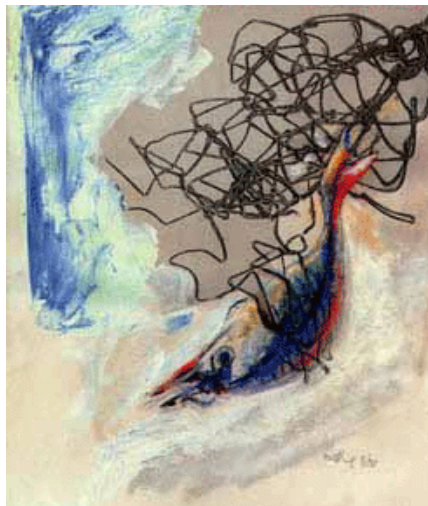


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Self-translators' rewriting in freedom

New insights from product-based translation studies



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1 Self-translation as rewriting in freedom

The current debate on self-translation is still pervaded by a contradictory tension. On the one hand, self-translation is viewed as a translational practice, as emerges from the most quoted and shared definitions, such as Popovič's (1976)¹ and Grutman's (2009)², underlying the growing interest of translation scholars in self-translation, which they increasingly see as a phenomenon falling under their jurisdiction. As Helena Tanqueiro points out, "l'autotraduction est traduction, et en tant que telle, elle doit être objet d'étude de la théorie de la traduction littéraire" (2009: 108). On the other hand, still widespread is the perception that self-translation is more a form of original writing than translation proper. Significantly, this perception is corroborated by a number of authors-translators themselves, who are resistant to call translations the second versions of their works in another language and have resort instead to other terms, such as recomposition, recreation, rediscovering, rendition, revision, rewriting, transactions, transcreation, writing in two languages, etc. One of the most famous cases of refusal of the label of translation to refer to self-translation is that of the French-American writer Raymond Federman, who explicitly states: "when I finish a novel ... I am immediately tempted to write (rewrite, adapt, transform, transact, transcreate – I am not sure what term I should use here, but certainly not translate) the original into the other language" (1993:79). Declarations like Federman's are copious and are almost all based on the more and greater liberties that authors take with their works compared to professional translators. Recently the Bulgarian writer Miroslav Penkov rejected the term translation for the Bulgarian rendition he did of his debut novel, *Stork Mountain* (2016), originally written in English, "because that would be disrespectful to literary translators throughout the world who try to stay true to the author's work. I took great liberties with my sentences" (cited in Pivovar, 2016). Also the South African writer Antjie Krog highlights the authors-translators' lack of patience and skill compared to professional translations, which would bring them to produce a new text rather than reproduce an existing one. As she declares in an interview with Klassnik (2013), while the

writer's effort goes into the heart/essence of the poem, the translator's into trying to capture that heart in the new language. As a writer one often doesn't have the patience or skill for the capturing process and sometimes prefers to write a new heart in the new language.

In this sense the Mexican-American author and translator Ilan Stavans seems to speak for most other authors when he declares "that what begins as self-translation always ends in a more

¹ For Popovič self-translation "is the translation of an original work into another language by the author himself" and "it cannot be regarded as a variant of the original text but as a true translation" (1976: 19).

² Also Grutman defines self-translation in terms of 'translation', pointing out that it "can refer both to the act of translating one's own writings into another language and the result of such an undertaking" (2009: 257).

elaborate rewriting” (2016)³. As Julio César Santoyo puts it, “whoever translates their own work ‘makes it their own’, goes back to editing their own text “in a form and style” which, the second time round, they think is best” (2010: 22). If self-translators produce new originals rather than ‘translations’ it is by virtue of their ‘ownership’ of the texts to be translated, which belong to them, not somebody else’s, and of whose translation nobody can complain. A cohort of authors-translators, from the Italian playwright Goldoni to the Urdu writer Qurratulain Hyder, has insisted on the difference between translating themselves and translating others claiming that when they translate ‘their own’ texts they feel less loyalty to the original texts than when they translate someone else’s texts. The South-African writer André Brink, for example, asserts that, when he translates someone else’s work, he is completely faithful to the original, but “when it’s my book I don’t give a damn about the original author” (cited in Roe, 2000).

Quite paradoxically, however, throughout history many authors have turned to self-translation because of the assumed unfaithfulness of professional translators. The most famous among them is probably the Franco-Czech novelist Milan Kundera, who decided to revise the translations of his works or, in certain cases, take charge of them himself because he could not accept the way his translators rewrote his texts, took liberties with them and adapted them to their taste. Like Kundera, many other authors view self-translation as a literal form of translation⁴. The Argentine-Chilean-American writer Ariel Dorfman, for example, states that “as a writer ... you tend to fall in love with your own language, with your own words. When you yourself translate them, I think you tend to be literal” (cited in Stavans, 2005: 58).

In the light of these many and diverse contradictions that pervade the discourse on self-translation, this article aims to explore some of the theoretical models elaborated by translation studies, especially by its creative tradition, and the methodological tools provided by corpus-based translation studies to enhance an understanding of the phenomenon of self-translation vis-à-vis translation. In particular it aims to show how the study of self-translated texts can benefit from a comparative analysis of self-translations and “standard” translations, either translations of the same

³ In fact it is not rare for authors-translators to stop self-translating their works precisely because they realize that their act of translation results in the creation of new originals, rather than in their translation. This is what happened to, among others, the Swedish-English novelist Linda Olsson, who explained in an interview on the Penguin website that she did not accomplish the Swedish translation of her first two English novels, *Astrid & Veronika* (2007) and *Sonata for Miriam* (2008), because she realized that she was rewriting, rather than translating. Similarly, the Algerian writer Waciny Laredj, after self-translating his novels *Sayyidat al-maqâm* (1993) from Arabic to French and *La gardienne des ombres* (1996) from French to Arabic stopped translating himself because he noticed that he took so many liberties with his texts that the two versions did not resemble each other anymore (see Ghosn, 2010).

⁴ It is interesting with this regard to point out what Pergnier observes in relation to authors assisting in the editing of their translations, that is that they tend to “tirer le texte vers une littéralité que le traducteur avait soigneusement évitée” (Pergnier 1990 : 219).

texts done by other translators or translations of the works of others done by the authors-translators themselves.

2 The freedom of translation

Research into self-translation has focused on the shifts, changes, adaptations and omissions that self-translators make to their own texts, which are well illustrated by Santoyo (2010), who aptly defines the work of self-translators as a type of rewriting or translation in freedom. Yet, it has also brought to light numerous cases of faithful self-translations, in which the authors adhere literally to their originals. Examining Samuel Beckett's self-translated production from the French *Murphy* (1947) to *The Unnamable* (1958) Ruby Cohn (1961) concludes that on the whole Beckett's self-translations are faithful versions presenting minor discrepancies from the originals (Cohn 1961: 620). Similarly, Montini, taking into account Beckett's entire self-translated production, draws attention to Beckett's respect for the original text, which always remains his main reference, though recognising different types of self-translations due to the periods in which they were produced (2009: 2-3). Nancy Huston's self-translations have found to be close renderings of their source texts (Klein-Lataud 1996, Schyns 2013), in accordance with what she declared in an interview with *Lire*: "je tiens ... à ce que mon texte soit rigoureusement le même dans les deux langues (Argand 2001: 32). Similarly, the Québécois writer-translator Daniel Gagnon states that his French translations of *The Marriageable Daughter* (1989) and *My Husband the Doctor* (1984) remain faithful to their English text (Gagnon, 2015: 46). These findings and declarations support the thesis, formulated by Grutman and Van Bolderen (2014), of a distinct tendency in literary criticism and translation studies to overestimate the creative aspect of self-translations. Curiously enough, this tendency is counterbalanced by a similar tendency in the literature on self-translation to underestimate the creative aspect of ordinary translations. The history of translations has brought to light endless cases of unfaithful translations and has shown that translators have taken great liberties with the texts to be translated (see in this regard Lefevere, 1992). As shown above, "I do not translate but rewrite" is a leitmotiv in self-translators' prefaces, interviews, as well as in critical writings and self-translation studies, yet in a translational perspective it is an oxymoron, at least since Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere's redefinition of translation in their preface to the translation studies series released by Routledge as "of course, a rewriting of an original text". Translation is rewriting in Lefevere's broader interpretation as "any text produced on the basis of another with the intention of adapting that other text to a certain ideology or to a certain poetics and, usually, to both (Hermans, 2004:

127)⁵. But it is rewriting also in Mechonnic's narrower interpretation of translation as 'réécriture'. For him translation is a "re-uttering specific to a historical subject" (2003: 341), it is "work in the chains of the signifier ... as a practice of the contradiction between foreign text and re-utterance, logic of the signifier and logic of the sign, one language-culture-history and another language-culture-history" (344). As Michel Ballard points out, the simple fact of writing in another language presupposes resorting to shifts and transformations 'which are part of an act of creation that happens in another linguistic fabric' (quoted in Hewson, 2016: 11-12). These views on translation are part of a creative tradition within translation studies – most notably represented by Paul Kussmaul, whose *Kreatives Übersetzen* (2000) posits translation as a highly creative activity – which has paved the way for a recent "creative turn" in translation studies that reasserts translation as a mode of writing and the inscription of the translator's subjectivity (Loffredo and Perteghella, 2006). While this creative turn is slowly taking place and still needs to be accepted in the larger socio-cultural, economic and literary systems and although it tends to equate translating to original writing in a way that has been questioned from a number of perspectives (see, e.g., Pym, 2011), it has undeniably emphasised aspects of translational creativity and subjectivity that can no longer be ignored by self-translation research. Anthony Pym, though advocating the difference between translating texts and authoring them both ethically and cognitively, admits that translators have authorship in the sense that they, "like all authors, transform texts, bring newness into the world, have complex productive cognition processes churning within them as they work, and are all different...translators are indeed subjective in their minds and creative in their writing" (2011: 32).

Nonetheless, the current debate on self-translation would benefit from assimilating the distinction between creative and mechanical or automatic translations that is frequently made also within the most creative strands of translation studies. Jiří Levý, for example, one of the first advocates of the translator's "creative individuality" ([1963] 2001: 14), argues that "creative translators are able to imagine the realities they are expressing, reaching beyond the text to identify the characters, situations and ideas that lie behind it, whereas non-creative translators merely perceive the text mechanically and merely translate the words" ([1963] 2011: 34). Norbert Greiner (2004) distinguishes between translators who find "congenial compatibilities in the work to be translated and pay reverence to them as translators," and translators who "see the process of translating as something that resembles and complements that of creative writing" (2004: 112).

⁵ Interestingly, also the notion of rewriting emerged from the most recent approaches to the subject, which have proliferated over the last decades, especially in the context of biblical texts, overlaps considerably with that of translation. Screnock (2018), for example, in his exploration of rewriting in ancient Hebrew texts argues that the idea of rewriting, drawn from Geza Vermes, as "the use of a base text that is changed in various ways (additions, rearrangements, and omissions), resulting in a text that varies, whether slightly or significantly, from the base text", finds close parallel in the models of translation put forward by translation studies.

More recently, Hewson (2017) has distinguished translational choices that appear to be predictable from those that are surprising or unexpected: while the first are mechanical or semi-automatic solutions that the translator immediately knows to be correct, the latter require conscious—and therefore creative—manipulation of the target language. This dual vision of the practice of translation could be usefully incorporated in the literature on self-translation where there seems to be instead a tendency to associate the more predictable and mechanical choices with ordinary translations and the more creative or manipulative ones with self-translations. It would at least help self-translation scholars to be better equipped to account for the situations in which authors creatively manipulate their texts as well as those in which they literally stick to them.

All the creative approaches to translation mentioned above have determined, and have been determined by, an increased recognition of the translators' agency and an extraordinary reinforcement of the socio-political relevance of translators, who increasingly view themselves as the owners and writers of the translated texts. As Stavans puts it, commenting on his retranslation of Juan Rulfo's *El llano en llamas* (1953) (*The Plain in Flames*, 2012), "To translate is to appropriate" (cited in Kellman, 2013). This attitude is typical of translators who are also writers, like the Spanish Javier Marías, who claims ownership of the texts he translates and puts his translations on a par with his original writings. He refers, for example, to his translation of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, by Laurence Sterne, as "his" *Tristram Shandy*, and explicitly states that he kept re-writing his version, because, unlike the English, it belonged to him:

my *Tristram Shandy*; that is, *Tristram Shandy* in or according to my version, which is necessarily different from Sterne's ... in my version, in Sterne-according-to-Marías, I know the reasoning behind the choice of each line and each word, whereas I don't in Sterne-according-to-Sterne. And that is why I could still go on correcting my version, could keep working on it, improving it in accordance with my current criteria, aptitudes and understanding ..., something that I couldn't and wouldn't want to do with the English text, which, unlike the Spanish, does not in any way belong to me (Marías, 2017).

In a similar vein the Austrian writer and translator Elfriede Jelinek tends, under certain circumstances, to appropriate the texts she translates, namely the theatrical texts. Of her translation of Oscar Wilde's *Ideal Husband*, based on a translation by Karin Rausch, she states that it is "more like Jelinek's *Ideal Husband*" (quoted in Wolf, 2012: 128). After all, it must not be forgotten that translators have copyright over their translations, which makes them juridically authors to all intents and purposes. What is more interesting here is that this appropriation of the translated text on the part of the translator blurs that clear-cut distinction between translating themselves and translating others, which is based, as said above, on the respect for a text which is someone else's. It is clear

that when translators view themselves as the owners of the texts to be translated they are in a position which is closer to that of self-translators, who, being the writers, feel less, or no, loyalty to the original authors.

3 Self-translations versus other translations

Methodologically, self-translation studies can benefit from the adoption of the approaches, increasingly used in corpus-based translation studies, in which translated texts are compared, along with their source texts, with other translations, either of the same source text in the same language or in different languages (as in monolingual or multilingual parallel corpora) or of different source texts in the same target language. While the comparison of multiple translations of the same text has been used, especially in the more applied branches of translation studies, to study translators' strategies and choices and as sources to resolve translation problems (Kenning, 2010; Zanettin, 2014), the comparison of several translations of different source texts by the same translator has been proposed to investigate distinctive stylistic features of individual translators (Baker, 2000). In the case of self-translation, the text translated by its author can be compared with one or more translations of the same text done by "normal" translators in the same language or in a different language as well as with other translations of the works of others done by the self-translator him- or herself, acting in these cases as a normal translator.⁶ Both approaches can be used to identify possible distinctive features of self-translated texts as opposed to normally translated texts, thus providing textual evidence to assess the extent to which translating themselves differs from translating others. More specifically, while comparing a text translated by its own author with the same text translated by another translator can shed light on the type of "rewriting in freedom" that authors carry out, comparing an author's self-translations with his or her allographic translations can help understand whether his or her translational choices and strategies are somehow connected to the process of self-translation itself, to the fact of translating one's own works, or whether they are ascribable to the author's translational style, understood, in the wake of Baker (2000), as a kind of thumb-print that is expressed in a range of linguistic and non-linguistic features. For Baker a translator's style includes the translator's choice of the type of material to translate, his or her consistent use of certain strategies, such as prefaces or afterwords, footnotes, glossing in the body of the text, but also the manner of expression that is typical of a translator, i.e. a "preference for using specific lexical items, syntactic patterns, cohesive devices, or even style of punctuation,

⁶ Drawing from Grutman's distinction between consecutive and simultaneous self-translations, according to which consecutive self-translations are prepared only after the completion or publication of the original, while simultaneous self-translations are produced while the writing process of the first text is still in progress (2009: 259), consecutive self-translations are preferably used for comparison with ordinary translations for their more overt status as target texts.

where other options may be equally available in the language” (248)⁷.

One of the drawbacks of the first approach is the limited availability of “normal” translations or retranslations of texts that already exist in target-language versions produced by their authors, which, as Grutman and Van Bolderen (2014) point out, are endowed with an aura of authenticity that is seldom granted to standard translations. For this reason it is more plausibly applicable either to translations in other languages, which can be set against self-translations with the primary aim of comparing translation-related procedures and strategies, regardless of the languages involved,⁸ or to translations preceding the self-translated versions as in the case of texts resulting from the authorial revision or supervision or retranslation of existing allographic translations with which the authors are dissatisfied. Milan Kundera’s or Joseph Brodsky’s interventions of revisitation of the earlier translations of their works could be beneficially studied in this perspective. It must be remembered, however, that in these cases the existing translations might have affected the subsequent self-translations. The second approach, based on the comparison of the author’s self-translations with his or her normal translation production, seems to be more easily applicable, if only for the great number of authors-translators who have also, more or less systematically, translated the works of others, like Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov, Raymon Federman, André Brink and Antjie Krog.

3.1 Self-translators translated by others

The first approach, comparing a text translated by its own author with the same text translated by another translator, can be illustrated through Beckett’s *Premier Amour*, written in 1946, yet not published until 1970, which is available in an English translation by Federman (ca. 1966-67), as well as in Beckett’s own subsequent translation (1973). Although, on the whole, both Federman’s *First Love* and Beckett’s represent faithful renderings of their original, Beckett’s translation introduces certain variations. He adds idioms or clichés not present in the original: “Personally I have no bone to pick with graveyards”⁹ (*First Love*: 8) for “Personnellement je n’ai rien contre les cimetières” (*Premier amour*: 8), which Federman translates more literally as “Personally I have nothing against cemeteries” (1). Or slightly changes the meaning of the source text, as in the

⁷ As suggested by Baker (2000), the patterns of linguistic behaviours typical to a translator are best studied through the use of translational corpora. It is therefore desirable that the initial hypotheses formulated in the present paper on the basis of qualitative comparative analyses of self-translations and allographic translations are supplemented and supported by corpus-based studies.

⁸ Occasional studies adopting this approach, like Schyns’ (2013), which compares Nancy Huston’s *Cantiques des plaines* (1993), the French translation of the English original novel, *Plainsong* (1993), done by the author herself, with Désirée Schyns’ Dutch translation, *Klaaglied voor het lege land* (2000), shed new light on the translation strategies enacted by self-translators, thus encouraging further and more systematic comparisons of self-translated texts with their translations in other languages. Schyns (2013), for example, through the comparison with her own translation shows that for the most part in translating her own text Huston behaves like a normal translator.

⁹ Beckett added this pun to the British edition, following the American, which contained a literal translation of the sentence.

translation of the epitaph, “Hereunder lies the above who up below/ So hourly died that he lived on till now” (*First Love*: 11), which, as Umberto Eco would put it, does not seem to say almost the same thing as the French “Ci-gît qui y échappa tant// Qu’il n’en échappe que maintenant” (*Premier amour*: 10), of which Federman provides a more literal translation (“Here lies he who escaped so often// That he can no longer escape now”, 2). At times, however, also Federman’s translation departs from the original in unexpected ways, as when he adds the sentence “It was quite an outing” (1), not present in the French original, nor in the self-translation, or when he spells out the original reference to a light lunch (“and took along a bag of sandwiches and three or four bananas”, 1), which translates the original “ayant cassé la croûte” (*Premier amour*: 7), faithfully rendered by Beckett as “having lunched lightly” (*First Love*: 7) whose content Beckett’s texts reveal only later on in the text: “Mon sandwich, ma banane, je les mange avec plus d’appétit assis sur une tombe” (*Premier amour*: 9). The aim of highlighting these deviations is not to argue that Federman’s *First Love* displays more translational creativity with regard to *Premier Amour* than Beckett’s *First Love*, which does not seem to be the case; it is simply to call attention to the often-unnoticed cases in which translators take liberties with the texts of other authors, while highlighting instances in which authors properly translate their texts in a patient and skilful manner.

The insights into self-translation that can be gained from the study of the translations revisited by their original authors can be illustrated by comparing the fifth definitive version of Kundera’s *Žert, The Joke* (1992), the one fully revised by the author, with the fourth English edition (1982), revised by Michael Henry Heim¹⁰. The comparison reveals a number of stylistic interventions carried out by the author to bring the translation closer to its source text and to counter the tendency of the translator to normalise the language of the original. The author frequently intervenes in the translation to replace periods with commas or semicolons, thus countering the translator’s tendency to break up long sentences and make syntax smoother; he replaces synonyms with the repetition of the same words, thus limiting the translator’s synonymising reflex, and replaces literary words with their more familiar equivalents in an attempt to oppose the translator’s propensity to standardise, or enrich, the vocabulary (Anselmi, 2012). Far from supporting the view of self-translation as free rewriting of the source texts, in contrast with ordinary translation as closer reproduction, these authorial interventions textually support the idea that authors at times translate their own texts more literally than professional translators by reason of their aesthetics, their writing style or the affection for their own texts, as stated among others by Dorfman (cited in Stavans, 2005).

¹⁰ For an exhaustive study of Kundera’s self-translating practice and the different forms of rewriting he undertakes, see Woods (2006),

3.2 Self-translators' other translations

The potential of comparing an author's self-translations with his or her translations of the works of others will be illustrated by focusing on the translational activity of two authors who engage in the translation of their works for totally different reasons, i.e. Beckett and Krog, in an attempt to provide evidence for the existence of a hypothetical translator's style regardless of the circumstances under which the act of self-translation is carried out. While for Beckett self-translation is an aesthetic and poetic act, which is part of the author's writing process, Krog undertakes the translation of her Afrikaans works into English primarily for ideological reasons, because she "wanted to be and become part of the new South Africanness that was being formed" (Krog, 2008).

When Beckett started translating his works, he had already had a long experience as professional translator, having rendered in English Italian poems by Eugenio Montale, Raffaello Franchi and Giovanni Comisso, a great many Surrealist French texts, namely by Paul Éluard, André Breton, René Crevel, Arthur Rimbaud's "Bateau ivre", Guillaume Apollinaire's "Zone" and the Anthology of Mexican Poetry (1958), written in Spanish. He also translated into French a fragment from James Joyce's *Work in progress*, *Anna Livia Plurabelle*. An examination of Beckett's ordinary translations reveals that though fundamentally respecting the original texts Beckett introduces a number of alterations to the structure, the style and even the themes of the original texts. For example in his translation of Montale's poem *Delta* (1930) Beckett not only varies the number and length of the original lines and reorganises the syntactic units but he also shifts the focus of the poem from the concepts of time and the opposition "tutto/nulla" ('all'/'nothing') to the dialectic element of the thee/I relation, which is made more explicit and put in a prominent position (Visconti, 1997). Likewise, Beckett's surrealist translations contain numerous and systematic alterations. One of the most noticeable concerns punctuation, which Beckett drastically simplifies by deleting commas and periods. For example, in *Lady Love* (1932), his translation of Éluard's *L'Amoureuse*, Beckett deletes all the original punctuation marks. Another striking modification concerns the systematic recourse to the archaic forms "thee", "thou", "thine", which makes Beckett's surrealist translations more formal than their originals. This change in register and style is well epitomised by *Scarcely Disfigured* (1932), Beckett's translation of Éluard's poem *À peine défigurée*, where Beckett makes syntactic changes, adds archaic forms ("thou") and introduces an allusion to a line in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, "Thou art the living fountain-head of hope", by rendering "Tête désappointée" as "Head of hope defeated" (see Sardin and Germoni, 2011: 746). Also *Drunken Boat* (1932), Beckett's version of Rimbaud's poem *Le bateau ivre*, though translating a number of lines literally, almost verbatim (as line 28 "The bitter rednesses of love ferment",

which almost transliterates the French “Fermentent les rousseurs amères de l’amour!”), introduces striking variations, as in line 16 of the original, where “dix nuits” is changed into “nine nights”, or in line 32 of the original, “Et j’ai vu quelque fois ce que l’homme a cru voir”, which apparently inexplicably becomes “And my eyes have fixed phantasmagoria”, actually a citation of another Rimbaud’s poem, *Une Saison en enfer*, where the poet describes himself as “maître en fantasmagories”. In addition to “phantasmagoria”, *Drunken Boat* makes use of a number of other neologisms (e.g. “arch-alcohol”, “disembowelled”, “polyps”, “turgent”, “oriflammes”), which make it a particular creative translation. For all these variations critics have often described Beckett’s translations in terms of “free” translations or “adaptations” (Gribben, 2011), new originals rather than translations (Sonzogni, 2005), something that goes far beyond what is originally designated as a “translation” (Macklin, 2003), even if they are not self-translations. But what is most interesting in the context of the present article is that many of these variations reflect translation choices and strategies that Beckett regularly uses in his self-translations. Thus, the exchange in *Drunken Boat* of “nine nights” for “dix nuits”, similar to the later exchange of “across a waste of leagues” (l. 81) for “à cinquante lieues”, recalls the numerous arbitrary translation choices that are usually associated with Beckett’s self-translations, like the apparently inexplicable substitution in the passage from *Malone Meurt* (1951) to *Malone Dies* (1956) of the French adverb “plus tard” (*Malone Meurt*, 62) with its English antonym, “earlier” (*Malone Dies*, 194), or the translation of “Trois petit tours” in *Fin de partie* (95) as “Winding up” in *Endgame* (46). Similarly, the intrusion of the allusion to Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and the reference to Rimbaud’s “Une saison en enfer” echoes a typical feature of Beckett’s self-translating practice, i.e. the systematic addition of intertextual citations or erudite references not present in the original text. Among the most famous examples of this strategy, which is pervasive in Beckett’s self-translations, are the reference to the biblical proverb “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick” (*Proverbs*, 13:12) in *Waiting for Godot* (1954), where the French version’s popular expression “C’est long, mais ce sera bon” (*En attendant Godot*, 1952: 12) is rendered as “Hope deferred maketh the something sick” (*Waiting for Godot*, 10) and the use of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* line “Our revels now are ended” (Act IV, Scene I) in *Endgame* (1958: 39) to translate the original French “Fini la rigolade” (*Fin de partie*, 1957: 78). Even more significantly, certain linguistic behaviours observed in Beckett’s translations of the works of others, such as the use of a more formal and archaic register, have been observed also in Beckett’s self-translations. The passage from *Fin de partie* to *Endgame*, for example, as symbolised by the intrusion of the Shakespearian line, is characterised by the adoption of a less comical and more formal register (see also, in this regard, Mooney, 2010). More corpus-based research is needed to confirm that Beckett’s allographic translations and his self-translations share recurring patterns of

linguistic behaviour. However, the finding of similar translation strategies in Beckett's allographic translations and in his self-translations supports the hypothesis that many of the choices that Beckett makes when he translates himself are due to his own translational style and not, or not only, to the fact of translating his own works.

Interesting parallelisms have been observed also in Krog's translations and in her self-translations. Apart from translating her own works from Afrikaans into English – *Country of my Skull* (1998), *Down to my last skin* (2000), *Skinned* (2013), the latter two translated by herself and others – Krog has translated other writers' work into Afrikaans. She translated Dutch author Henk van Woerden's *Een mond volglas* (1998), Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long walk to freedom* and Flemish author Tom Lanoye's re-working of Euripedes' *Medea* into the contemporary verse drama *Mamma Medea*. She also translated South African verse written in indigenous African languages into Afrikaans in the anthology *Met woorde soos met kerse* (*With words as with candles*) published in 2002 and in three other volumes: *Die sterre se 'tsau'* in Afrikaans, *The stars say 'tsau'* in English and *Liederen van de Blauw- kraanvogel* (*Songs of the blue crane*) in Dutch¹¹. One of the first striking analogies found when comparing Krog's work as translator and her self-translated texts concerns the selection of the material to translate. Among the poems Krog chooses to translate in her anthology *Met woorde soos met kerse* are a number of poems by women, such as praise songs by Zulu women, especially the ones containing transgressive elements with a feminist slant and vulgar language, which, as Viljoen (2006) argues, often went unnoticed in their indigenous literatures. The choice of this material is closely related to her self-translating practice. As Krog herself explains in *In the name of the other – poetry in self-translation*, one of the reasons behind her decision to translate herself was to give voice to the poems dealing with the issues of being a woman and being an Afrikaner woman, which were underrepresented in her works translated by others. Thus, Krog's preference for feminist and sexual issues directs the selection of the poems to translate as well as her self-translating decisions. Another aspect that emerges from the analysis of Krog's translations is the foregrounding of themes that are central to her poetics, i.e. references to sex, passion, rejection of tradition, focus on words and language. For example, in her reworking of //Kabbo's /Xam narrative *Bushman Premonitions* she foregrounds the reference to words and language according to her poetics and her ideas about the genesis of a poem. In a similar vein, in her self-translations the core themes of her poetics come to the fore. Thus, in *stripping*, from *Down to My Last Skin*, the self-translated version of the Afrikaans poem *man ek lus 'n twakkie* from *Gedigte 1989-1995*, the theme of the rebellion against male dominance is emphasised by a number

¹¹ The present analysis of Krog's work as translator mainly refers to her translation of indigenous verse into Afrikaans and English and is based on Viljoen (2006).

of translating choices, such as the change from a third- to a first-person speaker, who confesses in a more intimate and unmediated way her yearning for her husband's castration, and the relationship between sex and money within marriage, not present in the Afrikaans original, is added in the translation (see Weyer, 2011). As a result of these interventions the poem is totally recontextualised and reconceptualised through self-translation. A further feature that Krog's translations share with her self-translations is their overt status as translations. In *Met woorde soos met kerse* the translated poems are provided with explanatory notes that add information about the socio-historical and literary contexts of the poems for Afrikaans readers. The notes, which can take the form of introductions or "interruptions" of the poems, make the translator visible in the translated texts and remind the reader of their foreignness. Interestingly, also Krog's self-translations use a number of strategies that make them overtly translations: *Down to My Last Skin* contains a glossary explaining Afrikaans terms to English South African readers; *Skinned* literally translates Afrikaans diminutives for which there are no English equivalents (e.g. "houselet", "songlets", and "childling") and introduces neologisms ("onlyest" and "heartbreak-whole") which stress the fact the poems are translated from Afrikaans. For the parallelisms found between Krog's translations and her own self-translations it is plausible to think that many of the decisions that Krog makes when she translates her own poems derive from her conception of translation and her translational style, which manifest themselves in her work as self-translator as well as in her work as translator.

4 Concluding remarks

This paper suggests that the theoretical and methodological perspectives offered by translation studies can help enhance the discourse on self-translation and offer a way out of the contradictions that pervade it. In particular, they show that self-translators' "method of 'rewriting in freedom'" (Santoyo 2010, 22), made up of changes adaptations, substitutions, omissions, etc. is in fact also employed by normal translators. It is curious in this regard that Walter Benjamin's notion of translation as completion, transformation and renewal of an original text has been cited by many self-translation scholars to describe the specificities of self-translation almost neglecting the fact that Benjamin's theory of translation, presented in the foreword to his translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*, refers to translation in general, not only self-translation. This is not to claim that self-translation does not possess features that sets it apart from standard translation, which in fact have been identified especially by process-oriented translation studies (Grutman and Van Bolderen, 2014). It is rather to claim that to find what makes self-translations different from standard translations it is necessary to start from a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of translation and an increased awareness of the creativity demanded by any

translation, as emerged from the creative turn in translation studies. In this perspective the comparison of self-translated texts with the same texts translated by others or with other translations done by the same author can provide instructive textual insights into the extent to which the freedom enjoyed by self-translators differs from the freedom enjoyed by normal translators. The cases examined above have revealed certain liberties taken by authors-translators with the works of others that may call into question many of the common places about self-translation. Just think of Krog's reworkings and interpretations of the /Xam narratives according to her poetics or the variations that the young Beckett dared make to the works of other poets, by intruding references like "phantasmagoria", which alone may invalidate many general statements about the specific nature of self-translated texts and contribute to a broadening of the boundaries of normally translated texts, which are still challenged by the need to find *alternative* terms for translation, like the ones put forward by authors-translators, i.e. recomposition, recreation, rendition, revision, rewriting, transactions, transcreation, writing in two languages.

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