American Translators Association

# SOURCE

A Quarterly publication
of the ATA's Literary Division

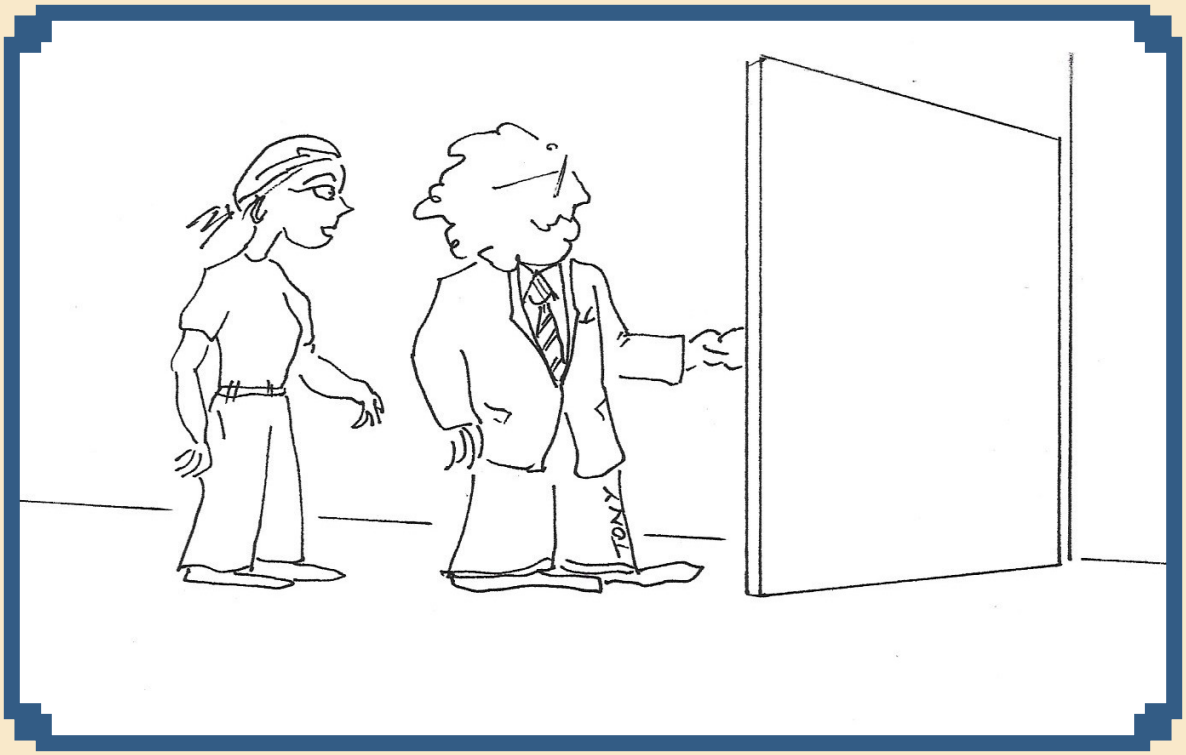
NO. 68 SUMMER 2016

# UNTRANSLATABILITY

*Valeria Petrocchi: Domesticating or Foreignizing Italian Translations from the English?*

*Patrick Saari: Untranslatability*

*Plus Part II of an interview with Erik Camayd-Freixas*

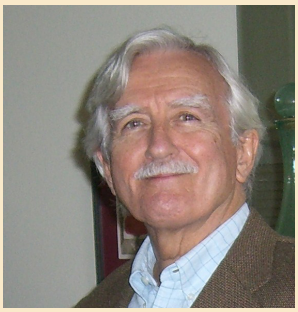



"*I have no idea. She came in on a whim, turned on a dime, and left in a huff.*"

# IN THIS ISSUE

# From the Editors

**Michele Aynesworth**
**Editor-in-Chief**



**Tony Beckwith**
**Associate Editor**

**Patrick Saari**
**Chief Copyeditor**

In this issue of *Source*, we honor master translator Gregory Rabassa with an *In Memoriam* tribute by Tony Beckwith (News, p. 8). As Tony says, "with his passing an important era in the history of literary translation came to an end."

Our theme for the Summer issue is "untranslatability." In his essay by this title, Patrick Saari highlights the 2004 publication of a 1,560-page Borgesian tour de force entitled *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, or *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, to cite the English version. Valeria Petrocchi's essay, "Domesticating or Foreignizing Italian Translations from the English? Italian Interpretations of Thomas Hardy's Poem 'Drummer Hodge'," gives the topic a different slant. Petrocchi compares the efforts of three Italian translators to deal with some "especially untranslatable words such as 'Karoo' and 'Bush'." Two of them, Singh and Stella, choose to leave the Afrikaans words, creating a foreignizing translation; the third, Gigli, prefers a domesticating translation, with words that relate to the Italian landscape and "enable the reader to imagine the scenario."

Professor Erik Camayd-Freixas, in Part II of his interview with Jesse Tomlinson, shares his experiences with "Literary Translation and University Life." (See our previous issue for Part I.)

Our Readers' Corner spotlights new publications by Ronnie Apter and Mark Herman, as well as by Mercedes Guhl.

Finally, Tony Beckwith's regular "By the Way" column ponders the "well of experience" that shapes a poet's approach to poetry, then examines the influences on his own, as reader, poet, and translator.


### About the editors

**Michele Aynesworth** specializes in translating Argentine and French authors. E-mail: michele@mckayaynesworth.com.

**Tony Beckwith**, a native of South America's Southern Cone, resides in Austin, where he works as a writer, translator, poet, and cartoonist. E-mail: tony@tonybeckwith.com.

**Patrick Saari,** born in Pasadena, California, now living in Quito, Ecuador, writes, translates, and interprets in English, French, and Spanish.

Email: patricksaari@netlife.ec.



Special thanks to **Jamie Padula** for proofreading and especially to Literary Division Administrators **Jesse Tomlinson** and **Paula Arturo** for their support.

# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

**Topic for the Fall issue:**
**Translation of Comics and Graphic Novels**

***As the journal of the ATA's Literary Division,* Source *is both a forum for the discussion of literary translation and a vehicle for LD members and guest contributors to publish their work. Novice translators, as well as those with more experience, are encouraged to submit translations of poetry and prose together with their meditations on the process. We are also constantly on the lookout for submissions from Asia, Africa, and all other less frequently represented cultures.***

FORMAT: Submit articles up to 1600 words, Word or text file, single-spaced. Palatino Linotype size 14 with indented paragraphs (1 tab), no line breaks between paragraphs and no word breaks. Unjustified righthand margin. Endnotes please, not footnotes.

Please include a brief, factual bio and photograph. Links and illustrations, etc., are encouraged. Submissions may be edited.

Submissions go to **michele@mckayaynesworth.com**
***Submissions deadline for the Fall issue: August 21.***

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# Letter from the LD Assistant Administrator

***Paula Arturo*** *is a lawyer, translator, and Professor of Law. She is Assistant Administrator of the ATA's Literary Division and Co-Director of Translating Lawyers, a boutique firm specializing in legal translation. She is an independent lawyer-linguist for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review process of several Latin American States and a legal-linguistic consultant for various international organizations. She has translated several highly technical law books and publications in major international journals for high-profile authors, including several Nobel Prize Laureates and other renowned jurists.*

Dear LD Members,

I must confess that when I first ran for Assistant Administrator I wasn't too sure what I was getting myself into. I knew I had some big shoes to fill and, despite having many good ideas for our division, I had my doubts as to whether or not I was the right person for this job.

Even though my bragging rights include translating several books on jurisprudence and legal philosophy, I never really thought of non-fiction as literary translation or of myself as a literary translator, which naturally raised questions and a little self-doubt. But "literature" is a broad concept that encompasses all types of the written word, and that includes non-fiction. So I went for it. Now, only a few months later, I'm confident I made the right decision.

These past few months have been busy and exciting. We've managed to put together a literary division blog for hosting conversations about literature, translation, and the arts on an interactive platform that will allow us to reach more people throughout the world. We hope that both seasoned as well as newbie literary translators will take an interest in our content, as we are reaching out to highly experienced members of the literary world to tell us about

their professional paths, interests, and challenges faced throughout their careers. But our content won't stop there! We also intend to explore the artistic side of literary translation as an intellectual process and the different roles that literary translators play as authors of a translated text, editors, proofreaders, and more.

From a more business-oriented perspective, we are happy to report that our proposal on literary translation contracts was accepted for San Francisco. In that session, we will discuss what is really lurking in our literary translation contracts, what certain terms and conditions mean, and what clauses should be part of all literary agreements. We will take a look at everything from copyright and royalties to conflict resolution and jurisdiction clauses to see how they affect translators.

I think we're off to a good start and hope to have more positive projects to report in the near future. I'm also looking forward to seeing our members in San Francisco and hearing their feedback and ideas for our division.

Best,
Paula

Literary Division Administrator:
Jesse Tomlinson, jesse@tomlinsontranslations.com

Assistant Administrator:
Paula Arturo, paula@translatinglawyers.com

# READERS' CORNER

Mark Herman and Ronnie Apter's book on *Translating for Singing* was published in May by Bloomsbury Publishing in London. Also in 2016 there are performances, in their English translations, of Smetana's Czech opera *The Bartered Bride* and Weber's German musical farce *Abu Hassan*, both in England; of Arensky's *Three Vocal Quartets for Four Voices and Cello* in England; and of Rachmaninoff's *Six Choral Songs for Treble Voices and Piano* in both England and the United States. Their translation of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* was performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival last summer. The works by Arensky and Rachmaninoff, translated from Russian, are published as dual-language scores by Musica Russica in San Diego.

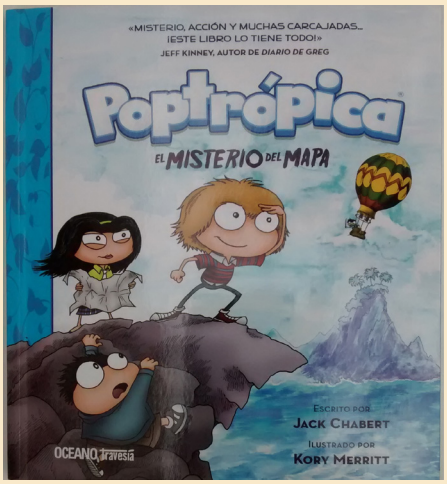
Herman and Apter have also translated from Russian into English seven children's picture books in verse by Diana Malivani: *Bazilio and the Little Mice*, *The Gnome Magicians*, *The Great White Rabbit*, *The Happy Little Pigs*, *The Little Honey Bears*, *The Little Lost Elephant*, and *The Little Mouse Musicians*. All are available as Kindle eBooks, together with translations into French and German by others, at <http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss/179-0517681-4312332?url=search-alias%3Ddigital-text&field-keywords=Malivani>.

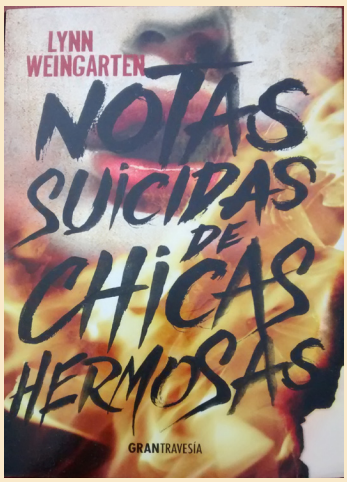
Ronnie Apter

Mark Herman

# READERS' CORNER continued

Mercedes Guhl's first attempt at translating comic books and graphic novels into Spanish, the first volume of *Poptrópica,* a series for children, has just been published this May. Entitled *The Mystery of the Map* (*El misterio del mapa* in Spanish), it was written by Jack Chabert and illustrated by Kory Merritt and was on the *New York Times* bestseller list. For this project Mercedes is working with Alfredo Villegas, a noted Mexican translator of comic books, and they are now working on the second volume of *Poptropica.* Together they have also translated the first volume of *Descender,* a widely acclaimed science-fiction series with, to date, more than a dozen volumes. Written by Jeff Lemire and illustrated by Dustin Nguyen, the *Descender* series was launched in 2015 by Image Comics (founded in 1992 for creator-owned comics), which is now one of the largest comic book publishers in North America.




Two other books of fiction for children and young adults translated by Mercedes were released earlier this year: *El nido* by Kenneth Oppel (*The Nest*) and *Notas suicidas de chicas hermosas* by Lynn Weingarten (*Suicide Notes from Beautiful Girls*). Both the comic books and novels were published for Spanish-speaking countries by Océano Travesía in Mexico, which belongs to the world's leading Spanish-language publishing conglomerate Grupo Océano.

# *In Memoriam: Gregory Luis Rabassa* *(1922–2016)*

## by Tony Beckwith

Sad news arrived as this issue of *Source* was being assembled. Gregory Rabassa died on June 13 after a brief illness, and with his passing an important era in the history of literary translation came to an end.

Dr. Rabassa was a celebrated literary translator who worked from Spanish and Portuguese into English. Born in Yonkers, New York to a Cuban father and an American mother, he fell in love with Spanish when he was an undergraduate at Dartmouth, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Romance languages. He went on to earn a master's in Spanish and a doctorate in Portuguese, both from Columbia, where he taught for over twenty years before joining the faculty at Queens College, New York. He retired with the title of Distinguished Professor Emeritus in 2007, a year after being awarded the National Medal of Arts for translations which "continue to enhance our cultural understanding and enrich our lives."

In the early 1960s, Rabassa edited *Odyssey Review*, a literary journal featuring new writing from Europe and Latin America. His English translations came to the attention of an editor at Pantheon Books, who asked him to translate *Rayuela*, a novel by Julio Cortázar,

a young Argentine writer. Cortázar was so pleased with the result—called *Hopscotch* in English—that he advised his friend Gabriel García Márquez to get Rabassa to translate the Colombian writer's saga *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. These two translations helped to launch what came to be known as "El boom," the mid-twentieth-century literary explosion that brought a wave of Latin American works to the attention of readers everywhere else.

Rabassa's translations from Spanish include books by Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru), Miguel Ángel Asturias (Guatemala), and Juan Benet (Spain). He translated works from Portuguese by the Brazilian writers Jorge Amado, Clarice Lispector, and Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, and the Portuguese writer António Lobo Antunes.

For his version of Cortázar's *Hopscotch*, Rabassa shared the inaugural U.S. National Book Award in Translation in 1967. He received the PEN Translation Prize in 1977 and the PEN/Ralph Manheim Medal for Translation in 1982. He was honored with the Gregory Kolovakos Award from PEN American Center for the expansion of Hispanic Literature to an English-language audience in 2001. Also in 2001, Rabassa received a lifetime achievement award from the PEN American Center for contributions to Hispanic literature.

"He's the godfather of us all," said Edith Grossman—the acclaimed translator of *Don Quixote* and several García Márquez books—the day after Professor Rabassa died. "He's the one who introduced Latin American literature in a serious way to the English speaking world."

## Translation Tuesdays *in The Guardian*

"This series highlights the work of translators and offers a short translated piece every Tuesday, from poetry to short stories and book extracts, courtesy of *Asymptote* as part of the Guardian books network." http://www.theguardian.com/books/translation-tuesdays-by-asymptote-journal

*ASYMPTOTE*

*The Guardian*'s source for all of these literary translation excerpts is the international online literary translation journal *Aysmptote*, a very useful resource for all those who wish to advertise their most recent translations, all the more so if they have not been published. Everything is free of charge. It also includes a blog with articles and translations being uploaded constantly. It is also looking for new staff (unpaid unfortunately) to support its many initiatives.

# Untranslatability

## by Patrick Saari


Book cover of *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, Princeton University

*Le vrai Sage est celui qui apprend de tout le monde*
Persian proverb from Jean Chardin's *Voyages en Perse* (1686)[1]

### *Vocabulaire* and *Dictionary*

In 2004, the French publishing houses Editions du Seuil and Le Robert came out with a 1,560-page book entitled *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, the brainchild of Barbara Cassin, a noted French philologist and philosopher who coordinated and edited the project. This vast lexicon, focusing essentially on European

philosophy and written entirely in French, consists of 400 entries/articles that zero in on 4,000 specific words, idioms, and expressions in many languages. It is the result of a 150-person international scientific team of philosophers and linguists working over a period of 10 years. The terms and concepts they scrutinized were drawn principally from Ancient Greek, Arabic, English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Russian, and Spanish, but also, albeit to a lesser extent, from Basque, Catalan, Danish, Dutch, Finnish, Hungarian, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, Swedish, and Ukrainian.[2]

So successful was this collective project that by 2016 more than 10,000 copies had been sold and, of even greater importance, 10 translations/adaptations/reinventions of the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies* had been undertaken in other languages and countries: in Arabic, English, Farsi, Hebrew, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, and Ukrainian. And the possibility of working on versions in Chinese and Modern Greek is also being considered. It is noteworthy that the Spanish, Portuguese, and English editions were spearheaded and published in the Americas: Siglo XXI Editores in Mexico, Editora Universidade de Brasilia in Brazil, and Princeton University Press in the United States.

Published in 2014, the U.S. edition, which should be viewed not simply as a translation but as an adaptation of the original in French, including new contributions specifically written in English, is entitled *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*. Five academics are credited with the translation: Steven Rendall, Christian Hubert, Jeffrey Mehlman, Nathanael Stein, and Michael Syrotinski, whose translations were in turn edited by Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra, and Michael Wood.[3]

**Obvious question**

The first question that leaps to mind is: why even talk of untranslatability and untranslatables when hundreds of pages and a dozen editions are actually doing what is supposedly undoable, that is, translating? In the book's "Introduction," Barbara Cassin quickly puts to rest any concern that she and her colleagues are involved in some academic sleight of hand and that nothing will ever be translated:

> To speak of *untranslatables* in no way implies that the terms in question, or the expressions, the syntactical or grammatical turns, are not and cannot be translated: the untranslatable is rather what one keeps on (not) translating. (p. vi)

Emily Apter, in her "Preface" to the English version, uses the term "interminability" (which also embraces mistranslation, retranslation, and what is left untranslated) to highlight Cassin's notion of untranslatability, which very simply means "that one can never have done with translation." At the same time she discards erroneous expectations of either impossibility, at one extreme, or perfection, at the other, from this fresh but peculiar notion of interminability / untranslatability:

> One of the risks of the casual use of "untranslatable" is the suggestion of an always absent perfect equivalence. Nothing is exactly the same in one language as in another, so the failure of translation is always necessary and absolute. Apart from its neglect of the fact that some pretty good equivalencies are available, this proposition rests on a mystification, on a dream of perfection we cannot even want, let alone have. If there were a perfect equivalence from language to language, the result would not be translation; it would be a replica. And if such replicas were possible on a regular basis, there would not be any languages, just one vast, blurred international jargon, a sort of late cancellation of the story of Babel. (p. xiv)

Although the driving force behind the project was to map the many philosophies of Europe by exploring their differences and the crucial linkage between language and thought, it specifically (therein lies its originality) focused on what translators know and do, in short, their expertise and wisdom, to achieve its purpose. This unique approach led to the identification of 400 "knots" (*nœuds*) of translation

difficulties, playfully nicknamed "untranslatables" (*intraduisibles*), with an entry/article devoted to each one of these knots, which had to be unraveled, understood, connected to other knots, possibly tied again, or left loosely tangled for others to play and work with. In a sense, the book and its success have given translators their *titre de noblesse*, the high rank, respect, and trust they deserve.

Nor does it neglect the emotional element underlying translation, the raw nerve that is exposed when translators, caught between a rock and a hard place, have their epiphanies of self-awareness. As Emily Apter beautifully puts it:

> The untranslatable as a construct makes a place for the private anguish that we as translators experience when confronted with material that we don't *want* to translate or see translated. A certain density or richness or color or tone in the source language seems so completely to defy rendering into another language that we would just as soon not try: the poverty of the result is too distressing, makes us miss the first language as we miss a friend or a child. (p. xiv)

**Language hegemonies and pluralism**

The Ancient Greeks believed that theirs was the only language, the language of power, intellect, and freedom. Any other language was that of slavery, unbridled passion, and chaos, and hardly qualified as a language at all (Persian, for example). For the Greeks, to speak another language was to speak like a barbarian, to utter gibberish (*barbarizein,* equivalent to something akin to blah-blah-blah in English). Indeed, any foreigner was de facto a barbarian, a subhuman, whose language was too inferior to be translated into Greek (see p. 1141). Ancient Greek held sway for centuries even when Classical Latin was at its peak, but then Latin took over and repeated the same pattern, for centuries entrenched in all institutions of authority, the Church, schools, universities, courts, and government administration, well into the eighteenth century, even

when European vernaculars had already produced the masterpieces of Dante, Cervantes, and Shakespeare. Then French picked up where Latin left off, although its ascendancy was to be relatively short-lived as English quickly spread its wings over "an empire on which the sun never sets." There were other hubs, of course, like Spanish in the New World, Arabic in the Middle East and Northern Africa, Chinese in the Far East, and Russian in the Czar's Empire, the Soviet Union and its satellites, but for now English reigns supreme.

So it is not without magnanimity of spirit, as well as a dash of bittersweet irony, that the heirs to a powerful cultural hegemony, the French, have embarked on this exemplary twenty-first century initiative, a dictionary of untranslatables that takes a resolute stand against millennia of hegemonic hubs of language and culture. Short shrift is given not only to the ambition of a single universal language implicit in the spread of English (and the sad-sack ersatz of globalized Anglo-American English, otherwise known as *globish*), but also to Heidegger's promotion of the German language as the sole rightful and ontological heir to Ancient Greek's philosophical character.[4] The *Dictionary* is like a giant level grid, with no hotspots, black holes, or edges. The pith and gist of it lie in the empty spaces that need to be filled in between words, ideas, and concepts, a sort of all-pervasive and infinitely supple dark matter and energy that gives priority to the interstices of language, the distances yet to be cleared to make the connection between one word, culture, thought and another and the distances left behind once that connection has been made.

There are no absolute "philosophies" carved in stone or suspended in some magical Platonic kingdom of perfect forms, but rather intervals, even rifts, where links must be forged. The key words to understanding the book's intentions are pluralism (*pluriels, pluralisme, multiplicité*) instead of monism, dualism, or universalism, diversity instead of homogeneity or standardization, difference instead of similarity or commonality, gaps (*écarts*) instead of togetherness and communion.

***On Correct Translation***

The *Dictionary*'s 17-page entry on "To Translate," with its many mini-chapters, five boxes, and dozens of reference works listed in the bibliography (pp. 1139-1153), should be required reading for all translators, as it provides a broad and dense but succinct overview of what could be called, for want of a single term, the philosophy, history, theory, and evolution of translation. It includes considerations about Greek, Aristotle, and the Septuagint; Latin, Cicero, and St. Jerome; the connections of translation to interpretation, inspiration, and prophecy; the medieval notions behind the term *translatio* (meaning "transfer"); the distinction between the German terms *dolmetschen* (to render into German), *übersetzen* (to translate), and *übertragen* (to transpose); the thesis of the "indeterminacy of radical translation" by the American philosopher W.V.O. Quine; and the intriguing concept of "inimitability" regarding the *Qur'ān (Koran*) and the development of Islam, among many other reflections.

It is, however, the last box, on the Florentine humanist Leonardo Bruni (1369-1444), entitled "No untranslatables!" that is most relevant for contemporary translation. His treatise *De interpretatione recta* (*On Correct Translation*), written in anger in response to criticism of his Latin translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, is "a passionate statement about translation's importance to the modern Western world":

> Bruni seems to be the first to have used *traductio* and *traducere* to mean "translation": words that would come to replace *interpretare, vertere,* and *convertere,* as Remigio Sabbadini has noted, and thus words that insist on the act of transporting, and even transformation. Transformation is, in fact, at the heart of Bruni's meditations: the "best translator will turn his whole mind, heart, and will to his author, and in a sense be transformed by him" (*De interpretatione recta*). But after losing his identity, the translator must regain it, and he can only do so if he is absolute master of his own language, dominating all in his power. (…) Not to translate

> is to remain a beggar, a mendicant, trapped in the no-man's land between two languages and thus in exile. (p. 1153)

***Saudade***

Another sample of this labyrinthine *Dictionary,* especially attractive for those searching for the roots of poetry in the human psyche, is the article on "Saudade" (pp. 929-931), written by the Brazilian philosopher and poet Fernando Santoro. It was in the context of refugees, displaced persons, and immigrants that I first heard the Portuguese word *saudade,* and to me, at the time, the logical translation was "homesickness," which could best be dealt with by simply going home, back to one's country of origin, the specific place where one had grown up. But the many translations and words associated with *saudade* (*nostalgie* and *spleen* in French, *Sehnsucht* in German, *desiderium* in Latin, *soledad* and *añoranza* in Spanish, as well as others I would like to add such as "the blues" in English) point to something more nuanced and complex than mere "homesickness," as highlighted in this article by Santoro, who defines it as a "delectable melancholic passion" and "the collective feeling of mourning and hope" that characterizes the Portuguese soul.*

> *Saudade* proceeds from a memory that wants to renew the present by means of the past in a loving soul that is restrained by the limits of its condition, whatever that might be. A concise definition of *saudade* appears in the treatise *The Origin of the Portuguese Language* (*Origem da língua portuguesa,* 1606) written by Duarte Nunes de Leão: "Memory of a thing with the desire for this same thing" (quoted in Botelho and Braz Teixeira, *Filosofia da saudade*). Endowed with a structural ambiguity, this feeling is located at the intersection of two affections that present absence: the memory of a cherished past that is no more and the desire for

* To understand *saudade* through music, one has only to listen to a recording of soprano Salli Terri singing Heitor Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas brasileras No. 5*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gejY9FQlDGM.

> this happiness, which is lacking. Pleasure and anxiety: the result is a displaced, melancholic state that aspires to move beyond the finitude of the moment and the errancy of distance. "It is a suffering that we love, and a good that we suffer . . ." (Melo, *Epanáfora amorosa*). (p. 929)

**What next?**

The original *Vocabulaire des philosophies* published in 2004 in France has continued its explorations far from European philosophical traditions and languages as well. Barbara Cassin and Danièle Wozny spearheaded this research in Africa, with the 352-page *Les intraduisibles du patrimoine en Afrique subsaharienne* (Heritage Untranslatables in Sub-Saharan Africa) published 2014 in French, English, Bamanankan (the Bambara language of Mali), and Fulfulde (the Fula language of Western and Central Africa), with a second edition to include Swahili, Sukuma, and Tsonga (the Bantu languages of Eastern and Southern Africa).[5]

It is also far from language itself that this exploration must continue. To all those who believe it is only language that can "philosophize" or that philosophers only have language at their disposal to discharge their duties, we must oppose what painters, sculptors, architects, photographers, musicians, dancers, and moviemakers might have to "say" and "think." They would most likely emphatically claim, and we would most certainly concur, that what they do is untranslatable into any written or spoken language, but just as profound and philosophical, while also more communicable and universal. That would be the bold next task that the world's many teams of experts in "untranslatables" would have to tackle, but this time without the intermediation of language translators, because a piece of music, a painting, a temple will automatically and immediately sidestep the very notion of translation, all the more so that of untranslatability.

## NOTES

1 "The true wise person is the one who learns from everybody" (Persian proverb). Jean Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse,* Vol. III (Amsterdam: 1735), p. 215. Jean Chardin (1643-1713) wrote a ten-volume work of scholarship (first published in 1686) on the Near East after 15 years of travels in Persia, India, Smyrna, Constantinople, and the Caucasus, where he learned Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. His description of Persia was the source for Montesquieu's novel *Lettres persanes* (1721).

2 *Vocabulaire européen des philosophie, Dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, ed. Barbara Cassin (Paris: Le Seuil/Le Robert, 2004). For a broad sampling of the articles available online in French, sponsored by European Cultural Heritage Online (ECHO), see: http://robert.bvdep.com/public/vep/accueil0.html

3 *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon,* ed. Barbara Cassin (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014). All page numbers indicated in the text and quotes refer to the English version of the *Dictionary*. For purchase and sample articles, table of contents, preface, and introduction in English, see Princeton University Press website: http://press.princeton.edu/titles/10097.html

4 "Only our German language has a deep and creative philosophical character to compare with the Greek." Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Human Freedom,* quoted in: Barbara Cassin, "Introduction," *Dictionary of Untranslatables,* xviii.

5 *Les intraduisibles du patrimoine en Afrique subsaharienne*, eds. Barbara Cassin and Danièle Wozny (Paris: Demopolis, 2014), http://www.demopolis.fr/livre-notice.php?Clef=62


"*I'd give all my PhDs to have been raised bilingual.*"

# Domesticating or foreignizing Italian translations from the English?

## Italian interpretations of Thomas Hardy's poem "Drummer Hodge"

By Valeria Petrocchi

*Valeria Petrocchi teaches English > Italian Translation at the Istituto Universitario "Carlo Bo" in Rome (Italy). Among her publications:* Edward A. Storer, il poeta dimenticato – Dalla School of Images ad Atys; Dialect identities in Gadda's translation: the case of "Quer pasticciaccio brutto de via Merulana"; *and* Prospettive e obiettivi funzionali nell'insegnamento delle tecniche di traduzione inglese>italiano. *She also works as a freelance translator and judiciary interpreter at the High Court of Justice of Rome.*

At the beginning of the last century, translations of English works in Italy were subject to a sort of French contamination: Italian translations were all based on the French versions, creating many problems such as misinterpreting and/or transferring mistakes. At that time, French was the *lingua franca* and translation played a significant role in spreading new ideas and innovative literary models in poetry, narrative, and theatre.

The great majority of Italian translations were from many European authors, among them not only English but also Russian, German, North American, French, Spanish, contemporary and not (many old poems and novels received renewed attention by being translated again, and therefore updated). The publishing industry was very active for economic reasons and certainly helped to steer

literature towards new frontiers. Moreover, Italian translators were liberal intellectuals who were not from the academic ranks. For them translating was a moral task, one that implied their involvement in the world since they did not work and act exclusively as translators, but as cultural mediators as well.

The first Italian version of Hardy's "Drummer Hodge" appeared in 1925,[i] translated by Lorenzo Gigli. Who was Gigli? Briefly, a journalist, poet, and writer as well as a translator. Gigli was also the first critic to introduce Hardy's works to Italy, approaching them from a new perspective by highlighting their modernism. In Hardy's poetry, Gigli found pictorial and psychological descriptiveness, dramatic intensity, and a sense of mystery in his perception of life and death. Gigli also translated other poems by Hardy, but mainly he concentrated on "Drummer Hodge"(*Il tamburino morto*) because he considered it the most significant.

Analyzing Gigli's translation, we can see that verses have disappeared as the poem has been changed into a prose poem, not just due to the French influence, but also to his specific preference for *verse libre*. He was convinced it reflected Hardy's unique language more accurately. Gigli's prose poem had its own prosody that respected the internal meditative structure through other means such as syllabic irregularity, peculiar punctuation, printing breaks, and stylistic heterogeneity (colloquialisms, archaisms, pauses, anacolutha, parenthetic clauses), all free from the constraint of metrics. The prose could create multiple semantic layers, develop the complex Hardyan idiolect, and maintain the original poetic richness.

From a comparison with the French version, it is evident that, although Gigli kept the English text in mind, he based his translation on the former, as we can immediately realize in the title. At the beginning of his translating career, his command of English did not match his mastery of French, so he had to use French as an aid and constantly compare the two texts. This becomes particularly apparent in the second version, where the original English text is more dynamic.

The latest Italian translations of "Drummer Hodge" by Singh (*Hodge suonatore di tamburo*) and by Maria Stella (*Hodge, suonatore di tamburo*) are doggedly faithful to the original. Their strategy (parallel texts) is useful to appreciate Hardy's prosody in English, but on the whole they are lacking in poetry and are too rational, as we can see from the first line. Paradoxically, despite the verses, the rhythm is narrative and the conceptual development is not passionate. Gigli was able to interpret Hardy's poetry on a deeper level, beneath the formal one.

Singh and Stella solve text-specific difficulties, especially untranslatable words such as "Karoo" and "Bush," by leaving the original forms, thus creating a foreignizing translation. The aforesaid lexemes certainly expose the reader to a new, non-European geographical reality. Afrikaans words are left untranslated in order to evoke the South African natural world, as in the case of *kopje* (a small hill), which is unmodified in the French version but translated by Gigli as *collinetta* (literally: small hill) to associate it with the Italian landscape. He used an Italian feature to enable the reader to imagine the scenario. On this occasion, Gigli created a domesticating translation.

The Dutch word *veld(t),* which identifies a more complex idea—a wide and open pasture land as in parts of South Africa near the Karoo—was translated by Gigli as *boscaglia* (bush), as in the French *brousse*. Then we find "kar(r)oo": the "barren tracts in South Africa of extensive elevated plateaus, with a clayey soil, waterless and arid in the dry season" (*Oxford English Dictionary*), now used as a toponym in Italian. The South African landscape is also characterized by the particular colours of the rock, greenish and blue, and unfortunately, in Gigli, "Karoo" reverted to its generic name *altipiano* (plateau), again as in the French *plateau*, which was too impersonal. The same could be said about "Bush": the word (from the Dutch *bosch*) is usually associated with the Dutch colonies and possesses very specific connotations. Gigli translated it as *foresta* (forest) in line with the French *forêt*. The untranslatability of such words was solved in the latest versions by leaving them untranslated.

Nowadays, the media have made different geographical areas around the world more familiar and therefore more comprehensible for the present-day reader, although paraphrasing the translation could damage the poetical tone. In poetry, it is not as easy to adopt an explanatory strategy as it is in narrative. Gigli preferred to adapt the text, to domesticate it and re-create an atmosphere that was similar to the original that the reader could imagine. Another consideration: "loam" is a "clayey earth, mud," which Gigli translated as *terra polverosa* (powdered soil/earth),[ii] as in the French *poudreuse*. His goal was to re-create not only the colours and suggestiveness of the African landscape, but also the harsh and inhospitable land that will "make you see." Singh and Stella translated it as *terriccio argilloso* (clayey earth), which is certainly more accurate but not poetical.

Let us now analyze the name "Hodge:" it is "a familiar by-form and abbreviation of the name *Roger* and is used as a typical name for the English agricultural labourer or rustic" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). It is a keyword and represents the core of the poem. It is not only related to Englishness but also to the Hardyan idiolect. Hardy used this name to underscore the contrast between the rural universe the drummer belonged to and the far and foreign land[iii] where he was fighting a war that was alien to him. The untranslatability of "Hodge" creates a weakness in the translated text. Hardy imbued the nickname with special meaning as it represents not only a social class, but also a world of simplicity, a genuine and profound relationship with the earth, a feeling for nature, brotherly love, and an inborn love of freedom. Hodge is not only the aforesaid stereotype; he is a human being endowed with his own individuality, who lives a real life facing everyday misery and concern. Considering all these factors, the poem can be read from a dramatic perspective, but the contrast between Dorset and South Africa is not easily conveyed and unfortunately the tragic aspect disappears.

Another difficulty involves the verse "His homely Northern breast and brain." In Singh it is "il suo petto e il suo cervello nativi del nord," and in Stella "petto e cervello nati nel Nord"; "homely" is an adjective applied to a place in the former, while in the latter it becomes a past participle. Hardy used "homely" because the root of this word was related to the idea of home and family and conveyed a sense of

authenticity and simplicity. He included in the word the concept of naiveté and of belonging to a family in contrast with the reality the boy was experiencing. The word in Italian is literally *domestico/familiare* (domestic/familiar). "[B]reast and brain" are meant both physically and psychologically, therefore *il cuore e la mente* (heart and mind) would have been more appropriate. None of them translated it this way. The English rhythm created by the alliteration intensified humanness and compassion towards the boy, but unfortunately the phonetic-semantic relationship was lost in Italian.

Gigli respected Hardy's conversational style, because he himself wished to establish a direct relationship with the reader. Translating had an existential value and was a sort of ethical, rather than linguistic, challenge. Each word played a specific role and was not used by chance because it reflected the Englishness of the rural culture and tradition of Dorset (Hardy's homeland). The main difficulty was that Hardy's idiom was apparently simple, but in fact a complex semantic reality lay behind it. So we find Dorset versus South Africa. Hardy's introspective style obscured his metaphorical language, and his message was often labyrinthine. The variety of his language created originality and strength, but at the same time caused difficulties for the translator. Hardy also employed frequent neologisms, original compounds, and adjectival phrases for ekphrastic descriptions.

Gigli's translation retained Hardy's vitality and spontaneity, as when he translated the compound "strange-eyed constellations" as *costellazioni stranamente occhieggianti*. Gigli was able to intensify the prosodic movement by gathering emotions in one mental state and creating psychological involvement. The past participle was changed to the present participle, which produced a visual image of the stars shining. Stella's and Singh's translations are literal but superficial: *strano sguardo* and *sembianze strane*.

In conclusion, although recent Italian translations have achieved scientific rigour, Gigli revealed the so-called "intuitive fidelity," which went further than mere linguistic competence and took into account many other factors—historical, psychological, cultural—thus producing genuine poetry.

# Gigli's translations:
## *Il tamburino morto*

| **Drummer Hodge** | **First version** | **Second version** |
|---|---|---|
| They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest<br>Uncoffined – just as found:<br>His landmark is a kopje-crest<br>That breaks the veldt around;<br>And foreign constellations west<br>Each night above his mound. | Gettano Hodge, il tamburino, al riposo eterno così come l'hanno trovato: la sua pietra funeraria è la cresta di una collinetta che interrompe le boscaglie intorno a delle costellazioni straniere che salgono ogni sera ad occidente sul suo tumulo. | Portano Hodge, il Tamburino, al riposo eterno così come l'hanno trovato: la sua pietra funeraria è la cresta di una collinetta che interrompe le boscaglie intorno, e costellazioni straniere montano ogni sera ad occidente sul suo tumulo. |
| Young Hodge the Drummer never knew—<br>Fresh from his Wessex home—<br>The meaning of the broad Karoo,<br>The Bush, the dusty loam,<br>And why uprose to nightly view<br>Strange stars amid the gloam. | «Hodge», il giovine tamburo, non ha mai conosciuto, sbarcato di fresco dal suo Wessex, il segreto del vasto altipiano, la foresta, la terra rabbiosa, e non ha mai saputo perché si levassero, alla sera davanti ai suoi occhi quelle strane stelle disseminate nel crepuscolo. | Hodge, il giovine tamburo, non ha mai conosciuto, sbarcato di fresco dal suo Wessex, il segreto del vasto altipiano, la foresta, la terra polverosa; e non ha mai saputo perché si levassero alla sera davanti ai suoi occhi quelle stelle strane disseminate nel crepuscolo. |
| Yet portion of that unknown plain<br>Will Hodge for ever be;<br>His homely Northern breast and brain<br>Grow to some Southern tree,<br>And strange-eyed constellations reign<br>His stars eternally. [iv] | Tuttavia, una parte di questa pianura sconosciuta sarà Hodge per sempre; il suo cuore e il suo semplice cervello del Settentrione passeranno nella linfa di qualche pianta orientale, e costellazioni stranamente occhieggianti regoleranno il suo destino eterno. [v] | Tuttavia una parte di questa pianura sconosciuta sarà Hodge per sempre; il suo cuore e il suo semplice cervello del settentrione passeranno nella linfa di qualche pianta orientale, e costellazioni stranamente occhieggianti regoleranno il suo destino eterno.[vi] |

# Latest Italian Translations

**by Singh**

Buttano dentro Hodge, suonatore di tamburo,
così come l'hanno trovato, senza una bara,
perché possa riposare;
la sua linea di confine è la cima
di una collinetta che spezza la pianura;
e costellazioni straniere tramontano
ogni notte sopra il suo cumulo.

Hodge, il giovane suonatore di tamburo –
era la prima volta che lasciava
la sua casa nel Wessex –
non aveva mai imparato
che cosa fossero l'ampio Karoo,
il Bush e il terriccio argilloso,
e perché di notte si vedessero
sorgere stelle strane.

Eppure per sempre Hodge sarà parte
di quella pianura sconosciuta;
il suo petto e il suo cervello nativi del nord
fioriranno in qualche pianta meridionale,
e costellazioni dalle sembianze strane
regneranno eternamente sulla sua sorte.[vii]

**by Stella**

Buttano dentro Hodge, suonatore di tamburo,
a riposare senza bara – così come l'hanno trovato:
lo segna la cresta di un kopje,
che spezza il veldt intorno;
e costellazioni straniere tramontano
ogni notte sopra il suo tumulo.

Il giovane Hodge, suonatore di tamburo-
fresco della sua casa nel Wessex,
mai seppe cosa significava ampio Karoo,
Bush, e terriccio argilloso,
e perché sorgessero alla visione notturna
strane stelle in mezzo al crepuscolo.

Eppure, parte di quella sconosciuta pianura
sarà per sempre Hodge;
petto e cervello nati nel Nord
fioriranno in un albero Meridionale,
e costellazioni dallo strano sguardo regneranno
in eterno come sue stelle.[viii]

**French translation**

On jette Hodge le tambour, au repos éternel sans cercueil – comme on l'a trouvé: sa pierre funéraire est la crête d'un kopje qui interrompt la brousse à l'entour; et des constellations étrangères montent à l'ouest chaque soir sur son tertre.

Hodge, le jeune tambour, n'a jamais connu – frais débarqué de son Wessex – le secret du vaste plateau, la Forêt, la terre poudreuse, et pourquoi se levant à ses yeux le soir d'étranges étoiles parsemaient le crépuscule.

Cependant une partie de cette plaine inconnue sera Hodge pour toujours; son cœur et son cerveau naïfs du Nord monteront dans un arbre d'Orient, et des constellations aux yeux étranges régleront son destin éternel.[ix]

NOTES

[i] Lorenzo Gigli, "Hardy poeta," *La Sentinella Bresciana*, 8 August 1925, 5.

[ii] In the first version it was mistranslated as *rabbiosa*.

[iii] The following observation appeared in a footnote of *Literature*: "One of the Drummers killed was a native of a village near Casterbridge." *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy*, ed. S. Hynes. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982-1995), 1:10.

[iv] Thomas Hardy, "Drummer Hodge" in *Poems of the Past and the Present*, now in *The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy*, 122. The poem was first published in *Literature* (25 November 1899) as "The Dead Drummer," the same title Gigli used.

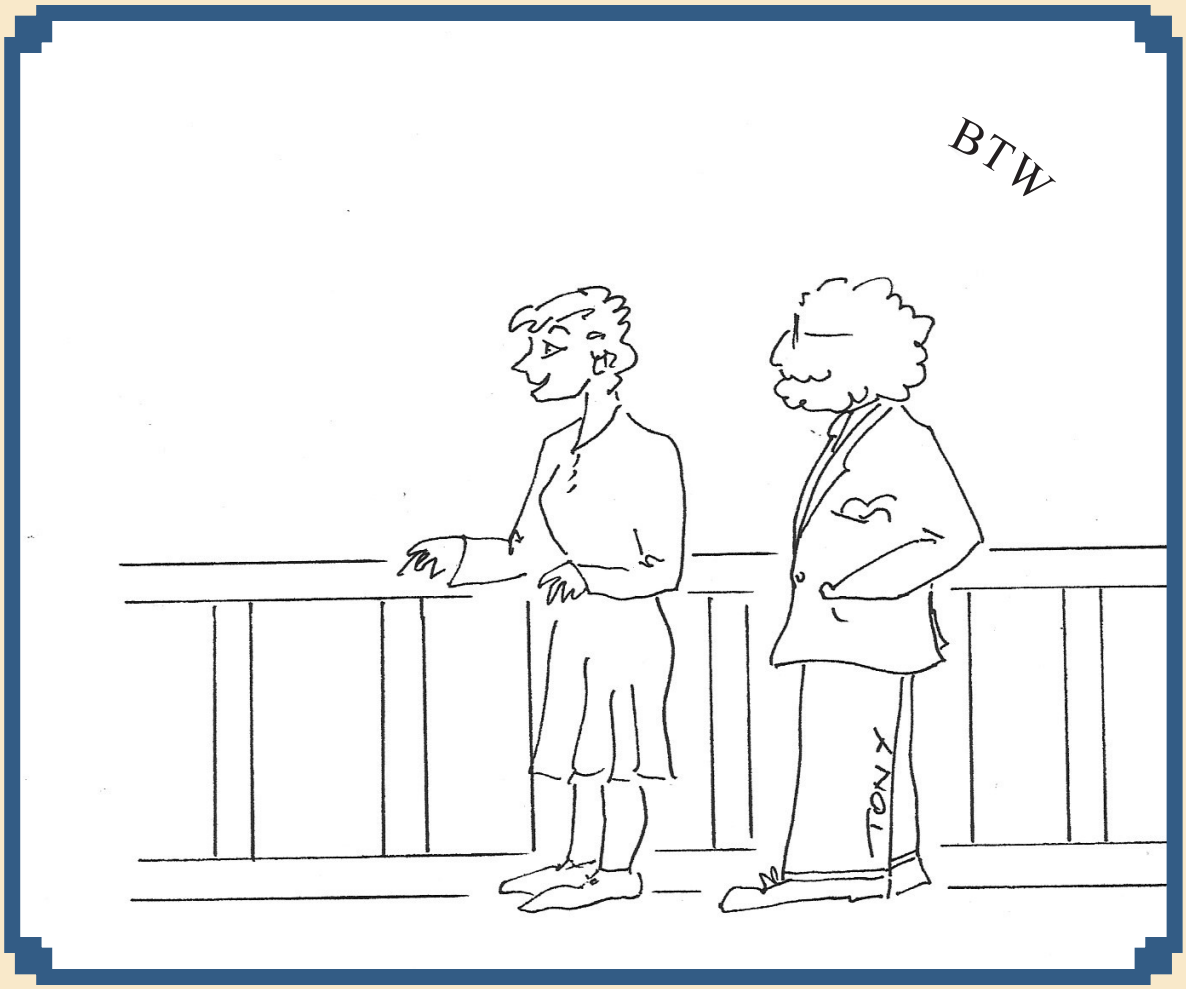
[v] Gigli, "Hardy poeta," *La Sentinella Bresciana*, 8 August 1925, 5.

[vi] Gigli, "Thomas Hardy," *Nuova Antologia*, 16 January 1928, 187-194: 190.

[vii] Hardy, "Hodge suonatore di tamburo," in *Poesie*, ed. and trans. G.S. Singh, preface by E. Montale (Parma: Guanda, 1968), 193.

[viii] Hardy, "Hodge, suonatore di tamburo" in Maria Stella, *Momenti di visione: identità poetica e forme della poesia di Thomas Hardy* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1992), 77.

[ix] Hardy, "Le tambour mort" in *Poèmes*, trans. J. Fournier-Pargoire, preface by J. Bithell (Paris: Librairie de France, 1925), 56.




*"Her idea of gardening means walking around the yard with a glass of wine in her hand."*

# An Interview with Erik Camayd-Freixas, Part II
# Literary Translation and University Life

## by Jesse Tomlinson

Dr. *Dr. Camayd-Freixas is a professor of Spanish and Director of the Translation and Interpretation Program at Florida International University. A Harvard-trained communications analyst, social theorist, and expert linguist at federal and state courts, he has testified before Congress, contributed as* amicus curiae *to the U.S. Supreme Court, and received human rights awards from the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, the Guatemalan Foreign Ministry, and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. He has interpreted for ten heads of state, including President Obama and Pope Benedict XVI.*

*Dr. Camayd-Freixas has lectured on linguistic, literary, and cultural studies, immigration, labor, ethics, and human rights in law schools, bar associations, and professional organizations nationally and internationally. Dr. Camayd-Freixas specializes in cultural studies, literature, and historiography of the colonial and contemporary periods of Latin America and the Caribbean and has a number of very interesting articles available online.*[1]

*For a look at his new Youtube channel, see http://tinyurl.com/C-FYoutube16.*

*Literary Translation*

**What are the first words that come to mind to describe your experience with literary translation?**

The poetry of the language. As a native Spanish speaker and writer, it took me many years to capture the poetry of the English language, both in reading and writing, verse and prose—which also has its poetry, its prosody, its musicality. I knew the grammar and usage well enough to aptly translate to and from English, but the "soul" of the language evaded me. I was deaf to its inner beauty. While Spanish seemed poetic to me, English just seemed practical and economical. I think it is only in the past several years that I have been able to grasp its poetic sense, after decades of reading, writing, and translating into English. This is very gratifying. Now I enjoy the challenge of translating poetry and creative prose into English, and writing it with "soul."

**In the act of literary translation, is the translator a complete voyeur, or is the essence of an author (e.g., their voice and style) captured in the translation?**

Both, but I'd like to think more so the latter. The translator's work is always a negotiation between the author's intention and the reader's reception or need to understand. When the translator adopts the reader's viewpoint, she becomes more of a voyeur, but when she steps into the shoes of the author, she becomes a co-creator. The translator must alternate between both roles—exhibitionist and voyeur—with equal passion. First, you write with "soul" as the original author but in the target language; then you distance yourself from it, reboot your mind, and read it as though you were a stranger who picks up the text for the first time. At that point, you need to ask yourself: Am I hooked, taken in, seduced by these words?

**What do you think about translating names, as in Lucia for Lucy or Peter for Pedro?**

Unless there is a very good practical reason for it, or a generally accepted convention applies, don't do it!  Granted, there is a conventional usage

for some historical figures (*Ana Bolena, Pedro el Grande,* etc.) and some contemporary figures (Pope Francis / *el papa Francisco*). But these are exceptions. Normally, in this day and age, you would not translate the name of a character in a novel, although such a practice was not uncommon in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As modernist theorist Walter Benjamin said in the late 1920s, a translation should maintain some of the foreign flavor of the original. So, other things being equal, I would not translate proper names.

Once you start translating names, where do you stop? No one wants to say Michael of Cervantes or Guillermo Shakespeare (let alone *Cimbralanza*) after they both left us 400 years ago this year. It is true that Francophobic Hispanic writers 150 years ago used to write "Juan Jacobo Rousseau"… and some still do. Well, I tried it in chapter one of my Spanish dissertation, and my advisor replied by calling me a *purista*. Not too bad. So I figured I would push the envelope, for consistency's sake, and in chapter two I quoted "Jacobo Lacán" and "Jacobo Derridá." My advisor just laughed at me. I was humiliated. But I learned my lesson.

**What would you like to see more of/less of in current discussions on literary translation with respect to Latin American literature?**
I would like to see more homage paid to the great translators of our literature, Edith Grossman, Gregory Rabassa, Margaret Sayers Peden, and others. And I would like to see less homage paid to them as well, so that new names may come forth who follow in their footsteps.

I would like to see more of an outcry about the publishing "crisis" in Spanish, so that something is done to remedy it. And I would like to hear less about it, as a sign that the crisis is no more.

I would like to see more discussion about the interference of English in U.S. academic Spanish, and less discussion when it is no longer an issue. In his *Gramática castellana* (1845) Andrés Bello warned that due to its colonial heritage and new foreign influences, the Spanish language risked becoming fragmented over time, as did Latin. He feared that the day would come when a Mexican, an Argentinean, and a Spaniard would no longer understand each other. He saw this as a cultural and political

tragedy to be averted. Call me a *purista*, but I agree with Bello. The signs of such fragmentation are already evident in Portuguese, and Spanish is not that far behind.

Translators are key agents in preserving the unity of the language.

***University Life***

**Is your translation and interpreting program split evenly?**

Yes. And I have recently discovered that students who do well in Spanish for Heritage Speakers are excellent candidates to begin translation and interpreting courses. This is important, since enrollment in advanced language courses is always a concern in most colleges and universities today, where language education is under pressure.

**Do you have literary translation classes at FIU?**

We do not, unfortunately, since ours is an undergraduate program that emphasizes legal, medical, and technical translation and interpreting. I believe literary translation is more appropriate at the graduate level. However, I recently had the opportunity to direct a very stimulating PhD dissertation on problems of translation and code switching in U.S. Latino literature. This shows that there is always a space for literary translation, even if it is more often in the literature curriculum than in the language program or even the T&I program.

**What areas do your students typically go into after graduating?**

Advertising, marketing, business, public administration, teaching, the legal and human services fields are popular occupations where a certificate in translation studies is a plus. In addition, we have a T&I internship program, and many of our interns who are graduates are then hired by T&I agencies, courts, hospitals, as well as in the media. Some of our graduates have become Spanish TV news anchors, reporters, and producers. Many have gone into different aspects of Spanish media productions, dubbing, close captioning, subtitling, and online TV writing and programming, as well as social media promotions.

**When I was in my master's program, a number of students were interested in literary translation, but the first thing we were told was that literary translation wasn't a career, but something you did late at night and out of love. Do you agree?**
No, I don't agree. But I must say that, aside from the very few, consecrated, full-time professional literary translators, all other literary translators I know combine literary translation with another main occupation. Some are literature professors, but most are technical translators who occasionally have an opportunity to do paid literary translations as well. Personally, I fit into both of these categories. While I have done some paid literary translations, I also often include my own translations in the articles of literary criticism I write (late at night and out of love) for academic publications. I particularly love translating very challenging poetry. In this way I have translated baroque poetry, Octavio Paz, Tablada, Villaurrutia, and others into English, and Hart Crane into Spanish, always as an integral part of my literary analysis.

**And now to close—a perennial question—What is your best advice for literary translators looking for publishers?**
Well, like in any competitive market, access is complicated. Occasionally I have seen grants offered for translation of book-length works, with publication assured. Often assistant professors on a tenure track will translate a book essentially for free and publish it as a way of garnering academic credit towards tenure and promotion. The chances of publication are greater if the publisher does not have to pay for the translation. Many academic publishers now even require a subvention from the author or the author's institution in order to cover basic printing costs. These factors weigh against the commercial viability of literary translation.

There are ways, however, of getting fair pay for our labor of love. Aside from established translators of major writers who get advances and royalties from major publishers, there are two main avenues for

paid literary translations. First, there are the occasional authors who published a successful book in their home country and are willing to pay to have it translated into English in order to break into this market. The second and more common way is the translator who "discovers" a successful foreign book and sends a proposal and sample chapter to a publisher to secure a contingent publication contract with royalties and perhaps an advance. Because now the publishing industry works via software directly from the desktop to the press, without the need for typesetting or printing plates, publishers can print on demand without investing in large inventories or printing runs. This means less risk and easier access to print more titles, but in quantities too small to produce any significant royalties. So unless it is a guaranteed bestseller, the translator should do well in applying for a grant or subvention from a foundation or other institution.

In terms of finding a publisher, a simple Internet search of similar titles will reveal publishers who are printing similar works. My best advice is not to neglect electronic media, which does away with printing costs, has instant worldwide distribution, and can be monetized in various ways. Those of us who love the musty smell of libraries and old books are already mourning the impending obsolescence of the bound volume at the hands of the ubiquitous e-book.

## Note

1 See http://dll.fiu.edu/people/faculty/erik-camayd-freixas/.

# The Raggle Taggle Gypsies

## By Tony Beckwith

**Tony Beckwith**, *a writer, translator, interpreter, poet, and cartoonist, is a regular contributor to* Source.

*Do great poets much enjoy translating the work of other poets? Yes and no. Seamus Heaney's spirited and acclaimed translation of* Beowulf, *published in 1999, made him feel like a man sentenced to hard labor, he later confessed. Now, three years after his death, we can read what he made of a fragment from Virgil's* Aeneid, *a work by an utterly different kind of maker. The Roman poet, in contrast with the unknown Anglo-Saxon who wrote* Beowulf, *is mellifluous and silver-tongued.*[1]

This introduction to a review of Heaney's *Aeneid: Book VI* caught my attention. I imagine he is not the only translator who ever felt he was doing hard time. What struck me was the reviewer's remark about the two poems—*Beowulf* and *The Aeneid*—being the work of utterly different makers. I wondered about each maker, drawing from his own well of experience, and about the books he might have read when he was young, the poets he recited, the kind of rhythms and melodies and

traditions he absorbed from his surroundings. All that experience is in the original poems, in word and tone, meter and rhythm.

My thoughts drifted to an earlier translation of Virgil's work by Robert Fitzgerald, considered by some to be the definitive version. Once again, we have a triangle, but instead of a translator and two poets, we have a poet and two translators. Now the translators are the makers, and each dips into his well of experience as he imports Virgil's Latin words into his mind and gradually sees them appear in English. Each comes up with his own version and, as always, it is interesting to see different renderings of certain words and phrases. I will quote just a few examples, to give a sense of the various shades of meaning that each translator found in the original.

Fitzgerald: Am I to see your face, my son, and hear our voices in communion as before?
Heaney: Am I now allowed to see your face, my son, and hear you talk, and talk to you myself?

Fitzgerald: My longing has not tricked me.
Heaney: My trust was not misplaced.

Fitzgerald: Might do you harm.
Heaney: Might be your undoing.

Fitzgerald: Three times the shade untouched slipped through his hands, weightless as wind and fugitive as dream.
Heaney: Three times the form, reached for in vain, escaped like a breeze between his hands, a dream on wings.

As always with translations of this quality, there is a triangulation effect that illuminates ambiguous terms in the original. Who knows what combination of experiences led to each translator's choices, to their particular variation on the poet's words? Wondering now about their background and influences makes me think about what any translator

brings to the task. Since we're talking about poetry, what poetic tradition filters our translation of a poem? In his poem "Ulysses," Tennyson said "I am a part of all that I have met." In their versions of *The Aeneid*, these two translators both make inspired choices as they transmute Virgil's Latin into English. In the examples quoted above, Fitzgerald's "voices in communion" rings true to my ear. I prefer Heaney's "My trust was not misplaced," and his "Might be your undoing" takes a broader view of a father's concern for his son. In the last example, I think Fitzgerald's "weightless as wind and fugitive as dream" does a better job of capturing the "song" of the original. My own poetic tradition no doubt influences these opinions, though precisely how that works I couldn't say.

Poetry is like truth; we grow up with or grow into certain styles that become our standard, what we regard as "true" poetry. Our truth is not necessarily true, of course, and it is certainly not universal, it is simply what we believe. The school I attended flooded my awareness with British poetry and songs, some of them validated by my British grandparents who heard echoes of the old country in those words and rhythms. The earliest song I can recall was about a rich man's wife who was either kidnapped by gypsies or ran away with them of her own free will. It was an old Anglo-Scottish folk song, a border ballad called "The Raggle Taggle Gypsies" and was sung to a haunting melody. It's the first song I remember that told a story. What moved me even more than the hint of scandal in the narrative was the rhythmic rattle of the chorus line, "She's away wi' the raggle taggle gypsy-o." The song had a lilting beat that captivated me, conveyed a seductive sense of danger, and made me want to run away with the gypsies. To this day I can barely speak the line without lapsing into song. I think of songs like this as being the midwives of my sense of rhythm.

In our literature classes at school (in the late 1950s) we were introduced to a group of British nineteenth- and twentieth-century poets. Although they were all different, their poems had clearly discernible structures and, in most cases, they rhymed. One of my early favorites was John Masefield (1878–1967),[2] specifically his poem

"Sea Fever." I lived on the coast at that time, within the sound of the waves, and his poem seemed to express the myths and meanderings of a seafaring people:

> *I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,*
> *And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;*
> *And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,*
> *And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.*

I felt the rise and fall of the waves in the opening line of that verse, and the pull of the great beyond in the second. The other two lines had me on deck, my hands gripping the wheel, the sail fluttering above me as a clammy mist shrouded the break of dawn. Masefield showed me how words can create movement and make me feel the mist on my face.

G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936) intrigued me. He was the first poet who talked to me about politics and social problems. His poem "Lepanto," written in 1911, is a hypnotic account of the Battle of Lepanto[3] (1571):

> *Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,*
> *Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince has stirred,*
> *Where, risen from a doubtful seat and half attainted stall,*
> *The last knight of Europe takes weapons from the wall,*
> *The last and lingering troubadour to whom the bird has sung,*
> *That once went singing southward when all the world was young.*

To my great good fortune, my English lit teacher was passionate about his calling. He explained the mechanics of what Chesterton was doing in that first line, introducing us to the power of poetic devices such as alliteration, the intoxicating effect of repetition, and the crucial importance of syllables.

Arthur J. Hobson taught us that heroic deeds were recorded for the ages in epic poems. Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809–1892) wrote his riveting masterpiece "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (1854) in response to the military disaster at the Battle of Balaclava during the Crimean War. Tennyson showed me that poetry can reflect national

traits, in this case the British sense of duty, as expressed in the terse, unsentimental line "Theirs not to reason why, / Theirs but to do and die."

Tennyson wrote many poems in blank verse, but most of the poets I grew up with wrote structured poems that rhymed. Sonnets, for example: three quatrains and a couplet create a perfectly balanced structure, so pleasing to the senses, in which to develop an idea. Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861) helped to revive the sonnet as a poetic form, and gave us a memorable opening line in Number 43 of her *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850):

*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.*
*I love thee to the depth and breadth and height*
*My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight*
*For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.*

Sonnets have been around since the thirteenth century, and rhymed poetry for even longer. I can see how, long ago, before mankind learned how to write, words assembled in a particular order and structure would have created a container, in a sense, in which an idea could be carried from place to place. And rhyme gave the container a handle.

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894) was another poet whose work showed how words could (like Masefield's mist) stimulate a physical reaction, as in her "In the Bleak Midwinter," published posthumously in 1904, which was later set to music and became a Christmas carol:

*In the bleak mid-winter*
*Frosty wind made moan,*
*Earth stood hard as iron,*
*Water like a stone;*
*Snow had fallen, snow on snow,*
*Snow on snow,*
*In the bleak mid-winter*
*Long ago.*

These writers and others like them laid the groundwork for my poetic tradition. In time, naturally, I broadened my scope and read poems by many different kinds by poets from many different places. I have never lost my preference for structured, rhymed poetry, and on the whole agree with Robert Frost (1874–1963), who said that writing free verse is like playing tennis without a net. But there is, of course, plenty of unstructured, non-rhyming poetry that I enjoy at least partly because it has some of the rhythmic and melodic qualities I learned to appreciate when I was very young. When it comes to translating, the latter kind of poem is sometimes considered easier, since structure and rhyme add two more layers to the challenge. A familiarity with classically structured works might therefore be an asset when one is called upon to translate a structured, rhymed poem as distinct from one written in free verse.

I can look back and see roughly where poetry written in English has come from, and try to keep more or less current with what is being written by contemporary poets today. But where does poetry go from here? What kind of poetry will be written by the next generation, and the one after that? What poetic languages will they use? And what demands will future poetic and linguistic forms make upon translators? I feel modestly capable of translating poems written yesterday and today, but what about tomorrow? I see popular language changing around me every day as our communication is increasingly influenced and modified by digital technology. New words are introduced and old ones reinterpreted, acronyms are used as words, traditional syntax is transformed, poets experiment with every aspect of the language, and at some point (as we saw, to cite just one example, in "Jabberwocky,"[4] Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem) these innovations will surely appear in poems. Am I ready to translate this kind of poetry? More broadly, am I equipped to translate these new forms of speech in any context?

It was this thought that led me to write a poem that incorporates some of the more commonly-used examples of this 'new language' as a way to explore how it works:

**Like, A Foreign Film**

They chatted on beside me,
as boys and girls will do,
and I'd love to tell you what I overheard.
But their speech was unfamiliar,
not your usual parlez-vous,
and I barely understood a single word:

He went *OMG*
and she was like *Whoa*
so he goes *Awesome*
and he's like *Totally*
but she's like *Get Out!*
and he goes *Huh?*
then he's like *No Way!*
but she goes *Way!*
then he's like *Forever*?
and she's like *Whatever*
so he goes *Bummer*
*I hate for it to end*

Then they lapsed into a silence
I could totally comprehend.

The italicized acronym and words are representative of expressions used in conversation and digital communication by a large sector of the population that tends to consist mainly, but by no means exclusively, of a younger demographic. They are phonetic symbols used to express a particular idea or feeling. The sentence structure reflects contemporary use of the word "like" to indicate a reaction, and the verb "to go" as an alternative to conventional use of "say," "reply," "indicate," and so on. The words (as used here) and the construction are new, but the ideas and feelings are not, and surely that is where tomorrow's translator will find inspiration.

The next step in this linguistic evolution involves emoticons[5] and emojis[6]—symbols that seem closer to hieroglyphs than to the classic writing of twentieth-century poets—which create a whole new set of challenges for the translator. The emoticon is, after all, a graphic icon used to convey an emotion that knows no language barrier, offering a tantalizing glimpse of a time when a pool of icons might be available to those who wish to construct poems addressed to mankind as a whole rather than to those who speak the same language. A truly universal symbol-based language seems a little remote at this stage, however, especially since not all images mean the same thing to everyone, so presumably the poetry translator's career is not in immediate jeopardy.

I have not yet seen a poem that uses emoticons in the text, but when I do I will know that I have come as far as I will ever get from the poets I was weaned on, and am standing on the border between what I might call their era and the future. I will probably think of William Wordsworth (1770–1850), whose "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud"—were it written today—could quite easily be festooned with emoticons of clouds and flowers to replace some or all of the words:

*I wandered lonely as a cloud*
*That floats on high o'er vales and hills,*
*When all at once I saw a crowd,*
*A host, of golden daffodils*

Wordsworth said "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." We have largely taken for granted that such overflows are expressed in recognizable words. Are we on the brink of something new? And, if so, how will that affect what we translators do? People say poetry is hard to translate. Some say it can't be done. I think it all depends—as it has always done—on the poem and on the translator's well of experience.

## NOTES

1 "Seamus Heaney's *Aeneid*: Music from the underworld." *The Economist,* 16 April 2016. A review of Seamus Heaney's *Aeneid: Book VI* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016). http://www.economist.com/news/books-and-arts/21696919-music-underworld

2 John Masefield was Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom from 1930 until his death in 1967.

3 The Battle of Lepanto (1571), in which the Ottoman fleet was defeated by the Christian crusader Don John of Austria. Cervantes was in the service of the Spanish Navy at the time, and fought in the battle, where he was wounded and lost the use of his left arm, which earned him the nickname "el manco de Lepanto" (the one-armed man of Lepanto).

4 "Jabberwocky" was part of *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, the 1871 novel by Lewis Carroll (1832–1898), a sequel to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

5 An emoticon (a hybrid of *emotion* and *icon*) is "a pictorial representation of a facial expression using punctuation marks, numbers and letters," written on a computer keyboard "to express a person's feelings or mood." From Wikipedia.

6 Emojis are pictures of many different kinds, available online to be added to text that is sent electronically.

# CREDITS

**Page 9**
Photo of Gregory Rabassa posted on Youtube taken from an interview conducted by Elizabeth Lowe at the 2007 annual conference of the American Literary Translators Association.
https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=gregory+rabassa