pace, and emotional key, are transposed from the originating body to the body of the translating poet, so that TT can genuinely sing in a new acoustic space;

- the process itself is emphasized and made creative; the gates of perception are opened by an almost shamanistic act; the translation becomes an adventure, a pioneering journey;
- it is craftsman-like, oriented to words as material;
- it listens to silence as well as to sound.

The last point, the listening to 'silence as well as to sound', will be further explored in the following chapter, while aspects of shamanism and magico-materialism will be tackled in Chapter 4.

Just at this point the kettle starts to toot.
Life is strange again, as if you're on a train
and you come awake in a different country.

Nijhoff (tr.)

CHAPTER 3

Translating Breath

Not until the translator has grasped the reality in the form in which it has been executed in the work, will he be able to create an artistically true translation.

Jiří Levý

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I briefly summarize the findings of Chapter 2 with regard to the role of rhythm and metre in poetry and extend this into considering issues of breath and pausing, which formed important aspects of Nijhoff's poetics and conscious theorizing about his work, particularly in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. As I will show, the translator aware of the importance of breath in shaping not only the phrasing and syntactic units of the source texts, but also the positioning of key-words, as well as its role in giving emotional tone and colouring to the poem, is better placed to read the text as a complex unity marked by the originating body, which, as will be discussed in Commentary III, may itself be mirroring and enacting what it has felt and perceived in others.

This does not mean that I will argue for a perfect mimicry of the phrasal units of the ST. What this chapter will posit, as an extension of the previous chapter and commentary, is that an awareness of the actual physicality of language and a conscious use of the body in the act of translation should help the translator produce work which is a vivid and living answer to the ST. Nijhoff's insights into the nature of poetry, and, in particular, his emphasis on breath will form the basis for testing new methods of approaching the translation of formal verse of the Modernist period, in particular that of Nijhoff himself. As will be seen in **3.3** Achterberg expressed no views as such on the role of breath in poetry, but nevertheless the theme of breath is central to his work.

Since this work is process-based, the methods described and analyzed in Commentary III, which follows this chapter, and, with a different focus, in Chapter 4 and its follow-up commentary, should be seen as experiments with *possibly* fertile approaches to translation and not as prescriptions, either for myself or other translators. The best claim I can make is that such methods, emerging from the translation-work itself, with all its necessary research and contextualization, should heighten the translator's awareness of aspects of style which might otherwise not have been noticed, enabling a more flexible and creative writing of the TT. The main focus of the present chapter, however, is on analytical work carried out prior to and concurrently with the experimental work, giving that work its focus and justification.

In **3.2.1** I consider the question of Nijhoff's 'verse-external' poetics (Akker 1985a), concluding that not only do Nijhoff's critical and self-analytical writings form a good source for understanding his poetics in implicit and explicit statements (Akker 1985a:14-16), but that these writings were also essential to Nijhoff in helping him shape his own thought and practice. That is, not only are they part of the same process which produced the poetry, but without these writings the poetry itself may not have taken the shape it did. These critical and self-analytical writings, therefore, can also be used to help the translator bring into consciousness essential elements of Nijhoff's technique and style, elements inextricably bound to the effect of the poems on their readers and the meanings and intentions they impute to them. Although not all poets reflect critically on their own creative processes and on the work of others, when such 'verse-external' writings are available, it is beneficial to consider them carefully and use them to help guide any translation. This is not a new insight, since questions of context are discussed, for example, in Boase-Beier's work on stylistics and translation (2006:9, 16, 32) and in Ernst-August Gutt's work on translation and relevance theory (1989:44-53, 2000:26-35)[115]. We can imagine, for example, that the critical writings of a poet such as Seamus Heaney would be of real benefit to his translators, once it is realized that the criticism represents simply a part of the growth-process of the poet's mind, and does not, by any means, offer a privileged

[115] As Gutt (2000:26-7) points out, context in Relevance Theory is a psychological concept which covers the full cognitive environment, one's concepts about the world.

way into the poetic material for the translator. It is the interplay between verse-internal (implicit) and verse-external (explicit) poetics which is of interest to the translator and may be of help in developing a sensitive approach to the translation-proper.

In **3.2.2**, therefore, I briefly survey what part breath has played in traditional and contemporary accounts of rhythm and metrics in poetry, contrasting this with Nijhoff's insights, and giving an account of what these seem to be and their implications for the translator.

Section **3.3** is an example of the detailed analysis a translator may carry out across the whole body of a poet's work, in order to sharpen awareness of the part that particular words, concepts, and images may play in the oeuvre, and to see their inter-relationship. The approach here is first computational and descriptive, then analytical. I come to the preliminary conclusion that while the theme of breath was of great importance to Achterberg, its shaping force in the *form* of his poems is less easy to trace, particularly as he rarely spoke or wrote about his own poetics. Achterberg's consciousness of the value of breath is expressed within his poems in an apparently traditional manner as 'Holy Spirit' and 'inspiration', or alternatively in erotic terms, yet the actual subtlety and unusualness of his thinking on breath should be apparent from this section. Although there is less overt emphasis on questions of craftsmanship in Achterberg's brief conversational statements about his poetry and verse-form than in Nijhoff's criticism, like Nijhoff Achterberg implicitly places the shaping power of language itself at the heart of his poetics. I conclude that questions of sound and iconicity are the core of his verse-internal poetics.

Sections **3.4** and **3.5** present my research into the specifics of interaction of line, phrase, word, pause and breath in Nijhoff's work. Section **3.4** examines some thematic implications of breath in Nijhoff's work, briefly contrasting these with Achterberg's poetry. Section **3.5** deals with my computational analysis of pre-breath words in two Nijhoff collections in preparation for the translation-work of Commentary IV. **3.6** concludes this chapter and looks forward both to the following commentary and to Chapter 4: Exploring sound and iconicity.

3.2 Nijhoff's poetics

3.2.1 Nijhoff's critical and self-analytical writings

Martinus Nijhoff, as discussed in 2.4.1, not only wrote poetry but was also a critic, reviewer, editor and prose writer. The careful reader of his critical pieces, mainly focused on the works of other poets (*VW*II), will develop a growing awareness of Nijhoff's own poetics, not static over the nearly 40 years in which Nijhoff practised his art, but changing in response to discoveries made in his reading, poetry, and translations.

Van den Akker points out in his study of Nijhoff's verse-external poetics (1985a) that, in effect, all writers who write about their craft are engaged, knowingly or not, in a polemical attempt to situate their work in the literary system and mould a readership for themselves (Akker 1985a:12, 27-9). For that reason, Van den Akker warns us against applying literally everything Nijhoff says about the nature of poetry and the craft of the poet to his own work, since such comments may be strategic, polemical, or opportunistic, rather than forming part of a coherent philosophy (1985a:30). At the same time, Van den Akker demonstrates that the careful critical interpretation of Nijhoff's reviews and other prose-works can indeed be helpful in understanding Nijhoff's poetics.

The same warning is sounded by Nijhoff himself in the preface to his *Gedachten op dinsdag* [thoughts on Tuesday] (*VW*II:1214), which collected critical pieces written between 1920 and 1925. Nijhoff emphasizes that these reviews and essays should not be read as prescriptive judgements, aesthetic precepts, or theories of form raised to the level of absolute criteria (ibid.), but states that the act of writing these pieces had enabled him to search for answers to questions about poetry's power and music, the capacity of art to transform reality whilst still leaving it as reality, and the mysterious ways a poet exercises his or her craft, making from the common inheritance of language a tool that works personally for him or her.

It is clear then that Nijhoff himself perceived these regular acts of analysis and criticism as enabling, a way of clarifying his own thinking and taking his creative work a step further:

> In the act of writing we start to write. Thought becomes word, word follows thought. Even a little bit of writing brings more inspiration than a great deal of thinking.
>
> ibid. (tr.)

In the final paragraph of this introduction Nijhoff speaks directly to the essays and reviews he has made:

> Adieu, Tuesday thoughts. I often wrote you with resistance, or in anguish, but you always compensated me fully. I still know the place and time, the weather and mood in which each one of you was written. […] You always gave me more than I gave you. Adieu again.
>
> *VW*II:1216 (tr.)

The tone and subject-matter of this farewell are in keeping with Nijhoff's belief that the real work of art has an autonomous life not dependent on the life and will of its author. More subtly, it becomes clear even from the short extracts and summaries above that Nijhoff believed that the act of writing, and language itself, are what make the writer and his works possible, and not vice versa. This insight can be extended and applied to the work of the translator too: it is the act of translation and the interaction between word and word, language and language, which makes translation possible, and which gives autonomous life both to the source text and the target. For the translator holding a similar poetics to Nijhoff's own, in such an act the question of the translator's visibility or invisibility becomes almost an irrelevance, since it is the process, and its shaping effect on the writer-translator's mind and thought, and, ultimately, the never-entirely-finished work itself, which are most important.

The best introductions, however, to Nijhoff's thinking about the nature of poetry and his aims in writing are the two long prose pieces *De pen op papier* [the pen on paper] (1927) and *Over eigen werk* [about one's-own work] (1935). These are not considered in any detail in Van den Akker's study, mainly because he limits his analysis to the years between 1924 and 1927, basing his research on the peak of critical writing in Nijhoff's career, following the publication of *Vormen* [forms]

(1924), Nijhoff's second collection of poems. These two longer pieces of writing differ substantially from the short critical pieces in that they are primarily self-analytical, rather than analytical of the work of others. Moreover, the questions raised here about the nature of the creative process, the role and nature of poetry and language, and the relationship of the work of art to life and society are posed within unusual and highly creative frameworks. The insights gained from reading them are obtained not from reflection on direct pronouncements, even less so than in the critical pieces, but indirectly, by means of imagery, fable, and anecdote, and through twists and turns of thoughts enlivened by direct speech and self-questioning.

The first of these prose pieces, *De pen op papier*, as yet untranslated, was briefly considered in 2.4.2; the second, *OEW*, the focus of my analyses and experiments in Commentary III, has previously been only partially translated (Holmes 2010:79-88) and the crucial sections I will examine have as yet not been published in translation. All references to *OEW* in this chapter will, therefore, be to my own translation.

3.2.2 Nijhoff's insights on poetry and breath

Nijhoff's insights into the nature of poetry, and the special place or privilege that this, in formal verse, gives to breath, not only give the translator clues about possible approaches to his work, but can help the translator in manifold ways, ranging from questions of where best to place key-words and phrases, to issues of how to solve the interplay between metre and rhythm. Moreover, it should become clear that Nijhoff's attention to this apparently basic, and usually unconscious, aspect of our life as bodies not only has significance beyond the physiological, but also enabled him to develop a mode of writing both formal and entirely modern. In this respect, the new rhythms he sought, a process which obsessed him throughout the 1920s, as demonstrated in 2.4, were already unconsciously shaping in his work and brought into full play in the collection *Nieuwe gedichten* [new poems] (1934). These poems embody and creatively

enact the insights about breath and rhythm which Nijhoff, as will be shown, discusses in *OEW*.

Although breath and the physiology of breathing are central to concepts of phrasing and phrase-groups in both prosodic-linguistic and musical analysis, breath as an element of form and structure in the composition, analysis, or especially the translation of formal poetry has rarely been discussed as a factor, even though pausing, the place where the in-breath is assumed to be taken, is, as I shall show in Commentary III, an important element in the building of rhythm and meaning[116].

In Chapter 2 we saw that there is a perceptual issue at play with regard to the primacy of either metre or rhythm in verse, which can be summarized in the following manner. Many traditional and modern prosodists, including generative metricists, come down in favour of metre, as a basic ordering principle related to other similar cognitive functions in which a deep 'grammar' of lawful possibilities already exists as innate potential within the mind and brain (e.g. Fabb 2002), whereas the psychologist Nicolas Abraham, the academic and critic Amittai Aviram, and You Haili, a medical anthropologist, all discussed in 2.2, tend towards an analysis which perceives rhythm as the basic underlying element interacting with the mind's rhythmizing consciousness. These critics are careful not to conflate rhythm with metre, since, as pointed out by Scott (2000:29-33) and You (1994b), rhythm is both dynamic and continuous: unlike metre, it cannot be cut up into more or less exact units or feet.

In fact, when the opposing views are restated as simply as this, it can be seen that they are two sides of the same coin, and that it becomes more a matter of orientation, or viewpoint, as to which, metre or rhythm, is perceived as primary on

[116] Breath is discussed as an important factor in speech prosody in several interesting books and articles (see e.g. Byers 1979; Lieberman 1984 118-122; Hird and Kirsner 2002; Li and Kong 2011) and in poetry by Olson (2004). I have not, however, been able to discover any discussion of the part that breath might play in translating poetry other than a reference in the introduction to Michael Hamburger's translation of Celan's poems to the fact that the movement of the ST is 'governed by breath units rather than by metrical or syntactic units' (Hamburger1972:15). Hamburger does not say directly that he has translated the movement of the poems in the same manner, but the implication is that he has paid attention to these 'breath units'. For a discussion of breath in Celan's work see Guyer 2005.

any specific occasion. The clear conclusion that can be drawn from this, and which may be helpful to the translator, is that in paying attention to this specific level of organization of a (formal) poem, it is not so much a question of either/or but rather both: the principle of rhythm operating in all aspects of nature can be perceived by human cognition (and through the senses of the feeling body) as free and complex forms of repetition, *and* as essentially simple, law-governed, and metrical, with certain (permitted) deviations adding to tension and surprise.

Reuven Tsur's important study in poetic rhythm (1998) leads to similar conclusions, locating the perception of these rhythms in the mind of the reader, the reading performer who brings the text to life. In his judgement, all lines can be performed 'lawfully', that is according to rules of metricity, and rhythmically (by readers with competent abilities), while conversely, no line is either metrical or rhythmic *until* it has been performed, either physically or through mental enactment. This insight, while not directly relating to the part that breath plays in creating poetic rhythm, does clearly suggest that it is a matter of the body, not only in re-creative performance, but also in terms of its origin in the creating writer. As we shall see, Tsur's cognitive empiricist research, drawing together Gestalt theory, phonological analysis of lines of poetry in performance, and work into short-term memory capacity, both gives support to Nijhoff's much earlier intuitive insights, and is enabling for the translator in reassuring him or her that rhythmical properties will indeed emerge from the text through the voice and breath of the competent reader, whether actually enacted in performance or through silent reading (cf. Fónagy 2001:174-90).

Alan Holder's study on metre (1995) is one of the few recent monographs on either rhythm or metre in poetry which mentions breath as such, although many studies, including Tsur's, do acknowledge the part that phrase units and pauses play in our perception of rhythm, Tsur usefully pointing out that pauses within the poetic line are deviations which bring the reader's attention into focus again, allowing a certain aspect of that line to be highlighted. Holder's analysis is primarily focused on free verse, however, and pays attention not so much to the effect of breath itself in the poetic line, but rather to questions of pausing,

phrasing, and expressive intonation, which for him replace the foot-based line as an ordering principle (1995:203-4).

What all these studies have in common, however, is that they are primarily concerned with the *product*, the outcome of the poet's creative process, the artefact which lies on the page waiting to be brought to life through the mind of the critic, the analyst, the prosodist, and the voice of reader or the performer.

The approach of a poet such as Nijhoff is different and anticipates later concerns with breath in the work and theory of poets such as Charles Olson (2004) and Allan Ginsberg (1984). A major difference, however, between the approaches of these American post 2nd World War poets and Nijhoff's is that his focus is on *the value of the breath-pause itself*, and not on the length of the poetic line created by the act of utterance. Where for Olson and Ginsberg the unit (the line) is generally conceived of as fitting with, or matching, the utterance and the length of each individual out-breath, and, crucially, disrupting conventional syntax and semantics (see Merrill 1982:52-5; Trigilio 2007:133-7)**,** Nijhoff, fascinated as he is by the possibilities of syntax[117], holds the formal line (both in inherited and self-conceived forms) in tension with and counterpoint against the utterance, making the voice twist and balance itself across lines, thus producing unexpected and highly-charged pauses within the line itself. This concern, as I will show, moves well beyond the normal expectations of where caesurae would fall in traditional metrical poetry[118]. As Nijhoff himself points out (see below) his lessons in enjambement and pausing were partially learnt from Shakespeare's blank verse. This learning was very much from the inside. Nijhoff is known and admired for his translation work in the Dutch-speaking world and, amongst other texts, translated Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1930). Significantly, this period of deep immersion in Shakespeare's poetics took place only a few years before the

[117] See in particular Nijhoff's comments on syntax in his essay on Paul van Ostaijen's work: 'Without syntax, no creativity. Without syntax the world would slide past our consciousness again, just like images across our eyeballs' (*VW*II 626, tr.).

[118] The common perception of where the caesurae fall may in fact be too classicist, influenced both by classical French poetic practice and, in the English tradition, by the 18th century pre-Romantic norms. Nijhoff's vitalist, *parlando* approach to form makes us aware that silence and intaken breath, the non-linguistic, give depth and spirit to the realm of the linguistic.

publication of Nijhoff's *NG* (1934), which includes *Awater*, generally considered to be his greatest work.

More interesting still is Nijhoff's emphasis on the value of the breath-pause itself, already partially quoted in 2.4.2:

> ... but poetry, I suddenly realized, pays attention to the in-breath. Through regularity, metre, word-repetition, alliteration, rhyme, and, in unrhymed and free verse, by means of the so-called period, the secret of Shakespeare's blank verse, it controls this in-breath. It makes you breathe in on the living places. In this way, again and again, for an indivisible moment, stillness comes into being, exactly at those living places, and in that vibrating stoppage soul and eternity confront each other.
>
> *VW*II:1157 (tr.)

There are several insights here which Nijhoff expresses almost casually and, in spite of his assertion that these ideas about poetry and breath came to him suddenly, it is clear that this flash of understanding is the culmination of the two preceding decades of struggle with his own poetics, expressed in action in his poems and critically and reflectively in his many prose works. It should be noted that the lecture, preserved only in draft (*VW*II:1217), although presumably very much like the text actually delivered to his audience, takes the form of a self-reflexive musing on what shape the lecture itself should take. In the course of this musing the reader (or assumed listener) is drawn, by way of a series of anecdotes, into the theme: 'what is the role of poetry in a time of crisis?'[119]. En route to discussing this Nijhoff deals, in a seemingly casual, rather charming manner, with the essence of language, its meaning for humanity and its germ in animals, the relationship between breath and language, the relationship of pausing, delay, and silence to ethics and morality, and the relationship of, and differences between, poetry and prose. Yet this casualness of approach disguises what is tremendous practical knowledge and immense learning.

Once Nijhoff has distinguished poetry as being uniquely concerned with the regulation of the in-breath rather than with rhythm as such, he begins to move closer to the core of his subject: what poetry can and should do, what its special

[119] The crisis is the period of economic depression caused by the 1929 Wall Street crash.

character and function is, not only in a time of crisis but at all times, and how that character and function relate to his own work (the title of the lecture).

But the insights Nijhoff expresses in the passage quoted above are what primarily concern us here since they led directly to my own approach to translating for breath as an aspect of form.

It is worthwhile, therefore, to unpack what it is that Nijhoff appears to be saying. Firstly, he discovers through introspective musing (significantly, in the company of others, both animal and human[120]) that rhythm is *not* a distinguishing characteristic of poetry. For a poet as sensitive to rhythm and sound as Nijhoff is, this is an unexpected discovery. Rhythm he realizes is just as much a feature of prose as of poetry; and indeed of utterance too.

The next realization is that this aspect of rhythm is based on a 'law' which governs the number of 'little bundles of syllables' (*VW*II:1157) which can be uttered on the out-breath. This number Nijhoff sets as being between 7 and 10. It should be noted that this insight of Nijhoff's is not based on empirical research, but is the intuitive result of years of creating and commenting on poetry, and later of studying Dutch Language and Literature at the University of Utrecht. This insight into the average length of tone or breath-groups[121] is now something of a commonplace, being supported by work in phonology and prosody (e.g. Lehiste 1970; Lieberman 1976), and in cognition, or cognitive psychology (e.g. Miller 1956). But Nijhoff's insight here is not information-based, as was Miller's similar insight into chunking, that is, it is not based on the amount of information people can transmit or retain in their short-term memories, which Miller also sets at 7 +/- 2 (1956:81, 90.), although this may have also played an unconscious and underlying role in Nijhoff's lighting upon this notion. Rather, Nijhoff's emphasis is more physiological and more psychological. It is based on the actual physical act of breathing, what the capacity of the lungs is to take in breath *during the act*

[120] The framing anecdote is set in a café, where Nijhoff drinks coffee with a friend and his dog.

[121] Although the terms 'tone-group' and 'breath-group' are sometimes used interchangeably, it seems useful to keep them apart and to use 'tone-group' as generally defined in prosodic analysis for a group of words containing only one nucleus or peak of prominence (Crystal 1976:209) and 'breath-group' for the number of words (or syllables) encompassed in a single out-breath. It can be imagined that two or more tone-groups may be encompassed within a single out-breath.

of speaking, and therefore, how much breath is held within the body to give shape to the words which flow out on the out-breath (i.e. enough for around 7 to 10 syllables[122]) before the next in-breath has to be taken. It is also based on pondering on what may happen to us psychologically at the point of in-breath, the very point when we stop, for a tiny moment, the speech-acts Nijhoff believes make us human. This is the point, Nijhoff makes clear, when infinity enters into us and when we, therefore, confront our inner selves, our souls, our psyches, with the whole universe. That this is not merely a poetic notion is obvious when we consider what it is that air is, how it cycles and recycles between plant and animal life, how no limit of any kind may be put on it, and how in itself, although a feature only of our planet[123], as far as we know to date, it is also shaped by and dependent on the whole universe. Breath is the very agent, Nijhoff tells us, which allows us to cross backwards and forwards between two worlds, the inner and the outer, and also, through language which is carried on the breath-stream, to comprehend and apprehend these apparent opposites. It is no wonder therefore that Nijhoff, with his emphasis on the Other[124], on using poetry not as self-expression but to give voice to that Other, should have been particularly interested by what happens during the act of breathing in. That is, it is the point when we fill ourselves with what is infinitely other than ourselves and yet with something essential to us and to our continuing existence as selves.

---

[122] Hird and Kirsner's paper summarizes research into breathing patterns and syntactical boundaries in spontaneous speech: although earlier research found that most in-breaths are taken at such junctures, current research suggests that there is a greater range of deviation than was first thought, that the breath-intake may be in random places, even within the word itself, and that breath-groups may be longer than previously believed (2002:536-8). Research by Li and Kong (2011) and by Byers (1979) does, however, suggest that Nijhoff was correct in his perception that poetry specifically regulates the in-breath.

[123] There is a crucial difference between the terms 'air' and 'atmosphere', although these terms are often used interchangeably, in that 'air', a mixture of gases and water-vapour in the specific life-supporting proportions which exist in our world, does not seem to be present on other planets, whereas 'atmosphere' does. Jupiter, for example, has an 'atmosphere', but one which would be actively harmful to the forms of life existent on our earth. The shading of air, through the layers of atmosphere which enclose our world, into the universe as a whole, where gradually its proportions change as it thins and drifts away into space, becoming less like air, and more like individual gases, supports my point that Nijhoff understood the essential properties of air as being both specific to our planet and a part of the universe. It is therefore, exactly as he says, infinite and, exactly as he says, each in-breath, in a sense, brings the individual into active confrontation with the universe as a whole (cf. Allaby 2009).

[124] This comes to a peak in a poem like 'Haar laatste brief' [her last letter] (1934), discussed in Commentary III. Nijhoff's interest in the feminine, the mother-image, is also well-known, apparent in the earliest of his poems, and transfigured in the quest of *Awater*.

This is where Nijhoff's thinking seems to lead back into the traditional notions that link breath and spirit, breath and inspiration, and forward into the kinds of Postmodernist and philosophical thinking which place an emphasis on the body and on the infinite otherness of the other, as well as on the place of the other within our psyches (see e.g. Ferrer 2002; Shusterman 2008; Wright 1998). It would be going too far to claim that Nijhoff, whose work has only recently been agreed to be essentially Modernist in nature, as discussed in 1.2.1, is actually *Post*modernist, or even Feminist *avant la lettre*, but it is certainly true to say that his approach to his poetics was modern in a way we can recognize as being closer to our own time, in spite of his adherence to traditional forms, in that from the basis of his real somatic awareness he can shape these forms afresh to make them not a dead inheritance but infused with new life and breath.

Nijhoff's main realization in this section of *OEW*, however, is that it is the way that poetry 'pays attention to the in-breath' (*VWII*:1157, tr.) that is crucial: that where prose, in effect, forces the speaker to breathe in on 'the dead places, the punctuation' (ibid), poetry, by regulating the breath through all the means which belong especially to it (metre, repetition, sound-patterning), enables the speaker to breathe in on the living places. Furthermore, Nijhoff emphasizes the importance of 'stoppage' (ibid), a similar insight to that which he has about the function, meaning, and intention of language itself, which for him signifies 'a small, minimal delay between an impulse and its gratification' (*VWII*:1155, tr.), paralleling the minimal and instantaneous confrontation between self and universe which the breath-pause in poetry brings about (*VWII*:1157). The self, or soul, which is spoken of here is not so much that of the individual *per se*, but rather that of any human being who reads or speaks the poem with their full bodily selves involved in that action. It is the poem itself which is thought of as doing the enabling, and bringing the act of confrontation between self and universe into bodily awareness. In such an act, produced by the poem in consort with both the breathing, originating body of the poet, and the breathing, re-enacting, re-creating and re-interpreting body of its reader, ideas about who the poet is and who the reader, and who, therefore, by extension, the translator, melt away. The poem, by regulating the in-breath and producing the same psycho-physiological effect on poet, reader, and translator alike, at one and the same time makes us aware of

what is going on inside ourselves, the microcosm, and brings the macrocosm livingly within us.

The implications of these insights, together with the testing of what Nijhoff might have meant by the terms he uses, specifically 'trillend oponthoud' [vibrating stoppage] and 'de levende plekken' [the living places] (*VW*II:1157), will be further examined in 3.5, and then extended into my own practical translation work in Commentary III, an experimental approach to translating Nijhoff's sonnet, 'Haar laatste brief'.

Firstly, however, I will examine Achterberg's work for evidence of a concern with breath, and look at what can be gleaned from his 'verse-external poetics' in biographical and critical materials. Computational evidence is examined, and then followed up with a detailed analysis of the importance of breath-imagery in Achterberg's poems, since, as discussed in 1.3.2 and 2.5.1, Achterberg gave very little formal critical insight into his own poetics, and left none of the body of critical writing which Nijhoff left. The 'verse-internal' evidence then becomes the most important evidence to examine in Achterberg's case.

3.3 Evidence for a concern with breath in Achterberg's work

3.3.1 Computational evidence

Just as in the English poetry-writing world a concern that poetry should not use clichéd language sometimes seems to tip over into rather puzzling interdicts on the use of specific words in poems[125], producing lists of banned or unacceptable words[126], so too recent discussion in the world of Dutch-language poetry has centred on lists of 'foute woorden' [incorrect words[127]], words felt to be outdated

[125] Puzzling because naive about the way in which words work in language. Individual words can never be clichéd. It is the way a word is used in its context which produces its effects, and justifies its usage in specific poems.
[126] See e.g. Sansom 2007:35-37; Read 2011.
[127] The term 'fout' has specific connotations in Dutch which make the term 'foute woorden' particularly judgemental. People who collaborated with the Nazis in the 2nd World War were after its end deemed to be 'fout', so that those poets who use such words do seem to be being accused of something more than just bad aesthetics. An actual, as opposed to a gloss, translation would probably be 'clichéd words'.

or overused in poems. The English and Dutch lists of words to banish from contemporary poetry do not, in fact, overlap, although it might be argued that Achterberg's poetry would fare badly by the judgements implied in both. A recent article by Henk Ruijsch (2002:n.p.), published by the Dutch on-line poetry journal *Meander*, has questioned the poet Ingmar Heytze's list (2002:n.p.), by testing Achterberg's poetry, and a database of around 3,000 poems, to determine how many of these 'incorrect words' are actually used.

One of the words on Heytze's list of 'foute woorden' is 'ademen' [to breathe], which Ruijsch modifies to its stem 'adem' [breath] in order to check its recurrence in the works he investigates. In the case of Achterberg's poetry he finds 46 occurrences of 'adem', within circa 1,150 poems[128], that is around 4% of Achterberg's poems touch on 'breath' in some way or another.[129] This seems significant; and significant too may be the fact that there is a falling-off in the direct use of this word-stem in the later poems[130]. However, although computational work of this kind, whether manual or computer-aided, can highlight the fact that a certain word or concept is of importance to the writer, it cannot pick up all the subtle ways in which such a word is used within its context, nor can it find word-usage with a semantic, metaphorical, or metonymic relationship to the word-stem being investigated, unless pre-specified. For example, there is a clear link or contrast in many of Achterberg's poems between 'adem' [breath] and 'wind' [wind]; 'wind' and 'geest' [spirit] or 'Heilige Geest' [Holy Ghost/Holy Spirit]; and 'wind' and 'stilte' [silence/stillness]. Once these links and oppositions are perceived, then many more words and concepts are understood to be part of the same field of association, including words like 'ruisen' [rustle], 'fluister' [whisper] and 'geruisloos' [silent]. The complexity of

[128] How many poems Achterberg's *VG* contains depends partly on whether certain poems as perceived as being one poem with several parts, or as a sequence of individual poems. Moreover, Ruijsch does not identify the edition on which the database is based. More poems have been admitted to the Achterberg canon in recent years (see *Alle gedichten* [all poems] (2005)). Ruijsch's brief article simply looks at frequencies for several words. The specifics of analysis in this section are, therefore, entirely my own.

[129] Ruijsch was able to use an electronic database of Achterberg's poems which I was not able to access during my studies. A manual check of my edition of *VG* (1988) has found 40 uses of the stem 'adem', a very similar count to Ruijsch's.

[130] By date of publication in book form: 1931 x 7; 1939 x 5; 1940 x 2; 1941 x 10; 1944 x 4; 1946 x 6; 1949 x 3; 1950 x 1; 1951 x 2; 1953 x 0; 1954 x 0; 1957 x 0; 1961 x 0; 1969 x 0 = 40 (my manual count).

this field of semantic and imagistic association is illustrated in *Figures 19* and *20*, based on my own count, not Ruijsch's, a total of 40 instances within circa 854 poems, a percentage of 3.416, that is around 3.5%[131]. *Figure 19* shows the number of instances of the use of the word-stem 'adem' [breath] by year of publication of the collections, as well as the various themes under which those usages may be grouped. It does not indicate how many collections were published in the year in question, nor should it be taken to show precisely how Achterberg's usage of the word-stem changed over time since, particularly in the years between 1939 and 1946, date of publication is not completely linked to date of composition[132]. Nevertheless it does give a good impression of the range of usage and context for this word-stem, and of its diminishing usage in later collections. After *Mascotte* [mascot] (1951) I have been unable to find a single instance of the word-stem 'adem'[133]. *Figure 20* gives the same information, but ignores date of publication, allowing for a clear impression of frequency by thematic category. However, when the word 'wind' [wind] is added to the investigation, then the picture changes somewhat, as shown in *Figure 21*. Further charts could be made to show the nuances created by words related to spirit, stillness and silence, or to actions shared by both wind and breath, such as whispering, rustling and so forth.

[131] Mathematical accuracy is not the point here; the percentage and charts are intended to give an indication, not a precise picture, of frequency of usage.
[132] See Meijer 1961 for a first discussion of the problem and Achterberg 2000 for a full record of composition and publication dates, as far as these can be determined.
[133] Although I am not working from the most recent collection of Achterberg's poems, *Alle gedichten* (2005), which draws on the specialist editorial work of the historical-critical edition (2000), I *am* working from the standard edition current between 1963 and 2003, which draws together all the collections published in Achterberg's lifetime, with the exception of his 1924 joint publication, *De zangen van twee twintigers* [the songs of two twentiers]. The picture I sketch above, therefore, is of the Achterberg canon as it appeared to readers between 1963 and 2000/2005.

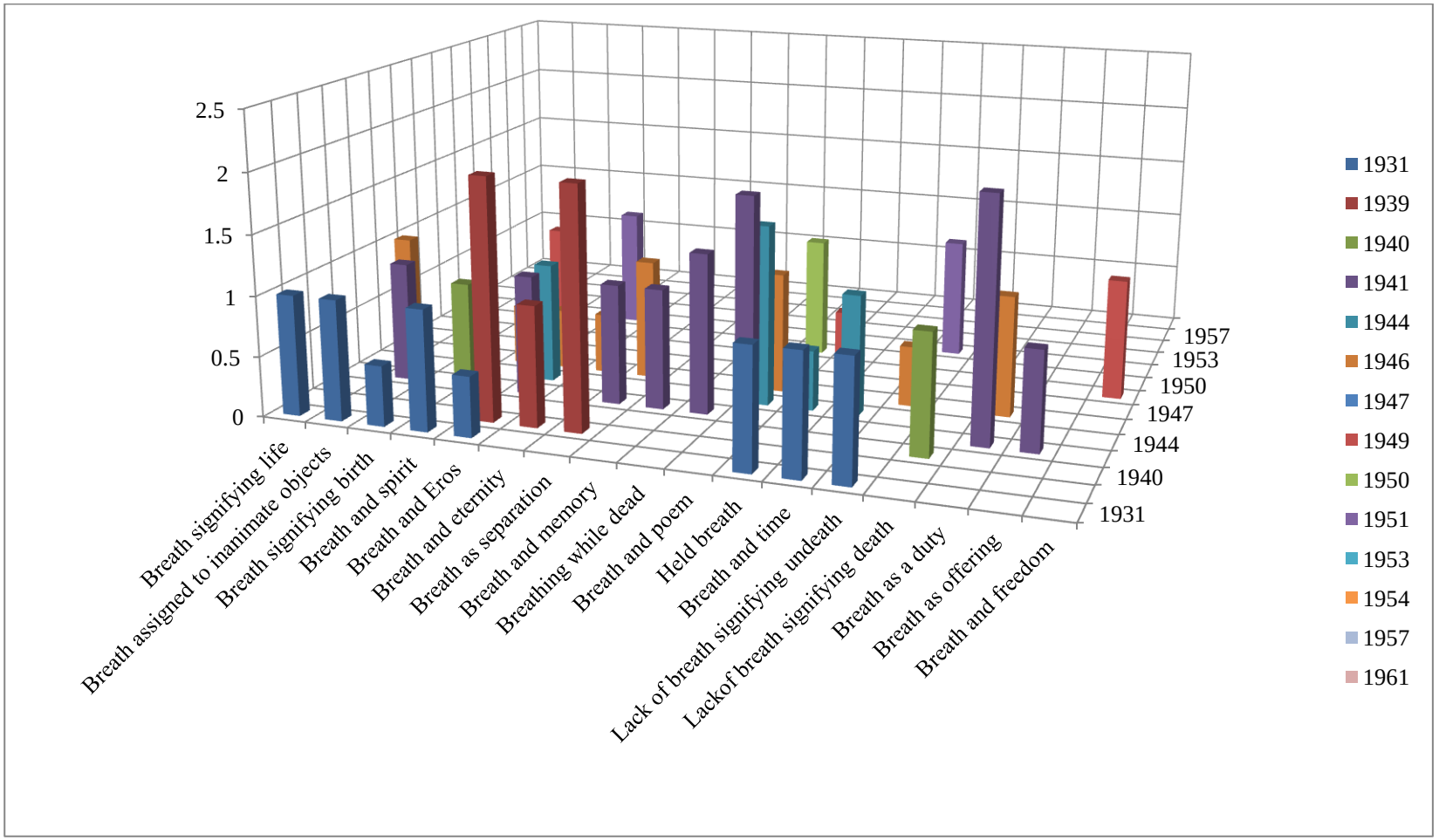


Figure 19: 'adem' [breath] in Achterberg's poetry, by theme and date of collection

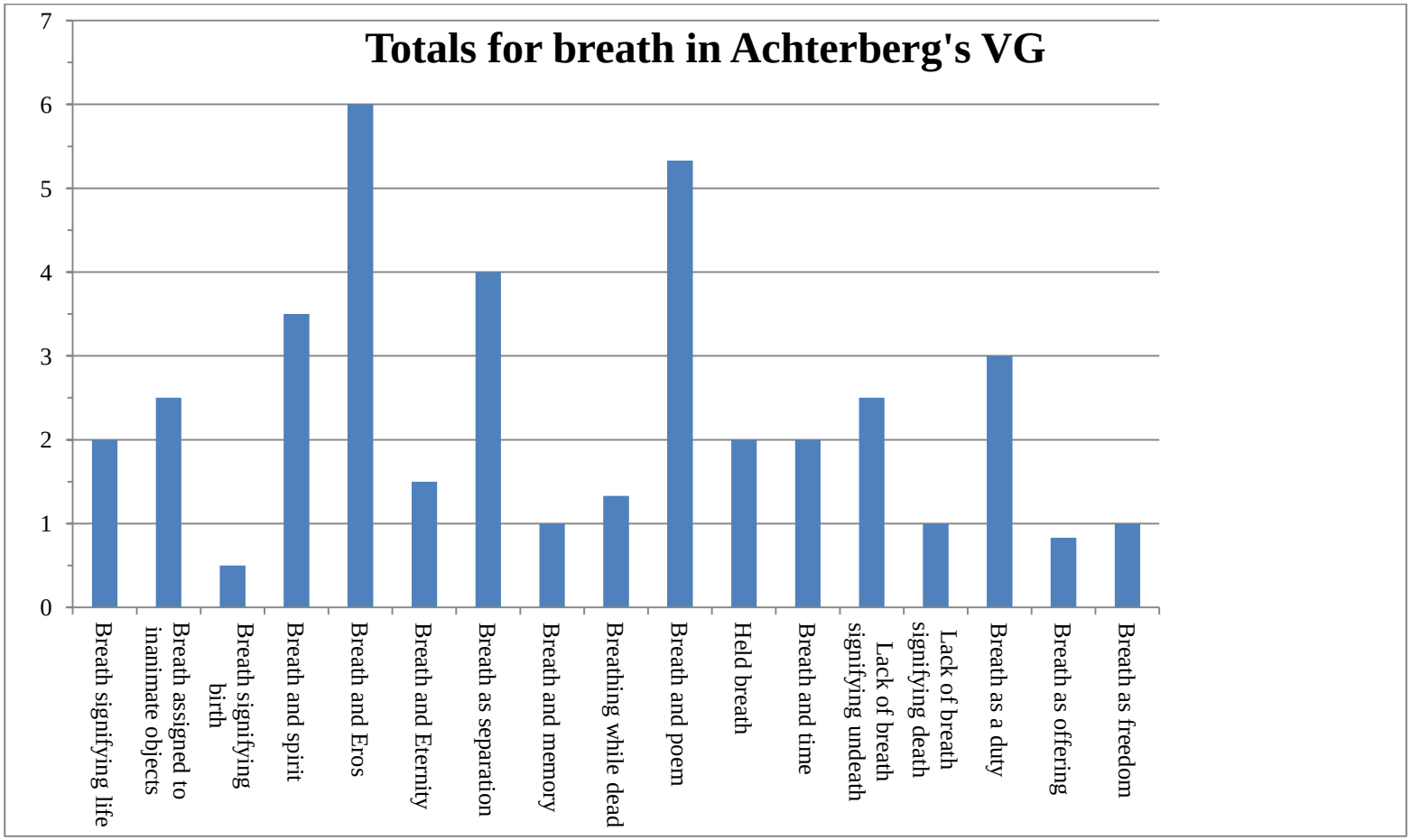


Figure 20: totals by theme of the word 'adem' [breath] in Achterberg's VG

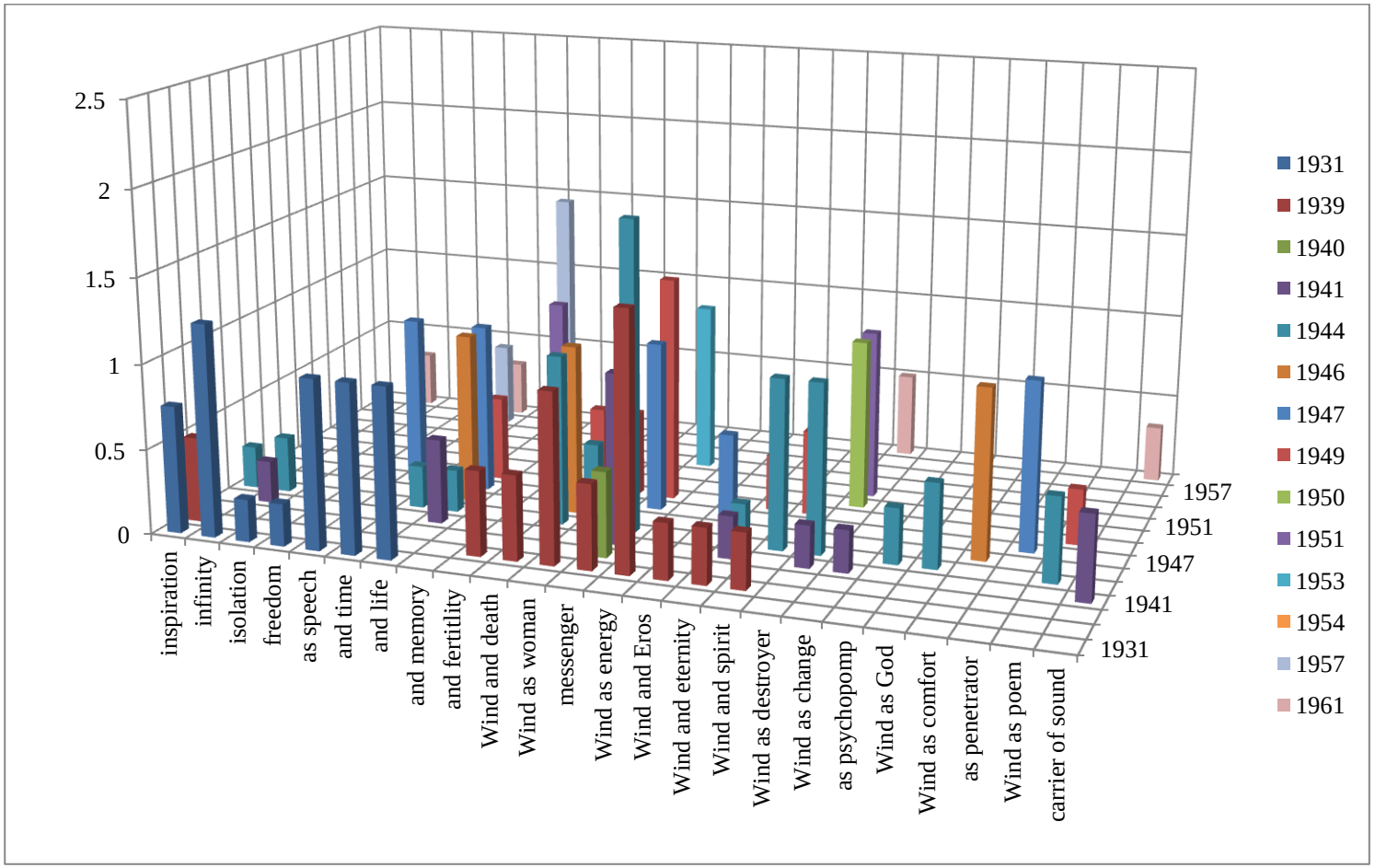


Figure 21: 'Wind' in Achterberg's poetry, by theme and date of collection

In fact, all instances of the use of these words or word-stems are infinitely complicated by the resonances set up in the individual poems, carried into the body of the work as a whole. To demonstrate this I will give a more detailed account of the categories of breath created from my readings of the poems, which have been important in helping me to see the inter-relationship of these images within the Achterberg-oeuvre. These analyses are summative of more extensive work, and, with the exception of three key poems ('Osmose', 'Franciscus', and 'Thebe'), are very briefly presented. The categories are not hard and fast, and in the reading experience clearly overlap with each other, but are helpful in allowing the translator to understand the nuances of thought in the usage of breath-related words in Achterberg's poetry.

3.3.2 Analysis of breath-imagery in Achterberg's *Verzamelde gedichten*

My method here is intended to demonstrate how a translator may benefit from placing close textual reading of individual poems against the work as a whole, to understand the links between the poems, and therefore to enable, in translation, the poems to inter-relate, to 'call each other up'. The sensitization of the translator to key-words and concepts should lead to a more carefully judged translation, one more fully able to re-create aspects of the 'mind' the translator reads into the ST.

Although I applied this method of categorization and analysis to the concepts of 'wind' and 'spirit' as well as to 'breath', I focus here only on breath, because of limitations of space. The point is not so much to demonstrate the effect of such analysis on translation, but rather to give evidence for the importance of breath-imagery in Achterberg's work, and of its subtlety and variety. Although the categorization of this imagery may seem to have some relationship to cognitive-metaphor theory, this is not the perspective from which I am analyzing these poems. As Steen (2011a, 2011b) makes clear, this approach can certainly be useful in determining general underlying categories of thinking, but it cannot account for the *specific* way in which *specific* minds use metaphor. This is particularly so for poetry which strives for 'singularity' (cf. Attridge 2004a) of

expression. It is to understand what the specificity of these metaphors suggests about the underlying vision permeating Achterberg's work that I have made these analyses. I recognize that these categories are neither hard and fast, nor empirically discoverable: they represent my own attempt to clarify what I perceive the poetry to be saying – they are a summarized reading, but not the only reading, of the evidence offered to my mind by the Achterberg poem-complex.

i. Breath signifying life

This is the most basic of the categories and derives from common conceptual imagery linking breath and life (see Kövecses 2011:328, 344). Achterberg uses this straightforward image twice in the *VG*, 'Droomballade' [dream-ballad] (*VG:*41) and in 'Afspraak' [appointment/tryst] (*VG*:554), though in a far from straightforward manner.

Breath is equated with new life, given through pain, sacrifice, or extinction ('Droomballade'), but as a sign of life may easily give way to its opposite[134] ('Afspraak'), uniting all elements (alive and dead) into one.

ii. Breath assigned to inanimate objects/abstractions

This is a more unusual category. Non-living things are perceived as having life – and breath is its marker. This goes beyond personification as a figure of speech into something more vital and animistic: if the world of matter and objects is actually a living, breathing world, then the dead beloved, who now belongs to the world of matter, may also still live. This is the trope underlying *Stof* [matter/dust], a collection of poems in which the beloved is figured within everything, from linoleum, to radios, to granite. Whilst I have found only four poems in this specific category, the theme pervades Achterberg's poetry, and shapes his stance towards the Thou-persona. The poems are: 'Droomgericht' [dream-judgement] (*VG*:32); 'Afscheid' [leave-taking] (*VG*:58); 'De verloren zoon' [the lost son (= prodigal son)] (*VG*:250); and 'Het weer is goed' [the weather is good] (*VG*:682).

[134] Underlining in this section highlights the summary of each category.

With the exception of the clock (in 'Droomgericht') which governs time, the world of inanimate matter is not perceived as threatening. On the contrary, the inanimate, abstract and un-human is humanized through the basic quality of being able to breathe and is perceived as being on the side of, pleading on behalf of, or even breathing for the lyric-I. Breath itself has agency and externality: a concept linking it to (living) spirit and to the wind. In one of the poems ('Afscheid') Breathing is attributed to the landscape, the horizon between life and death. Breath has qualities of liminality.

iii. Breath and spirit

This category, although seemingly only containing four instances of its usage, overlaps with many poems containing imagery of wind and (Holy) Spirit. The four poems are: 'Liggende onder een boom' [lying under a tree] (*VG*:66); 'Nadood' [after-death] (*VG*:154); 'Spiraal' [spiral] (*VG*:537); and 'Status moriendi' [the state of dying] (*VG*:721). They show that the concepts of breath and spirit are not straightforward. On the one hand, in my reading of Achterberg's vision, spirit persists once the body has gone, and still can make contact with the living. Spirit also infuses the word with creative potential. On the other hand spirit (and poetic word) cannot literally re-create what has gone. The lyric-I is left with an ultimate sense of failure.

iv. Breath and Eros

Most of Achterberg's poems can be read as love poems, so arguably Eros infuses all that he writes. The poems are: (i) 'Eiland der ziel' [island of the soul] (*VG*:74); (ii) 'Ritme' [rhythm] (*VG*:211); (iii) 'Illusie' [illusion] (*VG*:310); and (iv) 'Maria Magdalena' [Mary Magdalene] (*VG*:344).

The major aspects of breath which can be understood from this category are that (i) the standstill of breath in the moment of the kiss connotes ecstasy and a shared eternity, that (ii) the breath of the lyric-I is attuned to the breath-rhythms of the beloved, that (iii) signs of breath in the world (wind) are signs of physical love-making between the I and the Thou, and that (iv) the actual (breathing) body of the beloved is more valuable than any form of spirit. In

spite of the moments of hope and ecstasy, the prime sensation is one of loss and failure.

v. Breath as separation

I have found four instances of poems in which the breath-imagery can primarily be placed in this category. By breath as separation I mean figures of breath in Achterberg's poetry which place the emphasis on the separation of the living from the dead, the I from the Thou, the lover from his beloved. This category is clearly a sub-category of breath signifying life, where life is a separate state from that of death, although the two may interpenetrate each other. The poems are: 'Smart' [pain/hurt/wound] (*VG*:121); 'Stof' [matter/dust] (*VG*:136); 'Rouw' [mourning/sorrow] (*VG*:271); and 'Energie' [energy] (*VG*:463).

In these poems which take the idea of breath as a symbol of separation, the thought is gradually transformed until the grief and pain of separation are seen to be illusory: within separation there still is contact; within transformation there still is continuity. Life, signified by breath, is shown to be not so very different to death, signified by a lack of breath: these two states interpenetrate, are permeable to each other, and will transform into their opposite state.

vi. Breath and memory

Although I have found only one poem in which breath specifically intersects with memory, memory is one of the most central themes in Achterberg's poems. In 'Afspraak' [appointment/tryst] (*VG*:197) the Thou has made a tryst with the lyric-I. The time is dusk. Lamps are glowing in the windows of houses, which in that light become soft and gentle as women (or wives). It is this atmosphere of home, restfulness and quiet expectation which the lyric-I breathes in that implies a recollection of a former time when the beloved still lived, and when he hoped for, or had, domestic unity with her.

vii. Breathing while dead

If the first and most basic association of breath is with life, the most astonishing denial of the reality of death is to assign breath to the beloved, although she is dead. Again, whilst I have found only one poem which directly deals with this thought, there are a number of poems which imply this, including 'Thebe' [Thebes] discussed below under the category Breath as offering, and many of the poems which deal with the wind (since the wind is figured as the still-living breath of the dead beloved).

Under the light of a radiant moon in 'Baaierd' [chaos/whirlpool] (*VG*:200), the beloved is asked if she has managed to steal a single breath from death. If so, then the Thou is no longer determined or defined by what is hidden, and poems are no longer necessary to reveal her. Creation has yielded, and the void itself lies open (to new possibilities) – it is the time before time began, before the first light. The whole poem, apart from the first line, is in the form of a question, casting some doubts on its implications. Not only is this poem dominated by the idea that the beloved may well breathe while dead, but the thought is that if this is so, then the work of the lyric-I, the poet in particular, and in general, is no longer necessary.

We can see from this poem that at this stage in his poetic career (around 1940), Achterberg tended to see the work of the poem as the bringing to life of the dead beloved, whether metaphorically or actually. If the beloved actually breathes whilst dead, then the poetic task is no longer necessary. This thought contrasts with 'Thebe' (see below) where the mystery of death proves too strong for the lyric-I, and the poem itself is figured as an escape from death for the lyric-I, an escape which allows the I to breathe in life, as he could not do in death.

viii. Breath and poem

Since the poem is 'inspired', is not seen as having its origin in the poet/lyric-I but rather in something outside him, a spirit infusing him with words which are then carried outwards on the breath of the lyric-I (spoken out or sung), the links between breath and poem in Achterberg's work are literally vital:

through the action of the poem, the beloved may be given breath. This is a cycle (like the physical cycle of breathing): the dead beloved, the eternal Thou, is the spirit infusing the poem with breath and being; in its turn the poem may well give her breath again, particularly if the right words are found. Note: although the initial inspiration (breath) comes from outside the poet/lyric-I, the poet himself has the responsibility of finding the right words, and binding these into the right form, exhaling that inspiration in the correct manner. There are six poems in this category: (i) 'Remplaçant' [substitute/surrogate] (*VG*:215); (ii) 'Kwatrijnen' [quatrains] (*VG*:238) (quatrain 1); (iii) 'Sterrenhoos' [star-whirl] (*VG*:328); (iv) 'Branding' [surf/burning/branding] (*VG*:368); (v) 'Vacuüm' [vacuum] (*VG*:399); and (vi) 'Mascotte' [mascot] (*VG*:746).

The basic idea is that the poem has a life of its own, symbolized by the fact that it can breathe, or bestow breath. In some cases (i) this is seen as an insufficient replacement for the life of the dead beloved, leading the lyric-I to feel that something more than words should be offered in order to secure a new life for the Thou. In other cases (iii) the poem allows the lyric-I to continue living. In others (iv) it is figured as a new-born being, defiant of and resistant to death itself, or (v) becomes a kind of machine which has the potential to give life and breath to the dead beloved. Finally (vi), the story the poem tells is told through the breath of the dead beloved, even if only in the memory of the lyric-I. This story can never be exhausted, just as the respiratory cycle itself repeats and repeats without coming to an end (except through death, which all these poems have tried to show is not actually an end).

ix. Held breath

The category of held breath is signalled either by the word 'ademloos' [breathless/without breath] or by variants on the phrase 'hield de adem in' [held the breath in]. It seems to carry connotations beyond the physical to suggest wonder, awe, surprise, or timelessness, or of waiting for something to occur over which one has no control. I have found three poems in this

category, overlapping somewhat with others: (i) ‘De slag’ [battle/heartbeat] (*VG*:33); (ii) ‘Sterrenhoos’ [star-whirl] (*VG*:328) and (iii) ‘Het weer is goed’ [the weather is good] (*VG*:682).

This category adds to the basic notion of breath signifying life the concept that the temporary cessation of the act of breathing is linked to states of wonder, awe, and even (iii) foreboding. In that suspension of time between one breath and the next something may occur which takes the lyric-I and/or the Thou-persona into another dimension to reverse states which seem final, as in (i) the death of love, or in (ii) actual death), or to allow new acts of creativity to take place, as in (ii) the coming into being of the poem within the poet. That there is an ambiguity about this state can be seen in ‘Het weer is goed’, where it seems that something terrible (or transfigurative) may occur while the room watches with bated breath.

x. Breath and time

This category links time with breath and sets these against eternity. This linkage can either be positive (breath and life are the gifts of time) or negative (breath is the clock-like mechanism separating us from eternity). There are two poems in this category: ‘Herboren’ [re-born] (*VG*:36); and ‘Klok’ [clock] (*VG*:364).

In ‘Herboren’ breath and blood are the gifts of time but that gift, granting the body its feeling and reciprocity, takes away the eternal formless form of the self.

‘Klok’ [clock] (*VG*:364) portrays the rising and falling of a pendulum, the clock’s perceptible tick-tocking, as its breathing. The clock is the time-soldier, a monstrous being which emptily swallows up everything that decays. Human-beings act like the clock, moving in violent locking motions in a mechanism whose aim is to manufacture death. The key phrase with regard to the clock’s breathing is that it is an empty swallowing [een lege slik]: the implication is that true breath – nourishing, life-giving breath – can only exist

outside clock-time, in eternity itself, in the little eternity of love-making or moments of awe.

Although this category seems relatively small it is important in that it links to imagery in other Achterberg poems which, at first sight, seem to have little to do with breath. For example, the poem 'Robot' (*VG*:699) contains the image of a Frisian standing (or longcase) clock which takes 'a long, blue swallow' [een lange, blauwe slok] every hour. 'Droomgericht' and 'Herboren', also link the clock with breath.

xi. Lack of breath signifying un-death

This category overlaps with Breath and Eros and Held breath, since Achterberg associates the holding in of breath with wonder, awe, timelessness, and even ecstasy – the sensation that one is not breathing at all in moments of intense joy and rapture. The logic seems to be that if in our most intimate moments with the beloved, the Thou, we suspend our breath (even if only apparently so), then the ultimate suspension of breath cannot signify death, but on the contrary signifies a continued existence in another form: un-death. I have found one poem clearly in this category: 'Spiraal' [spiral] (*VG*:537) also categorized under Breath and spirit. The Thou speaks to the lyric-I, by means of the wind entering the hollow of her death. She assures him, in a series of paradoxes, that whilst she no longer breathes, and cannot be physically reached, she is a circle which does not close [een cirkel die niet sluit], a living spiral dancing above her own grave.

xii. Lack of breath signifying death

We have seen how Achterberg attempts to invert our commonsense laws of nature which say that something which has no breath has no existence (or rather, he works with the laws of physics, such as the law of the conservation of energy, where energy can change location and form, but cannot be destroyed); in this category he frankly admits that what is no longer able to breathe is clearly dead, but insists that survival can still be granted within the poem itself. I have found one poem, 'Medium' [medium] (*VG*:164), which

can be categorized like this. In this complex and subtle poem life and death greet each other within the lyric-I in words recalling those of the Angel Gabriel to Mary in his annunciation of her pregnancy of the word made flesh. Lack of breath does indeed signify death, but that death can have union with life, both producing the eternal word in the form of the poem.

xiii. Breath as a duty

The category of breath as a duty is strongly interrelated to the basic category of breath and life and to that of breath and poem. Breath here is the breath of the lyric-I which signifies his own life. Since the beloved is dead, the I would also rather be dead but continues to live as a duty to fulfil the task of continuously attempting to find the right words to penetrate the border between life and death, and to bring the Thou back to the world of life. I have placed three poems in this category: 'Osmose' [osmosis] (*VG*:204); Franciscus' [Franciscus] (*VG*:294); and 'Intermédiaire' [Intermediary] (*VG*:558).

'Osmose' [osmosis] may be seen as the basic poem in this category from which the others evolve. Although the title of the poem initially seems to play no part in the poem as such, in fact it is important to my reading. The process of osmosis is one in which molecules move across a semi-permeable membrane, from a less concentrated region to one of greater concentration, until a state of equilibrium between the two has been reached. Like the breath-cycle, osmosis is vital to life and is the main means by which water is transported into cellular systems. Figuratively, then, the less-concentrated region can be read as the region of 'spirit' (or death) whilst the more-concentrated region is that of 'matter' (or life). The membrane is the thin barrier which appears to separate the world of death from the world of life, but which is in fact, under the right circumstances (the circumstances of the poem), semi-permeable. The implicature is that the super-concentrated language of the poem draws into itself the dispersed spirit of the dead beloved, so that two worlds are then shown to be inter-dependent.

In ‘Osmose’, the lyric-I compares the repetition of his breathing, to the repetitive action of rain (repetitive not only because rain happens on more than one occasion, and occurs as a series of micro-repetitions, but also because rain itself is part of the greater water-cycle, of which the process of osmosis is an element). He wills this repetition of his breath so that he can write ‘the story of the body’ (life and love) and allow it to weigh more strongly than the story of death (indicated in the poem by ‘doodsberichten’ [obituaries/death-messages]). If he is successful in this process then languages will be ‘threaded into each other’ [in elkaar geregen] (as in the process of osmosis molecules inter-flow) and the resulting equilibrium will allow both regions to become each other’s mirror-images (life and death will reach a similar state of concentration), so that the Thou and the lyric-I will be able to see each other in reflection walking with each other, as lovers do.[135]

Breath is a duty for the lyric-I because it may enable something miraculous to occur, although that miraculousness is simply an extension of the already-current laws of nature.

‘Osmose’ is also formally interesting in that a distinct breath-pause is indicated in two places in lines 1 and 2 of the poem:

> Nu ik hier nog herhaal**,** herhaal als regen
> *now I here still repeat repeat like rain*
> mijn ademhaal**,** opdat zal óverwegen
> *my respiration so-that shall over-weigh*
> het bloedverhaal boven uw doodsberichten,
> *the blood-story above your death-messages/obituaries*

It seems to me that the effect of this is iconic: as in Nijhoff’s work the breath-pauses draw attention to the words placed immediately before them, here, the concepts of repetition and respiration, which in themselves are linked, and deeply linked moreover to rain and to the water-cycle, as pointed out above. This iconicity extends also to the repetition of the word ‘her**haal**’ which, because of its sonic link to ‘adem**haal**’ (respiring/respiration but literally

[135] The idea of this final image seems to be that the Thou and the I will be seen walking together in *both* regions: in a state of absolute equilibrium between life and death.

'breath-haul'), seems also to represent the actual breath. In translating these lines I therefore paid attention not only to the pause but also to the repetition:

> Now I **repeat here, repeat here** like the rain
> **the breath I take**, so that the greater weight
> will be the story of the blood, and not obituaries,

This catches the repetition and the deliberate placing of the breath-pause, but is not able to tie the breath into the repetition in the very form of the words.

Although the breath-pause itself is well made use of by Achterberg in this example, I have not found evidence that the breath-pause as such is a formative principle in Achterberg's poems as a whole. Here its function is clearly iconic, an aspect of the work which will form the theme of Chapter 4 of this study.

Another poem in this group, <u>breath as duty</u>, is deeply interesting in philosophical terms, but has a less clear relationship between the breath-word and the breath-pause. The poem 'Franciscus' [Franciscus] (*VG*:294) refers to the medieval Italian saint, Francis of Assisi. It is a song of blessing with similarities both to the Beatitudes (see Matthew 5:3-12) and to the poem composed by Francis, known as the Canticle of the Sun (cf. Reijmerink 2007:219-31). It is the first stanza of the poem which concerns me here:

> Gezegend zij het brood
> *blessed be the bread*
> ter langzame verbranding,
> *to-a slow burning*
> opdat mijn ademhaling
> *so-that my respiration*
> geschiede tot den dood.
> *(may-)occur till the death*

The key word is the preposition 'ter', a remnant in Dutch grammar of case-formation. The word has archaic overtones and is linked with formal situations, such as when sentence is pronounced by a judge. It sits rather oddly with a blessing, such as is given in this stanza, and would be expected

rather in cases such as ‘ter dood verwezen te worden’ [to be condemned to death] or ‘ter dood veroordeeld’ [condemned/judged to death][136].

The oddness of the preposition highlights, therefore, the odd choice of word, ‘verbranding’ [burning/combustion], which has connotations of punishment (death by burning), self-sacrifice (see 1 Corinthians13:3[137]) and of physical processes of the transformation of energy. One would expect the word to be some form of the verb ‘bakken’ [to bake]. Because the actual choice of word in the Dutch is more loaded, the ‘bread’ itself becomes symbolic and open to several different interpretations. For example, ‘brood’ can be seen as the daily necessity, that which keeps us alive. In this case, the bread must burn slowly so that it can become food. A fast burning would destroy it. If the bread is the poem itself, or the act of making poetry, then a slow transformation of language into another form produces better food than a swift one. If the bread stands for the lyric-I himself, then this stanza can be read as a statement that within his own punishment (the punishment of being alive whilst the beloved is dead), his own damnation, the I may still be blessed because he is the food (or his poem-making is the food) which gives life to the beloved, or, to those who read of her.

Breath and bread therefore have a deep alikeness implicitly explored in this stanza, whilst breath, which carries the word, is a duty so that this act of combustion, act of life-giving transformation may occur.

What is interesting is that the word ‘ademhaling’ [respiration] is not so foregrounded in formal terms as in ‘Osmose’, although it is placed at the end of the line, also the point at which a breath is likely to be taken in (cf. Li and Kong 2011), especially in conjunction with the highly rhythmic song-like metre of the poem. It has therefore less iconic weight here than in the

[136] Both phrases taken from Nanning 1767:265.

[137] ‘En al ware het, dat ik al mijn goederen tot onderhoud der armen uitdeelde, en al ware het, dat ik mijn lichaam overgaf, opdat ik verbrand zou worden, en had de liefde niet, zo zou het mij geen nuttigheid geven’ (*Statenbijbel* 1637; cf. KJV: ‘And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing’.)

previous example, although it is still beautifully placed in rhythmic terms, as my translation has tried to capture:

> Blessed be the bread
> in its slow slow burning,
> so that each breath I breathe
> may come to pass till death.

xiv. Breath as offering

This category may be seen as an inversion of the previous one where the lyric-I has the duty to breathe, and therefore live. Here the lyric-I offers his breath, his life, to the Thou that she might live. This is an exchange of his life for hers, so that his (potential) death may purchase her (potential) life, rather than, as in the previous category, a continuation in life of the lyric-I until the work of the poems give life (symbolically or, sometimes, perhaps literally) to the dead beloved.

There are only two poems, 'Remplaçant' [substitute/surrogate] (*VG*:215) and 'Thebe' [Thebes] (*VG*:258-9), in which I have been able to find direct evidence of the notion of 'breath as offering'; nevertheless, the underlying idea of an offering of the life of the I in exchange for the (potential) life of the Thou permeates many of Achterberg's poems, particularly those published before 1950.

'Thebe' takes the notion of life (and therefore breath) as an offering as its basis. The lyric-I is on an expedition into the underground necropolis of the Egyptian Thebes equipped with life both for himself and for the beloved: 'Met leven toegerust voor beiden' [with life equipped for both]. The labyrinth-like endless journey into darkness is only endured by the lyric-I in the thought that he will discover the beloved's location and be with her eternally. Although he does indeed find her, and she appears momentarily to come to life again, eyes opening, hands caressing, mouth asking, nevertheless the lyric-I is unable to bear the knowledge given him by the beloved and must flee back to the land of the living, by means of the poem, the 'emergency staircase to the dawn': 'noodtrappen naar het morgenlicht' [need-stairs to the

morning-light]. The inability to fully bear this mystical knowledge, 'een taal waarvoor geen teken is/ in dit heelal' [a language for-which no sign is/ in this universe] is figured as a lack of breath in the lyric-I: 'maar had geen adem meer genoeg' [but had no breath more enough].

I have translated this section of the poem as follows:

> A language for which there is no sign
> in this whole universe,
> I understood one final time.
>
> But did not have sufficient breath
> and have escaped into this verse:
> emergency staircase to the dawn,
> pale light and much too soon.

This is one of the most interesting and complex references to breath in Achterberg's poems, with, as I interpret it, several potential layers of meaning:

a) The lyric-I has insufficient breath to live in the underground chambers of death (the air as described at the outset of the poem is mouldy, tainted, hard to breathe). He cannot fulfil his desire to live with the beloved in that burial chamber till judgement day. He himself would die there and his death would not give the beloved life.

b) The lyric-I has literally insufficient breath to give breath to the dead beloved. He cannot resuscitate her. (She does momentarily regain life, but not through his actions).

c) The lyric-I has insufficient breath to speak out the mystical language which he understands for the final time (which seems to be the language of the question the Thou has asked him. Is this a language which would literally create life from death? Or is it a language of absolute love and forgiveness?)

d) The lyric-I has insufficient breath to rescue the beloved, to carry her with him, from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of life.

The poem itself, that is *this* poem, 'Thebe', is an emergency escape into the daylight world, and does no more than record the experience of an intense meeting between the I and the Thou within the world of death, but is not in

itself the material/the word from which life will be given to the beloved. She is left behind in the underground chambers of darkness.

Here breath, and life, and the poem itself, are failed offerings which cannot work the exchange the lyric-I hopes for.

Formally speaking, again it is not so much the breath-pause which structures this poem against syntax and metre, as in Nijhoff's work, and especially with the function of foregrounding important concepts, as we shall see, but rather the subtle use of longer and shorter lines, together with the rhyme-scheme, which suggest the lengthy spiralling journey into the underworld (in 'schroeven van eender blinder cirkeling' [spirals of a continuous blind circling]), and give an anxious tone to the poem as a whole:

Stanza 1: Thebe

———————————	a	
———————————	b	
————————	a	
———————————	c	
———————————	b	
————————	c	verdroeg

The c-rhyme returns throughout the poem in the assonantal rhymes of 'schroeven' [helix/spiral] and 'begroeven' [buried], 'sloeg' [beat], 'vroeg' [asked], 'genoeg' [enough] and, the last word of the poem 'vroeg' [early]. The sound itself has spiralled through the poem, providing its conclusion.

In this section, **3.3.2**., I have given basic analyses of the thought in forty of Achterberg's poems in which the concept of breath plays an important metaphoric and symbolic role. I have also examined some places where the thought clearly interacts with the form and structure of the poem, concluding however that Achterberg's relationship to the breath-pause is different to Nijhoff's. Where it is highlighted, this seems to be for reasons of iconicity, and not so much, as I will

explore further in Nijhoff's case, a result of a poetics which places importance on the vibrant emptiness of the pause itself.

Barring a few exceptions, I have not discussed my translations (see Appendix 1), but have instead shown in detail some elements of the complex dialogue a translator may have with a body of work, as opposed a single poem taken out of the context of the total oeuvre. My contention is that an active critical engagement with the work as a whole, consciously carried out, along the lines demonstrated in this section, is of tremendous help to the translator in deepening the readerly response and in helping to solve specific translation issues within the individual poem. The importance of such work lies in allowing the translator to obtain a grasp of the development of the source poet's thought, as expressed in the poetry, on the various forms in which this thought is expressed, and of the shape-shifting, yet essentially stable, nature of the imagery which is used. This means that the resulting translations can be more securely placed in the context of the total oeuvre, and that any re-drafting of earlier translations may be made in the light of what has been learned by comparative analytical work. Indeed, the more coherently organized knowledge of the oeuvre which such reading-work yields is useful to the translator not only in helping him or her to make informed translation decisions, but also in the editing of that work, and in the presentation of the translations to the general reader.

Although the kind of interpretive work I have carried out in investigating the role of breath in Achterberg's work may initially seem to have little relationship to problems of form and structure, except negatively, by showing that although breath as a concept is vital to Achterberg, the breath-pause itself is not of such structural and thematic importance as with Nijhoff, I have stressed throughout this study the impossibility of separating form and content. Moreover, as will be seen in Chapter 4, Achterberg's pervasive use of iconicity should encourage the translator to interconnect rhythm, sound-patterning and thought so that important concepts are foregrounded. To do this, I would argue, a deep understanding of the themes and major image-networks of the oeuvre is vital. To investigate the metaphoric basis of the poems and their inter-relation to each other is, effectively, to investigate the mind-style of the poet, and to attempt an understanding of this

mind-style – or characteristic cognitive states as represented and presented in the text, through the lyric-I voice (the implied poet) – is to be confronted with 'distinctive and striking textual patterns' (Boase-Beier 2003:254) which build into 'larger patterns running through' (Boase-Beier 2003:257) the poem as a whole and, indeed, sets of interconnecting poems.

Gutt's work on translation and relevance theory has shown the importance of context in helping the translator determine whether a particular interpretation is or is not relevant, context here being defined as 'the mutual *cognitive environment* of communicator and audience' (Gutt 1989:44). The translator, in respect of the translation work, is both audience and communicator, and should strive therefore to understand the cognitive environment, i.e. the full context of the poet's work, as completely as possible: an important element of that is to go beyond the individual poem to the network of poems so that the target reader also has the chance to step into that mutual cognitive environment as the translated texts interact with and reinforce each other. That this is not a new thought can be seen from a comment made by the translator Dolf Verspoor (1917-1994), as reported in a recent article by Edwin Lucas (2007). Verspoor (Lucas 2007:14-15, tr.) felt that:

> poetry demands […] a total approach. You can only translate, he found, if you know the whole work, or at least as much of that work as possible, because: 'the vocabulary which will be used is embedded and spread throughout the complete oeuvre. It is only on this that you can base style and word-choice.'

The translator can know the whole work in the total sense implied above through grappling with it intellectually, as well as bodily, consciously as well as sub-consciously, through acts of reading, interpretation, and enactment, through the manifold pathways of apprehension.

3.4. Thematic implications of breath in Nijhoff's poetry

In contrast to Achterberg whose work is suffused with the theme of breath, Nijhoff's poetry, in spite of the clear importance he gives to what happens in, or because of, the breath-pause, makes much less use of the word 'breath' ['adem'] or breath-related imagery, although this theme certainly does exist in Nijhoff's poetic work. Using the search-engine on the DBNL website to search Nijhoff's *VG* I have found only four instances of the word 'adem' being used, two of which are in translated poems[138]. Additionally Nijhoff has used the word 'ademhaling' [breathing/inhaling] twice: once in the important longer poem 'Het veer' [the ferry], and once in a translation of a poem by Victor Hugo. In the case of 'Het veer', it is significant that 'ademhaling' is used in the context of a particular kind of silence and stillness, associated with earthly warmth, hope, and pregnancy. Nijhoff uses exactly the same word in describing the quality of the stillness here as he does in describing what happens within the breath-pause: 'oponthoud', the word I translated as 'stoppage' but which can also mean 'delay' or 'standstill'. In the context of this poem, however, this 'oponthoud' is not 'trillend' [vibrating], as in the phrase from the lecture. It does not contain what has gone before but is a 'silence like a first day' – a silence out of which something will come, rather than a silence into which something vibrates. This contrast is made specific by the description within the poem of another kind of silence which clearly does vibrate: that of the silence contained within a 'broad monotony', such as the sea, the wind blowing through woods, or a hive full of bees. This notion of silence within complex but unified sound will not be further explored, although it is interesting to note how important the contrast between sound and silence was for Nijhoff, and to see the subtlety of his thinking here.

'Het veer' is one of the poems in *NG* and was composed in the same time-period as the lecture *Over eigen werk* which has formed the basis of this investigation. It seems, therefore, that at roughly the same time in his writing life that Nijhoff came to a critical awareness of the importance of breath in poetry, he came to

[138] 'Tweeërlei dood' (*VG:*159); 'Het uur u' (*VG*:293-308, this reference p. 297); 'De dood van de wolf' (*VG*:328-331), a translation of Alfred de Vigny's 'La mort du loup'; and 'Psalm 150' (*VG*:388), a metrical rhymed translation.

similar awareness within the poetry itself, through considering the meaning and nature of stillness, silence, and still-stand[139].

There are also two uses of the word 'ademhalen' [to breathe] worth considering. The first is in 'Sonate', an early poem, written around March/April 1916 (*VG*:420); the second in 'De schrijver' [the writer], written in 1933 (*VG*:442). Both are significant. In the first poem 'ademhalen' is connected to silence, but a silence the lyric-I hears breathing, not silently, in fact, but 'hijgend' – gasping, or panting. The following line connects this gasping silence to the decay, or perishing, of life in the form of a dance. The tone throughout the poem is one of horror and desperation, coupled with a frantic desire to enjoy the sensual beauties of life and love whilst they still exist, and all within the stately form of a harpsichord sonata rather than, say, the frenzied dancing of gypsy music or a tarantella. There is a huge tension in the poem between desire and ennui, lust for life and the inevitable movement towards death, between the forward motion of the dance, and the strict repetitiveness of the sonata, mirrored in the form of the poem, itself both sonnet and sonata. The image of silence gasping for breath contributes to the desperate tone of the poem, and captures very well the heart of the contradiction within it. However, although it signals to the reader that Nijhoff was conscious even at the start of his poetic career that silence and stillness paradoxically contain sound and movement, either in embryo, or in the barely perceptible vibration of what has preceded them, the image cannot be said at this point to be an aspect of a deeper philosophy of the creative effects of the spoken and written word.

The second poem, 'De schrijver', is much more clearly related to the poetics Nijhoff expresses in *OEW* and, like 'Het veer', is written in the same time-period as the lecture[140]. Here the word itself is figured as breathing. The act of writing gives it life and once each written word starts breathing, it calls up an answer in the ear of the writer. In a continuous cyclical process this answer sets down a new

[139] The long poem 'Het veer' [the ferry] was first published in July 1931 (*VG*:437). *OEW* dates to 1934, soon after the publication of Nijhoff's *NG* (1934) in which 'Het veer' appears. Nijhoff was reflecting in his lecture on the themes and poetics most important to him at this time.
[140] 'De schrijver' exists in three distinct forms, all re-published in *VG* (1990). The version I discuss here is on p. 248 of this edition. All three versions appear in translation in Appendix 2.

word, imagined in the poem as birds flying to the poet with 'new text', a primal word 'from the sun', which then deprives the writer of his own speech. In the sestet of this sonnet the volta is immense: the atmosphere of joyful creativity evoked by the octet, in which the act of writing gives life to the word, which then calls up further life in new words, is reversed to one of doubt. Deprived of his own speech, the poet sees the bird/word migrating elsewhere, and the simple essential life of the world going about its own business, unaware of the vision he has of it. The dual awareness of the poet, of the living potential of the breathing word to infuse the world with meaning, and of the innate meaning of the living world which carries on well enough without him, is what silences him, making him doubt his capacity to set the word off on its own journey. The poet occupies a crossing-point between these two ways of seeing, the spiritual and the material, the ideal and the actual. That place is one both of mental torture and of joy. It is the place of impasse, of seeing his necessity and unnecessity at one and the same time: the living word will survive without him; the living world also... and yet, he does, when he can do so, set the word itself breathing, freeing it into its own independent life, a somewhat different life to that which it would have had if he had not set 'pen to paper'[141].

Although it might be interesting to chart Nijhoff's use of the words 'wind' and 'spirit'[142], because of their interlinking with concepts of breath, it should be clear from the above analyses of the thematic importance of words related to breath and breathing, that firstly it is not a question of *how many times* such words appear in the poetic oeuvre as a whole which lends significance to these terms, and secondly that the most important related concept is that of 'stilte' [silence/stillness]. This word appears 30 times in the *VG*, clustering more strongly in the period when *NG* (1934) was being formed, and in the poems written after this period, notably in *Het uur u* [zero hour] (composed 1936/37; revised 1940) and in *Een idylle* [an idyll] (1940). It is also precisely this word which appears in conjunction with Nijhoff's thoughts about the function of the breath-pause in poetry. I cite the relevant passage once again, highlighting the part that 'stillness' plays within it:

[141] *De pen op papier* (*VW*II:1062-80).
[142] There are 10 instances of 'geest' [spirit] and 25 of 'wind' [wind] in the *Verzamelde gedichten* (1990), which for Nijhoff, particularly in the case of 'wind', is rather a high rate of repeated use.

> ... but poetry, I suddenly realized, pays attention to the in-breath. […] It makes you breathe in on the living places. In this way, again and again, for an indivisible moment, stillness comes into being, exactly at those living places, and in that vibrating stoppage soul and eternity confront each other.
>
> *VW*II:1157 (tr.)

I have translated 'stilte' as 'stillness' here to emphasize the action of speaking the words of the poem, either aloud or subvocally[143], since something previously in motion has come to a standstill, or stoppage. I could also have translated it as 'silence', just as I could have translated 'ziel' as 'psyche' rather than 'soul'.

The word 'stilte' appear six times in 'Het veer', the poem discussed above, and is clustered around the idea of the breathing qualities of silence. Investigation of the placing of the word in this poem also leads one to see that it links to the further concept of 'het wonderbaarlijk lichaam in de tijd' [the miraculous body within time], a revelation given to the now-dead St. Sebastian, the subject of the poem, that it is the body itself which is wondrous, and not some kind of mystical afterlife. This makes it very clear that although the concept of 'stilte' can have mystical and quietist connotations – and indeed does carry those connotations in some of Nijhoff's earlier poems – the 'newness' of the insights which Nijhoff's work was moving towards, signalled by the simple word 'nieuwe' [new] in his *Nieuwe gedichten* (cf. Bakker 1987), was to recognize the deep importance of the here-and-now, that the spiritual is inherent in the material. This insight makes it clear that images of 'breathing' or 'breath' in Nijhoff's work, especially that published after his 1924 collection *Vormen*, are literally vital; they imply a real speaking voice which takes breath in the silent pauses of the poems, and whose words, even if autonomous and freed from the poet's own biographical-I, vibrate as material and meaning-creating sound into the silence which then itself comes to life, brought into being by the human word. As the words on the breath-stream

[143] The subvocalization of speech sounds whilst engaged in silent reading is a well-charted psycho-physical phenomenon (see e.g. McGuigan 1970a, 1970b; Slowiaczek and Clifton 1980; Kadota 1987; Gallese 2007). Although speech is not sounded out as such, it is actively there in the body in the silent act of reading, even at speed, though many speed reading programmes aim to eliminate this 'unnecessary' act, seen as a primitive survival from childhood, when reading was first learnt. But poetry, which slows down the reading mind by virtue of being poetry, needs the act of subvocalization to bring out the 'voice' of the poem, and involves this subvocalization even more strongly than normal reading (Wheeler 2008:23-27).

die into emptiness that emptiness itself vibrates back to their sayer what has been spoken. That, I think, is the idea behind Nijhoff's notion of 'soul' (or 'psyche') and 'eternity' confronting each other within the breath-pause. Each needs the other to show exactly what the 'living places' are within embodied human speech and within the universe as whole. According to Nijhoff, it is a human being's relationship with the inner world of his or her own nature and with the universe in its totality which is explored in poetry, whereas prose concerns itself with human interrelations and with the world as it now stands:

> ...in poetry human is not joined to human. In a flash we are in the whole universe. Every good poem encompasses this confrontation between the totality of the universe and the interiority of the human being, or better said, a poem is good only insofar as it has fulfilled this destiny; and it is only in this way that it has any use at all.
>
> *VW*II:1158 (tr.)

3.5 Phrasing, breath-pause and salience in Nijhoff's poetry

3.5.1 What is happening in the breath-pause?

Just as the word 'adem' [breath] is almost invisible in Nijhoff's poetry, though clearly highly significant when used, so too the effects Nijhoff claims for it are difficult to analyze in any manner which might yield generalizable conclusions. In 3.2.2 I examined in detail the implications of Nijhoff's insights on the role of breath in poetry, citing the passage in his lecture *OEW* (*VW*II:1157) where he speaks of how all the elements of poetry help control the in-breath, so that when the reader (or possibly the writer) of the poem breathes in, he or she does so 'on the living places'. The multiplicity and the complexity of interaction of those various elements, 'regularity, metre, word-repetition, alliteration, rhyme, and [...] period[144]' (*VW*II:1157) are precisely what make it difficult to pin down what it is that Nijhoff imagines is happening in the breath-pause, and, therefore, to which stylistic effects in the poem the translator should be alert.

[144] That is, complex sentence structure. Nijhoff is, once again, signalling his interest in the interaction between verse line and syntax.

I have approached this problem in two distinct ways concurrent with and interacting with each other. The first approach has been computational, descriptive and analytical, and has consisted of several stages, none of which have given me a definitive answer to the question outlined above, but which have helped shape the second approach to the problem, which has entailed the development of a translation method helpful in enabling me to focus on aspects of form not commonly perceived as carrying weight in the translation of a poem.

The following sub-sections will describe the analytical work whilst the practical translation work will be presented in Commentary III. The broad question I am now addressing, therefore, is not a thematic one, but one of style, form and structure: what exactly is happening in, and around, the breath-pause?

3.5.2 Pre-breath words and phrases: preparing the word-frequency data-sets

Two terms Nijhoff uses in the passage about the intaken breath in poetry made me feel it was important to focus on the words or phrases immediately preceding the breath-pause. These terms, as mentioned above and in 3.2.2, are 'trillend oponthoud' [vibrating stoppage] and 'de levende plekken' [the living places] (*VW*II:1157). In order to obtain an overview of the kinds of words which appear in the pre-breath position, I sampled Nijhoff's *VG* by charting all the pre-breath words in all the poems appearing in two collections: *De wandelaar* (1916)[145], the first collection, and *NG* (1934), the third collection[146]. For the purposes of this analysis, I have taken stressed words or phrases immediately preceding a pause indicated either by a line-ending, or by punctuation such as the comma, semi-colon, colon, full-stop or dash, to indicate a 'pre-breath word'. In a few cases I have discounted the line-end pause if an enjambement was particularly marked. I have also, rarely, included pauses preceding a caesura unmarked by any form of punctuation, but nevertheless sensed as part of the rhythm of the line. This systematic examination of the pausing in each collection yielded a total of **970**

[145] Henceforward: *DW*.
[146] The two books examined in this section are representative of the start of Nijhoff's poetic career, and its full flowering.

pre-breath words out of a full total of 5,092 words[147] in the case of ***DW***, approximately **19%** of the total word-count of the collection, and **1,268 pre-breath words out of a full total of 4,600 words** in ***NG***, approximately 27% of the total word-count[148]. This is a significant increase and implies that Nijhoff was more consciously working with the breath-pause in his later work, which falls into the same compositional period as *OEW*. However whilst this simple analysis may confirm that the breath-pause was of increasing importance to Nijhoff, by itself it yields nothing of particular interest to the translator, other than signalling what is already known, that the breath-pause has significance in Nijhoff's poetic oeuvre.

The next step was to find a way of looking at the thematic importance of the pre-breath words, since the lists of words in themselves told me very little. I decided to examine word-frequency in order to determine whether certain key words appeared in the powerful pre-breath position. This involved several steps. Using a freely available on-line word-frequency counter, I made word-frequency lists of all the words appearing in both collections, *DW* and *NG*, and made similar lists of the pre-breath words, creating four data-sets: *DW.all*; *DW.pb; NG.all;* and *NG.pb*[149]. Once again, although it was easy enough to make a comparison between the two collections, and between pre-breath words and the total word-usage in each collection, the data itself remained rather opaque. It was only when I took further steps with it that certain aspects of Nijhoff's poetics became truly striking.

Using a free web application which enables word frequencies to be visualized from any text, I was able to refine the word-frequency lists already generated in the previous step. TagCrowd allows the manipulation of text either by automatically excluding common words in a given language or by choosing which specific words to exclude[150]/[151]. It also can be set to show, for example, the 250

[147] This total includes the titles of the poems.
[148] The precise percentages are: 19.049% of all the words in *DW* are in a pre-breath position; 27.565% of all the words in *NG* are in a pre-breath position. I have used *VG* 1990 as the basis of this computational work.
[149] The website I used is *Write Words*, which has a free word-frequency tool: http://www.writewords.org.uk/word_count.asp.
[150] TagCrowd is freely available at: http://tagcrowd.com/. It was created by Daniel Steinbock in 2006 as a tool for data mining a corpus of text, and for the visual analysis of qualititative data: http://www.tagcrowd.com/blog/about/.

most frequent words in any given text. Two useful documents can be generated from the tool: the first simply displays the most common words alphabetically, with the point-size of the font indicating their frequency; the second works in the same way but adds the frequency-count in brackets after each word. I set the parameters to count the frequency of the top 200 or 250 most repeated words, and then used the resulting documents to prepare my final data-sets, simple but accurate lists of the most frequently repeated words in each of the original four data-sets. In these final lists (*DW.all3*; *DW.pb3; NG.all3;* and *NG.pb3*) words were listed from high to low frequency, and were repeated the exact number of times indicated by cross-checking the original word-frequency lists (*DW.all*; *DW.pb; NG.all;* and *NG.pb*) against the TagCrowd documentation (*DW.all2*; *DW.pb2; NG.all2;* and *NG.pb2*). These final lists, then, excluded words judged to be thematically unimportant (see footnote 151) and were totally detached from the context of the poems, but accurately derived from them. These data-sets were then processed by a final web-based application which produces much more visually striking material than TagCrowd: the Wordle tool for creating word clouds[152].

The reason I did not use Wordle directly with the first data-sets (*DW.all*; *DW.pb; NG.all;* and *NG.pb*) was because Wordle does not allow the user to save its word-frequency count, and thus can appear to be less trustworthy as a data-mining tool than simple word-frequency tools or TagCrowd. It also does not so easily allow for the non-automatic removal of common words.

Cross-checking all three sets of data, and carefully determining exactly what text goes into the Wordle tool makes it more academically reliable. In order to create a visually effective message from the final set of data, I set the parameters as follows: maximum number of words 150; words left as spelled[153]; common words

---

[151] I did not use the automatic word-exclusion facility, since even common words may be thematically important in a poet's oeuvre. Rather, I used the previously mentioned word-frequency lists to help me decide which words to exclude from the TagCrowd exercise. These included the definite and indefinite articles 'de'/'het' [the] and 'een' [a], personal and possessive pronouns, demonstratives, and most conjunctions.

[152] Wordle is freely available at: http://www.wordle.net/. It was created by Jonathan Feinberg in 2008: http://blog.wordle.net/2011/09/wordle-miscellany.html .

[153] This is important because Nijhoff's earlier work follows the spelling rules current before the Dutch spelling reform of 1934 and the further post-war reforms of 1947.

not removed[154]. Other parameters of font, colour, layout and so forth were made for aesthetic reasons, so are not described here.

This final step yielded the most interesting results of the simple computational work carried out on the two collections. The resulting word clouds can be examined in *Figures 22* through to *29*.

I have presented the following figures in both plain and annotated versions, so that the reader unfamiliar with Dutch can understand the meaning of the most significant words, and can grasp the different emphasis which appears when all the words in a collection are taken into consideration, and when only the pre-breath words are considered.

[154] As described in footnote 151, I had already removed thematically unimportant common words in the second stage of preparing the data-sets.

Figure 22: all words in *Wandelaar*; plain version.
150 most frequent words setting:
http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/5205217/wandelaarall2_150words
27th April 2012

Figure 23: pre-breath words in *Wandelaar*; plain version
150 most frequent words setting:
http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/5205233/pb_wandelaar150
27th April 2012

Figure 24: all words in *Wandelaar*; annotated version;
150 most frequent words setting:
http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/5205217/wandelaarall2_150words
27th April 2012

Figure 25: pre-breath words in *Wandelaar*; annotated version
150 most frequent words setting:
http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/5205233/pb_wandelaar150
27th April 2012

Figure 26: all words in *Nieuwe gedichten*; plain version
150 most frequent words setting:
http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/5207198/NGedichten_150
27th April 2012

Figure 27: pre-breath words in *Nieuwe gedichten*; plain version
150 most frequent words setting:
http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/5210907/NGedichten2_pre-breath_150
28th April 2012

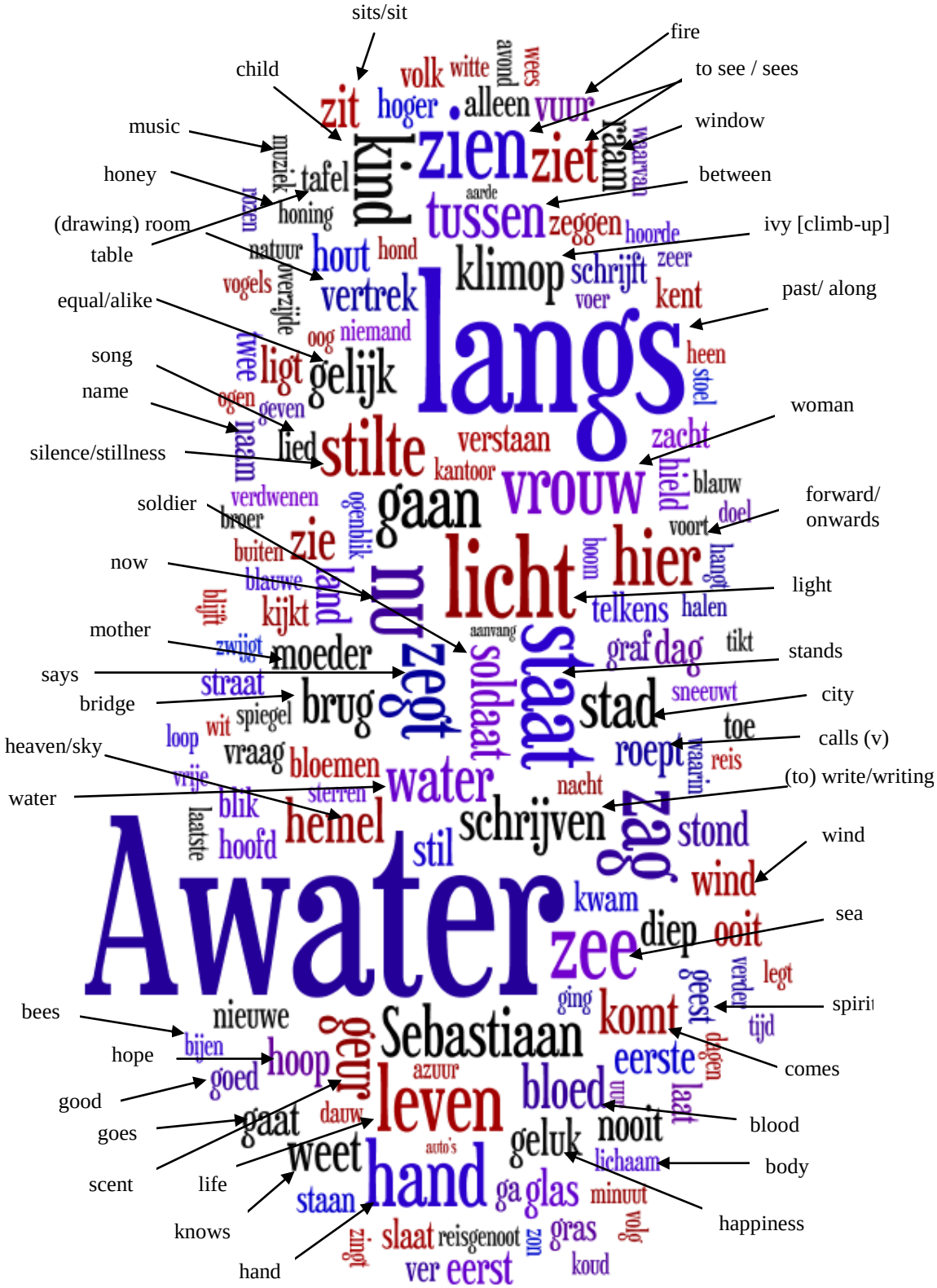


Figure 28: all words in *Nieuwe gedichten*; annotated version
150 most frequent words setting:
http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/5207198/NGedichten_150
27th April 2012

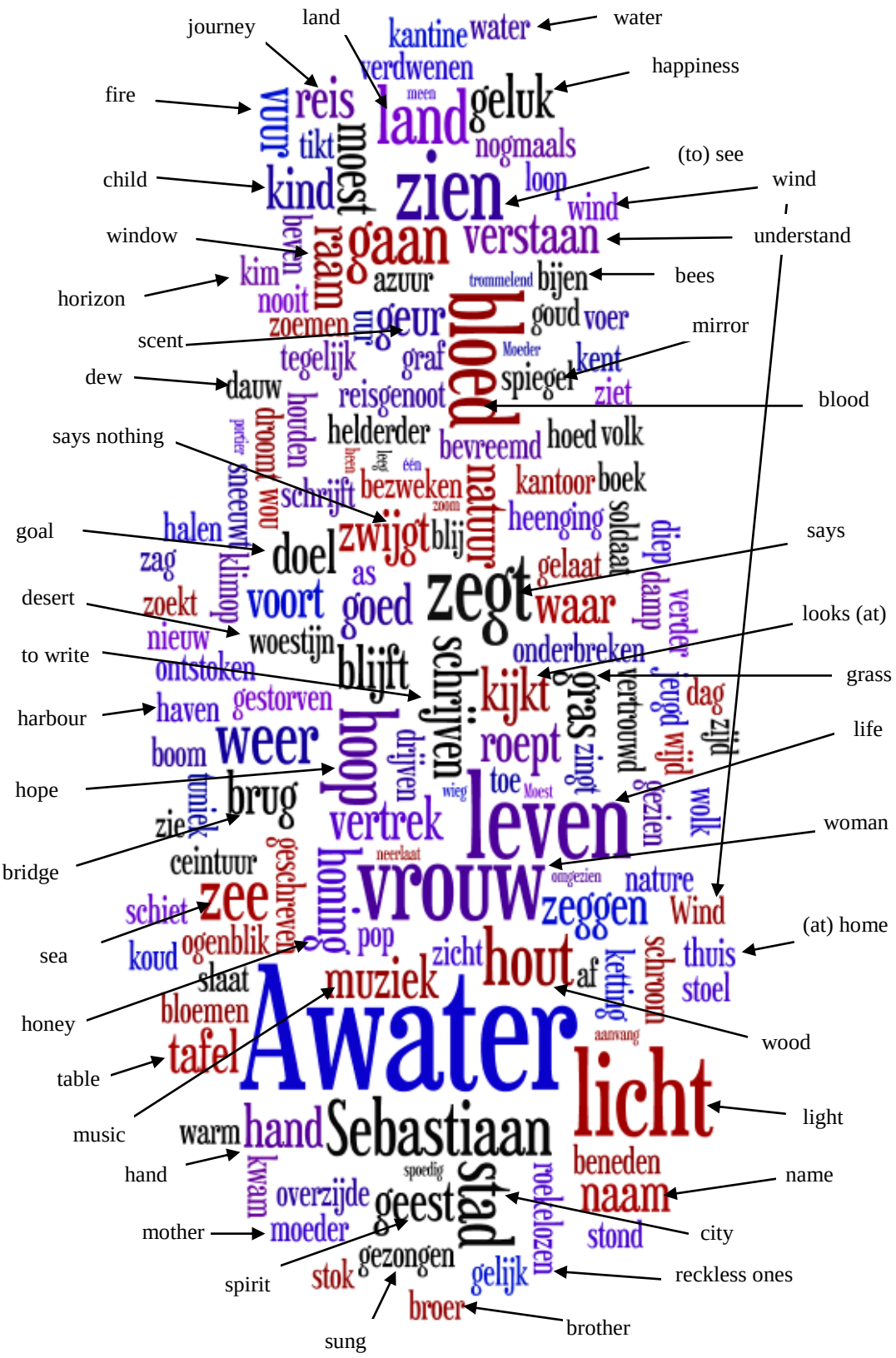


Figure 30: pre-breath words in *Nieuwe gedichten*; annotated version
150 most frequent words setting:
http://www.wordle.net/show/wrdl/5210907/NGedichten2_pre-breath_150
28th April 2012

3.5.3 Analysis of *Figures 22* and *23* – word-frequency in *DW* in all positions and in pre-breath positions

What *Figures 22* and *23* clearly show is that whilst the words 'leven' [life], 'zie' [see], 'handen' [hands], 'oogen' [eyes], 'licht' [light], 'God' [God], 'hoofd' [head], 'hart' [heart], 'nacht' [night], 'gelaat' [face], 'zon' [sun], 'zag' [saw], 'wereld' [world], 'bloed' [blood], 'moeder' [mother], and so forth, loom large in *DW* as a whole, if one takes only the pre-breath words into account, the story looks a little different. The most important words now are seen to be: 'gelaat' [face/countenance], 'handen' [hands], 'licht' [light], 'leven' [life], 'goed' [good], 'moeder' [mother], 'straat' [street], 'zie' [see], 'zingen' [sing], 'vrouw' [woman], 'raam' [window], 'hart' [heart] and 'oogen' [eyes]. The number of times these words have been repeated within the collection remains the same, but because the words which appear immediately before a breath-pause are the last significant words in the preceding phrase or clause, these can be assumed to 'vibrate' into the minimally empty space of the breath-pause with more salience than the words in the middle of the phrase or clause. Experimental work on cognition and memory has shown that short-term memory works best with early and late items in a span of items (Baddeley and Hitch 1993; Beaman and Morton 2000). The memorability of late items in a span is known as the 'recency effect', and in poetry can be assumed to be particularly powerful since the auditory channel is peculiarly retentive of later rather than earlier items (see e.g. Gardner and Gregg 1979). The table below illustrates how thematic words interact with pre-breath words, and includes word-frequency counts.

Words which do *not* appear in both data-sets are highlighted in **bold type**. Words which *primarily* appear in front of breath-pause, marked with an asterisk in the table, can be assumed to be doubly fore-grounded, both by virtue of their relative frequency of use, and because they occupy the strong pre-breath position. I shall not examine the implications for translation of this foregrounding in this section however, but will postpone this till Commentary III.

DW: thematically important words	English	frequency (total word-count in total *DW* data-set = 5, 092 words)	*DW:* thematically important **pre-breath** words:	English	frequency 1 (total word-count in pb *DW* data-set = 970 words)	frequency 2 (total word-count in *DW* data-set = 5,092 words)
leven	life	39	gelaat	face	10	15
zie	see	28	handen	hands	10	21
handen	hands	21	licht	light	9	20
oogen	eyes	20	leven	life	8	39
licht	light	20	*goed	good	7	12
God	God	19	*moeder	mother	7	12
hoofd	head	18	***straat**	street	7	8
hart	heart	18	zie	see	7	28
nacht	night	16	***zingen**	sing	7	9
gelaat	face	15	hart	heart	6	18
zon	sun	13	nacht	night	6	16
zag	saw	13	***raam**	window	6	9
wereld	world	13	***vrouw**	woman	6	7
bloed	blood	13	oogen	eyes	6	20
moeder	mother	12	bloed	blood	5	13
goed	good	12	***doet**	does	5	8
zacht	soft	11	***open**	open	5	8
sterven	die	11	***staat**	stands	5	6
			zon	sun	5	13

Table 1: Most frequent words and most frequent pre-breath words in DW *(1916)*

We can see at a glance, both from the word clouds and the table above, that the repeated, and therefore prominent and memorable, vocabulary is primarily concerned with almost elemental concepts – so elemental that an English speaker will inevitably feel that these words are recognizable and, in their English form, a part of his or her own basic vocabulary.

A group of these words are associated with the body (hands, eyes, head, heart, face, and blood) and have obvious metaphoric and symbolic potential: hands being connected to work, tasks, deeds, and human creativity; eyes being linked to observation and intimacy; head with thought, intelligence, character and person; heart to life, love, and emotion generally; and blood also to life, rhythm, pulse, and energy. The 'face', appearing prominently in both lists, but most so in the pre-breath data-set, is a particularly interesting concept because of its links to the other frequent words in this second list: hands, life, light and mother. It is the face

of the mother which the new-born infant most recognizes and most prefers to gaze at; this continues throughout the first months of development and contrasts with other infant perceptual preferences, which tend towards novelty rather than familiarity (Bushnell 2001:73). It is the face which is the locus of the infant's first experience of love, and it is the face which is at least one of the major loci of attraction in romantic love. It is also the naked face which reveals our feelings to others, and across which we often, consciously, place a (metaphorical) mask. Nijhoff's first collection, understandably so since it is the culmination of work started in his teens and continued into his early twenties, is concerned with oppositions between body and spirit, the search for love, the role of the mother, and the contrast between a life of action and one of quiet, meditative observation. The face and the mask, the personae tried on by the lyric-I in a range of marginalized types and characters (soldier, monk, street musician, clown, prostitute, dancer, maddened lover, mystic, composer, and so forth) are central to this first collection, and the frequency data interestingly foreground this.

A further group of words concerns the opposition between light and dark, day and night, death and life: blood could be taken as crossing the border between these groups, since it may signify life but also, when spilled, is associated with death. The second list, the pre-breath words, shows that the pull between positive and negative elements across the collection tends rather to the positive side.

If the word 'God' which appears so prominently in the collection as a whole is balanced against the prominences suggested by the pre-breath list, we see that the word has, in effect, disappeared – it has become de-emphasized – and what takes its place is the 'mother'. The attention paid here to word-frequency, and to the words placed immediately before the breath-pause, is seen to yield interesting insights into Nijhoff's major themes: co-existing and unresolved tensions between opposite tendencies, between, for example, the spiritual and the material, creativity and destructiveness, passivity and action, with an ultimate pull towards the light, the good, and the feminine.

There is one more word, 'raam' [window], to which I wish to draw attention at this point. This word is repeated 45 times in the *VG* as a whole, 9 times in *DW*

and 5 in *NG*, and is one of the most important key-words in Nijhoff's oeuvre. Although the most common translation of the word 'raam' would be window, it is, in origin, the 'frame' around the window which by metonymy has come to stand for the window itself (Veen 1991:614). A related concept, is 'venster', also meaning 'window' and derived from the Latin 'fenestra' – an opening in a wall. This does not appear in *Table 1* above, because it appears just twice in a pre-breath position. However, when this word, and its plural form 'vensters', is added to 'raam', then the window-concept is seen to be repeated 17 times in total in *DW*, making it very prominent indeed[155]. The window as the point between outside and inside, the place by which (or even *in* which) the writer/observer sits[156], and the place which allows vision to turn two ways (out into the world, inwards into the domestic life, or, symbolically, further inwards still into the soul) is thus highly significant in Nijhoff's oeuvre and may present certain problems in translation, with regard to where the English word may best be placed in the line in relation to the breath-pause, and in terms of the range of connotations a word like 'raam' has in Dutch.

A fascinating point about Nijhoff's repeated use of the window-concept is that it is something like the breath-pause itself – the clear, apparently empty, space into and out of which the interior and the exterior resonate.

As the above discussion of 'raam'/'venster' reveals, the word-frequency data-sets and the corresponding visual word clouds should be treated with some caution. Synonyms, or near-synonyms, are not highlighted by the use of these tools, nor are different forms of the same word. It might also be argued that the tools I have used are simple and unsophisticated, being limited to list-making, counting, percentages, and word-frequencies. I have not attempted to use specialized techniques or tools for computational stylistic analysis, such as Principal Components Analysis (PCA), useful for the precise statistical analysis of large

[155] The plural form of 'raam', 'ramen', is not found in *DW*. It is used just twice in the *VG* as a whole. 'Venster' is used 33 times in *VG* and 'vensters' 5. The total for *VG* of both words in plural and singular forms is 85.

[156] Nijhoff uses this preposition once in connection with 'raam', in *NG*, in a poem (*VG*:199) in which a tree in the garden addresses the writer. The 'in' here may signify that that the writer writes within a bay-window or that, from the point of view of the tree, the writer is an image in the glass of the window, framed by the window as a whole.

corpora (Craig 2004:n.p.) or the suite of tools known as WordSmith[157], which allows the researcher, after *pre-selecting* a particular word or stem, to see with which words it co-occurs. Using the on-line search facility to explore Nijhoff's *VG* it is, in any case, easy to check the context in which specific words occur, and moreover the point of the explorations into word-frequency is to enable me to think more carefully about the way the breath-pause works in Nijhoff's poetry, and, in particular, how it interacts with the words immediately preceding it. For this to happen, I need to work with the individual poems in detail. As with Achterberg, the purpose of the work carried out here is to enable me to see beyond the individual poem and to realize that a particular word, phrase, or concept might have resonance for the full collection in which it appears, and indeed within the oeuvre as a whole.

I have not attempted to carry out more than the most basic forms of mathematics, not only because to do so would seem unnecessarily complex for what I am exploring, but also because, like me, many translators, and translation scholars, would feel uncomfortable with anything more than the simple computational analysis I have used. David Hoover (2008:n.p.) discusses what the goals, theoretical foundations, and methods of quantitative analysis within Literary Studies are, or might be, stressing the fact that

> [q]uantitative approaches to literature represent elements or characteristics of literary texts numerically, applying the powerful, accurate, and widely accepted methods of mathematics to measurement, classification, and analysis. They work best in the service of more traditional literary research [...]

The intention of my own small sally into computational work is not so much research-oriented as – and this is the case for all the descriptive and analytical work carried out in this course of this study – process-oriented: to enable me translate with a greater awareness of what is happening in the ST.

[157] Online at: http://www.lexically.net/wordsmith/index.html.

3.5.4 Analysis of *Figures 26* and *27* – word-frequency in *NG* in all positions and in pre-breath positions

The word clouds of *Figures 26* and *27*, and *Table 2* (below), show that the most frequently repeated vocabulary in *NG*, as for *DW*, is rather elemental in nature, 'light', 'sea', and 'water' featuring prominently in the collection as a whole, and 'land', 'wood', 'wind', and so forth in the pre-breath positions. The surname 'Awater' dominates the data-sets from this collection, unsurprisingly as this character is the focus of the narrator's quest to find a 'travelling companion' after the death of his brother in the poem of the same name. Even if it were not clear from the name itself that 'water', the origin of life and creative genesis, is important both for this poem and the collection as a whole, Nijhoff's remarks about the meaning of the name point up some aspects of its symbolic importance:

> One afternoon I was drinking coffee at a friend's house. There was also a doctor there, whom I met for the first time on this occasion. He said: 'I just have to phone the hospital, to see if I can stay a little longer'. He asked the operator to put him through to a particular clinic and enquired about the condition of a certain patient, Awater. I can still hear him say: 'Awater, no, no, Awater'. I immediately decided to use this name.
>
> A more fleeting contact between myself and the man who in real life is called Awater could not be imagined. Only his name, heard then by chance for the first time, gripped me. Philologists have attributed endless significance to that name. 'A' is the ancient word for water. Awater = 2 x water. Water that gives taste back to water. The first water. But there is more and deeper substance in this word. It is also a word in Sanskrit, as Van Leeuwen has pointed out; it is also a monogram containing the names of both my parents. And most of all it means: any individual at all, a neighbour, someone emerging from the crowd, reaching me along the thinnest thread of contact, a fellow-man.
>
> *VW*II:1167-8 (tr.)

A comparison between the two sets of words – the full *NG* data-sets of most frequent words and the pre-breath words – shows again that certain concepts gain greater prominence in the pre-breath set. In particular, 'blood', 'hope', 'wood' 'land' and 'wind' are now seen to be important. The word 'bloed' [blood] which in the earlier collection was associated with passion and desire, rhythm and energy, but primarily with death and sacrifice, is now connected to life, to the

earth, to one's own land and people, and to action. Although elements of blood-as-sacrifice remain, they are less important than the sense, expressed most clearly in 'Het veer' [the ferry], that the onward flow of the life-stream, here on earth, is more important than any death-mysticism. The fact that the word 'hoop' [hope] should become so prominent in this collection, especially when taking its pre-breath placing into consideration, also seems significant. 'Hoop' only appears once in *DW*, and that is in a poem dedicated to Nijhoff's young son; its opposite, 'wanhoop' [despair], appears 4 times in *DW*, and not at all in *NG*.

When a further comparison is made between the frequent words in *NG* and those in *DW*, it is clear that certain concepts remain constant, whilst others have almost disappeared: 'light', 'life', 'mother' and 'woman' persist; 'raam', discussed in the previous section, persists but diminishes slightly in importance[158]; and, 'God', one of the most dominating words in *DW*, has disappeared almost entirely.

There is one occurrence of 'God' in *NG* in the famous 'De moeder de vrouw' sonnet, in which a woman singing psalms reminds the lyric-I of his own mother. God, therefore, in this sonnet, appears in (invented) quotation and in memory. God also appears in *NG* in the phrase 'Gods barmhartigheid/ reikt verder dan zijn wet' [God's mercy reaches further than his law] in the poem 'Het veer'. There is not the same sense of religious and spiritual crisis in *NG* as there is in *DW*, but rather a reconciliation with the spiritual through the earthly, the feminine and the quotidian.

[158] 'raam' appears 6 times in *NG*; it is, therefore, not included in *Table 2*, which stops at a frequency of seven repetitions, simply because there are so many words repeated 6 times. It appears 9 times in *DW*.

NG: thematically important words	English	frequency (total word-count in total *NG* data-set = 4, 600 words)	*NG:* thematically important **pre-breath** words:	English	frequency 1 (total word-count in *NG* data-set = 4,600 words)	frequency 2 (total word-count in pb *NG* data-set = 1, 268 words)
Awater	Awater	21	Awater	Awater	21	9
langs	along/by/ past	19	*leven	life	9	6
weer	again/ (back and) forth	18	*licht	light	11	6
licht	light	11	*vrouw	woman	9	6
nu	now	11	***bloed**	blood	6	5
staat	stands	11	weer[159]	again/ (back and) forth	18	5
zag	saw	10	zee	sea	10	5
zee	sea	10	zegt	says	9	5
zien	to see/ see	10	zien	to see/see	10	5
hand	hand	9	gaan	to go/go	8	4
leven	life	9	***hoop**	hope	5	4
vrouw	woman	9	***hout**	wood	5	4
zegt	says	9	***land**	land	5	4
stilte	silence/ stillness	8	*Sebastiaan	Sebastian	7	4
gaan	to go/go	8	*stad	city/town	7	4
hier	here	8	***wind**	wind	5	4
kind	child	8				
geur	scent/ aroma	7				
Sebastiaan	Sebastian	7				
stad	city/town	7				
tussen	between	7				
water	water	7				
ziet	sees	7				

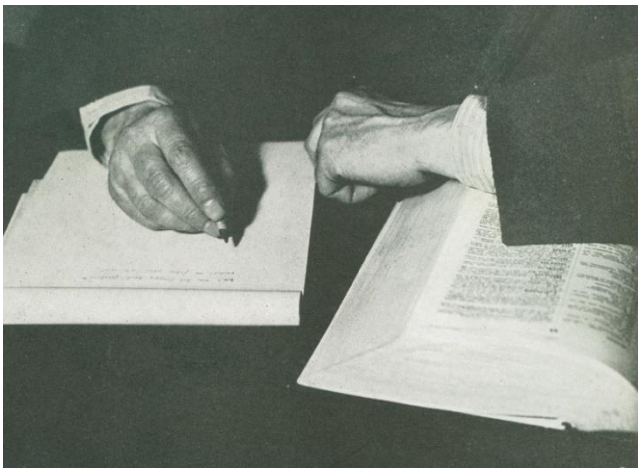
Table 2: Most frequent words and most frequent pre-breath words in NG *(1934)*

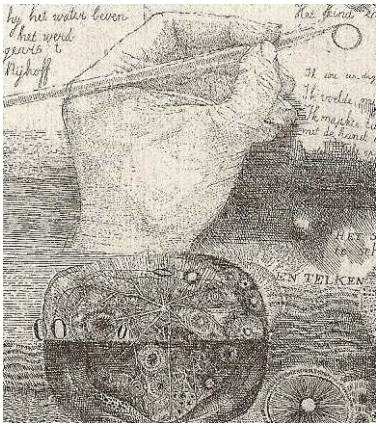
* words marked with an asterisk are those in the pre-breath position in the majority of their uses

[159] I have checked the appearances of 'weer' in context in *NG*, using the DBNL online search engine, to make sure that it is not the homonym 'weer' [weather].

3.6 Translation implications of the breath-pause

The previous sections of this chapter have presented detailed evidence for the philosophical importance of the breath-pause in Nijhoff's work, and for the thematic importance of breath-imagery in Achterberg's. Although, as discussed above, Achterberg clearly does use the breath-pause with intention and attention, it does not seem to me to have quite the same structuring function in his work as it does in Nijhoff's, particularly in the shorter lyrics which are song-like, rather than speech-like in nature. In formal poetry like Nijhoff's which counterpoints speech-rhythms against formal metres, an awareness of the several functions which the breath-pause carries out seems to me vital for translation, specifically in helping to solve issues of rhythm, in its interplay with enjambement, and sound-patterning, and in the foregrounding of thematically important words and phrases, as well as in other effects, such as ambiguity and polyvalence. These aspects will be explored in greater detail in the following commentary.





we wake as children of earth
and see that our most precious good
is the language a mother preserved,

and write, now the hand starts its task,
all that a person must write

Nijhoff (tr.)

Commentary III

Working with breath: translating Nijhoff's 'Haar laatste brief'

III.i Introduction

The previous chapter, 'Translating Breath', presented my research into breath as a formative principle in Nijhoff's work and as an imaginative and thematic principle in Achterberg's, although there is an overlap between these categories in both cases. Whilst breath as such is mentioned much less frequently in Nijhoff's poetry than in Achterberg's, the imaginative thrust of Nijhoff's poems is clearly rooted in the body, particularly from *Vormen* (1924) onwards, and most markedly in *Nieuwe gedichten* which works with themes relating to the material life of the body, finding spiritual meaning in the concept of the 'miraculous body within time' (*VG*:202).

This commentary will focus on my work with Nijhoff's sonnet 'Haar laatste brief' [her last letter], and follows the translation process developed here. 'Haar laatste brief' was first published in *NG* and forms part of a group of eight sonnets placed at the heart of the collection, between 'Zes gedichten' [six poems] and the long modernist epic *Awater*. The collection as a whole is dedicated to the memory of Nijhoff's mother and brother. Elements of those primary relationships touch all the poems in this collection, particularly if the mother/woman theme is extended to include love and creativity, and if the brotherly theme is extended to include the search for intellectual companionship, and to societal, spiritual, linguistic and other broadly human concerns especially appropriate to the times of economic depression in which the poems were composed, and within which the related *Over eigen werk*, discussed in Chapter 3, is clearly set.

In addition to the realization expressed in *OEW* that the rhythms of poetry give full weight to the in-breath, to stillness and to silence, Nijhoff came to a further realization about the nature of poetry in 'De pen op papier' [pen to paper] (1925),

an experimental, self-reflexive, dream-fable. In a central section of this prose-piece Nijhoff describes his meeting with the figure of the Pied Piper who will help him overcome his writer's block by advising him to think and live within the feelings of others, in order to estrange the self from the self and gain artistic distance. In this way the poet can lead a double life: one in which he feels and acts in the same way as all humans; and one that enables him to achieve the objectivity and distance required for poetic creation. Poetry's answer, says the Pied Piper to Nijhoff in this modernist fable, can come most clearly when the poet picks up a (metaphorical) flute and blows through that, not when he is singing (or whistling) from his own mouth:

> The mouth can only sing what your own heart is full of, but every flute is a magic flute and sings the hearts of others to completeness.
>
> *VW* II:1074 (tr.)

The Pied Piper, whom Nijhoff in effect has summoned to himself in a perhaps imagined walk through the streets of the city, also tells him that sympathy and empathy are not moral duties as such but innate passions rooted in the magnetic attraction that all flesh feels for other flesh. His final piece of advice is to make the diary the place for one's own feelings, to use it as a workbook and a source for poetry, but to use poetry itself to focus on the feelings of others. In order to give those feelings shape, the Pied Piper enjoins Nijhoff to find a figure or form, a 'gestalte', embodying similar attitudes or feelings to those discovered from a cool re-reading of the diary, and then to call that figure forth in the form of a poem. That figure will 'bring everything you need [to write the poem] with him' (or her) (*VW*II:1075, tr.).

How can we interpret the image of the flute in this fable? There are many possible answers to this question, but my own is that the flute represents the poem's form. It is form that shapes the feelings of the poet, directing his breath into expressing something more universal, more objective, and more artistic, ultimately becoming, so Nijhoff hopes, something which moves people more, reflecting their own deepest beings.

An interesting comment made by the Pied Piper in the midst of this writerly advice links Nijhoff's thinking in this fable to the sonnet 'Haar laatste brief':

> There's a problem, for example, in one or other love-relationship, or friendship: put your own state of mind in the diary, but try to express your girlfriend's point of view and her sorrows in the form of a poem.
>
> *VW*II:1074 (tr.)

Although a large proportion of Nijhoff's poetry – about 46%[160] – is concerned with thematic, imagistic and symbolic aspects of the feminine, often through explorations of mother-child or male-female relationships, 'Haar laatste brief' is the only poem in Nijhoff's poetic oeuvre in the voice of a woman, with the exception of an early symbolist poem, 'De rozen' [the roses] (1915)[161]; although throughout his poetic writing life Nijhoff takes on the voice, or mask, of another, the poems are principally in male voices. In 'Haar laatste brief', however, Nijhoff seems to be doing exactly as advised by the Piper, expressing the point of view of someone whom we, as readers, are likely to identify as a woman who has been in a love-relationship with the author. Yet, interestingly, the female voice is framed by the title as speaking in the form of a letter, thereby allowing the lyric-I to be fully distanced from the actual author, and providing a fictive implied author – the woman-speaker of the poem – for the reader's imagination to work with. Nijhoff thereby avoids a direct appropriation of the woman's voice, and at the same time allows the reader to identify him- or herself with the implied primary reader of the letter, its first recipient, the man, who by further implication is Nijhoff himself. The reader is thus invited into a complex series of empathetic attractions, in which the feelings articulated by the lyric-I are split between the imagined woman-speaker of the letter and the imagined male recipient, both of whom have their shadowy authors lurking behind them, fictive and actual.

---

[160] The percentage of 46% has been arrived at by examining each poem in Nijhoff's *VG* (Nijhoff 1990). It does not reflect the actual importance of the feminine theme in the body of the work, since each poem gives different weight to the theme. But it does reflect the fact that this theme, and its connected imagery, was of continuing importance in Nijhoff's poetic work, both in his original verse and his translation-work.

[161] This poem is rather conventionally decadent in imagery, and although in a woman's voice, is not truly from a woman's point of view. It was published in the private edition of *DW* (1916), 'per le nozze' – for the marriage of Nijhoff and Netty Wind – but not collected in the official first printing (Nijhoff 1990:426). I have also discounted multi-voiced dramatic poetry.

The poem itself, as the title declares, is the ‘last’, or possibly most recent, ‘letter’ of a woman to a man, and the words of that letter make it clear that what is being narrated are the reasons for the breakdown of a love-relationship. The word ‘laatste’ has the same ambiguity in Dutch as ‘last’ in English in that it can mean both the ‘final’ and the ‘latest’ (most recent) event. The poem itself leads the reader to the conclusion, however, that the poem represents the final words of a woman to her erstwhile beloved. The sonnet-form of octave and sestet (here of two tercets) is used to great effect to enable the woman-speaker first to present her reasons for leaving the man, then, after the volta, to offer consolation for her definitive departure, and finally to reproach the letter’s recipient (the implied (fictive) primary reader and the implied (actual) author) for the physical and time-conditional nature of his love, thereby opening the poem into more universal aspects, in which the letter’s recipient stands for men in general, and the woman-speaker for women in general.

The sonnet itself now follows, together with a gloss translation, which will enable me to highlight some of the main translation problems, and how an awareness of the issues of breath and form, discussed above and in Chapter 3, may help overcome these.

Line	Haar laatste brief	Rhyme/ syllable-count	
1	Verwijt mij niet dat ik lichtzinnig was *reproach me not that I fickle was*	a	10
	omdat ik liefgehad heb zonder trouw *because I loved have without faithfulness*	b	10
	en zonder tranen heenging. **Want een vrouw** *and without tears away-went for a woman*	b	10
4	**komt nooit,** als zij bij voorbaat niet genas**,** *comes never if she in-advance not cured*	a	10
	de wond te boven ener tederheid *the wound (over….)of-a tenderness* *at above*	c	10
	die op toekomstig leven is gericht. *which on future life is aimed*	d	10
	Ik moest mij wel hernemen voor een plicht *I had –to myself certainly resume for a duty*	d	10
8	waartoe ik onbemerkt ben voorbereid. *whereto I unnoticed am prepared*	c	10
	Zeg zacht mijn naam, en ik ben in ’t vertrek: *say soft my name and I am in the room*	e	10
	de bloemen staan weer in de vensterbank; *the flowers stand again in the window-sill*	f	10
11	de borden in het witte keukenrek. *the plates in the white kitchen-rack*	e	10
	Want meer van mij bevindt zich in die klank *because more of me finds itself in that sound*	f	10
	dan in de jeugd waarom je van mij houdt, *than in the youth wherefore you of me love*	g	10
14	mijn bijna-jongensborst, mijn haar van goud. *my almost-boy’s-breast my hair of gold*	g	10

Figure 30: ‘Haar laatste brief’: gloss translation, rhyme-scheme and syllable-count

The crux of the translation problem lies in lines 3 to 6 and is centred on the fact that the phrase ‘te boven komen’ is a set idiom which means ‘to overcome’ or ‘surmount’ (Cassell 1978:89), but that this meaning is postponed in the sentence by the significant pause, and parenthetical clause, after ‘komt nooit’, which may temporarily make it seem as if the meaning is ‘never comes’ rather than ‘never overcomes’.

For purposes of comparison I include a translation of ‘Haar laatste brief’ by Cliff Crego, a composer, photographer, poet and translator who maintains a website devoted to an extensive archive of his own translations of Dutch poems[162].

Line	Her last letter	Rhyme/ syllable-count	
1	Don't accuse me of being frivolous just	a	11
2	because I have loved without trust	a	8
3	and have departed without tears**. For a woman**	x	12
4	**never comes** if she had not beforehand healed**,**	x	11
5	**rising above** the wound of that tenderness	x	11
6	that is directed towards future life.	x	10
7	I had to retake myself for a responsibility	x	15
8	for which I unawares have been prepared.	x	10
9	Say softly my name, and I am in the cupboard[163]:	x	12
10	the flowers are once again on the windowsill.	x	11
11	the plates are in the white kitchen rack.	x	9
12	For more of me finds itself inside the sound	x	10
13	than in the youth for which you love me,	x	9
14	my almost boy's breast, my hair of gold.	x	9
	Crego 2010 (tr.)		

Figure 31: ‘Haar laatste brief’: translation by Cliff Crego

My intention here is not to analyze this translation as such, but simply to indicate that the problem of lines 3 to 6 has not been fully solved here. The ambiguity of the idiom ‘iets te boven komen’ (to overcome or surmount something) seems to have led the translator into translating the literal meaning of the first part of the phrase, ‘komt nooit’ as ‘never comes’ (line 4), without apparently seeing that the full meaning has been postponed by a parenthetical clause, and then translating

[162] This is the only translation of ‘Haar laatste brief’ I have identified, other than my own. Crego is not, apparently, a professional translator, but has translated an extensive number of Dutch and German poems. His highly visible presence on the Internet means that many people will have their first introduction to Dutch poetry through his translations.

[163] Sic. This does appear to be a mistranslation. The Dutch noun ‘vertrek’ is generally translated as ‘room’ (Cassell 1978:626) and is conceptually related to the English ‘drawing room’, originally the ‘withdrawing room’ – the room to which the ladies withdrew at the end of dinner, allowing the men to drink and smoke at ease. The Dutch verb ‘vertrekken’, from which the noun is derived, means ‘to depart, leave […], go away’ (ibid.).

something close to the meaning of the idiom in the phrase 'rising above the wound of that tenderness' (line 5). The consequence is that the English is rather opaque and that the reader will ask him- or herself what is meant by the phrase 'a woman never comes', since the previous line has told us that she has departed; what exactly she 'had not beforehand healed'; and how the two parts of the sentence, divided by a single comma in Crego's translation, relate to each other. This almost literal translation, which pays very little attention to the rhythms of the poem, clearly stumbles in these lines, and to my way of thinking numbs the emotional response the reader is likely to give because of its rather abstract language. As emphasized by Pilkington, 'art exists to make us feel things' (2000:18), but the combination of abstract language and confused syntax in Crego's translation will be unlikely to lead the reader into making subtle inferences about the speaker-in-the-poem's state of mind and feelings, since the focus is much more likely to be on a simple making sense of the primary message. My own translation of the poem was arrived at without initially being aware of Crego's, but I found it extremely interesting to see that the same lines and phrase which had challenged me in my own work clearly gave rise to difficulties here.

The following sections give an account of the translation process I followed in working with this sonnet. I will follow the same model used in Commentary II where I combined an account of the experimental elements of the process with an analysis of the ST and of the TT where relevant.

III.ii Description of the translation process and analysis of aspects of 'Haar laatste brief'

Aim of experiment

The aim of my approach to translating 'Haar laatste brief' was to extend the kinaesthetic work described in Commentary II into a method which would allow me to explore how Nijhoff's insights on the way that breath works in poetry makes it distinctively different from prose, and, in particular, to see whether the notion of the salience of the pre-breath word or phrase, discussed in 3.5 above, would not only allow me to solve the translation problem I briefly describe above,

but also enable me to look at poetic form in a different fashion, de-emphasizing rhyme-scheme, generally viewed as being vital in the sonnet-form (see e.g. Turco 2000:263-4), and instead placing the emphasis on phrasing and rhythm, and the interaction of these with the meanings which can be read into the poem.

As in the case of my translation of Achterberg's 'Sneeuwwitje', it was also vitally important that the resultant translation would be artistically satisfying, that it would be read *as a poem* by any potential reader, and that it would (re-)create at least some of the most important effects of the original.

Since I had achieved some success with memory techniques in translating 'Sneeuwwitje', I decided to make use of such techniques once again, though with a different emphasis, this time moving away from the imagistic basis of my work with 'Sneeuwwitje' into a voice and character-based approach, appropriate to the nature of the text, in which the persona of the woman speaks (or fictively writes) in miniature form the whole drama of her relationship to the man and her decision to leave him.

The translation process was commenced on 2nd June 2009. A first draft was completed on the 29th June, with further minor refinements to the translation being made on the 3rd, 7th and 23rd July of the same year. The deliberate slowness of the translation process was intended to bring the text into the translator's own body-mind, to incorporate its way of being as much as possible into my own self. At the same time, until the very last stage of the process, in the same manner as described in Commentary II, the focus was not on translation as such but on becoming deeply familiar with the material of the poem.

Stage 1: gloss translation

For this translation, unlike with 'Sneeuwwitje', I prepared a meticulous gloss translation (as above). This was intended to help me focus at a later point on salient pre-breath words or phrases, and to enable me to see the text as composed of word-material, and not simply of semantic concepts. The context of the later imaginative and analytical work is thus located from the initiation of the process

in lexis, as opposed to the work on 'Sneeuwwitje' where the emphasis was on image and on rhythm conceived as beat. This is not only because the translation problem described above is located at the level of lexis (solvable only by a carefully reading of the context, a context which includes breath-pauses), but also because in this poem Nijhoff's way with rhythm is very different to Achterberg's, being as close to speech as possible within the formal metrics of the sonnet.

Making a gloss translation in no way precludes or anticipates the later creative process of poetic translation. As is clear from Benjamin's discussion of interlineal translation in 'The Translator's Task' (1997:64-5), it is a practice which forces the reader to focus intently on the full weight and possible intention of each word within the context of the whole. If there is often no objective certainty of meaning, neither for the individual word, nor for the text, the provisional meaning that the gloss translator arrives at by careful textual, grammatical, syntactical and lexical analysis, slows down the translation process sufficiently to make each choice conscious and justifiable within the translator's reading of the text. Even so, some individual words remain only virtually and not effectively translatable, as is the case with 'komt nooit' and 'te boven' in the gloss above. By making it clear that there is no actual one-to-one correspondence between the Dutch and the English, no matter how hard the translator strives, the poet-aspect of that translator may be liberated into a greater freedom in tackling the poem as a whole once that stage of the process is reached, and, as Benjamin suggests in holding up the interlinear gloss translation as the 'prototype or ideal of all translation' (1997:65), the text itself may then be freed by the dialogue between its own, only apparent, fixity and the inept literality of the gloss into a more revelatory quality which pierces beyond fixed significations. The pedestrian journeyman work of word-by-word gloss translation may, therefore, with the right frame of mind, lead far beyond itself into a truer perception of the poem as a whole.

Stage 2: breath-groups and memorization

This stage of working with the poem involved breaking the text into breath-groups and phrases, and learning the poem incrementally, until my breath movement matched what I imagined the author had in mind when he composed it. The

breath-group as a concept is that which I discuss in 3.2.2 – 'the number of words (or syllables) encompassed in a single out-breath' (see also Lieberman 1984:118-19, 121-2). Whilst it is true that the length of out-breaths will vary from person to person, and from situation to situation, Nijhoff's contention, as also discussed in 3.2.2, is that the rhythms of the poem itself will encourage (within certain physiological constraints) an in-and-out breathing fitted to the poem's own patterns, making the in-breath and its following minimal breath-pause, the period of stillness between in- and out-breath, the most significant aspects of poetic rhythm which distinguish it from its prose counterpart.

Although the research is ultimately inconclusive with regard to establishing an 'algorithmic model of respiration' during the reading of metrical poetry, Li and Kong's 2011 paper on the 'metrical poetry respiratory signal' certainly does suggest that breathing patterns are matched to the metres of the poems being vocalized. Cognitive studies of anticipatory participation in discourse show that '[t]here is converging experimental evidence that the human brain has properties of an embodied anticipatory system. This system enables individuals to continuously entrain to one another's actions and meanings' (Kinsbourne and Jordan 2009:104). This entrainment is primarily rhythmic in nature (Kinsbourne and Jordan 2009:107; Thaut et al 1999) and, although mainly studied in mother-infant interaction, continues throughout the lifespan of the human being, not only in terms of conversational anticipatory dyadic interactions, but also in the realms of dance, music and poetry. This links back to the innate capacity of the human body, discussed in 3.4, to interact with textual material as if it were part of an actual dialogue, in which the neuromuscular systems are primed in exactly the same manner as they are in actual bodily interaction (see also McFarland 2001:128 which focuses specifically on respiration). This research gives strong backing to Nijhoff's instinctive notion that poetry entrains the breathing patterns of the reader in a particularly distinctive manner.

In order to explore this in practice, as opposed to the theoretical and analytical exploration of Chapter 3, this stage had to be undertaken in a manner which consciously and systematically involved the whole body. This meant that the poem was read aloud several times in an exploratory fashion, to determine where

the boundaries of the breath-groups would fall. These were generally, although not always, indicated by punctuation or line-endings. This exploration led me to conclude that there were seventeen breath-groups of syllabically uneven length within a fourteen-line poem, as apparent in *Figure 32*. These are nested within a hierarchy of five sentences (three unevenly balanced across the octave; and one in each tercet), which themselves break down into smaller phrase and clause units. The system of analysis used here will be further discussed in Stage 3.

Memorization of the words of each breath-group was carried out incrementally, over a period of days equal to the number of breath-groups, and was intended to be lexically accurate, in contrast to the work described in Commentary II, in which a conceptual sequence of images was first analyzed and then memorized. Rather than using conventional rote-learning techniques, however, which focus the mind primarily on the task of memorization itself and do not promote a meaningful or lasting connection with the material learnt (see e.g. Corbett 1977), the decision to learn the text incrementally enabled me to focus each day on a new phrase or clause, and to work with that imaginatively, both within the mind's eye and ear, and through vocalization and simple gestural enactment, establishing a non-arbitrary link between the elements being learned.

The rationale for this deliberately prolonged form of memorization was based in part on my reading of Stanislavski, in particular his Method of Physical Actions, founded on the idea that a meticulous and accurate physical way into the movement, gestures and vocal qualities of a character will enable the psychological and emotional elements to be actualized (Moore 1965, 1984; Stanislavski 1988). It was also inspired by aspects of Eastern thinking, in particular those techniques of meditation known as mindfulness training, promoted by a range of practitioners and theorists, including Williams and Penman (2011), in addition to readings in transpersonal theory (Ferrer 2002), classic Buddhist texts and theoretical explorations of such texts and the practices they advocate (Suzuki 1964; Watts 1999; Humphreys 1962; Maezumi and Glassman 2002).

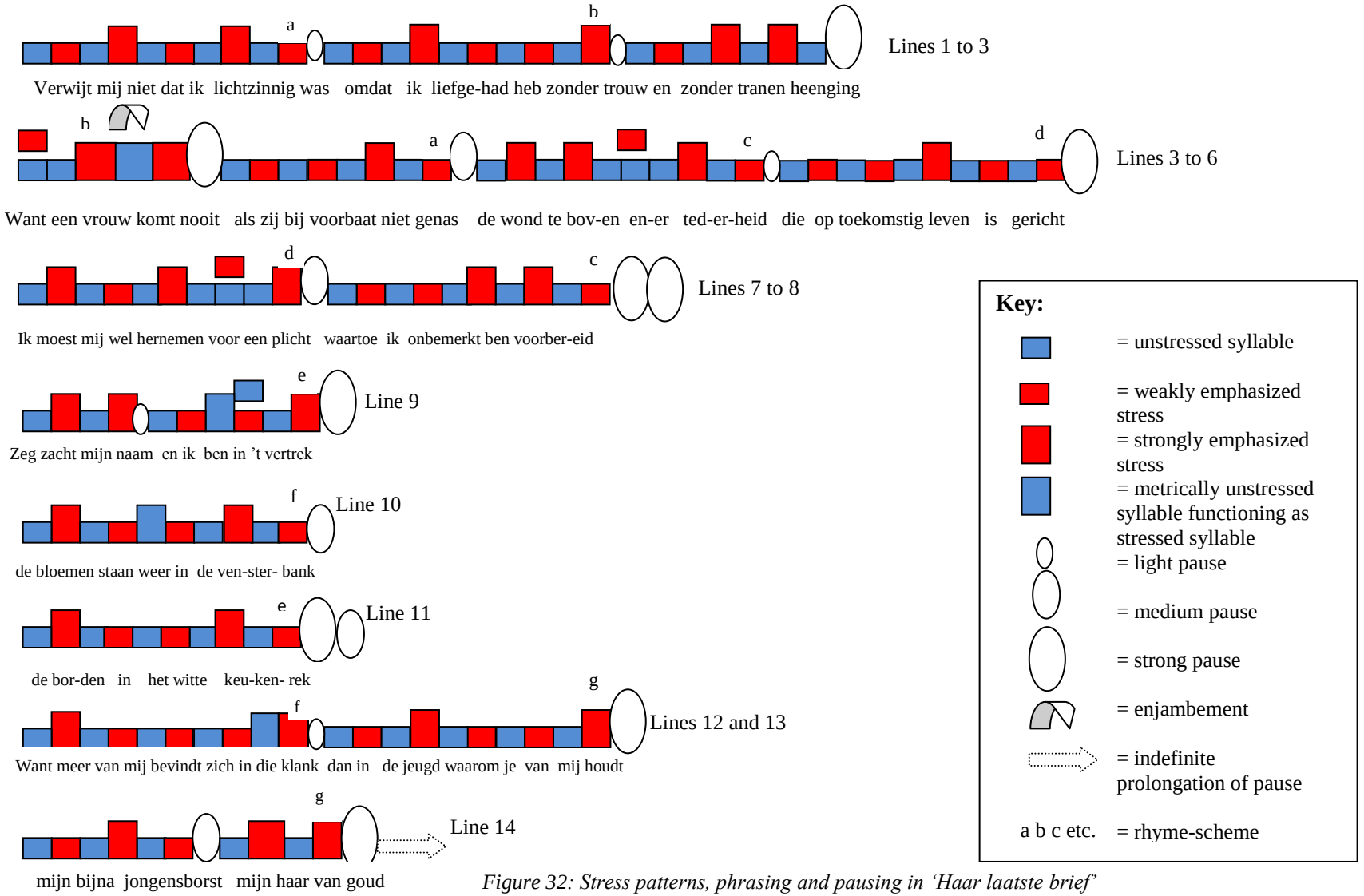


Figure 32: Stress patterns, phrasing and pausing in 'Haar laatste brief'

The method I used, therefore, combines kinaesthetic with meditative work, in order to bring the text as completely as possible into the full body-mind, and may be seen as a logical extension of cognitive poetics within the realm of the practical. Like the use of the *image-frame*, discussed in Commentary II, this is a practice far more powerful than the method's simplicity might suggest. That power may be difficult to prove in academic terms – particularly as the wider applications of this method are not the subject of the current study – but in process-based terms, the sense of growing familiarity with every aspect of the physical and mental properties of the ST, freed from any 'irritable reaching after fact or reason' (Keats in Bate 1963:250), and the consequent delay of the act of translation, is enabling. The full body-mind apprehends and leads the translating self into a decision-making process which is ultimately swift and joyful, after the long preparatory process. The aim was, as with the 'Sneeuwwitje' project, to translate the poem from memory, without the aid of a written text.

Stage 3: analysis of phrasing

The following stages (3 to 6) were carried out after the work with memory and breath-groups of Stage 2. They are presented as stages for the sake of clarity, although there was no absolute distinction between one stage and another, since the work of each naturally leads to, and was often carried out in parallel with, others. They represent an exploration of the interaction between breath, phrasing, rhythm and the structuring of meaning within the poem, centring ultimately on the question of what, if anything, happens in the space where the in-breath occurs. These stages, therefore, are a continuation and an application of the analysis described in 3.4 and 3.5 of this study.

In analyzing the phrasing and rhythmic patterning of 'Haar laatste brief', I developed the system shown above (*Figure 32*) which was intended to make the stress patterning, phrasing, and pausing of a poem visually clear, and was partially derived from my reading of the authors on metre and rhythm examined in detail in Chapter 2, in particular Cureton, Attridge, and Holder, but also from paying attention to theories of stress or accent in English and in the related Germanic languages which perceive it as 'a gradient phenomenon' (Szwedek 1986:34; see

also Crystal 1976:157; Kiparsky 1975), distinguishing four important degrees of stress on a continuum which may in fact be more finely graduated and melodic. Attridge's theory of the promotion and demotion of stresses played a particularly important role in my decision to listen for four degrees of stress, discounting the more conventional S (strong) and W (weak) perception of stress in foot-based analysis (cf. Halle and Keyser 1971).

My interest was in finding a way of describing and analyzing verse-movement and, in particular, the inter-relationship of pause, sound-patterning, and meaning, which would not be bound to metre, but which would enable me to perceive the flow of the verse in a more undivided fashion. The division into metrical feet would have the effect of labelling each unit within a conventional system and of making the 'unity in variety' (Dewey 1934:161) of the whole less easy to perceive. The exercise, in combination with the incremental breath-group memorization of the poem described in Stage 2, made me more conscious of the *parlando* quality of Nijhoff's poetry (see footnote 118), especially suited to the careful taking-on of the voice of another.

Figure 32 makes it apparent that the octave is built very differently to the sestet; in particular, I saw that *the rhymes in the octave are over-ridden* by long sentence structures moving across several lines. This de-emphasizing of rhyme on the part of the writer gives clues as to how this element might be tackled in translation and will be discussed in Stage 7.

The phrasing I felt gave a strong sense of the woman's character to the verse-movement. Because a prolonged out-breath is required to articulate the words, the long phrases of the octave suggested self-control and maturity, with the pauses creating a feeling of balance and moderation in what is being said, as well as a sense that the woman is carefully marshalling her arguments. The allocation of pauses in *Figure 32* acknowledges that the rhythmic clues provided by line-endings, conjunctions, relative pronouns and pronominals are likely to be preceded by a pause, which may also be a breath-pause, but the fact that such pauses are unmarked by punctuation, except at sentence boundaries and, in one

case, by parenthetical commas, indicates that the pauses will be light except for the cases I have mentioned.

Very important was the clause in the second sentence, which adds a degree of tension to the woman's voice, as the ambiguity of 'komt nooit' (only apparently 'never comes', as discussed above) is not resolved until the verbal phrase is fully finished after the parenthesis, making it clear that the meaning is not 'never comes' but 'can never overcome .... unless....'. Following the phrasing carefully in the octave helped me unravel the difficulties of the syntax, and arrive at an interpretation that stressed the woman's duty to herself, her bid for independence. The salience of this particular breath-group ('Want een vrouw/ komt nooit') will be further discussed in Stage 4.

In the sestet, as can be seen in *Figure 32*, the phrasing returns to the norms created by iambic pentameter, internal pausing occurring in positions of traditional caesura, i.e. after the fourth or sixth metrical position in an iambic pentameter line, as the difficult moment of justification moves into more essential matters (the continuation of love even in absence; the emphasis on what is truly important both in the relationship and in the woman herself). Although I have marked lines 12 and 13 as being one unit, interrupted only by a brief breath-pause, as suggested by the syntax of these lines, it is clear that the 10-syllable iambic line is much more easily sensed by the reader-listener here than in the octave, in particular in lines 1 to 6. In combination with *what* is being said, therefore, the *how* it is being said, the marks of intonation and phrasing apparent in the textual movement, give rise to interpretations such as I have suggested in this section.

Just as most human beings can read non-verbal signals in other human beings (see e.g. Payrató 2009:163-194), so too, I would contend, the text itself can be read for bodily clues, in this case clues to the frame of mind, emotional stance, and self-presentation of the fictive I-speaker of this poem. In particular, breathing patterns and forms have long been associated with emotional states (Boiten, Frijda and Wientjes 1994:103-4), and although it is suggested that specific patterns cannot be linked to specific emotions (Boiten, Frijda and Wientjes 1994:122), some recent research does claim that basic emotions are connected with (cardio-)respiratory

activity (Rainville et al. 2006). Even if, as the earlier research suggested, there is only a weak correlation between 'certain patterns of respiratory responses' and 'dimensions that define general aspects of emotions' (Boiten, Frijda and Wientjes 1994:123), this leads to the conclusion that the encouragement towards bodily enactment of the words of a poem[164] (regulated by aspects of rhythm, phrasing and pauses for inspiration, exactly as Nijhoff suggested) does indeed promote a state of affect in the reader which in a broad sense corresponds to that of the I-voice of the poem's (fictive) speaker. This also suggests that a translator who pays attention to aspects of form often disregarded in poetic translation, length of phrase or clause, and placement of important lexis at the (breath) pausal juncture, will be closer to achieving some of the complex emotional effects of the original.

Stage 4: analysis of rhythm

Part of the rhythmic analysis focused on the beats of the poem, which, in the octave in particular, because of the promotion of unstressed syllables to stressed syllables (shown as a taller blue rectangle in *Figures 32* and *33*) and the demotion of stressed syllables to a more weakly emphasized stress (shown as a smaller red rectangle in *Figures 32* and *33*), no longer follow a strong five-beat norm, particularly noticeable in line 4, giving instead the sense of something closer to speech than to metrical verse.

Just as the strong sense of a speaking voice is carried by careful phrasing in the octave, so that the traditional iambic pentameter is over-ridden by natural cadences, the metre itself is de-emphasized at the greatest moments of tension, the point where the woman's self-justification could descend into hysterical argument if she were not presented as being so much in control, again in line 4, and on the key phrase 'komt nooit'. Once again, at the level of metre, we see that this phrase becomes salient (*Figure 33*). The de-emphasized metre, but heightened speech-

[164] Bloch, Orthous and Santibañez-H (1987) specifically examines a psychophysiological method of training actors which focuses on portraying emotions through 'respiratory-postural-facial' effector patterns which, in accordance with Stanislavski's theories, enable the actor to portray feeling through careful physical means. In particular they find that 'it is the performance of the respiratory-postural-facial pattern of an emotion that evokes the corresponding subjective activation or feeling in the performer as well as in the observer' (1987:18). The key word here is 'pattern' for the translator who wishes to use a psychophysical route into translation.

rhythm, here lends a certain quiet authority to her message, whilst a more insistent *metre* might make us feel that the message was literally being hammered home. If the metre is unemphatic, however, the speech rhythms reach a highly significant point of stress and emphasis, at exactly the place already noticed as being the strongest pause in the octave ('komt nooit'). Nijhoff's rhythms are used for dramatic and character effects in this sonnet – and the iambic pentameter is subordinated to those considerations, the iamb by virtue of the promotion of a metrically unstressed syllable becoming a spondee (/ /).

In the sestet, which displays more lyrical tender feelings, directed towards the recipient of the letter, a restrained sense of the normative iambic metre returns, but this too is made subordinate to the actual rhythms of a speaking voice, even though that voice has to be imagined as being conveyed in the form of a letter. The informal, intimate letter is a written form of discourse which we perceive as being very close to the writer's spoken voice. There is an interesting 'as if' at work here: the poem presents itself as if it is a letter; the voice of the poem-letter appears to follow the rhythms of a speaking voice; those as-if rhythms are also modified by the metrical norms of the sonnet, which add their own weight to the shifts in tone felt at key points in the sonnet.

These rhythmic movements closely match the feeling of the octave and the two tercets which may be summarized as: 1) the potentially harsh justification of the break-up of the relationship coupled with a declaration of independence; 2) tender hints of a love which will continue in spite of changed circumstances; and 3) a restrained but sardonic reproach of the basis on which a man's love for a woman is traditionally constructed, coupled with a calm demonstration of what is truly of the essence.

This grossly over-simplifies the complexity of feeling in the poem but allows one to see that the differences between each section are reflected in the way that the underlying metre is set against natural rhythmic movement in strongly varying manners. A glance at *Figure 33* will confirm that within the norms of the iambic pentameter each line is different, through the careful interaction of metre with phrasing and pausing, and through the sensitive use of the promotion and

demotion of syllables,. What is especially obvious is the salience of the phrase ‘Want een vróuw/kómt nóoit…’ where the only strong enjambement of the poem is further strengthened by the use of three stresses coupled together, whilst the full phrase, in my interpretation, is sandwiched between two maximal breath-pauses.

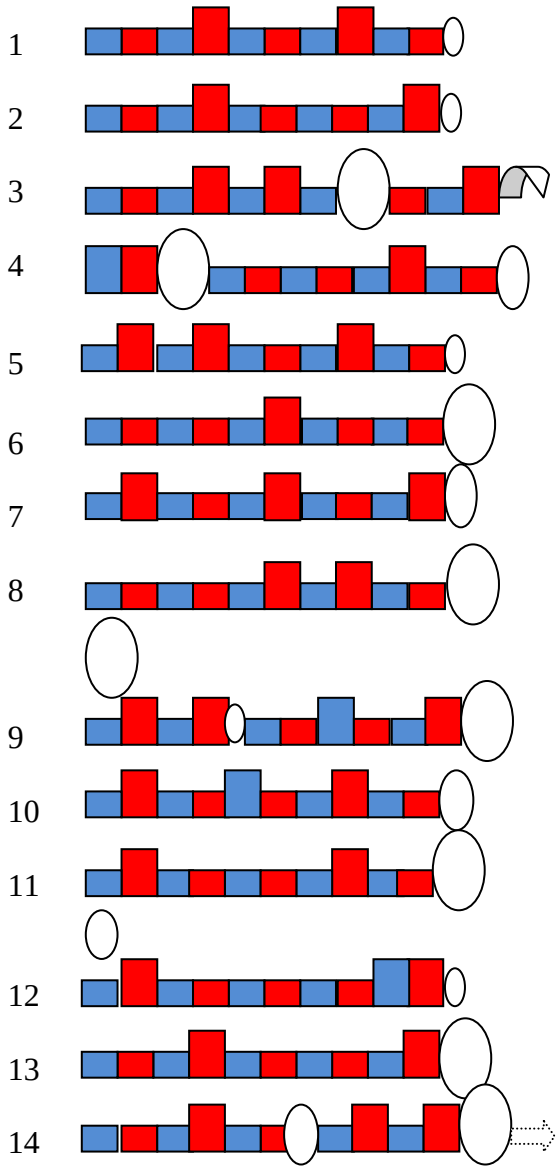


Figure 33: stress patterns and pausing in ‘Haar laatste brief’

Refer to Figure 32 for the key.

Stage 5: recording of native speaker

At this stage I checked the validity of my rhythmic and phrasal analysis through recording a native speaker of Dutch[165] to assess her intonational patterns in reading this poem, and in particular where she would lay the main stresses, and place the pauses. This allowed me to verify that what I had heard in the phrasing would also be heard by a Dutch speaker. It also allowed me to listen to the emotional colouring another interpreter gave the words.

Stage 6: analysis of pre-breath lexis

As described in 3.5, I wished to discover whether Nijhoff's theory about the breath-pause, specifically his notions of 'trillend oponthoud' and 'de levende plekken' (*VW*II:1157), might relate to his use of key-words, not only in individual poems but across the body of his work. I discovered that indeed many words or phrases clearly thematic in nature were placed immediately before the breath-pause, leading me to think that Nijhoff might well be working in a similar fashion in this poem.

The following table details the *strongly-stressed* words preceding the pauses, allowing me to discount the one case in the poem where a lexically non-important word ('was' [was]) is placed immediately before the pause.

[165] Nelleke Koster; recorded at her home in Norwich on 18/07/2009.

Octave		Sestet	
lichtzinnig	*fickle*	naam	*name*
trouw	*true*	vertrek	*room*
heenging	*went away*	**vensterbank**	*window-sill*
vrouw	*woman*	keukenrek	*kitchen-rack*
nooit	*never*		
(i.e. komt nooit … te boven = overcomes)			
genas	*cured*	klank	*sound*
leven	*life*	houdt	*love* (2nd person sing.)
tederheid	*tenderness*	jongensborst	*boy's-breast*
plicht	*duty*	goud	*gold*
voorbereid	*prepared*		

Table 3: strongly stressed pre-breath words in 'Haar laatste brief'

The very ordinariness of these words – their quotidian qualities – points to their importance for Nijhoff, whose emphasis on the virtue of the everyday increased throughout his writing life, till its culmination in the *Nieuwe gedichten* (1934). In particular it should be noted that the two highlighted words, 'vrouw' [woman] and 'leven' [life] are amongst the most frequent words employed by Nijhoff in the body of his oeuvre as whole and in positions immediately preceding the breath-pause (see 3.5). The word 'vensterbank' [windowsill] is not a frequently occurring word, but nevertheless includes the concepts of 'raam' [window] or 'venster' [window] within it. The in-between, liminal nature of this image in Nijhoff's work was discussed in 3.5, and is clearly salient in this particular poem, since the flowers (initially representative of the care of the woman for beautifying the life of her companion) will become symbols of the spiritual presence of the woman within her actual absence. The fact that the flowers are portrayed then as being placed on the window-sill situates them in the same liminal condition, but oppositely to the woman herself. They stand at the symbolic border of the home where inside and outside meet. They are of the outside world – belonging to nature – but are able to bring the woman back into the home, in spirit at least. The woman has left the home, gone into the wider outside world, but a part of her spirit remains inside the relationship.

Once again, the most salient pre-breath words seem to be those contained in the phrase ‘Want een **vrouw**/komt nooit’, which combines the key-word ‘vrouw’ with the highly foregrounded ‘komt nooit’ which is then shown, by deferment of the remaining element of the verbal phrase, to convey a meaning very different to that expected.

Stage 7: translation

In making the translation, therefore, I was determined to reflect above all the phrasing, pausing, and salient words and phrases immediately preceding the breath-pause. These aspects of the poem’s structure, integral to its organic as opposed to schematic form, enabled me to work with its sound in a non-schematic fashion, with approximate rhymes of many types, including alliteration, assonance, consonance, and eye-rhyme, as well as rhythmic matches (‘w**í**ndow-s**í**ll’/’k**í**tchen-rácк’) whose similarity to each other primarily comes through sharing the same stress-patterns, a perception reinforced by their placement (as in the ST) at the end of a line. Although I have notated a form of rhyme-scheme in my translation below, the sound-echoes across the poem as a whole are more complex than can be indicated by such notation, since a particular word may echo another word in more than one way, as for example in the chain ‘natured’/‘cured’/‘future’/‘duty’. Internal sound-echoes also play a part in creating a sense of sonic unity: note in particular in line 11 the repetitions of the vowel sound ‘a’ (/eɪ/) and the consonant ‘r’ which ties into the final word of this line (‘rack’), giving it further weight as a near-rhyme, and which taken together (almost) predict the final word of the poem, ‘hair’ (/heər/), giving a sense of completeness to the whole. In this way, the lengthy process enabled me to develop an approach to the sonnet somewhere between free and fixed form, where the rhymes – as suggested by King in his discussion of Nijhoff’s ‘Het uur u’ (1986:284, discussed in 2.4.3) – ‘emerge spontaneously out of the natural speech rhythms’ (tr.). The kind of rhyming I have focused on in this translation is of a type, as Simon Jarvis points out in a recent article on ‘Why rhyme pleases’, which, especially in line-internal positions, would not traditionally be viewed as rhyme because of (sometimes) non-metrical positioning, yet, as he argues, such sound-echoes contribute to the ‘saturatedness’ of a poem, and should be viewed

rather as ‘fugitive’ or ‘quick and unfixed rhymes’ (2011:39) which, as in my own example above (‘plates’/‘arrayed’/‘rack’/‘hair’), give a sense of sounds coming together in harmony at foregrounded positions (in my case, the end of the poem; in Jarvis’s analysis, the end of a couplet).

Line	Her last letter	rhyme	syllable-count
1	Don't blame me for being fickle-na**tured**	a	10
	because I loved you without staying tr**ue**	b	10
	and left you without crying. A w**o**man	b	10
4	can’t be quit – unless she herself has **cured**	a	10
	the wound already – of a **tender**ness	c	10
	fixed on the life to come in the f**uture**.	d	10
	It was me I[166] had to start again – a d**ut**y	d	11/12
8	I hadn’t seen I was in**tende**d for.	c	9
9	Softly say my name, and I am in the **roo**m:	e	10/11
	the flowers are there again on the window-sill,	f	11
11	the pl**a**tes a**rray**ed in the white kitchen-**r**ack.	g	10
12	Because there’s more of me within that sound	h	10
	than in the youthfulness you love me f**or**,	i	10
14	my almost boy-like breasts, my golden h**air**.	i	10

Figure 34: ‘Her last letter’: my translation

Because my analysis of Nijhoff’s poetry had led me to believe that the pre-breath words were of importance, I paid particular attention to their placing in my translations. This helped me make translation decisions about word-orders that are a little unusual in English (e.g. ‘Softly say my name’) in order to keep the most important concept (‘name’) in a key position (before a pause). But more important than the analysis, in fact, was the physical and emotional nature of the unusual translation process which helped me feel my way into the phrasal movements of the poem, and what these might signify; Stages 3 to 6 may, therefore, be viewed as being merely supportive of the main process which was kinaesthetic, psychophysiological and meditative in nature, as described in Stage 2.

[166] The underlining here and in line 9 signifies that the vowel sounds may be elided – or glided – into each other, giving the lower syllable-count detailed in the final column.

Paying attention to the breath-pauses, helped me perceive certain words or phrases as having vital importance. The most dramatic pause ('een vrouw/ komt nooit...'), which also signals a hugely significant ambiguity, is the one which gave me most difficulty and most joy in translation. My solution ('a woman/can't be quit...') is rhythmically and sonically (at least on the key word 'quit') similar to the original, and performs a similar syntactic function, but has, until the verb is united with its complement, almost the *opposite* ambiguity of meaning to that of the original. The ST seems to say that a woman 'never comes', but on further reading says that she cannot '*over*come' the wound of her gender, which will lead to an inevitable and depersonalizing motherhood, unless she has already 'cured' herself of this tender aspect of her own nature. The TT says that a woman 'can't be quit', seeming to imply that she is unable to leave her love-relationship, but on further reading says that she cannot get rid of ('be quit of') this child-directed tenderness, unless she has cured herself of this beforehand (perhaps through the act of leaving a relationship which would otherwise over-domesticate her). The point is that whilst changing the lexis I have managed here, I hope, both to keep the overall meaning of the clause, and to create tension, or vibrancy, almost exactly where it appears in the source text, a vibrancy caused by several factors, semantic, syntactic, and rhythmic, all interacting with the breath-pause.

Stage 8: arriving at the final version

My initial plan had been not only to delay the actual act of translation but to translate as incrementally as I had built up the memorizing of the poem – in other words I thought I would translate over several days, phrase by phrase and sentence by sentence, but in fact after all the pre-translation work, once the translation started I had to carry on until it was finished. I spent two hours, late at night, translating the first sentence, and then retired to bed. Eventually I realized that I had to get up and continue to the end, working from 3.00 till about 6.30 a.m., until the task was completed. Any adjustments made later were minor[167].

[167] The only adjustment was to the word-order of line 9, which I originally translated as 'Say my name softly…'. The reasons for changing the word order were both metrical and to do with the positioning of the pre-breath word 'name', as discussed above.

This aspect of the experiment I had set up to test a translation process focused on breath and phrasing at first disappointed me, since my aim had been to approach each section in a meditative spirit, not rushing the work. Only later did I realize that the suspension of my plans, because the shape of the translation being formed within me was now too pressing to ignore, was a Zen-like moment. Solutions to the problems posed by the formal aspects of the ST often happen after a period of silence, the suspension of all apparent mental activity, the point at which the body breathes and listens, but does not consciously think. This is literally what happened when I went to bed for several hours and then got up again, determined to finish the translation. The long preparatory process declared itself to be over, and the new text was already there in embryo.

III.iii Conclusion

Robert Bly, whose warnings about translating for metre and rhyme I discussed in 2.3, also has a highly active way of entering the translation process, described in *The Eight Stages of Translation* (1983). The difference between his approach and mine is that he is constantly working with *his* version of the poem, whereas in mine I am constantly working with the actual poem (and the poetry of the writer in more general terms). In the process discussed in this commentary, I delayed the actual translation in order to write something in English which would be both a re-creation of the original and an original act – the object being to go beyond analysis and worries about where the stresses are, what kind of metre is being used, where the rhyme-words fall, what kinds of rhymes they are and so forth, in order to write something in English which is an analogue of the feelings called up in me by my bodily enactment of the original. In doing so, with the amount of preparative, meditative, enactive, and analytical practice I devoted to the poem itself, and not to my representation of it, the rhythms and sound patterns of my response fell into place naturally, needing very little adjustment in the final draft. When the actual translation occurred the focus was on shaping naturally cadenced rhythms in English, without having to worry too much about literally following the shape of the original, since the essential aspects of that shape were already

incorporated through the memory work and regular performance I had dedicated to the original.

In giving advice to children learning to write creatively, Ted Hughes says that instead of thinking of themselves, the emerging poem, or the techniques they will use to make it into a poem, they should concentrate entirely on the object, becoming one with that object (Hughes 1994:13), as he himself enacts for us in his poem 'The Thought Fox'. Whilst according to Suzuki in his foreword to Herrigel's *Zen in the Art of Archery*:

> In the case of archery, the hitter and the hit are no longer two opposing objects, but are one reality. The archer ceases to be conscious of himself as the one who is engaged in hitting the bull's-eye which confronts him. This state of unconsciousness is realized only when, completely empty and rid of the self, he becomes one with the perfecting of his technical skill, though there is something in it of a quite different order which cannot be attained by any progressive study of the art.
>
> (1953:6)

What this experiment in translating rhythm and phrasing did was to allow me to become one with my object, in this case the breath and intonation patterns of a text which itself conveyed the patterns of a living, breathing man feeling his way into the thinking, feeling, and still (apparently, or fictively) loving body of a woman. This is what I think Nijhoff meant by the living spots or places in the poem, the silence which vibrates with more meaning than the actual words can say – and this is what I hope this work has enabled me both to find and re-create, through a meditative, self-reflexive practice which uses the tools of stylistic analysis yet attempts to go beyond them in a concentrated act of translation. If the resultant text, resonating in its own silent spaces, can give a hint to English-speaking readers of some of the qualities of the original, so much the better.

To my way of thinking, the emphasis laid in this experimental process on stillness, silence, and the in-breath offers a possibility of finding a middle way into the translation of rhythmic and sonic effects in poetry (and not only in Nijhoff's work). As discussed at several points in the foregoing study, too strong an emphasis on the part of the translator on the schematic elements of a poem may

lead to a translation rather far from the original in terms of imagery, meaning and tone, whilst overstressing the purely semantic aspects of a poem will ignore those aspects of communication which are apparently 'beyond language' (Boase-Beier 2011:167). When the translator understands the importance of the breath-pause, then the attention can shift from relatively simple matters of determining the underlying metre of a poem, or its rhyme-scheme, to seeing that the interplay between form and content is indeed much more vital and more unified, as Nijhoff points out, and not at all mechanistic. Whilst it may be argued that it is impossible to generalize from my discoveries about the breath-pause in Nijhoff's poetry either to its effect in the work of other poets, or to a similarity of effect in the ST and the TT, the work I have carried out on the interaction between the breath-pause and the significant, or salient, pre-breath words has shown that it is possible to sensitize a translator to the specific positioning of such words in relation to the pauses and within the rhythms of a poem as a whole, releasing worthwhile artistic effects in the TT. This will not, of course, guarantee an equivalence of breath-pause effect between the ST and the TT, since much will depend on the interaction of a specific reader with a specific translation. Nevertheless, the psychological and biological research I cite above on respiration and metrical poetry (Li and Kong 2011), entrainment (Kinsbourne and Jordan 2009; Thaut et al 1999) and neuromuscular responses in silent reading (McFarland 2001) does give support to my own research, suggesting that the translator of poetry would do well to look carefully at the interaction of the breath-pause with the rhythms and semantics of poems when making translation decisions and forming translation strategies.

Chapter 4 will examine aspects of sound and image in both Nijhoff's and Achterberg's work, with the main focus being on Achterberg's poetry and poetics, whilst Commentary IV will focus on the development of the memory techniques outlined in this commentary in a way more suited to Achterberg's work.

I understood one final time
a language for which there is no sign
in this whole universe.

But did not have sufficient breath
and have escaped into this verse:
emergency staircase to the dawn,
pale light and much too soon.

Achterberg (tr.)

Chapter 4

Exploring sound and iconicity: at and across the borders of word and form

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter and its follow-up commentary explored the significance of breath in Nijhoff's poetics and its relationship to form, structure, and meaning in the poems themselves, comparing this to Achterberg's work in which breath played an important thematic role, but appeared to have less formal importance than for Nijhoff, where the breath-pause itself, the effect of its empty fullness (cf. Cheng 1994) on the surrounding words, was paramount and recognized as such. The significance of this discovery for the translation of Nijhoff's poems was discussed and exemplified in Commentary III, and a method for sensitizing the translator to the psychophysiological effects of the breath-pause was proposed and tested. Attentiveness to the breath-pause was shown to have positive effects on making the translator aware of the rhythmic movement of the poem as a whole, of the importance of salient words and phrases in relation to the breath-pause, and on decisions about the placing of such words or phrases within the translation. The focus on the formal and thematic effects of the breath-pause was also shown to be beneficial for the translation of schematic elements of form, in particular for rhyme and other sound-effects, which, as a consequence of being de-emphasized within the translation process, were enabled to operate in a less schematized, more natural fashion in the TT. Further discussion about this discovery will be postponed till the concluding chapter of this study.

The present chapter will explore in greater detail the part sound plays in both Nijhoff's and Achterberg's work, examining the relationship of sound to iconicity, in both aural and visual modalities, and considering the implications of these for the translation of form. Just as the main focus in the previous chapter was on Nijhoff's work, with the follow-up commentary examining the translation process of a single Nijhoff poem, in this chapter the main focus will be on Achterberg. The aim will again be to show that a deep understanding of the writer's poetics

can lead to translation approaches and methods which involve the translator's complete being and which therefore enable a full creative and dialogic involvement with both the ST and TT.

I hypothesized in Chapter 3 that for Achterberg questions of sound and iconicity are at the heart of his verse-internal poetics. These questions may include elements of pausing and silence, in particular the use of typographic white, the places in the disposition of the poem on the page (for example, between the octave and the sestet in a sonnet) where pausing is clearly indicated, which may contribute to specific iconic or psychophysiological effects within the poem and are used by poets (not only by Nijhoff or Achterberg) to heighten such effects. This aspect of pausing and of emptiness was not examined as such in Chapter 3, as the focus there was not so much on the shape of the poem on the page, and the relationship between its typography and the blank spaces surrounding it (cf. Scott 2006 and Dijk 2005, 2011), but rather on the poem in the ear, voice, and body-mind. Clearly, however, it is difficult to draw a boundary between the poem on the page and the poem in the body, since, as discussed in 3.4, even the silent reading of a text on a page will have its effect on the reader's body. Sound and silence in printed poetry are inevitably linked to both the auditory and the visual, and the concept of poetic iconicity includes both modalities.

This chapter will then examine sonic and visual iconicity in Achterberg's and Nijhoff's work, relating these to questions of materiality, the body-mind, and, in particular in Achterberg's case, the connection of these aspects of poetic form and structure to word-magic, shamanism, the supra-real and the metaphysical, already partially explored in 2.5.1. This chapter will take up some issues to which the earlier chapters gave rise, including the iconic effect of visual and aural blanks.

The implications for translation will be the focus of section 4.8 of this chapter and of the follow-up commentary, although translation issues will be discussed throughout, particularly in 4.6 and 4.7 which examine examples of iconicity in Achterberg's and Nijhoff's work respectively. Firstly, however, I will consider what iconicity is, its potential in poetry, how this might relate to the magical and ritualistic, and finally how iconicity may bring the living body into the written

word, an aspect linking to the experimental work described and analyzed in the follow-up commentary.

4.2 Iconicity of sound and image: the dialogue between affect and meaning

Iconicity has been defined as a relationship of analogy or similarity between form and concept, signifier and signified, within a sign relationship (see e.g. Lyons 1993:70; Chandler 2007:36; Cuypere 2008:2), in which 'similarity' is perceived against a background of difference, and in which 'similarity' is not the same as 'identity' (cf. Taub 2001:19-20), offering the potential for one 'thing' to be perceived as a sign of another (Cuypere 2008:66; cf. Chandler 2007:40). Iconicity is a cognitive process held to be creatively operative within sign systems in general, within language in particular, and especially within literary and poetic texts, which often foreground both metaphor and iconicity, and the 'interplay' between them (Hiraga 2005:14).

The concept of iconicity is sometimes held to challenge a Saussurean view of the arbitrariness of language (Boase-Beier 2006:102; Hiraga 2005:14; Jakobson 1965; Saussure 1983:59), although, as pointed out by Cuypere (2008:31), recognizing that iconicity is a vital principle of language, does not imply that it is incorrect to perceive the linguistic sign as being fundamentally arbitrary, and in fact Cuypere argues that this is indeed the case, seeing iconicity in linguistic signs as being secondary rather than primary in nature (Cuypere 2008:71-4, 252). Iconicity and arbitrariness are both clear aspects of the language-making capacities of the human being, arbitrariness contributing to the 'versatility and flexibility of language' (Lyons 1993:70) and iconicity to its creativity. As John Haiman has argued, iconicity is an active principle in the living syntax of a given language (Haiman 1985a, 1985b), whilst research by Ivan Fónagy supports the notion that there are dual 'encoding' processes in language (Fónagy 2001:18-40) in which iconicity plays the literally vital part of keeping language alive: 'live utterance and natural language … owe their liveliness to this magic fountain' (Fónagy 1999:26).

What seems to be important for literary studies and, therefore, also literary translation within the concept of iconicity is not so much the question of arbitrariness as such, but the 'interplay between arbitrariness and relative motivation' (Cuypere 2008:43), thereby giving rise to a multiplicity of 'creative possibilities' (Cuypere 2008:title) within language as a whole and literary texts in particular. These possibilities in turn give rise to the sense that certain texts – often poetic – are, or are felt to be, deeply and coherently expressive, not only of referential and non-referential meaning, but also, and perhaps especially, of emotions and affects accompanying, or forming, the grain of those meanings. The possibility that the iconic aspects of texts relate to emotion was noticed by Leech and Short (1981:236) and has been developed more recently by Michael Burke in an exploratory article which explicitly discusses the concept of 'emotive iconicity' (Burke 2001:32).

An important aspect of iconicity is that it is inclusive of aspects of semiosis beyond the level of the word itself. Within poetry it may potentially include rhythm, rhyme and patterned sound, sound-symbolism, the configuration of the text on the page, including the shape of the poem and the nature of the blanks around it, the type-face and other aspects of typography, punctuation, and so forth. Within the context of the poem's meaning-making, all aspects which contribute to its status as a living artefact may potentially be read iconically. As Peter Robinson states, in discussing Auden's poem 'Musée des Beaux Arts':

> In a poem, the responses are never simply just to the meaning of the words. Since all the aspects of a poem's technique can be endowed with significance by their thematization, its structure will have significant things to imply about the meaning of the words, and about itself…'
>
> Robinson 2002:158

The same tension apparent in linguistic and philosophical discussions about the nature of language, the linguistic sign and the part that iconicity plays within a linguistic system (arbitrary versus motivated), is also apparent in the modern understanding of formal aspects of poetry, as discussed at several points in the foregoing study, questions as to whether these are conventionalized and merely decorative or whether they are 'endowed with significance' (ibid.) in the act of

making and in re-making, that is to say through attentive reading and translation. Iconicity in all its varieties – aural, grammatical, syntactic and visual – clearly contributes to this.

As first theorized by the scientist and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) in a wide range of formal and informal writings produced throughout his working life (see e.g. Peirce 1999), the concept of iconicity includes 'all sense modalities' (Sonesson n.d.:n.p.) and thus, in my interpretation, may function in literary texts precisely as a way of calling up modalities not literally present in the text, i.e. as a means of encouraging the full use of the bodily senses – hearing, feeling, and inner visualization, for example. Tsur has drawn attention in particular to the modality of sound in his discussion of the cognitive effects of sound-symbolism in poetry, stressing the dynamic nature of our sense of hearing (both actual and via the inner ear of the imagination):

> …sounds inform us about events. While vision and touch enable us to explore stationary environments, hearing … tells us about movement and change…
>
> Tsur 1992:101

The question of how to approach such modalities within the translation process will be discussed in 4.8, and in Commentary IV, which takes the body-mind approach to translating poetry, described in Commentaries II and III, a step further.

Both visual and sonic elements in poetry have, then, the potential to be read iconically, and, as argued by James Wimsatt, within the poem they are not so much, or not only, supportive or imitative of verbal meaning, but creative of their own meanings within 'a separate semiotic system with independent sign value' (1996:n.p.). Wimsatt, much as Achterberg did in the making of his poetry, in particular sees sound as 'a source of power' (ibid.) within the poem, a power in dialogue with both the verbal meaning of the text and the bodily responses of the reader, 'a symbiosis of mutual dependence' (ibid.), of effect and affect in dialogue with each other. It is within this aspect of form that poetry in general, and Achterberg's poetry in particular, links most strongly to the realm of the non-rational, the magical, the kabbalistic and the shamanistic, as will become

apparent. As a translator of Achterberg's poetry, it is important for me to work as imaginatively with this aspect of his poetics as possible.

The following two sections briefly survey the relationship of iconicity to some aspects of the magical and ritualistic within poetry.

4.3 Magical and ritual aspects of sound and iconicity in poetry

The relationship between the phonosymbolic aspects of both language in general, and poetry in particular, to ritual and magic, is well known and has been explored by, for example, Eliade (2004:510-11), Frazer (1922), Leavitt (1997:129-68), Patton (2005), Ryding (1995), Stetkevych (1993, 2006), Sviri (2002), and Vaughan-Sterling (1983). I follow the literary scholar Thomas Greene in broadly defining magic as a charge of energy which can affect something at a distance, whether by 'contact or through resemblance or through the participation of the part in the whole or through correspondence between things linked by sympathies' (Greene 2005:246).

Sound in general, and vocal sound in particular, can be viewed as paradigmatic of an 'invisible' energy which affects at a distance, and is woven into all kinds of human rituals, spells, chants, charms, mantras and invocations, which gain their power from the very literal call of the caller to that which responds. Bronisław Malinowski's classic study of the magic, science and religion of the Trobriand Islanders, for example, gives interesting insights into the perceived material power of voice, in which not only do words and sounds themselves have symbolic and actual potency, but the voice itself also does, so much so that it must be caught and held within a special container so that its magic can work correctly and not go astray (Malinowski 1948:167). Malinowski explains that, in Melanesia, the voice is perceived as 'the main organ of the human mind' (1948:57) and that 'magic is the one and only specific power, residing exclusively in man, let loose only by his magical art, gushing out with his voice, conveyed by the casting forth of the rite' (1948:56-7). Magic in this view, therefore, is linked very closely to human speech as such, although human speech used in specific ritualistic contexts and

channelled through forms more or less poetic in nature (cf. Greene 2005:43-50; Malinowski 1948:173-176; Vaughan-Sterling 1983).

Laurie Patton employs cognitive and performance theories to examine the use of poetry and language in ritual contexts in a manner she terms 'associative' rather than 'magic', redefining 'magic' itself as a form of associative or metonymic thinking (2005:16) and warning against the 'overzealous application of the term magic' (2005:18). Karin Ryding, on the other hand, in her examination of 'alchemical phonology' in the Arab Middle Ages, cites the medieval Arab philosopher and historiographer Ibn Khaldūn's opinion that '[o]ne should realize that all (magic) activity in the world of nature comes from the human soul and the human mind, because the human soul essentially encompasses and governs nature' (1995:91). Alchemical and magical systems interrelating the sound and form of words to their effect on the world should therefore, as Ryding argues, be seen as 'the business of the human psyche' (ibid) and as such are clearly also a reasonable topic of investigation within the realm of poetics and of literary translation studies[168].

Phonosymbolism in poetry is generally perceived as 'the correlation between sounds (intonation, prosodic patterns, rhythm and so on) and emotion' (Violi 2000:10) or between sounds and, as discussed above, some aspect of the world onto which they map (e.g. onomatopoeic sounds are felt to map, perhaps in a schematic or idealized fashion, onto an actual sound audible in the world). It has been a matter of some controversy as to whether the effects created in poetry and in other literary forms by the use of phonosymbolism – properly described as sound iconism, as pointed out by Linda Waugh (1987:266) – are deliberately created by the author or are merely perceived and interpreted as such by the reader (see e.g. Johnson 1971:48, 289-291; Shelley 1953:28-9; Richards 1973:231-232). As discussed by Simon Alderson in a recent article on literary iconicity, the problem comes down to a question of whether chance (in creation) and the imagination (in reading) are considered by the critic to play a legitimate part in the

[168] cf. Tsur 2012, read after completing this chapter.

perception not only of iconicity but of all kinds of stylistic effects within the literary text (2001).

That emotional and other effects are attributed to sonic aspects of poetry by readers and are utilized as such by poets is, however, clear not only within traditional poetics and poetic analysis (Beardsley 1958:220-37, 254-9; Pope 1978:73-5) but also from research by Hevner (1937), Hrushovski (1980) Jakobson (1965, 1978, 1987, 2004), Lakoff and Turner (1989), Fónagy (1999; 2000), Whissell (1999), Tsur (1992, 1998, 2008), Paterson (2007b) and many others. Less examined in literary studies or in stylistics is the specific relationship of sound iconicity and sound affect in poetry to ritual and magic, although a number of studies do touch on such a relationship from a variety of standpoints. For example, a relatively early article by V.G. Hopwood on 'Dream, magic and poetry' discusses rhythm, rhyme, and other sounds as being the 'guardians of introversion of the poem', dimming 'the sense of reality' and allowing 'the emotions [to be] free to align themselves according to the organization of the poem' (1951:153). Hopwood also stresses the potential efficacy of the arts of magic and of ritual, clearly relating these to poetry. These arts contain:

> a principle of emotional determination which is of continuous value to the community. Ritual is a process by which the people who wish to accomplish something enter imaginatively into the process so that they can carry out their share in producing its result.
>
> 1951:158

The similarity of this analysis to reader-response and cognitive stylistic accounts of reading as such should be clear, as well as its relevance to the intensive approaches to poetic translation described in this study.

The clearest example of a detailed examination of magic and iconicity within poetry is Michael Webster's 2001 article on the poetry of Apollinaire and of E.E. Cummings in which he distinguishes between non-magic and magic forms of iconism, stressing the necessity for the 'living consciousness of the reader' to activate all forms of magic within poetry (2001:100). Although Webster's focus is primarily on visual rather than sound iconism, he does briefly analyze the metrical and incantatory effects of the sound-system of Apollinaire's 'Cœur

couronne et miroir', thereby acknowledging that iconicity is a matter of the ear as well as the eye. The 'magic iconism' poems Webster analyzes are perceived as rituals or spells the reader has to enter and performatively enact in order to break open their hermetic seals and come to a deeper understanding of their mystery. These texts present an interplay between absence and presence, between what is past and what is here, between author and reader:

> we have a calling-forth of the absent which is made present through iconism – the "was" and "am" are simultaneously present. A magic transformation of identity also occurs, made possible by the cooperation of reader and author.
>
> 2001:111

Interestingly, in discussing Apollinaire's emblematic poem (and his book of emblems *Le bestiaire, ou le cortège d'Orphée*), Webster makes reference to the Hermetic or esoteric tradition, linked specifically to the archetypal figure of Orpheus, as poet and inventor of the arts and sciences, translating Apollinaire's Orphic motto and emblem as: 'Founded in magic, he knew the future' (2001:105). As discussed at several points in this present study, Achterberg's poetry has also been described as being Orphic, hermetic, and even shamanistic, and in this respect it clearly belongs to a specific stream of the modernist movement (cf. Rasula 2009). It is not surprising, therefore, that iconicity of sound, image, and even letters, plays a large part in Achterberg's work: such techniques must be viewed as forming an active and creative aspect of his own poetics, thematically suited to his quest as a poet. As a poet obsessed with energy, transformation, similarity and contiguity, as well as with the formative power of the Word, the 'dynamic dialectic' between sound and meaning, which Waugh (1987:271) describes as being fundamental to sound iconicity, must have seemed to Achterberg an essential aspect of the living language of poetry, so much so that, as discussed in 2.5.2, he could think in terms of the individual sounds of a poem as having autonomous life, as conjuring each other up across the poem. In a memoir by C.J.E. Dinaux written soon after Achterberg's death in 1962 (Dinaux 1964:765-6), Achterberg is reported as indicating, in response to a French translation of his collection *Stof* (Hazeu 1989:543), several places where the 'under-word' communication of the original had been missed. Dinaux says that Achterberg 'indicated vowels [*klinkers*] which didn't correspond and which

therefore did not call each other up, word-forms [*woordbeelden*] which did not reflect each other and which therefore had no effect', before adding that the work of translation had still been cleverly done. The crux of the matter here is that Achterberg focuses both on sound (vowel-sounds, or on phonemes in general) and on image (the visual rendering of the word – the word-image [*woordbeeld*] – its shape or form; as well as the images created by the word as concept) (Dinaux 1964:765-6). Iconicity and materiality – embodiment of sound (and vision) – within a text are thus clearly related to each other, as are icon and image, both aural and visible, and relate strongly to magic.

The sounds of words and phonemes were of crucial import to Achterberg, in particular within the word in its performative function. Hazeu, Achterberg's biographer, relates two anecdotes about him which emphasize this. When Achterberg was a guest at the home of one of his publishers, he asserted that poets were more important than publishers. Another guest sprang to the defence of publishers, telling Achterberg he was overvaluing poet-hood, and eventually coming up with the argument that a baker was just as important as a poet, for if there was no bread, how could the poet survive? Achterberg replied that he could demonstrate that poetry was the most important thing in creation because 'God already made poems in paradise. Because he said: *Let there be light*. He could also have said: fffff! Because he could just as easily have done that' (Hazeu 1989:456, tr.). A more developed version of the same thought is described in the second anecdote. As recalled by the Dutch writer J.B. Charles, Achterberg said (on a different occasion): 'God was the first poet … He simply could have called out pst! Or have snapped his fingers when he created light, but he did it with the word, he spoke light, he said: let there be light! and there *was* light' (Hazeu 1989:457, tr.). The key words here are 'he spoke light'. There is, therefore, a real difference in Achterberg's thinking about the power of interjections and gestures, and those of words, especially words within the context of a sentence that makes something happen. Not only, in this report of Achterberg's version of creation, does God speak light into being, but in speaking the word 'light' he conjoins the phenomenon with its sign in absolute iconicity: light and God's (first) speaking of the word 'light' are one and the same thing.

Nijhoff's use of iconic features within his poems was of a different order to Achterberg's in that it does not clearly relate to an overarching interest in the place of the Word, the Poem, and the Poet at the magical interface between body and spirit, life and death, mind and matter, as Achterberg's does, but that there are, nevertheless, some elements of magical and material thinking with regard, especially, to the visual form of words will become apparent in 4.7.

4.4 Magical and ritual aspects of visual iconicity in poetry

Just as sound iconicity, and the inherent energy or force of the word as willed human sound, have been linked both to poetry and to magic and ritual, visual iconicity also plays a vital part in both fields, and – as shown by Michael Webster in the article discussed above – is used in the poetry of particular modernist poets with what seems to be deliberate 'magical' intention. Magic is here taken to be a cognitive operation in the mind of the reader whereby (in some cases) the poem is 'a magic ritual that the reader must complete and perform' (Webster 2001:102). In both cases which Webster examines visual and sonic iconicity perform together to create a summoning forth of something absent in order to make it present: in the Apollinaire poem the poet himself is embodied through the visual and typographic emblems of heart, crown and mirror; in the Cummings poem on the ruby-throated humming bird, the mother bird is summoned, her presence merging both with the 'i' and 'eye' of the poet and that of the reader (Webster 2001:106-107), thereby effecting a magical transformation.

Although Webster makes a useful distinction between magic and non-magic iconism – partly based on esoteric knowledge the reader must bring to the text to fully summon the presence evoked – the crucial aspect of the reader's re-enactment of the ritual which bodies forth something which would otherwise be absent seems to be existent also, perhaps in a weaker form, within poems Webster describes as being ordinarily, rather than magically, iconic. Any kind of poetic use of visual iconicity draws attention to the medium – to the materiality of the word, page, type-face, and so forth – asking the reader to enter into the poetic process, to become, as Achterberg himself said, 'the second poet' (Fokkema

1973b:25). Nevertheless, where there is what appears to be a deliberate linking by the poet to esoteric practices (Apollinaire) or to mysteries which may be seen as a form of natural magic (Cummings) then indeed the visual (and aural) iconicity does seem to point to something which may be called 'magical iconism'.

The link between the shape and form of the written word and magic and ritual is as well-explored as the link between the sound of language and the same, indeed writing itself was traditionally conceived of as being magical, and as having mythical or god-gifted origins (Beard 2007:137-8; Covino 1994:19; Senner 1991:10-15). Carved, incised, painted or drawn symbols, and writing as such – the written form of the word and of the number – have, therefore, also been strongly linked to ritual practices, magic, and shamanic or other forms of healing. The example I examine below – an ancient magic word-square – is a strongly visual use of words within a magical context. Although runes and rune-magic (Elliott 1980; Page 1999), the Jewish and Arabic writing systems, particularly within kabbalistic, mystical or alchemical contexts (Ryding 1995; Shaked 2005), and Chinese talismanic script (Robson 2008) might provide equally strong examples, these are less clearly related to the concept of iconicity in visual or pattern poetry[169].

The Rotas-Sator squares, discussed in the 1950s as examples of word-magic that might have early Christian (Atkinson 1957), Judaic (Fishwick 1959) or even antique pagan origins (Ernst 2008:756), and historically used as protective talismans or amulets, or as charms or magic formulae (Koch 2013), are a clear illustration of the power attributed to the written form of the word, not only to its placing within the 'magic square', but also to the palindromic, mirror-like qualities of the word in such an arrangement, and to the occult cryptographic powers contained within it, not obvious to casual view, and open to countless interpretations (Sheldon 2003). Rotas-Sator squares have been found at several archaeological sites from the ancient world including Cirencester, Pompeii, Syria and Hungary, and in artefacts and manuscripts from both ancient and medieval times. In the medieval era and beyond the square was used for exorcism, healing,

[169] But see Tsur 2012:225-7 which discusses a medieval Jewish pattern-poem.

fire extinguishing, and to help in childbirth (Sheldon 2003:239) and was associated with or borrowed by popular Christian tradition in a wide variety of ways, from the naming of the nails of Christ's crucifixion by the five words of the rebus, to the naming of the shepherds of the nativity (Sheldon 2003:239, 241). Some healing rituals – in a form reminiscent of medieval Arabic practices with the words of Al-Būsīrī's 'Mantle Ode' (Stetkevych 2006:146) – even encouraged the literal swallowing of the words of the formula to achieve a cure (Sheldon 2003:269). The written word is then perceived both as philtre and sacrament, with real physical and spiritual effect.

Figure 35 below illustrates the two forms of the square – which in many respects also seems to be a visual or pattern poem, and has been discussed as such (Glaz 2012; Ernst 2008:756).

R	O	**T**	A	S		S	A	**T**	O	R
O	P	**E**	R	A		A	R	**E**	P	O
T	**E**	**N**	**E**	**T**		**T**	**E**	**N**	**E**	**T**
A	R	**E**	P	O		O	P	**E**	R	A
S	A	**T**	O	R		R	O	**T**	A	S

Figure 35: The Rotas-Sator 'magic' square (after Fishwick 1959)

Modern scholarship has not only seen a fairly obvious but not necessarily Christian cross in the twice-repeated central 'tenet' (highlighted in bold in the figure above), but has also perceived the square anagrammatically, holding that the words 'Pater Noster' and the alpha/omega symbols are revealed when the letters are re-arranged to form a new cross (Fishwick 1959; see *Figure 36* below), although the 'pater noster' interpretation has also been contested by many including Tabbernee (2008) and Baines (1987). The most common current position seems to be that the square is of pre-Christian origin but was later adopted by Christians and consequently interpreted in a variety of ways conformant to a Christian message.

What interests me in this example is its paradigmatic quality in terms of visual, imagic iconicity (the square which reveals the cross; the further hidden cross within the words, not immediately visible to sight, but revealable to interpretation) and diagrammatic iconicity (the wheel [‘rotas’] turning round the sides of the square in an eternal motion), as well its cryptogrammic elements. It combines, as visual effects in printed poetry often do, the playful and the deeply serious, and can be explored and meditated on in great depth, as Rose Mary Sheldon’s recent annotated bibliography, which runs to 54 pages, testifies. In its ingenuity and formal perfection it is a powerful form of visual word-magic – however that is interpreted –and therefore offers a good basis for comparison to more modern uses of visual effects in poetry.

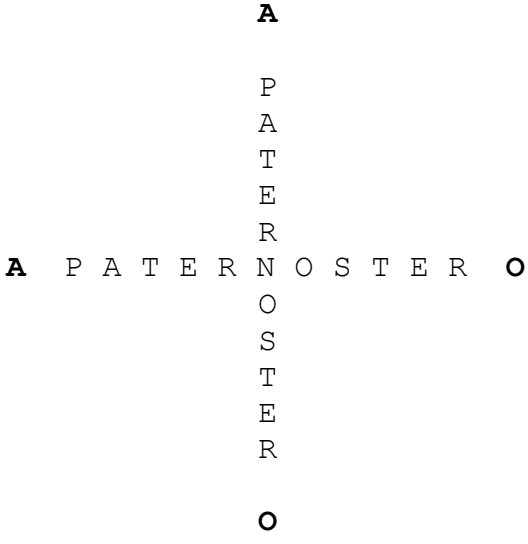


Figure 36: the ‘re-arranged’ cross of the ‘Rotas-Sator’ square (after Fishwick 1959)

As mentioned above, the Rotas-Sator square has often been linked to the genre of pattern poetry or *carmina figurata*, defined by A.L. Korn as poetry in which the line-lengths are so arranged as to 'form a consciously chosen shape or design' (1954:289), a form of poetry with a long history and with possible oriental or near-Eastern origins (Korn 1954), of which there certainly are classical Greek and Latin examples (Colón 2012). These may also have been linked, like the Rotas-Sator square, to mystical, spiritual, talismanic or near-magic practices, but their interest in terms of visual iconicity, and how this operates in verse, is that the practice of visually shaping poetry to fit a serious purpose can be found in the work of major English poets of the 17th century like George Herbert, for example in the oft-examined 'Easter Wings' (Brown and Ingoldsby 1972; Elsky 1983; Hiraga 2005:58-63; Westerweel 1984; White 1995:124-8), and in the work of several modernist poets, including Mallarmé, Apollinaire, Carlos Williams, E.E. Cummings and Dylan Thomas. Indeed, as Westerweel (1984:7) has noted, this type of poetry often relates to the sacred, even in the modern age (cf. Thomas's 'Vision and Prayer', discussed in Bauer 2003). The stylistic effect of the visual patterning in all such cases lies not so much in recognizing the shape, and how this fits to the subject-matter of the poem, but in the more deeply metaphorical aspects of fit as the iconic and graphical elements of the text cue the reader into several channels of interpretation and 'different modes of signification' (Gross 1997:22). As Masako Hiraga's recent volume on metaphor and iconicity has convincingly demonstrated (2005), and as emphasized by Gross in her account of the psychological effects of visual patterning within poetry (1997), metaphoricity is not only a feature of words in their conceptual form, but is just as much an aspect of visible and concrete sign-making. That is to say, except in the simplest and most literal forms of iconicity, if such a state can exist, since as Peirce himself made clear even the purest icon carries an element of cultural convention within it in order to make it sign-like and interpretable (Peirce 1974:51), metaphoricity is part and parcel of iconism and is intricately linked to meaning-making in human communication in general, and in poetic art in particular, which foregrounds both visual and auditory iconicity to a greater or lesser extent, according to the individual poetics of the specific poet and the cultural background within which he or she works. The two modes have been separated here for convenience of discussion, but in most cases, even in extremely concrete or visual poetry, they

operate in unity with each other, reinforcing the power, energy and expressiveness of the word.

4.5 Materiality, corporeality, and enactment: the perceptible icon

The arguments of the previous three sections of this chapter – that iconicity in poetry enacts the dialogue between affect and meaning; that it has powerful links to magic and ritual in both aural and visual forms; and that the sense of deep and meaningful fit that it gives between word and thing, or word and action, enables this most dynamic and creative feature of semiosis to operate at and across the borders of word and form – lead to the conclusion that one of its modes of operation within the written language is to draw attention to materiality and corporeality. This aspect of iconicity is particularly emphasized by Fónagy in several different works, including 'Why iconicity' (1999) and *Languages within language* (2001), in which he traces the counterpointing of physical and iconic features of language against more static elements such as conventionalized syntax, grammar and lexis. The essentially personalized, creative, and corporeal nature of iconicity (within the melodic contours of speech and their imprint on poetic rhythm, for example) enables a dialectic to exist within the language which paradoxically by returning, or regressing, to 'modes of mental processing which probably precede the genesis of language proper (*langue*)' (Fónagy 1999:26) enables the language to get 'beyond' itself (ibid.) and to convey – in its physicality, its thing-likeness – 'with precision mental contents of high complexity' (Fónagy 1999:29). Fónagy's 2001 study of iconicity, *Languages within language*, places gesture at the heart of the iconic. Fónagy's definition of gesture is wider than most, including oral (vocal) and syntactic gesturing, and is linked, especially in 'vocal art' (poetry) and 'verbal magic'[170], to iconic and imagic principles of sign-making. As discussed above (4.2), this position implies that a density of iconic features in poetry, both aural and visual, in some sense re-creates the bodily presence of a gesturing, vocally expressive, trans-temporal

[170] Fónagy defines verbal magic as 'identity of speech and action, of the word and the referenced object' (i.e. iconism) (2001:266), and links this not only to actual magical rites, but also, as discussed above, to poetry and other forms of 'verbal magic', including euphemisms and cacophemisms.

'being', speaking to us, the reader, within and through us, and through the medium of language which, as recent research into gesture claims, is in any case more than simply words.

Adam Kendon, in reviewing the history of the study of gesture (2013), for example, makes it clear that from the first half of the 20th century to the present-day there has been a stream of linguistic research, following on from Franz Boas (1858-1942) and Edward Sapir (1884-1939), which has maintained that there is 'no sharp boundary between what is "linguistic" and what later was to be called "paralanguage" and "kinesics" (Kendon 2013:80). This anthropological stream of linguistic research, followed by the later emergence of the discipline of semiotics, has led to a re-evaluation of the role of 'visible modes of signification, including gesture' (Kendon 2013:81). The co-expressiveness and co-presence of 'multiple communication systems involving linguistic, vocal, kinesic and spatial-orientational (or proxemic) systems in a complex interplay' (Kendon 2013:82), which Kendon sees as an integral part of the process of discourse, defining gesture as 'visible action as utterance' (2004:title), is clearly related to both the iconic and the imagic, as Fónagy argues, and as explored by David McNeill in a number of works relating gestural aspects of language to both iconicity and metaphor (see e.g. 2005, 2008, 2009).

The gestural, or material and corporeal, aspects of language and their relationship to poetry – especially poetry of the kind discussed in 4.3 and 4.4 – may not be fully realized in translation unless the translator takes particular steps to ensure that he or she moves beyond the words and into some kind of enactment which brings the full body into the translation process. McNeill's work on gesture is particularly suggestive for the translator interested in doing so, in that he identifies the co-presence of gesture and speech in utterance with a dynamic and creative dialectic that produces genuine 'growth points' in thought-in-action. This, as explored further in 4.8 and in Commentary IV, suggests that a mimetic enactment of the poem to be translated can deepen the understanding of the translator by taking the work off the page and giving the whole body its role in apprehension. Such an approach to translation may help move the poem from its dead object-like

form into a dynamically unfolding physical experience, not only expanding the translator's comprehension of the text but also her creative engagement with it.

4.6 **Evidence of iconicity in Achterberg's work**

4.6.1 Magic, iconicity and the problem of translation

As discussed in 1.3.1 and 2.5.2, Brockway, Achterberg's earliest translator into English has spoken of the difficulty, even impossibility, of translating his poetry because of issues of form and meaning which, as should now be apparent, are often scruples about the iconic weight of each and every aspect of the ST. It is worth looking in detail at what Brockway says about this. In discussing his translations of Achterberg's poems ('about fifteen altogether' (1980:52)), Brockway states that:

> form, even physical shape, even the shape of some of the letters, the shape of the poem on the page and its aural shape within the ear and mind, are factors of such vital importance that I regard it as an essential imposition on the translator to preserve these forms, or imitate them as closely as he can. This is what makes translating Achterberg so exacting a task. Any mountebank can translate free verse. But Achterberg's verse is not free; it is exceedingly, exquisitely close-knit. You cannot divorce the content from the form, though you'll be lucky if you can get away with original form and sound patterns intact in your translated version.
>
> ibid.

The correspondence of aural and visual form with the Achterbergian poem's meaning and effect, which Brockway describes here, is so close both to the various definitions and descriptions of iconicity in language and literature examined in the preceding sections, and to the 'active interplay of influences, sympathies, and correspondences' (Greene 2005:189) deeply understood in magical, alchemical, shamanic, spiritual and mystical practices, and tapped into by a wide range of writers and poets, that it should be clear why I link both iconicity and magic extremely strongly to Achterberg's work. What Brockway discovered in Achterberg's poetry as a reason to question the efficacy of translating the work at all, saying that to translate them was to 'damage' them, or 'maul' their 'beauty' (1980:52), may in fact have been simply a highlighting of

what is there, to a greater or lesser extent, in all poetry: correspondences between words, words and things, words and actions, words and sounds, words and the pulsating rhythms of life and energy, full of meaning and empty of meaning at one and the same time, as suggested by Aviram in his study of poetic rhythm (1994).

That Brockway focuses on the special importance of formal aspects of Achterberg's work is not, therefore, surprising. What is more questionable is the reification of the poem into a static object in which the reader-translator's performative reading of the work can play little or no part in the shaping of a translation – and yet Brockway himself states that his attitude to the theory of translation is that it is a 'precarious' matter because, crucially, 'it is impossible to ascribe to any piece of writing an identity, since its identity is dependent upon the mind engaged with it' (1980:55). This perception could have led him to a more fluid interpretation of what the translator's task might be, and yet, it seems that Brockway whether consciously or not, perceived Achterberg's poetry somewhat in terms of a *rigid* magic (or scientific) formula in which every element had to find its precise place within the translation in exactly the same terms as in the ST, otherwise the magic could not work. Like the alchemical linguists of the medieval and Renaissance period who believed in the superior qualities of Hebrew (God's language) in performing spiritual and material work, Brockway essentially seems to believe that Achterberg's poems *simply will not have effect in any other language*. In a sense this is true: Achterberg translated is not Achterberg as such. Yet Webster's careful analysis of the 'magic iconism' at work in Apollinaire's and Cumming's poetry, which places the onus on the reader to co-work with the material of the poem in such a way that the absent is made present, and the living is bodied forth through performative engagement with the text, suggests that the translator-as-reader may also effect this 'magic', whilst the translator-as-poet has to find ways to re-create those possibilities in the new text. This may not be an Achterberg poem 'quite' (Brockway 1980:54), but may *stand in for* an Achterberg poem as effectively as possible.

Brockway's strict demands on himself in terms of the absolute translation of all formal features with the same – or a near-equivalent – formal feature brought him

to the state of translational impasse he describes with some anguish in his essay 'at a loss for words' (1980), and, as argued in 2.5.2, may have delayed substantial translation of Achterberg's work into English for several decades.

The following sections will present some of the evidence for the thematic involvement of Achterberg's poetry in aspects of magic or ritual, as well as looking at some characteristic uses of iconicity in the poetry.

4.6.2 Thematic evidence for magic and ritual in Achterberg's work

The evidence for Achterberg's interest in magic and ritual as a means of contacting the dead beloved, making the absent present, attempting to penetrate the borders between life and death, permeates the whole oeuvre and is apparent in most of the poems. The following paragraphs are intended to review this tendency, without making any claims at all for completeness or complexity of analysis (cf. Meertens 1966; Vegt 2008[171]).

The titles of each individual collection (26 published in Achterberg's lifetime; 4 published posthumously) as well as the four 'omnibus' volumes – *Cryptogamen* (1946), *Oude cryptogamen* (1951), *Cryptogamen III* (1954), and *Cryptogamen 4* (1961) [cryptogams, old cryptogams, cryptogams III, cryptogams 4] – in themselves give evidence of Achterberg's sustained interest in the esoteric, occult, alchemical, and spiritual. A few examples will suffice: *Eiland der ziel* [island of the soul] (1939); *Osmose* [osmosis] (1941); *Thebe* [Thebes] (1941); *Morendo* [morendo/dying] (1944); *Eurydice* (1944); *Radar* (1946); *Sphinx* (1946); *Energie* [energy] (1946); *Doornroosje* [Thorn-rose/Briar Rose = Sleeping Beauty] (1947); *Sneeuwwitje* [Snow White] (1949); and *Spel van de wilde jacht* [Play of the wild hunt] (1957). Of particular importance in this record of isolation (the soul set apart, islanded, by its task of transformative poiesis), abandonment and search (Eurydice/Orpheus; the 'wild hunt'), and life as a continual process of dying and

[171] As Vegt (2008:7) points out, the recognition that 'magic' plays a large part in Achterberg's work, is not new. My intention here is to provide a background for the English-speaking reader, less familiar with his work, and to lay the ground for the links I make between magic and iconism in the poetry, with the further aim of relating these to some issues in translation.

fading (*morendo*), is an underlying thought that matter is interpenetrative (osmosis) and can be penetrated (radar), and that, in the physical universe we inhabit, the law of conservation of energy means that whilst things may change form, they cannot pass away: the hundred-year old thicket surrounding Briar Rose will be pierced and the princess will awake from her sleep-death into a new life.

The 'wild hunt', (sometimes known as the 'wild host' – the army of ghosts and spirits led by Odin, or Herne the Hunter, or the Lord of the Dead) is a motif taken from folklore (Schenkeveld 1973:269; Briggs1976:437), and is closely connected to states and seasons of liminality and otherness, when the psyche may be lured into crossing the borders between life and death, and may also be snatched up forever. The state of danger that exposure to the Wild Hunt represents also presents an opportunity to gain esoteric knowledge and penetrate the veil separating the living from the dead, the word from its object. This endless hunt is linked within the poetry itself to the vital spark which is both poem and sought-for woman – a goal which can almost be attained but which like the horizon can never actually be reached, except through an act of almost god-like mercy when the quarry ('*het eeuwig wild*' – 'the eternal(ly) wild' = the wild animal/game) seems close enough to be both perceived and fully known, if only for a moment:

> Hunt for the spark of poems and a woman:
> one and the same being, true to the horizon,
> slip-slipping away … o nights of mercy
> in which I'm eye to eye with the ever-wild one.
>
> Achterberg 1988:241 (tr.)

The poem on such a night *is* the woman, word becomes flesh, sign coheres perfectly with referent, though fleetingly, and the eternal hunt begins anew when 'this poem has deposed the last one' (Achterberg 1988:90, tr.) and the poet faces and acknowledges his perpetual (and obligatory) failure[172] to find the one sign which will perfectly recover the living woman, sealing her perpetually into the form. This is one aspect of the 'secret wedding' – the alchemical union of poet and the poetic subject – within the poetic word to which Achterberg's omnibus collections refer: the cryptogams (non-flowering plants) of the plant world have

[172] The failure is obligatory because to find the perfect sign which coheres absolutely with its referent means that there will be no more need for poetry at all.

hidden or secret ways of reproducing themselves. Their Linnaean classificatory name is composed of the two Greek words 'kryptos' (hidden, secret) and 'gameein' ('to marry') (OED 'cryptogamia', 'cryptogam'). Each poetic collection then, each poem within it, each word, each letter, is a hidden spore which will perform the wedding rite between word and thing – and the titles of the books are clues to that.

Similarly, a brief survey of some of the poem-titles will point to other aspects of Achterberg's interest in exploring the borders of word and form, and in using a wide range of magical, ritual, mystical and miraculous referents to do so. A good number of the titles, for example, are focused on re-birth, resurrection, re-creation, re-incarnation or nirvana (extinguishment/union with the divine ground of existence). These titles reflect the metaphysical nature of Achterberg's thematic interest in the esoteric, the supernatural and the magical. More obviously connected to the uncanny, and the poet's and poem's role as mediating between the veiled and the everyday world, are the titles which reflect the belief that dreams reveal truths which waking states do not; communication with ghosts and phantoms; vigils, visions and contact with the dead; hallucinations, illusions and supernatural occurrences; or liminal states or locations. I also include titles of poems which indicate an eternal quest or hunt, or point to locations of power or the uncanny, suggest secret codes or watchwords, or the consequent isolation, exile or banishment of the lyric-I, as well as prayers or invocations, within a general category which draws attention to a near-shamanic presentation of the role of the poet. Together with poem-titles pointing to specialized scientific, alchemical or esoteric knowledge[173], and titles which name people or figures of special power, the scope of the broadly magical in Achterberg's work will be seen to be very large. Approximately one quarter of the poems in the *Collected poems* are titled in such a way as to give rise to sets of ideas related to this theme[174].

[173] A large proportion of the titles fall into this category: 55 in total.

[174] I have counted 219 poems – out of a total of nearly 1,000 in the VG – which reflect magical, ritualistic, uncanny or esoteric referents. Naturally, given the interpretive nature of such a count, another scholar might arrive at somewhat different totals. Nevertheless, it should be clear that the general atmosphere evoked by a large number of Achterberg's poem-titles points to an overwhelming interest in such matters.

Perhaps the most interesting category of titles in this respect is that dealing with god-like, mage-like, shamanic, saintly, oracular or outsider figures. This is a large category – including about 55 poems in total – and comprises a surprising variety of figures with whom the lyric-I identifies (the majority), or with which he identifies the beloved. These figures are often archetypal, biblical, classical, mythical or folkloric in nature – extra-historical – or alternatively evoke historical figures whose vocations and life-tasks in some way mirror that of the poet (artists, musicians, writers, scientists and philosophers). A few examples will suffice: 'Mozes' (*VG*:349) [Moses]; 'Orpheus' (*VG*:366); 'Narcissus' (*VG*:381); 'Janus' (*VG*:503); 'Wodan' [Odin] (*VG*:227); 'De vliegende Hollander' [the flying Dutchman] (*VG*:235); 'Graalridder' [Grail Knight] (*VG*:140); 'Franciscus' [i.e. St. Francis] (*VG*:294); 'Kandinsky' (*VG*:394); 'Vincent' (*VG*:686); 'Kafka' (*VG*:461); 'Spinoza' (*VG*:487); 'Einstein' (*VG*:518); and 'Rasputin' (*VG*:696)[175]. Even the outsiders Vincent van Gogh and Franz Kafka, whose 'magical' connections may not seem obvious at first sight, fit into the broad theme I am describing because their isolation and psychic self-wounding (with parallels to shamanic practices) can be viewed as the source of their artistic and world-transformative power. Needless to say neither these poems – nor any of those entitled with the name of a figure – are biographical studies, but instead are lyrical explorations of an essence of character or life-task which in some way resembles that of the lyric-I behind the first-person voice or third-person narration of the particular poem. Each of the figures in such poems has a quest or vocation, each has transformative powers or the power to communicate between inner and outer states of being, between spirit and matter. Many are in some way also marked or damaged (Wodan/Odin by the loss of an eye; Vincent by the loss of an ear; Francis by the stigmata), further reinforcing links with shamanic initiations (Eliade 2004:33-66) and with ritualistic modes of communicative power.

When we turn to the associations called up by the female figures of this category of poem-titles we meet comparatively fewer actual historical figures and more extra-historical ones. The Maiden-Mother-Crone archetype (cf. Conway 1994)

[175] The examples given here are from the poems' titles; the body of Achterberg's poems would give further evidence. The poem 'Eine kleine Nachtmusik', for example, has Mozart as its subject, as the type of someone whose creative powers lay in recognizing the song that was calling to him (rather than the reverse).

suffuses these titles and is most simply represented by, for example, 'Moeder' (*VG*:248) [mother], biographical and actual, but also, and perhaps primarily, archetypal. The titles, and poems, 'Diana' (*VG*:875), 'Maria' [Mary (both maiden and mother)] (*VG*:343), 'Sneeuwwitje' [Snow White] (*VG*:770), and 'Jeanne d'Arc' (*VG*:750) all call forth aspects of the Maiden archetype, Joan of Arc being both historical and extra-historical, and especially important for Achterberg in fusing beloved and spirit-medium, not-self and self, in one figure. Eurydice herself, the poet's muse, the archetypal lover lost to death, is not given a poem of her own, although one of Achterberg's collections is named after her (1944), but she permeates each and every poem in the many equivalences the poet finds for her. Finally, the Crone or Witch archetype is represented by various figures of uncanny power: 'Sphinx' (*VG*:266), 'Medusa' (*VG*:375), and 'Hecate' (*VG*:891), the latter combining in herself a threefold nature, and further evoked in 'Trivia' (*VG*:892), the Roman goddess of the crossroads (the Threeways), in which the lyric-I addresses his invocation to 'holy Hecate, you one-in-three' (ibid., tr.).

Turning now to some examples of imagery within the poems which evoke or gesture towards a magical or hidden power, specifically the secret, and often unrecognized, power of words, but also natural and supernatural powers, there are striking examples within the body of Achterberg's work, some of which will be examined more closely in the following sections, but a flavour of which will be given here.

Throughout Achterberg's oeuvre there are poems in which the imagery irresistibly reminds one of shamanic ritual. An imagery composed of objects and phenomena such as flight, thunder and lightning, mirrors and mirroring, drums and drumming, illness, fever, and so forth, and of states of liminality, suffuses the poetry. I will confine myself to examining two major fields of imagery which seem to relate to shamanism: the symbol of lightning, and the symbol of the mirror. The mirror, in particular, has iconic implications which will be further examined in the following section.

The phenomenon of lightning is seen in a relatively early poem called 'Gevecht' [fight] (*Osmose*, 1941; *VG*:201), in which the suffering of the lyric-I at the onset

of morning is portrayed as only being possible to diminish if he can rend through 'dit kristal' [this crystal] with the 'witte bliksem van mijn vlucht' [the white lightning of my flight]. Mircea Eliade, in his classic study of shamanism, ([1964] 2004), makes clear the importance of lightning 'in designating the shaman […] it shows the celestial origin of shamanic powers' (2004:19). Lightning is also linked to the notion of '"mastery over fire"' (Eliade 2004:206). In 'Gevecht', and other 'lightning poems', the attempted mastery of lightning, as vehicle of flight, or as a metaphor for the enflamed, inspirited psyche that can 'fly' at night into a vision at the borders of life and death, is in fact not quite shamanic, since the power ultimately fails: morning will come, and the white lightning of the poem can bring the dead back only hesitatingly, waveringly, for the short duration of the lyric itself. As mentioned above, failure in a sense is obligatory, since to succeed in the terms set up within each poem would mean that Achterberg is not in fact writing poetry, but carrying out actual shamanic, mystic, alchemical, or magical rituals. In Webster's sense of magic iconism – in which the whole poem becomes an icon activated by the reader – there is a strong link to such rituals; but an efficacy beyond the metaphorical bringing to life of the beloved, in potential within the text and within the minds of poet-creator and reader-understander is not, I feel, what Achterberg believes will truly happen.

In symbolic terms, however, the sharp burst of concentrated energy of which lightning is the visual token does seem to signify either destruction or renewal and revitalization, and has been almost universally linked to spiritual, god-like, or magical powers (see Vries 2004:354-5 for some discussion of the symbolic implications of lightning). Lightning is not only a potent – and magical – image in 'Gevecht', but pervades many of Achterberg's poems (e.g. 'Het onweer' [lightning], *VG*:89, 'Cirkel' [circle], *VG*:127, 'Visioen' [vision], *VG*:264, 'Slaapliedje' [lullaby] *VG*:278, 'Klankleer' [phonetics], *VG*:406, and 'Inclinatie' [inclination], *VG*:740), in each case creating an atmosphere of power, emanating from the dead beloved, protecting her or even destroying her, or, as in this case, marking out the seer-singer as one who has true, but time- or daylight-limited

vision. Lightning is the other light, the play of the weather or air[176], in which these limitations are momentarily suspended to allow a new way of seeing that the sun does not permit. This other light gives its uncanny atmosphere to the whole body of Achterberg's oeuvre, making the title of the posthumous 1965 selection from his work *Het weerlicht op de kimmen* [it's lightning/the lightning on the horizon] very appropriate. The links to shamanism may be coincidental rather than deliberate, and, in any case, I use 'shamanism' and 'shamanic' in a loose rather than strictly anthropological sense, but the otherworldly impression that the lightning imagery evokes, and the link to Achterberg's over-riding concern with energy and transformation, seem highly appropriate.

Jung connects the symbolism of lightning, in his examination of conscious, unconscious and individuation, with a 'flash' cutting through the unconscious state and with a 'sudden, unexpected, and overpowering change of psychic condition' (Jung 1990:95), and, in a footnote citing Ruland's Lexicon of 1612 with the 'gliding of the mind or spirit into another world' (ibid.). Even more appropriately, given Achterberg's thematic interest in 'cryptogams' or 'secret weddings', Jung points to the fact that in the alchemical tradition 'lightning causes the royal pair to come to life' (ibid.), clearly something that the poetry metaphorically attempts.

Yet, in spite of Achterberg's indignant rejection of his work as being shamanic, or 'medicine-man-like' in nature[177] (and clearly it is not literally so, it is an artistic

[176] Etymologically speaking, the morpheme 'licht' in the originally compound word 'weerlicht' is not the modern 'licht' [light] but '-lijc', related to OHG *leih* [game, melody], ON *leikr* [game, jest], Goth. *laiks* [dance], MHG leichen [to dance, jump, play]. The morpheme 'weer' derives from 'weder' [weather, storm, air], rather than 'weder' [again], but Achterberg activates both the folk and the actual etymology.

[177] Discussed in 2.5.1, and footnote 77. As described by A. Marja (1954), and reported on by Hazeu in his biography, Achterberg took exception to a comparison between himself and the figure of the Polynesian medicine-man, made by the writer Fokke Sierksma in an essay on Achterberg's poetry. Achterberg was staying with Marja and Sierksma popped in for a visit. Marja encouraged Achterberg to tell Sierksma his objections to the comparison. '"Sir," said Gerrit, "I have read your piece. I don't agree with it. I am not like a Polynesian medicine man. What do you imagine? That you are the only one who can think? I can think just as well as you, you know! I will goddamn think you down the stairs." He was truly indignant, but he was also the first one to burst out laughing when Sierksma answered, rather astutely: "But that's exactly it, Mr. Achterberg, that's what medicine men also do!" And I believe that he has accepted this title since then as an honourable sobriquet' (Hazeu 1989:492, tr.). I imagine that Sierksma himself was aware of the work of Malinowski (1948), referred to in 4.3 above, which was absolutely current at the time Sierksma wrote his essay (1948).

representation of aspects of the psyche which may tend to such ritual practices), there is even further evidence from the poems that elements and symbols common to shamanic or near-shamanic practice are of constant fascination to him. I will deal briefly with some of these. In traditional shamanic practice – and indeed in many religious practices, such as Daoism or Lamaism – the mirror plays a large part (Eliade 2004:151, 153-4, 498). Indeed, Eliade tells us that

> the mirror is said to help the shaman to "see the world" (that is, to concentrate), or to "place the spirits," or to reflect the needs of mankind, and so on. V. Diószegi has shown that the Manchu-Tungusic term designating the mirror, *pańaptu*, is derived from *pańa*, "soul, spirit," more precisely the "soul-shade." Hence the mirror is a receptacle (*-ptu*) for the "soul-shade." Looking into the mirror, the shaman is able to see the dead person's soul.
>
> 2004:154

Mirrors, reflection, refraction, and the act of mirroring are frequent images in Achterberg's oeuvre, and are signalled as being of importance from the outset of the poet's first volume in which the epigraph or theme-poem speaks of the lyric-I as '*zeilend over spiegeling/ van al wat het geleden had*' [sailing over reflection/mirroring of all that it had suffered], which I have translated as: '*sailing over mirrored forms/ of everything it had endured*'. The poems themselves are presented both as the means of sailing over this suffering to move beyond it, and as a mirroring of the suffering itself.

More specifically linked to notions of seeing 'the dead person's soul' are poems in which the mirror (which may be a window, a revolving door, or water) shows the lyric-I not an exact mirror-image of the world as it is, but rather the world as he wishes it to be, in which the dead one continues to live, and indeed walks, communicates and makes love to him in spirit-form (see e.g. 'Osmose', *VG*:204). But the relationship between seer and seen, conjurer and conjured, can also be 'back-to-fronted', so that in many poems it is the beloved who conjures him up not vice versa (e.g. 'Don Quichot' *VG*:267), or the task of the lyric-I is to become the material which mirrors her and therefore, by implication, gives her back to the world (e.g. 'Glas', *VG*:403).

But the image of the mirror shows the same ambiguity as the lightning-image. It gives back the beloved but is also recognized by the lyric-I as being mere shine or seeming ('weerschijn' = reflection, and etymologically 'again-shine' or 'again-appearance'). This idea is explored within the almost post-modernist, consciously fictive, triple-ended 'Ballade van de winkelbediende' [Ballad of the shop-assistant] which uses the image of mirror to suggest the ordinary daily routine of shaving, an action of living, but also that the man standing at and in the mirror carrying out these actions may be triply dead (once because that is his fate in the invented story; once because he is himself merely shine or seeming, a fictive representation of something in the everyday world; and once because the wished-for and sentimental escape from death which the reader desires cannot actually occur except within the bounds of the poem, and even so is ironically recognized as being a false ending). Which side of the mirror is real? Which is illusion? These are questions the poems ask us to ask again and again.

The shamanic atmosphere is also evoked in poems in which the lyric-I figures himself as an archetype in contact or desirous of contact with the spirit-world. In these cases the poem assumes the form of a mini-drama in which the mantle of power which belongs to such figures is taken on to enable an enactment stronger than a simple expression of mood or feeling, or the workings of personal memory, to occur. The poem 'Druïde' [Druid], for example, enacts a ritual process in which words, fire, weaponry, flight and sacrifice, play their part. In the first stanza the lyric-I attempts through the medium of language to create a formula, rounded out from dark conjuration or incantation, which will reach the mouth of the beloved. In the second, he incises, druid-like, symbols (runes?) onto the wood which will then form the material for the magical and transformative fire which in its turn will take the words, changing them to spirit. The final stanza vibrates with mystery. Why is there a white and spotless horse? Why is it ready for the night? To what purpose is there a sword? The connotations are many, and include shamanic horse-sacrifice rituals to ensure spirit-flight (Eliade 2004:190-200[178]), and the fairy-tale and legendary uses of the white horse by means of

[178] Significantly, the horse must be 'light-colored' (Eliade 2004:191) and 'pleasing to the divinity' (ibid.). Eliade also speaks of the link between the 'white horse of the shamans' and the mirror in which he is glimpsed. Both are linked to spirit-flight, i.e. ecstasy (2004:154).

which the hero rescues the maiden in distress (cf., once again, Snow White or Sleeping Beauty). The horse may be ready to lead the lyric-I to the beloved in order to rescue her, or is being prepared (metaphorically or literally) for sacrifice to enable the shamanic soul- or spirit-flight which will bring direct communication with the beloved. Whatever the result may be, it will happen through the medium of the poem, but outside the poem itself, hence the open ending.

syllables	Druïde *druid*	rhyme	end-consonance
8	Formule in den morgenstond, *formula in the morning-hour dawn*	a	a
10	uit donkere bezwering afgerond: *from dark incantation rounded-out/completed conjuration*	a	a
4	bereik haar mond. *reach her mouth*	a	a
6	Ik teken in dit hout *I draw in this wood trace*	b	a
4	stand, inhoud, tijd. *status content time state*	c	a
8	En leg het vuur aan op den grond. *and lay the fire* **sv** *on the ground*	a	a
6	Zo keer, geladen met *so turn loaded with*	d	a
6	antwoord van eeuwigheid, *answer of eternity*	c	a
4	in wind en woud. *in wind and forest*	e	a
8	Het witte, smetteloze paard *the white spotless horse*	f	a
6	staat voor den nacht gereed. *stands for the night prepared*	g	a
4	Hier ligt het zwaard. *here lies the sword*	f	a

Figure 37: Achterberg's 'Druïde', gloss, syllable-count, sound-patterning

The careful questions of a Dutch textbook on style and vision in poetry by Father Jan Klein, intended for the upper classes of secondary school (Klein 1962), make it clear that behind the apparent simplicity of the words of this poem, there is a great deal of polyvalent yet precisely evocative connotation at work in the compressed, highly charged language. Klein uses 'Druïde' as an example to demonstrate how the reader has to work with – incorporate – the text by letting it speak through them, very much in the way that Webster feels the reader activates the magical iconicity of the text (as discussed above), yet Klein implies that all poetry in which the personal and inner vision-drive[179] finds harmonic stylistic expression asks the reader to participate in the creation of the poem:

> The reader doesn't only hear what the text says, no: he speaks along with the text itself, aloud or silently. If he's totally inside it, then it is as if the text is enabling him to say something. Understanding it he co-creates it, thereby creating his own vision. But as soon as he thinks: 'What is he saying to me there?' he is no longer a reader. At that point he becomes a critic. He is outside it. He doesn't play along with it anymore. He refuses to participate any further in the creation, for just as long as the text has not convinced him again, has not swept him along.
>
> 1962:9 (tr.)

Klein points his readers – and pupils – into an active 'playing along with' the text, making us perceive the fire of 'Druïde' as a symbol of inspiration as well as of sacrificial offering, and enabling us to see the relationship between the burnt wood and the forest to which it returns as smoke, and from which it may turn back on the endless wind to give its answers of everlasting life.

The translator too, plays along with the text, more actively still than the ordinary reader: the words ('state, matter, time' – feelings, the content that created them, and their situatedness within the world of time) are set down (carved, incised, written) rune-like (magically, iconically) into the wood-pulp of the paper, take fire within the mind, touching our own mouths (readers, translators), and thus come to life once more. We stand in for, perhaps are, both the sacrificial poem, and the

[179] Klein invents some of his own literary terminology, including 'visiedrang' [vision-drive], defined within the textbook as the urge to bring one's strong inner vision/insight into words. (Klein 1962:9, tr.).

one giving its words answer. Our answer comes, as Klein points out, through such a deep playing-along that understanding the text co-creates it, that our voicing it gives rise to our own vision, both shared with and separate from the text. To translate poetry of this type, and of the type Webster (2001) discusses in the article described above, in a sense then is already a ritual or magical re-enactment, a bodying forth of the text to make the absent present.

In translating what clearly evokes a magical and near-shamanic act, a literal and metaphorical ritual, I have attempted to pay strong attention to the rhythmic, incantatory flow of the poem: the careful conjuration of the slowly-paced first two stanzas, the more fluent plea (or command) of the third, and the almost blunt, but resonant, mystery of the final stanza. The sound echoes do not match those of the ST (see *Figure 37*), but the poem in translation sets up its own dense weave of internal and end-rhyme, assonance, consonance, and alliteration. Achterberg himself deviates from an expected triple-rhyme scheme for each stanza, moving instead towards end-consonance and fugitive rhyme (cf. Jarvis 2011:39), whilst closing the poem off (in contradistinction to the open mystery of the final images) with an enclosing **axa**-type rhyme (actually **fgf**). If assonance in the context of an expected closure works as rhyme does (as I believe it does), then my translation does in fact match that effect, whilst also picking up a rhyme from the very start of the poem (**jaj**). The recognition of the tension between the open and the closed (mystery and mastery[180]), and its thematic importance for this poem, and within Achterberg's work in general, is what made me choose for 'horse' rather than, for example, 'steed', as a translation of 'paard', not only because it is the more common word (as 'paard' itself is) but because of its near-rhyming with 'sword', helping to close the poem and signify the ending of the ritualistic act. The total

[180] Mystery and a concern with the mystical implies a certain lack of personal power, an openness to forces ultimately beyond one's control; mastery – and a concern with the magical, alchemical, or scientific – is mystery's opposite, but necessary, partner – the drive to gain ultimate understanding of the forces of nature (and perhaps the supernatural) and to make them obedient to one's will. In poetic terms, this is the difference between free and closed forms. Achterberg experimented with both. Moreover, in spite of Achterberg's clear interest in mastery, the body of his poetry as a whole, both thematically and technically, tends to openness and mystery. An article by Els Bruynooghe (2006) discusses the undoubted mystic aspects of his work, arguing that 'magic' and 'mysticism' are opposite modes. Nevertheless, in my opinion, there is an interconnection between them, and they do not necessarily preclude each other. The opposing yet interconnected terms, 'mystery' and 'mastery', are my allusion to Wilfred Owen's 'Strange meeting'.

effect, I hope, of the rhythmic and sound-based choices in my translation is to create a phonological analogue to Achterberg's poem, without exactly imitating its aural basis. In this way, when the reader, as Klein says, 'plays along with' the poem, speaking it, either by actual vocalization or by an internal sounding-out, the near-magic aspects of the text, its iconic ground, the sound and spirit (or breath) of the words – represented in the poem by the image of the burnt runic offering – will be activated.

The sound of the poem as a whole, not the individual sounds, is what I believe is iconic here (or has the potential for magic iconicity). This particular sound in the poem does not map onto that sound or action in the real world, but the careful consort of sounds does create a ritualistic, incantatory effect, without which, I believe, the poem would not have the potential to create its own action in the receiving mind. The form, as Achterberg himself shows, in his deviation from an expected pattern, does not have to be rigid to release this potential, but it does have to unfold its own music.

stanza	Druid	rhyme	assonance/alliteration etc.	end-consonance
1	Formula in the first light, rounded from dark spells: reach her mouth.	**a** b c	**f**ormula/**f**irst light **r**ounded dark **r**each mouth	
2	I carve into this wood state, matter, time. And lay the fire on the ground.	d e f	carve (repeated t's) time **l**ay ground	wood ground
3	So turn, laden with answers of eternity, in wind, in woods.	g h i	(t) **l**aden **w**ind **w**oods	 woods
4	The white, unblemished horse stands ready for the night. Here is the sword.	**j** **a** **j**	**w**hite horse (repeated d's) night sword	 sword

Figure 38: My translation of 'Druïde' with indications of the sound-patterning

4.6.3 Iconicity in Achterberg's work: 'Zeiltocht'

I have discussed sufficient examples of 'magic' in Achterberg's poetry in the foregoing section for it to be clear that the use of iconicity, both visual and aural, in his work should link very clearly to his over-riding thematic concerns, that his poetics is shaped down to the most precise detail by what Klein calls the 'vision-drive', with the consequence that Brockway noted of making it impossible to 'divorce the content from the form' (1980:52).

Visual iconicity in Achterberg's work is, generally speaking, not of the obvious pattern poetry or *carmina figurata* type, discussed in 4.4 above, although there is

at least one example in the oeuvre which is close to this: 'Zeiltocht' [sailing trip] (*VG*:681), which seems to take the loose form of an inverted sail (or the reflection of a sail in the water) (cf. Dyk 2004:33). I discussed this poem briefly in my MA dissertation, *The translatability of rhyme: rhyme in Gerrit Achterberg's* Hoonte *and issues in its translation* (2008), providing a translation of the poem in the appendix. This translation was later accepted by the Gerrit Achterberggenootschap as one of three Achterberg poems I had translated, and published in their journal (Fawcett 2009b:44-6). The poem, its sound patterning, and the gloss translation appear below as *Figures 39* and *40*.

line	Zeiltocht	rhyme	assonance	near-rhyme	internal rhyme/ assonance
1	Zingen omdat zeilen zo verrukt.	a			
	Het lichaam als een vlam gebukt	a			
	op het witte waterstuk.	a		a	
5	Stromen. En volkomen zijn	b	b		c / c
	vrouwenlichaam achterover,	c			
	achterover naar beneden,	d			
	met het blinken rug aan rug.	a		a	
	En de ziel, het helle zeil,	b	b		
10	als een vogel over mij.	b	b		c / c
	Hemelsnede.	d			
	Heil.	b			

Figure 39: 'Zeiltocht' – sound-patterning

Zeiltocht
sailing-trip

Zingen omdat zeilen zo verrukt.
to-sing because sailing so delights
singing so-much ravishes
enchants
Het lichaam als een vlam gebukt
the body like a flame bowed
op het witte waterstuk.
on the white water-piece
water-picture
Stromen. En volkomen zijn
to stream and perfect(ly) its
streaming complete(d)
vrouwenlichaam achterover,
woman-body backwards
on-one's-back
achterover naar beneden,
backwards to below
on-one's-back towards beneath
under
down
met het blinken rug aan rug.
with the shining back on back
glittering
gleaming
En de ziel, het helle zeil,
and the soul the bright sail
glaring
blazing
als een vogel over mij.
like a bird above me
Hemelsnede.
heaven-cut
heaven-section
heaven-slice
sky-cut etc.
Heil.
salvation
good
welfare
support
Hail!

Figure 40: 'Zeiltocht' – Gloss translation

Whilst the similarity between the visual form of this poem and its subject-matter is certainly striking, it seems to be more of a 'for-the-nonce' type, rather than a planned and perfectly-shaped geometric or pictorial representation of a boat or its sail. One could argue that the imperfect inverted sail-shape represents the rippled reflection in the water, however the iconicity which takes place in the poem is, I believe of a different and more subtle kind, in which analogies, and differences, are read-off the poem in a *fusion* of rhythm, sound, and vision.

The poem starts with its title, 'Z**eil**tocht', which sets up the rhyme-sound 'eil' (/ɛɪl/), picked up fleetingly within the first line ('Zingen omdat z**eil**en zo verrukt'), visually inverted in line 8 as 'ziel' [soul] (/zil/), coming back in its first form at the end of this line as 'zeil', and then forming the end-rhyme, closing statement, of the poem: 'Heil', which, as shown in the gloss translation above, may have several possible meanings, including the religious or spiritual one of salvation, and the more imperialist-sounding 'Hail!' Its use in the poem functions primarily as a phonological tie-back to the idea of sailing, announced in the title as a 'tocht', a trip or voyage across the sounds of the language until the sail and soul are united. This is achieved through the mirror of letters, which turns them into reverse images of each other, allowing the self to reach both physical well-being and spiritual salvation. The joyful triumph of recognition and ecstasy is perfectly articulated in 'Heil', set apart in a one-word line to give it a rhythmic and visual emphasis, iconic of the point of the poem, which is also the point of the sail.

Pieter van Dyk in his 2004 article 'Ballade van de bricoleur' [ballad of the bricoleur][181], draws attention to the flowing qualities of the sounds of this poem, relating these to the process of forming the poem through associative thinking which, according to him, almost makes this into a stream-of-consciousness piece (2004:34). However, his emphasis on Achterberg as *bricoleur* – a collage-artist picking up and pasting together random pieces from the world to form them into poems in which coherency of voice and meaning break down – for me somewhat diminishes the deliberate acts of transformation which the poems attempt, and

[181] This is an allusion to several Achterberg poems entitled 'Ballade van…'. Van Dyk's argument is that Achterberg's free-associative, expressive, and incoherent poetic strategies make his poetry more post-modernist than modernist in essence.

which I feel occur in this particular poem too. The poem is not so much an *actual* stream-of-consciousness flow of associative sounds, but rather a representation of a state of mind in which the perception of the inherent, though often hidden, links in the phonology, graphology, etymology and semantics of the language activates their iconism and leads to an ecstatic moment in which there and not-there, real and not-real, soul and body merge. The borders between the two states fade away, and the liminal becomes the absolute.

Van Dyk is right to say that in this poem the syntax almost breaks down completely (2004:34) particularly in lines 4-7, but this does not take away from the poem's essential artistry. The lines are an artistic and symbolic representation of the achievement of union, however momentary. The rhythmic movement, then, itself becomes the iconic ground of resemblance, with its opening move (l.1) telling of delight and ravishment to come (the verb 'verrukken' means literally 'to be snatched up', and is associated with ecstasy). This narrative proposition forms a rhythmic phrase by itself, and is followed by the longer phrase of the complex metaphor which equates body with boat, body with flame, and the surface of the water with the margin where such transformations happen, and which changes the mode from narrative to imagistic (ll.2-3). There is then a gathering-in of forces in the single word 'Stromen' (l.4) [streaming/flowing], a pause, and then a renewal of energy signalled by the word 'En' [and], followed by the longest phrase (ll.4-7), in which the increasing momentum and excitement of the action is intensified, changing the mode of the poem again to dramatic and interactive. Then the moment of interchange and union occurs within the magic icon of the reversed vowels of 'ziel/zeil' (l.8), and the ecstatic flight is indicated by the image of the bird (the boat which was the body is now identified with the sail which is the soul, of which the bird is the symbol) (l.9). This rhythm balances against and almost mirrors the rhythms of the second and third lines, but contains an important space, a pause, in which the spirit is given an opening where the change can occur. And then the soul floats in its section of heaven (perhaps a visual image of the mast cutting through the blue of the sky to claim part of it as its own), again in a short one-word rhythmic phrase (l.10), and the final climactic word (l.11) stands alone to signify the wholeness and completeness of the health-giving, saving, transformative process.

Figure 41 below represents the rhythmic and phrasal movement across the poem as a whole, making it clear that repeated and climactic sounds (colour-coded) are an integral part of the rhythm, and showing how the central lines (4-7) form part of one swift rhythmic phrase, only lightly marked by the barest pauses (or prolongations of sound) at the line-ends. The diagram is meant to show how the rhythm seems to take off on its own 'tocht' (trip/voyage), enabling the (near-shamanic) transformation and flight I perceive as happening in ll.8-9. The iconicity here resides in the quality of movement, enabling a ground of comparison (or similarity) to emerge between this movement and that of the sailing boat, as it skims across the water, takes up the wind, and bends downwards almost to water-level. The sailing boat's movement in itself bears several resemblances to a constellation of other movements, bodily and sexual, spiritual and empyrean, whilst its reflection (almost certainly activated within the shape of the poem, even though it is not to be regarded as a strict pattern poem), following the movement of the boat, almost united with it, suggests one or other of the two partners, soul and body, death and life, beloved and lover. Before the mutual transformation, the actual iconic sign of 'ziel' and 'zeil', occurs within the magic boundaries of the poem, a near-transformation takes place as the boat dips further and further downwards, sail almost touching its own reflection, signified within the language of the poem by the highly charged 'achterover,/ achterover' [backwards/on one's back], which contains part of the poet's surname within it ('achter-'), and is followed by 'rug-aan-rug' [back-to-back], where the two almost become one. In alchemical terms, if the magic iconism of the poem is taken seriously, this is the point of union (the secret wedding) which allows the transformation to take place. It is also the point at which death and life most nearly meet, as the sailor of the boat may lose control and merge completely with the shining waters, the shining reflection. There is thus a mutual interaction between the movement of the poem, recognized as grounds for iconicity, and the language of the poem, yielding both iconic sign and highly complex metaphorical symbol, as well as between the visual and aural elements of form, which tell related but slightly different stories.

To translate a poem like this with awareness of the iconic values of the rhythmic movement, and of individual sound or letter-forms within this rhythm is clearly a challenge, as Brockway pointed out, though using different terminology to describe the effect (1980:52). The fact that Dutch and English are closely related languages, with similar though not exactly the same phonological systems (see Collins and Mees 1999), and a similar strong-stress-based approach to rhythm, makes the task a little less daunting, at least not completely impossible, especially since my aim is not 'to preserve these forms, or imitate them as closely' (Brockway 1980:52) as possible, but rather to produce a translation broadly analogous in its effects.

In the translation below the shape of the poem is more or less maintained, enabling an imagic iconicity to be activated in the reader, who will probably make a connection between the loose inverted triangle and the boat, or the sail, or its reflection. More importantly, the rhythmic movement is maintained, enabling the resemblances of movement outlined above to be activated, and specifically allowing for the mutual transformation occurring between 'soul' and 'sail' (and everything symbolized by them) to take place in the same space and within the same temporal frame. In terms of the links between the sounds of the poem, rhyme, assonance, consonance, alliteration and other aural echoes, my translation does not attempt to follow the same rhyme-pattern (which in any case Achterberg treats fluidly), but rather ties together sounds in an analogous fashion: 'sailing', 'singing' (creating poetry), and 'streaming' (flowing water, flowing inspiration, the flow of life and love) are linked through sound, as are 'sail(-ing)', 'whole', and 'hail'. The pararhyme 'soul' and 'sail' is a given in English, and does not quite have the same iconic weight as 'ziel' and 'zeil' in Dutch, where the mirror-effect in the centre of each word is what is productive of the 'magic icon' – but their clear sound-relationship must, in the context of the poem, produce a similar sense of transformation. The phrase 'takes you whole' is my for-the-nonce attempt to convey a sense of rapture, ecstasy, and ravishment appropriate to the Dutch 'verrukt', whilst also tying the sound and connotations of 'whole' into the

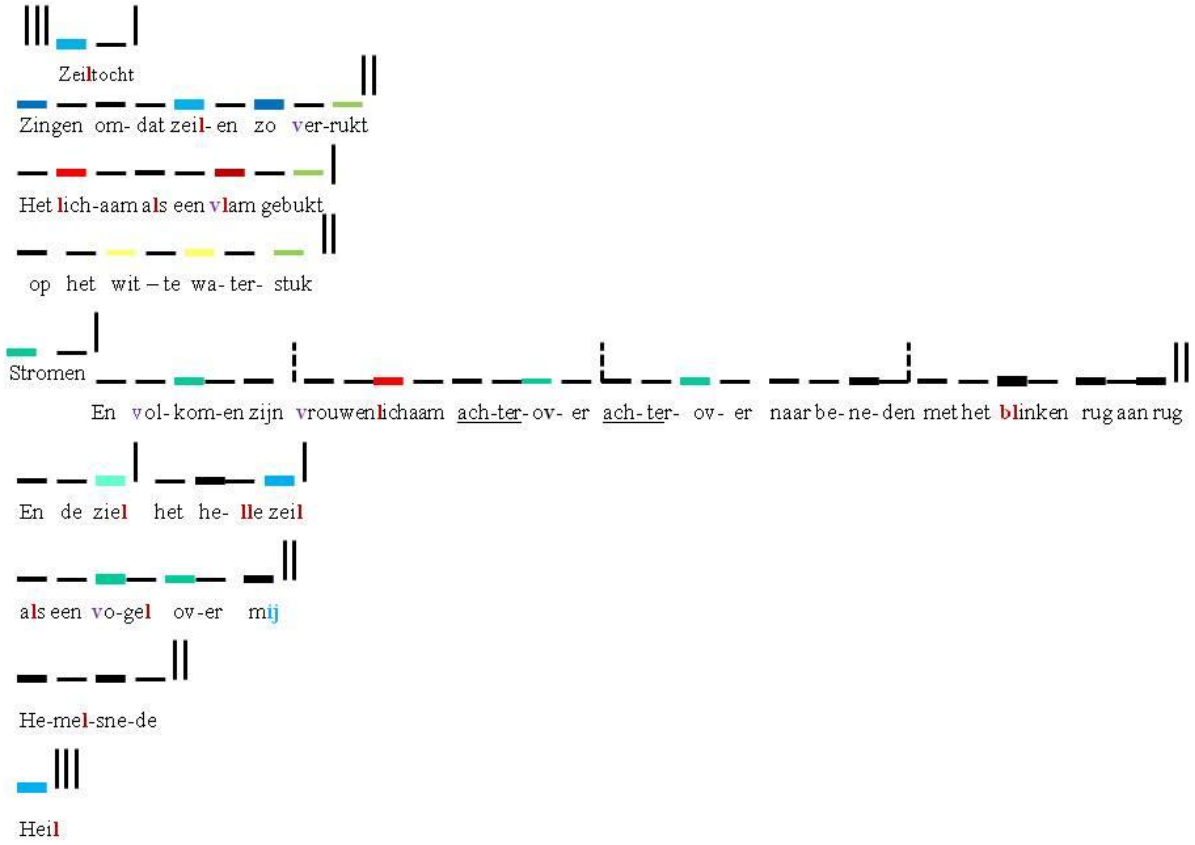


Figure 41: Rhythmic movement of 'Zeiltocht'
[Each dash represents a syllable. Heavier dashes indicate the stress-weight, the colours repeated sounds, both vowel and consonantal. The repeated 'l' sound is highlighted in the text, in red, rather than in the visual representation of the rhythm. The bars represent various degrees of pausing.]

climax of the poem: ‘Hail’. Whilst ‘hail’ in English certainly carries some of the connotations of the Dutch ‘heil’, and providentially forms a hidden pun with ‘hale’, it misses some of the sense of achieving health, wholeness, and salvation which the Dutch word carries. By tying together the first and last lines with ‘whole’/‘hail’ I hope to activate some of those connotations for the English reader, if only subconsciously.

Sailing

Singing because sailing takes you whole.
The body bowing like a flame
within the clear white water-piece.
Streaming. And perfected she
is bending back her woman’s form,
lying back and going downwards,
with the shining one to one.
And the soul, that blazing sail,
like a bird is over me.
Slice of heaven.
Hail.

‘Zeiltocht’ provides a concrete example of some ways in which iconicity works in Achterberg’s poetry, visually and aurally: similarities and analogies are simultaneously activated at several different levels, and fluidity and dynamism are most important. Above all, the magical and mystical sympathies which the poems reveal to be working in language are presented as having their parallels within the cosmos, and on either side of life and death, and the rupture between these two states is both temporarily and permanently mended: temporarily because of the time-boundedness of the poem, which must be entered into each time anew; permanently, because once created (even if lost to human sight), the poem cannot be destroyed. Within the momentary flash of the poem, the healing energies of the word are enabled, and the poet’s task , in Achterberg’s terms, is to lay him- or herself open to the flame, whilst at the same time working with it, working until the perfected form is shaped. This is why there are two obvious poles in Achterberg’s writing, the ritualistic mastery-attempting pole represented by ‘Druïde’ (see 4.6.2), and the more mystical, fluid openness represented by ‘Zeiltocht’. It is Achterberg’s attraction to both modes, I believe, which makes

his use of the iconic potential of language so vibrant and so necessary to his 'vision-drive'.

4.7 Nijhoff and iconicity

This section briefly examines the role of iconicity in Nijhoff's poetry and in his external poetics. As explained in 4.1, I shall not pay the same attention to this feature of Nijhoff's work as to Achterberg's, partly for reasons of balance across this study as a whole, and partly because although iconic effects are resources drawn upon by Nijhoff, as by many poets, the drive to make iconicity a motive force of the poetry, seems less strong in Nijhoff than in Achterberg. The areas of iconicity which have been recognized and discussed as such by Dutch scholars relate also to quieter manifestations of the phenomenon: the careful use of typographic blanks (Dijk 2005), and some phonosymbolic or 'sound-expressive' aspects of the rhythms of Nijhoff's poetry (Vis 1991). These in their turn relate to the investigation carried out in Chapter 3 on the use of the breath-pause in Nijhoff's work, the empty fullness which allows space for the reader's bodily image-making and emotions to become one with the text. Although I did not discuss such pauses in terms of iconicity, but rather in terms of Nijhoff's poetics (*VW*:509-11, tr.), and the effect of those silences on the surrounding words, it is certainly possible to read Nijhoff's use of the breath-pause and the enjambement in iconic terms.

There have also been comments by writers such as Simon Vestdijk (1898-1971) on specific poems, in this case 'Het lied der dwaze bijen' [the song of the foolish bees] in which, as pointed out by Jan de Roder (2001:32), he perceives the verse-form (a variation on the terzina) as iconic of the meaning. 'The song of the foolish bees' is one of the best-known of Nijhoff's shorter lyrics and takes as its subject a story of bees whose search for 'higher honey' leads them further and further into 'the heavens' where they freeze to death, returning to earth in the form of snowflakes. Vestdijk has this to say about the relationship between its form and its meaning:

> As the prosodic vehicle of this gripping conceit, Nijhoff has chosen an original variation on the terzina-scheme. As you will remember, the terzina is made up of stanzas of three lines, which always have a rhyme-sound in common: *aba*, *bcb*, *cdc*, etc.. But what does Nijhoff do? Again and again he inserts an extra line between the 2nd and 3rd line of each stanza, and usually nothing more than a literal word-for-word repetition of the first line, that is to say, not only of the rhyme-word. In a completely unforced manner, the cyclical principle (dependent on line-repetition), as we have come to know it from the rondel and the French ballade, is added to the progressive principle. In this way a forward and an inward-turning recurrent motion are simultaneously suggested, 'mechanically' yielding a screw-like movement which seems very characteristic of the difficult upward-rising of the foolish bees. Most of all, the repetition of the initial lines of each stanza lends something stubborn and desolate to the poem, something of a bleak ecstasy, as of creatures who have dedicated themselves to death. Finally, I would point out that the closing line of the terzinas is missing; and that this is also justified, for the poem actually has no close, no normal close at least: the death of the bees and their metamorphosis into snowflakes is something irrational, equivalent to an open question.
>
> 1975:164 (tr.)

Vestdijk's analysis here, as De Roder points out, does not use the word 'icon' as such (Roder 2001:32), but the mimetic qualities he perceives in the structure of the poem, its rhythms, rhymes and repetitions, clearly relate very strongly to what linguists and linguistics-influenced literary scholars and critics now call 'iconicity'. The drive to perceive meaning in every aspect of a poem is, as stated by Robinson, a question of 'thematization' of 'all the aspects of a poem's technique' (2002:158). What interests me particularly in Vestdijk's analysis is the way in which the structural and rhythmic movement of the whole poem becomes iconic of a particular kind of analogous movement (as in the interpretive analysis I made of the Achterberg poem 'Zeiltocht'), which then gives rise to emotions and feelings ('stubborn', 'desolate', 'bleak ecstasy'), which in their turn lead to an interpretive interaction with the poem ('creatures who have dedicated themselves to death'), and the final insight into the 'open question' which the structure itself poses. Movement – kinaesthetics – and emotion (the feeling body) are finely inter-related in Vestdijk's account of the poem, and these in turn are intertwined with the interpretive inferences a reader makes of the work. The movement of the poem, the bodying-forth of its structure, calls up an answering movement, as arousal, in the reading body, however minimally and subliminally, is then

experienced within the body as (responsive) emotion, and then cognitively processed to discover that emotion's meaning (cf. Frijda 1986:231-41). The poem then becomes iconic both of the type of motion Vestdijk describes and the provoker of an answering motion/emotion in the reader, making the link between poetic iconicity, the body, and the emotions as strong as suggested by the work on gestural aspects of language described above at 4.5.

Yra van Dijk, in her doctoral thesis *Leegte die ademt: het typografisch wit in de moderne poëzie* (emptiness which breathes: typographical white in modern poetry) (2005) examines the work of several modern poets, including that of Mallarmé and Celan, as well as the Dutch poets Nijhoff, Leopold, Van Ostaijen and Hans Faverey, for the stylistic and semantic effects of typographic blanks in a given text. Van Dijk identifies three major characteristics of the use of such blanks in poetry (both in free- and fixed-form verse): iconicity; radical distrust of language itself, with the consequent attempt of the poet to point to Otherness through a deliberate and conscious use of language failure; and a self-reflexive use of the blank to indicate threshold or border states (which may also include iconic possibilities) (Dijk 2005:336-7). Van Dijk characterizes Nijhoff's use of the typographic blank as being primarily of a meta-poetic nature, allowing the poet to use the blanks in his poetry (often, and especially in the earlier poetry, related to fixed forms such as the sonnet) 'to clarify the poet's intentions for his poetry' (2005:337). But she also makes the point that such blanks are used by Nijhoff 'to turn the poem into an entity which is as tangible as possible, an "organism"' (ibid.), as well as indicating the possible metaphysical functions of such blanks in the poems, a 'reaching towards an "indication of the divine"' (Dijk 2005:195, tr.[182]). Interestingly, and by a somewhat different route, Van Dijk's assessment of Nijhoff's primary intention in the formal aspects of his poetics is that it is focused on the organic or biological functions of language (2005:196), paralleled in this study by my focus on the breath-pause in both my analytical and practical translation-based work. Van Dijk also mentions the breath-pause as a function of the typographical blanks (2005:197-8), but her focus, as a critically-

[182] Van Dijk bases her argument on Nijhoff's own 'external poetics' and quotes here from Nijhoff's essay on Herman van den Bergh (*VW*II:338). The translation, as always unless otherwise indicated, is my own.

oriented literary scholar is somewhat different to mine: for her the 'white' at the end of each line and each stanza, as well as the white surrounding the text, is potentially thematized by the words which precede and are enclosed within it (2005:204); for me, the interest lay in the careful placing of the words in ST and translation, so that each breath-pause, including the blanks, but also including spaces indicated by punctuation and by rhythm, but not otherwise visually indicated, is vivified. The difference is that between the visual (Van Dijk) and the aural-kinaesthetic which interests me. Both approaches are equally valid, and indeed both contain elements of the other: Van Dijk is also, by implication, speaking of the verse-movement and how that is 'governed' by the typographical blanks, whilst I derive physical movement and sound from the visual clues on the paper. Both approaches yield interesting and suggestive interpretations which ultimately relate to the 'higher purpose' of the poem, the reaching outwards to the creative and the divine present in the earthly, the everyday.

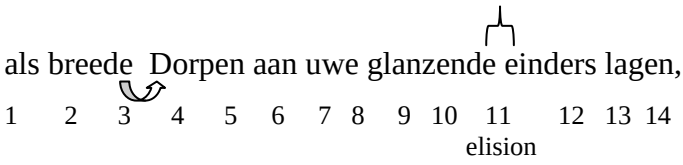
With regard to iconic elements of Nijhoff's poetry, however, Van Dijk's specifically visual focus leads her to read significance in the longer line which juts out into the 'white' further than other lines in the same poem. Whilst such lines certainly do have a pronounced visual effect, to the ear, however, often no such irregularity is apparent. To take two examples from Van Dijk's analysis (2005:23):

(i)
Rood van verlangen, bonzende van vragen,
Ging weer een stuwen door mijn bloed, als breede
Dorpen aan uwe glanzende einders lagen,
En slooten weiden in figuren sneden.
(from the sonnet 'Holland' *VG*:25)

(Red with longing, beating with questions,
A push went through my blood again, when broad
Villages on your shining horizons lay,
And ditches cut your meadows into (geometrical) figures.)

Even the rather clumsy, literal translation above gives an indication as to why Van Dijk might read the projecting line iconically: there seems to be a push outwards, reflecting the 'push' (the propulsion) of the blood, and also a 'broadness', relating to the broadly-spread villages on the shining horizons, described in this line, and

the one following[183]. However, rhythmic analysis would, firstly, not perceive this as a longer line than the norm (iambic pentameter, here lengthened to eleven syllables, because of the cadenced feminine endings, a variation permitted, and even expected in traditional metrics); and, secondly, would place the foregrounding at the breath-pause, after the eighth syllable, indicated by a comma, which highlights and thus thematizes 'blood', without necessarily endowing this word with iconic significance. Where I would place the iconic effect, then, would be in the strong enjambement at the end of this line (at 'breede') which has the effect of rhythmically and aurally extending the <u>following line</u> into a fourteener:



This does indeed convey the broad-spread nature of the villages, and at the same time the wide, shining qualities of the open Dutch horizons. The iconicity here, then, is of a diagrammatic rather than an imagic type (structural and aural rather than visual and directly representational). It is not an iconicity which draws attention to itself, as it might be argued Achterberg's use of iconic potential does; and it certainly is not of the 'magic iconism' type discussed in the foregoing sections; rather it displays a subtle at-oneness between the poet's creating, perceiving body, the lyric-I voice within the poem itself, the subject-matter, and, crucially, the real, life-world[184] landscape to which the poem points.

Similarly, in the second example of the jutting-out line which Van Dijk gives, I would lay the emphasis on the aural rather than on the visual iconicity:

[183] Van Dijk identifies the line as being one of meaningful iconicity and says that it portrays the 'broadness' (or widespread nature) of the villages, but does not discuss the 'push' or 'beat' of the blood (2005:224).

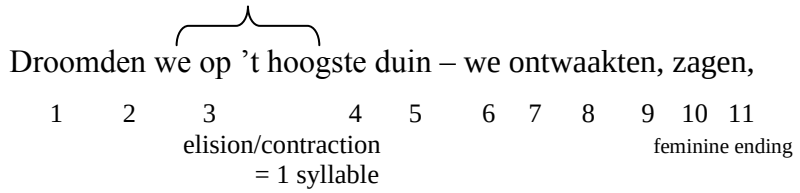
[184] Cuypere points out the importance of the concept of the 'life-world', ultimately derived from Sonesson's interpretation of Husserl's *Lebenswelt*, for the theorization of iconicity: 'iconicity should not be regarded as a logical symmetry […] similarity as experienced in the Lifeworld is not symmetric' (Cuypere 2008:66). In other words, the iconicity here points one way: the landscape is not like the rhythmic movement of the poem, but the rhythmic movement of the poem is similar to the landscape in the qualities discussed above. This is presumed to have been either consciously or subconsciously noticed by the creating poet, and worked with in the form of the poem, and then is re-noticed by the interpreting reader. The iconic ground is then activated, and the iconicity unfolds itself.

(ii)
Naar antwoord zoekend voor onzekerheden,
Droomden we op ’t hoogste duin – we ontwaakten, zagen,
Hoe vast uw slooten ’t land in vlakken sneden,
Hoe breed uw dorpen langs den einder lagen!

(Searching for an answer for uncertainties,
We dreamed on the highest dune – we awoke, saw,
How firmly your ditches cut the land in sections,
How broadly your villages lay along the horizon!)

As can be seen from the literal translation, these lines are a variation on those quoted in example (i), and represent Nijhoff’s second attempt at phrasing the thought (or feeling) lying behind the poem (Dijk 2005:223)[185]. Van Dijk once again lays the emphasis on the visual or imagic iconicity of the line, which in this case she feels portrays the height of the dune, but takes the iconicity a step further when she sees a metaphorical link between the content of the poem (the description of the ditches – or drainage channels – cutting the land into sections) and the form of the poem itself (the content cut into stanzas by the typographic white) (Dijk 2005:224). I would agree with her analysis of the meta-poetical iconic ground here, but once again feel that the corresponding aural aspects of iconicity have been missed out. As in example (i), the ‘jutting-out’ line is not, in fact, technically speaking a longer line in metrical terms, although at first sight it might seem so. As should be clear from my analysis of the first example, Nijhoff makes full use of all the variations and syllabic rules available in traditional metrics, including the use of elisions (end-vowels of one word being ‘spoken-as one-with’ the following syllable of the next word if that begins with a vowel-sound) and of hypercatalectic (feminine-cadenced) endings. He also makes use of contractions permitted in the Dutch language, or traditionally used by ‘poetic licence’, such as ‘’t’ for ‘het’ [the] and ‘’n’ for ‘een’ [a/one]. This makes the second line of example (ii) a regular iambic pentameter line in terms of its syllabic length:

[185] As Van den Akker and Dorleijn make clear in their edition of Nijhoff’s *VG* (1990), the final choice Nijhoff made (in the fifth edition of *DW*, the last ‘authorized’ edition), was for the first version. This is the one I have translated (Appendix 2).



The licenses are 'permitted'[186], but the effect is more forced than in the original version, later restored by Nijhoff, and smacks of a more old-fashioned poetics than he himself wished for, since the voice cannot so easily speak the technical 'one syllable' out as a single syllable, unlike with the elision in example (i) where indeed the two words 'glanzende einders' would naturally flow together in speech. Unlike Van Dijk, therefore, I feel that this line cannot iconically represent the height of the dunes on which the 'we' voice has been dreaming, particularly since the cut, the caesura, marked by the long dash following 'duin', effectively splits the line in two in aural terms. Again, attention to the breath-pause and the rhythm of the line leads one away from imagic iconicity and into something more subtle: the dream-state is interrupted by the dash, and the 'we'-voice awakens into a perception of the importance of the land itself, a 'seeing' which is itself set aside from the rest of the sentence by parenthetical commas. This turning from sea to land, and from high to low, is a topos in Nijhoff's poetry, as recognized by several critics, including Van Dijk herself, although not discussed in her interpretation of this poem. Nevertheless, Nijhoff, with his sensitive ear, and movement towards plainness of language and natural speech-rhythms, is unlikely to have remained satisfied with this second version of the poem, which relies too much on the 'rules' of metre, and over-foregrounds the poem's problematics. Above all, the 'we'-voice sounds forced, as if the lyric-I is speaking for a particular group of people, and not expressing personal insights (which become universal through the reader's emotional identification with the poem).

My critique of Van Dijk's specific analysis here is not intended as a criticism of her overall thesis that typographic blanks create an important formal, thematic, meta-poetic, and iconic resource for Nijhoff, but is intended to point to the fact

[186] Fabb (2002:122) describes such long-permitted licences as a form of 'looseness of fit', which makes some syllables 'invisible to the metrical rules'.

that iconicity in his poetry is often, and perhaps predominantly, as pointed out by Vis (1991), related to the rhythmic and sonic structure of the poems[187]. An over-emphasis on visual iconicity, can dull the ear (and eye) to the subtler qualities of an aural diagrammatic iconicity, particularly within the rhythms and silences (as opposed to the emptinesses) of the poem's structure. Van Dijk's insights into the biological aspects of Nijhoff's poem-shaping are valuable, and are directly (via her careful citation of Nijhoff verse-external poetics, and indirectly (via the title of her thesis) related to the breathing living body. Her thorough analysis and categorization of the several functions of typographic white, not only in Nijhoff's work, but in the work of several other modernist poets, has certainly furthered stylistic analysis of poetry, particularly in her more recent work on the topic, published in English (2011)[188]. Nevertheless, as I have shown in my analysis of the two examples above, her focus on the visible blanks or gaps in the poems – the typographic white – does sometimes lead her away from other corporeal perceptions, in particular those related to the rhythmic structure of the poem. The consequence then is that the iconicity of such rhythms, their expressivity, and meaning-making potential, is ignored in favour of what is visible to the eye.

G.J. Vis's 1991 article on 'Iconicity and rhythm: sound-expressiveness in Nijhoff's work' (tr.) uses some examples (eight in total) of the movement of Nijhoff's poetry to argue that although a universal one-to-one relationship between sound and meaning is impossible to justify, a more reader-based and contextualized interpretive approach to phonosymbolism is certainly founded in the realities of sound iconism. Vis, as should be clear from the title of his article, focuses primarily on the rhythmic movement of some of Nijhoff's poems, making a useful distinction between explicit and implicit iconicity, explicit being, for example, a direct representation of a sound or a rhythmic structure with which obvious qualities are shared[189]. He gives the examples of the rhythmic representation of a polonaise in Nijhoff's poem of the same name (Vis 1991:55-6; Nijhoff 1990:16) and of the sonata-like macrostructure of the sonnet 'Sonata' (Vis

[187] See also my comments on the possible iconism of the rhyme-scheme of *Awater* in 2.4.3.
[188] Unfortunately, Van Dijk does not examine Nijhoff's poetry in this article, confining herself mainly to examples of poems written in English, or by already well-known European poets such as Celan and Mallarmé.
[189] As in onomatopoeic sounds – although these also may be conventionalized forms of similarity.

1991:57-8; Nijhoff 1990:15). Implicit iconicity he seems to attribute more to theme- and metapoetic-related rhythmic movements, such as the double metrical pattern of 'Sonata' (iambic and dactylic) pointing both to the formal duality of the poem (sonnet and rondel) and to the thematic dualism between the I and the you in the poem (Vis 1991:57-8). Overall, the intention of the article is to argue for the important place of interpretation in literary research side by side with a more empirically-based analysis: the iconic effects he describes are perceptible to the 'sensitive' reader, but can also be unfolded through stylistic and metrical analysis.

Iconic effects in Nijhoff's poetry have, therefore, been noticed and commented on in Dutch scholarship, and in terms which are rather suggestive for my own approach to the translation of his poems. This will be further examined in the following section.

Both the contemporary scholars whose work on Nijhoff and iconicity I have examined (Vis and Van Dijk) have not only enabled a deeper understanding of Nijhoff's exquisitely tuned approach to the relationship between form, forming, and content, but have also helped to move considerations of iconic effects in poetry into the realm of the structural and rhythmic (Vis) and out of the word itself and into the empty, or silent, spaces surrounding it (Van Dijk). These approaches particularly suit Nijhoff's quietness, the initially non-demonstrative seeming aspects of his poetry, the plainness of language, particularly in the later verse, and his musical sensitivities[190]. In this respect, Nijhoff's use of iconic effects seems at first sight to be very different to Achterberg's, in that the ritualistic and potentially transformative, the magically iconic element is missing. Nijhoff's prose writings, however, suggest that he was just as aware of the material body of the word as Achterberg, and that in a different manner this also forms a major theme in his own work.

In an article about the poetry of Henri Bruning (1900-1983) Nijhoff fixes on Bruning's insensitivity to form as an explanation for his insensitive thinking[191],

[190] See 2.4.2 which discusses Nijhoff's poetry and music.
[191] Bruning was a Catholic poet who, in Nijhoff's opinion, placed God outside the material world, making human life as such essentially desolate and hopeless. Nijhoff's own emphasis was on the

the thematic implications of his collection *De sirkel*[192] [the circle] (1924). Form is seen to mean for Nijhoff not just the form of the poem itself, but also, and very much so, the form of each word and each letter, linking his thinking here to the kind of 'alchemical phonology' discussed in 4.3 above, which is so clearly operative in Achterberg's poems:

> For everyone who, like me, has sometimes felt that a word possesses a small form, a lovable little body, whose scent and voice are always vaguely present in our thoughts, until it takes on a spoken or written form, literally a plastically visible form, a tangibility, which one is almost inclined to pick up from the paper, like an insect, like a leaf, - for everyone for whom a word is a living organism in its representation of language, one that moves, that breathes, that suggests in its form a hidden inner meaning of higher order - , for someone like this Kollewijn's simplified spelling[193] is simply a kind of ready-made, of generalized workmanship, outside the personal life of the language, manufactured to a rational but lifeless model. Someone like this becomes almost down-hearted when he finds 'the sirkel' written with a little snake of an s, as it is in the title of these poems, instead of with the almost-closing arc of a c. In the shape of this misshapen word the s has no space for its twistiness, as it does in 'sik' [goat/goatee] or 'sikkel' [sickle], it continues to be a c-substitute. It feels even more degenerate when the word 'circus' is written as 'sirkes', which Bruning also does. All the roundness of the arena is lost with the loss of both c's, and the Roman reminiscence disappears too; without a body and without a past, the image approaches us in Peek & Cloppenburg phonetic clothing[194].
>
> *VW*II:256-57, tr.

The emphasis on the bodily in Nijhoff's critique of Bruning's spelling as evidence for his lack of sensitivity to form, and the greater lack of awareness of the relationship between form, thought and feeling, is striking, as is the emphasis on an almost mystical identity between form and meaning (not between form and object), where 'meaning' would include all the historical associations conveyed by the word and the letter, as well as their visual and aural connotations.

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earthly and the bodily, the everlasting incarnation within the actual world. The extraordinary thing is that Bruning's cold idealism led him later to identify with Fascism, so that Nijhoff's hostility towards Bruning's insensitivity seems justified.

[192] The more usual spelling is 'cirkel'.

[193] R.A. Kollewijn (1857-1942) was a Dutch linguist who in 1891 wrote an article suggesting reforms to the Dutch spelling system. Some of these reforms were indeed taken up in the 1946-1947 Flemish and Dutch spelling reforms (Noordegraaf 2012). Some writers, however, adopted his suggestions before these were made official. The words Nijhoff uses in the quotation above actually say: 'Kollwijnian orthography'. My translation is intended to help the reader unfamiliar with the history of Dutch spelling.

[194] Peek & Cloppenburg was, and still is, a well-known chain of Dutch department stores.

Where Achterberg's poetry gives rise to the notion that often, if not always, there is a wished-for identity between word and object, a relationship which can be characterized as magical, Nijhoff's thinking about iconicity seems most clearly to relate to a kind of down-to-earth mysticism, the divine presence immanent in the bodily and earthly feelings which the sounds and shapes of words in their surrounding stillness evoke. Where Achterberg ritualistically fills every word and letter with layer upon layer of meaning, so that the desired transformation may take place outside ordinary time and space, Nijhoff allows the meanings to swell out of and into the surrounding space, from ordinary, everyday materials, materials which, as shown from the quotation above, are rooted in our personal linguistic bodies. Both Nijhoff and Achterberg in their poetics – verse-internal and verse-external – pay deliberate attention to the shaping force of the word, but they seem to approach its relationship to reality from opposite directions. This has an effect on the way that iconicity operates within their poems. The iconic word has the potential to break through the borders of form with Achterberg, whereas for Nijhoff the formless, the beyond-words, vibrates within the form, if it is properly placed and allowed to breathe within emptiness and silence.

4.8 Translating iconicity

This chapter has explored the relationship of sound in poetry to iconicity, both visual and aural, and has examined important aspects of iconicity in Achterberg's and Nijhoff's work, relating the underlying poetics of their individual use of iconism to both magic and mysticism. In this section I will summarize some of the implications of iconicity for the translation of their poems, and by extension for the translation of poetry in general.

To translate iconic effects in poetry is to be confronted with the essence of the relationship between form and content which has been examined in this study from various angles. If they are conceived as being separate, then one way of envisaging the translation task is that a particular meaning has to be re-formulated from the SL into the TL, and then poured into a mould which coheres in every respect with the 'form' of the ST, in terms of metre, sound-patterning, visual

patterning, syntactic order, and global and local iconic and other 'effects'. Another way would be, as Brockway did, to acknowledge the impossibility of such a task, and to admit defeat: the poem of complex form and thought cannot, and should not, be translated.

If on the other hand, form and content are seen as being totally unified, inseparable in every respect, then similar problems arise. One is again confronted with, in Shelley's words, 'the vanity of translation' (1953:28-9). The project is either doomed to failure or may succeed on shaky grounds: the form of the poem in the TL is never the same as in the original even if by chance or luck certain elements of the ST are mimicked, for example the metre or the rhyme scheme. Put simply, even a perfect representation of the formal elements of the poem is likely to affect the meaning of the poem, since the TC context differs from the original context. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that the meaning in translation will exactly match the kinds of meaning-making readings someone from the Source Culture would derive from the text. Even such readings are not stable and will change through time. As Clive Scott has pointed out, literary, and especially, poetic 'translation aligns itself with the arts of forgery' (2008:16) in the sense that the TC reader is expected to take for granted that the TT is a fair representation in all respects. Yet, as I have shown in Chapter 2 of this study, too much focus on the form of the poem can lead the translator into serious misrepresentations of aspects vital to its reading. Brockway, for example, in the same essay in which he stresses the necessity of preserving the forms, or of imitating them as closely as possible (1980:52) presents a translation which he feels does this; yet at the same time the final word of the poem ('Woord' [word]), the word and image most likely to linger in the audience's memory, is translated in such a way that neither the formal element nor its meaning, denotative or connotative, is 'preserved' (Brockway 1980:52-3). Instead of the potentially iconic 'samenvalt' [coincides] which crucially does not rhyme with any other word of the poem, whilst (hopelessly?) gesturing towards a possible coinciding of word and object, Brockway has 'counterfeit', a word which stresses its own falseness and lack of genuineness, and is deliberately made to rhyme with another word in the poem:

En nochtans moet het woord bestaan,
and nevertheless must the word exist
dat met u samenvalt.[195]
that with you coincides

Brockway translates this as:

Yet somewhere a word must lie that is
your perfect counterfeit.

As Brockway points out, the 'aan'-sound of 'bestaan' is maintained throughout each of the four stanzas of the poem. He also sees that Achterberg does not rhyme 'samenvalt' with any other sound in the poem but says this: 'While Achterberg is content to end with a non-rhyming sound "samenvalt", the form is further tightened up in the English version, […] to compensate for the lost "aan"-sound, by introducing the rhyme: "replete-counterfeit"' (Brockway 1980:53). What Brockway seems not to see is that Achterberg's choice to end the poem on an unrhymed sound points iconically to the at-present lack of rhyming, or coincidence, between Word and Object, thus creating an extra layer of meaning through this formal resource. The metaphoric iconicity of the non-rhyming effect effectively points to a lack, to an ultimate non-iconicity, the non-efficacy of the poet's word. For this ironic iconic effect to work, the word itself must be straightforward, as 'samenvalt' is, and the irony (or hopelessness) must be contained in the gesture of not-rhyming, which contradicts but does not cancel it out. As McNeill's work on the iconic aspects of gesture has made apparent (2005, 2008, 2009), there is a dynamic and creative dialectic within language, language being defined in this view as being more than words. In this case the dialectic occurs between the poetic gesture of not-rhyming at precisely the place in the poem where one might expect a firm signal both of closure, and of the achievement of the aim of the poem, in this case the coincidence or identity – falling-together-with (samenvallen = samen [together] + vallen [fall] – between Word and Object.

As a reader, I can notice such iconic effects operating through the form of Achterberg's poem; as a translator it seems that without some kind of creative inspiration, or alternatively a simple coincidence of related languages, as in

[195] See Appendix 1 for ST and for my translation.

'soul'/'sail' as a sufficiently iconic translation of 'ziel'/'zeil', I cannot convey them adequately. My solution to the problem posed by the ending of 'Woord' [word], the poem Brockway discusses, also loses elements of the iconic ground:

> Yet still I feel there must exist
> the word that matches you.

This retains the simplicity of the ST, and does not add to the TT suggestions of falseness and forgery, almost repellent in the context; it also fails to rhyme, although not quite in the same way as Achterberg's iconic failure, since 'you' as a line-end word appears in two other places in the translation, but close enough to the start of the poem so as not to catch on the ear[196]. However, and inevitably, the translation makes its own additions to the meaning, in that 'matches you' is clearly, in the context of Achterberg's work, likely to be read by an English-speaking reader as connoting 'mating' or 'marrying'. There is an extra, an addition, as well as a subtraction – and that addition has been made not so much in compensation for effects I have been unable to achieve elsewhere, as Brockway suggests in justifying his rhymed ending, but rather because the language itself, and the context in which I as a translator have placed it, unfolds this surplus, just as my own language is not Dutch (let alone Chinese or Persian or Arabic) and cannot therefore by definition behave in the same way: I cannot rhyme (or iconize, or metricize, or semanticize, or syntaxify) exactly as Achterberg does – my language does not let me do so. Even my reading of the ST poem is changed and modified in translation to produce something which is neither fully my own nor fully Achterbergian. Just as the formal constraints (and the breaking of those constraints) helped shape the original poem and its thought, as stressed over and over again by Nijhoff (see 1.3.2 and 3.2.1), the act of translation, particularly of a formally conceived poem, is in itself a shaping, creative process, in which new rhythms unfold, new sound-links emerge, and, inevitably almost, new possibilities for iconicity take shape, both in the mind of the translator, and in the mind of the new reader. In the case of my specific failure to capture the full iconic effect of the not-rhyming at the end of 'Woord' [word], the word 'you' still trails a little dolefully, a little 'unmatchedly', into the white space surrounding the poem, whilst it could be argued that new metaphoric links are made into its semantic

[196] See Appendix 1 for source and translation.

ground, which does indeed speak of 'seeding' and 'fulfilling' ('Voorzover het mijn bloed aangaat,/ zijt gij met ieder element/ verzadigd en voldaan' [In so far as it concerns my blood/ you are with every element/ sated and satisfied]). The verb 'verzadigen' contains the 'zaad' [seed] within it, whilst the verb 'voldoen' means literally 'to do full', i.e. to fulfil. The sexual connotations of the earlier stanza are, therefore, released by my translation of 'dat met u samenvalt' as 'that matches you'. Such translation decisions are not a deliberate 'compensation', as Brockway tells us that his decision to close the poem with a rhyme is, but a consequence rather of the enfolding reading-and-writing process which is translation.

If it were possible in the TL to also find the word that coincides with, or matches, the 'you' of the ST, then the barriers between languages and between the word and our gesturing, feeling bodies would break down entirely, and the necessity for iconicity, for metaphoricity, for analogy, for poetry itself, in its broadest sense, would not be there. This is exactly the position that the American poet Laura Riding worked herself into after renouncing poetry and instead devoting herself to a project of 'Rational Meaning', a combined dictionary and treatise of the English language, in which the aim was for each word to mean one thing only, a position, as pointed out by Marjorie Perloff, which put her at odds with all modern linguistic thought, including that of Wittgenstein (Perloff 1998), whose emphasis on language in use, is also an emphasis on the process-based, dialogic, and dialectic nature of language.

The problem of translating iconicity and the iconic form, then, brings us back to the heart of the problem of translation. As Derrida notes of homophones or homonyms in his lecture 'What is a "relevant" translation?', when we meet such effects 'translation in the strict, traditional, and dominant sense of the term encounters an insurmountable limit' (2001:181). In all but the most imagic (the simplest, most direct) forms of iconicity, for example the formal shape in a pattern poem, or a directly similar form of onomatopoeia (Dutch 'koekoek', English 'cuckoo'), the iconism of a specific poem may be difficult, if not impossible, to translate and certainly not in the 'one word *by* one word' expectation which

Derrida tells us is a translation norm (ibid.)[197]. Translation, Derrida tells us, is a contradictory mode in which 'nothing is translatable, and by the same token, […] nothing is untranslatable (2001:178).

Such considerations can cause a kind of petrifaction before the living word of the poem, as Brockway found. But not to translate would mean that this specific poetry, from this specific language and culture, cannot attain its after-life, cannot live forwards, cannot enter into a dialogue with other literatures, other languages and cultures. And if the poetry has already been translated, then not to re-translate it is to refuse a further dialogue with another reading-creating mind and with what, at any rate, has only been provisionally done. No translation will ever displace another in this view, even if an earlier translation is no longer widely read, since the translator (ideally) has incorporated his or her dialogue with the earlier translation into the new text.

A process-based approach to poetic translation, in the sense I have defined this in 1.1, does not solve these difficulties and paradoxes, but its emphasis on the text as fluid, as an 'act-event' in Attridge's words (2004a:108), and on the engagement of the reader-translator with the text as being open, experimental and ever-changing, will, I believe, help unfreeze and unpetrify the translator's attitudes, with the consequence that the new text, the meta-poem (Holmes 1988:9-22), is able both to embody the reader-translator's engaged devotion to the ST and to body forth the translator's own creative involvement with the emergent poem, the TT. The emphasis which Nijhoff places on

> form not as a casing for emotion, made as transparent as possible, but as material of a spiritual order, not an embodiment, but a body in itself, not a mirror of life but itself an organic life formed from spiritual reality in the process of becoming understandable, coming down into our awareness and, as it were, condensing itself within this material…
>
> *VW*II:340 (tr.)

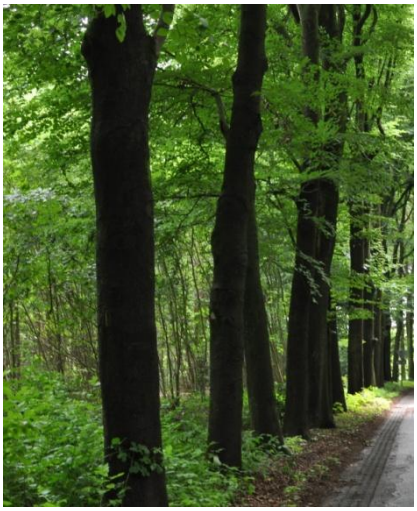
is exactly the same emphasis which I believe should show the translator the way through the impasse of 'nothing is translatable'.

[197] Derrida is not advocating this as a translation approach or method; rather he is pointing out that this is what is expected in traditional translation. The philosophical thrust of the essay is elsewhere.

The concept of iconicity itself when understood as Cuypere defines it, as a form of sign-making in which relationships of similarity are not identical but rather analogical and asymmetrical (Cuypere 2008:63-6) is also helpful to the poet as meta-poet, in that the translated poem may itself be seen as a hypoicon (imagic, diagrammatic and metaphoric by turns or in varying degrees) of the ST. The translator can then be seen to be not so much attempting to precisely mimic the ST, an enterprise doomed to failure, but rather as creatively gesturing towards it, or calling up its body within the body of the new text.

Importantly, as this chapter has shown, the concept of iconicity includes all the sense modalities, as does poetry itself, with hearing, vision, and perhaps even touch, being primary modes of activation, and taste and smell being activated through the imagination – and other senses too, are brought in play, as discussed at various points in this study, such as the kinaesthetic sense, the sense of time and rhythm, and so forth. The body and mind together, the body-mind, can and should be asked to help in the translation process, and experiments such as those described in Commentaries II and III, and in the following commentary, can be viewed as methods to open the gates to the kind of organic life Nijhoff felt the poem should have. In this way the translator too can move across the borders of word and form, following and learning from the poets she is translating, but making the exploration entirely her own.

I felt that I was mired in side-roads
and asked children for directions, they showed
the way, they somehow knew what I'd been reading



Trees, stripped of their bark, were ready and at hand
for all the furniture makers of the land.

Achterberg (tr.)

COMMENTARY IV

Translating through enactment

IV.i Introduction

The chapters of this study, exploring issues arising from my reading of Nijhoff's and Achterberg's individual poetics and the consequences of these for translation, have been intercut with commentaries intended to show how an alert process-based approach to translation might benefit from such knowledge. In particular, my argument has been that because sonically, rhythmically and imagistically rich poetry, whether spoken aloud or not, works directly with the whole body of the reader, it may be important for the translator to consciously work with the body-mind, to ensure that the formal poem continues to work *as a poem* in translation. Practical techniques, close to drama-training methods and Zen and other meditative practices, and relating also to cognitive-stylistic approaches to a text, have been described and analyzed in Commentaries II and III, and set against my previous approaches to translation, an uninformed and unreflective practice, which sometimes achieved good results, but at other times led to the (relative) translation-failure presented in Commentary I. Because the techniques were developed over a space of time and in reaction both to my deepening knowledge of each poet's and poem's 'vision-drive' (Klein 1962) it goes without saying that no final 'recipe' for translating formal poetry will emerge in this commentary. Each poem and poet is different; what has proved useful in making me a more flexible translator may well not be applicable to other poets, other languages, other translators. Yet the general approaches I have described and analyzed will, I hope, prove useful, in that they should suggest similar routes: an attuning to the poem, 'as […] a body in itself' (*VWII*:340).

Since Commentaries II and III have presented both the broad outlines and the detail of a body-mind approach to translation, including the use of the 'image-frame', a physicalization of the rhythms, an oralizing of the process through the use of Think-Aloud procedures and the vocalization of the poem, memorization,

attention to breath-structuring and the placing of breath-salient words within the text, this final commentary will not repeat these details, but will focus instead on certain techniques differing in emphasis from my previous methods, and used with Achterberg's poem 'Station'. These methods link back to the theories of iconicity, magic iconism, gesture and performativity discussed especially in Chapter 4.

IV.ii 'Station'

Achterberg's poem 'Station' (VG:954) was composed before June 1955 (2000d:1092) and first collected in *Vergeetboek* [forget-book/oblivion], Achterberg's final collection whilst still alive. Formally speaking, it is a variation on the sonnet, with sixteen lines, rather than fourteen, and with a rhyme-scheme that mixes elements of the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean form, ending on the typical Shakespearean final couplet, with its strong sense of closure, here, as will be seen, giving a sense of release. Rhythmically, however, the poem moves within and across the lines in such a way that the iambic pentameter, except at key points, very much gives way to speech rhythms, making this poem closer to Nijhoff's *parlando* style than many others by Achterberg, particularly those published pre-1949.

The I-Thou relationship, central to Achterberg's oeuvre, is less apparent in this poem, although, as will be seen, some of the beloved's actions – the undeserved grace granted to the I – are still present. The poem, at first sight, seems to be a simple anecdotal narrative, in which the I-person tells of being lost in woods before finding his way again, resting on a bench, and then departing by train.

The elements of iconicity, particularly of ritual or magic iconism commented on in Chapter 4, seem to be less marked in this poem than in 'Druïde' or 'Zeiltocht', and apparently less emphasized by sonic or visual effects, partly because these are masked by the rhythmic movement. They are still there, however, and the fact that they are still there was revealed to me through the methods I used to approach the act of translation.

In approaching the translation of this poem I used a development of the procedure employed for Nijhoff's 'Haar laatste brief', as described in Commentary III, rather than that used for Achterberg's poem 'Sneeuwwitje'. This was because of the clear importance of the phrasing and speech-like rhythms in this poem, making a beat-based physicalization of the text seem inappropriate.

I split the text into sense-units rather than breath-groups, as with Nijhoff, for the reasons discussed in Chapter 3, that the breath-group as such seems structurally less important to Achterberg. This yielded nine major units, with sub-units, as shown in *Figure 43*. As with 'Haar laatste brief', these were learned incrementally over a period of days equal to the units, and carried in the memory throughout the day, until by Day 9 the full poem had been memorized. Each time the new increment was added to what had gone before and accompanied by internal visualization of the situation, imagery, and narrative of the poem. The poem was learned away from the desk, standing, so that gestural enactment could enhance the visualization and vocalization. Finally, on the tenth day, when the full poem had settled in the memory, the translation was made during a recorded Think-Aloud process, with no reference to the written text. The draft was then refined over a number of ensuing sessions, at which point the TT was compared to the ST.

Gesture, as discussed in Chapter 4, not only has close links to metaphor and iconicity in dialogic speech, but creates a dynamic and creative dialectic between word and body which McNeill (2005:105ff) has described as forming 'growth-points' within thought and discourse. McNeill's work on gesture has focused, naturally, on spoken discourse rather than the written text, although the experimental subjects are often placed in situations in which they narrate to an interlocutor the story of a cartoon-film they have watched, in other words they are recalling fictional events in which they have participated vicariously, and are recalling their memories of those events in re-telling the story[198]. Gesture in these experiments clearly relates both to memory, to narrative and to (partial) re-

[198] Most of McNeill's experiments, in order to ensure comparability and reproducibility, deal with the re-telling of a single cartoon-film, *Canary Row* (ca. 1950), from the Tweety and Sylvester series (McNeill 2005:260-1).

enactment. A memory-based approach to the translation of formal poetry draws naturally on similar gestural techniques, even though the self is speaking to the self, rather than to an interlocutor, or any other audience. Gesture is an essential aspect of 'thinking for speaking' (McNeill 2005:125)[199], grounding linguistic content in a 'material carrier' (McNeill 2005:126), and as such clearly links to the material aspects of poetry, the sounds, rhythms and images for which the text is a kind of score. More than this, as the literary genre which can most easily be carried whole and complete in the mind, with its memory and bodily cues encoded into every aspect of its form, the poem, as suggested by Fónagy's work on iconicity (1999, 2001), seems to import gesture[200] and other forms of bodily communication, into the text itself. To explore the poem then in the bodily fashion I employed here, and in other translation work, takes the translator more deeply into the poem's dynamo, the dialectic between image and language, which as McNeill stresses, following Vygotsky (1972), is still a whole, still unitary (McNeill 2005:136). It is the slow and consciously holistic approach to the to-be-translated poem, which interacts with it as fully as possible, without pre-judging it, without cutting it up into this metaphor, or that iconism, or this specific metre, which allows the body-mind to co-create in action with the ST, to produce, eventually, a poem which is a poetic (i.e. fully psychophysiological) response to that ST. It may be objected that the incremental memorization does 'cut up' the poem and, in one sense, this is true, but it does so with a non-analytical purpose – not that of rote memorization, but of meditating on and working with the words of the poem as actively as possible, giving each sense-unit, and its accompanying images, full weight in the body-mind, so that by the time the complete poem is in the memory, the material of the poem is deeply known and deeply experienced.

Visualization, or the use of mental imagery, is a real and powerful technique naturally used by the human mind (see e.g. Block 1981; Kosslyn 1980, 1983, 2006), but also developed systematically by various traditions, including within shamanistic healing (Achterberg 2002[201]), Buddhist and other forms of meditation

[199] cf. Slobin 2003, which also deals with 'thinking for translation'.
[200] As previously noted, for Fónagy gesture includes oral (not only intonation but the actual physical act of producing sounds) (2001:18-21) and syntactic gesturing (2001:41-57).
[201] This is not Gerrit Achterberg, but Jeanne Achterberg (1942-2012), a pioneer in the use of imagery in medical practices.

(e.g. Williams and Penman 2011), within drama training (e.g. Riley 2004) and in psychotherapy (e.g. Leuner 1969). Iain R. Edgar (2004) argues for the use of visualization and other 'image-work' techniques as a vital and important experiential research tool in the social sciences, which by 'drawing attention to the creative capacity of the imagination to generate spontaneous imagery which is open to interpretation' (2004:8) is able to 'reach levels and forms of knowledge not immediately apprehensible' (2004:13) by other means. To use visualization is also to draw on mnemonic or artificial memory techniques, which have a history going back at least to classical Greek and Roman times, being consciously exploited by students of rhetoric, oratory and law to prepare them for the lengthy speeches they would give in public (Yates 1992:17-41; Whitehead 2009:27-33). This system of inner visualization used place and space – *loci* – in order to improve recall of detail and order and was considered to be an important extension of natural memory (Yates 1992:17-18). Ted Hughes, in his foreword to the poetry anthology *By heart* (1997), applies the same system to suggest ways in which the poem can become one's own personal and perpetual possession, part of one's own internal memory system. Hughes, however, in his enthusiasm for the art of memory, and antagonism to the 'tedium of learning by rote' (1997:ix), introduces visualization techniques in such a way that they encourage the poem's memorizer to invent internal visual images not directly related to the poem, and to treat the poem as a 'list' of items (images) to be learned, rather than as an integral whole, thereby breaking apart the poem's own finely constructed memory-system of rhythm, sound, image and syntax. This leads to Hughes suggesting that Hopkins' poem 'Inversnaid', for example, might be learned by heart through constructing a series of images which together make a story involving a burning stream, a horse escaping from it and setting off an avalanche, followed by a lion disturbed by the falling boulders fleeing into a hen-coop for safety, swallowing the hens, and leaving behind him a devastated coop which becomes 'a rickety, awkward, great comb' (1997:xi). Vivid, yes, and memorable, but only tangentially based on the poem's own memory-system since the images themselves are not a development of those in the text (there is no lion, or avalanche, there are no hens, or fire: the only element which Hughes retains is the stream). However, Hughes's linking of these methods into the art of memory, as used in both the classical and medieval periods, formed part of my motivation for

using memory and visualization techniques in my approaches to translation, and specifically for using vivid internal visualization of place and action, as exemplified in the four snapshots of my work with the poem, discussed below, after *Figures 42* and *43*.

line	Station	rhyme-scheme	pauses and enjambements
1	Ik voelde me bezoedeld in zijwegen	a	|
	I felt me sullied in side-roads		
	en vroeg de weg aan kinderen. Zij wezen	b	||| ⌒
	and asked the way to children they indicated		
	en wisten dingen, die ik had gelezen	a	| | ⌒
	and knew things that I had read		
	in oude kranten; keken schuw-verlegen,	b	| || |
	in old newspapers looked shy-timidly		
5	of ze het niet vertrouwden. Ik moest wezen	b	||| ⌒
	if they it not trusted I had-to be		
	bij 'n school, maar alles was al bos. We kregen	a	| ||| ⌒
	at a school but everything was still woods we got		
	een meisje op een fiets. Zij liet zich deze	b	||| ⌒
	a girl on a bike she let herself this		
	kwestie uitleggen, bloosde toegenegen	a	|| |
	affair explain blushed affectionately		
	question towards-inclining		
	en stapte op. Houtwagens kwam ik tegen	a	||| |
	and stepped on wood-trucks came I against		
10	en zag het leven openstaan, genezen.	b	| |||
	and saw the life open-stand, healed.		
	Ontschorste bomen lagen aan de kant	c	⌒
	de-barked trees lay at the side		
	klaar voor de meubelindustrie van 't land.	c	|||
	ready for the furniture-industry of the land		
	Onder mijn eigen naam en zonder vrezen	b	| |
	under my own name and without fearing		
	heb ik die middag op een bank gelegen	a	|
	have I that afternoon on a bench lain		
15	en ben vertrokken van een klein station,	d	|
	and am departed of a little station		
	dat vrijuit achter mij vergroeien kon.	d	|||
	that freely behind me grow could		

Figure 42: Achterberg's 'Station': text, gloss, rhyme-scheme, pauses and enjambements

(1) Ik voelde me bezoedeld in zij**wegen**/ en vroeg de weg aan kinderen.

(2) Zij **wezen/** en wisten dingen, die ik had **gelezen** in oude kranten;// keken schuw-**verlegen**,/ of ze het niet vertrouwden.

(3) Ik moest **wezen** bij 'n school,// maar alles was al bos.

(4) We **kregen** een meisje op de fiets.

(5) Zij liet zich deze kwestie uitleggen,// bloosde **toegenegen**// en stapte op.

(6) Houtwagens kwam ik **tegen** // en zag het leven openstaan,// **genezen**.

(7) Ontschorste bomen lagen aan de **kant**
klaar voor de meubelindustrie van 't **land**.

(8) Onder mijn eigen naam en zonder **vrezen**
heb ik die middag op een bank **gelegen**

(9) en ben vertrokken van een klein sta**tion**,
dat vrijuit achter mij vergroeien **kon**.

Figure 43: 'Station': incrementally memorized sense-units. End-rhymes are in bold.

Visualization and gestural and vocal enactment of ‘Station’ (June 2010)

i. (Day 1) Ik v**oe**lde me bez**oe**deld in zijwegen/ en vr**oe**g de weg aan kinderen + (Day 2) Zij wezen/ en wisten dingen, die ik had gelezen/ in oude kranten; keken schuw-verlegen,/ of ze het niet vertrouwden.

The main setting of ‘Station’ is a wood (l.6) in which the narrator, the lyric-I, is lost in ‘zijwegen’ [side-roads] which have sullied or besmirched him (l.1). He asks children for directions.

The visualization of this situation brought forth images of a densely-grown near-wilderness in which the mud of the miry paths had so much spattered the lyric-I that he feels himself to be stained or polluted, as well as lost. Accompanying gestures of brushing and cleansing of clothes with the hands, and of the pushing away of branches and brambles to find one’s way through the thickets, gave an emotional depth to the words, supported by facial expressions of disgust or distaste, alternating with fear and worry.

The children, not clearly characterized in the first lines of the poem, were imagined as lit-up figures, chanced on now and then, in small clearings, potential helpers out of the situation. A dream-like quality was given to the whole by the strange emphasis on the tangibility and emotional quality of ‘bezoedeld’ [sullied] with its internal near-rhyme on ‘voelde’ [felt], and assonance with ‘vroeg’ [asked], which is at the same time almost distanced, as if the sullying has happened to a part of the lyric-I from which he is detached (as would be the case in a dream). The children, lit up in my visualization, are clear symbols of contrasting innocence (unsullied). The main track, from which the lyric-I has strayed, is not yet apparent, however, in spite of their help. The side-roads [zijwegen], as the vocalization made clear, are also ‘she-roads’ [zij-wegen]. Are these roads which the lyric-I has travelled for the sake of ‘she’, or roads into which he has been led astray? My visualization could not clarify this question, but instead I felt myself envisaging a vague female shape in the trees themselves (cf. Achterberg’s poem

'Dryade', Appendix 1), or simply sensing that something was ahead of me which I could not properly see.

Note: the visualization and accompanying gesture bring with them a close identification with the material of the poem, such that it may feel as if the lyric-I and the enacting I are one and the same, making physically actual and kinaesthetically active the 'dynamic character' (Iser 1980:51) of the work. At the same time the polyphonic and multi-spatial/multi-perspectival nature of the enactment is also apparent.

ii. (Day 4) We kregen/ een meisje op de fiets. + (Day 5) Zij liet zich deze/ kwestie uitleggen, bloosde toegenegen / en stapte op.

The situation of being lost, and its accompanying feeling of ensulliment, gives way in the centre of the poem (ll. 6-9) to a more defined situation of help. The lyric-I – who has shifted to being a 'we' [wij] – meets a girl on a bicycle who gives aid so that the situation will change. This is an unlooked-for grace, a moment of empathetic fellow-feeling emphasized in the image of the girl blushing 'toegenegen' [bent towards/showing sympathy or well-wishing towards].

The visualization, gesture and facial expression, accompanied with the vocalization of this increment of the poem-narrative, switched between persons here, from the lyric-I to the girl (neither child nor woman, as I perceived her). The pathway (or side-road) broadens a little, so that there is room for bicycle-riding, and thus the sense of being entangled and enmired gives way to a slowly-growing relief, as the lyric-I (in whose body I am in my active imagining) hears and then sees a girl on a bike nearing him.

NB I do not imagine the lyric-I with another person as an explanation of the 'we'-voice here; rather I see this as being representative of a human situation of being lost in a dark wood (with parallels to the opening

lines of Dante's *Inferno*[202]). The girl, haloed in beams of light falling through the trees, stops her bike and listens to the narrator's problem of being lost. I see – and feel in my imagination – how she back-pedals to brake her bike[203], and then leans her feet on the ground, the bike still between her legs, as she kindly takes in what is being said to her. She pushes on her own journey, which has momentarily crossed that of the lyric-I. The feeling left in me, once again identifying with the narrator of the poem, is one of joy, as if the problem has now been solved, although in actuality nothing is said to indicate that he is now on the right path.

The dual identification of my own visualizing enacting self with both characters in this section is an aspect, I feel, of perceiving this exercise as a form of story-telling, aptly, given the narrative basis of the poem. Story-telling as an oral genre is different from theatrical performance in that the teller of the tale both narrates and (minimally) enacts all the characters in a story, through gesture, positioning of the body, and vocal characterization, without her- or himself entirely disappearing into one single character, as may be the case in conventional acting (cf. Wilson 2006:4-5).

iii. (Day 6) Houtwagens kwam ik tegen/ en zag het leven openstaan, genezen. + (Day 7) Ontschorste bomen lagen aan de kant/ klaar voor de meubelindustrie van 't land.

The I-persona reaches a place where felled trees are ready to be taken all over the country by timber-lorries to be changed into furniture.

In visualizing these increments of the poem, I imagined a large clearing in the woods, standing open [openstaan] to the full light of the sun, everything bathed in an equal light (not spot-lit, as the children were in my imagining, nor haloed by soft beams of light down-dropping

[202] 'In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself, in a dark wood, where the direct way was lost' (tr. A.S. Kline 2000: n.p.). Note the mixture here too of plural and singular first-person perspectives.
[203] This is a Dutch bicycle, of course.

through the trees, as the girl was). The tree-trunks lying ready to be taken on their journey of transformation are stripped white and clean. The timber-lorries are loading these, and in my mind's eye I can see them leaving the byways of the woods, and moving onto the country roads, and then the main roads of the network which will take them to the factories and craftsmen which will transform them into objects of daily usefulness. The narrative in my mind's eye moves then out of the woods, the wilderness, nature, into human connectedness and culture.

Gestures in this section are relatively minimal, a slight tracking from one side to the other to take in the extent of this destructive-constructive business, and a lifting upwards of the face to the sun on the key word 'genezen' [cured/healed], and, significantly, an opening outwards and raising skywards of the arms and hands. The joy already felt in the previous increment increases.

iv. (Day 8) Onder mijn eigen naam en zonder vrezen/ heb ik die middag op een bank gelegen + (Day 9) en ben vertrokken van een klein station,/ dat vrijuit achter mij vergroeien kon.

The final two increments of the poem take the lyric-I out of the woods and into an unspecified landscape in which he can lie down and rest on a bench (perhaps constructed from the felled wood of the previous section), before leaving forever by train from a little (i.e. country) station.

The visualization here pulls away from full identity with the lyric-I so that I perceive him lying at length on a bench, as if a corpse, but not yet a corpse, on the station-platform, before the train pulls away with the lyric-I as passenger and the station diminishes (from the perspective of the lyric-I) as it fades into the distance, but then begins to grow again back to its full proportions in a landscape free of the lyric-I's presence. The name of the place is 'Achterberg' and there is a station sign which tells me that, looming over the now-empty bench where the lyric-I's figure had lain. The woods edge up to the railway line, but beyond the

> woods is the shining network of rails and roads leading to houses in which a book of poems lies open. In the furthest distance, on a horizon beyond any horizon which can be seen from ground-perspective, are high snowy mountains. The little train climbs away from it all and out of my perceiving eye. The feeling is one of release.
>
> Clearly, the act of visualization and minimal enactment has activated an instinctive and personal re-visioning in which details are added which may be suggested by the poem, which possibly lie behind its words, but which are not there as such. The interesting imaginative detail of the name of the station being 'Achterberg' [behind-mountain][204] is an example of this. Because the words of the ST say that the lyric-I lies down on a bench beneath his own name and without any fears, a phrase open to several interpretations, including that of an acceptance or acknowledgement of one's own true self, my mind linked this in a literal way both to the station from which the lyric-I departs, seeing a name-sign on the platform, over the bench where the figure lies down, and to the (imagined) distant mountains, both of which provide a visual image of 'under my own name'. This envisioning, entirely preparatory to the act of translation, led to some of the translation decisions I made, as will be seen, although no literal station sign appears in my translation.

Each day on which these exercises of vocalization, visualization and enactment has taken place has involved a recollection of the scene, the feelings, and the words and gestures of the previous days, so that by the end of the ninth day the full poem and its accompanying self-generated body-text is fully memorized and incorporated.

The time spent on the exercise is incalculable, although I estimate that I spent a hour each day in conscious work with the text, till on the final day both the full

[204] There is a village called Achterberg, now a suburb of Rhenen, in the province of Utrecht. Although there is a station in Rhenen, I have not found evidence of one in Achterberg, so the envisioned image seems not to have a basis in reality.

text and the full gestural visualization/enactment were complete in my mind. I worked on the text twice a day, each morning and late evening, before going to bed. This meant that each day itself was filled with images from the visualization and words from the text, so that it was inhabited both deliberately and in the day's spaces – walking to the university, looking up from a book in the library, musing over a cup of coffee, and so forth.

Translation of 'Station'

The translation of the poem was made vocally and from memory, using a Think-Aloud technique, supported by a typescript emerging as the translation itself emerged[205]. Since the focus of this commentary is not so much on the TAP itself, I will not examine the translation process as such in any detail. My main focus is, rather, on what can be learned about translating formal aspects of a poem from using memory, visualization and enactment techniques, and more specifically, how aspects of form, particularly in Achterberg's work, but also with probable application to the work of other poets, interact with iconicity.

Nevertheless, a few points about the TAP may be noted. The total time taken for the translation of the poem was 1hr:26m:26s, and I note near the beginning of the recording (after about 2 and a half minutes of introductory material): 'Obviously there has to be thinking time. I can't be speaking aloud all the time'. This comment was made in the light of the fact that after carrying out fifteen or so TAP-based translations, of which 'Station' was the penultimate one, I had realized that in spite of my intention to speak aloud what was 'in my head', there were often long periods of silence in which nothing conscious was apparently happening at all, but which inevitably led to a translation solution. In fact, my feeling by the time I came to carry out this translation, was that the silence and apparent emptiness of thought were an essential part of the process, and that to force a verbalization onto the translation process at inappropriate points might damage the actual translation work.

[205] In other words, I did not choose to hold the emerging translation in my memory in addition to recalling the memorized text. My instinct is that this would have put too much strain on the re-creative memory, and would have produced a very different outcome in the translation.

Apart from the first and last lines of the poem, and some small differences at other points, the translation as it emerged from the Think-Aloud exercise was the final version. However, one significant mistake in the recollection of the poem was made, in that I missed completely missed out two lines (5-6), further discussed below. This was corrected after the recording process, when the draft TT was checked against the ST. At that point too, refinements were made to the translation; these I consider to be part and parcel of this process, and not revisions as such. The final revisions were made in March 2011, about nine months after the intensive translation exercise.

'Station': the final TT

The final TT of 'Station' appears below, together with notes on its difference to the final Think-Aloud version.

TT	comments
Station	
~~how I was sullied by the~~ I felt that I was m**ire**d in s**i**de-**road**s	- 'mired' chosen because of assonance with 'side', internal front-rhyme with 'directions', and for its connotations
and asked children for d**ire**ctions, they **showed** ~~and knew what I'd been reading~~ the way, they somehow knew what I'd b**ee**n **r**e**a**ding	- changed for rhythmic reasons
in old newspapers, gave me sh**y** looks, askance as if they couldn't qu**i**te bel**ie**ve it. I was expected ~~it was still all woods~~	- slight normalization in the revision, but also a recollection of Dante's *Inferno*
at a school but still was in the woods. A girl **rode** ~~past~~ ~~stopped and listened~~	- changed for sound and rhythm
by on her **b**i**l**ke, but stopped and listened to what was trou**b**ling m**e**, **blushed** in sympath**y**, ~~lorries~~	- changed for sound and rhythm
and then **pushed** on. I came across **t**imber **t**rucks, ~~and saw~~	- changed for rhythm
saw life o**p**en and re**vealed**, **healed**. Trees, stri**pp**ed of their bark, were ready and at **hand** for all the furniture makers of the **land.** Under my own name, *beneath the* ***hills***, I lay down on a **b**ench, with no more **fears** – and that afternoon left from a little **station** ~~which could freely grow~~ ~~with no action~~ which could grow ***b****ehind* me, free from my **action**s.	- changed for rhythm and to strengthen the underlying meaning I felt here

Figure 44: 'Station' – final version and differences from Think-Aloud version [some of the sound relations are highlighted in colour and/or bold type].

Questions of sound and rhythm and the relationship of these to iconicity emerge strongly from the process and the translation itself. As shown in *Figure 42* Achterberg's poem – an extended sonnet – is heavy on internal pausing and enjambements, especially in the first ten lines, i.e. until the volta. The pausing is often weighted towards the end of a line, having a similar effect to the use of such pausing in Nijhoff's poetry: the rhythms become more speech-like, the sense of metre is subdued, and the line-end rhymes are overridden by the onward drive of the syntax. The end of one line is effectively incorporated into the following one, which is then itself unbalanced in terms of syllabic count by further heavy pauses. Disorientation and blurring of line-ending is also achieved by the unusual rhyming of the first ten lines which only seem to alternate between a and b rhymes, since they are closely related to each other by assonance. Effectively, the first ten lines rhyme on the same sound. It is this combination of monotonous rhyming (which may convey a state of near-panic, or a sense, as the poem suggests, of being stuck in a situation from which escape is difficult) with the dissolving of a clear sense of line within the rhythms which, I feel, made me forget part of lines 5 and 6. The clues of distinct metre and rhyme were missing. Moreover, this sentence, although important in conveying the narrator's continued state of being lost, does not entirely fit into the poem's narrative, and as such was hard to visualize. The literal translation, 'I had to be at a school, but everything was still woods', shows the problem: where does the school fit into the framework of the poem[206]? The second part of the sentence merely shows a continuation of the situation in which the lyric-I finds himself, and had already been envisaged and enacted in my response to the first four and a half lines. Obviously, there are reasons why this sentence needs to be in the poem, but it does not add greatly to the iconic relationship between the mazy lostness of the metrical line, the oppressive repetitiveness of the rhyming, and the lyric-I's situation. In other words, it gives, in rhythmic and sonic terms more of the same. For this reason, it was not particularly difficult to adjust the translation after the Think-Aloud exercise, to include this sentence. This might have disrupted a rhyme-scheme if I had decided to let the rhyme lead my work, rather than the phrasal rhythms, but

[206] I am not implying that an explanation cannot be found for this detail, as clearly the school could be read in various ways, both symbolic and literal, yet it in narrative terms the school is both outside the frame of the woods and outside the ending which takes the lyric-I away by train.

the rhythmic fit is strong, since both this sentence and the following one, in which the lyric-I meets the girl on the bike, commence at a similar point, near a line-end, and after a strong pause.

After the volta of line 10, the rhyming of the ST begins to be more varied, and the metre of the poem re-asserts itself, as the situation changes to one of hope, and a loss of fear. There are clear couplet rhymes, 'kant/land', 'vrezen'/'gelegen'[207] and 'station'/'kon', which seem to indicate the greater clarity, cleanliness and sense of purpose, or order, which pervades the sestet. The TT picks up on this potential iconicity with its own couplet rhymes, 'hand'/'land', 'hills'/'fears'[208], 'station'/'actions', and with a stronger sense of metre. The volta itself – the moment of revelation and release – is iconically present in the ST within the internal assonantal rhyme 'l**ev****en**'/'gen**ez****en**' (/e:/), which in itself relates back to the assonantal a and b rhymes of the first ten lines, which can now be viewed as iconically representing a hopeless or perhaps hopeful-against-hope searching, which can only be fulfilled after the grace of the encounter with the girl. The search then ends with 'leven openstaan, genezen' [life standing open, cured], where the rhyming of healing with life itself is also emphasized by the pause. Although 'openstaan' does not literally mean 'revealed', conceptually it is related to notions of revelation or disclosure. The WNT gives examples of 'openstaan' used in connection with heaven, and with the heart and spirit, whilst the OED confirms that the verb 'to reveal' has an etymology relating to unveiling, opening to view what was previously hidden. In translating the sentence containing this line as 'I came across timber trucks,/ saw life open and revealed, healed' both the sound-clue of the internal assonantal rhyme ('leven'/'genezen') and my own gestural enactment and visualization helped me to create this TT response. This is one of the places in which McNeill's theory of gesture as integral to language, a dialectic of bodily icon, image and metaphor with the spoken word, unlike versions of the same idea which as a single unit form a growth-point, helps to explain the centrality of actual or imagined gesture in the translation exercise I have described.

[207] These are the returning a and b rhymes of the first ten lines, but the pairing here gives the impression more of an assonantal rhyme-couplet.
[208] Approximate rhyming, but in a rhyme-position, clearly indicated by the metre, still audible as rhyme.

The gestures accompanying 'leven openstaan, genezen' have already been described: a tracking from side to side of the head (looking at the evidence of 'life standing open' in the cleared woods, in the felled and stripped logs), an opening out and raising of the arms and hands, and a lifting of the face to the (imagined) full light of the sun. The photographs below present a re-play of these gestures for full clarification.

Figure 45: 'en zag het leven…'[209]

Figure 46: 'openstaan…'

[209] The photographs of Figures 46-49 are by Glenn Lang.

Figure 47: 'genezen'…

Figure 48: 'genezen' (continued)…

Not only do the gestures explain why ‘revealed’ was paired with ‘open’ in the translation, iconically representing both a surrounding openness and an openness to action upon oneself – a receiving and a giving – they are especially suggestive of a ritual moment of revelatory wonder. They combine something like the ancient hieratic *orans* [praying] gesture (see e.g. Hassett 1913:269) with a more natural turning towards the warmth of the sun. The revealed wonder, in my psychophysiological reading, is that clearance and felling bring new life with them: the logs are there in their full nakedness (‘ontschorste bomen’ = debarked trees), with the growth-rings of their life clearly visible, ready to be transformed into the furniture of home and soul. The lyric-I in the course of his life has felled and has been felled – but the material of that life is the creative xylem from which usefulness and beauty can be shapen. Moreover, the general context of the clearing in the woods (both in actuality and symbolically), which encourages a natural cycle of regeneration, speaks of the interdependence of life and death, and a healing which moves beyond the personal into the inter-personal and the inter-species: a network of healing perceived in an intense moment of revelation.

Figure 49: Saint Apollinaire in the orans *gesture. My photograph. Basilica of Sant’Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, April 2013.*

My own spontaneous gestural response to the ST, with its inherent iconicity and metaphoricity, in itself reveals the kind of iconism present in the text which, following Webster (2001), may be designated as a type of magic iconism. In ‘Zeiltocht’, as discussed in Chapter 4, the point of magical transformation and

healing takes place within the magic icon of the reversed mirror-like vowels of 'ziel' [soul] and 'zeil' [sail]. Here the searching obsessive rhyming on the same sound (/e:/) finds it object in 'genezen' [cured/healed], a transformative word sprung into being by its pairing with 'leven' [life]. The magic here is not so much to body forth a living being, as Webster shows is the case in the Apollinaire and Cummings poems, but rather to show the state of life itself in action: nothing dies, whatever, whatever the case seems. In the midst of the dark wood of suffering we may not realize this, but moments of grace can show us the full light of the sun, and its transformative poiesis. The choice of my TT words 'I saw life open and revealed, healed', then, whilst not exactly providing the culmination of the iconic search through words containing the same vowel-sound[210], does allow a magically iconic transformation by placing the two rhyming words next to each other, triggering an electrically swift switch, and allowing the further, gentler transformative understanding of the sestet to take place.

Gestural enactment and visualization also provided me with translations for 'bezoedeld' [sullied], and for Achterberg's hidden signature, which symbolically personalizes the final magic act of release and closure. In the case of 'bezoedeld', the actions of moving through muddy or boggy ground, and the clearing away of branches from the face (see Visualization i.), suggested both being sullied *by* a mire, and being stuck *in* a mire, which the translation 'mired' captures. The concealed reference to Achterberg's name has already been commented on (Visualization iv.), and was incorporated into the TT both in direct translation as 'under my own name', but also allusively in 'beneath the hills'[211], behind which, after his departure in the train, the lyric-I will disappear, leaving his 'station' (his works, his life) to freely take on their own significance and import, with no further action on his part, and no influence from any adverse actions his life may have led him into.

[210] But there has been some preparation for the /i:/ of 'revealed'/'healed' in 'reading', 'believe', 'me', 'sympathy', which tell their own story of search and grace.

[211] In other words, I have imported the hills (or mountains) of my visualization into the translation, but these appeared in my mind because of Achterberg's clear reference to his own name [behind/beyond-mountain].

Formally speaking, Achterberg's poem has already diverged from the strict sonnet-form both in its rhyme-scheme and in its extension of the octave – the problem – into ten lines. Although the obsessive rhyming of those ten lines has strong iconic effect, the rhymes themselves seem to appear in unexpected places, because of the phrasing of the poem which, as already discussed, conveys its sense of wandering lostness through strong enjambements and a preponderance of unbalanced, back-loaded pausing. In translation this effect has been captured by patterning the TT phrasing very closely on the ST, as a result, I believe, of the incremental sense-unit memorization which obscured the end-rhyme until the couplet rhymes of the sestet. This allowed the TT to develop its own solutions to the close relationship of form and meaning in this poem, so that the rambling rhythms of the 'dizaine' are inter-punctuated with several different kinds of sound-echoes, shorter, smaller searches for the object, but are still interwoven with the key vowel sound which will find its home in 'h**ea**led'. The translation approach chosen for this poem, therefore, enabled me to make hierarchical decisions about the inter-relationship between phrasal movement, rhythm, and sound, which placed the emphasis on their relationship to iconicity rather than to schema, allowing elements of the schematic form to return in the sestet, when the problem had found its resolution.

IV.iii Conclusions

This final commentary has focused on my experimental approach to translating a single poem by Achterberg, relating this back to the concepts and theories discussed in Chapter 4, whose own exploration of iconicity, magic iconism and gesture, was prompted by my reading of Achterberg's poetics. The techniques discussed in this commentary are a development of those used in translating Nijhoff's 'Haar laatste brief', with an especial emphasis here on visualization and gestural enactment. This exploration has convinced me that exercises which deliberately draw on the body-mind – body and mind acting in full unity as the whole unit they already are – can aid the translator by provoking responses to the TT in such an engaged manner that problems of form and content dissolve in the re-creative act. A related, but opposite, way of looking at this would be to say that it is the knowledge that one comes to the text with the ultimate aim of

translating it which produces the heightened body-mind awareness which enables one to interact with the text in this manner: a 'thinking for speaking' (through gestural enactment and direct corporeal experience) which has been prompted, as it were, by a 'thinking for translation' (Slobin 2003:8).

In particular, this last exercise has been most clearly ritualistic and even shamanistic, in an active playing out of those elements in the ST, making it clear also that a truly poetic ritualism, a poetic shamanism, is not based on exclusivity, but on participation. Ritual, as perceived by Hopwood in her essay on the relationship between dream, magic and poetry, 'is a process by which the people who wish to accomplish something enter imaginatively into the process so that they can carry out their share in producing its result' (1951:158). As discussed in Chapter 4, Webster sees something similar occurring in magically iconic poems whose techniques of defamiliarization serve as forms of enchantment which consist 'of the reader's ritual re-enactment of the writer's experiences and being' (2001:113). In Achterberg's words, which form the epigraph to this study: 'the reader must be the second poet' (quoted in Fokkema 1973b:25, tr.). How better to do this than through translation? And how better to approach translation than by methods, all and any, which activate the full creative and re-creative self?

Finally, of the several exercises carried out in preparation for translation, this was the one which most convinced me that a non-schematic approach to rhyme and sound-echoing, a conversion of the fixed to the fleeting, or fugitive (cf. Jarvis 2011:39), where appropriate and possible, does enable the translator to find a middle way between translating for the form and translating for 'image and meaning' (Bly in Allén 1999:84). The implications of this will be further discussed in Chapter 5, the conclusion to this study.

a language, changing into music
of itself because it echoed,
like a pitcher in the desert
giving water, the gift of music.
Nijhoff (tr.)

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Learning the work of a poet is not linear, one item at a time, first this, then that, but complex and simultaneous, just like learning a language in fact.

James Boyd White

5.1 An exploration

This study has explored the poetry of two major Dutch poets of the 20th century from a number of angles, but with the aim of discovering what makes the voices of their poems so distinctive. Those voices are formal – in the terms discussed throughout this enquiry – but are also quick, alive, spontaneous, and singing. They encapsulate both sound and silence – and send those capsules of being into a future which has included my listening ear, my co-creative mind, my feeling body.

Some of the questions I asked in my introductory chapter – can aural devices in poetry like this be translated for expressivity and meaning? can strong rhyming and metrical effects still be used in contemporary poetry translation practice? – seem to me now almost to border on the naïve when reviewed from the perspective of the study itself, which in its complexity has, at least in part, mirrored the actual complexity both of learning to read these poets and of learning to translate that reading into new texts which are partially translation (declarations that in this or that specific TT that this is – more or less – what Nijhoff or Achterberg 'said') but much more are, once the act of translation has begun to imprint itself in language, a new set of word-relatings within a form which evolves in answer not only to the ST, but to itself, the emerging TT. This is so whether or not my aim is ethically restorative (cf. Venuti 2011), a question of redress, as I phrased it in Chapter 1, or whether my aim is to give full free play to my own creativity, as appears to be the case for a number of poet-translators, as was also discussed in Chapter 1. Borges' fable of 'Pierre Menard: Author of the *Quixote*' (2000:62-71) perfectly captures how even the same is different

according to the context in which it appears, so that even were I to aim for a perfect reproduction of rhyming and metrical effects of the ST in my TT, and, unlikely as that may be, still capture the ST image and meaning, the new *context* would render my TT different. Translation – especially of poetry *as poetry* – can never in this view be simply a direct quotation of the ST, but is always at one and the same time interpretive (i.e. readerly, cf. Gutt 2000:169-173), co-creative, *and* originally creative. It is originally creative – in the simplest terms – because before the translation process, both act and pre-actional activation, *that* TT did not exist. The process has brought it into being. This may in part be a back-to-front process in comparison to the original ST act, which seemed to start in the mind, and end on the paper, but, as Nijhoff pointed out again and again, there is a circularity between thought, writing, and reading, which makes it hard to pinpoint the source or origin, or the conscious action of the writer on the material which shapes itself under the pen:

> *it is he who writes*, that is to say, who allows my pen to glide and with long flowing strokes lets it hover like a gull, and who dreams his own monstrous dream on which my consciousness can get no grip; – formerly, when my full consciousness wrote, when with careful up and down-strokes I wrote down, absolutely clearly, the results of abstract reveries that had gone through my mind when I strolled, with the tormented expression of a philosopher, through the suburbs of the city where I live, – what difficulty it cost me to grant my thoughts anything like the flesh and blood of emotions; – while now, in this present moment, when the strange free flourishing of my own arbitrary hand is writing independently, I start to notice that he is expressing himself there in the form, the dreaming animal, already there, and that my wakeful consciousness cannot do anything better than match itself against him, wrestle against him, follow these arbitrary movements of the pen on the paper and as far as possible get them under its power; – like this am I not made from two elements which work against each other, struggling with each other, beyond the control of reason, perhaps in a fight to the death? –
>
> *VW*II: 1063-4 (tr.)

This is Nijhoff's own fable of creativity, *De pen op papier* [the pen on paper], referred to several times in this study, but this translated quotation comes from an earlier point in the fable, before the Pied Piper's advice which will be so determinative of Nijhoff's new direction in poetry (in itself a development of and

a natural growth from his earlier poetics). Here Nijhoff, in his emphasis on the bodily and the subconscious, the dreaming animal, the hand that holds the pen which draws out its movements across the paper as freely and naturally as a gull, in dialogue and dialectical struggle with the conscious rational form-imposing mind, catches the exact dilemma faced by someone like me who wants to translate for sound and rhythm, but who does not entirely want to subjugate the free, subconscious creativity of the dreaming animal to the constraint of a given form. Moreover, as has been argued throughout this study, such a form can never mean and evoke in the same way as in its ST, where form and content are 'exquisitely close-knit' (Brockway 1980:52), cannot in fact be separated.

My hope has been that a process-based approach to translation, developed, as demonstrated throughout this study, in response to the poetics of both the poets I have worked with, would help me find a way out of the blind alley created by the strict opposition between free and formal translation. This has led me to develop the methods and approaches presented in Commentaries II to IV, which have explored how far a psychophysiological approach to poetry translation can help solve problems of form. As I have shown, each method tested has been somewhat different in emphasis according to which poet and which poem was to be translated. Each approach was developed in conjunction with my understanding of Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poetics, based on an extensive and thorough exploration of their total oeuvre, which in Nijhoff's case has also included critical and creative prose writings and letters, and in Achterberg's case (rare) interviews and anecdotes which open a window onto his thinking about poetry. Helpful also has been a wide range of Dutch critical works on both poets, more than I have been able to refer to directly in this study, but whose angles on specific poems or groups of poems have sometimes enabled me to solve certain issues of meaning or intention[212]. Moreover, as I have discussed throughout the study, but especially in the main chapters, specific methods of literary analysis (stylistics, cognitive poetics, close reading) and particular lines of philosophical or experiential enquiry (derived especially from Buddhist philosophies, from drama training, pragmatic

[212] For example, it is helpful to know that the sonnet inserted into Nijhoff's 'Awater' is a translation of Petrarch's sonnet 250, 'Solea lontana in sonno consolarme', since this may have implications for its translation (cf. Steenhuis 2010:n.p.).

philosophy, and psycholinguistics) have enabled me to focus on aspects of form in both Nijhoff's and Achterberg's poetry from an unusual angle. This led to my investigation of the meaning of breath in the work of both poets, and to seeing its importance in Nijhoff's work, in particular, as a structural element working with the syntax to create speech-like rhythms which counterpoint the metrically-created rhythms of the formal poems, and which have the effect of masking end-rhyme and therefore schema. These speech-like rhythms are further developed in Nijhoff's own work, particularly in the longer poems ('Het veer' [the ferry], 'Awater' and especially 'Het uur u' (zero hour)), in which the rhymes, as pointed out by King, 'emerge spontaneously out of the natural speech-rhythms' (King in Kroon 1986:384, tr.). King's insight, later supported by my reading of Jarvis's essay on rhyme (2011), led me to see that a more spontaneous, non-schematic, approach to rhyme might help me find a middle way between translating for form and translating for 'image and meaning' (Bly in Moffett 1999:84), Pound's opposition between melopoeia (sound and form) and phanopoeia (imagery). This investigation of breath also led me to understand that the placing and order of words in the poem was of especial importance if they were to interact with the breath-pause as Nijhoff clearly intended, especially in the poems collected in his *Nieuwe gedichten* (1934) and beyond. This helped me grasp that form is much more than set form, that the poet working with set forms (for example, the sonnet) can stretch and mould those forms to his or her own design with the same meaning-making intentions as for those working in free verse or organic form. Indeed, as Nijhoff makes clear in the translated quotation from *De pen op papier* (above), it is that tussle between the 'wakeful consciousness' and the 'dreaming animal', in which the wakeful consciousness has to be taught to wait and watch, and be content with only sometimes getting the 'free flourishing' 'arbitrary' expressiveness 'under its power', it is that which infuses the verse with life, with flesh-and-blood emotion. The translator who submits entirely to the wakeful consciousness, Blake's over-control of Ratio as discussed in 2.2, is unlikely to be able to create that feeling of flesh-and-blood emotion in his or her work. As should be clear from the foregoing study, in particular in the commentaries, that aim has been mine throughout, and in the psychophysiological approaches I have developed I believe I have discovered a method that at the very least has worked for me, and may well work for other translators.

The exploratory, bottom-up, inductive nature of my investigation – in keeping with the guiding notion of process matching both Nijhoff's and Achterberg's own poetics, as discussed in 1.3.2 – also meant that what I see as an important element of Achterberg's relationship to rhythm, sound and form in his poetry, its strong tendency towards iconicity, began to grow in importance as a focus of my work, particularly with regard to magic iconism, and its relationship to the performativity of the word. This not only led to a deepening of my understanding of the shamanic in Achterberg's poetry and poetics, but also inter-related my interest in psychophysiological approaches to translation to gesture in the fullest sense of the word (see 4.5). The '*actual* sensory content' (Scarry 1999:5) of poetry, rooted in its sounds and rhythms, can not only be read iconically, as shown in Chapter 4 and its follow-up commentary, but can also be sympathetically enacted in a preparation for translation which allows the body-mind (the dreaming animal *and* the wakeful consciousness) to play its full role in experiencing the power of the word: voice, gesture, posture and, crucially, internal visualization helped to make the to-be-translated poem an experience fully rooted in the translator's self, enabling, once again, the schematic aspects of form to subside in importance and be replaced by a focus on the (magically) iconic sounds, those which most clearly tell the story in the whole.

Working from rhythm, to the resonant non-word spaces of the in-breath, to the fullness of sound and iconicity within the work of both poets, subtly present in Nijhoff's work, saturatedly so in Achterberg's case, enabled me to fully understand, for myself, through experience and investigative work, how the form worked, and, therefore, how it might be translated.

5.2 Contribution of this study to knowledge

As detailed in 1.2, both Nijhoff and Achterberg are considered to be major Dutch poets of the 20th century, influential in their own time, and into the present-day, yet their work is barely known outside their own culture. I consider this study as a potential contribution to extending knowledge of their work to a new readership, to an international discussion on modernism, which, as discussed in 1.2.3, has

ignored the place of Dutch literature for far too long, and possibly to Dutch scholarship itself. Much of the ground covered in my investigations into breath and iconicity in the work of both poets has not, as far as I am aware, been discussed in this fashion in the Low Countries.

I have also drawn into my discussion the work of several Dutch critics whose writing has not yet been translated into English, including that of Nijhoff himself; my translated extracts from such works should point to the fact that critical and philosophical thinking from a lesser-taught language also has much to add to literary debates.

Although my translations have primarily been included in the appendices, it is my hope that they too have made some contribution to knowledge about Nijhoff's and Achterberg's work, and that they do so in a literary fashion, by (re-)presenting poetry as poetry. It should be apparent both from my discussion throughout this study, and from the presentation of the translations, that I see the end-result (if indeed these appendices are a final result) as co-creative, a standing-in-for, standing-against and standing-with the STs, making the relationship between the ST and TT clear and open.

Finally, the approaches I have discussed in Commentaries II to IV, which have worked extensively with the physicalization of rhythms, with memorization, visualization, gestural enactment, and with an oralization and vocalization of the text through the use of Think-Aloud methods and audio-recordings will, I hope, be suggestive to translators, teachers and researchers working in the fields of literature and translation, showing also that corporeal forms of knowledge may be as enlightening as more conventional forms of literary and stylistic analysis.

As should be clear from this discussion, I consider this study both as a contribution to Comparative Literature and to (Literary) Translation Studies. The translation approaches I have developed, as should by now be apparent, have not been a potential contribution to Translation Theory, but rather to Translation Pedagogics and to experiential forms of learning.

5.3 What this study has not covered

Although this study is sub-titled 'a process-based approach to translating the poems of Martinus Nijhoff […] and Gerrit Achterberg', and although I used some Think-Aloud methods in oralizing a number of actual acts of translation (about 17 in total), this study has not analyzed this material according to Think-Aloud protocol methods. This has been for a number of reasons, partly to do with the intensive nature of transcription, and partly because the thrust of this study has been (self-)educative and experiential. Moreover, as discussed in Commentary IV, ultimately, and perhaps in keeping with a Nijhoffian understanding of resonant silence, I found that there were long periods when no 'thinking-aloud' was taking place, which nevertheless often resulted in translation solutions. More importantly, I felt that to add a level of self meta-observation to acts which were primarily intended to be (co-)creative, would make me too self-conscious, and would ultimately work against my main aim, which was to write good translations of the poems. A possible solution to this would be to ask another scholar to carry out the observations and analyses, myself being the subject of another person's experiments.

I have also not been able to cover the full extent of all the different approaches to translation which I tested. I most regret not having the space to discuss in full the part that memory played in this work and, in particular, to examine what happens when the text is thrown away all together. Commentary II detailed my work with memory and the use of an image-frame as an aide-memoire. However, later work with both Achterberg's and Nijhoff's poetry tested the role of visualization *without the vocalization of a memorized text*. In these cases, the images themselves created an oral script from which I worked to produce a TT. This method, I feel, is an interesting one for translator-poets who wish to free themselves entirely from the word-material to concentrate on the phanopoeia. Melopoeia and logopoeia would then evolve in the TL in response to the visualizations derived from the ST, and not to the ST itself.

5.4 Further possibilities

Although this study has focused on the work of two specific Dutch poets, the methods outlined in Commentaries II to IV may be suggestive not only to translators of poetry, but also to those working with prose and drama. Short passages from longer narratives – perhaps of a lyrical or descriptive nature – could be explored for sound and rhythm, for image and icon, in the manners I have suggested, bringing the to-be-translated text more closely into the translator's full self. A free memory-based translation could be compared to a text-based translation to determine which of the two approaches produced a more vivid answer to the ST, perhaps with the intention of combining the best of both.

In more specifically personal terms, I myself would now use elements of these approaches as part of a familiarization with the work of a particular writer or poet, not for each and every poem or passage, but rather to open the gates to a more consciously psychophysiological involvement with the text, to show the body-mind that text can come fully alive in the self, to give the body-mind analogous experiences to those which helped form the text, and to allow the text to grow, change and develop beyond the locked doors of its print.

5.5 The final word

Whether or not my main thesis questions have been answered in this study is a matter of perspective. From a personal point of view I feel that a critical, co-creative, process-based approach to translating formal poetry has strengthened me as a translator. Moreover, whether or not the methods trialled in the course of the investigation and described in the commentaries will prove useful to others is beyond the actual scope of this work, but lies in a possible future. I hope that these methods do have usefulness, and that the examples I have given may be suggestive to other translators and teachers, although, clearly, the detail of their own work would have to be developed in conjunction with the poetics of any work to be translated. To paraphrase Nijhoff, each new journey is always an adventure. I do, however, feel that this study has given a detailed example of

what it might mean to approach translation by a psychophysiological route. In that sense, I believe, my aims have been achieved.

***

Go little book, go my little study,
go, take your chances in the wider world.
Who knows if you'll be lucky or unlucky?
Who knows what kind of influence you'll wield?
Perhaps none at all, though you have things to yield.
I can't say what they are, only the reader
will bring these words to life, speaking them, breathing.

Antoinette Fawcett
After Chaucer (Book V Troilus and Cressida)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

BWN: *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*: the Biographical Dictionary of the Netherlands. Also referred to as BWN-online.
CUP: Cambridge University Press
DBNL: Digitale Bibliotheek voor de Nederlandse letteren
EB: Encyclopaedia Britannica
ed.: edited
(ed.): editor
(eds): editors
KB: Koninklijke Bibliotheek
KJV: King James Version of the Bible
KHM: Kinder- und Hausmärchen (fairy tales collected by the Grimm brothers – 1857 version)
KNAW: Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen
LM: Letterkundig Museum
MUP: Manchester University Press
n.d.: no date
NG: Nijhoff's *Nieuwe gedichten* [new poems]
n.p.: no page
OED: Oxford English Dictionary
OEW: Nijhoff's *Over eigen werk* [about one's-own work]
OUP: Oxford University Press
pb: pre-breath
SL: Source Language
ST: Source Text
SUNY: The State University of New York Press
SV: Statenvertaling [states-translation]: the Dutch translation of the bible
sv: separable verb
SW: Snow White / Sneeuwwitje
TAP: Think-Aloud Protocol
tr.: translated (by)
(tr.): translator
(trs): translators
TC: Target Culture
TL: Target Language
TT: Target Text
v: verb
VG: *Verzamelde gedichten* [collected poems]; this abbreviation may refer either to Nijhoff's or to Achterberg's work. The context will make clear which is intended.
VWII: Vol. 2 of Nijhoff's *Verzamelde werk*
WNT: *Woordenboek der Nederlandse Taal* (1851-1998, available on-line from 2007 in a corrected version).

*: an asterisk preceding a word or phrase signifies 'hypothetical' e.g. *'But the blossoms are, when the little-tree blooms...' which indicates a possible, but not actualized, translation.

Hours, minutes and seconds are abbreviated to this form: 4h35m2s.

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APPENDIX[214]

FINAL VERSIONS OF SOME POEMS

[214] This appendix represents only a very small proportion of all the translation work carried out during my doctoral studies.

Little song

A sapling has grown in my heart,
red as blood in its roots,
but when it blooms its blossoms are
snow-white on the slender shoots.

I dream about birds and a blazing fire,
a whirl of screeching, a scratch,
but a song rises up in the morning hour
like a phoenix from ash.

And the red of love fades away
to become the flawless child;
the purity which belongs to death
already begins in life.

Liedje

Er staat in mijn hart een boompje gegroeid,
De wortels zijn bloedig rood,
Maar de bloesems zijn, als het boompje bloeit,
Sneeuwwit langs de tengere loot.

's Nachts droom ik van vogels en laaiend vuur
En hoor verward gekras,
Maar een lied rijst in het morgenuur
Als een feniks uit asch.

En van de liefde verbleekt het rood
Tot de smetteloosheid van het kind -
Er is een zuiverheid van den dood
Die reeds in het leven begint.

Martinus Nijhoff

Translated November 2008. Revised April 2012 and November 2013. (From *Vormen* (1924) *VG*:126).

Curriculum vitae

Always the victim of indulgent scheming,
a conscious dallier and a melancholic,
I know how to dupe my imagined public,
how to fake seriousness in every single look.

Shadows, you who at night-time, during music,
stand at my shoulder, rocking your dark wings,
will my soul ever fly into your strange wild kingdom,
pioneering towards your rhythms and your myth?

Did I have to reach this place of abandonment –
becoming old, sitting at lonely tables –

and work, not for the sake of the work,
but simply to argue against doubt and silence,

dig into the heart, find the infertile clay,
dream polar expeditions, make poems?

Levensloop

Steeds dupe van toegeeflijke intrigen,
Bewust behaagziek en melancholiek,
Weet ik, zonder scrupule, als voor publiek,
In iedren oogopslag een ernst te liegen.

O schaduwen die, 's nachts en bij muziek,
Met donkre vleugels aan mijn schouder wiegen,
Zal ooit mijn ziel uw vreemd wild rijk in vliegen
Baanbrekend naar uw mythe en uw rythmiek??

Moest ik tot zoo'n verlatenheid geraken:
Oud worden, aan eenzame tafels zitten,

Werken, om 't werk niet, maar om tegen 't zwijgen
En twijf'len argumenten te verkrijgen,

Het hart tot de onvruchtbare plek omspitten,
Pooltochten droomen en gedichten maken?

Martinus Nijhoff

Translated December 2008. Revised June and August 2009. (From *Vormen* (1924) *VG*:133).

Trinity

God whets His law upon this stone,
which my existence has become.
But Jesus Christ has given us fish
and wine to be his memories.

Is One of Either then mistaken?
We are a dark phenomenon
if in our lives there does not rise,
out of the Holy Ghost, the light.

Holy Ghost, come into verse,
in which all Three of You, One by One,
might be the same and I alone
the singing word that gives you form.

Holy Ghost, complete the verse
so fully that there be no thread
which with Yourself does not vibrate,
as if it were the beloved flesh.

Mother of Jesus – that's the flesh.
Sister of Christ – that is the verse.
Father, who in the heavens reside,
may Your kingdom come, and bide.

Triniteit

God scherpt Zijn wet op deze steen,
die mijn bestaan geworden is.
Maar Jezus Christus geeft ons vis
en wijn tot Zijn gedachtenis.

Heeft Een van Beiden Zich vergist?
Wij zijn een duister fenomeen,
zolang niet in ons leven rijst
het licht van den Heiligen Geest.

Heilige geest, kom in het vers.
waarin Gij Drieën, Een voor Een,
hetzelfde zijt en ik alleen
zingend van U de woorden ben.

Heilige Geest, vervul het vers
zo gans, dat er geen vezel is,
die niet van Uw belevenis
vibreert, als van de liefde vlees.

Moeder van Jezus is het vlees.
Zuster van Christus is het vers.
Vader, die in de hemelen zijt,
kome Uw koninkrijk.

Gerrit Achterberg

Translated July 2008. Revised July 2013. From *En Jezus schreef in 't zand* (1947, VG: 601).

Snow White

Snow White lies encased in glass.
Every mirror has wiped her out.
She's on the Missing Persons List.

Just because she took a bite
from the fairest apple ever made
she has to lie congealed in ice.

The huntsman told to murder her
in the woods, let her go free;
the huntsman in his plumed attire.

Poison-stays and poison-comb
could not make her leave our home –
the dwarves hurried through the reeds.

Only an apple is so sweet
that not a dwarf could suspect
why dead Snow White is lying here.

They carried her to a mountain-top.
A dwarf stumbled on the path
against the casket, but nothing broke.

With rosy cheeks she will lie in state
till the prince grasps her hands of ice,
plunging his arms in the deep wet.

Then the apple will shoot from her throat,
and once again the velvet blood
will stream in the body's diamond.

Sneeuwwitje

Sneeuwwitje ligt in glas gekist,
bij alle spiegels uitgewist
en opgegeven als vermist.

Omdat zij van de appel at,
de mooiste die zij ooit bezat,
ligt zij in dit gestolde bad.

De jager, die haar in het bos
ombrengen moest, liet haar weer los;
de jager met zijn vederdos.

Gifsnoer en haarkam konden niet
bewerken dat zij ons verliet:
de dwergen joegen door het riet.

Alleen een appel is te zoet,
dan dat een dwergenmond vermoedt
wat hier de dood Sneeuwwitje doet.

Zij droegen haar tot op een berg.
Onderweg struikelde een dwerg
tegen de kist aan, zonder erg.

Zij ligt met hoge kleur totdat
de prins twee ijshanden vat,
diep met zijn armen in het nat.

Dan schiet de appel uit haar keel
en stroomt het bloed weer als fluweel
door lichaams fonkelend juweel.

Hij zet haar voor zich op het paard.
Als zij hem in de ogen staart
ziet ze haar beeld daarin bewaard.

Nu gaat het in gestrekte draf.
Op vuurpantoffels danst voor straf
de boze koningin naar 't graf.

He sets her before him on his steed.
If she turns and looks inside his eyes
she'll see her image, still life-size.

Now the story gallops away.
On fire-shoes the wicked queen
dances her punishment to the grave.

Gerrit Achterberg

First translated October 2005. Re-translated February 2009. Revised May 2009 and November 2012. From *Mascotte* (1950, VG: 770).

Her last letter

Don't blame me for being fickle-natured
because I loved you without staying true
and left you without crying. A woman
can't be quit – unless she herself has cured
the wound already – of a tenderness
fixed on the life to come in the future.
It was me I had to start again – a duty
I hadn't seen I was intended for.

Softly say my name, and I am in the room:
the flowers are there again on the window-sill,
the plates arrayed in the white kitchen-rack.

Because there's more of me within that sound
than in the youthfulness you love me for,
my almost boy-like breasts, my golden hair.

Haar laatste brief

Verwijt mij niet dat ik lichtzinnig was
omdat ik liefgehad heb zonder trouw
en zonder tranen heenging. Want een vrouw
komt nooit, als zij bij voorbaat niet genas,

de wond te boven ener tederheid
die op toekomstig leven is gericht.
Ik moest mij wel hernemen voor een plicht
waartoe ik onbemerkt ben voorbereid.

Zeg zacht mijn naam, en ik ben in 't vertrek:
de bloemen staan weer in de vensterbank,
de borden in het witte keukenrek.

Want meer van mij bevindt zich in die klank
dan in de jeugd waarom je van mij houdt,
mijn bijna-jongensborst, mijn haar van goud.

Martinus Nijhoff

Translated June 2009. Revised July 2009. (From *Nieuwe gedichten* (1934) *VG*: 215).

Word

You are now equalized with earth.
Rain penetrates the core of you,
snow sinks into each part of you.
Winds blow you bare.

Your eyes still keep the shine of light
as if you'd woken up today.
But they can't track the sun or moon.
No star is touched this way.

And what my blood-stream understands
is that you're seeded and fulfilled
by every element.

Yet I still feel there must exist
the word that matches you.

Woord

Gij zijt den grond gelijk gemaakt.
Regen is tot u ingegaan.
en sneeuw zinkt in u saam.
Winden waaien u naakt.

Het licht blijft in u ogen staan,
alsof gij heden zijt ontwaakt.
Maar zij volgen zon noch maan.
Geen ster wordt aangeraakt.

Voorzover het mijn bloed aangaat,
zijt gij met ieder element
verzadigd en voldaan.

En nochtans moet het woord bestaan,
dat met u samenvalt.

Gerrit Achterberg

Translated June 2013. Revised August 2013. From *Eiland der ziel* (1939, VG:126).

Station

I felt that I was mired in side-roads
and asked children for directions, they showed
the way, they somehow knew what I'd been reading
in old newspapers, gave me shy looks, askance
as if they couldn't quite believe it. I was expected
at a school but still was in the woods. A girl rode
by on her bike, but stopped and listened
to what was troubling me, blushed in sympathy,
and then pushed on. I came across timber trucks,
saw life open and revealed, healed.
Trees, stripped of their bark, were ready and at hand
for all the furniture makers of the land.
Under my own name, beneath the hills,
I lay down on a bench, with no more fears –
and that afternoon left from a little station
which could grow behind me, free from my actions.

Station

Ik voelde me bezoedeld in zijwegen
en vroeg de weg aan kinderen. Zij wezen
en wisten dingen, die ik had gelezen
in oude kranten; keken schuw-verlegen,
of ze het niet vertrouwden. Ik moest wezen
bij 'n school, maar alles was al bos. We kregen
een meisje op een fiets. Zij liet zich deze
kwestie uitleggen, bloosde toegenegen
en stapte op. Houtwagens kwam ik tegen
en zag het leven openstaan, genezen.
Ontschorste bomen lagen aan de kant
klaar voor de meubelindustrie van 't land.
Onder mijn eigen naam en zonder vrezen
heb ik die middag op een bank gelegen
en ben vertrokken van een klein station,
dat vrijuit achter mij vergroeien kon.

Gerrit Achterberg

Translated October 2011. Revised July 2013. From *Vergeetboek* (1961, VG: 954).