

The Uncanny Pleasures of Autotranslation

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Abstract: If, as Walter Benjamin suggests, a translation must 'lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification', translating is an act of creation predicated upon transference – a rewriting that entails a relationship with the other. This is in accordance with Benjamin's proposition that the translator must allow her language to be powerfully *affected* by the foreign tongue. But what if the foreign tongue is one's mother tongue? This performative paper explores what is at stake in the act of autotranslation when a writer returns to her mother tongue. I will use my own practice to identify what is recovered in this act, namely, a voice, a word, a letter threaded through the fabric of language. I ask why this act produces a linguistic and subjective destabilisation that opens up translinguistic play and suggest that autotranslation consists of a creation in each language with its own interferences, rhythms and affects. Though the theoretical frame of my investigation touches upon linguistic and translation studies, this paper is essentially underpinned by psychoanalytic concepts and concerns itself with experiential knowledge.

Keywords: Autotranslation, subjectivity, affect

There is a double polarisation in the rapidly expanding field of literary autotranslation (Ferraro and Grutman 2016: 7). On the one hand, scholarly approaches tend to either privilege contextual frames or textual dynamics. On the other hand, scholars are divided by those who consider autotranslation 'translation', that is, as a pure interlinguistic transfer even though it might potentially lead to creative rewriting (Tanquerio 2007: 96) and those who, emphasising the prefix 'auto', see it as an act of recreation, or 'alloglot auctorial rewriting' (Ceccherelli 2013: 14). As a writer who has translated both fiction and poetry and who now autotranslates, I am interested in textual dynamics and in the autotranslator's relationship with what I call the material fabric of language. However, unlike scholars such as Chiara Montin (2016) or Pascale Sardin (2016) who explore the genesis of texts or their mechanisms, I explore the act of autotranslation as a

practitioner, that is from the inside out, as it were. My methodology is that of practice-led research and my method is inductive.

'The Uncanny Pleasures of Translation' explores what is at stake in the act of autotranslation when a writer returns to her mother tongue. I will use my own practice to identify what is recovered in this act, namely, a voice, a word, a letter threaded through the fabric of language. I ask why this act produces a linguistic and subjective destabilisation that opens up translanguistic play and suggest that autotranslation consists of a creation in each language with its own interferences, rhythms and affects. The chosen approach is to rely primarily on psychoanalytic concepts and on experiential knowledge. The paper is performative in that it incorporates poems that are not only autotranslations but also poems *about* translation. These are meta-translations that enhance the writing process and may even contribute to research.

Why 'autotranslation'? Why erase the hyphen that usually separates 'auto' from 'translation' in English? As the Italo-Australian poet Paul Venzo reminds us, 'the terms "auto-translation" and "self-translation" are often used interchangeably' (2020:1) to refer to the act of translating one's own original work into one or several languages. As a native speaker of French, I would prefer to highlight the Latin root of the word *auctor* and thus use a term that fluidly crosses the linguistic divide that conjures 'author' and 'authority' while occluding the 'self' implicated in the practice of writing and translating. Indeed, I chose to write in English at a point in time when my relationship with French was problematic.

Though it would have made sense for me to use the term 'auto-translation', which highlights the Greek *εαυτός* (self), the practice itself provoked a linguistic and subjective destabilisation that needed to be addressed intellectually. As I coursed to and fro between English and French, I realised that I was not translating at all. Or rather, I realised that in the act of *self-trans-la-tion* I was not only investigating my relationship with two languages, but with language at large, by which I mean the material fabric of language comprising speech and writing, *parole* and *langue*. Therefore, I prefer the term 'autotranslation' because it refers to crafting a parallel text in each language while enabling an exploration of the hidden life of language, including linguistic interferences and rhythms, but also its *affective* dimension. I call this affective dimension the lining of language.

While interferences and rhythms are scrutinised and modified in the process of revision, affects remain intact despite the difference in register in each language. Affects are the signature, so to speak, of my relationship with each language. To put it another way: affects are the trace of 'transference love', a Freudian concept which designates an emotional relationship determined by the analytic setting, where the manifest love object is the analyst (Freud 1915). In translation, as in any writing, the love object is seemingly language, but it covers the primary love object, i.e., the mother. Writing in a language other than one's mother tongue means covering up this primary love object. Returning to one's mother tongue in autotranslation means uncovering affects tied up with this lost object. It means reaching for the infancy of one's relationship with language. It means brushing against the lining of language.

Pascale Sardin's study 'Ecriture féminine et autotraduction: entre "occasion délicieuse", mort et jouissance' (189-203) is of particular relevance to this paper. In it, Sardin examines the linguistic manipulation of two autotranslators, Héléne Cixous and Nancy Huston. The case of Nancy Huston bears some resemblance to my own history: Huston wrote her first fictions in French, thereby rejecting English, the tongue of the mother who had abandoned her as a child, then autotranslated herself whereas I discarded French in favour of English. Sardin notes that for both Cixous and Huston the act of autotranslation is charged with jubilation, a pleasure that she calls 'trajouissance' (189), expressed by way of neologisms, puns and onomatopoeias, a feature that also applies to my own work. Sardin's trajouissance derives from Roland Barthes's *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975), but ignores the fact that Barthes himself drew on a Jacques Lacan's concept of jouissance, which is far from benign. The French word *jouissance* means enjoyment with connotations of excess as well as sexual pleasure. In this sense it is located beyond the Freudian pleasure principle. In the 60's, Lacan contrasts jouissance and pleasure, the pleasure principle functioning as a limit to enjoyment, therefore to excess and pain. The term jouissance therefore also expresses the paradoxical satisfaction that the subject derives from his symptom and sufferings. For Lacan, jouissance is located in the death drive: it is 'the path towards death' (1969-70: 17). Thus, jubilatory though it might be, trajouissance covers up (self) destructive impulses.

I grew up in the French-speaking part of Belgium. In 1985 I flew to Australia to write a PhD on exile in Australian literature. Now living and working in Melbourne, I have become one of the characters in the fictions I analysed thirty-five years ago. My first published piece, 'Embabelled' (1997) was written concurrently in French and English. Then tragedy struck and I stopped speaking my mother tongue. It took twenty years for me to return to it when, in 2015, I was invited to an international poetry festival at Trois Rivières, Quebec, and had to translate fifty of my poems into French. Not an easy task. Nonetheless, from Quebec, I began translating *Out of Bounds* (2009), my fourth book of poetry. *Hors Limites* only appeared in 2018, marking the end of a three-year wrestle with French. Since then, I have entertained a practice of writing and translating in a mode of chassé-croisé across both languages. *Kosmogonies* (2019) exemplifies this form of bilingual dance. Like 'Embabelled', it was written simultaneously in English and French except that in this case, English had the supremacy over French, highlighting in the process linguistic interferences and rhythmic variances. The sequence of poems *Pistes de Rêve*, on the other hand, was first written in French, then in English, making me acutely aware of the different affective registers I entertain with each language.

A short work of fiction, 'Embabelled' probes the relationship between grief and aphasia. *Out of bounds*, a sequence in three parts, is a double story of dislocation that explores autobiographical fragments drawing on the protagonist's experience of migration and motherhood. It draws together the two strands to reveal a subject at pains to re-define herself through language in a space circumscribed by sexuality, culture, and postcolonial politics. *Hush: A fugue* weaves a contrapuntal mix of poetry, memoir and reflections on literary theory to tease out the relationship between mourning, mothering and art making. *Kosmogonies* expounds the dialectic between *poiesis* and *poiema* on the cusp of creation understood literally and metaphorically. *Pistes de Rêve* takes the reader to the North of Australia in search of Aboriginal rock paintings. Acutely aware of the

legacy of colonisation, the speaker focuses on issues of nomination and appropriation as she writes Country, her mind a predator. All these works, indeed probably all of my work, nudge at the limits of language.

What is interesting to me from a reader's point of view is the difference in affective register as I cross languages. I am often struck by the violence of the language in the French versions, not because French is a violent language, but because it is my mother tongue. Like other writers such as Nancy Huston, I confess to having a difficult relationship with my mother. I also confess to finding the process of translating myself back into French exhausting. The dominant pitch of *Hors Limites* is frenetic, while for instance that of *Pistes de Rêve* contains rings of composure that nonetheless speaks of self-punishment. The English versions tone down these extreme qualities. It is as though English shields both author and reader from violent emotions buried in my mother tongue.

Re-reading the previous paragraph, I realise that this paper will have to take into account the notion of 'self', or to be more precise, the ego. All art practice is enmeshed with the ego (m'Uzan 1977), and sometimes consists of a never-ceasing refashioning or remaking of the ego, especially as regards writing, as Jacques Lacan, among others, pointed out. Lacan even somehow scandalously suggests in his seminar titled *Le sinthome* (Lacan 2005) that James Joyce may have avoided madness because his art and artifice offered an alternative to psychotic delusions. Further, the rewriting of one's own text in another language may have something to do with a tacit desire to retrace the creative self or what George Steiner calls 'a narcissistic trial of authentication' (1998: 336), by which he means that the author 'seeks in the copy the primary lineaments of his own inspiration and, possibly, an enhancement or clarification of these lineaments through reproduction' (337). Though writing may be a narcissistic act, it should not be an egotistic affair.

I used to think that one writes alone: the potential and anonymous reader is absent by definition. I used to think that this absence is a prerequisite for all written acts of communication, that absence here is compounded by the fact that writing is not the transcription of speech and that writing fashions this dimension of absence into language while it re-presents some 'thing' through imaginary and symbolic operations. I used to think that writing intensifies the dimension of absence which endows it with its creative specificity and destructive capacity. But one does not write alone.

I used to think that, in translating, the author is always absent despite the shape of her ghost flickering in and out of the room where the translator alone creates the quasi-presence or quasi-absence of a voice. I used to think that the author is a secret sharer whose name and palimpsest of traces are part of the text. I used to think that I could shut the ghost out of the room so that I could ghost my voice better into this other throat. In the course of translating a novelist's work I encountered fantasies and obsessions as I unpicked threads that were part of the text's fabric, and though I bracketed these out of my consciousness, some threads stuck in the guise of images and cadences, thus colouring my own fictions. One does not translate alone.

In the course of translating my own work I realised that the text was layered in a series of linguistic strands and latent threads leading (back) to what Winnicott, in his book *Playing and reality* (1971), called 'transitional space', the latent threads that I, as reader, re-covered in the act of autotranslation—that I uncovered and covered again, metaphorically turning a blind eye to some 'thing' I did not want to see. It is on this site of trans-narcissistic communication, where the doubling of potential reader and breathing author occurs, where doubles indeed communicate through the writing, its echoes and uncanny silences, that ghosts might reveal themselves and not want to leave the room. As strange as this may sound, one does not engage in autotranslation alone.

Neither writing nor translating are lonely pursuits. Nor are they benign affairs. The doubles and repetitions are what unite the figure of the ghost with the author and translator in the uncanny territory that is the haunted text—a fiction in the making through the interplay of two languages. But if death, as 'the uncanniest thing of all, can only return in fiction' (Wright 1984: 149) and if the ghost is 'the fiction of our relation to death' made visible (Cixous 1976: 542), questions arise with respect to the operation of autotranslation as writing. What space does it uncover at the point at which the two versions of one text reflect each other? What is at stake? What does it mean as regards the status of so-called 'original work' and translated text?

Incarnadine Sun

The skin of day bursts

A wild goat leaps off the page

Word parola Wort mot woord—

a dice throw cast in jest—

a tongue in free fall—

images adjust to words:

things said

things utterly written

Where do words come from?

From behind an eyelid

the world slows down

silence swaps

the living with the dead

the mother with the child

the dead for the living dead.

Is language the world?

Soleil incarnat

La peau du jour éclate

Une chèvre sauvage saute hors de la page

Word parola Wort mot woord

un coup de dés exécuté par plaisanterie –

une langue en chute libre –

les images s'ajustent aux mots

choses dites

choses uniquement écrites.

D'où viennent les mots?

De derrière une paupière

le monde ralentit

le silence échange

le vivant et le mort

la mère et l'enfant

les morts pour les morts-vivants.

Le langage est-il le monde?

Absence. Loss. Ghosts. Death. Presence. Some 'thing' signalling that 'incarnadine' vies with incarnat(e) and silence with the word made flesh. We are on a familiar-not-familiar ground: the uncanny strand upon which one finds oneself suddenly marooned, perhaps. In German, 'Unheimlich' is, as Freud points out, a compound word (Freud 1919: 337). The negation prefix 'un' precedes 'Heimlich', familiar. 'Un', Freud stresses, is the mark of repression, which is part of the term as such: something that was familiar has become not-familiar, strange and threatening. Through the peculiar status of the unconscious, where opposites, far from excluding one another, make up for, substitute for, or replace one another or are implied in pairs, the familiar and the strange end up surfacing together. Writing is suspended in the provisional space, of reading/writing, which is the point at which the text breaks silence by saying something, but also does not divulge what is more essential: the truth of our desire for the lost object once familiar, yet now made unfamiliar via repression. Thus, reading and writing constitute an uninterrupted search for the lost object, an uninterrupted work of mourning. It is a ghosting process whereby the subject hides from the dark object of desire also named *Das Ding*, the 'thing' which heralds the death of subjectivity, in order to keep desire alive via a series of metonymic displacements originating in the word itself.

Rock clouds

A clutter of tongues

The gaze of silence

She is in limbo where blue is green is yellow is white, where sweet is bland is bitter and bites, and where silence is an incessant excess of violence. For something to come about something must go away, she hears. She wants to go. She wants to stay. As in *bleiben* blubbering *blancheur des mots* blackness of things blurring of boundaries bewitching soundaries in Babel instead of that blundering *babbelchose* to be—is a belle. She hangs on to the word word.

Nuages rochers

Désordre de langues

L'œil du silence

Elle est dans les limbes où bleu est vert est jaune est blanc, où douceur est sans goût dégoûtante et amère et mord. Et où le silence est incessant excès de violence. Pour que l'un advienne, l'autre doit disparaître, entend-elle dire. Elle veut s'en aller. Elle veut rester. Comme dans *bleiben* blundering *blancheur des*

mots noirceur des choses néant de limites annulant son et frontière à Babel au détriment de cette excrembuting babblechose à être – Is a belle. Elle s'accroche au mot mot.

It is the ghost's disruption of temporal and spatial boundaries here reduced to the Other's spectral eye that makes it such an effective figure of psychic and semantic disruption. Temporally, the spectre has to do with what Derrida calls the 'pre-originary and properly spectral anteriority' of every event, the way every human action is motivated by anterior ones (Derrida 1994: 21). Yet the ghost also embodies the paradox of its own 'radical untimeliness': it represents both the first originating time and its endless repetition (Derrida 1994: 25). Spatially, the spectre effects similar disruptions. For Derrida, its challenge to identity and its presence makes it a crucial concept for modern philosophy. The spectre functions as 'an identity that ... invisibly occupies places belonging finally neither to us nor to it ... this that comes with so much difficulty to language, this that seems not to mean anything, this that puts to rout our meaning-to-say' (Derrida 1994: 172).

'Ghosts are go-betweens. They tell us where death resides. Where life is. They tell us that art is an entwining of death and life and what lies in between' (Hecq 2017: 4). *Out of Bounds*'s protagonist and narrator inhabits this *in between*. The gap between worlds: a no man's land. I am struck by the fact that I effectively stage myself as author in the dynamic heterolinguistic threading between languages of 'bleiben blubbering blancheur des mots blackness of things blurring of boundaries bewitching soundaries in Babel instead of that blundering babbelchose to be' that anticipates the dedoubling that occurs in the act of autotranslation just as the sliding of meaning in the original version is compounded in the translation, mirroring what occurs at the level of subjectivity—my 'self'. But in this linguistic sliding, 'I' is always out of step and the mirror slightly askew.

Traditionally, translation is 'concerned with meaning' (Hervey and Higgins 2002: 132). Linguistic research in the field of translation studies, with its emphasis on the 'target literature' and its 'norms', would not dispute this (Venuti 2000). Walter Benjamin, however, suggests that 'a translation ... must lovingly and in detail incorporate the original's mode of signification' (Benjamin 1970: 79). I am struck by the use of the adverb 'lovingly': does this mean that for Benjamin a translation should bear the mark of love? A love of the work? A love passed on to the text? A love of this palimpsest of signs we call an author? If this is so, then love is the con-text of translation, that which accompanies the text. It is in this con-text that the work of translating occurs, a work that produces another text just as fiction produces parallel texts to desires and fantasies.

Benjamin's comment also refers to *incorporating* 'the original's mode of signification'. This reference to an oral relationship to the text resonates with my own reference to a tactile relationship with the fabric of language: what the translator does in working the text is to experience it as a texture—be it in the mouth, in the throat, or on the skin, i.e., when the translator has become a disembodied subject ghosting herself into some other's voice or when the autotranslator has become a doubled subject projecting her voice into another language. The text is a textile composed of differing threads or

strands, now loose, now woven tightly together, always retaining a set of relations to each other.

As a text evolves through successive interpretations, the traditional role of the author as creator slowly wanes, the notion of intentionality wanes in the process of this ever-elusive search for meaning, this unpicking and re-assembling of signifiers from the text. Post-structuralist theory denied the previously fundamental assumption that literary meaning originates from the author. 'To give a text an Author is to impose a limit', whereas without one the text becomes indeterminate, achieving reality in the imagination of the reader instead of the author's supposed intentions (Barthes 1993: 157). Hence the instability of the relationship between textual signifiers and their signifieds is acknowledged and used positively, not to undermine the possibility of consistent meaning, but to affirm the creativity inherent in the decoding process of reading, and hence of translating.

Imagine insisting too heavily on the side of meaning in the translation: then you would lose the trace left by these strands; you would no longer be able to follow the threads, the insistence of certain sounds, the cadences of sentences. Imagine insisting too heavily on the side of meaning in the autotranslation: then you would lose what Roland Barthes has famously called 'the grain of the voice' (1977). This is actually highlighted in autotranslation whereby 'the bilingual writer-translator produces two different but interrelated texts-in-translation rather than separate source and target texts' (Venzo 2016: 1). These two interrelated texts partake of the same texture. They originate from the same breath. But is it the same voice?

Gorge

non saperlo mai per te, pei tuoi puri occhi

so cold the ends of twigs burn white with frost
voices hover over flames sing to the fire's crackle
silent cadences squeeze the breath out of your chest
you wait for daybreak's natural selection to lisp
moonlight prayers dyed bright orange yellow blue
enter the freezing dawn...

Gorge

non saperlo mai per te, pei tuoi puri occhi

si froid l'extrémité des brindilles brûlent de givre
flottis de voix par-dessus le brasier chantent le feu crépitant
cadences tues t'arrachent le souffle hors de la poitrine
tu attends le ramage de l'aurore et son zézaiement habituel
prières de clair de lune teintées d'orange vif jaune bleu
tu pénètres l'aube glaciale ...

Apart from the epigraph from Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, which duplicates a voice, the two poetic excerpts modulate a voice, gesturing to the *encrustation* of the grain of the voice in the texture of the human gorge, so to speak. Roland Barthes' focus on the 'pulsional incidents' inherent in vocal performance is congruent with the more general 'definitive discontinuity of the text' that he promotes in *The Pleasure of the Text* whereby writing becomes 'writing aloud' or 'vocal writing' (1975: 66), a form of writing that abolishes the distinction between speech and writing, *langue* and *parole*. It is also opposed to linguistic closure and to the cultural subordinations for which it stands. Thus, what we call 'voice' is a distributive, rather than univocal, dimension of the signifying chain with its variations in register, timbre and tone. The voice's texture.

To allow something of this texture and of this grain to cross over from one language into another, we need to follow what Lacan calls the letter of the text, that is, to create a literal translation and therefore one whose end, underlying desire and purpose is to recover, uncover, even discover traces or latent threads. This makes sense, for what is buried in the text are events and affects transformed by the process of writing where the unconscious plays a part. Further, doesn't Jacques Lacan say in his 'Discours de Rome' that 'the word is the murder of the thing' (2001: 137)? It is as though the function of the text, reduced to the chain of language, is to resuscitate that which has been murdered in the process of writing. The word is a vital necessity. Without language we are returned to the inanity of nothingness.

THE MOON

is a glass
bowl full to the brim

dead matter lifeblood

How it

s a

h

DARKNESS

mid

W A Y

between

(us)

t

t

e

s

r

How it s s s

it s'm AT s m a t s

s m a t t e r s

brittle birds hankering

after air light water

(our lungs)

burr ...burring ...burn... burning

LA LUNE

est un bol
de verre plein à ras bord

matière inanimée élan vital

comme elle

s b

e

b b

OBSCURITÉ

b

r i

s

à mi

C H E M I N

e n t r e
e
comme elle sss (nous)
aile s'e FR frac
f r a c a s s e

*oiseaux fragiles en mal
d'air lumière eau*

(nos poumons)

Brr... bruibrui... brûle ...brûlants

Constellations disperse in a stutter alongside antiphonic song lines because every star has its avatar, double, negative. Take B-612 from the depth of the night you call childhood, renamed ST-B-612 when it shrunk to the size of your hand out of shock due to the Indo-European *st st stem* 'St' meaning just that: 'shock'. The star has dulled, or faded, but if you squint you can see its body encrusted with salt now that it has drained and dried out in the sun, now that it has been scrubbed ever so gently, now that its surface is peeling like the skin of a paper gum.

Stars are not made for the gaze. They need space, light, wings.

Les constellations se dispersent dans un bégaiement le long de lignes de chant antiphoniques car chaque étoile a son avatar, double, négatif. De la nuit que vous appelez enfance, exhumez B-612, renommée ST-B-616 lorsqu'elle fut réduite à la taille de votre main sous le choc de la *ra ra racine* Indo-Européenne 'St' qui ne signifie que ça : 'choc'. L'étoile a pâli ou s'est estompée, mais si vous regardez bien, vous verrez que son corps est *encrusté* de sable maintenant qu'on l'a saigné et séché au soleil, maintenant qu'on l'a délicatement excorié, maintenant que sa surface pèle comme l'écorce d'un eucalyptus à la peau de papier.

Les étoiles ne sont pas faites pour le regard. Elles ont besoin d'espace, de lumière, d'ailes.

What makes translating oneself back into one's mother tongue so problematic is that one uncovers traces, latent threads and fibres which occasionally cause the skin to itch, or indeed burst as does the skin of day in the opening to *Out of Bounds*. The above excerpt from *Kosmogonies* highlights the interrelatedness of external and interior spaces—an enmeshing of threads and interplay of spaces—witness how I spread myself on the page, destroy time and space. Make them real by invoking B-612, a fictional planet in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *Le petit prince* (1945). It also foregrounds what I would call the navel of autotranslation in the interference 'encrusté', from the English 'encrusted' now enlisted in my French lexicon for its play on 'incrusté' and 'encroûté' to convey the hold of one language on the other. The depth of it. The ambivalence at the core of it: the word suggests both a healing wound and a precious stone set in a jewel. But the 'i' of the French 'incrusté' has been sewn over just as the 'I' of the poem has been erased by matter.

I used to think that one writes the thought unthought alone, and therefore that one translates one's own work unpicking threads of this thought unthought alone. But that is not the case. Any writing is *unsolitary*. I move the pen across the page or my hands hover over the keyboard in the company of those I have read or heard. I write in the company of the long and recent dead. In the company of ghosts and ghosts of ghosts. And shadows. I dream-walk with them. In that walking, fragments of memory, residues of experiences lodged in the body and deposits of nomination. Flashes of intuition and concepts are shaken, jumbled, altered, processed, reshaped. Dream-walking is a prelude to making. The pre-amble to creation. It bears a relation to the stuff of writing, including theme, form and syntax. I notice that the poems I walk into the world, so to speak, have a freer syntax. They are also unrestricted by punctuation. This is not to say that they are unstructured and unbridled. Quite the opposite. I don't write when I am dream-walking. I take notes. I consider myself at liberty to collect images, impressions, sounds that will later constitute a body of thought unthought. The linguistic fabric of the writing to come takes shape retroactively. First, random notes. Second, a succession of drafts, or different incarnations of thought unthought suffused with images, rhythms, affects. Third, the text on the cusp of autofiction or autotranslation with all its linguistic trammels and enabling devices. A self-reflexive and reflective process kindled by the letter. Although both writing and autotranslation are acts of creation in their own right, it needs to be stressed that one is composed *ex-nihilo* while the other *ex-novo* (Sperti 2017: 2).

As I write, I catch myself doubting myself: Am I losing the thread? I am suddenly reminded of *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* where Christopher Bollas (2018) contends that 'within the analytic relationship it becomes possible, at least in part, to think the unthought'. Checking the preface, I read that most of our experience of the object world resides within us as 'assumed knowledge', a domain which he calls the 'primary repressed unconscious [...] the unthought known' (xviii). In this book, Bollas argues that 'aspects of the unthought known – the primary

repressed unconscious – will emerge during a psychoanalysis, as a mood, the aesthetic of a dream, or in our relation to the self as other'. So, I have reconfigured Bollas' concept of 'unthought known' when I speak of 'thought unthought', by which I mean imagining in the act of moving the pen across the page, narrative making, sensing ideas in the form of concrete and specific details, images, metaphors: writing. A writing that leads to the emergence of aspects of the 'unthought known' consonant with mood, affect and movement—a day-dream-ing aesthetic, an othered sense of self. It is this othered sense of self which is birthed in the autotranslation as I confront the ghost train of memory trailing in the fabric of language.

Lier, délier, relier. Tying, untying, retying. A kind of corporeal schema meant for the other: the image of a body of thought unthought.

It is this 'primary repressed unconscious' tied up as it is with the mother's body, indeed its presence and absence, which emerges in the course of writing in any language. In my case, writing in English means that this primary repressed unconscious is already at one remove. The act of autotranslation annihilates all distance, throwing into relief that which has been excoriated from and encrusted in my imaginary body. No wonder it hurts.

Nonetheless, there is an exhilarating dimension to autotranslation, too. It is no other than Sardin's *trajouissance*. The process is generative and regenerative: autotranslation opens up a space where two versions of one text reflect each other, however imperfectly. Gaps between words make room for neologisms, puns, archaisms, foreign words, assonances, internal rhymes, alliterations and other figures of speech whose threads illuminate the fabric of language and might repair a fraying ego.

Alone with the dark

An odour of seaweed A whiff of oil Open space from littoral to ocean
Earth to firmament Day a sunken boulder on dry sandbar The horizon lies
flat on your hand Underfoot squeaky sand Plastic scraps to glide onto A
dead seal alive with maggots Night glass water The milky way drinks you
with the cosmos Shhh A chirp Blue moon thrust against the sky You
lower your gaze The sea froths at the river's mouth A taste of salt Spray
and spume on the surface of the water Whitecaps everywhere You dive
Surface Paddle Plough the water as you would *wordsoil* Strike the waves
harder and harder You are a rider of white horses rolling in The storm
gathers momentum and the sun slowly climbs on its upward course
Schimmelreiterin You are a prose poem on the make *Stimmung*
Seething semiotic flux Not gravid amniote *Allant-toi* Fuzzy-wuzzy
wavelets Horsehair in *aqualune* *Lunaqua* *Chevaux de frise* Friesland
Mijn platte land *Belaqua* Whetting stone Cutting cold You are flayed
alive *El Desdichada* *Sheer mise en abyme* An eclipse Washed ashore
memory *Fussig* pebbles Pumice Porous skin Papyrus *Pailles de
papier* Flick flicker The sky catches on fire Tongues of pink violet
crimson lemon orange butter blue Plumes of sea green Elderflower ash

Ember rain *Schimmel* *Argent* *Alloi* *Hors la loi* Loops Ululation
Elation Entanglements Black sun shining bright

Alone with the ghosts that people the dark ... Autotranslation enhances one's 'capacité de décentrement et de mise en perspective', that is, one's ability to decentre and refocus (Bachir Diagne 2019: 88), as does the wild goat that leaps off the page in the fictitious incarnadine sun. The skin of day bursts and she regards her mother tongue from another perspective. From the other tongue. From outside her 'self'. She is free in the playground of language. She can gambol back to its Indo European roots, should the idea tickle her fancy. She can take language apart and remake it. She can reinvent herself in another language, tie herself back to life through language. It need not be a bilingual affair. Though that may be the beginning of a plurivocal, even heterolinguistic, affair.

Orfeu une pièce d'or sous sa langue affronte ses démons
dans l'imperfection de la traduction.

Orfire a gold coin under her tongue confronts
her demons in flawed translation.

Language is metamorphosing and metamorphic. Its fabric is a seething semiotic flux made of phonemes, syllables, figures of speech, cadences, rhythms and silences that hark back to what the English language translates by the word 'uncanny'. The phrase 'pleasures of the uncanny' is necessarily ironic. The uncanny is an index of what Lacan calls the real, that is, what is outside representation and where Das Ding and death reside. The gossamers of the real induce anxiety.

Translating is an act of creation predicated upon transference: it is a rewriting that entails a relationship with the other that bears the mark of love, which harks back to Benjamin's proposition that the translator must allow her language to be powerfully *affected* by the foreign tongue. This performative paper has explored what is at stake in the act of autotranslation when a writer returns to her mother tongue, gesturing to that which is lost and re-covered in the process, namely, a voice, a word, a letter and, surprisingly, the 'I' of the self threaded through the fabric of language—an 'I' lost and found again through *trajouissance*. In what may just be a case study, autotranslation consists of a creation in each language with its own interferences, rhythms and affects that opens up new linguistic and subjective spaces. Though autotranslation may be a re-creation, it has here the status of a writing: a type of writing whose function is to sound out the nature of an author's relationship with language at large.

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