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Author-Translator Collaborations: A Typological Survey

Patrick Hersant

Translating is an act of loving collaboration. The translator and his or her author must constantly re-interpret the fable of the Blind Man and the Lame Man: I will walk for you, you will see for me.

M.-E. Coindreau (1992: 137)

Though neither systematic nor even frequent, collaborative relationships between an author and his or her translator reveal blind spots, which are interesting both for translation studies and textual genetics. The exchange between the two parties is not always fruitful, nor amicable; rarely prolonged, it often proves disappointing. Occasionally, however, the experience is rich in teachings and surprises, and offers us valuable insight into the translator's workshop. Collaboration can thus bring into the light of day an activity – that of translation in the making – normally kept in the shadows, revealing its lines of force and fracture, hesitations and revisions, instances of audacity, daring and regret. Without being totally absent from theoretical charts, the terrain that now lies spread out before us remains largely unexplored.¹ The heterogeneous corpus presented here, consisting of letters and translators' accounts, will allow us both to outline a typology of these various exchanges and to identify their key stakes, whether they concern questions of correction and revision, intention and *auctoritas*, the desire for mastery and the fight for control. To better understand a practice which naturally varies according to the era, as well as the authors and translators involved, it is useful to divide this corpus into several methodological categories. A distinction may indeed be made between varying, more or less extensive degrees of collaboration – from informal discussion to a text's author taking control, from general recommendations, co-translations, revisions, questions and answers, back-and-forth exchanges, to giving a translator *carte blanche*.

Carte blanche and recommendations

By giving *carte blanche* to their translator, some authors show a type of trust, which may be based on an earlier collaborative experience, on the translator's reputation or on the author's own conception of the writing process. André Brink thus affirms to Jean Guiloineau: 'Do as you like, it's your text' (Segonds-Bauer 1994: 62). Breyten Breytenbach: 'I think that the ideal is precisely that, from the time a translator starts working on it, the text is her own' (62). Aimé Césaire to Janheinz Jahn: 'I hasten to tell you that I leave you absolute freedom for the German adaptation' (Mbondobari 2009: 260). Gregory Rabassa concerning Gabriel García Márquez: '[He] lets one go his way and is satisfied with the overall impression he has' (Hoeksema 1978: 9). William Faulkner to Maurice-Edgar Coindreau (1992: 23), who was afraid of not doing justice to the American novelist: 'Why are you concerned about it? If there were passages which caused you problems, you could simply have skipped them.'

Next in our progressive scale of author-translator collaboration come general recommendations to the translator. Joseph Conrad, in a letter to André Gide, thus gives some advice to his French translator: 'My style is almost always entirely idiomatic. One can therefore translate me faithfully by seeking the equivalent French idioms. For example: – if I wrote, let us say, that in the narrated circumstances, a certain *Mr X had taken his own life*, the most faithful translation would be the French idiom: "Monsieur X s'était donné la mort." It is not here a question of corrections, nor of suggestions, but rather of guidelines outlining a general poetic: 'The most simple, most energetic idiom is always preferable' (Conrad 1996: 592).

My second example may be surprising, since it presents a collaboration which can only be described as posthumous. I recently translated a text by Mary Butts entitled *Imaginary Letters* (2013), whose very particular Modernist style forced me to repress, in each line, a natural tendency towards smoothing out its disparities, since it is true that 'faced with a heterogeneous work ... the translator tends to unify, to homogenize what relates to the different or the disparate' (Berman 1999: 60). A difficult task, which Mary Butts summoned me to tackle by challenging me from beyond the grave. Indeed, browsing through her *Journal* between two pages of my translation, I came across a warning from Butts to her future French translator. On 16 May 1930, then, Mary Butts let me know that my language is simply not made in such a way as to appropriately render her own; her singular style, her way of manhandling syntax, creates turns of phrase which

are ‘not known in french (*sic*), not to be known in french or only to be admitted by the back door of a paraphrase’. In this way, Butts confirms that my translation, if I am not careful, risks being merely ‘nearly always a bald explanation’ (Butts 2002: 348–9).

Revision, questions-and-answers, back-and-forths

In addition to their minimal character, the various forms of collaboration discussed so far all have in common the fact that they take place before the actual process of translation has itself begun. A much higher degree of involvement is implied in the process of revision: it assumes that the author inspects a translation submitted for his or her judgement. Provided that he sufficiently masters the target language, such an author thus becomes his translator’s corrector. The most well-known case is perhaps that of Milan Kundera, who discovered quite late in the day that the French public had a distorted image of his work because of the translator of *La Plaisanterie* having ‘introduced around a hundred (yes!) embellishing metaphors (in my original: the sky was blue; in the translation: under a sky of periwinkle October flew its sumptuous bulwarks; in mine: the trees were multicoloured; in his: upon the trees there abounded a polyphony of tones’ (Kundera 1985: 399).

In the best case scenario, revision may take the form of a fruitful dialogue, as we see in the epistolary exchange between the Canadian poet Anne Hébert, and her translator Frank Scott, concerning her ‘Tombeau des Rois’, an exchange which, as Graham Fraser (2013: 20) notes, unfolds ‘line after line, peeling like an onion the multiple layers of meaning in what constitutes a remarkable document on the collaboration between poet and translator’. Hébert (1970: 43) thanks Scott in the following terms: ‘Your keen attention, your precise questions, the clarification of some linguistic misunderstandings, often allowed me to go deeper into the hidden meaning of certain passages.’ Scott replies: ‘The “dialogue between author and translator,” as you point out, can thus be carried on between us directly, and little by little what is in your poem can be made to express itself more and more in my language. At the end, however, there will still be something unsaid by me. This is where your poem is left standing alone’ (50).

The richest exchange, however, and the one most likely to affect the final outcome, intervenes neither before nor after the work of translation itself; it most often occurs during the translation process, and as difficulties are encountered,

when the translated material presents a maximum of plasticity. For Italo Calvino (2002: 81), everything begins with questions: 'I strongly believe in collaboration between the author and translator. Rather than a revision of the translation by the author, this collaboration emerges out of the translator's questions to the author.' At a 1982 UNESCO translation conference in Rome, Calvino outlined his conception of translation as ideal reading. For a writer who had been translated so many times, and who was himself a translator, translation constituted 'not only an essential complement to writing, but the veritable keystone of literary creation' (Cappello 2007: 164).

In 1934, when René-Noël Rimbault wrote to George Orwell (2006) to ask him to preface his translation of *Down and Out in Paris and London*, he appended to his letter a series of questions concerning 'some points in your book that [he] d[id] not think [he] understood very well' (19). Two examples: Rimbault: 'Page 238: *The current London adjective, now tacked on every noun, is – ...* What is this adjective?' (21) Orwell: 'This adjective is *fucking*. *Fuck* means "foutre" and *fucking* is the present participle' (24). Rimbault: 'Page 259: "Bull shit"' (21). Orwell: '*Bull shit* is an expression which means the excrement of male cows. A man would thus say to another *You're talking bull shit*; that is, "You're talking nonsense." It's a very impolite expression' (25). Once the proofs have been reread, Orwell adds 'some changes and suggestions, for the most part very minor' (53) to his initial responses. These various forms of authorial participation, need it be said, are not necessarily mutually exclusive: general recommendations may be accompanied by an explicit revision, and an instance of revision may follow a series of back-and-forth exchanges. The Italian poet Fabio Pusterla, translator of Jaccottet, welcomes the poet's various interventions in his work: 'He could tell me if I was exaggerating, if I was going too far in a certain direction. ... The right distance from another's work is always difficult to find' (Vischer 2000).

The Italian novelist Claudio Magris anticipates questions of translation by accompanying the manuscript with a list of instructions for his translators, which range 'from intertextual references in the form of direct quotations or paraphrases, to the so-called culture-specific words, from dialectical expressions to the most general mixture of linguistic registers and varieties' (Ivančić 2011: 161). That an author should be so concerned about the fate of his work in a foreign language is certainly fascinating, but one can imagine the uneasiness or apprehension a translator might feel upon discovering such a list, before subsequently receiving, by post, Magris's remarks and corrections of the translation currently in process.

Closelaborations

We owe this beautiful neologism to Guillermo Cabrera Infante, who thus chose to baptize his ‘close collaboration’ with the translator Suzanne Jill Levine (1991: 47). Resolutely target-oriented, the method used by Levine and Cabrera Infante consists in adapting the original with the author’s active collaboration: ‘[The translations] are consistently more *literary* than the original. The incommunicable in-jokes of Havanan popular culture and the associations provoked by the spoken play of sounds have been displaced by conceptual, graphic, *readerly* in-jokes’ (23). Levine continued this collaborative practice with Manuel Puig, affirming that the Argentine’s ‘vast knowledge of North American mass culture was invaluable to our creative collaboration’ (127).

We can glimpse in this practice a particular form of mediated self-translation, or of four-handed translation, in which the final text sometimes appears as the joint work of the author and his or her translator – all the English editions of Cabrera Infante’s novels thus specify that the book is ‘translated from the Spanish by Suzanne Jill Levine with the author’. In this sense, the ‘closelaboration’ announced by Cabrera Infante intends less to pay tribute to his translator than to clearly signal his own participation: ‘A tyrannical writer so jealously protective of his text that he claims to have produced the French translation,’ the Cuban novelist thus claims a sort of ‘paternity by force’ (Bensoussan 1995: 43).

Jorge Luis Borges translated around ten of his books into English with Norman Thomas Di Giovanni, a student he met at Harvard and immediately invited to visit him in Buenos Aires. Borges, it seems, sought to offer his Anglophone readership a version as far from ‘foreign’ as possible, and the young American translator was thus appropriately invited to adapt the text to his liking: ‘I said we could then credit the finished product as having been translated in collaboration with the author. Borges was stunned by the suggestion. “Of course, I’ll help,” he said, “but won’t it hurt you to say that I took part?” I told him it would give the work more authority’ (Di Giovanni 2003: 165). Borges’s books in English are the fruit of such a close collaboration with his translator that for many years the copyright was shared between them. As in the case of Levine with Cabrera Infante and Puig, we will see that an author’s participation in the translation process, far from producing a more literal version than usual, can in fact have the opposite effect: without the author’s approval (and even incitement), we may suppose that Levine and Di Giovanni would never have modified and acclimatized the original with such confidence.

Translations of this type are often the cause or effect of a deep friendship between an author and his or her translator. Heinrich Heine (1857: vi): 'I cannot, without profound emotion, remember the evenings of March, 1848, when the kind and gentle Gérard [de Nerval] came every day to see me in my reclusion ... in order to work peacefully with me on the translation of my tranquil German reveries.' Laure Bataillon (1991: 55): 'Julio Cortázar never hesitated to push me further than his text allowed, whether the request came from me or from him.' Concerning Vargas Llosa, Puig and Cabrera Infante, Albert Bensoussan (2001: 13) recognizes 'the requirement for sympathy, and more still of empathy, which defines the translator's attitude before his or her author'. Borges and Di Giovanni (2003: 165): 'We don't think of ourselves as being two men. We think we are really one mind at work.' The Irish poet Denis Devlin recalling his working sessions with Saint-John Perse: 'When the night was growing darker, and the voice of a negro outside underlined for an instant the colour of rhythm, we set the Latin dictionary on the Mansion dictionary, with the Petit Larousse above both, and it all ended with a burst of laughter' (Saint-John Perse 1972: 1112–13).

Friendships are at once the cause and effect of some collaborative translations. Philippe Jaccottet thus notes concerning Giuseppe Ungaretti: 'He was an extraordinarily warm, generous man, a true friendship soon developed between us. ... He invited me to Rome to work on the translations' (Graf 1998: 63). The correspondence between the two poets and translators was the subject of a publication, which allows us to follow, step by step so to speak, the evolution of the translation of one of Ungaretti's poems entitled 'Dunja' (Jaccottet 2008: 201 *sqq*; Graf 1998: 65–72). This is not the place to examine in detail these typed and handwritten pages which, far beyond the mere revision and correction of terms, or even scattered suggestions, give the feeling of a text forged by a back-and-forth exchange as amicable as it is demanding; one extract should suffice in indicating the tone and fecundity of the exchange. Jaccottet (2008: 200), in a letter dated August 22 1969: '*Leoparda*: I don't know if we can say *léoparde* in French. Littré doesn't say. Maybe *panthère*?' Ungaretti, in the margins of the typewritten translation: 'Better to go with the neologism: it's not a *panthère*: it's primarily a beast of grace rather than of cruelty' (Jaccottet 2008: 210).

An extreme (and rather rare) form of closelaboration consists in modifying the original according to its translation, in changing the source text in the light of the target text. Gregory Rabassa (2005: 43) thus affirms: 'Julio Cortázar, my first author and oldest friend among them all, liked the way I handled his stuff. ... Of all "my" authors he was the one who came closest to what might

be called collaboration. His marginal notes were well-taken and sometimes he would even alter his text to better fit the English.' Fabio Pusterla: 'Some authors who speak Italian wanted to collaborate in the translation. One of them, who was very meticulous, even decided to change one of the lines of his own poem in accordance with one of my suggestions, because he preferred the translation' (Vischer 2000).

When undertaking a translation into German of an anthology of poems by Aimé Césaire, Jahn sends the Martinican poet a list of questions; having to delve back into old poems for a foreign edition, Césaire took the opportunity to rewrite or remove certain passages. When asked about the meaning of the word 'tur-ra-mas' for example, he responds to his translator (Ruhe 2003: 414): 'The word *tur-ra-mas* is an Australian word whose meaning I no longer remember. *We can remove it.* I'll remove it myself in the French edition.' As we can see, it becomes difficult to judge a translator's work without having access to the translation process's complete genetic record; as Ernstpeter Ruhe makes clear, 'we must take into account the contribution of the author himself, who changes his text in order to facilitate its passage into another language' (ibid.: 413).

How do authors come to modify their own texts based on a translation currently in progress? Some seek to comply with the customs of the target language in order to better appeal to a foreign readership: Kundera removes certain elements which he deems untranslatable (such as the use of formal and informal pronouns), or which are overly linked to a specific historico-cultural context (like the Slavophilia of Czechs in the 1950s, Woods 2006: 3–4), while Cabrera Infante, with the help of his translator, imagines new references to popular music and cinema (Levine 1991: 23). Others take into account possible suggestions from a translator who has been able to earn their trust. Jean Guiloineau, while in the process of translating André Brink's novel *A Chain of Voices* (1982), informs the author that some passages remind him of a work by Michel Foucault, *Moi Pierre Rivière*, published in 1973. Struck in turn by the correspondences between his own novel and Foucault's text, Brink decides to add several lines to the original text: 'What amazes me is the light that [Foucault's book] sheds on several aspects of Galant himself. And it is perhaps because of this that I have two last passages to add' (Guiloineau 2007: 241). Finally, some authors, in a more playful way, go as far as to accept changes inspired by a typo: Rabassa, having typed 'fired eggs' instead of 'fried egg' in his translation of *Hopscotch*, notes with surprise and pleasure that 'Julio said, "I like it. Let's keep it"' (Rabassa 2005: 44).

Rarity and reliability of sources

Celebrating the long overdue marriage between textual genetics and translation studies in a special issue of the journal *Genesis*, Fabienne Durand-Bogaert (2014: 8) regrets that the majority of translators ‘do not consider it useful to preserve traces of the various battles that allowed them to reach a particular lexical or syntactic choice’. The published text thus constitutes a translation’s sole state, the successive versions of which remain forever inaccessible. With translators always ready to erase their tracks, the scarcity of their drafts and manuscripts makes all the more precious those rare exchanges, whether epistolary or otherwise, in which we see the transition from one text to another emerge and mature under the dual, more or less benevolent or critical gaze, of both author and translator at once. Some of these exchanges have survived.

The letters and manuscripts of Saint-John Perse, who collaborated regularly with his English, German and American translators, are all available in the form of archives or publications which elicit abundant critical interest. Analysing in detail the English versions of T. S. Eliot and Robert Fitzgerald, Henriette Levillain (1987: 334) notes that this relatively interventionist poet, ‘by expressing his preferences for certain words or sounds rather than others, or by refusing the ones or the others, extended into the English language his reverie regarding words’. Maryvonne Boisseau (2009: 200) has shown that Saint-John Perse’s relationship with translation, as illustrated by his collaboration with Denis Devlin, reveals several aspects of the interaction between translation and criticism – ‘the importance of the conditions of translation, in other words, translation’s enunciative context ... [and] the importance of critical dialogue and collaboration in the genesis of translation.’² Following an examination of the translation manuscripts of Wallace Fowlie (and John Marshall)’s ‘Narrow Are the Vessels’ (‘Étroits sont les vaisseaux’) according to a triple approach (genetic, hermeneutic and poetic), Esa Hartmann (2000: 26) concludes that as the ‘mirror of a writing in quest of itself ... the history of this translation is like the evolution of a second creation’.

A collaboration which has been followed and documented, either in the form of archives or in a posthumous publication, is close to a miracle. Indeed it requires conditions as strict as they are numerous: the author and translator must be contemporaries, must accept to work together, must master the other’s language and, above all, leave written traces of their exchanges. It often occurs that the author’s letters are preserved and published without those of the translator: ‘Translators’ archives have never generated the same concern

for preservation, from libraries and publishers, rights holders, and even the translators themselves, as writers' archives' (Durand-Bogaert 2014: 16). The hundreds of letters and telegrams sent by Gabriele D'Annunzio to his French translator are a case of one-way correspondence. Fascinating but truncated, the exchange above all reveals the conception that D'Annunzio (1946: 175) came to have of literary translation: 'I do not despair of getting you to be a more *literal* translator; especially since the most beautiful and noble passages of translation are precisely those in which the *faithfulness* of the text has been most closely respected.' D'Annunzio did not conserve the letters he received from his translator, who did not himself keep his own drafts; Georges Hérélle's questions and responses thus remain unknown. We can only regret such a loss: one of his letters, which survived by happy coincidence in the form of a copy sent to a journalist, reveals a translator at once supple and tenacious in the face of an excessively fussy novelist.

[Some of your corrections] are unfortunate, either because you use words which cannot express in French what you want them to express, or because you employ barbaric constructions that make the French text look like a translation by a clumsy schoolboy. ... Yes, you are 'solely responsible for your art'; but it is I who am responsible for the translation of your work, and therefore it is my role to be the *ultimo correttore* of this translation.' (ibid.: 350)

The correspondence between Joseph Conrad and André Gide, which in this instance is fully documented, allows us to follow the highs and lows of a collaboration as amicable as it was fruitful. Direct exchange, however, is not always enough: if we indeed want to understand the position of the two correspondents, we must read with caution, and even crosscheck, their respective claims. Gide, for example, never reveals to Conrad that his own translation of *Typhoon* is a simple (and utterly imperfect) revision of the same work entrusted in 1915 to a certain Marie-Thérèse Muller. Sylvère Monod (1991: 24) argues sympathetically that Gide's *Typhoon* is in reality 'an unacknowledged collaboration with an anonymous and forgotten individual, who cleared away the initial scrub and provided a terrain on which Gide's great literary talent could then flourish.'

What credit should be given then to the discourses of translators and their authors? Whether in good faith or not, some exaggerate the quality of their exchanges or the richness of their collaboration. Vanity lies in wait, sometimes fuelled by the author's compliments. Albert Bensoussan, Mario Vargas Llosa's translator: 'It is rare for an author to dedicate a book to his translator. I am a translator among others, but he has never known such fidelity with a single

conflict is more common than one might think; if it fails to excite the general public, it fuels conversations as bitter as they are amusing between translators, and most likely between authors as well.

Alice Kaplan (2013: 71–2) has recounted her savoury troubles with the translator of her *French Lessons* (1993) who, for the sake of beautiful style, did not hesitate to rewrite a prose he deemed overly transparent. Two unnamed characters from the original text, ‘he’ and ‘she’, thus become in his translation ‘Betsy’ and ‘Joey’, on the pretext that the indefinite article would be ‘very ugly in French’. The conflict escalates. At first enthusiastic, the translator multiplies his reproaches and threatens to publish under a pseudonym; in the end, Kaplan rejects the translation, and the publisher renounces the plan to publish it. Indeed, stylistic or personal disagreements often arise, perturbing a collaboration which may have initially seemed fruitful.

Authorial appropriation

The case of Vladimir Nabokov in many respects foreshadows that of Milan Kundera. In each case, the fear of betrayal is a powerful motivator, encouraging the author to monitor closely his translator, and then replace him. We know that experience had taught Kundera to dread embellishments of his work and that he corrected his translators unceremoniously in order to conserve, even at the price of a certain psychological violence, absolute control over his written production. Equally polyglot and respectful of the original, Nabokov shows himself similarly wary of the liberties his translators might take. Between 1959 and 1977, he systematically collaborates with them, as though on the lookout for the slightest alteration of image or term in their work. As translator of Nabokov’s first novel *Mashenka* (1926), Michael Glenny for example abandons the metaphor ‘dog nipples’, used to describe the aeration vents aligned on the roof of a carriage, and replaces the image with simple ‘ventilators’. Nabokov is quick to correct him: ‘There are no “revolving ventilators” in my text; *such’i soski* are dog nipples’ (Grayson 1977: 126). This type of correction is a mere prelude to Nabokov’s slow appropriation of the English language by way of the translation process. Such an appropriation first manifests itself by Nabokov’s close surveillance of his collaborators in the languages he speaks (French, German, Italian), and then, from 1959 on, by the collaboration between Nabokov and his son Dmitri, who, according to Nabokov, is a veritable ideal model of the translator: ‘A translator

who would provide him with an accurate version in good English, leaving him free to attend to the “gnoseological side”, to adapt, revise, elaborate as he chose, resisting or indulging the creative urge’ (Grayson 2000: 989).³

Derek Walcott is among the many poets and translators who worked with Joseph Brodsky on the English version of the latter’s poems. The collaboration Walcott evokes takes place over three stages: ‘The first is the interlinear translation, the second a transformation, and the third, with luck and with Brodsky’s tireless discipline, transfiguration’ (Walcott 1998: 138). It is over the course of these three successive stages that disagreements and tensions begin to emerge – the tone of the following letter to Daniel Weissbort (1989: 225–6) provides a glimpse: ‘Lots of things to be changed. ... Watch the meter. ... The first line is by far too long. ... I am positive. ... Stubbornly yours, Joseph.’ Brodsky, by dint of blaming his translators for their shortcomings, notably in matters of rhythm and rhyme, eventually opted for solitary work: after years in exile, his mastery of the foreign tongue allowed him both to write directly in English and to translate his own Russian texts. The demands of the Russian poet got the better of his most patient translators; according to Alexandra Berlina (2014: 3), ‘Conflict-laden collaboration eventually led to the co-translators giving up and clearing the field for Brodsky himself.’

In the course of a rigorous analysis of Paul Celan’s interventions on certain French versions of his poems, Dirk Weissmann (2003: 138) notes that Jean-Pierre Wilhelm must ‘content himself with signing in his own name a translation done mainly by Celan himself’, to the extent that the suggestions of the German poet ‘go beyond the limits of a simple translation and in reality come close to a recreation of the text in French’. For example, by suggesting that the title *Nächtlich geschürzt* be translated ‘Retroussées et de nuit’, Celan replaces a relationship of subordination (the lips are curled up *for the night*, according to Wilhelm’s first version) by a parataxis absent from the original German.

Intention and *auctoritas*

In its various forms, from the most superficial to the most in-depth, collaboration is an act of writing whose finality and efficacy still remain to be determined. What does collaboration claim to do, and to what extent does it succeed? Whether through preliminary framing, revising the completed text, or accompanying the work of translation, collaboration aims, in an almost always unformulated way, to *improve* the translation itself. In this way, it is based on a

presupposition which, though certainly admissible, deserves to be questioned, namely: that the author would know more about his own text than any other reader, and his or her intention would be at once defineable, circumscribed and beneficial. None of this is self-evident, a fact translators are indeed well-placed to judge. Referring to a working session with Faulkner, Coindreau (1999: 21) thus recalls: 'Only once he was unable to give me an answer. ... He read it, reread it, then began to laugh. "I have absolutely no idea of what I meant," he admitted.' Occasionally, the translation reveals to the author of the original subtle aspects which he did not expect in his own text. Patricia Zurcher, translator of the Swiss poet Kurt Marti: 'Kurt Marti had found in my translations certain dimensions of his texts which he had not perceived before. He had planned to rewrite his poems in the light of these dimensions' (Vischer 2009: 230). When he happened to read his own texts in translation, Umberto Eco (2007: 14) always perceived with enthusiasm the possibilities revealed to him by the passage into another language: 'I felt how, at the contact of another language, the text exhibited interpretative potentialities which had remained unknown to me, and how translation could sometimes improve it (I say "improve" precisely with regard to the *intention* that the text suddenly manifested, independently of my original intention as an empirical author).'

It is safe to assume, however, that in the majority of cases, the offer of collaboration comes from authors concerned with ensuring the preservation of their intended meanings, sometimes to the detriment of what the text may unwittingly mean – in spite of, or even *against*, itself. Every reader, according to Eco (1985: 230), 'by identifying profound structures, sheds light on something that the author *could not* mean, but which the text nevertheless seems to exhibit with absolute clarity'. If each of us has this experience upon reading a literary text, many authors seem to think it is especially important to understand, and thus translate, their initial intention. Borges to Rabassa (1989: 2): 'Don't translate what I've written, but what I wanted to say.' Saint-John Perse, collaborating with Fitzgerald on the translation of *Chronique*, embarks on an endless quest of possible meanings, so much so that, 'as the poet analysed what he "*had sought to suggest*," the poetic effect was multiplied and attached to separate or competing semantic or phonic origins' (Levillain 1987: 213).

Does translation benefit from reflecting the author's intention to the detriment of the intention of the text, at least such as its translator perceives it? Lawrence Venuti (1995: 165) has shown the extent to which 'this notion of authorship assumes romantic expressive theory: the text is seen as expressing the unique thoughts and feelings of the writer, a free, unified consciousness

which is not divided by determinations that exceed and possibly conflict with his intention'. There is a certain unction to *auctoritas*. In many cases, the translator who collaborated with the author – and even more so when this collaboration is explicitly mentioned on the title page – takes far greater liberties with the source text when he enjoys the author's blessing. We may occasionally observe a phenomenon of acclimatization, constrained by the culture of the target language, which constitutes a type of ethnocentrism against which Antoine Berman (1984: 74) warns the translator to be on guard: 'The very aim of translation – to open up in writing a certain relation with the Other, to fertilize what is one's Own through the mediation of what is Foreign – is diametrically opposed to the ethnocentric structure of every culture' (Berman 1992: 4). Now it is in this sense that many collaborations seem to play out with the author. From already old Borges texts, Borges and his translator Norman Thomas Di Giovanni 'rewrote their versions as if they had been originally written in mid-twentieth-century English' (Krause 2010: 85), inserting subtle changes 'so that American readers could understand the various historical and cultural references taken for granted by an Argentine readership' (41). Cortázar's French translator, Laure Bataillon (1987: 83), also admits that the author's approval provided him with an unexpected margin for manoeuvre: 'In terms of the advantages: authorised illumination of notorious obscurities, rejections or credible requests regarding the audacities of translation; accentuation of the text (rhythm, sonority) in tune with the author's ear – the advantage here is a double-edged sword, as Cortázar did not hesitate to push me further than his own text allowed.' Cabrera Infante's American translator, Suzanne Jill Levine, partly Americanizes place names and insults with the author's permission (or insistence). Munday (2007: 225) concludes from this that 'freedom of expression is a function of the permissive presence of the author'. As for Kundera, he does not hesitate to modify his own original in the course of translation, the most often in order to carry out a cultural acclimatization which we may assume his translator was careful to avoid (Woods 2006: 4). What prevails here is in fact the author's image of that which, in his eyes, will seem 'too exotic' to the translation's reader, which amounts to assuming an explicitly target-oriented approach that the translator would most likely be loathe to endorse. As Lawrence Venuti (1998: 6) underlines concerning Kundera, 'The fact that the author is the interpreter doesn't make the interpretation unmediated by target-language values.'

This unformulated aspect of collaboration ('the author knows best') clearly hides some questionable presuppositions – which, although certainly not

inadmissible, deserve to be exposed and critiqued – and raises unexpected questions which loom or erupt with particular force in those situations that are finally not uncommon of disagreement between the translator and the author of the text.

For better and for worse

Given these frequent disagreements, combined with the problems of a poorly mastered target language and the dubious virtues of authorial intention, we may wonder whether authors' participation in the translation of their own texts is indeed useful, or even desirable. Their corrections may be inept; their lists of commentaries may attract the translator's attention to unessential points; their conception of the act of translation itself may sometimes testify to an unexpected ethnocentrism and academicism. Analysing George Davis's questions and annotations in the margin of his translation of Mario Vargas Llosa's essay entitled 'El Paraíso de los libros' (1991), Jeremy Munday (2012: 121) concludes: 'Davis' negotiation with Vargas Llosa revolves around narrowing down the semantic space occupied by the source text items and very often adjusting the graduation in the target text. It is interesting that often the target text wording that is selected (presumably by or with agreement of Vargas Llosa) is the most standardized and the least intense.' Finally, we must mention a significant methodological difficulty: how to evaluate the real impact of the author's collaboration? Does it indeed have an impact, other than an incidental one? Of course, the exchanges quoted above indicate lexical and other changes with regard to the initial version. Can we in fact affirm, however, that without the author's collaboration, an entirely different translation would have seen the light of day?

Though the matter is rarely verifiable, some configurations may allow us to come to a partial conclusion. The same text by Calvino for instance, *Dall'opaco* (1976), has been the subject of two translations into French, of which only one benefited from collaboration with the author. Danièle Sallenave received commentaries of the following type: 'It seems to me that *ensoleillé* is too common a term, like the Italian *soleggiato*; we should thus translate *opaco* by *ombragé*. For *opaco*, I would prefer *ubac*, close as it is to the dialect term from which I started' (Calvino 2000: 1322). Jean-Paul Manganaro translated the same text after Calvino's death, without having access to the first translator's clarifications and responses. A comparison of the two translations – one collaborative, the other not – thus becomes possible. Garbarino (2005: 401) suggests that in this case

Sallenave, more than Manganaro, was able to ‘create a version more faithfully reproducing the precision of the source text’.

The case of *Tres tristes tigres* presents a similar interest. Cabrera Infante’s novel was the subject of a collaboration between the author and his French and English translators, while the Dutch translator not only worked alone, but some twenty years after the other two. Comparing Bensoussan’s and Levine’s versions, which date from the 1970s and which both benefited from the author’s clarifications, July De Wilde (2010: 3) ‘assumed that the author’s collaboration would be traceable in the translation product’. In the light of three linguistic criteria (‘intralingual speech variety’, ‘language play’ and ‘intertextual irony’), she finds that this is not so: in this particular case, the non-collaborative translation is not significantly different from the two others.

To the usual criteria we may refer to when analysing or criticizing translations, author-translator collaborations thus encourage us to add another: that of collaborative efficiency. Beyond the obvious relevance of their various correspondences and negotiations – and possibly the manuscript traces of their collaboration – it is indeed important to determine whether collaboration has had a noticeable effect on the published translation (an effect which would itself be susceptible to evaluation). Collaboration is also an experience of writing, the effects of which are sometimes felt not only on the translation currently taking place, but also on the work to come. It is, in the end, a practice which sheds more light than any other on the translation process – and it is for this reason that Umberto Eco (2007: 12) may observe: ‘I wonder if, in order to elaborate a theory of translation, it would not only be necessary to examine numerous examples of translation, but also to have carried out three experiments: to have checked the translations of others, to have translated and been translated oneself, or better still, to have translated in collaboration with one’s own translator.’

Translated by Nicholas Manning

Notes

- 1 See however Vanderschelden (1998), Graf (1998), Segonds-Bauer (1994), Ivančić (2011), Tanqueiro (2000), Gschwen (2000: 188–229).
- 2 For a transcription of Saint-John Perse’s correspondence with T. S. Eliot, Denis Devlin and Robert Fitzgerald, with lists of questions, commentaries and suggestions, see Hartmann (2007: 479–85).
- 3 See Anokhina (2014 and chapter 5 in the present volume).

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