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TTR
Traduction, terminologie, rédaction

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Volume 35, Number 1, 1er semestre 2022

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1093023ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/1093023ar

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Publisher(s)

Association canadienne de traductologie

ISSN

0835-8443 (print)
1708-2188 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Washbourne, K. (2022). “It is *you* who must be translated”: Translational Immortality and Mark Strand’s *The Monument*. *TTR*, *35*(1), 121–146. https://doi.org/10.7202/1093023ar

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"It is *you* who must be translated": Translational Immortality and Mark Strand's *The Monument*

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Abstract
This study primarily surveys one work, Mark Strand's *The Monument* (1978), though it is also a glimpse into translational immortality and authors' relationships to their own afterlife, their legacy, and their (im)mortality. We will turn to other fictional translation scenarios in Strand's work, and ideas emerging from interviews, but our analysis will focus largely on the ways the text at hand represents author-translator relations, the self in translation, including its intertextuality, translational immortality, and the notion of monumentality in the verbal arts.
Keywords: literary immortality, afterlife, author-translator relations, translation and citationality, textual monumentality

Résumé
Cette étude examine principalement une seule œuvre, *The Monument* [*Le monument*] de Mark Strand (1978), bien qu'elle donne également un aperçu de l'immortalité translationnelle et des relations des auteurs avec leur propre vie après la mort, leur héritage et leur (im)mortalité. Nous examinerons d'autres scénarios de traduction fictive dans le travail de Strand, ainsi que des idées provenant de ses entretiens, mais notre analyse se concentrera surtout sur la manière dont le texte représente les relations entre auteurs et traducteurs, le moi en traduction, y compris son intertextualité, l'immortalité translationnelle et la notion de monumentalité dans les arts verbaux.
Mots-clés : immortalité littéraire, « survie » de l'auteur, relations entre auteurs et traducteurs, traduction et citationnalité, monumentalité textuelle

Could we not say, therefore, that individual poems succeed most by encouraging revisions of themselves and inducing their own erasure?

Yes, but is this immortality, or simply a purposeful way of being dead?

Mark Strand (2001a, p. 7)

The very notion of a modern monument is a contradiction in terms: if it is a monument, it cannot be modern, and if it is modern, it cannot be a monument.

Lewis Mumford (1937, p. 264)

[...] only some instant of myself can survive in him. Little by little, I am giving over everything to him, although I am quite aware of his perverse custom of falsifying and magnifying things. Spinoza knew that all things long to persist in their being: the stone eternally wants to be stone and the tiger a tiger. I shall remain in Borges, not in myself (if it is true that I am someone)[...].

Jorge Luis Borges (2000, p. 282)

I empty myself of my life and my life remains

Mark Strand (2007d, p. 45)

Introduction: Genre

Written starting in 1973, Canadian-American Mark Strand's *The Monument* is laid out in fifty-two sections of his "non-self," as he called it (cited in Fitzgerald, 2015, n.p.), to mirror Walt Whitman's 52 cantos of "Song of Myself". Unserious, self-parodizing, the work is full of echoes of other voices (Bloom called it a "quasi-chrestomathy" [2011, p. 324], referencing the genre of literary passages used for learning languages). The book recalls epitaphic genres, *siste viator* poems, and is dedicated "*To the Translator of* The Monument *in the future*" followed by the very phrase, *siste viator*, from the Latin for "Behold, traveler!," an injunction on ancient tombstones for passersby to stop and heed a lesson about life and death. The work has eluded or turned away critics despite nearly winning the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1979 (its prose poetry aesthetic disqualified it in the end). The text is not quite poetry for a reason: It is self-aware, in the postmodern fashion, as a *text for translation*; in #44 (all citations are n.p.), the "I" (the fictive author) tells us of his or her wish to include

unequivocal poetry in *The Monument* but fears it is "[t]oo hard to translate out of the original."

The broadest genre to which the text pertains may be the *anti-memorial*, which partakes in the celebration of the ephemeral. This is despite the work's posture as a paean to the narrator's own memorialization, a work Gregerson calls "a monument to the egotistical sublime" (2012, p. 17). In some ways the text is an unfinished monument, thus inviting itself to be read as a *participatory monument* by readers and the future translator enshrined as the addressee. Monumentality calls first of all for *scope*, which *The Monument*, despite its depth and breadth of suggestiveness, fails deliberately to marshal. The first genre related to translation that the text can be classified as is a *poem about translation*, a tradition with well-known examples including works by John Denham (1668) and the Earl of Roscommon (2011 [1684]). It is far rarer, within this tradition, to have perspectives or focalizations from the author to the translator rather than the reverse; authorial poems "to the translator" include L.F. Rosen's "To My Translator" (2008, n.p.) and Twm Morys' "To the One Who Is In My Translating" (n.d., pp. 630 et seq.), and even poems about being translated, such as Osip Mandelstam's lines ("And maybe this very minute / some Japanese is translating me / into Turkish / and has reached the depths of my soul" [1973, p. 223]). The second text type is a *lament*; a lament is a literary genre of mourning and a seeking of what is lost, or perhaps not lost but what becomes elusive, uncertain. Here translation accompanies the author's trauma of self-loss.[1] The third text type, the pseudotranslation, consisting of an author presenting an original as a translation, is well established (see Toury, 1984; Lefevere, 2000); by contrast, here we have, in parodic mode, a fictionalized author leaving instructions to a future translator for a translation of an unspecified work—the original is a pretense, a pseudo-original. In section #28, the author expresses his fear that the translator will claim authorship, that "you will tell people in your day that you made up *The Monument*, that this is a mock translation, that

1. Anne Carson's *Nox* (2010) similarly uses translation (those of others and the author's own) as a vehicle for meditation on grief. I am not convinced Strand's text is a classic lament, but I find affinities in Ferber's claim, in discussing Gershom Sholem's ideas, that the "extreme, vigorous nature of lament's expression and the intensity of its self-destructiveness make it the only expressive form that can reveal the nature of language as such," and especially that "its recurrent failing efforts to transgress its own boundary" undermine itself (2014, p. 50).

I am merely a creature of your imagination." If we see *instructions to the translator* as a paratextual genre, albeit a ghostly one, like bridge texts used in relay translation, and meant not for posterity but for instrumental ends, *The Monument* is a metafictional version. In the fiction Strand creates, the text we read is a translation, fulfilling the text's prophesy (we know this from a metatextual comment about being a "communication that strains even to exist in a language other than the one in which it was written" (#22), and two translator's notes).

From the theoretical side of Translation Studies, the work converses with recent critical trends in the translator's identity, status, and professional ethos (Sela-Sheffy, 2016); translator-author relations (Washbourne, 2017); the translator's voice (Hermans, 1996); and the translator's legacy (Guzmán, 2009). Resonances of the translator as *border-crosser*, of which posterity is the tenuous residence after the final crossing, can be heard.[2] Above all, the meme of *translation as survival*, not only of works in this case but also of their makers, is textualized.

The Monument may be read as an exploration of authorship and translatorship and their interrelations and aporiaic natures; the symbiosis of self and Other in (self-)creation; a meditation on literary life and death; the multiplicities and complicities of selfhood in artistic representation; and translation's role in constructing or deconstructing the unity of authorial voice. In the work, translation holds the place of future plenitude, "the text of promise," or as Octavio Paz called the work, "always in a blessed state of 'almost unfinished'" (1978, n.p.). The inextricability of the work from its author, and its translator, is made plain; *authorship is the monument*. As Victor Hugo (1964-1967, 2, p. 853) wrote, "Ce que nous écrivons est notre propre chair. / Le livre est à tel point l'auteur, et le poème / Le poëte" (cited in Garval, 2003, p. 89). If what we translate is the author, then, *who or what is the author*?

This is a vexed question, of course, especially when translators, a type of future reader, are involved. In the persona of the fictive author, Strand's text gives anxious voice to Derrida's observation that "the original is marked by the requirement to be translated [...]. The original is the first debtor, the first practitioner; *it begins by lacking*

2. "[...] translation and memory are marked by a boundary-crossing and by a realignment of what has become separate" (Iser, 1996, p. 297).

and by pleading for translation" (1979, pp. 165-207; my italics). The awareness of lack, of radical uncertainty about one's fate, of the unicity of one's own surviving voice (the all-important "how" of translation), organizes the whole text.

The issue of genre having been addressed, in what follows, first we will attend to 1) monumentality; then 2) immortality, in general and in Strand's *The Monument* and his poetics as a whole; and 3), we will observe in detail the acute problem of self and Other in translation and its dynamics in the text, including in the relation between text and citation.

1. Monuments Literary and Otherwise

A monument is a signifier of commemoration, or put another way, against forgetting; it can be built to elicit remembrance, or to incarnate memory, as in a writing or other work of art.[3] Classical writers often argued that verbal monuments would outlast those of stone—overlooking the materiality of their own archives and arguing instead that their dislocation freed their monumentality from place (Hui, 2009, p. 28), that they could "take leave of their origins, be imitated, appropriated, and adapted" (*ibid*., pp. 19-20), assuming in their translativity an evergreen existence (*ibid*., p. 23). Often they became metapoetic assertions of eternalization through words (viz. Shakespeare's "So long lives this, and this gives life to thee" in Sonnet 18 (2004 [1609])). What kind of monument is Mark Strand's *The Monument*, called "a void, artless and everlasting" in the text (#9), and of which the author has stated, "It unmonuments itself at every turn" (cited in Cavalieri, 1994, p. 40)? An iconoclastic text at its core, *The Monument* features these lines:

> It is the giant of nothingness [...]. If there were a limb here, a limb there, on the desert sand, *that* would be something. If on the pedestal these words appeared: "I am the Monument. Should you doubt this look around you and compare," *that* would be something. But The Monument has no monument. (*#48*)

3. e.g. *Odes* 3.30 Horace, where the poet says of his own work, *exigi monumentum aere perennius* ["I have built a monument more enduring than bronze"]. A curious twist: Horace flatters himself of the "praise in time to come" that is his due for his having translated a Greek meter to Latin, complicated, in Rotella's words, by "the rich cultural politics of translation" rife with "obedience and rebellion, community and displacement" (2004, p. 3). Poets such as Pushkin have explored the motif memorably in various statuary poems.

The sculptural ruins of the "trunkless legs of stone" and half-sunk "shattered visage" lying in the desert, and the pedestal declaring: "My name is Ozymandias, King of King; / Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!" from Shelley's "Ozymandias" (2002 [1818], p. 194) are turned ironically on their head. The Monument[4] is less than a ruin, but an anti-ekphrastic gesture toward the missing work.

Aaron finds Strand's text a satire:

> *The Monument*, published [in 1978], showed that Strand had not lost his faith in the uses of self-mockery. A book of "notes, observations, instructions, rants, and revelations" satirizing the notion of literary immortality, it was Strand's answer to a question he'd heard asked at a translation conference: "How would you like to be translated in five hundred years?" Strand thought it a "fabulous question. It stumped everyone." The book was his answer. (Aaron, 1995/1996, p. 203)

Significantly, the question is "How would you like to be *translated*?," not "How would you like to be *remembered*?." The question goes to, of course, the heart of target-oriented thinking about translation in that the audience is the question behind the question. How can we know of readers' expectations so far in advance? The purposes of reading change, as do the media, taste, scholarship, and much more. And how can we know into whose hands our works fall, to be reinterpreted, recontextualized, resemanticized, amid the drift of language and the vicissitudes of art? The desiderata an author may express for his or her own translations may be fanciful inasmuch as their control over translation quality, not only diachronic translations but even synchronic, is variable, subject to luck and any number of conditions. Strand's text is valuable in assuming, and dramatizing, the translator's role in an author's extended life, which points to human identity not as problems of formation but of maintenance. And like the relics of the saints, which were translated (transferred), often at the volition of the bones themselves, redounding to the greater prestige of their holders, the dissemination of translation is intimately related to transcendent status.

Samuel Maio calls Strand's technique "self-effacing," a way to "absent himself" (2005, p. 180). It could be seen as the *author's invisibility*, to coin a phrase. "This is the poetry of erasure. This is a poem that declares itself by taking away from itself" (Cavalieri, 1994,

4. The Monument, unitalicized, will be used in this text to denote the artifact within the universe of the text; *The Monument* will refer to Strand's publication.

p. 40). In #21, for instance, an excerpt from a notional autobiography, the narrator reveals that the grandfather was dissolved in a vat of molten steel, and to the narrator's mind was added the mythos that the man was now "part of a Cleveland skyscraper," symbolically both present and absent. The invisible work and the invisible translator make their disembodied "appearance" in the text as well, agentless and fated: "Perhaps there is no monument and this is invisible writing that has appeared in fate's corridor; you are no mere translator but an interpreter-angel" (#10). Or consider section #1, which mimics the form of a literary introduction but empties the narrator of identity: "Let me introduce myself. I am . . . and so on and so forth. Now you know more about me than I know about you." This is a frustration of the convention of provenance, as *The Catcher in the Rye* parodied "all that *David Copperfield* kind of crap" (Salinger, 1987 [1951], p. 5). Strand drains the gesture of substance with the ellipses. In #2 he goes further, his identity now both past and future, same and other: "I am setting out from the meeting with what I am, with what I now begin to be, my descendant and my ancestor, my father and my son, my unlike likeness" (#2), borrowing from Octavio Paz' "Old Poem" (1976). This line establishes a departure, dissimilitude, kinship that is also a self-exile from the plenitude of self into paradox. Monuments by their nature, like so-called originals, are fixed forms; translation *un*fixes them, making of monumentality a contingency and paradoxical in its turn.

A prism through which to view Strand's narrator is the pursuing of an "immortality project" in cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker's (1973) term, whereby death is staved off through heroic—death-defying, sometimes creative—behaviors. Human beings, as "half animal and half symbolic" paradoxes, Becker tells us, are self-reflexive, small gods outside of nature but also "hopelessly in it" (p. 26). In the madness of this irreconcilability, the human turns to heroic gestures to deny the fear of death and create meaning. The self-preservation instinct in the face of annihilation—in this case, that of an imaginary author contemplating his fate in translation—today forms the heart of terror management theory, which studies the cultural worldviews and self-aware symbolic productions intended to hold the realization of death at bay.

2. Poetic and Translational Immortality

Accordingly, let us consider forms of poetic and translational immortality. One posits atemporality:

> Ancient Greeks perceived immortality not as movement along a very long, potentially endless, continuum, but as a god-like existence beyond the stream of time. [...]. [T]hey enjoy a synoptic view of past, present, and future such that all times coexist in one harmonious unity, with past and future mutually influencing one another. (Sigelman, 2016, p. 3)

But some immortalities are decidedly more time-bound and all-too-human. "**I**," writes Strand, "is for Immortality." In this entry for the letter "I" in "A Poet's Alphabet" (2001a, p. 7), the narrator tells us that the quality of remembrance and obscurity is subject to vagaries and variations. Neither are all translation afterlives alike. Let us posit three imaginable immortalities of self: Of the self, of the self's work, and of the works that the self's work has influenced. Strand draws on Lucretius' view of the immortal, which embraces the second and third but not the first: "'[T]rue' immortality is to be sought not in the survival of the individual personality but in understanding the eternal processes of creation and destruction in the universe" (Segal, 1989, p. 197). Strand himself calls this an "alternate, less lustrous immortality": "even if individual poems die, [...] poetry will continue" (2001a, p. 7). Neither is the poet himself salvageable; consciousness has one salvation, the text where "we both write": "it is not my image that I want you to have, nor my life, nor the life around me, *only this document*. What I include of myself is unreal and distracting. Only this luminous moment has life, this instant in which we both write, this flash of voice" (#3; my italics). Between the lines we can infer the idea that a literary future is a projection; literary life is the moment of enunciation. The briefness of the present moment, moreover, is the *communal* voice. There is a constancy of theme immune to poetic fashions, and that poems remain alive in subsequent poems, just as the poems themselves retain previous ones (2001a, p. 7). By #5 the author-translator relationship is symbiotic, one as likely as the other to be incomplete alone: "You must imagine yourself asking the question: Which of us has sought the other?" While the theme of *non omnius moriar* [I shall not altogether die, or Not all of me shall die] would reign in poetry for millennia, we are a long way from Horace's assertion of ego: "*I shall not wholly die. A great part of me / will escape Libitina. My fame will grow, / ever-renewed in time to come* [...]."

(1997, p. 108; italics in original). Of course, readers, and translators, are the agents of this endurance.

At the same time, section #6 shows a narrator-author less confident, dependent on the translator, hearing—to his torment—the translator's voice:

> In what language do I live? I live in none. I live in you. It is your voice that I begin to hear and it has no language. I hear the motions of a spirit and the sound of what is secret becomes, for me, a voice that is your voice speaking in my ear. It is a misery unheard of to know the secret has no name, no language I can learn.

The inaccessibility of the translator's voice, the author's own estranged speech, is figured here as a pre-linguistic or alinguistic state, a banishment from self and a forced muteness, and a *mundus inversus*: The translator speaks; the author must listen. The relationship throughout the work is cast by turns as interdependent, dependent, and codependent, present and absent, alive and dead. We cannot even be sure the "you" in the poem is a singular "you," or a multitudinous one, like Walt Whitman's "I." A climax of the work of sorts is #38: "Some will think I wrote this and some will think you wrote this. The fact is neither of us did. There is a ghostly third who has taken up residence in this pen, this pen we hold."

The shared corporeality—*this* pen *we* hold—is striking. The "ghostly third" recalls Frawley's (1984) notion of translation as a third code, which parallels the displacements of the participants themselves into a third party writing a text, in addition to evoking spectrality, a spatiotemporal intrusion. The Monument even at times becomes Other, impersonal, autonomous and authorless as writing, desiring impossibilities for itself.[5] Translation is figured as an inversion of a text, the erasure of which leaves it as pure futurity, the absent text present in pure potential.[6] Text and translation here becomes linked into a *coincidentia oppositorum*. A Strandian text is one that is written-unwritten, the space where a text was and will be, translation as negative space—but not a text made manifest. Chapman, apposite of this phenomenon, proposes a "messianic potential" or "messianicity" of texts, in that

5. e.g. "how it wishes it were something it cannot be" (#17).

6. "[...] it is the text already written, unwriting itself into the text of promise. It blooms in its ashes, radiates health in its sickness" (#17).

> understanding texts as existing within a process of continual translation means that we understand texts as containing a messianic promise, the potential to allow absolute alterity to irrupt at any moment. The precise character of this alterity remains unknown, by definition, as it must be outside current structures. To encounter a text, then, is seemingly potentially to encounter the unknown—the Other. (Chapman, 2019, p. 118)

But the messianic in *The Monument* is subversive: The Other in the text is unknown, translational, emerging by degrees if not absolutely:

> They are back, the angry poets. But look! They have come with hammers and little buckets, and they are knocking off pieces of The Monument to study and use in the making of their own small tombs. (#34)

2.1 "Not translation but continuous life"

Translation Studies has its ideas of an afterlife, all well exercised in the wake of Walter Benjamin.[7] But there is a precariousness to any life in that all life depends on the living to sustain it. Human memory thus determines the different qualities of this life after death, many afterlives in one: different literary neighborhoods, "living" conditions, fortunes, and faces that regenerate and fall away and return. The gulf separating an author and their own translations has been described too in terms of loss, notably by Susan Sontag, who reflects that translation's meaning of displacement was for escaping extinction, though she concludes that "[i]n supervising my translations, I am supervising the death as well as the transposition of my words" (2002, p. 347). Strand's fictive author similarly oversees his translations knowing it is a fool's errand.

In this light, let us widen the field of view to Strand's poetics of translation, as far as it can be determined from other writings, as nowhere is it codified; and as with all creative writing, it says more than it says. And Strand uses metaphor in non-fiction modes as well, such

7. An apropos irony: Disler (2011, pp. 183-185) argues that "afterlife" (see Benjamin, 2000) is a mistranslation surrounding "*Überleben*," survival, but used in quotes, tentatively; the term has had the greatest afterlife of all Benjamin's concepts, even gaining new life through quotations in German with a term Benjamin never used but attributed to the author: *Nachleben* (p. 212). The "language that calls from the future" (#46) is just this sort of reading: A translation with "viral," deathless, potential, and one perhaps not yet available in the writer's present. Cf. Heidegger: "Each human being is in each instance in dialogue with [her or her] forbears and perhaps even more and in a more hidden manner with those who will come after [...]" (1971, p. 123).

as the interview: "I want to be translated not just what I've written but I want to be translated in such a way that I can live infinitely ... I want not translation but continuous life" (cited in Cavalieri, 1994, p. 40; ellipsis in original).[8] To contrast "life" and "translation" as opposed or as different, rather than the latter as a means to the former, challenges translation orthodoxy while leading us to wonder: Is translation, then, an obstacle to "continuous life"? Especially if we consider Derrida's notion that "triumphant translation is neither the life nor the death of the text, only or already its living *on*, its life after life, its life after death [...]" (1979, pp. 102-103; italics in original). We turn to #3: "Why have I chosen this way to continue myself under your continuing gaze?" We can interpret "continuing" to mean not only constant but bestowing of continuity. Or we can consider continuous life in the poem as conceived in terms of "perpetual birth instead of [The Monument's] death again and again" (#17). Elsewhere lies a clue, reported by Carol Muske-Dukes, from a conversation with Strand in which he reveals a view of translation not only as continuity but as betterment: "Any writer who is translated dreams of being translated by a better writer" (Muske-Dukes, 2015; cf. Derrida's "lacking" above). We can say this another way, or perhaps these are implications: If one is to reach one's full potential as a writer it will be in other language versions of oneself. Or another twist: A source text is merely another version; as Borges taught us, there are only drafts. The self-conscious elaboration of this idea is found in #26. The author begs for some little phrase that will make him look prescient in the future.[9] This leitmotiv permeates *The Monumen*t, as in #46: "We shall grow into the language that calls from the future."

This diachronicity in translation across gaps of time or space, and to an unknown receiver, recalls Bosinelli Bollettieri and Torresi's (2016) image of translation as a message in a bottle, floated with abandon across distant polysystems; or Benjamin (2000, p. 20), who likened the translation to a *calling into a forest* from outside it, in expectation of hearing a meaningful echo. The sentiment of to "grow into one's language" is the understanding of one's historicity as an author, the unfinishedness and unfixity of source texts, and the advantage of future translators over contemporary ones (hence the work's fictional translator's moment of panic that the author may

8. Quotation *sic* in original.

9. "[…] something meaningless to you, but impossible for me to think of."

be alive for his own future translation). It should be noticed that nowhere in the *The Monument* is retranslation mentioned. The text treats translation as a single event in the future, despite all works being potentially multiparous. To "grow into one's language" also comments more generally on the impermanence of memorializations in art. The author leaves a blank space, in the manner of Laurence Stern's *Tristram Shandy,* under which a new voice emerges, that of the translator, the actual one rather than the future one, who leaves a Translator's note:

> [Translator's note: *Though I wanted to obey the author's request, I could not without violating what I took to be his desire for honesty. I believe he not only wanted it this way, but might have predicted it.*] (#26; italics in original)

What does this mean for the discursive unity of the text? It may point to the divided goals of an author—to have loyalty in translation—"honesty"—but to also recognize the new environment in which a text is received, and the nature of the translator's task to not speak for the writer even as they speak with their own voice. When the actual translator of the text disobeys and does not add some new phrase from the future to supplement him (or her), the translator ostensibly is reading the author's intention *not to be improved.* We witness an act of disloyalty to the letter of the text, ironically, as in choosing to forego his or her own freedom, and instead respect the will of the author, the translator is acting against the author's conferral of power onto him or her. While the fictional narrator licenses resistance, the *actual* translator proves loyal and unintrusive (at least as far as we can tell).

The six-part parable "Translation" (2014, pp. 305-309) is another rich vein of insight into Strand's translational thinking, even if not programmatic but dialogic:

> Then don't you think [...] that the translation of poetry is best left to poets who are in possession of an English they have each made their own, and that language teachers, who feel responsibility to a language not in its modifications but in its monolithic entirety, make the worst translators? Wouldn't it be best to think of translation as a transaction between individual idioms, between, say, the Italian of D'Annunzio and the English of Auden? If we did, we could end irrelevant discussions of who has and who hasn't done a correct translation. (*ibid.*, p. 308)

There may be a bit of slippage in Strand's discussion of "correct translation." While he disparages arguments over the criteria for "correctness," use of the term clouds the picture and may be an unhelpful theoretical framework for thinking about literary translation quality. In other words, it is not correctness but *effectiveness* that is being proposed as the remedy to artless translations. "Correct" is a byproduct of grammar acquisition thinking about translation from the time when classics were taught with this method, and has lingering traces of equivalency about it. Imagining the correctness of translations ignores, for instance, that poems, as Strand argues (2001b), may communicate something over and above meaning.

The narrator goes on to argue for an intralingual translation of say, "Wordsworth or Shelley into Strand." Strand is slyly representing two arguments here: The argument that translation is a matter of style, and that of target-oriented proficiency as determinant in translation, against the academic specialists who produce the often-derided "academic translation," close kin to philological translation, which prizes meaning over style. Both may be accurate in the traditional sense but lacking in artistry, instead serving scholarly, historical or pedagogical roles. Translation in the style-oriented view presented in the parable revolves around idiolect. José Martí captures this in the well-known coinage, to translate as *transpensar* [to transthink]. It is this particularity, not the natural language, that resists translation, he suggests, and in a mystic turn, intimates that writing can even transcend language:

> traducir es transpensar: pero cuando Víctor Hugo piensa, y se traduce a Víctor Hugo, traducir es pensar como él, *impensar*, pensar en él. [...] Víctor Hugo no escribe en francés: no puede traducírsele en español. Víctor Hugo escribe en Víctor Hugo: ¡qué cosa tan difícil traducirlo! [...] cuando hay una inteligencia que va más allá de los idiomas, yo me voy tras ella, y bebo de ella [...]. (Martí, 2011, p. 16; italics in original)
>
> [to translate is to transthink: but when Victor Hugo thinks, and one translates Victor Hugo, to translate is to think like he does, *to think my way i*n, to think into him. [...] Victor Hugo writes in Victor Hugo: what a feat to translate him! [...] Faced with a mind that transcends languages, I go in pursuit, and imbibe it [...].] (my trans.)

In a comical interlude between a fictional Strand and a fictional Borges, the latter replies that to translate Wordsworth, "It is *you* who must be translated, who must become, for however long, [Wordsworth]," The

Strand avatar replies that this is "absolutely impossible," of course, finally realizing that

> in order to translate, one must cease to be. I closed my eyes for a second and realized that if I ceased to be, I would never know. "Borges..." I was about to tell him that the strength of a style must be measured by its resistance to translation. "Borges..." But when I opened my eyes, he, and the text into which he was drawn, had come to an end. (2014, p. 309)

The idea that "in order to translate, one must cease to be" works against the idea of a translator's subjectivity, or rather, makes of it a *trans*subjectivity. Perhaps Strand's most revelatory line about *The Monument* is as follows, in an interview with Graziano: The book became "less and less about the translator of a particular text, and more about the translation of a self, and the text as self, the self as book" (cited in Graziano, 1979, p. 37). This could not be more significant in that it says something about translation that is universally missed: *what is translated*? Too often we assume it is a text, rather than an essence: "*it is* you *who must be translated*." In the text, translation is not a property of language but something more elusive, style as indexical of a sum of human particularities or alterities and "measured by its resistance to translation."

All the parts of "Translation" are self-contained, darkly comic absurdist fables, but another thread running through them is a veiled comment on *who translates*. In the first section of "Translation," the narrator gives this advice to his four-year-old budding translator: "'Son,' I said, 'you should find a young poet to translate, someone your own age, whose poems are no good. Then, if your translations are bad, it won't matter'" (2014, p. 305). Or in the second, the child's nursery school teacher complains of Rilke translations, which of course is not unreasonable, but her solution is to pool them to "come up with something better," while taking German lessons (*ibid.*, pp. 304-306). The critique, in a parodic vein of translation debates, is of translation *dilettanterie,* such as the practice of "translating" only from existing translations of a source. For instance, in section 3, Jorge de Lima is discussed by the nursery school teacher's husband—also, naturally, a translator—who needs to decide whether or not to "antique" the poet's style or whether the effect would prove mocking to the original's vitality. As de Lima's work was judged too passé, he concludes: "So far as I can see, there's nothing to be done with his poems" (*ibid.*, p. 307).

The "I" interlocutor questions this very "editorial," and superficial, approach to translation, one which will not be original or educated.

3. Self and Other

The dependency of self on the Other as a paradigm of translation is eloquently captured in the following passage:

> Strand [...] conceives of the recognition of the Other as an elementary step for the emergence of the self: "consider how often we are given to invent ourselves; maybe once, but even so we say we are another, another entirely similar" (#4). *The Monument* locates the dialectic between self and Other in the complex relationship between the "author" and his hypothetical translator. If the author recognizes the Other as he constructs the text, so too the verbal text, as it emerges from the Imaginary, is founded, in Lacan's words, upon the "discourse of the Other."[10] The author exclaims: "This word has allowed you to exist, yet this work exists because you are translating it." By extension, of course, we are all "translators" of the text, and the author initiates an endless chain of relationships; moreover, he himself seems to emerge from the diverse texts [...]. So for example, a citation from Unamuno seems to prefigure the "author" of *The Monument* by making him an Other projected by a precursor [...]. (Jackson, 1980, p. 139)

Strand's Unamuno citation presents translation as inevitably paradoxical, at once the work of self and Other. Lucas (2014, pp. 34-39) effectively captures this relational self through the lens of Ricoeur's *Oneself as Another* (1992) and concludes that Strand's work both affirms and denies the self. We glimpse this in Strand's poetry, where the literary ego and competitive ambition are satirized: "If a man claims the poem of another, his heart shall double in size" (2007c, canto 17). Translation involves a choosing of texts, of influences, and of creating and being created by them. Inevitably the reader calls to mind Borges' "Kafka and his Precursors," though Borges does not mention translation in the essay:

> The word "precursor" is indispensable to the vocabulary of criticism, but one must try to purify it from any connotation of polemic or rivalry. The fact is that each writer *creates* his precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future. In this correlation, the identity or plurality of men doesn't matter. (1999, p. 365; italics in original)

10. Lacan, 1966, p. 16.

The fictive author in The Monument does not so much quote, but become quotation, transgressing boundaries, hierarchies, identities, and precedence:

> And so by analogy, it is the author of The Monument who makes the text of Unamuno or any other writer exist by "translating" it into his own work. *The Monument* thus establishes what Foucault calls the endless referentiality, the infinite contextualism of texts that transcends and subverts the priority of any particular Other, and any particular "author." What, then, happens to the author? Who *is* the author? He is, first, the speaker who dissolves into the Other's language. He is, then, the author who foresees an apocalyptic "giant of nothingness rising in sleep like the beginning of language" (#48). But this subversion of the traditional role of the author does not subvert the fundamental structure of desire as a lack which motivates human action. (Jackson, 1980, p. 139; italics in original)

That is, presence-in-absence, and like the words "anything" may be "nothing" (#14), anything may be nothing. A paradoxical movement of the author into the Other—whether the Other be a translator or another author—is framed as a "nothingness" that emerges with an origin, the origin of language. The author's language is obliterated—consigned to oblivion—by another's.[11] In #9 an apotheosis of nothing leads to "I speak for nothing, the nothing that I am," and the legacy left to the translator is this nothing, "our commonness made dumb." In Strand—and here we see a theme explored time and again in his work—the void is productive: the need "to submit to vacancy in order to begin again, to clear ground." Or: "[...] die and you clear a space for yourself" ("**A** is for Absence," in "A Poet's Alphabet," 2001, p. 3). The behest to the future of *nothing* is part of a literary order, a "mirror [...] to the gap between the nothing that was and the nothing that will be" (#22, italics in original).

In #15 we read of the confusion of cenotaphs (empty or "false" monuments) that have confused "true graves." One cannot resist

11. Strand's translatorly instincts are on display in "**O** is for Oblivion" (2001a, p. 11), where he writes: "Forgetfulness, the fullness of forgetting, the possibilities of forgottenness. The freedom of unmindfulness. It is the true beginning of poetry." These permutations of glosses for *olvido*, the notoriously nuanced word for the translator from Spanish or Portuguese, are recognizable in this poetic treatment as part of the literary translator's thought process. He even invokes the River Lethe as "the River of Unmindfulness" in #24. In *The Monument*, Strand plays with the translator's work with synonymy in the line "if 'nothing' conveys the wrong idea, use 'something'." An anarchic snub of propositional content, this line parodies a sacred cow in translation.

comparing the deception of fame to the goddess Rumor (Pheme or Fama), from Virgil's *Metamorphoses*, who had "many eyes, ears, and tongues; *she heedlessly mixes truth and lies* [and is] notoriously fickle" (cited in Jackson, 2015, p. 2; my italics). Transience and falsity are linked, as repeatedly in the text we see language as something effaced by newer language, as in "their poems will die [... and] they'll be replaced by poems sporting a new look in a language more current" ("**I** is for Immortality," p. 7). The text demonstrates this on an unsuspected level: the translations quoted for which dates are given are, in order of appearance in the text, from 1976, 1974, 1954, 1967, 1974, 1970, 1957, 1974, and 1937 ("Acknowledgements," n.p.). That is, they are overwhelmingly the texts most available in Strand's early to middle adulthood, 1950s-1970s. The translations are thus a situated, particular reading of history rather than one that is ahistorical or impersonal. Translation has enshrined this idea in faith, now often questioned, in generational retranslation; the caducity of translation is more deeply rooted a credo than the belief in "original" writing's susceptibility to contemporariness. The author-narrator of *The Monument* makes concessions to the translator's decision-making agency in #14 by admitting that the words of the writer may not exist in the translator's time, but can be replaced with "words for which you yourself have a fondness." Many authors seek to give translators passage out of difficult language binds, but this goes beyond in an attempt to deconstrain the translator by allowing leeway, by encouraging subjectivity (albeit with misgivings). The translator's gender even figures as determinant of the author's own gender (!) in #29, when finally the author suggests the translator emerge through the mouth of the Monument in a mutual birth, "a birth, your birth, the birth of myself as a woman."

The idea that Mark Strand may be identified with both the author *and* the translator in this text (if such a biographical reading is apropos; he does say as much (Anon., 2015, pp. 131-132); Brooks wonders the same (1979, p. 72)) is lent credence by such passages in which they are no longer antagonistic or even separate but mutually constitutive and cocreated. In #31 the perspective shifts, as the author writes a speech for the translator to express his (her) disdain toward the author's greed and burden on the translator, and the hope for his or her "continued anonymity." Another Translator's note: "I must say that he has expressed my feeling so adequately that I find myself admiring him for it and hating myself somewhat" (*ibid.*). The

fictitious translator dramatizes through paratextual dialogue the negotiation of authorial identity, heightening its mediatedness. The "angry poets" arrive in several cantos to exact some kind of revenge on the Monument, or to make their own monuments. The author taunts the translator in #39 as a power play; s/he wonders explicitly if "my poverty would be more complete without you or whether you complete it," and upon saying so the author feels empowered: "I, a single strand"—overcoming the duality of authorship and punning on "Strand"—"making translation less and less possible."[12] These tensions of *authorial self-assertion* and *authorial effacement*, under a cacophony of other voices, characterize the momentum of the text.

The text blends voices, translated and untranslated, and makes concessions in an Acknowledgements section to the sources it borrows from (significantly, the borrowings are seamless in the text, and attributions only given at the end): Octavio Paz (#2); Miguel de Unamuno (#3, #47), William Shakespeare (#4, #8), Anton Chekhov (#6), Robert Penn Warren (#6), Wallace Stevens (#9, #38), Sir Thomas Browne (#15, #37), Walt Whitman (#18, #47, #52), Juan Ramón Jiménez (#18), Jorge Luis Borges (#18), M. Playa (#19), E.M. Cioran (#21), Suetonius (#22), Yanette Deletang-Tardif (#25), William Wordsworth (#30, #37), Anonymous (#50), and Friedrich Nietzsche (#52). It is significant that Anonymous is among the authors, as part of the authorial persona is the jealousy toward names replacing his own.[13] Strand does play with authorial ontological boundaries, self and Other, not only in theory but in practice. For instance, Strand's poem "The Dirty Hand" has appeared as both Strand's, in *New Selected Poems* (2007a), and as a translation from Carlos Drummond de Andrade in *Another Republic* (1976). In the former, "after Carlos Drummond de Andrade" is the subtitle, a convention not used with translations but adaptations or imitations (see also Maio, 2005).[14]

12. Washbourne (2017) treats the psychological complexities of authors' reactions to themselves in a new language, although almost always it is to their material, rather than hypothetical, selves transformed by translation.

13. The wish expressed is that the text "should be passed on in no one's name, not even yours" (#28).

14. Strand's imitations ("after" poems) would repay sustained attention; another Drummond poem, "Ser," rendered in Strand's English as "My Son" (in *The Late Hour*, 2002a [1978], pp. 116-117), asserts a presence that the Portuguese effaces (he is called *o filho que não fiz*, [lit., the son I never made]), though in Drummond's last line, the son *makes himself* [*faz-se por si mesmo*]. In the English, the poem ends on the stanza ending with the son calling from "where nothing, / everything, / wants to be born."

Citation and intertextuality, reported speech, functions much like translation in that it does not replicate but *recreate* and *manipulate*:

> Our speech [...] is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness and varying degrees of "our-own-ness," varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, re-accentuate. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 89)

Shultz summaries Sternberg's universals of quotation (1982), which are useful in this connection; in quotation there must be:

> 1) representational bond, which links the quoting discourse and the original discourse, of which it is an imperfect mimesis; 2) structural framing, which surrounds and incorporates the quoted portion (the inset) into its new context; 3) communicative subordination (of the quoted portion to the quoting discourse), which is the automatic result of recontextualizing; and 4) perspectival montage or ambiguity, which the blending and blurring of the voices and viewpoints of the original subject, with its own verbal, moral, sociocultural, thematic, aesthetic, informational and persuasive expressive features, and the quoting subject who cites and manipulates it. (Schultz, 1999, p. 202)

Let us draw out some implications of point 4, the ambiguity and manipulation, which is something highly operative in the text. Citations can blend together discursive events into a single complex act (Nakassis, 2013, p. 56). The translations are not self-evidently translations, as famous quotations might be, but hidden in plain sight. Translations and English originals are confounded, and multiple quotations on the page may serve as thematic point and counterpoint. Strand—who was a collagist—comments: "I wanted a stereo effect between the quotations and the text; the quotations are part of the fabric of the text. The relation between them and the text is sometimes close, sometimes very distant" (Anon., 2015, p. 132). The citations are used strategically as found objects, reinvented. For instance, section #30 starts with an epigraph, "...a poet's mind / Is labour not unworthy of regard," Wordsworth's words that by association reflect the poet's ambitions to write *The Recluse*, a dream forever deferred, though he asserts his powers to accomplish it in these lines from Book XIV of *The Prelude* (1850, p. 250). In #8, Shakespeare's "*Thy do thy office, Muse; I teach thee how / To make him seem, long hence, as he shows now*" serves

Strand remakes the poem imbued with Strandian hollowing out, implosion into irresolution, a son that never materializes.

as epigraph to an interlude on being "born again" through "you," in the words of the fictive author, which Strand uses to equate with the youth apostrophized in the original sonnet, 101. In other words, translation preserves youth, stops time; the narrator writes: "I imagine you taking my name; I imagine you saying 'myself myself' again and again," which acts as an incantation, a ritual like the invocation of the Muse in Shakespeare's poem. The speaker in the sonnet chides the Muse for her neglect; the author in #8 implores the translator to assume an expected creative role; the translator becomes Muse and author both.[15] Or consider the Unamuno passage in #4, the sentiment about longing to be another without ceasing to be oneself continues in the source, not quoted in *The Monument*, to the effect that the hunger to be another is a hunger for God (Lucas, 2014, p. 72; Unamuno, 1974).

Like Strand's own book, which ends with a valediction, excerpts from Nietzsche (*Thus Spake Zarathustra*) and Whitman ("O, Living Always, Always Dying"), we will end with two fitting quotes, but by the author himself (as the title of this study includes a quotation—from another work, of an imaginary version of another writer):

> *Why do you never come? Must I have you by being*
> *somebody else? Must I write My Life by somebody else?*
> *My Death by somebody else? Are you listening?*
> *Somebody else has arrived. Somebody else is writing.*
>
> "My Life By Somebody Else" (2007b, p. 63; italics in original)

> *The book would have to be written*
> *and would have to be read.*
> *They are the book and they are*
> *nothing else.*
>
> "The Story of Our Lives" (2002b, p. 33; italics in original)

Strand observes, "the quotes get the last word, [...] the words of the so-called original writer are lost in the quotes" (Anon., 2015, p. 132). Near the end, *The Monument* includes words from Anonymous (a classical Greek quotation); the *memento mori* is directed to the translator, who will by implication share the fate of the dead author:

> *Here I lie dead, and here I wait for thee;*
> *So thou shalt wait*

15. "I imagine you taking my name," an echo of a biological lineage.

Soon for some other; since all mortals be
Bound to one fate.

It is followed indistinctly by more lines on oblivion, from Thomas Browne: "[…] our fathers find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our survivors" (1658, p. 76). Like an unmarked grave, these quotations rely on the future readers—that is us—to sweep away time and tend to memory by sorting the dead, as we too will need sorting.

Conclusion

The Monument is no treatise on translation, and it is poetry in precisely those aspects in which its contradictions tease out competing or imbricating poetics, rather than set forth a dogma, of translation. Rather than an apologia for the translator, the author's project is full of misgivings and ironies, and tensions, anticipated and thus theoretical, but accurate to the author-translator relationships chronicled in literary translation history.

To ask "How would you like to be translated in five hundred years?" invites one to die before one dies. Mark Strand's *The Monument* holds its gaze on the contemplation of one's future translations as *dying into translation*, facing death, or in the jargon of terror management, mortality salience. The paradox of becoming text, a vulnerable immortality, is played out across the text's pages. Authorial and translatorial identities emerge as mutual dependencies ("Which of us has sought the other?," #4). Translation in the work tends to stand for lack and promise, but also unfulfillment; it stands too for the tensions between authorial ego and ego-unboundedness or ego death, between voice and quotation, between communication with an unknown interlocuter in the future and recognition that future readers are fanciful beyond human invention, and between the desire for rebirth and the embrace of nothingness.

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