

TRACES

Marta Marín-Dòmine
Grup Étienne Dolet
Wilfrid Laurier University (Canada)

L'anthropologie nous apprend que le passage du primate à l'humain se produit dans le processus qui permet l'apparition de la marche bipède.

La position érigée indique, en effet, le désir d'explorer l'environnement d'une façon autre médiatisée par une nouvelle forme de se déplacer qui permettra jeter sur le monde un regard aussi nouveau.

Marche, passage, donc, qui sera *translatio*, *methaphorein*, *Übersetzen* avant la lettre, et qui forgera de façon indélébile cette relation entre désir et déplacement qui habite chez les humains.

Désir et marche qui permettront, bien que plus tard, la conceptualisation de l'espace et, donc, du vide.

L'espèce humaine se déplace en créant symboliquement des espaces qui sont remplis, au fur et à mesure, avec des corps (vivants et morts). N'importe si le mouvement est circulaire, linéaire ou sans point de fuite ; se mouvoir, se déplacer, implique toujours faire des *pas-sages* qui se correspondent avec des traces du désir. Ce qu'il y a au cœur de chaque pas est mobilisation d'une inscription, bien que psychique, antérieure.

Marcher comporte la possibilité de trouver le nouveau tandis qu'on retrouve (à nouveau) le passé de la pulsion faite désir dans la marche. [La parole surgirait-elle, alors, comme réponse à l'impossibilité de mouvement, lorsqu'on fait l'expérience qu'en marchant on est inlassablement condamné à une marche sans but ni destination ?]

Il faut ne pas céder sur son désir ; alors, on marche. On découvre, on s'arrête, on édifie des petits univers pour se protéger du vide qui guette au-delà du propre corps.

D'ailleurs, on peut dire qu'on ne marche pas seulement pour échapper de soi, ou de la terre (de ces hypothétiques origines trop proches à soi-même), pas seulement pour refuser l'enracinement. On marche pour savoir ce qu'il y a au-delà de soi. On marche pour faire connaissance de l'autre et renouveler ainsi le pacte avec la vie ; leurrer la mort avec le mouvement qui va de soi à l'autre.

La parole ira au secours de la marche en créant un tiers espace qui donnera sens à notre regard, à ce que nous regarde, à la marche même.

Accepterons-nous, hélas, que marche et parole vont ensemble pour nous montrer qu'il y a toujours un « au-delà » insondable, et que cet insondable a été créé par l'événement même de la marche et par la parole ? Inutile mais nécessaire, c'est là le paradoxe : en marchant nous faisons *comme si* nous poussions régler les temps ; en parlant *comme* s'il n'y avait pas un Autre qui parle pour nous.

Oui, il faudra nous arrêter encore, et rester muets en attendant.

L'autre scène est toujours devant.

J'ai écrit ces mots auparavant. Je les récris à présent, mais ils ont fait leur apparition dans un voyage. Je suis dans le train. Je vais croiser des frontières langagières. Dans le wagon on s'aperçoit de cette multiplicité. A quelle des langues j'appartiens ? J'en ai une autre, une autre en plus. Les voix diverses me poussent à faire un mouvement mental de va-et-vient au delà de l'itinéraire modulé par l'artifice du temps et de l'espace.

Dehors, tout est couvert de neige, à la limite du blanc. Je viens d'éprouver, encore une fois, que ce n'est pas le noir qui fait évanouir les objets, non. Dans le noir nous savons qu'il y a un monde qui échappe à nos yeux. Mais c'est le blanc qui fait tout disparaître. La paysage qui passe et disparaît par la fenêtre du train.

La pàgina blanca, the white page, la page blanche...

I cross-over. *Je passe. Suis-je une autre ? Si je le suis, je voudrais être encore l'autre de l'Autre.*

This white screen, so well framed, its perfection anodyne and mechanical.

Other than the black blinking cursor that tells me where I should start, if I ever start writing, nothing comes to break the monotonous electronic whiteness.

I fool myself into believing that the white frame is telling me all, potentially the Whole of myself: It, *Ça, Lo (Inshalah?)*

If I follow the call of the blinking cursor, the touch of my finger would suffice to make the first imprint. The trace is almost, but not quite, what I wanted it to be. I fall again into silence, the muteness of the white space. It throws me the nothingness of an alterity that I cannot fully apprehend. Only the letter, a black trace on the white, can translate the angst of Other to which I am pray.

To be within language means to be already in the other scene. It means having pierced the Real, to be a remnant. To palpitate against the white, like the ever titillating lights of Baltimore:

When I prepared this little talk for you, it was early in the morning. I could see Baltimore through the window and it was a very interesting moment because it was not quite daylight and a neon sign indicated to me every minute the change of time, and naturally there was heavy traffic and I remarked to myself that exactly all that I could see, except for some trees in the distance, was the result of thoughts actively thinking thoughts, where the function played by the subjects was not completely obvious. In any case the so-called *Dasein* as a definition of the subject, was there in this rather intermittent or fading spectator. The best image to sum up the unconscious is Baltimore in the early morning.¹

The unconscious inscribed against a background of blurry limits. The unconscious as remnant, already interpreter, always translator: we are beings in translation, geared for translation.

“No dejar mis cartillas en manos de ninguno”

Freud’s phobia of trains is well known. However, his desire for displacement came first and, in fact, it is in trains, that many of the most memorable examples used by him to explain the work of the unconscious arise.

Freud explains the genesis of his phobia in a letter to Fliess, dated 1897, in which he recalls having seeing his “mater nudam” for the first time while traveling by train from Leipzig to Vienna. The young Sigismund was at that time a boy of almost four. The forty-one year old letter writer delicately disguises the body of the mother under the cover of Latin. Translation works here as a limit between the desiring subject and the forbidden object. Furthermore, the use of a “dead” language hides another corpse to which Sigismund likely attached his angst: the little brother, recently deceased and point of departure of a metonymic relation between sexuality and death.

Death and sex would be at the core of another of the extraordinary cases described by Freud to exemplify the forgetting of names. Once again

¹ “Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever”, talk given by Jacques Lacan at John Hopkins University, Baltimore, 1966.

the scenario is a train: Freud, talking to a stranger and traveling companion, attempts to recall the name of the painter of the frescoes of "The Last Judgment" once seeing on the walls of the Cathedral of Orvieto. Here the forgotten name, Signorelli, surfaces in remembrance but disguised under the German "Herr" ("Mister", that is "Signor" in Italian) as part of a comment Freud recalls a patient made regarding his sexual desire.

Years later, during the occupation of Austria by the Nazis, Freud will repeat in his diary the gesture of using a foreign word —this time in the most pathetic of forms: *Finis Austria*— to demarcate the death of an epoch, and a city, and the distance he wished to place between the dramatic event and himself.

Sex and death, insolvable obstacles, enigmas which can only be faced with other enigmas: here, with foreign words. Translation as one of the means of making material a desired distance, to keep Death at bay.

Much earlier, at age sixteen, Freud made use of a foreign language to correspond with his friend Eduard Silberstein. Eduard and Sigmund were the founders of the Society of the Spanish Academy, a society of just two members, committed to write to each other in Spanish —language that both friends learned through a reading book containing excerpts from Cervantes' Exemplary Novellas— in order to be able to talk freely about their lives —and loves.

Here foreign language is put into the service of a more vital undertaking: to keep the matters of the heart safe from the gaze of intruders. More than once young Sigmund cautions his friend: "No dejes estas cartillas leer a ninguno" (Do not let these letters to be read by any one), for even in a foreign language, the "cartillas", written in a lovely archaic Spanish, transpire something belonging to the dimension of Freud's desire.

Here, translation stands for transgression.

From these examples, and from psychoanalysis itself, we can see that the diversity of languages is no obstacle for the unconscious. On the contrary, we can argue that the unconscious relies on difference to show the (un)veiled truth of desire.

Translation, therefore, opens up a space of tension where the subject can inscribe itself between. Distance and closeness, thus, allow the subject to open —to say, to be said— in a manner that one's first languages does not allow (Is not the sweetest fruit forbidden?).

The foreign is the Other me, while "me", the "I", is already translation. In the trans-lability of the Other, I find another me. As Anne Michaels in *Fugitive Pieces* puts it: Translation is like transubstantiation. Some bodily dimension is at stake when translating.

What do you see in it?

It is no surprise that a Colloquium on the Subject and Translation has attracted interventions in which psychoanalysis forms a theoretical background (Ayouch, Frota) or a point of departure (Basile). Furthermore, we should say these were expected.

It is well known that psychoanalysis employs the dynamics of translation (the various transformations of the signifier, either intra- or interlinguistically, or semiotically in the form of symptoms) to explain the vicissitudes imposed onto language by the unconscious —and should we not say “and vice-versa”?— as well as to explain the use of interpretation as an analytic tool.

It is only logical that from a theoretical point of view psychoanalysis comes to the rescue, liberating us from a rather stultifying theory maintaining the univocity of meaning and the prerogative of equivalents as the only valid method for achieving the promised land of “faithful” and “accurate” translation.

Psychoanalysis has freed us from this theoretical “prison-house of language” by teaching us that signifier and signified do not enjoy a relation of coincidence, and that “significance” rather than “meaning” is what is inferred (or deferred) in any text. Moreover, as we now, this significance would be achieved always differently since it dwells at the crossroad with subjectivity.

Concepts such as “Truth”, “Meaning or Sense”, “the Intention of the Author”, therefore, are undermined or displaced in favor of an approach that, acknowledging the presence of the subject in any linguistic act, theorizes its departure from the vantage point of the particularity that subjectivity brings about.

However, and interestingly enough, the collaborations we are presenting in this volume have taken the psychoanalytic turn —and *détour*— a bit beyond the text. The trajectory here is mostly through the subject, and in the process of translating. From semantics to somatics: there is not *sema* without a *soma* —and this time, yes, vice-versa. Subject in flesh, then, corporeal textuality, the word made flesh: translation as inscription.

It is as if the collaborators have made actual the icon under which the research group responsible for the Call finds its representation: Étienne Dolet, translator, supposed heretic, and for this burned at the stake. Dolet, qua Antigone, does not surrender to the Master, and does not give way on desire that only death can measure.

We are taking a tragic turn here to point to the common ground upon which stand desire and death. Therefore, and for the sake of keeping our desire alive, we proclaim Dolet a vital signet, an icon by which we may keep our memory alive and our bodies alert, admission token to the beyond the fixation of the signifier.

The stone of all conventions has to be lift up. It crushes theory, and allows routine to become practice. Here, it would not be a matter, we know it, of claiming for subjectivity for this one is there even when eyes are shut.

Our task is to be always aware of the work and its impossibility. Impossibility that we have claimed and reclaimed as the last proof of our ethics in translation: we are not translators of the Whole, where desire would find its death, but halves, adding one more piece to the text that through its supplement will never find its complement.

Translation, thus, can be imagined and imaginized as the movement to and fro (*le va-et-vient*, full of whatever resonances the reader might wish to read) in which the translated text and the subject are always actualized.

As the contributions by Ayouch, Basile and Frota demonstrate, translation is a modality of relation with the Other and, thus, a corporeal investment.

This physicality is, in fact, what puts translation at work, and the index of the impossibility of translating the Whole. There is, and we know it, something that resist being translated.

The snow-blanketed landscape.

The classical and clichéd angst before the white page is the most obvious symptom of the encounter with an alterity that cannot be reduced to identification.

Only with the emergence of rail tracks in the landscape does the angst begin to succumb. Without them, there is no way, no such a thing as the subject.

Marta Marín-Dòmine
January 2006, Toronto-Montréal, ...and back