RHYTHM IN TRANSLATION, WITH TWO ACCOUNTS OF LECONTE DE LISLE'S 'MIDI'

1. Argument

I want to explore rhythm, not as a given feature of the source text (ST) so much as an activity of mind in the translator. The adoption of this perspective relates directly to the proposal that the polyglot reader – the reader familiar with the ST and the source language (SL) – makes possible a distinctive mode of translation, because we can take knowledge of the ST, and of its rhythm, for granted. While translation for the monoglot reader remains an indispensable translational function, it has so monopolised critical and theoretical attention that it has obstructed other approaches to translation, particularly through the polyglot reader, and an elaboration of the other creative and literary models those approaches make available. I want here to propose a new model for the role of rhythm in translation.

If we were writing about translation for the monoglot reader, we would most probably be addressing the perennial problems associated with the translation *of* rhythm, that is, of rhythm perceived as inhering in the text, as a feature of text already there, to be respected if a 'faithful' translation is to be achieved. How do we translate metrico-rhythmic principles – of Chinese, say, or Bantu – which are alien to our own practice? In the case of Leconte de Lisle's 'Midi' (*Poèmes antiques*, 1852), how do we translate the so-called syllable-timed into the so-called stress-timed, and is the right way to translate a French alexandrine inevitably an iambic pentameter, given that the alexandrine is ostensibly what Mallarmé calls 'l'instrument héréditaire' [the hereditary instrument], or 'la cadence nationale' [the national cadence]

(2003: 206-7)? Too often such reflections lead to those pre-translational decisions which close down exploratory channels and willy-nilly transform *énonciation* into *énoncé*.

But how might rhythm inform and generate the very process of translation? Let me immediately itemize some of the propositions which guide the argument which follows:

(i) Rhythm[1] creates a subject-position for the reader/writer, as a user of language, but not an identity. This subject-position is a linguistically inaugurative force.

(ii) Rhythm creates a subject-position for the reader/writer, as a changing temporal perspective which in turn changes the nature of language's effect: slow motion (the time of accent, pitch, pronunciation/articulation, articulated sound), real time (the changing, durational time of linguistic consciousness), chronometric time (the time of the measured and measurable, metre).

(iii) Rhythm has an ever-changing multi-functionality: as an instrument of perception/cognition; as an instrument of the investigation of sense; as an instrument of expression or projection; as an instrument of eco-relation.

(iv) Rhythm safeguards *énonciation* against the *énoncé*.

(v) Rhythm creates a tighter connection between voice and language, where voice is the body and the configuration of consciousness. Acousticity, in the analysis of written verse, remains, generally speaking, in the realms of 'pure', incorporeal sound ('average' IPA sound) rather than engaging with articulated sound,[2] even though handbooks of phonology ground their classifications in articulation (voiced/voiceless, rounded/unrounded, fricative, plosive, etc.). When rhythm itself is delivered to readerly physiology, it not only shifts emphasis from absence/presence of accent to *quality* of accent and questions of promotion to, and demotion from, accent, that is, vocal pressures rather than properties of language; it also expands the notion of rhythm beyond accent/syllable to include paralinguistic features such as patterns of

pitch, of tone, of changing amplitude and tempo,[2] pausing and phrasing, the events of the vocal tract.

Many of these propositions emphasize rhythm's role as the agent of a translation devoted to temporal becoming. But translation also changes the space that the ST occupies, its distribution in consciousness. What was, in a variety of ways, unitised and segmented (by measure, line, stanza) in the ST, is, in the target text (TT), allowed to re-enter space under new understandings, a space potentially smooth, unstriated.[3] This lack of striation means that materials are always able to redispose themselves/be redisposed, and that their 'system' of relationship is not governed by a fixed space they occupy; it is redisposition which allows the release of the ST's invisible in the rhythmically changeable. The page is the field that consciousness inhabits, a field too frequently evacuated by the 'traditional' translator. Additionally, it means that the rhythm of consciousness (the consciousness of the reader/translator) can be both purposeful and multi-directional, nomadic.[4]

If rhythm is the manifestation of translatorial consciousness, then to call rhythm 'nomadic' is to note its refusal of transcendent constraints, of pre-emptive patterns or principles, in favour of the capacity to extend its range and activity from within. Rhythm does not perform an allotted expressive task within a hierarchy of such tasks, in the name of regularity, or periodicity; instead, it operates immanently, to project new possibilities, new shapes of utterance. Unbound by terms of reference, working out of the localized and situated, it dissolves 'lawful' structures the better to instigate continuous self-adjustment and self-engenderment. Thus, translation itself generates more expressive affordances, translates rhythm into a capacity rather into the structure of an object. We are suggesting that translation's business is not to translate the rhythm of one object (the ST) into that of another (the TT), but to translate the rhythm of a printed text into a capacity for rhythm and the

rhythm of a capacity, both of which derive directly from the subjecthood of the translator. It is the purpose of translation not to stabilize the ST in the fairest of fair copies, but further to de-stabilize its hidden instability (see, for example, Emmerich, 2017), in such a way that it acquires room to move, to become.

What does this destabilization involve? Among other things, it entails language's recovery of its own uncontrollability. There is a general assumption that the writer has the art (control of stylistic resource) to achieve what he/she sets out to achieve. This does not deprive the reader of a certain freedom of response, but it does imply a shaping authorial presence, a presence that the translator should set out to re-embody. Barthes, of course, provides an alternative view, in, for example, 'La Mort de l'auteur' (1984a), 'De l'œuvre au texte' (1984b) and in the notion of the 'scriptible' [writerly] as set against the 'lisible' [readerly] (1970: 9-12).

I do not wish to undertake here any systematic commentary on the Barthesian texts. But I would just like to observe that translation turns the 'lisible' ST into the 'scriptible', by 'textualizing' it, that is to say by considering it to be, *through rhythm*, a text which '*ne s'éprouve que dans un travail, une production*' (1984b: 73) [*is experienced only in an activity, in a production* (1986b: 58)], which 'pratique le recul infini du signifié'[practices the infinite postponement of the signified], whose 'champ est celui du signifiant'[field is that of the signifier] and whose 'engendrement du signifiant perpétuel […] se fait [..] selon un mouvement sériel de décrochements, de chevauchements, de variations' (1984b, 74) [engendering of the perpetual signifier […] is […] achieved […] by a serial movement of dislocations, overlappings, variations (1986b: 59)]. Furthermore, '[l]e Texte n'est pas coexistence de sens, mais passage, traversée; il ne peut donc relever d'une interprétation, même libérale, mais d'une explosion, d'une dissémination' (1984b: 75) [[t]he text is not coexistence of meaning, but passage, traversal; hence, it depends not on an interpretation,

however liberal, but on an explosion, on dissemination (1986b: 59)]. Like the score of modern music, it requires the performer to co-compose it rather than 'express' it, to occupy a space where different (auditory/musical) languages freely circulate and just as freely intervene (1984b: 79; 1986b: 64). In short, the translator converts the 'lisible' into the 'scriptible' not only by writing, but also by voicing.

The presence of the voice in the translational 'scriptible', the refusal to detach the voice from the writing hand, means that the 'scriptible' is not just '*nous en train d'écrire*' (1970: 11), but 'us in the process of listening to our vocal performance of our writing' and has further consequences. If the 'scriptible' is animated by 'la pluralité des entrées, l'ouverture des réseaux, l'infini des langages' (1970: 11) [the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages (1974: 5)], if, in translating, we are inserting ourselves as rhythm/voice into the text, then Barthes's negatively formulated thoughts on the first-person pronoun after the death of the author, require the positive spin provided by Benveniste.[5]

With the death of the author, Barthes writes, 'l'Auteur n'est jamais rien de plus que celui qui écrit, tout comme *je* n'est autre que celui qui dit *je*: le langage connaît un "sujet", non une "personne", et ce sujet, vide en dehors de l'énonciation même qui le définit, suffit à faire "tenir" le langage, c'est-à-dire à l'épuiser' (1984a: 66) [the author is nothing but the one who writes, just as *I* is nothing but the one who says *I*: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person', and this subject, empty outside of the very speech-act which defines it, suffices to 'hold language, i.e., to exhaust it (1986a: 51)]. But the assumption of *je* as a translational position changes the relationship with rhythm and necessarily generates a *tu*, a set of vocative rather than accusative connections with the ST, with the text of one's own TT, and with the reader of the TT. This *je*, for all the transferability of its subject position, is not empty,[6] but, with each of its uses, filled with 'personne':[7]

C'est dans l'instance de discours où *je* désigne le locuteur que celui-ci s'énonce comme 'sujet'. Il est donc vrai à la lettre que le fondement de la subjectivité est dans l'exercice de la langue. […] Le langage est ainsi organisé qu'il permet à chaque locuteur de *s'approprier* la langue entière en se désignant comme *je* (Benveniste, 1966c: 262).

[It is in the instance of discourse in which *I* designates the speaker that the speaker [speaks] himself as the 'subject'. And so it is literally true that the [formation] of subjectivity is in the exercise of language. […] Language is so organized that it permits each speaker to *appropriate to himself* an entire language [*langue*] by designating himself as *I* (Benveniste, 1971c: 226)].

Here, two further qualifications are needed: the translator as subject is not an identity, an autobiographical self, but 'l'unité psychique qui transcende la totalité des expériences vécues qu'elle assemble, et qui assure la permanence de la conscience' (1966c: 260) [the psychic unity that transcends the totality of [lived] experiences it assembles and that [assures] the permanence of the consciousness (1971c: 224)], that is to say a cumulative synthesis of experiential instances inhabited by a consciousness. I would also add that translation entails the translation of *langue* into *langage*: the adoption of *je* in translational enunciation involves all language (languages, verbal and non-verbal), that is, *je* is not just an appropriation of the entirety of a native language but a *release into* the totality of expressive means; elsewhere (1966a: 254), Benveniste remarks that, in becoming *je*, 'chaque locuteur assume pour son compte le *langage* entier' (my emphasis) [each speaker takes over all the resources of language [*langage*] for his own behalf (1971a: 220)]. These 'individus linguistiques' [linguistic individuals] that personal pronouns are, 'sont engendrés à nouveau chaque fois

qu'une énonciation est proférée, et chaque fois ils désignent à neuf' (1974: 83) [are created anew each time an enunciation is uttered and each time they designate as if from scratch]. Each enunciation can redefine the point of application of its pronouns.

For me, then, the translational *je* does reclaim and develop an interiority. But the interiority is profoundly marked by historicity, the instance of speech. One can therefore agree with Barthes's observation that 'il n'y a d'autre temps que celui de l'énonciation, et tout texte est écrit éternellement *ici* et *maintenant*' (1984a: 66) [there is no time other than that of the speech-act, and every text is written eternally *here* and *now* (1986a: 52)]. The translational act is highly situated, it draws the ST aggressively into time and place, into ongoing dialogue, into the pragmatic and deictic, into the uttering body: it is in these senses that translation is a performative art; it is in these senses that page-design, or support-design, is of paramount importance to translation's business.

It is easy to think that the translator's dialogue with the ST is based on a consensual model; the consensual casts translation as the discovery of the best solutions to linguistic problems/discrepancies. But, in our understanding, translation is an ever-ongoing relationship with text, with a text's becoming, not a search for solutions. The dialogues in which translation is involved – between ST and translator, between TT and translator, between TT and (polyglot) reader – are not dialogues of consensuality, of coming to agreement, but are dialectical and progressive in nature, dialogues of potentially infinite extension, in which interlocutory exchange is driven by the speakers' constant reciprocal self-differentiation. Each individual speaker originates language-use, is the generator of its development, increases its expressive capacity. As Wilhelm von Humboldt puts it:

> Erst im Individuum erhält die Sprache ihre letzte Bestimmtheit. Keiner denkt bei dem Wort gerade und genau das, was der andere, und die noch so kleine Verschiedenheit zittert, wie ein Kreis im Wasser, durch die ganze Sprache fort. Alles Verstehen ist

daher immer zugleich ein Nicht-Verstehen, alle Uebereinstimmung in Gedanken und

Gefühlen zugleich ein Auseinandergehen (2003: 330)

[Only in the individual does language receive its ultimate definition. Nobody thinks

with a word exactly what the other thinks, and the divergence, very small though it is,

ripples out like a ring in the water, through the whole language. All understanding is

thus always and simultaneously a non-understanding, all agreement in thought and

feeling simultaneously a parting of ways].

And when we speak about the deixis of situated speech, that is, about words –

tomorrow, soon, now, there, + verb tense and aspect - whose meaning is relative to a specific

speech situation, we want to imply three things: (a) underlyingly, that translation, as itself a

situated act, invests language with the deictic impulse; (b) that deixis is more significantly

about co-presence than about reference; (c) that deixis is crucially about perspectivalism.

If we insist on preferring the notion of co-presence (indexicality) to that of reference,

it is to insinuate that language is not an instrument to indicate or designate a world outside us,

but rather a vocal gesture of ecological relation, of making the world immanent in language.

To suggest that language provides us, naturally, with a direct experiential contact with the

environment sounds like wishful thinking. But I do want to propose that the investment of

language by the voice, in rhythm, is that means by which language becomes our agent of

relating, existentially, with me and not-me, with a general vocative.

About perspectivalism, two things should be said:

(i) The *intensity* of perception is directly proportional to its *limitedness*. We see

     specifically, uniquely, with all the energy of sensation, at the cost of any overall

     conception of what we see. Reading is a sequence of vivid perspectival encounters. In

     order fully to capture *je*, to make *je* as translator count, translation, too, must be a

constant unfolding and modulating of self-intensifying perspectives. Rhythm is the perspective of *je*.

(ii) Merleau-Ponty observes the following about perception: 'Mais les lieux mêmes où je me trouve ne me sont cependant jamais tout à fait donnés, les choses que je vois ne sont choses pour moi qu'à condition de se retirer toujours au-delà de leurs aspects saisissables' (2014: 40) [But even the places in which I find myself are never completely given to me; the things which I see are things for me only under the condition that they always recede beyond their immediately given aspects' (1964: 16)]. Merleau-Ponty goes on to say that the experience of perception inevitably includes both this presence and this absence. The ST is to be treated as a perceived object, that is to say, as a text which has textual being beyond its immediate textual visibility. In order to transform the ST's being into becoming, translation must release this absence, this invisibility, must imagine those re-formations and re-metabolizations by which the ST can begin to become the totality of its expressive possibilities.

2. Translating Leconte de Lisle's 'Midi' (1994: 277-8)

'Midi' is already a poem on the move, a poem which reworks themes and lexicon and rhymes to be found in the work of Leconte de Lisle's île Bourbon (La Réunion) compatriot and friend Auguste Lacaussade, more particularly in 'L'Heure de midi', a sub-section of 'Le Bengali', and in 'Les Soleils de Juillet', both from the collection *Poèmes et paysages* (1852) (see Gothot-Mersch's edition of *Poèmes antiques* (1994: 380-2)). In Leconte de Lisle's volume, 'Midi' is the middle element of a three-stage life-cycle: 'Juin' – 'Midi' – 'Nox':

Midi, Roi des étés, épandu sur la plaine, $2 > 4(1 > 3) > 3 > 3$

Tombe en nappes d'argent des hauteurs du ciel bleu.   1 > 5(2 > 3) > 3 > 3

Tout se tait. L'air flamboie et brûle sans haleine;   3 > 3 > 2 > 4

La Terre est assoupie en sa robe de feu.   2 > 4 > 3 > 3

L'étendue est immense, et les champs n'ont point d'ombre, 3 > 3 > 3 > 3

Et la source est tarie où buvaient les troupeaux;   3 > 3 > 3 > 3

La lointaine forêt, dont la lisière est sombre,   3 > 3 > 4 > 2

Dort là-bas, immobile, en un pesant repos.   3 > 3 > 4 > 2

Seuls, les grands blés mûris, tels qu'une mer dorée,   1 > 5(3 > 2) > 4 > 2

Se déroulent au loin, dédaigneux du sommeil;   3 > 3 > 3 > 3

Pacifiques enfants de la Terre sacré,   3 > 3 > 3 > 3

Ils épuisent sans peur la coupe du Soleil.   3 > 3 > 2 > 4

Parfois, comme un soupir de leur âme brûlante,   2 > 4 > 3 > 3

Du sein des épis lourds qui murmurent entre eux,   2 > 4 > 3 > 3

Une ondulation majestueuse et lente   6 > 4 > 2

S'éveille, et va mourir à l'horizon poudreux.   2 > 4 > 4 > 2

Non loin, quelques bœufs blancs, couchés parmi les herbes, 2 > 4 > 2 > 4

Bavent avec lenteur sur leurs fanons épais,   1 > 5 > 4 > 2

Et suivent de leurs yeux languissants et superbes   2 > 4 > 3 > 3

Le songe intérieur qu'ils n'achèvent jamais.   2 > 4 > 3 > 3

Homme, si, le cœur plein de joie ou d'amertume,   2' > 4 > 2 > 4

Tu passais vers midi dans les champs radieux,	3 > 3 > 3 > 3
Fuis! la Nature est vide et le soleil consume:	1 > 5(3 > 2) > 4 > 2
Rien n'est vivant ici, rien n'est triste ou joyeux.	1 > 5(3 > 2) > 3 > 3
Mais si, désabusé des larmes et du rire,	2 > 4 > 2 > 4
Altéré de l'oubli de ce monde agité,	3 > 3 > 3 > 3
Tu veux, ne sachant plus pardonner ou maudire,	2 > 4 > 3 > 3
Goûter une suprême et morne volupté,	2 > 4 > 2 > 4
Viens! Le Soleil te parle en paroles sublimes;	1 > 5(3 > 2) > 3 > 3
Dans sa flamme implacable absorbe-toi sans fin;	3 > 3 > 4 > 2
Et retourne à pas lents vers les cités infimes,	3 > 3 > 4 > 2
Le cœur trempé sept fois dans le Néant divin.	2 > 4(2 > 2) > 4 > 2

Poems, then, are passages of poetic material through a poet, passages of the inevitably intertextual, re-configurations and re-metabolizations of energy-fields of expression. This is an enterprise into which the translator unproblematically slips, with the difference that his/her task is not so much to produce just another text, albeit in another language, but rather to use that new text and its other language (a) to reflect/be a reflection on language itself, its malleabilities and expressive range, its relating to other languages and its eco-relating; and (b) to open up, to invite, new departures, new possibilities in a given textual body. Rhythm is the agent of these preoccupations:

NOON

Mid-

Day

    summers' sovereign

    spread   across the plain

    falling in sheets

              of silver

      from the peaks of

                    blue

                    sky

no

sound

      the air a conflagration

      an airless burning

The earth is drowsy   in its robe of   flame

           As far as the eye can see

                    fields

                    without shadows

           the cattle's watering-hole

                      bone

                      dry

           the distant forest

                  its outer edges dark

           sleeps in its distance

                  unmoving hunched

              in a massy repose

Only the acres

          of ripened corn   unfurling far off

like a golden sea

             spurn

             sleep

pacific offspring of the sacred soil   untroubled

they drink to the lees

             the brimming cup of the sun

                             Exhaled at times

                     like a sigh from the burning heart

                     of the heavy-headed

                     murmuring

                           grain

                           ears

               a slow majestic undulation

                   gets under weigh

              and ripples to extinction

                     on the dust-shrouded

                     horizon

Close by   a scattering of white cattle

             hunkered down in the grasses

             lazily salivate

               over fleshy dewlaps

and track   with their proud and languid eyes

    the inner dreams

they'll never finish dreaming

                                            If, flushed with joy or dogged by bitterness,

                                                   you were to

                                                   pass at noon

                                                          through these

                                                          light-emblazoned

                                                              fields,

                                        hurry on

                                                 Nature has nothing for you

                                                   and the sun consumes

                                               there's no life here

                                             no spark of pain or pleasure

But if   disenchanted

                        with tears

                        with laughter

             thirsty to forget

                  this world's futile

                              agitation

you wish

          having no further appetite

                            for cursing

                            or forgiving

to taste of an ultimate and dispiriting delight

                                                   Come

                                                 the sun intones

sublime words   for your ears alone

                                        plunge

                    endlessly into its unforgiving flame   and then

                                        go back

                          with measured steps

                                              to the appalling cities

                          your heart steeped sevenfold

                          in   Divine

                                              Nothing

                                                    n

                                                    e

                                                    s

                                                    s

        In this version, as the linear gives way to the tabular, so the idea of prosodic

sequencing gives way to vocal sculpting, to the distribution of paralinguistic features, to

words less as bearers of content and function and more as articulations, that is to say, as an

articulatory record of an *énonciation*, not the recitation of the already written. The ST is,

then, two things: (a) a poem in the middle of its becoming; and (b) a poem which compels the

reader/translator, through linguistic change, to speak it differently, to explore the linguistic

consciousness it releases or makes possible.

        When we call translation de-stabilizing, a process likely to place us in smooth spaces,

spaces of de-territorialization or extra-territorialization, we include a certain nomadic drifting

between different temporalities. The linear, we might claim, endorses the chronometric,

which in regular verse expresses itself in the homogeneous, discontinuous and quantitative nature of the metrical. In turning to tabular layouts, we invite the infiltrations of real time, or Bergsonian duration, and thus to the heterogeneous, continuous and qualitative nature of the rhythmical. Our further implied argument is that while the voice *reciting* the *énoncé* is chronometric, the voice *speaking* and palpating *énonciation* is durational. But there is a further temporal dimension: the tabular layout also encourages the slow-motion reading (128) of Stanley Fish's 'affective stylistics' (1970), '*an analysis of the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time*' (126-7).[8] Slow motion is here a prosthesis of audition and processing, an instrument of vocal auscultation, likely to intensify sensations connected with the psychic assimilation of words and to bring the textual-subliminal into view. Slow motion is intimately connected with proximity, close-up, and the reader must be wary of the risks of distortion: increased amplitude, over-ascription of intention. Inasmuch as each kind of temporality has its own, competing characteristics – chronometric time = evenness of pace, in-order sequence, measurability, externality, spatialization; inner duration = elasticity, non-communicable interiority, availability of the total self (associations, memories, knowledge); slow motion = fascination and temporization, hyper-localization, interruption of speech-flow – the reader may be making sense in ways that are naturally unsettled and unresolvable. Thus, the experiential complexity of relating to the text is ever renewed, never the same.

In the more detailed analysis that follows, space permits only a representative sampling, but this should suffice to give a clear idea of what rhythm-as-translational-instrument means as a presiding principle. I have translated the opening word 'Midi' by 'Mid/Day', such that /d/ both ends and begins, creates a cleft between the two, as if midday were a point of disjuncture or hiatus, opening up a vista on to a fault-line, a half-concealed metaphysical rupture. This sense is intensified by the fact that word-initial /d/ is more voiced

and has more plosion than word-terminal /d/. This fault-line reappears in the further two-line spondees[9] ('blue/sky','bone/dry', 'spurn/sleep', 'grain/ears') that punctuate the first four stanzas of the poem and is endorsed by the 'bi-lateral' arrangement of the stanzas themselves, zig-zagging back and forth across the page ('spread   across the plain').[10] Against the spondaic inflexibility of this first monosyllabic pairing, are set the metamorphic modulations of the rhythmic phrases which follow, metamorphic in terms not only of accentual configuration, but also of tempo, intonation and pausing. Several of the accentual figures – double iamb (x / x /: 'across the plain'), choriamb (/ x x /: 'falling in sheets'), third paeon (x x / x: 'from the peaks of') – then go on intermittently to haunt the text.

The section which begins 'But if   disenchanted' weaves together, as elements of sustaining tone, iamb ('But if', 'with tears', etc.), amphibrach ('with laughter', 'for cursing') and third paeon ('disenchanted', 'this world's futile' (?), 'agitation') and does so, I want to suggest, by implying connective silent off-beats between the figures: i.e. 'But if' (x / (x)), 'with tears' (x / (x)), etc., 'with laughter' ((x) x / x), 'for cursing' ((x) x / x), etc. This, then, is a passage resonant with rhythmically animated pausing, which plays off against 'empty' pausing, such that the impetus-filled is in dialogue with the impartially matter-of-fact: 'you wish (x)/having no further appetite/(x) for cursing'. The final line of the stanza, 'to taste….delight', dismantles the expanding and contracting respiration of previous deliveries, by introducing only four accents into fourteen syllables, a flatter tone, a faster tempo, a neutral infinitivity, but only to set in greater relief the imperative 'Come'; this in turn instals a field of plangent accentuation, of ironic deceleration, of inflational resonance, with its insistence on the nasals /n/ and /m/: 'Come (/)/ the sun intones (x / x /)/ sublime words (x / (x) /)   for your ears alone (x / / x /)/ plunge (/)'. We then enter another 'dismantling' line-segment ('endlessly… flame'), with three accents in eleven syllables, before re-stabilisation, as after 'Come', with iambs ('and then', 'go back', 'with measured steps')

which iconically enact this last phrase. The translation ends, after lines which first destroy the iambic tread ('to the appalling cities' (x x x / x / x)) and then reinsert a rapt accentual cluster ('your heart steeped sevenfold' (x / / / x x)), with a rhythmic collision which recalls the initial cleavage of terminal and initial /d/ ('Mid/Day'); but this time the collision is more explicitly metaphysical and is expressed in the abuttal of the rising and falling motions of anapaest and dactyl ('in   Divine (x x /)/Nothing/n/e/s/s' (/ x x)).

My second version derives from a hybrid Petrarchan sonnet, for the most part in half-rhymes (abab/cdcd/eff/geg), and incorporating some elements of Bertram Kottmann's German translation:[11]

HIGH NOON

High noon sprawled across the plain. Ringsum Stille.

Dry drinking holes, atemlos die Luft. Fields without shade.

Waterfalls of steep sunlight, fire-pillars –

Where some may feel drenched, others feel flayed.

Allein der reife Weizen wogt, a sea in gold,

And spurning sleep, drinks deeply of the brimming sun,

And now and then from heavy-hanging ears unfolds

A long-breathed undulation,

              that crumples dying

                      on the dust-suffused horizon.

If, flushed with joy or dogged with bitterness, you

Were to pass this way at noon in the unforgiving glare,

Hurry on, nature's desiccated, moribund, and leer.

But if your heart is numb, and neither saddened nor buoyed

By the agitated world, then grant Helios his due

And steep yourself sevenfold in the god-given void.

In my further development of this re-metabolization of the text (see Fig. 1), I have, first, re-adopted the zig-zag layout, and then dramatized the conflict between those visions of rhythm, which this article is about. The regularity of the sonnet-structure, the handwritten inclusion of alexandrines from Lacaussade's 'L'Heure de midi', and of lines from Kottmann's translation, whose rhythm shifts from the steadily duple (predominantly iambic) in its first five stanzas, to much triple admixture in the closing three, all argue for the presence of the metrically governed. How then, from within this apparent drive towards regularity, to recover the notion of rhythmic *capacity*, how to transform translating rhythm into the rhythm of translation? First, the lines are heterosyllabic, ranging between 9 and 20 syllables, where the mean is 11-14, and, despite a significant iambic presence, heterometric: the final stanza (without the inserted line), for example, runs:

x / x / x / x / x / x x /

x x / x x / x / x / / x x x /

x / x x / x x x x / x x /

Furthermore, in the doodling with enamel paints, where one might expect the depiction of the sun and its activity to be paralyzingly still, it is, on the contrary, dynamic, erratic, generating rhythmically irregular pulses of light, complicated by visual interferences, luminous spray

and spots before the eyes. Finally, the active graphism of the paint and calligraphy insinuates the improvisatory, which not only distracts from and infiltrates sonnet-structure, made vulnerable by the 'gapping' of its lines, but also implies that text is infinitely expandable, subject to centrifugal and radiating forces.

In this particular instance, we see how translation is bound to be self-undermining. In its effort to open up, or at least imply the opening up of, multiple textual inhabitations, it must always be a process of *discomposition*, of setting pathways of retreat from any notion of the fairest of fair copies, of some ideal rendering. It continually moves away from what it seems to pre-suppose, it dis-intends what, initially, it might seem to intend. This is the work of rhythm, not as a confirmation or consolidator of form, but as a self-interrogative force of proliferation. As an intralingual, endo-genetic principle of Babel, rhythm disqualifies itself from building a tower, a sonnet; but it can enrichingly multiply the manners in which we grasp textual knowledge, or, rather, in which we make textual knowledge knowable to ourselves. Rhythm is the diversity of languages within a language.

3. Conclusion

This is all to say that translation is not just a service provided by 'translators' for persons unable to read the ST in the SL; it is, more importantly, *a kind of writing*, for which the raw material is a text in another language and in which the writer comes into possession of that text (re-subjectivises it) by releasing its invisible, its capacity for multiple re-expression. The ST maintains its textual existence – translation is transcription (in the musical sense) rather than adaptation – but does so on the understanding that all texts are looking to grow different from themselves, are located in the very process of that writerly experimentation which we call composition, and which rhythm conducts. Rhythm is the behaviour of language, in a particular configuration, at a particular moment, in a particular voice. And sense, the

semantics of the shifting and multiple and elusive, not meaning, is what emerges from this fluid set of contingencies.

NOTES

1. I should say immediately that my view of rhythm owes much to Émile Benveniste's account of pre-Platonic visions of *rhuthmos*, in particular that it is 'la forme dans l'instant qu'elle est assumée par ce qui est mouvant, mobile, fluide, la forme de ce qui n'a pas consistance organique' (1966d: 333) [form in the instant that it is assumed by what is moving, mobile and fluid, the form of that which [has no organic consistency] (1971d: 285-6)].

2. Already for Wilhelm von Humboldt, in his *Ueber die Verschiedenheiten des menschlichen Sprachbaues* (1827-1829), this distinction between pure sound and articulated sound is of crucial significance: 'Dasjenige aber, wessen das Denken, um den Begriff zu bilden, in der Sprache, strenge genommen bedarf, ist nicht eigentlich das dem Ohre wirklich Vernehmbare; oder um es anders auszudrucken, wenn man den articulirten Laut in die Articulation und das Geräusch zerlegt, nicht dieses, sondern jene' (2003: 147) [But what thought, in the strict sense of the term, needs in order to form concepts in language, is not actually what is in reality audible to the ear; but, to express it otherwise, if one separates out the articulated sound into articulation on the one hand, and pure sound on the other, it is articulation and not pure sound that counts].

3. The opposing concepts of smooth and striated space are owed to Pierre Boulez (2011: 93-113; 1971: 83-98), but filtered through Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980:

592-625; 1988: 474-500); smooth space is the space in which measure, periodicity, assigned position, pattern, the characteristics of striated space, no longer obtain, in which the ear and the eye conjoin in a constant process of redistribution, discovering constantly re-configured fields of energy. The temporal equivalents of smooth and striated space are amorphous and pulsed time, the one governed by the durational, the other by the chronometric.

4. The notion of the nomadic is also a borrowing from Deleuze and Guattari (see, for example, 1980: 434-527; 1988: 351-423).

5. This is not to suggest that Barthes was not perfectly familiar with Benveniste's extensive writings on the differential functions of the personal pronouns; see, for example, Barthes, 1984c: 26-8; 1986c: 15-17.

6. Pronouns are key to the realisation of intersubjective communication: 'Le langage a résolu ce problème [celui de la communication intersubjective] en créant un ensemble de signes "vides", non référentiels par rapport à la "réalité", toujours disponibles, et qui deviennent "pleins" dès qu'un lecteur les assume dans chaque instance de son discours' (1966a: 254) [Language has solved this problem [that of intersubjective communication] by creating an ensemble of 'empty' signs that are nonreferential with respect to 'reality'. These signs are always available and become 'full' as soon as a speaker introduces them into each instance of his discourse (1971a: 219)].

7. As, according to Benveniste, the third person is not: 'On voit maintenant en quoi consiste l'opposition entre les deux premières personnes du verbe et la troisième. Elles s'opposent comme les membres d'une corrélation, qui est la *corrélation de personnalité*: "je-tu" possède la marque de personne; "il" en est privé' (1966b: 231) [It can now be seen what the opposition between the first two persons of the verb and

third consists of. They contrast as members of a correlation, the *correlation of personality*: 'I-you' possesses the sign of person; 'he' lacks it (1971b: 200)].

8. As in Fish (1970: 128), our (tabular) slow motion is designed to track what words do, rather than what they say, but while Fish envisages a 'qualified' reader – the 'informed' reader (1970: 145) – who steers clear of the personal and idiosyncratic, we would promote only the reader's readiness to adopt a subject position, such that the experience of reading is translated into a source of creative projection.

9. This term and those following are no longer metrical terms, no longer refer to 'feet', but are rather simply convenient ways of describing certain accentual configurations.

10. The constituent elements of this 'binary split' – being and nothing, the fiery and the liquid, proximity and distance, darkness and light, the motherly and the patriarchal, Nature and humanity, death and regeneration – are explored in Mary Ann Caws's commentary (1990).

11. https://gedichte.xbib.de/Leconte+de+Lisle_gedicht_Mittag.htm

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