

**A CRITICAL ACCOUNT OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE
POETRY TRANSLATION IN 20th CENTURY FRANCE :
THE CASE OF EMILY DICKINSON**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, do hereby declare that this thesis, 'A Critical Account of Poetry Translation in Twentieth-Century France: The Case of Emily Dickinson', was composed by me and is my own work.

Signed:

Date: December 30, 2002

Abstract

This thesis aims to give a critical account of the place of English-language poetry translation in France in the twentieth century, with particular reference to translations of Emily Dickinson. Chapters One to Four present the wider context against which the analyses of Dickinson's poetry (Chapters Five to Eight) are set.

The goal of Chapter One is to provide a broad sense of the place French literature has accorded to poetry translation during the twentieth century; changing attitudes are noted through a sampling of works from different areas of publication: literary histories, anthologies, and literary journals. It is seen that the small presses, journals, and individual editors are forceful champions of translation as the twentieth century progresses; a French taste for American and metaphysical poetry also emerges. Again from a representative selection of works published across a period of time, Chapter Two explores and summarises the views of eight translation theorists who have been influential in France: although individual opinions remain divided on the question of fidelity to the source text, a tendency towards foreignisation is seen at the end of the twentieth century. Antoine Berman emerges as a significant contributor to the field; I outline his model for translation criticism which I adapt and employ in the later part of the thesis. Chapter Three signals and discusses some of the significant events and developments in verse and translation, from Chateaubriand's *Paradise Lost* to Leyris's Hopkins and Klossowski's *Aeneid*.

Chapter Four tracks the path of Dickinson's publication in France, from the first journal publications in the nineteen-thirties through the major markers in her acculturation up to the end of the century. Chapters Five to Eight focus in turn on four different collections of Dickinson poetry translations: the findings of

each study are reported from the viewpoint of the translation ‘project’ and the approach to Dickinson’s translation taken by each author. Issues discussed include formal questions and problems provoked by aspects of the poet’s style such as syntax, rhyme, compression, and irony; these are all approached by means of a comparative analysis of a chosen group of poems. Chapter Five studies the 1954 collection translated by Jean Simon; Chapter Six studies Alain Bosquet’s collection, published in 1957; Chapter Seven looks at the work of Guy Jean Forgue, published in 1970, and Chapter Eight, at the 1998 collection translated by Claire Malroux.

The Conclusion summarises the patterns of growth in English-language translation in France as demonstrated by the enquiries of the first three chapters. The role Berman’s method has played in my analyses, and its potential help to translation criticism, is discussed. I summarise Dickinson’s assimilation into French literary culture, and I discuss the ways the different translators have presented the poet and translated her work, with particular reference to fidelity to the original texts. I close with a brief homage to the translator Pierre Leyris.

ABBREVIATION

Throughout this work, Antoine Berman's *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne* (Paris, Gallimard, 1995), is referred to as *PUC*.

Introduction

The idea for this thesis came out of a personal interest in Emily Dickinson, which I felt would fit together well with M.Sc. research I had undertaken on the French translation of poetry in the twentieth century. Aware of the impact that other American figures, such as Poe, Eliot, and Whitman had made in France, it seemed a likely hypothesis that given the increased interest in translation during the course of the century, the internationally-renowned Dickinson would have had something of a similar effect, principally by way of translation. In simple terms, it was the degree and nature of that effect that I wished to measure.

Of course, the path of my enquiry varied enormously in its breadth. In order to set Dickinson in a context substantial enough to illuminate later detailed analyses, it was necessary to establish a sense of the wider picture into which she would fit; the picture was complex and I decided for clarity to separate its key aspects into different categories of study: these areas furnish the first three chapters of my work.

The broadest part of the enquiry sought to establish the place of English-language poetry translation in France during the years leading up to, and particularly following on from the moment of Dickinson's first publications in the United States (in 1890) and France (in 1939): for this purely material information, I drew on prominent literary histories and poetry anthologies, on other works of reference, and literary journals.

Another important aspect of the general context was the specific French writings on translation - the theorists' views, which have been expressed increasingly over the course of the century. Again, I chose a sampling of the better known names in the field, and endeavouring within the limits of space to

grasp the general mood, I selected authors writing from different vantage points. For similar reasons, I chose publications which best represented a particular author's views, but which also ranged over an extended period of time. Beginning with the essays of Valery Larbaud, published in the 1940s, I look in chronological order at the work of eight figures, closing with the views of Jean-René Ladmiral and Antoine Berman, who published in the 1990s. I should say that while my work is generally not concerned with linguistics, I felt that in the particular area of theory, a glance in that direction would help round an overall understanding of twentieth-century views - thus Ladmiral, and also a work by Georges Mounin, published much earlier in 1957. In addition, since the century's deepening interest in translation was reflected in the number of works published in the sixties and seventies, I also consider two quite difficult works published at that time, both renowned in the field: Walter Benjamin's essay, 'The Task of the Translator' (originally published in Germany in 1923, translated into English in 1968, and French in 1971), and Henri Meschonnic's *Pour une poétique de la traduction* (1973). In addition, for the views of a poet who is also a practising translator, I turn to the essays of Yves Bonnefoy, again published in the sixties and seventies; and finally, for an opinion running absolutely counter to those generally held, I consider Efim Etkind's *Un Art en crise*, published in 1982.

In addition to the theorists, there are of course a multitude of other French figures who are often even better known, precisely because their names have been more publicly linked to works or events of significance in the field. While it was impossible to summarise or even mention all of these, in a third area of study, I select and briefly describe those that again, are key to an understanding of the broader context. These range from Chateaubriand's notable translation of Milton, in 1836, through the critical versions of Poe offered by Baudelaire and Mallarmé, to the debate, somewhat emblematic of twentieth-century translation, between Léon Robel and Henry Deluy in the pages of *Change*, one hundred and fifty years later. In addition, bearing in mind that a translator coming to Emily Dickinson almost half way through the twentieth century would certainly be aware of preceding approaches to translation, and also of changes in poetic composition that the last one hundred years had brought, it was important to allude to the most significant of those changes,

which I do in this part of my summary. This involves briefly crossing the Atlantic to interview Whitman, before returning to France to report the changes in versification which culminated, broadly speaking, in the introduction of free-verse (*vers libre*).

The understanding provided by these different areas of enquiry piques the curiosity about how Emily Dickinson might be translated. One is impressed to learn that even as the poetic world on both sides of the Atlantic was opening its arms to Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* in 1855, Emily Dickinson had in total privacy accumulated a similar amount of poetic composition, and while the French leaped at the turn of the century to translate Whitman's free lines into a similarly liberated verse of their own, it was forty years on that anyone went near Dickinson's equally innovative lines. The question of Dickinson's acculturation is addressed in the final area of exploration before I move to specific analyses of her translations, and constitutes the fourth chapter of my work. For much of the information contained in Chapter Four, I am particularly indebted to Ann Lilliedahl's 1981 publication, *Emily Dickinson in Europe*; I was also aided by the articles of James Woodress, 'Emily Dickinson', in *Fifteen American Authors before 1900* (1971), and Mariette Messmer, 'Dickinson's Critical Reception' in *The Emily Dickinson Handbook* (1998).

As that chapter on Dickinson's French publication indicates, from the large quantity of translations of her poems, there are probably eight or nine volumes whose place in this work one might easily justify. However, since I wished to undertake quite detailed analyses of individual works in the final chapters of my study, I was obliged to make a selection. I accordingly chose publications which, as with the theorists, would together represent a good cross-cutting of the period, and also, for comparative purposes, provide translators from different professional backgrounds. These factors considered, the final selection of four was made by a system of comparison and elimination.

It was clear from the outset that the work of Dickinson's principal translator, Claire Malroux, also a poet, would be included. Of her works, the last and most significant publication, *Une Âme en incandescance*, held the additional attraction of having been published at the end of the century (1998): this would act as a kind of outside marker of my period. At the other end of the period, the very first book-length collection of Dickinson's poems in French was

offered by Félix Ansermoz-Dubois in 1945, but since the publication appeared in Switzerland, I chose rather to select a collection of forty-nine poems translated by Jean Simon, and published in 1954 in Paris: Simon's work, issued by an important poetry publisher, represents the first book-length translation of the poems to appear in France. Two other important works of translation appeared in this post-war decade, those of Pierre Messiaen (son of Olivier), in 1956, and Alain Bosquet (1957). Both contrasted well with Simon: their work was more substantial, and whereas Simon was translating from an academic context (he was university professor), both translators were poets. Of the two, however, Bosquet's name was the better known, and his interest in Dickinson established through his important anthology of American poetry published the previous year (1956).

Simon, Bosquet, and Malroux selected, it remained to choose a collection which ideally would fall somewhere in the middle of the fifty-year period marked: Guy-Jean Forgue's significant 1970 work was the obvious choice, the more so since Forgue is a university professor specialising in American literature. However, a smaller collection translated by Claude Berger and Paul Zweig in 1963 needed mention by dint of the particular attention they accord to the findings of American Dickinson scholarship. I thus decided to use their work as a comparative introduction to my chapter on Forgue.

These selections made, it was with regret that I did not have the space to include either Patrick Reumaux's 1998 collection, or to devote a chapter to Pierre Leyris, the translator responsible for Dickinson's first journal translations in 1939. The fact that Reumaux's work appeared in the same year as Malroux's vital collection rendered that absence less crucial, but I was less consoled by Leyris's neglect: finally, no doubt moved by the fact that Leyris, a life-long translator, had recently died (2001), I decided to devote the very last part of my work to him and his work with Dickinson - a kind of coda to my study.

Antoine Berman, as I say, initially represented one of eight theorists whose views were to contribute to a broad summary of the thinking on translation during the twentieth century; in the event, however, and primarily as a result of reading his 1995 publication, *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne*, both author and work assumed roles of more critical importance in my study - in particular, to my method of analysis. I largely summarise Berman's

thinking in his *Pour une critique*, and his earlier work, *À L'Épreuve de l'étranger* (1984), in Chapter Two, but I am indebted to him for the basic model for my own method of procedure in Chapters Five to Eight of my work. Also in this respect, I found the work by André Davoust, 'Emily Dickinson entre la dérive des règles et les règles de la dérive' (*Poésie en traduction, Cahiers Charles V*, 1994), in which he acknowledges his own debt to Berman, of immense help and interest.

The goal of the final part of my study was to investigate the ways in which several twentieth-century translators, at different moments in the century, had approached the translation of Emily Dickinson's poetry. Guided to a degree by Berman's recommendations, I kept several factors in mind in making my analyses.

For each of the four collections in question, I seek firstly to establish a 'théorie du sujet traduisant', as Berman has it. This entailed providing a simple outline of the translator's professional and/or translating profile, tied in with a description of his or her 'position traductive', that is to say, his or her conception of translation. Stepping back for a moment, I should note that this particular style of investigation is supported by the belief (again initially prompted by Berman's own views) that if translation criticism is to take more convincing form than it has, broadly speaking, in the twentieth century, then the work of translation being criticised must be coherent: from there, it ideally follows, the criticism will be more lucid, and in circular, mutually beneficial, manner, future translations more accomplished, etc.

The 'position traductive', then, is largely established through the attitudes displayed either overtly or covertly in introductions or prefaces to the work in question, and occasionally through other paratextual material. I then define the 'projet de traduction', that is to say, the particular goals of a translator in presenting his or her Dickinson collection, and finally, I consider a selection of the translated poems.

For this last step, once the context, the translator, and the project are described, I choose not to follow Berman for my method in the analyses of the poems, but rather employ a more traditional, and certainly more practical procedure. Whereas Berman recommends a close reading and analysis of the translation *before* applying the same process to the original, I study the two texts

more or less in parallel - much as a reader might proceed with a bilingual translation printed on facing pages. I have nevertheless adopted, as far as possible, the goal of 'la critique productive', which underlies Berman's approach (and in which, as I discuss, he follows the German Romantics); I do not aim at 'destructive' criticism, of the kind frequently associated with twentieth-century criticism (Meschonnic's name is often cited), but rather - again, to the extent possible - at a fair and descriptive appraisal of the texts. In making my analyses, I also bear in mind the findings I give in preceding chapters: the state of French verse at the time the translations were made, the state of translation itself, and, where relevant, other factors described by Berman as 'paramètres langagiers, littéraires, culturels et historiques qui "déterminent" le sentir, l'agir et le penser d'un traducteur' (*PUC*, p.79). (There is naturally something of a circular process in play here, since at the same time that translations respond to current taste and demand, they are also to a certain degree acting as creators of that taste.) In the particular period with which I deal, the effects of the 'crise de vers' were naturally significant, and in the case of Dickinson, the advances made in American research on the manuscripts.

In devoting a lengthy section of his *Pour une critique* to the comparative analysis of one poem, Berman allows himself enough space to make the kind of scrupulous analysis he feels translation criticism demands; given my own aims, I widen my selected material, as discussed, to four separate collections of poems, but I was persuaded to concentrate my analysis on a small number of poems from each, rather than carry out a more general, necessarily less detailed, study. Finally, for practical reasons I could not follow Berman's recommendation to explore the 'réseaux' of connected works which might be said to surround the poems by Emily Dickinson discussed (the equivalent of Donne, in Berman's work), but chose rather to follow the most significant particularities of each translator's work, as I judged them, as they manifest in the different collections of poems.

Chapter One : The Place of Translation in 20th-Century France

The goal of this chapter is to provide a sense of the place which French literature has accorded to translation during the twentieth century. Clearly, a full assessment would not be possible or essential here: my intention is simply to offer a sketch of the literary culture into which Emily Dickinson had to make her way, and accordingly, my enquiry is limited to a sampling of some of the more prominent surveys of literature in France. At the same time, given my focus on the translation of Emily Dickinson, I pay particular attention to the place of English-language poetry translation.

The majority of works mentioned are devoted to twentieth-century literature,¹ but to provide a clearer idea of the way translation has been considered over the hundred years in question, I have also looked at two works published at the very end of the nineteenth century: Lanson's *Histoire de la littérature française*, published in 1894, and Petit de Julleville's *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900*, published in 1897.² Two further works have been consulted which do not fall strictly into the category of literary history, but which are nevertheless significant in the field of translation.

¹ According to Robert Escarpit, '[p]lus encore que le XIXe, le XXe siècle est celui de l'histoire littéraire' ('Histoire de l'histoire de la littérature', *Histoire des littératures* (Paris: Gallimard, 'Encyclopédie de La Pléiade', 1958) vol. 3, p. 1792); my survey emphasises works published in the latter part of the century, reflecting a general increase in publication of anthologies and histories at that time.

² Gustave Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature française* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1894). The edition used here is the seventh, published in 1903, and all quotations and page references are taken from this edition; Louis Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature française des origines à 1900*, 8 vols (Paris: Armand Colin, 1897).

Fortuitously, they mark the beginning and end of the period in question: *Le Manuel bibliographique de la littérature française moderne*, also by Lanson, and published in 1909, and the *Dictionnaire des oeuvres du XXe siècle*, edited by Henri Mitterand, and published in 1995.³

The two nineteenth-century works have somewhat different parameters: Lanson concentrates purely on literature, while Petit de Julleville's study incorporates both the history of language and the history of literature; while Lanson begins his work with the middle ages, Petit de Julleville includes the period leading up to the middle ages. These differences result in an eight-volume work by Petit de Julleville, and a one-volume study by Lanson. Perhaps partially on this account, it is generally Lanson who is acknowledged as having established literary history in France.⁴

Gustave Lanson

In his 'Avant-Propos', Lanson says that the decision to produce a one-volume work obliged him to restrain the material to be included: he excludes all he feels to have been 'souvent . . . mêlé dans une *Histoire de la Littérature française*', et qui pourtant n'y appartient pas réellement'; his area is 'ce qui [est] indispensable à l'explication de la littérature française . . .'.⁵ He does not mention translation as one of the several areas he has chosen to exclude, and his work contains a number of references. Most significantly, one of the chapters on the sixteenth century is devoted to 'Les traducteurs' (pp.265-270); the 'Tableaux chronologiques des principales oeuvres de la littérature française' at the back of the book also reflects the importance of translation at that time: Lanson lists sixteenth-century translations in a separate column headed 'Traductions', whereas in other periods, translations are subsumed under other categories of literature.

³ Gustave Lanson, *Manuel Bibliographique de la littérature française moderne: 1500-1900* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1909); *Dictionnaire des oeuvres du XXe siècle: littérature française et francophone*, ed by Henri Mitterand (Paris: Librairie Hachette), 1995.

⁴ In *Histoire des littératures*, Robert Escarpit speaks of '[l]e règne de Lanson', and refers to the 1894 *Histoire* as 'un des best-sellers de l'édition universitaire' (p. 1783).

⁵ Lanson, *Histoire*, 'Avant-Propos', pp. xii-xiii. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.

The *Histoire* is organised chronologically, and in charting the course of ten centuries, Lanson refers several times to the impact that works of translation have had on the French literary language. Speaking, for example, of the early twelfth-century interest in Britain, he refers to the ‘fabuleuse *Historia regum Britanniae*’, pointing out that ‘quatre traductions françaises avaient presque aussitôt rendu Arthur et Martin universellement populaires’ (p.47). Or again, in the context of the late fourteenth-century renaissance, he refers to ‘[l]e profit que la littérature française reçoit . . .’, when, as he puts it, ‘de studieux esprits s’appliquent à mettre en langue vulgaire les oeuvres latines’ (p.153). In Lanson’s view, the substantial number of works of translation helped not only to liberate and affirm man’s sense of reason: they also ‘. . . élargi[rent], assoupli[rent], affirm[èrent] à la fois le style et la langue’. Indeed, certain translations brought considerable linguistic innovation: in works such as those by Oresme, Gerson, or Jean de Montreuil, ‘on remarque . . . un accent, une sonorité, une hauteur de ton, qui sont vraiment les commencements d’un art nouveau . . .’. (p.154-55). Lanson contrasts ‘les constructions légères, familières, à la française’, and ‘les tours plus graves, compassés, à la manière des orateurs romains’; with hindsight, his enthusiasm for such confrontation seems to presage later twentieth-century theorists such as Benjamin, Meschonnic, or Berman. The author does not discuss the art of translation, but he views its practice as an important implement for the refinement of the French literary language.

A large section of the *Histoire* is devoted to the ‘Distinction des principaux courants (1535-1550)’, and it is here that the chapter claiming ‘Les traducteurs’ as its chief concern is located. The title is just, in that the focus is, again, not on the craft, but the individual: two short sections focus on La Boétie and Amyot. This approach no doubt reflects Lanson’s vision of literary history in general as one whose object is ‘la description des individualités . . .’(p.vii).

Lanson describes La Boétie as ‘. . . le bon et par endroits délicieux traducteur des *Economiques* de Xenophon’ (p.266), and calls particular attention to his *Contr’un*, ‘un petit écrit qui n’est pas une traduction, et toutefois ne saurait être classé ailleurs que parmi les traductions’. Lanson’s remarks again reveal his belief in the potential power of translation:

. . . La force de ce naïf *Contr’un* se révéla quand les protestants se soulevèrent contre la royauté qui opprimait leur foi: ils le recueillirent et s’en

firent une arme . . . (p.267).

But Lanson is at his most enthusiastic in his section on Amyot. The translator represents, in his view, 'l'effort de tous les traducteurs de son siècle'; with his translation of Plutarch, Amyot 'fit une des grandes oeuvres du siècle . . . le plus considérable effort fourni par la langue française dans sa tentative d'égaliser les langues anciennes' (pp.268-70). In words that seem to echo the aims of the German *Bildung*, Lanson once more insists on the potency of translation. I give this final quotation from the *Histoire* at some length; of the general works on literature consulted, Lanson's words stand out for their conviction and authority in speaking of the creative qualities of translation:

. . . quel exercice cette traduction a été pour la langue . . . il a fallu en élargir les moules et les formes par toutes sorte d'analogies et d'emprunts, italianismes, hellénismes, latinismes. Nombre d'idées et d'objets étaient pour la première fois désignés ou définis en français: il a fallu trouver et créer des mots. Par le Plutarque d'Amyot, des termes de politique, d'institutions, de philosophie, de sciences, de musique, ou sont entrés ou bien ont été définitivement implantés dans la langue française (p.269).

Louis Petit de Julleville

Petit de Julleville's eight-volume work also sporadically mentions translation, and, like Lanson, devotes a large amount of space to Amyot. The chapter on the sixteenth century, 'Les Érudits et les traducteurs', written by Charles Dejob, while drawing attention to the literary worth of Amyot, Étienne, and Pasquier, concludes by discussing the 'supériorité d'Amyot' (4,XI,pp.628-32). Dejob reasons that ultimately, Amyot's eminence was in part due to the 'rôle modeste qu'il a choisi'; the very fact that Amyot was translating, sustained the rigour of his style: '. . . tenu par son texte, il ne pouvait tomber ni dans les digressions ni dans la diffusion'. On the other hand, whereas Lanson was nothing but enthusiastic about Amyot's innovatory use of language, Dejob remarks that 'on peut sourire des anachronismes d'expression'. While he finds that 'son style est resté jeune parce qu'il était vivant . . .', he feels his superiority lies in a 'ferme volonté d'écrire dans la langue de tout le monde . . .' (p.632).

The eighth and final volume of Petit de Julleville's work, devoted to the period from 1850-1900, includes a chapter written by Joseph Texte, 'Les Relations littéraires de la France avec l'étranger' (ch.XII, pp.662-702). The

short section devoted to 'L'influence anglaise' is of note for naming those authors whom Texte judges as most influential during the period leading up to the twentieth century. Texte states that after Romanticism, and the attendant vogue for Shakespeare, Scott, and Byron, there was a hiatus in French interest in the British; this was then strongly revived by Taine's 1864 *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*. All aspects of English intellectual life became subjects for study, and therefore of subsequent influence; Taine mentions Scottish philosophy, and the kind of liberal protestantism favoured by the English and the Americans. At that time, 'Thackeray et Dickens . . . furent très vite francisés' (p.678); the author draws attention to Poe ('L'extraordinaire romancier américain a eu chez nous une très réelle influence' (p.679)), to George Eliot, and to Shakespeare's new popularity, brought about through 'd'innombrables traducteurs et adapteurs' (p.680). Finally, as far as English-language poetry is concerned (other than Poe, Texte does not mention Americans), in a list reminiscent of Lanson's, the author cites Shelley, Coleridge, Keats, Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Elizabeth Browning (p.680).

It is Petit de Julleville himself who concludes the *Histoire*, and given the relative brevity of this section (22 out of approximately 8,000 pages), it is of note that the author elects to promote translation, albeit with typically French understatement:

Cette lutte de deux idiomes, cet effort ingénieux, réfléchi, difficile, qui cherche à traduire une pensée sans lui rien ôter de sa vigueur et de sa clarté, n'est point du tout méprisable (pp.896-97).

Lanson's *Manuel Bibliographique*

The second work by Lanson considered here, the *Manuel Bibliographique de la Littérature Française Moderne 1500-1900*, was published thirteen years after his *Histoire*, in 1909. While it stands as testament to the interest in translation demonstrated in the earlier work, it also by its very nature points to the divide between French translation and French literary history. In the preface, Lanson states that one of the guiding principles for the *Manuel* was to respond to the unanswered needs of students of French literature. He says:

J'ai enflé certains chapitres . . . comme celui des traductions, parce que les manuels et les histoires de la littérature traitent ce sujet fort insuffisamment. Il

est plus facile à un jeune homme de se documenter sur Ronsard que sur les traductions de moralistes.⁶

It is impressive, from the student of translation's point of view, to find that Lanson devotes two or three chapters out of each volume (twenty to thirty chapters in each) to translation, where works are grouped variously under headings of 'Les Traducteurs', 'Théorie de la Traduction', or in the form of lists of translated works, split into country of origin and genre. A detailed analysis of Lanson's methods of presentation and selection is impossible here, but there are one or two comments to be made.

Firstly, Lanson's acknowledgement of the significance of translation is reiterated in a remark he makes in the 'Avertissement' to the section on the seventeenth century. Acknowledging his debt to Gustave Reynier's work, from which he drew, Lanson encourages the publication of Reynier's compilations of Spanish, Italian, and English translations, which would aid '... une connaissance précise de la pénétration des littératures étrangères dans le public français' (II,6,p.v).

We also find, in the same part of the work, an indication of two different roles Lanson judges translation to play. In listing translations in the first two-thirds of the seventeenth century (up to 1660), Lanson distinguishes between Greek and Latin works, which he presents under the name of the translator, and translated works from other countries, which he lists under the name of the author. He explains why:

Les traductions d'auteurs grecs et latins du XVII^e siècle sont surtout des exercices du style: je donne donc la liste alphabétique des traducteurs. Mais pour les ouvrages étrangers, italiens, espagnols, anglais, allemands, orientaux, ce qui importe surtout, c'est leur introduction dans la langue française et devant le public français: je conserve donc l'ordre alphabétique des auteurs (p.296,fn.1).

From 1660 on, Lanson returns definitively to listing the original authors first, a choice which he clarifies in a further footnote:

L'importance des traductions dans l'histoire de la littérature et celle des traducteurs dans l'histoire de la langue diminuent après 1660. Je serai donc plus

⁶ Gustave Lanson, *Manuel Bibliographique de la littérature française moderne: 1500-1900* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1909), preface, p. vii. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

bref. Je reviens à l'ordre alphabétique des auteurs. Ce qui importe maintenant, par accident, telle traduction d'auteur ancien, italien, espagnol, jusque-là non traduit, ou telle traduction qui a fait date, mais surtout l'entrée dans la littérature et la culture française des littératures du Nord, par le moyen des traducteurs (p.431,fn.1).

In making these remarks, Lanson seems to be setting up an opposition between translations that he sees as having been made for the linguistic influence the original style will have on French (the Greek and Latin authors) and those made 'par accident', in other words, all others, judged by Lanson as primarily significant for their first appearance on the French stage.

(It is not without relevance here to mention a work to which we will return, where the 'accidental' nature of translation is also signalled, this time by the editors of Bordas's *La Littérature en France depuis 1945*.

... Étrange cercle vicieux: l'oeuvre de l'écrivain n'est traduite que lorsqu'il y a une 'mode' pour cet écrivain. Lorsqu'elle est traduite, ce sera dans le désordre... *Les Désarrois de l'élève Torless* de Robert Musil, écrits en 1906, ne sont traduits en français qu'en 1960, lorsque la traduction en 1957 et 1958 de *L'Homme sans qualités*, qui date de 1930, a imposé le nom de son auteur.⁷

These remarks, together with Lanson's judgements, suggest that the chaotic quality inherent in the field of translation is at least in part responsible for the lack of systematic incorporation of translation into literary history.)

Before closing Lanson's *Manuel*, it is of interest to note the English-language poets whose translations the author elects to list for the two hundred years leading up to the twentieth century; Macpherson (Ossian), Milton, Pope, and Young predominate in Lanson's eighteenth-century chapter (III,3,pp.576-79), and in the book's final part, 'Le Dix-Neuvième Siècle', twelve poets are listed, who together seem to roughly constitute the traditional poetry canon at the turn of the twentieth century: Elizabeth Barrett-Browning, Byron, Coleridge, Keats, Thomas Moore, D.-G. Rossetti, Shakespeare, Shelley, Southey, Swinburne, Tennyson, and Wordsworth (IV,3,pp.1148-50). American poets mentioned by Lanson are Longfellow (p.1162) and Poe, who is listed under both 'Traductions' (which include those made by Mallarmé (pp.162-63)), and 'Baudelaire' (p.1271).

⁷ *La Littérature en France depuis 1945*, ed by J. Bersani, M. Autrand, J. Lecarme, B. Vercier (Paris: Bordas, 1970), p. 689.

Later Literary Reference Works

Several of the later reference works consulted refer to translation fleetingly, and often solely in connection with the work of Valéry Larbaud, an established French author in his own right, also known for his interest in translation. Henri Clouard's *Histoire de la littérature française du symbolisme à nos jours*, for example (1947), acknowledges Larbaud's translations for revealing '... talents que nous ne connaîtrions peut-être pas sans lui; il a été le découvreur français de Chesterton, de Conrad, de Coventry Patmore, de Joyce...'.⁸ The volume of Lagarde and Michard's *La Littérature Française*, devoted to the twentieth century and published twenty years later, in 1971, follows comparable lines, not mentioning translation other than when speaking of Larbaud.⁹ And while the seventh edition of Pierre de Boisdeffre's *Une Histoire Vivante de la littérature d'aujourd'hui*, published around the same time (1968), reproaches the French for their inferior rates of publication: '... le nombre de livres publiés chaque année ne progresse pas et reste inférieur à la production étrangère... [et] les traductions (13% du total mondial) marquent le pas',¹⁰ the author does not provide a place for translation himself. Finally, neither the 1968 *Littérature française*, nor Jacques Brenner's *Histoire de la littérature française: de 1940 à nos jours*, published in 1978, give any mention of translation in the body of the text;¹¹ Brenner includes a section at the end of his work entitled 'Repères', in which he charts a chronology of the major publications, films, theatre pieces and translations between 1940 and 1978, but poetry translations are limited to Eliot's 'La Terre Vaine', with no acknowledgement of the translator.

On the other hand, a more active stance is adopted by other twentieth-century literary histories, including, as we have already glimpsed, the 1970 Bordas publication, *La Littérature en France depuis 1945*. The preface draws

⁸ Henri Clouard, *Histoire de la littérature française du symbolisme à nos jours: de 1885 à 1940*, 2 vols (Paris: Albin Michel, 1947-49), vol. 1, p. 77.

⁹ *La Littérature Française*, ed by A. Lagarde and L. Michard (Paris: Bordas-Laffont, 1971) vol. 4, 'Les Métamorphoses du XXe siècle', pp. 218-220.

¹⁰ Pierre de Boisdeffre, *Une Histoire Vivante de la littérature d'aujourd'hui*, 7th edn (Paris: Le Livre Contemporain, 1968), p. 32.

¹¹ *Littérature française*, ed by A. Adam, G. Lermnier, E. Morot-Sir (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1968); Jacques Brenner, *Histoire de la littérature française: de 1940 à nos jours* (Paris: Fayard, 1978).

attention to certain differences from preceding Bordas compilations, made in the hope of presenting ‘une meilleure connaissance de ce qui s’écrit aujourd’hui’ (p.5); among other modifications, the editors draw attention to the following:

Quant au chapitre ‘Traduit de l’étranger’, il met en place, dans leurs grandes lignes, les rapports des auteurs et du public français avec certaines littératures étrangères que nous n’aurions pu passer sous silence sans rendre incompréhensibles bien des aspects de la nôtre . . . (p.7).¹²

Furthermore, this chapter is singled out as justification for the wording of the book’s title, *La Littérature en France depuis 1945*:

. . . peut-être saisira-t-on mieux, à la lecture de ces pages, la signification de notre titre; entre ‘La Littérature Française’, dont nous ne voulions plus, et ‘La Littérature en Français’, que nous n’osions pas, nous avons opté pour la plus sage . . . des solutions (p.7).

However, these attempts which seem to edge towards providing a place for translation within the regular French canon, did not endure. In 1980, after one previous re-edition in 1974, Bordas renamed the work, which became *La Littérature en France de 1945 à 1968*. Two years later, in 1982, they published *La Littérature en France depuis 1968*, and chose to omit the authors in translation previously featured (primarily Kafka, Joyce and Faulkner), rather than rewrite the chapter according to the new time-frame; thus the few pages on translation were lost. The decision is not explained; the editors simply ask that the present work be read in conjunction with those previously published.

Something of a comparable demise can be tracked through the pages of another Bordas work, the *Dictionnaire des littératures de langue française*, published in 1984.¹³ In 1987, this work was reissued, in four volumes rather than three, and the lengthy (admittedly somewhat inaccessible) piece on translation

¹² Similarly, Lagarde and Michard’s *Les Métamorphoses du XXe Siècle*, while containing no such chapter devoted to translated literature, seems at one point to endorse this idea of its wider significance. We read that Larbaud, ‘. . . a joué un rôle important dans le cosmopolitisme accru de la culture actuelle’ (p. 219).

¹³ *Dictionnaire des littératures de langue française*, ed by J.-P. de Beaumarchais, D. Couty, and A. Rey (Paris: Bordas, 1984), article by Henri Meschonnic, ‘Traduction et littérature’, vol. 3, ‘p-z’, pp. 2319-2324.

in the '84 edition, 'Traduction et littérature', by Henri Meschonnic,¹⁴ was replaced by an article written by Hans Peter Lund. Lund takes a similar line to Meschonnic, but produced a shorter, simpler, and less polemic entry.¹⁵ The *Dictionnaire des littératures* was reissued in 1994, but seven years later, in 2001, a further work appeared, the *Dictionnaire des écrivains de langue française*, from which translation is excluded.¹⁶ Similarly, translation is also absent from another 1994 Bordas publication: the *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires de langue française*.¹⁷

Lastly, before turning to those publications devoted specifically to poetry, we may note that the 1995 *Dictionnaire des oeuvres du XXe siècle: littérature française et francophone*, while not including translations in the 'oeuvres' listed,¹⁸ does devote two enthusiastic pages to translation in an article entitled 'Traducteurs et traductions', written by the translator Jean-Yves Masson (pp. 488-89).

Masson provides an overview of the state of translation as he sees it at the end of the twentieth century. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, if we consider our findings so far, Masson says that the century represents a watershed for translation. There has been an explosion (his word) of activity in the area, linked with a willingness on the part of the French to welcome the influence of foreign literature. This has prompted changes in all areas of translation, illustrated

¹⁴ Broadly speaking, here Meschonnic summarises the points he develops in his later works. He criticises the present vogue whereby the translator prioritises linguistic concerns over literary ones; he contrasts the '... indissociable et mystérieuse association de la forme et du sens dans l'original', with 'la piteuse dissociation des deux dans la traduction, pour ne guère garder que du sens'. It is not 'l'effacement et la modestie du traducteur', which produce works of translation which endure, so much as the translator's concern for the literary, as well as for the target language. He cites Saint Jerome's Vulgate, the King James Version, and Baudelaire's Poe, as *oeuvres* which 'rest[ent] [des] text[es] malgré et avec [leur] vieillissement'. For Meschonnic, literary translation turns on 'l'interaction de la théorie du langage et de la théorie de la littérature'. Ultimately, a theory of translation is inevitable: it does not exist at present because we do not have a full theory of language.

¹⁵ *Dictionnaire des littératures de langue française*, ed by J.-P. de Beaumarchais, D. Couty and A. Rey (Paris: Bordas, 1987), article 'Traduction et littérature' by H.P. Lund, vol. IV, p. 2486. Lund claims that the modern consensus regarding translation is in favour of foreignisation; he cites Nerval's Heine as an example of 'décentrement'.

¹⁶ *Dictionnaire des écrivains de langue française*, ed by J.-P. de Beaumarchais, D. Couty, and A. Rey (Paris: Bordas, 2001).

¹⁷ *Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires de langue française*, ed by J.-P. de Beaumarchais and D. Couty (Paris: Bordas, 1994).

¹⁸ *Dictionnaire des oeuvres*. A selection of foreign literary works in a year-by-year 'Chronologie' is provided at the back of the book. The only English or American poets mentioned are Pound, Alan Ginsberg, and Kathleen Raine (pp. 529-565).

tangibly by recent statistical information:

. . . en excluant le domaine scientifique et technique, l'Association des Traducteurs Littéraires de France estimait en 1990 la part des traductions à 30% de la production globale des éditeurs et à 50% des reprises en format de poche (p.488).

According to Masson, there is now general recognition that translation represents 'un véritable patrimoine' for the French language. He cites Larbaud, Blanchot, Benjamin and Mallarmé as determining influences in enabling the 'modern' view that 'le traducteur enrichit non seulement sa langue en mettant les limites à l'épreuve, mais aussi l'original qu'il traduit'. Masson mentions the ongoing polemic surrounding Klossowski's 1964 translation of *L'Énéide* as illustration of translation's key position in the contemporary literary world.

The elevation in the status of the art is also reflected, in Masson's view, in a higher esteem for the individual 'écrivain-traducteur' or 'traducteur de métier'. Of the former, Masson says: 'En France, il n'est guère de poète contemporain qui n'ait fait l'expérience de la traduction . . . Il a même pu arriver que l'oeuvre du traducteur fasse presque oublier celle du poète': among others, the author cites Jouve, Du Bouchet, Gaspar, and Bosquet. Of the 'traducteurs de métier', he says: '. . . les plus grands traducteurs du XXe siècle se reconnaissent à ce qu'il est permis d'appeler leur 'oeuvre', quand leur travail révèle des goûts affirmés qui dessinent un paysage mental'; Masson mentions Pierre Leyris's particular 'oeuvre', for having brought Irish literature to the attention of the French public, 'dans le contexte d'une défense et illustration des pouvoirs de 'l'imagination', au sens que Coleridge, Blake ou Yeats donnent à ce mot'. He also speaks of Maurice-Edgar Cointreau, whose translation work, as he sees it, 'révèle un goût littéraire d'une sûreté exceptionnelle' (pp.488-489). (Cointreau is known for his translations of prose, but it is of note that he concentrates on American, rather than British, authors; Masson's words thus imply a certain French bias.)

Finally, Masson sees the specialist publishing houses and literary journals as playing a significant role in having enabled translation to achieve its current status. This important area is one to which we will return.

Anthologies and Histories of Poetry

The majority of works referred to in this part of my survey are poetry anthologies. We may deal with them relatively quickly, for with one significant exception, they do not feature translated works.¹⁹ Each author or editor is at pains to redefine the boundaries of anthology compilation (Fouchet: ‘aux dates nous avons préféré les thèmes’; Cazenave has replaced ‘le dessin de l'éventail’ with a respect for ‘les périodes, les courants et les cycles selon leur *importance intrinsèque*’, etc.) but only Henry Deluy, in his *Poésie en France: 1983-1988*, includes work which did not originate in the French language.

In contrast to Cazenave’s method of selection, where ‘... la pierre de touche a été de manier notre langue, et donc de sentir, de pleurer ou de rire en français...’, and excludes all those who ‘... parlaient, sentaient, s’exprimaient... dans une autre langue que le français...’, Deluy gives his objective as: ‘de mettre en lumière la richesse et la multiplicité des écritures de poésie en France, ainsi que l’importance des travaux de traduction’ (p.9).

Aside from Deluy, only Delvaille, in the lengthiest introduction to any of the anthologies consulted, makes mention of certain foreign influences on French poetry (he acknowledges the English romantics as among those who ‘... avaient ouvert la voie’, and cites authors ‘tels que Blake, les romanciers noirs anglais...’, for their influence in the creation of surrealism. He also notes one or two key translations (‘la traduction des poèmes d’Ossian (1760) et surtout Fingal (1763)...; la traduction complète par Leon Bazalgette des *Feuilles d’herbe* de Walt Whitman...’). Delvaille sees Whitman’s role in the development of free-verse in France as vital: ‘le vers libre... n’a peut-être été... qu’un des résultats de

¹⁹ The following works have been consulted: *Anthologie de la poésie française*, ed by André Gide (Paris: ‘Bibliothèque de la Pléiade’, Gallimard, 1949); *Anthologie thématique de la poésie française*, ed by Max-Pol Fouchet (Paris: Seghers, 1958); *La poésie française depuis 1950: une anthologie*, ed by Alain Bosquet (Paris: La Différence, 1979); Robert Sabatier, *Histoire de la poésie française: La Poésie du XXe siècle*, 3 vols (Paris: Albin Michel, 1982 (2 vols) and 1988); *Anthologie de la poésie française du XXe siècle: de Paul Claudel à René Char*, ed by Michel Decaudin (Paris: Gallimard, 1983); *Poésie en France 1983-1988: une anthologie critique*, ed by Henry Deluy (Paris: Flammarion, 1989); *Mille et cent ans de poésie française de la séquence de Sainte Eulalie à Jean Genet*, ed by Bernard Delvaille (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991); *Anthologie de la poésie de langue française: du XIIe au XXe siècle*, ed by Michel Cazenave (Paris: Hachette Livre, 1994); *Anthologie de la poésie française contemporaine: les trente dernières années*, ed by Alain Bosquet (Paris, le cherche midi, 1994). Finally, I have consulted two entries, ‘Poésie française depuis 1960’, and ‘Traduction et littérature’, in the more general work: *Dictionnaire des littératures*.

l'influence . . . notamment du poète américain Walt Whitman' (p.1859). In its own right, however, translated work does not feature.

Perhaps the name Deluy gives to his prefatory remarks, 'Préliminaires' (rather than the usual 'préface', or 'introduction') already indicates some kind of break with the more traditional anthologies: certainly, his selection of material is unprecedented among those we have consulted. Deluy draws on work published between 1983 and 1988, and his volume consists of:

. . . cinquante-huit recueils publiés par des poètes de langue française, vingt-trois recueils publiés par des traducteurs de langue française, vingt-trois recueils publiés par des traducteurs de poésie étrangère et six anthologies (p.9).

Thus as the author points out, 'une large place est faite aux traductions'; Deluy wishes to:

. . . fixer l'importance de quelques-unes [des] traductions, à éclairer la diversité des tentatives en cours et la multiplicité des angles d'attaque (traductions frontales, détournements, interprétations, adaptations . . .) (p.10).

Nevertheless, like others we have seen, Deluy chooses to separate translated poems from those originating in French, but here, the decision is not without debate:

Dans la perspective qui est la mienne, la question pouvait se poser d'une intégration des livres de poèmes traduits parmi les autres, le tout dans l'ordre alphabétique, le plus simple et le seul praticable en l'occurrence. J'ai préféré, mes orientations étant claires, conserver une différenciation: elle me paraît introduire une nuance nécessaire entre des activités proches, mais différentes (p.11).

The translations, in consequence, are listed in a separate section from the French originals and the anthologies. The twenty-three translated poets represented in Deluy's anthology are: Aigui, Anna Akhmatova, Rafael Alberti, David Antin, Basho, Jorge Luis Borges, Joseph Brodsky, Paul Celan, 'Lord Charter', Dante, Josep Vicenc Foix, Ibn Al Farid, Octavio Paz, Fernando Pessoa, Alejandra Pizarnik, Ezra Pound, Rainer Maria Rilke, Yannis Ritsos, Umberto Saba, Mario de Sa-Carneiro, Jaroslav Seifert, Marina Tsvetaieva, Andrea Zanzotto. In addition, under a section at the end of the book, 'Notes Complémentaires', Deluy signals more: 'Rappelons la continuation de l'édition des oeuvres complètes de Vladimir Maiakovsky . . . [des] poèmes de E.E. Cummings . . . le Basil Bunting . . . les Paul Auster. . . *La Langue greffée* de John

Montague'. (p.452). The selections from each poet and anthology are prefaced by an introduction, which, when preceding the work of a translated poet, gives some details of the translator and usually a remark or two expressing Deluy's own views on the quality of the translation itself.

Deluy chooses to print translations of work by only two English-language poets, neither of whom are British: David Antin and Ezra Pound. In the introduction to Antin's poetry, Deluy expresses his enthusiasm for contemporary American poets ('La poésie américaine contemporaine est d'une telle richesse . . .' (p. 305)²⁰ and it is hard not to conclude that the choice of the fictitious 'Lord Charter', whose two four-line compositions are of the *Mots D'Heures: Gousses, Rames* variety, represents a personal comment on contemporary British poetry.²¹ Certainly, Deluy's decision to use the verse as the anthology's sole representative of British poetry in translation is striking. There is no doubt, however, as the next section of our enquiry further attests, that Deluy is one of those who have played a significant role in facilitating the publication of translated work in the twentieth century, particularly poetry.

Lastly in this section, the three volumes Sabatier has devoted to 'La poésie du XXè siècle', and which form part of his monumental *Histoire de la poésie française*, should be mentioned. Published between 1982 and 1988, Sabatier's work can be helpfully compared to that of Lanson one hundred years earlier, although the scope of the two projects is different: Lanson deals with five hundred years of literary history in one volume, Sabatier covers not one-fifth of that period, yet uses three volumes to do so. Lanson is looking at literature in general; Sabatier, specifically at poetry.

However, neither author discusses the art of translation, and the ways in which the two authors make reference to works of translation are in some ways remarkably similar. In the same way that Lanson uses Shakespeare, Milton, the Romantics, etc., in making comparisons with French authors, so Sabatier refers

²⁰ It is of note that one of the five anthologies on which Deluy draws is *Vingt et un plus un poètes américains d'aujourd'hui*, ed by C. Royet-Journoud and E. Hocquard (Paris: Delta, 1986); no anthologies of British poetry are included.

²¹ According to (one assumes) Deluy, the enterprise of 'Lord Charter' (whose name research does not bring to light) is to 'prendre des chansons populaires françaises et à les transcrire, suivant la phonétique, en mots anglais, sans trop se soucier du sens, sans l'éviter non plus' (p. 238).

to those poets such as Whitman, Eliot, Pound. Sabatier talks of a 'long récit . . . digne de Lewis Carroll' (p.557); of 'un souffle comme chez Whitman' (p.610); of a poet's style ' . . . comme un Jack Kerouac' (p.336). However, whereas Lanson, as we saw, also drew attention to the impact of translation on the French language and culture, Sabatier does not expand on his references to translation in the twentieth century. Similarly, although both authors are inconsistent in naming translators or names of specific works in translation, Sabatier is less thorough than Lanson. Lanson provides details of translations in footnotes; Sabatier gives them in the body of his text, but not in systematic manner. In speaking of Bonnefoy's accomplishment, for example, he simply refers to 'cet ensemble de traductions de Shakespeare', or ' . . . S'ajoutent huit volumes de traductions de Shakespeare, et, bientôt, des *Poèmes* de Yeats' (p.157).

The Publication of Poetry in Translation

If, as Masson has stated, the twentieth century may be viewed as a 'siècle traducteur', it is not, it seems, due to the work of anthologies and histories of French literature, which, with one or two striking exceptions, have generally not been active in raising the consciousness of literature in translation. Yet at the end of the twentieth century, poetry translation seems to have come to represent an important part of the contemporary literary landscape. Masson's views have been mentioned; similarly, in justifying his inclusion of translations in his anthology, Henry Deluy states: 'Elle souligne l'avancée d'une conception de la traduction comme activité de premier plan dans les exercices de la poésie, pour les poètes eux-mêmes'. Elsewhere, he speaks of ' . . . l'attention nouvelle portée à la traduction . . . ' (p.323).

Clearly, then, this kind of awareness has largely been achieved through other conduits than the literary histories and general poetry anthologies. For the information we are seeking, it is helpful to turn to the article entitled 'Poésie française depuis 1960', published in 1984 in the *Dictionnaire des Littératures de Langue Française*.²² The author, Alain Paire, sums up his subject thus:

La présente étude se bornera à souligner la singularité de quelques pratiques (celles des maisons d'édition petites ou grandes, celle des revues); en insistant sur les incidences de récentes traductions, elle dégagera de grandes

²² Article written by Alain Paire (see note 13), pp. 1770-72.

tendances et s'efforcera de parier sur l'émergence de certaines oeuvres (p.1770).

Thus at the same time as acknowledging poetry in translation as '[une] grande tendance', the author also suggests the transporting vehicle: 'des maisons d'édition petites ou grandes [et] des revues'. It is to these two major forces that we will now turn.

The large publishing houses are responsible for the existence of a well-defined, primarily pre-twentieth century, canon of translated poetry, reminiscent of that given by Lanson and Petit de Julleville. Gallimard and Aubier Flammarion are typical of the handful of large houses which only publish translated poets who represent a marketing certainty: Gallimard lists Brontë, Elizabeth Browning, Donne, Durrell, Heaney, Joyce, Kipling, Milton, Shakespeare, Dylan Thomas, and Yeats; Aubier publishes Blake, Robert Browning, Burns, Coleridge, Hopkins, Keats, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Yeats. Naturally, this hard-nosed approach draws criticism from those who would like to see lesser-known authors represented by the main-stream publishers. To quote Masson again:

Le fait que les traductions de l'anglais représentent la moitié des traductions publiées montre à lui seul le poids des enjeux économiques sur une activité qui n'est en aucun cas régie par le seul principe de la qualité des textes traduits (p.488).

At the other end of the publishing scale are the many small presses, who see the publishing of translation more as a vocation than as a financially-rewarding exercise. As Paire points out, 'Il n'est pas possible de citer les dizaines [de] petites maisons d'édition qui, chacune à leur manière, permettent aux poètes de s'exprimer' (p.1770). While the author is speaking generally about French poetry since 1960, Masson also says that,

... la part des traductions dans l'actualité littéraire n'a cessé de croître, atteignant un sommet au cours des années 80, où certaines maisons d'édition nouvelles ont pu bâtir la quasi-totalité de leur catalogue sur les titres étrangers' (p.488).

One such house is Orphée La Différence, which lists over two hundred titles, and whose aim, according to its director, Claude-Michel Cluny, is to publish 'une collection bon marché exclusivement consacrée à la grande poésie

universelle'.²³ Other small publishing houses may be cited, who foster their own particular interests, yet concur in their common goal of publishing poetry in translation: the 'In'hui Collection', identifiable by its British and American interests; Arfuyen, which aims to publish works considered 'spirituels' (and lists Blake, Keats, Mansfield, and Dickinson); Granit, which claims a similar goal - 'les intérêts métaphysiques' - and publishes Gascoyne, Hopkins, Raine, and Jeremy Reed; Obsidiane, which lists Hill, Hopkins, Keats and D.H. Lawrence, and Verdier which is publishing Masson's complete Yeats. Yet other small houses are responsible for having published a range of English-language poets: Auden, Clare, Constantine, Larkin, Kenneth White.

Naturally, an individual editor or director of a collection plays an important role in the choice and publication of certain authors. Masson draws attention to the following:

... la collection 'Connaissance de l'Orient' créée par Étienne chez Gallimard ou le travail de traduction et d'édition de René Sieffert aux Presses orientalistes de France en sont peut-être les exemples les plus caractéristiques, mais le 'Cabinet cosmopolite' des éditions Stock, le domaine des 'Maîtres de la littérature étrangère' fondé par Albin Michel dans les années trente, les 'Feux croisés' dirigés par Charles Du Bos chez Pion, et plus récemment, 'Le Don des langues' (Seuil) ou 'Pavilions' (Robert Laffont) ont joué un rôle fondamental (p. 489).

However, probably the main venue for poetry in translation is offered by the countless literary journals (there are over four hundred published at the present time in France), some of which focus primarily on works of translation. Masson provides a selection of the most significant: '... 'Les Écrits nouveaux', 'Commerce', 'Les Oeuvres libres' ... avec, au premier rang, 'Europe' et 'Les Cahiers du Sud' (p.489). We might add to this list Masson's own publication, 'Polyphonies', where more than 50% of each issue is devoted to translated poetry. More 'mainstream', and vital to the publication of poetry in translation, are the three journals, 'Po&sie' (which began publishing in 1977), 'poésie' (1984), and 'Action Poétique' (1953). Each has its own profile within the field: 'Po&sie', for example, is reputed to attract a 'philosophical' audience; 'poésie' has more popular aims. Both devote well over half of their pages to work in translation, but if we search purely for English-language poetry in translation,

²³ In personal interview, Paris, 1995.

we find that 'Po&sie' has published too many (twentieth-century) poets to conveniently list here, whereas 'poésie' produces a smaller band: Eliot, Gascoyne, Raine, Stevens, Williams and Walcott. 'Action Poétique', which was conceived by Henry Deluy in 1953, continues to publish a considerable body of poetry in translation, with most issues based on the poetry of a certain country.²⁴

Finally, in attempting to build a profile of poetry in translation in twentieth-century France, it is impossible not to allude to the unprecedented changes in methods of communication and the media, and which in the last third of the century have facilitated hitherto-unknown public paths of access to all poetry. Alain Paire cites the radio ('La place manque pour évoquer les possibilités d'expression dont usent certains poètes sur France Culture (lors d'émissions comme 'Poésie ininterrompue', 'Nuits Magnétiques', 'Albatros') (p.1771)), but other important channels for exposure are provided by television, newspapers, and even the Metro.

Conclusion

I think it is clear from the section of this survey devoted to literary histories and anthologies, that no distinct paradigm shift has taken place in these particular areas regarding the position of translation in the past one hundred years - despite occasional demonstrations of interest from those such as the Bordas publications. The divide between translation and French literature is clear in Lanson's work, and it is largely retained across the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it is of significant note that the question of the divide is one that has been posed. Henry Deluy, a prominent editor, author and translator, is a good example of those who pinpoint the problem as worthy of discussion, even if, for practical reasons, he himself ultimately resorts to the traditional categorisation in his own work. More generally speaking, it is clear from this study that Deluy, Lanson, and, as might be expected, the translator Masson, emerge as examples of individual voices who, in their different ways, point firmly to the power and place of translation within the French literary culture.

²⁴ The place journals offer to American poets, in particular, 'Action Poétique', is large. In an introduction to a 1973 issue, 'Poésies USA', Jacques Roubaud refers to 'une renaissance' in American poetry; twenty years later, a 1994 issue again features American poets in translation: '3 + 1 poètes américains'.

The 'siècle du traducteur' that Masson describes, then, in some respects seems something of a parallel universe; as Masson signals, the areas where translated literature has shown the most prolific growth during the course of the century are primarily the small presses, and the literary journals.

This study has also highlighted one or two perhaps less tangible points, which are of interest to the present work, and which are, again, made most clearly by Jean-Yves Masson. Firstly, he draws attention to the individual translator's 'feel' for more widespread literary preferences, a kind of intuition of developing taste that some translators seem to possess; as example, he cites Pierre Leyris, who has given French voice to some of the more 'metaphysical' English-language poets - a taste in poetry now considered to be significant in French literary culture. For her part, Emily Dickinson has been categorised many times as a 'metaphysical' poet, and it is of interest that her principal translator, Claire Malroux, whom Masson does not mention, has also demonstrated an 'instinct' for current taste. In addition to her multiple translations of Dickinson, Malroux is notable for having translated Derek Walcott at a time when the poet was very little known in France. When Walcott won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992, the only translation of his work available in French was Malroux's translation, in print with the relatively minor house, Circé. (Malroux also provides a specific example of the French preference, to which Masson also draws attention, for American, rather than British poets - a taste which seems to have existed since the early influences of Poe and Whitman.)

Finally, Emily Dickinson herself proves the importance to translation of the literary journals: her very first French appearance was in the pages of the journal *Mesures* in the nineteen-thirties, translated by the intuitive Pierre Leyris.

Chapter Two : The On-Going Debate; 20th-Century Views on Translation

Another part of the ‘parallel universe’ of translation Masson seems to be describing is represented by the rapidly increasing number of specialist works on translation, to which we now turn. As in the preceding chapter, I am not able to provide an exhaustive account of these works, but again, give a sampling of those authors who, each with their varying interests (poet-translators, cultural translation theorists, and linguistic translation theorists all have a place here), together constitute the growing field. The authors are listed according to the order in which the principal work discussed was published.

Valery Larbaud

The earliest twentieth-century French work on translation to be consistently cited in the field is probably ‘le classique de Larbaud’, as Antoine Berman calls it: a collection of essays entitled *Sous l’invocation de Saint Jérôme*, written by Valery Larbaud, and published in 1946.¹ An eminent author in his native French, Larbaud also translated from Italian, Spanish, and English: among other achievements, he translated several works by Samuel Butler, fully revised Auguste Morel’s translation of *Ulysses* in collaboration with Joyce, and was one of Whitman’s earliest translators. Berman lists Larbaud as one of the major translators of the twentieth century, and refers to him as ‘le père symbolique de la réflexion française sur la traduction’, one of the ‘grands

critiques occidentaux'.²

If Larbaud's work is considered significant, it is no doubt in part because he calls attention to the lowly status of translators (he compares them with Bossuet's 'Pauvres'), and expresses the wish that translation be fully included in all future works of historical record. He applauds 'les bons manuels biens faits' which do give translation a place, such as those by Petit de Julleville, and Gustave Lanson's *Manuel bibliographique* ('ce magnifique instrument de travail littéraire'), which Larbaud cites at some length. Larbaud's wish is that:

... tout lettré qui traduit dans sa langue natale une oeuvre étrangère importante - c'est-à-dire capable d'avoir influence sur la littérature dans laquelle il l'introduit - assure à son nom une place dans l'histoire intellectuelle.³

It is also the quality of his writing that elevates Larbaud's work - and by proxy, perhaps, the art of translation. George Steiner has glancingly referred to Larbaud's work as 'inspired but unsystematic',⁴ but it is precisely the way in which the author allows his thoughts to follow one another in a style reminiscent of Montaigne's *Essais* - complete with Latin and Greek quotes - together with the sheer elegance and erudition of his writing on translation which renders the work one 'qui mérite d'être lu et relu', as Antoine Berman says.⁵

Indeed, Larbaud's combination of common sense and elegance of style come in pleasant contrast to the kind of dense and highly specific work that translation often provokes. (Eugène Nida's *Bible Translating, An Analysis of Principles and Procedures, with Special Reference to Aboriginal Languages*, was published the following year, in 1947.)⁶ Unlike some of the later French translation theorists, such as Mounin or Meschonnic, Larbaud does not deal with the niceties of linguistic analyses, but presents his views in more general terms, by way of the translator's 'vocation', his 'droits et devoirs', and his 'joies et

¹ Valéry Larbaud, *Sous l'invocation de Saint Jérôme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946).

² *PUC*, p. 247.

³ Larbaud, *Sous l'invocation*, pp. 100-101. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

⁴ George Steiner, *After Babel, Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 249.

⁵ *PUC*, p. 73, fn. 80.

⁶ Eugene Nida, *Bible Translating, An Analysis of Principles and Procedures, with Special Reference to Aboriginal Languages* (New York: American Bible Society, 1947).

profits', all of which he uses as chapter titles.⁷ He is as concerned with the moral stance of the translator as with the text.

Larbaud refers to St. Jerome as 'le patron des traducteurs', for his huge and varied work of translation, which includes his Latin translation of the Bible, ultimately recognised as the official version of the Catholic Bible. He says that 'c'est dans les eaux profondes, vivifiantes, de la Vulgate de Jérôme, que nos littératures se sont abreuvées, et parmi nous Bossuet et Racine et Claudel sont tout rayonnants'. Larbaud is not uncritical of Jerome, but thinks, too, that one immediately recognises his works of translation as 'vivants et chauds d'une chaleur humaine', and sees 'en l'homme qui a écrit cela un maître de la pensée et du langage, un artiste' (pp.12-13).

In fact, Larbaud wishes that Jerome had written more on translation; we are left with his work and his guiding principle of '*Non verbum verbo, sed sensum exprimere de sensu*'. Larbaud describes his translation as '[d'un] modernisme voulu', and says that:

Il faut aussi remarquer . . . comment le traducteur . . . allant toujours (comme Cervantes) vers plus de liberté et simplicité, a fini par inventer cette syntaxe, ce style et cette langue à la fois très populaire et très noble, ce latin - qui anticipe sur les langues romanes . . . (p.52).

Given the diverse nature of Larbaud's writing, it requires a certain determination to establish Larbaud's more specific views on the way translation should be conducted. In the essay, 'Droits et devoirs du traducteur', he asks what the translator can do, 'pour ne pas *trahir*, et pour éviter, d'une part le mot à mot insipide et infidèle à force de servile fidélité, et d'autre part 'la traduction ornée', but the answer, at this point, is only indirect (p.62). He allows what he calls 'deux textes parfaits' to act as response to his question: one by Francesco De Sanctis, comparing two translations of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and the other by Joseph de Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. The biting criticism which De Sanctis pours liberally over both translations, and which Larbaud cites at length, makes entertaining reading, but Larbaud warns translators to take heed; the following quotation well illustrates the author's style and tone:

Ah, ne nous cherchons pas d'excuses! . . . Chaque texte a un son, une

⁷ There is little doubt that Larbaud saw the translator as male. In his sixth chapter, 'L'Amour et la traduction' he employs an extended analogy which depicts the text to be translated as a woman, or mistress.

couleur, un mouvement, une atmosphère, qui lui sont propres. En dehors de son sens matériel et littéral, tout morceau de littérature a, comme tout morceau de musique, un sens moins apparent, et qui seul crée en nous l'impression esthétique voulue par le poète. Eh bien, c'est ce sens-là qu'il s'agit de rendre, et c'est en cela surtout que consiste la tâche du traducteur (pp.69-70).

Here, Larbaud's views seem to echo those of Paul Valéry - whom Larbaud cites elsewhere - and also to presage Bonnefoy, who, similarly, believes the translator should recreate the original poet's aesthetic intention. From *De Sanctis*, then, Larbaud takes the affirmation that '[une] certaine liberté nous est donc nécessaire' (p.70). He then refers to De Maistre's translation criticism, and this time he is damning of the extremes to which the author takes his freedom. Larbaud tells us that De Maistre sanctioned some of the deletions and changes made by a translator of Locke, because he considered them 'purement esthétiques', and condoned yet others because a passage in the original was '*ridicule*'. Larbaud protests that 'vraiment, nous nous refusons à le suivre aussi loin', and says that it would only have been acceptable had the translator edited on grounds of the '*inutile*' - certainly not the '*ridicule*' (p.72).

In the short essay devoted to 'A. Fraser Tytler' - the only translator-'theorist'⁸ singled out by Larbaud after Jerome himself - the author compares the doctrine outlined in the *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, published in 1791, with the taste in translating style current at the time Larbaud himself was writing (his work was published in 1946). As with Jerome, Larbaud views Tytler's work as 'déjà moderne', because he judges the kind of liberties taken by d'Ablancourt, for example, as 'excessives'. Nevertheless, Larbaud also feels that the works praised by Tytler at times sacrificed '... l'exactitude à la beauté avec une absence de scrupules qui aujourd'hui nous choque'. Ultimately, Larbaud's view here seems comparable to that held in 1791: '... l'idéal, ce sont des traductions qui seraient aussi belles [que celles d'Amyot, de d'Ablancourt, de Florio) tout en serrant le texte de plus près ...]', but the author also feels that translations made in the intervening years have provoked a qualification:

... c'est encore notre idéal, bien que nous ayons perdu quelques illusions quant à la possibilité de l'atteindre sans sacrifier la beauté à l'exactitude ou

⁸ It is common practice to refer to the various approaches to translation as 'theory', although the word is not used according to its scientific definition. For the sake of simplicity, I have followed general practice.

l'exactitude à la beauté et que nous demandions avant et par-dessus tout l'exactitude' (pp.101-102).

Little by little, then, Larbaud's rather fluid views on translation emerge: there is praise for the journalist who translated 'Scilly Isles' by 'Iles Sorlingues', rather than the 'silly', as he puts it, 'Iles Scilly', for example (p.237); and a suggestion in the same chapter that the French should attempt '... de rétablir, de faire rentrer dans l'usage les anciens noms géographiques français', in order to 'franciser le[s] nom[s]' (p.40). Elsewhere, speaking of the difficulties of using archaisms in translation, he quotes Quintilien's advice, which he judges 'encore universellement valable': 'Préférer ce qu'il y a d'ancien dans le moderne et de moderne dans l'ancien' (p.143).

These are the two poles, then: on the one hand, 'francisation' of proper names in translation, and on the other, the advocacy of the unfamiliar. The chapter, 'L'Air étranger', gives a fuller sense of Larbaud's views. Citing Aristotle, he clearly states that 'en poésie et en prose poétique', we should, as far as possible, lend an 'air étranger' to our writing: 'les emprunts d'origine littéraire et faits à la langue littéraire... enrichissent incontestablement les langues'. He speaks out against those 'purists' who dispute such a notion, judging that often they are 'entachées de préjugé national... qui est plus dangereux pour l'essentiel de la culture que... la plus farouche ignorance' (pp.176-178).

Larbaud also cites Meillet, who, writing on the formation and characteristics of the Greek common language, 'Koïnè', warns that a language which has limited ancestry is incapable of producing 'une littérature poétique nouvelle';⁹ Larbaud himself adds that a "beau style" ne peut sortir que d'une langue bien vivante et saine, et donc bien nourrie - d'emprunts' (p.179).

With these statements, the reader clearly understands Berman's enthusiasm for Larbaud; indeed, the following words could easily have been composed by any one of a number of theorists, writing some forty years later, and advocating, in more recent terminology, a (moderately) 'foreignising' approach to translation:

⁹ According to A. Meillet, Koïnè came out of the Attic and Ionian dialects; stated in *Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque*, p. 191, cited by Larbaud, p. 178.

‘[C]eux qui empruntent largement et sans scrupules’ [here, Larbaud is making a comparison with the ‘archaïsants à outrance’ of which French, for example, is guilty] ‘mais d’une manière savante, aux domaines voisins, - soit directement, soit à travers l’ouvrage des traducteurs, - apportent à leur langue des éléments, du tissu, *vivants*, et la possibilité d’associations, de rapports, nouveaux’ (p.179).

It would probably have pleased Larbaud to know of the praise that those such as Berman have bestowed on him. At the close of the chapter on Tytler, he expresses the hope that in writing his work dedicated to Saint Jerome he might have given French literature ‘un ouvrage qu’on pût un jour comparer à celui de A. Fraser Tytler, lord Woodhouselee’ (p.103). Berman’s description of *Sous l’invocation de Saint Jérôme* as ‘un grand livre nourricier, séminal, qu’il faut lire et relire’ would no doubt have more than sufficed.¹⁰

Georges Mounin

In an article published in 1957, ten years later than *Sous l’invocation de Saint Jérôme*, the linguist Georges Mounin has no difficulty agreeing with Larbaud about the ideals of translation: ‘Chez nous les traductions, comme les femmes, pour être parfaites, doivent être à la fois fidèles et belles’. He also observes that particularly in the fields of theatre and poetry translation, this ideal is ‘loin d’être toujours atteint’.¹¹ Although there seems to be theoretical agreement regarding translation in these two areas, disputes occur between two camps - ‘celui des professeurs, qui restent hantés par la fidélité littérale,’ and ‘celui des artistes, qui répondent: à quoi bon traduire fidèlement, Shakespeare par exemple, si votre fidélité laisse échapper l’essentiel, si l’on n’y sent pas au moins la grandeur de Shakespeare?’.¹²

Although Mounin has made a small number of translations (which include the Italian poet, Umberto Saba), he is not primarily known as a practising translator, but is of significance to twentieth-century French translation for being one of the first linguists to publish works devoted

¹⁰ *PUC*, p. 247.

¹¹ Georges Mounin, ‘Traduction fidèle...mais à quoi?’, first published *Horizons*, March 1957, pp. 99-102, subsequently in *Linguistique et Traduction* (Brussels: Dessart & Mardaga, 1976), p. 145.

¹² Mounin, *Linguistique et Traduction*, p. 145, fn. Mounin refers to a quarrel conducted in the pages of *Le Monde* between August 1955 and June 1956: ‘On a beaucoup discuté depuis un an sur une nouvelle traduction de Shakespeare’.

exclusively to the problems of translation.¹³ He is probably best known for his first work in this area, *Les belles infidèles*, published in 1955,¹⁴ and for *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction*, in many respects its sequel, published the following decade, in 1963.¹⁵ Mounin has also published works on machine translation.

By the nineteen-sixties, the field of translation was booming, and with it, anger at past lack of acknowledgement. Of interest in this respect are the opening words of Dominique Aury's preface to Mounin's *Les problèmes théoriques* (a preface which, incidentally, Antoine Berman describes as 'd'une humilité excessive . . . envers celui qui "sait"',¹⁶). Aury writes:

Dans l'armée des écrivains, nous autres traducteurs nous sommes la piétaille; dans le personnel de l'édition, nous sommes la doublure interchangeable, le besogneux presque anonyme. . . si la couverture d'un livre traduit porte le nom de l'auteur et le nom de l'éditeur, il faut chercher à la page de titre intérieure, et plus encore face à cette page, tout en haut ou tout en bas, dans le plus petit caractère possible, le mieux dissimulé possible, le misérable nom du traducteur.¹⁷

Mounin himself complains that until recently, translation, 'considérée comme . . . un domaine de recherches ayant un objet *sui generis*, restait un secteur inexploré, voire ignoré' (p.10). As a linguist, he also regrets that until twenty years earlier, authors who had written about translation (including Larbaud, Mallarmé, and Gide) had done so in an impressionistic, empirical manner. There had been no studies of translation 'comme opération linguistique', and even renowned linguists such as de Saussure, Sapir, or Bloomfield, had only briefly mentioned translation in their work (p.8). As a result, there had been no articles on translation in the 'grandes encyclopédies'. Mounin also observes that although some universities had established 'instituts d'interprètes', they taught only practical translation; they were not concerned with translation theory, or with the problems theory might pose.

¹³ As such, Mounin justifies a place in this chapter. However, given, precisely, that as a linguist Mounin's methods are less relevant to my later analyses of Emily Dickinson's work than other authors mentioned here - with the possible exclusion of Ladmiral, for the same reason - it seemed to me appropriate to summarise the intricacies of his supporting arguments.

¹⁴ Mounin, *Les belles infidèles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Lille), 1955, 2nd edn 1994.

¹⁵ Mounin, *Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

¹⁶ *PUC*, p. 246, fn. 24.

¹⁷ Mounin, *Les problèmes théoriques*, preface by Dominique Aury, p. vii. Further references to this work are made following quotes in the text.

Unsurprisingly, then, Mounin welcomes the 1958 work by Vinay and Darbelnet, which, to his knowledge, was the first ‘*précis de traduction se réclamant d’un statut scientifique*’.¹⁸ He agrees with the authors, who state in their *Stylistique comparée du français et de l’anglais* that ‘*la traduction est une discipline exacte . . .*’, one to be studied in the light of the ‘*techniques d’analyses actuellement à l’honneur [en linguistique]*’ (p.13).¹⁹ Mounin also cites Féderov, who, again in 1958, similarly proposes that translation be considered as ‘*une opération linguistique*’.²⁰

Given that so few linguistic studies of translation had appeared, it is natural that at the time Mounin is writing, there was also an absence of works that might *unite* empirical and linguistic reflection about translation. Translators who are not linguists disagree with the opinions of Vinay, Darbelnet, or Féderov; Mounin cites Cary, who feels that their point of view “‘résiste mal à l’épreuve des faits’”.²¹ Mounin feels that Cary’s views ‘*méritent d’être pesés*’, but ultimately agrees with the linguists who say that “‘*toute opération de traduction comporte à la base une série d’analyses et d’opérations qui relèvent spécifiquement de la linguistique*’”.²² Mounin’s final view of the matter is that ‘*la traduction reste un art - mais un art fondé sur une science*’ (pp.16-17).

Thus Mounin’s main aim in *Les problèmes théoriques* is to show how recent work in linguistics may be usefully incorporated into the translator’s art. His work was also necessitated by the rapid growth in all areas of translation (demonstrated by figures from ‘*l’Institut de coopération intellectuelle*’ and UNESCO), and by the (almost scandalous!) problem of theory that translation now poses for linguistics: current linguistic theses show translation to be theoretically impossible, yet translation practice is accelerating. Mounin wishes to clarify the situation by examining the linguistic findings which support such a claim, and suggesting how they and the empirical, practical work of translation

¹⁸ Berman is critical of this claim by Mounin, accusing him of underestimating ‘. . . scandaleusement tous les écrits sur la traduction de la tradition . . .’ (*PUC*, p. 246, fn. 24).

¹⁹ Jean-Paul Vinay and J. Darbelnet, *Stylistique comparée du français et de l’anglais* (Paris: Didier Editions, 1958), p. 23, cited by Mounin, p. 13.

²⁰ A.V. Féderov, *Vvedenie v teorju perevoda (Introduction à la théorie de la traduction)*, 2nd edn rev. (Moscow: Institut des littératures en langues étrangères, 1958), pp. 17-18, cited by Mounin, p. 13.

²¹ Edmond Cary, *Comment faut-il traduire?* (Cours polycopié de l’Université Radiophonique Internationale, 1958, without page nos.), cited by Mounin, p. 13.

²² Vinay and Darbelnet, p. 23.

may be mutually productive.

Mounin agrees with Vinay and Darbelnet when they stress that the translator's point of departure is *meaning*: all translation procedures are carried out within the semantic domain. Indeed, the strongest theoretical problems for translation (to return to Mounin's title), have been raised by modern linguists who challenge the traditional notion of meaning that says, put simply, that exact words exactly represent objects in the real world.²³

Taking de Saussure as his initial reference point, Mounin analyses the findings of those such as Bloomfield, Harris, Hjelmslev, Martinet and Frei, who worked in the fifties, and endeavoured '... à fournir des méthodes plus scientifiques pour approcher *finalement le sens*' (p.39). The author concludes that while the linguistic field 'a... ébranlé profondément la vieille notion tout empirique et tout implicite, du lexique considéré comme un répertoire...', it has demolished neither 'la légitimité théorique', nor 'la possibilité pratique des opérations de traduction'(p.71).

Mounin calls the second major theoretical linguistic problem for translation the problem of 'les langues comme "visions du monde"'. Again, modern linguists have shaken the traditional belief that the structures of language in some way reflect the universal structures of the mind and the world. The author describes the theories and investigations of those such as Trier, Hjelmslev, Sapir, Whorf, Benveniste and Harris, and concludes that, '... [I]es hiatus entre deux cultures données s'ajoutent aux difficultés que les langues elles-mêmes opposent à la traduction totale' (p.68).

In Mounin's opinion, a theory of translation must hinge on the possibility of finding a way to 'structure meaning', and the author next considers the work of several linguists who have made inroads in this area. Noting that 'la sémantique est le domaine linguistique où l'on a le moins avancé depuis trente ou quarante ans', he finds that theorists have nonetheless worked to account linguistically for the fact that 'les inventaires lexicaux reflètent une expérience non-linguistique du monde', and to challenge the further fact that 'les unités de signification plus petites que le signe tendent à se trouver mises en évidence hors

²³ This idea touches the heart of translation: were it the case, every language would have its own word for the corresponding object, and translation would simply involve exchanging the word belonging to one language for its equivalent in another.

du domaine proprement linguistique . . .' (p.112). He refers to Hjelmslev and Sørensen's research on the 'unités minima de signification', and to archaeologist Jean-Claude Gardin's system of codes - his 'sémantique mécanographique'. However, despite proof showing that 'la réalité sémantique' might be manipulated 'sans le secours d'une réalité concrète correspondante', nothing has really changed as far as the ultimate nature of the unit of signification is concerned: Mounin accepts Martinet's conclusion that: "ces unités minima de signification plus petites que le signe *sont aussi des signes*".

According to Mounin, it is with the association of translation, linguistics, and logic, that the ancient words of connotation and denotation are called into question. He describes the subtleties of their meaning with reference to work by linguists from John Stuart Mill onwards, and concludes that the consolidated findings have clarified the problems they pose for translation. He stresses that, 'ce qui intéresse la théorie de la traduction c'est que les connotations . . . font partie du langage, et qu'il faut les traduire, aussi bien que les dénnotations.' Nevertheless, when faced with practical instances of translation, Mounin is obliged to acknowledge that to measure 'la surface sémantique d[un] terme dans un contexte donné, lorsque les connotations rendent floues les limites mêmes à partir desquelles mesurer cette surface sémantique', remains a challenging problem: '. . . la notion de connotation pose à la théorie de la traduction le problème, soit de la possibilité, soit des limites de la communication interpersonnelle intersubjective' (pp.165-68).

Finally, Mounin discusses the 'modern' idea that "toute communication directe [au moyen du langage] est impossible"²⁴ (the paradox known as 'linguistic solipsism'), this time with reference to Humboldt, Rilke, Roubakine, Blanchot, and I.A. Richards. He gives Richards' description of language's collective goal -

'Le langage est notre tentative collective de minimiser les différences de significations personnelles [entre] des situations partiellement semblables au cours desquelles des énoncés linguistiques partiellement semblables ont été proférés',²⁵

²⁴ Maurice Blanchot, *Faux-pas* (Paris: NRF, 1943), pp. 21, 30, cited by Mounin, p. 171.

²⁵ I.A. Richards, 'Towards a theory of translation', in *Studies in Chinese Thought* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 247-263.

- and says that it is also applicable to translation: 'La traduction, comme la communication, n'en demande pas plus', he declares (p.187).

More optimistically, Mounin then moves on to a consideration of why, how, and to what degree, the practice of translation is, despite all problems, relatively feasible.

Firstly, as far as the translator's problem of 'visions du monde' (irreducibly different or impenetrable civilisations) is concerned, linguisticians are beginning to acknowledge that in certain areas of language, shared elements exist. The author recounts the contributions of those such as Chomsky (at that time endeavouring to establish an 'espèce d'algèbre naturelle'²⁶ which might eventually lead to the discovery of '[des] universaux de syntaxe' (p.254)), who have incorporated research from other disciplines into their linguistic work. Although the work is ongoing, Mounin says that 'il faut conclure que la traduction de toute langue en toute langue est au moins possible dans le domaine des universaux: première brèche dans un solipsisme linguistique absolu' (p.223).

In addition, it may be helpful for translators to turn to a form of ethnography for aid with the practical problems of translation. Mounin refers to Eugene Nida, who has shown that a given problem of translation is not the same between two languages in both ways, because complex cultures (such as English) have a wide range of references on which to draw, whereas (taking Nida's example), Zuñi, does not. Thus the translator's problem 'n'est pas d'ordre linguistique, il est d'ordre ethnographique'. Having presented several different theorists, Mounin concludes: 'L'ethnographie s'est donc révélée comme un moyen (relativement mais vraiment efficace) de pénétrer les "visions du monde" et les "civilisation[s]" des communautés différentes de la nôtre' (p.242).

The author also proposes the idea of translator as philologist, to help him/her to fully comprehend (and translate) texts from the past. Mounin finds the stress modern philology places on the separation between 'signifié' and 'signifiant' useful, with respect to the translator's need to understand the intellectual and cultural context from which a text emanates, and the relationship between that context and the words used to describe it.

Finally, although a complete theory of translation has yet to be

²⁶ Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic structures* (La Haye: Mouton, 1957), p. 44, cited by Mounin, p. 254.

established, Mounin concludes that the translator's situation is well described by Bloomfield: with two given languages, it is possible for a translator firstly to analyse shared non-linguistic situations (which do not hold great difficulties of translation), and secondly, to scientifically identify non-communal, non-linguistic situations, and add footnotes to the translated text (an approach which we see demonstrated in Claire Malroux's translation of Emily Dickinson).

Writing twenty years later than Mounin, and with reference, precisely, to *Les problèmes théoriques*, Antoine Berman also concludes that Bloomfield's view probably holds: 'Nous sommes linguistiquement parlant face à une plage d'intraduisibilité. Mais si l'on se place au niveau de la traduction d'un texte, le problème change complètement'.²⁷ Although science must acknowledge that some translation is, indeed, impossible, the translator's art may render the situation relative, and able to adequately bridge the lacunes.

Walter Benjamin

Another testimony to the growing interest in translation in the second part of the century is the fact that Walter Benjamin's 1923 essay, 'Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers', waited until the late sixties before it was translated into either English or French. In the preface to the second edition of his *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction*, published in 1994, Jean-René Ladmiral refers to the 'come-back' of the work of Walter Benjamin, and in particular of 'la vogue que connaît depuis quelques années l'essai que Benjamin . . . a consacré à la traduction'.²⁸ George Steiner, writing in the preface to the second edition of *After Babel*, describes Benjamin as someone with 'rare . . . penetrative insight into the act of translation'; one of those 'who ha[s] said anything fundamental or new about translation'.²⁹ Finally, the title alone of Michel Ballard's 1992 publication, *De Ciceron à Benjamin: traducteurs, traductions, réflexions*, must testify to the present perceived significance of Benjamin's work.³⁰

²⁷ Antoine Berman, *L'Épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique: Herder, Goëthe, Schlegel, Novalis, Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Hölderlin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 302.

²⁸ Jean-René Ladmiral, *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. xii, xiv.

²⁹ Steiner, *After Babel*, pp. xii, xiv.

³⁰ Michel Ballard, *De Ciceron à Benjamin: traducteurs, traductions, réflexions* (Lille: Presses Universitaires, 1992).

The essay in question (in French 'La tâche du traducteur'), was translated from the German by Maurice de Gandillac and published in France in 1971; (it was published in English translation three years earlier).³¹ The essay is an abstract, wide-ranging work, which Ladmiral describes as 'souvent cité, parfois lu et rarement compris'. He himself regards it as 'un texte fondateur', but one 'plus facile à citer comme une autorité proprement "prestigieuse", mais énigmatique, qu'à analyser'.³²

The work was originally published in Heidelberg in 1923 at the head of Benjamin's translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*. (Benjamin also translated Proust, and participated in the translation of Saint-John Perse's *Anabase*.) Benjamin does not mention or comment directly on the particular task of translating Baudelaire, but leaves the essay to stand in its own right as philosophical reflection, and to reflect implicitly on the translation itself.

Most first readers - German, French, or English - would probably think Ladmiral had a point in calling attention to the enigmatic qualities of the essay. Disconcerting, for example, is the occasional unexplained use of religious vocabulary; it helps to learn from other sources that all Benjamin's writing is generally perceived as influenced by a deep (and renewed) involvement with the author's Jewish origins. Ballard, for one, claims that 'Au coeur de sa philosophie domine le concept de révélation'.³³

Possibly also troubling to the general reader of this essay is Benjamin's concept of language, which is not specifically explained, yet from which must naturally flow his views on translation. Some clarification is gained from his more general essays on language, in particular from 'Sur le langage en général et sur le langage humain', which preceded 'La tâche du traducteur'. The following extract gives a useful sense of the dual nature of language as Benjamin perceives it:

Ce qui signifie, par exemple, que l'allemand n'est aucunement

³¹ Walter Benjamin, 'La tâche du traducteur', published in *Oeuvres*, vol. 1, trans. by Maurice de Gandillac (Paris: Denoël, 1971), pp. 261-275; *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, 1968, first published in Britain by Jonathan Cape, 1970). I quote Benjamin in Harry Zohn's translation (1970 edition) since the French translation is unavailable at the time of writing - a situation regretted by Jean-René Ladmiral, among others: 'Ce livre est, hélas! épuisé depuis plusieurs années . . .' (*Traduire*, p. xiv, fn. 19).

³² Ballard, p. xiv.

³³ Ballard, p. xiv.

l'expression de tout ce qui *par* lui nous sommes censés pouvoir exprimer, mais bien l'expression immédiate de ce qui en lui *se* communique. Ce 'se' est une essence spirituelle. Il est donc évident dès l'abord que l'essence spirituelle qui se communique dans le langage n'est pas le langage même, mais quelque chose qui se distingue de lui.³⁴

This 'essence', then - which Benjamin in 'La tâche du traducteur', implies is similar to the 'pure language' of Mallarmé, and which Steiner in *After Babel* compares to a 'universal language' - is not contained in any one language, since on its own a language can only represent a fragment of a pure and absolute whole. Again like Ballard, Steiner sums up this particular part of Benjamin's thinking in religious terms: 'At the "messianic end of their history" (another Kabbalistic or Hasidic formulation), all separate languages will return to their source of common life.'³⁵

Despite the difficulties, however - or possibly partially because of them - 'La tâche du traducteur' has undoubtedly gained renown in the last twenty-five years, due, too, to the surge of interest in translation during the sixties and seventies. And reciprocally, by elevating the status of translation to a position to which its practitioners had long aspired, the essay reflects and reinforces that interest. For Benjamin sees translation as highly potent; translation is that which 'of all literary forms is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language . . .'; in addition, it is translation alone which has the capacity to breath new life into a literary work, ' . . . for a translation comes later than the original, and . . . translation marks [its] stage of continued life (p.71) . . . in translation, the original rises into a higher and purer linguistic air, as it were . . .' (p.75).

And no less lofty is translation's ultimate goal. As we have seen, according to Benjamin each and every language contains a hidden essence, or 'intention', which only translation, in its ability to express the 'kinship of languages', is able to in some part represent: a process destined to ultimately reveal the 'totality of intentions'. For Benjamin then, translation represents ' . . . undeniably a final, conclusive, decisive stage of all linguistic creation' (p.75).

At the same time, Benjamin's essay has added the full weight of the

³⁴ Benjamin, trans. by Zohn, pp. 79-98. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

author's name and reputation to one side of the age-old meta/paraphrase tug-of-war - a dispute which, again, has gained impetus with the heightened interest in translation. As Ballard remarks, the essay 'est souvent présenté comme le manifeste de la manière littéraliste . . .',³⁶ an observation supported by Ladmiral, who says that ' . . . son argumentation . . . le design[e] comme un Manifeste en faveur du littéralisme . . .'.³⁷ (Ladmiral himself has taken Benjamin to task for his literalist views, together with Meschonnic and Berman.³⁸)

Nevertheless, it should be recognised that Benjamin's argument for literal translation is not the same as the most frequent argument given for a word-to-word rendering: to fully transmit the *meaning* of the original. On the contrary, he states that ' . . . no case for literalness can be based on a desire to retain the meaning' (p.78). Benjamin sees the task of the translator as that of integrating 'many tongues into one true language'; translation's task is therefore to 'supplement and reconcile' that which ' . . . the independent sentences, works of literature, critical judgements, will never communicate'. The goal of literalness, then, is not so much to render meaning, but to '[reflect] the great longing for linguistic completion' - a mandate which Benjamin illustrates through the use of a much-quoted analogy:

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

But what, the reader might ask, are the practical implications of all this for the individual translation? What is the concrete advice offered to the would-be mender of amphorae? Benjamin sees the basic error of the translator as endeavouring to preserve the state in which his own language happens to be, rather than allowing it to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue . . .' (p.81). Instead, through producing 'above all, a literal rendering of the syntax', the translator ' . . . must expand and deepen his language by means of the foreign

³⁵ Steiner, pp. 67-68.

³⁶ Ballard, p. 253.

³⁷ Ladmiral, p. xiv.

³⁸ Jean-René Ladmiral, 'Sourciers et ciblistes', in *Revue d'esthétique*, no. 12 (1986), pp. 33-42.

language . . .’ (p.79). In sum, for Benjamin ‘ . . . [a good translation] is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language . . . to shine upon the original all the more fully . . .’ (p.79).

Benjamin gives the names of Luther, Voss, Schlegel, Hölderlin, and George, as those who . . . ‘have extended the boundaries of the German language’ (p.80), and leaves the final word on translation with Rudolf Pannwitz, whom he cites as ranking with Goethe in giving ‘the best comment on the theory of translation that has been published in Germany’: “Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a wrong premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English”³⁹.

In simple terms, then, it is a literal translation that Benjamin ultimately advocates - even if his reason for doing so is less pragmatic than the working translator might perhaps expect. As more tangible reference he or she may always wish to turn to Benjamin's own renderings of the *Tableaux Parisiens*.

Henri Meschonnic

It is not unusual for a writer to become known for one part of his or her work, particularly in specialist areas. As we have seen, Benjamin’s essay, ‘La tâche du traducteur’, retains a great deal of interest, possibly at the expense of his other writings.

Henri Meschonnic, philosopher and linguist, states at the outset of his 1973 work, *Pour la poétique II: Épistémologie de l’écriture, poétique de la traduction*,⁴⁰ that it should be read as continuation of *Pour la poétique*, published in 1970; despite this, however, only one small part of the later work has retained the interest of the translating world: the section entitled ‘On appelle cela traduire Celan’, most often cited for its polemical qualities.⁴¹ No widely-read author in the field mentions, to my knowledge, Meschonnic’s thirty-six propositions in the same work, which constitute a significant part of the section on translation, and which self-evidently are *indicative* statements.

³⁹ Rudolf Pannwitz, *Die Krisis der europäischen Kultur*, cited by Benjamin, p. 81.

⁴⁰ Henri Meschonnic, *Pour la poétique II: Épistémologie de l’écriture; poétique de la traduction* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973). Where appropriate, further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

⁴¹ Antoine Berman sees Meschonnic as largely responsible for creating the model for translation analyses, ‘[dont] l’orientation . . . prend . . . un tour . . . fortement “militant”’ (*PUC*, p. 46).

This said, there is no doubt that Meschonnic is critical. He states that he is essentially writing against the western 'idealist' culture which has produced false, non-dialectical oppositions, most significantly that between science and art, and more specifically, between the theory and practice of writing. Meschonnic wants an epistemology which assumes the text to be a 'language-système', and 'knowable' ('un objet de connaissance') rather than metaphysical (p.19). The title of the first part of his work is, precisely, 'Pour une épistémologie de l'écriture'.

It is in the context of the 'idealist' linguistics which has emerged from dualist conceptions of thought and language, that Meschonnic fully introduces the subject of translation. The work's second half, 'Poétique de la traduction', follows on from the first ('une poétique de la traduction . . . ne peut que dépendre de la poétique'), and is devoted to the practice and theory (indissociable, non-dualist) of translation; this section contains the 'Propositions', from which the observations that follow are largely drawn (pp.305-316).

Like Benjamin, Meschonnic accords translation an important role: it constitutes 'peut-être le levier le plus important' in the foundation of a materialist theory of writing (p.19). And as with writing, he sees it as being a complete system: the interaction of one 'langue-culture-histoire' with another. It is precisely this *complete* conception of translation that critics have so far failed to adopt in their writings: Meschonnic criticises Nida's thinking, for example, as being ideologically rather than scientifically founded, and in consequence as failing to account for literary writing. Jakobson's formal poetics, on the other hand, neglect to account for reading or subjectivity. Similarly, any empirical approach is inadequate, according to Meschonnic, since it cannot fully account for what produces a 'text' (those translations which function as 'oeuvres', or 'opérateurs de glissement culturels', like the Vulgate, or King James Version of the Bible) (pp.349-51).

It is ideology and its dualist notions which has led to more particular misconceptions in the field of translation and Meschonnic calls for 'un travail idéologique concret' to counter them. One commonly misconceived idea is that poetry is more difficult to translate than prose - a dated notion, according to Meschonnic, which is due to the perception of form as separate from content.

Another is the metaphysical, ‘non-historicised’ notion of the untranslatable. Meschonnic cedes that the untranslatable exists, but it is social and historical, not ‘l’ineffable, le mystère, le génie’. And in terms of translation practice, Meschonnic feels that the whole idea of ‘transparency’ (with its moralising corollary, the ‘modesty’ of the ‘self-effacing’ translator) is again a result of ideological belief. If a translation of a text truly functions as text (i.e. system), it follows that it cannot be termed ‘transparent’ in relationship to the original (pp. 307-8).

Against this notion, Meschonnic posits the idea of ‘décentrement’, which he describes as the ‘re-énonciation spécifique d’un sujet historique’, the textual meeting of two ‘langues-cultures’ - the all-embracing ‘système’ that he desires. Anything other is ‘l’annexion’ - translation that makes out it is not a translation, that it was written in the original language, thus at the same time ignoring all differences of time, culture and linguistic structure (p.308). Meschonnic refers to the Hebrew scholar, Louis Massignon for these definitions; Massignon in turn cites al-Hallaj, and we give the latter’s quotation here, since it explains the origins of the notion of ‘décentrement’ - a word that seems to have been absorbed into the vocabulary of translation in the latter part of the century:

Comprendre quelque chose d’autre ce n’est pas s’annexer la chose, c’est se transférer par un décentrement au centre même de l’autre . . . L’essence du langage doit être une espèce de décentrement, nous ne pouvons nous faire comprendre qu’en entrant dans le système de l’autre.⁴²

As indicated, Meschonnic sees ‘l’annexion’ - the process whereby the translator ‘transpose l’idéologie dite dominante’ - as very prevalent in France. An aspect of this procedure which Meschonnic specifically criticises, is what he calls ‘domination esthétisante’ in translation practice, whereby a need for arbitrary literary elegance, makes for translation practice which changes according to the moment. This can lead to a subjective decision to eliminate repetitions, or to add to, displace, or transform the text. These subjective notions of ‘fidelity’ should, again, be replaced by establishing criteria of translatability, and the determination of a theory of practice.

⁴² Louis Massignon, cited by Meschonnic as citing al-Hallaj (b. 855 B.C.): “‘L’involution sémantique du symbole dans les cultures sémitiques”’, *Pour la poésie II*, pp. 411-12.

As more practical illustration of his thoughts on translation theory, Meschonnic takes two main points of reference: the Jewish-Ukrainian author, Paul Celan, some of whose poems had been published in collected French translation at the time Meschonnic was writing,⁴³ and the Bible.

No doubt Meschonnic's criticism is indeed seen at its most severe in his section on the translation of *Strette* ('On appelle cela traduire Celan'), where he takes the three French translators mercilessly to task. However, although his criticism is largely contingent upon a certain understanding of Celan's own language, the end-product is not one to be dismissed as polemical ranting. Without repeating the details of his analyses here, Meschonnic argues that the very selection which forms the anthology is misleading, in the sense that such a choice does not, and cannot, reflect the process by which Celan's particular relationship with language evolved. He also criticises, again in precise detail, the ways in which the translators have 'edited' the work: 'On s'étonne . . . que des poètes, traduisant un poète, installent des omissions là où pas un mot n'est en trop' (pp. 390-91). Ultimately, it is again the need for a system of translation that Meschonnic is highlighting here, and it is precisely that which he finds lacking in this 1971 anthology of Celan.

In the very last part of his book, 'Au commencement', the author compares and criticises eight different translations of Genesis I, vv. 1-5. Generally speaking, Meschonnic views French Bible translation as having suffered through being translated from the Latin, rather than the Hebrew, as has been the case in Protestant countries (and as did Jerome). Thus instead of some equivalent of the 1611 King James Version, where, as Meschonnic sees it, 'l'idéologique et le littéraire ne sont pas séparables du linguistique', French translators have produced a Bible 'intrinsèquement latine'. No doubt this situation in part results from the 'coïncidence entre une commande sociale et une création linguistique', but Meschonnic also blames the translators, who 'se sont tous résignés à ne garder que les idées ("l'esprit") et ont abondonné sa "forme" à l'original, comme intraduisible' (pp.410-11).

Aware by now of Meschonnic's opinions, it is predictable that all the

⁴³ Paul Celan, *Strette* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1971). Meschonnic gives the work as 'Poèmes, suivis du *Méridien* et d'*Entretien dans la montagne*. Traduction d'André du Bouchet, Jean Daive et Jean-Pierre Burgart', p. 369, fn.

translations (he starts with the Latin Vulgate - 'matrice . . . avouée de nombreuses versions' - and then draws mainly on twentieth-century translations) would fall short of his ideal. (It is not only the Bible translators who Meschonnic criticises: 'il y a des spécialistes de l'anglais, mais guère de traduction-texte de Shakespeare, de Donne' (p.322)). Nevertheless, he does not give simplistic negative criticism: '. . . C'est le système de traduction qu'on tente de déplacer en travaillant du même coup à théoriser une pratique jusqu'ici mal historicisée' (p.450). For example, he views the 1959 translation by Fleg ('malgré ses erreurs dans la méthode') as 'une indication en français que le langage biblique est autre que subordination et prose digne'.⁴⁴ Dhorme's 1956 translation is marked by 'le scrupule d'exactitude'; 'il fait en français tout ce que peut l'honnêteté de l'érudition', but even he, as do the others, ultimately privileges 'l'idée'. 'Un texte', Meschonnic again insists, 'est le sens de ses formes autant que le sens de ses mots' (p.420).

Meschonnic closes the book with his own attempt at translation of the same five verses, using typographical indication of the pronunciation, accentuation and rhythmic signs for the scansion of the text in Hebrew, and dividing up a 'straight' French transcription in the same way, so as roughly to indicate the lexical and syntactical structure:

Le langage biblique est pris d'abord pour et par sa matérialité. Cette matérialité est prise comme une diction, prosodie et rythme dominant, inséparables de la signification, du rapport entre valeur et signification qui fait un texte (p.451).

It is for others to comment in their turn on his translation, and to decide to what extent it 'n'est plus la "belle infidèle", mais la production d'un contact culturel au niveau des structures mêmes de la langue' (p.413).

Perhaps, as Berman suggests, one of Meschonnic's primary aims is to 'dénoncer, et dénoncer précisément',⁴⁵ but he has also added a clear and reasoned chapter to the under-developed (as Berman also acknowledges) field of translation criticism, and I, as student, have been at least partially convinced that only 'une théorie de la littérature peut intégrer les problèmes proprement

⁴⁴ Meschonnic, p. 422, with reference to Edmond Fleg, *Le Livre du commencement* (Éd. de Minuit, 1959).

⁴⁵ *PUC*, p. 47.

textuels que pose . . . le traduire' (pp.410-11).

Yves Bonnefoy

It would be unthinkable to offer even a limited account of authors who have voiced their views on translation in the twentieth century, without mentioning the poet Yves Bonnefoy. In John Naughton's 1984 work, *The Poetics of Yves Bonnefoy*, the author, who is the principal translator of Yves Bonnefoy's prose into English, says that '[Bonnefoy] . . . has emerged, since the Second World War, as the most consistently articulate, serious, and interesting spokesman for poetry in France. . .'.⁴⁶ Not many would disagree with this view: Bonnefoy is famous not only for his own poetry, but probably equally so for his translations of English-language poetry, and for his writings on the art of translation.

The considerable body of Bonnefoy's translated work consists almost entirely of the poetry of Shakespeare, Yeats and Donne. With respect to his critical writing on translation, the earliest significant piece accompanied his 1962 translation of *Hamlet*: two short essays, 'Shakespeare et le poète français' and 'Transposer ou traduire *Hamlet*', are reproduced under the title, 'Une idée de la traduction'.⁴⁷ Two later essays also supply insight: 'La traduction de la poésie (1976)⁴⁸, and 'On the Translation of Form in Poetry' (1979)⁴⁹.

Broadly speaking, these essays deal primarily with three aspects of Bonnefoy's views on translation, which he illustrates with reference to his own experience of translating Shakespeare and Yeats. He explores his perception of the fundamental differences between the French and English languages, the implications of those differences for the translator, and he discusses the question of form in poetry translation.

⁴⁶ John T. Naughton, *The Poetics of Yves Bonnefoy* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 1.

⁴⁷ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, trans. and essay, 'Idée de la traduction', by Yves Bonnefoy (Paris: Mercure de France, 1962).

⁴⁸ 'La Traduction de la poésie' was first given as a lecture to the 'Association des traducteurs littéraires de France' in Paris, 1976. The essay was then published in *Entretiens sur la poésie* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1981).

⁴⁹ 'An Homage to French Poet Yves Bonnefoy', published in *World Literature Today* (University of Oklahoma Press, vol. 53, no. 3, summer 1979).

As far as the difference between languages is concerned, Bonnefoy finds his own way of referring to the commonly-held view that the French language is essentially abstract, while the English language is concrete. He describes the French language as 'un sphère', which he contrasts with the image of the English language as 'une glace'. (This opposition has proved unclear to some: 'sphère' has been variously translated in English as both 'sphere' and 'crystal ball'; however, it seems probable that Bonnefoy wanted to suggest the particular sense of closedness that the French word can carry: 'Domaine circonscrit . . .', is one definition given by *Le Nouveau Petit Robert*).⁵⁰ Bonnefoy elaborates on his distinction by referring to 'd'une part . . . un mot [anglais] appelant la précision ou l'enrichissement d'autres mots' and 'de l'autre . . . un lexique [français] aussi réduit que possible pour protéger une unique et essentielle expérience'.⁵¹

Writing in the sixties, Bonnefoy saw this fundamental difference between the languages as responsible for France's history of inadequate translations of Shakespeare. He thinks of Shakespeare's iambic pentameter as epitome of the English language's ability to describe the real and everyday world, the vicissitudes of individual experience, that the French language is unfortunately unable to replicate.⁵² He regrets that a translation was not made of Shakespeare before the Classical period had had time to restrict the French language, and he agrees with the view, expressed by many, that 'le goût classique empêcha toute intelligence vraie de Shakespeare'. Nevertheless, he is also now optimistic that the 'new' French poetry, with its focus on the 'objet réel' will lead to more adequate translation:

c'est par leur intuition la plus profonde . . . que le réalisme de Shakespeare et l'idéalisme renversé de la poésie française récente peuvent désormais communiquer. L'un décrit ce que l'autre demande à vivre.

⁵⁰ *Le Nouveau Petit Robert* (Paris: Dictionnaires le Robert, 2000), entry 'Sphère', p. 2391.

⁵¹ 'Shakespeare et le poète français' from *Hamlet*, p. 239. Further references to this essay are given after quotations in the text.

⁵² Speaking on Bonnefoy at the Oxford TRIO conference in 1997, Professor Michael Edwards said (I paraphrase) that the native English speaker may experience French as presenting a detached mental world, in some way hovering above the real. Professor Edwards defines the difference between the two languages as temporal, but adds that it is also spatial: through the English language's use of adverbs, synonyms, and adjectives (the incidental is placed before the defined), English seems to express 'a half-spoken desire to move into the material world, to dwell on the relationships of things amongst themselves.' French, on the other hand, hones in on *being*: the way in which the world presents itself to consciousness.

At his most hopeful, Bonnefoy envisages future translation as guiding the French language 'à un nouvel état de l'esprit' (pp.244-45).

So how should a translator proceed? Discussing the art of translation in more general terms, Bonnefoy believes it essential that in order to translate, the translator must firstly endeavour to get 'inside the mind' of the original poet, and relive the act that produced the poem: naturally this requires the translator to be deeply implicated in the role of poet. This notion is perhaps best explained by reference to a work of translation made by Bonnefoy himself. In the preface to his *Quarante-cinq poèmes de W.B. Yeats*, the author talks interestingly of how the line of thought of a poet may become obscure, as is the case with Yeats, he feels. It is for the translator to struggle to understand what that original 'lateral' manner of thinking was at its inception in the poet's mind, so as to be able to clarify the meaning to the reader in the translated language. Bonnefoy is aware that this will involve a certain 'explication', but he sees this as necessary if the poem is not to be reduced to a series of fragments.

From here, it is easy to see how the translator's own interpretation of the original poem becomes all-important: indeed, it is in this area that Bonnefoy lays himself open to criticism of his own translations.⁵³ In the collection of Yeats in question, for example, Bonnefoy justifies his use of 'enfanter' for 'to labour' in 'Among School Children' by way of his own, unusual, he agrees, interpretation of the poem. Elsewhere, in illustrating some of the difficulties the translator may face, Bonnefoy discusses the title of another of Yeats's poems, 'Sailing to Byzantium', which he ultimately decided to translate as 'Byzance - l'autre rive',⁵⁴ and also Horatio's words from *Hamlet*: Horatio might have felt 'distill'd like jelly', but in Bonnefoy's French he is 'presque en cendres'. In short, Bonnefoy feels that the poet-translator must transpose *the idea* of a work;⁵⁵ he concedes this is not an easy recipe for the translator to follow, but neither is poetry facile; he also accepts that with these particular examples, '... la

⁵³ In his *Un art en crise: Essai de poésie de la traduction poétique* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1982), Efim Etkind says that 'la position d'Yves Bonnefoy . . . ouvre trop grand la carrière à un subjectivisme incontrôlé' (p. 257).

⁵⁴ Speaking of this particular choice of Bonnefoy's, Pierre Leyris exclaimed, 'Mais enfin, pourquoi il n'a pas pu mettre 'Byzance, à la voile', tout simplement!'. (In personal interview at Leyris's home in Meudon, 1996.) (Overall, Leyris greatly admired Bonnefoy's work.)

⁵⁵ In consequence, one should only translate the poets who compel: 'Tout oeuvre qui ne nous requiert pas est intraduisible'.

traduction est manquée au plan local . . . mais l'acte de traduire est commencé . . .⁵⁶ We sense here how deeply Bonnefoy is implicated in his translation work; he has stated that he does not consider it as distinct from his life and own work as a poet, and that his translation of Yeats gave him insights into his own poetry.

It is clear from these views that Bonnefoy would not argue for a literal, word-for-word approach to translation, and it is unsurprising to learn that he is also adamant in his rejection of an equivalence of verse form. With reference once more to the 1962 *Hamlet*, in the essay, 'Transposer ou traduire *Hamlet*', he speaks strongly against a proposal that the work should be translated into some kind of form 'analogue à celui du verset claudélien'.⁵⁷ Some two decades later, Bonnefoy restated his case, this time in discussion with the Russian poet, Joseph Brodsky, who emphatically believed that formal verse cannot satisfactorily be translated by free-verse.⁵⁸ Broadly speaking, Bonnefoy's counter-argument pivots on three different points: firstly, that the form of a poem is just one of the poem's components - no one part of a poem has a detached and constant meaning - and that poetry written in a certain time and place will display a form appropriate to that moment, but not, most probably, to the moment of its translation; secondly, that if a translator works according to Bonnefoy's notion, mentioned above, that 'la traduction n'est que la poésie, recommencée', given that the form is one part of writing, it cannot be chosen in advance by someone who is endeavouring to translate another work (according to Bonnefoy, one may only select a form if the content is as yet unknown); and thirdly, and perhaps more constructively, that the felicitous use of free-verse may enable some echo of the old traditions to be found in different form.

Efim Etkind

It is a sign of the twentieth century's sheer range of opinions on translation that at the same time that Bonnefoy published his essay condemning the idea of form equivalence in translation, Efim Etkind spoke out on a number

⁵⁶ Bonnefoy, 'La traduction de la poésie' (1976), published in *Entretiens sur la poésie*, p. 99.

⁵⁷ Comment made by M. Christian Pons in *Études anglaises*, 'Shakespeare en France', cited by Bonnefoy in 'Transposer ou traduire *Hamlet*' (1962).

⁵⁸ Bonnefoy, *World Literature Today* (University of Oklahoma Press, vol. 53, no. 3, summer 1979).

of issues, which included precisely the opposite view.

The title of Etkind's work, *Un art en crise: Essai de poésie de la traduction poétique*, published in 1982, speaks for itself.⁵⁹ The author feels that the quality of translated poetry in France is, simply, in a state of crisis: it is frequently damaged beyond recognition during its passage into France, with the result that it cannot be fully incorporated into French literature, which in its turn remains 'installée dans un isolement royal'.⁶⁰ In offering his suggestions and solutions, Etkind states that he does not wish to present a theoretical treaty with *Un art en crise*; indeed, he in part is writing against those who recently have produced 'un grand nombre de théories fort abstraites', which 'n'ont rien fait pour améliorer la pratique de la traduction' (p.xix). (Etkind is possibly thinking of Mounin's 1963 *Les problèmes théoriques* here, which Berman describes as a linguist's work which has little to do with the practical difficulties of translation.⁶¹)

Etkind's other works are written and published in Russian, and in *Un art en crise*, he refers primarily to translations made of the Russian poets. But it is the attitude of French translators towards poetry from all foreign literatures that he criticises, and his opinions and views on the nature of poetry itself - which in many respects echo those of Paul Valéry - are of importance in charting the broad context of poetry translation in twentieth-century France.

Etkind lays the blame for the state of French poetry translation at several doors. As others, including Antoine Berman and Yves Bonnefoy, have done, he traces the problem back to the French classical period, which did little to encourage translation. He cites Marmier's 1839 analysis: 'nous étions alors trop fiers de nos travaux, trop préoccupés de notre gloire, pour nous laisser séduire par une ambition étrangère',⁶² and concludes that at the end of the twentieth century, 'l'indifférence pour la poésie des pays voisins est restée' (p.xvii).

With echoes of Mounin, the author also sees the present University as responsible, in that it translates largely for the purposes of information and

⁵⁹ Efim Etkind, *Un art en crise: Essai de poésie de la traduction poétique*, traduit par Wladimir Troubetsky avec la collaboration de l'auteur (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 1982).

⁶⁰ Etkind, *Un art en crise*, 'Avant-propos', p. x. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

⁶¹ *PUC*, p. 247.

⁶² Xavier Marmier, preface to Mme. de Staël, *De l'Allemagne* (Paris: Garnier-Frères, 1813).

erudition, and not in order to provide the reader with a certain *pleasure*. Etkind sees a poem as an organic whole (like man), and thinks that if translation is made for information only, then it will naturally be at the expense of other, vital, elements. The semantic ‘meaning’ (‘le sens’) of a poem ‘n’est pas, le plus souvent, et de loin, son trait principal’, and the translator must perceive a poem as ‘l’union du sens et des sons’. If, as with university translators, this does not happen, then the original will be reduced to a kind of semantic skeleton, having lost the flesh of its particular cultural associations. In sum, Etkind sees France as currently suffering from ‘la rationalisation systématique de l’original’ (p.13).

This twentieth-century problem has been doubly compounded, in Etkind’s view, firstly by the emergence of free-verse, which has tended to eliminate French poetry’s traditional emphasis on form and rhyme; and secondly, by the current trend in poetry translation for a ‘mot à mot’, or ‘literal’ translation. In both instances, Etkind sees the translators as responsible, and condemns the fact that ‘verse’ is frequently rendered as a kind of ‘prose’.

However, Etkind does not see this crisis as necessarily permanent. If the French poets ceased to leave translation to the academics, and changed their approach to poetry translation (the title of the final chapter, ‘Traductibilité et création’ hints at Etkind’s preferences in this area), the trend could be reversed: poetry translation would survive its current state of crisis and continue as the art form that it truly is.

Briefly, Etkind argues on two fronts: he mounts a defence of French language and verse forms and cites many examples of translations which are, in his view, successful (or failed); he also provides practical and theoretical guidelines for translators, based on the idea, mentioned earlier, that translation should above all aim to transmit the *principal element* of a poem - again, more often than not, the ‘mouvement harmonique’, as Valéry calls it, rather than the purely semantic ‘meaning’.⁶³ More specifically, French translators must take their own national verse forms more seriously, and work with them, rather than against them, as he feels they do at the present time.

Thus, ‘non sans une certaine audace’, Etkind takes up the statement

⁶³ Paul Valéry, *Oeuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, ‘La Pléiade’, 1968), pp. 210-211, cited by Etkind, p. 18.

made by du Bellay in his sixteenth-century *Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Françoise*: 'la langue françoise n'est si pauvre que beaucoup l'estiment'. Etkind contests the idea that certain aspects of the French language might prevent the 'poetic' translation of poetry (he names them), and he challenges those such as Edmond Cary, who has said that,

'en matière de traduction poétique, le français se trouve dans une situation défavorisée. La langue a une structure exigeante, moins souple que d'autres et se plie moins aisément à la forme d'expression poétique'.⁶⁴

Etkind concedes that this might have been the case in the eighteenth century; perhaps in 1810 Madame de Staël was right when she observed the rigidity of the French language,⁶⁵ but with the Romantics, and in particular with Victor Hugo, came 'une expression verbale absolument individuelle et comme réinventée à chaque fois', which has continued until the present time, and has changed everything (p.76). Quoting Léon Robel's (rhymed) French translation of some of the 'petits vers' that Madame de Staël had viewed as beyond the bounds of translation, Etkind declares, 'Elle peut tout, cette langue française!' (p.79)⁶⁶

As far as French verseform is concerned, Etkind again claims that its perceived shortcomings are due largely to a reputation established in the classical period. In this respect he wholeheartedly agrees with 'l'un des plus profonds philosophes de la poésie', Paul Valéry, who made that suggestion in 1944, and at the same time stated his own idea of the particular nature of poetry, as opposed to prose:

'... c'est l'erreur de Malherbe et Boileau d'avoir oublié l'essentiel dans leur code... pour moi, le langage des dieux devant être discernable, le plus sensiblement qu'il se puisse dans le langage des hommes, tous les moyens qui le distinguent, s'ils conspirent, d'autre part, à l'harmonie, sont à retenir...'⁶⁷.

Moving into a more practical analysis of translation, Etkind defines six different categories, which I repeat here with a brief definition of each:

⁶⁴ Edmond Cary, 'Traduction et Poésie', in *Babel* (March 1957), p. 23, cited by Etkind, p. 68.

⁶⁵ Mme de Staël, *De l'Allemagne*. De Staël writes: '[l]on ne dit en français que ce qu'on veut dire, et l'on ne voit point errer autour des paroles ces nuages à mille formes, qui entourent la poésie des langues du nord...' p. 147, cited by Etkind, p. 75.

⁶⁶ S. Kirsanov, trans. by Léon Robel, in *La poésie russe* (Paris: Seghers, 1965), cited by Etkind, pp. 78-79.

⁶⁷ Valéry, *Variations sur les Bucoliques*, p. 217, cited by Etkind, p. 115.

‘Traduction-information’, which almost always consists of prose; ‘Traduction-interpretation’, which usually consists of prose and accompanying commentaries; ‘Traduction-allusion’ whereby the reader’s imagination is triggered, but which leaves him/her to ‘terminer l’esquisse’; ‘Traduction-approximation’, where the possibility of a full translation is rejected as impossible by the translator at the outset; ‘Traduction-imitation’, where the result owes more to the poet-translator than to the original poem; and finally, ‘Traduction-recréation’, where the poem is (re)created in its unity, and the original structure is retained (pp.18-29). (The difference between ‘imitation’ and ‘recréation’ is that the latter conserves the structure of the original, and also keeps its ‘système d’images’.) At present, according to Etkind, the crushing majority of poetry translation in France falls into the categories of ‘information’ and ‘allusion’. Etkind feels that the translator should aim for ‘traduction-recréation’. This is not a new idea: Valéry voiced his preference for this kind of approach, and Léon Robel and Yves Bonnefoy have done so more recently.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, according to Etkind, this category of translation accounts for only 2% of current poetry translation.

Etkind gives many examples of translations which may be placed in the various categories. He himself analyses Osip Mandelstam’s 1911 poem (translated into French as “Le Coquillage”), and concludes that ‘[ses] caractéristiques rythmiques, syntaxiques et phonétiques de la forme du poème . . . matérialisent son idée’ (p.43); he also interrogates four other different translations (three French, one German), for the degree to which they realise his findings. Aware as we are of Etkind’s thesis, his conclusions come as no surprise. The following comments variously illustrate his desire for rhythm and verseform, and his wish for translation *system*:

. . . Point de mètre. Point de rimes. Nulle organisation phonétique du poème. . . . Car nous avons affaire, de toute évidence, malgré le découpage en vers, à de la prose, et toutes ces intentions ne sont que du vent, n’étant point renforcées par la matière du vers, de l’art poétique (p.44).

. . . J’ai dit que chaque strophe est soumise à ses règles propres. Ce n’est pas exact: chaque strophe a son profil particulier, et de règles il n’y en a point, ce qui est funeste pour la traduction’ (p.47).

⁶⁸ Etkind nevertheless finds that ‘la position d’Yves Bonnefoy . . . ouvre trop grand la carrière à un subjectivisme incontrôlé’, p. 257.

Overall, Etkind finds it is the French translators who are most guilty of failing to render the musical qualities of poetry. Although there are notable exceptions - among some dozen names, he includes Bonnefoy for his translation of Yeats, and Leyris for his Hopkins - French translators have been too inclined to think of poetry translation according to Baudelaire's famous opposition between 'le moulage de la prose' and 'une singerie rimée'.⁶⁹ In a summary of great interest, Etkind traces the current vogue for 'literal' translation from Humboldt through to the present time, mentioning the better known incidents and characters as they occurred (the views of Robel, Deguy, Klossowski, Bonnefoy, etc.).)

In order to prove that the situation is not irreparable, Etkind also cites many examples of successful translation (Moreau's Rilke is 'un miracle', for example) and, again practically, he provides a list of equivalent verse forms for different languages. He stresses that poet-translators must work to revitalise the traditional forms that were lost in the changes that led to free-verse at the beginning of the century, so that they may be used in a manner both true to the original poem and to the present-day climate (here he perhaps unknowingly echoes Bonnefoy, who, as we saw, also says that the felicitous use of free-verse may produce an echo of the old forms).

As enduring symbol of his beliefs, Etkind again holds up Valéry, not only for his views on poetry, but also for his verse translation of Virgil. Etkind sees Valéry's translation as a denial both of Baudelaire's definition of the translator's choice, and also of the poet's decision to shy away from Poe's rhyme (whose importance Baudelaire at the same time acknowledged) in his translation. In 1944, Valéry wrote: 'C'est que les plus beaux vers du monde sont insignifiants ou insensés, une fois rompu leur mouvement harmonique et altérée leur substance sonore . . .'. Citing these lines, fifty years later Etkind regrets that 'personne ne leur a accordé la moindre attention'.⁷⁰ It is no doubt to his credit that he has taken such a firm step against prevailing belief and practice: *Un Art en crise* makes a book-length case for poetry translation where the (semantic) 'meaning'

⁶⁹ Charles Baudelaire, 'Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe' (1859), in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), p. 353, cited by Etkind, p. 253.

⁷⁰ Valéry, *Variations*, cited by Etkind, p. 18.

is not necessarily perceived as the most important element for the translator to preserve: an unhabitual stand at the end of the twentieth century.

Jean-René Ladmiral

Jean-René Ladmiral is a philosopher, linguist, and translator, who has taught philosophy and ‘traductologie’ in Paris, and written on intercultural communication, theory, and criticism.⁷¹ By far the largest part of his published work, however, consists of prose translation from German into French; authors he has translated include Fromm, Habermas, and Adorno. Ladmiral’s most significant work on translation is *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction*, originally published in 1979, and reissued with a new preface in 1994; it is this work which concerns us here.⁷²

The first section of *Traduire* is devoted to a discussion of translation teaching at secondary school level; this is not an area of relevance here, and we will allow Ladmiral’s own summary, in which his views are clear, to suffice:

[L]e littéralisme est une régression au plan d’une pédagogie des langues et de la traduction; en un mot . . . il conviendra de *réhabiliter la traduction* et d’en renouveler la pédagogie.⁷³

Broadly speaking, *Traduire* builds on the works that have been published over the preceding fifty years; in 1979, Ladmiral feels able to categorise the writings on translation that linguisticians have produced in that period. He himself writes within the domain of ‘linguistique appliquée à la théorie de la traduction’, and from the viewpoint of the ‘linguiste-philosophe’, as he terms himself, and others such as Mounin, Nida, and Taber. According to Ladmiral, they represent the ‘sémanticiens, or ‘théoriciens *sémanticiens* de la traduction’, and he distinguishes the group from the ‘stylisticiens’, or ‘littéraires-théoriciens de la traduction’ such as Meschonnic, or Robel, who ‘travaillent à élaborer une poétique de la traduction’ (pp.172-73).

⁷¹ Specifically, *La Communication Interculturelle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1989), and *Critique & Théorie* (Paris: l’Harmattan, 1997).

⁷² Jean-René Ladmiral, *Traduire: théorèmes pour la traduction* (Paris: Payot, 1979, 2nd edn Gallimard, Collection ‘tel’, 1994).

⁷³ Ladmiral, part 2, ‘La traduction et l’institution pédagogique’, pp. 23-82 (p. 82). Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

Ladmiral is not so much writing for or against one group, however, but against the division between the theory and practice of translation that he sees as being maintained in authors' - and in particular, in philosophers' - work. He reproaches both Mounin and Meschonnic for not having properly considered the difficulties of the practising translator in their writings: 'A quoi bon une belle théorie rigoureusement cohérente, et "scientifique", qui ne mordrait pas sur les réalités effectives du métier?' (p.9). He names his own particular goal as that of enabling, through the formulation of theorems, a bridging of the gap between translation theory and practice.

Ladmiral sets out from the ancient point of divide between those who favour a 'literal' translation, and those who favour the 'freer' kind. He describes the opposition of the two categories with reference to the work of Nida and Mounin:

[C]e sont ces deux pôles d'une même alternative, indéfiniment rebaptisés, qui scandent l'histoire de la traduction selon un mouvement de balancier entre "l'équivalence formelle" et "l'équivalence dynamique" (E. A. Nida 1964, p.159 sqq), entre le mot-à-mot et les "belles infidèles" (cf. G. Mounin, 1955). . . (p.14).

He himself does not take up arms in this particular battle here, wishing to move on, and having already made his views clear in an article published in 1986, in which 'mon propos était de faire une critique radicale de la position littéraliste'.⁷⁴

Instead, he refers to his own 'néologismes': 'sourciers' and 'ciblistes', and the Saussurian distinction between 'langue' and 'parole', and states his understanding of their definitions:

Ceux que j'appelle les 'sourciers' s'attachent au *signifiant* de la *langue*, et ils privilégient la *langue-source*; alors que ceux que j'appelle les 'ciblistes' mettent l'accent, non pas sur le signifiant, ni même sur le signifié mais sur le *sens*, non pas de la langue mais de la *parole* ou du discours, qu'il s'agira de traduire en mettant en oeuvre les moyens propres à la *langue-cible* (p.xv).

Among the 'sourciers', Ladmiral counts Benjamin, Meschonnic, and Berman; among the 'ciblistes', Mounin, Etkind, and himself. Despite certain sympathies, however, Ladmiral wishes to build on the findings of his fellow

⁷⁴ Ladmiral, 'Sourciers et ciblistes', *Revue d'esthétique*, no. 12 (1986), pp. 33-42, cited in the preface to *Traduire*, 2nd edn.

'ciblistes', such as Mounin, who posits a dualism (ultimately unhelpful to the translator, in Ladmiraal's view) between 'science' and 'poetry', or Meschonnic, who seeks to establish 'une théorie de la "littérarité"' (limited in its scope as far as translation goes), or, again, Taber, who (unhelpfully, and also mistakenly, Ladmiraal feels) sees the process of translation as able to operate in two stages: 'le sens', and then 'le style'. Ladmiraal sets out to approach the theory of translation 'latéralement', by focussing on it through the lens of connotation. He states that

. . . les connotations culturelles sont propres aux contextes de chaque langue et qu'à ce titre, elles doivent être traduites, c'est-à-dire qu'elles doivent figurer dans le texte-cible puisqu'elles font partie des informations que comporte, implicitement, le texte-source' (p.178).

That which is above all important for Ladmiraal is that 'le sens "passe", quoi qu'il en coûte . . . On ne traduit pas des mots mais des idées': thus he moves his reader in the direction of 'connotations sémantiques' rather than 'sémiotiques', although he acknowledges that there will always be a fluctuating dialectic between the two. He lays out his thinking on the semiotic/semantic connotational divide in some detail, but it is towards the book's end that most non-linguists would find Ladmiraal's theorems most illuminating, since it is here that he endeavours to bridge the gap between theory and practice through the use of examples.

In order to illustrate his 'théorème opposant connotations sémantiques et connotation sémiotique', Ladmiraal nominates several 'mots problématiques', which he encountered while making a German/French translation of Habermas. To give one example, where the problem is to find the French equivalent of the German 'naturwüchsig', Ladmiraal sees the semantic connotations of the *parole*, or discourse, as all-important, and advises the translator (who, having had recourse to the theorem will have been better able to conceptualise the problem) to proceed by what Ladmiraal refers to as 'incrémentialisations'. By dint of phrases or footnotes, or both, such a procedure will edge the translation towards the semantic echoes of the word in the German language, word which in this instance could not be translated by one only (in this particular case, the translators gave six different translations of 'naturwüchsig'). Ladmiraal explains the process thus:

... le traducteur tend à être ... placé devant l'obligation de 'paroliser' les éléments de langue-source ... voire de périlangue-source ... c'est-à-dire de les intégrer comme incrémentialisations, au texte de la parole-cible qu'il produit (p.219).

Ladmiral also offers a 'negative' example. Asked to translate Adorno's *Jargon der Eigentlichkeit* (1965), he rejected the task largely on the grounds that at the time a translation was impossible. He found the German work to be so charged with semantic connotation as to be 'pratiquement impossible':

... dans le cas précis de ce livre, pour que la traduction puisse compenser ce que nous avons appelé 'l'entropie des connotations' (J.-R. Ladmiral, 1975, p.219) [the expression implies the translating opposite of 'l'incrémentialisation'], il aurait fallu consentir à de telles incrémentialisations que le texte-cible en eût été allongé ... dans des proportions qui eussent largement excédé les limites de ce qu'il était raisonnable d'envisager (p.257).

The author feels that a future translation may well be possible, but only once additional, relevant works will have sufficiently familiarised the French audience with the semantic connotations present in Adorno.

Finally, no doubt it is just one more sign of the rapid development of the translation field that when *Traduire* was reissued in 1994, Ladmiral found himself obliged to '[préciser] quel est le sens que peut prendre ce livre dans le contexte actuel' (p.v). At the time the second edition was published, Ladmiral had moved from viewing translation as a sub-division of linguistics to seeing it as an interdisciplinary area. He consequently views his own work as *psychologically* helpful to the translator, in that by permitting him/her to conceptualise a problem through reference to theory, it will facilitate the actual practice of translation. In Ladmiral's view, all theoreticians should work with the practical end in sight:

Le seul bénéfice que l'on a droit d'attendre d'une théorie de la traduction ... consiste à clarifier et à classer ... les difficultés de la traduction, à les conceptualiser pour articuler une logique de la décision (p.211).

Antoine Berman

Until now, with the exception of Benjamin, my study has considered works by authors published in the forty years between 1946 (Larbaud's *Sous l'invocation de Saint Jérôme*) and 1982 (Etkind's *Un art en crise*). In consequence, we are almost entirely ignorant of those authors' views on the work

of the late Antoine Berman, who, before his early death in 1991, wrote several works on translation which have made possibly the greatest impact in the field in France in the latter half of the twentieth century.

There are several sources which indicate this to be the case. The only author mentioned in this study who has had the practical possibility of citing Berman in his work is Ladmiral, who does so in the 1994 preface to *Traduire*. Even though he does not ultimately share Berman's views on translation, Ladmiral nevertheless finds that 'ses travaux constituent certainement le contribution la plus importante au débat depuis une quinzaine d'années'. He sees Berman's work as 'doublement significatif', in that it extends and appeals to a wider audience than is usual in the field: 'Berman était traducteur et philosophe, mais c'était aussi un littéraire'.⁷⁵ The poet Yves Bonnefoy expresses a similar view, saying that in his opinion, Berman is the only author to have produced anything significant about translation in recent times.⁷⁶ Also, again in a new preface to a revised work published in 1994, Roger Zuber finds that Berman 'a eu la sagesse d'orienter ses curiosités vers ces formes de la traduction qui échappent à la seule compétence des linguistes . . .'.⁷⁷ And finally, the late Pierre Leyris said that he saw Berman as one of two notable critics of translation in the twentieth century.⁷⁸

For my part, I have found that of all the critics and commentators, it is Berman who has most influenced my own work. As Ladmiral suggests, Berman manages to combine common sense with rigour, and in an area where it is so difficult to do any kind of objective justice to all parties, I have found Berman's clarification and suggestions of critical method most helpful. For these reasons, I devote more space to summarising his approach and his method than that of the preceding theorists.

The two works for which Berman is best known, are *L'épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique*, and *Pour une*

⁷⁵ Ladmiral also speaks of Berman as 'plutôt du côté du littéralisme - comme un Henri Meschonnic . . . et aussi comme Walter Benjamin . . .' (pp. xii-xiv).

⁷⁶ In conversation at the 1997 Conference on Translation held at The University of Edinburgh.

⁷⁷ Roger Zuber, *Les "Belles Infidèles" et la formation du goût classique* (Paris: Albin Michel, first published 1968, rev. 1994) preface to the 2nd edn, p. xii.

⁷⁸ This according to the obituary article on Leyris in *The Times Literary Supplement* (February, 2001); the second critic Leyris esteemed was probably Valéry Larbaud.

critique de la traduction: John Donne, published in 1984 and 1995 respectively. The first, a largely discursive and theoretical work, may be seen as laying the ground for the second, which is more solidly founded in Berman's practice as critic and translator.

L'épreuve de l'étranger: Culture et traduction dans l'Allemagne romantique

L'épreuve aims primarily to outline and compare the approaches to translation (largely in fragment form) of those German Romantic writers such as F. Schlegel, Schleiermacher and Novalis, whose translation strategies differed slightly from those of their contemporaries - Goethe, Hölderlin, or Herder. Berman also provides valuable observations on the comparative histories of German and French translation, and his commitment to the development of translation theory and criticism in France (later exemplified in *PUC*) is particularly striking.

Berman's wider goal in outlining the approaches of the major German translation theorists and practitioners, is to provide 'au moins l'ébauche de l'écriture de l'un des chapitres les plus captivants' of an 'histoire de la traduction occidentale', a work as yet unwritten.⁷⁹ He feels that the ideas on translation put forward by the Athenäum group laid the ground for '... une certaine conscience littéraire et traductrice moderne' and says that later French theorists, such as Blanchot and Serres, have been influenced by '[l]a théorie romantique de la traduction, poétique et spéculative'. Indeed, the author places himself alongside such twentieth-century French authors as Breton, Benjamin, and Jaccottet, who have all turned to the German Romantics for a sense of '*l'origine fascinante*' of their own literary awareness (pp.37-38).

In laying out some major markers in the history of occidental translation, Berman observes that the divergence between French and German translation culture was prompted largely by Luther's sixteenth-century translation of the Bible. The work has proved of considerable importance to German translation and to the national literature overall; Berman cites Hermann Broch, who states that: "La création de l'allemand écrit a eu lieu en étroite association avec la

⁷⁹ Berman, *L'épreuve*, p. 289. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

traduction de la Bible par Luther” (p.49).⁸⁰ Berman also observes that Luther’s aims in translating - broadly speaking, to make the Bible as accessible as possible to the general public - further strengthened the roots of the German translating tradition.

France, on the other hand, has no such single equivalent work of translation, and demonstrates a very different tradition of translation; according to Berman, from Luther’s founding work on, the German tradition grew broadly in opposition to the French translating style, in particular, in contrast to the well-known ‘poétisant’ classical translations of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France.⁸¹ The poets and writers who gathered round *The Athenäum* Romantics’ journal largely disagreed with the prevalent French attitude; Berman gives a statement made by the poet Collardeau as illustration of the French way of thinking at the end of the eighteenth century:

“S’il y a quelque mérite à traduire, ce ne peut être que celui de perfectionner . . . son original, . . . de l’embellir, de se l’approprier, de lui donner un air national et de naturaliser, en quelque sorte, cette plante étrangère”(p.62).⁸²

Behind these differences, says Berman, was the fact that France, in contrast to Germany, felt sound in its own culture, and did not experience the German need to appeal to other countries and poetic models for identification.

The Germans, then, embarked on the endeavour of *Bildung*, a project of ‘auto-définition globale’, which sought to construct and develop German art and science, and in which translation (together with criticism, the concept of encyclopaedia, a universal poetry, etc.,) played an important role. Berman reviews the principal contributions and the central tendencies: broadly speaking, translation practice and theory were characterised by the notions of

⁸⁰ Hermann Broch, *Création Littéraire et naissance* (Paris, Gallimard, 1955), p. 301.

⁸¹ In his influential *The Translator’s Invisibility* (London: Routledge, 1985), Lawrence Venuti enters into the cultural and political effects of fluent, or domesticating, translation - an area into which I am unable to enter here. Focusing primarily on Anglo-American culture, Venuti argues that ‘insofar as the effect of transparency effaces the work of translation, it contributes to the cultural marginality and economic exploitation that English-language translators have long suffered . . . [but] whose work nonetheless remains indispensable because of Anglo-American culture, of English. . . . Behind the translator’s invisibility is a trade imbalance that underwrites this domination . . .’ (p. 17).

⁸² Quote by Collardeau (1732-1776) taken from Van der Meerschen: ‘Traduction française, problèmes de fidélité et de qualité’, in *Traduzione-tradizione, lectures 4-5* (Milan: Dedalo, n.d.), p. 68, cited by Berman, *L’épreuve*, p. 62, fn.

'Erweiterung and Treue' ('élargissement, amplification', and 'fidélité'), and the author explores the subtle differences of viewpoint (primarily regarding the process of selection of works for translation) of Herder, Goethe, Voss, F. Schlegel and A.W. Schlegel, Novalis, Humboldt, Schleiermacher, and Hölderlin. A good, if somewhat extreme illustration of the general tendency can be seen in Voss's translations of Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*. Berman remarks of translations at the time that 'elles doivent se consacrer avant tout aux Anciens . . .'; more specifically, he says that '[la] traduction [de Voss] vise à traduire les Grecs avec la plus grande fidélité possible, mais aussi, à soumettre l'allemand encore non formé au joug "salutaire" des formes métriques grecques' (p.82). (Naturally, the general tendency had its critics: Schlegel criticised Voss for having 'grecified' the German language too abruptly, for example.)

Turning to France, with echoes of Larbaud, Berman calls for a history of occidental translation, and a complete account of the French translating tradition. Noting the influence of the German Romantics on the later French writers and translators, he thinks that the time has come to sever France's particular evolutionary vein, in order to establish 'un nouveau champ de la littérature, de la critique et de la traduction'. In a couple of key statements in the introduction, he lays out his views on how translation (into French) should be approached, and, more widely, how he believes the field of French translation should interact with other literatures in the future:

Le travail à accomplir sur le français moderne pour le rendre capable d'accueillir authentiquement, c'est-à-dire sans ethnocentrisme, ce domaine littéraire montre bien qu'il s'agit, dans et par la traduction, de participer à ce mouvement de décentrement et de changement dont notre littérature (notre culture) a besoin . . . (pp.37-39).

As far as translation practice is concerned, then, Berman wants the foreignness of the foreign to be kept. The translator's task is to permit the strangeness, as it were, to be released from the language of the original text, and to enable his/her own language to be permeated by it:

J'appelle mauvaise traduction la traduction qui, généralement sous couvert de transmissibilité, opère une négation systématique de l'étrangeté de l'oeuvre étrangère . . . L'essence de la traduction est d'être ouverture, dialogue, métissage, décentrement (p.17).

To move towards achieving this - and this surely was the hidden

beginning of *Pour une critique* - Berman considers that translation must 'réfléchir sur elle-même et sur ses pouvoirs'. But not only reflect. In the author's view, 'aucune "théorie" du traduire ne serait nécessaire si quelque chose ne devait pas changer dans la pratique de la traduction' (p.39). It is in his second work, *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne*, published eleven years later than *L'épreuve*, in 1995, that Berman demonstrates some part of these beliefs in more practical form, and it is to this achievement that we now turn.

Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne

As the title suggests, the first part of *Pour une critique* endeavours to outline 'les contours d'une critique des traductions', - a branch of literary criticism which Berman sees as previously neglected and ill-defined. Translation criticism has never taken the form of a discipline in its own right, but has been largely and loosely embraced by the 'véritable institution' of 'la Critique'. The following quote encapsulates Berman's reasoning and design:

Si nous estimons que la critique littéraire est essentielle à la vie des oeuvres . . . nous devons considérer . . . que la critique des traductions l'est tout autant, et donc accorder à cette partie de la critique tout le sérieux que l'on accorde à celle relative aux oeuvres (p.43).

Berman's aim, then, is to articulate an approach to translation criticism which is sufficiently rigorous to help it become established as a distinct and independent genre, much as literary criticism had been in the nineteenth century. However, he feels that this cannot be fully accomplished until there is a general shift in the way in which translation criticism is perceived and, indeed, operates. Traditionally, it has largely functioned in the Kantian sense of a 'judgement', or, in more recent terminology, as 'evaluation': in Berman's view, the goal of translation criticism would be better redefined as 'dégagement de la vérité d'une traduction' (pp.13-14).

Berman feels that at present, the different approaches to translation analysis are so diverse and display such an 'absence de forme et de méthodologie propres' as to be most easily defined by their incoherence. He gives his own definition of what he feels translation criticism should specifically represent:

Par forme d'une analyse de traduction, j'entends une structure discursive *sui generis*, adaptée à son objet (la comparaison d'un original et de sa traduction, ou de ses traductions) . . . J'entends aussi par là une forme qui se réfléchit sur

elle-même, thématise sa spécificité et, ainsi, produit sa méthodologie, mais cherche à fonder celle-ci sur une théorie explicite de la langue, du texte et de la traduction (p.45).

Notwithstanding his general criticism, Berman singles out two well-known approaches as significant in the field, and of value to his own work: that of Meschonnic, and the 'functionalist', Tel-Aviv School (founded by Even-Zohar and presently represented by, among others, Gideon Toury in Israel and Annie Brisset in Quebec). To Berman, their analyses 'me paraissent avoir une *forme*, et une *forme forte*'. He praises the clear and rigorous nature of Meschonnic's analyses, '...solidement étayées par des savoirs "modernes" (linguistique, sémiologie, poétique, etc.),' and which 'examinent des traductions au nom d'une idée de l'acte traductif et de ses tâches entièrement déterminée'; Meschonnic's method is 'parfaitement transférable'. With respect to the Tel-Aviv functionalist approach, Berman particularly approves of the fact that their method is target- rather than source-text orientated, thus side-stepping the prescriptive slant from which, in his opinion, most approaches to translation suffer. This approach aims to:

... éviter d'analyser les traductions en mettant en jeu un concept prescriptif du traduire, et d'étudier de façon neutre, objective et "scientifique" ce qui est appelé la "littérature traduite" dans son empiricité, sans se laisser guider par les schémas *a priori* des linguistes ou des philosophes . . . (p.51).

Thus even if Berman does ultimately reject the full and complete model of both approaches (briefly, Meschonnic for his systematically negative and polemic angle, and the Tel-Aviv School for their failure to account for the 'sujet traduisant' and for placing literary translation in a secondary position), his own project draws on their achievements, and places itself somewhere between the two:

... entre une analyse 'trop' militante genre Meschonnic et une analyse 'trop' fonctionnaliste, sociologique, genre Toury ou Brisset, il y a place pour un autre 'discours' qui, loin de s'opposer polémiquement aux deux premiers, sache conquérir son autonomie en leur rendant justice (p.62).

In producing such a discourse, Berman also acknowledges being influenced by some aspect of most of the major authors in the fields of his expertise: philosophy, linguistics, and translation. He has been primarily influenced by the hermeneutics of Ricoeur and Jauss, as they developed from

Heidegger: '[l]'herméneutique moderne . . . me permet d'éclairer mon expérience de traducteur . . .'. He has also been guided by Benjamin, 'car c'est chez lui qu'on trouve le concept le plus élevé . . . de la critique littéraire; . . . Benjamin est indépassable' (p.15). Benjamin, it may be noted, was particularly influenced by Friedrich Schlegel (Berman refers to Benjamin's thought as 'radicalisation des intuitions de Novalis & Schlegel'), and Berman himself occasionally uses Schlegel to support his own views. Given the central role that translation criticism plays in Berman's work and my present study, it is of interest to read Schlegel's view of its high aims, presented 'de manière originelle', as Berman puts it:

"Cette critique poétique . . . voudra exposer à nouveau l'exposition, donner forme nouvelle à ce qui a déjà forme, . . . et l'oeuvre, elle la complétera, la rajeunira, la façonnera à neuf"(p.40).⁸³

Moving towards more grounded application, Berman further defines the work of translation criticism: 'La critique d'une traduction est donc celle d'un texte qui, lui-même, résulte d'un travail d'ordre critique' (p.41). 'Opération delicate', he adds. *Pour une critique* lays out the steps which might enable the kind of achievement to which Schlegel points, and, in the second part of the work, attempts to illustrate and support Berman's method through practical demonstration.

Berman's 'trajet analytique' is divided into successive steps, each described in considerable detail. Here, I simply outline the key stages through which the critic who chooses to follow in Berman's path is advised to travel.

The first steps concern the act of reading and rereading: firstly the translation(s) and then the original (the order is significant). At this initial stage it is important for the critic to adopt a certain stance: Berman's goal, as we have seen, is to follow Schlegel and Benjamin in encouraging translation criticism to function in more productive and positive mode than has traditionally been the case; thus rather than the habitual 'regard méfiant et pointilleux', the reader of the translation should bring a 'regard réceptif' to the text. This does not imply a lack of critical eye, so much as one which accords to a translation the same

⁸³ In Benjamin, *Le concept critique esthétique dans le romantisme allemand*, p. 112. Berman notes, 'Rajeunir l'oeuvre est exactement ce que Goëthe demande à la traduction. Cf. Le chapitre sur Goëthe dans *L'épreuve de l'étranger*' (p. 40, fn.13).

amount of respect as (ideally) to an original text. One must ‘apprendre à lire une traduction’, and Berman advises that, as with the reading and multiple rereadings required to access the workings of *any* text, a translation should be studied autonomously, *away from the original*: ‘Laisser l’original, résister à la compulsion de comparaison, c’est là un point sur lequel on ne saurait trop insister’ (p.65). This very practical piece of advice is theoretically quite wise: it is indeed difficult to read a translation as a text in its own right if the original is already imprinted on the mind.⁸⁴

The ultimate goal of the multiple readings is to prepare for the inevitable moment of comparison between original and translation, but firstly, the initial concentration on the translation alone will permit the critic to see whether the text ‘holds’ (‘tient’) in its own right. Berman uses ‘tenir’ to stress that the writing must be found, firstly, to attain to an acceptable standard of composition (not often the case with translated texts, in the author’s view) and, secondly, to achieve a level where the text becomes worthy of its name: ‘le texte traduit doit [. . .] faire *texte*’. Berman loosely defines the key components of a ‘text’ as ‘systématicité et corrélativité, organicité de tous ses constituants’; in sum, he says the critic should attempt to locate those characteristics which produce the text’s degree of ‘*consistance immanente*’ and its (possibly less easily pinned down) degree of ‘*vie immanente*’ (p.65). As mentioned, Berman’s application of this approach is demonstrated in the second part of his work, where he criticises and compares three translations of one poem by John Donne, with its original.

Moreover, the aim of the two types of reading is to accumulate a certain number of ‘zones textuelles’, in both original and translation, which in some way determine the coherence and particular stylistic nature of texts. The critic’s aim at this stage is the ‘repérage de tous les traits stylistiques . . . qui *individuent* l’écriture et la langue de l’original’. These may be either felicitous or problematic. Although, naturally, the conclusions of these readings will vary according to the eye of the individual critic, Berman offers precise advice. As far as the reading of the original is concerned, Berman suggests that it be accomplished ‘dans l’horizon de la traduction’. Without, again, going into his

⁸⁴ *Theoretically*, because in practice it requires an extraordinary will and confidence not to at least *glance* at the original before examining its translation.

analysis too deeply here, Berman points out that in the same way that a translator reads (or should read) a text 'as for translation' (translation being itself a form of criticism), so must the critic. He also advises that these acts of reading may only be effectively accomplished if the critic refers to collateral works: material which casts light on the texts to be discussed. Berman cites Pierre Leyris as a translator who has worked in such a way: 'pour traduire Hopkins et comprendre son *inscape*, [Leyris] a lu l'ouvrage de Gilson sur Duns Scot' (p.68).

At the moment of 'confrontation' between the two texts, this preliminary work will also draw on those areas of study which have proliferated in the twentieth century, and which may enrich the critic's work: 'la linguistique, la poétique, l'analyse structurale, la stylistique'. In no way should these 'sciences' act as restraining forces, but be used as is appropriate: their contribution to our century's accumulation of linguistic knowledge makes them, says Berman, 'un incontournable' of criticism (p.69).

It will be recalled that one of Berman's reasons for not whole-heartedly embracing the Tel-Aviv method was the (hermeneutic) question of the 'sujet traduisant', and it is not surprising to find that the next steps in his method send the critic off in search of the translator. Berman points out that even if the 'consistance [et vie] immanente' of a translated text are manifest, there will still remain elements which require enquiry: even if, say, two translations are clearly successful, one translator will have translated very differently from another. At this stage the critic's aim is to acquire what Berman refers to as 'une théorie du sujet traduisant', a sense of 'qui est le traducteur' (p.73). Briefly, this may be obtained through three separate, yet allied, investigations: a study of the translator's profile (translating/professional); his or her 'position traductive'; and 'le projet de traduction'. These last two require brief explication.

'La position traductive' is generally obtained through the paratextual apparatus, such as prefaces, or interviews with the translator, but Berman advises caution: 'le traducteur a tendance à laisser parler en lui la *doxa* ambiante et les *topoi* impersonnels sur la traduction' (p.75). (Berman probably has the 'norms' of polysystems theory in mind here, and is warning that the critic should be aware of the degree and ways in which the translator may have unconsciously internalised current thinking and practices of translation.) Linked to this

‘position traductive’, the ‘projet de traduction’ refers to the form in which the translator has chosen to carry out a particular work of literary translation (anthology, collection, etc.), together with his or her selected (perhaps ‘norm-determined’), manner, or style, of translation. The translator’s decisions are all-important: a straight-forward example of a ‘flawed’ project, as Berman views it, is described in the second part of *Pour une critique*, where he ultimately condemns a translation of Donne on the grounds that the authors wished to create a ‘Donne français’, a project, in Berman’s view, self-evidently doomed.

(On a less concrete level, Berman makes the interesting point that between comprehending the ‘projet de traduction’ and the analysis of the translated text, the critic is presented with a curious circular trajectory: ‘la vérité (et la validité) du projet se mesure . . . à la fois en elle-même et dans son produit’ (p.83). More simply, the project is realised only through the translation, yet the translation cannot be realised without the project; for the critic, as Berman says, ‘à entrer dans ce cercle et à le parcourir’ (p.77)).

The final, wider, consideration for the critic resides in ‘l’horizon du traducteur’, a term and concept most recently explored by Hans Robert Jauss, and within which, in Berman’s terms, both the ‘projet de traduction’ and the ‘position traductif’ lie (p.79).⁸⁵ Before stating the implications of the concept as Berman employs it, it is worth noting that if Berman again turns to hermeneutics here, it is to avoid the kind of functionalism or structuralism ‘qui réduisent le traducteur au rôle d’un “relais” entièrement déterminé socio-idéologiquement’, as he puts it (p.81). Berman prefers to refer to the notions put forward by Ricoeur and Jauss, where it is question ‘[d]’horizon, d’expérience, de monde, d’action, de dé- et de recontextualisation’. These concepts, ‘fondamentaux de l’herméneutique moderne . . . ce sont des concepts à la fois “objectifs” et “subjectifs”, “positifs” et “négatifs”, qui pointent tous une finitude et une infinitude’. As Berman points out, these are not concepts that are (in practical terms) ‘fonctionnels’, but in his view, they nevertheless permit the critic to

⁸⁵ Berman states that the term was developed through the philosophy of Husserl and Heidegger, elaborated epistemologically by Gadamer and Ricoeur, and finally exploited to the great advantage of literary hermeneutics, by Jauss (p.79). He refers the reader particularly to *Pour une herméneutique littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988; pp. 25-26) in which Jauss ‘a même fait l’histoire du concept d’horizon’ (p. 79, fn. 95).

‘mieux saisir la dimension traductive dans sa vie immanente et ses diverses dialectiques’ (p.81). The notion of ‘l’horizon’ thus has a dual nature: ‘(designant ce-à-partir-de-quoi l’agir du traducteur a sens et peut se déployer’), it both points to ‘l’espace ouvert de cet agir’, and also designates ‘. . . ce qui clôt, ce qui enferme le traducteur dans un cercle de possibilités limitées’ (p.81).

To reduce, for our purposes, a complex and primarily philosophical area of concern to a very basic, indeed more functionally-orientated summary, in requesting that the critic consider the ‘horizon traduisant’, Berman is asking for criticism that sweeps across ‘l’ensemble des paramètres langagiers, littéraires, culturels et historiques qui “déterminent” le sentir, l’agir, et le penser d’un traducteur’ (p.79).

Eighty-three pages into the first part of *Pour une critique*, ‘Nous voici, à n’en pas douter, arrivés à l’étape concrète et décisive de la critique de traductions’ (p.83), and it is here, grounded as we are in the principal tenets of Berman’s method, that I surrender the conclusions of Berman’s work into the hands of the interested reader, and replace the author’s selected translations, together with his criticism of Donne’s ‘Going to Bed’, by my own particular choice of poet and translations, the analyses of which form the greater part of this work.

Chapter Three : Landmarks in 19th & 20th-Century Poetry Translation

In a 1813 lecture on the possible different approaches to translation, the German theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher argued, disarmingly simply, that there were two methods only: ‘Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him’.¹

In the preceding chapter, I have tried to provide my reader with a summary sense of the theoretical side of the context in which the twentieth-century French translator works, but my account would remain somewhat one-dimensional were it not to be viewed alongside the lively translation practice which has also characterised the century. From the early nineteenth century until now, verse and verse translation in France have been marked by extremes, not only of theoretical debate, but also of practice, which, to a greater or lesser degree, illustrate Schleiermacher’s statement. This chapter, then, describes a number of the major landmarks in the last two centuries - just some of the principal events and concerns in verse and translation of which every individual translator in the twentieth century would be increasingly aware. Given that my ultimate focus is on the translation of Emily Dickinson, it will not surprise to find that my account includes references to those other key American figures, Walt Whitman and Edgar Allen Poe.

¹ Cited by Lawrence Venuti in *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 19-20.

Chateaubriand: A 19th-Century Precedent of 'Littéralité'

My account begins, however, with a French translation of a particularly English work. Chateaubriand's 1836 translation of Milton's *Paradise Lost* is often cited as one of the earliest precursors of the twentieth century's tendencies towards literal translation.² Jean Gillet observes in his 1975 *Le Paradis perdu dans la littérature française: de Voltaire à Chateaubriand*, how the work differs from earlier translations: 'La traduction de 1836 se distingue de toutes les précédents par son parti pris de fidélité absolue'.³ It is interesting to learn that the 1836 translation was in fact Chateaubriand's *second* translation of (parts of) *Paradise Lost*:⁴ he had already translated some of the work thirty-five years earlier, in 1802, and notably, been less interested in literality at that point. Gillet notes that, 'En 1802, Chateaubriand était déjà soucieux de fidélité, mais une fidélité limitée'.⁵

In order to produce a translation worthy of Milton ('La traduction de Chateaubriand est . . . d'abord une oeuvre d'admiration', says Gillet), Chateaubriand went to considerable lengths; he studied Milton's life, his work, and, in particular, the language of *Paradise Lost*, and immersed himself in all available Latin, French, and Italian translations. (One is reminded of Berman's comments here, and the extent of the preliminary work that, some hundred years later, Pierre Leyris undertook before attempting his translation of Hopkins's *Wreck of the Deutschland*).

With the qualified exception of the work by Louis Racine, Chateaubriand criticised all earlier translations for their marked inexactitude. His studies of Milton led him to observe that the language of *Paradise Lost* ' . . . est une langue composée, savante . . .'; he observed the many particularities of Milton's style - the inversions, the Hellenisms, the expressions from authors such as Virgil or Seneca, the exact wording from parts of *Genesis* - and he finally concluded that

² François René de Chateaubriand, *Le Paradis perdu de Milton, traduction nouvelle*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 12 vols (Paris: 1836). The edition available in Edinburgh University Library, from which I have taken my quotations and references, was published in 1876 (Paris: Furne, Jouvet).

³ Jean Gillet, *Le Paradis perdu dans la littérature française: de Voltaire à Chateaubriand* (Paris: Librairie Klincksieck, 1975), p. 603. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

⁴ Chateaubriand's earlier translations were published in *Le Mercure de France* (Paris, 1802), vol. VII.

⁵ Two translations by the same author of the same work will naturally invite comparison and comment; both Leyris and Malroux retranslated Emily Dickinson.

in order to translate, he had to adopt an attitude of total respect for the author. 'J'ai calqué le poème de Milton à la vitre', he says, and describes his translation thus:

. . . c'est une traduction littérale dans toute la force du terme que j'ai entreprise, une traduction qu'un enfant et un poète pourront suivre sur le texte, ligne à ligne, mot à mot, comme un dictionnaire ouvert sous leurs yeux.⁶

Naturally, the translation has provoked much comment. To mention just one or two of the critics' remarks, as far as the 'literal' style of *Paradis perdu* is concerned, Gillet, certainly, feels that 'personne . . . n'est allé jusqu'au mot-à-mot strict que Chateaubriand s'impose comme règle' (p.600); Berman, writing twenty-five years later, is more precise: he is at pains to point out that the 'littéralité' of the translation does not turn it into a 'mot-à-mot' translation. A 'mot-à-mot' translation, says Berman, '. . . par définition horizontal et linéaire, est impuissant à rendre les divers niveaux étayés de l'original, ainsi que son épaisseur signifiante'. Chateaubriand's translation is all the less of a 'mot-à-mot', according to Berman, since 'elle est en prose'. For Berman, the 'littéralité' of Chateaubriand's translation resides in the fact that the work is 'à la fois religieuse et latinisante'.⁷ (Chateaubriand himself acknowledges the latinising quality of his translation; in his accompanying commentary, he declares his debt to other Latin translations: 'Les traductions latines, par la facilité qu'elles ont à rendre littéralement les mots et à suivre les inversions, m'ont été très-utiles' (p.339)).

Here, for comparison, are Milton's four closing hexameters, followed by Chateaubriand's 1802 translation and the revised, 1836, version.⁸

The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide :
They hand in hand with wand'ring steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.

The 1802 translation:

⁶ Chateaubriand, in 'Remarques', which precedes *Le Paradis perdu* in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 6, p. 329. Further references to this edition will be given following quotations in the text.

⁷ Antoine Berman, *La Traduction et la lettre ou l'auberge du lointain*, 'Chateaubriand, traducteur de Milton' (Paris: Seuil, 1999), pp. 101-103.

⁸ *Paradise Lost: an authoritative text, backgrounds and sources of criticism*, ed by Scott Elledge 2nd edn (London: W.W. Norton, 1993), p. 301; both French translations taken from *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Garnier) vol. 6, p. 378, cited by Gillet, p. 608.

Le monde entier s'ouvrait devant eux. Ils pouvaient y choisir un lieu de repos; la Providence était leur seul guide : Eve et Adam se tenant par la main, et marchant à pas lents et indécis, prirent à travers Eden leur chemin solitaire.

And that of 1836:

Le monde entier était devant eux pour y choisir le lieu de leur repos, et la Providence était leur guide. Main en main, à pas incertains et lents, ils prirent à travers Eden leur chemin solitaire.

The critic and translator, Fernand Baldensperger, who compared certain passages between the 1802 and the 1836 translations, finds that the earlier work demonstrates far less 'littéralité' than that of 1836, and thinks this is in part due to the fact that by 1836, the author 's'est avisé des ressources nouvelles dont le romantisme avait tenté . . . d'enrichir la langue française'.⁹ Similarly, Gillet finds the second translation 'plus austère', with ' . . . la sonorité volontairement amortie'. In his view, the later work ' . . . révèle surtout une conception plus rigoureuse de la prose poétique, qui se sépare entièrement de la poésie versifiée' (p.608). Finally, to cite the translator himself, Chateaubriand viewed his later translating style as having been partially influenced by a political climate similar to that in which Milton himself was writing:

Au reste les changements arrivés dans nos institutions nous donnent mieux l'intelligence de quelques formes oratoires de Milton. Milton a écrit, comme moi, dans un temps de révolution et dans les idées qui sont à présent celles de notre siècle: il m'a donc été plus facile de garder ces tours que les anciens traducteurs n'ont pas osé hasarder (p.484).

Of Chateaubriand's decision to use prose, we can only speculate that his choice was due to his personal proficiencies and preferences: Berman points out that he never fully explains his decision.¹⁰ Gillet comments that in choosing a prose translation, Chateaubriand 'semble avoir choisi un style très sobre, en particulier dans le rythme des phrases . . .' (p.608). Berman, who discusses the question of the prosaic qualities of English literature at length, does not find the diminished flow to be necessarily negative: 'Peut-être le poème miltonien, prosifié par son traducteur, rejoint-il ce que Benjamin appelle "le noyau

⁹ Fernand Baldensperger, *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1913), pp. 428-29.

¹⁰ *PUC*, p. 221, fn. 216.

prosaïque de toute oeuvre”¹¹.

What is clear, is that in order to produce a translation which reflected Milton’s particular language more faithfully than had previously been the case, Chateaubriand took unusual liberties with the French language. With his ‘audaces linguistiques et stylistiques’, as Gillet calls them, he stretched the French language to its limits: ‘La langue utilisée par Chateaubriand donne une impression de recherche et d’effort . . . les violences faites à la langue font justement partie de cette fidélité totale recherchée’.¹² Berman, too, notes that Chateaubriand ‘violente forcément . . .’ the French tongue.¹³ A striking illustration of this linguistic violence may be clearly observed in the following passage from Chateaubriand’s work, a passage provided by the translator himself in his preface, to illustrate his claim that: ‘. . . je n’ai pas craint de changer le régime des verbes lorsqu’en restant plus *français* j’aurais fait perdre à l’original quelque chose de sa précision, de son originalité ou de son énergie’. The extract concerns Milton’s description of the ‘palais infernal’:

Many a row
Of starry lamps
. yielded light
As from a sky.

Chateaubriand comments:

J’ai traduit, ‘Plusieurs rangs de lampes étoilées . . . émanent la lumière comme un firmament’. Or je sais qu’*émaner* en français n’est pas un verbe actif; un firmament n’*émane pas de la lumière*, la lumière *émane d’un firmament*: mais traduisez ainsi, que devient l’image? Du moins le lecteur pénètre ici dans le génie de la langue anglaise.¹⁴

Professor Peter France cites this particular passage as illustrative of Chateaubriand’s desire ‘. . . to bring home to his French readers the sheer otherness of the original’. France, who is also a translator, describes the work as ‘. . . a strange version . . . in prose, but not prosaic . . . avowedly literal to the point of seeming un-French’.¹⁵

¹¹ Berman, *La Traduction et la lettre*, p. 104.

¹² Gillet, p. 606.

¹³ Berman, *La Traduction et la lettre*, p. 105.

¹⁴ Chateaubriand, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 331.

¹⁵ Peter France, ‘Lost for words: translation and travel’, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (Hull: 2001: 09), pp. 201-216, revised version of the 4th Besterman Lecture given at the Voltaire Foundation, Oxford, May 15, 2000.

These examples perhaps explain why the 1836 *Paradis perdu* continues to be frequently cited in the twentieth century. With this translation, Chateaubriand went some way towards fulfilling the demands voiced by Meschonnic or Deguy more than a hundred years later: his influence on future translation is indisputable.¹⁶ In this respect, his work appears as a good representative of the tendencies of French Romanticism, which, under the influence of the Germans, saw taste swing away from a desire to provide the reader with a text unidentifiable as translation (according to ‘the aesthetic of transparency’, as Venuti calls it¹⁷), in favour of a respect for the original text, and a desire for a certain ‘foreignness’.¹⁸

‘On Touche au Vers’

As I mentioned at the outset, in attempting to provide a fuller context for my later analyses, I am not only hoping to enliven the bones of theory through the example of certain translations, but also to draw attention to some of the major developments in verse *per se*, events which by their very existence must somehow impact on both theory and practice of translation in the twentieth century. Any account, however brief, must therefore make mention of the extraordinary ‘crisis’, as it is called, that French verse underwent in the second part of the nineteenth century.

It was not French verse alone which was affected. In an intriguing display of synchronised thought, in the mid-nineteenth century (and indeed within a few years of each other), two poets on opposite sides of the Atlantic called their respective worlds into question in works so distinctive that the repercussions remain with us now.

Walt Whitman’s particular innovations were brought together in the

¹⁶ Gillet observes that ‘la dernière traduction française parue, celle de Pierre Messiaen (Aubier, 1951) . . . reste très proche du texte du Chateaubriand, en corrigeant certaines erreurs de celui-ci, et en essayant de trouver un rythme plus proche de celui de Milton.’, p. 607, fn. 66.

¹⁷ Venuti, p. 289.

¹⁸ Chateaubriand was not alone in attempting to use the resources of the target language that were nearest to those of the source language. In a clear split with the tradition of ‘les belles infidèles’, many classical works were retranslated in the nineteenth century in a spirit of restitution, whereby the fluid and elegant form of the French text was regarded as secondary to the reproduction of the style of the original. Jacques Delille, Paul-Louis Courier, Leconte de Lisle, Charles Nodier, and Francois Victor Hugo were particularly well known among nineteenth-century translators.

1855 publication in Brooklyn, New York, of *Leaves of Grass*: a collection of twelve untitled poems, the first and longest of which would eventually be called 'Song of Myself'. Louis Untermeyer describes Whitman as 'the Lincoln of our literature . . . our great poetic emancipator';¹⁹ certainly, there are several aspects of the poet's project which were unorthodox, but of all the liberating aspects of Whitman's composition, it is his verseform that should be noted here. Fifty years later, reflecting on the changes that had succeeded Whitman's work, Pound declared: 'To break the pentameter, that was the first heave'.

Indeed, it would be hard to imagine any lines of poetry more strikingly 'new', or different to those of the Romantic poets such as, say, Emerson or Aldrich in America, or de Musset in France, than these by Whitman, taken from 'Song of Myself':²⁰

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the
wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'oeuvre of the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlours of heaven, . . .²¹

As may be seen, Whitman's verse is 'free' by dint of its contrast with more traditional verse - primarily through the length of the lines, the lack of metrical regularity, and (very often), lack of rhyme.²² Although the Western poetic tradition had seen occasional examples of free-verse prior to Whitman, or something approaching it - Whitman's own greatest single influence was the King James Version - it was *Leaves of Grass* in 1855 which consolidated the form. It is impossible to estimate the extent of Whitman's influence on European poets:

¹⁹ *Modern American Poetry, Modern British Poetry*, ed by Louis Untermeyer (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925), p. 6.

²⁰ Of course, the leap that Whitman took was one in a number of smaller 'revolutionary' steps. In his *Histoire de la poésie depuis Baudelaire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1965), Henri Lemaître places the initial sparks of rupture that initiated the profound changes between the old tradition and the new, with Victor Hugo, who 'mettait un bonnet rouge au vieux dictionnaire'; after Hugo, 'l'histoire de la poésie française est . . . l'histoire des variantes successives . . . d'[une] interrogation sur la nature de la poésie . . .' (p. 8). In somewhat similar vein, Richard Ellman, writing in the introduction to *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), states that 'Romantic poets offered subsequent writers an all-important idea . . . (the) power . . . to invent what W.H. Auden has called "alternative worlds". This idea bred new forms . . .' (p.1).

²¹ *Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass: The First (1855) Edition*, ed by Malcolm Crowley (New York, Viking, 1959), p. 55.

²² Later modern free-verse practitioners went further, making typographical and even orthographic changes; the tradition whereby each poetic line began with a capital was abandoned, and the rules of punctuation flouted.

certainly, he is known to have influenced Baudelaire, and several major French poets translated his work, including Larbaud, Gide, and Jules Laforgue. (It was Laforgue who made the very first free-verse translations of Whitman, which he published in the avant-garde journal, *La Vogue*, in 1886.)

Moving back across the ocean to the French tradition, it is the year 1857, two years on from *Leaves of Grass*, which critics most frequently cite as the nineteenth century's most significant 'literary' year. The editor of *Baudelaire et la modernité poétique*, Dominique Rincé, says: 'L'année 1857 fut décisive dans l'histoire littéraire du XIXe siècle français et, par-delà, pour celle de notre XXe siècle'.²³ Rincé is referring primarily to Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* (and to Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, also published in 1857), but here we are concerned with two other areas of Baudelaire's *oeuvre*, composed at roughly the same time: his translations and his 'prose poems'.

In acknowledging Whitman's influence on Baudelaire, we must note the even greater importance of a second American writer to the French poet, Edgar Allan Poe. At the time *Leaves of Grass* was in final preparation, Baudelaire was already committed to translating Poe, and as early as 1848, he published *La Révélation magnétique*, marking the beginning of a seventeen-year period during which, to again cite Rincé, '[il] côtoiera l'oeuvre du conteur américain dont il traduira l'essentiel avec une patience et une pertinence remarquables' (p.8).

Of all his Poe translations, *Le Corbeau* is Baudelaire's best-known work of poetry: given below is just one stanza from the original together with its translation:

"Prophet!" said I! - "thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil! -
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted -
On this home by Horror haunted - tell me truly, I implore -
Is there - is there balm in Gilead? - tell me - tell me, I implore!
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."²⁴

"Prophète! - dis-je, - être de malheur! oiseau ou démon! mais toujours prophète! que tu sois un envoyé du Tentateur, ou que la tempête t'ait simplement échoué, naufragé, mais encore intrépide, sur cette terre déserte, ensorcelée, dans ce logis par l'Horreur hanté, - dis-moi sincèrement, je t'en supplie, existe-t-il,

²³ Dominique Rincé, *Baudelaire et la modernité poétique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), p. 8. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

²⁴ Edgar Allan Poe, *The Raven*, first published 1845, edition cited *The Raven*, illustrated by Gustave Doré (London: Sampson Low, 1883), p. 22.

existe-t-il ici un baume de Judée! Dis, dis, je t'en supplie!" Le corbeau dit: "Jamais plus!"²⁵

It is certainly of interest to French poetry in general, and to verseform translation in particular, that a master such as Baudelaire chose to exchange Poe's somewhat 'Hiawatha'-style chant with its simple end-rhyme, for prose.²⁶ (Highly poetic prose, but prose all the same). In his preface to *Le Corbeau*, Baudelaire makes a statement which is much quoted (as we saw, Etkind used it as a major point of reference²⁷), but one which does not really explain the poet's reasons for moving Poe into prose: 'Dans le moulage de la prose appliqué à la poésie, il y a nécessairement une affreuse imperfection; mais le mal serait encore plus grand dans une singerie rimée'.²⁸

Aside from the fact that Baudelaire, unlike Chateaubriand, was primarily a poet, his choice is the more notable since in his own work, he adhered to traditional forms until almost the end of his life. (Rincé observes that, '... en maints domaines, prosodique et rythmique notamment, il n'a pas été un grand inventeur', and Baudelaire himself famously declared: '... jamais les prosodies et les rhétoriques n'ont empêché l'originalité de se produire distinctement'.²⁹)

What Baudelaire does do, instead of attempting to produce a rhymed translation, is to describe the effects that the original poem had on *him*, in this way leaving it to the reader to assemble the ingredients him or herself, as it were (perhaps what Etkind would refer to as 'Traduction-allusion'). He instructs as follows:

Ecoutez chanter dans votre mémoire les strophes les plus plaintives de Larmartine, les rythmes les plus magnifiques et les plus compliqués de Victor Hugo; mêlez-y le souvenir des tercets les plus subtils et les plus compréhensifs de Théophile Gautier . . . où la rime triplée s'adapte si bien à la mélancolie obsédante . . . et vous obtiendrez peut-être une idée . . . de Poe en tant que versificateur. . .³⁰

Reading this lavish description (only partially reproduced here) it is

²⁵ Edgar Poe, *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses*, trans. by Charles Baudelaire (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1865), p. 343.

²⁶ Notably, Baudelaire also translated parts of 'Hiawatha', but into verse, and entitled 'Imité de Longfellow': Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), vol. 1, pp. 243-46.

²⁷ Chapter Two, 'Efim Etkind', p. 49-.

²⁸ Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2, 'La Genèse d'un poème', p. 344.

²⁹ Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2, 'Salon de 1859', p. 627.

³⁰ Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 2, 'La Genèse d'un poème', p. 344.

impossible not to wonder exactly why Baudelaire has gone to such creative lengths in order to avoid attempting some French replication of Poe's end-rhyme. A few motives come to mind, which in some proportionate mix might explain his choice.

Firstly, as mentioned, Baudelaire was hugely influenced by Poe. In the man, he saw a 'frère spirituel', and in the writings, he found confirmation of his own 'intuitions sur le rôle de la réflexion critique dans l'acte de création littéraire', as Jean-Louis Curtis puts it in his work on Poe's poems.³¹ Poe had idiosyncratic views on what constituted poetry: in his essay, 'The Philosophy of Composition', which Baudelaire also translated, and which accompanies *The Raven*, he defines a long work of poetry as being nothing but (in Baudelaire's own translation) '... une série d'excitations poétiques parsemées inévitablement de dépressions correspondantes'. He adds, 'C'est pourquoi la moitié au moins du *Paradis perdu* n'est que pure prose'.³² It is perhaps possible that Poe's definition of the long poem as a kind of partnership between poetry and prose played some part in the thinking behind Baudelaire's translation of *Le Corbeau*.

Another explanation of Baudelaire's prose, might reside, at first sight paradoxically, precisely in the strong tradition of end-rhyme in French poetry, to which, as noted earlier, Baudelaire himself was a strong adherent, and which is well-documented. In his *Dictionnaire de poésie et de rhétorique*, editor Henri Morier speaks of the 'nécessité de la rime' to French verse, and observes that 'elle paraît essentielle au français'. . . 'la poésie n'a cessé, de Rutebeuf à Valéry, de faire chanter la rime'.³³ However, in the twentieth century, taste in end-rhyme, both in verse and in translation, is demonstrably divided. Alain Bosquet's anthology, *La Poésie française depuis 1950*, published in 1979, for example, contains very few poets who employ end-rhyme; at the same time, from ten works of poetry translation chosen at random, and all published by Orphée at the end of the twentieth century (between 1989 and 1994), five translators have clearly attempted to reproduce end-rhyme where it occurs in the original,

³¹ Jean-Louis Curtis, *Les poèmes d'Edgar Poe*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), p. 24.

³² Edgar Poe, *Méthode de composition*, trans. by Baudelaire, cited by Curtis, p. 167.

³³ Henri Morier, *Dictionnaire de Poétique et de Rhétorique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975), p. 914. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

and five have not.³⁴ Returning to Baudelaire over one hundred years earlier, it was perhaps precisely out of a continued *respect* for the traditional forms that Baudelaire decided not to try to reproduce Poe's verse - some residual sense that at that time they were inviolable.

Perhaps, too, there was an element of artistic jealousy at play, which prompted Baudelaire to produce a translation which was different enough to the original not to be judged as its poor imitation. A degree of jealousy would naturally accompany the respect (and intimidation) Poe provoked in Baudelaire (who, we recall, had already famously professed himself to be 'dévoué, respectueux, et jaloux' of Gautier!). It is likely that the key word in Baudelaire's dismissal of the possibility of rhymed translation is not so much 'rimée' as 'singerie'.

Finally, it is perhaps the case that Baudelaire was inadvertently using his translation of Poe as a site for experimentation prior to the realisation of a dream: '... le miracle d'une prose poétique, musicale sans rythme et sans rime, assez souple et assez heurtée pour s'adapter aux mouvements lyriques de l'âme'.³⁵ These are the words that Baudelaire used to describe his creation of the second of his works that needs to be mentioned here, the *Petits poèmes en prose*: it is possible that the poet's mind was already engaged in producing this innovatory verseform at the time he translated *The Raven*.

The significance of the posthumously published prose poems to the fluctuating boundary between verseform and prose is well known - indeed, their title speaks largely for itself. They are generally viewed as marking Baudelaire's

³⁴ Works where an attempt to replicate end-rhyme, where it occurs in the original, are the translations of Robert Herrick (*Hespérides*, trans. by Gérard Gacon, 1990); Philip Larkin (*Où vivre, sinon?*, trans. by Jacques Nassif, 1994); Kathleen Raine (*Le Royaume invisible*, trans. by Philippe Giraudon, François Xavier Jaujard, Pierre Leyris, Jean Mambrino, and Marie-Béatrice Mesnet, 1991); Stephen Spender (*Un Regard*, trans. by Jean Migrenne, 1990); and Alfred Tennyson (*Le Rêve d'Akbar et autres poèmes*, trans. by Claude Dandréa, 1992). Works where no such attempt has been made are the translations of William Blake (*Chansons et mythes*, trans. by Pierre Boutang, 1989); Rupert Chawner Brooke (*Dans la poussière des Dieux*, trans. by Patrick Hersant, 1991); Thomas Hardy (*Poèmes du Wessex*, trans. by Frédéric Jacques Temple, 1990); Gerard Manley Hopkins (*Le Naufrage du Deutschland suivi de Poèmes gallois, Sonnets terribles*, trans. by René Gallet, 1991); and John Keats (*Seul dans la splendeur*, trans. by Robert Davreu, 1990). All works listed are published by Orphée La Différence.

³⁵ Baudelaire, *Petits Poèmes en prose*, ed by Robert Kopp (Paris: José Corti, 1969), p. 8.

shift (self-professed, this time³⁶) against the traditional heritage of verseform. Baudelaire described his work as ‘... un petit ouvrage... [qui] n’a ni queue ni tête, puisque tout, au contraire, y est à la fois tête et queue, alternativement et réciproquement’.³⁷ According to Rincé, in composing the *Petits poèmes en prose*, ‘... Baudelaire accède... à un non-dit résiduel que le vers, trop “carré” précisément, manquait...’ (p.105). Georges Blin states the now widely held view that ‘... *Les Petits Poèmes en prose* marquent un commencement absolu’.³⁸

Returning to the Americans, it is as hard to estimate Poe’s influence on literary France in the second half of the nineteenth century, as it is with Whitman: many scholars have attempted to do so.³⁹ That both authors made a remarkable impact is clear; certainly, Stéphane Mallarmé, the leader of the Symbolist Group (and the next poet to be discussed here) agreed with Baudelaire’s description of Poe as ‘un des plus grands héros littéraires’.⁴⁰

Mallarmé, like Baudelaire, translated *The Raven*, and also like Baudelaire, fought shy of Poe’s end-rhyme. Anything one might say to explain his decision would, again, be speculative, but the fact remains that when it came to translating Poe, these two masters of French poetry fell into something of a state of abjection: Mallarmé speaks of their common ‘peur’; Baudelaire had earlier stated that a complete translation of Poe’s poems was ‘un rêve’, and although Mallarmé went on to translate more of the work than had Baudelaire, he also left some poems aside on grounds that they would be ‘dénudés, à travers la traduction, d’intérêt’. Yet curiously (the later reader might feel), Mallarmé’s respect for Poe stopped short of leaving the texts in their original order: he carved up the poems into sections, gave them new titles, and altered their ordering.

It is during the late nineteenth century, precisely with the group of so-called Symbolist poets working around Mallarmé, that traditional verse underwent its greatest period of change since the sixteenth century (a century, like the twentieth, also prolific in translation). As the earlier comments on

³⁶ Berman remarks that ‘Baudelaire a la prodigieuse lucidité de reconnaître qu’en écrivant ses poèmes en prose, il y a rencontré la prose...’ (*PUC*, p. 212.)

³⁷ Baudelaire, *Petits Poèmes*, p. 7.

³⁸ Georges Blin, *Le Sadisme de Baudelaire* (Paris: José Corti, 1939), p. 143.

³⁹ One might note James Lawler’s 1989 publication, *Edgar Poe et les poètes français* (Paris: Conférences essais et leçons du Collège de France, Julliard, 1989).

⁴⁰ Stéphane Mallarmé, ‘Scolies’, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Gallimard, ‘La Pléiade’, 1965), p. 225.

Whitman suggest, the developments turned primarily on the introduction of free-verse: following Whitman's lead in America, in France it was firstly Rimbaud in 1873 (with the poems, 'Marine' and 'Mouvement'), followed by Verlaine in 1874 (with his *Art poétique*), and then Gustave Kahn who took up the baton of the 'vers libre'. Henri Morier states that in Kahn, 'l'on a généralement vu le promoteur du mouvement verslibriste du XIX^e siècle' (p.1119). (It was in the same 1886 issues of 'La Vogue' where Laforgue's Whitman translations appeared, that Kahn published a series of his own free-verse poems, following them the next year with a collection, *Les Palais nomades*, the first collection of free-verse poems to be published in France.⁴¹)

Because free-verse endeavours to be just that, it has never been defined with the same clarity as traditional verse or stanzaic form.⁴² Morier states that 'a priori n'existe aucune technique uniforme du vers libre symboliste: chaque poète s'est créé son propre instrument' (p.1119). Nevertheless, he observes that it was Kahn who 'fut . . . le théoricien attitré' of the free-verse movement, and it was Kahn who first attempted to enumerate the principal tenets of a theory, published in the preface of the 1897 edition of *Les Palais nomades*. (A later author, Camille Mauclair, also made a contribution to French thought on free-verse, but it is Kahn's name which is primarily retained.) To give, at this point, some kind of brief recension of the state of the 'new verse' at the end of the nineteenth century, here are the principal points of Kahn's theory, given in abbreviated form from Morier's account (p.1119):

- 1) La longueur du vers comme son rythme interne doivent être en rapport avec l'idée exprimée; on déconseille donc l'enjambement . . .
- 2) Rien n'empêche de considérer la finale féminine d'une mesure rythmique à l'intérieur du vers comme la finale même du vers et, par conséquent, d'apocoper cet *e* atone devant consonne . . .
- 3) La rime cédera la place à l'assonance, plus discrète, chaque fois qu'elle ne doit pas, en vertu du sens, éclater en fanfare; le vers doit exister en lui-même grâce à un tissu d'allitérations de voyelles et de consonnes parentes' . . .
- 4) La strophe n'aura plus de dessin préétabli, mais sera conditionnée par la pensée ou le sentiment . . .

⁴¹ Gustave Kahn, *Les Palais nomades* (Paris: Tresse & Stock, 1887), out of print.

⁴² According to *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, article 'Romance Prosody', 'At the end of the 19th c. the traditional syllabic verse was discarded by the Fr. symbolists who replaced it with "vers libre" (free-verse). It is a verse based on rhythmical groups corresponding to syntactic units and does not observe any fixed rules.' (p. 715). *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* ed by A. Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993)

As stated, Kahn's definition of free-verse was manifestly not adhered to systematically. From the moment of Whitman and Baudelaire's coincidentally joint rebellion against the verse tradition, every major poet added their distinctive contributions to a revolt which is generally seen as culminating in the actions of the Symbolist group around Mallarmé.

It would not be essential to this brief outline, whose ultimate goal is to describe the context in which the translations of Emily Dickinson were made, to describe in detail the many different challenges and changes made to verse during the years bridging the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: in order to illustrate their range, however, I simply note a few of the more significant contributions. The principal point to be made, is that from the moment of the so-called 'crise de vers', the nature of language and verse was transformed from one of an essential rigidity, into one of a remarkable malleability; language was now a commodity which could be manipulated according to the inclination of the individual poet. Loosely speaking, by the mid-twentieth century - that is to say, the period when the first collections of Dickinson translations were made - any writer or translator would have at his or her disposal a language more flexible than had probably been known in France in the past four hundred years.

Many identify the principal object of the changes as 'le grand vers' - the mighty alexandrine, French poetry's preferred line; such was the attention it received that it achieved the status of 'une sorte de personnage emblématique', as Michèle Aquien puts it in *La Versification*.⁴³ Jacques Roubaud sees the demise of the traditional alexandrine as central to the revolution in verseform, which he sums up as 'une succession de réponses à cette question: que faire de l'impossibilité de continuer l'alexandrin?'⁴⁴ Starting with Hugo, and culminating with the efforts of the poets at the end of the nineteenth-century (again in his *La Vieillesse d'Alexandre*, Roubaud speaks of the 'assassinat de l'alexandrin dans les années 1870-1880'),⁴⁵ the alexandrine gradually fell out of favour, and has only been revived in the twentieth century in a quite different, self-conscious way (by those such as Francis Ponge, or, as Roubaud points out, in

⁴³ Michèle Aquien, *La versification* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, Collection 'Que Sais-Je?', 1992), p. 30.

⁴⁴ Jacques Roubaud, *La Vieillesse d'Alexandre* (Paris: Maspero, 1978), p. 13.

⁴⁵ Roubaud, p. 10.

publicity slogans).⁴⁶

As the traditional alexandrine was fading, a desire on the part of the poets emerged to somehow lend words the qualities of music: 'De la musique avant toute chose', Verlaine unforgettably wrote. Verlaine himself is primarily remembered for his defence of the nine-syllable line, but Aquien observes that, 'D'une manière générale, les vers impairs (pas seulement les ennéasyllabes) ont été . . . remis à l'honneur par les symbolistes'.⁴⁷ This was perhaps not only to produce what Henri Lemaitre refers to as 'beauté musicale et alchimie de la nuance'⁴⁸: Aquien cites Benoît de Cornulier's explanation of 'music's' dominance as an attempt to create 'un brouillage subjectif chez l'auditeur'. De Cornulier gives Verlaine's nine-syllable line as example of this kind of engineered 'interference':

Le vers où rien ne pèse ou ne pose . . . c'est le vers dont le nombre syllabique - sa mesure - est psychologiquement incertain . . . la proximité quantitative des nombres 4 et 5 contribue à un certain *brouillage* de la perception numérique, *la rend moins aisée*.⁴⁹

Two other poets habitually cited for their part in the attack on tradition, are Lautréamont, about whose *Chants de Maldoror* Lemaitre states, '[ils représentent] . . . l'épopée de la révolte absolue: révolte contre la littérature par les moyens mêmes de la littérature . . .' (p.32); and his contemporary, Rimbaud. Lemaitre describes the nature of his particular poetic creation thus: 'la révolte . . . s'identifie à la *voyance* poétique; mais les aspects techniques de la voyance sont aussi importants . . . dans la mesure où ils la constituent . . . [la voyance] est elle-même langage' (p.33). Speaking of the response of both Lautréamont and Rimbaud to 'la question du vers', Roubaud says, 'c'est une réponse radicale: celle du *non-vers*'.⁵⁰

Lastly, in this brief summary, but importantly, we should signal the introduction of a kind of 'technical virtuosity', or 'spatialisation', in verse, of which Mallarmé's *Coup de dès*, composed in 1897, marked only the beginning:

⁴⁶ In the closing section of *La Vieillesse*, Roubaud states: 'Bref, le vieil alexandrin est partout' ('OO. La disparition', p. 196).

⁴⁷ Roubaud, p. 32.

⁴⁸ Henri Lemaitre, *Histoire de la poésie depuis Baudelaire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1965), p. 104. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

⁴⁹ Aquien, p. 32, citing B. de Cornulier, *Théorie de la littérature* (Paris: Picard, 1981), ch. V, p. 100, my italics.

⁵⁰ Roubaud, p. 14.

in the first two decades of the twentieth century, Apollinaire followed Mallarmé's innovation in composing *Alcools* and *Calligrammes*.⁵¹ Summing up the state of twentieth-century verseform, Michèle Aquien describes 'le blanc' (or silence) as one of the 'deux éléments constants' which continue, despite the many changes, to assume a fundamental role in poetry (the other is 'le nombre').⁵²

Translating 'Mallarméennement' or 'Valéryennement'

Moving on now half a century from the 'crise du vers', as Mallarmé himself collectively labelled the changes described, I return to my central subject of translation. While researching the nineteen-sixties for his analyses of Donne translations, Antoine Berman observed that translation criticism was marked at that time by a certain attitude: it was grounded in '[le] fait indéniable que la traduction poétique est dominée par les figures de Mallarmé et de Valéry'.⁵³ Reflecting on this, Berman suggests that in the second part of the twentieth century, and for reasons that include the 'crise de vers', any French translator would find him or herself more or less obliged to make the choice between translating 'mallarméennement' or 'valéryennement'. Among other considerations which lead him to make such a comment, Berman examines the prosaic qualities of the English language - an aspect of his thought pertinent to my discussions of the translations of Emily Dickinson, and one that I explore in the concluding part of this chapter.

That which we might retain here is the fact that, as Berman puts it (and as we have had occasion to observe), Mallarmé 'avait poétisé sous l'empreinte, l'impulsion massive de l'anglais'. Berman quotes Gérard Genette, who says:

⁵¹ Continuing to note the influence of the American poets on the French, of all Poe's work, of most significance to Mallarmé was his account of the composition of *The Raven*, 'The Philosophy of Composition' (1846). Here Poe put forward the notion that a work of art owes nothing to chance, but everything to design and premeditation. Although it is now thought that this was not a serious piece of work, Baudelaire and Mallarmé (and others) were marked by the ideas it contained. Both authors made their own the belief that (in Baudelaire's translation) 'tout hasard doit être banni de l'oeuvre moderne et n'y peut être que feint', and Mallarmé added his own words to the statement: '. . . et que l'éternel coup d'aile n'exclut pas un regard lucide scrutant l'espace dévoré par son vol.' (Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Scolies', *Oeuvres Complètes* (Gallimard, 1965), p. 230). There is little doubt that the American author's 'regard lucide' contributed to Mallarmé's own thinking and composition.

⁵² Of this second element essential to modern verse, Aquien says that it is 'le nombre', '. . . que l'on retrouve dans tous les domaines de la versification, qui est le maître du rythme, et par là même de ce qui nous attache sensuellement au signifiant . . .' (p. 124.)

⁵³ *PUC*, p. 255.

‘L’anglais joue un peu dans le système mallarméen le rôle d’un mythe nostalgique’. For Mallarmé, it was the English language that happened to play the part of ‘l’autre langue. . .’, as Berman puts it, ‘. . . [or ‘langue autre’, says Genette] . . . nécessaire maintenant à toute poésie “nationale”’. (For Chateaubriand, to take another example, it was English and Latin.) The fact that English represented the ‘langue “suprême”’ for Mallarmé, enabled it also to act, in Genette’s words, as ‘celle-là même qui “manque”, et dont elle incarne . . . le manque et (au sens fort) le *défaut*’.⁵⁴

With these comments, Berman is signalling Mallarmé’s desire for a *renewal* of the French language, and his wish that translation be accomplished ‘de telle manière que la traduction poétique “rémunère le défaut des langues”’, which, in his own case, meant, among other factors, appealing to the English language. It is this desire that Berman contrasts with Valéry’s more ‘essentialist’ vision of the French language as one that is pure, and able to replenish itself. He describes Valéry as ‘l’homme qui a défendu une certaine forme de la formalité de l’essence, une forme classique, une forme qui se résume à l’adéquation parfaite entre le son et le sens’.⁵⁵

A practical, but perhaps indicative, comparison between Mallarmé and Valéry may be made between Mallarmé’s translation of Poe, which we have already consulted, and Valéry’s famous translation of Virgil’s *Bucolica* (*The Eclogues*), first published in 1953. Clearly, Mallarmé’s translation of Poe is not a text illustrative of the most ‘extreme’ Mallarmé, where, as George Steiner observes, ‘he seeks to resuscitate the magic of the word by dislocating traditional bonds of grammar and of ordered space’,⁵⁶ but nevertheless, one may quickly see the distinction between his and Valéry’s style, which is striking by its fluidity. Indeed, Etkind describes the way in which Valéry perceived his own task of translator as: ‘. . . pas seulement de trouver une manière de rendre avec les moyens du français le vers ou la strophe: [il] s’efforçait de recréer l’oeuvre d’art dans son unité. . .’.⁵⁷

Of further interest here are Valéry’s views on language and translation

⁵⁴ Gérard Genette, *Mimologiques, voyage en Cratylie* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1976), p. 273, cited by Berman, *PUC*, pp. 255-256.

⁵⁵ *PUC*, p. 256.

⁵⁶ Steiner, *After Babel*, p. 178.

⁵⁷ Etkind, *Un Art en crise*, p. 265.

which he gives in the short introductory essay, 'Variations sur les Bucoliques'.⁵⁸ However, before moving to either essay or translation, it is both interesting and pleasurable to read just part of the exchange reproduced at the beginning of the *Bucoliques*, between Docteur A. Roudinesco, who first proposed that Valéry undertake the translation, and Valéry himself. We also note Valéry's thoughts on rhyme. Roudinesco recounts,

J'ai eu la bonne fortune d'obtenir de Paul Valéry, pendant l'occupation, une traduction en vers des *Bucoliques* de Virgile pour en faire un livre illustré par Jacques Villon, sous le patronage de la Société de Bibliophiles *Scripta et Picta*.

'... mais je ne veux pas d'une traduction, je veux une transposition de Valéry, je veux des beaux vers comme ceux de *La Jeune Parque*.'

'Vous voulez, en plus, des rimes? Alors je demande cent ans! Pourquoi avez-vous besoin de rimes? Virgile n'en a pas, c'est saint Ambrose qui a inventé cette calamité.'

'... Vous êtes bien décidé à renoncer à la rime, d'après ce que vous m'avez dit. Sans rimes, est-ce que ça chantera?' osai-je lui redemander.

'Ça, je vous le promets.'

Il m'appela un mois plus tard et me lut la première *Bucolique*:
'Ça vous plaît? Vous entendez, ça chante, vous voyez bien que les rimes sont inutiles.'

En effet, c'était un enchantement, on croyait entendre Virgile parler en vers français. En moins d'une année, tout était traduit...⁵⁹

Here, for the reader to judge whether or not 'ça chante', is a short extract from the beginning of the fourth stanza of the 'Quatrième Bucolique: Pollion':

Tandis que t'enseignant les hauts faits de tes pères
Les livres t'instruiront de ce qu'est la valeur,
Toute blonde de blés se fera la campagne
Et la grappe aux buissons pendra les fruits vermeils;
Du chêne le plus dur un doux miel suintera.
Quelques traces du mal pourtant subsisteront.⁶⁰

It is unnecessary to list the many techniques of repetition of which the poet makes use, but it can immediately be seen that Valéry did not choose the path of prose taken by Mallarmé, Baudelaire, or Chateaubriand. He declares his decision in the essay, 'Variations', saying: 'J'ai pris le parti de faire vers pour vers, et d'écrire un alexandrin en regard de chaque hexamètre' (p.23).

⁵⁸ Paul Valéry, *Traduction en vers des Bucoliques de Virgile* précédé de *Variations sur les Bucoliques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956). Further references to 'Variations' are given after quotations in the text.

⁵⁹ The exchange is recorded by Roudinesco in his introduction to Valéry's *Traduction en vers*, pp. 11-14.

⁶⁰ Valéry, p. 79.

As far as rhyme is concerned, the following comment, also in 'Variations', cannot help but remind the reader of the remark made by Baudelaire on which we have already commented:

Toutefois, je n'ai même pas songé à faire rimer ces alexandrins, ce qui m'eût assurément contraint à en prendre trop à mon aise avec le texte, tandis que je ne me suis guère permis que des omissions de détail (p.23).

Where Valéry's translation of Virgil varies from Baudelaire's Poe, however, is in his use of verse:

D'autre part, l'usage du vers m'a rendu ça et là plus facile, et comme plus naturelle, la recherche d'une certaine harmonie sans laquelle, s'agissant de poésie, la fidélité restreinte au sens est une manière de trahison (p.23).

Finally, Valéry expresses his regret over the current translating trends, as he perceives them: 'Que d'ouvrages de poésie réduits en prose, c'est-à-dire à leur substance significative, n'existent littéralement plus!' (p.23). One wonders to what extent Baudelaire's translation, but also those by Chateaubriand and Mallarmé, were in his thoughts.

With the music of Valéry's most classical French in mind, we turn to the last two translation 'events' essential to this account, two works which were both published in 1964: Pierre Klossowski's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Pierre Leyris's translation of Gerard Manley Hopkins's *Wreck of the Deutschland* (*Le Naufrage du Deutschland*).

Klossowski's Virgil

In her recent work, *Aeneas Takes the Metro: The Presence of Virgil in Twentieth-Century French Literature*,⁶¹ Fiona Cox cites a comment made by Jean-Paul Brisson regarding Klossowski's translation as typical of the 'voice of ruffled pique' with which the classicists responded to the work: Brisson complained that the translation 'qui a fait grand bruit est un véritable contre-sens qui dénature profondément le texte de Virgile'.⁶²

Even a short extract from the work will at once show why Klossowski may have caused the classicists to bristle, and will also illustrate to what extent

⁶¹ Fiona Cox, *Aeneas Takes the Metro: The Presence of Virgil in Twentieth-Century French Literature* (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre of the University of Oxford, Studies in Comparative Literature 3, 1999).

⁶² Jean-Paul Brisson, *Virgile, son temps et le nôtre* (Paris: François Maspero, 1966), p. 338, cited by Cox in *Aeneas*, p. 119.

the author's chosen translating style varies from that of Valéry's Virgil. These are the opening lines of the *Aeneid*, in Klossowski's French translation:

Les armes je célèbre et l'homme qui le premier des Troyennes rives
en Italie, par la fatalité fugitif, est venu au Lavinien
littoral: longtemps celui-là sur les terres jeté rejeté sur le flot
de toute la violence des suprêmes dieux, tant qu'à sévir persista Junon
dans sa rancune
durement eut aussi de la guerre à souffrir, devant qu'il ne fondât la ville
et n'importât ses dieux dans le Latium; d'où la race Latine
et les Albains nos pères, d'où enfin de l'altière cité les murs - Rome.⁶³

Here is Valéry again, this time on his own translation, and specifically, on Virgil's Latin: 'Il est clair que la liberté de l'ordre des mots dans la phrase, à laquelle le français est singulièrement opposé, est essentielle au jeu de la versification' (p.20). With this in mind, we at once see that Klossowski, for his part, has kicked his heels at the priorities of the French language as Valéry supposes them, and produced a text which, in contrast to Valéry's, has made no attempt to familiarise Virgil, or render his work accessible. Cox finds that Klossowski has accomplished precisely the 'marriage of languages' that Benjamin describes in his essay, 'The Task of the Translator'; it is pertinent to cite Benjamin again here, this time on Sophocles' fate at the hand of Hölderlin, whose approach to translation was very similar to Klossowski's:

A literal rendering of the syntax completely demolishes the theory of reproduction of meaning and is a direct threat to comprehensibility. The nineteenth century considered Hölderlin's translations of Sophocles as monstrous examples of such literalness [. . .] it is self-evident how greatly fidelity in reproducing the form impedes the rendering of the sense. Thus no case for literalness can be based on a desire to retain the meaning.⁶⁴

One may see how far Klossowski is from Valéry, and Valéry's idea that the translator's work, 'son travail interne', as he puts it, '... consiste moins à chercher des mots pour ses idées qu'à chercher des idées pour ses mots et ses

⁶³ Virgil, *L'Enéide*, trans. by Pierre Klossowski (Paris: Gallimard, 1964).

⁶⁴ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992), p. 78, cited by Cox in *Aeneas*, p. 120. 'La tâche du traducteur' is discussed in Chapter Two of the present work, 'Walter Benjamin' p.40.

rythmes prédominants'.⁶⁵ Klossowski's text is in direct contradiction to Valéry's judgement that 'Le poète français fait ce qu'il peut dans les liens très étroits de notre syntaxe; le poète latin, dans la sienne si large, à peu près ce qu'il veut'. Klossowski does seem to have done what he wanted to do, and Etkind sums up his approach as follows:

Klossowski comprend la traduction comme un travail de substitution des mots d'une langue par ceux d'une autre . . . sans qu'on prenne en considération la syntaxe de la langue d'arrivée.⁶⁶

In introducing this chapter, I stated that certain translations in the twentieth century had provoked debate, and Klossowski's 1964 translation is notable in that respect. When Brisson refers to the 'grand bruit', which the translation's publication incited, he is alluding to the disapproving reception given by the classicists, but he would at the time have been unaware of the 'débat fondamental', as Berman has called the discussion which was to ensue over the course of the next ten years. The exchange is usually characterised by reference to an open correspondence between Michael Deguy and Léon Robel, which took place in the pages of the journal *Change* in 1974.⁶⁷ The correspondence does not so much serve to resolve one particular question, as to bring a couple of significant issues to the forefront.⁶⁸

Deguy first wrote to Robel in order to describe the translating work and principles of his journal, *La Revue de poésie*, the ancestor of *Poésie*; for my purpose here, I reproduce the part of Deguy's letter which is most frequently cited as an apology for 'literalism':

[I]l s'agit moins d'annuler la distance entre un texte de départ et un texte d'arrivée . . . que de rendre manifeste cette distance comme différence dans notre langue . . . Le texte d'arrivée, travaillé par l'effort de traduire, se donne pour ce

⁶⁵ Remembering that Benjamin's essay was first published in 1921, it is perhaps of interest that I, as an end-of-twentieth-century reader, now find that Etkind's words carry less resonance than they probably would have done at the time, or even in 1971, when the text was translated into French. There seem to be two possible reasons: either, as Berman and Roubaud, among others, propose, the French language has evolved so as to permit translations such as Klossowski's - or indeed Leyris's - to be accepted into the culture, which would mean that the reader would necessarily have evolved in parallel; and/or I, as student of language, have become accustomed to the reading of such poetry. Certainly I do not find that the literal rendering of the syntax threatens comprehensibility.

⁶⁶ Etkind, p. 264.

⁶⁷ *Change*, no. 19, 'La traduction en jeu' (Paris: Seghers-Laffont, 1974), pp. 47-55, cited by Berman, *PUC*, p. 248.

⁶⁸ Berman sees the 'dialogue' (which he quotes at length) as exceptional at a time when translation was marked by a *lack* of communication; (Berman complains precisely that 'le champ de la traduction des oeuvres *ne forme pas monde*' (*PUC*, p. 254)).

qu'il est: déplacé, hybride. La langue hôte tressaille et craque sous l'effort . . .

Further on in the same letter, Deguy articulates two of translation's exigencies, as he considers them, which 'semblent donc fournir maximales à l'opération de traduire'. Briefly, one is the need for *reflection* on the part of the translator, on which we need not expand; the other, 'celle de la littéralité', is developed by Deguy as follows:

. . . "littéralement et dans tous les sens" par prudence négative de ne laisser aucun préjugé d'élégance faire l'économie d'une virtualité; de s'orienter sur le filon inépuisable de signifiante du texte à traduire sans bloquer prématurément la lecture sur un "signifié universel".

Deguy continues that such a notion of 'littéralité' must in its turn point the translator in two opposite directions: 'celle du "autant de mots qu'il sera requis pour un mot"', and 'celle du "mot à mot"'. Of his advocating of this second (necessary) aspect of 'literalism', he says:

[C]'est pourquoi il m'avait semblé nécessaire de soutenir la traduction par Klossowski de *L'Énéide*, contre tous les destructeurs . . . de l'hypallage: *Ibant obscuri*; oui, "ils allaient obscurs" . . .

Etkind, too, considers the letters; in his view, Deguy's opinions, including that of his approval of Klossowski's 'literal' translation, reside in his vision of poetry [translation] 'comme un phénomène d'ordre purement linguistique' - a view, as we have seen, with which Etkind is far from agreeing.⁶⁹

It is Robel's opinions (which we have already had occasion to mention), that Etkind finds the more compelling, in particular his justification of all types of translation (including those of which Deguy approves). Etkind particularly likes the idea of: 'la polysémie du texte artistique, manifestée par la pluralité des traductions', or the notion that, with reference to Robel's words, ". . . un texte est l'ensemble de toutes ses traductions significativement différentes".

Leyris's Hopkins

It is with the last work to be mentioned here - the 1964 translation of Hopkins's *The Wreck of the Deutschland* - that we first encounter the late Pierre Leyris, whose translations of Emily Dickinson are mentioned in the conclusion to this work. As an example of Leyris's achievement in translating Hopkins, one

⁶⁹ See Chapter Two, 'Efim Etkind', p. 49-.

might also select any of the poems in his initial collection, *Reliquiae*, first published in 1957: together, the two works are of particular value to French literary culture as the first major translations of Hopkins to be published in the French language. It is widely acknowledged that Hopkins is a crucial marker in the western poetic tradition; *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, remarking that '[t]here were modern poets before there was modern poetry' claims Gerard Manley Hopkins as the third precursor of the modern movement. (The editors give Whitman first credit for breaking the bonds of conventional prosody, and name Hopkins and Emily Dickinson as English-language poets who, like Whitman, looked at the world in startlingly new and different ways.⁷⁰) Speaking specifically of *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, *The New Princeton Encyclopedia* refers to 'the tortured syntax and obscure diction with which Hopkins explored his own religious experience', and comments:

No English poetry of any age wrenches language so violently and powerfully to fit meaning . . . His defiantly Saxon vocabulary and his sprung rhythm derive from his interest in Old English, while his brilliant experimentalism anticipates much in modern poetry.⁷¹

In similar vein, Berman describes Hopkins as 'un poète où l'éloignement de la tradition française est aussi extrême que Donne ou Shakespeare'.⁷²

Many have said that remarkably, Leyris rose to the challenge. Compliments regarding his achievement are not hard to find. George Steiner, for example, is eulogistic, and refers specifically to Leyris's translations of Hopkins, describing them as 'among the finest restatements in modern literature and inexhaustibly instructive both in detail and general grasp'. He gives the fourth stanza of *The Deutschland* as 'characteristic in its sensory exactitude and its involution', and provides close commentary on parts of Leyris's translation. Berman, who in some respects is critical of Steiner, nevertheless describes these interpretative passages as 'de remarquables micro-analyses . . . qui sont des analyses "positives"'⁷³; we give here both Hopkins's fourth stanza with Leyris's translation, and also one or two of Steiner's remarks.

⁷⁰ *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, 2nd edn, ed by Richard Ellman and Robert O'Clair (W.W. Norton & Company, 1973), introduction, p. 3.

⁷¹ *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, article 'English Poetry', p. 350.

⁷² *PUC*, p. 221.

⁷³ *PUC*, p. 62, fn. 56.

I am soft sift
 In an hourglass - at the wall
 Fast, but mined with a motion, a drift,
 And it crowds and it combs to the fall;
 I steady as a water in a well, to a poise, to a pane,
 But roped with, always, all the way down from the tall
 Fells or flanks of the voel, a vein
 Of the gospel proffer, a pressure, a principle, Christ's gift.
Deutschland, IV.

Je passe au sas
 D'un sablier - contre la paroi, ferme,
 Mais miné par un mouvement, une coulée,
 Et qui s'ameute et qui se carde vers la chute;
 Moi calme comme l'eau d'un puits jusqu'au suspens, jusqu'au miroir,
 Mais encordé - toujours et tout du long des hauts
 A-pics ou flancs de la montagne, d'une veine,
 De l'Évangile proposé, pression, principe, don du Christ.

Steiner draws attention to a number of Leyris's translating qualities, and notes in particular his deployment of connotational vocabulary, shown, for example, in the multiple meanings and associations of 'sas'. He hazards that '[l]etting 'sift' work on his inner ear, Leyris probably caught the presence of neighbouring 'sieve' and, perhaps, that of Scottish 'siver'. He points out that 'Sas' is both a strainer, but also 'the confined section of watereen lock-gates in which a vessel is held while the sluices operate', and further suggests that Leyris might also have had a line from Charles d'Orléans in mind (which he indicates Leyris would have found in Littré - this is quite probable; we spoke earlier of Leyris's use of even the most inaccessible sources in translating Hopkins).

To whatever degree Steiner is correct in his linguistic speculations, Leyris's efforts to bring a similar originality to the French vocabulary as did Hopkins to the English, is evident. One does not need Steiner's erudition to be struck by the unusual semantic and acoustic nature of Leyris's work. Steiner refers to 'those reproductions of internal rhyme which would be the pride of a lesser translation', and it is obvious how with the words 'Je passe au sas/D'un sablier', for example, Leyris has rendered 'a translation which, seemingly without effort, mimes Hopkins's assonance', as Steiner puts it.⁷⁴ It was perhaps in part Leyris's love of the *music* of poetry that led him to such heights: in

⁷⁴ Steiner, p. 431.

recommending the poet Sidney Lanier, one of those he chose to translate for his 1995 *Esquisse pour une anthologie de la poésie américaine*, Leyris said, 'Il était musicien, vous savez', in a tone which suggested that this was the definitive accolade.⁷⁵ Certainly, one can imagine that his leanings would have made him critical of Klossowski's *Aeneid*.⁷⁶

However, it is also the case that, in contrast, now, to Hopkins's English, Leyris has employed a French which is syntactically faultless; his translations, however admirable linguistically, do not stretch the boundaries of the French word order that, say, Klossowski's work does. Naturally, along with the many voices of praise, this aspect of Leyris's work has also solicited criticism. Jacques Roubaud, for one, speaks of his translations as being too deferential: he has made the comment that Leyris is 'timide', citing the first line of Leyris's translation of Hopkins's *Deutschland* as one example.⁷⁷ Here, for 'Thou mastering me', Leyris gives 'O Toi mon maître -': in Roubaud's view, the translator should have offered something more syntactically literal - something such as, 'Toi me maîtrisant' - something, at any rate, which might force the French language to 'craque sous l'effort', as Michel Deguy has it. Of course, it might be argued in return that even a syntactically flawless Hopkins is far enough removed from the general reader's culture not to necessitate a further removal in translation in the direction of the audience, even by literalist lights.

Towards Emily Dickinson

It is clear from the accounts and investigations contained in the last two chapters that the field of translation in the twentieth century is far more complex than Schleiermacher's neat summary might suggest. Although the different points of view might be pushed into one or other of the camps Schleiermacher defines (the majority, as we have seen, on the side of 'foreignization', the others on the 'domesticating', minority, side, and represented most obviously by Etkind, Ladmiral, and Valéry), in reality, more subtle categorisation is in play.

⁷⁵ In private conversation at Leyris's home in Meudon, 1995.

⁷⁶ Berman, having studied the reception of Klossowski's translation in the press, says that 'Leyris ne salue pas *L'Énéide* de Klossowski sans réserves, à la différence de Deguy' (*PUC*, p. 253.)

⁷⁷ Gerard Manley Hopkins, *The Wreck of the Deutschland* (*Le Naufrage du Deutschland*), trans. by Pierre Leyris (Paris: Seuil, 1964). Comments made by Roubaud in conversation at a conference on translation held at the University of Edinburgh, 1997.

To take one or two illustrations, we saw Meschonnic calling for ‘décentrement’, yet also wishing that verse forms be left intact; Bonnefoy, on the other hand, thinks the reproduction of form is merely a hindrance to the translation of meaning; Benjamin, for his part, wants ‘literal’ translation, but not for the sole purpose of meaning.

In the analyses of Emily Dickinson presented in Chapters Five to Eight, the range of discussion widens once more. However much we may wish to simplify the situation, it seems to be the case that, as we have heard Berman say, ‘[quand] on se place au niveau de la traduction d’un texte, le problème change complètement’.⁷⁸

Bearing this in mind, in order to clarify some of the points made in the later chapters, I have taken up Berman’s suggestion that the critic undertake a ‘repérage de tous les traits stylistiques . . . qui *individuent* l’écriture et la langue de l’original’, in this instance, of course, paying attention to the stylistic traits which particularise the poetry of Emily Dickinson. However, rather than exhaustively listing Dickinson’s ‘éléments stylistiques’, as Berman suggests, I offer here a short exploration of just three important aspects of Dickinson’s writing which are likely to be problematic in the American poet’s translation.

The Colloquial

Dickinson’s statement, “I don’t speak things like the rest”,⁷⁹ would undoubtedly be viewed as a truism by many critics and readers of the poet’s work, but it also points beautifully to the prosaic and colloquial qualities of her language which permeate her prose, but also her verse. Two important critics of Dickinson’s language, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted and Cristanne Miller, both insist that these qualities are fundamental to her verse.⁸⁰

This prosaic quality is in one respect the most significant stylistic element

⁷⁸ Antoine Berman, *L’Épreuve de l’étranger: Culture et traduction dans l’Allemagne romantique: Herder, Goëthe, Schlegel, Novalis, Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Hölderlin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p. 302.

⁷⁹ From “My Personal Acquaintance with Emily Dickinson” by the poet’s cousin, Clara Newman Turner, c. 1900 (quoted by Brita Lindberg-Seyersted in her work, *The Voice of the Poet: Aspects of Style in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p.17.

⁸⁰ Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, *The Voice of the Poet: Aspects of Style in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); Cristanne Miller, *Emily Dickinson: A Poet’s Grammar* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1987).

of Dickinson's work mentioned here, in that it is a quality of language not only pertinent to Dickinson, but one which has been seen as a feature of the English language which has had extensive influence on the French poetic language. (We recall, for example, Berman's statement that Mallarmé 'avait poétisé sous l'empreinte, l'impulsion massive de l'anglais'.) Thus it is appropriate to give fuller consideration to the quality of the 'prosaïque', as Berman calls it, in Dickinson's verse, than to the other two selected elements, which, although present in Dickinson's style, are possibly less wide-ranging in their implications.

In order to explore the notion of the 'prosaic', it is helpful to return to the section of *Pour une critique* alluded to in Chapter Three, where Berman discusses at length the relationship between prose, the 'prosaïque', and verse, in the part of his work entitled 'La Prose est l'autre de la poésie' (p.198).

Reflecting on the nature of twentieth-century French verse, Berman cites an observation made by Pierre Leyris in the introduction to his translation of Hopkins published in the fifties, that at a certain moment, the French language seems suddenly to lessen its resistance and offer a welcoming 'passage dérobé' to the battling translator.⁸¹ Berman feels that this phenomenon is not so much due to some arbitrary moment of clarity or memory on the part of the translator, nor indeed to some inexplicable self-enrichment of the French language (Berman shares Goethe's belief that languages tend naturally towards decadence), but that it is more a result of 'l'entrée de la poésie française dans l'espace de crise et de sobriété . . .'.⁸² (With 'crise', Berman is referring to the 'crise de vers' which we summarised in Chapter Three; with 'sobriété', he refers to a perceived quality of prose - Roubaud, for example, speaks of 'la sobre prose'.⁸³)⁸⁴ In Berman's opinion, the fact that canonical English-language authors such as Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, or Hopkins, were not adequately translated (as he sees it) at their time, was because the French language was not *at that moment*

⁸¹ Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Reliquiae: Vers, proses, dessins*, trans. by Pierre Leyris (Éditions du Seuil, 1957); remarks made by Leyris in his introduction, p. 17, cited by Berman in *PUC*, p. 222.

⁸² *PUC*, p. 222.

⁸³ Berman states that, 'Novalis est sans doute le premier à avoir projeté . . . la figure d'une poésie *prosaïsée*' (*PUC*, p. 207)

⁸⁴ Jacques Roubaud, 'Le silence de la mathématique jusqu'au fond de la langue', in *Poésie*, no. 10 (Paris: Belin, 1979), p.79, cited by Berman in *PUC*, p. 31.

receptive: they were *unable* to be translated in their own time.⁸⁵ He finds that it is only in the twentieth century that these texts have, very slowly, become more accessible to the French language, and this through the effects of the 'crise de vers', but also, interestingly, through the effects of the translation of English-language works:

L'entrée de la poésie française dans cet espace de crise, qui est aussi un espace d'ouverture, donne simultanément à la traduction de la poésie anglo-saxonne son sol, son sens et sa nécessité en tant qu'elle est acte de la poésie française . . . '[p]our la première fois la poésie française se trouve rapprochée de la poésie anglaise de par *le principe de prosaïcité*.'⁸⁶

Berman supports his argument by reference to other authors who have observed the capacity of twentieth-century French to accommodate foreign languages with unprecedented ease. He paraphrases Rilke, who, translating Moréas in the early twenties, discovered with pleasure that 'la poésie française, par sa propre évolution, est devenue traduisible en allemande'. Rilke himself states: 'C'est admirable comme la poésie française des dernières années par ses moyens s'est rapprochée des nôtres, jamais elle n'a été aussi traduisible'.⁸⁷ Meschonnic, too, in his preface to *Les cinq rouleaux*, finds that French poetic language has changed, and consequently is hopeful that it will now be capable of producing a translation of the Bible which retains 'toute sa force de langage consonantique . . .'.⁸⁸

But what exactly is understood by 'le principe de prosaïcité'? For this, it is useful to return momentarily to Yves Bonnefoy, who has written extensively on the different qualities of the French and English languages, and whom Berman quotes at length. A poet and translator, Bonnefoy has endeavoured to pin down certain qualities of the English language that are difficult for the French to echo - those qualities, precisely, which are seen by Berman as having edged into the French language in the twentieth century, by way of the 'espace d'ouverture'.

⁸⁵ (Berman himself found that until the last part of the twentieth century, John Donne had been far from adequately translated, and this, in part, because of the "scandale poétique" that Donne's own particular style has presented in the past to the French language; that is to say, Donne's particular meshing of poetry and prose - in short, his 'prosaïcité'. See *PUC*, esp. the chapters on Donne's work and his translations.)

⁸⁶ Berman, *PUC*, p. 223, my italics.

⁸⁷ R.M. Rilke, *Lettres françaises à Merline*, trans. by Philippe Jaccottet (Paris: Le Seuil, 1986), pp. 121-122, cited by Berman, *PUC*, p. 223.

⁸⁸ Henri Meschonnic, 'Pour une poétique de la traduction', in *Les Cinq Rouleaux*, trans. by Henri Meschonnic (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), cited by Berman, *PUC*, p. 223.

In Bonnefoy's view, one of the potential problems of translating English resides in the language's manifest ability to grasp and define an event in all its immediacy and complexity. Taking Shakespeare's language as point of reference (language, as mentioned in Chapter Two, of which he is a practised and acclaimed translator), Bonnefoy asks:

Les métaphores contradictoires, les images ébauchées et abandonnées, les vers interrompus, les obscurités, tout ce chaos de l'auteur "irrégulier" du *Roi Lear*, que signifient-ils?

He responds:

Simplement que Shakespeare est à la fois désireux d'intérioriser le réel (comme *La Tempête* va être si près d'y réussir) et de sauver la richesse d'une langue qui a des mots si nombreux pour dire l'aspect des choses.

Speaking more directly, perhaps, Bonnefoy finds that:

. . . la poésie anglaise s'engage dans le monde du relatif, de la signification, de la trivialité (le mot est intraduisible), de l'existence de tous les jours, d'une façon presque impensable en français, dans la poésie la plus "haute".⁸⁹

Notably, in his introduction to the French translation of Geoffrey Hill's 1998 collection of poetry, the English translator and critic, Michael Edwards, speaks along similar lines to Bonnefoy. Edwards sees Hill as 'éminemment représentatif' of the English language and its poetry, and wonders whether the French reader is able to fully relate to this 'poésie extrêmement étrangère': '. . . un lecteur français peut-il se retrouver en lisant cette poésie si invinciblement anglaise?'. Edwards signals three different ways in which Hill's work manifests the notion of 'trivialité' discussed by Berman and Bonnefoy, all three of which may trigger the 'possible malentendu' on the French reader's part: firstly, there is Hill's concern with the 'trivial' things of the world; secondly, the poet composes by way of a 'maniement souvent "trivial" du langage'; and thirdly, Edwards notes the 'proliférations de sens très étudiées' in Hill's poetry. The multiple meanings implicit in Hill's often 'prosaic' vocabulary, his insistence on composing 'avec le pêle-mêle de la vie', run the risk of gaining limited appreciation from a tradition that remains largely 'purist': French poetry may have encompassed the nuances of the 'universal' words (such as 'onde' or 'jour',

⁸⁹ Yves Bonnefoy, *L'improbable et autres essais* (Paris: Gallimard, Idées, 1980), pp. 257-259, cited by Berman, *PUC*, pp. 218-220.

says Edwards), but a polyvalence such as Hill's may be viewed by the French reader as properly belonging to a lighter, punning, style of writing; the precision Hill acquires by exploiting a word's different connotations so as to link heterogeneous things and produce new meaning, is in danger of being lost on the ear of the current French poetic tradition - and this despite the innovations brought about by Poe or Mallarmé.⁹⁰

Following Bonnefoy's line, it is Berman's view that if the French have chosen to translate the English, 'avec sa prosaïcité propre, son colloquialisme, sa "trivialité"', it is to some extent because English poetry 'peut aider l'universum poétique français à trouver la forme de sa moderne poéticité prosaïque'. Indeed, he thinks that 'Chateaubriand a sans doute été le premier à le pressentir'. In sum, we might say that at the turn of the nineteenth century, for reasons which begin to clarify, a slow process was already at play, which, operating by a system of feedback and reinforcement between the *ability* of French to translate English in all its 'prosaïcité', and the *effect* that this quality then must have on the French language, then proceeded to accelerate throughout the course of the twentieth century. Of course, this is only a tendency: poetry that manifests the 'essentialism' of Valéry, as Berman has described it, or the 'poésie la plus "haute"', as has Bonnefoy, is not fully replaced or destroyed. As Berman points out, 'Ce principe [de prosaïcité] n'anéantit pas cette "fatuité" puriste française, ainsi que les formes concrètes de poétisation qui en découlent'. Nevertheless, though, '... elle l'affaiblit et libère des formes de poétisation moins "serrées" qui peuvent accueillir la poésie anglaise'.⁹¹

This much, for the moment, for the more theoretical aspects of 'prosaïcité' and the possible effects of English-language poetry translation on the French language. No doubt it would now be helpful to look briefly at the quality of the 'prosaïque' in some of Dickinson's actual verse, and of some importance to define more clearly a few of the terms brought into question by the above considerations, and which I will employ in my analyses of the translations.

⁹⁰ Geoffrey Hill, *Scènes avec arlequins et autres poèmes*, trans. by René Gallet, in collaboration with Michael Edwards; introductory essay, 'Le Mot juste' by Michael Edwards (Éditions de la Différence, 1998).

⁹¹ *PUC*, p. 223.

Firstly, the much-argued, and unresolved question of the distinction between prose and verse (Messieurs Jourdain and Mallarmé are only two of many who have offered their own particular definitions), is perhaps most clearly described by *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, who confirm what is generally sensed to be the truth of the matter as present research stands:

Since it is palpable that no single feature can be identified which is present in poetry though not in prose or speech, the differential can only lie in degree of order, which leads to difference in kind.⁹²

Exploiting the relativity implicit in the phrase ‘degree of order’, for the prose/poetry distinction in my own analyses, I will rely to a certain degree on subjective judgement. I will consider as prose-like, or as having prosaic tendencies, those parts of a poem which, in my opinion, stand out as reminiscent of everyday speech. The following two poems provide an illustration.

Image of Light, Adieu -
Thanks for the interview -
So long - so short -
Preceptor of the whole -
Coeval Cardinal -
Impart - Depart -
(1556)

A Route of Evanescence
With a revolving Wheel -
A Resonance of Emerald -
A rush of Cochineal -
And every Blossom on the Bush
Adjusts it's tumbled Head -
The mail from Tunis, probably,
An easy Morning's Ride -
(1436)

Although these poems were selected to demonstrate the prosaic quality of Dickinson's verse, it is the case that one might open a volume of Dickinson at almost any page and observe similar examples. As we have suggested, the ‘prosaic’ is a significant element of Dickinson's style: in summing up Lindberg-Seyersted's ‘extremely thorough . . . documentation of speechlike elements in Dickinson's poetry’⁹³, Miller says that:

[Lindberg-Seyersted] finds speechlike syntax and diction to be the single

⁹² *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, entry ‘Prosody’, by T.V.F. Brogan, pp. 982-994, p. 985.

⁹³ Miller, *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar*, p.197, fn. 63.

most important aspect of Dickinson's language; . . . particularly Dickinson's use of colloquialisms and her direct address to an audience make the poems seem more like acts of discourse than icons of art.⁹⁴

The distinction between the prosaic and the poetic parts of the above poems are, I think, not difficult to observe (line two in the first poem, lines seven and eight, and part of line six in the second all appear prosaic), but they also raise the question of whether a finer distinction of terms should be made: the division between the prosaic and the colloquial. The abbreviation 'Thanks', in the first poem's second line, is certainly colloquial, but within the context of the whole poem, the line itself could be said to fall short of the prosaic due to the basic poetic devices of rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration. In the second poem, we observe that the two final lines appear to be both colloquial *and* prosaic. The visually colloquial 'it's', of the sixth line, with the misplaced apostrophe, anticipates the colloquial 'probably' of the following line, and the two in their turn this time accentuate the prosaic quality of the last two lines, which stand out largely because of their lack of rhyme.

It is easy to see from these brief comments how the qualities of the prosaic and the colloquial are very closely bound. It is of note that in Berman's discussions of Donne's translations, he does not clarify the difference, referring, for example, to 'des éléments prosaïques et colloquiaux chez Donne'.⁹⁵ For purposes of clarity, then, I too will consider the colloquial as synonymous with the prosaic where appropriate in my analyses, although the encompassing nature of the prosaic is acknowledged. (Indeed, Lindberg-Seyersted, who speaks primarily of the 'colloquialness' of Dickinson's verse, looks at the quality through very many different lenses - the contrast between the poet's different vocabularies, her use of the colloquial as metaphor, the contrast between native and abstract, etc.)

Compression

The second stylistic element which can be expected to present a problem to French translators, and which requires brief preliminary discussion, is compression. The term simply refers to whatever features of the work create

⁹⁴ Miller, *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar*, pp. 104-105.

⁹⁵ *PUC*, p. 194.

density or compactness of meaning in the language: this may stem from the ellipsis of function words, dense use of metaphor, highly associative vocabulary, or indeed from any other language use that reduces the ratio of what is stated, to what is implied. Poetry often displays compression, but it is particularly marked in Dickinson's work: it not only characterises her syntax, but also the structure of her poems; her stanzas and the very poems themselves are generally much shorter than those of her contemporaries, such as Longfellow, Tennyson, or Whitman.

One of the most striking effects of compression is that it increases the ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning in a poem; one may easily understand how this may provoke difficulties for the translator, who is generally in search of a reasonably secure semantic position from which he or she may begin to translate. Naturally, ambiguity can force a translator to make particular choices regarding even basic vocabulary.

The scholar Samuel Levin, who has studied the details of compression in poetry, refers to one of its key aspects as 'unrecoverable syntax'.⁹⁶ Levin makes the point that, again, with poetry in general, but with Dickinson's poetry in particular, which he takes as one of his models, language is used in such a way that the reader often cannot with certitude retrieve certain deleted syntax. We may see an illustration of 'unrecoverable syntax' with the pronoun in the first line of the second stanza in one of Dickinson's most famous poems:

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air
Between the Heaves of Storm -

The Eyes Around - had wrung them dry -
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset - when the King
Be witnessed - in the Room -

I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable - and then it was
There interposed a Fly -

⁹⁶ Samuel Levin, 'The Analysis of Compression in Poetry', *Foundations of Language*, 7 (1971), p. 39, cited by Miller, p. 24.

With Blue - uncertain stumbling Buzz -
Between the light - and me -
And then the Windows failed - and then
I could not see to see -
(465)

In normal English language usage, a pronoun may be relied on to point back to its nearest antecedent, but in the instance of the pronoun in the second stanza's first line, we cannot with certitude appeal to any deeper grammatical structure to pinpoint its reference. As a result, 'them' remains in a state of ambiguity, and in consequence, may place the French translator under a certain pressure to take a stance. (Having referred to the work of six translators, five have taken this pronoun to refer to 'the eyes' in the same line, and have thus translated the verb reflexively: "s'étaient drainés", "s'étaient vidés", etc. One translator - André Davoust, the most recent - has sought to protect the pronoun's ambiguity by omitting it completely and reconstructing the syntax of the two key lines.)

An even more crucial semantic example of ambiguity through compression may be seen in Dickinson's poem no. 273, 'He put the Belt around my life -':⁹⁷

He put the Belt around my life -
I heard the Buckle snap -
And turned away, imperial,
My Lifetime folding up -
Deliberate, as a Duke would do
A Kingdom's Title Deed -
Henceforth, a Dedicated sort -
A Member of the Cloud.

Yet not too far to come at call -
And do the little Toils
That make the Circuit of the Rest -
And deal occasional smiles
To lives that stoop to notice mine -
And kindly ask it in -
Whose invitation, know you not
For Whom I must decline?
(273)

⁹⁷ This poem is also discussed with reference to the translations by Jean Simon (Chapter Five) and Claire Malroux (Chapter Eight).

Without entering into a detailed analysis, it may be observed that compression permits several different readings. A knowledge of Dickinson biography in fact allows at least eight (feasible) subjects to be inferred from the undisclosed identity of the poem's opening pronoun, 'He'.⁹⁸ Naturally, the surrounding vocabulary will influence the interpretation to a certain extent, and it is here, again, where the translator may choose, or even be obliged, to arrange the target language around one specific meaning.

Irony

As with the two preceding characteristics of Dickinson's verse, those of 'prosaïcité' and compression, the third element which requires preliminary consideration is irony, again pervasive in Dickinson's poetry, particularly with reference to religion. There is little doubt that irony is present in 'I heard a Fly buzz', and in all probability, in 'He put the Belt around my life'.

As is well-known, Emily Dickinson was brought up in the deeply religious environment of New England in the middle of the 19th century. The tail-end of Puritanism was still manifest, and although Dickinson herself ultimately chose not to join her family and friends in converting, she was under considerable pressure to do so: there were twelve Revivals during the period she spent at school. We know, too, that one of Emily's stated reading preferences was the Bible, and that most of Dickinson's poems adopt metres taken from English hymnody - from early childhood she was imbued with the hymns of Isaac Watts. Again, both of the above poems are composed in the common measure, or hymn metre.

The paradox posed in the poems and the letters, that Dickinson rejected a formal relationship with the Church (both her mother and her father joined the First Church in her lifetime; Emily did not, and indeed stopped attending church completely around the age of thirty)⁹⁹, yet so clearly thought constantly about all aspects of religion, has made for much discussion in the scholarship. Most recently, James Olney has made the case for Dickinson's ironic handling of

⁹⁸ Martha Ackmann points out that 'Turning to the poet's biography as a means for understanding her literary work has long been a valuable approach in Dickinson scholarship': 'Biographical Studies of Dickinson', in *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, eds Grabher, Hagenbüchle, Miller (Amherst: Univ. of Mass. Press, 1998), p. 12.

⁹⁹ Roger Lundin, *Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), p. 4.

religion, both semantically and formally. According to Olney, 'Dickinson's slant rhyme reflects her slant relationship to both the form and the content of the Watts tradition'. Referring to a number of poems, including 'I heard a Fly buzz', Olney says that the 'poem[s] constitute an ironic commentary on the world of the hymns, a commentary that is at once formal and thematic'.¹⁰⁰ He provides substantive support for his readings; without laying out the details of vocabulary and tone in 'He put the Belt around my life -', one might sustain an argument for a similarly ironic religious interpretation of that particular poem.

Any translator coming from the overwhelmingly Catholic tradition in France thus faces one or two significant problems. On the most simple level, the question of Dickinson's hymn metre must be considered, and decisions made regarding the importance of its transposition, indeed the feasibility of French culture and language to make that transfer. No less important, on the semantic level, the translator must decide to what extent and in what manner he or she might present Dickinson's complex, frequently ironical as we have seen, relationship with religion. The answers to these questions will naturally be influenced by the type of translating project chosen, itself contingent on the receiving French audience, on editorial goals, and no doubt to a large extent, on the personal proclivities of the translator.

¹⁰⁰ James Olney, *The Language(s) of poetry: Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 33.

Chapter Four : Emily Dickinson's French Reception

The American Background

Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, on December 10, 1830. She died there on May 15, 1886, having scarcely left the family home, and leaving behind her a total of 1,775 poems and a copious correspondence - all of which, apart from a handful of poems, remained unpublished until after her death. Barely understood or appreciated in her own lifetime, one hundred and twenty-five years later, Dickinson now appears as a central figure, at once rooted in the American tradition, and yet, similar in this respect to Whitman, a poet who broke with tradition, a revolutionary: since her eventual recognition, Dickinson has been widely acclaimed as a precursor of modern poetry movements and techniques.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Emily Dickinson has arguably been written about more than any other poet in the history of literature. Scholars explain the attraction primarily on the grounds that the lack of customary activity in Dickinson's life has provoked curiosity, which has led to considerable enquiry and exegesis; in its turn, this has resulted in Dickinson acquiring something of a mythical status. In a 1993 French study of the poet, the author, Christine Savinel, speaks of the sets of images of which the scholarship now often consists: 'Le mythe a généré ses images: la recluse, qui ne quittait plus sa chambre, l'évanescence, qui parlait dans un souffle, la mystique, qui ne s'habillait qu'en blanc'. Many attempts have been made to fully fathom the mind and poetry of Emily Dickinson, and as Savinel points out, her own study

maintains the exploratory vein in its attempt ‘. . . d’ aller déchiffrer, à son tour, le parcours poétique’.¹

One of Emily Dickinson’s most eminent biographers, Richard Sewall, has observed that there is ‘hardly a more erratic publishing record of a major poet in literary history’. Dickinson’s publication in the United States began in 1890,² four years after her death in 1886, but despite the work’s success (the first collection went into its fourth edition within six weeks)³ it took another sixty years for the complete poems to be published.

To lay out the process in a little more detail,⁴ on Dickinson’s death in 1886, her sister Lavinia turned to the wife of an Amherst professor, Mabel Loomis Todd, for help with the task of publishing the poems; Todd then appealed to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, a literary editor and well respected Boston journalist and critic, as well as being Dickinson’s principal literary critic, to also lend his expertise. Higginson agreed, and the first volume, *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, was published in 1890, with Higginson’s own introduction. One hundred and fifteen poems appeared in this initial volume, and its favourable reception encouraged the editors to select a further 166 poems, which were published a year later as *Poems, Second Series*. These were similarly well received. In 1896, Mrs. Todd alone edited *Poems, Third Series*, bringing the total number of poems published to 449: together with 102 additional poems, and parts of poems included in Mrs. Todd’s edition of *Letters of Emily Dickinson*

¹ Christine Savelle: *Emily Dickinson et la grammaire du secret* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1993), pp. 7-8.

² *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, ed by Mabel Loomis Todd and Thomas Wentworth Higginson (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1890).

³ *Emily Dickinson’s Reception in the 1890s: A Documentary History*, ed by Willis J. Buckingham (Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), entry 132, p. 125.

⁴ To know which American editions were or were not available and to note which volumes the translator chose to work with, naturally enables a fuller understanding of the translators’ particular projects. When a translator chooses to translate an author such as Dickinson, whose publication has been complex and erratic in the original language, he or she is forced into the role of editor, who, as Ralph Franklin puts it, ‘must turn to [Dickinson’s] manuscripts and, against criteria which were never explicitly hers, prepare texts for the public’. Franklin continues, ‘The criteria can vary, as they have throughout the publishing history’. (*The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, variorum edition, ed by R.W. Franklin (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), vol. 1, introduction, p. 27.) These words also apply to some extent to works of translation; it is only if we are aware of the state of the texts available at the particular moment of translation, that we may observe the translator’s larger editorial decisions.

(1894), they constituted the Dickinson canon until 1914, when Emily Dickinson's niece and literary heir, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, issued *The Single Hound*, from manuscripts Emily had sent to her close friend, and sister-in-law, Sue.

It was after Mabel Todd had published the three series of Dickinson's poems (1890, 1891, 1896), that a quarrel ensued between herself and Lavinia which ended her work, and kept the poems locked away (in the now-famous camphorwood chest) for many years. This division of the manuscripts between the Dickinson and Todd families thus continued into the twentieth century: having issued *The Single Hound* in 1914, Martha Dickinson Bianchi then published *Further Poems* (1929), *Unpublished Poems* (1935), three collected editions (1924, 1930, 1937), and biographical treatments that also included poems (*The Life and Letters* was published in 1924). These works completed publication of all the manuscripts in Bianchi's possession, but it was not until 1945 that, from the Todd portion of the poems, Millicent Todd Bingham, daughter of the first editor, published *Bolts of Melody*, 668 poems from texts prepared by herself and her mother. With this work, publication of all the known Dickinson poetry was virtually complete.

The delay in publishing was exacerbated by the chaotic state in which the poems themselves were found. The fact that Dickinson did not write with a view to publication meant that she had undertaken only a small amount of the author's usual pre-publication process: selecting and discarding of work, the ordering of draft versions. When the poems were discovered, although Dickinson had arranged some of them into a rough order, all were undated and untitled; there were many unprioritised variants and they were in many stages of completion. (Not unusually for the end of the nineteenth century, the early editors did much to tidy up Dickinson's irregular punctuation and erratic spelling, and to sort the poems into more publishable form. In the first editions, the poems were placed into categories entitled 'Love', 'Life', 'Nature', and 'Time and Eternity', and no doubt in response to current poetic taste, the editors added titles to the poems, despite the fact that Dickinson herself rarely used them.) The handwriting itself, with its well-known idiosyncrasies and wide variations in style

during the thirty years of Dickinson's composition, has proved to be an additional challenge to Dickinson's publication.

Thus it was not until 1955, with the publication of Thomas H. Johnson's three-volume Harvard variorum edition, that the complete collection of poems appeared, giving Dickinson's original spellings and punctuation. Johnson's edition represented the most serious attempt at some kind of ordering up until then, albeit ultimately his own;⁵ the work is widely considered to be the most significant event in the history of Dickinson's publication.

Following Johnson, it was in 1981, almost exactly one hundred years after the Dickinson's death, that the complete poems were published in an order which aimed to reflect the poet's original composition, as offered by the best estimates of scholarship, including graphologists' expertise.⁶ Even then, however, the editor of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Ralph W. Franklin, chose to publish the work in its manuscript form, thus still leaving the complete poems somewhat beyond the reach of the general reader. It was only in 1998, that Franklin finally reedited the poems, and made them available both in the original order of composition, and also in accessible, printed form.⁷ It had taken just over one hundred years for Dickinson's verse to be printed in its entirety in the original language.

The Present Status of Emily Dickinson; her European Reception

In terms, briefly, of the poet's world-wide reception, the 1998 *Emily Dickinson Handbook* reports that annual MLA listings show a yearly average of more than fifty entries for Emily Dickinson, with international scholarly activity well underway in many languages: English, Japanese, Polish, German, French, Slovenian, Russian, Spanish, Macedonian, Indian and Portuguese, among

⁵ *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, including variant readings critically compared with all known manuscripts, 3 vols, ed by Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1955). Three years later, Johnson published Dickinson's correspondence: *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed by Thomas H. Johnson and Theodora Ward (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958).

⁶ *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*, 2 vols, ed by Ralph W. Franklin (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁷ Franklin, *The Poems* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998). In 1999, Franklin also published the one-volume *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition*, with the same publishers.

others.⁸ English-language book-length studies alone have been published at a stable rate of five to seven a year since the 1980s (the eighties celebrated the centenary year of Dickinson's death, 1986), and 1989 saw the foundation of the Emily Dickinson International Society, which issues the biannual *Emily Dickinson Bulletin*, and, since 1998, may be accessed through the web. (In addition to this principal site, there are over twenty others which relate to Dickinson, including one which invites the reader to join with a discussion group on her poetry.) The very existence of a 'Handbook', together with a second general reference work, *An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*, published in 1998, testifies to Dickinson having well-nigh reached the status of a discipline in her own right, comparable to Whitman, Shakespeare, or Baudelaire.⁹

Turning to Dickinson's reception in Europe, it is *The Emily Dickinson Handbook* that considers James Woodress's 1971 article, 'Emily Dickinson', to be 'still the most useful and comprehensive essay-length reception study to date';¹⁰ Woodress informs us that the first translations of the poems were published in a German magazine in Chicago in 1898; then, in 1907, Ewald Flügel translated two poems and included them in an essay published in Germany: Woodress says that 'The two poems that Flügel translated may well have been the first appearances of Emily Dickinson in translation outside of the United States' (p.167). Nevertheless, Woodress also states that '... the greatest enthusiasm for Emily Dickinson ... has been shown in Italy' (p.168), and Willis J. Buckingham's 1970 bibliography confirms that, at that time, of the two hundred-plus foreign critical pieces listed, seventy-seven are in Italian. This compares with forty-three German items, twenty-five French, and twenty-eight from all of Spain and Latin-America' (p.168).¹¹

⁸ Marietta Messmer, 'Dickinson's Critical Reception', in *The Emily Dickinson Handbook*, ed by Grabner, Hagenbüchle, and Miller (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), pp. 299-322, p. 299.

⁹ *An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*, ed by Jane Donahue Eberwein (Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1998).

¹⁰ James Woodress, 'Emily Dickinson', in *Fifteen American Authors Before 1900: Bibliographical Essays on Research and Criticism*, ed by Robert A. Rees and Earl N. Harbert (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971), cited by Messmer, p. 301. Further references to Woodress's article are given after quotations in the text.

¹¹ *Emily Dickinson: An Annotated Bibliography*, ed by Willis J. Buckingham (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1970), 'Foreign Language Materials', pp. 165-201.

French Publication and Reception

In France, the pattern of Dickinson's publication has been similarly erratic to that in the United States, lagging roughly behind the American editions at a distance of fifty years; as yet, nowhere near the full number of Dickinson poems has been published in French translation. Speaking of Dickinson in her recent work of translation, *Quatrains*, Claire Malroux reflects, 'Ce poète dont la voix ne nous parvient dans sa vérité que plus d'un siècle après sa mort . . .'.¹²

In the U.S., the first edition of poems was published in 1890; in France, Emily Dickinson's life in verse began in a journal, *Mesures*, in 1939. After this introduction, anthologies of American poetry started to include some of Dickinson's poems, and in 1945, the first collection of poems in French translation was published in Geneva. However, it was not until 1954 (almost exactly fifty years after the first American collection), that the first separate edition of poems to be published in France appeared.¹³ Two further selections were published in the fifties, followed by several more slim volumes in the sixties, and a new, much larger selection, was published in 1970.¹⁴ Since then there has been a marked acceleration of interest in Dickinson in France, in particular in the 1980s. In the forty years between 1939 and 1980, half a dozen separate collections of Dickinson's work (both letters and poems) were published; in the twenty years between 1980 and the present time, there have been almost thirty.¹⁵ Significantly, in 2001, a double-page spread appeared in the national newspaper, *Libération*, devoted to Dickinson, and her principal translator, Claire Malroux. Such prominence in a general newspaper may certainly be seen as an indication of the poet's wide acceptance into French culture. Obviously, fame does belong to Emily Dickinson; we will now explore more closely the path that took her there.

The work which to date focuses most closely on Dickinson's French reception was published in 1981: *Emily Dickinson in Europe: Her Literary*

¹² *Emily Dickinson: Quatrains et autres poèmes brefs*, trans. by Claire Malroux (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p. 7.

¹³ *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, trans. by Jean Simon (Paris: Seghers, collection 'Autour du monde', no. 22, 1954).

¹⁴ *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, trans. by Guy Jean Forgue (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1970, 2nd edn 1996).

Reputation in Selected Countries, by Ann Lilliedahl. Lilliedahl states as her goal, 'to make available to the English reader an objective presentation of European criticism of Emily Dickinson'. The author looks at the poet's critical treatment in sections which comprise Sweden (and Swedish-speaking Finland), Norway and Denmark, France (and French-speaking Switzerland), and Germany, during the period from the poet's death in 1886 up to and including 1977; Lilliedahl makes no claim that either the French or German material is complete (the two largest European countries studied), but believes 'that few works of great significance have been omitted'.¹⁶ Here, I resume Lilliedahl's principal findings concerning Dickinson's critical introduction into France.

Following Germany, France was the next European country to publish Dickinson.¹⁷ The earliest manifestation of French interest in Dickinson came in the nineteen-twenties, and Lilliedahl suggests several reasons why, '... contrary to the situation in many other countries, the French literary climate was ready for the poetry of Emily Dickinson in the mid-twenties (p.84)'. Firstly, the traditional importance of women in French intellectual circles doubtless facilitated an interest in Dickinson, but the workings of the human mind, a theme fundamental to much of Dickinson's poetry, also became a focus of general interest. According to Lilliedahl, this trend occurred primarily in the period following the First World War, in reaction to the witnessed realities of the outside world. Also at this time, a marked appreciation of the individual emerged, seemingly manifested by a preference for the non-conformist writer, and the individual style. There was also a surge of enthusiasm for reading and literature, which brought unprecedented prosperity to French publishing houses in its wake. More specifically, a new preoccupation with other countries and their translated literature emerged, demonstrating a particular interest in work from nations which ended the war as world powers: to meet the increased

¹⁵ The principal translations of Emily Dickinson's poetry are given in the bibliography.

¹⁶ Ann Lilliedahl, *Emily Dickinson in Europe: Her Literary Reputation in Selected Countries* (Washington: University Press of America, 1981), p. 3. I am indebted to Lilliedahl's study for many of the details quoted in this chapter. Where appropriate, further references to her work are given in the text.

¹⁷ Buckingham, p. 177 (9.6); p. 181 (10.4).

interest in American culture, the first two academic chairs in American literature were created in Paris and Lyon (pp.83-84).

This, briefly, was the general French climate which awaited Dickinson's arrival from the United States. I now chart her reception more closely, with reference to a number of specific publications.¹⁸ For the purposes of clarity, I present my survey by decade.

The Twenties

As we have seen, it was in the nineteen-twenties that Emily Dickinson made her very first appearance in France. In 1925, Professor Jean Catel, a specialist of American Literature, wrote two essays for separate publication in the *Revue anglo-américaine*: 'Emily Dickinson: essai d'analyse psychologique', and 'Emily Dickinson: l'oeuvre'.¹⁹ Lilliedahl feels that Catel's judgement of Dickinson and her poetry were influenced by an inclination toward Freudian readings. Catel focuses on the now-familiar Dickinson themes of nature, death, and religion (his view is that Dickinson's belief was minimal); he acknowledges her wit, her sensitivity to beauty, and overall, finds that the modern poets were correct to extol Dickinson. Catel names several poems as among the most successful, and chooses one line from, 'There is a solitude of space' to illustrate the essence of the poetry: 'a soul admitted to itself'. Like many later critics, in order to illustrate his observations, Catel translates certain lines or phrases, but he gives only one, brief, poem in complete translation: 'Heart! We will forget him!' (in Catel's translation, 'Ô mon coeur, oublions-le!' (Lilliedahl, pp. 86-87)).

In 1926, Régis Michaud devoted limited space to Emily Dickinson in his *Panorama de la littérature américaine contemporaine*; he describes Dickinson as a poet far removed from Romanticism, and a long way from Longfellow - an

¹⁸ My survey is not intended to be exhaustive. During the first few decades of Dickinson's publication in France, while she was relatively unknown, I mention both critical discussion of the poet, and also the works of translation. From the sixties on, as Dickinson's recognition begins to accelerate, practical considerations have obliged me to concentrate primarily on the different works of poetry translation.

¹⁹ Jean Catel, 'Emily Dickinson: essai d'analyse psychologique', *Revue anglo-américaine*, 2 (June 1925), pp. 394-405; 'Emily Dickinson: l'oeuvre', *Revue anglo-américaine*, 3 (December 1925), pp. 105-20.

opinion he shared with Catel (Lilliedahl, p.88).²⁰ Also significant in the twenties was Albert Feuillerat's article, 'La Vie secrète d'une puritaine: Emily Dickinson', 1927, in which the author gives the details of Dickinson's Puritan upbringing, and emphasises the importance of her poetry as escape (Lilliedahl, pp. 88-89).²¹

The Thirties

This decade was again dominated by Jean Catel, who published three articles. His 'Poésie moderne aux États-Unis: II', published in the *Revue des cours et conférences* (1933), is largely an attempt to categorise Dickinson's poetry, illustrated by parts of poems in Catel's own translation.²² Another article, published the same year, is primarily devoted to Whitman, but Catel praises Whitman's and Dickinson's poetry together as work from the new nation of America;²³ a later piece, 'Sur Emily Dickinson: à propos de deux livres' (1935), comments on two books published in the United States in 1930: Josephine Pollitt's *Emily Dickinson: The Human Background of her Poetry*, and Geneviève Taggard's *The Life and Mind of Emily Dickinson*. Catel is mildly chiding of the curiosity these works show towards the details of Dickinson's romantic life; he reiterates his enthusiasm for Dickinson's poetry, and compares her to Donne, Keats, Browning, and Shakespeare (Lilliedahl, pp. 91-94).²⁴ Also in the thirties, a lengthy essay by John Jacoby was published in 1931 in *Le Mysticisme dans la pensée américaine*; the author views Dickinson as unquestionably a 'mystic' - an aspect of the poet on which critics in France and America still insist.²⁵

²⁰ Régis Michaud, *Panorama de la littérature américaine contemporaine* (Paris: Simon Kra, 1926), pp. 128-29, 182, 226.

²¹ Albert Feuillerat, 'La Vie secrète d'une puritaine: Emily Dickinson', *Revue des deux mondes*, 40 (1927), pp. 668-91.

²² Jean Catel, 'Poésie moderne aux États-Unis: II', *Revue des cours et conférences*, 34 (May 30, 1933), pp. 345-56.

²³ Jean Catel, 'Poésie moderne aux États-Unis: I', *Revue des cours et conférences*, 34 (May 15, 1933), pp. 210-23.

²⁴ Jean Catel, 'Sur Emily Dickinson: à propos de deux livres', *Revue anglo-américaine*, 13 (December 1935), pp.140-44.

²⁵ John Jacoby, 'L'esthétique de la sainteté: Emily Dickinson', *Le Mysticisme dans la pensée américaine* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1931), pp. 241-76.

With respect to the poems' translation, by the end of the thirties only occasional poems or fragments of poems had appeared, embedded in critical articles; as mentioned, it was not until July 1939 that the first few, complete, translated poems were published in France. Pierre Leyris offered six poems and five letters, 'Poèmes et lettres d'Emily Dickinson', in the journal, *Mesures*.²⁶ He supplied the English texts of the poems, and also gave a very brief introduction.

The Forties

The forties saw a further step in Dickinson's acculturation: her first appearances in anthology form. In 1945, Jean Catel published a book-length volume of translations, *Quelques poèmes de l'Amérique moderne*, in which he included six (abbreviated) poems by Dickinson in his own translation,²⁷ and in 1948, Maurice Le Breton published the *Anthologie de la poésie américaine contemporaine*, which contains four complete translated poems. Le Breton views Dickinson primarily as an Imagist; he draws attention to her succinct style of composition, and also to what he sees as a rather malicious sense of humour²⁸ (Lilliedahl, pp. 96-99).

Also in the forties, three works of literary history featured Dickinson. In 1945, in *La Littérature américaine*, Professor Charles Cestre refers to her as precursor of the turn-of-century renaissance in American poetry; through her frankness and originality, he feels she prefigured modern taste; he also draws attention to her lack of traditional feminine reserve (another area which in one form or another was to become of increasing interest to later scholars).²⁹ In 1948, Cestre published *Les Poètes américains*, in which he devotes considerable space to Dickinson. He finds that while she possessed artistic sense, she was not concerned with form. He, too, stresses the feminine in Dickinson, but for his part finds that (in Lilliedahl's words), 'she forgets the prudence of the Puritan moral

²⁶ 'Poèmes et lettres d'Emily Dickinson', trans. by Pierre Leyris, *Mesures*, V, no. 3 (Paris: Monnier, July 1939), pp. 125-39.

²⁷ Jean Catel, *Quelques poèmes de l'Amérique moderne* (Paris: Collection Dauphine, 1945), pp. 12-13.

²⁸ Maurice Le Breton, *Anthologie de la poésie américaine contemporaine* (Paris: Éditions Denoël, 1948), pp. 35-38, 62-69.

²⁹ Charles Cestre, *La Littérature américaine* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1945), pp.189-91.

code and the natural timidity of her sex [and] cries out in her desire to become a woman'. He gives 'Wild Nights! Wild Nights!', as illustration.³⁰ Also in 1945, we find the first mention and translation of Dickinson in a work by a French female author; Léonie Villard offered four poems in translation, together with critical comments, in *La Poésie américaine: trois siècles de poésie lyrique et de poèmes narratifs*.³¹ After briefly mentioning Emerson and Whitman, Villard declares that it is a woman - Dickinson - who represents the supreme manifestation of a world vision. Villard also sees the 'visionary' aspect of Dickinson as comparable to that of William Blake (Lilliedahl, p.97). Lastly in the forties, also in 1945, the first book-length publication of Emily Dickinson poetry in French translation appeared. *Emily Dickinson: choix de poèmes* was composed by Félix Ansermoz-Dubois, and published in French-speaking Switzerland.³² According to Lilliedahl, the translations were 'denounced by several French critics' (Alain Bosquet says simply of this work, 'Ouvrage sans intérêt'³³), but she also quotes an American reviewer, Josephine Pollitt, as having observed: "Unlike his predecessors in French, this translator is ambitious to keep as close as possible to the original . . ."³⁴ (Lilliedahl, p. 122).

The Fifties

The post-war decade saw a marked increase in Dickinson criticism, and another significant marker in the poet's French integration was achieved. In 1954, Professor Jean Simon published the first book-length French-language translation to appear in France, *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*. Simon provides forty-nine poems in his own translation, and a critical introduction to the poet.³⁵ Following Simon, two further works of translation also appeared in the fifties.

³⁰ Charles Cestre, *Les Poètes américains* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1948), pp. 91-103.

³¹ Léonie Villard, *La Poésie américaine: trois siècles de poésie lyrique et de poèmes narratifs* (Paris: Bordas, 1945), pp. 78-84.

³² Félix Ansermoz-Dubois, *Emily Dickinson: choix de poèmes* (Geneva: Éditions du Continent, 1945).

³³ *Emily Dickinson: choix de textes, bibliographie, portraits, fac-similés*, presented and trans. by Alain Bosquet (Paris: Pierre Seghers, 1957), p. 204.

³⁴ Josephine Pollitt, 'Emily beyond the Alps', *Saturday Review*, 29 (April 6, 1946), p. 20, cited by Lilliedahl, p. 122.

³⁵ *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, trans. by Jean Simon (Paris: Pierre Seghers, 1954).

In 1956, Pierre Messiaen's *Emily Dickinson, poèmes choisis*, was published, with 146 translations by the author,³⁶ and in 1957, Alain Bosquet published his comprehensive *Emily Dickinson*, which includes 100 previously unpublished poems in his own translation. Bosquet's collection follows an earlier work in which he also devotes considerable space to Dickinson: in 1956, Bosquet edited the *Anthologie de la poésie américaine des origines à nos jours*, and included sixteen of Dickinson's complete poems in his own translation.³⁷ In this work Bosquet says that Dickinson's poems reflect '... une originalité extrême'; in his view, she is 'une des plus grandes poétesses de tous les temps' (p.10). He also feels that Dickinson is 'infiniment moins intraduisible qu'on ne l'a prétendu' (p.21).

In the context of general works on American literature, we should note Cyrille Arnavon's *Histoire littéraire des États-Unis*, published in 1953, in which the author devotes a page to Dickinson.³⁸ Arnavon compares aspects of Dickinson's verse to that of the Imagists and the Metaphysical poets; he says that 'il n'est guère surprenant que [sa] vogue ... ait coïncidé avec le retour de Donne' (p.355). Elsewhere, Arnavon refers to Dickinson having 'inventé un langage' (p.280); in his preface, he acknowledges his debt to the work of, among others, Michaud, Catel, Villard, Cestre, and Jean Simon (p.vi).

In 1954, John Brown published the *Panorama de la littérature contemporaine aux États-Unis*, a work reissued in 1971.³⁹ Brown draws attention to the French ignorance of American literature in the early part of the century, except for those 'îlots privilégiés de civilisation', which, for the poets, he names as Poe and Whitman (pp.9-10). Brown mentions Dickinson firstly in the context of Hawthorne, as another in the line of 'excentriques reclus ... de Nouvelle Angleterre'; he sees her as one of those who 'se sont révélés géniaux' (p.47); later, he includes her among those 'exceptions de génie' (Whitman and Poe, but

³⁶ *Emily Dickinson, poèmes choisis*, trans. by Pierre Messiaen (Paris: Aubier, 'Collection Bilingue des Classiques Étrangers', 1956).

³⁷ *Anthologie de la poésie américaine des origines à nos jours*, ed by Alain Bosquet (Paris: Librairie Stock, 1956).

³⁸ Cyrille Arnavon, *Histoire littéraire des États-Unis* (Paris: Hachette, 1953), Section VIII, BI) 'La Poésie', 'Redécouverte de l'Amérique: Emily Dickinson', p. 355.

³⁹ John Brown, *Panorama de la littérature contemporaine aux États-Unis* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954, 2nd edn 1971).

here also Dickinson and Emerson), who stood out from the generally 'pâle imitation de la poésie . . . à la mode en Angleterre . . . au XIXe siècle' (p.250).

Of note, too, is an article by André Maurois, 'Emily Dickinson: poétesse et recluse', first published in 1954, and then included in the 1955 *Robert et Elizabeth Browning: portraits suivis de quelques autres*.⁴⁰ Maurois describes Dickinson as 'un des plus grands poètes de langue anglaise'. Although he sees her as '[i]nférieure à Shakespeare . . . à Shelley et à Swinburne' she is nevertheless 'digne d'être égalée à Poe et comparée à Blake' (p.47). He speaks of her poetry as difficult, and '. . . d'une concision toute mallarméenne, symboles et aphorismes'. It is of interest that in offering a translation of a few lines from 'Un soir je me suis endormie', Maurois says the poem 'est à peu près intraduisible' (p.54); later, in speaking of the poems generally, he says, 'toute traduction les ruine' (p.58).⁴¹

The Sixties

As the fifties indicate, the second half of the twentieth century saw a dramatic increase in Dickinson criticism; consequently, from this point on, my account is limited to a signalling of only the most significant publications.

In the sixties, seven major items were published on Emily Dickinson: one new collection of translated poems, one book chapter, four articles, and one doctoral dissertation.

The work of translation, *Emily Dickinson: twenty poems: vingt poèmes*, published in 1963, was edited by the American poet, Paul Zweig, who also translated the poems with Claude Berger.⁴² The work presents Dickinson's poetry to the French reader for the first time according to Thomas H. Johnson's 1955 variorum edition. Zweig sees Dickinson's punctuation as playing a role as

⁴⁰ André Maurois, 'Emily Dickinson: poétesse et recluse', *Revue de Paris*, 60 (November 1954), pp. 1-13, reprinted in *Robert et Elizabeth Browning: portraits suivis de quelques autres* (Paris: Grasset, 1955), pp. 45-64.

⁴¹ Efforts to identify the original of 'Un soir je me suis endormie' failed, itself perhaps a sign that Maurois significantly changed the poem (or at least its first line) in the translation.

⁴² *Emily Dickinson: twenty poems: vingt poèmes*, trans. by Claude Berger and Paul Zweig (Paris: Minard, Lettres Modernes, 1963). As Stéphane Bouquet points out in his article, 'Emily Dickinson: Lettres Majuscules', it was this particular volume of poems that first attracted Claire Malroux to Dickinson. (*Libération*, 'Livres', June 14, 2000.)

calculated and vital to her poetry as it is to the work of Mallarmé (p.10). A year after Zweig's collection, in 1964, Robert Goffin also compares Dickinson to Mallarmé, in a chapter devoted to her in *Fil d'ariane pour la poesie*. It is Goffin's thesis that 'Dickinson's poetry is consciously erotic', as Lilliedahl puts it (p.112).⁴³

From the other criticism in the sixties, it is of interest to note writers with whom, in addition to Mallarmé, the French critics are inclined to compare Dickinson. An unpublished doctoral dissertation compares her with Jules Supervielle;⁴⁴ Pierre Brunel views her as direct inspiration for Paul Claudel,⁴⁵ and Christian Murciaux, in *Cahiers du Sud*, extends the comparisons to the other arts (Albrecht Dürer, Fra Angelico, and Bach) as well as making the by now customary comparisons with Blake and the Metaphysicals. Murciaux also sums up the current French perception of Dickinson, as he sees it, as a poet equal in stature to Poe, Emerson and Whitman, and comparable to Blake and Shelley.⁴⁶ Also in the sixties, according to Lilliedahl, in an article in *Études anglaises*, J. Normand links Dickinson with Baudelaire and Pasternak: 'to all of them, the discovery of poetry was synonymous with the discovery of the self'. In addition, as other critics had done, Norman sees sexuality at the heart of much of Dickinson's poetry (Lilliedahl, p.116).⁴⁷

Finally for this decade, we might mention the inclusion of an entry on Dickinson published in the *Grand Larousse encyclopédique*. The article states that with Poe and Whitman, Dickinson dominated the nineteenth century; it states that some European critics have likened her to Louise Labé, and the article's author compares some aspects of her poetry with Emerson's, in that it is 'un acte de foi, le seul qui reste dans l'écroulement du puritanisme'. Finally, Dickinson is described as 'un peu la "Religieuse portugaise" de la Nouvelle Angleterre'.⁴⁸

⁴³ Robert Goffin, *Fil d'Ariane Pour La Poésie*, 'Emily Dickinson' (Paris: Nizet, 1964), pp. 250-66.

⁴⁴ Maria Elsa Copeland, 'Le Créateur et la création dans la poésie de Jules Supervielle et d'Emily Dickinson', unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Paris, 1964.

⁴⁵ Pierre Brunel, 'Le Corbeau (à propos de la transposition par Claudel d'un poème d'Emily Dickinson)', *Revue des lettres modernes*, 134-36 (1966), pp. 113-18.

⁴⁶ Christian Murciaux, 'Emily Dickinson', *Cahiers du sud*, 51 (April-May 1961), pp. 276-89.

⁴⁷ J. Norman, 'Emily Dickinson: une aventure poétique', *Études anglaises*, 21 (1968), pp. 152-59.

⁴⁸ *Grand Larousse encyclopédique*, 4 (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1961), p. 65.

The Seventies

The most significant work in this decade is Guy Jean Forgue's 1970 translation, *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*. This comprehensive collection, which includes a fifty-page introduction, was re-issued in 1996; it represents an important addition to the growing number of French Dickinson poetry translations.

The Eighties

There was a marked increase in the number of publications produced in the years surrounding the centenary of Dickinson's death in 1886. Five different French works of translation were published (three in France itself, two in French-speaking Switzerland), together with the first published French doctoral thesis on Dickinson; also in this decade, Dickinson appeared on the programme for the Agrégation (in 1988, the only year to date when this has occurred). The increased interest is also demonstrated by the number of English-language works on Dickinson acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale during the 1980s: approximately forty works, including three works of reference. Many of the titles reflect a growing interest in Dickinson and feminist studies, no doubt in part due to the increased importance of a feminist movement originating in the work of Simone de Beauvoir: BN acquisitions during this period include, for example, Suzanne Juhasz's *Feminist Critics Read Emily Dickinson* (1983), and Paula Bennett's *My Life, a Loaded Gun: Female Creativity and Feminist Poetics* (1989). The BN titles demonstrate an ongoing curiosity with regard to Dickinson's psychology; a large number of works are also devoted to Dickinson in various contexts, such as American literature, biography, and genre. There is a concern with Dickinson's linguistic style, perhaps indicating an increasing French interest in more specific areas of Dickinson's work. Naturally significant in terms of the poet's acceptance into French culture, is the publication of a French doctoral thesis: *Emily Dickinson* was written by Françoise Delphy, and was published by Didier in 1984.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Françoise Delphy, *Emily Dickinson* (Paris: Didier Érudition, 1984).

With respect to collections of poetry translation, the first to appear during the eighties was a new edition of Alain Bosquet's work, first published in 1957. In 1984, Belfond republished the poems, with minor modifications, and without the author's earlier introduction; the work was issued as *Les 100 plus belles pages d'Emily Dickinson*.⁵⁰ Two years later, in 1986, Philippe Denis translated a collection entitled *Quarante-sept poèmes*, published in Lausanne, and in the same year, again in French-speaking Switzerland, Félix Ansermoz-Dubois (translator of the first French-language collection, in 1945) published *Poèmes*, this time with Violette Ansermoz-Dubois as co-translator.⁵¹ Lastly in this decade, two further collections of poems in translation appeared in 1989: *Vivre avant l'éveil*, translated by William English and Gerard Pfister, with the collaboration of Margherita Guidacci,⁵² and *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, the first presentation of Dickinson's poems in translation offered by the poet and translator, Claire Malroux, and the first major collection of poems translated solely by a woman.⁵³

The Nineties; the First Years of the 21st Century

The 1989 *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, heralded the beginning of a period in which Claire Malroux translated Dickinson intensively: in terms of Dickinson's French publication, the next dozen years belong to her. In 1998, the significant *Une Âme en incandescence, cahiers de poèmes 1861-1863*, was published with José Corti (reissued in 2001), and one year later, *Lettres au maître, à l'ami, au précepteur, à l'amant*, appeared with the same publisher. These two works were followed in the next two years by *Emily Dickinson: Quatrains et autres poèmes brefs*, published with Gallimard in 2000, and by Malroux's most recent work of translation, *Avec amour, Emily*, again published with Corti, in 2001. This remarkable devotion to Dickinson on Malroux's part has resulted in the

⁵⁰ *Les 100 plus belles pages d'Emily Dickinson*, trans. by Alain Bosquet (Paris: P. Belfond, 1984).

⁵¹ *Quarante-sept poèmes*, trans. by Philippe Denis (Geneva: La Dogana, 1986); *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, trans. by Félix and Violette Ansermoz-Dubois (Lausanne: Editions Ouverture, 1986).

⁵² *Vivre avant l'éveil*, trans. by William English and Gerard Pfister, in collaboration with Margherita Guidacci (Paris: Arfuyen, 1989).

⁵³ *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, trans. by Claire Malroux (Paris: Belin, 'L'Extrême contemporain', 1989). The third edition of this work was published in the autumn of 2002.

appearance of five different publications of Dickinson's work in French translation in twelve years.⁵⁴

Although no one French translator has challenged Malroux's achievement, it is of note that during the nineties decade, no less than seven further works of Dickinson translation appeared. Patrick Reumaux published two major collections: *Autoportrait au roitelet: lettres à T.W. Higginson et aux soeurs Norcross, suivi de 'La Gloire est une abeille', choix de poèmes, 1858-1881*, which appeared in 1990, and *Le Paradis est au choix*, which offered over two hundred and fifty poems, including those from the earlier work, was published eight years later, in 1998, the same year as Malroux's first edition of 'les cahiers'.⁵⁵ A further five, smaller, collections of Dickinson's work in French translation were also published in the nineties, which together with Malroux's *oeuvre*, and Forgue's reissued collection, resulted in a total of twelve works of Emily Dickinson in French translation in as many years.⁵⁶

During this period, the Bibliothèque Nationale acquired approximately fifteen English-language works, which, while reflecting similar interests to those seen in the eighties' publications, notably also include works devoted to specific areas of Dickinson's work, such as musical productions inspired by the poetry, and a study of the fascicles. Another French thesis was also published in the nineties, which is more specifically titled than Delphy's 1984 work: *Emily Dickinson et la grammaire du secret*, by Christine Savinel, appeared in 1993.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ The following works are translated by Claire Malroux: *Une Âme en incandescence, cahiers de poèmes 1861-1863* (Paris: Corti, 1998); *Lettres au maître, à l'ami, au précepteur, à l'amant* (Paris: Corti, 1999); *Quatrains et autres poèmes brefs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000); *Avec amour, Emily* (Corti, 2001).

⁵⁵ *Autoportrait au roitelet: lettres à T.W. Higginson et aux soeurs Norcross, suivi de 'La Gloire est une abeille, choix de poèmes, 1858-1881*, trans. by Patrick Reumaux (Paris: Hatier, 1990); *Le Paradis est au choix*, trans. by Patrick Reumaux (Rouen: Élisabeth Brunet, 1998).

⁵⁶ *Lettre au monde: quarante poèmes*, trans. by Georges Tari (Montpellier: Éditions du Limon, 1991); *Janvier 1866*, trans. by Déborah Kéramsi and Pierre Mréja (Paris: Éditions du Rouleau, 1991); *Escarmouches*, trans. by Charlotte Melançon (Paris: Orphée La Différence, 1992); *Cinquante-six poèmes, suivi de trois lettres*, trans. by Simone Normand and Marcelle Fonfreide (Paris: le Nouveau Commerce, 1996); *The Master Letters: Les Lettres au maître*, 'suivies de dix-huit poèmes inédits en français', trans. by Claudine Prache, and by O. des Fontenelles for the poems (France: Cazimi, 1997).

⁵⁷ Christine Savinel: *Emily Dickinson et la grammaire du secret* (Lyon: Presses Universitaire de Lyon, 1993).

Concluding Remarks

Even from this brief summary, the enthusiasm that the French have manifested for Dickinson over the course of the twentieth century is very clear. This being so, it is possibly surprising to find that occasional, prominent, voices have complained that the poet has not received due attention in France. Before finally concluding this enquiry, then, it is of interest to explore briefly why several specialists should consider this to be the case.

In the introduction to his 1970 translation, Guy Jean Forgue states that in his view, Dickinson had yet to acquire 'de vrai public chez nous'.⁵⁸ (It is also perhaps of note that when Forgue's collection was reissued in 1996, despite the appearance of many major Dickinson translations in the intervening years, the author did not modify his statement.)⁵⁹ Similarly, some twenty years later, in the introduction to her 1989 work, Claire Malroux said, 'On ne peut manquer de s'interroger sur les raisons de la relative ignorance dans laquelle est tenu en France un poète reconnu comme aussi important dans son pays . . .';⁶⁰ even ten years after that, the 1998 American *Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*, referred to Malroux's comment, and in their turn state that although 'some of the best French scholars [have devoted] significant attention to Dickinson's poetry . . . in France [it] has not received widespread critical recognition'.⁶¹ Lastly, it may be noted that in 2001, the member countries listed on the 'Dickinson Scholarship' pages of the web, of which many are European, do not include France.

In 1970, Forgue explained the absence of Dickinson's rightful acclaim (as he perceived it) as due to the critics having placed undue emphasis on the details of her biography. In 1989, Malroux felt that in addition to the enigmatic qualities of Dickinson's verse, and the unfamiliarity of Dickinson's biblical and Shakespearean references to the French ear, the determining factor was the lack of a translated edition of the complete poems.

⁵⁸ Forgue, *Poèmes*, p. 16.

⁵⁹ It is likely that Forgue simply chose to leave the entire 1970 introduction unaltered; initial research shows that he simply added four works of French translation which appeared in the eighties and nineties, to his Bibliography, together with Richard Sewall's 1974 work, *The Life of Emily Dickinson*.

⁶⁰ *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, introduction, p. 11.

⁶¹ *An Emily Dickinson Encyclopedia*, 'French Responses to Dickinson', pp. 118-199.

To understand the background from which these comments emerged, one might do worse than consider the way in which the French have perceived *other* American authors. In doing so, however, it is also pertinent to note that a considerable number of literary histories published in the *English* language, tend to link Emily Dickinson's name with Walt Whitman's, coupling them together as the two great American verse emancipators.⁶²

As far as the key *French* literary histories are concerned, brief enquiry shows no such linking, nor any drawing of comparisons between Whitman and Dickinson. France (as we observed in Chapter Three), is more inclined to perceive the two great American influences as Whitman and Poe. To explore this a little further, we may return to one of the more significant works mentioned in the survey given in Chapter One: Robert Sabatier's *Histoire de la poésie française*, published in 1982. In Sabatier's work, an interesting contrast does indeed emerge between the attention accorded to the principal American poets, Poe, Whitman, and Dickinson. The indexes to the three volumes on the twentieth century reveal that Poe is mentioned a total of twelve times, Whitman thirty-four times, and Dickinson, only five times. If, for the purposes of our enquiry, we leave Poe aside (given that his dates are significantly earlier than those of Whitman or Dickinson), we further find that it is not just the difference in the numbers of references to Whitman and Dickinson that is telling: it is also their nature.

Sabatier describes Whitman as '[un] grand étranger . . .', 'le géant américain . . .', and ranks him variously alongside those such as Pindar, Homer, Virgil, Hugo, and Baudelaire. He speaks of Larbaud's early translation as a 'révélation capitale', and repeats Larbaud's effusive praise of Whitman's work at length: "Quels horizons n'ouvraient pas ces grands vers plus libres que tous

⁶² For example, as we noted in Chapter Three, the *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* places Dickinson alongside Whitman as the principal American precursors of modern verse. A more recent example of this linking is found in the 1994 *Great Women Writers*, where the author of the essay, 'Emily Dickinson', having described the condition of American lyric poetry in the mid-nineteenth century as 'still hampered by certain limiting assumptions about the nature of literary language', goes on to say: 'Into this situation came Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, poets who were alike only in their commitment to writing a personalized poetry unlike anything the nineteenth century had thus far read'. (*Great Women Writers: The Lives and Works of 135 of the World's Most Important Women* (Chicago, Hale: 1994), pp. 128-132.)

ceux que nous avons vus jusqu'alors, et ce ton nouveau, ce ton d'effusion lyrique, quotidienne et prophétique”.

Sabatier also notes Whitman's links with several schools of poetry, including the Symbolists, the Futurists, and the 'Poètes de l'Abbaye'; in addition, he names many individual French poets as having been marked by Whitman's work: these include Apollinaire, Pierre-Jean Jouve, Cendrars, Saint-Jean Perse, and Deluy. Also, since Whitman's influence has been channelled largely through the medium of translation, Sabatier calls attention to other of the Whitman translators: Alain Bosquet, Raymond Queneau, and Yvan Goll (into German). Finally, a reference Sabatier makes to Lily Bazalgette, 'Rappelons aussi Lily Bazalgette, descendante du traducteur de Walt Whitman', seems to be yet another indication of the kind of stature that Whitman (and Bazalgette, his earliest principal translator) has achieved - at least in the eyes of one of the twentieth-century's most important poetry historians.⁶³

In marked contrast, then, appear the five references Sabatier makes to Emily Dickinson. Three of these occur in the context of her translators (Alain Bosquet, Philippe Denis, and René Char with Tina Jolas), and the fourth, with respect to her punctuation, is primarily in the context of Jean Cocteau: (Sabatier quotes Cocteau's statement that: "Emily Dickinson s'aperçut la première, en 1845, du ridicule de ponctuer un poème"). The fifth and final reference echoes Forgue's remark that Dickinson's reputation has at times ridden largely on her biography. While speaking about Renée Vivien, Sabatier remarks that she was 'semblable en cette réserve à la poétesse américaine Emily Dickinson'.

In sum, in contrast to Whitman, Sabatier makes no reference to Dickinson's achievements, or innovations; our brief study so far suggests that twentieth-century French literary culture might view Whitman and Dickinson in quite different ways to its English-language counterpart.

To take the enquiry one step further, in 1989 Claire Malroux felt that the determining factor in Dickinson's lack of acclaim (as she then perceived it), was

the lack of a translated edition of Dickinson's complete works. Continuing to compare Whitman with Dickinson, this time with respect to their initial translations in France, we find that once the first Whitman poems had been translated by Laforgue in the 1880s, it took only twenty years for Léon Bazalgette to produce his 1909 *Feuilles d'herbe: traduction intégrale d'après l'édition définitive*. Bazalgette then followed this collection by four further translated works in the next five years. Thus by 1917, Whitman was well and truly established in France, and in the following year, Balgazette rounded off his achievement with the highly-celebrated *Oeuvres choisies: Poèmes et proses traduits par Jules Laforgue, Louis Fabulet, André Gide, Valery Larbaud, Jean Schlumberger, Francis Vielé-Griffin, précédés d'une étude par Valery Larbaud* (1918).

As we know, Dickinson's first mention in France did not occur until 1925, and in 2001, as Malroux points out, Emily Dickinson's complete poems still await French translation.

Of course, one reason why Dickinson's translation in France was slow and patchy was due to the difficulties with the manuscripts, and the consequent delays even in Dickinson's English publication, but our enquiry suggests that there is perhaps another important reason why Whitman and Dickinson are viewed so differently in France.

It will be recalled that Larbaud's praise of Whitman, cited by Sabatier, was primarily in connection with Whitman's innovative *form*. Thus while the English-language literary histories seem to see Dickinson and Whitman as being on a par as 'revolutionaries', as far as the French are concerned, Whitman's free-verse no doubt offers a concept and a practice eminently more accessible and adaptable, than Dickinson's quieter, more subtle, innovations. The break with traditional verse that Whitman's free-verse signalled was a change French poetry was enchanted to embrace. In translating terms, too, Whitman's long, rolling, prose-like lines are far more readily translated, both practically and

⁶³ In his *Histoire de la littérature française* (Paris: Bordas, 1972), Pierre Brunel demonstrates similar priorities to Sabatier: he mentions Poe eight times, Whitman twice, and makes no reference whatsoever to Dickinson.

thematically, than Dickinson's complex and ambiguous musings. By the time Dickinson began to be published in France, verse had already undergone its major revolution: the enthusiasm or need to welcome another American innovator was perhaps no longer there.

Thus although the fact that for a long time Dickinson remained literally something of a passing reference is in some part due, as Malroux points out, to the lack of an equivalent to Bazalgette's complete translation of Whitman, the situation is more complex. The perception of those such as Forgue and Malroux, that Dickinson had not received her rightful acclaim, is possibly correct, but in the light of this brief examination, it seems to be only *relatively* correct. Perhaps in the eyes of France, whatever the energies of Emily Dickinson's early translators, the poet was doomed for a time to remain under Whitman's shadow.

Of course, in final conclusion (and in the absence of a fuller study of the comparative French receptions of Whitman and Dickinson), the extraordinary surge in translation figures in the eighties and nineties suggests that from then on Dickinson has achieved a status at least equal to that of Whitman. We will accord the last word to Claire Malroux. When asked in interview in 2001 whether she felt that her 1989 comment remained valid, Malroux responded by saying that, on the contrary, in the preceding twenty years, the French had come to consider Emily Dickinson as 'propriété publique'.⁶⁴ As random illustration, Malroux pointed to the fact that the 2001 'Salon du Livre' booklet, featured a quotation from Dickinson on the cover, and the fact that in recent times she personally had heard several poets, including Jaccottet, publicly cite Dickinson. Lastly, Malroux said she had just handed over the manuscripts of her own translations of Dickinson's poetry to the well-known French composer, Philippe Manoury, who is planning to produce a significant composition around the poet's work: that is to say, around the sounds of Emily Dickinson *in French translation*.

⁶⁴ In personal interview during the Edinburgh Book Festival, August 2001.

Chapter Five : Professor Jean Simon, Translator of Dickinson's First Book-Length Collection in France

We begin the story of Dickinson's French acculturation with the first collection of Dickinson poems in translation to be published in France. In 1954, Pierre Seghers brought out *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, in the 'Autour du monde' collection; the poems were translated by Jean Simon. This work consists of 49 poems, which are presented with the English and French texts on facing pages, a three-page 'Avant-Propos', also written by Simon, and a one-page 'Note Bibliographique', on the book's closing page.¹

In 1954, Simon was Professor of American Literature in Paris. His doctoral thesis, which was published in 1939 by Boivin, was entitled 'Herman Melville, marin, métaphysicien et poète'; in the same year, also with Boivin, Simon published a 'thèse complémentaire', 'La Polynésie dans l'art et la littérature de l'Occident'. In 1946, he edited *Herbert Melville: une anthologie*, published in Paris by Didier, and lastly, four years before the Dickinson translation, and again with Boivin, he published *Le Roman américain au XXe siècle*. His translation of Dickinson was his only work of translation.

Half-way through the twentieth century, the field of translation was only just beginning to make itself known as a discrete area of study and discussion, having previously been encompassed by universities under the larger rubric of 'Literature'. Now, the translator, too, was gradually acquiring a certain status in literary and more general circles, although only very few translators could yet be certain, as Larbaud pointed out in 1946, that their name would be assured of

¹ *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, 'Avant-Propos' and trans. by Jean Simon (Paris: Pierre Seghers, 1954).

a place in intellectual history. Simon's 1954 volume of Dickinson translation certainly seems to justify Larbaud's comparison of the translator with Bossuet's 'Les Pauvres'.² A glance at the book's covers would not reveal that this is translation at all: one needs to turn to the title page to discover, in small print, that Simon is responsible for the 'Avant-Propos et Traduction'. Later investigation also shows no mention of translation in the introduction, a remarkable omission, when viewed from the vantage point of the twenty-first century.

Simon does not make any reference to his choice of 49 poems, and the reader simply assumes that, as may be expected from introductory collections, the work is intended to provide a representative selection of Dickinson's work, chosen according to the translator's taste. With respect to Simon's sources, in the list of 'Éditions' which heads the bibliography, he cites three works: the 1947 edition of *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, edited by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampton; *Bolts of Melody*; and *Poems for Youth*, which he describes under the rubric of 'Éditions' in the 'Note bibliographique' as an 'Importante anthologie'.³ (In fact, Simon's selection is drawn largely from *Poems . . .*, (his first thirty-six poems), and from *Bolts of Melody* (the last thirteen)).⁴

The American Myth Perpetuated

Simon's introductory essay presents an unusual mixture of romanticised, somewhat clichéd description, and more specialised literary reference. The author deals firstly with Dickinson's 'life', and straight away dismisses 'certaines biographies récentes' (which his bibliography reveals to be those by Pollitt and Taggard, both published in 1930), which 'font plus honneur à l'imagination romanesque de leurs auteurs qu'à leur sensibilité poétique'.⁵ Stating at the outset that 'La vie d'Emily Dickinson est mal connue encore', he gives 'ce dont

² Valery Larbaud, *Sous l'invocation de Saint Jérôme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), pp. 100-101.

³ Bianchi and Hampton print 'If I should die', and 'Tis sweet to know that stocks will stand', as separate poems, contrary to Johnson. Simon, working from the former, does the same.

⁴ The 'Note bibliographique' provided by Simon is divided into five sections: Éditions; Biographie; Critique; Traductions françaises; Bibliographyxie. (The unusual last rubric, a bibliography of bibliographies, no doubt points to the old-school academic, rather than popular, environment in which Simon was working.)

⁵ Simon, 'Avant-Propos', p. 7. Further references to the 'Avant-Propos' are given after quotations in the text.

nous sommes sûrs [en] quelques lignes' (p.7). Simon does not concern himself, (as do Pollitt and Taggard), with any mysterious loves Dickinson may have had, but he nevertheless writes about Dickinson's life in terms that a present-day reader would probably consider parodic. The descriptions are generally extreme: Amherst is 'toute petite', Dickinson's youth, 'exaltée et douloureusement déçue', her mind full of 'questions angoissantes'; the poet herself is portrayed as a figure of aching sensitivity, who 'se condamna volontairement . . . à une semi-reclusion' (pp.7-8). Thus in this first French collection, Simon perpetuates and transposes the accepted American myth of the white-robed recluse, 'meditating majestically among the flowers', as the biographer, Jay Leyda, later quite wilfully parodied Dickinson's image.⁶

Again, read fifty years on, some of Simon's introduction is striking by the conventional, now probably unacceptable way in which it describes the poet. Speaking of what he calls Dickinson's 'élan passionné', Simon continues,

. . . élan qui s'accompagne d'extase dans les moments d'espoir, et de douleur exquise dans les autres. Tout ce qu'elle aime, les fleurs, les bruits de la ferme, l'odeur des pressoirs, le chant des oiseaux, peut alimenter sa souffrance (p. 8).

The description is hard to imagine ever being applied to a man, and in the twenty-first century, it would be impossible to use seriously such language to describe either woman or man. Of course it is possible to interpret this description as an attempt on Simon's part to make Dickinson more accessible to the French reader. It is quite usual for a translator, in introducing a little-known poet into his or her language, to endeavour to find points of reference to help the reader relate to the work; here, it is difficult not to think of Louise Labé with Simon's mentions of 'extase', 'douleur', and 'souffrance'; later, the translator alludes to Baudelaire.

It is perhaps an indication of Simon's anticipated audience, that he on the one hand romanticises Dickinson's life, suggesting that he wishes to appeal to the general reader, yet on the other, cites dates and schools of poetry without explanation, which indicates a more academic audience. Early in the preface, the translator refers to 1912 as the year after which, in a general turn against

⁶ Jay Leyda, *The Years and Hours of Emily Dickinson*, 2 vols (Oxford: OUP, 1960), p. 64.

'l'Académisme', '[I]a vogue [pour Dickinson] ne cessa de grandir', but he does not clarify the events which took place at the time. Admittedly, he later refers to how Dickinson's work was claimed, firstly by 'les Imagistes de 1912', and then 'après 1922, les Modernistes venus sur les pas de T.S. Eliot', but again, he leaves the references without development, thus assuming a certain knowledge of literary history on his reader's part.

As far as Dickinson's literary worth is concerned, Simon draws a comparison with other American poets of international repute. He states that whereas Longfellow and even Poe are now more or less forgotten - at any rate by 'les jeunes Américains' - 'Emily Dickinson, comme Whitman, est maintenant mise . . . au premier rang de leurs poètes' (p. 8). In addition to these well-known names, another comfortable reference for the French reader is, as mentioned, Baudelaire, who is never named, but whose phantom floats over sentences or phrases such as, 'La nature [pour Dickinson] lui paraît pleine de symboles de mort', '[les] correspondances', '[la] volupté', and '[le] pouvoir destructeur [de la nature]' (p. 8). Finally, Simon describes Dickinson as 'un poète "avancé"', even 'près de soixante-dix ans après sa mort' (p. 9).

In seeking out Simon's views on translation, as already noted, there is a total absence of reference to translation in Simon's 'Avant-Propos' - probably unsurprising given the practices at that time. However, since Simon is careful to weight his introductory pages towards Dickinson's composition rather than her biography, it is from his discussion of the poetry, and from the poems themselves, that we learn most about his approach to the task of translation.

Explaining Dickinson to the French

Simon speaks in assured terms of Dickinson's poetic style, which he refers to through three distinct categories: her 'idées', her 'syntaxe', and her 'mots'. Firstly, he disagrees with those who have 'voulu voir en elle un poète des idées'; '[I]à', he says, 'n'est pas . . . l'essentiel'. He does not explain what he has in mind in speaking of Dickinson's 'idées' (he places the word in quotes himself), but at any rate, he views them as 'élémentaires': 'si elle veut les formuler', they are 'souvent conventionnelles' (p. 8). Similarly, he says nothing positive about Dickinson's syntax: in his view, '[elle] lui fut tout à fait indifférente'. This seems to imply that he does not entertain the possibility that Dickinson's syntax might

be inherent to her expression, and vital to the work as a whole. Indeed, his words carry an edge of school-masterly reproof; again speaking of her syntax, he adds, 'Elle n'hésite jamais à la bousculer . . .', and continues, 'De même les expressions qui joignent [l]es groupes d'images peuvent être négligées, insignifiantes, parfois triviales'. It is clear that these comments tend more toward personal judgement than neutral observation, and a comment concerning Dickinson's rhythm carries a similarly critical tone: 'Le rythme enfin, pour être clairement indiqué, n'a rien chez elle d'original' (p. 9).

Taken together, these comments on the inadequacies of Dickinson's style lead the reader to feel that the translator is a little patronising towards Dickinson, an impression perhaps reinforced by Simon's defensiveness on the poet's behalf: it is notable how he endeavours to find reasons for Dickinson's negligence. According to Simon, that which 'd'abord, comptait pour elle', were her 'belles images verbales'. In his view, 'les mots et les images sont la vie même de ses poèmes', and he quickly seeks to excuse Dickinson's syntax on the grounds of her anxiety to return to her priorities, (as he views them): 'elle semble éprouver comme une hâte d'aborder l'image suivante'. On the other hand, Simon is as enthusiastic about the poet's use of vocabulary, where words are chosen 'pour leur sonorité autant que pour leur sens', as he is deprecating of her syntax. Thus, although one notes that this early translator does not consider the different elements of the poet's style as a piece, he also takes care to signal the innovatory qualities of Dickinson's work: she accords words meanings 'inconnus des dictionnaires', Simon says; they bring to the reader 'l'impression fugitive d'une beauté nouvelle' (pp. 8-9).

Correcting Emily

Turning now to the translation of the poems, as we discussed in Chapter Three, one of the most marked features of Dickinson's work is the degree to which she employs compression, which often leads to ambiguity and occasionally results in the occurrence of 'unrecoverable syntax', to use Samuel Levin's terminology. Again as suggested, this extreme compression may present a considerable problem to the translator: even if he or she wishes to maintain Dickinson's ambiguities, instances are bound to occur when this is not possible and the difference between the French and English languages force certain

selections of vocabulary and syntax to be made. Claire Malroux speaks of the way Dickinson's words 'frott[ent] ensemble comme des silex, sans liant syntaxique'; she finds that, 'La traduction vient s'y heurter, le socle du vocabulaire étant souvent différent dans les deux langues'.⁷

Jean Simon's translations offer a good illustration of the way in which one translator has chosen, or found himself obliged, to deal with the problem of ambiguity in Dickinson, and the decisions he makes are significant in determining this particular 'projet de traduction'. We will therefore particularly consider the problems posed by compression, and the solutions Simon has found.

As a more general introduction to Simon's style of translation, however, we firstly look briefly at a poem which is one of the few poems (there are seven in all) which three of the translators in our study (Simon, Bosquet, and Malroux) all chose to translate, and one to which we will return at greater length in the next chapter, devoted to Alain Bosquet's work.⁸

If I shouldn't be alive
When the robins come,
Give the one in red cravat
A memorial crumb.

Au cas où je ne vivrais plus
Quand reviendront les rouges-gorges,
Donnez de ma part au plus rouge
Sa miette commémorative.

If I couldn't thank you,
Being just asleep,
You will know I'm trying
With my granite lip.

Si je ne puis dire merci
Venant juste de m'endormir,
Vous saurez du moins que j'essaie
Avec ma lèvre de granit.

There are several elements to be considered in tracing an initial outline of Simon's approach to translation. Firstly, although Dickinson's use of compression is minimal here, compared to poems we will discuss later, we nevertheless note the translation's tendency to extend certain of the original's lines. In Dickinson's lines one, in the first stanza, and one and three in the second, abbreviation combines with a directness of address which together produce three examples of Dickinson's concise, and in this instance, colloquial language: 'If I shouldn't be alive' (1;1); 'If I couldn't thank you' (2;1); 'You will know I'm trying' (2;3).

⁷ Emily Dickinson: *Quatrains et autres poèmes brefs*, trans. by Claire Malroux (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), p. 23.

⁸ This poem, 'If I shouldn't be alive', (Simon, p. 32), was also one of the six poems Pierre Leyris published in translation in the journal *Mesures* in 1939.

It is clear that Simon has not chosen, or been unable, to render the abbreviated, speech-like language into a similar register in French: to the contrary, all three lines are composed in the formal register, and the first and seventh lines of his poem stand out by the very degree of their finish: 'Au cas où je ne vivrais plus' (1;1); 'Vous saurez du moins que j'essaie' (2;3). The adverbial phrases 'Au cas où', and 'du moins', neither of which are present in the original poem, serve in Simon's translation to render Dickinson's short, colloquial lines, as lengthier, more discursive lines. Similarly, although Dickinson's third line, 'Give the one in red cravat', contains no abbreviation, its directness and concision is dimmed in the translation by the addition of the qualifying, 'de ma part': ('Donnez . . . au plus rouge'). The line's added specificity again produces a formality not present in the original. Although one might argue that Simon has said nothing that was not implied in Dickinson's line, it is precisely the *degree* of compression in Dickinson's work which is significant: the ratio of what is stated to what is implied is reversed in Simon's translation of this poem, and the extended, fuller lines result in a more expository style than Dickinson's.

Another aspect of the translation which gives Simon's poem a more discursive edge, is the translator's decision to omit the anaphora in the openings of Dickinson's first and second stanzas, 'If I shouldn't be alive', (1;1), and 'If I couldn't thank you', (2;1). Together, these lines impart a direct, speech-like quality to their two stanzas; they also tie them together structurally. Simon's choice of opening lines do not carry the same degree of echo: 'Au cas où je ne vivrais plus' (1;1), and 'Si je ne puis dire merci' (2;1), and while the decision is perhaps minor, it nevertheless lets slip the possibility of employing a poetic device.

These points noted, even at this initial stage of analysis, it seems clear that Simon's expansions have in part been necessitated by a desire to maintain a regular verseform which would help suggest something of the rhythm of Dickinson's (7,5,7,5) common metre, and which, perhaps more importantly, would resemble the kind of rhymed verse with which his audience, even 'post-crise', would be familiar. As we see - and as we will have further occasion to note

- Simon composes entirely in octosyllables, the metre of the 'petite ballade'.⁹

The Problem of Ambiguity

The specific instances in this particular poem, then, seem to indicate an overall tendency on the part of the translator to render Dickinson's verse into a more developed, 'rational', language. In the following, longer poem, we see Dickinson's ambiguities more forcibly in play than in the preceding work; we also observe how, in this instance, Simon's translating decisions have a more radical effect on the poem's meaning.

It was not death, for I stood up,
And all the dead lie down;
It was not night, for all the bells
Put out their tongues, for noon.

La mort? Non - car j'étais debout,
Et tous les morts sont étendus.
La nuit? Non - car partout les cloches
Dardaient leurs langues méridiennes.

It was not frost, for on my flesh
I felt siroccos crawl, -
Nor fire, for just my marble feet
Could keep a chancel cool.

Le gel? Non - sur toute ma chair
Courait un vent de sirocco.
Le feu? Non - la fourrure à peine
Pouvait tiédir mes pieds de marbre.

And yet it tasted like them all;
The figures I have seen
Set orderly for burial,
Reminded me of mine,

Tous ces goûts pourtant se mêlaient.
Les formes que j'ai vu passer
S'alignant pour des funérailles
Me semblaient figurer les miennes.

As if my life were shaven
And fitted to a frame,
And could not breathe without a key;
And 'twas midnight, some,

Net, on m'avait tranché la vie
Pour l'ajuster sur un boîtier
- Tournez la clef, que je respire! -
On eût dit qu'il était minuit,

When everything that ticked had stopped,
And space stares all around,
Or grisly frosts, first autumn morns,
Repeal the beating ground.

L'heure où tous les tics-tacs s'arrêtent
Et l'espace est partout béant,
Ou le gel d'un matin d'automne,
Gris, faisant résonner le sol,

But most like chaos - stopless, cool, -
Without a chance or spar,
Or even a report of land
To justify despair.

Ou le chaos froid, infini,
Sans un espoir, sans une chance,
Sans même une terre entrevue,
Justifiant le désespoir!¹⁰

On account of their denseness, we will firstly examine the two opening lines of this now-famous Dickinson poem:

It was not death, for I stood up,
And all the dead lie down;

La mort? Non - car j'étais debout
Et tous les morts sont étendus.

In the original, these lines represent the first of several observations

⁹ In this and succeeding analyses, I count the mute 'e' as one syllable when it occurs before a consonant.

delivered by the speaker as she endeavours, through a strategy of exclusion, to discover the nature of a particular remembered state: the poem's opening 'it'. We break in on her reasoning as she looks back and realises that the condition could not have been death, since now she recalls standing up, and (her reasoning continues) this is not a position normally associated with the dead: '. . . all the dead lie down'. The compressed, paratactic style of these two lines produces an ambiguity and strangeness which, while typical of Dickinson, presents a complexity Simon apparently wishes to avoid. He takes two evasive steps in order to translate these lines: he rewrites the speaker's internal monologue in the form of a question and answer, and he eliminates the semantic uncertainty present in the second line.

The first strategy represents a radical deviation from the original syntax, whereby Simon renders the independent statement, 'It was not death for I stood up', as two, inter-dependent units: 'La mort? Non - car j'étais debout,'(l.1). In transforming the line into a question and response, Simon remoulds the condensed reasoning of the speaker, perhaps to produce a more accessible, and ultimately more acceptable (to the foreign reader), form. Certainly, in introducing the notion of dialogue into the poem, Simon subtly simplifies the uncertain, perplexing, relationship between cause and effect in Dickinson's line. In Simon's first line, the imperfect tense of 'j'étais debout', indicates that the speaker recalls that he/she was already standing: it is as a result of having been in that position that the speaker is able to eliminate the possibility of death: 'Non - car j'étais debout'. Dickinson's speaker, on the other hand, recalls the completed act of standing up ('for I stood up'), which leaves the question of the state in which he/she initially found herself, open; we are also unsure whether the unnamed 'it' continued to be present during the act of standing up, or whether it *preceded* the action taken, and that the speaker might therefore have acted as a *result* of its onset/appearance. Simon's more straight-forward line does not carry this set of ambiguities: the reader reads on without great hesitation.

It is also the case that by separating the reference to death from the rest of the sentence: 'La mort?' (and similarly, 'La nuit?', 'Le gel?', and 'Le feu?', in lines three, five, and seven, respectively), thus necessitating a clear response,

¹⁰ 'It was not death, for I stood up,' Simon, p. 36.

'Non - car j'étais debout' (l.l.,etc.), the translator again makes life easier for his reader, who has more time to assimilate and accept the ideas being proposed, than he or she does in reading Dickinson's complex, paratactic line.

Simon's second strategy also imbues the original with a certain 'clarity', this time seen in the second line. Firstly, we should note that Dickinson's, 'And all the dead lie down', suggests two ideas simultaneously, precisely on account of its unrecoverable syntax: the line is able to imply either, as mentioned above, that the usual state of the dead is to be in horizontal position, but also, and more curiously, that the dead themselves are responsible for the act of lying down. It is compression that enables the ambiguity: the lack of explanatory syntax encourages the reader to read the line 'illogically', with the verb in active form. This understanding is also prompted by the fact that the reader has retained the meaning and rhythm of the active verb at the end of the preceding line, '(I) stood up', and the placing of the verb in similar line-end position - '(the dead) lie down' - again encourages him or her to simply reapply the acquired impressions.

Simon's line, on the other hand, presents 'the dead' in passive, rather than active state: '(les morts) sont étendus'. Full syntax is in place, and it produces a certitude of meaning not present in Dickinson's line. The dead are laid down by external agents in Simon's poem; there is no suggestion that they can do so themselves. The ambiguity is thus lost, and again, the French reader is spared any hypothetical bafflement.

There are several other specific instances in this poem where Simon has apparently decided to couch the translation in less strange, more certain terms than its original. With reference now to the complete poem, we will look at one more example of these, before examining the more significant effect that loss of ambiguity in this poem has on the overall meaning, at least in one reader's understanding.

It is just possible to envisage the presence of a second character in Dickinson's poem, to whom the speaker is directing her thoughts, but, as we have already demonstrated, this slim hypothesis is greatly strengthened in Simon's poem, by dint of the question-and-answer formulation. We surmised that such a form makes the poem more straight-forward, less odd, than is Dickinson's, in adding an addressee to the scene. In the third line of Simon's fourth stanza, the appeal to another is clear: ' - Tournez la clef, que je respire! - ', and the insertion

of the imperative (absent in the original), in addition to maintaining the impression of a presumably human presence, helps simplify one of Dickinson's more complex stanzas (the fourth). As we see, the subject of the first three lines is 'my life' (l.1), and Dickinson speaks of it as though it were a distinct and living entity, which (in its present enclosed situation), '... could not breathe without a key' (l.2). The three elements - abstract life, organic being, and tangible object - brought together in the space of three lines, present a complex set of ideas, where compression in the form of parataxis again enables Dickinson to move quickly between the concrete and the abstract and back again. Simon's tactic of rewriting the third line as if delivered to a second party, side-steps any problem of comprehension, and perhaps again illustrates his desire to ease the reader over a moment where even an English reader might pause.

However, Simon's major adjustment to the poem's ambiguity, is, as we mentioned earlier, more radical; in order to observe this, we must firstly explain more fully the narrative development in Dickinson's poem.

In the original, having endeavoured to satisfactorily define the nature of the remembered state using a series of exclusion clauses, by the beginning of the third stanza, the speaker feels in a position to describe the state in positive, rather than negative terms, and brings together the impressions gathered in the first stanzas: 'And yet it tasted like them all' (3;1). Now she is surer that death is not to be eliminated from her reasonings, but again, she is ruminating from a position unable to be defined simply as life or death: 'The figures . . . set . . . for burial,/Reminded me of mine' (3;2-3). In the first line of the fourth stanza, mentioned above, 'As if my life were shaven', she manages to hit on a way of articulating how she feels, using a metaphor of life as a tangible concept: 'shaven' at once suggests 'wood'. The link between abstract and concrete apparently appropriate, the speaker lets her thoughts stream over the next two lines, until the breathless anaphora 'And', (4;2-4) lead her into an untenable state: 'And could not breathe without a key'. At this point she finds herself unable to take the idea further, and is forced to back off and take a different line of comparison in the next line 'And 'twas midnight, some,' (l.4).

From then on, the speaker continues with the list of positive comparisons through the fifth stanza, which culminate in the first line of the sixth and final stanza, where she finds the most satisfactory comparison so far: 'But most like

chaos - stopless, cool, -' (6;1). However, even if 'it' reminds the speaker 'most' of inevitable ('stopless') chaos, we know from the previous stanzas that death is also an ingredient in 'its' nature. The poem's final three lines, ('Without a chance or spar,/Or even a report of land/To justify despair' (6;2-4)), while superficially simply adding further description to the hopeless nature of the 'chaos', also lead to the poem's final word, and perhaps go some way to explaining why the speaker has taken such a long route to get there. She has managed to keep the most accurate description of her state at bay for six stanzas. The last word of the last line's, '(To justify) despair', finally names what she had perhaps hoped not to admit, and the withholding of the word suggests an element of guilt on the speaker's part over her actual, living state. (The idea of the speaker's state of despair being one that perhaps Dickinson herself felt ought to be 'justified' is one that might be explored.) With this, we reach the end of the poem's summary.

The Problem of Ambiguity Resolved

In order, now, to discuss the translation, we should bear in mind that the key moments in the poem's evolution turn around the speaker's continuing evaluation of the poem's subject: the initial eliminating, and opening, 'it' - 'It was not death for I stood up', is then repeated in line three, 'It was not night . . .', and in the first line of the second stanza: 'It was not frost . . .'. The move from the negative appraisal to positive comparison comes in the first line of the third stanza: 'And yet it tasted like them all'. The fifth time 'it' is mentioned, again positively, is in the abbreviation of the fourth stanza's final line, 'And [i]'twas midnight, some', and finally, 'it' occurs in the deleted syntax of the last stanza's first line, which in this instance is easily recoverable by the reader: 'But [it was] most like chaos . . .'.

Turning to Simon's treatment of these defining moments, we have already seen that the highly ambiguous 'it' in Dickinson's poem is replaced by Simon in his very first line by the specific noun, 'La mort(?)'. The fact that Simon's speaker still questions whether or not death is the correct definition, does not fully compensate for the elimination of Dickinson's non-specific pronoun, which by its initial position, and its subsequent repeated reference throughout the poem, defines 'it' as the work's principal subject. The fact that the pronoun recurs, gives weight both to its presence and its nebulous quality.

Once Simon, perhaps through caution, has made the decision to lose this awkward and unusual entity in his first line, he is obliged to continue his translation without it, which leads to a number of important changes in the poem's sense. As mentioned, he turns the first three reappearances of 'it' into question-and-answer format, each time eliminating the pronoun, and substituting a different noun: 'La nuit/Le gel/Le feu' (ll.3,5,7). Next, the important transitional 'And yet it tasted like them all', is translated by Simon as 'Tous ces goûts pourtant se mêlaient.'. Again, Simon prefers to side-step the complicated notions, not just of 'it' this time, but of 'its' now having assumed the capacity to be tasted. By excluding the pronoun, and changing Dickinson's verb into a noun ('ces goûts'/'it tasted'), Simon eliminates the slightly unnerving notion that now the 'it' in question is able to be tasted - in short, it is no longer fully exterior to the speaker, but has moved (perhaps like the taste of Eve's apple) into her very being. Simon's line keeps such an idea at a distance: in referring to 'ces goûts', he is speaking specifically of the nouns already mentioned; by using the reflexive verb 'se mêler', he keeps them under restraint, and distanced, much less surreally, one might say, from any possible contact with the speaker. (In all, this is a statement which, together with Simon's following line, 'Les formes que j'ai vu passer' (3;3), brings Baudelaire's 'Correspondances' to mind. It is surely not simply due to the translator's introductory allusions that the reader recalls other abstract elements which 'se confondent', or 'se répondent'.¹¹)

The next mention of 'it' is in the last line of Dickinson's fourth stanza, where, as explained earlier, the speaker starts a new series of attempts to define her subject, this time reverting to the concept of time as her point of reference: 'And 'twas midnight, some.'. Simon's translation of this line, 'On eût dit qu'il était minuit', frankly makes little sense in the context of his stanza:

Net, on m'avait tranché la vie
 Pour l'ajuster sur un boîtier
 - Tournez la clef, que je respire! -
 On eût dit qu'il était minuit,

Having not been prepared by the preceding allusions to 'it', the 'il' does not resound with other connotations than those usually contained in telling what

¹¹ Charles Baudelaire, *Les fleurs du Mal: édition du centenaire* (Paris: Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1957), 'Correspondances', p. 15.

time it is. At best, the line delivers the idea that the speaker, for reasons of which the reader is unaware, was suddenly put in mind of the bleakness of midnight. (Another change Simon makes in translating this line, is the American, colloquial, usage of the adverb, 'some', in such a context. Only American allows the English-speaker to isolate the word as Dickinson has here, and as such, is unusually evocative of her particular voice.¹²)

The loss of 'it', then, pushes the reader to understand Simon's following line, 'L'heure où tous les tics-tacs s'arrêtent' (5;1), solely as a description of 'minuit', rather than a further qualification of 'it', as in Dickinson's poem. In fact, the rest of the fifth stanza, and also, as we shall see, the sixth and final stanza, in consequence carry quite different implications in the translation to those of the original. Whereas Dickinson's speaker continues through the fifth stanza to search for a final definition of the elusive 'it', Simon's can only describe what reads as being a rather arbitrary moment in the turning of the clock's hands.

Dickinson's final allusion to 'it' comes, as mentioned, with the elision in the last stanza's first line: 'But most like chaos - stopless, cool, -', but what is a further, pivotal point in the original, in the translation becomes simply another comparison, 'Ou le chaos froid, infini', to join the list in the fifth stanza. (While not the primary point of our discussion, it is impossible not to note the translator's replacement of Dickinson's unusual adjective, 'stopless' (6;l) with the more current 'infini'. This decision reinforces our impression of the basically domesticating nature of the work - although it is hard to see in this instance how

¹² The few Americanisms that occur in this collection are smoothed over in the translation. Simon gives 'la fête d'automne' for 'Thanksgiving' (p. 41), and 'chariot' for 'wagon' (p. 77); he reworks the American use of the adverb 'just', in the sense of 'exactly': for Dickinson's line, 'I thought just how red apples wedged', Simon gives, 'J'imaginai le temps des pommes rouges . . .' (p. 41); similarly, the American 'In just the dress his country wore', is translated by 'Dans le costume de son siècle!' (p. 12).

the translator might cope with such an idiosyncratic word; no doubt Nabokov would advocate the use of footnotes.¹³)

The final three lines of Simon's poem are thus stripped of the dramatic edge contained in Dickinson's final, bleak description of the sought-for presence, and the final words 'le désespoir!' are in no way revelatory, but rather seem to describe some incoherent moment, which the reader only knows had something to do with midnight. In sum, in this poem Simon has largely suppressed the subject of Dickinson's poem, as expressed through the central pronoun, 'it', and in doing so, has again avoided some of Dickinson's complexity and ambiguity. It is possible that Simon saw this poem as an attempt on Dickinson's part to express one of her more 'inessential ideas'. Paradoxically, it might be said to be Simon who, as we have seen, rendered her ideas in more elementary, and 'conventional' form.

So far, then, our analyses have suggested that, either through lack of understanding (unlikely, given Simon's academic position) or, more probably, through a desire to render Dickinson's complexities and strangenesses accessible to an unaccustomed French audience, his approach to translation has been to 'clarify' Dickinson, by using a number of different strategies. Finally, we note that in both the poems analysed, Simon has used a strictly octosyllabic form. Naturally, to decide to impose a certain form on the translated verse, is to accept that limitations will occur in composition, but ultimately, the kind of changes we have observed in Simon's poems, speak to an additional agenda on the translator's part.

We also observed that in 'It was not death for I stood up', Dickinson's compression played principally around the central and ambiguous pronoun 'it'. Pertinent to Simon's observed avoidance strategy, it is worth pointing out here that Dickinson's poetry employs an unusually abundant repetition of pronouns. According to Cristanne Millar, in speaking of poetic repetition generally,

¹³ Other instances where the translation exchanges Dickinson's unusual figurative language in favour of simpler expression, are seen in the following lines (highlighted by italics): '*The dust did scoop itself like hands*'/'*Telles des Mains se creusa la poussière*' (p. 19); '*Too happy in my sparrow chance*'/'*Trop heureux, dans mon sort de moineau*' (p. 19); '*The lightning skipped like mice*'/'*La foudre décampa, telles souris en fuite*' (p. 31); '*It had the tassels on*'/'*Et ses épis étaient en fleur*' (p. 41); '*And carts went stooping round the fields*'/'*La charrette inclinée au bord du champ*' (p. 41); '*This quiet dust was Gentlemen and Ladies*'/'*Cette cendre, c'étaient des messieurs et des dames*' (p. 43); '*This passive place a Summer's nimble Mansion*'/'*Ce lieu morne, c'était un jardin vif et gai*' (p. 45).

although Dickinson's use of alliteration and assonance (for example), do not distinguish her verse from that of other poets of the time, her poetry 'is unusual . . . in its repetitions of a grammatical class of words. . . . especially pronouns' (p.76). We might thus view Dickinson's repetition of pronouns as a further, significant, stylistic element of her poetry, and the translator's treatment therefore naturally gains importance.

Miller also categorises the poetic functions of Dickinson's pronouns, and according to her definitions, the pronoun 'it' in the above poem might be seen as representing, ' . . . a blank around which the poet draws the boundaries for a phenomenon she cannot name . . . '. The next, and last poem we will discuss here, also revolves around a central pronoun; here, 'He' serves a similar purpose as did 'it' in the preceding poem, in that, ' . . . [the] meaning [is] not yet realised'; in this particular poem, this is the case 'even though the direction of its meaning is referential'.¹⁴

Who is the Master?

The following poem is one of the 23 selected for translation by both Jean Simon and Claire Malroux, and one we have already mentioned in our discussion of Dickinson's stylistic elements in Chapter Three. 'He put the Belt around my Life -' (as the first line is printed in Franklin's 1998 variorum edition). was written, according to Franklin, in 1862 - a year when the poet is thought to have written 227 poems. It is a poem where compression plays an important role, and where ambiguity hinges primarily on the pronoun, 'He'.

This is the poem as it is printed in Simon's 1954 publication, with his translation on the facing page:

He put the belt around my life, -
I heard the buckle snap,
And turned away, imperial,
My lifetime folding up
Deliberate, as a duke would do
A kingdom's title-deed, -
Henceforth a dedicated sort,
A member of the cloud.

Yet not too far to come at call,
And do the little toils
That make the circuit of the rest

Il mit la ceinture autour de ma vie,
Et j'entendis claquer la boucle,
Impérial, il me quitta
En enfermant ma vie entière,
Tranquille, comme un duc enfermerait
L'acte qui lui donne un royaume.
Je suis désormais consacrée,
Anonyme dans la nuée,

Mais assez près pour venir, sur un signe,
Accomplir les menus travaux
Qui frangent la ronde des autres,

¹⁴ Cristanne Miller, *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 76.

And deal occasional smiles
To lives that stoop to notice mine
And kindly ask it in, -
Whose invitation, knew you not
For whom I must decline?

Adresser parfois un sourire
A qui veut bien se pencher sur ma vie
Et m'inviter avec bonté.
Mais ces invites, savez-vous
Qui me force à les décliner?¹⁵

In her own introduction, Claire Malroux pinpoints the key question in this poem - the identification of the opening pronoun, 'He',¹⁶ - but there are several other specific instances in this poem where compression leads to ambiguity. Naturally, it will be of interest in a subsequent chapter to observe how Malroux's translation handles the problem, but firstly, we will observe how Simon, having chosen to suppress the poem's subject in the previous poem, deals with the specific pronoun which again represents the subject of the narration.

It is indeed the opening pronoun, 'He', which, due to its contextual ambiguity, makes any fixed interpretation of this poem difficult. There are no immediate points of reference or a context through which the precise nature of 'He' may be established, and the reader is thus prompted to interpret this poem in several different ways. In addition (and here we refer to another of the 'éléments stylistiques' foregrounded in Chapter Three), the moot question of irony lends another layer of ambiguity to this poem. If we decide to take the poet's biography into consideration, and if we also decide that a potential case for irony is present, there are (at least) seven possible readings of this poem, all of which may be plausibly backed by reference to accepted details of Dickinson's life and work.¹⁷

However, even without a knowledge of Dickinson's life, the poem elicits three different interpretations, which we outline in order to appreciate the way in which Simon has approached the translation.

Briefly, the most obvious, non-ironical, reading, involves taking the initial 'He' as referring to God. If we read this poem 'straight', we understand that the

¹⁵ 'He put the belt around my life -', Simon, p. 28.

¹⁶ Emily Dickinson: *Une Âme en incandescence, cahiers de poèmes 1861-1863*, trans. by Claire Malroux (Paris: José Corti, 1998), p. 24.

¹⁷ The less obvious readings, which I do not support in detail here, are non-ironical readings, taking the opening pronoun 'He', to refer to a) 'Death' (whereby the second stanza refers to the soul's return to the earthly world from the thereafter); b) to Higginson (the poem is written in the same year, 1862, as Dickinson appealed to the critic to ask him if her verse "breathed"; c) to the Muse, or Art; d) to the poet herself, where 'Belt' and 'Buckle' refer to the string and stab-binding of the notebooks respectively. In addition, reading (b) above, may also be read with ironic slant.

speaker found herself with no choice but to give herself to God, and she is unquestioningly proud of her commitment. Vocabulary to support such a reading abounds: the 'kingdom', and 'the cloud', (1;6,8), might both be seen as Biblical references, and the citing of the '... little toils/That make the circuit of the rest', (2;2-3), brings an implicit echo of 'the daily round, the common task', and suggests Christian servility and humility. Of course, we are also aware of the deeply religious New England environment in which Dickinson grew up. (It is of interest here to point out a further element of this poem which is typical of Dickinson's style, and which should therefore be considered in the translation. It also provides another reason why this poem might ultimately lend itself to a 'religious' reading - whether ironical or not. In the work by Cristanne Miller already cited, the author refers to Eric Auerbach's description of *Genesis I*, and makes the point that in much of Dickinson's poetry, as in the Bible, 'the contrast between extreme brevity and powerful content contributes to the large "note of obscurity", and makes her . . . sound "Grand"'.¹⁸ Miller observes that ' . . . compression may suggest untold profundity . . . [conveying] a sense of the speaker's withheld power.'¹⁹ 'He put the belt around my life', certainly seems to carry something of the grand tone of the Bible's authors.)

The most likely alternative non-ironical reading, involves casting the imperious 'He' as a kind of Flaubertian 'Rodolphe' figure, a man to whom the speaker has given herself in some way, and to whom, in contrast to the speaker, the union meant nothing. In support of this reading, we note the definite article in 'the belt', implying perhaps that the item was not unknown to the poem's characters; also in support of a more man-based interpretation, we hear intimations of breakage in the onomatopoeic 'snap' (1;2). In terms of biography, again there are at least three candidates in Dickinson's life - Charles Wadsworth, Samuel Bowles and Judge Otis Lord - who suggest themselves as possible candidates for the 'Rodolphe' position.

In addition to being read 'straight', both these interpretations may easily be placed before a filter of irony. As we also mentioned in Chapter Three, James Olney finds that most of Dickinson's poetry where the subject matter is religious

¹⁸ Miller states that: 'Dickinson's lifelong familiarity with the Bible, with church hymns, and with the paratactic or conjunctive styles of earlier writers . . . most likely influenced her style' (p. 32).

is ironic; he suggests, for example, that the scene described in 'I heard a Fly Buzz' in fact parodies the moment of transcendence from ordinary into heavenly life. (The 'King' of the poem, as Olney points out, is, after all, displaced by a fly.)²⁰ Moreover, as far as Dickinson biography is concerned, despite the immense pressure the poet received to formally commit herself to God, and the fact that most of her school friends converted, she never did so. Aged twenty, describing her family to Higginson, Dickinson wrote: 'They all believe except me, and every morning they speak to an Eclipse they call "Father"'.²¹

I would argue that the poem's formal elements present a strong case for irony, and I need to enter into some detail to explain how the mood is introduced. In my opinion, irony is first evident in the broken iambic pentameter of the poem's fifth line ('Deliberate, as a duke would do'); once the tone is cast, it is maintained from that point until the poem's end.

The fifth line begins with a rising light unaccented syllable, 'De', which is then followed by a dactyl in the next three syllables, 'liberate': a strong stress, followed by two light stresses. The line's next three words, 'as a Duke' consist of an anapest - that is to say, the reverse of a dactyl in terms of stress: two light stresses and one strong. Thus these six syllables produce a mirroring effect, and the result in terms of the line's tone, is to mockingly reflect the Duke's action back at itself: '(De)liberate/as a Dúke (would do)'. The line's final two words, with the closing alliteration on 'd', echo the first word of the line, and, closing the incident, return to the iambic pentameter of the surrounding lines, almost suggesting that the mocking interlude did not occur. In my view, this is a moment in the text which might be described, in Berman's terms, as a 'zone miraculeuse'. It has made its mark, and the irony is sustained throughout the poem through the (falsely) mild tone suggested by 'the little toils' and the 'occasional smiles', which jars with the preceding, violent, notions of belt and buckle. Similarly, the harsh repetitions on 'k' and 'd', contrast and highlight the (false) sweetness of the soft 's' sounds. Although the seemingly gentle 'Yet', which opens the second stanza, and the succeeding lines superficially transform

¹⁹ Miller, p. 32.

²⁰ James Olney, *The Language(s) of Poetry: Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 33.

²¹ Dickinson's letter to Colonel Higginson, April 25, 1862 (*The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed. by Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), vol. 2, p. 404.

the anger into contentment (2;1-6), it reappears and is scarcely contained in the sarcastic, cooing, harmony of the final two lines: 'Whose invitation, know you not/For whom I must decline?' The rhetorical question completely undermines the authority of the buckler, in much the same way as the fly does the King.

A Traditional Approach

The most immediately noticeable feature of Simon's translation is its form. As in the preceding two poems discussed, here the translator has again seemingly tried to indicate the regularity of Dickinson's alternating 8,6 lines by imposing another, different kind of regularity on his own poem: that is to say, here a line of ten syllables, followed by three lines of eight, the whole repeated three more times. The principal effect of the form is that it lends a traditional air to the poem, (reinforced by the decision to place the initial action in the past historic tense: 'Il mit la ceinture . . .' (l.1))²². The decasyllabic line may be traced back even earlier than Maurice Scève and the 'École lyonnaise', to the Middle Ages, when it was the preferred form of lyric poets, and known as 'le vers commun'. Thus, although Simon did not have an easy equivalent of Dickinson's hymn metre, he does seem to have tried to suggest a traditional, and similarly rhythmic form of verse. However, the use of four ten-syllable lines suggests four stanzas, rather than Dickinson's two, and the poem's layout in the 1954 collection reinforces that idea. The longer lines which suggest introductory lines in what could be stanzas two and four in Simon's poem, are not, however, stressed by any moment of particular significance in the content. On the one hand, then, the choice of form may ultimately appear a little arbitrary (perhaps backed by Simon's introductory remark that Dickinson's rhythm 'n'a rien . . . d'original' (p.9)), but on the other, it might have been chosen as representative of a form of traditional verse with which French readers would be familiar: it is of

²² Unlike the English, the French language offers the choice of the past historic and the perfect tense to convey the idea that an event has taken place; Simon chooses the more formal of the two.

note that the octosyllable was, with the alexandrine, one of Baudelaire's preferred lines.²³

On the whole, as a result of the longer lines, and the comparatively reduced alliteration and rhyme, Simon's poem does not carry the same grandeur, or sense of 'withheld power' that is present in Dickinson; there are instances in the translation where the lines sound more like descriptive prose than resonant verse. The poem's first two lines provide a good example: 'Il mit la ceinture autour de ma vie,/Et j'entendis claquer la boucle.' The addition of 'Et' in the second line lends a temporal slant to the lines which is quite different to the timeless quality of Dickinson's same two lines: 'He put the belt around my life - /I heard the buckle snap'. We will have occasion to return to these two lines, but here we note simply the lack of compression, and the consequent lack of grandeur. Overall, there is no sense of Biblical, or indeed Dickinsonian, inevitability in Simon's poem.

The above example confirms that, as in our previous analyses, Simon on occasion endeavours to expand, almost to explain, Dickinson's language. Here, we note that in line four, where Dickinson (typically) speaks of an abstract noun in tangible terms, 'My lifetime folding up', in the translation, Simon uses a much less unusual verb: 'En enfermant ma vie entière'. The line does not startle, because the idea of a life being enclosed is far less surprising than a lifetime being folded up: the contrast between the abstract and tangible entities is lost. A similar clarification is found in the second stanza's fifth and sixth lines: rather than allowing the odd notion of 'lives' being able to 'stoop', ('To lives that stoop to notice mine' (2;5)), Simon extends the line and makes it clear that it can only be *someone* who pays attention to the life of another: 'A qui veut bien se pencher sur ma vie' (2;5). In addition, Dickinson's sixth line, where the poet gives the speaker's life a certain substance, through the use of one of her favourite pronouns: 'And kindly ask it in -' (2;6), is also rendered simpler by Simon, who

²³ Indeed, the majority of Simon's poems are composed in octosyllables, but occasionally, he uses different schemes: his translation of 'The clouds their backs together laid,' (8,6,8,6...), 'Les nuages butés épaule contre épaule', employs a mixture of alexandrines, decasyllables, and octosyllables: 12,8,12,12,8,10,12,8 (p. 30); 'Quelqu'un est mort dans la maison d'en face'/'There's been a death in the opposite house', employs a 10,6,10,6 scheme (p. 39), as does, for example, 'C'était un Maelstrom en furie, où pointait'/'Twas like a Maelstrom, with a notch' (p. 71); in 'J'apporte un vin inhabituel'/'I bring an unaccustomed wine', Simon has not been able to reproduce Dickinson's 8,8,6 (repeated) lines exactly: his stanzas' first and second lines are either ten or nine syllables; his third line always contains six syllables (p. 17).

(again) suppresses the unusual presence, 'it', and replaces it with the more usual first person pronoun: 'Et m'inviter avec bonté' (2;6).

A final ambiguity of this poem is its use of tense. The reader of Dickinson's verse is able to envisage the action of the poem as having taken place, either at some much earlier unspecified time, or in the recent past: with the latter, the apparent present tense of the second stanza 'Yet not too far to come at call', can equally be read as being a continuation, again in the recent past, of the description given in the first stanza. With the 'buckling' having taken place a long time ago, the speaker is looking further back, and remembering, before then continuing to talk in the present tense. Interestingly, Dickinson herself was undecided, or at least as far as the tense of the poem's final two lines are concerned. The English in Simon's edition gives 'knew' in the penultimate line, whereas Simon translates as if it were the present, 'savez-vous'. There is no ready explanation as to why this occurred in Simon's edition (although if it is a typographical error, it would be one of many in this collection) but, perhaps fortuitously for the translation, research shows that the poet revised her initial 'knew' to 'know'. (As is often the case, we have no way of knowing Dickinson's final preferences; both have been reproduced in various editions.²⁴) Simon has opted to place the initial action of the buckling in the historical past, but through the use of the personal pronoun in line six, "Je suis", has moved into the present tense, in which the poem then remains, up to and including the immediate address of the final question. Ambiguity of tense is thus not a feature of Simon's poem.

Dickinson Domesticated

Simon's poem may be seen to carry two principal interpretations. Firstly, although the 'grandness' of the tone is mitigated, the idea of the opening 'Il' as referring to God is retained by the use of religious or regal vocabulary, such as the 'Impérial' of line three, the 'duc' of line five, and 'royaume', (l.6), and the more pointedly religious 'consacrée', (l.7), and 'nuée', (l.8).

However, I do not think that Simon's poem guides us primarily in that

²⁴ Franklin states that 'knew' was printed in four separate editions; he prints 'know' in his own variorum edition: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. by R.W. Franklin, 3 vols (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press (Cambridge, MA, and London: 1998), vol. 1, p. 354.

direction, but more towards a reading of the 'Il' as the Rodolphe-type figure mentioned earlier.

We have already observed that, precisely on account of their compression, Dickinson's first two lines ('He put the belt around my life/I heard the buckle snap') lend a timeless quality to the poem's dramatic opening. In Simon's translation of these lines: 'Il mit la ceinture autour de ma vie,/Et j'entendis claquer la boucle,' (1;1-2) the additional conjunction 'Et' suggests that the speaker is describing the actions in a sequential, rather than simultaneous way; together, Simon's two lines suggest something more homely than metaphysical: 'he put the belt around my life and then I heard the door slam', is the kind of rather domestic action that the lines seem to suggest.

This earth-based slant is maintained in Simon's following line, 'Impérial, il me quitta'. The lower-case 'i', implies that the figure in question is not so much God as man, and this is reinforced by Simon's choice of the traditional man-leaves-woman verb, 'quitter'. (In Dickinson's poem, the speaker only refers once to 'He', and it is precisely the lack of qualification - the compression - in the original text's third line, 'And turned away, imperial,' which adds to the poem's accumulating ambiguity, and the possibility of the referent as being either God or man.) In addition, by repeating line four's 'enfermer' in line five, ('En enfermant ma vie entière,/Tranquille, comme un duc enfermerait') and making the object of the verb the tangible 'L'acte' ('L'acte qui lui donne un royaume', (l.6)), the concrete connotations of the second 'enfermer' rebound back to the preceding line, suggesting primarily concrete, rather than abstract entities, and raise the possibility that the speaker, like the Kingdom's Deeds, is shut away physically. Our sense that it is man who is taking the action is strengthened.

Simon's second stanza continues in similar vein, where the 'menus travaux' of line ten acquire a homely air through the choice of 'franger' in the following line, a verb often used in connection with the sewing of a skirt: again we observe Simon pushing Dickinson's ambiguity in lines ten and eleven into a more defined context. Altogether, Simon's poem overwhelmingly suggests a setting of enforced domesticity - an impression rammed home in the last line, where Dickinson's milder (at least superficially) 'For whom I must decline?', is translated by the much stronger 'Qui me force à les décliner?' (2;8). The use of 'forcer' again suggests a physical violence.

Once the dominance of the reading of 'II' is established, the author's preface seems to support it. Although Simon states that '[Dickinson] se condamna . . . à une semi-reclusion dans la maison familiale', he adds: 'Emily laissa voir d'abord quelque impatience, puis sembla s'accoutumer' - quite as if her reclusion had little to do with her own decision.

A final point to be made regarding Simon's translation is that the irony, if present, is weakly so. The lines, longer than Dickinson's, as we have discussed, mitigate the necessary sharp delivery. In addition, there is no one point where irony might be seen to be introduced: the mirroring effect of Dickinson's fifth line is not present - in fact, there is no alliteration at all in Simon's fifth line. Furthermore, the wit of the final rhetorical question in the original, also key to the irony, is not present in Simon's poem. His final two lines, 'Mais ces invites, savez-vous/Qui me force à les décliner?' (2;7-8) do not carry sufficient alliteration to suggest sarcasm. In addition, the immediacy of the verb, 'forcer', leaves little distance for the speaker to have acquired sarcastic tone, which leaves only the question mark to carry the burden of any potential irony.

Conclusion

Although Jean Simon's collection of Dickinson's poems was not the first to appear in the French language, it was the first to be published in France, and as such, must elicit both criticism and praise. Criticism, because, as Berman points out, a 'first' translation often manifests 'l'impact des "normes"', but also an element of praise, because, as Derrida, whom Berman cites, puts it, one must acknowledge 'une immense dette et rendre hommage à ceux qui ont pris la responsabilité ou le risque de traduire'.²⁵ We may safely assume from Simon's bibliography that he was aware of the earlier, less significant works of translation, but, equally, he was translating for, and thus critically exposed to, a much wider public, and his collection thus carries the responsibility of representing 'à la fois introduction et traduction', as Berman has it.²⁶ Certainly, Simon's dismissal of some American biographies, his assured knowledge of 'ce dont nous sommes sûrs', and his methods of keeping the unruly Dickinson under

²⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Schibboleth, pour Paul Celan* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), pp. 115-116, cited by Berman, *PUC*, p. 50.

²⁶ *PUC*, p. 84.

control would indicate that he felt himself responsible for the poet's debut entrance, firmly guiding her on his arm. At the same time, however, Simon's role as patron was not at once apparent: superficially - and here again the collection is representative of its time - both translator and his approach are remarkable by their obliquity.

'Toute "première traduction" appelle une retraduction', states Berman, and in this instance, as we observed in the chapter on Dickinson's French reception, retranslations of Dickinson began in the year following Simon's introduction, and have flowed thick and fast ever since. By the same token, our criticism of Simon, in its role as first translation, must be limited: again as Berman points out, analysis of a work is always more fruitful when studied alongside others.²⁷

It is true that we observed certain 'norms' at play in Simon's translation, although it is hard to quantify the part that the learned conventions of the translator's particular profession played in his approach to Dickinson. Those elements which pertain both to mid-century translation practice and also wider, literary norms, are the attempts to render Dickinson's syntax more coherent, her complexities less ambiguous, her oddnesses, less odd.

Viewed from the twenty-first century's standpoint, then, both Simon's introduction, and, on occasion, as we saw, his translations, push the critic to interpret his approach as patronising, perhaps even sexist. Yet we should remember that if Simon took the (now seemingly) extreme measure of suppressing something as vital to one of Dickinson's poems as the subject pronoun, then it was presumably because he felt his culture would not accept Dickinson 'raw', as it were. No doubt for similar reasons, Simon composed his translations in traditional form, implicitly drawing comparisons between Dickinson and the work of earlier French poets, primarily Baudelaire.

Finally, our analysis of Simon's translation cast up several aspects of Dickinson's style which at this point in the century remained hidden from the French, monolingual reader. The stylistic elements of compression, ambiguity, rhythm, and rhyme are all aspects of the American poet's work which will be addressed in different ways by the translators discussed in subsequent chapters.

²⁷ PUC, p. 84.

Chapter Six : After the Professor, the Poet

Alain Bosquet

Twentieth-Century Anxiety and Traditional Form

Writing in 1967, this is how Alain Bosquet looked back on the nature of post-Liberation French poetry:

La poésie “engagée” . . . s’épuisait alors dans les derniers mots d’ordre politiques. Deux tendances se dégageaient . . . D’un côté, autour d’Yves Bonnefoy et d’André Du Bouchet, des auteurs plus soucieux de perfection formelle que d’inventer un nouveau langage . . . D’un autre côté . . . des poètes tenaient à proclamer bien haut leurs angoisses d’hommes menacés par la condition atomique.¹

It was during the fifties decade that Bosquet published his important collection of one hundred Dickinson poems in French translation.² While Jean Simon was an academic, Bosquet was primarily a poet, and in determining his particular ‘projet de traduction’, we are in a position to look at the work he produced around the time of the Dickinson translation.

One need only look at some of the titles of Bosquet’s post-Liberation work, to know whether he was a poet more concerned with ‘une perfection formelle’ than with the invention of ‘un nouveau langage’. Titles such as *A la*

¹ Article by Alain Bosquet in *Le Monde*, April 27, 1967, cited in *Histoire de la littérature de langue française des années 1930 aux années 1980*, ed by Pierre de Boisdeffre (Paris: Plon, 1985), vol. 2, ‘Poésie, Idées’, pp. 249-50.

² *Emily Dickinson: présentation par Alain Bosquet, choix de textes, bibliographie, portraits, fac-similés* (Paris: Seghers, ‘Poètes d’aujourd’hui’, no. 55, 1957).

mémoire de ma planète, (1948), *Langue morte*, (1951), and *Quel royaume oublié?* (1955), do not suggest a primary concern with formal perfection.³

On closer examination of a couple of poems from these collections, we see that as the titles suggest, Bosquet's work seems to focus on the kind of post-war twentieth-century anxiety he describes. This is the first part of the title poem's first stanza, taken from *Quel royaume oublié*:

Ici naquit le rire. Ici naquit
la parole de l'arbre. Ici naquit
le geste du silex. Ici nacquit
le doute minéral, puis le mensonge
qui dort dans l'intestin de la montagne.

The verse is clearly not just post-war, but post-'crise de vers'. Traditional themes and end-rhyme are absent: all lines run freely over line-endings, and (the first line excepted) there are no initial capital letters. But there is no question of whether Bosquet intended to compose prose or verse: using anaphora, the three simple statements comprising the poem's first two and a half lines all begin with the nervous, but ultimately lifeless and ironic, repetitions of 'Ici naquit', and the same words also drum out the endings of the first three lines. The deadening effect of the repetition is stressed by the contrast between the shortness and simplicity of the sentences in which it occurs, and the much longer final sentence, which runs across the last two and a half lines, and whose rhythm is quickened and strengthened by the caesura in the middle line, and the repetitions of the consonants 'd' and 'm'. In sum, as far as this brief glimpse allows, we see that Bosquet's writing combines the freedom of post-'crise' composition with poetry's more traditional qualities of alliteration, assonance, and a strong rhythm; it is also of note that the poet employs a regular, ten-syllable line.

Quel royaume oublié, from which the lines were taken, was published in 1955, two years earlier than Bosquet's translation of Emily Dickinson for the 'Poètes d'aujourd'hui' series. Given Bosquet's despair with the world as it was in his lifetime (he was born in 1919), and given his own definition of post-war poetic tendencies, one might perhaps have expected him to turn progressively

³ In this respect, by his own definition, Bosquet seems to fall into line with American poetry, which he describes as having 'ni la variété, ni la perfection formelle . . . de la poésie française'. (*Anthologie de la poésie américaine des origines à nos jours*, ed by Alain Bosquet (Paris: Stock, 1956), introduction, p. 10.)

away from traditional form, but in 1957, the same year that the Dickinson appeared, he published *Premier Testament*, a lengthy and pessimistic reflection on the state of the world, yet one composed entirely in quatrains of twelve-syllable lines, with an abab rhyme scheme. Charles le Quintrec, who in 1964 published *Alain Bosquet: Choix de textes*, describes *Premier Testament* as ‘. . . un douloureux et grinçant poème en alexandrins’.⁴ Quintrec also informs us that Bosquet was ill at the time of writing, and quotes the poet himself, who describes his recourse to the alexandrine form in terms of a patient turning to the comfort of authority:

Avant d’écrire cet ouvrage, j’avais été malade à plusieurs reprises . . . Peut-être est-ce la raison de mon retour à ce moule vétuste: l’alexandrin. . . En tous cas, j’ai éprouvé le besoin d’une protection sûre : celle des grands hommes d’hier . . . poètes en rimes et en césures . . .⁵

Bosquet goes on to speak more generally of his use of traditional form, and, notably, again employs a metaphor of physical sustenance, revealing his own perception (or fear) that without the aid of proven support, his poetry is in danger of collapse:

Il est des jours où il me suffit de me confesser; à ces moments-là, j’écris en rimes, avec l’aide de mes copains Ronsard, Musset, Verlaine et Aragon: solidarité réactionnaire, mutuelle d’assurance sur la survie d’un langage. Au contraire, dans mes instants les plus libres, j’écris sans ces béquilles, et je suis obligé d’inventer une écriture à moi; c’est moins joli et plus douloureux.⁶

Thus, certainly as far as his own work was concerned, at this mid-point in the century, Bosquet felt able to take up or leave aside the traditional forms as and when he felt the need.⁷

⁴ *Alain Bosquet: présentation par Charles le Quintrec* (Paris: Seghers, ‘Poètes d’aujourd’hui’, no. 117, 1964), p. 47.

⁵ Quintrec, *Alain Bosquet*, p. 51.

⁶ Quintrec, *Alain Bosquet*, introduction by Alain Bosquet, ‘Faute de portrait’, April 1964, p. 10.

⁷ Thirty years later, with his *Sonnets pour une fin de siècle*, Bosquet employed a similar mix of traditional and free-verse form, and produced a kind of ‘liberated’ sonnet form: fourteen lines of alexandrines, divided into quatrains and tercets, combined with frequent enjambement (even running across stanzas), and again, with no end-rhyme. Bosquet opens his introduction to *Sonnets* by saying that ‘Il est temps de mettre Pégase sur pneus, un radar entre les ailes’, but he again pours twentieth-century pessimism and preoccupation with ‘le réel’ into a mould over four hundred years old. The reason he gives is the same as he cited in the fifties: ‘Il me fallait la certitude un peu facile du réceptacle’. Bosquet, *Sonnets pour une fin de siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), pp. 5-6.

Twentieth-Century Dispersion?

Alain Bosquet was born Anatole Bisk in Odessa in 1919; he died in Paris in 1998, and in his own words, was '[u]n homme de partout et de nulle part . . .'⁸ He lived in several countries, including Belgium, France, and the United States, where he enrolled in the American army and fought alongside the allies during the Second World War. He was a prolific novelist, poet, and translator, who throughout his life published critical and journalistic articles, and broadcast on radio and television. In 2001, the Bibliothèque Nationale lists the total number of novels, collections of poetry, and works of criticism and translation published by Bosquet, as 187; in the 1964 preface to Quintrec's work, Bosquet says, perhaps with some accuracy, 'Je ne suis pas compartimenté: je suis dispersé'. He continues:

Je produis des articles, comme le lapin que je suis. Une quantité énorme. . . Je viens de remettre un article à *Combat*: c'est le 913e. Je viens de remettre un article au *Monde*: ce doit être le 80e. J'en termine un pour *la Nouvelle Revue française*, le 50e. Dans deux jours j'en devrai un à *La Revue de Paris*, à *Plaisir de France*, aux *Nouvelles littéraires*. J'ai publié neuf mille pages de chroniques en l'espace de douze ans . . .⁹

Pierre de Boisdeffre has commented that Bosquet was indeed an 'écrivain un peu trop abondant', but that 'avant tout', he was a poet. 'La liste de ses recueils traduit ses diverses inspirations', says de Boisdeffre. As translator, Bosquet produced several poetry anthologies, including *Les Plus Beaux Poèmes du monde*, published in 1979, in which, according to another critic, 'il navigue avec brio dans des eaux, qui, semble-t-il, lui sont familières: Italie, Angleterre, Allemagne, U.R.S.S., Chine, États-Unis'.¹⁰ His first translation of an English-language poet appeared in 1956, *Le Peuple, Oui*, a collection by the American poet, Carl Sandburg, published in the Seghers 'Autour du Monde' series. The same year, Bosquet published his *Anthologie de la poésie américaine des origines à nos jours*, in which his first translations of Emily Dickinson are included (sixteen poems), and to which we will later return.¹¹ The 1957 volume devoted

⁸ Quintrec, *Alain Bosquet*, introduction by Bosquet, p. 5.

⁹ Quintrec, *Alain Bosquet*, p. 7.

¹⁰ *Dictionnaire des littératures de langue française*, ed by J.-P. de Beaumarchais, Daniel Couty, Alain Rey, vol. 'A-F', article on Bosquet by J. Garcin (Paris: Bordas, 1984), p. 300.

¹¹ *Anthologie de la poésie américaine des origines à nos jours*, ed by Alain Bosquet (Paris: Stock, 1956).

purely to Dickinson, *Emily Dickinson*, was followed two years later by a study and translation of Whitman. In 1980, he published a collection of Lawrence Durrell's poems also in French translation, and in the same decade, the Dickinson was re-issued by Belfond with the new title, *Les Cent Plus Belles Pages de Emily Dickinson* (1986).

It is clear that the period in which Bosquet translated Dickinson was an enormously active time, even by his own standards. In the four-year period between 1953 and 1957, he published two major collections of his own poetry, one novel, several anthologies, several book-length essays on other writers, four works in the series, 'Les poèmes de l'année' (Pierre Seghers), four major works of translation, and various other pieces of writing. Describing the years covering almost the same period (1954-1958) Quintrec's 'Chronology' of Bosquet gives: 'Chroniqueur de poésie à *La Table Ronde*, à *La Revue de Paris*, à la R.T.F. Écrit dans plusieurs revues et élargit son action à *Combat*. Se marie'.

A Popular Presentation

Bosquet's introduction to Dickinson in 1957 represented the third collection of her poems in translation to be published in France.¹² The 'Poètes d'aujourd'hui' series, published by Pierre Seghers, became well known in the twentieth century for providing informative, accessible, introductory volumes to a poet and his or her work. The majority of poets featured are French, but some foreign authors occasionally appear: Whitman was presented early on in the series (no. 9), as were Milosz, Lewis Carroll, Neruda and Poe (all earlier than Dickinson (no. 55)). That an author has been selected for inclusion, marks a step towards his or her integration into French literary culture; (in terms of Dickinson's reputation, it is also of note that she was the first woman to be featured in the series).

There are several features of the volume's presentation designed to attract a general audience. The paper-back and pocket-size format, and the well-known (touched-up) daguerreotype of the poet on the front cover all place

¹² As discussed more fully in the Introduction, in addition to Jean's Simon's 1954 collection, Pierre Messiaen published 146 poems in translation, with a biographical and critical introduction, the year before Bosquet: *Emily Dickinson, poèmes choisis*, trans. by Pierre Messiaen (Paris: Aubier, Éditions Montaigne, 1956).

this work in a popular (poetry) market-place. The text is interspersed with photographs featuring different aspects of Dickinson's life: family members, friends, the family homestead, etc., and facsimiles of the original front covers of the first editions of the *Poems* (1890), and the *Letters* (1894) are printed within the book's pages. Similarly, although the typeface is small, and the introduction lengthy (fifty pages compared to Simon's three), the text is broken up by short, titled chapters, and sections. (A chapter entitled 'Une adolescence banale', is divided into the sub-sections, 'Amherst, petite ville de province', 'La maison paternelle', 'Le père', etc.) In all, this is clearly a work which aims to introduce Emily Dickinson to the interested, general reader, rather than to an academic audience.

Preceding the introduction, Bosquet gives a four-page chronology, and after it, some thirty or forty 'Réflexions, aphorismes et images, en prose et en vers'; then follow one hundred of Dickinson's poems, ten of her letters, and finally, a short bibliography ('Ouvrages à consulter'), comprising three sections: 'L'Oeuvre d'Emily Dickinson', 'Études critiques', and 'Traductions françaises'. The poems are printed in English and French, with facing texts; the aphorisms and letters are given in French only.

The presentation of this volume was probably largely dictated by the publishers, and no doubt the popular tone of the introduction was also dictated by editorial aims. This is perhaps one reason why, despite the large number of translated poems offered, Bosquet, like Simon, makes very little comment on the problems of translation, or his approach to the art. The critic's understanding of the 'projet de traduction' must therefore rest on information provided - however obliquely - by Bosquet's introduction, by other paratextual material, such as the works mentioned previously (the anthology of American poetry already mentioned gives more information regarding translation), and by the poems themselves: their selection, and the ways in which their particular translation indicate a certain relationship with the original text.

Dickinson's Modernity is Acknowledged . . .

Both Bosquet's war activities and his own work demonstrate the author's political preoccupations, and it is not surprising to observe the way he initially chooses to present Dickinson. Opening his introduction, Bosquet establishes a

link between the secluded activities of the young poet in 1862, (then aged 32), and one of the bloodier moments in the War of Succession. In the same year that Dickinson acted on her need to know if her “vers [étaient] vivants”, and first wrote to Higginson, ‘[l]a jeune République connaît sa crise de croissance la plus meurtrière’. Thus 1862 marked both ‘un tournant dans la guerre’ for the country, and a ‘prise de conscience’ for the poet Dickinson - even if it was ultimately thwarted by lack of proper publication.¹³

This accessible, even topical opening (to the extent that all readers of this work, ‘engagés’ or not, would have had the more recent war still in mind), enables Bosquet to expand on a favourite theme: broadly, that revolutions in poetry never (visibly) chime with political change.¹⁴ Thus, he says, despite the two previous ‘alertes sérieuses’ experienced by American poetry with Poe and Whitman, Emily Dickinson also had little effect in her time: ‘[o]n continue, prudemment, à suivre les exemples d’une poésie provinciale et moraliste’ (p.15). Bosquet’s opinions are very clear, here: the extent of his admiration for the innovations made by Poe (‘pour la première fois le poème ne se contentait pas d’une dialectique et d’une éthique admises . . . il usait d’un langage différent’) and Whitman (‘il a créé un genre nouveau: le poème en vers libre’) is only balanced by a regret bordering on disgust, that the American public did not properly acknowledge either in their time. Thus Whitman’s idiosyncrasies, (‘son vocabulaire de ruisseau, ses impropriétés de termes, . . . sa grammaire défectueuse’), were seen as ‘des excès’, rather than for what, in Bosquet’s view, they were: ‘sa grandeur’ (pp.14-15).

Bosquet gives several examples of the kind of poetry which *was* common currency in Dickinson’s time, the stuff of ‘[l]a masse des “rimeurs”’, as he calls them, such as ‘ce parfait gentleman’, Oliver Wendell Holmes, or ‘le poète des familles bien pensantes’, John Greenleaf Whittier. In all, he has little respect for ‘ces poètes abondants et faciles du dix-neuvième siècle’ (pp. 17-18).

¹³ Bosquet, *Emily Dickinson*, introduction, p.13. Further references to the introduction are given after quotations in the text.

¹⁴ In the ‘Avant-propos’ to Bosquet’s *La Poésie française depuis 1950: une anthologie* (Éditions de la Différence, 1980), the author again makes the point that political events have no effect on poetry. After the changes in verseform made by Baudelaire and Rimbaud, it was not until the fifties when, ‘en corollaire de l’existentialisme et de concert avec l’avènement du nouveau roman . . . notre poésie franchit une étape capitale . . . elle s’interroge sur le langage, de son essence à son emploi’ (p. 8).

Neither, Bosquet assures us, (although he does not give any supporting reference) did Emily Dickinson particularly appreciate ‘les vers de mirliton’. ‘Dans sa solitude’, he says, ‘elle écrit avec l’instinct des “voyants”’: celui de Thérèse d’Avila, encore que Dieu ne soit pas à ses yeux un ami sans défaillance; celui de Rimbaud aussi, encore qu’elle n’ait pas appris comment l’on aligne les rimes’ (p.19). Here, Bosquet would seem to be indicating that Dickinson’s use of rhyme was haphazard; elsewhere, he informs us (again without reference) that ‘elle ne sait ce que signifie ce labeur minutieux et réglé’, which carries similar implications. He ultimately concludes that the delays in Dickinson’s publication were probably felicitous:

[I]l vaut mieux que les écrits qui correspondent le plus à la sensibilité poétique du vingtième siècle aient vu le jour après Rimbaud, après Mallarmé . . . [i]ls n’en sont que plus actuels; il faudrait dire: plus durables, plus universels’ (p.50).

. . . But Modern Scholarship is Ignored

In his ‘Ouvrages à consulter’, Bosquet lists three Dickinson English-language poetry collections in the following manner: ‘*Poems by Emily Dickinson*, edited by Martha Dickinson Bianchi, 1946¹⁵, *Bolts of Melody*, edited by Millicent Todd Bingham, 1945, and *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, 1955’. Although Thomas Johnson’s name is not given, it is obvious that the last reference is to the three-volume variorum edition; Bosquet notes, ‘C’est l’édition la plus complète des poèmes, à ce jour’. However, it is clear both from the introduction and from the poems themselves, that if Bosquet consulted Johnson’s work, he did not choose to include any of the editor’s changes to earlier publications; Bosquet’s one hundred poems are presented as printed in *Bolts of Melody* (about 40% of the poems) and the 1946 *Poems* (approximately 60%).

The purpose of the variorum edition, was, as Johnson puts it, ‘. . . to establish an accurate text of the poems and to give them as far as possible a chronology’;¹⁶ the typographical differences between his 1955 edition, and the two editions with which Bosquet worked, are marked, and it is of some interest

¹⁵ This edition is the ninth printing of the second edition of Little, Brown, and Company’s 1930 *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (first printing of the second edition in 1937), ed by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson. With this edition, and in subsequent editions, the title was changed to *Poems by Emily Dickinson* (Joel Myerson, *Emily Dickinson: A Descriptive Bibliography* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1984, p. 98.))

to compare the way in which Johnson presented one of Dickinson's poems, with the way in which it appeared in the 1946 *Poems* used by Bosquet. This short poem, (thought by Franklin to have been written 'about early 1861' - a change from Johnson's 1860 dating), appeared as follows in the 1946 edition:

If I shouldn't be alive
When the robins come,
Give the one in red cravat
A memorial crumb.

If I couldn't thank you,
Being just asleep,
You will know I'm trying
With my granite lip!

and as follows in the variorum edition of 1955:

If I should'nt be alive
When the Robins come,
Give the one in Red Cravat,
A Memorial crumb.

If I could'nt thank you,
Being fast asleep,
You will know I'm trying
With my Granite lip!
(J182)

A discussion of the differences between the two publications would not be useful here, but it is significant that despite the fact that the Johnson appeared two years before his own translation of Dickinson, Bosquet chose to present the earlier texts; moreover, in his introduction, he dismisses the editions produced by Todd, Bingham, and Bianchi, as 'un travail d'amateurs' (p.51), which makes his decision yet more curious. At the limit, Bosquet's choices might be interpreted as an indifference towards Dickinson's form.¹⁷

It is in the part of Bosquet's introduction entitled 'L'Oeuvre', that the author most clearly voices his views on Dickinson's poetry. Perhaps on account of his audience, this section is considerably shorter than the biographical section.

¹⁶ Johnson, 'Notes on the Present Text', vol. I, p. lxi.

¹⁷ In fact, although this particular poem appears with a closing exclamation mark in the 1946 text, Bosquet's version prints the last line without it, which constitutes a further minor discrepancy between his and Dickinson's original text, and perhaps suggests that Bosquet took that particular poem from Jean Simon's earlier work of translation, which Bosquet cites, and where the poem also appears without exclamation mark.

The Translator Takes a Forceful Line

Bosquet places Dickinson in a category of prolific, unpublished poets, 'qui . . . n'ont pu supprimer de leur oeuvre les pages sans intérêt'. In his opinion, 'Emily a laissé un grand nombre de poèmes descriptifs, obscurs ou sans relief'; he thinks there are approximately two hundred poems 'qui méritent d'être lus', and, of those, approximately one hundred and thirty, 'd'une originalité et d'une profondeur indéniables'. Furthermore, (and in one of the author's few comments on the translation of the poems in this work), he adds that of those, 'seuls vingt-cinq ou trente ne sont pas traduisibles, contrairement à l'opinion courante' (pp.54-56). Although Bosquet does not expand on this remark, an earlier comment suggests that it is the quality of 'obscurity', in these poems (none of which he specifies) which renders them, in his view, untranslatable.

Bosquet sees Dickinson's vocabulary as of an 'originalité foncière'; he gives a somewhat caricatural portrait of Dickinson pouncing on 'les mots étranges de son dictionnaire' and, in a 'vraie frénésie', pummelling the word for its potential. According to Bosquet, Dickinson rejects 'l'explication rationnelle' of certain words, to a point where, 'il serait vain pour Emily comme pour autrui, de vouloir le préciser', and further, to the point where '*elle accepte ce risque suprême: elle renonce à comprendre ce qu'elle écrit*' (it is Bosquet who moves into italics). This dramatic statement might well hold implications for the task of translation, but if Bosquet sensed that, he did not take the matter further, saying only that endeavours to understand her more difficult passages have 'fort mal réussi[s] à ses exégètes, et tout aussi mal à ses traducteurs français' (p.53).

In fact, the whole question of how Dickinson's language, which Bosquet describes as, 'plus qu'original ou particulier . . . un langage privé', might be handled by the translator is left begging, although we understand that it does not pose too much of a problem to Bosquet: 'Le processus de pensée peut être suivi, sans trop de peine' (p.53).

Given the emphasis Bosquet places on Dickinson's unusual vocabulary, his subsequent declaration is slightly contradictory: 'Emily est avant tout un poète pour qui ne compte que *le jeu des concepts* . . .'. He describes the typical Dickinson composition as opening with an '. . . image formelle, ou une sentence', then losing its 'éléments concrets' to finish 'comme une sorte de morale sans

précepte bien défini . . .’ (p.55). Whereas Simon simply suggested Baudelaire as familiar point of reference for the reader, Bosquet names him in order to illustrate how Dickinson’s poetry moves quickly away from the use of precise definition:

[l]es objets tangibles - abeilles, fleurs, jardin, tout un vocabulaire caractéristique du romantisme, au seuil des premières “correspondances”, au sens baudelairien - ne servent . . . qu’à mieux amener cette équivoque finale . . . (p.55).

He then describes Dickinson’s ‘method’ in terms which, again, might be helpful in determining his approach to the project of translation, and for that reason, I give the quote in full:

Jongler avec les idées abstraites . . . c’est écrire en dehors - et au-dessus, peut-on risquer de dire - d’une langue donnée, c’est ne point s’occuper d’une syntaxe inutile, c’est se désintéresser d’une correction tout extérieure, c’est trouver une écriture éminemment universelle qui ne s’arrête pas aux combinaisons fortuites des termes employés, c’est enfin accéder à une sensibilité que l’on n’a pas le droit de qualifier d’américaine, d’anglaise ou de française, c’est être transmissible, paraphrasable, *on ne peut plus traduisible* (pp.55-56). (Bosquet’s italics.)

If we choose to take Bosquet literally, we can conclude that if Dickinson’s work is ‘paraphrasable’, it will be primarily the ‘meaning’ that will count in the translation. Certainly, in saying that Dickinson sees syntax as ‘inutile’, and ‘correction tout extérieure’ as unimportant, he is at the same time dismissing Dickinson’s formal style, and also leaving the way clear for the translator to adopt a similar set of ‘values’. He later describes Dickinson’s writing as careless: ‘[l]’écriture est capricieuse, et souvent négligente’, and once more takes the opportunity to dismiss both her syntax and her punctuation: ‘La ponctuation, rudimentaire chez Emily, est conforme à la logique de la syntaxe: . . .’. He concludes by saying that ‘. . . c’est assez dire qu’il convient de l’accepter avec prudence’ (p.52), which again leaves his choices as translator open, and also unclear. On another level, it is again striking that these comments were made two years after Johnson’s edition appeared, whose entire aim was at last to treat Dickinson’s ‘negligence’ with full seriousness. This rather dismissive attitude on Bosquet’s behalf seems to border on the patronising, an impression only reinforced by the familiar way in which he refers to Dickinson as ‘Emily’.

It is possible, too, that in describing Dickinson’s ‘sensibilité’ as universal,

the translator is dismissing the 'national' quality of the poetry. Certainly, the 'universality' of her work has apparently rendered the poetry eminently 'traduisible', in Bosquet's view. (If at any moment the author anticipates that the reader might wonder about the relationship between that and the twenty-five or thirty poems he finds 'intraduisibles', he does not seek to clarify the seeming contradiction.)

Finally, as with Bosquet's conflicting remarks on the degree of Dickinson's 'traduisibilité', his negative comments on the poet's syntax and punctuation seem at odds with other, later statements about Dickinson's form, which are delivered in far more enthusiastic terms: Dickinson 'est la première à avoir utilisé le vers libre et le poème sans ponctuation'. He also refers again to the poet's lack of form, but this time with jubilation: 'des poèmes libres de toute contrainte'. He also wonders: 'Emily distingue-t-elle le "poème" de la "prose"?', and concludes, 'Rien n'est moins sûr.'. The reader, or critic, is again left in need of clarification, and another statement, that, 'Emily admet, avec Higginson, que la forme devrait être correcte', does not make Bosquet's 'projet de traduction' any more coherent (p.52). It is clear that the poetry itself must carry particular responsibility in determining the translator's approach to his task.

It is, in fact, quite difficult to sum up Bosquet's introduction. The somewhat contradictory nature of the section on Dickinson's work would not please scholars, but given that the introduction is clearly intended for a general audience, it might be argued that that is irrelevant. On the whole, Bosquet provides a highly readable piece of writing, which no doubt fulfilled its aim of interesting the non-academic reader in a little-known poet. It seems likely that Bosquet's fragmented life to a degree accounts for the fragmented nature of this introductory essay.¹⁸

¹⁸ It is apparent, from reading Bosquet's introduction to the 1956 *Anthologie*, and also his 1961 *Verbe et vertige: situations de la poésie* (Paris: Hachette), that he repeats sections of his writing from one work to another (for example, the notion of the universal, translatable quality of post-war poetry is repeated and expanded on in *Verbe et vertige*), and that statements found in the *Anthologie* (where, for example, Bosquet refers to Dickinson as 'une des plus grandes poétesses de tous les temps' (p.10)) should perhaps also have found a place in the later work. The *Anthologie* was no doubt written first, and Bosquet takes more time to explain his ideas on translation there; however, he does not repeat them in the work specifically on Dickinson.

Translating Against Predecessors?

Turning fully now to the translations, we will start by looking more closely at the poem already mentioned in the preceding chapter, and cited above. While my purpose is not to give a full comparative analysis of the different translation approaches of Simon and Bosquet, it is nevertheless interesting to note one or two examples of their distinguishing styles.

If I shouldn't be alive	Si au retour des rouges-gorges
When the robins come,	Je n'étais plus en vie,
Give the one in red cravat	Au cravaté de rouge donne
A memorial crumb.	La miette commémorative.

If I couldn't thank you,	Si à peine endormie
Being just asleep,	Je ne pouvais dire merci,
You will know I'm trying	Tu sauras que j'essaie
With my granite lip.	De ma lèvre en granit. ¹⁹

Here, for example, we may observe how differently the translators deal with Dickinson's compressed, sometimes colloquial lines: ('If I shouldn't be alive' (l.1); 'If I couldn't thank you' (l.5); 'You will know I'm trying' (l.7)). We recall that Simon considerably lengthened two of these lines: 'Au cas où je ne vivrais plus' (l.1), 'Vous saurez du moins que j'essaie' (l.7). Bosquet, on the other hand, comes much closer to the concise, colloquial style of the original, and the contrast between the two translations is marked: Bosquet's first two lines, 'Si au retour des rouges-gorges/Je n'étais plus en vie' come across much more rhythmically, particularly by dint of the shorter second line, when compared with Simon's two rather laborious, octosyllabic lines: 'Au cas où je ne vivrais plus/Quand reviendront les rouges-gorges'. Similarly, whereas Simon corrects and elaborates Dickinson's syntax in the second stanza's third line ('Vous saurez du moins que j'essaie' for 'You will know I'm trying'), Bosquet manages a similarly succinct line to Dickinson's: 'Tu sauras que j'essaie' (both lines have six syllables). Lastly, in a particularly successful line, Bosquet renders Dickinson's compressed 'Give the one in red cravat' (l.3) as 'Au cravaté de rouge donne', whereas Simon again elaborates the line: 'Donnez de ma part au

¹⁹ 'If I shouldn't be alive', Bosquet, p. 116.

reader, but the lines wander badly from the original, and the introduction of the curious 'lengthy essences' seems needlessly confusing. We note that Bosquet's poem has returned the two lines to something far nearer the original, both visually and semantically.

These few examples might also suggest that Bosquet was composing as much against Professor Simon's translation, as he was for the original - an idea which seems to find support in a remark Bosquet makes in the *Anthologie de la poesie americaine*: in the introduction, he states that 'le traducteur . . . ne peut pas, en principe, accepter le point de vue des professeurs pour qui la fidélité littérale doit être préservée à tout prix'.²³

Translation that Re-Creates

Returning more fully to Bosquet's translation of 'If I shouldn't be alive', let us firstly note that as with many of Dickinson's poems, the principal effects that the original impresses on the reader are those of surprise, and a sense of strangeness. As Bosquet points out when speaking of Dickinson's poetry in general, in this poem the simple subject matter contrasts with the abstract nature of one of the poet's many explorations of death: it is this contrast in tone, together with the poem's particular rhythm and rhyme, which helps produce the immediately recognisable voice - one that a translation would ideally hope to catch.²⁴ We will in consequence look primarily at these three elements.

Partly because of their opening positions in the two stanzas, and their anaphoric quality, the first and fifth lines mentioned above ('If I shouldn't be alive' (l.1), 'If I couldn't thank you' (l.5)), carry particular force. The lines act in

²³ Bosquet, *Anthologie*, introduction, p. 35.

²⁴ In fact, it is incorrect to state in unqualified manner that her abstract speculations 'contrast' with the everyday items of robins, crumbs, and (the New England stone), granite. For to Dickinson, although human contact occasionally provoked extreme emotional reaction (the first time she met Higginson, described by Higginson himself, is possibly the most famous instance), death, whose unknown elements appealingly combine with an ability to behave predictably, as it were, presented an ideal subject for repeated enquiries of detached, almost scientific nature. Seen this way, it is not Dickinson, but the reader who, not instinctively placing the act of giving a crumb to a bird on the same emotional level as endeavouring to communicate once buried, receives the poem with a certain sense of surprise, and possibly unease, that such an awful moment as death can be reduced, some might feel, to such a trivial level. It is certainly the case that whatever the particular type of psychological reaction, reactions there are: there is no doubt that the emotion evoked by the poem forces the reader to read with a heightened sense of awareness.

parallel to introduce the two hypothetical situations being suggested by the speaker. Their colloquial quality is also important to the overall character of the poem: the informality, which is stressed by the linking of the abbreviation with the old-fashioned conditional, rather than present, tense, immediately conveys to the reader the idea that *someone is speaking, therefore someone is listening*. That this initial conviction be established is vital to the effect of the rest of the poem, where - again as frequently seen in Dickinson's poetry - both speaker and 'listener', (who here reappears in the other colloquial line, line seven, 'You will know I'm trying'), finally fail to suggest proper human identity: by the end of the poem we are not convinced that this was human dialogue at all. There is something peculiar about the way the speaker's casual address transforms so quickly into a detached, slightly ghoulish, meditation on the occasion of his or her death. These are not ideas normally tossed around in the casual chat that the stanzas' first lines lead us to expect. In this way, the colloquial in this poem serves the same purpose as that to be (subsequently) observed in the rhythm and end-rhyme: the banal points up the strange.

Perhaps because Bosquet felt Dickinson's colloquialness in these lines to be impossible to replicate in the French, (and perhaps partly because his lines are already more concise than Simon's), Bosquet's translation does not attempt to reproduce it ('Je n'étais plus en vie'; 'Je ne pouvais dire merci'); neither does the poet accord importance to the parallel structure of the two stanzas' opening lines, aside from the repeated initial word, 'Si'. Rather than give opening priority to the speaker, and the subject of his/her eventual death, Bosquet begins his poem with reference to the moment when the robins return, 'Si au retour des rouges-gorges,'. Placed in a secondary position on the second line, the importance of the reference to the speaker's death is naturally diminished. Similarly, he reverses the order of Dickinson's lines in the second stanza. In all, the impact created as a result of Dickinson's opening colloquial anaphora, and the subsequent strangeness they produce in the poem, is mitigated, and changed.

There are several further points to be made regarding Bosquet's translation. We have already observed that his line lengths are considerably shorter than those of Simon, and even occasionally coincide with those of Dickinson. Also, whereas Simon renders Dickinson's even 7,5,7,5 and 6,5,6,5 syllable stanzas as octosyllabic lines throughout, Bosquet seems initially to go

some way towards replicating the alternating line lengths of the original. His first three lines are striking by their similarity: 8,6,8, (as opposed to 7,5,7), but the regularity is lost in the stanza's fourth and closing line - again eight syllables. In the second stanza the alternating count resumes, this time starting with the shorter line: (6,8,6), and again, the final line slightly interrupts the regularity (seven syllables).

As with many of Dickinson's poems, rhyme is used here to reinforce or deny the regularity of the rhythm, and in doing so, helps to produce the final dramatic effect. (Rhyme should be considered a significant stylistic element in Dickinson's poetry. An important critic of Dickinson's language, Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, states that rhyme 'has its place in [Dickinson's] form of verbal art, and is thus by definition a "literary" feature'.²⁵ Seyersted also draws attention to the fact that it was probably Dickinson's first critic and editor, Colonel Higginson, who '... expressed criticism of the rhymes of the ... poems she sent ...'; emphasising the importance of rhyme in the poetry, Seyersted quotes from the third letter Dickinson wrote to Higginson, it is presumed in reply to his criticism - 'I ... could not drop the Bells whose jingling cooled my Tramp' - and reiterates that the line is commonly understood to indicate the importance of rhyme to the poet's verse. While I do not have the space here to provide a wider analysis of Dickinson's rhyme and its translations, I consider that the rhyme in 'If I shouldn't be alive', plays a key role in the poem's overall effect.)

The poem's first stanza displays a typical Dickinsonian rhyme scheme: abcb. The even rhythm set up by the alternating 7,5,7,5 syllable lines is strengthened by the full end-syllable rhyme of lines two and four ('come', and 'crumb'). Bosquet is unable to find, or perhaps does not choose to provide an exact equivalent, and although his corresponding 'vie' and 'tive' certainly hint at rhyme, the increased length and slight awkwardness of his stanza's fourth line, 'La miette commémorative', (eight syllables following six in the second line), finally obscures the suggestion.

In ways that we have seen, Dickinson's first stanza sets the reader's

²⁵ Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, *The Voice of the Poet: Aspects of Style in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 162; Dickinson citation taken from *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed by Thomas Johnson and Theodora Ward, 3 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), vol. 2, p. 408.

expectations of even rhythm and rhyme in place, and these initially appear to be maintained by the alternating 6,5,6,5 syllables of the (original's) second. The reader arrives at the poem's last syllable in anticipation of a closing word which rhymes (as in the first stanza) with the second line's end-syllable, 'asleep', and which (the reader expects) will provide the poem's final resolution. The discovery of the closing 'granite lip', and its contrast with the second line's 'asleep', shocks semantically, and thwarts the reader's expectations. Where she/he anticipates full rhyme, only near-rhyme is provided, (lip/'asleep'): the effect is that of having missed a step.

Bosquet's stanza does not read as dramatically. The translator does not attempt to repeat Dickinson's near-rhyme, but uses vocabulary in lines one and two which gives two fully rhyming end-syllables: 'endormie', 'merci', and then rhymes again in the fourth and final line, with 'granit'.²⁶ Together with the visually similar effect of the vowels in the third line's closing word, 'j'essaie', the lines produce a much smoother rhythm than experienced in the original. Rather than working *against* an established pattern, as we saw Dickinson do to great effect, Bosquet never fully establishes one, and the final effect of the second stanza is thus markedly less 'surprising' than the original. The comparative smoothness is reinforced by 'lèvre en granit', which carries less resonance than does Dickinson's 'granite lip'; perhaps the French language does not work in the translator's favour, here: the short rhyming Saxon monosyllables, 'it'/'lip', help produce an almost palpably heavy and sinister presence in 'Granite lip', against which the lighter vowel sounds of 'lèvre en granit' almost float on air.

Overall, Bosquet's poem has certainly succeeded in rendering the sense of Dickinson's poem, but in doing so he makes changes, as we have seen. The colloquial nature of Dickinson's lines is not reproduced, the order of lines is changed, and the translator veers away from the original in terms of both rhythm and rhyme. Although it is too early in our examination to come to any

²⁶ The French word is written with or without a final 'e'. If Bosquet has chosen to write 'granit', rather than 'granite', I think it is safe to assume that he did not intend the final 't' to be pronounced. Either way, there is perhaps a case to be made for the (clear) end-rhyme in Bosquet's second stanza actually *heightening* the semantic shock - precisely in the way that the almost ditty-like quality of the lines contrasts with the notion of a granite lip. Although I personally do not experience this effect, the rhyme might suggest a sweetness which would ultimately lead to the reader experiencing an even greater, semantic, shock, than with the original.

final conclusions regarding the translator's approach, we are nevertheless reminded of a remark Bosquet makes in the *Anthologie*. Discussing the translation of American poetry generally, he comments that, after Whitman, '[la poésie devient] plus superficielle, on peut lui demeurer fidèle sans attacher au seul rythme une importance exceptionnelle'. Also in that introduction, after chastising the 'professors' fidelity, Bosquet states: '[le traducteur] s'efforce bien plus de re-cr  er le po  me en fran  ais que d'en donner un d  calque rigide'. It seems that 'Si au retour des rouges-gorges' points Bosquet's translation approach in that direction.

The Losses and Gains of Free-Verse Translation

To further investigate this initial impression, we will examine how the translator handles another of Dickinson's poems, this time apparently composed in quite different form to 'If I shouldn't be alive'. Here the poet again reflects on the natural cycle, and once more alludes to one of Dickinson's preferred birds.

	When they come back, If blossoms do - I always feel a doubt If blossoms can be born again	Quand elles s'en reviennent, Si reviennent les fleurs - Toujours je me demande Si renaissent les fleurs
5	When once the art is out. When they begin, If robins may - I always had a fear I did not tell, it was their last	Quand tout leur art est ��puis��. Quand ils se mettent �� chanter Si le peuvent les rouges-gorges - Toujours j'ai craint De ne l'avoir point dit : l'ann��e derni��re,
10	Experiment last year. When it is May, If May return - Had nobody a pang Lest on a face so beautiful	Ce fut leur derni��re exp��rience. Quand c'est le mois de mai - Si mai revient - Personne donc n'a-t-il eu peur De ne pouvoir �� nouveau regarder
15	He might not look again? If I am there - One does not know What party one may be To-morrow, - but if I <i>am</i> there	Un visage si beau? Si je suis l�� - On ne sait pas Qui on peut ��tre Demain - eh bien, si je <i>suis</i> l��,
20	I take back all I say!	Tout cela que je dis, je le retire! ²⁷

The appearance of this poem proves to be somewhat misleading: although it is laid out as a continuous passage, a syllable count reveals a completely regular pattern of lines: 4,4,6,8,6, repeated four times. The count suggests four identical stanzas, the openings of which are further distinguished by the relative adverb, 'When', save for the last stanza, where the focus switches away from

²⁷ 'When they come back,' Bosquet, p. 140.

nature fully on to the speaker herself, and 'When' is replaced by the less-certain, 'If' ('I am there'). Once again in this poem, Dickinson's regular form serves to point up the idiosyncratic and possibly perplexing content.

Although the syllable count quickly reveals that any division into stanzas in Bosquet's poem is rhythmically, at any rate, false - 6,6,6,6,8; 7,8,4,10,9; 6,4,8,10,5; 4,4,5,8,10 - we nevertheless note one or two areas where the translator has seemingly attempted to create an impression of Dickinson's regular form. We remark that he translates the opening words of each of the original's 'stanzas' by 'Quand', three times, followed by 'Si'. More significantly, the idea of regularity is summoned in Bosquet's opening 'stanza', which, as we see from the syllable count, is composed of four six-syllable lines, followed by one of eight. Here, (yet only here), the translator bestows something of the song-like quality of Dickinson's verse, through the regular count, and the repetitions of vocabulary: 'reviennent' in lines one and two; 'les fleurs' at the ends of lines two and four. The poem's opening seems almost reminiscent of Renaissance song style.

Nevertheless, the opening is exceptional; in this poem, seemingly to a greater degree than with 'If I shouldn't be alive', Bosquet does not sustain his attempt (if attempt it was) to recreate the original's rhythmic pattern. Broadly speaking, his poem looks, and reads, as free-verse. It is a moot question as to whether Bosquet felt himself obliged by the constraints of translation to compose in this way, but in the light of his remarks and his translation of 'When they come back', it seems most likely that this was a considered decision - an impression strengthened by the knowledge that no edition of this poem ever appeared without stanza breaks.²⁸

Exploring now the question of re-creation further, there are several instances in this poem where Bosquet modifies the language of the original, sometimes with the seeming aim of clarifying the original's compression; in its turn, this clarification, perhaps inevitably, produces longer lines. (Again in the 1956 *Anthologie*, Bosquet observes of Dickinson's verse, that, 'l'ellipse est tellement poussée que le traducteur a plusieurs solutions, et qu'il peut

²⁸ The particular volume with which Bosquet was working, the ninth printing of the second edition of Little, Brown, and Company's 1930 *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (first printing of the second edition in 1937), ed by Martha Dickinson Bianchi and Alfred Leete Hampson (1945), gives the poem in four stanzas of five lines.

interpréter à sa guise ce que le poète lui paraît avoir dit'.²⁹) We now look at one or two illustrations of Bosquet's desire to reduce Dickinson's ambiguity; we also highlight the inevitable rhythmic changes.

In her typical style, Dickinson's second line, 'If blossoms do', loses the (recoverable) syntax of 'If blossoms do (come back)'. Bosquet, on the other hand, spells out the elision, repeating the first line's verb in the second: 'Si reviennent les fleurs'. Similarly, Dickinson also compresses the first and second lines of the second stanza: 'When they begin - /If robins may'. These lines, which imply slightly panicky attempts to formulate a thought, create a certain ambiguity. The reader is obliged to work out for him/herself what it is that the robins begin to do, and a straightforward understanding of their beginning to sing, is perhaps not the only available sense. By repeating the first stanza's rhythmic pattern, Dickinson prompts the reader to retain, and then reapply, the connotations of the unusual passive verb, 'to be born', (associated in the first stanza with blossoms, rather than, as is customary, animal, or human entities, (1;4)); by then withholding a qualifying verb from the line, 'When they begin' (2;1), the reader is invited to sense some combination of both song and birth. It is certainly a question of a larger, broader, emergence than the straight-forward bird-song which Bosquet stipulates in his sixth line, 'Quand ils se mettent à chanter'. In these instances, the translator's decision to opt for clarity over ambiguity has naturally produced longer, and uneven lines.

Another instance where Bosquet does not reproduce Dickinson's ambiguity, and where both semantic and rhythmic patterns are changed, occurs in the eighth and ninth lines - again, compressed in the original: 'I always had a fear/I did not tell, it was their last'. Bosquet translates: 'Toujours j'ai craint/De ne l'avoir point dit : l'année dernière'. As we see from the use of the initial verb, 'craindre', the object pronoun 'le', and the colon which introduces the object itself, the implication is that the speaker is worrying that she has not, (until now) revealed her fear. The original, on the other hand, while allowing that interpretation, suggests more strongly that a relative pronoun has been elided and that the ninth line's opening clause is adjectival: 'I always had a fear/[Which] I did not tell, (it was their last)'. Her concern, here, is not so much

²⁹ Bosquet, *Anthologie*, introduction, p. 32.

that she didn't reveal it, as Bosquet suggests, but what her fear actually represents. (It is possible that Bosquet misread the original here, but the consequences have a certain importance.)

As a result, the poem's thinly-veiled central concern, the speaker herself, loses a certain importance in Bosquet's poem. Dickinson's speaker would not, I think, be bothered about whether or not she revealed her fear to others - she is too concerned with her own gratifications to do so. In addition to this slight semantic shift, (which will ultimately prove more significant), Bosquet's decisions have produced the very short eighth line (four syllables), and a much longer ninth line (ten syllables).

In sum, these examples show that whereas the original employs compressed syntax, and produces a combination of semantic ambiguity and rhythmic certitude, the translation prioritises syntactic and semantic clarity.³⁰

Continuing our analysis, we note that Bosquet's poem does not employ anything approaching Dickinson's percentage of repetition. For example, in Dickinson's first 'stanza' alone, the poet end-rhymes lines three and five ('doubt' and 'out'), uses anaphora in four of the stanza's five lines ('When' (ll.1,4,5), 'If' (ll.2,4)), alliteration on 'b' four times ('back', 'blossoms', 'blossoms', 'born'), and alliteration on 'd' twice ('do', 'doubt'). Bosquet's first five lines have no end-rhyme, and very little alliteration. Repetition is provided primarily by a kind of semi-anaphora: the 's'en reviennent' in line one reoccurs as 'Si reviennent' in the following line, and is suggested again in line four, 'Si renaissent'. Similarly, Bosquet repeats the opening 'Quand' in three lines.³¹ In this respect, we are reminded of the style of the title poem from *Quel royaume oublié*, where the position and repetition of 'Ici naquit' was largely responsible for rendering the composition as verse, not prose. Also of note here, is that rather than producing self-contained 'stanzas', Bosquet occasionally makes links

³⁰ It is of interest to note that (in contrast to Simon, see Ch. 5, p. 139), Bosquet clearly views the pronoun in 'It was not death . . .', as a vital element in the poem's translation. He loses only one of the original's six references to the poem's subject, 'it': in a lengthy, rather formal, line, he translates the third stanza's opening, 'And yet it tasted like them all', as 'Je percevais pourtant comme eux tous à la fois'. In all other places, however, 'il' is translated as 'ce'. Here, the translator seems to have illustrated his claim that Dickinson's train of thought 'peut être suivi, sans trop de peine' (*Emily Dickinson*, introduction, p. 53).

³¹ The same poetic device of word repetition occurs in lines 10 and 11 ('dernière'), and in lines 11 and 12, where Bosquet repeats 'May'. (Dickinson uses 'May' twice, and 'may' once.)

across them, providing coherence to his own free-verse composition. For example, the final word of his fifth line, 'épuisé', while not rhyming with any preceding line-ending, is echoed in the final word of the *following* line, 'chanter'.

In all, these observations seem to indicate that Bosquet has indeed chosen to 'recreate' rather than adopt the 'professor's stance', and that the adoption of free-verse is a significant component in that decision.³²

Moreover, a final, confirming, feature of Bosquet's approach is revealed through the changes the translator makes to some of the original poem's more unusual vocabulary. Despite the translator's expressed enthusiasm for Dickinson's language, he replaces 'pang' with 'peur' (4;3), and 'party' ('What party one may be' (5;3)), with the less ambiguous, 'Qui on peut être'. The translation keeps the alliteration on 'p', but the exchange loses an important subtlety of Dickinson's poem: we already noted that, as early as in line four, the poet used the vocabulary of human birth to speak of blossoms. There Bosquet caught the connotations of 'universality', translating with 'renaître', but he failed to sustain them later, by filling in Dickinson's deleted syntax, as discussed earlier: 'Quand ils se mettent à chanter', for 'When they begin'(l.6). Dickinson's unusual choice of 'party', continues the sense of neutrality, or lack of specificity, and suggests the possibility that the speaker may return in *any* natural form. Bosquet's 'Qui (on peut être)' keeps the speaker firmly in her human place.

Again in the 1956 *Anthologie*, Bosquet states: '[ce] qui . . . "ne passe pas", [le traducteur] doit le transposer, en trouver une paraphrase et remplacer, là où il le juge nécessaire, un terme par un autre',³³ and it seems likely that the changes made in this particular poem illustrate this. In all (with the exception of the archaic qualities of the opening 'stanza'), in line with the choice of free-verse, Bosquet's substitution of contemporary vocabulary for Dickinson's more

³² There are many other specific instances in this volume that illustrate Bosquet's decision to 'recreate'. To signal just a handful of these which also show a desire to clarify and modernise the poet, Bosquet alters Dickinson's line 'But on some other flight' (in 'Within they grave! Oh, no,', p. 180), to 'Mais prends un autre vol!'; he changes the old-fashioned 'Pray (do not ask me how)' in 'Going to heaven!' (p. 120) to 'Ne me demande pas . . .'; the unusual 'To *shut* the other's gaze down' ('Je ne peux pas vivre avec toi' 4;3, p. 94) is modified to the more straight-forward 'Pour renfermer les yeux de l'autre'; similarly '(experiment) had *subjugated test*' (At half-past three a single bird' 2;2, p. 74) appears in the French as 'Dépassa cet essai'; 'A grave is a restricted breath' ('A coffin is a small domain', 1;5, p. 178) is translated as the simpler 'Largeur réduite est le tombeau'.

³³ Bosquet, *Anthologie*, introduction, p. 36.

romantic offerings, seems to have brought Dickinson's poem into his own - and his reader's - particular time.³⁴

We can conclude from our analyses so far that Bosquet's aim is to offer translations which are ultimately free-verse creations, very much in line with the general changes to verse which took place at the turn of the century. His poetry does not hinge so much on the elements of rhythm, rhyme, and ambiguity, as on a clear rendition of her meaning. The replacement of some vocabulary reinforces the suggestion that Bosquet is endeavouring to compose translations which, as he says of Dickinson's poetry, 'correspondent . . . à la sensibilité poétique du vingtième siècle' - poetry indeed suggestive of a time 'après Rimbaud, après Mallarmé'.

A Case for Tradition?

There are certain of Dickinson's poems where, perhaps more than in those already considered, the translator's changes may be seen as losing too many of the original's elements to be compensated for by any re-creation, however talented. Such a poem, it might be argued, is the famous 'Because I could not stop for death', one of Dickinson's longer poems, which, like 'If I shouldn't be alive', speaks of the moment *after* the speaker's death.

³⁴ There are other instances, where, as in 'When they come back', Bosquet modifies Dickinson's vocabulary. A good example of this occurs in the second stanza of Dickinson's 'How many schemes may die', presented by Bosquet as 'Tant de projets qui meurent' (p. 168).

The man that was not robbed	Un homme qui échappe au vol
Because by accident	Car il s'écarte, un incident,
He varied by a ribbon's width	L'espace d'un trottoir,
From his accustomed route;	De sa rue coutumière;

Given the time of original composition, and an additional line found later in the poem - 'Some unsuspecting horse was tied' (3;3) - the scene described is clearly that of an earlier time, where horses (which needed to be attached) were still employed as transport. By employing the vocabulary of the modern town ('un trottoir', '[une] rue', (2; 3,4)), Bosquet eliminates any suggestion of an earlier age; in addition, in changing the 'unsuspecting horse' to 'Un cheval imprévu' (3;3), the context moves from a situation where one horse (out of many) is unaware, to a setting where it is unusual to find any horse. Similarly, we note Bosquet's decision to avoid using 'a ribbon's width', as a term of measurement, preferring to stick to unromantic concrete ('L'espace d'un trottoir' (2;.3)).

There are other occasions where Bosquet replaces unusual (that is to say, American, nineteenth-century, or idiomatic vocabulary) nouns by more modern terms: the noun, 'trinket', is replaced by 'bijou' (p. 85); 'fallow article', by 'morceau de terre' (p. 89), and 'dram' is replaced by 'goutte' (p. 168).

Because I could not stop for Death
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves
And Immortality.

We slowly drove, he knew no haste,
And I had put away
My labor, and my leisure too,
For his civility.

We passed the school where children
At wrestling in a ring; played
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible
The cornice but a mound.

Since then 't is centuries; but each
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
Were toward eternity.

Comme je ne pouvais m'arrêter pour la Mort
Elle s'est arrêtée aimablement pour moi;
Nous étions deux dans le carrosse,
En compagnie de l'Immortalité.

Nous sommes allées lentement, elle sans hâte,
Moi délaissant
A la fois mon travail et mes loisirs,
Pour être aussi courtoise qu'elle.

Nous passâmes l'école où des enfants jouaient
A lutter dans un cercle;
Nous passâmes les champs de blé très attentifs,
Et nous passâmes le soleil couchant.

Nous nous arrêtâmes devant une maison
Qui ne semblait qu'une bosse du sol;
Toit à peine visible,
Corniche à peine un monticule.

Il est des siècles de celà, mais chacun d'eux
Paraît moins long que le jour où je vis
La tête des chevaux
Se tourner vers l'éternité.³⁵

It is clear that in this particular poem, the elements of rhythm and rhyme are key factors in the reader's apprehension. The poem is a good illustration of the extent to which Dickinson is able to intensify mental imagery through the rhythmic use of language, and, to convince the reader, in this case, of the journey the speaker is describing. Throughout the poem, Dickinson employs 8,6,8,6 hymn metre, and constantly crafts the syntax to accentuate the rhythm: significant assonance and alliteration are employed, with occasional inversion, anaphora, and full and half end-rhyme. Together, these devices help to evoke the horse-drawn rhythm of the carriage, from the moment the party starts out until it finally reaches its destiny, and halts.

We do not have room here to fully discuss this remarkable poem, but will instead isolate just a few of those 'zones miraculeuses', which somehow vary the ongoing regularity and inevitability of the poem's journey, and which, in doing so, contribute greatly to the work's overall persuasiveness.

Firstly, the 'stop' of the poem's first line ('Because I could not stop for Death') is here used primarily in the colloquial sense of 'not having time for'. It is only in the second line that the full ambiguity of the word becomes clear, as it

³⁵ 'Because I could not stop for Death', Bosquet, p. 108.

is repeated, this time in the past tense ('He kindly stopped'). No doubt partially because of the attention now brought to the word, we are also made aware of the onomatopoeic quality of 'stop'. As the reader registers the repetition of 'stop'(l.1), in 'stopped'(l.2), the carriage does indeed seem to come to a halt. The rhythm is then allowed to pick up again.

Next, the journey proper starts out with the opening line of the second stanza: 'We slowly drove, he knew no haste'. The syntax is arranged so as to reflect the pace of the carriage being described. The parallel structure of the two clauses, with their equal length, the inversion in the first clause, and the double alliteration on 'h' and 'w' in the second clause, are all elements which contribute to the idea of a continuing and solemn rhythm, further stressed by the prominent position of 'slowly', and the repetitions of the long 'o' in 'slowly drove'. This line indeed knows no haste.

The middle part of the journey consists of an almost photographic depiction of a series of familiar scenes, which are steadily noted by the speaker as they travel by. Each scene is triggered by the line's opening words, described, then replaced by another. The effect of the three repetitions of the opening 'We passed' (3;1,3,4), is effectively to pass one image, then another, before our eyes. Then, as we await a fourth repetition, the 'passed' is modified to 'paused' (4;1), a change which causes the reader, as well as the travellers, to pause. In this way, both carriage and reader are also prepared for the journey's culminating moment, (a moment so key, in fact, that Dickinson elides it, instead devoting the fifth and closing stanza to one of her familiar post-burial meditations.)

In looking back to the start of the journey, the speaker's final comment is that compared to the timeless place from where she or he now speaks, the road travelled was a very long one. (If proof were needed that slow rhythm is an important factor in this poem, the content of the last stanza provides it.) Here, Dickinson creates a highly romantic sense of eternity, firstly by her use of the Keatsian 'surmise', which enables remembered oceanic expanses to combine with the endless, final, 'eternity', but also through a slight modification in the stanza's rhythm. The last line is given fitting solemnity by the addition of an extra syllable, which presents the possibility that the poem's final three words be articulated more slowly than the other stanzas' closing lines. Although with syneresis, one might easily read the last two lines to conform with Dickinson's

overall 8,6 pattern, it seems more likely that if the poet wilfully added a syllable, it was because she wished it to be noted. Reading 'I first surmised the horses' heads/Were toward eternity' more steadily, we seem to hear and see the horses slowly coming to a standstill, and both poem and journey simultaneously close. It is a final, poetically triumphant marker in the poem's movement.

Turning to Bosquet's poem, we see that the translator chooses, as we saw him do in 'If I shouldn't be alive', to visually replicate Dickinson's four-line stanzas, but he (again) replaces the regular 8,6 metre with lines of varying, usually longer length (there is one exception: 2;2). The syllable count of Bosquet's translation is as follows: 12,12,8,10, 12,4,10,8, 12,6,11,10, 12,10,8,10, 12,10,6,8. We will look firstly at the opening stanza.

Comme je ne pouvais m'arrêter pour la Mort
Elle s'est arrêtée aimablement pour moi;
Nous étions deux dans le carrosse,
En compagnie de l'Immortalité.

It is possible that this poem provides a good case for Berman's idea that a translation should be studied by the critic before turning to the original; unfortunately, with such a well-known poem, this is difficult to achieve. Once the rhythm of Bosquet's first two lines' alexandrines has been absorbed, it is then perhaps partly a knowledge of the original which (certainly helped by the open, expectant, vowel of the second line's closing 'moi'), leads the reader to expect a similar regularity in the third and fourth lines. And indeed, the anticipation is satisfied by the 'rythme agréable' of the octosyllabic third line, 'Nous étions deux dans le carrosse,' where the rhythm is helped by alliteration (on 'd', twice in the line), assonance (on 'o' twice in the line, and twice in the preceding line), and the resonance of 'étions' and 'dans'. The reader's expectancies now redoubled, they are (at any rate as far as this particular reader is concerned) disappointingly thwarted in the stanza's final line, where the closing ten syllables seem to read almost perversely awkwardly: 'En compagnie de l'Immortalité'.

Again calling on the *Anthologie*, we find Bosquet gives the following as another of the translator's precepts:

Le poète anglais et a fortiori le poète américain ont de la syntaxe une notion simple, sinon élémentaire; le traducteur doit, en revanche, rétablir des liens logiques . . . ³⁶

Without wishing to make every instance prove a point, this might indeed be an example of a case where Bosquet felt that the correctness of the language was more important to the French reader than any final resolution in the rhythm: in the 1950s, the line might not have been acceptable, both grammatically and semantically, without the explanatory ‘En compagnie de’. Writing fifty years on, it is tempting to suggest that a satisfactory closing rhythm might easily have been achieved with a literal translation of Dickinson’s line, ‘And Immortality’, as ‘Et l’Immortalité’. In addition to maintaining the rhythm, it would also have had the attraction of being a six-syllable line.

Bosquet’s second stanza, which contains the poem’s shortest line (the four syllables of line two), clearly has a somewhat different rhythm to the first stanza:

Nous sommes allées lentement, elle sans hâte,
Moi délaissant
A la fois mon travail et mes loisirs,
Pour être aussi courtoise qu’elle.

As in the first stanza (and, notably, as throughout the poem) Bosquet opens with another alexandrine, but here breaks the rhythm after the eighth syllable.³⁷ The pause creates a sense of slowing speed, reflected in the sense of the four syllables at the end of the line (‘elle sans hâte’), which also provide the first clause’s exact half-measure. The slowness is maintained by another four-syllabled clause, which constitutes the second line: ‘Moi délaissant’. The repetition of ‘l’ and the vowel sounds in this line nicely echo the ‘elle sans hâte’, thus adding to the impression of a steady and slow pace. In all, the short, four-syllable line serves the purpose of suggesting the slow pace so brilliantly caught in the original, and its effect is continued by the liaison into the next line, where the first three syllables, ‘A la fois’, again, echo the preceding ‘délaissant’. However, the last two lines carry minimal alliteration or assonance, and no end-rhyme, which causes the rhythm to be lost. Despite the success of the first two

³⁶ Bosquet, *Anthologie*, introduction, p. 36.

³⁷ After the changes in verse made by the Symbolists, the alexandrine was no longer viewed as demanding a caesura at any fixed point in a line, and for my purposes, I refer to any twelve-syllable line as an ‘alexandrine’.

lines, we ultimately feel the unwieldiness of the first stanza's last line has been repeated in the second.

As well as starting each stanza with a line of twelve syllables, Bosquet chooses to end the stanzas' with either eight, or ten syllable lines. The intervening lines, as we noted initially, vary in length, and have apparently been guided by the possibilities of the poet and the French language. Having looked at the first two stanzas, we see that the results are effective in varying measure. (It is just possible that in translating this poem, Bosquet chose to employ *partial* traditional form: perhaps, as with his own verse, he felt the translation needed *certain* support from the ancient and trusted 'béquilles', such as the alexandrine, the decasyllable, and the octosyllable.)

So far then, we note a tendency on the translator's part to lose something of the original's overall rhythmic effects in this poem, perhaps only partially compensated for in specific successful instances. However, the fourth stanza of Bosquet's poem must receive recognition for the way in which it succeeds both as poetic composition in its own right, and also achieves an excellent rhythmic recreation. Here, the 12,10,8,10 scheme, and the use of several poetic devices, produces a highly effective translation.

We paused before a house that seemed
A swelling of the ground;
The roof was scarcely visible
The cornice but a mound.

Nous nous arrê tâmes devant une maison
Qui ne semblait qu'une bosse du sol;
Toit à peine visible,
Corniche à peine un monticule.

The caesura in the first line suggests the pause of the carriage, and the alliteration on 'm' in both lines one and two tie the lines together visually??. The slightly shorter second line, with a caesura after the fourth syllable, reads with an even rhythm in its own right, but this is reinforced by the assonance in the last three words, 'bosse du sol'; again, the 'o' sound echoes the '(mais)on' of the first line, and links the two lines. Similarly, lines three and four read with comfortable and steady rhythm: the fourth line in this quatrain does nothing to stall the stanza's even flow. The two lines are tied by a Dickinson-type anaphora 'à peine' - a tactic of Bosquet's we have noted before - and the fourth line refers back to the second by the 'o' assonance, and the half-rhymed end-syllable in 'monticule' (with 'bosse', 'sol' (l.2)). In addition, these lines are enhanced by the confident trimming of their syntactic paraphernalia, and go far to suggest

Dickinson's admired 'langage sténographique'.

In all, the stanza shines as illustration of the kind of translation Bosquet might ideally have achieved throughout the whole poem. The rhythm is steady enough to allow the strangeness of the scene to penetrate the reader's mind without interruption, and at the same time manages to completely convey the original's content.

There are several other aspects of this poem which might be seen to represent '[des] zones miraculeuses'.

The opening twelve-syllable line in the third stanza, for example, 'Nous passâmes l'école où des enfants jouaient', sets up a good rhythm, and the poet manages to contain the information in Dickinson's octosyllabic line, by dint of dropping the traditionally 'correct' preposition, 'devant'. Here Bosquet shows again that he is prepared to take certain risks with language, and the felicitous result is that he obtains a rhythmic first line, and also a literal translation of the original: 'We passed the school where children played'. And although we might cite the loss, in the fifth stanza, of the romantic 'surmise', to the more conventional verb 'voir' (5;3,2, respectively), Bosquet does provide the traditional tone suggested by Dickinson's nineteenth-century 'tis' (5;1); he uses the formal 'Il est des siècles de celà', as his opening line, and employs the past historical tense (throughout).

Returning to the third stanza, a further success comes with Bosquet's translation of the third line, where he again employs an alexandrine. Perhaps to the reader desiring an even rhythm, the line reads slightly awkwardly: 'Nous passâmes les champs de blé très attentifs'. Certainly, it does not echo the rhythm of the original's 'We passed the fields of gazing grain'. However, interestingly, Bosquet's line has brought out a meaning only implicit in the original. In 'Nous passâmes les champs de blé très attentifs', the adjectival agreement of 'attentifs', may apply equally to 'Nous' or 'les champs de blé'. The grain is paying attention to the occupants of the carriage, but the occupants are also watching the fields of grain. In Dickinson's line, 'We passed the fields of gazing grain', it is only implicitly that the reader links the gaze of the grain to the attitude of the occupants. Perhaps exceptionally, Bosquet's French here produces stronger ambiguity than does Dickinson's American line. (Nevertheless, this happy flash, whether desired or accidental on the translator's part, does not enhance the

overall stanza's rhythm, and once again, the closing decasyllable (here, 'Et nous passâmes le soleil couchant'), while linked poetically to the preceding line through anaphora and assonance, cannot completely save the broken rhythm.)

Conclusion

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Alain Bosquet's approach to Dickinson's translation in some respects differs markedly from that of Jean Simon; no doubt the most significant divergence between the two is Bosquet's decision to translate Dickinson into free-verse. In their own styles, the two translators have shown themselves at pains to clarify Dickinson's meaning; both endeavour to render the American poet's vocabulary more accessible to the French reader - more 'universal' as Bosquet has it - but notably, with respect to syntax, Bosquet's translation carries a decidedly more modern ring than Simon's. Another area where Bosquet demonstrates an affinity with Simon, is in his work's absence of any explicit discussion regarding the 'projet de traduction': with both Simon and Bosquet, the critic is obliged to assemble the project piece-meal.

We have also observed that while Bosquet employs free-verse in the majority of his translations, he also endeavours to replicate certain aspects of Dickinson's style; as a general rule, he suggests her verse visually, and although, as he states, he does not accord particular importance to Dickinson's rhyme, he on the whole compensates with other forms of repetition. On occasion, he also employs time-honoured forms, such as the decasyllable and the alexandrine; in this respect, we might compare his intermittent flirting with tradition in his own work, with his approach to Dickinson's translation.

Notably, Bosquet's translations frequently result in a loss of Dickinson's rhythm, an element of verse which the translator has also declared inessential to post-Whitman composition; ultimately, the success of his tendency to sacrifice Dickinson's rhythm and rhyme can only be judged by reference to specific poems. There are occasions where Bosquet's belief, which he shares with those such as Yves Bonnefoy, that a translator should recreate a poem rather than employ a 'découpage rigide', proves more successful than on others. We have seen examples of poems where, in my opinion, the rhythm or rhyme in Dickinson's verse proves indispensable to the work's overall meaning. It is just possible that

Bosquet's rejection of Dickinson's rhythm and rhyme in favour of a freer composition, motivated his decision to ignore the major work of Dickinson scholarship produced two years before his own publication, the 1955 Johnson variorum edition. Bosquet perhaps was not so much at pains to exactly reproduce the original, as to let Dickinson speak in a 'post-crise' French voice. (It is of note that while both Bosquet and Simon compare Dickinson to Baudelaire, Bosquet also speaks of her with reference to Rimbaud and Mallarmé.)

It is also possible that, in addition to the mid-century tendencies towards free-verse, Bosquet's intense dislike of the American 'rimeurs', so popular in Dickinson's time, played a role in this aspect of his approach. Having denounced their 'vers de mirliton' so thoroughly, and linked them with all he was against politically, to have then rendered Dickinson's verse according to her own traditional metres might have appeared as tantamount to treason.

Finally, in summing up Bosquet's approach, it is notable that his work bears distinct signs of haste. By his own admission, Bosquet was inclined to overcharge his life and workload; perhaps he did not have the time, (or the money), to polish this significant introduction to Dickinson: his translation of the poems, as well as his discussion of the poet's work, are, as we observed, erratic in their achievement.

Chapter Seven : 1970

Guy Jean Forgue

A First Attempt at Textual Fidelity

Although the 1963 collection of twenty poems, translated by Berger and Zweig, is not the subject of full study here, it should be mentioned for the innovative way it presents Dickinson to French literary culture.¹ During the six years between Bosquet's 1957 translation and Berger and Zweig's in 1963, the full significance of Johnson's 1955 edition had perhaps had time to permeate the growing French consciousness of Dickinson's work; Zweig devotes a page of his short introduction to the changes the variorum edition brought to light.

Or [cette édition] est d'une importance capitale car, sans parler des "corrections" plus ou moins malheureuses qui ont pullulé dans les recueils antérieurs, leurs éditeurs avaient toujours cru bon de corriger aussi la ponctuation assez particulière utilisée par le poète (p.14).

Zweig then refers to the now well-known Dickinson dash, and states, for the first time in any French translated collection, that : 'ce dosage savant de tirets . . . n'est nullement excentrique'. Zweig does not concur with Simon and Bosquet that the poet's form is more or less to be dismissed as negligent or careless. Quite to the contrary, he continues: 'Par les tirets, Emily Dickinson parvient à imposer un rythme de lecture; elle brise l'écoulement de certains vers afin que des mots ou des groupes de mots, ressortent et s'imposent'. In other words, where previous translators have viewed her rhythm, punctuation, and syntax as somewhat troublesome, and certainly extrinsic to her 'poetry', Zweig is

¹ *Emily Dickinson: twenty poems, vingt poèmes*, introduction by Paul Zweig, trans. by Claude Berger and Paul Zweig (Paris: Lettres Modernes, 'Passeport', 1963). Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

proposing that her punctuation is a key element: her chosen form is vital to the overall meaning. He concludes, 'En fait, la mise en page qu'implique sa ponctuation est aussi soignée et aussi calculée que celle d'un Mallarmé.' As example, he gives the following line: 'Diadems - drop - and Doges - surrender', describing it as 'littéralement sculpté par les tirets' (p.14).

It is clear that the importance Zweig accords to Johnson's edition, together with the respect he shows for the original poetry and Dickinson's manner of expression, marks a considerable shift in the approaches of the translations we have so far examined. Although Zweig is by no means in awe of the entire corpus of the poet's work, ('une grande partie de son oeuvre est loin d'être de premier ordre'), he is the first translator to state of his collection, '[ce] recueil observe fidèlement les notations originales et restitue tous les vers qui furent "corrigés" par l'excès de zèle des premiers éditeurs' (p.15).

In this respect, one can speculate that Berger and Zweig might mark the first signs of an inching towards more faithful reproduction of the original text; seen another way, their translation perhaps indicates that French literary culture is now ready to accept the poet in her own terms. For his own part, Zweig closes his introduction with some pride: 'Ainsi le lecteur français pourra, pour la première fois, connaître ce poète incomparable comme elle-même l'aurait voulu, dans toute son originalité' (p.15).

Guy Jean Forgue: A Fresh Face for Dickinson

With this brief signalling of Berger and Zweig's 1963 work, we now move to our third major study: *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, introduced and translated by Guy Jean Forgue, published in 1970.²

In Antoine Berman's *Pour une critique*, the author speaks of how the sixties are distinguished from the preceding decade by the increased quantity of translations and translation criticism which appeared during those years.³

Despite this general movement, however, in Forgue's translation of Dickinson,

² *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, intro. and trans. by Guy Jean Forgue (Paris: Aubier, 1970, 2nd edn 1996). References to this work are given after quotations in the text.

³ Berman names 'Bonnefoy, Leyris, Deguy, Robel (et son groupe), Roubaud, Meschonnic, Klossowski, Mounin, Grosjean, Granel, et Benjamin', as those who contributed to this surge of activity, which focused primarily on philosophical translation, Bible translation, and poetry translation (*PUC*, p. 246).

there is, yet again, only the merest of mentions of the translator's approach to his work. In the series of translations under study, it seems that in this respect nothing has significantly changed.

At the time the Dickinson volume was published, Forgue was a professor at the Sorbonne, and a specialist in American literature: he had already published works on H.L. Mencken, and translated Mark Twain; following the Dickinson, he published two further works, concerned specifically with the American language - one of which, *Les mots américains*, was reissued in 1992.⁴ In *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, Forgue offers one hundred and fifty poems in original translation (almost one hundred of which were previously unpublished in French translation), with a twenty-five page introduction, an abbreviated Dickinson chronology, a select bibliography, and two tables, one listing the poems by first line, the other according to Johnson's 1955 ordering, which the author discusses in some detail. In the series of works studied here, this is the first time an index to the poems is provided.

Forgue observes in his introduction that Dickinson 'n[a] pas encore de vrai public chez nous', and suggests that this is because earlier critical emphasis had concentrated on the person, rather than the poetry: 'Quelle tentation de ramener cette poésie à un lamento de vingt-huit années sur quelque amour frustré, mais aussi quelle insulte au bon sens!'⁵ He continues:

Longtemps la critique s'est émerveillée de cet "horizon étroit et minutieux", de cette ferveur aux sources mystérieuses; on a monté en épingle tel poème intimiste, telle banale tentative de vers sentimentaux. Aujourd'hui, d'autres substituent un sofa de psychanalyste au lit conjugal clinique (p.15).

We do not know whether it is only English criticism that Forgue has in mind, or whether he was also thinking of Bosquet's lengthy introduction, which, as we saw, is weighted in favour of the person, rather than the work. In either case, it would seem that one of the goals of the author's comprehensive introduction, is to 'rehabilitate' Dickinson. Forgue does not deny the poet's physical seclusion and accompanying sensibility, (indeed, he muses that '[elle] a frôlé le dérangement mental' (p.27)), but there is an obvious endeavour not to

⁴ Guy Jean Forgue, *Les Mots américains* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1976, 2nd ed. 1992).

⁵ Forgue, *Emily Dickinson*, introduction, p. 15. Further references to the introduction are given after quotations in the text.

dwell on such biographical detail, and to present Dickinson to the French audience primarily through her work. Overall, he succeeds. Despite occasional passages where the author's attempts to come to terms with the difficulties of Dickinson's work present their own mysteries ('... créer un poème, c'est ressentir un effroi sacré qui l'on projette sous une forme "sphérique", symbole de la parfaite congruence', etc. (p.21)), Forgue offers one of the more critically balanced analyses of Dickinson's themes and style to have accompanied a collection of the poems in translation thus far.

The author achieves this in a number of ways, the most simple being the way in which he points up the extent of Dickinson's intellectual curiosity, and the breadth of her reading. (Her favourite works are the Bible, the English classics, and the Metaphysicals, and also the Americans of her time, such as Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Poe.) Forgue refers to the quality of Dickinson's intellect on several different occasions: in speaking of her attitude to death, for example, he says, 'Si c'était une névrose, constatons qu'elle est bien intellectualisée' (p.30).

Secondly, in terms of Dickinson's themes, Forgue continues to move away from critics who have described the poet as primarily neurotic, or primarily reclusive. As suggested, he views her concern with death - which, by its degree, is comparable to Montaigne's (p.30) - not so much as 'morbide et névrotique', as 'métaphysique'; similarly, he explains Dickinson's recurrent, occasionally exalted, references to the material things of death, such as 'la dureté, le minéral, les cadavres', in implicit Sartrean terms: he sees these interests as representing not so much a superficial obsession, but a desire for 'la "facticité", ... l'abolition du "pour-soi"' (p.33).

Or again, as far as Dickinson's preferred theme of religion is concerned, Forgue encompasses, but also lifts, the familiar 'did she/didn't she believe' debate, onto another plane. In Forgue's view, at Dickinson's level of thought, 'la religion importe peu ... le dogme s'efface et l'on touche à une sorte de matérialisme instinctif' (p.33).

Likewise, in terms of Dickinson's other principal concern of 'love', not wishing to reduce Dickinson's 'odyssée poétique' to 'quelque sublimation sentimentale', Forgue observes that Wadsworth ('ou tout autre') doubtless merely played the role of catalyst in the poetry's composition: 'ce qui compte du

point de vue poétique est moins la relation affective que les prolongements métaphysiques et esthétiques de cette attitude' (p.29). Again, rather than dwelling on biographical detail, the translator chooses to describe Dickinson's 'lover' in 'courtly', idealistic terms - he cites Marvell and Donne, (but his descriptions put one equally in mind of Dante, or Scève) - whereby 'le seul amant idéal c'est l'amant lointain et absolu, auquel on n'accède que par la souffrance et la mort . . . cette aventure est surtout symbolique, et grosse d'une métaphysique' (p.29). Neither is Dickinson's concern with the 'self' straight-forwardly subjective, in Forgue's view: for Dickinson the self is 'à la fois unique et monolithique, et regard sur soi, ou "pour soi"'. (In addition to the two earlier references to French figures of renown, Forgue also compares Dickinson to Baudelaire with respect to her relationship to the 'Moi', which represents, as he sees it, 'comme la Nature . . . un domaine hanté' (p.27). He also, (like Simon), incorporates the well-known Baudelairean reference to the symbolic value of nature: 'dans sa jeunesse, {Dickinson a-t-elle] vu dans la nature une source de symboles . . . (p.25)).

Lastly in terms of Dickinson's themes, while Forgue points out that '[v]ers 1860 un poète américain ne pouvait guère ne pas parler de la nature', and that Dickinson followed her compatriots in this respect, her view of nature was nevertheless based above all on 'une conviction philosophique'.

I think it is clear from these comments that Forgue does much to break with the style of those who have cast Dickinson as the kind of character that Alain Bosquet describes as 'une véritable petite demoiselle comme Elizabeth Barratt Browning les a mises à la mode',⁶ and we are not surprised to find that Forgue's initial presentation of Dickinson's poetic style follows similarly decisive lines.

Sa manière . . . tranche singulièrement sur celle des poétesses de son temps; rien de fade et de distingué, rien de sucré ou de verbeux. Nous avons ici une sécheresse clinique et une brutalité qui suggèrent notre temps . . . [p]arfois très proche de T.S. Eliot ou de Kafka . . .' (p.28).

Expanding on Dickinson's quality of plainness these lines suggest, Forgue sets Dickinson's work firmly in its American context. He endorses Whicher's statement that "'elle est de chez nous autant qu'une myrtille'", and gives his own

⁶ Alain Bosquet, *Emily Dickinson*, introduction, (Paris: Seghers, 1957) p. 28.

view that 'un net accent yankee se dégage de son oeuvre'; he sees in her poetry something of the 'laconisme presque brutal des gens de Nouvelle-Angleterre'. He also sees her as forming part of a line of American 'formalistes soigneux': T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Robert Frost, Marianne Moore, Robert Lowell, and perceives a connection between her language and that of Pound, Carlos Williams, and e e cummings (p.34). In addition, while he compares Dickinson's vocabulary - 'riche, chatoyant, expérimental' - to that seen 'aux grands jours des Elisabethains', he views it as also marked by elements of dissonance and surprise. He points to the conversational style occasionally apparent in Dickinson's work: 'la tendance naturelle de la poëtesse à jouer avec les mots s'est nourrie d'une méditation sur les matériaux bruts du parler . . .'; he also signals the tension between the metre and a spoken rhythm, and makes a comparison with Hopkins's 'sprung rhythm' (p.36).

Thus far in his criticism, Forgue shows no signs of *judging* Dickinson's poetic style. Moving to the question of metre, the author is as informative as he was on the work's thematic content, and is the first translator studied here to enter into the details of the different metric forms Dickinson employs; he discusses the ballad metre, for example, and explains the different syllabic forms referred to by Watts, in his introduction to the *Christian Psalmody* (p.35). In a lengthy footnote, he also lists Dickinson's most frequently used words, as found in Rosenbaum's *Concordance*, and, apparently objectively, signals the most notable idiosyncrasies of the poet's style, such as the dashes, her 'subjunctive', etc. (p.38).

Dickinson's Imperfect Prosody

With respect to Dickinson's prosody, Forgue firstly informs the reader, again in neutral tone, that Dickinson's 'forme poétique . . . présente des problèmes ardues et suscite des objections majeures'. He then draws attention to the line of critics who have found her style in some way unacceptable:

Que de condamnations, depuis le correct Higginson qui trouvait ce style irrégulier, saccadé et fantasque, jusqu'aux interventions des éditeurs choqués par telle rime imparfaite ou tel vocable insolite! (p.33).

Following such strong condemnation on the part of others, any remarks the author might add will naturally appear mild, but little by little, we do gain

the impression that Forgue himself is not wholeheartedly approving of Dickinson's style. The criticism is frequently guarded - '[elle] est poète par sa façon de concevoir . . . plus que par sa maîtrise rythmique'; '[sa] prosodie est de toute évidence celle d'une autodidacte' (p.34); '[l]'inspiration prend le pas sur la forme', etc. - and generally balanced by counter-argument: for example, despite his criticism of her form, he says it is not '. . . affranchie de toute contrainte' (p.35).

Overall, however, the presentation of Dickinson's style has a negative edge, and the reader is left wondering whether the mood might not permeate the translations. Such comments as 'Le vers de Dickinson chante rarement; il se retient mieux par l'image ou la tonalité que par les qualités prosodiques' (p.33); or 'La principale irrégularité . . . c'est la rime' (p.35); or 'Il y a peu de rigueur sémantique chez Dickinson' (p.37), make one think that these might be problems the author feels he could correct in the translation. He, like other translators, also refers to 'les obscurités' in Dickinson's work: 'les raccourcis qui gênent parfois le lecteur', and 'l'ambiguïté' (p.33).

And although Forgue does not devote more than a few lines to the way in which he has approached Dickinson's translation, he nevertheless tells us enough to know that he was not following Berger and Zweig's example. At the very end of a lengthy footnote on an early page of the introduction, we find: 'J'ai cru pouvoir prendre dans la traduction certaines libertés avec la ponctuation comme avec la syntaxe' (p.18, fn.1).

In all, one notes that while Forgue on the one hand elevates Dickinson's intellectual and poetic status, on the other, he does not allow his seeming belief in her qualities to temper his judgement of her basically flawed, as he sees it, style of composition.

Textual Regression?

Moving on to Forgue's selection of poems, the author states his choice as being determined by personal taste and deference to Dickinson critics: 'Les poèmes choisis l'ont été selon le critère de la valeur poétique, pondéré par la fréquence avec laquelle certains sont cités chez les plus grands spécialistes de Dickinson' (p.17,fn.1). With the exception of eighteen poems (which Forgue enumerates by reference to Johnson), all the poems are to be found in *Final*

Harvest (1961): the author tells us that he has made his own choice from the range of Dickinson's variants, rather than adhering to Johnson's order: 'Parmi les variantes proposées, j'ai choisi celles qui m'ont paru les plus intéressantes, et, donc, le texte n'est pas toujours celui que Johnson donne en premier' (pp.17-18, fn.1). The author then reverts to a slightly negative tone, telling the reader that although these particular poems '... ne sont pas les moins bons ... aucun lecteur ne pourra rester insensible à leurs imperfections' (p.33).

In turning to Forgue's translations, it is perhaps of interest to briefly make a comparison between the way Berger and Zweig team present Dickinson's works, and the way Forgue, seven years later, chooses to do so. To take one example, this is how 'Of Bronze - and Blaze -' appears in Berger and Zweig's work, with their translation on the facing page:

	Of Bronze - and Blaze -	De Bronze - et de Feu -
	The North - Tonight -	Le Nord - ce Soir -
	So adequate - it forms -	Si juste - qu'il érige -
	So preconcerted with itself	Si concerté
5	So distant - to alarms -	Si distant - aux alarmes -
	An Unconcern so sovereign	Une Indifférence si souveraine
	To Universe, or me -	A l'Univers, ou à moi -
	Infects my simple spirit	Infecte mon esprit simple
	With Taints of Majesty -	De Souillures de Majesté -
10	Till I take vaster attitudes -	Qu'enfin je prenne plus amples attitudes -
	And strut upon my stem -	Et me pavane sur ma tige -
	Disdaining Men, and Oxygen,	Méprisant les Hommes, et l'Oxygène,
	For Arrogance of them -	Pour Arrogance d'eux -
15	My Splendors, are Menagerie -	Mes Splendeurs, sont Ménagerie -
	But their Competeless Show	Mais leur Spectacle sans Rival
	Will entertain the Centuries	Divertira les Siècles
	When I, am long ago,	Quand je serai, au loin des temps,
	An Island in dishonored Grass -	Une Ile parmi l'Herbe en disgrâce -
20	Whom none but Daisies, know.	Ignorée de tous, sauf des Marguerites.

With the exception of the two longer lines, the high degree of visual similarity between the two texts is notable. The translators have clearly endeavoured to reproduce both Dickinson's original form and also her

punctuation: the capital letters, dashes, commas and full stops are reproduced exactly as they occur in the original.⁷

This, now, is Forgue's translation.

	Of Bronze - and Blaze -	Bronze embrasé,
	The North - Tonight -	Le Nord ce soir,
	So adequate - it forms -	Par sa congruité,
5	So preconcerted with itself	Sa forme fixée d'avance,
	So distant - to alarms -	Si loin de toute alerte,
	An Unconcern so sovereign	Suprêmement indifférent
	To Universe, or me -	A l'Univers - à moi,
	Infects my simple spirit	Corrompt ma simplicité
10	With Taints of Majesty -	Contaminée par sa grandeur.
	Till I take vaster attitudes -	Je prends des airs avantageux -
	And strut upon my stem -	M'étire sur ma tige -
	Disdaining Men, and Oxygen,	Dédaigne l'homme, et l'oxygène,
	For Arrogance of them -	Par arrogance pure.
15	My Splendors, are Menagerie -	Mes splendeurs sont ménageries -
	But their Competeless Show	Mais leur spectacle sans pareil
	Will entertain the Centuries	Réjouira les siècles
	When I, am long ago,	Quand depuis longtemps je serai
	An Island in dishonored Grass -	Dans l'herbe sans gloire un îlot
20	Whom none but Beetles, know.	Connu seulement des insectes. ⁸

The poem illustrates two of Forgue's decisions that we noted from his introduction. Firstly, he has seemingly chosen from Johnson's variants one of those 'qui [lui] ont paru les plus intéressantes': the change in the American text's final line, from 'Daisies' to 'Beetles' is striking. (Berger and Zweig repeat Johnson's first choice of 'Daisies' (l.20)). We also observe Forgue's almost total omission of dashes: out of a possible fifteen in the original, he reproduces only four, and the change, demonstrating his decision to take 'certaines libertés avec la ponctuation' (p.18), renders his poem visually very different to Johnson's, or, indeed, Zweig's.

To consider Dickinson's punctuation for a moment, it is easy to imagine how confronted for the first time with what is now the most immediately recognisable quality of the verse - her capitals and her dashes - Zweig must have realised the potential impact on the work's accepted rhythm. If, as example, we

⁷ We might also note that, in company with both Simon, and to a lesser extent, Bosquet, the authors do occasionally shave the layers of Dickinson's ambiguity, and lose some of the more original vocabulary. For example, line four, 'So preconcerted with itself', is reduced to the less complex 'Si concerté', and the ambiguity of line eighteen, 'When I, am long ago,/An island in . . . Grass' (the comma indicating that the speaker is referring to both the abstract notion that she will no longer be alive, and that she will also be a tangible place in the grass), is, by dint of the comma's changed location in the line, made to refer only to the last meaning: 'Quand je serai, au loin des temps,/Une Ile parmi l'Herbe . . . '.

⁸ 'Of Bronze - and Blaze - ', Berger and Zweig, p. 27, Forgue, p. 72.

take just one line from the Johnson text, together with the Berger/Zweig translation, we are immediately aware of the slowness and emphasis that the dashes and capitals bring to the line in both original and translation (the line is chosen for the literal quality of the translation, both in terms of syntax and syllables): ‘The North - Tonight -’/‘Le Nord - ce soir -’(l.2). I think it is clear that, by comparison, Forgue’s line, ‘Le Nord ce soir’, bare as it is of any braking device, reads at a much brisker pace.

This noted, we recall Forgue’s wish that in taking certain liberties with Dickinson’s punctuation and syntax, he hoped not to ‘trahi[r] ses intentions ou ses effets’; again, to a twenty-first century reader, the notion might seem absurd. How, we might argue, could the translator possibly not change Dickinson’s intentions and effects in changing qualities so vital to her composition? Both Johnson and Zweig had already illustrated this point of view, and Forgue’s decision comes over as all the more curious in that he actively chose to buck the trend. Exploring this a little further, in his introduction, Forgue gives what might be read as a defence of his decision. While he states that the 1955 Johnson edition is founded on ‘des recherches d’une solide érudition’, he also points out that the work ‘ne peut être considérée comme probante, car il est toujours possible d’imaginer un manuscrit antérieur et perdu, ou une erreur sur l’interprétation graphologique’. He continues as follows:

La ponctuation et les particularités graphiques (surtout les tirets) posent des problèmes que soulève Edith Stamm dans un article du *Saturday Review* (30 mars, 1963). . . . On pourra consulter également sur ce point l’ouvrage de R.W. Franklin: *The Editing of Emily Dickinson: A Reconsideration*, (1967) (p.17, fn.1).

In fact, although Forgue implies that Stamm and Franklin are making similar points, Franklin is dismissive of Stamm’s argument, (which is, according to Franklin, that “‘Dickinson’s ‘eccentric’ punctuation . . . is simply meant to direct the reading of her verse”): he finds Stamm to be ultimately arguing ‘against the value of her own theory’.⁹ For Franklin’s own part, he explores the difficulties of ever establishing one ‘authorial intention’ in much of Dickinson’s

⁹ Edith Perry Stamm, ‘Emily Dickinson: Poetry and Punctuation’, *Saturday Review*, XLVI (March 30, 1963), pp. 26-27, p. 74, cited by Franklin in R.W. Franklin, *The Editing of Emily Dickinson: A Reconsideration* (Madison, Milwaukee, and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), p.119.

work¹⁰, and feels finally that a new form of editorial practice should be found, whereby the editor will be ‘editor, critic, and philosopher in one’.¹¹

To briefly explore the implications of Dickinson’s idiosyncrasies further, generally speaking, the poet uses dashes either to emphasise a certain word or phrase by interrupting the rhythmic flow (as remarked by Zweig), or to indicate the continuation of an established rhythm into a succeeding line. The title line, ‘Of Bronze - and Blaze -’, illustrates both functions; the reader is obliged to read the two units separately, thus focusing on each in turn, and the final dash instructs him or her to continue in the same way into line two (where ‘The North - Tonight -’, are read in similar fashion). In this poem, Dickinson uses dashes in these two ways in four separate lines (1,2,3,5); seven lines are written with the end-dash only, and one line, the last, employs the dash within the line, in this instance before the final word: ‘Whom none but Beetles - know’. Here, the dash serves to emphasise the (apparent) contrast between the common insect and the abstract and valued human quality of knowledge; the Beetle’s true importance is additionally emphasised by the initial capital letter.

Turning now to the capitalisation, it might be argued - and Forgue has implied as much - that the capitals, also numerous (nineteen in all, excluding those of the lines’ opening words) are distributed in this poem somewhat arbitrarily, in that they occur on nouns (with one exception - the adjective ‘Competeless’ (l.16)), which the reader probably perceives as unusual, or perhaps as having significance for the speaker (‘Taints of Majesty’ (l.9), ‘Unconcern’ (l.6), ‘Grass’ (l.20)), yet they are not, (the reader might argue), used on other, equally unusual or contextually fitting vocabulary, such as ‘vaster attitudes’ (l.10), ‘strut’, ‘stem’ (l.11), or ‘them’, in ‘Arrogance of them’ (l.14): none of these would startle if capitalised. It is simply the case that this has not been Dickinson’s (or ‘Dickinson-Higginson-Johnson’s’, as Franklin puts it), choice.

¹⁰ Franklin reminds us that some poems theoretically represent impossibly high numbers of variations: ‘Those fair - fictitious people’, for example, ‘exists in a semi-final draft with twenty-six suggestions that fit eleven places in the poem. From this, 7680 poems are possible - not versions, but, according to our critical principles, poems’. (*The Editing of Emily Dickinson*, p. 142).

¹¹ It is of incidental interest that in his 1999 Reading Edition, Franklin gives ‘Of Bronze - and Blaze -’ in near-identical form to that of Johnson: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed by R.W. Franklin (Cambridge, MA., and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 142.

Forgue reduces the capitals in his poem to two, excluding those which open the lines, and both instances (in 'Nord' (l.2), and 'Univers' (l.7)), imply that the words are particularised because of their generally perceived importance - not because of any special significance they have to the speaker (as with 'Taints', or 'Unconcern'). As a result of these changes, the rhythm of the poem is smoothed and quickened, and the apparent importance of certain words denied. In sum, simply from these formal indications, we understand that the translator has to some degree - as yet to be fully established - diluted the dramatic quality of Dickinson's verse.

Ultimately, Forgue does not clarify why he has decided to change Dickinson's punctuation so radically. In the absence of indication, one may perhaps for the moment assume that his decision was taken, firstly, in the knowledge, as he points out, that discussions regarding authorial intention were still on-going, and also, perhaps from a desire to make Dickinson accessible to the French reading public - in this respect resembling Simon, and to a lesser degree, Bosquet. Lastly, Forgue stresses in the introduction that his 150 translations 'sont entièrement originales'; possibly his work is partially motivated by a desire to work 'against' previous translators: one need only compare Forgue's translation of 'Of Bronze - and Blaze -' with that of Berger and Zweig to note the differences between the two in, quite literally, every line.

Divorcing, for the moment, these formal qualities from the semantic content, we see that in terms of meaning, Forgue has provided, as he announced in the introduction, an entirely new translation; further, he has also brought a new interpretation to certain lines, where it could be argued, the original author's intention is reasonably clear.

The Translator's Visibility

We see, for example, that in line four, the original refers to the state of the 'North', that night: 'So preconcerted with itself', and in so doing, the speaker endows nature with the human quality of self-preoccupation. Forgue, in translating, loses the human comparison, and gives the line a Platonic spin quite absent in the original, (but in keeping, perhaps, with his tendency to compare Dickinson with the philosophers in the introduction): 'Sa forme fixée d'avance'.

We can also look at lines fifteen and sixteen, which open the second part

of the poem:

My Splendors, are Menagerie - Mes splendeurs sont ménageries -
But their Competeless Show Mais leur spectacle sans pareil

Firstly, we note that Forgue's translation alters Dickinson's single, collective 'Menagerie', to a plural noun. The change is subtle, but the original's collective noun makes sense when viewed in the context of the following line, where it also takes on the connotation of the speaker's body of writings: 'But their Competeless Show'. The remarkable neologism 'Competeless', is not just striking by its originality, but the adjective and noun unit are key to the poem's meaning. Here the speaker opposes her dull household rounds to the splendour of nature, but, further, the adjective 'Competeless', with its connotations of rivalry, and competition, takes on a touch of poignancy, as we realise that the 'Show' being referred to is probably the speaker's writing. Her work is without competitor, because unseen, and yet, perhaps with ironic optimism, the speaker suggests that her poetry will, somehow, *like* nature now, live beyond both its author and the human daily round. Forgue's plural 'ménageries', without capital, does not suggest a collective body of work, and the 'spectacle sans pareil', does not make the question of non-publication as clear a connotation as does the ambiguous 'Competeless Show'. There is a danger that the most significant element of the poem's meaning - the writer's relationship with her work - be lost. This is a moment where one might feel that Forgue's statement: 'Il y a peu de rigueur sémantique chez Dickinson', is refuted. The multiple meanings present in the original here find themselves indeed 'sans pareil' in the translation.

These observations in mind, we will now move to a second poem for comparison.

It will be recalled that Forgue says of Dickinson that:

Son hermétisme, ses ambiguïtés ne présentent pas toujours cette "élasticité" qu'elle souhaite . . . à l'extrême, elle n'entretient plus qu'une sorte de monologue codé avec elle-même, où le scrupule tue l'expression . . . (pp.37-38).

In fact, in this particular collection, it is not easy to locate a poem which is completely inaccessible to the careful reader, but this may be due to the fact that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we as readers are simply more used to the qualities of writing which even thirty years ago, when Forgue read and

translated Dickinson, were still relatively unusual. Nevertheless, the following, now-celebrated, work, with its typical Dickinson mix of ambiguity, concision, wide range of punctuation, and multiple registers and vocabularies, does require thought in order to come to some understanding of its complexities. Indeed, it is appropriate that before the translation, we firstly endeavour to outline the elements which together have brought this particular poem its renown.

Here is the poem, reproduced in both English and French, according to Forgue's presentation.

A *Wounded* Deer - leaps highest -
I've heard the Hunter tell -
'Tis but the Ecstasy of death -
And then the Brake is still!

Le cerf blessé bondit plus haut,
M'a dit un jour un chasseur :
Ce n'est qu'une mortelle extase,
Après quoi le hallier se tait.

The *Smitten* Rock that gushes!
The *trampled* Steel that springs!
A Cheek is always redder
Just where the Hectic stings!

L'eau jaillit du rocher qu'on frappe;
L'acier martelé rebondit;
La joue est toujours plus rouge
Là où la fièvre la consume.

Mirth is the Mail of Anguish -
In which it Cautious Arm,
Lest anybody spy the blood
And "you're hurt" exclaim!

La joie est la cotte où l'angoisse
Cherche une protection prudente
Pour que, voyant soudain le sang,
On ne crie : "Mais - tu es blessée!"¹²

The theme of this poem - not an unusual one for Dickinson - does not take more than a line to express; Richard Sewall does so as follows: 'The theme of the barb, or sting, or inner hurt, not perceived by others, and the protective covering assumed by the one who has been hurt'.¹³ What gives the poem its great force is Dickinson's particular way of handling her theme: as with much of her work, it is possible to read each stanza as a short poem in its own right, and the reader, drawn by the discrete power of each of the first two stanzas, does not fully realise, until completion of the third, that they were also building on each other, and in fact awaiting final resolution at the poem's end.

This is a poem of extremes, where words such as 'highest', 'Ecstasy', 'Death', are set into a series of short exclamations by the narrator - a narrator, who, despite the (once only) use of the pronoun 'I', never quite adopts a human stance, but remains in some further, unknowable, realm. Indeed, much of the poem's ambiguity, and its resultant complexity, resides in the shifting nuances of

¹² 'A Wounded Deer - leaps highest - ', Forgue, p. 56.

¹³ Richard B. Sewall, *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 65, 84, 213; vol. 2, p. 392, given in Joseph Duchac, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: An Annotated Guide to Commentary Published in English, 1890-1977*, (Boston, MA: G.K.Hall, 1979), p. 41.

the narrative voice. The opening lines of the first stanza, 'A *Wounded Deer* - leaps highest - /I've heard the Hunter tell -' suggest that a human narrator is speaking from and about a perfectly ordinary worldly location, but at the end of the second line, where the presence of the dash forces the reader on to the third, 'Tis but the Ecstasy of *death* -', the reader is now unsure as to who is speaking; queries arise over what kind of hunter would deliver such words, and whether there is not some other, omniscient presence here, capable of such perception and of a status appropriate to the delivery of such a declaration. In this light, the question of the identity of the initial 'I' blurs, and shifts towards occupying a less-worldly presence than that of a bystander at a hunt.

With the fourth line of the first stanza, 'And then the Brake is still!', the voice seems to shift back to a more neutral descriptive tone, but by dint of the capitalised 'Brake' and the poetic 'still', also fails to fully convince that this is quite a human voice - either the hunter's, or the observer's. The impression is confirmed with the declarations delivered in the next two lines, which represent some of the most elevated language in the entire poem: 'The Smitten Rock that gushes!/The trampled Steel that springs!' (2;1,2). Here the speaker moves fully into magisterial voice, and there is now no question that the words come from any identifiable narrator; the speaker is not describing anything of this world, but two entities both mythical and religious in nature. There is no development of either phenomenon - it is for the reader to enable inner resonances between Moses' smiting of the rock, the hunter's killing of the deer, and the piercing of Christ's side.

Such is Dickinson's concision that that the poem has moved convincingly from the natural to the supernatural in a few lines. With the third and fourth lines, which deliver the stanza's third observation (one which borders on typical Dickinsonian aphorism), 'A Cheek is always redder/Just where the Hectic stings!', the voice shifts again, seeming to edge back towards human ground. However, the choice of vocabulary and capitalisation of the two key nouns maintain a sense of ambiguity, in the first place through the multiple possible references, and in consequence, in the identity of the speaker. 'Cheek' may represent either the cheek of a human face (a common site for the 'sting', of line four), or the flank of a creature or being, as suggested above. The second noun, 'the Hectic', is even richer in connotation. Webster's Dictionary (one of

Dickinson's constant companions) gives the first meaning of 'Hectic' as 'characterized by agitations, excitement, or confused or hurried activity', and this, seen together with the verb 'to sting', and the semi-natural setting, brings a wasp, or, more probably, knowing Dickinson's love of the word, a bee, to mind. Yet at the same time, we recall the killing of the deer, and sense that 'Hectic' might also be referring to the red wound caused by a bullet, knife, or spear. Furthermore, Shakespeare used 'Hecticke' in substantive form in *Hamlet*, and, again, knowing Dickinson's reading preferences, it is impossible not to see the poison of the bee or the hunter's arrow as being also that of the lethal potion (given to the King). Finally, 'Hectic' is also the flush of fever, described by the OED as 'a symptom of a consumptive or wasting disease'.

Through all these multiple ambiguities, the two lines ultimately convey that all things (including the preceding Rock and Steel), whatever their nature, may be subject to affect by an outside agent.

The narrator continues the list of comparisons into the first line of the third stanza, again in aphoristic form: 'Mirth is the Mail of Anguish -' (echoing the first line of the first stanza, 'A Wounded Deer - leaps highest -'). Like so many of Dickinson's apparent maxims, this line is rhythmically and phonetically well-balanced, and seems to stand in its own right; it is indeed this self-contained quality, that makes the line initially strike the reader as language detached from all emotion. Yet this is precisely the line where the poem for the first time allows the reader to glimpse the depths of feeling that the poem is both describing and probably also shielding. There is no 'Mirth' in this poem, and with its sudden mention - as it were, 'out of context' - we find ourselves in some kind of recognisable place for the first time. With the introduction of this very human emotion, we realise that the 'Anguish' is probably the speaker's, and the 'Mirth', that which the speaker uses as protection in daily life. Moreover, in the light of this revelation, we further understand that the preceding elevated language and high-sounding vocabulary were probably also armour - themselves further (poetic) shields for profoundly felt feeling.

But the poet is ahead of us in the chase. Closing the second line and beginning the third in similarly traditional poetic style to that of the first, using both inversion and archaism ('... it Cautious Arm/Lest anybody spy the blood'), the mention of 'blood' resonates back through the red of the poem's many

allusions, and also continues the notion, just planted, of the narrator's human vulnerability. At this moment, the reader is poised to let understanding rush into a shared sympathy with the speaker, but the poet is furtive; she nips quickly into the open space and confronts us with the mundane, colloquial, and, of course, completely emotionally inadequate, "you're hurt". And in case we might be in any doubt that this is not our own, human speech, the poet highlights the words with the use of quotation marks - and the absence of any capitals. With this final, controlled leap from the elevated into everyday language, the poet-narrator presents a final protection, and we are left facing the realisation that we have merely glanced our target. Having momentarily allowed us to glimpse the soaring force of contained emotion, the poet once again moves silently under cover.

Even a first glance at these two poems shows that Dickinson's work, again with its large variety of typographical elements, is harder for the reader's eye to comprehend than Forgue's translation. The capital letters, the exclamation marks, the stresses (marked by italics), and the frequent dashes, all combine to create a surface which is visually complex; Forgue's poem, by contrast, allows the reader's eye to travel unimpeded across its surface; the lack of internal capitals, the absence of exclamation marks, (bar one after the closing word), and the uninterrupted use of regular type, all render Forgue's poem unmistakably smoother in appearance than Dickinson's. Observing these superficial differences, the reader senses they may indicate more profound contrasts between the two poems.

As with 'Bronze embrasé', Forgue has clearly endeavoured to suggest Dickinson's syllable count.¹⁴ Dickinson's poem, as we have already encountered, is firmly based on common hymn metre (7,6,8,6; 7,6,7,6; 7,6,8,5); Forgue uses the octosyllabic line on all but two occasions: 8,7,8,8; 8,8,7,8; 8,8,8,8. His lines are end-stopped for the main part, which reinforces the rhythm of the ballad form, and even in the two places where the lines run on (2;7; 3;9,10), the lines' initial capital letters invite a pause, again perpetuating the rhythm. Similarly, rhythm is encouraged by the disposition of strong stresses in certain lines: in line seven

¹⁴ The original 'Of Bronze - and Blaze -' divides into four 'stanzas' of 8 syllables: 8 (4+4: ll. 1& 2), 6,8,6; 7,6,7,6; 8,6,8,6; 8,6,8,6,8,6. Forgue's poem gives 8 (also broken, like the original, into two lines of four syllables), 6,8,6; 8,6,7,8; 8,6,8,6; 8,8,6,8,8,8.

of the second stanza, ('La joue est toujours plus rouge'), the assonance of 'joue, tou(jours), rouge' reinforces the stanza's regular rhythm, as do the three repetitions of 'la' in the eighth line ('Là où la fièvre la consume'). This is the only occasion in the poem where the rhythm is quite as marked, but nowhere does it appear to break down.

Reinterpreting End-Rhyme

Forgue does not employ full or half end-rhyme to the same extent as the original. If we take the middle stanza as example, we see that Dickinson fully end-rhymes lines two and four: 'springs!', 'stings!', and the closing words of lines one and three: 'gushes', 'redder' (2;2,4), manage to perpetuate the rhythm with their assonant short 'e'. Forgue, on the other hand, uses no end-line rhyme. His first stanza also only uses half-rhyme in two of the lines, in this instance, the first and fourth: 'haut', 'tait', and the third stanza displays only a suggestion of closing rhyme: 'prudente', 'sang'. The minimal nature of this practice does not indicate any particular intention to end-rhyme, and the half-rhymes seem to simply feature as one element of the poem's overall assonance and alliteration. In this respect, Forgue's poem is an example of the way in which twentieth-century poetry has modified and 'internalised' traditional end-rhyme; as Meschonnic has said, 'La suppression de la rime peut ne pas être la simple coupure avec une tradition, mais sa réinterprétation . . . son extension . . . rythmique'.¹⁵ Although Forgue's chosen form suggests a traditional scheme, end-rhyme has here been 'reinterpreted'.

We might also recall Gustave Kahn's statement in his 1887 manifesto: 'Le vers libre, au lieu d'être, comme l'ancien vers, des lignes de prose coupées par des rimes régulières, doit exister en lui-même par des alliterations, de voyelles et de consonnes parentes'.¹⁶ It is clear that Forgue uses assonance and alliteration to consolidate the poem's internal structure: to take one, significant, example, the 's' sound in the opening line's key noun and adjective ('cerf'; 'blessé' (1;1)), finds its full or half echo in several places in the three

¹⁵ Henri Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme: anthropologie historique du langage* (Paris: Verdier, 1982), cited by Michèle Aquien, *La Versification* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), p. 69.

¹⁶ Gustave Kahn, *Les Palais nomades*, (Paris: Tresse and Stock, 1887), out of print, cited by Henri Morier, *Dictionnaire de Poétique et de Rhétorique*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975), p. 914. (See here, Chapter 3, p. 82.)

stanzas (for example, 'chasseur', 'Ce', 'se' (1; 2-4); 'L'acier', '(con)sume' (2; 6,8); 'l'angoisse', 'Cherche', 'sou(dain)', 'sang' (3;1-3), and the initial adjective, 'blessé' is repeated in the poem's last line, positioned to close the poem in circular fashion: 'On ne crie: "Mais - tu es blessée!').

Thus, so far in our analysis, and perhaps to a greater extent than 'Bronze embrasé', Forgue's 'Le cerf blessé bondit plus haut' appears to represent a free-verse translation, which nonetheless visually and aurally adheres to the original's more traditional form.

If we return now for a moment to Dickinson's manner of emphasising or particularising certain words through capitals and stresses, we might expect Forgue's decision not to follow the original - one might say to literally 'lower' the case - to similarly reduce the imperative tone of Dickinson's poem, and this is undoubtedly the case in a number of respects.

Lowering the Tone?

Firstly, the translator diminishes Dickinson's dramatic qualities by occasionally reversing the poem's use of definite and indefinite articles. Thus 'the Hunter' - a specific being, further particularised, or even ennobled by the initial capital, is lowered in Forgue's poem to the rank of 'un chasseur'; similarly, 'the Ecstasy of *death*', which seems to refer to one extreme experience of one, equally extreme, moment, in Forgue's poem becomes 'une mortelle extase': this reverses the cause and effect in Dickinson's phrase, and the moment is generalised. Lastly, when Dickinson chooses to generalise 'A Cheek', it is in order to give the lines in question the quality of an aphorism, as in 'A Wounded Deer - leaps highest -' (1;1), and 'Mirth is the Mail of Anguish' (3;1), (the essence of aphorism is its ability to be applied generally). Forgue's 'La joue', still permits that idea, but the French makes no distinction between the beginnings of the poem's two aphorisms ('A Wounded . . .'; 'Mirth is . . .'; translated by 'Le cerf . . .'; 'La joie . . .') and the two declarations which in Dickinson begin with definite articles ('The Smitten . . .'; 'The trampled . . .'); again introduced by Forgue with definite articles ('L'eau', 'L'acier'). Thus the distinction between aphorism and statement is not made in the translation, which reduces the impact of the original's contrasting tones. Finally, we should note that Forgue's deer does not leap as high (and thus less dramatically) as Dickinson's: ' . . . leaps

highest -?/‘ . . . bondit plus haut’/ (1;1).

Another way Dickinson’s poem obtains its dramatic force is, as mentioned, through her use of exclamatory, undeveloped, statement: ‘The *Smitten* Rock that gushes!’/‘The *trampled* Steel that springs!’”. Precisely because their (capitals, italics, article, pronoun) particularity is unexploited (who smote? who trampled? what gushed? then what happened to the steel?, etc.), the phrases’ full semantic potential is left open to the reader. Turning to Forgue, we see that his translation suggests no further semantic examination is necessary. The lack of capitals, stress, and particularly, the absence of exclamation marks, reduce the exclamations to mere description. ‘L’eau jaillit du rocher qu’on frappe;’ (2;1), and ‘L’acier martelé rebondit;’ (2.2), read more as school geology text than the mighty words of some Biblical voice.

As with other translations we have discussed, it might be argued that clarity is one of Forgue’s principal goals. Again, Dickinson’s ambiguity is on occasion exchanged for more determinate meaning in this poem: ‘L’eau jaillit du rocher qu’on frappe;’ (2;1), as translation of ‘The *Smitten* Rock that gushes!’, provides a good example. The fact that Forgue chooses to name that which emerged from the stone as water, shows that the translator knows his Numbers, but it rids the line of the suggestion of blood, which is present in the English text. In addition, the many connotations we saw in Dickinson’s, ‘Just where the Hectic stings’, are replaced by the unambiguous ‘Là où la fièvre la consume’ (2;4); similarly, the mystery that surrounds capitalised common nouns, such as ‘*Brake*’ (1;4), ‘*Rock*’ (2;1), and ‘*Cheek*’ (2;3), is no longer present in Forgue’s lower-case translations: ‘hallier’ (1;4), ‘rocher’ (2;1) ‘acier’ (2;2).

Taken together, these different aspects of Forgue’s translation do support the immediate impression that the translation is in less imperative, dramatic vein than the original. Indeed, with hindsight, Forgue’s poem reads much in line with his description of Dickinson’s priorities in the introduction: he largely omits end-rhyme from his poem (‘il est vraisemblable que la poétesse n’[y] attachait guère d’importance . . .’), and his translation prompts a comparison with the rhythm ‘du langage quotidien’. Forgue’s poems do read, despite the ‘stanzas’ and some repetition, more like prose than poetry - in this respect, they no doubt illustrate what Berman refers to as ‘la légère prosaïcité du vers moderne’,

discussed at some length in Chapter Three.¹⁷

It is probably fair to say that with a certain number of Dickinson's poems, the occasional loss of her more idiosyncratic stylistic elements does not destroy the core of her meaning: one might argue that 'Of Bronze - and Blaze -' translates quite effectively into the kind of free-verse that both Bosquet and, more recently, Forgue use. However, I would also argue that in others, and certainly in 'A Wounded Deer - leaps highest -', the ultimate meaning of the original hinges to a large degree on its ample use of dramatic device. Without the emphasis created by the various means we have discussed, the contrast between the different narrative voices must be weakened, if not lost. Forgue's translation does not alert the reader to the final nuances of the original's conversational close, precisely because the tone he uses (along with the other elements we have discussed) is largely matter-of-fact throughout. Once chosen, Forgue's style of easy-reading translation runs the risk, on encountering a considerable portion of Dickinson's work, of mitigating the poet's complexity to a point where, as we have seen in this particular case, the original meaning is jeopardised. Indeed, in this respect, one might compare Forgue's translation of 'A Wounded Deer' with Simon's 'It was not death'. As we saw, Simon's desire to clarify Dickinson's complexities led to the suppression of the poem's key pronoun, and ultimately to the loss of the principal subject of despair. In Forgue's case, the changes made are more diverse, and less easily pinpointed than the neutral pronoun, 'It', but the final loss is comparable - the changes, I would argue, similarly damaging.

Concluding Remarks

In summarising Forgue's translation approach, and particularly in the light of his decision to ignore Johnson's work, it is helpful to look once again at the final section of the introduction, and to one or two possibly key statements therein.

Observing that Dickinson's 'concision gnomique . . . ne permet pas la lecture distraite, mais invite à l'exégèse', the translator then lists the various interpretations that scholars have offered: 'Gelpi a analysé la dialectique de la

¹⁷ PUC, p. 197.

fleur et de l'abeille . . . Griffith a parlé du complexe de l'horloge . . .'; he mentions his own suggestions with respect to '[le] cercle et de ses avatars, exprimant à la fois les limites de la conscience et de son appréhension du réel . . .'. Lastly, he lists at length the 'images les plus centrales de cette oeuvre', as he sees them: 'la mer', 'les ailes (et tout ce qui vole ou décrit un arc, en liaison avec la circonférence)', 'la communication (parole, silence)', . . . 'et une multitude d'autres encore' (pp.38-9).

It is in this way that Forgue attempts to suggest the vast scope of Dickinson's work, and, in conclusion, he makes a statement which, with hindsight, we might see as having strong bearing on the whole translation project. It is useful to quote him at some length:

Seule une interprétation de la concordance de Rosenbaum pourrait éclairer ces groupements et en tirer d'utiles renseignements sur le psychisme de Dickinson et le processus de sa création poétique. Sa poésie, en effet, demande une clef, ou, à tout le moins, une méthode d'approche, car elle suggère (selon l'image géologique de Whicher) "des strates rocheuses soumises à une pression tellurique et semblant pour le profane un simple cailloutis de sens brisés, où il convient de combler les ellipses et de raccorder les anacoluthes". A cet égard, de récents essais d'interprétation structuraliste paraissent ouvrir une voie prometteuse (p.39).

Of particular note is Forgue's view that Dickinson's poetry 'needs a key', and the prominence he accords to Whicher's (1938) statement, that for the uninitiated, the poetry amounts to 'un simple cailloutis de sens brisés . . .'.¹⁸ Given Forgue's translation style, and his decision to ignore the latest state of Dickinson manuscripts, one wonders if he did not see his French audience as 'le profane' to which Whicher refers. Certainly, with his description of Dickinson's multiple concerns and images, he seems to be presenting Dickinson as a problem yet to be solved, and in this light, an earlier description of Dickinson's work as 'une oeuvre obscure et inégale, dans laquelle chaque génération doit refaire sa sélection et l'interpréter' (p.17) acquires a more pointed edge.

It is possible that in the absence of clarity (as Forgue has chosen to perceive it) regarding Dickinson's work, he considers the poetry to be up for translation according to the translator's will. To follow this train of thought a little further, perhaps while awaiting a 'key', Forgue has simply undertaken a

¹⁸ Forgue includes Whicher in his 'Bibliographie choisie': 'George F. Whicher, *This Was a Poet: a Critical Biography of E.D.*, N.Y., 1938 (réimprimé en 1952 et 1957), p. 44.'

kind of ‘holding operation’: he has delivered a Dickinson ‘without frills’ to the French audience, while others busy themselves with further interpretations. (In this respect, Forgue’s work again reminds of Berman’s discussion of prose and verse, and a comment made by Octavio Paz, cited by Berman to illustrate ‘le tout-venant des opinions qui dévaluent la prose’: “Dans la prose, la signification tend à être univoque, tandis qu’[...] une des caractéristiques de la poésie, peut-être la caractéristique cardinale, est de préserver la pluralité des sens”¹⁹.)

This said, one might also make a case for Forgue having aimed, precisely, at delivering something of the ‘sécheresse clinique, . . . le laconisme presque brutal’ of the New England voice, to which he drew attention in his introduction.²⁰

If the first (in my opinion most likely), hypothesis is a correct interpretation of one of Forgue’s motivations, it is certainly in bad faith. That Dickinson’s work is of a complexity as yet to be fully explored is undoubtedly the case; that her punctuation, grammar, and other stylistic traits were in 1955 largely established, is also the case. Forgue’s decision to ignore them, offering flimsy reasons for doing so, and his choice to thus reverse, one might say, the process of understanding indicated by Berger and Zweig seven years earlier in France, also amounts to a reversal in Dickinson’s acculturation; in this respect, the work must finally be seen as somewhat patronising.

¹⁹ Berman, *PUC*, p.198; the quote by Paz is from *Traducción: literatura y literalidad*, (Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 1971), pp. 14-15.

²⁰ It is of interest that while Bosquet, as we saw, appears concise when compared with Simon, the reverse is frequently the case when he is placed alongside Forgue. From out of the twenty-two Dickinson poems that both men translated, one may point to the relative succinctness of several of Forgue’s lines: for example, the first two lines of ‘I’m Nobody! Who are you?/(Are you - Nobody - too?)’, are translated by Bosquet as, ‘Je suis Personne! Qui es-tu?/Es-tu Personne, toi aussi?’, and by Forgue, as, ‘Je suis Personne; et vous?/Etes-vous Personne aussi?’ (p. 71); in ‘At Half past Three, a single Bird’, Forgue removes the initial preposition ‘A’ on the three occasions where it occurs in the poem (e.g. ‘Trois heures trente . . .’, p. 201), whereas Bosquet does not (‘A trois heures trente . . .’, p. 74); a felicitous decision on Forgue’s part is found in his translation of the final line of ‘The grass so little has to do’. Colonel Higginson famously objected to the grammar of Dickinson’s line, (which the poem’s rhythm and rhyme require), ‘I wish I were a hay!’. Bosquet translates, ‘Que je voudrais être du foin!’ (p. 80), whereas Forgue gives the more faithful, ‘Je voudrais être foin!’ (p. 93). Lastly, of particular note is Forgue’s translation of ‘The Bat is dun, with wrinkled Wings’. Bosquet translates the first line straight-forwardly as, ‘La chauve-souris grise a les ailes ridées’, (p. 89), whereas Forgue, perhaps in order to demonstrate Dickinson’s affinities with Hopkins that he signalled in the introduction, gives the verb-less, ‘Chauve-souris gris-brun, ailes ridées’, (p. 227).

Chapter Eight : Claire Malroux

The Poet-Translator

Claire Malroux was born in Albi, France, and now lives in Paris and Cabourg. She is the author of six volumes of poetry, including *Soleil de Jadis*, a narrative of her childhood in south-western France during the approach of World War II, published in 1998, and *Suspens*, her most recent collection (2001).

At one point in her life, Malroux published her poetry under the name Sara Roux, but, finding that she was becoming better known for her works of translation than for her own composition, decided to publish all her work under her translating name, Claire Malroux. This alone indicates Malroux's success as a translator; her work is held in high esteem, and she was awarded the Grand Prix de la Traduction in 1995. Aside from Dickinson, Malroux has translated a large number of authors; she exemplifies Jean-Yves Masson's description of someone whose 'oeuvre de poète prene pour une large part la forme de la traduction'.¹ The Bibliothèque Nationale lists fifty-seven entries under her name, almost all of which are works of translation; interestingly, a considerable majority of the authors are American - an empathy Malroux freely admits. Among the novelists are Henry James, Edith Wharton, John Hawkes, Joyce Carol Oates and Marianne Wiggins; among the poets, Elizabeth Bishop, Charles Simic, Derek Walcott, C.K. Williams, and Wallace Stevens. In addition, Malroux has also translated a number of British poets and novelists, including Emily Brontë, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Kathleen Raine, Douglas Dunn, Ian McEwan, and Jennifer Jonston.

¹ Jean-Yves Masson, 'Traducteurs et traductions', in *Dictionnaire des oeuvres du XXe siècle*, ed by Henri Mitterand (Paris: Dictionnaires Le Robert, 1995) pp. 488-89, p. 488.

Dickinson's Principal French Translator

The remarkable number of translations of Dickinson made by Claire Malroux has already been noted.² The volume studied here is the most sizeable of those works, *Une Âme en incandescence, cahiers de poèmes 1861-1863*, published by José Corti, in 1998;³ it contains four hundred and ten poems, some ninety of which were originally published in Malroux's first Dickinson collection, *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, edited by Belin in 1989.⁴

In 2002, it seems surprising to recall that in her 1989 work, Malroux questioned why Dickinson remained relatively neglected in France: certainly, in the following twelve years, translations of Dickinson proliferated to a point where in 2001, Malroux felt able to refer to Dickinson as representing 'propriété publique' in France.⁵ As we mentioned in Chapter Four, the centenary of Dickinson's death in 1986 saw a renewed interest in her work; that, in its turn, was reinforced by a general increased preoccupation with translation, and by a growing interest in the feminist movement, which steadily trained the spotlight on Dickinson and generated a large amount of critical work, primarily by women, during the eighties and nineties. At that time a considerable number of women also turned to the task of Dickinson's translation,⁶ including, of course, Malroux herself, who has published five separate works between 1989 and the present time. (It will also be recalled that Malroux's 1989 volume represented the first major collection of Dickinson's poems to be translated into French by any woman.)

² Ch. 4, p. 122, fn. 54.

³ *Emily Dickinson: Une Âme en incandescence, cahiers de poèmes 1861-1863*, trans. and preface by Claire Malroux (Paris: José Corti, Domaine Romantique, 1998, 2nd edn 2001).

⁴ *Emily Dickinson: poèmes*, trans. and preface by Claire Malroux (Paris: Belin, L'Extrême contemporain, 1989, 3rd edn 2002). In addition to this 1989 work, and *Une Âme*, Malroux has translated and published the following collections: *Lettres au maître, à l'ami, au précepteur, à l'amant* (Paris: Corti, 1999); *Quatrains et autres poèmes brefs* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000); *Avec Amour, Emily* (Paris: José Corti, 2001).

⁵ In personal discussion with Malroux during the Edinburgh Book Festival, August 2001.

⁶ Dickinson's first French-speaking translator, Félix Ansermoz-Dubois (Lausanne, 1945), brought out a second publication in 1986, this time with the aid of Violette Ansermoz-Dubois (Switzerland: Lausanne, Editions Ouverture); the work entitled *Janvier 1866* (Paris: Éditions du Rouleau, 1991), was translated by Déborah Kéramsi and Pierre Mréja; *Escarmouches* (Paris: Orphée La Différence, 1992), consists of translations by Charlotte Melançon; *Cinquante-six poèmes, suivi de trois lettres*, was translated by Simone Normand and Marcelle Fonfreide (Paris: le Nouveau Commerce, 1996); and *The Master Letters: Les Lettres au maître*, was translated by Claudine Prache (Paris: Cazimi, 1997).

Respect for the Original

Moving to *Une Âme*, it is of immediate interest to discover that Malroux has chosen to return to the trend, begun by Berger and Zweig in 1963, of reproducing Dickinson's original form. By implication, Malroux's decision challenges Forgue's practice of employing the pre-Johnson style of punctuation.

By the time Malroux's 1989 collection appeared in France, Dickinson's American editing had taken yet another major leap forward, and while Berger and Zweig took full account of Johnson's 1955 edition in their translation (whereas Forgue, as we saw, did not), Malroux was able, and chose, to refer to the monumental two-volume work edited by Ralph W. Franklin, published in 1981: *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*.⁷ There are one or two essential differences between the Johnson and Franklin works, which are relevant here. To explain these, it is useful to refer firstly, to Franklin's later (1998) variorum edition, for the editor's own summary of Johnson's considerable contribution to the editing process: he acknowledges that Johnson presented the first collection of the whole of Dickinson's poetry without titles or alterations, preserved her spelling, and, to a large extent, her capitalisation and punctuation; Johnson dated the poems, provided a publishing history for each, and arranged the poems in chronological order.⁸

The ways in which Franklin's 1981 *Manuscript Books* furthered Johnson's accomplishments are also pinpointed by Franklin, in the work's introduction. Having noted that in presenting the poems chronologically, Johnson had obscured the fascicle structure, Franklin continues:

This facsimile edition . . . restores the original forty fascicles, arranged chronologically and renumbered. . . the internal sequence for each of the forty bound fascicles has been established . . .⁹

Thus almost twenty years later than the American edition, Claire Malroux's 1998 translation finally provides a selection of original texts as Dickinson wrote them - in fact made more legible than Franklin's manuscript edition, on account of the printed characters. In *Une Âme*, Malroux states:

⁷ *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*, 2 vols, ed by Ralph W. Franklin (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁸ *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, variorum edition, 3 vols, ed by Ralph W. Franklin (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), introduction, pp. 6-7.

⁹ *The Manuscript Books*, introduction, pp. ix, xi, xiii.

Le texte français suivi dans cette édition se veut aussi proche que possible de celui de l'original anglais des Cahiers . . . A été reproduite . . . la ponctuation propre au poète, c'est-à-dire les tirets, même là où ils pourraient paraître superflus.¹⁰

We may also note, then, that again in line with the manuscripts, Malroux reproduces Dickinson's idiosyncratic spelling; she explains to the reader that although '[l]'orthographe (dans le texte anglais) peut surprendre . . ., [certains] mots ne sauraient en aucun cas être considérés comme des coquilles' (p.33). (As examples of Dickinson's unorthodox spelling she respects in her work, Malroux gives the possessive pronoun 'its', always written by Dickinson with the apostrophe in the middle of the word, 'it's', and the nouns 'necessity', and 'angle'.)

Similarly in keeping with the manuscript edition, Malroux lays out her work according to the fascicle grouping established by Franklin; and she makes the decision to translate the cahiers '*dans [leur] intégralité*' (the fascicles, or 'cahiers' in Malroux's collection, comprise between 11 and 27 poems; on average, there are 20 poems to a cahier).¹¹ Naturally, for a single-volume work, Malroux had to make a selection from the forty different cahiers, and she decided to include those poems composed during '[les] années d'"incandescence"'. These are the three years between 1861 to 1863, which marked Dickinson's 'grande explosion de créativité', as she puts it. Finding the number of poems still too great to be reproduced in a bilingual edition, Malroux made further selections and decisions (for example, in *Une Âme*, Johnson's 'Packet 5' acts as substitute for the three Franklin cahiers, 21, 22, and 23, which Malroux elected to omit), bringing the total number of translated fascicles to twenty-two (Franklin's cahiers 12 - 40) and thus offering a sizeable, and almost continuous section of Dickinson's most productive years: 'L'ensemble se présente ainsi comme une série quasiment ininterrompue' (p.11).

¹⁰ *Une Âme*, 'Note sur le texte', written by the translator, p. 33. Further references to this work are given after quotations in the text.

¹¹ Malroux points out that she translates the American 'Packets', or 'Fascicles' by 'Cahiers cousus', 'afin de rester au plus près de la réalité'. (*Une Âme*, preface, p. 11.). For simplicity, I employ Malroux's term, 'cahiers', when referring to the fascicles.

A Solution to Dickinson's Ambiguity?

Already, then, there are obvious editorial differences between Malroux's 'projet de traduction' and those we have previously studied. Also in contrast to the earlier works, Malroux clearly articulates her decision to adhere as far as possible to the form and style of the original poetry. Furthermore, and most significantly for the critic thinking along Berman's lines, Malroux clarifies her method and aims in selecting poems for translation.

The work further differs from its predecessors by the inclusion of almost thirty pages of notes, written by the translator in order to: 'éclairer la genèse, le sens ou l'évolution de ces textes, lorsqu'ils ont été révisés par Emily Dickinson avant d'être envoyés à des personnes de sa connaissance'. (The translator also prints the poems' variants at the foot of the poem in question). Poems which carry notes are marked with asterisks, and the reader may turn to the end of the book, and discover details which can only be of the greatest interest to anyone who muses over the complexities of Dickinson's verse. The understated way in which the translator draws attention to her notes, neatly pulling the wide spectrum of information she provides into just one sentence, placed discreetly at the end of her one-page 'Note sur le texte', belies the assiduous, no doubt highly time-consuming labour which produced them.

Indeed, it is hard to estimate the extent of interest, and, perhaps more important, understanding, these notes bring to the poems; no doubt a certain section of Malroux's audience would be inspired to turn back to a translated poem as *direct result* of reading the corresponding notes! There is really no need to reproduce, for example, poem 298 (cahier 12), in order to be fascinated by the diverse information contained in its note:

Rappelons que le mot "gnomes" est celui par lequel E.D. se désigne elle-même comme poète. Les "Hôtes" représentent ici l'inspiration. Le mot *Host* signifie également "hostie" en anglais et rappelle le mot *Ghost* (fantôme) (p.576).

In addition to providing information on Dickinson's lexical preferences, Malroux notes concordances between the poems and letters, and gives the principal interpretations of certain poems offered by critics. She refers to the variants, and discusses her and her editors' selections; she informs of connections between Dickinson's individual poems, and occasionally compares the work with a composition by Tennyson, Brontë, or Browning. Finally, many

of the notes illustrate the translator's stated decision to adhere to Dickinson's idiosyncratic punctuation and ambiguities, both in terms of syntax and semantics.

Notes vary in length; while some poems are accorded just a couple of lines, the majority are much longer, occasionally running to a third of a page. To provide a brief illustration of Malroux's distinctive approach, I reproduce three (of the five) stanzas from Dickinson's much-analysed 'My Life had stood - a loaded Gun -', followed, without comment, by Malroux's corresponding notes; the range of information provided speaks for itself:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | My Life had stood - a loaded Gun -
In Corners - till a Day
The Owner passed - identified -
And carried Me away | Immobile ma Vie - Fusil Chargé
Dans un Coin - puis un Jour
Le Maître passa - Me reconnut -
Et M'emporta - |
| 3 | And when at Night - Our good Day done -
I guard My Master's Head -
'Tis better than the Eider-Duck's
Deep Pillow - to have shared - | Et la Nuit - accomplie Notre Bonne Journée -
Quand sur Sa Tête je veille -
C'est meilleur que d'avoir du profond Oreiller
Partagé le Duvet - |
| 5 | Though I than He - may longer live
He longer must - than I -
For I have but the power to kill,
Without - the power to die - | Il se peut que je Lui - survive
Mais il devra vivre - après moi -
Car j'ai seulement le pouvoir de tuer,
Sans avoir - celui de mourir - |

Ce poème a donné lieu à de multiples explications, qui insistent tantôt sur son caractère mystique, *The Owner*, Le Propriétaire, au v. 3, représentant Dieu, tantôt sur son caractère sexuel, le même terme représentant l'amant dans le vocabulaire d'E.D., ou encore sur ses connotations féministes, le Propriétaire représentant le pouvoir patriarcal contre lequel se révolte le poète féminin, réduit au rôle d'instrument (un fusil). Le Propriétaire, enfin, peut aussi représenter la Muse qui saisit l'esprit dormant du poète.

La dernière strophe, en particulier, se présente comme une énigme difficile à resoudre, même si elle semble souligner la différence de nature entre le Maître, esprit divin ou humain, qui possède à la fois le pouvoir de tuer et celui de mourir, et l'instrument, qui ne possède que celui de tuer.

L'image du fusil ou du canon (*gun*) se retrouve assez souvent chez E.D. Il ne faut pas oublier également que sa grand-mère paternelle portait le nom de Lucretia Gunn. Dans une lettre à sa cousine Louise Norcross, E.D. écrit en 1880: "...qu'est-ce que chaque instant, sinon un fusil, inoffensif tant qu'il n'est pas chargé, mais qui part lorsqu'on le touche?" (Note 754, p. 599).

Again, it is difficult to evaluate the difference in appreciation a reader might obtain by reading the poem on its own, or through the lens of Malroux's notes. Wisely, I think, the translator does not force information on the reader: as mentioned, the notes are placed, not at the close of each poem, which might

present a distraction, but at the back of the work; thus, only a closing asterisk at the end of certain poems reminds of their presence, and the reader is consequently offered a choice of two quite different kinds of reading.

The 'Projet' Defined

Aided by Malroux's clarity of intention as far as her translation project is concerned, the critic must nevertheless also draw on less overtly offered information. The paratextual material from which Malroux's 'projet' may be ascertained is altogether more comprehensive than with any previous works of translation we have examined: we are not only able to study the preface and the poems, but also, as indicated, the translator's notes. Through these different elements, a profile of Malroux's approach begins to emerge.

First faced with the abstract nature of Malroux's choice of title, however, and the way in which its rather intangible associations colour the preface, it is tempting initially to view this aspect of Malroux's presentation of Dickinson as not much more than a poetic conceit. In beginning her preface with the full (translated) line from which the title is taken, 'Oses-tu voir une Âme en incandescence?' ('Dare you see a Soul at the White Heat'), which she presents to the reader in the form of a question, Malroux immediately moves into the kind of metaphysical air that both Dickinson, and she herself, in certain of her own poetry, favour.¹² Telling the reader that this is the question with which Dickinson confronts 'quiconque se penche sur son oeuvre', Malroux then expands:

Ordre est donné au curieux de se blottir sur le seuil, comme si la forge intérieure était un sanctuaire interdit, le lieu d'une activité sacrée transcendant celle du dieu du Feu de la mythologie antique, Héphestos ou Vulcain. (p. 9)

I think it is clear, even from these few lines, that the translator has made a decision to allow her poet's voice full rein in her parallel activity of translation - or at any rate, in the preface to this particular work of translation.

¹² At the same time reminding us of Masson's pointing to the French taste for the 'metaphysical' (Masson, p. 489).

A Soul Not Easily Approached

Reading on, we quickly understand that the figurative language and metaphorical imagery in fact point to issues of central concern. Having presented the reader with a context of interdiction, Malroux goes on to state that: “‘Une Âme en incandescence’, ne s’explique pas ni s’analyse’. This soul - and now we realise it is to Dickinson herself that Malroux’s title refers - is not to be explained; to the contrary, ‘elle mérite le silence de la contemplation, un respect religieux’ (p. 9). Later in the preface, Malroux stresses the error (and here again Forgue’s quite contrary conclusion comes to mind) of trying ‘à tout prix . . . [de] dégager une dominante et de ranger les poèmes sous un seul clef’ (p. 20), but it is with this opening metaphor that Malroux first indicates her own perception of Dickinson and her work: with the image of the forge, ‘[d]’emblée une distance est posée entre le poète et le lecteur ignorant ou incrédule qui voudrait saisir le secret de la création’ (p. 9). The implication of Malroux’s introductory question, ‘*Oses-tu voir une Ame en incandescence?*’, is now clear: woe betide (perhaps a message to previous translators?) whoever attempts ‘to see’ this particular Soul. The translator’s own key to Dickinson, is precisely that there is not one. Again, in speaking later of the ‘autoportrait’ that the cahiers must ultimately present, Malroux reiterates that it is for ‘chacun de le recomposer, ainsi qu’un puzzle dont les pièces s’imbriqueraient en profondeur’ (p. 24).

Thus by presenting the poet and her work primarily through a context of uncertainty, the translator defines Dickinson less through the provision of hard ‘factual’ information,¹³ than by drawing attention to aspects of the poet which remain obscure; the series of questions Malroux poses in order to delineate principal areas of interest, are somewhat reminiscent of Dickinson’s own strategies of elimination that we saw at play in ‘It was not Death...’. (To take this one step further, this seems to represent just one of several occasions where a certain symbiosis between the translator and Dickinson suggests itself; it is of note that Malroux herself has drawn attention to the ‘profound harmony’ which generally exists between poet and translator.¹⁴)

¹³ Malroux provides more factual information under the rubric of her four-page ‘Chronologie’.

¹⁴ In personal interview at the Scottish Poetry Library, Edinburgh, August 2001.

There are, of course, certain constants in Dickinson's life and work which Malroux cites: the Bible ('toujours présente en arrière plan . . . au point de favoriser les interprétations les plus contradictoires'; (p.14)); the pervasive concerns of 'le deuil, l'abandon, la séparation, l'échec', which in turn are associated with the protagonists in Dickinson's life (Newton, Wadsworth, Bowles, Susan Gilbert Dickinson; notably, Malroux draws particular attention to Dickinson's relationship with her sister-in-law, 'sa "Cléopâtre"' - the recipient of a very large number of poems); the translator also signals that ' . . . contrairement à l'opinion répandue', Dickinson 'était loin d'être insensible aux drames de son époque' (p.15). Overall, however, Malroux's presentation of Dickinson revolves around the poet's very lack of finality, and the translator offers the reader advice as enigmatic as the subject of her study: 'Lire donc Emily Dickinson à l'envers, dans les marges où elle oppose aux certitudes, y compris celles qu'elle tente de se forger, ses hésitations essentielles' (p. 27).

The Question of Order

Given her particular selection of poems, Malroux enters into some detail regarding the practical assembly of the cahiers and the problems encountered in their ordering. The translator shares the widely-held view that the notebooks constituted a certain substitute for Dickinson: ' . . . le substitut, pathétique en un sens, de la publication à laquelle Emily Dickinson n'a jamais accédé de son vivant . . .' (p.12). Here again, Malroux draws attention to the many unknowns, in this instance those which still surround the creation of the forty small sets of poems.

Dans cet ensemble, elle n'a pas . . . introduit la moindre numérotation, ni la moindre hiérarchie temporelle. Quel cahier précède-t-il ou suit-il quel autre? Quelle était leur finalité? Servaient-ils à juguler le désordre entraîné par le foisonnement de sa production à partir de 1858? (p.13)

These are just three of the several unanswerable questions Malroux poses with respect to the cahiers, questions whose very mystery perhaps influenced her decision to translate such a sizeable, and almost integral, portion of Dickinson's work: her choice represents an attempt to offer some overall vision of the poet and her poetry:

Dans cette poésie, les plans se chevauchent comme sur une toile . . . [u]n

plan cache un autre plan . . . une Emily Dickinson cache plusieurs Emily Dickinson: la lecture intégrale des Cahiers invite à leurs dévoilements successifs (p. 25).

Even the cahiers, then, at first appearance so tidily ordered by twentieth-century scholarship, cannot be read in any linear fashion. ‘Duplicité, multiplicité, simultanéité’, says Malroux. ‘D’un cahier à l’autre, il n’est pas de développement linéaire . . . ‘[l]’ordre, s’il en est un, demeure secret’; once more, the translator advises that it is we, as readers, who must modify our expectations: ‘. . . il ne faut chercher ni unité ni progression, mais épouser plutôt un mouvement sinueux, avec ses avancées et ses replis’ (p.18).

The Letters

Although in this particular volume, Malroux appends just one of Dickinson’s letters,¹⁵ her interest in the concordance between the two genres is explicit. She draws particular attention to the three so-called ‘Master Letters’, whose date of composition crucially coincides with that of the cahiers, and in which, ‘[p]ar leur style métaphorique, leurs images, . . . sont . . . liées aux poèmes des cahiers. The letters also represent yet another enigma in terms of their intended destination (‘enigme en général passée sous silence par les critiques ou exégètes français’, notes Malroux), but although we cannot confirm the addressee, or indeed be sure if they represent anything other than an ‘exercice littéraire à l’imitation de *Jane Eyre*’, for Malroux, they are the culminating point in the poet’s ‘climat de tragédie intime, d’exaltation et de détresse’; their echoes ‘peuplent les poèmes des années 1861-63’ (p.16).¹⁶

On a slightly different level, it is of interest to note that if, as we have suggested, Malroux feels particular empathy with Dickinson, then it is with these three ‘Master’ letters that the translator, admitting to a failure of comprehension, confirms it:

La violence des sentiments exprimés est telle que l’on ne ressort pas indemne . . . de leur lecture. Le ton de l’une d’elles, en particulier, heurte l’idée

¹⁵ Dickinson’s second letter to Higginson, in which she thanks him for the ‘surgery’ (April 25, 1862), given by Malroux in French translation only (‘Appendice’, pp. 605-6).

¹⁶ In addition to the links between poems and letters Malroux makes in the present preface, she has published two separate volumes of Dickinson’s letters in her own translation: the year after *Une Âme* appeared, Malroux published *Lettres au maître, à l’ami, au précepteur, à l’amant* (1999); and a further volume of Dickinson’s letters, two years later: *Avec amour, Emily* (2001).

que l'on se fait du poète, tant la posture d'abjection adoptée semble incompatible avec la hauteur intellectuelle, morale et spirituelle qui est la sienne (p.16).

Malroux's admission points interestingly to the honesty and emotional awareness of the particular translator, and, again, to the degree of involvement possible between author and translator, which in the case of Malroux and Dickinson, now seems evident.¹⁷

Malroux gives two extracts from one of the letters, and compares the writing with parts of two poems: the link in tone and vocabulary between the genres is clear (and the attention accorded to this area by Malroux must surely advance a central strand of French Dickinson scholarship).

As other critics and translators have done, Malroux cites Shakespeare and the Metaphysical poets, as well as the Bible and hymns, as influences on Dickinson's work. In addition, however, and perhaps mindful of the 'Domaine Romantique' collection for which her publication is destined, Malroux mentions Dickinson in the context of Romanticism: she reminds the reader that Emily Brontë, too, kept secret notebooks of poems; she mentions Dickinson's admiration for Elizabeth Barrett Browning; Blake and Robert Browning are also mentioned as influences; and at one point she discusses whether the poet's passion might not be 'une concession du poète au romantisme . . .'; (p. 23).

Finally, however, in Malroux's view the poet's work - 'parole trouée de silence' - does ultimately break with 'les développements lyriques des Romantiques anglais'. Referring to the period encompassed by this collection, Malroux feels that Dickinson comes close to Rimbaud ('son grand contemporain en France') in her particular conception of heaven: 'En fait, le Paradis ne vient au quatrième rang dans une hiérarchie mettant au premier le Poète, puis le Soleil et l'Été' (p. 22). Also, calling on the key 'incandescence' of her title,

¹⁷ Malroux's comments also point to a curious question of 'betrayal' that translation perhaps, as here, occasionally prompts. That a poet criticise his or her own writing from an intellectual point of view is accepted; on the other hand, it is unlikely, I think, that personal composition would ever engender the kind of feelings, seemingly bordering on slight disgust, that Malroux clearly experiences when confronted with the 'Master' letter in question. No doubt a translator less implicated in his/her work than Malroux, would not endow that work with the kind of power necessary to enable such a reaction. That empathy exists between the two poets is undeniable: Malroux at another point suggests that Dickinson may have taken a conscious stance to render her work difficult to access: 'Peut-être faut-il voir dans ce mouvement d'orgueil l'effet d'une frustration ressentie à l'orée d'une carrière littéraire manquée . . .'; the reader senses here how the (successful) Malroux would have felt under Dickinson's circumstances.

Malroux seeks to place Dickinson in her appropriate literary context by comparing the translucent nature of Dickinson's work, with heat-produced, ultimately colourless, 'incandescent' light: 'Non seulement les couleurs s'abolissent, mais les catégories se brouillent . . . La clarté blanche, aveuglante, est celle du temps anéanti' (p.13). With this, Malroux again enjoys the use of figurative language to reflect, and also to place, Dickinson's creation in the almost uncategorisable context of 'the modern':

Art tendu vers l'absolu, mais qui, dans son heurt douloureux avec le réel, ouvre par contre-coup l'ère moderne de la discontinuité (p.14) . . . Le néant hante Emily Dickinson à l'instar de Mallarmé (p. 26).¹⁸

Finally, if we as readers wish to place Dickinson in any certain category, we must take the one key Malroux feels able to proffer - the instruction to read Dickinson's work. Yet, as we have learned, even here we find paradox: according to Malroux, 'la discontinuité en est le trait caractéristique'. But, perhaps strangely, once warned of what to expect, we, the modern reader, feel oddly comforted by the notion of discontinuity. As Malroux points out, 'c'est ce trait qui aujourd'hui nous rend le poète proche, en le propulsant dans la modernité' (p. 25). At a time when the ideas of those such as Einstein and Heisenberg have taken hold on popular thinking, when precisely the whole idea of time and place is uncertain, we are able to relate to Malroux's description of Dickinson's work in a way that earlier critics perhaps could not: 'Les Cahiers fournissent une coupe verticale de la poésie, qui doit être lue ainsi, dans l'abrupt et non dans l'horizontalité du temps' (p. 20).

A last point to be made about Malroux's preface, and one which will lead us into the poems, is that the metaphorical and figurative qualities of her work, some of which we have seen, give the impression in some passages that music is

¹⁸ With respect to Malroux's respect for the original, it is perhaps the case that when references and boundaries become blurred, or indistinct (as Malroux has amply illustrated), then the translator who wishes to do justice to the original, must hold on even faster to whatever constants are available, however idiosyncratic.

but a short distance away.¹⁹ Malroux occasionally employs highly poetical language to make an ultimately technical point; her style may again be observed in the following extract. Here the translator addresses the question of Dickinson's punctuation once more, a feature as important to the poetry as is notation to musical composition; for Malroux, the two are almost synonymous. This passage also rather beautifully evokes the possible resemblance between the American poet's written composition and a musical score:

A la page vierge, à l'azur, correspondent la neige, le vide entre les mots "sur un Disque Neigeux points minuscules -". En témoigne sa graphie si particulière, où ceux-ci forment des blocs séparés par des tirets. Les vers sont suspendus dans l'espace, constellations musicales et sémantiques, laissant les sens circuler en tous sens comme l'air, d'où la nécessité absolue de respecter [sa] ponctuation . . . (pp. 26-27).

The Problem of Rhyme

In moving to the poems, then, it seems appropriate to examine some aspect of Malroux's approach to Dickinson's musicality more closely, and we will begin by looking at the way the translator handles certain aspects of the poet's rhyme - in particular her end-rhyme. As we have discussed in previous chapters, Dickinson's rhyme - one feature of her 'constellations musicales' - is often linked to the use of her most prevalent form, the hymn metre. Notably, in this respect, Malroux says that although she initially found Dickinson's poetry 'tellement moderne' that she was tempted to translate into free-verse, she concluded that '[si] . . . Emily avait choisi de rester dans des formes fixes . . . [avec] beaucoup de quatrains où riment le deuxième et le quatrième vers, c'est qu'elle avait ses raisons'. She reasoned that, 'Sa fréquentation de la Bible, des offices . . . , des hymnes religieux, lui a insufflé sa musique', and made her final decision regarding Dickinson's translation: 'Je ne pouvais lui retirer ce moule, d'autant

¹⁹ Music is very important to Malroux. In Chapter Four, we noted the translator's pleasure on learning that Philippe Manoury was to compose a piece based on her translation of Dickinson. Similarly, on occasion in the notes, Malroux emphasises the musical or prosodic connotations of some of the poet's vocabulary: in the note referring to poem 366 (cahier 20), she states, for example, 'Il faut toujours entendre derrière le mot *foot*, chez E.D., le pied employé en prosodie, c'est-à-dire plus largement le vers. Elsewhere, she adds, 'Les *sticks* (brindilles) sont un autre métaphore pour le désigner. . .'. (p. 585); similarly, in the note to poem 454 (cahier 21), Malroux says, 'Le mot *Bars* (Lingots) . . . signifie également mesures de musique, et renvoie donc à la poésie.' (p. 587); finally, in the note to poem 343 (cahier 18), the translator states, '*This* (Ceci), au v. 1, peut désigner la poésie.'

que par toutes sortes d'irrégularités elle le pervertit'.²⁰

Of course, the musical quality of a poem does not hinge solely on rhythm and end-rhyme, but it is certain that other devices of repetition, such as internal assonance and alliteration, are on the whole easier for a translator to reproduce than end-rhyme, simply because of their lack of fixedness within the poem. For a translator to endeavour to reproduce end-rhyme, despite all linguistic differences, indicates a strong sense of priority in that regard. Accordingly, I will examine Malroux's treatment of a few poems where end-rhyme is present; I will also allow discussion of other aspects of the translation to ensue as they arise.

The very first poem in the collection (cahier 12; 214), is composed in the hymn metre, 8,6,8,6. As is usual with this regular metre, the rhythm is enhanced by the use of weak or strong end-rhyme, and line-end assonance:

I taste a liquor never brewed -
From Tankards scooped in Pearl -
Not all the Frankfort Berries
Yield such an Alcohol!

Je goûte une liqueur jamais brassée -
Dans les Chopes de Perle taillée -
Nulle Baie de Francfort ne saurait
Livrer Alcool pareil!

Inebriate of Air - am I -
And Debauchee of Dew -
Reeling - thro endless summer days -
From inns of Molten Blue -

A moi - Soûleries d'Air - Orgies de Rosée!
Aux jours sans fin de l'été
Je titube - sur le pas des cabarets -
De l'Azur en fusion -

When "Landlords" turn the drunken Bee
Out of the Foxgloves's door -
When Butterflies - renounce their
"drams" -
I shall but drink the more!

Hors de la Digitale, boute,
"Aubergiste", l'Abeille ivre -
Papillon - renonce à ta "goutte" -
Moi je boirai plus encore!

Till Seraphs swing their snowy Hats -
And Saints - to windows run -
To see the little Tippler
From Manzanilla come! (214*)

Les Anges agiteront leur neigeux Chapeau -
Les Saints - à la vitre accourront -
Pour voir, de Manzanilla venue -
Passer la petite Poivrote! (214*)

3. Frankfort Berries| Vats upon the Rhine
16. Leaning against the - Sun -

3. Baies de Francfort / Cuves sur le Rhin
16. Appuyée contre le - Soleil -

This poem demonstrates a much lighter side to Dickinson than has been previously perceived; although her subject matter is potentially grave (alcohol was severely frowned on by Puritan society), the tone is jaunty. The reader gains the impression that while the poem's regular rhythm and end-rhyme are probably employed in part for ironic purposes, they mostly serve to highlight the lilting tone of the speaker, who plays with the serious subjects of religion and its

²⁰ *Libération*, 'Livres', interview with Claire Malroux, June 14, 2001, p. III.

taboos to enhance the immediate pleasures of the natural world.²¹

Dickinson's first stanza employs weak end-rhyme for the endings of lines two and four, 'Pearl' and 'Alcohol!', achieved through the final shared consonant of each word. In the three other stanzas, full end-rhyme exists on 'Dew', 'Blue' (2;2,4); and 'door', 'more!' (3;2,4); and the assonance on 'run' and 'come!' (4;2,4), also provides a strong suggestion of rhyme.

Malroux replicates the structure of Dickinson's verse to the extent that her line counts, while not exact (by stanza, they are: 10,8,10,6; 10,7,11,6; 8,7,8,7; 11,8,9,8), similarly provide longer first and third lines than the second and fourth.²² The steady rhythm of Dickinson's 8,6 verse is naturally mitigated by the less regular lines, but no doubt the discrepancy would be more obvious did the French not provide end-rhyme.

Indeed, Malroux occasionally trumps Dickinson in her attempts to create end-rhyme. We see, for example, that in the first stanza of Malroux's poem, not only are the first and second lines fully rhymed ('brassée -', 'taillée -'), but the fourth line prolongs the same 'é' sound: 'pareil', and the final word of the third line, 'saurait', provides at least a weak echo.²³ The fact that the ten-syllable third line is followed by a much shorter fourth line (six syllables) prevents the stanza from recreating the almost sing-song rhythm of the original, but the message of levity created by the elements of end-rhyme in the French is undeniable.

The second stanza continues the established rhyme with the 'Rosée!',

²¹ Malroux goes further, pointing out in her end-notes that the poem 'est l'un de ceux où E.D. se laisse le plus aller à la joie de la création, au point de s'identifier à la nature et de proclamer la prééminence de la poésie par rapport à la société (les aubergistes) et l'ordre divin, anges et saints venant saluer l'ivresse poétique'. (p. 575).

²² In discussion, Malroux has said that the fact that Dickinson never rhymes lines one and three makes the translation of her rhyme in other lines possible. The unrhymed lines are able to be shortened or lengthened, as the translation demands. (In open conversation with Marilyn Hacker, Malroux's American translator, at a Workshop during the Edinburgh Book Festival, August, 2002).

²³ It is of interest that, in a possible instance of involuntary intertextuality, in this opening stanza, Malroux has employed similar rhyme to that of Rimbaud's first quatrain in 'L'Éternité': *retrouvée, L'Éternité, allée, soleil*: in comparing Dickinson's conception of heaven with Rimbaud's, Malroux takes this stanza as example (p. 22). However, when asked if she might have tried to suggest Rimbaud generally in her translation of Dickinson, Malroux said she did not. She feels that if any comparison can be drawn between the two, it is primarily that both poets '... suppress any logical links, and seem to speak from an intensely personal depth, hardly to be guessed by anyone around them'. Malroux's further view is that, 'they are also very different from each other ... Rimbaud is a "voyant", ED essentially a questioner, someone who tries to see ... She loves the Revelations, but is nearer the Ecclesiaste ...'. (in personal e-mail exchange, May 14, 2002).

l'été', of lines one and two and the (heard) rhyme of 'cabarets -' (l.3), but is broken by the contrasting 'fusion' - on line four. Clearly in this instance the translator has had to allow the internal assonance on 'u' of 'Azur' and 'fusion -' (in 'De l'Azur en fusion -') to compensate for the loss of end-rhyme.

In the third stanza, the first line's end-word, 'boute', is fully rhymed with the end-word of the third line's "'goutte";²⁴ in this way, as she has pointed out in more general terms, Malroux exchanges the end-rhyme on Dickinson's second and fourth lines for end-rhyme on lines one and three - a device she employs on other occasions in this collection.²⁵

In the fourth stanza, the translator has been unable to provide end-rhyme as fully as in the preceding three stanzas, but instead leans on assonance and heavy alliteration. Weak assonance is offered by the 'Anges' and '(agiter)ont' of line one, and 'agiteront' is echoed by the 'a(ccour)ont' of line two; alliteration occurs on 'v' no less than four times in lines three and four, and there are four repetitions of 'p' in the same lines ('Pour' (l.3); 'Passer', 'petite' 'Poivrote' (l.4); together, these elements provide the stanza with an overall harmony. In addition, the end-word of line four, 'Poivrote!', while not end-rhyming, finds strength through the counterbalancing 'Pour voir', which opens the preceding line.

Here, then, Malroux has sought, and largely succeeded, to reproduce something of the particular rhyme of the original, and her determination is further visible in her decision to compensate for the loss of rhyme in one place by providing a substitution in another (as seen in stanzas two and three, noted above).

However, it is obvious, too, that such an achievement in one area must run the risk of paying too high a price in other areas, and it is worth examining the small chain of achievement and sacrifice that Malroux navigated in order to make good her decision.

It is generally recognised that a word which begins, or, more pertinently

²⁴ Malroux was certainly aware of the pun created by her line's end-word, 'boute', and the English 'to boot out'!

²⁵ In 'There's a certain Slant of Light'/'Certain clarté Oblique' (13;258), Malroux rhymes the first and third lines of the third stanza (p. 81); stanza two of 'Removed from Accident of Loss'/'Soustraite à Accident de Perte' (14;424) illustrates the same treatment in the second and third stanzas (p. 107).

here, ends a line, often carries semantic significance, and Dickinson's 'I taste a liquor never brewed' presents no exceptions: eleven of the sixteen lines close with nouns, which through their position, and sometimes their rhyme, take up a key role in the poem's rhythm. However, a simple comparison with Malroux's poem shows that only three nouns end the French lines. In order to obtain the four end-rhymed words in the first stanza, for example, Malroux has chosen or been obliged to move three of Dickinson's important, capitalised and line-ending nouns to less prominent places in their respective lines, replacing them with less pivotal parts of speech: in three cases, some part of a verb ('brassée', 'taillée', 'saurait' (ll.1,2,3), where the endings provide or suggest rhyme) and in one case, with an adjective ('pareil' (l.4)). Similarly, in the second stanza, Dickinson's closing '(From inns of) Molten Blue - ' (whose resonance is accentuated by its rhyme with the preceding '(And) Debauchee of Dew - ' (l.2)), is replaced by the less dramatic, because more diffused, '(De) l'Azur en fusion'.

Indeed, were one to try to neatly sum up the particular *tone* of Dickinson's poem which might be lost through the transposition of her key words, it is the quality of drama which suggests itself; Malroux herself, in discussing the poet's style in the preface, points to the 'essence théâtrale de cette poésie' (p.23). With this in mind, it is of considerable interest to observe the ways in which Malroux has managed, in the very great part of this particular poem, to side-step the hypothetical loss of dramatic tone, at the same time keeping the rhyme; and this despite the syntactic changes mentioned above. The second and third stanzas probably provide the best examples of her tactics, and we will consider them in turn.

Inebriate of Air - am I -	A moi - Souïeries d'Air - Orgies de Rosée!
And Debauchee of Dew -	Aux jours sans fin de l'été
Reeling - thro endless summer days -	Je titube - sur le pas des cabarets -
From inns of Molten Blue -	De l'Azur en fusion -

We have already observed that while Malroux's translation has been unable to keep the heavy end-rhyme of Dickinson's lines two and four, it nevertheless compensates by providing three end-rhymes on lines one, two, and three ('Rosée', 'été', 'cabarets', respectively). We have also suggested that the stanza's closing 'Azur en fusion', might, through its length, lack of end-rhyme, and consequent failure to provide an easy resolution to the stanza, result in

diminishing the stanza's overall tone - in Dickinson, as throughout the poem, one of joyous confidence.

Malroux makes a significant change in this stanza. Where, in the first two lines, Dickinson's narrator proudly describes the drunken state in which she finds herself ('Inebriate of Air - am I - /And Debauchee of Dew'), Malroux chooses to suggest similarly Dionysian qualities, but through the use of nouns, which evoke scenes which exist outwith the speaker in which she has delightedly decided to participate: 'A moi - Soûleries d'Air - Orgies de Rosée!' By linking 'Air' ('Air') and Dew ('Rosée') with larger events, rather than simply applying them to the speaker herself, Malroux if anything increases the dramatic quality of Dickinson's lines - the more so since the two manners of drunkenness are now condensed into one, lengthier line, where they build immediately on each other, instead of being diluted over two lines as does Dickinson. (Malroux's line has ten syllables, where Dickinson employs eight, then six syllables.) In addition, Malroux changes the manner of delivery of the information, from description in Dickinson, to pure dramatic exclamation, which further suggests a highly confident narrator.²⁶ In this way, Malroux has reserved herself the space (line three) to lead up to the stanza's most inventive image - that of the speaker wheeling drunkenly 'From inns of Molten Blue' (l.4). Perhaps, again, in a desire to recuperate the drama lost in 'Azur en fusion - ', discussed above, Malroux brings her translation of Dickinson's noun, 'inns', the second word in the original's final line, up to the end of the third line, where it receives fuller attention ('Je titube - sur le pas des cabarets - '). In this way, three of the four lines end with nouns, as they do in the American, and the tone of Malroux's narrator is every bit as confident as Dickinson's own. Malroux has managed to suggest both this stanza's drama, and also its rhyme.

However, moving ever deeper into the intricacies of translation, we note that despite the ingeniousness of the translator, the very changes Malroux has used to produce the end-rhyme in this stanza have led to a breakdown in the rhythm. Dickinson's easy metre, coupled with the simple rhymes on the second and closing lines, produces a song- or dance-like rhythm which well reflects the

²⁶ There is no question that Malroux's decision to employ an exclamation mark is appropriate in translating Dickinson. One has only to look at other stanzas in this particular poem to note Dickinson's own frequent use of the device (1;4, 4;4).

movement suggested by the speaker's own 'reeling' (2;3). The translator's choice of 'tituber' does not carry the same connotations of music and dance, and, perhaps coincidentally, neither can the rhythm of Malroux's translation be said, at any rate in the second stanza, to 'reel'.²⁷ The lack of rhyme on three of the four final lines of the poem, but, in larger part, the choppy syntax of the French translation, are responsible for the sense that Malroux's narrator - at any rate in the second and third stanzas - is perhaps reeling and wheeling less lightly than Dickinson's speaker.²⁸

Speaking more generally for a moment, we might also note that a further reason why the dance-like quality of Dickinson's poem is mitigated in the translation perhaps hinges on the question of tense. The original presents the poem in terms of a narrative, which for the first two stanzas is written in the present tense, moving to the future and the future conditional in the third and fourth. The reader thus has a sense of movement, not only through the narrator's description of her actions, but in terms of progression of the story itself - we are danced through the tale, guided by the light touch of opening adverbs and conjunctions: 'When' (3;1,3), 'Till' (4;1), 'From' (1;2, 4;4), 'And' (2;2, 4;2).

We may see this difference in rhythm clearly in the third stanza:

When "Landlords" turn the drunken Bee	Hors de la Digitale, boute,
Out of the Foxgloves's door -	"Aubergiste", l'Abeille ivre -
When Butterflies - renounce their "drams" -	Papillon - renonce à ta "goutte" -
I shall but drink the more!	Moi je boirai plus encore!

Here, in order to obtain a substitution for Dickinson's rhyme on the first and third lines (again, the translator rhymes the uneven lines), Malroux has been obliged to take radical syntactic measures.

If we speak purely in terms of the tenses, we can see that the narrator is continuing her description, and now tells us that even when, at some future time,

²⁷ It is quite likely that Malroux was aware of the ambiguity present in the English 'reeling', although she makes no such comment in the notes: there are several occasions where the translator does highlight ambiguities; an example occurs in the note attached to poem 371 in cahier 37: speaking of the word 'content', Malroux says, 'Le mot . . . peut aussi signifier "Contentement". Cette ambiguïté ne peut malheureusement pas être sauvegardée en français' (p. 601).

²⁸ Anecdotally, Malroux has herself mused that she might be 'too serious' to (ideally) translate Dickinson, who she sees as 'very grave', but also 'joyous, espiègle'! (In discussion during a Workshop on Translation at the Edinburgh Book Festival, August 13, 2002.)

some of her drink-mates have drunk to a point where they are thrown out of their establishments, and yet others are totally satiated, she, the 'little Tippler', as the poem's final line names her, will out-do them, and simply consume more than ever. In order to obtain the desired rhyme in the translation, Malroux has lost the sense of future events, and placed the action in the present already established. She drops the repeated relative adverb, 'When', and delivers the first two lines as statement of fact: 'Hors de la Digitale, boute,/"Aubergiste", l'Abeille ivre - '.²⁹ Thus the reader of the translation at this point stands still, and continues to do so in the third line, which is again presented in the present, and in imperative, rather than descriptive terms: 'Papillon - renonce à ta "goutte". The fourth line, while employing the future tense ('Moi je boirai plus encore!') in context does not project the reader into the future, but continues the present tense of the preceding line.

This 'loss' of movement is inevitably exaggerated by the clever, but slightly awkward syntax of the first two lines. In order to find the end-rhyme, Malroux has placed the verb and the adverbial phrase together in the first line, and both subject and object, the one directly following the other, in the second. It is quite a feat, enabling the 'boute' which ends line one, to rhyme with its counter-part in line three, "goutte", but I think it is clear that it has been at the expense of the easy flow of the original. The reader is obliged to hesitate the time it takes to fully comprehend the syntax, and in that instant, the reeling movement of the stanza is lost.

In sum, out of respect for Dickinson's chosen form, and in an endeavour to keep the quality of music inherent in end-rhyme, Malroux has found herself obliged to sacrifice another musical quality of Dickinson's poem, the rhythm.

Other Forms

As we saw, in her preface Malroux expresses the wish and the opinion that the reader should read Dickinson in her entirety, and naturally, if one does so, little-known poems come to light, one or two of which we may signal in the

²⁹ One could argue, in the light of the following line, that these two lines should be read as an imperative, but the lack of exclamation mark suggests to me that Malroux was endeavouring, as far as possible, to suggest Dickinson's tone. In any case, the point regarding tense, which remains as present in either instance, stands.

present discussion of the translator's handling of rhythm, rhyme, and also, here, Dickinson's form. One of the three notes which Malroux appends to poem 358 (in the group of cahiers 29, 30, 31), reads as follows: 'Ce poème use du pentamètre, vers assez rarement employé par E.D. Il correspond à la solennité du ton'. This is the poem, with Malroux's translation:

<p>If any sink, assure that this, now standing - Failed like Themselves - and conscious that it rose - Grew by the Fact, and not the Understanding How Weakness passed - or Force - arose -</p> <p>Tell that the Worst, is easy in a Moment - Dread, but the Whizzing, before the Ball - When the Ball enters, enters Silence - Dying - annuls the power to kill.</p>	<p>A qui sombre, assure que ceci, debout aujourd'hui - Est tombé comme Eux - et conscient de s'élever - A grandi de ce Fait, et non pour avoir Compris Comment passa la Faiblesse - ou surgit - la Force -</p> <p>Dis que le Pire, es aisé en un Instant - La Peur, rien que le Sifflement, avant la Balle - Quand la Balle pénètre, pénètre le Silence - Mourir - annule le pouvoir de tuer.</p>
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The relatively long lines of this poem have allowed Malroux to produce a work of very near visual replication. It is clear that the French poem is, if anything, more evenly balanced than the American, and the syllable count confirms this: Dickinson's poem gives 11,10,11,8; 11,10,9,8; syllables, and Malroux's, 13,12,13,12; 11,12,12,11. Dickinson's pentameter, by virtue of its use of caesura, reads slowly and with solemnity; without entering into full details of analysis, we may note that in every line, Malroux reproduces the breaks in Dickinson's verse almost exactly, be it with commas, or dashes, or a combination of the two (which occurs, for example, in the first lines of each stanza).

If, as example, we look more closely at the poem's first line, 'If any sink, assure that this, now standing -', we see its impact is in part due to its division into three sections. The first two sections echo each other, through both the stresses and the assonance on the final 'i' of each, and the third, by its closing trochee, solemnises the line - yet by dint of the following dash, carries the sense and the eye on to the following line. This line's strength is furthered by the alliteration on 's' and the assonance, both of which continue unimpeded: the overall effect is that the simple, and in consequence, powerful, rhetoric, is reinforced by both the even, slow rhythm of the line, and the steady repetition of sound.

Malroux, I think, has done an extremely good job of suggesting a similar tone. Her line, 'A qui sombre, assure que ceci, debout aujourd'hui -', has obviously been arranged around the pauses dictated by Dickinson, and assonance is provided by the opening 'a' in the two first units ('A . . .', 'a[ssure] . . .'), and also, throughout the line, with the repeated long 'i' sound ('qui',

‘[ce]ci’, ‘[aujourd’]hui’). The first unit, ‘A qui sombre’, cleverly finds the noble tone of the compressed opening, ‘If any sink’: the slight adjustment in meaning, from (literally) ‘If anyone should sink’ to ‘To whomsoever sink’, permits of a shorter translation which neatly echoes the American.

Dickinson reinforces the elevated tone of the poem through the use of lexical repetition: the first stanza’s end-rhyme is created by the addition of prefixes to the two end words of lines one and two: ‘standing/(under)standing’ (1,3); ‘rose/(a)rose’ (2,4), and in the third line of the second stanza, the final word of the first unit, ‘(When the Ball) enters,’ is repeated in the first word of the second, and closing unit, ‘enters (Silence)’. Malroux has once more sought to preserve some form of end-rhyme, and accordingly has again adapted the meaning: in line three, she has exchanged the noun ‘Understanding’ for the verb form, ‘avoir Compris’, and by doing so, has assured an end-rhyme on lines one and three: ‘(aujourd’)hui’/(avoir com)pris’.

The harmony of Dickinson’s second stanza relies largely on internal alliteration and assonance, but the poet also provides slight end-line assonance with the final vowel sounds of ‘Moment’ and ‘Silence’ and closes her second and fourth lines with the half-rhyme of ‘Ball’, and ‘Kill’; Malroux has only been able to offer the assonance of ‘Instant’ and ‘Silence’ (2; 1,3). It is notable however, how she has engineered ample alliteration on ‘p’ to substitute for Dickinson’s impossible-to-replicate-in-the-French alliteration on ‘w’, and how the repetition at the end and beginning of the units in the third line (‘enters, enters’) is honoured by Malroux with: ‘pénètre, pénètre’.

Moving now to a different poem, if Malroux draws attention in her notes to poem 343 in cahier 18, saying that: ‘. . . E.D. a joué de la rime avec virtuosité dans la première strophe’, it is perhaps because she herself has managed to produce a work of comparable dexterity in the translation (p.584). In addition to Malroux’s virtuoso end-rhyme, this poem presents a fine example of Dickinson’s predilection for combining registers, and her love of compressed syntax and elision.

My Reward for Being, was This.	Ma Récompense d’Etre, fut Ceci.
My premium - My Bliss -	Ma prime - Mon Paradis -
An Admiralty, less -	Une Amirauté, broutille -
A Sceptre - penniless -	Un Sceptre - vétille -
And Realms - just Dross -	Les Royaumes - pure Scorie -

explanation. Only on one occasion (2;1), does she make a slight adjustment to the meaning. Where Dickinson's line reads, 'When Thrones accost my Hands -', Malroux translates 'Quand les Trônes s'approcheront de mes Mains -', which, in addition to changing the tense from the present to the future (silently implied in Dickinson), somewhat dilutes the violence present in 'to accost', and in consequence could be said to diminish the poem's overall irony. There is no easy explanation as to why Malroux did not employ 'aborder', or even 'accoster', here.

It no doubt requires a certain confidence on the translator's part to envisage the successful translation of Dickinson's meaning while at the same time adhering to her rhyme and form, but I think the three poems we have discussed illustrate that in Malroux's case, it was self-confidence well-placed. Before leaving 'My Reward for Being', we might note finally one particular instance of Malroux's nerve: rather than lose Dickinson's neat three-syllabled appeal in the second stanza's second line, "Me, Miss, Me", by "explaining" the 'Miss', and attempting to use a form of the more usual French equivalent, 'Mademoiselle', which would destroy the rhythm of the line, and probably that of the stanza, the translator has simply kept the 'Miss': 'Moi, Miss, Moi'.³²

A Feminist Reading?

This end-of-century translation was perhaps inevitably influenced, not only by the achievements of scholarly work on the original texts - most obviously that of R.W. Franklin - but also by the arguments put forward by theorists, in particular those of the feminist and structuralist schools. We have already had occasion to note Malroux's sense of the modern in Dickinson, and her stressing of the deep bond the American poet felt with her sister-in-law, Sue Gilbert, but nowhere does the translator proclaim an attitude which would fall tidily into any one particular school of theory. While it is beyond the capacity of this chapter to establish a full argument based on probable links between literary theory and this particular work of translation, it is nevertheless relevant to signal Malroux's

³² In fact, as Malroux doubtless was aware, 'Miss' had been in formal, if highly specific, French usage since the previous century. The *Trésor de la langue française* gives as one example of usage, the following line from Ponson du Terrain, *Rocamboles*, t. 4., 1859, p. 9: 'Sir Arthur, gentleman anglo-indien, épousait sérieusement miss Anne Perkins . . .'. (*Trésor de la langue française, Dictionnaire de la langue du XIXe et du XXe siècle (1789-1960)*, Gallimard, 1985).

obvious awareness of the movements of her time.

The last section of Malroux's three-part 'Bibliographie sommaire' is devoted to 'Études critiques et ouvrages de référence',³³ and twelve works are listed: the two studies by the French critics, Françoise Delphy and Christine Savinel, referred to in Chapter Four, and ten English-language works. In addition to the highly-respected biographical studies by Sewall and Griffin-Wolff, with which we can also categorise John Cody's 'psychobiography', *After Great Pain: The Inner Life of Emily Dickinson* (and in which the author broadly endeavours to explain Dickinson and her work through Freudian theory), Malroux lists works of a largely structuralist and feminist nature, which we will mention briefly.

Perhaps the best-known of the feminist works is Susan Howe's *My Emily Dickinson*. In this work, Howe allows the poet's voice to enter into a dialogue with critics and other writers, thereby refuting Gilbert and Gubar's image of Dickinson as "madwoman" and attacking Cody's *After Great Pain*, as "the rape of the poet". Howe also draws attention to the importance of the manuscript versions of the poems. Malroux also lists Joanna Feit Diehl's work, *Dickinson and the Romantic Imagination* (1984); here, the author poses the problem of women's writing in terms of both the achievement and the questioning of a conventionalised, traditionally masculine identity, or persona of authority. According to Mary Loeffelholz (whose 1991 work Malroux does not list), '[Feit Diehl] reads Dickinson's poetry through an original revision of Harold Bloom's notoriously Oedipal paradigm of male poetic careers'.³⁴

An important aspect of the structuralist movement was the growing interest in linguistic and rhetorical devices, and turning to the works Malroux lists of a more structuralist nature, we find Brita Lindberg-Seyersted's 1968 *Voice of the Poet*, a work which represents the first extended study dealing with the verbal features of Dickinson's work on all levels of language. Lindberg's work was furthered and refined by Cristanne Miller, whose *A Poet's Grammar* (1987) investigates Dickinson's most distinctive feature of compression, at the

³³ The first section, 'Oeuvres', lists five editions of the poems, and six of the letters; the second section is devoted to French translations of the poems, and lists fourteen works (pp. 607-609).

³⁴ Mary Loeffelholz, *Dickinson and the Boundaries of Feminist Theory* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), introduction, p. 1.

same time continuing the deconstructive and feminist approach to Dickinson's poems taken by other women writers (such as Margaret Homans and Feit-Diehl). Malroux also gives David Porter's 1981 *Dickinson: The Modern Idiom*; Porter builds on Wolfgang Iser's influential studies, and offers the reader a kind of primer for disentangling the poet's 'writerly' style, sharing with Iser an emphasis on textual gaps. Porter also draws attention to the manuscripts, and suggests that the meaning implicit in the visual irregularities of the writing is all too often smoothed out in print by editorial decisions.

The most immediate question feminist scholars debate is the nature of Dickinson's sexual orientation, a discussion of which Malroux is clearly aware; she speaks of 'une littérature prodigieuse sur l'homosexualité de Dickinson aux Etats-Unis'.³⁵ However, when the translator was questioned about a remark made in the preface to her translation of the letters suggesting that some of the correspondence might be interpreted as being of a homosexual nature, Malroux responded that she herself remains 'très en deçà de ce qui se dit là-bas [aux Etats-Unis]'. She grants that 'on ne peut nier qu'il y ait eu, au contact de Susan [Gilbert], une sorte d'éveil amoureux', but she adds, 'Mais cela reste à des millions de lieues de la consommation.' On the other hand, as far as '[une] consommation avec un homme' is concerned, Malroux's view is that 'il y a quelque chose, un phénomène physique, une presque-consommation'.³⁶

Approaching from another angle, Malroux clearly accepts the distinction in writing-style between men and women. It is of interest that, again, in the translation of Dickinson's correspondence, Malroux chose to place the letters addressed to men in a separate volume to those written to women, precisely on the grounds of difference in style: 'Quand [Dickinson] écrit aux hommes, elle surveille son écriture, ses émotions et sentiments. Elle donne un visage d'elle même qui est celui du poète. Avec les femmes, la communication est plus détendue'.³⁷ (Perhaps further support for Malroux's observation may be seen with poem 301, from cahier 20, 'I reason, Earth is short -' (p. 212). In the notes

³⁵ *Libération*, p. III.

³⁶ *Libération*, p. III.

³⁷ In fact, Malroux sees Dickinson's letters to Elizabeth Holland as representing 'le summum . . . de sa création poétique'. She compares them with the poems, in which 'il y a encore une certaine rhétorique, un jeu d'oppositions. Alors que dans les lettres à Holland, même cet échafaudage a disparu . . .'. (*Libération*, p. III).

to this poem, Malroux calls attention to the fact that another version exists, probably destined for Sue, in which the layout of the lines is much less conventional. Malroux says:

. . . le v. 1 de chaque strophe est divisé en deux, après les mots: “Je me dis”, les deux vers ainsi formés étant décalés l’un par rapport à l’autre . . . comme si E.D. avait voulu se livrer a une experimentation tout à fait moderne (p.585).

Given Malroux’s observation that Dickinson is more relaxed when writing to women, it seems likely that she would choose a woman as the addressee of any experimentation in that area.)

Again from a slightly different viewpoint, and as mentioned earlier, Malroux has spoken of the harmony which exists between author and translator: in her own case, she has only translated poets, both male and female, with whom she feels empathy. She has also said that she feels there is no distinction between the acts of writing poetry and translating,³⁸ and this being the case, it is not difficult to understand why she would need to feel an empathy with an author in order to be able to translate him or her.³⁹ At another moment, this time speaking of the fact that all the previous major Dickinson translators had been men, Malroux went further, stating that, more specifically, she felt that a *feminine* sensitivity was necessary to translate Dickinson;⁴⁰ she also said (and this time with some heat!), that she felt that one of the last translations to be made of Dickinson’s poems had been made out of *hate*! While not naming the translator, Malroux once again signalled her empathy with Dickinson by saying that when she herself translated the poet, she did so ‘just full of love’. In this respect, she acknowledges she translated ‘contre tous’.⁴¹

Bearing these comments in mind, we will allow Malroux’s translation of one last poem, already analysed at length in the chapter devoted to Professor

³⁸ In discussion during a Workshop on translation at the Edinburgh Book Festival, August 13, 2001.

³⁹ Pertinently, Malroux says that her first translations of Dickinson ‘sont de l’ordre de l’élan, la réponse d’un poète, fût-il mineur, à un autre. . . Pour la seconde traduction, plus complète, je n’ai pas laissé agir ma propre sensibilité’. (*Libération*, p. II.)

⁴⁰ Malroux speaks interestingly of this kind of shared women’s identity in discussing her work on Emily Brontë. Malroux translated Dickinson both before and after translating Brontë, and was struck by certain similarities: ‘J’avais le sentiment qu’il y avait là, malgré tout, des affinités féminines’. (As Malroux points out, Dickinson herself referred to Brontë as ‘Gigantic Emily’, and Malroux speaks of Dickinson in her preface, as ‘cette soeur d’Emily Brontë’ (p.21).)

⁴¹ In discussion during a Workshop on translation at the Edinburgh Book Festival, August 13, 2001, and in personal interview, August 16, 2001.

Jean Simon's translations, 'He put the Belt around my life – ' (Ch. 5, p. 143) to make a final, more tangible, contribution to the present discussion.

In passing, it is of interest to note the differences between the American, as it was published in Simon's 1954 work, and as it appeared almost fifty years later, in Malroux's 1998 collection. This is how poem was presented in 1954:

He put the belt around my life, -
I heard the buckle snap,
And turned away, imperial,
My lifetime folding up
Deliberate, as a duke would do
A kingdom's title-deed, -
Henceforth a dedicated sort,
A member of the cloud.

Yet not too far to come at call,
And do the little toils
That make the circuit of the rest
And deal occasional smiles
To lives that stoop to notice mine
And kindly ask it in, -
Whose invitation, knew you not
For whom I must decline?

Il mit la ceinture autour de ma vie,
Et j'entendis claquer la boucle,
Impérial, il me quitta
En enfermant ma vie entière,
Tranquille, comme un duc enfermerait
L'acte qui lui donne un royaume.
Je suis désormais consacrée,
Anonyme dans la nuée,

Mais assez près pour venir, sur un signe,
Accomplir les menus travaux
Qui frangent la ronde des autres,
Adresser parfois un sourire
A qui veut bien se pencher sur ma vie
Et m'inviter avec bonté.
Mais ces invites, savez-vous
Qui me force à les décliner?

This is the same poem as it is printed in Malroux's 1998 edition:

He put the Belt around my life -
I heard the Buckle snap -
And turned away, imperial,
My Lifetime folding up -
Deliberate, as a Duke would do
A Kingdom's Title Deed -
Henceforth, a Dedicated sort -
A Member of the Cloud.

Yet not too far to come at call -
And do the little Toils
That make the Circuit of the Rest -
And deal occasional smiles
To lives that stoop to notice mine -
And kindly ask it in -
Whose invitation, know you not
For Whom I must decline? (273)

3] And left his process – satisfied -
9. Yet not too far] Yet, near enough -

Il a Sanglé ma vie –
J'ai entendu claquer la Boucle –
Puis s'est détourné, impériale,
Repliant mon Existence –
Délibérément, comme un Duc
La Charte d'un Royaume –
Me voilà de la gent Consacrée –
Membre de la Nuée.

Mais pas si loin qu'à l'appel je ne vienne
M'acquitter des menues Corvées
Qui des Autres forment la Routine -
Et distribuer des sourires
Aux vies qui s'abaissent à remarquer la mienne –
Et poliment l'invitent –
Cette invitation, savez-vous pas pour Qui
Il faut que je la décline? (273)

13. That stoop] As stoop –
15. Know you not] For this world

Although Dickinson occasionally employs or suggests end-rhyme or assonance in this poem, the prosodic cohesion is primarily due to internal assonance, alliteration and half-rhyme. In consequence, Malroux has produced a free-verse poem, which when compared with Simon's translation, suggests a

composition which the reader might well perceive as ‘modern’.

As we have come to expect, Malroux has faithfully reproduced Dickinson’s stanza layout, her capitals and her punctuation - even to the point where the “gent Consacrée” of the first stanza’s seventh line is capitalised according to the English, rather than according to normal French usage, which would require a capital on the ‘G’ of ‘Gent’.

But as Malroux’s changes to the poem’s form have already suggested, there are certain aspects of this poem which distinguish it as the product of quite another voice than Dickinson’s, and which once more indicate the partnership between Malroux the translator and Malroux the poet.

Firstly, we remark the choice of the present perfect, rather than the preterite tense, which perhaps again suggests a desire on Malroux’s part to move Dickinson into more ‘modern’ voice:⁴² as it suggests, the present perfect implies a link between the present and the past, thus bringing an immediacy to the poem, and perhaps pointing to a wish on Malroux’s part to render the events being recounted by the speaker more forcefully.

This idea seems to be borne out by Malroux’s choice of the striking ‘Sangler’ in the poem’s first line. Naturally, the verb brings a violence to the line which in Dickinson is restrained (at any rate superficially) by the neutrality of ‘to put’: ‘He put the Belt around my life’. In fact, this line presents a good example of an instance where translation has directed the reader’s attention to something not immediately perceptible in the original. The connotations of ‘sangler’ are rich: in addition to the idea of physical or abstract restraint (present in Dickinson’s line), Malroux’s reader also senses the blood of ‘ensanglanter’, and the insanity in ‘cinglé’. This is certainly a highly personal choice of vocabulary on the part of the translator; there is little doubt that Malroux wished to highlight the underlying violence of the opening line.

Despite the immediacy of her tense, Malroux’s particular choice of vocabulary also seems to set the poem in the context of some ancient regime. The use of “Duc”, “Charte” and “Royaume” (all direct translations from the American), might signal a seigniorial regime, but they are wilfully emphasised by

⁴² Twentieth-century French literature has tended to employ the present perfect tense, rather than the preterite; *L’Étranger* by Albert Camus is probably the best-known example of this.

the poet's deliberate choice of "gent", mentioned earlier, and "Corvées" - the work of the serf. As suggested, the perfect tense brings a conviction to the speaker's description, as though she herself has selected to draw on such an analogy to show the extent of her oppression.

As far as the poem's many overall interpretations are concerned (discussed in Chapter Four), as with Simon's translation, the question of the undefined "Il" has been somewhat clarified by the repetition of the third person pronoun in line three, which of course denies any suggestion that it is the speaker, in whatever form, who 's'est detourne'. And although Malroux's poem may be read with a certain ironical bias, it is not as strong as in Dickinson. The translator has not provided one particular point in the poem which would unquestionably mark the mood's introduction, and the closing rhetorical question, a triumph of ironical wit with Dickinson, is here too conversational, too lacking in alliterative wit, to suggest strong irony. Again as with Simon's translation, Malroux's poem does not deny a religious reading, but tends more to set the speaker in an earth-based seigniorial world. Where Malroux's overall meaning does contrast with Simon is in losing the edge of domesticity that the 1956 translation implied, and in gaining a strong degree of anger. The overwhelming impression Malroux has constructed is that the speaker is in, or feels as if she is in, an earthly setting under male domination (and that perhaps she is too oppressed even to rise to irony).

Certainly, then, this poem's translation reveals an edge of anger which might be interpreted as marking a 'feminist' approach. However, overall, I am inclined to conclude that although obviously aware of theory, and in particular, as this poem perhaps illustrates, of feminism, Malroux's first priority has been to produce her French text according to her principal agenda of remaining as faithful as possible to the original manuscript text. Mary Loeffelholz has said that 'Dickinson's language speaks back to all the theories - deconstructive, feminist, materialist, psychoanalytic - that would address it', and perhaps Malroux would agree. Certainly, none of the translator's notes suggest a stance biased towards feminism: even the notes referring to 'My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun -' (a poem which, as Loeffelholz notes, has become the favourite "locus of discussion for feminist critics") are, as we saw earlier, purely informative.

A Solution to Dickinson's Ambiguity: II

As we have already viewed, there are aspects of Malroux's translation project which set it apart from its precedents; (it is also the case that all the earlier translations were made before the burst of theory that occurred in the seventies and eighties). One final distinguishing element of Malroux's translation which seems perfectly of her time is her treatment of Dickinson's idiosyncratic use of pronouns and gender.

The translator's use of footnotes is of course not a new one; Nabokov is perhaps the most famous exponent of the technique, but it is Malroux who for the first time in Dickinson's French translation uses them to explain some of the poet's renowned ambiguities, including Dickinson's ambivalent use of gender.

Naturally, the problem of gender is one that continually presents itself in French/English translation; it will perhaps be recalled that Bosquet's 1957 translation of 'Because I could not stop for Death/(He kindly stopped for me)', delivered the lines to the French reader according to the rules of the Academy: 'Comme je ne pouvais m'arrêter pour la Mort/(Elle s'est arrêtée aimablement pour moi);'.⁴³ In 1970, Forgue battled valiantly with the problem, completely rewriting the first line of the same poem in order to avoid the troublesome noun, and then turning 'Death' into an asexual character reminiscent of medieval drama in the second line: 'Voyant que j'étais empêchée,/MORT est passé me prendre;'. Having thus distanced the feminine nature of death in the important opening lines, Forgue obviously considered that the poem could now support the introduction of Death in masculine form in the first line of the second stanza: 'Nous allions doucement; il n'était pas pressé' (for 'We slowly drove - He knew no haste').⁴⁴

Although that particular poem is not included in Malroux's collection, the translator takes the opportunity presented by poem 608 in cahier 16 ('Afraid! Of whom am I afraid?/Not Death - for who is He?' (p. 150)) to inform the reader that: 'On notera que chez ED la mort est toujours du genre masculin' (p.582). Accordingly, Malroux has taken the final step following Forgue, and the two

⁴³ *Emily Dickinson: présentation par Alain Bosquet, choix de textes, bibliographie, portraits, fac-similés* (Paris: Seghers, 'Poètes d'aujourd'hui', no. 55, 1957), p. 108.

⁴⁴ Forgue, *Poèmes*, p. 169.

translated lines are: 'Peur! De qui ai-je peur?/Pas de Mort - car qui est-II?' (p.151). Similarly, Malroux uses the notes to let the reader know that certain words, such as 'jasmin' (14;238), or 'summer' (18;337), are always feminine for Dickinson (although the translator keeps the French masculine, with these, possibly less significant entities).

On several occasions, also, Malroux draws attention to Dickinson's fluctuating sense of the nature of personal pronouns: 'On remarquera . . . l'usage très particulier qu'E.D. fait de pronoms personnels'. Malroux draws attention to the fact that in 13;253, 'l'intime se dérobe sous le pronom indéfini *it* du vers 3 et du dernier vers', and continues, 'Il est cependant à noter que l'adjectif possessif *her* (v.13) est du genre féminin. On peut donc supposer que la personne évoquée est du sexe féminin' (pp. 576-577). Whether or not one agrees with Malroux's analysis in that particular instance, is of little importance set against the indisputable overall illumination that the translator brings to Dickinson's work. To give just one or two more examples, Malroux signals (among other information concerning form, modifications to vocabulary, and the poem's destinées) that in the ninth line of a second version of 'Blazing in Gold - and/Quenching in Purple!', 'l'adjectif possessif neutre *its* a été remplacé par l'adjectif possessif féminin *her*'; lastly, Malroux points out that Dickinson often addresses those close to her as 'sweet', and in poem 260 of cahier 13, 'Read - Sweet - how others - strove -', Malroux translates, 'Lis - mon Ange - comment d'autres - luttèrent -', choosing such a formula, as she tells us in the notes, 'afin de préserver l'ambiguïté du sexe de la personne' (p. 578). Certainly, Malroux's understanding of Dickinson's attitudes towards the traditional language of gender is unique among the poet's translators studied: again, with respect to 'This was a Poet - it is That' (20;448), Malroux explains the fact that the two neutral pronouns in the first line, indicate 'une entité asexuée, se situant au-dessus ou au-delà du personnel et du subjectif' (p.586). A far cry from Professor Simon's elimination of the pronominal reference to 'despair'.

In closing this discussion, even if Malroux is no declared feminist, her treatment of Dickinson's attitude to gender seems to be well summed up in the following statement by Mary Loeffelholz:

Dickinson's often-noted obliquities of language have assumed a newly gendered meaning in the context of feminist and deconstructive questions: her

words are now credited with deconstructing binary gender oppositions and rewriting the conventionally gendered relationship between the poet and his muse, the poet and his literary tradition.⁴⁵

Finally, I think the above study makes it clear that however much the translator wishes to do justice to Dickinson's sensibility, the language, as we have seen, may be a tenacious opponent. Malroux has circumvented this impediment by using a two-forked approach: her particular manner of translating, backed by her prodigious notes. There are few examples better suited than the following poem to simultaneously demonstrate Malroux's endeavours to be faithful to the poet, her awareness of the linguistic trials that her approach to translation must solicit, and, finally, her control over that very language through clarification of its employment. This is the first stanza of poem 528 (cahier 20), with its translation; we will let Malroux's punctilious notes speak for themselves:

Mine - by the Right of the White Election!	Mien - par le Droit de la Blanche Election!
Mine - by the Royal Seal!	Mien - par le Sceau Royal!
Mine - by the Sign in the Scarlet prison -	Mien - par le Signe dans l'Ecarlate prison -
Bars - cannot conceal!	Que Barreaux - ne peuvent celer!

. . . Le poème se présente comme une série d'exclamations, d'affirmations vigoureuses, sans que le lecteur puisse savoir au juste ce que recouvre ce "mien" triomphal. Le français, en faisant intervenir le genre de l'adjectif possessif, indiscernable en anglais, élimine nécessairement toute hypothèse de genre féminin, telle que la poésie, par exemple. Il serait plus juste de traduire par "à moi", mais cette expression, suivie d'un point d'exclamation, pourrait prêter à confusion (p.586).

⁴⁵ Loeffelholz, introduction, p. 6.

Conclusion

This study set out to explore the path of assimilation into French literary culture followed by one, nineteenth-century, English-language poet. Backing the enquiry was a larger, more general question, of the place of English-language poetry translation in France in the period which roughly spans the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries. Ultimately, the two areas of exploration cast light on one another.

The Translation of English-Language Poetry in Twentieth-Century France

It would be misleading to try to chart the growing interest in translation in France during the twentieth-century through a single filament; there are several strands to this part of the story, each of which has travelled across the century at its own pace.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, translation's past and its potential power to enrich and renew the French language was actively acknowledged by Gustave Lanson and, to a lesser degree, by a second great literary historian of the time, Petit de Julleville. Yet even Lanson, whose *Manuel* proves the strength of his wish to illuminate the field of translation, does not seek to integrate 'literature in French' with French literature. It is perhaps this seemingly logical, but also, in terms of translation, damaging, distinction which has delayed the acceptance of translated works into the French 'canon'. We saw that poetry anthologies and later literary histories often excluded translation completely from their contents; occasionally, when translation was included, it seemed to occur somewhat arbitrarily, or when there was a deliberate effort on the part of an editor to cross the Lanson divide. In the sample of works consulted, only two

or three editors queried the nature of the partition, and only one, Henri Deluy, crossed it; thus the distinction has remained more or less intact throughout the century.

In this way, it was primarily the individual voices of those such as Lanson or Valéry Larbaud, who in the first half of the century served to maintain a subdued awareness of translation, which flourished truly in the following fifty years. Antoine Berman specifically notes the nineteen-sixties as a time of remarkable growth, when translations and reflections on translation were produced with a vigour not seen in France since the nineteenth century; my own study has shown that both these areas were primarily fostered by the small presses and the literary journals: by providing a forum which allowed translated poetry and discussion of the different facets of its practice to blossom, it was largely the enthusiasm of individual editors - often translators themselves - which eventually enabled Jean-Yves Masson to make the proclamation in 1998 that the twentieth-century was 'le siècle traducteur'.

In another area marked by debate, the translation theorists have contributed another important strand to the expanding translation field. On one level, this group agrees - as illustrated here by the views of linguisticians such as Georges Mounin, Henri Meschonnic and also Walter Benjamin - that no theory in any scientific sense is possible while a larger theory of language is still lacking. On another, however, all have contributed their particular, often opposing, points of view regarding the balance of rhyme, rhythm and form in translation to the essential and on-going debate concerning fidelity to the source text. Opinions range from the call for a return to traditional forms and rhyme made by Efim Etkind, through Meschonnic's wish for 'décentrement', to Walter Benjamin's more philosophical view that literal translation must be understood to be a vital step in the search for linguistic completion.

Naturally, the key thread in the expanding field are the translations, which provide some illustration of the theorists' discussions yet which are manifestly marked by the major developments in French verse. Underlying the many changes in poetic practice which may be said to begin in the nineteenth century and to peak in intensity around the turn of the century with the 'crise de vers', as Stéphane Mallarmé has it, was the profound desire to rebel against the verse tradition, to find new forms and a language with the competence to express

more adequately the 'modern situation'. Finding itself uneasily situated at an axis offering not only the choice between fidelity and infidelity to the original text, but also the option of an adjacent path which stretched between the old and known and the newly glimpsed and challenging, twentieth-century translations have offered examples of most possibilities, but broadly speaking, and as with the theorists, the tendency has been towards 'décentrement', to use Meschonnic's term.

Lastly, it is no doubt a sign of the time of writing that the translator may be, as above, unquestionably described as 'key'. Certainly, Lanson, particularly through the structure of the *Manuel*, accorded precise attention to the translator, but not in any systematic way. In Lanson's view, in the history he traces, translators primarily deserve acknowledgement for their style; when the author considers the work translated to be somehow of greater importance than the work of translating it, he inevitably signals only the work. The process of the translator's proper acknowledgement is another thread in the story, and one which has observably strengthened across the course of the century. Yet while Masson again can state that the translator has achieved the status of author, the psychological and financial battle for recognition goes on. Claire Malroux, for her part, acknowledges that the deeply engaged work which enabled her translations of Emily Dickinson would not have been possible solely on a translator's remuneration.

Towards a critique des traductions

A figure of great importance to French twentieth-century translation is Antoine Berman, whose critical works in the eighties and nineties are now renowned in the field, and whose premature death is much regretted. In this particular study, Berman may be viewed almost as emblematic, someone who as translator, translation historian-philosopher, and active translation critic, rightfully finds a place on several of the paths discussed. His voice in the century's swelling preference for the practice of foreignisation, or fidelity to the form of the original, has made its mark by virtue of the sheer good sense and rigour with which he debates the case. Pivotal too, since Berman at the same time has represented a central figure in my explorations, less here for his stance on translation practice, but for his particular arguments concerning translation

criticism. His method, and the work in which he illustrates it, the 1995 *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne*, has played an essential role throughout my enquiries. Although I found, as I believe most critics would, that it was impractical to follow his rigorous (book-length) procedure step by step, his approach to translation criticism is one which is persuasive again precisely through its rigour, which again combines with logic and simplicity. Taking the broad view, surely it must be ultimately more productive for literature in general if the critic endeavours to understand the translator's point of view - the goal in his or her approach to the work of translation - the work, to a degree, therefore, in its own right - than to impose *a priori* one's own, prescriptive opinions. Berman's view is that translation criticism completes the *oeuvre de traduction*; while it can never be wholly objective (representing, after all, a form of translation), a practice that lays out its own objectives in the way indeed that it calls on the translator to do, can only encourage more articulate future translation, more enrichment finally, of the original work of literature. As such, the basic tenets of Berman's model cannot but aid, it seems to me, the formative stages of the discipline (as Berman wished it) of translation criticism. It is a method whose bases, to borrow from one of Berman's own kinder remarks about Meschonnic's procedure, 'se transposent parfaitement'.

Thus when looking at the different translations of Dickinson, I sought at the outset to establish the nature of the 'project' in question; intellectually convinced by Berman's theory, I found in practice that to a large degree, the individual approaches to Dickinson's poetry translation could be established through the paratextual information. From this point of view, one may neatly conclude that the only one of the four works whose author, Claire Malroux, clearly articulated her vision with respect to translating the original was also the most successful (in terms both of coherence and of adhesion to Dickinson's work). Interestingly, Malroux herself has said that she 'surely kept . . . [PUC] all the time at the back of [her] mind'.¹

It must also be argued, however, that Malroux had the luxury of being able to deal with a poet who had already been established, in however haphazard a form, by her predecessors. (A telling detail of the embryonic stages of

¹ In e-mail correspondence, May 20, 2002.

Dickinson's acculturation is that the fifties translators published the poems without any index: the work had yet to take recognisable form. The fact that Claire Malroux published her first edition of *Une Âme* also without index was due more, I feel, to the empathy between women poets: Malroux followed Dickinson's behaviour to the point, in this instance, of forgetting her public; friends pointed out the oversight and the second edition was amended.)

The Assimilation of Emily Dickinson into French Literary Culture

Dickinson's French publication started fifty years after her death in the pages of a journal, and might be said to have proceeded in much the same, muted way as the more general field of translation. The first French book-length publication came in the nineteen-fifties, and collections of her poems and her letters have appeared with increasing rapidity throughout the century. Malroux's multiple translations, and her own renown - which reached even the general reader's eye - no doubt mark a zenith in Dickinson's acculturation.

In contrast to Whitman, Emily Dickinson was completely unknown in France at the beginning of the century. When compared with Whitman's rolling lines, Dickinson's form is at first sight misleading, giving the initial impression of being one of the 19th century 'rimeurs' that Bosquet criticises. The understanding of Dickinson at the end of the twentieth-century is that her form is as necessary to her work as it was to Mallarmé - simply one aspect of the complexities and ambiguities which express a modernity similar to that of Mallarmé and Rimbaud, a comparison made by both Forgue and Malroux. In sum, Dickinson's French presentation has changed as radically over a period of sixty years as it has in America: whereas the first translations in the twenties and thirties gave titles to the poems, and endeavoured to render her syntactically and semantically more accessible, the goal of the end-of-century work is to present Dickinson in a form faithful to the original.

The translations of Dickinson I discuss also point to aspects of the broader path, in particular the development of French-language verse. The work of Bosquet and Forgue, and to some extent, Malroux, provide illustration of the twentieth century's taste for free-verse; Simon, on the other hand, although translating only a few years before Bosquet, was writing from within the more traditional academic context, and is at pains to suggest the older, more rigorous

forms. Indeed, in this respect, the very first translations made by Pierre Leyris in the 1939 *Mesures* - translations, therefore, which preceded both Simon and Bosquet by fifteen years, are of interest, as are the same translator's later, much fuller work on Dickinson undertaken after an elapse of almost sixty years. For this reason alone, and despite not having the space to devote a full chapter to this eminent figure, I felt it appropriate to pay my final attentions and respect to Leyris's Dickinson translations, which take the form of a coda to my work (pp. 256-67). More generally speaking, the taste for Dickinson was no doubt accentuated by the French preference for American and metaphysical poetry.

Particular Questions of Fidelity

One aspect of the question of fidelity must be the extent to which the translator acknowledges the achievements of the American scholars, T.H. Johnson and R.W. Franklin, who have worked on the Dickinson manuscripts in order to produce the poems in the original form and order in which Dickinson wrote them. It was of note that Bosquet ignored Johnson's variorum edition in the selection of poems he produced; Berger and Zweig then reversed the process with their 1963 publication, but seven years later, Forgue once again chose to ignore the American edition. Malroux was in a situation to reproduce - and did so - the even more recent (1981) Franklin variorum edition.

Of course, faced with the enigma of Dickinson's work, different translators found different solutions to what they clearly perceived as a problem to French understanding. Jean Simon, endeavoured to present Dickinson's form in a traditional manner, and felt the need to expand and clarify the poet's thinking, notably through making semantic changes. Bosquet and Forgue both used free-verse, thus placing Dickinson's form in a somewhat secondary position, and altering many of her idiosyncrasies of style - most obviously the capitals and dashes. Of the two translators, Bosquet tended more towards a poetic recreation of Dickinson's verse, using some of the techniques he employs in his own work; Forgue rendered a rather clipped version of Dickinson, occasionally bordering on a kind of note-taking style. (It is nevertheless significant that he creatively strove to retain Dickinson's vision of Death as masculine. Simon and Bosquet put the problem of gender aside; Malroux, as we saw, addressed it in her end-notes.)

It must be said that the changes employed by the male translators were without exception accompanied by negative criticism, whereas Malroux, who endeavoured to keep both Dickinson's form and the ambiguities of her meaning, simply accepted the difficulties as part of the poet's voice, which she respected as far as she was able. Yet Malroux also accepts that she could not have undertaken such a lengthy and meticulous job without financial support: it is impossible to know how Dickinson would have fared at the hands of her male translators under similar circumstances. It remains that, to a greater or lesser degree, a patronising tone emerged from the study of the projects undertaken by men, which would presumably have been unaffected by time or money.

Coda : Pierre Leyris (1907-2001)

Although the translator Pierre Leyris does not claim a book-length collection of Emily Dickinson among his many works, he was responsible, as we have had occasion to mention,¹ for the very first introduction of Emily Dickinson into France. In 1939, he published six poems and five extracts from Dickinson's letters to Higginson, with the briefest of introductions. He found her work difficult, '[d']une dangereuse pureté', and presented his poems with an unusual humility - even by translators' standards: 'Ce sont simplement ceux que le traducteur n'a pas tout à fait détruits'. Then in 1995, after half a century in which Dickinson achieved great renown at the hand of her later translators, Leyris decided to seek her out once more, offering her by far the largest part of his *Esquisse d'une anthologie de la poésie américaine du XIX^e siècle*.² In the much lengthier introduction to this work, he reveals the hold the poet had maintained over him during the major part of his life:

En fait, elle m'est toujours restée secrètement présente - jusqu'au jour où, l'idée de ce recueil me ramenant droit à elle, j'ai repris la lecture de sa "lettre au monde" avec plus de recul et moins de naïveté (p.7).

For the part Leyris played in Dickinson's French publication alone, it seems fitting that I should conclude my study with a brief acknowledgement of this exceptional figure, whose life stretched across the twentieth century (1907-2001), and whose wider contribution to the field of literary translation in France stands second to none.

¹ Chapter Four : Emily Dickinson's French Reception.

² Pierre Leyris, *Esquisse d'une anthologie de la poésie américaine du XIX^e siècle* (Gallimard, 1995). Page references to this work will appear after quotations in the text.

Acknowledgement of Leyris's achievement is not hard to find. In his *Pour une critique*, Antoine Berman refers to some aspect of Leyris's work on literally dozens of occasions; in *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, Peter France singles out Leyris's name as one of the most prominent figures in French translation in the twentieth-century;³ and in Leyris's many English-language obituaries, *The Guardian* describes him as 'the leading translator into French of a staggering number of British and American writers'.⁴

Pierre Leyris translated works from Greek, German, Italian and Chinese, but his principal contribution to the French literary stock originated in the English language. His major work includes translations of Blake (four volumes), Emily Brontë, Byron, Coleridge, de Quincey, Dickens (four volumes), T.S. Eliot (in collaboration with the author), Hardy, Hawthorne, Hopkins, Melville, Shakespeare (nine plays, supervision of the complete works, and a selection of the *Sonnets*, published posthumously), and Yeats. Many more names could be listed; it would be difficult to cite many other figures from any century who have been as prolific yet accomplished as this 'écrivain-traducteur' *par excellence*.

In my own work, Leyris has appeared as a presence as significant, in some ways, as that of Antoine Berman. While Berman has played a vital, yet specific role in shaping my method, Leyris's name seems to have arisen in almost every context - not only with respect to the quality and quantity of his translations (such as the tribute made by George Steiner, mentioned in Chapter Three), but also on a wider and more personal level, where he appears as a hugely generous character, quick to support and contribute to the work of others.⁵ I therefore devote the final part of my study to Pierre Leyris, which I hope will serve as a form of coda to my work, and which also springs from the desire to pay him some small homage.

The Guardian obituarist, Douglas Johnson, continues his description of Leyris's work in the following manner:

But it is not only the quantity that is remarkable. It is the quality of the

³ *The New Oxford Companion to Literature in French*, ed. by Peter France (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), article 'Translation', pp. 810-811, p. 811.

⁴ *The Guardian*, Leyris obituary by Douglas Johnson, March 12, 2001.

⁵ To give just one example, Patrick Reumaux speaks of Leyris's generosity in his 1998 translation of Dickinson: *Le Paradis est au choix* (France, Librairie Élisabeth Brunet); I myself was the recipient of Leyris's hospitality, and subsequently, letters and books, during my post-graduate work.

writers concerned and the fact that they often presented difficulties of understanding and interpretation.

In our context, the names that seem to present themselves alongside Dickinson from Leyris's impressive list of translations are those other two great 'moderns before their time': T.S. Eliot and Gerard Manley Hopkins. All three poets are renownedly 'difficult' (Leyris himself acknowledged - as indeed have other translators - that his translating came in part out of a desire to 'really understand difficult works')⁶, and significantly in terms of Leyris's achievement, all three, to a greater or lesser degree, owe their French existence to his initiatives and skills.

All three poets, we might also note, share a broad religious sympathy. However different the degree and type of commitment (as we know, Dickinson overtly refused a formal acceptance of the faith prevalent around her), a personal engagement with God is manifest in each poet's work. It is perhaps the case that Leyris would have chosen to translate these authors, not only for their apparent difficulty, but because of their spiritual cast of mind (which, one might argue, perhaps produced the 'difficulty' of their work: certainly, it accompanied it).

Leyris's own religious convictions had early been visible through his association with journals such as *Mesures*, where the first French Dickinson poems appeared, and *Dieu Vivant*, where he served as secretary after the war, and in which several of his translations of Eliot, and later, Hopkins, were published. More tangibly, in his seminal Hopkins's collection, the 1957 *Reliquiae*, Leyris makes his own faith clear during his discussions of the poet's particular type of Christianity.⁷ (Of note, too, is that in translating Eliot, Leyris

⁶ Reported by Joan Fillmore Hooker, *T.S. Eliot's Poems in French Translation* (Epping, England: Bowker Publishing House, 1983), p. 172.

⁷ Reproduced in *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poèmes accompagnés de proses et de dessins*, trans. by Pierre Leyris (Paris: Seuil, 1964). I have written about this aspect of Leyris's work in an unpublished M.Sc. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1995.

took care to translate the author's Anglican references into language accessible to the French Catholic reader.)

In the light of his religious belief, one or two comments Leyris has made about the translation of poetry seem to assume a fuller significance. In a statement of some complexity, he has said, 'Mais la traduction poétique ne sera jamais lavée de son péché originel; la folie de vouloir mettre après coup une pensée en poésie'. This acknowledgement, which appears to suggest a comparison on Leyris's part between the difficulties inherent in both translation and, broadly speaking, the post-lapsarian life, is echoed in a second comment. Here Leyris speaks of translation in sensual, almost mystical terms - terms, too, which might also hint at the moment of full acceptance of faith: 'Il faut, avant tout chose, s'offrir pleinement, sans réserve, à l'influx du poème, puis le transporter aussitôt, tel qu'il vous a pénétré, dans la matrice du français' (p.12). Similarly, it is hard to read this last remark, again delivered in Leyris's discussion of Hopkins, without sensing a possible broader reference to man's struggle with his faith:

' . . . Il serait même impropre de dire que [Hopkins] paraît obscur, car le lecteur qui . . . s'achoppe à chaque mot et laisse tomber le livre, a pourtant vu luire quelques puissants éclairs. S'il est honnête, il avouera que l'obscurité est dans son regard, non dans la chose regardée'.⁸

Space does not allow for full exploration of these ideas here, but it does appear that the first concerns of Leyris's life - literature, language (particularly translation), and his faith - may ultimately be seen as representing a kind of central rope for him - a vein, *un principe*, as says Hopkins - which in turn perhaps speaks to the extraordinary diligence and tenacity with which the translator followed his vocation.

Turning now to Leyris's work with Dickinson, we may, I think, also discern something of this central thread. In the introduction to *Esquisse*, Leyris acknowledges that his selection of poems was indeed 'partial': 'comment traduirait-on, en poésie, ce qu'on sent mal?' he asks. A simple count reveals that in 1939, four of the six poems he presented in *Mesures* are of religious content, and in 1995, almost half of his selection of fifty-three poems are in some way

⁸ *Poèmes accompagnées de proses*, translator's preface, p. 10.

concerned with faith. Leyris speaks of Dickinson's 'intense vie de l'esprit', and like many, points to the ambivalence of her attitude towards God. However, he also cites three poems which show - in his view - Dickinson's faith to be sure. As he closes his comments on Dickinson, he cites the second stanza (in the French translation) from 'At least - to pray', and adds:

On peut voir dans [ce] poème . . . soit une mise en doute de sa nature divine et de sa toute-puissance, soit une supplication *de profundis*. À mes yeux, l'une et l'autre' (p.18).

Thus the path for a Dickinson 'croyante' is left open.

Philippe Jaworski, a translator himself, has spoken of:

. . . the very strong and significant stylistic continuity which leads the reader, without the slightest jerkiness or break, from an introduction signed Pierre Leyris into the translated text . . .⁹

Taking up Jaworski's line of thinking, it is of interest to consider, in the course of a more general discussion of Leyris's two publications, whether any threads of the translator's core beliefs, which we have now perhaps glimpsed in his introduction to the poet, also weave into the language of his translations.

Looking firstly at the six poems published in 1939, it is no doubt a sign of the time that, as with the early American editions, titles have been given to the poems, one of which, 'Astra Castra', must have been Leyris's, or the editor's, own invention: it did not appear in the 1924 *Complete Poems*, from which Leyris certainly made his selection.

An important aspect of both sets of translations is that Leyris clearly attempts to keep Dickinson's rhyme, even if this is sometimes at the expense of the poet's apparent meaning. We may observe this in 'Water is taught by thirst' - (a poem printed under the title 'Lessons'/'Leçons', in 1939).

Water is taught by thirst;
Land by the oceans passed;
Transport by throe;
Peace, by its battles told;
Love, by memorial mould;
Birds, by the snow.

L'eau, c'est la soif qui l'apprend;
La terre, les mers passées;
L'extase, agonie soufferte;
La paix, ses guerres contées;
L'amour, un tertre funèbre;
Et l'oiseau, la neige.

⁹ Philippe Jaworski's words are cited by the obituarist, Dinny Thorold, in *The Independent*, 'The Monday Review', 12 March, 2001.

The two lines which waver most strikingly from the sense of the original, are line four, where (it seems to me) the principal meaning of ‘Peace, by its battles told’, is that peace is defined by its battles; and line five, where it is question of a commemorative stone, or plaque: ‘memorial mould’. Taking each line in turn, we see that Leyris translates the ‘told’ of line four with ‘contées’, which in fact describes the ‘guerres’, rather than ‘la paix’. Nevertheless, the ending of ‘contées’ does provide an aural and visual rhyme with the ending of ‘passées’, two lines above, and the translator was seemingly content with that. Similarly, in line five, Leyris’s ‘tertre funèbre’ might appear as either a wilful or involuntary misreading of ‘memorial mould’ (he may have understood ‘mound’), but here again, if rhyme is a priority, the ‘funèbre’ nicely recalls the ‘soufferte’ of line three. (In the 1995 volume, Leyris left the ‘contées’ of line four, but thought better of line five, changing it to read, ‘L’Amour - un Mémorial’.)

A second poem published in both 1939 and 1995 is ‘I reason, Earth is short’, reproduced here as it appears in the later volume. As may be seen, Leyris’s later work acknowledges the by-then common currency of Dickinson’s punctuation:

I reason, Earth is short - And Anguish - absolute - And many hurt, But, what of that?	Or donc, la Terre est brève - Et l’Angoisse - absolue - Nombreux sont les meurtris, Et puis?
I reason, we could die - The best Vitality Cannot excel Decay, But, what of that?	Or donc, la mort nous guette - Nulle Vitalité N’a raison du Déclin. Eh! bien?
I reason, that in Heaven - Somehow, it will be even - Some new Equation, given - But, what of that?	Or donc, au Ciel sera - Une Équation nouvelle - Et tout s’aplanira - Mais quoi?

Aside from the typographical alterations, the only difference between this poem and that published in 1939, is the (editors’) title: in English, ‘Reason’, and in Leyris’s translation, ‘Je raisonne’. This is an important difference, however. Given the changes Leyris makes in the body of the translation, particularly to the first lines of each stanza (‘I reason’/‘Or donc’), the French title appears as indispensable to the original meaning. The first person singular is omitted in Leyris’s poem, and with the loss, in 1995, of the poem’s title, the reader would need to rely on the English on the facing page to know that the poem represents a

very personal reflection on the part of the narrator. It is hard to know why Leyris made this particular adjustment: it was perhaps due to an unfamiliarity with the use of the written 'je', the less personal form being favoured in the first part of the century. However, in terms of Leyris's style of translation, it does reveal a certain willingness to re-create. (Again, although we cannot fully explore the notion here, it is perhaps relevant to learn that Leyris's decision to become a literary translator came 'malgré des efforts frénétiques . . . [de trouver] mon moyen d'expression personnelle (d'où cette expression indirecte, surtout en poésie'.)¹⁰

In another important change in this poem, Leyris finds three different translations for Dickinson's concluding stanza lines. Here it seems clear that the alteration was again made (as we saw in 'Water, is taught by thirst'), in order to render a suggestion of end-rhyme: 'meutris/puis; déclin/bien; s'aplanira/quoi;', an embellishment of the original's anaphora. However, the decision means that the futility created by the repetition of 'But what of that?' in Dickinson's poem, is lost. The resigned tone of the original narrator, changes in Leyris's poem to that of a speaker bothered enough with his or her art to place the apparently inevitable void in a secondary position. The particular nature of this change is of note, in that its underlying, perhaps religion-driven motive, as we will see, seems to be supported by the suppression of the original's dubious 'Somehow' ('. . . in Heaven - /Somehow, it will be even -' (3;1,2)): the narrator in Leyris's poem knows no doubts: 'au Ciel sera - /Une Équation nouvelle' (3;1,2), he or she unquestioningly states. It is a subtle shift in tone, but together, this change, and the transforming of the original's rather dismissive, so-what type question, 'But, what of that?', into the less sceptical, 'Mais quoi?' ('et alors', or 'et après' would better catch the American sense) might be seen to suggest a shadowy emergence of Leyris's own belief.

Interestingly, this idea is backed by a change of similar nature made in the poem, 'I shall know why'/'Je saurai pourquoi', published in *Esquisse*. Whereas Dickinson places the reference to the principal disciple, Peter, in quotes, Leyris in the French removes them; the result is the switch from irony to sincerity: 'He will tell me what "Peter" promised -'/'Il me dira ce que Pierre a

¹⁰ In a personal letter, written on October 5, 1995.

promis' (2;1). And lastly, with respect to this important aspect of the translator's voice, another small illustration is found in Leyris's substitution of 'Nazareth' for 'Home' in 'To know just how He suffered' (3;1) (also only in *Esquisse*). Although the poem most obviously suggests the narrator's musing over the moment of Christ's death (in his introduction Leyris takes this interpretation as a given), the original just leaves room for a less particular moment of death (in biographical terms, Dickinson's father provides an obvious alternative). While the signified of 'Home' in the original line is left open ('What was His furthest mind - Of Home - or God') in Leyris's translation ('Quel était le tréfonds de Sa pensée - Nazareth - ou Dieu'), there is no place for ambiguity.

Returning now to the question of Leyris's desire to rhyme, a final example of that other aspect of his approach - and one which in addition points nicely to the rather traditional quality of his poetic voice - may be viewed in the second stanza of 'Wild Nights - Wild Nights', another of the many Dickinson poems unpublished when Leyris issued his first translations:

Futile - the Winds -	Les Vents? Bagatelle
To a Heart in port -	Pour un Coeur au port!
Done with the Compass -	Carte, Compas,
Done with the Chart!	Par-dessus bord!

Even from this short stanza, the French narrator does seem to come over as being of a more delicate, refined nature than the American counterpart. This is largely due to a combination of the old-fashioned 'bagatelle', and the rather genteel dispensing of the chart and the compass 'par-dessus bord': one can sense the impatience in the American voice as the narrator tosses the instruments aside. Here, too, though, is a case where the translator clearly views the poem's rhyme as a priority. As we see, Leyris has radically rewritten the fourth line (and in consequence, the third), in order to provide the rhyme of 'port' (l.2) and 'bord' (l.4), going one step further, in terms of rhyme, than Dickinson's half-rhyme on 'port' and 'Chart'.¹¹

From these first brief enquiries, then, we have been able to see Leyris's

¹¹ A famous example of Leyris's respect of rhyme is found in his 1947 translation of Eliot's *Prufrock* lines: 'In the room the women come and go/Talking of Michelangelo'. Leyris translated: 'Dans la pièce les femmes vont et viennent/En parlant des maîtres de Sienne'. See Joan Fillmore Hooker, *T.S. Eliot's Poems*, pp.19-20, and *T.S. Eliot, Poèmes: 1910-1930*, trans. by Pierre Leyris (Paris, Seuil, 1947).

rather old-fashioned, literary voice emerge, and with it, the desire to create a traditional, often end-rhyming, kind of verse - even at the expense of jeopardising the original meaning. We have also seen that his own faith has - to a degree which might be only ascertained in a longer study - influenced his approach to the work.

With a life that spanned the twentieth century, Leyris was of course witness to the many social and literary changes to which we have alluded in Chapters Three and Eight of this work. In closing this discussion, then, I draw attention to two changes Leyris made between the two sets of translations - changes, we remember, adopted after more than half a century's elapse - which appear to illustrate the way his work acknowledges some of the century's principal cultural shifts.

Firstly, it is striking that the longest poem Leyris included in his initial selection of six, 'In winter, in my room,'/'*En hiver, dans ma chambre*', is absent from the 1995 volume (the only poem to be so). Reading this poem, one feels quite strongly that at the time of writing, Leyris, the naive young poet 'croyant', would have seen in this tale of a serpent, a retelling of the chapter on original sin. At the end of the twentieth-century, however, it is equally impossible to ignore the way the poem brandishes its sexual implications. Perhaps, in the light of this later consciousness, Leyris chose to omit the poem from his second selection simply because it would not now portray Dickinson in the manner he wished.

Also of note is the fact that Leyris has sought to depict Dickinson's narrator as a female persona. In 'The Show is not the Show', the last two lines of the 1939 French, read 'Car je/Suis venu voir aussi'. In 1995, the lines appear as, 'Car je/Suis venue voir aussi'. Similarly, the first line of 'Departed - to the Judgement -' is translated in the later work as 'Allée au Jugement': in 1939, the line read 'Au Jugement allé'. It is improbable that these were two typographical errors (there are no more comparable instances with which to verify): it seems to me more likely that Leyris, aware as he must have been (or as he perhaps thought he was) of political gender correctness that the century has brought, was at pains to acknowledge Dickinson as the narrative voice. (Perhaps, too, more personally, Leyris wished the narrator/Dickinson to be seen to have gone to her final, heavenly, resting place.)

Lastly, the one poem which Leyris altered most considerably between the

two publications, perhaps speaks to his awareness of the taste for more literal translation that the fifty-year gap had imposed. Here is Dickinson's version, as given in the 1995 collection, with the two Leyris poems alongside.

When I hoped I feared -	Espérant, craignais;	Du temps de l'espoir j'ai craint
Since I hoped I dared -	Espérant, osai;	Depuis l'espoir, j'ose
Everywhere alone	Partout solitaire,	Où que ce soit solitaire
As a Church remain -	Comme église, dure;	Telle une ruine d'Église -
Spectre cannot harm -	Spectre ne meurtrit,	Spectre ne saurait blesser -
Serpent cannot charm -	Serpent n'ensorcèle;	Serpent ne saurait charmer -
He deposes Doom	Malheur n'est plus roi	Il dépose le Malheur
Who hath suffered him -	Pour qui l'a souffert.	Celui qui l'a enduré -
	1939	1995

In this poem, the translator seems to have revised his first version to offer a poem which is on the whole closer to the original text in meaning than the first. The first two lines of the 1995 translation ('Du temps de l'espoir j'ai craint/Depuis l'espoir, j'ose') are much more explicit than those of the 1939 version ('Espérant, craignais;/Espérant, osai'). The first line is longer than either the original or the first version (seven as opposed to five syllables in both), and as a consequence, the two lines together read more prosaically than do the more 'poetic' 1939 lines. In this instance, it seems, Leyris has decided to prioritise the meaning of the original over the form: the 1939 version, while more succinct, fails to catch the distinction between 'When' and 'Since', which the 1995 translation makes clear.

Similarly, one might particularly signal the closing four lines, not only as a further example of Leyris's desire to rhyme ('blesser' and 'charmer', for Dickinson's 'harm' and 'charm' (ll.5,6) provide stronger rhyme than do the 'meurtrit' and 'ensorcèle' of the first version) but also, again, for their closer adherence to the original: lines five and six in the 1995 version are, like the poem's first line, longer (seven syllables, instead of the original and 1939 version's five), but again, make the original's sense clearer: the 1939 version ('Spectre ne meurtrit'/Serpent n'ensorcèle) loses the impossibility present in the repeated 'cannot', whereas the 1995 lines, 'Spectre ne saurait blesser -/Serpent ne saurait charmer', spell it out quite clearly. Moreover, 'Il dépose le Malheur' (l.7, 1995) comes much nearer in meaning to 'He deposes Doom' than does 'Malheur n'est plus roi' (l.7, 1939).

This poem is a good final illustration of the way in which Leyris has sought to remain true to his own, rather traditional by present-day standards, poetic voice, but also of the translator's willingness to permit of a certain

flexibility, perhaps in deference to current taste. The two aspects of his approach appear to be not so much incompatible, as complementary. These last two quotes might be seen to stand together as testament to the authenticity of both aspects. Firstly, referring to ‘the remarkable range of Leyris’s work’ at the time of his death, *The Independent* newspaper says:

Also remarkable, and a proof of his scrupulousness and integrity as a translator, are the later revisions of earlier translations. It was a matter of applying what he had learnt in the intervening years . . .¹²

And secondly, in his 1995 *Pour une critique* - the year, of course, that *Esquisse* also appeared - Berman describes Leyris’s work, and speaks of it in terms of his achievement of *translation*:

L’oeuvre-de-traduction de Leyris a démarré durant les années 1930, et suit sa logique propre, à peine influencée par le travail de Klossowski . . . Elle se poursuit encore, longue fleuve, monument unique de *translation* de prose et de poésie.¹³

There is no doubt that in the twentieth century, *la champ des traductions poétiques anglaises*, as Berman has it, has benefited immeasurably at Leyris’s hand: the range and sustained quality of his work is remarkable. Most pertinently, Leyris’s desire to return to Dickinson after more than fifty years, when he was in his eighties, and in uneasy health (when I met him in 1995, he was painfully correcting the page proofs of *Esquisse*, magnifying glass held right to his eye), speaks not only to his integrity in retranslating Dickinson (‘j’ai senti très fort que, plus j’en citerais, moins je la trahirais’, he writes in his introduction), but also to an extreme fortitude. Ultimately, one must wonder whether Leyris’s achievement – *oeuvre-de-traduction* by any standards - was prompted simply by his love of letters, or whether his enduring faith did not play a role. Leyris himself I think would say: ‘et l’un et l’autre’.

¹² Dinny Thorold, in his Obituary article, ‘Pierre Leyris’, *The Independent*, ‘The Monday Review’, 12 March, 2001.

¹³ *PUC*, p. 121.

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