

debate and consensus and constituted by individuals agreeing to submit to the implicit contract of its laws.

Translation poetics, approaching languages(s) from the perspective of a relation with an outside, poses the question of (in)finitude, of limits, those of the self, the other, the collectivity, of the medium, the *tecknè*, the nation, of modernity even, and of knowledge. What remains a matter of ongoing debate is whether translation is a process of enfolding an outside, or of unfolding to an outside in a movement of expansion with the potential for enhancement or dispersal.

Notes

- 1 Karen Littau, "Refractions of the Feminine: The Monstrous Transformations of Lulu," *Modern Language*, Notes 110, 4 (1995): 888–912.
- 2 Michel Serres, *La Traduction* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974).
- 3 John Glassco, "Introduction," *Poetry of French Canada in Translation* (Toronto: Oxford, 1970), xxii.
- 4 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 293.
- 5 Brian Singer, "Cultural versus Contractual Nations: Rethinking their Opposition," *History and Theory* 35, 3 (1996): 309–337.

—Barbara Godard

Ultrasound

"[I]n the nineteenth century, [there was] a long period when a woman was not sure if she was pregnant. At a certain point, there was quickening and she gained certainty and then became a pregnant woman socially. If a woman did not want to be pregnant, she did not have to deal with the destruction of life in the uterus because that life stayed within the central experience of her own body. This is very different from women who are pregnant today, and who as many doctors report, do not feel "certain" that everything is alright until they have seen an image of their uterus through the ultrasound scan." {Barbara Duden}

—Janine Marchessault

Excerpted from "History Beneath the Skin" (transcript from *Ideas*), CBC Radio (Oct. 7–8, 1991).

Utopia

Last night a thick mist shrouded the city of Corrientes in a mysterious cloak, a physical manifestation of the intrigue that swirls through narrow colonial streets and spills into the plaza where the utopians wait, hopeful,

dreaming, for a social revolution that has already been defeated. In their tent city, built upon colonial histories and contemporary abuses of power, they organize fish and loaf communal meals and spontaneous assemblies where each speaks to a system in ruins. Behind the thick whitewashed walls of the government buildings, meetings take place in secret rooms hidden down dark labyrinthine hallways. A paranoia inherited from the ruling classes seeps through the city like damp rot through an old crumbling house. The new leaders and their advisors know that although the system is in ruins, it is still powerful. The people who have brought them to power have handed them a terrible paradox. To feed the people, outside of miracles wrought from a biblical epoch, they must accept the crumbs of globalization. They speak of social justice to the multitude in the square and meet with international bankers behind closed doors. They barter away a state infrastructure in response to International Monetary Fund demands for privatization and austerity. In the plaza the utopians begin to fight among themselves and they don't even know why.

In a house just off the main square, dust settles on pictures of Ernesto Cardenal and framed slogans from the sixties; dust cloaks pamphlets and books, muralist ink drawings and indigenous wood carvings, a thick suffocating dust that muffles the future. A sadness permeates the space, a retreat from what is left of dreams and utopias. The couple inside hide behind their books and their writings. Their bodies turn inwards, defensive, nervous, drooping in defeat, refusing to walk in the plaza, to breath the air of the people's desire for change, to witness euphoria turning to bittersweet resignation to anger at the immobility of the world in an era after the end of the revolutions. The past encircles them, clasping them with long thin outstretched arms, dragging them down into a cloudy pool of memories.

The night that the dictator was overthrown in this sleepy backwater city where the confluence of the Parana and Paraguay rivers form eddies and whirlpools and battling currents, the church called upon a deeply religious and traditional people, who live amongst their saints and folklore, to exorcise the devil. Rumours had swept through the city that the dictator was involved in black magic, that near his vast opulent estate built in the middle of the jungle in the style of the rubber barons of the Amazon, little boys had disappeared into the chasm of satanic ritual. From these rumours grew an outrage, swelling in concert with the demonstrations against corruption, the marches demanding unpaid salaries, and the hunger that began to gnaw at people's stomachs. With the call of the church to defeat the forces of evil, they began to march silently, with candles in hand, from the four corners of the city, like ants that devour all vegetation in their path, to form a cross at midnight in the plaza. An *auto-da-fé* is held only months before a new millennium promises a world of clinical surfaces and technological miracles that will brush away the superstitions of a spiritual dimension.

In the pedestrian shopping promenade, lined with endless shoe stores, two boys play accordians—trade name Child Prodigy—two blocks apart. Each has his lunch beside him, a Coca-Cola and a sandwich, carefully packaged, Each has a sign telling passers-by that they are refugees—from where they do not say—and that their father and little brothers need money to survive. One is named Florian and the other Christian. When the Correntinos stop to ask them questions, fascinated by the appearance of exotic beggars from elsewhere peddling music in their shopping concourse, the two boys smile angelic smiles and lift their fingers to their mouths as if to signal they are dumb—without language—but not without guile. Gypsies or Kosovo Albanians fleeing a war, they cannot or will not say. A few stores down sit the regular beggars. A woman with her two babies is empty handed. An old blind man clutches a clear plastic pop bottle that has nothing in it. Meanwhile, the two accordion players beat out music to the sound of constant change clattering through the slot of their tin cans, carefully closed so that no one can know how much money they are collecting each hour.

At the Casino Hotel bar overlooking the river, where Graham Greene once sat scribbling notes for *The Honourary Consul*, a couple sit eating white bread sandwiches and drinking beer from tall frosty glasses. Sinister is a word that keeps entering their conversation. Perhaps, she tells him, the struggle for power is so sinister because it is an empty abstraction, a cobweb of illusions, a force that slips away into the everyday world of petty manipulations. They pause and stare out at the lapacho trees in full bloom, blossoms falling softly to earth forming vast petal carpets of soft mauve and vibrant rose. The setting sun, an iridescent ball of red, falls into a thick mist rising from the river. As dusk envelops the city, old friends are torn apart by the political upheaval. Loyalties dissolve into the murky waters of power struggles and brute survival. Hope is cast up against the cruel ironies of a global defeat. What to do with this encounter of dreams and materiality? Where to take the contradictory emotions that rise like bile from the heart? How to believe that utopia can still exist, if even for a moment, in a sleepy Argentinean town that unexpectedly awoke one day to marches in the plaza and impossible demands for social justice?

—Dot Tuer

Vacation

And what is a paradox, most often, if not the account of a phenomenon identical to one declared to be true, but whose point of view, alone, was changed?

—Victor Ségalen, “Pensers païens”¹