

‘TRANSLATING BOOKS MIGHT LEAD TO
WANDERJAHRE’: *DEADLOCK* AS BLISSFUL
BABEL

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Dorothy Richardson is known to have been fluent in German and French and to have translated several pieces of work into English ranging from medical lectures and various essays to a biography of André Gide in 1934. In some cases these pieces of work were what she called ‘potboilers’. In *Pilgrimage*, however, translation is not limited to non-literary works. The sixth chapter-volume, *Deadlock*, shows Miriam Henderson engaged in the translation of three short stories by ‘Andreyeff’ (Leonid Andreyev), a Russian short-story writer (and playwright).¹ Although Miriam’s translations are never published, they are an important landmark in the narrative of her development as a writer.

Miriam’s interest in translation is aroused in two stages. First there is the episode when Miriam starts to correct Mr Lahitte’s English paper (III 118); and then the moment when Michael Shatov suggests that Miriam should translate the French and German translations of two Russian books (125). Translation is never presented as an end in itself either by Michael Shatov or Miriam. Michael thinks of translation as good practice for Miriam:

‘Translate, translate,’ he cried; and when she assured him that no one would want to read, he said, each time, ‘No matter; this work will be good for you.’ (140)

For Miriam, ‘[t]ranslating books might lead to wanderjahre’² (120). As for many modernist writers, translation is always the beginning of something new.

¹ George H. Thomson, *Notes on Pilgrimage. Dorothy Richardson Annotated* (University of North Carolina: E.L.T Press, 1998), p.159.

² German: a period (literally years) of travel.

Deadlock was published in 1921. The chapter-volume shows Miriam beginning to translate around 1900, anticipating by over a decade translations by modernist writers during or after the First World War, when Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, H.D., James Joyce, and Ezra Pound all tried their hands.

Miriam's practical approach to translation bears some similarity to the collaborations of Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield, who barely mastered Russian, with S. S. Koteliansky.³ Michael Shatov plans at first to work with Miriam: 'It would be a revelation to English readers and she should translate it; in collaboration with him [...] They would work at it together' (119). This is an example of what Steven G. Yao sees as a characteristic of translation during the modernist period:

the common contemporary practice in English of producing translations (especially in poetry) through the collaboration of two or more people, one (or more) who possesses an actual understanding of the original language, and the other who boasts an ostensibly more supple English literary sensibility.⁴

In this particular case, however, Miriam eventually translates Andreyeff's stories on her own. It seems likely she is working on their German translations not on the original text, but it is also clear that translation has already become something more for her, something not unlike the process of creation she associates with the table she writes on in her room (134). Here again the similarity with the other modernists is striking. Translation was no mere dabbling for them either. In fact, as Claire Davison points out, since the 1990s critical reassessments of modernism have brought about 'a redefinition of translation as cultural process as well as a "product"' and 'certain critics even see Anglophone Modernism as having been "constituted" by translation'.⁵ For example, Yao has

³ S.S. Koteliansky collaborated with Katherine Mansfield in 1915 and with Virginia Woolf in 1921-1922.

⁴ Steven Yao, *Translation and the Languages of Modernisms. Gender, Politics, Language* (N-Y: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.31.

⁵ Claire Davison, *Translation as Collaboration. Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield and S.S. Koteliansky*, (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p.5, 3.

come to the conclusion that ‘during the Modernist period translation served as a specific compositional practice by which different writers sought solutions to the various problems and issues that have come to be understood as the primary concerns of Modernism’.⁶ Translation was an important adventure for all the Modernist writers mentioned earlier in so far as it raised questions about how narrative achieves meaning and what therefore happens when the conventions of narrative are different, changed or challenged. This change in narrative conventions is something Miriam herself experiences when she reads an English translation of Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* with Michael Shatov in the reading-room of the British Museum:

Conversation began almost at once and kept breaking out; *strange*, abrupt conversation *different* from any she had read elsewhere. . . . What was it? [...] What was the *mysterious difference*? (60, my emphases)

Although the text she is reading in snatches is written in English, it is as if English has been infused with something new and probably foreign (‘different’, ‘the mysterious difference’) so that its limits have been extended and transformed. It seems here that the English translation of Tolstoy’s novel is imbued with the ‘spirit of the original’ at least as far as conversations go and however faulty it may be in some other respects. This ‘spirit of the original’, however elusive, precisely because it cannot be translated, it may be, is what translation theorists such as Antoine Berman or Henri Meschonnic have focused on over the last thirty years, albeit from profoundly different perspectives.⁷ For example, Henri

⁶ Steven G. Yao, op. cit, p.7. The rest of the quotation is a list of the primary concerns of Modernism according to Steven G. Yao, ‘concerns about the disappearance of any stable religious or moral values by which to ground a viable society, the staggering realities of world conflict and economic collapse, the perceived radical inability of established forms and genres to confront and accurately represent the new realities of the world as it exists, and, consequently, the need to develop new formal and representational possibilities more in tune with the demands of the expressly modern world.’

⁷ See Ines Oseki-Dépré, *De Walter Benjamin à nos jours. Essais de traductologie* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2007).

Meschonnic considers that one is not supposed to translate words one after the other. As Hannah Lovejoy writes:

Meschonnic [...] argues that many translators do not consider language theory when translating. The *langue* is simply the meaning of the word, whereas language theory is all-encompassing and includes the rhythm of the text, the movement of speech and different meanings of words culture-specific. When the movement of speech is not translated, a significant part of the text can be easily lost. Meschonnic writes, “the record of speech in writing” – supposes a gesturing of meaning, thus a positional rhythmic or semantics. It is widely erased. If we do not translate it, translation is speechless.⁷

Meschonnic defines continuum as ‘the state of things or ideas that are interdependent; epistemological interconnectedness’. He argues that this is relevant to translation since, when translating one needs to think about the sense and style of the language as a whole, rather than merely the individual meaning of the words.⁸

According to Davison, Meschonnic ‘sees scrupulous attention to a source text’s rhythm, orality and voice as the prerequisite of living translation, one that embodies the life force of a text and which refuses appropriation.’⁹

In examining Miriam’s interest in translation, I first look at her awareness of the pitfalls of translation, one of the consequence of her fascination with foreign languages, before analysing how the practice of translation is a means for Miriam to find literature’s essence. I end with the way Dorothy Richardson contrives to create similar experiences for her readers.

Enthusiastic as Miriam may be about translating the stories by Andreyeff, she is at first wary of translation. She knows translation is not without pitfalls. On first reading the English translation of

⁸ Hannah Lovejoy, ‘Review of *Meschonnic Henri. Ethics and Politics of Translating*’, *Cadernos de Tradução*, 30 (2013), 238.

⁹ Claire Davison, op. cit, p.23.

Anna Karenina, she finds fault with the translator who has anglicised the name of the heroine while next to her Michael Shatov ‘pronounce[s] it in Russian’ (60):

But Anna Karenine was not what Tolstoi had written. Behind the ugly feebleness of the substituted word was something quite different, strong and beautiful; a whole legend in itself. Why had the translator altered the surname? Anna Karaynina was a line of Russian poetry. His word was nothing, neither English nor French and sounded like a face-cream. She scanned sceptically up and down the pages of the English words, chilled by the fear of detecting the trail of the translator. (60, emphasis in original)

By anglicising the name of the heroine, the translator has lost something of its ‘expressiveness’ (60) and in that respect his translation has become ‘speechless’. He should have kept the Russian name of the heroine in his English text so as to unleash its powerful foreign sonorities (‘different, strong and beautiful’), disrupt the smooth English sentences and charge them with Russian emotions (‘a whole legend in itself’). There is a force in language that does not reside in the meaning of the words themselves. Reading the German translation of the stories by Andreyeff with a great deal of attention – ‘*For days* she read the first two stories in the little book’ (139, my emphasis) – Miriam becomes increasingly alive to this quality of any literary text although she is unable to grasp what it is: ‘some strange quality coming each time from the printed page. She could not seize or name it’ (139).

She feels words, phrases, sentences and pages cannot be pinned down to one meaning, be it their useful meaning. As shown by Annika J. Lindskog, this experience of the ineffable in literature can be compared to Miriam’s experience of silence when she is with the Quakers.¹⁰ Miriam could also be fumbling for Jean-François Lyotard calls ‘figural writing’ in his book *Discours, Figure*. The words ‘figural experience’ and ‘figural writing’ indicate the

¹⁰ Annika J. Lindskog, ‘Dorothy Richardson and the poetics of silence’, *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, 5 (2012), pp. 1-9.

moment when the space of discourse is disrupted by forms ‘able to cross the barriers separating the intelligible world and the sensory world, forms independent of the milieu they informed’.¹¹ It is thanks to the ‘figure’ that a written text is eventful, that is to say it contains that which exceeds signification.

The force of language may partly reside in its tactile quality, but this tactile quality varies with each language as is made clear by Miriam’s interest in foreign languages throughout *Pilgrimage*. This interest manifests itself from the start, when numerous German sentences and phrases are used in *Pointed Roofs*. Nowhere is Miriam’s fascination more to the fore than in *Deadlock*, where it becomes a topic in and of itself. The reader comes across: people speaking German; a Russian, Michael Shatov, who speaks English sprinkled with French and German words, but who sings in Russian; and a Frenchman, who gives a talk on Spanish literature in English using extracts from German and French texts. These exchanges prompt Miriam to enquire into the specificity of each language, to be more attentive to what attracts her to foreign languages, as well as in her own language, and to discover new territories and new visions of life, thus breaking down existing habits of thought.

Foreign languages or the accent of foreign people speaking English are a gateway to other imaginary landscapes provided one pays a great deal of attention to orality, which is exactly what Miriam does when she listens to Michael Shatov speaking about Russia in English but ‘with an intonation that she supposed must be Russian’ (28). She has the impression of visiting Russia although she is not really taking heed of his words; rather she is engrossed in his voice, that is to say his accent and intonation. Although she is simply listening to Michael Shatov’s voice, her discovery of his country seems to be haptic:

But somewhere outside her resentful indignation, she found herself reaching forward unresentfully towards something very far off and, as the voice went on, she felt the touch of a

¹¹ See Geoffrey Bennington, *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.68.

new strange presence in her Europe. She listened, watching intently, far off, hearing only a voice, moving on, without connected meaning. . . . The strange thing that had touched her was somewhere within the voice; the sound of Russia. (43)

Language cannot be reduced to words alone – to the individual meaning of each word, or even to its sonorities. Miriam becomes aware that rhythm is what she likes best when listening to foreign languages or foreign people speaking English with a foreign accent, as Michael Shatov does. Meaning does not come before or beside the musicality of each language, meaning and rhythm are intrinsically linked: ‘the voice *was* the very quality he had described, here, alive’ (43, emphasis in original); ‘the meaning gathering, accumulating, coming nearer with each rising falling rhythm’ (128).

Thus the materiality of each language – its specific sonorities, musicality and rhythm – matters as much as or even more than what the words mean. In that sense, Miriam is increasingly aware of ‘the sense and style of the language as a whole’.¹² While Michael Shatov is speaking about Russia, and even if the reader cannot be sure whether he is speaking English or Russian, Miriam thinks:

Russia was *recognizable*. So was every language. But no foreign sound had brought her such an effect of strength and musical beauty and expressiveness combined.’ (44, emphasis in original)

Although this is something Miriam was conscious of before meeting Michael Shatov, their numerous discussions urge her to ponder the material otherness of all languages, the feel of a text or a voice, the sounds and sights, and the echoes and colours she clings to when she does not necessarily understand the literal meaning of the words and the effect of the whole. The lure of foreignness is made clear in the following passage:

Alors un faible chuchotement se fit entendre au premier ... à l’entrée de ce bassin, des arbres ... se fit entendre ... alors un

¹² Hannah Lovejoy, op. cit, p.238.

faible chuchotement se fit entendre ... all one word on one tone ... it must have been an extract from some dull mysterious story with an explanation, or deliberately without an explanation; then a faint whispering was audible on the first floor; that was utterly different. It was the shape and sound of the sentences, without the meaning, that was so wonderful – alors une faible parapluie se fit entendre au premier – Jan would scream, but it was just as wonderful. (119)

In the extract, Miriam's analysis of the sound patterns and syntactic rhythms of the French sentences is all the more likely to strike the reader as it is phrased in a sentence with remarkable sonorities: 'it was the shape and sound of the sentences, without the meaning, that was wonderful'. The text does what it suggests, the sound of the sentence *is* 'the very quality' (43) that is referred to.

And this is true not only of other languages but also of English itself. While listening to foreigners speaking English, Miriam becomes more attentive to the materiality and specificity of her own language, 'The French sing their language [...] In their English it makes the expression swallow up the words, a wind driving through them continuously ... liaison.' (118). In other words she is able to think about English from the outside and it is through what is foreign that she becomes more alert than ever to the feel of English. This is obvious when she comments on the word 'Polish' in a sentence whose sonorities reduplicate what is being said: 'Polish; the word suggested the effect, its smooth liquid sheen, sinuous and graceful without weakness' (48). Or when she remarks on some strange similarity existing between Russian and English: 'There was something in common between English and this strange language that stood alone in Europe' (43).¹³ Likewise, it is made impossible for the reader to forget that Michael Shatov is not English. His accent is made not only audible but also visible

¹³ This comment cannot but remind one of what Walter Benjamin was after in 'The Task of the Translator' suggesting that translators ought to try and find the most intimate relationship uniting the different languages. See Ines Oseki-Depré, *op. cit.*, p.20.

on the page thanks to ‘the frequent onomatopoeic representations of pronunciation on the page’:¹⁴ ‘zo’ (40, 41); ‘sympa-thaytic apprysiacion’ (41); ‘most-*fascinatink*’ (46); ‘dirrty’ (47): ‘stewdye-ink medecine’ (47); ‘Where is a ponning shop?’ (73). His Russian accent even seems to reveal some of the dormant possibilities of English itself as suggested when Miriam notes, ‘Schtudent, how much more expressive than *stendent* ...’ (57).

It is as if Michael Shatov gives to Miriam the possibility of listening to what English could have been, or gives access to an alternative, liberating variation of English. As summed up by Steven G. Yao, ‘[Through] the practise of translation, Modernist writers undertook to extend the limits of English itself, which in turn led them to discover new possibilities for their own expression.’¹⁵

Indeed Miriam’s fascination with foreign languages leads to a breaking down of existing habits and a sense of renewal. Being between two languages or even three languages (English, German, French) decentres Miriam, but also invigorates her English. She is made to think about her own language again instead of taking it for granted and to discard what is usual (standard English) and what seems to be fixed once and for all. Listening to other languages means paying attention to other worlds ‘of beautiful shape and sound’ (119), becoming more aware of the specificities of one’s own language, the shape and sound of English, and discovering new vistas: ‘it was opening again, drawing her in away from the tuneless, shapeless—’ (119). English spoken as an everyday language by English people is in a way ‘tuneless and shapeless’; when spoken with other intonations by foreign people, including Americans (122), it becomes something new in the same way as when the English written by an English writer who has found his/her own peculiar shapes and tunes, his/her own voice and musicality is something new. Miriam’s alertness to the specificities and rhythm of each language, however, also implies she is particularly attentive to the difficulties of translation.

¹⁴ Annika J. Lindskog, op. cit, p.4.

¹⁵ Steven Yao, op. cit, p.7.

Miriam feels daunted by the prospect of translating the three stories and dissatisfied with her first attempts at translation. She has the feeling something might be lost or might even die in the process: "Translating the phrases made them fall to pieces. She tried several renderings of a single phrase; none of them would do; the original phrase faded and, together with it just beyond her reach, the right English words" (128). What is at stake is not that the translation should be source-oriented or its converse, target-oriented.¹⁶ Something else matters, something that is elusive since a literary text cannot be reduced to the words composing it. Otherwise it is likely to 'fall to pieces'. "[T]he 'right English words' may fail her because they are not necessarily the English words one associates with word-for-word exchange, that is to say the exact English words; the exact English words may come to her mind rather easily but they are not necessarily surrounded by the same halo of sonorities and do not create the same rhythm as the original words. When she refers to 'the right English words' she is thinking of the words which will play a part in the preservation of 'the spirit of the original' because they will appeal not only to her intellect but to her senses and help her capture 'the movement of speech'.

Thus how does Miriam manage to go beyond the sense of doubt and guilt which assails her when she translates, aware as she is of the possibility of making the original text 'fall to pieces' by losing track of its 'spirit' and probably trespassing on some grounds that she, as a woman and as an amateur, is not entitled to tread upon (140, 141, 143, 148)?¹⁷ Her method is analysed in a long passage starting on page 142.

¹⁶ However arduous it may be to understand all Walter Benjamin's theses in 'The Task of the Translator', one of the things that transpire from his article is that the distinction made between source-oriented or target-oriented translations misses what is at stake when one translates, since this distinction postulates that one is interested in the *langue* instead of being interested in 'the movement of speech'. See fn. 9.

¹⁷ While analysing the translations by E. Pound and H.D., Steven Yao insists on the fact that their poetics of translation were linked with their challenge of some gender-biased preconceptions. Steven Yao, op. cit, p. 42, 62, 80-114.

There was no longer unalleviated pain in the first attack on a fresh stretch of the text. The knowledge that it could, by three stages, laborious but unchanging and certain in their operation, reach a life of its own, the same in its whole effect, and yet in each detail so different to the original, radiated joy through the whole slow process. It was such a glad adventure, to get down on the page with a blunt stump of pencil in quivering swift thrilled fingers the whole unwieldy literal presentation, to contemplate, plunging thus roughshod from language to language, the strange lights shed in turn upon each, the revelation of mutually enclosed unexpandable meanings, insoluble antagonisms of thought and experience, flowing upon the surface of a stream where both were one; to see, through the shapeless mass the approaching miracle of shape and meaning.

The vast entertainment of this first headlong ramble down the page left an enlivenment with which to face the dark length of the second journey, its separate single efforts of concentration, the recurring conviction of the insuperability of barriers, the increasing list of discarded attempts, the intervals of hours of interruption, teased by problems that dissolved into meaninglessness, and emerged more than ever densely obstructive, the sudden almost ironically cheerful simultaneous arrival of several passable solutions; the temptation to use them, driven off by the wretchedness accompanying the experiment of placing them even in imagination upon the page, and at last the snap of relinquishment, the plunge down into oblivion of everything but the object of contemplation, perhaps ill-sustained and fruitful only of a fury of irritated exhaustion, postponing further effort, or through the entertaining distraction of a sudden irrelevant play of light, turned to an outbranching series of mental escapades, leading, on emergence, to a hurried scribbling, on fresh pages, of statements which proved when read later with clues and links forgotten, unintelligible; but leading always, whether directly in one swift movement of seizure, or only at the end of protracted divings, to the return, with the shining fragment, whose safe placing within the text made the pages, gathered up in an energy flowing forward transformingly through the interval,

towards the next opportunity of attack, electric within her hands.

The serene third passage, the original banished in the comforting certainty that the whole of it was represented, the freedom to handle until the jagged parts were wrought into a pliable whole, relieved the pressure of the haunting sense of trespass, and when all was complete it vanished into peace and a strange unimpatient curiosity and interest. She read from an immense distance. The story was turned away from her towards people who were waiting to read and share what she felt as she read. It was no longer even partly hers; yet the thing that held it together in its English dress was herself, it had her expression, as a portrait would have, so that by no one in her sight or within range of any chance meeting with herself might it ever be contemplated. And for herself it was changed. Coming between her and the immediate grasp of the text were stirring memories; the history of her labour was written between the lines; and strangely, moving within the whole, was the record of the months since Christmas. On every page a day or a group of days. It was a diary. . . . Within it were incidents that for a while had dimmed the whole fabric to indifference. And passages stood out, recalling, together with the memory of overcoming their difficulty, the dissolution of annoyances, the surprised arrival on the far side of overwhelming angers. (142-3)

Here translation is presented as a gradual, three-stage process not simply a product. Throughout the passage, Miriam as translator is identified as a kind of ferrywoman. In some ways this represents the role of the translator as mundane: one who transports a text from one bank to another, that is to say from one language to another and from one cultural system to another. This is made obvious by the lexical fields of travel – ‘adventure’, ‘ramble’, ‘journey’ (142), ‘passage’, ‘the surprised arrival on the far side’ (143)¹⁸ and water, another obvious association with the ferryman/woman: ‘plunging thus roughshod from language to language’ (142), ‘flowing upon the surface of a stream’, ‘the plunge down into oblivion of everything but the object of contemplation’,

¹⁸ The ‘adventure’ or ‘journey’ of the translator anticipates those of the writer and the readers.

‘divings’ (143). This watery imagery is also an echo of the metaphor previously used by Miriam when she tries to explain to Michael Shatov that a book written in a foreign language is like a sea, ‘each sentence a wave rolling in [...] each chapter a renewed tide’ (128). Miriam is carrying a precious load, a text, which is no inert object but a living system; it needs to be carried alive to the other bank, as alive as it was when it left the first bank even though it is likely to have been transformed by translation: ‘The knowledge that it could, [...], reach a life of its own’ (142). Thus Miriam does not believe in word-for-word exchange but in a process that goes beyond transferring the semantic context and exceeds a binary logic. In spite of the huge differences between the two languages – ‘in each detail so different’, ‘insoluble antagonisms of thought and experience’, ‘the insuperability of barriers’ (142) – what matters is to transport a text whose spirit and overall aesthetic impression (that which Henri Meschennic refers to as the ‘continuum’ of the text) have been preserved as satisfactorily as possible thanks to echoes, resonance and rhythms: ‘the same in its whole effect’ (142), ‘the original banished in the comforting certainty that the whole of it was represented’ (143). A text which is as beautiful and alive as the original text, although its beauty is so elusive that it can only be conveyed through oxymoronic phrases: ‘in the well-known sentences that yet were every time as fresh and surprising’ (140).

The three stages differ widely from each other as indicated by the words used to refer to them and the way the text mimics what is being dealt with. The first stage evokes a masculine poetics of conflict: ‘the first attack on the fresh stretch of the text’ (142), ‘the next opportunity of attack’ (143). The impression is reinforced by the use of a lot of plosives, ‘It was such a glad adventure, to get down on the page with a blunt stump of a pencil’, ‘plunging thus roughshod from language to language’ (142). As Clare Davison writes, the ‘archetype of the male scholar mounting an attack on the foreign resistance of the text [could be read as] a rather crude caricature of Dryden’s method of translating, which still held sway in the pre-Modernist world.’¹⁹

¹⁹ Claire Davison-Pégon, ‘“Translation as explanation”: Virginia Woolf Reads the Russians’, *Études britanniques contemporaines*, numéro hors série (Automne

The second stage seems to be time-consuming and painstaking, even painful: a ‘problem’, ‘wretchedness’ (142), ‘fury’, ‘effort’ (143). This is no sudden and exhilarating attack, rather it is a negotiation ‘through the shapeless mass’, which is that of literal meaning, so as to give it shape. It is analysed in one paragraph, consisting of one long sentence where coordinated or juxtaposed clauses try to capture ‘the dark length of the second journey’ (142). The process takes a long time, it is one of ‘exhaustion’: ‘postponing’, ‘protracted’ (143) and uses indirection: ‘an outbranching series of mental escapades’ (143). It is fraught with difficulty as conveyed by the use of fricatives, ‘fruitful only of a fury of irritated exhaustion, postponing further effort’ (143), even temptation, ‘the temptation to use [several passable solutions]’ (142) and seems to be never-ending, as is made explicit by the recurrent use of the continuous present. It is as if the translator were crossing an ocean (or a desert). He/she seems in fact to be in the throes of brooding over each word or phrase or sentence and hatching new sound patterns and syntactic rhythms. The masculine onslaught of the first stage has been replaced by a more feminine approach. Some of the images previously mentioned and the multiple meanings of the word ‘labour’, for example ‘the history of her labour’ (143), suggest that the translator is giving birth to a new text.

The process is reminiscent of a passage analysed by Steven G. Yao from H.D.’s *Bid Me to Live* (1918-1960) in which H.D.’s fictional double, Julia Ashton, endeavours to translate some Greek words:

She was self-effacing in her *attack* on those Greek words, she was flamboyantly ambitious. The words themselves held inner words, she thought. If you look at a word long enough, this peculiar twist, its magic angle, would lead somewhere, like that Phoenician track, trod by the old traders. She was a trader in the gold, the old gold, the myrrh of the dead spirit. She was bargaining with each word.

She *brooded* over each word, as if to *hatch* it. Then she tried to forget each word, for “translations” enough existed,

2007), 189.

and she was no scholar. She did not want to know Greek in that sense. She was like one blind, reading the texture of incised letters, rejoicing like one blind who knows an inner light, a reality that the outer eye cannot grasp. She was arrogant and she was intrinsically humble before this discovery. Her own.

*Anyone can translate the meaning of the word. She wanted the shape, the feel of it, the character of it, as if it had been freshly minted [...] She wanted to coin new words.*²⁰

The third stage seems to have a lot to do with trimming since the original can now be discarded, 'banished' (143), once the translated text has acquired 'a life of its own' (142), thanks to 'some spell in [its] weaving' Miriam has managed to retain (139). It is a much easier and lighter stage, 'serene' and 'comforting', characterised by 'freedom', 'peace', and 'unimpatient curiosity' (143). Supple elegance has replaced the jarring experience of the second stage, gaining 'the freedom to handle until the jagged parts were wrought into a pliable whole' (143). That Miriam passes the test of this last stage with flying colours is proved by Hypo Wilson:

'He also said that the translation was as good as it could be.'

... You've brought it off. That's the way a translation ought to be done. It's slick and clean and extraordinarily well Englished.' (146).

The last part of the sentence, however, might be seen as disappointing, as if in spite of Miriam's interest in the 'spirit of the original', her translation was nevertheless more goal-orientated than one might have expected; but it may in fact be a comment on Hypo Wilson's inability to understand her aim, or on his lack of attentiveness to what has to a certain extent become her text.

The three-stage process also implies that translation is no tributary art and the translator neither a transparent medium nor a passive vessel, but a mediator. Of course to begin with the translator is a reader: 'For days she reads the first two stories in the little book'

²⁰ Cited in Steven G. Yao, op. cit, pp.97-98 (my emphases).

(139); but we know how important it was for Dorothy Richardson that the reader should not be passive. She wanted him/her to collaborate with the text. Besides, when Miriam reads her translation ‘from an immense distance’ (143) and although she is mainly interested in the effect of the text on the reader (‘people who were waiting to read and share what she felt as she read’ (143), she also realizes that there are traces of her subjectivity in the English version of the text even if she has misgivings about ‘the trail of the translator’ (60):

It was no longer even partly hers; yet the thing that held it together in its English dress was *herself*, it had *her* expression, as a portrait would have, [...] the history of *her* labour was written between the lines (143, my emphases).

So much so that, revealingly, she is reluctant to let people who know her read the translated story: ‘so that by no one in her sight or within range of any chance meeting with herself might it ever be contemplated’ (143). ‘A translation’, Bernard Hoepffner writes, ‘is only the shimmering of the text in a mirror, [...]; it is not the object itself but an image of the object, probably also much more the portrait of the translator and its time than he or she would like to admit.’²¹ In other words, if the translation is a good one, the translator is no mere ferryman/woman and, if not an author, is at least a writer. In this sense, translation is not just a process but also something produced: it is a creative enterprise. As such it can be considered a ‘prototext’ for composition.

Miriam uses the phrase, ‘its English dress’, to refer to her contribution: ‘the thing that held it together in its English dress was herself’ (143). She distinguishes this ‘English dress’ from the ‘foreign dress’ of the original text (148), without referring once to the plots of the stories about which the reader knows nothing.²² If

²¹ Bernard Hoepffner, ‘Until you understand a writer’s ignorance, presume yourself ignorant of his understanding’, in Jean-Pierre Richard (ed.), *La traduction littéraire ou la remise en jeu du sens, Cahiers Charles V*, 44 (2008), pp.115-123, p.122.

²² This is revealing of Miriam’s general attitude to plot: ‘She does not read for “story”, but for the representation of thought. To her, a text presents a mind-frame or a perspective: a silent, textual presence which hovers between the lines.’ Annika J. Lindskog, op. cit, p.7.

the translator is a writer of sorts, he/she cannot be the writer of the literal meaning of the text as such (provided one can distinguish the meaning of a literary text from its form) but of the poetics of the translated text: its ‘dress’ or ‘weaving’ (139), a word that conjures up the etymological similarities between the words ‘text’ and ‘textile’ which both come from the Latin word *textere* meaning ‘to weave’.

Miriam as a translator is responsible for the English ‘sound and [...] character of the words and the arrangement of the sentences’ (131), that is to say for the weaving of the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic axes, for the touch and feel of words and for the rhythm of the text, not simply the rhythm of a particular language, but one particular rhythm, that of the text itself:

there is a rhythm, *an élan*, a dynamic flow, [...], something which exists in the text to be translated which would tend to disappear with the spluttering of machine-gun bursts of senses / or words ... or sentences ... or paragraphs, something that cannot be defined as a dictionary defines words.²³

Translating is for Miriam a way of experiencing but also producing style,²⁴ what Gilles Deleuze calls ‘le devenir-étranger de la langue’, ‘the becoming-foreignness of language’ or ‘the foreign language in language’, which he sees at work in each true writer’s work.²⁵ Thus the translator is active and creative.

It is no surprise that Miriam refers to *Villette* in this chapter of *Pilgrimage*: ‘Villette had meant nothing for years; a magic name until somebody said it was Brussels’ (65). *Villette* is a novel in which two languages, English and French, coexist side by side and in which Charlotte Brontë is in fact thinking over the processes of literary

²³ Bernard Hoepffner, op. cit, p.119.

²⁴ ‘[S]tyle concerns undoing and redoing communication (literary, rhetorical, discursive) assemblages. Style is a territorial movement.’ Michael Levan, ‘Aesthetics of Encounter: Variation on Translation in Deleuze’, *International Journal of Translation*, 19, 2 (Jul-Dec 2007), 56. The word ‘assemblage’ makes one think of the word ‘arrangement’ used by Miriam in *Deadlock* (III 131).

²⁵ Gilles Deleuze & Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997), pp.8-15.

creation and trying to figure out what is not proper in each writer's style, what is borrowed and what distinguishes one writer's style from another's, in a word exploring her own innovative literary voice. This is also what Miriam starts to do when she embarks on translation.

Not only does the text of *Pilgrimage* deal with the defamiliarization of language (Viktor Shklovsky), it makes the reader experience this defamiliarization ('read and share what [Miriam] felt as she read') and become a translator too, something that Yao argues is common to many modernist texts: 'At a more conceptual level, many Modernist texts encode translation into the very act of reading itself.'²⁶ The presence of foreign words, whether French or German, which the reader does not necessarily master and which are not translated into English, means that he/she is made to stop and to pay heed to the materiality of language instead of thinking of language primarily as meaning and representation. Since in the case of a foreign language one does not master as well as one's native tongue, word sounds are separated from word meaning, the reader is made to feel what Miriam feels when she reads a foreign text. As summed up by Francesca Frigerio, '*Pilgrimage* is a text that urges the reader to tune his/her ear to the rhythm dictating its sentences, to the ellipses and silences fragmenting its pages, and to the material, almost tactile quality of the words'.²⁷ The reader is also alerted to the entrenched opposition between linguistic codes so that the so-called purity of national language is destabilized. For example in the following sentence it is impossible to know whether the word 'patient' is to be considered as English or French since in both languages the written word is identical, only its pronunciation differs:

It ought to be shouted from the house-tops that a perfectly ordinary case leaves the *patient* sans connaissance et nageant dans le sang' (121, my emphasis).

²⁶ Steven Yao, op. cit, p.8.

²⁷ Francesca Frigerio quoted in Susan Reid, 'Bodies, Feelings, music in long modernist novels by D.H. Lawrence and Dorothy Richardson', *Pilgrimages: The Journal of Dorothy Richardson Studies*, 7 (2015), 3.

Either way, it shows that binary oppositions are confounded and that boundaries are far from being stable. More generally speaking, the reader is asked to try to guess the meaning of foreign words when he does not know them. She/he is compelled to try and become a translator (whether by knowledge or appeal to dictionaries) and a modernist one at that. Yao has underlined that ‘the expressly Modernist assumption that translation as a literary mode does not depend entirely, or even necessarily, upon the mastery of the original language. Its domain goes beyond the realm simply of linguistic competence.’²⁸ In fact, becoming a translator is to a certain extent what each reader reading the work of a writer who has discovered ‘the foreign language in language’ (Deleuze) is urged to do. Richardson does not simply speak about new ways to read. She makes her reader experience them and compels him/her to become an active collaborator. Foreign words and sentences, her experimental use of punctuation,²⁹ her anonymous narrator who knows how to disappear and does his/her utmost not to guide the reader,³⁰ and her elaboration of the ‘stream of consciousness technique’ – a phrase she disliked – all contributed to this process.

Miriam’s translation of the three stories by Andreyeff is analogous to the plunge described by John Beresford in his Introduction to *Pointed Roofs*; but this earlier initiation acts as a kind of apprenticeship, even if it does not yet give her the opportunity of entering Hypo Wilson’s milieu. Instead Hypo Wilson makes light of her work and the stories themselves; Miriam feels turned down and is made to feel an outsider: ‘[it] meant belonging outside the world of clever writers’ (148). This feeling could be said to be in keeping with the very practice of translation as summed up by Davison, who throws a more positive light on this sense of alienation than Miriam does at the time: ‘translation and code-switching offered a liminal sense of otherness and outsidership

²⁸ Steven Yao, op. cit, p. 195.

²⁹ Dorothy Richardson, ‘About Punctuation’, *Adelphi*, 1, 11 (1924), pp.990-996, p.991: ‘So long as it conforms to rule punctuation is invisible.’

³⁰ See Jean Radford, *Dorothy Richardson* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp.14-16.

that was fascination, desirable and constructive'.³¹ Miriam's feeling may also have something to do with the question of gender, which seems to me to be hovering in the background each time Miriam refers to her feeling of guilt or fear. Embarking upon translation and being 'lost in translation' means unsettling the fixed differences of nation, class and gender. This unsettling of fixed patterns makes it possible for Miriam 'to gain technique, semantic and stylistic precision and syntactic force'³² while experiencing and producing what can never be pinned down, namely literature.

³¹ Claire Davison, *op. cit.*, p.31.

³² *Ibid.*, p.173.