

Independent scholar

Abigail Fisher

These lips that are not (d)one: Writing with the 'pash' of translation

Abstract:

Taking up the embodied erotics of translation put forward by Aarón Lacayo and drawing on Luce Irigaray's figure of the lips as meeting the other at the threshold of their irreducible becoming, this paper presents the make-out session, or 'pash' of translation, as a framework for producing multilingual writing that preserves the messy, multidirectional movement of interlingual translation on the page. Close textual analysis of Kathy Acker's *Don Quixote* and Giannina Braschi's *Yo-Yo Boing!* serves to demonstrate that such a mode of translatable writing defers textual closure so as to facilitate the emergence of a multiplicity of textual resonances and highlight the asymmetries and discomfort of the interlingual encounter. An accompanying creative text, also published in this edition of *TEXT* (Fisher 2020), experiments with the application of such multidirectional and 'suspended' translation techniques to produce a response to a poem by the Argentinian author Alejandra Pizarnik, moving between Old Provençal, Castellano and English to produce a piece of poetic prose that interrogates the frustration of displaced infatuation, the ethically questionable state of travelling 'for pleasure' and the embodied resonances between material discursive bodies in various states of becoming and becoming undone in desire.

Biographical note:

Abigail Fisher is a writer, editor and part-time tutor living on unceded Wurundjeri land.

Keywords: translation, multilingual writing, translation poetics

Leaning in

On the wilder shores of academia, an interest in French philosophy has given way to a fascination with French kissing.

– Eagleton (2004)

Taking up the embodied erotics of translation put forward by Aarón Lacayo and drawing on Luce Irigaray's figure of the lips as meeting the other at the threshold of their irreducible

becoming, this paper presents the make-out session, or 'push' of translation, as a framework for producing multilingual writing that preserves the messy, multidirectional movement of interlingual translation on the page [1]. Building on the scholarship of translation theorists Aarón Lacayo and Elena Basile, both of whom frame the 'scene' of translation as an ongoing and transformative erotic encounter between textual bodies, I investigate the potential for multilingual writing to *stay with the scene* of that encounter. I argue that multilingual writing has the potential to suspend and intensify the materially embedded event of translation on the page, thus testifying to the fluidity of the translative encounter, as well as the irreducible distance between dynamic textual bodies that cannot be entirely appropriated in the interlingual transfer. Framing such an approach as a mode of creative writing, I suggest that the emergent texts implicate writers and readers in the open-ended, multidirectional and always dilatory process of textual production.

In putting forward a mode of translative writing, or *writing with translation*, I draw on the work of a number of theorists who have investigated the generative space of interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic translation and its role in creative writing. I identify two major strands within this field: scholarship that takes translation as a model for writing as intersemiotic and intralingual transfer, particularly as a metaphor for the conversion of embodied subjectivity *into language*; and a second movement that deals more concretely with the generative and disruptive potential of interlingual translation in producing creative texts. The former strand tends to draw on the more abstract embodied discourse of post-structuralist feminism and queer studies in order to propose an approach to textual production that foregrounds the material differences and physical locality of bodies that read, write and translate [2].

The second, more literal, multilingual approach is best characterised by pedagogical texts such as Fiona Sampson's chapter 'Creative Translation' in *The Cambridge Companion to Creative Writing* (2012), which frames translation as a practically generative process for aspiring writers. Similarly, in 'Writing with Translational Constraints: On the "Spacy Emptiness" Between Languages' (2016), Lily Robert-Foley interrogates the generative potential for playful engagement with 'omission, addition, displacement, reordering and rewording' in translation to become 'a motor for potential writing' (Robert-Foley 2016: 916). Offering more of a metadiscursive perspective, texts such as Rebecca Walkowitz's *Born Translated* (2015) and Eva Karpinski's *Borrowed Tongues* (2012) examine the sociopolitical conditions that have produced a new mode of multilingual or translative writing over the past half-century. It is this second strand that is more closely aligned with my approach in this paper, concerned as I am with the potential for specifically interlingual translation to produce a certain kind of text. Walkowitz's assertion that globalisation has led writers to approach translation 'as medium and origin rather than as afterthought' (Walkowitz 2015: 4) holds particular resonance with my project, as does Karpinski's acknowledgement that 'translation not only is a tool of economic and cultural power brokers but it is also adopted daily as a vital strategy for survival by thousands of various "supplementary" subjects' (Karpinski 2012: 20).

In approaching textuality through the lens of embodied relationality, alterity and desire, my proposed trope of the 'pash' of translation operates within what Sathya Rao (2005) refers to as the 'erotic turn' in translation studies over the past two decades. Such an erotic turn can be seen as emerging from the various strains of queer, postcolonial and feminist translation scholarship in the late twentieth century addressing the positionality, corporeality and creative agency of the translator. What distinguishes the erotic turn from previous movements, such as the embodied translation espoused by Canadian feminist scholars such as Barbara Godard (1989 & 2000) and Pamela Banting (1995), and even more from the embodied cognition of Douglas Robinson's 'somatic turn' (1991: 3-15), is that a queer and embodied erotics of translation concerns itself not only with the bodies of translators in translation, but with texts themselves *as bodies*, opening up the discourse to the ethical ramifications and resonances that follow on from such embodied metaphors of textuality [3].

Although the 'erotic turn' can be traced in the works of Pier-Pascale Boulanger (2005 & 2008), Sathya Rao (2005), Kevin West (2010) and Christopher Larkosh (2011) – all of whom investigate the subversive dialogue 'between sex and text, between body and translation' (Santaemilia 2017: 19) – I pick up the thread of the conversation in the work of Aarón Lacayo (2014). In 'A Queer and Embodied Translation: Ethics of Difference and Erotics of Distance' (2014), Lacayo draws on Irigaray's concept of thick somatic difference to characterise 'the act of translation as a queer encounter between a bodily text and an infinite number of unknown, possible others' (Lacayo 2014: 215), seeking to account for the ethics of preserving the irreducible materiality of the foreign on the page, the intimacy, distance and desire in the caress between textual bodies, and the infinite outcomes that such a caress can produce, none of which are fixed or final. Lacayo describes this 'small point in which both texts meet' as a 'recurrent birthing that does not culminate in a birth', an 'offshoot of a union but not its culmination' (Lacayo 2014: 225).

I find Lacayo's account particularly illuminating when read in conversation with Basile's 'A Scene of Intimate Entanglements, or, Reckoning with the "Fuck" of Translation' (2017). Basile presents an analysis of what she terms

the relation between translation and queerness; between writing and corporeal practices that invariably cross over leaky boundaries, animate thresholds, eschew containment, and hold out unexpected textual and fleshy pleasures. (Basile 2017: 26)

Basile's account, in contrast with Lacayo's, moves away from the flowering 'textual caressing' (Lacayo 2014: 226) towards the 'fuck' of translation, emphasising the pornographic nature of the 'scene' of translation (Basile 2017: 27). This can be understood as a 'profoundly disorienting experience of bodily arousal drawn into a zone of indefinite proximity to the object of desire' (Basile 2017: 28), as well as the 'potential for violent non-

relationality and mis-reading' (28) in translation, characterised by asymmetrical relations of power.

My invocation of the figure of the Irigarayan make-out session as a means of approaching a certain form of writing-with-translation, which I develop below, builds on the scholarship of both Lacayo and Basile. Although I eschew the originally 'feminine' labiology of Irigaray's lips, I am also indebted in my analysis to the work of theorists such as Bracha Ettinger (2006), Luise von Flotow (2014) and Carolyn Shread (2007 & 2014) who have taken up the metaphors of gestation and birth in order to posit a model for 'ethical encounters through exchanges in which difference is maintained within an intimate space' (Shread 2007: 213). In taking up this line of thought and turning towards the pash, I hope to continue in this trajectory of engagement with translation theories attuned to an ethics of difference, building on the work of Barbara Godard (1989 & 2000), Sherry Simon (1996 & 1997), Luise von Flotow (1997), Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood (1991) and Lawrence Venuti (1992, 1998 & 2001), while simultaneously addressing the asymmetrical power relations that necessarily inform any ethics of translation, as articulated by postcolonial critics such as Gayatri Spivak (1993).

Applying this theory to these specific works and to my own creative practice should extend the debate and reframe it. In taking up Lacayo's translation model, parsing it through Basile's pornographic scene and applying it specifically to experimental multilingual writing, I do not mean to suggest that this is the only application of queer and embodied translation; rather, I argue that Lacayo's figuration can help us understand how to write with translation in such a way that *testifies* to this movement while preserving the material density of textual bodies. Such writing can be considered doubly suspended, desirous, perpetually unsettled by the 'disruptive intimacy of the foreign' (Basile 2017: 30). I am interested in writing and translation that engages with texts as bodies *in a certain way* to produce *a certain kind of writing*. In other words, I propose that we take these texts – Irigaray, Basile, Lacayo, Braschi, Acker – invite them into a cupboard at a party, stand outside giggling in the hall and attempt to 'exercise patient vigilance toward the unexpected reverberations of their entangling effects' (Basile 2017: 32).

The 'pash'

In the 2010 exhibition, 'The Anatomy of Desire', contemporary mixed media artist Charlie Murphy showcased a number of glass sculptures: the products of an elaborate mould-making process using casts made of dental alginate placed in the mouths of strangers, friends and colleagues and left to harden for ninety seconds as they kissed. The resulting work is described in the exhibition catalogue as 'mischievous and sensual' (Segal 2010: 9), 'beautiful, provocative' and 'photographic' in the ability of the 'three-dimensionality of glass' to 'document' and 'fix' what 'would otherwise disappear into the normally irreversible



Figure 1: Cast of a kiss #1 (kiss as negative space) (Murphy 2010) [4]

flow of time and sensation' (Gentry 2010: 14). On Murphy's work, Irigaray writes, 'She tries to make visible the most irreducible to the visible: mucous touch' (Irigaray 2010: 22).

Similarly, I am interested in an approach to writing with translation that suspends a particular erotic encounter in the moment of its becoming. I propose that the translative 'pash' can be considered a generative model for experimental, multilingual writing that produces texts that are open and *in process*, working to suspend the desirous movement of production and consumption, thus facilitating ongoing translation and interpretation rather than presenting a fixed 'target text'. I propose that writing that engages with multilingual, fragmented and homophonic translation has the potential to produce texts that are disruptive, indeterminate and intertextual, placing 'the strategies of the telling' at the centre of the 'tale' (Costello 2005). In particular I look at how translation can help us to resist "the idea of closure of conviction" in our creative practice (Castro qtd in Costello 2005), to produce "interactive ... conversational ... open-ended and process-oriented texts" (Costello qtd in Costello 2005), characterised by "materially contingent", "multiple, associative, nonhierarchical" logics and processes (Retallack qtd in Costello 2005).

Lips, tongue and teeth

In taking up the figure of the pash, this paper makes metonymical use of the mouth as a means to 'convey the mediating space between subjects that allows the subjects to come into

contact with one another but without being reduced to the other' (Toye 2010: 48). Metaphors for translation based on birth or sex, such as those put forward by Lacayo and Basile, are compelling to the extent that they unsettle the erasure of the translation process and highlight the fluidity of translative becoming (and as such, this paper can be positioned as an extension to this scholarship). However, these proposed models also carry tempting connotations of closure, climax and finality [5]. The pash, on the other hand – the queer figure of the lips, tongue and teeth meeting at the interval of the half-open mouth – 'foregrounds transformation' (Toye 2010: 48) and stresses that its subjects 'are not static, but are constantly engaging in processes of transformation and becoming, and that both entities on either side of the space have the right to this becoming' (48). Approaching translation as a textual make-out sesh entails a recognition of the ongoing and infinite generation of texts-to-come in the translation process.

Such an approach to writing with translation is grounded in the indeterminable nature of difference in Irigarayan philosophy: 'the difference between two beings who do not yet exist, who are in the process of becoming' – difference as "always in the process of differentiating itself" (Grosz qtd in Lacayo 2014: 219). As Lacayo acknowledges, this necessitates an understanding of translation that 'does not presuppose the existence of two bodies but rather a body that, in the act of translation, moves towards an encounter with a body that is yet to come into existence, a body created – and that only exists – in the act of translation' (Lacayo 2014: 219). If such a statement feels counterintuitive, this is perhaps because we are accustomed to encountering translation in the final product that it produces; not only do we rarely see the source text and target text side by side, but we almost never directly observe the 'process' of differentiation between them. If translation is a bedroom in which 'the unruly material entanglement' (Lacayo 2014: 227) of signifiers and bodies 'come undone' (227) in order to reveal the instability and interpermeability of the boundaries of subjectivity and language (227), the problem is that 'the reader always arrives on the scene of translation after its event: that is, after the linguistic bodies have apparently entered and exited their own material entanglements (ie the bed is empty...)' (Basile 2017: 30). Thus traditional interlingual translation enacts an erasure not only of the original text but of the movement between, the process or event that claims to 'produce' a fixed translation.

The Irigarayan interval

The interval is an ethical space of transcendence between two subjects that allows the two to remain two without being reduced to one another: 'the "through" which allows each one their living becoming' (Irigaray 1992: 27). It emerges from 'a desire to enter in relation with the other, as opposed to a desire to appropriate the other' (Tremblay 2017: 288) by reducing them to one's self, or possessing them as a fixed being. It is the respecting of the other's difference while also opening to it and the potential to be transformed by it: proximate distance as a 'motor of becoming, allowing both the one and the other to grow' (Irigaray 1992: 27). Jean-

Thomas Tremblay identifies the Irigarayan interval as authorising a 'nonteleological process of thinking about, relating to and cultivating life from difference itself, instead of a conceptual outside' (Tremblay 2017: 288); the two subjects do not pre-exist their opening onto the interval of mutual transformation. In other words, the threshold is that which simultaneously constitutes the subject, and that passage which opens 'towards the becoming of the other' (Hill 2008: 129).

The interval is at the core of Irigaray's project of radically rethinking sexual difference, which seeks to invent 'a new dynamic of relation' (Ziarek 2000: 142) between two subjects, a relationality 'that would not only work without appropriation and power but also maintain relating as futural/transformative' (142). The interval entails a respect for the irreducibility of the other, which importantly is not simply material but also cultural, linguistic, political and discursive. In other words, the interval necessitates the recognition of the constant and irreducible material-discursive becoming of the other that can never be fully grasped. Although Irigaray draws on a number of 'intermediary figures' to characterise the interval, including 'love, angels, mucous' and the more abstract 'sensible transcendental' (Ziarek 2000: 135), perhaps the most frequent figure she draws on is the lips, which she characterises as the 'threshold' of our 'external appearing', that in the act of kissing are opened 'towards our intimate and invisible dwelling for a sharing of our mucous intimacy' (Irigaray 2010: 22). Thus the metonymical figure of the kiss, like the interval, concerns itself with 'proximity' and distance: 'the edges of the faces finding openness' in one another, allowing the 'possibility of exchange' (Irigaray 1992: 63).

To return to the question of suspended translation, I invoke Ziarek's interpretation of the interval once more: in order to 'avoid muting or effacing [textual] difference' (Ziarek 2000: 148) by directly transcribing its fixed meaning, the writer/translator might 'inflect difference' (148) instead, through maintaining a non-appropriative proximity with the text which works to 'intensify difference and render it transformative in order to counteract its inherent tendency toward misprision' (Ziarek 2000: 148). Irigaray indicates that only then can the movement towards the other be a positive and transformative interval, rather than a kind of Hegelian cancelling negation (Irigaray 1992: 20). I bring this thinking to the field of translation to suggest that translation models that frame the process as being linear and unidirectional – producing a fixed product of more or less literal equivalency – carry the risk of eliminating the distance required for such an inflection to take place, thus closing off the possibility for transformative futurity. In treating each unit as a sign that has a direct and concrete correspondence that can effectively be swapped for another, such an approach fails to recognise the fluid becoming of the other textual body. By approaching the foreign text as absolutely alien and yet absolutely accessible in such a way that recuperates it back into the self, such translation fails to truly maintain the two textual bodies *as two*. This resonates with what Spivak describes as one of the 'seductions of translating' (1993: 179): that it is a 'simple miming of the responsibility to the trace of the other in the self' (Spivak 1993: 179).

It is my contention that multilingual translative writing has the potential to maintain the interval of desire by approaching the body of a source text in such a way that respects the fluid becoming of that text. In allowing for many possible interpretations or translations, multilingual writing that suspends the process of translation can be seen to acknowledge that any given 'source text' is unfixed and unfinished, never fully graspable. Multilingual translation thus moves towards the interval between its own becoming and that of the text in translation in such a way as to allow for the possibility of real transformation. The interval can aid us in understanding the transformative potential of the translative textual encounter without falling back on models of consumption, equivalency or fidelity. Rather, the interval offers an 'aesthetics of emergence', with an 'accent on the ecstasy of situation-specific relationality' (Tremblay 2017: 294). How then, specifically, does the 'push' of multilingual writing move towards a space of ethical transcendence without appropriating the 'other'? And what kind of writing may be produced when we suspend and intensify this movement of translative bodies towards the interval of desire?

Preserving the materiality of the 'foreign text'

In attempting to answer a similar question, Lacayo gestures towards the necessity for translation to perform the 'simultaneous act of moving toward the interval and of retreating from full appropriation' by somehow preserving the 'density of unknown, irreducible [textual] bodies' (Lacayo 2014: 223) in such a way that allows them 'to remain foreign' (223). He suggests that queer and embodied translation must preserve a remainder of the foreign materiality of the source text in order to produce the awe and wonder that constitutes the basis of the respectful movement towards the other, recognising the irreducibility of the 'thick' material, and the cultural and linguistic difference of the other textual body. Returning to the figure of the kiss, the figure of the tongue (*lengua*, which also means language in Spanish) could be understood in this context as the 'foreign' language retained in its alien materiality on the page, revealing the interstitial presence of the textual body. The thickness of the tongue in the other's mouth can be taken as the literal embodiment of the thickness of the corporeally conceptualised 'thickness' in translation theory that 'hinders the desire to overcome cultural difference through explication' (Lacayo 2014: 218).

Here Lacayo follows Venuti and a number of other translation scholars in arguing for a translation that does not eradicate the disturbance of the foreign but allows it to remain and unsettle the target language. However, Lacayo is fairly vague in gesturing towards what such a remainder might actually look like. I suggest that an Irigarayan translation would perhaps be one that preserves some, if not all, of the literal materiality of the foreign text on the page – that is, a translation that avoids translation. Such an approach has the potential to preserve the 'wonder' that Irigaray desires, and holds space for many possible interpretations and re-translations in the future. However, the risk of maintaining the entirety of a text in its blank materiality is that the situational relationality of 'the two' absolutely privileges distance over

proximity. Multilingual writing that respects the interval between textual bodies must somehow engage with the transformative effects of the translative encounter without closing off or 'sealing' the difference of the other text in a way that ensures the untouched continuation of the self. For Irigaray, what makes the lips a site of potential intimacy that avoids consumption (intimacy with the self and with the other) is that 'when lips kiss, openness is not the opposite of closure' (Irigaray 1992: 63); 'closed lips remain open' and 'their touching allows movement from inside to outside, from outside to in' (63).

There is still the question, then, of how to write in such a way so as to preserve an ongoing *exchange* between textual bodies. In other words, 'What is the utility of an open non-object? And how can an endless circulation be set up – in the thing?' (Irigaray 1992: 63).

Translation relies on the flow of meaning, rhythm and linguistic associations between textual bodies, drawing our attention to the intertextuality and interpermeability of all texts [6]. In multilingual writing that suspends the movement of translation, this exchange – 'swapping spit' – is ongoing, allowing for an endless circulation between textual bodies that facilitates their fluid and collaborative becoming without reducing them to a single unified self. Irigaray also frequently substitutes the *interval* with the figure of the *breath*, a term that 'vivifies the interval by highlighting its creative potential' (Tremblay 2017: 290), heralding 'the emergence of new forms of life by infusing the world with potentialities that are embodied, but never possessed' (290), putting 'fragility and incompleteness at the core of the labour of being and becoming' (290). Whether the exchange is that of breath or saliva, a translative kiss is 'multiple' and its 'movements cannot be described as the passage from a beginning to an end' (Irigaray 1985: 215).

On the page, this might look like a 'teasing-out' of multiple linguistic resonances, the preservation of partially untranslated passages. Such an explicit marking of a meta-discourse of textual production might frame the writing as unfinished and open-ended, the repetition of textual passages with variation in translative 'equivalents' serving to demonstrate the unfixed and fluid nature of the movement taking place. It might also involve paronomastic or homophonic techniques that bring to the forefront the fluid becoming of both textual bodies as they move towards a transformative encounter. As Basile points out, the 'movement of translation', when attentively pursued as *movement*, puts pressure on the 'representational stability of source and target texts' (Basile 2017: 30); languages 'come undone in translation just like subjects come undone in sex' (30) [7]. As Spivak argues, the translator who seeks to enter into a truly ethical relation with a text cannot approach it simply as 'a matter of synonym, syntax, and local colour' (Spivak 1993: 181), but must recognise an ongoing staging of an unknown agent within a post-structuralist, three-tiered notion of language – an unfixed and fluid interplay between 'rhetoric, logic' and 'silence' (181).

Suspending the tension of translation

The multilingual mode of writing-with-translation I have outlined so far embraces Irigaray's notion that we must 'leave things open' so 'that they can go on breathing' (Irigaray 1991: 30) rather than finishing them off 'by wrapping them in an airy shroud' (30) – preserving the gap or 'spacy emptiness' in translation (Robert-Foley 2016: 905), and its generativity for textual production. On the other hand – is not kissing the movement to *close over* the mouth of the other? When we consider the pushing figure, this suggests the co-dependent (but ultimately deathly) breathing of mutually shared air between locked mouths. The figure of the kiss can be read as leaning in to eliminate that gap, or to press against the interval – to merge, to block off the gap entirely. A tension emerges: if you leave the mouth open and unimpeded then there can be no intimacy between the texts; they are totally separate and autonomous. In moving towards one another, the space narrows in which the swerve can take place.

Perhaps it is helpful here to consult an advice column on kissing – 'Circle the tip of their tongue, *then pull back*. The pull back gives you time to breathe and keeps from an overflow of saliva' (Anat 2020, italics in original). The kiss, ideally, is 'movement whereby becoming remains becoming without ever forming a circle' (Irigaray 1991: 32) – without falling into a cycle of 'circular breathing' (32). Similarly, the 'act of translation', enacted as an open-ended and multidirectional process, is 'a caress always left ajar, always open to an outside, with the force to bring forth aesthetic possibilities of the new' (Lacayo 2014: 228). Thus the space between – the interval or gap – is preserved in its potential for possibility, suspending the moment in which a swerving is possible from exact replication into difference, producing multidirectional, paronomastic and playful linguistic and semantic resonances and associations. Such a mode of translatable writing has the potential to 'devise writing strategies that resist "narrative desire" or even foster alternative reading practices', developing an approach that emphasises the 'potential of desire, rather than its satiation', deferring *jouissance* (Lobb 2009: 6). [8] This involves promoting 'creative practices that value delay, deferral and displacement over fixed structure' (Lobb 2009: 6) – what Clayton calls "'desire as a creative force'" (Clayton qtd in Lobb 2009: 6). The push of translation is about 'that indefinable taste of an attraction to an other which will never be satiated' (Irigaray 1993: 186), 'which is always and still preliminary to and in all nuptials, which weds without consum(mat)ing, which perfects while abiding by the outlines of the other' (186).

Suspended, translatable texts take up the 'attempt to remain in "the textual middle ... all the while perversely delaying, returning backwards in order to put off the promised end, and perhaps to assure its greater significance"' (Brooks qtd in Lobb 2009: 7). Such an approach to translation produces a purely 'dilatatory' text, 'an introduction to what will never be written' which 'can only repeat itself – without introducing anything' (Barthes & Howard 1975: 18). The connotation is not only that of continual exchange of fluids and breath, but also that of foreplay – hands and lips and tongues that do not find a resting point but remain engaged in a perpetual movement 'toward an unknown future encounter' (Lacayo 2014: 221) – locating the potentiality of translation 'in the creative force of the process itself, not in an end result'

(221). If translation is understood as the 'call and response of attraction' (Lacayo 2014: 228), then to pash is 'to give birth to your desire itself' (Irigaray 1991: 34). Translation must grapple with the 'irreducible nature of the other's presence, which is put off to a time always in the future, *which suspends parousia indefinitely*' (Lacayo 2014: 211, emphasis added). A parallel, perhaps, can be drawn with Brooks' theory of narrative desire, which posits that textual desire is based on the reader's orientation towards narrative conclusion (Brooks 1994: 30). In the case of multilingual writing, that which is deferred is not necessarily the narrative plot or story being told, but rather the meta-narrative of creative process – the movement of translation and textual production.

Yet the spacy interval, or gap of translation, can also be understood in terms of Ashcroft's "absence" or metonymic gap (Ashcroft qtd in Freiman 2006: 85) that is 'constitutive of meaning in the cross-cultural situation', in which a reader or listener 'makes associative meanings through the metonymic function of the partially-referentially understood meanings' (Freiman 2006: 85). That this gap 'represents an unresolved element of conflict in postcolonial language, a conflict which is also the creative force of this language' (2006: 85), should indicate that in attempting to preserve the spacy interval of this gap, the pash of translation does not constitute an escape from the discomfort of translation. After all, in light of 'the potential for violent non-relationality' (Basile 2017: 28), which haunts translation in any form, the impulse to 'preserve' the foreign for whatever reason inevitably runs the heightened risk of empowering the translator as a source of meaning at the expense of the author whose work is being translated.

If multilingual writing is successful with suspending the movement of translation, it follows that it also suspends and intensifies the tensions and discomfort inherent to the process. The teeth embedded in the figure of the pash should alert us to the limitations of conceptualising translation simply in terms of playful desire. The pash cannot eliminate the evils of translation but in fact constitutes an intensification of the process in all its complexity, and can be understood as a means of interrogating the imbalances of the process, particularly 'the potential for violent non-relationality and mis-reading at the heart of intimacy itself (something both Spivak and queer theorists such as Berlant and Edelman recursively alert us to)' (Basile 2017: 28). As Irigaray warns, lips can be 'mis-used and reduced to a means of consumption or consummation', can 'assimilate', 'reduce' and 'swallow up' the other (Irigaray 1993: 14); what makes the meeting of lips the threshold of the shared, rather than the site of violent appropriation or misappropriation of another's mouth? The pash of translation, like the practice of all translation, 'shapes, and takes shape within the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism' (Niranjana 1992: 2). Rather than attempting to neutralise such questions, multilingual writing – as I will show in the two following case studies – works to intensify and suspend the creatively generative moment of potential conflict and misunderstanding in translation. Establishing a meta-discourse of textual production that emphasises the agency of the translator draws attention to the asymmetries of difference at play and the 'ethics of location' of the author(s) and translator(s)

themselves (Locayo 2014: 223). In engaging with the embodied positionality of the translation process, readers are confronted with the 'power differentials and their extensive effects' (Lacayo 2014: 217) in writing, translation and everything in between.

I now turn to close textual analysis in order to evaluate the extent to which Braschi and Acker employ certain techniques to produce writing that eschews fixed meaning in favour of facilitating the emergence of fluid and interpermeating textual resonances, as well as to establish a meta-discourse on the writing and translation process. I argue that Acker simultaneously fragments and preserves the materiality of Catullus's Latin text in such a way that effectively embodies the movement I have outlined above, teasing out the syntax and semantics of the source text without fully appropriating it, an approach that intentionally unsettles the notion of any fixed and finished translation. On the other hand, Braschi's *Yo-Yo Boing!* is an example of a text that frames writing and translation as inseparable, harnessing the movement between Spanish and English in a space of creative conflict, playing with the tension of deferred textual closure through linguistic experimentation and the construction of an explicit meta-narrative while always maintaining the shadow of the translation-to-come on the horizon.

Acker's Catullus VIII

In her translation of Gaius Valerius Catullus's 'Poem VIII' (which is situated at the beginning of section two of *Don Quixote*, 'The Poems of a City', in 'The Second Part of Don Quixote: Other Texts') Acker locks lips with Catullus at the 'half open' threshold of translation in a messy and erotically charged display of translation-in-process. Re-titling the poem 'On Time', Acker preserves much of the original Latin and inserts her own lines into the body of Catullus's poem, leaving translator's notes in a column to the right of the text. In this way her translation 'permeates the original but fragments and de-forms it' (Colby 2016: 129), the illegibility of the resulting hybrid text deposing 'denotative meaning' and empowering 'the materiality of language' in such a way as to generate a plurality of linguistic associations, a paronomastic effect typical of homophonic translation (Colby 2016: 133). In approaching Acker's text, we find that 'iba illa multa [*there are many*] kisses on kisses between us' (Acker 1986: 47).

For instance, in isolating both instances of the word 'cum' [*combined with*] and embedding them in her erotically charged English prose, Acker effectively amplifies the resonance of the word's contemporary connotations and leaves its syntax fluid and unfixed (Colby 2016: 133). Similarly, in isolating the word 'tu quoque' [*you also*] through enjambment and then following 'impotens' [*powerless*] with 'can't fuck any / boyfriends these days' (Acker 1986: 48), Acker connotes a state of sexual frustration that undermines the masculinity of Catullus's poetic voice (48). In her analysis of this passage, Georgina Colby compares Acker's process to a 'distended translation' or 'transliteration' in which 'no stable textual coordinates' are offered

and the ‘translator’s voice’ is inscribed as the ‘creator of language-centred meaning in the text’ (Colby 2016: 129). Such a transliteration effectively displaces ‘grammatically centred meaning’, generating ‘new meanings through parataxis’ (Colby 2016: 126). This in turn is linked to what Toby Fitch terms a ‘transposition’ (Fitch 2019), citing Jed Rasula and Steve McCaffery – “‘not a simple transit but a dichotomous zone of interaction’” between “‘the imperfections of signs’” (Rasula & McCaffery qtd in Fitch 2019: 61). Such a transposition or ‘mistranslation’ serves to ‘subvert/invert the hierarchy of one language over another by transforming the sounds of one linguistic system (and its many tongues) into sounds from another linguistic system (and its many tongues)’ (Fitch 2019: 67) [9].

Indebted to Colby’s insightful critique and Fitch’s parallel scholarship on this topic, I would suggest that Acker’s ‘On Time’ can also be interpreted as a series of decentralised and ‘multidirectional translations’ occurring ‘at the interfaces of different systems’ (Karpinski 2012: 3). Acker engages meaningfully with the semantics of Catullus’s source text while preserving its foreign materiality in a way that amplifies the resonances of each movement. For example, in the lines ‘bad / mood no wonder I’m acting badly, noli NO’ (Acker 1986: 48), the alliterative repetition of the first syllable of the second-person active imperative ‘noli’ [*don’t*] mimics the orality of a tantrum, making manifest the latent frustration underpinning Catullus’s poem (48) [10]. Similarly, in following the line ‘ventitābās quō puella dūcēbat’ [*you would always come where she led*] (Acker 1986: 47) with the bracketed lines ‘(on a leash: / leather Rome)’ (47), Acker literally ‘teases’ out the connotations of sexual submission in the lexical meaning of the Latin, transforming Catullus’s turn of phrase with the addition of the tangible and provocative leather leash.

Similarly, Acker homophonically echoes *labella* [*lips*] with ‘labula’, a Latin-esque word translation unit that has no obvious literal meaning; perhaps a distortion of *labellum* [*lip*] (Acker 1986: 48). In a contemporary context, the word could refer to the dorsoposterior part of the mandibular lobe on some mosquito larvae, an intriguing possibility given the total absence of technical jargon and the failure to mention mosquitos of any developmental stage elsewhere in the text. An alternate and perhaps more likely interpretation could be that the word is a play on the Spanish term, ‘la bula’, which is used to refer to the religious bull or public decree issued by the Roman Catholic Church. This resonates more compellingly with the matrimonial connotations of Acker’s words below, ‘(allied to death)’ (48). The effect, however, is indicative of the experience of reading Latin as someone with no prior knowledge of the language, like myself. The etymologically familiar but foreignised materiality of the words carry strong connotations with the modern derivative ‘labia’ as well as with ‘labella’, the Latin for ‘lip’. Similarly, in the line ‘*iam* (ha ha) / Catullus’ (48), Acker draws attention to the word *iam* [*now*] by placing it in italics, unsettling the construction of temporality in the text, simultaneously punning off the English ‘I am’ and the ‘iamb’ in syllabic meter. In following ‘*iam*’ with the breathy signification for laughter, Acker breathes into Catullus’s text, taking it up with her own embodied iambic expression. Similarly, in the line ‘quem you now fucking? cuiss else diceris / huh!’ (Acker 1986: 48), the breathy ‘huh’

echoes the crude contemporary interjection of the word 'fucking' to charge the original Latin with visceral erotic connotations (48). In traditional translation there is at the very least the *illusion* of one breath, whereas writing that works with the pash of translation presents the tension of more-than-one, air that belongs to no one body, deathly morning breath pumped through multiple lungs: heavy breathing as an instrument of desire.

The multidirectionality of the flow of saliva in this intertextual smooch allows for the addition of Latin as well as English lines to the text. For instance, we can observe the repetition of 'Scelesta' to form the phrase 'Scelesta nocte' [*impious, villainous or wicked night*] (Acker 1986: 48). The word 'nocte' is contentious here in the context of Poem VIII's translation history, as the word 'scelesta' has been more commonly supposed to be followed by 'vae tē' [*woe to you*], 'rere' [*think*] or even 'nullo' [*no*] (Cochrane 1842: 344) [11]. It is possible that Acker was working with a version that posited the word 'nocte' after 'scelesta'; Louis Zukofsky works with this term in his homophonic rendition of 'Catullus 8', which was published in 1969 and is thought to have influenced Acker's translation (Colby 2016: 113). However, the fact that Acker repeats 'scelesta', removes the comma between 'scelesta' and 'nocte' and follows the text with the English 'My / night' suggests that she chooses this word mindfully for its particular resonances with her own broader poetic project (Acker 1986: 48). Furthermore, given that the lower case hendecasyllabic Latin lines in Acker's translation are 'subordinated through hypotaxis to the upper case' of the contemporary English additions (Colby 2016: 133), the capitalisation of the repetition of 'Scelesta' marks it as Acker's own.

Hence Acker moves bidirectionally through the materiality of the Latin text to return once more to her 'emblematic use of the paronomasy between knight/night' (Cao 2017: 75), which I would argue not only 'plays a large part in the narrative' of *Don Quixote* (75), but can be considered fundamentally generative of its central character, thus framing Acker's project as an extended, divergent and experimental translation of Miguel de Cervantes' text. As a result of the repeated multidirectional translations between its two homophonic meanings, the word night becomes 'permanently' unfixed, so that it doubly signifies whenever it appears; in the same way, the kiss is 'multiple, devoid of causes, meanings, simple qualities' and 'cannot be described as the passage from a beginning to an end' (Irigaray 1985: 215). By materially 'embedding' and contextualising this paronomastic play's first instance with the titular character re-writing Cervantes' *Don Quixote* while waiting to have an abortion, Acker establishes a meta-discourse of extended textual production that is keenly attuned to the situation and positionality of the bodies involved in the translation process. The process of 'termination' in Acker's narrative is paradoxically the movement that allows her protagonist to continue living, desiring, and pursuing her personal quest without having to take on the responsibility of a child: 'This's why I'm having an abortion', Acker writes; 'So I can love' (Acker 1986: 10). In the same way, Acker's tactic of effectively emptying words of meaning, *destroying their capacity to signify*, allows them to go on living in a state of constant and fluid renegotiation, thus facilitating the suspension of translatory desire in the text [12]. 'Are we unsatisfied?' Irigaray might ask the reader of this hybrid text, the pash-in-process between

two texts becoming, becoming-undone. 'Yes, if that means we are never finished. If our pleasure consists in moving, being moved, endlessly. Always in motion: openness is never spent nor sated' (Irigaray 1985: 210).

Acker's open translation-in-process of Catullus's poem 'allows Acker to question the future tense within the present' (Colby 2016: 134), opening up the space for a new approach to temporality in the poems that follow, particularly 'Time is identity', 'Time is Pain' and 'Time is made by humans' (Acker 1986). Not only do the poems that follow 'On Time' echo the theme of romantic loss in Catullus's text, but they also enact a meta-commentary on creative process that mimics the translator's notes in the right hand column of 'On Time', a kind of *self*-translation-in-process that serves to further excite the reader by gesturing towards a body of text that is always irreducible and evasive, the 'lover' as 'changing water' (Acker 1986: 49). We can taste the 'thesis', the 'supplementary thesis', the 'overall sentence syntactical structure' and 'verb structure' of the poem, but its 'meaning' is elusive and unfixed (51). At the same time, in the sense that this poem can be read as a continuation of the translation of 'Catullus 8', divorced from the materiality of the Latin, it also evokes a deep-tongued probing into the recesses of the other's mouth, taking it apart without putting it back together as in Basile's 'scene' of translation. 'If love destroys common time' (Acker 1986: 51), then the push destroys the linearity of translation, and Acker is not willing to put either back together on the page. Acker's meta-commentary generates more desire for clarity than it does actual clarity, tempting readers with the terminology of textual analysis without providing it – 'My main verb is orgasm in the mythological past tense' (51) – and raising more questions than it answers: 'and the subjunctive at the beginning of the poem?' (48). In this way, Acker's fragmented translation enacts a suspension of the process of translation, which concerns itself with the movement towards the interval of desire – a doubly thick suspension that facilitates fluidity between difference and eschews consummation.

Braschi's *Yo-Yo Boing!*

Marketed as Spanglish or bilingual writing, Braschi's textual experimentation across linguistic borders has also been framed as 'translingualism', reflecting a process of communication in which "the semiotic resources in one's repertoire or in society interact more closely, become part of an integrated resource" and "mesh in transformative ways, generating new meanings and grammars" (Canagarajah qtd in Jones 2018: 4). In other words, this is a text in which the lips of more than one linguistic body are 'gathered one against the other' (Irigaray 1993: 14). I would argue that such a mode of writing, which resonates with Colby's 'transliteration' and Karpinski's 'multidirectional translation', enacts a sloppy *make-out* in which the porous wall between bodies allows for the ongoing 'passage' of 'fluids' to produce infinite textual resonances (Irigaray 1992: 66). The book necessarily exists in fluid and constant translation between Spanish and English – never having a 'fixed' site of meaning, each line always containing echoes of the others. Like the urban wasteland

represented by 'New York' in the text, the translative space of Braschi's writing 'es una lata de resonancias y una lata de atardeceres y sonidos – resounding – resounding – resounding' [*is a canister of echoes, a canister of sounds and sunsets*] (Braschi 2011a: 145; Braschi 2011b: 140).

This is most evident in moments of grammatical or orthographical deviancy, which are often rooted in homophonic or paronomastic equivalencies. Braschi disrupts translation's tendency to operate as an invisible process, birthing a new 'finished' text into being without calling attention to itself as the condition for the text's existence. Here, the movement reveals and perpetuates itself in the calques, neologisms and homophonic 'mistranslations' peppered through the text ranging from the nonsensical to the almost imperceptible: 'vacilation' for hesitation (Braschi 2011a: 48), 'grains' for pimples (26), 'revolting all my gavetas' [*drawers*] (35), 'I don't treason the people I love' (62), 'wet their appetite' (95). Braschi's homophonic methods inhabit the anxious liminal space between intentional and unintentional mistranslation, their absurdity unsettled by the insistence of the authorial voice that it is not her 'intention' to 'make you laugh' (2011a: 173). This tension within the text, and the policing of linguistic 'failures' between characters – assuaging their 'anxiety about [their] own language by dictating how others should use it' (Jones 2018: 7) – engages readers directly, forcing them to reflexively position themselves as the hostile audience for this performance. Braschi constantly reminds us that for linguistically marginalised subjects, translation is not simply a flirtatious hook-up but a lived and material reality, and a matter of survival. This tension also testifies to the structural inequalities and the role of power in translation – like the act of kissing, translation's creative/erotic generative potential does not by any means make it a *neutral* event.

The prominence in the narrative of the meta-discourse of ongoing and embodied textual production ('cuando el mentón choca contra el cuello, el brazo se move solo, va rayando las líneas, mi estómago está estragado') (Braschi 2011a: 116) [*my chin drops, my arm starts moving, writing these lines – my stomach growls*] (Braschi 2011b: 111) is heightened by the fact that Braschi explicitly frames the novel as a work-in-process, an attempt at producing a successful prose work; '*this fragment I wrote two years ago is obsolete. I'm talking about The Piano when I should be talking of the latest movie in town...*' (Braschi 2011a: 208). Indeed, the protagonist flirts with the idea of producing a work that is never completed; 'A lifetime work in progress' (2011a: 208), an idea that comes to fruition, to the extent that the resultant text is open, shifting and breathing on the page. In drawing attention to the process of textual production as desirous, Braschi also reflects the discomfort of that desire and her frustration at being unable to produce something fixed, 'finished' and entirely her own, rather than something entangled in a messy process of literary co-creation. Alongside the anxiety of performance, even the performance of *desire* – think the trope of straight girls making out at a party – Braschi's writing stays with the power imbalances between texts in translation and the bodies that translate them, interrogating the way they are enacted and resisted on the page, rather than ironing out the process to present a cohesive single body. Braschi's writing allows

the anxiety of semi-fluency to sit uncomfortably alongside the creative generative potential of that translative space; there is 'always an understanding in misunderstanding' (Braschi 2011a: 90), but that does not make it any less awkward. This resonates with Freiman's observation that the disruption and displacement of neoliberal globalisation and ongoing colonisation 'promote creative responses to language use, perceptual framework and meaning-making' (Freiman 2006: 83); "'Learning to work with the contradictory strains of languages *lived*, and languages learned, has the potential for a remarkable critical and creative impulse'" (Bhabha qtd in Freiman 2006: 83).

In translating a line from Eliot's 'The Wasteland' (itself a translative palimpsest), 'O Lord, Thou pluckest me out' becomes 'Oh, Dios, por qué me desplumas' (O Lord, why are you depluming me?), conjuring the intriguing image of Eliot being 'plucked' like a chicken but also indicating the speaker's confusion faced with Eliot's playfully invented Old English form of the word 'pluck' (Braschi 2011a: 220). Consistent with the linguistic policing that haunts Braschi's prose, another speaker then compares the first to an aunt who conflated '*son of a bitch*' with '*son of a beach*', believing the English phrase refers to the '*bastardos*' of '*las putas americanas who come to Puerto Rico and have sex on the beach*' (2011a: 221, original emphasis). Again, the mistranslation resonates compellingly with the semantics of the intended linguistic construction, as Braschi harnesses the 'expressive and innovative' creative potential of 'partial knowledge' and 'language contact' in the translative space (Jones 2018: 9). In the same way, the speaker treats their mistranslation as a prompt for the playful speculation that Eliot's 'sexual desire' is 'so repressed hasta que Dios le quitó todas sus plumas' (2011a: 220) [*that God plucked all his feathers*] (2011b: 214), leaving him 'como un vampiro sin dientes' (2011a: 220) [literal translation: like a toothless vampire]. In contrast, an alternate translation introduced further down on the page reads: 'O Dios, me estás pluckeando del closet' (Braschi 2011a: 220). The introduction of pluckeando as an English to Spanish neologism neutralises the creative mistranslation of 'desplumas', but also serves to illustrate the inherent hybridity of language in its constant processes of translation and regeneration across linguistic membranes. 'Now, I really understand. I'm really plucking the meanings. Deshojando las margaritas [*plucking daisy petals*]' (221). In the transformation of 'pluck' to 'deplume', the speaker brings to the surface the physical action of pulling something from its embedded state, thus making concrete the celestial, aesthetic movement of Eliot's verse. The fact that deshojando las margaritas is a phrase that can be roughly translated as 'to vacillate between options' adds an additional layer of dilatory, 'spacy' signification to this mistranslation that would likely be lost in the English text. In the following line, 'Oh Lord thou pluckiest meeoowt' (2011a: 220), Braschi makes 'a deliberate homophonic and cross-phonologic leap', dissolving the 'referential function' of Eliot's words into an 'animal cry' in what could plausibly be framed as a homophonic interlingual translation into a feline language (Jones 2018: 9). This serves to highlight 'the opaque materiality of foreign words' and 'their semiotic blankness for readers without the requisite language skills' and the 'creative ways they can be repurposed' (Jones 2018: 9), in the same way that Acker's 'labula' (1986: 48) plays off the semiotic blankness of Catullus's Latin vocabulary.

If Acker's protagonist's abortion frames the narrative as a materially embedded, embodied translation event, then Braschi's visceral, stream-of-consciousness prose in her opening chapter, 'Close Up', frames the very building blocks of both English and Castellano (the vowels A, E, I, O and U) as embodied 'translation units' to be inscribed and spoken by a poetic body. The materiality of language is inextricably linked to the materiality of the body: the letters that the narrator intones 'están hechas de formas que han producido formas', (2011a: 16), [*formed by forms that have formed forms*] 'ejercitado sus músculos, han escuchado la contracción de sus tripas', [*exercised her muscles, heard the grumbling in her belly*] (2011b: 15). The words on the page themselves written with 'el humo blanco del aliento negro, el humo negro del aliento blanco, y la contracción intensa y soporosa, el cálido aliento de la boca abierto cuando se va cerrando y abriendo, y abriendo y cerrando en el movimiento lento y pausado' (2011a: 17) [*the white steam of black breath, the black steam of white breath, and the intense soporific contractions, the warm breath of the open mouth, closing and opening, opening and closing in the slow and deliberate movement*] (2011b: 15). In drawing attention to the throat, the belly, the floor of the mouth, the 'lips flapping with spit bubbles popping on the tip of the tongue, repeating' (Braschi 2011a: 40), Braschi works 'between languages' in more than one sense – the text's hybridity is both interlingual and intersemiotic. It is not exactly the body acting on language or language on the body but rather the spacy in-between. 'If neither body nor text is construed as the original of the other, then multiple translations – intersemiotic, intralingual and interlingual – can take place between them' (Banting 1995: 18). Again, there is an anxiety here that highlights the discomfort of translation between languages as linked with intersemiotic translation. One character laments the unintentional rolling of his tongue: 'oops – frenó en el paladar – déjame parar – a ver si para – oops' [*it braked on the palate – let me stop – let's see if it stops*] (Jones 2018: 7, Jones' translation), and struggles to express in a halting fragmented sentence his frustration with his 'frenulum', a membrane 'connecting the tongue to the floor of the mouth' (Jones 2018: 7). Similarly, another character coaches a friend on the embodied logistics of articulating the English 'th': 'Repeat after me: thunder. The tongue behind your teeth: Th-under' (Braschi 2011a: 126). Thus Braschi's writing can be seen not only to enact a kind of embodied 'translation poetics', 'embrac[ing] local and particular sites of the body as the locus for writing' (Toye 1996: 187), but to highlight those sites as being one where power imbalances are enacted: many lips and mouths haunting the body of the text.

This heightens the sense of the text existing in translation, building tension between texts and languages (particularly towards the end of part two 'Blow-Up', where the extensive citation of Eliot becomes more prominent) while never offering 'resolution'. Translation is a process, not only when it goes wrong, but throughout the entire work, particularly in anticipation of its translation-to-come ('You should already be translating this work. My book needs your English') (Braschi 2011a: 33). As Ellen Jones points out, the 2011 English translation of this text by Tess O'Dwyer is interventionist to the extent that it exists in direct dialogue with the anxieties of the multilingual edition, forming an 'integral part of Braschi's highly self-

referential postmodern play' (Jones 2018: 1). O'Dwyer's translation 'unqueers' Braschi's language in ways that 'go beyond simply translating all the passages originally appearing in Spanish' (Jones 2018: 10), inserting dialogue tags, reordering sentences originally written in English and even removing the passage 'in which the protagonist takes offence at the audience's laughter during her performance, appearing to interpret the label "funny" as a euphemism for "queer"' (Jones 2018: 12). In other words, O'Dwyer's translation presents itself as the 'finished product' that the multilingual edition is not, thus marking the 'Spanglish' version even more explicitly as unfinished, in-process, a staging and a *staying-with the scene* of translation.

Pulling away

The role of multilinguality and homophonic paronomasia in Acker and Braschi's writing can be seen to demonstrate that the 'push' of translation provides an embodied conceptual framework for writing with translation which produces certain textual qualities, specifically facilitating the emergence of a multiplicity of linguistic associations and sitting with the dynamic movement of the 'process' of translation rather than a finished product. Whereas Acker can be seen to be working more traditionally with the paradigm of queer feminist translation that disrupts and embodies canonical texts, Braschi's work troubles the distinction between self-expression and translation, interrogating the threshold of interlinguality and intersemiotic exchange as sites of discomfort, creativity and frustration. Acker's translation performs a reinvigorating return to the past that brings it forward into the present, reanimating Catullus's text on the page and demonstrating that it is still in a state of fluid becoming. She allows her writing to be transformed by means of inflection, maintaining an Irigarayan proximate distance or 'interval' between the Latin text and her own. Braschi's text, on the other hand, *becomes* simultaneously in Spanish and English. However, the way in which this multidirectional becoming is policed, and its final culmination in a 'neutralised' English translation shows that the act of translation is politically and situationally embedded and inextricably linked with the positionality of translating bodies. The suspension of the movement of translation creates the opportunity for multiple linguistic resonances to be teased out of a single source text, recognising the fluid becoming of that text that can never be 'fixed' nor transposed onto a direct equivalent, deferring the desire for textual closure and opening onto the potential for future translations to 'permeate the membrane' of the current one (Lacayo 2014: 228). This suspension of process also has implications for the interrogation of power imbalances and positionality in translation, in that it preserves the discomfort and risks of translation on the page, lending itself to a meta-discourse of textual production that involves readers in the completion and interpretation of the text. The translatable space is one of play and experimentation that does not eschew positionality but rather interrogates the tensions that underpin all creative practice. Multilingual, translatable writing has the potential to simultaneously unsettle binaries, while highlighting structural

inequalities and foregrounding reflexivity, deferring both closure and complacency and concerning itself with intimacy and violence in equal measures.

The analysis I have presented in this paper should highlight the plurality of further questions to be investigated when it comes to writing with translation. Is it appropriate for self-translation and the translation of another author's work to be addressed using the same model, and what do the disparities between these two kinds of 'encounter' indicate about the relationships between textual and authorial bodies? To what extent can translative writing resist the arguably inevitable co-option of multilingual literature' into a hegemonic, state-sanctioned multicultural literature (Spahr 2018: 126)? How can digital and interactive writing mediums engage with the futurity of translative writing? What is the tension and potential of the relative inaccessibility of multilingual texts, and how might this be changing with the rapid development of translation technology? In the same way that to stay with the scene of translation 'is to translate toward an open-ended and uncertain future, to translate with the possibility that other variations will also permeate the membrane' (Lacayo 2014: 228), so too is my proposition of the metonymical figure of the pash as a gesture towards an unfixed 'mode' or genre of writing that cannot be pinned down so much as inflected: 'My lips drawing the outline, without end, of the act. Never definitively accomplished' (Irigaray 1992: 29).

Notes

[1] Thanks to Kay Are for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this work.

[2] In *Body, Inc* (1995), Pamela Banting proposes 'translation poetics' as a framework for conceptualising writing outside of representational models. She draws on Roman Jakobson's translation categories, Jacques Derrida's anti-logocentric deconstruction, and the writing of Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous in order to propose an approach to textual production and analysis rooted in translation rather than representation, testifying to the materiality and locality of the reading and writing body. More recently, theorists such as Margaret Toye have drawn on the same feminist scholars to characterise creative writing as a 'technology for establishing subjectivity by translating the bodily language of affect into written languages' (Toye 2010: 46).

[3] Of course, the queer erotic turn in translation is not the first to frame the act of translation as an embodied encounter – this is perhaps as old as translation itself. Metaphors for translation have included pregnancy, birth, infidelity, bearing witness, caressing and cannibalism. In fact, arguably what makes the erotic turn so crucial is that it works 'to uncover the ways that translation has always already been gendered in multiple ways' (Santaemilia 2017: 19), offering a 'site of resistance to the accepted conventions, traditions, forms of identification, forms of analysis, and forms of translation' (19), many of which have tended to gender texts and translators as female counterparts to male authors, or draw on heteronormative rhetoric to sanctify the object/subject dichotomy that so often haunts translation scholarship. For this reason, in 'Sexuality and Translation as Intimate Partners? Toward a *Queer Turn* in Rewriting Identities and Desires', José Santaemilia (2017) argues that the

queer erotics of translation, although still relatively 'underexplored' (18) as a field of study, has proven itself to offer 'the best testing ground for a complex problematisation of both sexuality and translation' (18) in translation scholarship to date.

[4] Image provided by the artist via personal email correspondence and reprinted here with permission.

[5] This may be helpful in approaching alterity and embodied relationality in more traditional models of literary translation, which produce cohesive texts to be released into the world, to be compared with their 'source texts'. However, I would argue that these and similar models are somewhat less helpful in framing the attempt to stay with the scene of translation itself in a way that is ongoing and inconclusive, and even less so when it comes to staying with the scene of writing that seeks to stay with the scene of translation.

[6] As Robert-Foley reminds us, 'in the history of thinking on translation, language is a substance, and has matter' (2016: 1) – 'language is a fluid, spilling from one vessel to another, or blood transfused between bodies' (2016: 1); it is 'like water, changing form to make the clouds in the sky' (2016: 1).

[7] Similarly, in his analysis of Australian homophonic responses to Stéphane Mallarmé's 'Un Coup de dés', Toby Fitch (2019) links paronomastic and translative play 'to an erotic multiplicity, and to an everlasting destruction of singularity in language' (Fitch 2019: 68). Fitch indicates that translation, and particularly homophonic translation, 'hangs on the split dualities of words, highlighting the signifier, dispersing the signified, while collapsing the ground beneath both' (72), thus revealing that language is 'unstable' and offering 'changeability and transformation' (80). Such an approach particularly resonates with my textual analysis.

[8] Fitch, citing Gregory Ulmer: 'The fifth sense (*jouis-sens* in French), "carries the insistence of desire in the chain of signifiers, productive of homonyms and puns". This is the fifth dimension that homophonic translation flirts with' (Ulmer qtd in Fitch 2019: 61).

[9] As Fitch points out, in homophonic mistranslations 'every word becomes a little tongue looping between languages' (2019: 68).

[10] 'A *mistranslation*, through its word-play techniques, its use of *latent* forms of language such as the pun, brings some of the unconscious elements to the surface, makes them "present", an event' (Fitch 2019: 57, original emphasis)

[11] Such discrepancy in word choice is attributed to the fact that the second word in this line was left blank or totally indecipherable in the original manuscript – which, after all, was 'found in a cellar, and under a wine barrel' (Cochrane 1842: 344).

[12] Colby links 'Acker's methods of writing-through' (including 'disjunction, de-composition, transliteration, intertextuality, and paragrammatic writing') with 'abortion as a literary trope' (Colby 2016: 114) – the 'unspeakable' is 'figuratively expressed in the practice of writing-through' (119).

Works cited

- Acker, K 1986 *Don Quixote, which was a dream*, Grove Press, New York
- Anat, B 2020 '20 Secrets Every Good Kisser Knows', *Seventeen*, 29 September. Available at <https://www.seventeen.com/love/dating-advice/advice/a7617/best-kissing-tips/> (accessed: 15 October 2020)
- Banting, P 1995 *Body, Inc: a theory of translation poetics*, Turnstone, Winnipeg
- Barthes, R & R Howard 1975 *The pleasure of the text*, R Miller (trans), Hill and Wang, New York
- Basile, E 2017 'A Scene of Intimate Entanglements, or, Reckoning with the "Fuck" of Translation', in BJ Braer & K Kaindl (eds) *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer*, Routledge, New York: 26-37
- Boulanger, PP 2005 'L' erotique du traduire', *Meta* 50, 4
- Boulanger, PP 2008 'Sa langue se glissa dans sa bouche: De la traduction des adjectifs possessifs his/her dans le récit erotique', *Palimpsestes* 21: 109-119
- Braschi, G 2011a *Yo-Yo Boing!*, AmazonCrossing, Las Vegas
- Braschi, G 2011b *Yo-Yo Boing!*, T O'Dwyer (trans), AmazonCrossing, Las Vegas
- Brooks, P 1984 *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge
- Cao, C 2017 'The Rhetoric of Madness in Kathy Acker's *Don Quixote*', *International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies* 5, 3: 72-79
- Cochrane, JG 1842 'Art III: The Carmina of C. Valerius Catullus, with the Annotations of Frederick William Doering', in JG Cochrane (ed) *The Foreign Quarterly Review*: 329-369
- Colby, G 2016 *Kathy Acker: Writing the Impossible*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh
- Costello, M 2005 "'Irrigorous Uncertainties': Writing, Politics and Pedagogy", *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses* 9, 1 (April): www.textjournal.com.au/april05/costello.htm (accessed 12 October 2019)
- de Lotbinière-Harwood, S 1991 *The body bilingual: translation as a rewriting in the feminine*, Les éditions du remue-ménage, Montréal
- Eagleton, T 2004 *After theory*, Penguin, London
- Ettinger, B 2006 *The matrixial borderspace*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis

- Fisher, A 2020 'A un poema acerca del agua', *TEXT: Journal of Writing and Writing Courses* 24, 2 (October): http://www.textjournal.com.au/oct20/fisher_poetry.pdf (accessed 1 November 2020)
- Fitch, T 2019 'Aussi / Or: Un Coup de dés and Mistranslation in the Antipodes', *Cordite Poetry Review* (May): www.cordite.org.au/scholarly/aussi-or/ (accessed 3 October 2019)
- Freiman, M 2006 'Postcolonial creativity and creative writing', in N Krauth & T Brady (eds) *Creative writing: theory beyond practice*, Post Pressed, Teneriffe: 81-97
- Gentry, A 2010 'The Archive of Imaginary Interiors', in *Charlie Murphy: The Anatomy of Desire (Text+Work)*, The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, Bournemouth: 12-19
- Godard, B 1989 'Theorizing Feminist Discourse / Translation', *Tessera* 6: 42-53
- Godard, B 2000 'Deleuze and translation', *parallax* 6, 1: 56-81
- Hill, R 2008 'Interval, Sexual Difference: Luce Irigaray and Henri Bergson', *Hypatia* 23, 1: 119-131
- Irigaray, L 1985 *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Cornell University Press, New York
- Irigaray, L 1991 *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Columbia University Press, New York
- Irigaray, L 1992 *Elemental Passions*, Routledge, New York
- Irigaray, L 1993 *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Cornell University Press, New York
- Irigaray, L 2010 'Towards the sharing of an invisible touch', in *Charlie Murphy: The Anatomy of Desire (Text+Work)*, The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, Bournemouth: 20-30
- Jones, E 2018 "'I want my closet back": queering and unqueering language in Giannina Braschi's Yo-Yo Boing!', *Textual Practice* 34, 2: 1-19
- Karpinski, EC 2012 *Borrowed tongues: Life writing, migration, and translation*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Waterloo ON
- Lacayo, A 2014 'A Queer and Embodied Translation: Ethics of Difference and Erotics of Distance', *Comparative Literature Studies* 51, 2: 215-230
- Larkosh, C 2011 *Re-engendering Translation: Transcultural Practice, Gender/Sexuality and the Politics of Alterity*, St Jerome, Manchester
- Lobb, JM 2009 'Deferring the "main" point: Teaching "narrative desire" as an alternative creative practice', in DL Brien & M Freiman (eds) *The Margins and Mainstreams Papers: The Refereed Proceedings of the 14th Conference of the Australian Association of Writing Programs*, AAWP Press: 1-11

- Maier, C 2006 'Translating as a body: meditations on mediation (Excerpts 1994-2004)', in S Bassnett & P Bush (eds) *The Translator as Writer*, Continuum, London: 137-148
- Murphy, C 2010 'Cast of a kiss #1 (kiss as negative space)'. The image is available at C Murphy 2020 'kiss sculptures', *Charlie Murphy*: <http://www.charliemurphy.co.uk/the-anatomy-of-desire/kiss-sculptures/> (accessed 20 October 2020)
- Niranjana, T 1992 *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism and the Colonial context*, University of California Press, Berkley
- Rao, S 2005 'Peut-on envisager l'avenir de la traduction sans plaisir? Vers une érotique du traduire', *Meta* 50, 4: <https://doi.org/10.7202/019855ar>
- Robert-Foley, L 2016 'Writing with Translational Constraints: On the "Spacy Emptiness" Between Languages', *MLN* 131, 4: 905-918
- Robinson, D 1991 *The Translator's Turn*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore
- Sampson, F 2012 'Creative Translation', in D Morley & P Neilson (eds) *The Cambridge Companion to Creative Writing*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 118-133
- Santaemilia, J 2017 'Sexuality and Translation as Intimate Partners? Toward a Queer Turn in Rewriting Identities and Desires', in BJ Braer & K Kaindl (eds) *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer*, Routledge, New York: 11-25
- Segal, M 2010 'In the best possible taste', in *Charlie Murphy: The Anatomy of Desire (Text+Work)*, The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, Bournemouth: 8-9
- Shread, C 2007 'Metamorphosis or metramorphosis? Towards a feminist ethics of difference in translation', *TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction* 20, 2: 213-242
- Simon, S 1996 *Gender in Translation*, Routledge, New York
- Simon, S & L von Flotow 1997 'Gender in translation: cultural identity & the politics of transmission', *University of Toronto Quarterly* 67, 1: 149-151
- Spahr, J 2018 *Du Bois's telegram: literary resistance and state containment*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA
- Spivak, GC 1993 *Outside in the teaching machine*, Routledge, New York
- Toye, ME 1996 'Pamela Banting. Body, Inc: A Theory of Translation Poetics', *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 27, 3: 187-190

Toye, ME 2010 'Towards a poethics of love: Poststructuralist feminist ethics and literary creation', *Feminist Theory* 11, 1: 39-55

Tremblay, JT 2017 'An Aesthetics and Ethics of Emergence, or Thinking with Luce Irigaray's Interval of Difference', *Criticism* 59, 2: 279-299

von Flotow, L 1991 'Gender in translation', in Y Gambier & LV Doorslaer (eds) *Handbook of Translation Studies 1*, John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: 129-133

von Flotow, L & C Shread 2014 'Metramorphosis in Translation: Refiguring the Intimacy of Translation beyond the Metaphysics of Loss', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 39, 3: 592-596

Walkowitz, RL 2015 *Born translated: The contemporary novel in an age of world literature*, Columbia University Press, New York

West, K 2010 'Translating the Body: Towards an Erotics of Translation', *Translation and Literature* 19, 1: 1-25

Venuti, L 1992 *Rethinking Translation: Discourse, Subjectivity, Ideology*, Routledge, New York

Venuti, L 1998 *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference*, Routledge, London

Venuti, L 2001 *The Translation Studies Reader*, Routledge, London

Ziarek, L 2000 'Proximities: Irigaray and Heidegger on difference', *Continental Philosophy Review* 33, 2: 133-158