Translating Rimbaud's *Illuminations*

CLIVE SCOTT

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This book is a sequel to Clive Scott's *Translating Baudelaire* (UEP, 2000), and a further development of its translational techniques. It argues for the intimate connections between literary translation and experimental writing, using a selection of Rimbaud's *Illuminations* to explore the different ways in which the translator can re-imagine and re-project source texts.

Clive Scott offers translations of a selection of Rimbaud's prose poems—setting out to invest the poems with expanded potential by reshaping them and by inserting them into new expressive environments. At the same time, he proposes a re-definition of the relationship between literary translation and creative writing. He suggests that the translator's imagination can operate more effectively if it fully exploits the space of the page, if it adopts tabular rather than linear ways of thinking.

Clive Scott, a Fellow of the British Academy, is Professor of European Literature in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of East Anglia. He has published in the areas of French and comparative versification, translation, and photography, and is currently working on the relation between translation and experimental writing.

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Clive Scott

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Introduction

The impulse to write this book came from five directions. In *Translating Baudelaire* (2000), I had brought myself to the persuasion that free verse was a 'proper' translational response to regular verse, partly because the lineation of free verse increases expressive resource without entailing lexical licences, partly because free verse *compels* readerly/writerly idiosyncrasy, and partly because contemporary translation has an obligation to its own characteristic forms. It seemed logical, therefore, to ask how other, more extreme modernist and contemporary forms might be harnessed to the business of translation. Free verse stands at a cross-over point, because it is at once a practice of free textuality (lineation, margins, de-metrification and localised re-metrifications), the image of an improvised text, an open text, and at the same time a characterisation of the space on which it is inscribed, the score for a voice which it has somehow activated. In pushing beyond the limits of free verse, I shall inevitably be emphasising the latter dimensions of free verse and pushing into those areas of poetic output—words in freedom, concrete poetry, calligrams, *poésie sonore*—which lie just beyond free verse. We should remember that Marinetti had already (1913) taxed free verse with continuing artificially to channel 'the flow of lyric emotion between the high walls of syntax and the weirs of grammar' (Apollonio 1973: 99) and that Apollinaire had confidently predicted free verse's imminent demise in a letter to André Billy of July 29 1918:

> Quant aux *Calligrammes*, ils sont une idéalisation de la poésie vers-libriste et une précision typographique à l'époque où la typographie termine brillamment sa carrière, à l'aurore des moyens nouveaux de reproduction que sont le cinéma et le phonographe.

> [As for the *Calligrams*, they are an idealisation of free-verse poetry and a specific application of typography at a time when typography is coming to the end of its brilliant career, at the dawn of new means of reproduction, like the cinema and the gramophone.]

Secondly, and in closely related fashion, I had increasingly felt that, in the translation of poetry, we need better to understand the space of the page as the translator's mental landscape, or imaginative territory: that is to say that the notion of 'style' might be relocated from language itself to the space which language was called upon to inhabit or map out; that is further to say that just as the page awaits its poem, so the spatial style of the translator awaits its source text (ST). This textuality-space is the imagination of the translator, first and foremost perhaps a mental space, a receptive and activating chamber. But it is also the potential space of other spaces: social spaces, geometries Euclidian and non-Euclidian, cosmic spaces, graphic and painterly spaces, reading spaces. Much has been made of the space of the page, and also, incredibly little. This space is frequently referred to as blank space, empty space, the silence of the white sheet. That is to say that the white of the page is thought of as something featureless, where interpretation, association, mental elaboration, of the written text, can take place unhindered, where no trains pass and where one has no fear of the imminent intrusion of a meteorite or a drum majorette. No benefit is to be gained, apparently, from thinking of this space as three-dimensional, already occupied, busy with its own activity, yet alone as n-dimensional. Of course, any spatial configuration also has temporal implications, and, as I have argued elsewhere (1998: 97–101), our grasp of the many possible interactions of the text's several layers of temporality is in its infancy. The translator who undertakes to release the potential spaces within the text, and the perceptual modes that go with them, or the potential environments in which the text might take place, must also think of the ways in which the temporal dimensions of textuality generate, or need, space to express themselves.[1]

Two obvious and related clarifications are needed here. In printed verse, the poem is the whole *page* rather than the printed text alone. It is not just that the poem relies on spacing to define its lineation and its stanzaic configuration. This is dangerously to reduce page-space to gaps which act simply to circumscribe and demarcate what is printed. The space of the page is what the poem is projected into, and the question for us is what that space represents, what its coordinates are, what kind of resonating chamber it is. Furthermore, when one speaks about blank space in verse, one should speak about it less as blank space, existing as it were

outside the perimeter of the verse, and more as *ajours*, in the way that this word is used by the contemporary French poet André Du Bouchet, that is to say as space in an architectural design or in lace-work, which is fully integrated into the structure of the work, as part of its being and effect.

What I am trying to do through the performance of text in the space of the page is to suggest to the reader a certain *mode d'emploi*, instructions for use. It should be a familiar contention that translation does not indicate to its reader how it should be read. Reception theories are able to develop because they can exploit reliably supposable contracts between the text and the reader. But what contract does a translation presuppose? About this, translation theory, focused as it so often is on the process of translation itself, is amazingly reticent. On the one hand, we have the critical reading of translation which concentrates on the validity of the translation to the exclusion of the uses to which a particular translation might be put. On the other hand, we have the ignorant reader who is presumably consuming the translation with no questions asked and no specific demands being made. The translator's principal concern, it seems to me, should be less about *what* is read than about *how* it should be read; the former flows from the latter. And the mode of reading should, where at all possible, be integrated into the translation. The activation of the space of the page is the activation of a mode of reading and the promotion of perceptual mechanisms suggestive of the ways in which a text might map out its future. It is also an invitation to readers to read this space to their own psychic tunes, to mould space to their own perceptual imperatives. It is for this reason that, having developed a linguistic version of a text, I rarely change it; my various page-designs are ways of re-circulating the language of the texts.

Third, I wanted to confront the prose poem as a translational problem. I shall have more to say in Chapter 2 about the name and nature of the prose poem, but I should emphasise from the outset that, for me, the prose poem is a virtual genre producing virtual texts, both potentially pre-metrical and post-metrical, both potentially a memory of verse-lyricism and a projection of other, 'prosaic' kinds of expressivity. For many, the prose poem is a counter-discourse (Terdiman 1985), a discourse of oppositionality (Stephens 1999) by very virtue of its generic hybridity, its refusal to normalise the distinction between poetry and prose; but, for a variety of reasons, this revolutionary subversiveness has never allowed the prose poem to move from the literary margins, however much may have been made of certain individuals who practised it. One might attribute this relative political ineffectiveness to the self-contradictions with which the genre is ripe; one might equally attribute it to the prose poem's refusal to

declare its hand. Baudelaire's celebrated prefatory letter to Arsène Houssaye is an argument for the prose poem's inclusiveness, its adaptability, its formal nonchalance:

> Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture; car je ne suspends pas la volonté rétive de celui-ci au fil interminable d'une intrigue superfine. Enlevez une vertèbre, et les deux morceaux de cette tortueuse fantaisie se rejoindront sans peine.
>
> (Baudelaire 1975: 275).
>
> [We can cut wherever we like, I my reverie, you the manuscript, the reader his reading; because I am not attaching the rebellious will of the reader to the unending thread of an intricate plot. Remove a vertebra, and the two pieces of this tortuous fantasy will have no difficulty in joining together again.]

Baudelaire seems anxious to give his restive reader plenty of rein. The prose poem is not, *as it is*, a discourse of taboo-breaking; it creates the space for taboos to be broken and only the reader, or translator, can embody or configure the act. My translations attempt to lead the prose poem out of its equivocations, to explore some of its virtualities, because one of my premises is that translation should not translate a text (in its inertial state) but a reading process, a reading process which challenges readers of the translation to read their own way back into the source text. In this sense, meaning, for the reader, remains a latency; it rises to the surface but is never extracted. On the contrary, it is allowed to sink back, to recover its embryonic quality and its availability to intuition. I am not trying to convey a false impression of what the prose poem is: we already know what the prose poem is, we can consult the ST, and there are a sufficient number of 'straight' translations of Rimbaldian poems in this book to remind us of the textual origins of more experimental versions. I am trying to relocate the business of translation so that it is no longer in the text, but in the spaces of a psycho-physiological encounter with the text. In order to establish an existential relation with the text, upon which meaning might be predicated, I must re-enter the dynamic of my own reading by re-entering the pulsions of my own voice, the hesitations and momentums, all of which is, for me, to re-enter my own duration.

Further justifications for this approach are to be found in Rimbaud's own apparent inability to settle into a particular model of the prose poem and to make any definitive peace between the contrary urgings of poetry and prose. If some have argued that it is possible to draw clear lines of

demarcation between Rimbaud's verse-practise and his prose—in the formal compulsions at work in 'Marine' and 'Mouvement', for example (see Guyaux 1991: 165–78; Murat 2000)—and that the discovery of units of verse within the *Illuminations* à la Fongaro (1993) is a dangerous delusion, the best advised position still seems to me to lie in making the most of Rimbaud's very unsteadiness, to lie in the kinds of view expressed by Guyaux in 1985: in remarks on Rimbaud's uses of line-initial upper and lower case in 'Marine' and 'Mémoire', Guyaux speaks of his 'idée d'un mimétisme réciproque de la prose et du vers' (1985a: 157), and in arguing for a Rimbaldian poetics of the line—but 'ligne' rather than 'vers'—Guyaux describes this unit as 'une phrase ou un vers en puissance, comme elle peut ne pas l'être' (159). In taxing Baudelaire for resorting to a form that is 'mesquine', Rimbaud adds 'les inventions d'inconnu réclament des formes nouvelles' (letter to Paul Demeny, 15 May 1871). Historically, it may be more appropriate to apply this last remark to Rimbaud's so-called *Derniers Vers*, but it anticipates that formal open-mindedness that seems to characterise the prose poems, from their paragraphing to their punctuation.

Underlying this general view of text, of a spatial disposition and supplementation which foregrounds the reading of text, both as visual and vocal performance, is the assumption that, in poetry, *parole* exceeds *langue*, cannot conveniently be seen as a generative transformation of *langue* and cannot be recovered by *langue*. The principal reason for this separation of *parole* from *langue*, of *parole*'s discovery of an autonomous existence, is poetry's maximisation of the materiality of language, of a materiality which must exist at the expense of conventional discourse-creating syntax and which is almost bound to operate anarchically. The practice of interpretation, against which I shall take up the cudgels, is the reduction of the poetic *parole* to *langue*, with the materiality of language in the role of submissive adjuvant. Translation also, too often perhaps, threatens to reduce the poetic *parole* to a *langue* of what the poet 'really wants to say'. Quite clearly, what I would want to propose is that this scheme be reversed: that translation perform the *langue* of the ST as a *parole* which is irreducible to a *langue*, but which demonstrates what capacities for *parole* lie within the ST.

My fourth concern relates to the translation of the Rimbaldian text in particular. Having read a variety of translations of the *Illuminations*, I found myself coming to the conclusion that linguistic choice of itself could not make the difference, in two senses: (a) it could not establish a way of making difference of choice count; (b) nor could it *translate* Rimbaud, that is, release the energies of the Rimbaldian text in such a way that we, as

modern readers, catch their fire. Under (a) I certainly do not wish to disparage the achievements of Rimbaud's translators[2] or to suggest that they are turning in diminishing circles: I am exaggerating a predicament for polemical purposes. But I do believe that predicament to be real. Where Bernard (1962: 244), for instance, gives us 'Whistlings of death and circles of faint music' as a translation of 'Des sifflements de mort et des cercles de musique sourde' ('Being Beauteous'), Treharne offers 'Deathly hissing sounds and circles of muffled music' (1998: 73) and Sorrell 'Hisses of death and circles of muted music' (2001: 267). And certainly we can argue meaningfully about the range of 'siffler' and about the character of 'sourde' (distance? obstruction? pianissimo?); and we can ask about the intended atmosphere (light-hearted? aggressive? celebratory?) and the likely agents of these sounds; and we can enjoy the different phrasal musics of these translations: /xx/—x/x…x/(x)/x (with silent offbeat attached to 'faint'?); /x/x/—x/x…x/x/x; /xx/—x/x…x/x/x. But while I can discern and describe these differences and their effects, I cannot see, textually, what makes them count, because I cannot relate the text to a theatre of operation. Meaning and interpretation are less at stake than, as Rimbaud puts it here, 'la Vision, sur le chantier' [the Vision, in the process of construction], with its accompanying 'frissons'[shudders] and 'la saveur forcenée de ces effets' [the frenzied flavour of these effects]. What, it seems to me, would make difference count is the textual *projection* of the lexical constituents.

My fifth motive is the belief that translation must see itself principally as experimental writing, for reasons which I explore in Chapter 1. The exploration of the literariness of translation is by its nature bound to entail experimental writing, to make the writing of avant-gardes—Cubist, Futurist, concrete, Lettrist—of particular interest to translation. These avant-gardes are not movements which are historically played out, but styles of literary production as relevant as ever they were. Translation must be prepared to share with avant-gardism its struggle against a certain marginality, a certain shady lack of credibility. Literary translation thus inevitably entails multiple translations. A work has never done with re-imagining itself. There is, unfortunately, in translation a teleological heritage which is to do with translation's educational embedding and the concomitant pursuit of the optimal *corrigé*; but translation will only have *exemplary* value if being an authority for the ignorant is what is at stake. If such a situation does *not* obtain, if translation is a kind of literary production for those who know both the source and target languages, then translation, acting within assumptions of knowledge, will be able to operate with more point as an extension of a field of perception, or the gamble of an expressive possibility. There is no point in telling someone something

they already know.

We have mentioned that literary translation inevitably entails multiple translations. To the reason already adduced, we might add the following uses of a multitranslational practice:

1. If we assume that translation is an effort not to fix a relatively definitive interpretation of a text, but to embody an ongoing relationship with it (which may include interpretation, but is more to with the reading experience itself, the fluctuations of association, intertextual memory, modality, function, context), then multitranslation is a way to capture the *autobiography* of this relationship.
2. If we assume that an ST is one realisation of a set of expressive potentialities which *predate* the ST and consist of the suggestivity of forms and rhythms, different collocational energies, different nuances of tone and register, etc., if, that is, we look upon translation as the exploration of the ST's putative creative provenance rather than as a communication of its message, then translation must be multiple. This is a view of translation which closely corresponds to that of Walter Benjamin, outlined in 'The Task of the Translator' (Schulte and Biguenet 1992: 71–82).
3. If we feel bound as translators to trace, in translation itself, the associative network that an ST has traversed as it comes towards us across time and/or space and to register past texts that may be audible within it, then this itinerary from an antecedent past to the translator's present must constantly be re-traced, since the itinerary is full of detours and digressions and chance encounters. I tried to begin a task like this in my montage translation of Baudelaire's 'Le Voyage' (Scott 2000: 218–46).
4. I have elsewhere (2000: 71–93) suggested that, in the translation of poetry, the translator should find ways of standing off from the ST, the better to find his/her own voice among the voices of translation and thus the better to know how the target text (TT) might want to approach the ST. The method I proposed was intralingual multitranslation, translations of other translations. Multitranslation is as indispensable to translational process as it is to translational product; indeed, one might argue that one of the important functions of multitranslation is to erase the distinction between process and product, to remind us that translation takes place in Bergsonian duration, is an existential and psychological situation as much as it is a cultural one.

I can confidently expect this book to be read with a degree, or moments,

of irritated scepticism or exasperated disbelief. It may seem that I am attempting to turn translation into a conceptual art, and, indeed, it would be true to say that this is part of my purpose. But, more fundamentally, I am trying to explore the limits of translational activity, to open up those dimensions of text and textual response which translation easily overlooks, to develop translational means sensitive to the variety of Rimbaud's own attitudes and textual practices, and, most particularly, to take translation off the page and into the reader's head. I am trying to imagine what might be meant not by 'translating a text' but by 'translating the being-in-consciousness of a text'.

What is recorded in the following pages is not just a desire to drink translation to the dregs, but—and this is also of crucial importance—a desire to pace round and round Rimbaud, to do justice to a readerly experience which will not hold still, which will never have had enough of re-conceiving his texts, of trying to be equal to his challenges. Rimbaud has been read to countless tunes, none of which can muster a final chord. And in the space of this nervous restiveness, all is still to be reinvented; this restiveness itself deserves its diary of searching, essaying. My translations do not have the ambition of exemplarity; they are intended as exemplars of different kinds of translational conduct, for which I hope the reader will envisage improvements and alternatives. If, from time to time, I fall off the edge of the translator's still square world, then a log of the unsuccessful voyage of discovery may still have value for 'd'autres horribles travailleurs' who 'commenceront par les horizons où l'autre s'est affaissé!' (letter to Paul Demeny, 15 May 1871) [other horrible workers (who) will begin from the horizons where the other finally collapsed].

The crude graphic means I have used in these versions may be the source of some mirth or disbelief. I would beg the reader to think beyond these means, towards what might be achieved, or at least to consider these means cumulatively, in the hope that the whole is something more than a sum of the parts. I entertained the idea of consulting a professional typographical designer, if only to relocate what might be meant by 'collaborative translation'. I considered exploiting computerised enhancement to its limits, but was afraid of falling into what is meretricious or predictable about these resources. I have much faith in what hypertextuality and multi-media flexibility might contribute to translation, but for the purposes of the present venture, I felt happier working within limitations—A4, black and white, my own collages, my own simple graphics—simply to maintain the sense of handwork and to keep the project within one translatorial predicament. Many of these devices, by their shortcomings, require much imaginative sympathy from the reader;

but, as we have said, part of translation's present problem is precisely how it can and should engage the reader in the translational enterprise. Besides, reading, and reading Rimbaud more particularly, is quite properly a process of 'reaching for', not for understanding so much as for a way of inhabiting the poet's psycho-perceptual world. And another concern remains of grave importance: that readers of translation, however extensive or not their grasp of the source language, should, by very virtue of their reading of a particular translation, wish to become translators themselves. If translation can become a properly creative undertaking, it will do so by its very contagiousness.

If I have justified fears that my translations may cause some embarrassment in the reader, I also hope that these general points will be conceded: (i) that translation, whether intratextual or intertextual, is an inevitable doodling in any reading, is the natural means by which reading is registered as a creative act or impulse; (ii) that DIY translation not only encourages all readers to become translators, but, more specifically, it gives readers the opportunity to express not merely what the ST has triggered, but what they have brought to reading in the way of mindsets, professional knowledge and cultural baggage.

In the chapters that follow, argument periodically turns to painting, to cinema, to photography as well as to different modes of literary critical analysis, in an attempt both to do justice to the multifariousness of the Rimbaldian text and to shed light on the translation process itself. There are many who are deeply suspicious of the pressing of metaphor into the service of definition. Lori Chamberlain's (1992) exploration of the semi-covert sexism to be found at the root of standard translational metaphors is not the only reason to beware figurative descriptions of linguistic processes; Eliot Weinberger finds that the habit of analogy masks the uniqueness of translation:

> I have always maintained—and for some reason this is considered controversial—that the purpose of a poetry translation into English is to create an excellent translation in English. That is, a text that will be read and judged *like* a poem, but not *as* a poem. Translation is an utterly unique genre, and all the traditional analogies for it—a musical or theatrical performance, a metaphor, a reading, an act of criticism—are inadequate. In fact, translation is such a familiar and intrinsic part of any culture that one wonders why there is this perennial need to explain it by analogy: we do not say that baking is like playing the violin.
>
> (1999: 243)

But this sounds to me like obscurantism trading under the flag of plain-dealing. To compare baking with violin-playing would be second nature to, say, Proust, and it would be precisely because baking is both unique and familiar, unique, and thus only to be approached through a network of kinships, and familiar, so that we could renew our perception of it only by adopting different spectacles.

Our proposition is that what makes translation unique is its needing constantly to be *re-imagined* as a mode of writing; it cannot usefully be *defined*. Translation is an activity for which it is possible to have creative ambitions. It is a fluid and unresolved practice; or at least it is only resolved in those contexts in which it is designed to provide a particular service, and I will argue that to treat translation as a service for those ignorant of the source language is to do the literature of translation no service. Each time the translator engages with a text, he needs to think his way towards the relation that the translation will express, the creative posture it will be informed by. This thinking one's way creatively into the translational is an essential part of translation's literariness: there is no privileged version of translation, there are no sine qua nons, no best practice. And in order to locate oneself in this shape-shifting world of possibility, it is inevitable, desirable, that one should describe it, not in and for itself, but relative to other creative activities with which it might share certain isomorphisms.

Additionally, recourse to metaphor as a way of describing practice is an integral part of the argument for translation as a form of spiritual autobiography, of life-writing. Translation has been much exercised by the invisibility of the translator, since Lawrence Venuti's groundbreaking book (1995); the visibility of the translator is certainly a question of proper acknowledgement, critical credit, legal rights. But, more especially, it is the translator's taking literary possession of the process of translation, which in turn entails the making visible of the currents of association, investigation, aspiration, that intersect in the translator's mind. This autobiography, an autobiography of reading and writing, is about the ST both as subject and as an instrument by which the translator explores his own voice and creative proclivities. But in saying this we must not forget that the ST is also the instrument by which the translator explores the expressive potentialities of different poetic forms, and the relationship between forms as repositories of generic and ideological prejudice or possibility. And underlying all these preoccupations is the core concern: how translation can constitute its own literature, that is both a literature specific to translation and a literary language adequate to the needs of translation.

The book's opening chapter is a set of reflections about translation, about translation's relationship with creative writing and with interpretation, and about what might constitute a literature of translation. It does not attempt to develop a theory of literary translation, so much as to establish founding propositions and lay out speculative objectives. It is not primarily concerned with Rimbaud—although it begins to prepare itself for that encounter—and, indeed, several of its pages are devoted to an analysis of François-René Daillie's translation of Wordsworth's 'The Daffodils'. But moves like this are necessary to the elaboration of possible models of literary translation. Although the space of the page is the book's abiding preoccupation, Chapter 2 offers translations of 'Après le Déluge', 'Aube' and 'Jeunesse: Sonnet' as a means of confronting the complex world of Rimbaldian temporality, caught between the cyclical and the linear, between explicit temporal indication and modality, between the indexical and the non-referential; it also investigates the ways in which translation can capture these temporal collisions in the unfolding of rhythmic texture. Since one of the book's principal concerns is the rendering of the materiality of language, Chapter 3 addresses the problems associated with the translation of the acoustics of voice into the text. There are senses in which any written text is no longer spoken (however speakable), no longer has an originating voice, so that the translator has to develop strategies by which this voice might be imagined and the text made vocally accessible. This chapter focuses on a translation of 'Enfance I', setting the translational process within a much broader consideration of voice quality and its communicability. Chapter 4 continues to preoccupy itself with the voice, not so much as a presence within the text, as an animating force moving through the text, as the agent of metamorphosis; in this guise, the voice undoes the recuperative mechanisms of interpretation which draw so heavily on the principle of juxtaposition. This chapter continues to explore the 'Enfance' cycle, offering translations of 'Enfance III' and 'Enfance IV', before turning to 'Ornières'. Inevitably it re-engages with questions of textual temporality and rhythm. Three translations—of 'Parade', 'Fairy' and 'Vagabonds'—again make up the argument of Chapter 5, marking out the stages of an enquiry into how translation might make visible the silences behind or within words, the silences between words or phrases, and the silence of a whole text. By this last is meant a translation which is as if already in another dimension, a text which the ST has made possible, which was a virtuality of the ST, but bears no apparent resemblance to it. Chapter 6 is a chapter of transition, in the sense that concern with silence as the 'site' of the 'elsewhere' of a text and its language, and with the temporality of the reading experience, when texts lose their

linearity, shifts over to the broaching of questions about translation's involvement with space and with the arts of noise. This transition is mapped out in the shift from a concrete translation of 'Départ' to a Futurist one, and is followed by rendering of 'A une Raison' which looks to blend the concrete, the Futurist and the Lettrist, and to trace the ways in which noises, working with rhyme, repetition and rhythm, can sculpt the spaces of a text. Chapter 7 examines translational space from a point of view which reformulates and extends the foreignisation/domestication controversy. The translation of 'Fête d'hiver' is approached through questions about 'Chineseness' and 'Chinoiserie', about perspectival and planar space, about the ekphrasis of reproduction and the ekphrasis of fictionalisation, all within the broad context of the rococo. The reciprocal interferences of colonist and colonised, space and place, are pursued, in more detail, in a rendering of 'Démocratie', and the chapter closes with an account of 'Royauté' which considers it both as a power-struggle between narrator and protagonists, and as a *fait divers* negotiating its position in a tabloid newspaper. It is through treatments of the 'Ville(s)' poems that Chapter 8 principally addresses Rimbaud's visions of cities and their spaces. The structure of the sonnet, the vehicle for the translation of 'Ville', is explored as a collision of street-maps, and parallels between the signifying modes of poems and cities are investigated through the proper noun. This leads into an assessment of montage as the aptest 'medium' for urban translation, in versions of both 'Ville' and 'Villes I'. The chapter ends with an attempt to convey the vertigo of urban perception in a chronophotographic/photodynamic version of 'Les Ponts'. Chapter 9 is devoted to an enquiry into the spaces of reading. Through translations of 'Mystique', it pursues ways of representing the 'rumeur' of the Rimbaldian text, and of communicating optic and haptic perceptions of text, and considers textual space in relation to the convex and concave. This produces a Cubist model of Rimbaldian reading space which is explored through renderings of 'Antique', the last of which, a version à la Gertrude Stein, provokes a brief discussion of translation as pastiche. The Conclusion looks back reflectively over travelled roads.

1

Translation and Creativity
Reflections on a Relationship

This book is interested in 'traductologie', as defined by Antoine Berman: 'La traductologie: la réflexion de la traduction sur elle-même à partir de sa nature d'expérience' (1999: 17) [Traductology: translation's reflection on itself, based on its nature as practice]. Although reflections such as these are theorisations of translation practice, they have no theory in view; and they have no theory in view partly because they share Berman's belief that a general theory of translation cannot exist, 'puisque l'espace de la traduction est babélien, c'est-à-dire récuse toute totalisation' (1999: 20) [since the space of translation is Babelian, that is, resists any totalisation], but more especially because translation is about relationships with texts, changing, multiform and heterogeneous relationships, which concern the psychological and existential situation/predicament of the translator more than they concern the linguistic proximities and distances between two texts. Quite simply, translation is first and foremost an act of writing; the ST is not so much to be translated as to become an episode in a writer's life and perhaps a crucial instrument in a writer's apprenticeship. By virtue of its linguistic incompleteness ('Les langues imparfaites en cela que plusieurs' (Mallarmé 2003: 208) [Languages being imperfect in that there are several of them]), the ST forces TTs into existence and, in so doing, forces the translator to define himself as a re-writer of the ST. Translation is never less than a reflection about language; but most especially, it is a reflection about language as a potentiality of expression for a particular translator-writer.

It is not difficult to bestow on translation the status of a creative act, particularly when we can view translation as an integral part of the writing activity of any creative writer. Robert Lowell tells us that translation was for him a way of negotiating the creative doldrums, of, we may assume,

finding a new creative wind; of *Imitations*, he writes: 'This book was written from time to time when I was unable to do anything of my own' (1971: xii). Emily Salines (1999: 19–30) shows how different kinds and degrees of translational activity nourished Baudelaire's 'original' output. And Michael Alexander (1997: 28) reminds us that 'There is for Pound no distinction between his own work and his translations'. But while the evidence of practice makes creativity unproblematic when we consider the author-translator, we are confronted by a tangle of controversy when it comes to identifying and locating creativity in the conduct of the translator-translator.

We might identify four inbuilt transformational dangers in translation which militate against its literarisation. First, the TT (target text) tends to make the ST (source text) more intelligible.[1] Myriam Diaz-Diocaretz is surely right to point out that, in 'standard' assumptions about translation, the target text (TT) will be more communicative than the source text (ST) simply because it must, in order to be clear, derive from specific interpretative moves:

> Communication, a property not predominantly present in the poetic language of the ST may take over the primary function of an aesthetic work in translation, because a literary work exists, obvious as it seems it must be mentioned, only for those who can understand its language (linguistic code). When translating a poetic work, one of the primary purposes is that it must be done in such a way that the text is made accessible and intelligible—on the level of competence—to the receptors.
>
> (1985: 10)

However, Diaz-Diocaretz is also prepared to envisage a TT which diverges significantly in its meanings and effects from the ST:

> While the readings of the source-text engender interpretative operations, the translator produces an equivalent text in the receptor-culture which will, in turn, furnish a new chain of significations that perhaps did not belong to the original response.
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> (1985: 2)

This begs questions about 'equivalent text' and does not sit entirely comfortably with Diaz-Diocaretz's identification of the translator as an 'omniscient reader' (1985: 16). It seems, with its 'perhaps', to allow for an element of the aleatory and to accept as inevitable that the TT will activate

'a new chain of significations' (thanks to the interferences of the translator's subjectivity). In the end, it may seem that Diaz-Diocaretz is rather evasive or equivocal about the relationship between the translator as omniscient reader and the translator as 'acting writer', who co-produces an already existent 'text' and in so doing gives it a new identity. One might equally find a rather awkward discrepancy between Diaz-Docaretz's espousal of a Jakobsonian view of the 'poetic' as self-reflexive, or self-regarding, at the same time as she pursues a pragmatics-based agenda ('[The translator] seeks to understand the orientational features of language which relate to the situation of utterance' (1985: 25)). I take these contradictions, or positional uncertainties, to be symptomatic of an approach to translation which wishes to marry the taxonomic, the linguistic and the literary, rigour and thoroughness with an acknowledgement of creative caprice.

If translation seeks to increase textual accessibility, then its manner of achieving this is crucial. The second transformational danger of translation is the conversion of the linguistic/textual into the metalinguistic/metatextual. Translation is an interpretation of, and response to, a given linguistic configuration, not to a set of putative pretextual phenomena. The creativity of translation all too easily becomes assimilated to this hand-to-hand struggle with grammatical and syntactical resistances, connotations, tonal ambiguities, in the ST. In such instances, the ST is a given—i.e. it is assumed to have achieved its expressive ambitions, to say what it wants to say—and the translator's art is all in the consolidation and communication of that given. But we have no reason for making these suppositions, other than that there is no reason to make the contrary supposition. I am trying to promote a creativity which relates to text rather than to language, to whole-text rather than to localised problems within it, which is unpredictable in its operations but explicable in its effects, which is not constituted by sets of responses so much as by an overriding textual perception or enterprise.

The third transformational danger concerns the relation of form and content: translation, inevitably, tends to spring them apart, for reasons outlined by Yves Bonnefoy:

> We must understand that writing, the act of writing, is in itself an unbreakable unity whose formal operations are conceived and executed in constant interaction with, for example, the invention of the images and the elaboration of meaning. [. . .] But this necessary freedom is not, unfortunately, within reach of the translator. In his case, meaning, the whole meaning of the poem, is already determined; he cannot invent anything about it without betraying

> the intent of the author. Consequently, were he to decide to adopt the alexandrine or the pentameter, this regular pattern would be for him nothing but a frame to which the meaning would have to adjust itself, obliging him to pure virtuosity.
>
> (1979: 377)

This is perhaps to underline the need for the translator to reimagine the ST as a total creative enterprise, and is one of the reasons why, in the wake of Bonnefoy, I have promoted free verse as the ideal translational medium: quite apart from the arguments about free verse's *inevitable* organicity (is this battle too easily won?), free verse constantly confronts the translator with formal decisions (about degrees of metrico-rhythmicity, lineation, lay-out, rhyme) which ensure that no frame becomes a justification for certain linguistic collocations, and that each structural configuration is sense-giving. In the present work, I have, if anything, attempted to take a further step towards the indissolubility of form and content, in opting for versions that, in one way and another, abut concrete poetry.

The fourth transformational danger relates to the proposition that poetry is designed to maximise the materiality of language. At the moment, the materiality of a text is what is seen as constituting its untranslatability. Robert Frost famously declared that: 'Poetry is what is lost in translation'. But his immediately following remark is not so frequently cited: 'It [poetry] is also what is lost in interpretation' (Untermeyer 1964: 18). Denied access to the materiality of the ST, translators cut their losses, concentrate on the translation of meaning, by interpretation; the materiality of the ST is 'retrieved' by means of salvage operations: equivalence, compensation.

But we should remind ourselves that linguistic materiality is not itself a stable value, but is subject to constant historical re-negotiation. If we looked to the eighteenth century, we might argue that linguistic materiality related to aesthetic decoration and to rhetorical ingratiation, to the auditory fluency of text (euphony); in the nineteenth century, to subliminal pantheistic kinships, to verbal instrumentation ('correspondances'), to alternative syntaxes, to the projection of the paradigmatic on to the syntagmatic. Today, we are perhaps more persuaded that linguistic materiality makes manifest the anarchy and uncontrollability of the human organism, in eruptions of -lalias (echolalia, coprolalia, glossolalia), in Tourette's syndrome, in the pulsional upbubblings of the semiotic, in all kinds of psychosomatic revelation. This materiality is a vital channel of the reader's engagement with the text, of a psychphysiological engagement which makes reading an inevitable rebellion against interpretation, with its sanitising, ordering and cerebrating conduct. This book seeks to pursue

translational strategies which have linguistic materiality as their constant focus. Interpretation cannot, should not, be dispensed with: it is the means whereby works are made public and susceptible of collective debate. But we should recognise that interpretation is, in many senses, a failure of reading, a loss of psychophysiological contact with the text.

Interpretation has been attacked from several quarters (for example, Sontag 1994[1964]; Culler 1981; Meschonnic 1999). Susan Sontag's first move, for example, is to distinguish between the *experience* of art and its *theory*, suggesting that theory has overly concerned itself with questions of (detachable) value, with the way a work of art can justify itself, and more especially with the way it can justify itself by what it *says* (1994: 3–4). Sontag's references to the codedness of interpretation and her call for an erotics, rather than a hermeneutics, of art (1994: 14) slips us easily across to Barthes. We might want to locate his objections to interpretation in his attitudes to the *lisible* and we would be right to do so inasmuch as the activity we imagine as the contrary of interpretation, reading, is an activity designed to recover the *scriptible* of a text. Translation is often a performance of the *lisible* in that it is designed to *promote* not just the ST, but a certain critical vision of the ST.

But the particular Barthesian assault on interpretation that I wish to summon is that enshrined in the *punctum/studium* duality (1980) (if we are allowed to transfer this from photography to literature). *Studium* is that corporate and culturally average relationship with the object (photograph), an interpretative relationship designed to make the object instructive, and to draw on a common, already acquired body of cultural expectation. With *studium*, interpretations are already predicted by the corpus of knowledge from which they emerge. *Punctum* installs a confrontational relationship with the image, where the confrontation itself cannot be defused or solved by interpretation, although it may involve recognition. It is unpredictable, it lacerates, pricks, is visceral, and has no outlet in discourse; it belongs to the dark of the individual, to involuntary memory, to desire, to the singular, to the non-cultural and non-coded; it fractures the 'unariness' of the object. *Punctum* cannot be planted in a work; it is what the spectator/reader adds, but is already there.

Sontag's 'Against Interpretation' suggests other ways of outwitting interpretation. One of the solutions lies in the cinematic, in the production of images whose speed, fluency, metamorphic relationship and directness of sensory address, prevents the engagement of any interpretative mechanism:

> Ideally, it is possible to elude the interpreters in another way, by

> making works of art whose surface is so unified and clean, whose momentum is so rapid, whose address is so direct that the work can be. . . just what it is. Is this possible now? It does happen in films, I believe.
>
> (1994: 11)

The possibility of translating Rimbaud cinematically, and the interpretative implications of such a move, are explored in Chapter 4.

Closely related is the solution through the senses: 'What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to *see* more, to *hear* more, to *feel* more' (1994: 14). Sensory involvement with the text releases us, as film does, from the 'itch to interpret'. And if anything in Rimbaud's own writing might warn us against jumping too quickly into the interpretative free-for-all that his poems have generated, then it would precisely be: 'Cette langue sera de l'âme pour l'âme, résumant tout, parfums, sons, couleurs, de la pensée accrochant la pensée et tirant' (letter to Paul Demeny, 15 May 1871) [This language will be of the soul and for the soul, synthesising everything, perfumes, sounds, colours, thought catching hold of thought and pulling].

Ironically, Rimbaud's wild, subversive, scandalous writing finds itself enmeshed in, incapacitated by, the web of concessive interpretation. Interpretation, foxed, finds its way into polysemy (x could be a, or b, or m, or y), only to discover polysemy as a founding literary virtue. This self-multiplying analysis is, in many senses, a product of silent reading in that it does not involve the body and does not have, or want, to make up its mind. Ultimately we may feel that interpretation in Rimbaud's work has become self-defeating; accounts are multiplied and either leave the reader bemused by the prospect of paying his money and taking his pick, or require some generalising superordinate synthesis, beyond the individual text, which will reveal an underlying Rimbaldian stylistic policy,[2] or a network of generical subsets.[3] These latter strategies belong to what Todorov would call 'la critique paradigmatique' (1978: 243–4) [paradigmatic criticism], but they have their staunch defenders.[4]

At all events, the great 'advantage' of translation is that it has no generalising refuges, and certainly does not seek to generate an increasing critical distance from the individual text, a distance itself generated by the proliferation of alternative readings. Instead, it seeks to take the reader back to the text qua text, that is to say as something prior to interpretation, where potentiality does not mean itemisable alternative readings, but a maximised capacity to mean. Translation is not what tells us what Rimbaud is all about; translation is what suggests to us ways in which we

might most profitably read Rimbaud, and in such a way that the space/time between ST and TT is fully taken into account, made evident, made visibly active in the TT. If we are to make Rimbaud more intelligible, it will not be by straightening his 'crooked' texts, but by articulating the sense he makes for our own time, and thus the sense we make of ourselves.[5] Peculiarly, interpretation only takes that *décalage* into account implicitly; 'Rimbaud' slips effortlessly back into Rimbaud.

On the basis of these transformational dangers, and in the light of certain goals which, I believe, translation should set itself and which this book sets out to pursue, I would lay out the following founding propositions.

1. Founding propositions

1. That the primary purpose of literary translation is not to mediate between readers and texts in languages they do not know. While translation in this guise might be a subordinate element in the network of translational functions, it should not, as largely at present, act as the superordinate function. The superordinate function of literary translation is to promote translation as literature, or the literature of translation. In this sense, the translator has more important obligations to translation itself than to the source text (ST); the habit of conceiving of the ST as the locus of translation's moral debates with itself has diverted translators' attention from their 'obligations' to their medium and its development. Assumptions are made that literary translation simply exists and that our first task is to understand its relations, hierarchical and cultural, with 'first-degree' literature (polysystem theory, and so forth; see, for example, Lambert 1998: 130–3); in fact, the literature of translation has to be made with each translation.

Part of my objection to the paramountness accorded to translating foreign texts for the ignorant reader lies in the unacceptable 'system of exchange' that it entails: it involves too much authority being given to the producer of a text, which is inevitably unreliable, by a reader who is necessarily unable to judge either the degree of reliability or the quality of what he/she is reading. Another part of my objection is that where a version or versions of a translated text already exist, further translations destined for the ignorant reader tend to justify themselves by linguistic variation, by playing through remaining alternatives, if only to avoid 'plagiarism'. These variations may well produce real expressive and semantic differences, but they have the curious effect of seeming to exhaust the ST, to bleed it dry of potentiality; after all, it is not the connoted meanings of a word that we are trying to translate, but the

connotative power of the word itself.

At the same time, these lexical/linguistic variations remind us that choice is being made among a selection of alternatives *that is already available* (in the dictionary or thesaurus), that is *universally* available. And the criticism of such translations is usually, precisely, a review of available choices, where the critic evaluates whether option X is, or is not, better than option Y. But these are choices that *anyone could make*, supplied with the requisite information. The advantage of the 'qualified' translator is that he/she can make these choices more efficiently; but they are still the same choices. Consequently, every translation turns out to be a curate's egg, and the kind of choice which should be peculiar to a *literature* of translation, a creative, existential choice, not so much available as inevitable, the choice that nobody else could make, the choice that expresses a relationship with, and a vision for, the ST, the choice which does not simply set out to display the ST's meaning (possible meanings), but reinvents the ST in order to re-embody its expressive energies, this choice is reserved for translational heretics, self-translators, and writers creative in their own right (!?). My second proposition is closely related, namely:

2. That the literary purpose of translation is to ensure that the ST *makes progress*. I have argued elsewhere (2000: 47–70) that a certain kind of translation has the effect of turning the SL (source language) into a dead language, the ST into a dead-language text.[6] My comments above, on the way that 'linguistic-variation' translation may seem to exhaust the ST is a similar anxiety about the 'fossilising' or 'immobilising' effect of translation on the ST. If a text is to have an after-life, is to survive in translation, then the literature of translation must ensure that the continuing life of the ST is not merely a back-reflection of the TT, but is something that the TT acts to create, the translator as if entering into a partnership with the author, a collaboration which, to use Tony Harrison's term (1976: vi), 're-energizes' the ST, re-configures the expressive potentialities of the ST. My position is thus diametrically opposed to the situation outlined by Anthony Pym whereby 'translation is defined by a relation of equivalence which denies the very possibility of any such value added, since the output is supposed to be directly exchangeable for the input' (1992: 52); this is a recipe for premature fossilisation if ever there was one. *Literary* translation does not interpret the ST, or transcribe its meaning, but re-embodies the ST, re-articulates its literariness; if the TT can be said to be performance of the ST, then it is not the recital of an ST which already possesses itself, its completeness, but the acting out of implications that the ST cannot have foreseen, the acting out of a literary selfhood diversely, repeatedly and unpredictably coming to itself afresh.

But what we also mean by the ST's making progress through translation, is its continual drawing closer to us, or even outpacing us, across space and time. Translation is not a commemorative process, a way of remembering the ST and updating that memory; to use these notions is to look too exclusively from the point of view of the TT. The ST is being encouraged to traverse a space and/or time which it does not yet know. As it traverses this space/time, so it encounters the poetries that postdate it, poetries which are part of the translator's consciousness and through which the world has been variously re-imagined. We might express this difference—between translation as (a) commemoration and (b) as progress of the ST—diagrammatically, thus:

(a) ST ← TT (ST + 5yrs)
← ← TT (ST + 10 yrs)
← ← ← TT (ST + 15yrs)
(b) ST → ST (TT at 5 yrs) → ST (TT at 10 yrs) → ST (TT at 15yrs)

In (a), while successive TTs make progress, the ST remains marooned in its own origins. In (b), as the ST passes along the corridor of posthumousness, through successive TTs, so it is invited at every turn to rethink its literary choreography, to restage its semantic dramas, to reproject itself as literary experience. In other words, the translator becomes the representative of the ST in its after-life by acting as the representative of that after-life; what translation translates is the ST's perpetual discrepancy with itself, not the discrepancy between two languages.

So the translator takes upon himself the task of extending the expressive relevance of the ST, of exploring the ST's potential to be other, to operate in other creative contexts and to animate other ways of thinking about its subject. This is to assume not only that any text is, in some sense, unfinished—it can never grasp how it might be imagined, it cannot control what might be intuited in it, it cannot predict the uses to which it might be put—but also that every text desires to be other. Translation is an eroticisation of the ST; it allows the ST's desire to express itself and, at the same time, re-projects that desire into the blind field of a future; translation works to turn the pleasure of the ST into Barthesian *jouissance*. But if we are shifting the emphasis from linguistic variation to textual re-projection, or, expressed in other terms, from translation conceived of as the solution of *problems* of linguistic transfer, to translation conceived of as a response to textual *opportunities*, those opportunities being principally provided by the space/time that lies between the ST and the translator,

then we must know what we mean by text, and that leads to my third proposition, namely:

3. That the text of the ST is, by definition, an expanded and expanding text. There are three senses in which this is so, and it is the third sense that principally concerns me in this book. Genette potentially did translation studies a great service by including translation within the much broader purview of transtextuality (1982): this move quite simply shifts translational consciousness out of preoccupations with the feasibility of linguistic (cultural) transfer into a sense of how open, and naturally assimilative of each other, texts are, and how much translation is itself more a weave of quotation, pastiche, imitation, allusion than a self-defining and separate activity. And I would emphasise the notion of 'weave'. I have no objection to typologies of translation; they enlarge our awareness of the range of possible translational moves (see, for example, Eco 2001: 99–130). But they tend implicitly to promote the ideal of unmixed, non-hybrid products, products which can be clearly identified (so is this, once and for all, a translation or a paraphrase?), when, on the contrary, we may aspire to versions whose means cannot quite be brought into focus, which change kaleidoscopically, which are intended to be experienced as fluid.

The life of a text is a process of accretion, accumulating to itself, and discarding, meanings, intertexts, varying functions and roles within the (cultural) landscape:

> Si le traducteur ne restitue ni ne copie un original, c'est que celui-ci survit et se transforme. La traduction sera en vérité un moment de sa propre croissance, il s'y complètera *en* s'agrandissant. [. . .] Et si l'original appelle un complément, c'est qu'à l'origine il n'était pas là sans faute, plein, complet, total, identique à soi.
>
> (Derrida 1985: 232)
>
> [If the translator neither restitutes nor copies an original, it is because the original lives and transforms itself. The translation will truly be a moment in the growth of the original, which will complete itself *in* enlarging itself. [. . .] And if the the original calls for a complement, it is because at the origin it was not there without fault, full, complete, total, identical to itself (trans. Graham 1985: 188).]

But if I have bracketed 'cultural', it is because the translator is both a public representative and a private poet, so that he operates both with a structuralist version of intertextuality, an intertextuality of shared cultural reference, operating in accordance with a nameable set of categories (quotation, allusion, parody, travesty, forgery), and a post-structuralist

version, where intertextuality is the instigator of textual anarchy, textual chaos, depriving the author of rights to, and control of, his own language, and inviting the reader to let intertextual fantasy have its way, as that which defines the permutative vagaries, the inexhaustibility, of the reading experience.

At all events, we might begin by saying that the ST in the TT is an expanded and expanding text by virtue of its intertextual existence, its borrowings and lendings, its metatextual and architextual baggage, the associations it generates in the reader; some of these I tried to incorporate into my translation of Baudelaire's 'Le Voyage' (2000: 218–46). Secondly and relatedly, there are the paratextual features (blurbs, publicity, prefaces, footnotes—see Genette 1987) which constitute the readerly contexts of both the ST and the TT, an important part of the conditioning of readerly response. This leaves open an important question: how far should it be a distinguishing feature of the literature of translation that the textual actively incorporates the paratextual/contextual within its borders, so that the text is supported, made to radiate, associatively unpacked, in a variety of ways? Such a move might be a way of further implicating the reader in the text, of maintaining an awareness that the text is a translation, and of installing a different rhythm of textual assimilation, a rhythm which might, again, be a distinctive characteristic of the literature of translation.

Finally, there is the textual space itself, in the strictly physical sense. This space, the space of the page, of the double page, of the unfolding book, this is, as it were, the consciousness of the translator, into which the translated ST comes to bed itself, which distributes the text according to the way that the text is imagined in the translator's mind. Thus the text is certainly not just the words; it is the text and its *Lebensraum*, the text and its space, or rather its place, where that place is defined by the translator, by the translator's inhabitation. The space of the page is not what is left by the text, but what makes the text, as *ajours* [openwork] make lace or architectural tracery. Space is at once the translator's imaginative field and the text's own consciousness of itself.

Translation is principally about putting a text into a new expressive environment. This is what I understand translation as recontextualisation to mean: not putting a text into a new context of reception, but into a new context of projection. Correspondingly, the space of the page should suggest to the reader a certain *mode d'emploi* [instructions for use]. Translation studies, focussed as it so often is on the translation process itself, has done very little to develop a reader-response theory. Given the general absence of translator/reader contracts, and the general passivity of readers of translation—particularly ignorant readers—it is vital that modes

of reading are, where at all possible, integrated into the translation. The activation of the space of the page is the activation of a mode of reading, the promotion of perceptual mechanisms suggestive of the ways in which a text might come home to itself.

In Barthesian terms, and as already intimated, the object of translation is clear: to translate a Work into a Text, to translate the *lisible* [readerly] into the *scriptible* [writerly], to translate the culturally institutionalized into the culturally undefined, re-inventable, open-ended. It is this process, these notions, which make multi-translation inevitable, not because of the ST, but because of the different ontological status of the TT. The ST is substance, while the TT is methodology, to be experienced *only in an activity of production*. The TT seconds the ST in the deferral of signification; the TT does not arrive at an interpretation but at a dissemination; the TT is a plurality (by connections, overlappings, variety of perspectives) (Barthes: 1984).

2. Four models of literary translation

On the basis of the founding propositions above, I would like to propose four models of literary translation.

The first kind is what one might describe as a re-definition, or relocation, of textuality. Textuality is, in the written text, a set of verbal relationships, partly prescribed by complex formal and syntactic conventions, partly free. But what is principally important is that the isolatedness, or circumscribedness, or system-potential, of this textuality draws the text into modes of meaning which are not *quite* covered by other known verbal organisations. This is inevitably a theoretical supposition which it would be extremely difficult to demonstrate in any conclusive way. But it is sufficient that it allows us to imagine the senses in which the 'known language' is insufficient to account for and cope with the textuality of text and that, therefore, for reader and translator alike, each text, to a greater or lesser degree, requires a re-imagining of language. But for the translator this re-imagining, which is already necessitated by writing in a 'foreign' language, produces a consequent requirement to re-imagine a textuality which is equal to it. I prefer the phrase 'equal to' to 'equivalent to', because equivalence always implies the already existent.

At the centre of textuality, then, lies a paradox: the more one advances into a text, the more one experiences its compulsions, its determination to multiply its interwovenness. But the more, concomitantly, one loses one's grasp and control of its multiplicity. And this loss of control is exacerbated by the unpredictability of what strikes us as readers, the irregular patterns

of readerly attention. It is these factors which help to generate the Barthesian *scriptible*, the plural text:

> Dans ce texte idéal, les réseaux sont multiples et jouent entre eux, sans qu'aucun puisse coiffer les autres; ce texte est une galaxie de signifiants, non une structure de signifiés; il n'a pas de commencement; il est réversible; on y accède par plusieurs entrées dont aucune ne peut être à coup sûr déclarée principale; les codes qu'il mobilise se profilent *à perte de vue*, ils sont indécidables (le sens n'y est jamais soumis à un principe de décision, sinon par coup de dés); de ce texte absolument pluriel, les systèmes de sens peuvent s'emparer, mais leur nombre n'est jamais clos, ayant pour mesure l'infini du langage.
>
> (Barthes 1970 : 12)
>
> [In this ideal text, the networks are multiple and interact with each other, without any single one being able to control the others; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; there are several points of entry none of which can be declared, with any certainty, to be the principal one; the codes activated by it stretch away *as far as the eye can see*, they are undecidable (their meaning is never subject to a principle of decision, apart from a throw of the dice); systems of meaning can take possession of this absolutely plural text, but their number is never finite, since the unit of measurement is the infinity of language.]

In creating an alternative ST in the textuality of the TT, we want to ensure that difficulties are treated as opportunities, that impossibilities generate licences. We need to create a TT which produces its own unfulfillable demands, in which any choices made become the property of the text, in which each move releases new expressive possibilities which must, in their turn, be responded to. The TT must generate its own kinds of formal knowledge, its own web of expectations, associations, surprises.

To illustrate this proposition, I would like to look briefly at François-René Daillie's translation of Wordsworth's 'Daffodils' (see Appendix I for full texts). Daillie's version makes its first constitutive decision in its choice of verse-line: the decasyllable, but not the classical 4//6 model, rather the nineteenth-century 'Romantic' 5//5 variety. This choice already sets certain architextual coordinates and calls forth an available readerly context: we shall find this 5//5 decasyllable exceptionally in the work of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore ('La Rose flamande'), for example, very

occasionally in Musset, more frequently in Leconte de Lisle, Cros, Corbière, Verlaine; we expect it to provide a tetrametric shape (such as 2 + 3 + 3 + 2), closer to the Wordsworthian iambic tetrameter than either the 4//6 decasyllable—usually trimetric—or the octosyllable—usually dimetric or trimetric—would get. So Daillie seems to be making an accentual rather than a syllabic choice. But the phrasal nature of French accentuation means that either or both of the decasyllable's hemistichs might be a single pentasyllabic rhythmic span, as here in:

l. 4		//	une légion	
l. 9	Elles s'étendaient	//	sans un intervalle	
l. 14		//	plus allégrement	
l. 16		//	par leur enjouement	
l. 19	Car si je repose	//		
l. 20		//	ô béatitude	
l. 22		//	de la solitude	
l. 24		//	avec les jonquilles	(perhaps (2+3))

Not surprisingly, these instances gravitate predominantly towards the second hemistich, as the line's initial impetus radiates out, spends itself, in feelings of spiritual lightness or transfiguration. This sense of radiation is more physical—numbers, spatial extent—in ll. 4 and 9. And it is fitting that the pentasyllabic measure with which the poem closes should be the daffodils themselves, the source of both animated multitude and spiritual replenishment. It is the pentasyllable that allows, encourages perhaps, the expansive but interruptive stillness of the apostrophe of l. 20, itself adumbrated by the apostrophe of line 3:

> Quand soudain je vis en foule—ô mirage !—

Apostrophe is not a feature of the ST, but for Daillie the fixedness of the decasyllable's caesura creates those tensions in syntax and word-projection for which apostrophe can act as a timely release.

The animated variety of the daffodils is embodied in the odd number of syllables in the hemistich, since this most frequently produces a segmentation—3+2 or 2+3—in which a one-syllable difference makes outlines vacillate and prevents the establishment of any sense of regularity or equilibrium. Daillie makes no use of the 4+1 combination, but on three occasions resorts to 1+4, to wit:

l. 13	Les vagues dansaient, pleines d'étincelles	2+3+1+4
l. 21	Vient illuminer l'œil intérieur	1+4+1+4

In each of these instances, the monosyllabic measure fixes points of light, glints—the words that Wordsworth himself uses to describe the light given off by the daffodils are 'twinkle' (like stars), 'sparkling' (like waves) and 'flash'. And l. 21 perfectly captures, in its twofold insistence on this sudden moment of focus followed by a tetrasyllabic movement of suffusion, a process that Pound tries to capture in 'In a Station of the Metro': 'In a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective' (quoted in Ruthven 1969: 153).

In comparison, Wordsworth's own metric may begin to look rather too homogeneous and insensitive. One might justifiably bewail the English ear's unresponsiveness to syllabic values and its reliance on the reassuring regularity of beat. To identify the metre of 'The Daffodils' as iambic tetrameter is to commit oneself to a through-read, non-phrasal treatment of the line, which masks the variety of segmentations, in favour of an unproblematic affirmation of the metre. But even if one uncovers the phrasal complexity in, say, the second stanza—

3' or 4' / 3 / 2
3' / 5
2 / 6
5' / 3
3' / 2 / 3
4 / 4

[note: the apostrophes indicate segments which end with an unstressed syllable]

—one realises that the English ear is more likely to identify a sequence of punctuations, of pauses of varying length, than a sequence of rhythmic segments redistributing iambic tetrameter in a range of re-configurations.

One might argue a similar French advantage in rhyme. The rhymes of 'The Daffodils' are exceedingly dull: from a semantic point of view, one might single out the fitting antonyms 'cloud/crowd', and the equally fitting kinships of 'trees/breeze', 'glee/company', 'mood/solitude', 'fills/daffodils'. But one feels no concertedness in these conjunctions, just as one feels no orchestration of, say, open and closed syllables in the rhyme position. The semantic suggestiveness of the French rhymes seems to me altogether greater, and we must remember that rhyme is one of those devices which is not merely a device, but a language likely to relocate or redistribute the