

CHAPTER 3. THE PERFORMATIVE GESTURE OF TRANSLATION

As the crickets' soft autumn hum
Is to us
So are we to the trees
As are they
To the rocks and the hills
(Gary Snyder)

i. Performative, translation, gesture, tool

My encounter with the ex-detention camp in Drenthe invites translation with De Certeau's notion of tools. In *The Practise of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau states that not only *tools* but *proverbs* and other discourses are also *marked* by uses and processes of enunciation¹, "...they signify the *operations* who's object they have been, operations which are relative to situations and which can be thought of as conjunctural *modalizations* of statements or of practices;² more generally, they thus indicate a social *historicity* in which systems of representations or processes of fabrication no longer appear only as normative frameworks but also as *tools manipulated by users* (21).

The resulting mosaic of thought allows gesture of usage to become performative in an intentional way. One tool in particular stands out, the gesture of its usage promotes both profoundness and manipulative parlance in material execution: writing... in all its variations, from scratching or typing symbols into syntax, to painting, editing sound and image, articulating legislation, to signing and *biting* (as mentioned above, related to Bokito). As translators, I feel writing is what makes humans travel between landscapes and origin sailing on memories that never really existed as one whole... only as particles in a shimmering of sensual encounters saved. *Vilém Flusser* believed "...nomadism is linked to a specific notion of translation as a basically endless, open-ended enterprise.

¹ To analyse "the imprint of the process of enunciation on the utterance" is, as is well known, strictly speaking the object of a linguistics of enunciation. See O. Ducrot and T. Todorov, *Dictionnaire encyclopedique des sciences du langage* (Paris: Seuil, 1972). 405 (From de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984) Note 14, p.210)

² On modality, by which the locutor assigns a status (concerning existence, certitude, obligation, etc.) to his utterance (*dictum* or *lexis*). See, for example, *Languages*. No. 43 (September 1976). De Certeau, M. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Note 15, 1984, 210)

The translator is forced to move on continuously, striving at the same time to get back to the origin, only to discover that there is no such possibility. Meaning is homeless and iterant ” (Finger, Gaudin, Bernardo 33).

Before I return to translating the sentenced landscape Westerbork, I will first discuss a number of translations in praxis, taken from divergent areas of discipline: arts, cinema, and legal/socio-political practice.

In *The Power of Movements of Plants*, Charles Darwin describes, how plant roots do not passively grow down but *circulate* and *observe*, localising moisture and chemicals. Designer Diane Scherer³, inspired by Charles Darwin’s writings on plants, explores these processes by articulating them to conform to specifically-designed patterns, in an online article (DesignBoom)⁴, she elucidates a method she coined *Rootsystem Domestication*. The tendril roots weave and braid themselves beneath the ground, they are cultivated in soil placed around particular types of mould. Unearthing reveals a dense structured textile-like reticulation. Organic elements interlaced in complex patterns. To me, Scherer’s artistic research regarding possible application of plant root manipulation into commodities (clothes and carpets -for the moment) gives new insight into the fragility of network systems. Her enticement, a manipulation of the natural results in seeming robust aesthetic structures ... Scherer *invites* natural space -articulated by systems of unmediated growth, into *abstract space* - appropriation of *natural space* (De Certeau). I feel however, the results portray grotesque, clownesque quality shared with other common objects made from natural sources we tend to overlook. Oil transformed into plastics is, *in-formed* (Flusser, *Does Writing*) into innumerable materialized need articulations (from lemonade cups to prosthetic limbs), after time escaping into the oceans organic polymers re-form into plastiglomerate⁵ stone by entangling with natural debris. An

³ www.dianascherer.nl

⁴ www.designboom.com/art/diana-scherer-manipulated-plant-roots-patterns-01-21-2017/

⁵ A term coined by Patricia Corcoran, Charles J. Moore and Kelly Jazvac. These objects contain mixtures of sedimentary grains, and natural debris such as shells and wood and is held together by hardened molten plastic. A potential marker of

metaphoric re-articulation, changing actors in the syntax. It reminds me of an example of re-articulated polymers through code: the instructor ... a Montessorian sensory clitoris⁶. An object from the *prepared environment*. Visual sense, stereognostic sense, tactile sense, olfactory sense, and gustatory sense mingle in a 3D-tool concept. Providing our possible re-connection of mind and bodies through tactile depiction of the hidden organ in an attempt to experience emancipated female orgasm, rejecting the imposed male notion of gendered sexuality. Woman's clitoris liberated from man's oppressive fear by use of sensation, tactile concerts. Opening portals towards learning how these embodied actions remove us from the linearity of *hetero*-sexuality. The notion of permeable connectiveness enhanced by the multi-phenomena of the senses from an internal to external. Inviting men and woman to experience and discuss affect from sensations conjured together. Offering space to focus on similarities, rather than differences. An entangled...intra-action.

She has the ability to go in and out of any creature she chooses and to "hook up" to that creature's sensorium without disturbing the creature itself, "lodging herself in the brains and bodies of birds, beasts, and fishes, insects, and animals of all kinds - like a hermit crab in a shell that belongs to another.
(Du Maurier 369)

Shane Carruth's *Upstream Color* invites the viewer to be an actor (re-thinking patterns of consciousness) in this provocation of accepted and unquestioned linear narrative. The almost absence of spoken language is hardly noticeable through his use of light, sound, montage, and colour mosaic resulted in sensuous, uncanny affect toward potential perception shifts. *Upstream Color*. A rare blue orchid has a symbiotic relation with a particular larvae. Protagonists Jeff and Kris are

the Anthropocene, an informal epoch of the Quaternary proposed by some social scientists, environmentalists, and geologists. www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plastiglomerate

⁶ Paul Verlaine celebrated it in his 1889 poem *Printemps* as a "shining pink button", but thanks to the sociomedical researcher Odile Fillod, French schoolchildren will now understand that it looks more like a hi-tech boomerang. Yes, the world's first open-source, anatomically correct, printable 3D clitoris is here, and it will be used for sex education in French schools, from primary to secondary level, from September.(Theobald)

unaware their behaviours are affected by a complex parasite. In a perpetual (directed) three-stage life cycle, it passes from orchids to humans to pigs to orchids and back. Each phase in the cycle guarded by an economic profiteer: The Thief, The Sampler and Orchid Mother and Daughter. The Thief. We see him in a greenhouse taking a scraping from a leaf. Blue powder. We see larvae in the plant's roots. He places the parasites into capsules, selling them on the streets. He spots Kris and *phasors* her. Then, infects her by inserting a larva into her mouth by force. Water pumped. She wakes. Uncoordinated. Hypnotised by the parasite. He tells her not to look at him directly, for he is the sun. Water is her nectar; she must earn to quench her thirst by copying all of *Walden* [Henry David Thoreau's account of this two-year survivalist "continue" in a self-built cabin in Concord, Massachusetts] onto sheets of paper stacked on a table. Endless chains made up of hand-written pages follow. Fingers fold, paper crackles. Stick glue applied, the pieces held together by index and thumb. The mirror script visible, bleeding through the pages. A code strand, a paper double helix emerges. The nature of parasitism is to assemble itself into chains. From small initial causes, these chains may multiply their effects. In *Language, Nonlinearity, and the Problem of Evil* Maria Assad states, "the parasite becomes an invader, a veritable tidal wave of tsunamic power that sweeps any opposition aside" (274).

The Sampler places two amplifiers face down on the earth beckoning the parasite with a droning sound thus luring Kris to his camp-site. He surgically connects Kris to a young pig, transferring the parasite from her to the animal creating a symbiotic association between the two. A reciprocal act. The pig, now connected to Kris interferes with her perception through the parasite. The Sampler tunes into their intra-actions. Like in gene-editing, The Sampler collects and manipulates experiences in his victims. A neo-liberal entrepreneurs dream: CRISPR-technology⁷ dispensed into a nightmare of spliced emotions removing thwarting adaptive disorders such as cost chasing burnout syndrome, from their workforce. Or an exciting way of introducing, writing new narrative? Kris has learned to

⁷ CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats), From: New England Biolabs, CRISPR/Cas9 & Targeted Genome Editing: New Era in Molecular Biology

“read” an imposed narrative by gesture of copying Walden and creating a paper code chain filled with Thoreau’s notions of the Natural. This performative act *re*-informs her with the nature / culture chain. Re-entangling her with the whole.

The Sampler throws a bag, with piglets from Kris’s sow, into a nearby stream. The larvae fumble out of the decomposing bodies. They creep and seep into white riverside orchids roots - hanging in the stream - turning them blue. Orchid Mother and Daughter unknowingly advance the larvae to the next stage by picking the rare blooms, selling them through their company, *E+P Exotics* to the Thief, who uses the emerging larvae to infect his victims. A circular continuum. A narrative of patterns and the disruption of patterns in tapestries of colour, symbols, and sound. These *Socratic Circle* questions do not provide generic answers but help to understand interrelatedness. To translate old concepts, into possible emergent understandings. As in a so-called doughnut economy. Focused on exploring what planetary and social boundaries imply for rethinking the concept of economic development: growth or post-growth? Asking how we could measure economic progress from another perspective. Circular. In her book, *The Real Wealth of Nations*, Riane Tennenhaus Eisler suggests Real Wealth is a measurement of a robust ecology and the general health and happiness of the people. With such a basis for the monetary economic system governments could adhere to the management golden rule that, you can’t manage what you don’t measure.

Our linear system of credit holds us in permanent captivity as dictated by credit invested into future ideas. We are always in dept of our own future, of progression. In a circular economy -or doughnut economy – this is not the case as investments are small scale, and do not rely on upfront funding to unfold. Perpetual flux here means making choices, limiting need to actual necessity opposed to endless gambling on persuasive constructions to create feelings of desire (need). Artificial need is therefore similar to artificial space.

