Translation in Lydia Davis's work

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Abstract:

This thesis analyses the position of translations in the work of the American writer and translator Lydia Davis. Davis has been publishing stories and translations since the early 1970s, and has translated works by Maurice Blanchot, Michel Leiris, and Marcel Proust among others. This thesis argues that her translations form a graft onto the body of her own fiction; they are both part of her work and retain their identity as being written by someone else.

The first chapter builds on theory from Translation Studies and literary criticism to formulate a theory of translation as a form of writing that creates texts which are recognised to be equivalent to another, pre-existing text in another language. The second chapter posits three main tendencies for how an author's translations may be seen to interact with their other writings: no relationship; training or influence; and dialogue.

The next four chapters provide case studies which analyse Davis's translations in relation to other texts by Davis and the author she translated. Chapter three focuses on Blanchot, who is an important figure for Davis. Chapter four analyses Davis's relationship of influence and dialogue with Leiris. Chapter five posits that Davis creates a dialogue with Proust in her translation and her novel. Chapter six questions Davis's rejection of some of her translations as 'work-for-hire', focusing on Léon-Paul Fargue, whose writing is only superficially similar to Davis's, and Danièle Sallenave, whom Davis rewrites in her own novel.

The final two chapters analyse how Davis's own stories use translation and similar intertextual techniques, questioning the boundaries of translation as a practice. These stories make translation a central part of Davis's work, as it operates within the structure of some of her stories as well as in the more conventional sense of her translations of other writers.

Contents

Declaration

"Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award."

List of Illustrations

A note on the text

All unacknowledged translations throughout the text are my own. Translations by others are acknowledged by a reference to their publication.

I have used the 1954 Pléiade edition of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* throughout. A later Pléiade edition was published in1987, although Christopher Prendergast, editor of the Penguin translation of *In Search of Lost Time* notes in his introduction 'where considerations of intelligibility have arisen, the 1954 Pléiade has been used' (2002: ix), and that the Penguin edition avoids the 'vast sea of additional material' (ibid.) that forms part of the 1987 edition.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Lydia Davis has been publishing short, intellectual, emotive stories for over thirty years now. Since her 1986 collection, *Break it down*, she has been published in America by major publishers. She has won many awards, including a MacArthur Genius Grant. Until recently, however, her work was little known in the UK. The independent press Serpent's Tail published a reissue of *Break it down* as well as a British edition of Davis's novel *The End of the Story* (Davis 1995) in 1996, which were reviewed by Michael Hofmann in the *London Review of Books* (Hofmann 1996). Her next British publication came in 2010: a British edition of her *Collected Stories* (Davis 2009), published by Hamish Hamilton.

However, books signed by Lydia Davis have long been available on British booksellers' shelves. She is the translator of a substantial number of books from French, including, most famously, a new translation of Marcel Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann*, called in Davis's translation *The Way by Swann's* (Proust 2002). She has also translated five of Maurice Blanchot's fictional texts, including *Death Sentence* (1978), and two volumes of the surrealist poet Michel Leiris's autobiography, *Scratches* (1991) and *Scraps* (1997). Most recently she has published a new translation of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (2010). These high profile translations overshadow her other work as a translator: between 1978 and 2002 she translated over 20 book length works, including four novels by Pierre-Jean Jouve (1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b), a travelogue by Michel Butor (1986), a biography of Alexis de Tocqueville (Jardin 1988), as well as a book on masculine identity (Badinter 1995), and several more novels and non-fiction works. Davis's career as a translator began at the same time as her career as a writer: she published her first book length translation, with Paul Auster, in 1975. The couple would go on to translate four more books together, including a book of Sartre's interviews

(Sartre 1977) and a novel, *Aboard the Aquitaine*, by Georges Simenon (1979).

The relationship between Davis's fiction and her translations is at the heart of this thesis. Davis's œuvre as a writer is quite small but she has published a substantial number of translations, some of which are significant in their own right. Davis's translations can be read in relation to her own stories because her translations are signed with her name and contain traces of her authorial intervention, linking them to the body of texts that she has signed as an author. I argue in this thesis that Davis's œuvre as an author consists of her stories, which are taken to be central, as well as those translations of hers which form significant relationships with those stories. Not all of Davis's translations do so, as she translated to earn a living for much of her career, and some of the texts she translated have no apparent connection to her other work. The translations do not, however, become fully appropriated into her œuvre: they retain a separate identity. The metaphor that I use in chapter two to describe the relationship that they have to her œuvre is that of the graft. Like an apple branch from one variety grafted onto a tree of another, Davis's translations bear different fruit from her own stories.

Davis started publishing her stories with small presses in the 1970s. Her first collection, *The Thirteenth Woman and other stories,* was published in 1976 by Living Hand Press, which was an extension of *Living Hand*, the little magazine that Davis edited with her then husband Paul Auster. A second small press collection, *Story and other stories*, was published in 1983 by The Figures. The stories from both of these collections would reappear throughout her later books. In her next book, *Break it down* (1986), which contains 35 stories, 16 came from *Story and other stories* and a further six from *The Thirteenth Woman* (Perloff 1989: 206n5). *Break it down* was the first of Davis's collections to be published by a major publisher, Knopf. She published a novel, *The End of the Story*, which was quickly followed in 1997 by Davis's next collection, *Almost no memory.* These and Davis's most recent collection, *Varieties of Disturbance*

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(2007), were published by Farrar Strauss Giroux. Her 2001 collection *Samuel Johnson is Indignant* was, however, first published by the independent publisher McSweeney's as a hardback, but subsequent paperback editions have been published by Picador, which is owned by the same group as FSG. A *Collected Stories* was published by FSG in 2009, which brought together the four books previously published by mainstream publishers.

Davis's translations (listed in the appendix) are so substantial in number and importance that her reputation as a translator has overshadowed her reputation as a writer. As James Wood comments in his review of her *Collected Stories*, when he first heard of Davis in the mid-nineties, '[s]he was known as a translator of the French autobiographer Michel Leiris and the philosopher and critic Maurice Blanchot' (Wood 2009: 88). She was known as a translator first and foremost, while her stories were secondary. Wood also writes that Davis's work is considered 'glamorous in literary circles' (Wood 2009: 88), leading to the risk of reading her as a 'writer's writer' (ibid.). She is much more than this.

Davis's stories are experimental in form, avoiding or complicating standard ideas of narrative. Some of them are one line long, seemingly nothing more than an observation. For example, the story 'Hand' from Davis's 2007 collection *Varieties of Disturbance* is, in its entirety, the following sentence:

> Beyond the hand holding this book that I'm reading, I see another hand idle and slightly out of focus – my extra hand.
> (2007a: 30)

Davis's stories are often more developed than this short example suggests, but it shares a characteristic reevaluation of the quotidian that appears in many of her stories. Even in a text as short as 'Hand' there is a questioning of the individual's perception of self. The speaker (it is too much to say narrator) exhibits a detached relationship to their own body, which is slightly alien to them.

Davis's characters often exhibit this sort of self consciousness. In 'Break it down' (Davis 1986: 20-30), for example, the central character is struggling to come to terms with a brief but emotionally powerful love affair. To do so, he analyses what its financial cost was. He concludes that the good times cost about $3 an hour, if you include all the thinking about it beforehand and the memories afterward. This figure does not include the pain, which comes afterwards, and which the character says cannot be measured (1986: 30). The story questions its own logic as it develops, posing intellectual questions about cost to cover the more emotional question about whether or not the pleasure outweighs the pain.

Davis's self-reflexive characters lead the critic Marjorie Perloff to state that 'the question of interpretation is Davis's real subject' (1989: 208). Many of her stories fold back in on themselves, focussing not on the events of their narrative but on a character's interpretation of those events. Karen Alexander (2008) views this as a focus on analysis in the stories. The central characters of Davis's fiction tend to spend their time listening to themselves think, thinking about themselves thinking, trying to understand. Davis's fiction revolves around understanding and interpretation, suggesting that even when translation is not explicitly invoked, it is never far away. The metaphorical relationship with translation in her stories makes a reading of how her translations relate to those stories all the more necessary. No other American writer I can think of offers such an intricate web of connections between their translations and their fiction, to the point that the boundary between the two can become blurred.

I am not the first person to notice this symbiosis in Davis's work. Other critics have not ignored Davis's translations, although what little critical work there is about her focuses on her other writing. The comments that are made are often speculations on what influence translating has had on Davis's short fiction, and no critic investigates the relationship beyond general speculations. Marjorie Perloff, in her groundbreaking essay

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on Davis's work, wondered in a footnote what influence translating Leiris and Blanchot had had on Davis's own writing (Perloff 1989: 205n4). She does not develop this thought, and her placement of it in a footnote is telling: it separates it from the body of her essay, reducing the question to something not properly part of her discussion of Davis.

Influence features heavily in other comments on the relationship between Davis's work and her translations of Blanchot. Beverly Haviland remarks that 'Davis's excellent work as a translator of Maurice Blanchôt [sic] seems to have made her as distrustful of language as he is' (1989: 153). Haviland here reinforces the notion that the influence of translation on a writer moves only in one direction; I would argue that Davis's distrust of language could equally have led her to translate Maurice Blanchot. Josh Cohen (2005, 2010) uses ideas from Blanchot's critical writings to read stories by Davis, suggesting that these ideas offer a privileged insight into Davis's writing precisely because she translated Blanchot. Cohen also suggests that Davis's translation activity mirrors her focus on form at the expense of content in her own writing (2010: 504), yet, as I will show throughout this dissertation, Davis is equally concerned with emotional states and how they are affected by language.

Other critics have remarked on the influence of translating in general on Davis's writing, which, as Christopher Knight puts it, 'has left an imprint on her fiction' (Knight 1999: 525). Larry McCaffery sees evidence of this imprint in 'the recurrence ... of a set of concerns that all fundamentally have to do with the slipperiness of language' (1996: 59), as well as the presence of French and translated materials in her stories. Again, there is little here that could be considered substantial analysis, although McCaffery at least offers new ways of thinking about how translating has influenced Davis. Rather than just the influence of the writers she has translated, he suggests that translation may have influenced Davis's style and subject matter.

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I would like to go beyond simple ideas of influence in this thesis. I do not doubt that there is a possible relationship of influence between some of Davis's translations and her fiction, but Davis has also been influenced by texts that she did not translate. I argue that there is more to the relationship between her writing and translating than just influence from the translated texts. Some of Davis's translations bear traces of her own writing, such as a use of French words in her translations of Leiris, a technique which also appears in her stories 'The Letter' (Davis 1986: 49-56) and 'French Lesson 1: Le Meurtre' (Davis 1986: 128-136). Ben Marcus (2007) also suggests that Davis's own minimal aesthetic shines through her translation of Proust, which he says put 'Scott-Montcrieff's seminal translation on a diet'. Marcus reverses the common reading of translation as training for a writer, suggesting that Davis's own writing influences her translation activity. But again, he does not develop this thought. In other cases, themes and motifs from the texts that Davis has translated appear revised in her own stories, and her fiction can be read as responding to some of her translations. This is not so much a form of influence, as a form of textual dialogue between Davis and the other writer. Her translation offers another facet of that dialogue.

In this thesis, then, I go beyond previous commentary on Davis's work, breaking new ground by exploring in depth how her translations can be seen to relate to her own stories. To do so I use a methodology that has its roots in both comparative literature and Translation Studies. I use comparative readings of Davis's writing with texts that she has translated to look for connections, searching for echoes, parallels, and responses in Davis's work to her translations. In addition I interrogate how she has translated a work, looking for clues to her relationship with that text, and for echoes of her own writing techniques in her translation strategies. This combined methodology affords me the opportunity to tease out the multiple, subtle connections between the texts. My choice of what to analyse is influenced by Davis's own pronouncements on her

translations, in interviews and significantly in her short book *Proust, Blanchot and a Woman in Red* (Davis 2007b), where she writes about her translations of Proust, Blanchot and Leiris. All three, she says,'have been very important in [her] career as a translator' (Davis 2007b: 7). I will argue, in chapters three, four and five, that they have also been important in her career as a writer.

My reading of Davis's translations is written against a tendency in Translation Studies to view translators as what Anthony Pym calls 'mono-professionals' (1998: 161), as I investigate the links between Davis as a translator and Davis as a writer. Pym explains that this tendency came about through the professionalisation of translation in the 1980s. There was a growth in translation training: according to Caminade and Pym (1998: 283b), the number of university-level institutions offering degrees or diplomas in translating or interpreting rose from 108 in 1980 to 'at least' 250 in 1994. Pym explains further:

> [t]he rapid expansion of translator training in the late 1980s has been bolstered by an institutional discourse that posits a social need for specialist translators and interpreters, implicitly people trained to work in this field and no other. The result is a widespread belief in what we might call the ideal 'mono-professionalism' of translators.
> (Pym 1998: 161)

The institutional discourse on translating (and interpreting) helped to influence the perception that translators' sole professional activity is translating. As Pym is careful to highlight, this is only a 'widespread belief': he goes on to show, referring to the work of David Callahan (1993) on the translation of Spanish texts into English in the early twentieth century as well as other research on translators, that relatively few translators lived off translating (Pym 1998: 162). The institutional move towards a discourse of the translator-professional may have also been a response to what Lawrence Venuti (1986, 1995) has called 'the translator's invisibility': the way that the actions of translators tend not to be seen. By focusing on translation and translators, to the exclusion of their other

activities, Translation Studies would make translation visible.

This does not mean that there is no work in Translation Studies that analyses a writer's translations. *After Babel* (Steiner 1998) is full of analyses of writers' translations, as is Venuti's *The Translator's Invisibility* (1995). These two well known examples do not, however, link the writer's translations with their other writing, and are indicative of the general tendency of the discipline in this. By focusing on translations alone, the equally interesting connections between those translations and the other literary productions of a writer are eclipsed.

As translations feature so prominently in Davis's bibliography, I would argue that any approach to her cannot ignore either her translations or her stories. The two intertwine in a complex network. It is this network that the current project seeks to analyse. There have been other studies that analyse the relationship between writers' translations and their other writing, including Webb 1977, Block 1981, Kaplan 1989, Gentzler 1996, Heep 1996, West 1996, Stark 1997, Felstiner 1998, Kristal 2002, Bernofsky 2005, Cockerill 2006, and Varney 2010. Although none of these studies take Davis as an example, they form a background for how I propose translations can be related to a writer's work in the second chapter.

The thesis does not, and cannot, analyse the relationship between all of Davis's translations and her own stories. With over 20 book length translations (see appendix), it would take much more space than is allowed in the present dissertation. Davis's translation of *Madame Bovary* was published too late to be included – the thesis was in late stages of writing when it came out in the autumn of 2010.

Nor do I fully address the complex question of Davis's relationship with postmodern writing. That would, I fear, be another book length study. But some consideration of the relationship between postmodernism and Davis's work is unavoidable. Davis's stories could be considered avant-garde, as some try to find new

narrative techniques, but many of them have a more complex relationship with narrative, often doubting its possibility while at the same time producing it. Her novel *The End of the Story* offers a good example of telling a story and simultaneously questioning the possibility of telling it (see chapter six). This relationship is similar to the mix of subversion and belonging that Linda Hutcheon (1989: 3-15) characterises as specific to postmodern art. Davis's conscious use of intertextuality in her stories, which I analyse in chapter eight, is also reminiscent of postmodernist writers such as Kathy Acker and William Burroughs. I argue in that chapter that Davis's work draws on a tradition of collage and montage that dates back at least as far as the early twentieth century and arguably much longer.

Davis's relationship to American literature is similarly complex and outside the purview of the thesis, which focuses on the relationship her translations have with her own stories. She will often cite European writers such as Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka and Vladimir Nabokov among her influences (see, for example, McCaffery 1996: 66-67), and she has stated that she has 'very strong ties to Europe' (Knight 1999: 548). However, her stories often take place in apparently American settings as well as European ones. *The End of the Story,* for example, is set somewhere on the west coast of the USA. Talking to Larry McCaffery about her influences, she also mentioned the American writer Russell Edson (McCaffery 1996: 67). Edson writes short, surreal prose texts which do not fall neatly into any genre, like Davis's stories. While Edson's are published as poetry (e.g. Edson 1994), Davis prefers to call her short texts 'stories', although they have also been published in *The Best American Poetry 2001* (Hass and Lehman 2001: 67) and *The Best American Prose Poetry* (Lehman 2003: 191-192). Davis is also connected through friendship to contemporary poets: Ron Silliman reports that she is part of a group of people to whom the poet Rae Armantrout sends drafts of her poems (Silliman 2001: xiii). Davis certainly has roots in European literature, but she

is also an American writer, and her writing reflects both of these backgrounds.

To analyse how Davis's translation relate to her stories, I begin the thesis by questioning theoretically how translating can be seen as a form of writing which does not invent but which contains traces of the translator, and therefore can be seen as potentially part of an author's œuvre. Translation is a form of writing that recreates in one language a text from another, which necessarily involves the translator's intervention. I argue that translation is a form of intertextual writing, and following Linda Hutcheon's (2006) work on the theory of adaptation, that translation is more precisely a specific form of adaptation. What separates translation from other forms of adaptation is the relationship of equivalence that is assumed of a translation and its source text. Equivalence is unique to translation, but I argue against a traditional notion of equivalence as similarity, suggesting, following Theo Hermans (2007), that equivalence is agreed upon. This special status of translations is important, as it means that Davis's translations are distinct from, although related to, other instances of intertextuality in her work.

As translation can be seen as the creation of texts signed by an author and showing evidence of their handiwork, chapter two argues that translations can affect how the œuvre of a writer who translates is received. They can influence what Michel Foucault (1994) called a 'fonction-auteur' [author-function]. This chapter draws on previous studies of the relationships between writers' translations and their other writing, recognising three major trends in how translation is seen: first, as having no relation at all to a writer's work, as is the case with unsigned translations; secondly, as being an influence on the writer, which is how Cockerill (2006) reads Futabatei Shimei's translations; thirdly, as a forming a dialogue with a writer's other texts, which is how John Felstiner (1998) reads some of Paul Celan's translation. I argue that Davis's translations can be seen as an extension of her own work, and fall into all three trends.

Each translation will have a different relationship to Davis's stories, necessitating a careful reading, which pays attention to intertextual elements, formal and thematic similarities, Davis's comments about the text, as well as her translation strategy itself.

The first two chapters provide a theoretical background and methodology. The remaining six provide case studies. These case studies can be read independently, as Davis's response to each text is unique, but they are brought together by a shared analytical approach and their shared question of how Davis's translations interact with her own writing. Chapter three approaches Davis's translations of Blanchot. Davis has stated how important translating Blanchot was for her as a translator (2007b: 7). I suggest in this chapter that she may have an affinity with Blanchot in terms of narrative technique, but her focus on emotional relationships between characters is absent from Blanchot's writing. The first half of the chapter questions how Davis has translated Blanchot, reading her more literal approach to his writing as a sign of her respect for his style and the effects that it is designed to produce. The translation itself provides less evidence of a connection than has been previously assumed by critics. On the other hand, Davis's work can be read as responding to his theory of the *récit*. The chapter then analyses how the two writers share a refusal of narrative closure in their works, particularly Blanchot's *La Folie du jour* (1973a) and Davis's 'Story' (1986: 3-7). Where Blanchot's narrator refuses to tell a story about what happened to him, Davis's tries to understand the story that her lover has told her, entertaining multiple possibilities but never deciding between them. Davis therefore resembles Blanchot formally but privileges interpersonal emotional relationships.

Chapter four analyses the dialogue between Davis's stories and her translations of Michel Leiris. I first read her translations of Leiris, which are unconventional in their use of French words in the target text. This technique was suggested by two of Davis's earlier stories, 'The Letter' (Davis 1986: 49-56), and 'French Lesson 1: Le Meurtre'

(Davis 1986: 128-36). Davis's translation of Leiris is, I argue, 'abusive' in the sense Philip E. Lewis (2004) gives that term, but shows a productive dialogue with her own writing. This impression is supported by the presence in Davis's œuvre of stories which refer to Leiris's work, placing him in the position of an influence on Davis. The second half of the chapter explores this dialogue through a reading of her work in relation to Leiris's autobiography. I argue that both writers privilege what Roman Jakobson (1960: 356) calls the poetic function of language; the capacity of language to draw attention to itself. Davis, however, questions the 'order symbolique' [symbolic order] (Lacan 1966: 66) more than Leiris does, and her work can be also seen as a response to his as it uses similar methods of composition but avoids the autobiographical focus.

The fifth chapter focuses on Davis's translation of Proust. It begins with an analysis of that translation, paying special attention to how, as a retranslation, it differentiates itself from previous translations. I argue that Davis's attention to minute details in Proust's prose comes from her reading of the inseparability of form and content in his work, and mirrors her own precision as a writer. Davis readily admits to Proust's influence on her own work, and the second half of the chapter reads her novel *The End of the Story* as identifying itself through allusion and parallel structures as a Proustian novel. I argue, however, that the novel presents a postmodern reworking of Proust's novel, notably in its refusal of a teleological goal of the narrative. Davis's novel enters into a dialogue with her later translation of Proust.

Chapter six analyses Davis's relation to two texts that she herself dismisses as 'work-for-hire' translations (Davis 2007b): her translations of the poet Léon-Paul Fargue in *The Random House Book of Twentieth Century Poetry* (Auster 1982) and Danièle Sallenave's novel *La Vie fantôme* (1986, trans. 1989). I question Davis's dismissal of the texts she calls 'work-for-hire' before reading the relations between Davis's writing, her translation, and the source texts. My choice of Fargue is predicated on the connection

Paul Auster (1982: xlviii) makes between Davis and Fargue in his introduction to *The Random House Book of Twentieth Century French Poetry*, which I argue is no more than a superficial impression. I show that Davis and Fargue are very different writers and this translation has little connection to Davis's other stories. Her translation of Sallenave, however, I choose because the two women write experimental prose, and both have translated alongside their producing their own fiction. Davis ultimately rewrites Sallenave's novel in her translation and *The End of the Story*, suggesting a more dialogic relationship between them than would be expected from Davis's implicit rejection of her 'work-for-hire' translations.

Chapter seven, 'Marie Curie revisited', analyses a story based on a translation that Davis distances herself from, but which still enters into a relevant relationship with her stories because it serves as a source for one. Davis translated Françoise Giroud's biography of Marie Curie, *Une femme honorable* (1981) as *Marie Curie: A Life* (1986). She then published a story in 2001, 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' (Davis 2001a: 99-119), which is based on literal translations from Giroud's book. I draw on a mixture of copyright law and Linda Hutcheon's (1985) theory of parody to question how it relates to its source text. I conclude that it is not purely a translation nor a parody nor an abridgement, but a hybrid of all of them. Like translation, 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' creates a double coded text where the source side is barred because inaccessible to the reader. It brings translation as a practice into Davis's œuvre as a writer, blurring boundaries between the modes of writing.

The final chapter analyses other stories by Davis which similarly question the distinction between translating and writing, returning full circle to questions asked in the first chapter. I analyse those stories which use intertextuality in a way that recalls translation before moving on to her stories which dramatise the process of translation. The former recontextualise work by other writers into Davis's own, like translation, and

can also be seen as producing grafts. The latter group show how translation becomes a part of Davis's own stories, shifting the centre of her œuvre away from fiction towards translation. The distinction between the two blurs, highlighting the importance of translation for Davis's writing.

Chapter 1   Writing and translation

Invention and originality are central to the concept of literature as it commonly understood. This understanding is historically and socially bound: it is a 'recent invention' in Jacques Derrida's words (1992: 40). Literature (as a concept) is the result of technical and cultural developments in Western Europe since the middle ages, such as the printing press and the development of the book trade. Derrida remarks that literary texts are bound to their written form, a signature, an author; this is not the case for poetry (ibid.), which could be spread by word-of-mouth without reference to an author. Literature is reliant on the dissemination of texts on a scale that was impossible before the printing press, and hence upon economic conditions which allow for the sale and exchange on a mass scale of written works. Originality became important to literature as a result of the development of copyright law in the eighteenth century (Rose 1993: 6): to benefit from the new marketplace for writing, authors needed to make sure that they had a product that was identifiably theirs. An author's work needed to be seen as original so they could sell the rights to copy it. The aesthetic ideal of originality is therefore intimately linked to the economic necessity of originality.

As a consequence of the connection between literature and originality, writing is perceived to be an act of invention. When she was asked how translation related to her fiction writing, Davis replied 'I like to have an ongoing translation because it is a way of writing without the pressure of writing' (Knight 1999: 528). Her comment is contradictory: it posits translation as a type of writing which is also not writing. Davis corrected herself a moment later to explain that translation was writing 'without the pressure of invention' (Knight 1999: 529). Davis's explanation suggests that writing is the creation of something which was not there before. This is arguably true of fiction writing, which involves the creation of character, setting, plot. Translation does not

create such fictional elements; in a translated text, there will be characters and situations which have already been written in another text in a different language. Translation is, however, a creative activity which requires an act of writing: the translator must find solutions to textual problems and manipulate words on a page.

Translation is a parallel form of writing to Davis's activity as a writer of fiction, one that differentiates itself by the absence of the need to create new fictional elements, or, as she says, to invent. Her translations can therefore be read alongside her own writings, as part of her work, and connections can be drawn between them and her other texts. In this and the next chapter, I explore how this reading of translation can take place.

The problem lies in the fact that, as Davis's comments show, 'writing' is identified with the act of writing fiction and literary creation. The Romantic image of the author as genius, wrestling their creations onto the blank page, continues to haunt the idea of literary writing. Translation always has a relation to another already existing text. The translator is not struggling with the muse, but with another writer's work: the blank page is no longer blank. In both American (17 USCode Section 101) and British law (Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 (ch. 48), Section 21(3)(a)(i)) a translation is defined as a derivative work, like an adaptation. Derivative works are defined in opposition to the creation of 'original' works, which are not supposed to substantially recreate an already existent text. However, translation is also original because it produces a new text – not a copy of the source text, but a text which, while different in appearance, is deemed equivalent to that source text. Translation is both original and not original, invention and not invention. It therefore complicates notions of authorship.

In this chapter I focus on how translation can be defined as a form of textual production that produces texts which are deemed equivalent to already existing texts in another language, and thus still a form of writing which can carry traces of the authorial

signature of its translator. I explore how translation relates to other forms of intertextuality. Translation can be viewed as a subset of adaptation, as both have the characteristic of relating two specific texts together at the level of the whole text. Yet not all adaptations are translations: the definition of translation remains restricted by the idea of equivalence, which is a socially produced phenomenon. The translator's interventions in the texts do not affect the possibility of equivalent status.

Intertextuality and translation

The concept of intertextuality undermines the connection between invention and originality. It posits that all textual production, including so-called original composition, is reliant on previous writing. No written text can be entirely original: it will always be related to other already existent writings. Texts relate to other texts in general ways, and also in more specific relationships. Translation is an example of a specific relationship between two texts. This section will begin by analysing the more general meaning of intertextuality, before focusing on more specific forms.

Intertextuality can be summarised by saying that all texts contain traces of other texts. In this formulation it is less precise than Julia Kristeva's definition: 'la transposition d'un (ou de plusieurs) système(s) de signes en un autre' [the transposition of one (or of several) sign system(s) into another] (1974: 59). The sign system of the novel, she says, can be viewed as 'le résultat d'une rédistribution de plusieurs systèmes de signes différents : le carnaval, la poésie courtoise, le discours scolastique' [the result of a redistribution of several different sign systems: carnival, courtly poetry, scholastic discourse] (ibid.). Kristeva's definition of intertextuality entails a movement of signs across different media, rather than just across different written texts: the novel can

accept signs from carnival as well as from written discourses.[1] The transposition of different sign systems is by no means limited to the novel: philosophy, for instance, can use elements of mathematics (for example, Badiou's use of formulae in *Being and Event* (2005)); and poetry can annex explicitly mathematical forms (e.g. Inger Christensen's use of the Fibonacci sequence in her poem sequence from 1981, *Alfabet*).

A more restricted sense of intertextuality as the interaction between texts is what Roland Barthes has in mind in 'Le mort de l'auteur' [The Death of the Author] when he writes 'le texte est un tissu de citations' [the text is a tissue of quotations] (1994: 494). He points towards a more specific form of intertextuality which relies on textual sources that can be traced, rather than the generic sign systems of Kristeva's more radical version of intertextuality. There is no reason why the citations in a text are limited to sources in the same semiotic system, however. Written texts can cite linguistic elements from films, dialogue for example. While there are differences between their concepts of intertextuality, both Barthes and Kristeva suggest that intertextuality is the normal state of literary works. No text can escape from interaction with other texts.

Intertextuality also includes the functioning of norms and genres,[2] as they rely on relationships between texts. A norm, for instance, cannot be a norm unless it appears in the majority of texts in a particular field. The rules of a genre are also intertextual; as Tzvetan Todorov remarks in his *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, analysing a genre means 'découvrir une règle qui fonctionne à travers plusieurs textes' [discovering a rule which functions across several texts] (1970: 7). While norms and genres do not involve a movement between sign systems, they are part of rules and systems that function across multiple texts. Norms and genres are important in determining a text's production and reception, even its possible publication. If a text breaks the norms which

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[1] Her conception of the novel is clearly indebted to Bakhtin's view of the novel as a protean form which 'squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure' (1981: 5).
[2] Introductions to intertextuality by Allen (2000) and Orr (2003) do not include norms and genres, focusing rather on the transfer of material from one text to another.

are active in its particular field, then it may not be published, or it will have to be revised. Norms and genres undermine the Romantic idea of originality, as they produce limits to what is acceptable as a text, revealing how originality is bounded by constraints.

Davis's stories clearly enter into intertextual relationships. They are part of the genre of the story, although they often question the limits of that genre. Her one sentence stories such as 'Hand' (2007a: 30) question just how short a story can be, while 'Story' (1986: 3-7) questions the possibility of a narrative conclusion in the story (see chapter three). In addition, they are read in relation to other texts; Christoper Knight (2008), for instance, reads *The End of the Story* in relation to Wittgenstein's philosophy. Her translations offer a more specific form of intertextuality, as they each have an extensive relationship with a single text.

Translations are not the only example of moments in texts when there is an explicit relationship with other texts. Such a relationship can range from fleeting references and allusions to full scale recreations in the form of adaptations or imitations. Quotation would offer the most obvious example of a case of a specific form of intertextuality, as here the other text is replicated in the new text. Forms like pastiche and imitation would also posit a specific and clear, if unacknowledged, relationship between two texts: the pastiche or imitation[3] mimics an older text, but produces a different, new text. Pastiche and imitation are specific in their intertextuality as their mimicry is limited to identifiable models.

There are also intertextual occasions when two texts interact in a close way, for example, novels or short stories that engage a single text. An example would be J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) which engages and rewrites Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). Different scholars have used different terms for an engaged relationship

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[3] Richard Dyer separates pastiche and imitation by noting that 'pastiche is a kind of imitation you are meant to know is imitation' (2007: 1). Pastiche is marked as imitation and as derivative.

between two texts: Linda Hutcheon called it 'parody' (1985); Gérard Genette called it 'hypertextualité' (1982); Christian Moraru called it 'rewriting' (2001). Theo D'haen (2007) characterises it as 'bound intertextuality', which he says 'posits a stricter link between two or more texts than is necessarily the case in an intertextual relation' (D'haen 2007: 108). This term is preferable because it can be used to describe a multitude of different relationships between texts, but also because it does not have the already existent connotations of a word like 'adaptation' or 'parody'.

D'haen's definition of 'bound intertextuality' comes as a reaction to the overuse of 'translation' as a description of the relationship between texts (2007: 108). D'haen makes clear that the relationship between texts in his 'bound intertextuality' is 'always less strict than that which we usually associate with a "real" translation' (ibid.). The newer text exists in a close derivative relationship to the older text, but is not supposed to be able to stand in for it as a 'reliable substitute', which is how Theo Hermans (1998: 17) describes translations. Many of Davis's stories that I discuss in the final chapter offer forms of 'bound intertextuality', as well as pastiche and parody: 'Southward Bound, Reads *Worstward Ho*' (Davis 2007a: 68-71) pastiches Beckett's style, while also providing a commentary on the text. Yet these stories are not translations, as they do not provide a substitute for their source texts.

The relationship between a translation and its source text is much more extensive than in 'bound intertextuality'. Adaptation also offers an extensive form of a 'bound intertextual' relationship between two texts, and can cover a variety of different possibilities and degrees of proximity to the original. While adaptations differ from their sources, they tend to look more similar to them than rewritings do. Adaptations can be seen as a specific form of 'bound intertextuality', and translations a specific form of adaptations.

Adaptation and translation

Adaptations are texts that recreate another text in a different form. This can be done by transposing a novel to film, or a film to a novel, to use an obvious example. Linda Hutcheon defines adaptations as 'openly acknowledged and extended reworkings of particular other texts' (2006: 16). The relationship between the two texts therefore entails an interaction at the level of the whole text, rather than of individual parts. Adaptations also acknowledge which other texts they are based on, differentiating them from parodies, imitations or rewritings which may not acknowledge their source openly. From this description, it would seem that translation can be considered a form of adaptation. In this section I analyse how Hutcheon defines adaptation, and how translation fits into this definition, before addressing how translation theory has attempted to keep a restrictive definition of translation that separates it from adaptation and other intertextual practices. In light of the use of intertexts in some of Davis's stories, a restricted definition of translation allows me to distinguish her translations from her other writings which have intertextual elements and to clarify the relationship between them and her stories in her œuvre.

  Hutcheon argues against seeing adaptations as simple repetitions of the previous text in another medium. 'It is repetition but without replication' she writes (2006: 173): there is always a difference at the heart of the adaptation. The adaptive text does not form a replacement for the source text because it is a recoding of it. At the same time the adaptation repeats a significant amount of its source, although not all. As this repetition takes place in a recoded form it is always different to the source text. Adaptation can only be seen as repetition from a limited perspective. For example, from the viewpoint of narrative, it is possible to see how two different texts in different media (e.g. film and novel) tell the 'same' story. Even in this example, though, the difference in media will make apparent how the telling of the story will be different: the verbal and

visual media have different constraints and capabilities. In a novel it is easier and more acceptable to have access to the internal thoughts of a character than it is in a film, for instance.

Adaptations create a new text because they represent a reworking or a recreation of the source text. The adaptive text stands beside the source text as a new way of seeing the same material. The relationship between adaptation and source is one of interpretation, as the adaptation can never fully reproduce the source. Adaptations must involve an act of interpretation to choose what elements from the original reappear in the adaptation. All of the characteristics of adaptation also describe translation: translation is interpretation; translation does not replace the source text but produces a substitute in another language; translation can only recreate elements of the source text. Translation can therefore be considered as a form of adaptation.

As adaptation and translation involve an act of interpretation and rewriting, they can therefore carry the authorial signature of the adapter, who creates a text that has an extensive relationship to a previous text but which also contains elements that the adapter is responsible for. Hermans makes a similar point about translation, where the translator's subjectivity must be present in the text, 'however well hidden' (2007: 27). In adaptation, this authorial intervention may be more obvious than in a translation, as it is more accepted that the adapter is the author of the adaptation: Gus Van Sant's remake of *Psycho* (1998), for instance, is viewed as a film by Van Sant (Verevis 2006: 58), even though there are extensive, almost translational relationships with its source text, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1968).

Translation cannot be viewed as totally indistinguishable from adaptation: not all adaptations are translations. Hutcheon initially remarks that 'adaptations are often compared to translations' (2006: 16): she appears here to see the two modes of textual production as distinct. Later, however, she includes translations in her continuum of

adaptations (2006: 171). Translation thus becomes for Hutcheon a specific form of adaptation. While Hutcheon does not show an image of the continuum, it can be visualised as a line from fidelity to diffusion:

Fidelity   Diffusion

$\longleftarrow$ ————————————————————————————————— $\longrightarrow$

| Literary translations, transcription of orchestral music for piano | Film adaptations of novels | Spin-offs, sequels, prequels |
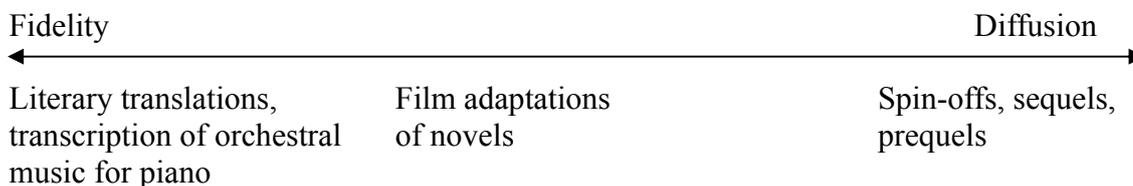
(Adapted from Hutcheon 2006: 171-172)

The left hand side presents those adaptations for which there is the ideal of reproducing the source text in the most complete way, although this may be practically impossible. A piano transcription of orchestral music, for example, cannot provide the same auditory experience as hearing the 'same' piece of music played by an orchestra, but it can represent the music in the different form of a piano solo which contains the same sequence of notes as the main theme of the orchestral piece. The right hand side represents the use of the source as an inspiration: the adaptation builds on its source, while still remaining in relationship to it. D'haen's 'bound intertexual' works would fit somewhere on the extreme right hand side of the continuum.[4] Hutcheon's continuum of adaptation still defines translation as a specific textual activity within the wider field of adaptation. Other theorists who have also related translation to a wider group of intertextual forms, e.g. Jakobson (1959), Genette (1982: 293-300), Lefevere (1992), Orr (2003: 156-161), D'haen (2007), Dyer (2007: 34), also define (often implicitly) translation as a specific textual form.

Many of these theorists separate translation from other forms of intertextuality by reference to a translation's closeness to its source text, compared with the freedom to differ that is accorded to adaptation. Describing exactly how a translation is connected to its source text is, however, somewhat problematic. D'haen notes that translations have

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[4]   The right hand side could be extended to works which are clearly not adaptations but which contain elements of adaptation and intertextuality, but this is not Hutcheon's aim.

a 'strict' relation to their source texts (2007: 108), but it is unclear what that strict

relation entails. Dyer (2007: 34) calls it a 'closeness to template', echoing the economic

closeness suggested by Dryden's (2004: 38) 'metaphrase', as well as Hutcheon's more

subtle 'fidelity to prior work' (2006: 171). Jacques Derrida's idea of 'le problème

économique de la traduction' [the *economic* problem of translation] (1985a: 231,

original emphasis) can be seen as a distillation of the approach implicit in these

theorists' definition of translation. Derrida explains the idea more fully in a later text: 'il

faut que, hors de toute paraphrase, explication, explicitation, analyse, etc., la traduction

soit *quantitativement* équivalente à l'original' [the translation must be *quantitatively*

equivalent to the original, without any paraphrase, explanation, explicitation, analysis,

etc.] (Derrida 1999: 27, original emphasis). There should be no addition, subtraction,

multiplication, or division of the text when translated. Derrida notes further on that

'cette forme d'équivalence quantitative n'est jamais rigoureusement accessible' [this

form of quantitative equivalence is never rigorously accessible] (1992: 27): it is only an

ideal of translations.

It is this ideal of an 'équivalence du "un mot *par* un mot"' [equivalence of "one

word *by* one word"] (1999: 28, original emphasis) that could be seen as the limit

between translations and adaptations: the former are supposed to achieve this ideal,

whereas the latter do not have this requirement. Anthony Pym also explicitly utilises a

quantitative ideal of translation as the border between translation and adaptation (2004:

87), but tempers it with the wry observation that '[o]f course, translators have been

omitting and adding things for centuries' (ibid.).

Pym highlights the practical argument against defining translation through

quantitative equivalence. Translators constantly cut and add material. In addition, due to

the difference between languages and how they can express the ideas and information,

no translation will ever be exactly the same length as its original. Derrida has already

admitted this failing, and he does not seriously expect any translation to achieve one-for-one equivalence. He is positing it as an ideal of translation. The idea of the strict relationship between a translation and its source text can be idealised to become this one-for-one equivalence. But this definition does not allow for the practices of real translators. In Davis's translation of Danièle Sallenave's *La Vie fantôme* (1986, trans. 1989), which I analyse in chapter six, for instance, Davis explains culture specific elements and alters paragraphing: she therefore adds and subtracts material.

If 'quantitative equivalence' is not sufficient to define whether a text is a translation or an adaptation, then there must be some other quality of translations that is unique to translations as a genre. Only translations are deemed equivalent to their source texts: no other specific intertextual form has this quality, even remakes in the style of Van Sant's *Psycho*.

Equivalence

Equivalence allows translation to be viewed as a particular (inter)textual activity. Anthony Pym has noted that any restrictive theory of translation needs to pay attention to equivalence (1997: 168). Without the idea of equivalence, he says, there is no way of defining which texts are translations and which are not. Werner Koller (1995), in the context of identifying the object of Translation Studies, also defines translations as having a relationship of equivalence with their source text. Adaptations and rewritings are not considered equivalent to their source text, but translations are. There is no real possibility of a text which is free from intertextuality, but a text may not be a translation.[5] I argue in this section that Davis's translations are recognised as translations rather than any other form of text because they are deemed to be equivalent

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[5] This is why Farzenah Farahzad's (2008) idea of avoiding the problems of equivalence by defining translation as an intertextual activity does not provide a definition of translation that could distinguish it from other forms of adaptation.

to their source texts by Blanchot, Proust, etc. They therefore remain distinct from other texts that share her signature.

Unfortunately, there is no real consensus on just what it means for texts to be equivalent. Equivalence appears as a concept in many theories of translation. Andrew Chesterman includes equivalence among his five 'supermemes of translation' (1997: 9-10), the ideas about translation that appear in one form or another in most theories of translation. Dorothy Kenny (1998) and Pym (1997, 2007) also both find evidence of the idea of equivalence throughout the history of translation theory. This ubiquity leads to many different theories of equivalence. Mary Snell-Hornby (1988: 22) considered this lack of clear definition as one reason to get rid of the concept of equivalence from translation theory. Several contemporary approaches to translation were already reducing the importance of equivalence. In skopos theory (see Vermeer 2004), equivalence was less relevant than fulfilling a goal. Descriptive Translation Studies posited that 'when a text is offered as a translation, it is quite readily accepted bona fide as one' (Toury 1995: 26); any text claiming to be a translation would be accepted as equivalent to a source text, even if there was no evidence of that source text (Toury 1995: 34). Poststructuralism's 'radical distrust of the possibility of any intrinsically stable meaning that could be fully present in texts … and, thus, supposedly recoverable and repeatable elsewhere without the interference of subject' (Arrojo 1998: 25) leads to an impossibility of equivalence; firstly, because poststructuralists will argue that there is no stable meaning to be equivalent to; secondly, because the translated text must always bear traces of the translator, which were not present in the source text; the texts therefore cannot be equivalent. A return to equivalence as a defining characteristic of translation could therefore be considered as going against the tide of opinion in

Translation Studies.[6]

Equivalence is, I would argue, a feature of the text that is presumed by the target language readership. Translations are accepted as providing what Hermans has called 'full-scale representations' (1998: 17) in another language of their source texts.[7] The acceptance of the translation as equivalent takes place despite any difference in meaning from the source text. This is in line with Descriptive Translation Studies' accounts of the status of texts as translations, and I would agree with Hermans's statement that equivalence is 'imposed on [translations] through an external intervention in a particular institutional context' (2007: 6). Literature is an institution, albeit one which operates with multiple authorities. Literature functions as a series of 'interpretive communities', which Stanley Fish explains are 'made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties' (1980: 171). There are multiple communities into which a text can be received, and not all of these will agree on its status. One interpretive community might not accept that a translation is equivalent to its source and will accordingly retranslate the source text, which will also lead to a declaration of equivalence for the new translation. In literature multiple translations may be considered equivalent. For example, there are multiple translations of Proust's work which compete for recognition as equivalent, and which are all, to an extent, considered equivalent (see chapter six).

Hermans's 'external intervention' of declaring translational status in literature generally takes the form of paratexts. The publisher of a translated text makes a declaration that a text is a translation, at least on the copyright pages. They also often declare the text's status through a series of additional paratextual markers such as the accreditation of a translator, publishing the text in a series of works in translation, and

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[6] I am not alone in this move: Anthony Pym has, since at least 1997, been endeavouring to get equivalence back on the agenda of Translation Studies.

[7] Chesterman defines the relationship between translation and source as one of 'relevant similarity' (1997: 69), but this could also be said of other forms of adaptation.

so on. These paratexts arguably convince readers of the already accepted equivalence of a translation. Methodological reflection in Translation Studies suggests a similar conclusion: Pym recommends, as part of a methodology for translation history, identifying translations by their paratexts (1998: 61-65).

It may appear as if defining translations by a declaration of equivalence is begging the question: translations, it would seem, are translations because someone says they are translations. It is more complex than this. The declaration of equivalence from a publisher comes after a process of validation that has taken place before publication. The process involves granting of the legal right to produce a translation, which means there must be a traceable source text which has been copyrighted. As I argued at the beginning of the chapter, the institution of literature is founded upon the idea of copyright and the sale of texts; literary translation is also subject to publication and copyright. Literary translations are sold as a translation of another text, rather than as a form of writing in their own right. If they are presented as something other than translations (e.g. adaptations, reworkings, imitations) then their status is not as an equivalent text, and therefore not a translation, but only as a form of adaptation. Without the declaration that a text is a translation, it is not read as a translation: Juliane House's 'covert translations' (1997: 69) are not experienced as translations by the general reader, but as non-translated texts. I therefore disagree with Hermans when he states that '[e]quivalence spells the end of translation' (2007: 25). In the form of a socially constructed acceptance of the trustworthiness of representation of a target text for its source text which is marked by paratextual indicators at publication, equivalence offers the possibility of recognising texts as translations.

The boundaries between translation and other forms of intertextual writing (i.e. adaptation) are not fully determined due to the socially constructed nature of translation, and some of Davis's stories, which I analyse in chapter eight, question the distinction.

The relationships between features of the source text and the target text are not defined by calling a text a translation, and may overlap with the relationships visible in adaptations. Both translation and adaptation involve the recreation of a text in another code (another language or another medium). The boundary between translation and adaptation is arbitrary and contingent: different interpretive communities will have different opinions on where it lies, and as such the boundaries may change.

The presentation of texts as translations is important for reading their position in relation to Davis's stories. Davis's translations are clearly labelled as translations: they are therefore supposed to be trustworthy in their representation of the source text. They are accepted as 'reliable substitutes' (Hermans 1998: 17) for their source texts, but at the same time bear traces of their translator throughout the text, as all translations do. Davis is the writer of her translations, and she must make interpretive decisions throughout the texts: her imprint is therefore left upon them throughout, often in subtle ways. Davis's Proust translation, for example, is as much her translation as it is Proust's novel.

Importantly, then, Davis's translations can be considered to belong to her body of textual production, as they are signed by her and contain traces of her authorial identity. The translations have a special status in relation to other of Davis's writings, as they are recognised as being equivalent to other texts by other writers, rather than solely texts by Davis. The question remains whether or not translations can affect how her other texts are read, and if they can be recognised as being part of her œuvre as an author. Once this is established, it is possible to map out the possible forms of connection that her translations have in relation to her own writing. I argue in the next chapter that they form a graft onto her work: both part of her work and recognisably different.

Chapter 2   The relationship of translations to the rest of an author's *œuvre*

Recognising both translations and literary texts as forms of writing that can be signed and connected to an author means that both can be seen as belonging to their œuvre. The concept of an œuvre, argues Michel Foucault (1994: 795), posits a unity across the different texts by an author. Foucault describes this unity as problematic (ibid.), as it is an expectation of the reader rather than a demonstrable textual quality: readers expect a certain coherence and uniformity across the work of an author. However, as Foucault points out, that unity is an illusion: the concept of an author, he writes, 'c'est ... ce qui permet de surmonter les contradictions qui peuvent se déployer dans une série de textes' [is what makes it possible to overcome the contradictions that may be spread through a series of texts] (1994: 802). The author is not therefore identical to the writer, but a construct of the text (ibid.). The author is not a living person who writes, eats, sleeps, drives to the shops, plays tennis, fills out tax forms, watches movies, etc, but rather the figure of the author that the reader imagines for themselves from the texts. Lydia Davis as author is not, therefore, Lydia Davis the flesh-and-blood person, but a textual construct.

The texts that can be associated with an author are more limited than those which the actual writer can produce. Readers will not accept just any text as part of an œuvre: there must be some sort of connection and uniformity with the other texts. Foucault (1994: 801-802) finds the roots of the modern concept of an author's uniformity of production in St Jerome's methods for deciding if a text was canonical or not. Accordingly, texts by an author are supposed to have a constant (literary) value, conceptual coherence, stylistic unity, and date from the same historical period. Such uniformity is not always demonstrable, but St Jerome is not trying to classify all texts by a writer; only those which are canonical. Only those which demonstrate this uniformity

"really" belong to an author's œuvre. The rest can be ignored. In modern terms, this would mean ignoring notebooks, drafts, letters, shopping lists, and other non-literary forms of writing, or anything by an author which was not of equal value to the rest of their literary works, such as juvenilia or pornography. The construction of an œuvre revolves around the exclusion of texts which are not considered to have relevant, significant connections with other works by an author.

Translations' dual status, as both original texts and derivative works, causes translations to take a problematic place in a writer-translator's œuvre. Because the translated texts may be from a different era, written in a different style, express different ideas, or be of a different value to the rest of an author-translator's writings, the translated texts may not appear to have significant relationships with those other writings. Translations begin to belong to a writer's œuvre when readers perceive thematic or stylistic similarities between the translations and their own works. There must be some sort of apparent connection, due to the expectations of coherence inherent in the concept of an œuvre.

In this chapter I argue that if there is a connection between a writer's own texts and their translations then translations can be viewed as an extension of a writer's œuvre through another writer's texts. Like a graft, they form part of the work but at the same time they are also recognisably distinct. Translations take a liminal position of belonging and not belonging, because they are part of a writer's textual production but at the same time they also present something which is potentially radically different from the other texts by the author.

The place that translations find in an œuvre is reliant on how they are perceived in relation to the other works by their translator. This chapter posits three main trends that can be seen in examples from other studies and Davis's work: translations may have no relationship to other texts; or they might be seen as having influenced a writer; or

they might form some sort of dialogue with the other texts. These three trends inform my later analyses of Davis's translations, and I conclude with a methodology for reading those translations in relation to her œuvre.

Translations with no relation to other texts

Translations are not always completed as literary projects. They can be, simply, a way of paying the bills. Literary writers may undertake translations that are technical or commercial in nature, and which are *de jure* works-for-hire. Such translations are often unsigned by the writer, and consequently extremely difficult to trace through library catalogues or other sources. Due to the lack of signature, such texts would almost never belong to an author's œuvre, because they are not associated with that author. The signature would connect them to other works with the same signature. Unsigned translations could also justifiably be said not to be part of their translator's œuvre, as they are not claimed by the writer/translator as part of their body of work because they are not signed.

Lydia Davis has produced such unsigned translations. According to Thad Ziolkowski (1993), Davis and her then husband Paul Auster 'translate[d] a variety of art books and catalogues for the Galerie Maeght' when the pair were living in France in the seventies. These translations appear lost: they cannot be found in library catalogues, or were unsigned at the time of publication and consequently difficult to trace back to either Auster or Davis. Auster mentions the translations in an interview:

> Then I went through a long period where I earned my living doing translations. That was a completely different matter [to his translations of modern French poets]. I had nothing to do with choosing the texts. The publishers would tell me that they needed a translation of such and such a book, and I would do it. It was very draining work and had nothing to do with literature or my own writing. History books, anthropology books, art books. You grind out so many pages a day and it puts bread on the table.
> (Auster 1997: 272-273)

Auster's description of the life of a jobbing translator is somewhat bleak: 'grind[ing] out pages' suggests a painful, violent process. Translation in this case is a job like banking or cleaning: it is what you do to earn money, and it bears no resemblance to an artistic activity. Auster's statement that he was translating to earn a living, and the lack of signature on the texts, place these early commissioned translations outside of Auster's authorial œuvre: they are excluded from relationships with his other work through his reduction of them to non-artistic activities

The translations by Auster and Davis from this period that are signed and accessible in library catalogues reinforce Auster's description of the texts as the choice of the publisher rather than the translators. The earliest is a translation of Saul Friedländer and Mahmoud Hussein's *Arabs and Israelis: A Dialogue*, published by Holmes & Meier in 1975. Auster and Davis translated four other books together: two of Chinese history (Chesneaux, Bergère and Le Barbier 1977; Chesneaux 1979), a collection of short essays and interviews with Jean-Paul Sartre (Sartre 1977), and a novel by Georges Simenon, *Aboard the Aquitaine* (Simenon 1979: 229-325). The books of Chinese history and the dialogue between Friedländer and Hussein cannot be considered literary works, and there is little in the texts to suggest that they may have literary connections to other writings by Davis or Auster. The texts by Sartre and Simenon that the couple translated are more literary, but are more accessible than the more avant-garde authors that Auster and Davis were also translating individually during that period, such as André Du Bouchet (1976) in Auster's case or Blanchot (1975, 1976, 1977) in Davis's.

The co-translations do not reflect the pair's other literary activities from the period. Auster had already published a book of poems, *Unearth*, in 1974, as well as translations of Jacques Dupin's poetry (Dupin 1974). Both books were published by *Living Hand*, a press and magazine that Auster and Davis edited (Ziolkowski 1993). The

magazine ran from 1973 to 1976, and would publish another book of translations by Auster, Du Bouchet's *The Uninhabited* (1976), as well as Davis's first collection of short stories, *The Thirteenth Woman and other stories* (1976). Davis would also begin publishing her translations of Blanchot's *L'Arrêt de mort,* under the title 'Death Halt', in *Living Hand* in 1975. The journal and the two writers' own works at this time were far more avant-garde than the translations they were undertaking together.

In relation to these more avant-garde activities, the co-translations certainly appear to be a means of making money. They were published by large presses, such as Holmes and Meier for *Arabs and Israelis,* while the China books were published by Harvester in the UK and by Pantheon (a division of Random House) in the USA. Sartre's interviews and essays were also published by Pantheon in the USA, and republished in the UK a year later, with a different title, by André Deutsch (Sartre 1978). *Aboard the Aquitaine* was published as part of *The African Trio* by Hamish Hamilton in London. These books appear not to have been republished, but publication with such large publishers meant that they would have been much more widely disseminated than Auster and Davis's own writing at the time.

It would be difficult to successfully argue that these early co-translations have extensive relationships with Auster's or Davis's later writing. In the interview, Auster explicitly excludes the possibility that translations done at a publisher's behest, even the signed translations, can belong to his œuvre. Although Davis has not been so vocal about these early translations, it would also be hard to present them as relevant to her authorial œuvre. Davis characterises these translations, as well as many of her other translations, as 'works-for-hire' (Davis 2007b: 7), suggesting she does not see them as artistic undertakings but as professional activities. There is little to relate them to her writing, either formally or thematically. Due to the fact that they were co-translated with Auster, they also become marginal to the body of works that could be viewed as her

translatorial œuvre. It is impossible to know, without access to drafts or without conducting interviews,[1] how Auster and Davis shared the work of translation. The co-translations are the product of their collective effort. They cannot be relied upon to characterise Davis as a translator because she was not alone in translating them.

Even in cases where it appears that there should be some connection between translations and the rest of an author's œuvre, due to some similarity in writing style or in outlook, it is still possible that there are no extensive connections. Raymond Queneau's translations of Amos Tutuola, as analysed by Carol O'Sullivan (2002: 187-200), provide an interesting example of this failure to engage. Queneau translated Tutuola's *The Palm Wine Drinkard* (1952) as *L'ivrogne dans la brousse* (1953), which back-translates as 'The Drunk in the Bush'. The title already gives an impression of the domesticating nature of Queneau's translation. O'Sullivan suggests that Queneau might have been expected to be interested in Tutuola's use of spoken language, as Queneau often uses spoken French in his own writing (2002: 193). Rather than revelling in the transgressive use of the English language in Tutuola's writing, Queneau translated it into a much more standard French (O'Sullivan 2002: 197-198). There is a possibility of connection here between Queneau as author and Queneau as translator, but the connection does not happen in the meaningful way that one might expect from the apparent similarities between Queneau and Tutuola. Queneau's translation does not reflect his own sensibilities as an author. The proximity of the two release dates, with the French novel being published only a year after the English, suggests that the translation was done quickly: Queneau would not have had the time to dwell upon it. It may have been, as Auster said above about his early translations, a case where a number of pages needed to be translated a day as a paid project.

Queneau's example highlights how translations do not necessarily become part

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[1]   Even interviews may be misleading, as it is over 30 years since these translations were completed, and both Auster's and Davis's memories of the process may no longer be precise.

of an author's œuvre, even if they appear to have some similarities with the author's writing style or themes. However, orality may be all that linked Queneau and Tutuola, and he made not have felt any connection to the African writer. Queneau's *Zazie dans le métro* [Zazie in the Metro] (1959), as the title suggests, takes place in the modern urban environment of Paris. The narrative of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* takes place in a clearly rural setting that is full of superstition and magic. Perhaps this landscape was too different from the imaginative spaces that Queneau was used to working in for the translation to capture Queneau's imagination. The texts themselves do not provide enough evidence to be sure either way and lead only to speculation on the part of the reader.

Translations, then, do not always interact with an author's other writing. Such translations do not affect how the author's other books are perceived. Auster and Queneau both translated books as paid translators. Auster says that his books were commissioned, and it is plausible to speculate that Queneau's Tutuola translation was also a commission. In such cases, the writer puts aside their own authorial persona and writes as if they were only a professional translator. Susan Bernofsky calls this type of translation 'service translation', which she explains as: 'translation in which the translator strives to subjugate his own authorial intention to that of the author of the original text' (2005: ix). 'Service translation' may not only be connected with translations that writers have undertaken solely as a means of employment, as a translation that an author has undertaken on their own initiative can also be respectful of the author in this way. For a translation to have a relationship with its writer's authorial œuvre, however, there needs to be more of a connection than just the same signature. The translations need to interact in some way with their other writing.

Translation as *Bildung*

In the same interview as above, Paul Auster mentions other types of translation that he undertook before he began earning his living as a translator in the seventies. He translated French poetry as an undergraduate at Colombia, while he was also writing his own poetry (1997: 271). Translation became a form of training for him: 'Translation allows you to work on the nuts and bolts of your craft, to learn how to live intimately with words, to see more clearly what you are actually doing' (1997: 272).[2]

The idea that translating can serve as a form of training for young writers is well established. It first appears in Cicero's remarks on translation in *De Oratore* (1997: 7), and has an influence into the present day. Cicero found paraphrasing another writer's poetry or speech limited as an exercise, because 'those words which best befitted each subject, were the most elegant and in fact the best, had already been seized upon' (1997: 7). Cicero could therefore not improve the poem or speech by using his own words. Translating from Greek to Latin allowed him not to repeat the same words as the Greek orators, because he had to find new ways of expressing their thought in Latin. Translation became a way of practising rhetoric.

The idea of translation as training changes with the growth in vernacular languages in the middle ages. While Cicero's concern was to perfect his own individual ability as a writer/speaker, vernacular translation in the middle ages 'us[ed] translation to develop and perfect literary skills in the native language' (Copeland 1991: 92). The goal was not just the development of the individual writer, but of the expressive capacities of the vernacular language. Rita Copeland foregrounds the way in which vernacular translations would supplant their Latin models: the translators were trying to 'generate a vernacular canon which will substitute itself for Latin models in the very

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2   Auster also says that 'Working on translations removes the pressure of composition' (1997: 272). This formulation is very similar to Davis's comment that translation is writing 'without the pressure of invention' (Knight 1999: 528). The similarity is not surprising, given the fact that the two writers were married and translated books together.

process of replicating them' (1991: 93). Through extending the capacities of the vernacular language, the medieval translators would reduce the privileged position of Latin, because there would be a text in the vernacular that could serve the purpose of a model. The vernacular would therefore grow in power as well as capability.

The German Romantics also focussed on translation as a means of developing a language, a culture, and the individual writer. Antoine Berman regards translation as closely connected to the German concept of *Bildung*, which combines the concepts of culture, education, and training [*formation*] (Berman 1984: 72). Berman notes that in the early nineteenth century there was an effort to bring into existence a German culture, specifically a German literature (1984: 28). There was, at the same time, 'un retour aux sources' [return to source] and an 'ouverture de plus en plus "multiple" … sur les diverses littératures mondiales' [more and more "multiple" opening … onto world literatures] (ibid.). German literature was formed through its encounters with foreign texts and through translation.

Not only would the national literature be subject to the process of *Bildung* by translation. The individual writer would also be shaped by encountering the foreign text and translating it. Novalis claimed, in a letter to August Wilhelm von Schlegel, that there had been 'no German writer of any substance who ha[d] not also been a translator, who in fact has not puffed himself up so much over his translations as over his original works' (1997: 212). While Novalis's claim may not be statistically accurate, it shows just how much esteem he had for translation and its role in forming a writer. Since any 'writer of substance' would have been a translator, translation would have been important in the training of those writers. The Germans had, like the Romans, 'learned so immensely' (ibid.) from translation, both as a people and as individuals.

The idea of translation as a way of developing the repertoire of literary and rhetorical devices of a language community and an individual continues into the

twentieth century. According to Steven G. Yao, the modernist poets saw translation as a means of expanding 'the range of cultural, linguistic, and generic fields in which they could actively participate' (2002: 6). The expansion of the individual's skills and the possibilities of the language are joined in modernism. Ezra Pound also counselled young writers to translate, so that their subject matter would not 'wobble' (1954: 7); advice that Auster refers to in the same interview as quoted above (1997: 272). By advising writers to learn their craft through translating, Pound makes translation into an act of *Bildung* for the author. His advice follows a tradition that has been active in European letters since the Romans.

In light of this tradition, it is very tempting for the critic to see an author's translations as part of their apprenticeship. There are two effects that follow: firstly, the translations cannot fully become part of an author's œuvre because they are preparation for the writing of it. Translation ends up by being both included in and excluded from the œuvre. An author's translations affect how other texts are read, but are also not considered to be equal to those other texts. If translation is viewed as training or practice then it becomes supplementary to the authorial œuvre: it is what one does *before* and *as well as* writing.

Secondly the relationship between the translations and the writer's own texts is viewed as one of influence. The texts that an author has translated can be read as having been formative of their own writing, and as such the translations become a record of influence on the translator/writer from the author they have translated. The translated text can be seen as a precursor to a writer's other texts.

Hiroko Cockerill's reading of the relationship between the Japanese writer Futabatei Shimei's own writing and his translations offers a good example of how translation is viewed as a form of training, and how translations can be seen to influence a writer. Cockerill explicitly states in her introduction that the study will examine 'the

influence [the translations] exerted on his original work' (2006: 11). Futabatei's[3] novel *Floating Clouds,* first published in Japanese between 1887 and 1889, has three parts. According to Cockerill, the first part 'is written in a distinctly Japanese style' (2006: 27), while the second and third parts exhibit a more 'western ([i.e.] Russian) style' (ibid.). Cockerill goes on to point out that Futabatei's translations of Turgenev's *The Tryst* and *A Chance Encounter* were published between the publication of parts two and three of the novel. She reads this translation activity as having an influence on Futabatei's writing style in the novel, and speculates that 'work on the translations commenced before he wrote Part Two, given the difference in style which is evident in Part Two of the novel' (2006: 27). She finds evidence for this in Futabatei's removal of the narrator and increased use of the auxiliary verb '-ta' (2006: 29).

Cockerill is forced to speculate about the influence of the translations on Futabatei's style, because of the difficulty of finding textual evidence for influence. Cockerill uses stylistic similarities as a basis for her speculations, but similarities are not sufficient to prove influence. Even the fact that Futabatei's translation of *The Tryst* also utilised the verb '-ta' consistently for verbs in the past tense (Cockerill 2006: 25), as do parts two and three of *Floating Clouds,* only means that it becomes reasonable to speculate that Futabatei may have realised what the potential was for this form when writing the translation. It is equally valid to speculate that Futabatei had considered using '-ta' as a past tense auxiliary verb in his own writing, but wanted to see how it looked in a translation before employing it. It is not possible to rigorously prove either hypothesis from the texts alone.

Cockerill's reading of Futabatei's translations allows them to affect how he is viewed as an author: the translations are used to explain features of his novel. They

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[3] Cockerill often refers to Futabatei Shimei as Futabatei. The Japanese convention for names is surname first, followed by given name. However, it is often reversed to follow European norms in English language publications (e.g Yoko Ono, rather than Ono Yoko). Consequently I am unsure whether Futabatei is the surname, and have chosen to follow Cockerill's convention.

therefore become part of his authorial œuvre, but in a reduced capacity. The translations are considered in relation to how they affect his own writing, rather than questioning how that own writing might affect his translations. The conventional hierarchy which values writing a novel because it is 'original' above the writing of a translation because it is 'derivative' is operative in the way that Cockerill approaches the relationship in Futabatei's case. Translation is solely seen as a source of influence, a way of learning a technique.

Translation may also be instrumentalised by an author, as the German Romantics and the Modernists thought, to alter the parameters of the literary culture in which they live. Edwin Gentzler's 1996 essay 'Translation, Counter-Culture and *The Fifties* in the USA' suggests that Robert Bly used translation as a way of exploring a poetics that was outside of the American norm. The journal *The Fifties*, which was edited by Bly, published poetry in translation from Europe and Latin America. According to Gentzler, the magazine aimed to 'combat the literary hegemony' (1996: 129), which Gentzler characterises as a 'reified, refined, conservative modernism' (1996: 127). Bly thought that poetry should deal with 'oppression [and] the description of everyday life' according to Gentzler (1996: 128). This aesthetic also appeared in the poems from Spanish and Latin American writers that Bly translated and published in *The Fifties*, such as Juan Ramón Jiménez, Antonio Machado, and Federico García Lorca. Bly's use of translation in *The Fifties* clearly relates to the idea of translation as a way of expanding a literary repertoire that has been common in the European tradition since the middle ages. By publishing these poets in translation, he offered alternatives to the dominant poetics in North America. Gentzler goes beyond a statement of the translation as an expansion of a poetic repertoire to state that Bly '*used* translations to change the system … in order to create cultural conditions that allowed his verse to appear' (1996: 134; original emphasis).

Gentzler's conclusion is supported by his reading of the translations in conjunction with Bly's essays in *The Fifties* and Bly's own poetry. Gentzler does suggest the translations influenced Bly's own writing (1996: 134). He finds parallels in Bly's poetry with the European poets that he had translated (ibid.), just as Cockerill found parallels between Futabatei's novel and Turgenev's stories. Where the two critics differ is Gentzler's insistence on Bly's conscious use of translations of a way of positioning himself in relation to American and Hispanic poetic traditions, whereas Cockerill focuses on Futabatei's development as a writer. However, it is necessary for Gentzler to refer to Bly's theoretical writings to be able to successfully demonstrate Bly's instrumentalisation of translation as a way of escaping the confines of American verse. As in Auster's case above, the author's own pronouncements affect how their translation work is received. Indeed, paratexts provide evidence of purpose that cannot be found in the texts alone.

Both Cockerill and Gentzler posit that translation is training and a sign of influence, but this may not be the case for all translations, and suffers from various methodological problems. Textual evidence that proves the influence of the translated text on the author is almost impossible to find: there may be similarities but they do not prove influence. Indeed, there seems to be, as Claudio Guillén noted in his *Literature as System*, a 'persistent confusion between influences and textual similarities' (1971: 33).[4] Viewing translation as a way in which a writer can position themselves within (or against) a tradition is also fraught with textual problems: there is no *a priori* reason to think translation has been used by an author to make an intervention in a culture.

Both individual and social facets of translation as *Bildung*, then, can only really be posited by a critic if there is sufficient paratextual and textual evidence. An author

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[4]   This confusion is apparent in Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* (2nd edition 1997), where Bloom's methodology relies on perceived similarities between literary texts by one author and by an earlier one, without recourse to paratextual materials.

who was translating a writer who influenced them may talk about this influence in a preface, interviews, or essays. While this paratextual evidence may be sufficient to posit a link, further textual investigation is required to see how that influence plays out. It may be that the critic can only find moments of similarity between the two texts. Alone, the similarity can hint at the possibility of influence and suggest some sort of affinity between the writers; combined with paratextual information it can be used to argue that one text influenced another.

However, translations can interact with an author's other texts on multiple levels, and viewing them solely as training is insufficient to account for all possible connections. While translation functions as training for some authors, for others, such as Lydia Davis, there are far more complex relationships with their other writing.

Dialogues

Moving on from viewing translations as solely a form of training means positing that they enter into a more multilateral relationship with the rest of an author's œuvre. A translation may be undertaken because it appeals to the author, or they may view it as an extension of their own artistic project. In such cases, I suggest that there will be interactions with other writing by the author that was written both before and after the translation.

The question of influence becomes less uni-directional in this case, as an author's writing practice can influence how they translate, and what they choose to translate.[5] Rather than solely looking for echoes of translations in its translator's writings as an author, as a critic would do when searching for textual evidence of influence, the critic who is interested in dialogue can look for echoes of the translator's

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[5] This will not be the case for all translations: some will have no real relationship with an author's other writing, as was the case of the work-for-hire translations that Auster talked about the in the interview quoted above.

authorial writing practices in their translations. John Felstiner, for example, sees such echoes of Paul Celan's own poetry in his translations of Emily Dickinson (Felstiner 1998: 169-170). Felstiner shows how Celan's German translations find 'terser, more concrete things to say' (1998: 169) than Dickinson's English poems. Where Dickinson uses the abstract noun 'Vitality', Celan employs the more concrete 'Saft' [sap]. According to Felstiner, Celan also adds a caesura in a line: 'auch ihm gilt dies; Verdirb –' [which Felstiner back-translates as 'it too knows this: Decay–'] for Dickinson's 'Cannot excel Decay' (Felstiner 1998: 169). This caesura, Felstiner postulates, is 'the signature of her translator Paul Celan' (1998: 170), because it is so characteristic of Celan's own poetry and poetics.

According to Felstiner, Celan's German translation of Dickinson deviates from her poem in meaning and form. These deviations show traces of Celan's own authorial voice, which causes Felstiner to call these translation's '"strong" translations' (1998: 165). Celan's translations would not be examples of what Susan Bernofsky has called 'service translation' (2005: ix), because he does not subordinate his authorial intentions in the service of the translated text. '"Strong" translators' is also how Susan Bernofsky describes the German authors Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Heinrich von Kleist, and Friedrich Hölderlin. These authors, she says, 'placed their own unmistakable imprint on the works they translated … their translations are marked by the literary concerns that can be found elsewhere in the oeuvre of each' (2005: x); their translations echo their own work.

Such 'strong translation' shows a relationship between translator and original author that is less hierarchical than the one found in conventional, 'service' translation. The translator has more authority over the translated text. Translators described as 'strong' (or 'authorial' in Bernofsky's (2005: x) preferred term) tend to be authors as well as translators, although there is no reason why a translator who is not also an author

cannot translate in a 'strong' way. The difficulty for the critic would then be the absence of an authorial œuvre with which to compare the translations; there is no evidence of an authorial style for the translator. A translator who is also an author provides the critic with possible explanations for interventions because there is a body of texts that the critic can search for precedents of translation decisions. Felstiner's reading of Celan's caesurae in his translations of Emily Dickinson, for example, rests on the precedent of caesurae in Celan's own poetry.

'Strong' translation may be a signal of the dialogic relationship between an author's translations and their other writing. It locates the translations as an extension of their own writing, contiguous with their authorial œuvre because of shared concerns and techniques.

'Strong' translation can, however, also be seen as appropriative of the other writer's work. The author-translator can be seen as colonising the other writer's texts. Susan Bernofsky's presentation of Goethe's translations of some of Diderot's works suggests that Goethe's 'strong' translation is appropriative,[6] using Diderot's work to further Goethe's own concerns. Goethe translated Diderot's 'Essais sur la peinture' [Essays on painting] in a 'strong' way. Goethe's 'Versuch über der Malerei' systematically incorporates commentary into the interlingual translation, according to Bernofsky, who writes that the translation is 'as much a critique and correction of Diderot's views as it is a translation' (2005: 160). Goethe's opinions are presented in relation to Diderot's. The resultant text is in dialogue with the original, but also in dialogue with Goethe's own writing and thinking. Bernofsky states that 'Goethe was in fact fighting the contradictions inherent in his own work' (2005: 191) in his translation of Diderot. Goethe was using the Diderot translation as a means of finding a way to

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[6]   I am using 'appropriative' here in the sense of taking and using the source text, rather than Julie Sander's definition of appropriation as 'a more decisive journey [than adaptation] away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain' (2006: 26), although this definition could also apply to Goethe's translation of Diderot.

overcome his own problems. While the translation presents a dialogue, it also functions as a form of training. There may be no direct influence from Diderot on Goethe's work, but the translation allows Goethe to develop his own writing.

Goethe's relationship to Diderot is one of antagonism, but there are more positive ways that dialogue can take place. Susan Bassnett's publication of her translations of Alejandra Pizarnik alongside her own poems as *Exchanging Lives* (Bassnett and Pizarnik 2002) further demonstrates how translation can form a dialogue with the translated author and the authorial œuvre of the translator. Bassnett has commented on these translations, placing them in the context of her own poetry. She suggests that translating and writing poetry are equally valid as a means of expression: 'translation may be one of several different literary activities undertaken by the same person' (2006: 174). Translation is, for Bassnett, a form of literary textual production; it can be considered alongside other forms of literary writing as part of an author's œuvre, although Bassnett herself does not provide any framework for doing so.

Bassnett focuses on what she calls her 'dialogue' (2006: 178) with Pizarnik, with whom she 'had fallen in love' (2006: 177) as a writer. The layout of *Exchanging Lives* enacts this dialogue in one section, 'Exchanging Lives' (Bassnett and Pizarnik 2002: 27-62). Pizarnik's Spanish poems, Bassnett's translations, and Bassnett's own poems intermingle throughout the section. Pizarnik's poems are each followed by a reference to the book they were published in and a date. For example, for 'Signos', there is a note saying '*El infierno musical* (1971)' (Bassnett and Pizarnik 2002: 32). Bassnett's translations of Pizarnik are often placed underneath the Spanish poems, but some are unexpectedly found on a facing page, which leads to the reader having to make an effort to work out whether the poem they are reading in English is a translation or not. Significantly there is not any distinction made typographically between Bassnett's own poems and her translations. The poems 'My Father', 'Poema para el padre' and 'Poem for

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my father' (Bassnett and Pizarnik 2002: 56, 57, 58) dissolve the visual distinctions

between translation and original poem. 'My father', Bassnett's poem, is on the left page

facing Pizarnik's 'Poema para el padre' in Spanish: typographical conventions of facing

page translations would suggest that Pizarnik's poem is a translation of Bassnett's. The

similarity of the titles, which even a reader who did not know Spanish well would be

able to recognise, also contributes to the impression that these poems exist in a close

relationship, and that one could be the translation of the other. Bassnett's actual

translation of 'Poema para el padre' is found over the page, which allows the reader to

identify which is original poem and which translation, but importantly the pause

required by turning the page leads to an initial confusion that is difficult to escape from

entirely: it continues to haunt the reader's experience of the poems.

Bassnett's translations of Pizarnik in *Exchanging Lives* are fully incorporated

into her own authorial œuvre. The layout of 'Exchanging Lives' leads the reader to

believe that Bassnett's poems are in dialogue with Pizarnik's. Her own poems are

visually intertwined with the translations, leading the reader to investigate the links

between them. The translations cannot be read solely as translations, either: they

represent part of a larger poetic project. Cecilia Rossi's review of *Exchanging Lives*

notes that often Bassnett's translations are likely to disappoint readers already

acquainted with Pizarnik, and comments that Bassnett's translations 'offer ... very

particular readings, if not inaccurate ones' (2003: 56). In other words, the translations

could also be called 'strong' translations. Rossi goes as far as to say that Bassnett's

translations are closer to 'recreations' (2003: 61) of Pizarnik's poems. This, I would

contend, is entirely the point of publishing the poems alongside the translations:

Bassnett is foregrounding how Pizarnik's poems are absorbed into her œuvre through

the act of translation. Bassnett's translations of Pizarnik show a dialogue with her own

poetry. The poems and translations echo each other through their placement on the page.

Bassnett readily admits that her writing changed under Pizarnik's influence, albeit 'in ways [she] cannot properly explain' (2006: 180).

Dialogue is not just one singular, stable concept but can take multiple forms. The way in which Bassnett's translations from Pizarnik interact with her own poems is different from the way that Goethe's Diderot translation interacts with his own work, or Celan's translations interact with his poems. Yet all of them still produce dialogues with the source text and the author's other writing. All three translators employ 'strong translation', and their translations exhibit traces of their own writing.

Importantly, viewing the translations in dialogue with an author's other writing places the translations in the author's œuvre. The translations are given an equal status to their other writing, as they are also important for an understanding of the author-function that unites those texts. There is still the recurrent problem that the relationship between the texts can only be established by comparative reading, as the only real textual evidence for dialogue, like influence, can be found by seeking out connections between the texts. On the other hand, dialogue does reduce problems of reading intention, as dialogue between texts can take place without the author's conscious awareness. Texts can look similar and form relationships in the mind of the reader. Where influence requires evidence of the author's intention, a reader can find a dialogic relationship without an author making clear in paratexts that the relationship exists.

Translation as an extension of an œuvre

Both the idea of translation as influence or training and the idea that translations enter into a dialogue with a writer's other works suggest that translations represent something that is different from those works. Training relies on the filling of a lack, providing skills that the author did not have before. Dialogue does not represent a lack or absence, but rather the encounter of two distinct voices, and a set of connections between their

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works that may take the form of responses or affinities between them.

Translation becomes an extension of the author's own work in both training and dialogue. The translations allow the author to expand in directions that are not normally open to them in their own work. The difference between training and dialogue lies in how the translations are perceived by author and reader. If the translation serves only to help a writer learn their craft, or develop new techniques, then it is reduced to a supplementary role as training. If the translation exhibits correspondances with an author's own work on several levels, such as style, theme, narrative technique, etc, which do not appear to have developed as a result of the translation but which were already present before writing the translation, then it may be regarded as being in dialogue with the author's own works.

The dividing line between influence and dialogue is porous, and a text which originally influences a writer may be responded to by other texts by that writer later on, which would then make it appear to be in dialogue. The trends that I identify above are, therefore, not entirely discrete, and a text may appear to fit into several at once. Reading the relationships between translations and other writings by an author can be guided by the above categories, but the actual relationships are often more complex.

This is the case for Davis's work. She presents a complex relationship between her translations and her own writing when she comments, in an interview with Larry McCaffery, that she enjoys translating because she enjoys 'assuming a disguise' (McCaffery 1996: 75), and because translating allows her to write in a way that would be out of place in her own work (ibid.). Davis here recognises the importance of difference for her as a translator: the translations interest her precisely because they are written in a way which is distinct from her own writing and which would not fit in with her authorial image. The translations allow her to explore a way of writing which is not her own. This can clearly be seen, as I argue in the fifth chapter, in her translation of

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Leiris's autobiography, where the autobiographic element is out of place in Davis's writing, but by translating Leiris it offers her the opportunity to explore that genre without writing her own autobiography.

The metaphor of the graft, introduced earlier, helps explain the relationship of translations to the rest of Davis's œuvre. If an apple tree has a branch from another apple tree of a different variety grafted on it, then it will produce different apples on that branch than on the rest of the tree. For example, a Granny Smith tree may have a Braeburn branch grafted onto it. The new branch would continue to produce Braeburn apples, although it was part of a Granny Smith tree. The graft continues to function as something distinct from the rest of its host. Translations continue to be distinct from the rest of the author's œuvre, while still being part of it.

The graft will be rejected, however, if it is too different. One cannot graft an apple branch onto a strawberry bush. There must be a degree of initial similarity for the graft to take hold. Translations enter into a relationship with an author's other works when there is some form of similarity, either in outlook or style or theme: some point of contact between the works. Without that point of affinity, it becomes difficult for a reader to see any connection between them.

My use of grafts as a metaphor for the place of translations in an author's œuvre has similarities to the reading of the graft in Derrida's work and especially in Jonathan Culler's reading of Derrida in *On Deconstruction* (1982: 134-156). Derrida, in Culler's reading, uses the idea of grafts to explain how texts are woven together from multiple discourses (Culler 1982: 135). In this way, grafts are similar to Kristeva's intertextuality (1974: 59): the use of signs from multiple sign systems in a single text. Culler also recognises other forms of graft in Derrida's writing: the placement of multiple texts on a page and the interrelationship between them (Culler 1982: 135-137); the reader's application 'of the text's own statements to its processes of enunciation' (1982: 137),

where the text is read through its own conclusions; an inversion of the interpretative procedure, where the interpreted text is read as shedding light on the interpreting text (1982: 139); the focus on a marginal work, making it more central (1982: 139); giving new meanings to words, which allows the current meaning to be co-present with the new one (1982: 141); the use of paronomasia and polysemy, allowing multiple meanings to function at once within a text (1982: 141-146). Each of these procedures acts as a graft because it recontextualises material, placing it in a new setting where it is both accepted by and distinct from its surroundings. Derrida's grafts erase the possibility of a single reading of a text, forcing the reader to accept multiple meanings at the same time. My use of the metaphor of grafts has similarities to Derrida's and Culler's use, because it highlights how translations take a double position of being both within and outside of an œuvre. Neither Derrida nor Culler use the idea of the graft at the level of authorship, but always as an internal part of a text. Their grafts affect how meaning is perceived within a text, while I am suggesting that the translated texts themselves appear as grafts within a larger system of the author's work, and offer new possibilities for the reception of other texts by that author.

Grafts, importantly, problematise the distinction between inside and outside. This is relevant to the discussion of an œuvre, as the construction of an œuvre itself is predicated upon the exclusion of certain texts which are not seen to be uniform with a particular reading of an author's production. The result of seeing translations as grafts is that the concept of the œuvre becomes more a question of centre and periphery than inside and outside: some texts are more relevant to the image of an author than others, but all may be incorporated into their work. If the texts do not fit with the image of the author, through a lack of perceived connection with their other works, then they are positioned at the periphery.

In some of her public statements, Davis highlights points of contact between

certain of her translations and her own work, allowing the reader to begin perceiving the translations as a graft onto Davis's œuvre. For example, in an interview with Christopher Knight, Davis remarked:

> Proust's approach ... probably did have a big influence on the way I wrote *The End of the Story*, even though of course I first read him years ago. I guess, for me, Proust was only the first in a line of writers that included Michel Leiris and Maurice Blanchot who all tended to go very deeply, very analytically into an experience. And I can't tell whether I'm drawn to them and happy translating them because I approach things the same way, or whether they have influenced me to do this even more.
> (Knight 1999: 529-30).

Davis here complicates the idea of influence as unidirectional. She is drawn towards Proust, Leiris and Blanchot because she feels an affinity for them, because she 'approach[es] things in the same way', but this affinity and translating them may have influenced her to write a certain way. Her own work influences her choice of translations, and her translations influence her own work. In an earlier interview with Larry McCaffery, Davis remarked that '[w]hatever affinity I have for an author I'm translating is already there in advance. I'm not going to be influenced by translating Blanchot so much as I *already* felt a kinship for him. Otherwise I would not be interested in translating him' (McCaffery 1996: 67-68; original emphasis). Davis clearly suggests she felt a similarity with Blanchot, and this attracted her to translating his work. Translation would not function as training, but rather be an extension of elements of her own work through the work of another writer. The translations could therefore be seen as existing in a dialogic relationship with her own writing.

An initial point of recognition between a writer's work and translations is enough to offer the possibility of reading their translations as a graft on their œuvre. This initial similarity may only be superficial, and requires further comparative reading. In addition, the approach that the author takes to the translation often reveals their relationship to the text. In the case of Queneau's translations of Tutuola, discussed

above, the translation is target-norm-oriented, smoothing out the idiosyncrasies of the source text. There is little to link Queneau's translation practice to his own work. Celan's translations of Emily Dickinson, on the other hand, mirror Celan's own poetics and interact in a much clearer way with his own poems.

To study how Lydia Davis's translations relate to the rest of her œuvre, then, requires a flexible methodology. First, a reading of the translations that questions how Davis translates and what relationship her translation strategies have to her own work. If her translations echo moments or techniques from her own writing, then they will appear more integrated into her œuvre. If the translations appear to be translated as solely professional activities, i.e. strictly following target language norms, then they may be perceived as less central to Davis's œuvre.

As analysing the translations alone will not bring to light correspondences with Davis's stories, it is also necessary to read those stories comparatively with texts she has translated to seek out thematic and stylistic affinities. Without any sense of affinity, the translations are peripheral to Davis's œuvre as a writer. If they offer an affinity with Davis's authorial image, then they can be read productively alongside her own stories and so become more central to her œuvre.

A third angle of approach revolves around intertextual repercussions that the translations have had in Davis's stories and in *The End of the Story*. If there are intertextual links (e.g. allusion, quotation, parody) from a translation to one of Davis's texts, then those texts can be seen as participating in an intertextual dialogue, moving them closer to the centre of her œuvre.

It should be clear at this point that the relationship that a translation has with Davis's other works will be specific to that translation. There is not a single relationship that all of the translations have with Davis's own work. It is necessary to read the translations individually to understand how they interact with Davis's stories. My

analyses in the following chapters may therefore appear to be discrete, but they are all formed around the same question of how Davis's translations can be seen to form an œuvre with her stories and each analysis is informed by the three trends above.

To read every translation in depth would take many more words than are permitted in this dissertation. Such a reading would not be warranted for many of the translations, which have no or only very minor links with Davis's own writing. Davis's own comments about her translations suggest a way of performing a triage of the translations most likely to form part of her œuvre. The writers she translated that she mentions often as being important to her as a writer are Proust, Leiris, and Blanchot. In 2007 she published a chapbook of essays related to these writers called *Proust, Blanchot and a Lady in Red* (Davis 2007b). In it she explicitly states that they have been 'very important in [her] career as a translator' (2007b: 7). The case of Blanchot, who was the first writer Davis translated on her own and the writer she has translated most over the years, seems to be unique: in another interview, Davis remarks that she 'was drawn to him and wanted to write [sic] his books because of those same elements in [her] own writing' (Boaz 2003). Davis seems to feel a strong affinity with Blanchot as a writer.

For Leiris and Proust, Davis's attraction is as a translator as well as as a writer. In the autobiographical essay '"Remembering the Van Wagenens"' (Davis 1999), Davis writes that she would be proud to tell her old French teacher that she was now a translator and translating Proust, 'which would have to appear to her [the French teacher] as some sort of pinnacle of a translator's career, whether it really is or not' (1999: 87). Davis goes on to suggest that, for her, the real pinnacle might be translating Michel Leiris, who, she writes, 'may be, in fact, stylistically more accomplished than Proust' (ibid.). Leiris and Proust both write in a highly elaborate style, which presents a challenge to the translator in a way that other, less complex writing, may not.

While an author's own statements about their translations may have an enormous

effect on how a reader perceives the importance and relevance of those translations in relationship to the rest of the author's writing, these statements need to be treated with suspicion, rather than as an absolute fact. Davis appears to be selecting the authors that she feels most comfortable with as a writer, and therefore shaping her œuvre by including those translations in it. Her statements should therefore be understood as an attempt to form a canon of the translations which she wants to be read in relationship to her own writing. Chapters three, four and five analyse the relationships between her work and her translations of Blanchot, Leiris, and Proust, which form the core of this canon.

The other translations she relegates to a lesser position when she does talk about them: she minimises their importance for her œuvre as a writer and effectively she excludes them from her perception of her work. They become professional activities with no relation to her own writing. Is this really the fate of the translations that she designates as 'work-for-hire' translations (Davis 2007b: 7)? This group of texts covers all the other translations she has undertaken: a large and heterogeneous corpus. Certainly not all of Davis's translations enter into fruitful relationships with her own fiction, and many of them have little apparent relationship with her own work. But there are some, outside of the Proust, Leiris, and Blanchot triad, which interact with Davis's literary production, even if in a more limited way, despite what Davis says about them. The sixth and seventh chapters investigate how some of her 'work-for-hire' translations relate to her own writing. Some do not have a clear and perceivable connection, but chapter six sees how other texts can be read as being rewritten (e.g. Sallenave's *La Vie fantôme*) by Davis in her own fiction, and in chapter seven her translation of Giroud's *Une femme honorable* (1981, trans. 1986) is seen to become the source text for a text which is recognised as one of her stories. Here Davis destabilises boundaries between translation and other modes of writing. This instability in Davis's work is taken up again

in the final chapter, which offers a wider reading of translation, suggesting that Davis's use of other writers' work in her own stories is related to her translation activity, equally grafting the material of others into her own. The final destabilisation takes place in her stories which take translation as a figure, creating translational texts which are nevertheless not translations.

Chapter 3   Blanchot and affinity

Blanchot is the writer whom Lydia Davis has translated most and longest: six books between 1978 and 1993, although she first began publishing her translation of *L'Arrêt de mort* (Blanchot 1948) in 1975 in *Living Hand*. Five of these books are translations of Blanchot's *récits* [tales[1]], four of which are novella length[2]: *Death Sentence* (1948, trans. 1978), *When the Time Comes* (1951, trans. 1985), *The One Who Was Standing Apart from Me* (1953, trans. 1993), and *The Last Man* (1957, trans. 1987). The fifth text, *The Madness of the Day* (1973a, trans. 1977), is much shorter: only nine full pages in its English magazine publication (Blanchot 1977) and the same in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader* (Blanchot 1999: 191-199).

The *récits* represent the majority of Blanchot's fictional output, but it is for his criticism that he has become best known in the English speaking world.[3] This may be due to the fact that while none of Blanchot's books have been published by a major trade publisher, Blanchot's *récits,* apart from *The Last Man*, were published by Station Hill Press, a small, federally funded publisher in upstate New York, and the individual volumes have gone out of print.[4] The critical works, on the other hand, were generally published by university presses and have remained in print.

The sixth book of Blanchot's that Davis translated was the first English collection of Blanchot's critical essays, *The Gaze of Orpheus and other essays* (1981b). The book contains selections from Blanchot's collections *Faux pas* (1943)*, La Part du feu* (1949)*, L'Espace littéraire* (1955)*, Le Livre à venir* (1959) and *L'Entretien infini* (1969). It

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[1] See Derrida 1992: 226n3 for some reasons why *récit* is a difficult word to translate, meaning both fictional narrative and description of events.

[2] Hess (1999: 180) estimates their length at around 30,000 words.

[3] A book that seeks to introduce Blanchot to Anglo-American readers, Ulrich Haase and William Large's *Maurice Blanchot* (2001), concentrates on the critical side of his work, as do the essays in *Maurice Blanchot: The Demand of Writing* (Gill 1996).

[4] Davis's translations published by Station Hill have been reissued in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader* (Blanchot 1999).

appeared just before two other translations of Blanchot's essays, *Siren's Song* (1982a), edited by the writer Gabriel Josipovici and published by Harvester Press in England, and Ann Smock's translation of *The Space of Literature* (1982b) for the University of Nebraska Press. These were most likely in preparation when *The Gaze of Orpheus* was published, probably with little or no knowledge of the other translations: Smock mentions *Death Sentence* but not *Gaze of Orpheus* in her translator's introduction (Smock 1982: 5n), while Josipovici (1982: 17) writes of introducing Blanchot to English readers, suggesting he was unaware of Davis's translations.

Davis has stated how important translating Blanchot was for her as a translator, saying that while translating him she 'learned to stay extremely close to the text … practising an extreme fidelity' (2007b: 7). She has also mentioned, as I noted in chapter two, that she shares some sort of affinity with Blanchot as a writer that drew her to translating him (McCaffery 1996: 67-68). From Davis's comments, it would seem that the translations from Blanchot should take a central place in her œuvre.

Certainly, the prevalence of the Blanchot translations in Davis's bibliography has influenced many of the critics who have written about Davis. They tend to approach Davis through the lens of Blanchot's critical writings. Beverly Haviland (1989: 153) noted 'Davis's excellent work as a translator of Maurice Blanchôt [sic] seems to have made her as distrustful of language as he is', an impression that Marjorie Perloff (1989: 205) deepens with reference to Blanchot's observation that 'ordinary language' is also full of 'misunderstanding'.[5] Likewise, Josh Cohen posits Blanchot's influence when, in an article on irony which is heavily grounded in Blanchot's thinking, he chooses Lydia Davis's work as a way of demonstrating how the 'mode of (non)revelation work[s] within the specific space of individual literary texts' (2005: 76), noting that his choice of Blanchot's American translator is not coincidental. Cohen also foregrounds elsewhere

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[5]   Perloff also remarks, in a footnote: 'The influence of Blanchot and Leiris on Davis's own writing deserves to be studied' (1989: 205n4), which, in a way, is what this and the next chapter do.

(2010: 502) how Blanchot's critical writings can be used to understand Davis's work.

I offer a different reading in this chapter, based on Blanchot's fiction. Davis's translations of Blanchot show a respect for his writing in their approach. Unlike the translations of Fargue and Sallenave (see chapter six), Davis does tend to be more literal in her translation of Blanchot, although by no means does she practise the 'extreme fidelity' that she claims to (Davis 2007b: 7). This approach is, I argue, representative of her acceptance of the difficulties that Blanchot's work presents to the reader, and reveals an affinity with his approach. Due to limits of space, this chapter will only analyse her translation of *Death Sentence,* which is important to Davis's œuvre of translations as it was the first book she translated alone, and she writes that it was her 'extended initiation into translating closely and exactly' (Davis 2007b: 31). She reports that she corresponded with Blanchot, who stressed her autonomy as the book's translator (Ziolkowski 1997). She also published early versions of the translations in magazines (Blanchot 1975, 1976), which, with the exception of Leiris's work, is something she has not done with her other translations, although it mirrors her practice with her own short stories.

After reading her translation I then analyse the correspondences between Blanchot's theories and Davis's work, especially how Davis's stories can be related to Blanchot's theory of the *récit.* Blanchot appears therefore to be an influence. The rest of this chapter questions how fictional work by Blanchot can be read alongside stories by Davis. I choose to focus on *La Folie du jour*/'The Madness of the Day', the shortest *récit* by Blanchot that Davis translated, and how it relates to Davis's story 'Story' (1986: 3-7). Both stories reject the possibility of a single interpretation of events. This indeterminacy attracted Davis to Blanchot as a writer, although she writes with much more focus on emotional connections than Blanchot, and appears ultimately to question his influence on her.

Translating *Death Sentence*

In this section, I will analyse how Davis's translation, *Death Sentence* (1978; 1999: 131-187), relates to the source text. There is not, I argue, an extreme fidelity, but there is a respect for and attention to the specific qualities of Blanchot's writing, especially the difficult relationship it has with conventional narrative, which is a quality shared with Davis's own writing.

Death Sentence tells two stories which the reader is left to relate to one another. The point of cohesion between the two parts is the narrating I, and it is difficult to be sure that the two I's refer to the same character. The first part relates the death of J., a female friend of the male narrator. As she is dying, the narrator receives a call from her sister Louise (Blanchot 1978: 17) asking him to come. He does, and J. has a miraculous recovery, or rather a reprieve, as she then dies again, helped by a large dose of narcotics from the narrator. The second part features the narrator and several women; there are repetitions of events (a character entering a room unannounced, for example), and towards the end the narrator tells a cold body in a room 'Come' (1978: 69): this body being the woman the narrator is looking for. Kevin Hart (2004) sees in the first part a retelling of the story of Mark 5.21-34, where Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead. I would suggest that the second command to come can be viewed as a parallel event, as it is said to a character who has disappeared, and who may be dead; as such it brings her back to life. Other than this possible calling back to life, another link between the two parts may be the production of casts of hands (Blanchot 1978: 10, 75), an activity which would make an image which would survive the death of the person whose hands have been cast. These casts would stop death, just as the deaths in the book are stopped or postponed. But death is never truly stopped, as J dies after her reprieve, as the casts themselves will disappear too; they will, however, outlast their model.

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The apparent lack of relationship between the two parts of the *récit* makes *Death Sentence* into a book that requires careful and multiple readings, and one not likely to have mass appeal. Gilbert Sorrentino (1986) also notes that Blanchot's writing 'is not intended for the anonymous body known as the public', a comment that seems illustrated by the publishers' recollection that while there was an 'avid "cult following" for *Death Sentence* on the Lower East Side of Manhattan ... a Blanchot readership took its own time in developing' (Quasha and Stein 1999: 512).

Davis's translation was fêted by Sorrentino in his review, where he called it 'beautifully translated' (1986). The translation seldom proves difficult to read on the sentential level in English, although it remains difficult to read the narrative of the text. Davis generally replicates Blanchot's paragraphing, with the exception that she sometimes extracts dialogue from the middle of paragraphs into new paragraphs of its own. This is a target language norm, and may have been a decision of an editor, especially as the technique is not applied uniformly (on page 16, for instance, there is dialogue in the middle of a paragraph and separated out). Toward the end of the novel (1948: 119-125; 1978: 75-79), there is dialogue between N and the narrator that is separated out from the body of the paragraphs, but this is also the case in the French text. Davis's attention to the shape of Blanchot's paragraphs shows a trust in his storytelling, and is different from her approach to the paragraphs in her translation of Sallenave's work (see chapter six). It makes the translation more source oriented, and suggests that Davis is writing a 'service translation' (Bernofsky 2005: ix), reducing her own authorial presence in the text.

On the level of cultural references, Davis leaves street names in French, fittingly for a novel set in Paris. The location also governs her choice of 'metro' rather than 'underground' or 'subway' for the underground rail network. On the other hand she translates the temperatures from centigrade into Fahrenheit. The text is therefore not

rigorously adapted for a target language audience, as is the case in her translation of Sallenave (see chapter six). But there is some adaptation. This is inconsistent with statements Davis has made about the translation, and inconsistent with what her strategy appears to be from the macro level decisions of her translation. However, small adaptations like these do not change the important features of the text, such as its narrative or its difficulty for the reader.

Blanchot's title, *Arrêt de mort*, is problematic to translate. As Derrida notes, it 'plays with language to the point of stopping [*arrêter*] any translation' (1979: 90; original interjection). 'Arrêt de mort' is used idiomatically in French to mean 'death sentence' in the sense of capital punishment. It could also, if read literally, mean a stopping of death, which is mirrored in the events of the stories. Davis used this literal approach for the sample published in *Living Hand*, calling it 'Death-halt' (Blanchot 1975), before reverting to the idiomatic translation for later publications, which follows her overall strategy of idiomatic translation in *Death Sentence*.[6] 'Death sentence' itself generates a certain polysemy, although different from the French: a sentence (phrase) of death. But *Death Sentence* has no sentence of death, only a sentence of reprieve from death: 'Come'. The focus on writing in *Death Sentence* could, tentatively, be seen as justifying the possible polysemy in English, and indeed the narrator notes '[i]f I have written books, it has been in the hope that they would put an end to it all' (1978: 1), suggesting that writing is related to death, an idea that Blanchot explores in 'Literature and the Right to Death' (1981b: 21-62; 1999: 359-99) and 'The Work and Death's Space' (1982b: 87-159). Davis's translation of the title, then, idiomatically translates the French title and produces ambiguity, although a different ambiguity to the French. Here, as

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[6] Interestingly, the 1998 paperback edition has both the English and French titles on the cover, a strategy also used the publishers of *The Step Not Beyond* (1992; translation of *Le Pas au-delà* (Blanchot 1973b)), although the French title there is in much smaller print than the English. This strategy of dual language presentation echoes Davis's use of French in her translations of Michel Leiris's autobiography (see chapter four).

elsewhere, Davis gives a translation of Blanchot that is acceptable to the target

audience, but which endeavours, and sometimes fails, to replicate the difficulties of his

writing style.

There is an elusive nature to Blanchot's prose, which, as John Updike wrote, 'gives

an impression, like Henry James' [prose], of carrying meanings so fragile they might

crumble in transit' (1982: 93). Part of this fragility lies in the narrator's disconcerting

lack of certainty. For example:

> Je pense qu'elle m'annonçait par là qu'elle allait mourir. Cette fois, je decidai de
> rentrer à Paris. Mais je me donnai encore deux jours. J'annonçai cela par téléphone
> ou par télégramme.
> (Blanchot 1948: 31)

Davis translates this as:

> I think that in saying that, she was announcing that she was going to die. This time
> I decided to return to Paris. But I gave myself two more days. I let her know by
> telephone or by telegram.
> (Blanchot 1978: 17).

The narrator's lack of certainty with regards how he transmitted the information seems

difficult to accept, assuming that the narrative is realistic: it may be that this uncertainty

exists to question the mimetic nature of narrative, and certainly the repetition of

'télé'/'tele' foregrounds the phonological aspect of the text. There are also many referents

here that are not mentioned or unclear in relation to 'this' or 'that'. What exactly does the

narrator announce in the final sentence — his return to Paris or his decision to stay two

more days? Davis's translation also avoids clarification of this point, however she

clarifies the recipient of the announcement: 'I let her know'. The addition of 'her' would

be unavoidable with Davis's choice of 'let know' for 'annonçai': Blanchot's French here

offers an impersonal announcement, whereas Davis's English addresses an interlocutor.

The increase of textual cohesion, making explicit who the recipient of the

announcement is, does not seriously alter what the reader understands, however, as the

interlocutor is arguably implied in French, by her appearance in the preceding

sentences.

Davis's translation manages to recreate much of the ambiguity of the source text, despite her occasional explicitation of individual parts of a sentence. The imperfect tense of 'annonçait'/'she was announcing' suggests a continuous action, without any clear reason why. To announce that one is doing anything is a single completed action, and should take the *passé simple*. Davis's choice not to repeat 'announce' could be explained by target language norms: using an impersonal 'I announced this' might appear excessively formal, and disrupt the reading of an already strange statement. Davis's decision here, contrary to her earlier explicitation of the recipient, reduces the cohesion of the text by removing repetition: the narrator's announcement no longer seems to mirror J.'s.

While Davis (2007b: 31) might have thought that her translation was close and exact, she makes the text more explicit than it is in French. The text is altered on a syntactic level to be more acceptable to the target language reader, which can also have negative effects on the cohesion of the text, as in the example above. Davis's strategy is much closer than in other of her translations (see chapter six), but it still adapts the text for a target language readership. In this example from the second part, Davis makes explicit certain implicit references:

> Ce voyage en métro m'a laissé le souvenir d'une grande tristesse. Cette tristesse ne se rapportait pas à mon peu de mémoire. Mais quelque chose de profondément triste était en train de se passer là, avec tous ce gens de midi. Il y avait, à deux pas, un malheur important, aussi silencieux qu'un vrai malheur peut l'être, étranger à tout secours, inconnu, que rien ne pouvait fair apparaître.
> (Blanchot 1948: 63)

> This ride on the metro left me with the recollection of a great sadness. The sadness had nothing to do with my short memory. But something profoundly sad was happening there in that car, with all those people going home to lunch. Very close to me was a great unhappiness, as silent as a real unhappiness can be, beyond all help, unknown, and which nothing could cause to appear.
> (Blanchot 1978: 37)

Davis does several things here to make the text more explicit: for 'les gens de midi',

which implies people going home for lunch but which does not state it, and which could be translated as 'the midday rush', she makes it explicit that they are going home for lunch, a traditional way of eating in the middle of the day in France, but not in America. Her 'there in that car' adds the unnecessary element 'in that car' to the French 'là' [there]. Finally, she adds an 'and' to the last part of the final sentence, which increases the cohesion of the sentence, although the 'que' [which] alone would also connect the final description to its noun.

Davis's word choice often reproduces the formality of the narrator's diction, while remaining idiomatic. For example, the repetition of 'sadness' and the use of 'sad' in the third sentence mimics the French 'tristesse' and 'triste', as the repetition of 'unhappiness' does for 'malheur' in the last sentence. The use of the cognate 'profoundly' for 'profondément' sounds formal here, but not out of place. Davis's strategy in this example combines reproducing the register and feel of the text, while at the same time making the connections between sentences more explicit.

Davis's tendency toward using formal language in this translation is a sign of her approach to Blanchot as a writer: it mimics the diction of his narrator, creating a similar style. Throughout the text there are examples of words or expression which appear formal or slightly antiquated, e.g. 'I was seized by a great tenderness for her' (1978: 5) for 'je fus pris pour elle d'une grande tendresse' (1948: 14), or 'with the fervor of hopeless desire' (1978: 8) for 'avec l'énergie d'un vœu désespéré' (1948: 18). The elevated register of these terms, as well as others throughout the text, is similar in both English and French, and characterises the narration as formal. They also reflect the detached state of mind of the narrator, who is writing the tale of an event that he thinks should not be written (1948: 8; 1978: 2), which also explains the lack of certainty that I discussed earlier. The sentence structures offer a similar formality. In the following example, Davis recreates the pausing, reflective sentence which allows the verb

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'touched' to have two subjects (the will and the thought).[7]

> Ce miniscule testament, à la mesure de son existence sans bien, déjà dépossédée,
> cette dernière pensée d'où j'étais exclu, me touchait infiniment.
> (Blanchot 1948: 14)

> That tiny will, in keeping with her propertyless, already dispossessed existence,
> that last thought, from which I was excluded, touched me infinitely.
> (Blanchot 1978: 6)

Davis's 'propertyless', for Blanchot's 'sans biens', and 'infinitely' both appear quite

elevated in register, as does the placing of the preposition at the beginning of 'from

which I was excluded'. Yet Davis does not over-formalise the text. Despite using several

cognates, i.e. existence/existence, dispossessed/dépossédée, touched/touchait, she

translates Blanchot's 'miniscule testament' as 'tiny will'. She produces an idiomatic

translation that fits with her general strategy of accuracy and making the text acceptable

to its target audience.

Davis's own early writing in *The Thirteen Woman and other stories* (1976) and

Story and other stories (1983), as Edie Jarolim remarks, also tends 'to be conservative in

its formality' (1985: 144). The story 'The Housemaid' (1976: 42-46) begins:

> I know I am not pretty. My dark hair is cut short and so thin it hardly hides my
> skull. I have a hasty and lopsided way of walking as though I was crippled in one
> leg. When I bought my glasses I thought they were elegant – the frames are black
> and shaped like butterfly wings – but now I have learned how unbecoming they
> are and am stuck with them, since I have no money to buy new ones.
> (1976: 42)

The sentences here appear conservative in their construction, offering nothing out of the

ordinary. There are similarities in diction of the speaker in the story and the narrator of

Death Sentence. The description of the glasses as 'elegant' and 'unbecoming' sounds

slightly formal and slightly outdated, as if the speaker had been kept from the outside

world. As the story develops, this turns out to be the case: she is a maid in a house

where her mother is the cook. Her relationship to her mother is one of quiet antagonism:

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[7] The sentence has similar rhythms to Henry James's sentences, especially in *The Turn of the Screw*
(James 1898), a narrative that Blanchot admired (Blanchot 1959: 155-65). This similarity may lie at
the root of Updike's (1982: 93) comparison of the two writers.

'I can hardly bear to sit across from her at dinner and I can tell by the look on her face that she feels the same way about me' (ibid.). The narrator's feeling of exclusion is subtly shown through her language, in a similar way to how Blanchot's narrator's detachment is shown in his choice of lexis and sentence structure. Other stories by Davis in this collection share a similar formality, although they do not always have a first person narrator. Her writing appears conservatively well written, and does not play with unconventional English as her later work will: for example in 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' (2001a: 99-119) which I analyse in chapter seven, or even 'Foucault and Pencil' (1997: 10-12), which is written in note form (see chapter eight). Her translation of Leiris (chapter five) also questions convention, as it is peppered with French words and often follows his complex syntax. However, for the younger Davis, Blanchot's characters' linguistic formality would have seemed a familiar element, and adds to the impression of affinity between the two writers.

Davis's translation of *L'Arrêt de mort*, then, is respectful of Blanchot's text regarding form and narrative. Where her translation differs from the original is in cases where she translates in such a way that she makes the text more cohesive and thus more acceptable to the target language audience. There is a move toward literalism in her translation style, especially when compared with the translations analysed in chapter six, but she does not translate literally, producing an acceptable translation. The changes she makes are generally quite minimal, and seldom affect the reader's experience of the text: indeed, they affect the reader's comprehension much less than a literal translation would. Her translation style shows a respect for Blanchot's particularity as a writer, such as his use of uncertainty and formal tenor, which positions this translation as a form of 'service translation' (Bernofsky 2005: ix): Davis does not enforce her own imprint as a writer on the text.

While they are not radically literal, the Blanchot translations represent a step for

Davis in realising her own style as a translator. As she says in an interview with Francine Prose, she likes to translate 'keeping, as much as possible, the same word order and same words' (Prose 1997), an approach that would be more apparent in one way in her translations of Michel Leiris and in another way in her translations of Proust. For this reason, the Blanchot translations, especially *Death Sentence*, are important in Davis's œuvre as a translator.

Their relationship to her œuvre as an author is more tenuous. The translation is conventional. There is some similarity with her own writing in her use of formal diction in both her own work of the time and her translation, which suggests an affinity between her and Blanchot. This affinity does imply some form of dialogue between the two writers. Nevertheless the connection cannot be read from the translations alone; the evidence is insufficient. It needs support from other elements of Blanchot's writing and Davis's relation to them.

Stories?

The affinity between Davis and Blanchot resides, I will argue in this section, in how both question the possibility of narrative within their narratives. Blanchot's *récits* are difficult to read as they evade normal characteristics of narrative: none really concludes, none has a traditional three part story arc. Davis herself has written of how difficult it was for her to produce an adequate summary of *The One Who Was Standing Apart From Me* (Davis 2007b: 32-33). The texts require a different, deeper type of reading than other works: as Brian Fitch notes, 'toute approche superficielle est vouée à l'échec: elle ne saurait déboucher que sur un constat d'incompréhension' [any superficial approach is bound to fail: it can only result in a statement of incomprehension] (1992: 7). Deborah Hess (1991: 1) calls these texts 'non-Aristotelian' as they appear to eschew Aristotle's three poetic unities of place, time, and action. This means that their reader struggles

with the texts, as their 'literary competence' (Culler 1975: 131-152) is likely to be based in Aristotle's unities, which form the backbone of Western poetics.

Blanchot himself suggests a way out of Aristotelian narrative poetics in his theory of the *récit*, which he compares to the singing of the Sirens (1959: 9-17). It is:

> un mouvement vers un point, non seulement inconnu, ignoré, étranger, mais tel qu'il ne semble avoir, par avance et par dehors de ce mouvement, aucune réalité
>
> [a movement towards a point which is not only unknown, unheard of, strange, but such that it seems that it is not real before or outside of this movement] (Blanchot 1959: 13)

The *récit* thus creates itself, at the same time pushing towards a place that is, like the Siren's song, outside of the reach of conventional conceptions of reality. The *récit* is not the narration of the event (Blanchot 1959: 13): the narration is the event. Rather than producing a narrative that has a unity of time, place and action, the *récit* can enter into another time, 'qui est le passage du chant réel au chant imaginaire' [which is the passage from the real song to the imaginary song] (Blanchot 1959: 15). It is this irregular and unreal relationship to time that defines the *récit*: it is narration which produces its own time, as well as its own event. Blanchot also notes that it avoids the trappings of fictionality (1959: 13): it does not develop in the conventional way, but within its own framework.

I would argue that this theory of the *récit* was attractive to Davis. Her stories also represent a departure from the accepted understandings of what a story might be, avoiding or complicating ideas of plot, character, and setting. The two writers share an affinity as their texts avoid narrative closure: they make it impossible to interpret the text in any one way. I focus here on Davis's story 'Story' (1986: 3-7), and on Blanchot's *récit La Folie du jour* (1973a), translated by Davis as 'The Madness of the Day' (1977; revised translation[8] in Blanchot 1999: 191-199). 'The Madness of the Day' seems to be

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[8] There are many minor, micro-level changes, which tend to be stylistic. The reading of the text is seldom changed by them. However, any changes relevant to this section will be noted.

ideal for comparing Davis and Blanchot, not only for its questioning of narrative, but it is, as Manola Antonioli remarks, 'peut-être le récit le plus enigmatique de Blanchot' [perhaps the most enigmatic of Blanchot's *récits*] (1999: 32). Indeed, Deborah Hess notes that '[Blanchot's] narrative works are progressively shorter and more abstract' (1999: 180), suggesting that 'The Madness of the Day' might be viewed as a distillation of Blanchot's aesthetic. It was also one of the first texts Davis translated on her own, showing an early interest in Blanchot, and especially in his narrative manipulations. Both texts problematise the possibility of ever deciding on a single interpretation of events, or even, in Blanchot's case, of being able to narrate a tale that satisfies that demand.

The history of *La Folie du jour* suggests another reason to compare it with 'Story': it was first published in 1948 in *Empedocle*, under two possible titles: 'Un récit?' and 'Un récit', a fact that Jacques Derrida comments on several times in his book about Blanchot, *Parages* (Derrida 1986: 130-136, 245-246, 275-277).[9] These earlier titles could be translated as 'A story?' and 'A story', giving Blanchot's and Davis's texts almost the same title, which, even if Davis were unaware of it,[10] suggests an affinity. Through reading the two texts I shall show both writers use narrative indeterminacy to their own ends. This difference offers the opportunity to read Davis's translation as a graft on her work: offering something that both belongs to her œuvre and at the same time cannot be assimilated to it. I begin with Blanchot's *récit* before moving onto Davis's story.

'The Madness of the Day' can be split into two movements. The first is a first person account of a man's life. He says he has lived in different circumstances: 'J'ai été pauvre, puis plus riche, puis plus pauvre que beaucoup' (Blanchot 1973a: 9) ['I have

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[9] He even reproduces the cover, contents page and first page of the *Empedocle* publication of 'La Folie du jour' on pages 132-134.

[10] Derrida's translator, James Hulbert, was aware of Davis's 1977 translation of 'The Madness of the Day', which is referred to in 'Living on/Borderlines' (Derrida 1979: 72-73), but it is unknown whether or not Davis would have read Derrida's essay.

been poor, then richer, then poorer than many people' (Blanchot 1999: 191)]. There are various events that are recounted in this half of the narrative, such as the narrator being placed before a firing squad[11] (1973a: 11; 1999: 191), being buried in mud in some sort of medical treatment (1973a: 12; 1999: 192), having his hand stabbed (1973a: 14; 1999: 193), falling into poverty and spending time in a 'bas-fond surchauffé' [overheated basement] of a library (1993: 15; 1999: 193), and seeing a man in a doorway giving way to a baby carriage (1973a: 16; 1999: 194). None of these incidents seems to lead to the next, and there are moments of reflection between them. Antonioli notes how '[l]e "récit" pourrait sembler ... recommencer à chaque nouveau paragraphe' [the "*récit*" could seem ... to start again with each new paragraph] (1999: 33), and indeed there is a feeling that the text is discontinuous, but at the same time the text does seem to present some sort of narrative development, with events noted as coming 'après' (Blanchot 1973a: 11) ['afterward' in Davis's translation (Blanchot 1999: 191)]. The construction of the text, with reflective passages between narrative passages, suggests that the narrator is looking back over their life and trying to establish some sort of positioning for the later events. The beginning does not, however, explain the rest of the text.

The second movement of the text begins with the narrator recounting that he 'failli[t] perdre la vue, quelqu'un ayant écrasé du verre sur [ses] yeux' (Blanchot 1973a: 17-18) ['nearly lost his sight, because someone crushed glass into [his] eyes' (Blanchot 1999: 194)]. Yet this information, which becomes central to the development of the rest of the narrative, is not foregrounded by being placed at the beginning of a paragraph, but rather appears two sentences in. The casualness of that placing, for what is effectively the pivotal moment of 'The Madness of the Day', means that the reader almost misses its significance. It is as if the narrator wants to reduce the importance of the event. However, the rest of the text recounts a narrative that unfolds as a

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[11] An event that Blanchot also writes about in *The Instant of My Death* (Blanchot 2000).

consequence of the damage to his eyes: the narrator is hospitalised and treated for the injuries, and is questioned about how he could have come to have glass ground into his eyes. He is given a job in the institute, but the doctors and nurses find his acceptance of his circumstances unacceptable. It seems he should want to 'rendre justice' (1973a: 24) ['see justice done' (1999: 197)], and he sees the silhouette of the law, a feminine figure, who speaks to him directly. He is locked up, in what appears to be a mental hospital, as the doctor thinks he is 'bien fou' (1973a: 25) ['truly crazy' (1999: 198)]. The doctors continue to ask questions of him, which he says come back to the question of who threw glass into his face. He finds it difficult to tell his examiners the story they want to hear, and it seems that the narrative he tells them may be the narrative the reader is reading, as it begins: 'Je suis ni savant ni ignorant. J'ai connu des joies.' (1973a: 29) ['I am not learned; I am not ignorant. I have known joys' (1999: 199)], which is the same as the first line of *La Folie du jour*/'The Madness of the Day'. The narrator concludes 'Un récit. Non, pas de récit, plus jamais' (1973a: 30) ['A story? No. No stories, never again' (1999: 199)]

Any summary of 'The Madness of the Day' reduces the complexity of the narrative, giving a coherence that the text itself does not have. While the 'story' of the text seems to centre on the narrative of the man who has had glass ground into his eyes, the refusal of the narrator to prioritise that event means that the centre of the story is shifted or dispersed. At the same time, as Leslie Hill (1997: 99) notes, it is only after that event that the text begins to follow any continuous narrative, effectively making it the centre of the story. Thus the glass attack seems to be both central and not central at the same time. It is tempting to try to resolve this duality, yet the text does not allow it.

Indeed, the text further complicates matters, as the narrator, just before recounting that someone crushed glass in his eyes, remarks that 'Je n'avais pas d'ennemis. Je n'étais gêné de personne' (1973a: 17) ['I had no enemies. No one bothered

me' (1999: 194)]. This causes the reader to find it difficult to know how to value the statement 'Je faillis perdre la vue, quelqu'un ayant écrasé du verre sur mes yeux' (Blanchot 1973a: 17-18) ['I nearly lost my sight, because someone crushed glass into my eyes' (Blanchot 1999: 194)], which appears in the same paragraph, after the narrator has stated how he can feel separate from the world. Hess sees the glass grinding as 'a symbolic episode' (1999: 52), arguing that this would deprive the narrator of sight permanently. Hess's argument highlights the fictional nature of the text: in fiction apparently unrealistic moments need not perturb the reader's suspension of disbelief, and may be accepted precisely because they appear in a fictional text. Blanchot's narrative works are not exempt from such moments: J's miraculous reprieve from death in *Death Sentence* (1948: 36; 1978: 20), for example. The narrator of 'The Madness of the Day' may be able to recover his sight in the story, precisely because it is a story, although even then he does not fully recover – '[m]ême guéri, je doutais l'être' (1973a: 19) ['Even after I recovered, I doubted I was well' (1999: 195)] – suggesting that Hess's reading of the incident as symbolic reduces its effects within the narrative. The event both foregrounds the fictionality of the narrative, and produces realistic consequences; a paradox that would seem not to be extraordinary in Blanchot's work.

The difficulty for the reader lies in the disjunction between someone who says that he had no enemies and that no one bothered him and then, almost immediately, that someone ground glass into his eyes. This is a violent act and it should not happen for no reason, suggesting that the narrator did have enemies. There is also, paradoxically, no reason why it could not be an act of random violence. The apparently motiveless nature of the crime is disturbing. It is not only the reader who has difficulty in accepting the narrator's account of the incident: the doctors keep asking him as well, and when he does tell them they dismiss his account, calling it nothing more than 'ce commencement' [this beginning] (1973a: 29), and exhort him to 'en [venir] au faits' (ibid.) ['get down to

the facts' (1999: 199)]. This might be taken as proof of the narrator's unreliability, as when other characters do not accept the narrator's word it becomes hard for the reader to do so, but in 'The Madness of the Day' the doctors' questioning seems rather to originate in a position where it is impossible to accept that there may have been no motive, or no 'story'.

In French the word used for 'story' in the last three paragraphs of the text is 'récit' (Blanchot 1973a: 29-30), causing Derrida (1986: 251-287) to question the narrative's generic status. For Derrida the text problematises the genre of the *récit*, as it does not recount a story, but rather questions the possibility of telling a story (268). He even suggests that the 'I' of the text may not necessarily refer to the same character throughout (269), although there is little evidence either way of this in the text itself. Derrida's reading of *La Folie du jour*/'The Madness of the Day' as a text about genres and the problem of the limit that the concept of genre includes is echoed in later commentators: Hill (1997: 98) brings up the question of the limit while Antonioli remarks that the text is about 'l'impossibilité du récit' [the impossibility of narrative] (1999: 32).

Derrida points out that one of the ways that 'The Madness of the Day' disorientates a traditional sense of story is through the moment where the text seems to fold back on itself and quote the beginning: 'ce bord supérieur ou initial, ce qu'on appelle la première ligne du livre, vient faire une poche à l'intérieur du corpus' [this superior or initial edge, what is called the first line of the book, comes to make a pocket at the interior of the work] (Derrida 1986: 271). This repetition of the beginning threatens to repeat the whole text,[12] although it continues for only three sentences, before the narrator returns to the point in the narrative where he is being questioned:

> Un récit? Je commençai: Je ne suis ni savant ni ignorant. J'ai connu des joies.
> C'est trop peu dire. Je leur racontai l'histoire tout entière

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[12] As happens in Samuel Beckett's drama *Play* (1964).

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(Blanchot 1973a: 29)

[A story? I began: I am not learned; I am not ignorant. I have known joys. That is saying too little. I told them the whole story
(Blanchot 1999: 199)[13]]

Derrida sees a second fold, or *invagination* as he prefers to call it (1986: 272), in the repetition of 'Un récit?'/'A story?' which comes before the narrator starts telling his story to the examiners and then again after, in the text's last line. Derrida sees this as excluding, possibly, the last line of the text from the *récit*: it seems to exist as an appendage. This speculation does not really seem warranted: the concluding line of the text follows from the narrator's protests that he cannot tell a story. In one way it is also a continuation of his withdrawal, which becomes clear when he remarks: 'Cependant quelque chose en moi cessait assez vite de vouloir' (Blanchot 1973a: 21) ['Yet something inside me quickly stopped wanting' (1999: 196)]. It appears that he stops wanting in general, and it seems that this withdrawal is at least partially responsible for his being locked up: he no longer follows conventions and thus seems mad within the order of reason represented by the medical profession. His inability to tell a story is met by incredulity, although the incredulity stems from what may be a hallucination of the narrator (and therefore possibly an externalisation of his own incredulity):

Mais, étant deux, à cause de cela ils étaient trois, et ce troisième restaient fermement convaincu, j'en suis sûr, qu'un écrivain, un homme qui parle et qui raisonne avec distinction, est toujours capable de raconter des faits dont il se souvient.
(Blanchot 1973a: 29-30)

[But because there were two of them, there were three, and this third remained firmly convinced, I am sure, that a writer, a man who speaks and reasons with distinction is always capable of recounting facts that he remembers
(Blanchot 1999: 199)]

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[13]   Davis's 1977 translation places the repeated beginning of the text in quotation marks: 'A story? I began: "I am neither learned nor ignorant. I have known joys. That is saying too little." I told them the whole story' (Blanchot 1977: 176). The quotation marks contain the repetition, clarifying its status as a citation, which neutralises the destabilising effects that Derrida (1986: 270-273) attributes to it. It is perhaps to restore the ambiguity of whether or not the repetition is a citation that Davis removed the quotation marks in the revised translation.

While the text plays with the impossibility of telling a story, and to some extent does not tell a story, it also tells a story. This appears contradictory, but the logic of the text is one of contradiction. The text does not provide a uniform narrative where all parts fit with Aristotle's unities of time, place and action; in this sense it does not tell a story. Yet at the same time, the text presents a narrative, albeit one with gaps and uncertainties: the narrative of a man who chooses not to sue [porter plainte contre] someone who ground glass into his eyes, a man who cannot tell the story of how that happened. Moreover the man can only provide a non-Aristotelian narrative, which is unacceptable to the medical and juridical questioners, who require motive, narrative causality, and a unity of time, place and action. The reader is placed in the same position as these examiners, trying to tie up the loose ends. Yet the reader can, unlike the examiners, accept the non-logic of the narration. They do not have to rationalise the story; the reader can accept it with its contradictions.

Lydia Davis's 'Story' (1983: 27-30; reprinted 1986: 3-7) presents a perspective that almost mirrors that of 'The Madness of the Day'. Instead of the narrator producing a contradictory narrative and the reader or narratee having to accept that contradiction or indeterminacy, the narrator is told a story by her lover, and cannot decide whether or not it is true. Here the reader is made to identify with the narrator's position and follow her interpretation of events with the hope of arriving at a conclusion.

'Story' is a story of two parts: the first (Davis 1986: 3-6) is narrated in the present tense by a female narrator and describes an evening when her lover, whom she does not live with, has stood her up to see his old girlfriend, the argument over the phone which ensues and the narrator's visit to her lover's house and the confusing discussion there. The narrator finds the explanation given by her lover unsatisfactory and thinks that '[e]verything he says is a contradiction' (4). A second part (6-7) entails the narrator trying to 'figure it out'. This section involves her recounting to herself (and

the reader) the tale her lover has told her and questioning it:

> So they went to the movies and then came back to his place and then I called and then she left and he called back and then I called back twice but he had gone out to get a beer (he says) and then I drove over and in the meantime he had returned from buying beer and she had also come back and she was in his room so we talked by the garage doors. But what is the truth?
> (6)

She continues to question his story, unsure of whether or not he has told the truth. She know he does not always tell the truth (7), and this makes her unsure of him at other times. In the end she is unsure of whether the truth matters, although it would allow her to 'come to some conclusions' (7) about some questions she has about the relationship:

> whether he is angry at me or not; if he is, then how angry; whether he still loves her or not; if he does, then how much; whether he loves me or not; how much; how capable he is of deceiving me in the act and after the act in the telling.
> (7)

It seems impossible that she should be able to answer these questions just from knowing the truth about that one evening: even knowing where her lover had been, it would be difficult to tell if he was angry, or how much he loved either the narrator or his old girlfriend.

The two part structure of 'Story' is reminiscent of the two part structures of Blanchot's *récits Death Sentence* and *The Last Man*; however, the relationship between the two parts of Davis's story is a lot clearer than the relationship between the two parts of *Death Sentence*. The combination of reflection and narration reflects 'The Madness of the Day', although there they are mixed throughout the text. The reflective passages in 'Story' serve to help the narrator to try to understand the encounter, whereas in 'The Madness of the Day' they seem rather to disperse any decidable meaning or narrative: the reflections on books (Blanchot 1973a: 15; 1999: 193), for example, seem unrelated to the rest of the text. However, Perloff notes that incomprehension is also the function of the second part of 'Story': 'the narrator's re-recounting of what she has already told us ... gradually blocks all possibility of interpreting the signs' (Perloff 1989: 207). By

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questioning all the parts of the preceding narrative, and the permutations of their possibilities, the narrator arrives at a position where the multiple possibilities cannot be reconciled, or the most likely chosen. As Perloff (1989: 208) describes it, '[t]he "story" cannot reach closure'. She also notes that the narrator appears to lose interest in the events of the narrative, 'for it is the puzzle itself which has become the narrator's obsession' (ibid.). This also appears to be Karen Alexander's (2008: 170) view of 'Story': '[t]he events she relates prior to her concluding calculations serve only to make those calculations possible'.

Yet those calculations are not 'possible', per se, as the narrator cannot arrive at any answer. The narrator's 'obsession' may not be the puzzle, either, but rather the concluding line of the story: 'how capable he is of deceiving me in the act and after the act in the telling' (Davis 1986: 7). The threat of betrayal, rather than an intellectual interest in the possibility of truth, motivates the narrator's attempts to understand. The beginning of 'Story' suggests her anxiety over her lover:

> I get home from work and there is a message from him: that he is not coming, that he is busy. He will call again. I wait to hear from him, then at nine o'clock I go to where he lives, find his car, but he's not home. I knock at his apartment door and then at all the garage doors, not knowing which is his – no answer. I write a note, read it over, write a new note, and stick it in his door.
> (3)

This opening sets up the idea that something has been planned, and the narrator is upset by her lover's cancellation of the date. She goes over to look for him at 9pm, leaving a note, which she is careful enough to redraft, only after exhausting the possibilities for finding him at home. The narrator seems to be thorough, almost to a point of obsession, and her knocking on every garage door in attempts to find her lover can be related to her later attempts to decipher the truth: she is capable of entertaining several possibilities, but only in the hope that one of them might be true.

The narrator's suspicions of her lover are revealed later on, when they are

talking: 'I am waiting for him to say that she is there and also that it's all over between us' (5), and when he does not she notes 'I have the feeling he did intend to say something like that' (ibid.). Here the possibility for what he can say or might say encroaches on what he does say. The narrator seems not to be able to accept what she is told: her jealousy causes her to be cautious and mistrustful. At the same time she knows he is withholding information from her, as they are standing outside and not in his room, as one might expect. He admits that his old girlfriend is there, but assures the narrator that she was not when they spoke on the phone. His acts and his statements seem difficult to reconcile, and it would appear that the narrator's suspicion is justified. She is haunted by what she cannot know, which relates to what her lover and his old girlfriend have been up to, whether or not he has been unfaithful, etc. As Perloff (1989: 207) asks, 'is "old" equivalent to "former"?' The lover's relationship with his old girlfriend is never clear.

The story, then, is about jealousy: the question is not about finding out some truth, but rather, more specifically, if the lover has deceived her, and how. The attempt to 'figure it out' at the end of the story is an attempt to overcome this jealousy, yet it perversely has the opposite effect of making it impossible to find the truth and so allay the jealous fantasies. Freud (2006: 163) notes that a child may repeat unpleasurable experiences in an attempt to master them, and it seems that the narrator here is trying to master the narrative through repeating it, yet she cannot because she does not know, and so repeats with different possibilities. The effect is not mastery but rather a dissipation of control: she cannot know what happened, and cannot control it or her lover. This is reminiscent of Marcel's struggles with Albertine in *In Search of Lost Time* (Proust 1954); the unknown, in the spectre of Albertine's possible lesbianism, haunts him.

The difficulty the narrator is having, then, is accepting a narrative that she doubts. Yet it is impossible to arrive at any one truth. The relationship between the

lovers needs trust for it to work, and suspicion means that not only is the lover's word put into question but also the relationship: she expects him to say it is over (Davis 1986: 5), she questions if he loves her and how much (7). As Josh Cohen notes, in relation to 'Story': '[t]he everyday interaction of lovers is built on the shaky foundations of one or other "story" whose correlation with "the truth" can be neither confirmed nor refuted' (2005: 77). All loving relationships rely on accepting a narrative: by not accepting that narrative the relationship itself is questioned.

The narrator in 'Story', like the doctors in 'The Madness of the Day', thinks that it should be possible to arrive at a story, but she cannot. There is a hint she may stop trying to make sense of it, as she notes '[m]aybe the truth does not matter' (Davis 1986: 7). The narrator of 'The Madness of the Day', however, begins to repeat only to stop the repetition after a few words (Blanchot 1973a: 29; 1999: 199). He seems not to want to control the events, or to revisit them. The difference lies in the relationships the narrators have with other people: the narrator of 'The Madness of the Day' is alone, whereas the narrator of 'Story' is involved in an amorous relationship. For her, interpreting the story is connected to her acceptance of her lover, whereas Blanchot's narrator seems to need to find a story to fulfil the abstract notion of justice, rather than an emotional goal. The motivation for the story is therefore very different. One is unavoidably facing a failure to reach a conclusion; the other refuses to entertain the basis on which any conclusion could be based: it seems that Blanchot's narrator is not interested in clearing up any ambiguities, whereas Davis's narrators would like to, but cannot. The effect in both narratives is, however, a failure to find any closure, and a questioning of narrative's capacity to provide a complete 'story'.

The similarity between the two texts shows evidence of an affinity of approach in Davis's and Blanchot's work. Following the scheme in chapter two, it is unclear if Blanchot served as an influence or if there is a dialogue between Davis's translations of

his work and her other stories. Both seem equally plausible: there are parallels in form, although differences in motivation of the texts, suggesting that Davis moves away from the terrain covered by Blanchot in her own writing. She writes in 'Story' in a way that is more immediately based in emotional reactions, compared to the emotional blankness of Blanchot's narrator in *La Folie du jour*. It is not clear if this focus on emotion is a reaction to Blanchot's writing, or solely a difference between the two writers.

Davis's translation of Blanchot, then, offered her a way of exploring a writer who seemed similar in outlook to her, but it is precisely the difference from Blanchot that makes the relationship between them interesting: Davis is much more focused on emotional and interpersonal elements in 'Story' than Blanchot is in *La Folie du jour*. There is a dialogue here which builds from the affinity that Davis felt to Blanchot, but which develops through her move away from the icy narrative coldness of Blanchot's narrative.

Rather than the affinity that Davis claims she feels for Blanchot, and which other critics have suggested, there is in fact a sort of rejection of his influence in her writing. Davis writes in a way that mirrors some of the structures and narrative techniques of Blanchot, and which draw on his theory of the *récit*. On the other hand, she creates characters and situations that are much more down to earth than Blanchot's – 'Story', for instance, focuses on a woman not trusting her boyfriend, rather than the elaborate mental deterioration of the narrator in *La Folie du jour* or the mysterious reprieves from death that appear in *Death Sentence*.

Her initial attraction to his writing leads to a more complex relationship than solely influence. There is a form of dialogue between their works: Davis's own texts appear to respond to Blanchot's, and her translations of Blanchot resonate with her own writing. The relationship between her work and the translations therefore appears like a graft, as I suggested in chapter two: her Blanchot translations are part of the host

(Davis's work), but at the same time they do produce a different fruit. The translations encourage a reading of Davis's work in relation to Blanchot, and therefore they appear to be a part of her work, influencing how the other texts in her œuvre are received. At the same time, they are not assimilated into Davis's writing. They can still be read independently, as translations of Blanchot. They retain a double status, which allows the dialogue, as they offer something different to Davis's own stories. Her 'Story' can be seen to respond to the indeterminacy present in Blanchot's *récit*, but this response is part of a conversation, showing Davis's own perspective which has affinities with Blanchot's writing but at the same time produces something new.

Chapter 4   Leiris and dialogue

In terms of style, Michel Leiris is, according to Davis, perhaps the 'real pinnacle' of a

translator's career (1999: 87). Davis translated three books by Leiris, 1989's *Brisées:*

Broken Branches, a collection of occasional essays, and two parts of his four part

autobiography, *Rules of the Game*: *Scratches* (1991) and *Scraps* (1997). This chapter

explores how Davis's translations of Leiris represent a graft onto her own work,

producing a dialogue between the two authors. I focus on Davis's relationship with *La*

Règle du jeu, due to its importance, indeed centrality, in Leiris's œuvre. Leiris wrote in

many genres, from surrealist poetry to ethnography, but for many critics (e.g. Lejeune

1975, Leigh 1978, Sauret 1995, Hand 2002) his most important works are in the field of

autobiography.[1] Indeed, Seán Hand regards all that Leiris wrote as connected to

autobiography, 'seizing the rule of its own singular game' (2002: 4), so even the essays

in *Brisées* could be viewed as part of the same project.

This chapter begins with analyses of Davis's translations of Leiris.[2] Her

approach to his work is unique in its extremity, as Davis broke norms of translational

behaviour to recreate a poetic and unorthodox text. This recreative form of translation

suggests a productive dialogue between the translation and Davis's stories, which is

further supported by two texts by Davis which have an intertextual link to Leiris,

'Swimming in Egypt: Dreams While Awake and Asleep' (Davis 2007b: 35-44) and 'To

Reiterate' (Davis 1997: 83). The second section argues that these texts position Leiris as

a precursor and influence, and the final section reads *La Règle du jeu* in relation to

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[1]   Strangely, English language writers on autobiography (e.g. Anderson 2011; Eakin 1999) do not refer
to Leiris, despite their reliance on the work of his commentator Lejeune. Leiris is mentioned briefly in
Marcus 1994, but only as an example of 'Freudian-inspired autobiography' (215).

[2]   While Davis's translation of *Rules of the Game* is incomplete, it is worth noting that originally Leiris
intended *La Règle du jeu* to be just two volumes (Leiris 2003: 1285)*, Biffures* and *Fourbis*, titles
which reverse each other in sound and thus mirror each other in a closed system. Patrick Sauret sees
Fibrilles, the third volume, as 'd'une manière le dernier volume' [in a way the last volume] (1995:
112), with the fourth volume *Frêle Bruit* being almost an arbitrary continuation of the text.

Davis's writing. Davis and Leiris share an affinity in their privileging of what Roman Jakobson calls the 'poetic function' (1960: 356-358) above narrative development in their texts. The poetic function is where language brings attention to itself, 'focus[ing] on the message [the verbal text] for its own sake' (Jakobson 1960: 356). This is not only relevant to poetry, but to any verbal text that is self-reflexive, folding the reader's attention back onto the text and the formal construction of that text.

The importance of language is a regular trope in writing on Leiris (see Thomas 1975), but I argue here that Leiris's focus on the poetic function is an attempt to recover unconscious structures as part of his autobiographical project: he focuses on what Julia Kristeva calls the semiotic elements of the text, or the 'géno-texte' (Kristeva 1974: 83), the sounds and rhythms of the text, in an attempt to understand his process of subject formation. Lydia Davis, on the other hand, privileges the poetic function of language in order to question what Jacques Lacan calls the 'ordre symbolique' [symbolic order] (Lacan 1966: 66), the interpersonal system of language, and its exclusion of real referents. The two writers therefore proceed by similar means towards different goals; Davis's texts function as a response to and a rewriting of Leiris's. Her translations of his writing leave a formal legacy, but not a thematic one. The translations therefore act like a graft onto Davis's writing: they offer an extension of her own concerns, but one that is recognisably distinct.

Scratches and Scraps in translation

In a 1997 interview Davis remarked that she was working on the third volume of Leiris's autobiography (Prose 1997), which has not been published and it would appear that Davis's translation was interrupted by the work required to translate Proust, which she began in 1997 (Davis 2007b: 11). At the time she worried that she had 'gone too far' in her preference for literal translation, afraid that she might be 'creating a language that

[was] going to read as a stilted difficult language in between French and English' (Prose 1997). Her translation of Leiris represents a further development of the increasingly literal style that she had practised translating Blanchot, but also shows parallels with techniques used in her own stories. Beginning with *Brisées* (Leiris 1989), this section argues that Davis's non-translation in her Leiris translations shows a unique relationship with that writer, one that blends influence and response.

Brisées announces in its title a new approach in Davis's translations, moving away from the assimilative commercial translations and even the directness of her translations of Blanchot towards a new level of literalism. This should not be necessarily read as a linear progression; some of the commercial translations were written at the same time as the Leiris translations, and Davis would not return to this level of literalism again. Leiris is unique in Davis's œuvre for the distance she is prepared to take English to meet his French, and her willingness to use French words in English.

Brisées are literally, as the subtitle states, broken branches. Yet this subtitle suggests arbitrariness to the English reader: the branches are broken, but there is no clue as to how or why. The French word is more suggestive, and a definition from Littré's *Dictionaire de la langue française* is given in the opening pages of *Brisées*, in French:

> **Brisées** (bri-zée), s.f. plur.
> 1. Branches cassées par le veneur
> pour reconnaître l'endroit où est la
> bête. . . . 3. Marques fait aux
> arbres par le passage d'un bête.
> 4. Branches taillées pour marquer
> les bornes d'une coupe de bois.
> (Leiris 1989: unnumbered page)
>
> [**Brisées** (bRize), n{oun}. fem{inine}. pl{ural}.
> 1. Branches broken by the huntsman
> to recognise the place where the animal
> is. . . . 3. Marks made on
> trees by the passage of an animal.
> 4. Branches cut to mark the
> limits of a felling area.]

'Brisées', then, while being broken branches, also have the characteristic of being markers in some way, and another possible translation might have been 'tracking marks', which would cover several of the meanings. Davis chose to use *brisées* in French, which is more suggestive in its lack of significance to the English reader. Providing the definition in French in the book itself, with no translation, sends a message to the audience that this is a French book, despite being translated into English. Indeed, many of the essays in *Brisées* are about topics that require a wide knowledge of French culture to understand, and the choice of a French title would alert the reader to the cultural background of Leiris's writing.

The title warns the reader of the translation strategy in the book. While not having as much French in the text as *Scratches* or *Scraps*, there is far more than in almost any of Davis's other translations, except possibly the Tocqueville biography (Jardin 1988) and Badinter's *XY* (1995), both of which are academic books and where the French is often only used when there is no English equivalent. In *Brisées*, there are occasions where French is used not because of its semantic specificity, but to show connections between words, for example *baclé* [bungled] and *débâcle* (Leiris 1989: 36-37), which also receive a translator's footnote to explain their etymology. Most of the titles of works referred to by Leiris are kept in French, e.g. *Le Piège de la méduse* [Medusa's trap], a play by Eric Satie, which requires later references to traps to have a backwards gloss relating the word trap to *piège* (Leiris 1989: 57), showing Leiris's wordplay. Davis uses long, convoluted sentences in her translation, following the syntax of the French, which sometimes leaves the reader a little lost, looking for the subject of the sentence after a long digression. This fidelity to Leiris's style shows a trust in its ability to create effects for the reader, and an understanding that these effects (including boredom) are relevant.

Yet the translations in *Brisées* look conservative next to those in *Rules of the*

Game. Leiris's autobiography is not typical of the genre. The titles of the individual

parts, rather than describing the stages of life like childhood etc., are abstract and

seemingly unrelated: *Biffures* [crossings out; Davis's translation is *Scratches*], *Fourbis*

[gear/equipment, but in a mess; Davis translates this as *Scraps*], *Fibrilles* [fibrils, small

fibres] and *Frêle bruit* [Fragile noise]. An earlier autobiographical work was called

L'Age d'homme (1939), which was translated by Richard Howard as *Manhood* (1963).

Its French title seems quite grandiose next to the others, and yet if read literally may just

mean what it says: the age of man. The titles of the parts of *Rules of the Game* suggest

moreover a piecemeal approach to autobiography, reducing the importance of the self to

small things (*Fourbis, Fibrilles*), or to faint or hidden things (*Biffures, Frêle bruit*).

Davis's translated titles *Scratches* and *Scraps* rhyme at the beginning. The rhyme is

suggested by the repetition of /bi/ in '**bi**ffures' and 'four**bis**', although Davis does not,

and probably could not, reproduce the way these words almost reverse each other,

changing only one vowel: /bifYR/ and /fuRbi/. Leiris repeats the sounds /f/, /b/ and /R/

across the series of titles in a variety of permutations, and it is doubtful that Davis's

decision to repeat /skRæ/ would work across the last two titles.

The difficulty in translating Leiris lies in his style, which is baroque and

digressive. Davis comments on Leiris's style in her translator's introduction, calling it a

'deliberate overload [that] tempts the translator to go too far in the direction of a similar

deliberate awkwardness' (Davis 1991: xi). This can be seen in the beginning of

Scratches, which starts with a paragraph-long sentence which is full of digressions,

questioning the recollection of the narrator and providing a wealth of detail:

> Onto the pitiless floor (of the living room or the dining room? onto a fitted carpet
> with faded floral patterns or a rug with some other design on which I inscribed
> palaces, landscapes, continents, a true kaleidoscope delightful to me in my
> childishness, for I designed fairytale constructions on it as if it were a canvas for
> some thousand and one nights that hadn't yet been revealed to me by the pages of
> any book in those days? or a bare floor, waxed wood with darker lineaments,
> cleanly cut by the rigid, black grooves from which I sometimes liked to pull up

tufts of dust with a pin when I was lucky enough to find one that had fallen from the dressmaker's hands during the day?) onto the irreproachable, soulless, floor of the room (velvety or ligneous, dressed up in its Sunday best or stripped bare, favoring excursions of the imagination of the imagination or more mechanical games), in the living or dining room, in shadow or light (depending on whether it was the part of the house where the furniture was usually protected by dust sheets and its modest riches were often screened from the sun by the bars of the shutters), in the special precinct accessible only to grownups – a tranquil cave for the somnolent piano – or in the more common place that contained the large, many-leaved table around which all or part of the family would gather for the ritual of daily meals, the soldier had fallen.
(Leiris 1991: 3)

The conclusion to the sentence feels somewhat disappointing when it is finally reached by the reader, who by now feels a little confused and disorientated. This is not the sort of construction one expects to find in an English text, and certainly not in a genre which is supposed to be informative, such as autobiography. This sentence has more in common with a prose poem, where one does not expect a narrative flow, than a supposedly narrative genre.

The translation here follows the digressions of Leiris's French, without following a translation strategy of slavish literality. Davis occasionally alters and anglicises word order, as well as clarifying the meaning of the sentence, as a short comparison with the French will show:

Sur le sol impitoyable de la pièce (salon? salle à manger? tapis cloué auz ramages fanés ou bien tapis mobile au quelconque décor dans lequel j'inscrivais des palais, des sites, des continents, vrai kaleidoscope dont mon enfance jouait
(Leiris 2003: 3)

[On the pitiless floor of the room (lounge? dining room? fixedcarpet with faded leafy designs or even loose carpet with some decoration into which I inscribed palaces, sites, continents, real kaleidoscope that my childhood made use of] (my literal translation)

Davis increases the cohesion of the text: she adds a second 'onto' before mentioning the carpets, bringing them back into the narrative of the sentence, where Leiris's mention of them is more of a reflection, questioning his memory of the room. Davis also relates the rug to the fixed carpet with 'some other design', whereas Leiris only mentions 'some

[quelconque] decoration', in a form of enumeration that seems only to suggest his thinking of the carpet, rather than its relation to the rest of the sentence. The addition of an alliteration in 'faded floral patterns' (where Leiris writes 'ramages fanés') is in keeping with Leiris's poetic style, and increases the literariness of the text. Davis's translation is, therefore, not as extremely literal as it first appears to an English reader: it is willing to adapt the text in minor ways towards coherence, while at the same time recreating major stylistic features. Davis balances a commitment to the style of the text with a need for the text to be understandable for the target audience.

Davis's other solutions are not always as helpful to the English reader. She remarks in her translator's note that 'certain of Leiris's words must remain in French' (Davis 1991: xi), due to the 'historic truth' (ibid.) inherent in the autobiographical nature of the work: the sounds and words relate to Leiris's own childhood, and it would thus be inauthentic to try to recreate that childhood in English. Her solution is to use many French terms throughout the text, leaving many of the puns in French with either glosses or footnotes to explain them. Of the 255 pages in *Scratches*, 126 have French words on them.[3] This is almost half, and the effect is that the text is peppered with French words. This can sometimes produce a disrupted, uncomfortable reading experience for the English reader. For example, the following list appears in the section 'Alphabet':

> *coup de foudre* [lightning bolt], *coup de théâtre* [dramatic turn of events], or *coup de ciel* [blow from heaven] – one can speak of a *coup de dés* [throw of the dice]. ... from *coup de sang* [apoplectic fit] to *coup de vent* [gust of wind], from *coup de mer* [heavy sea] to *coup de feu* [gunshot], from *coup de tête* [head butt in wrestling] to *tout à coup* [all of a sudden]
> (Leiris 1991: 33, original interjections)

The text shows the grapholgical pattern of the French around 'coup de'. Davis's glosses

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3   These are pages 3-11, 14, 15, 18-27, 29-31, 33, 34, 36-44, 46-59, 61, 62, 64-66, 68, 72-74, 76, 80, 83-88, 90, 92, 97, 98, 101, 102, 104-111, 113, 114, 117, 118, 122, 123, 126, 127, 133, 136, 137, 138, 143, 146, 147, 151, 155, 157-162, 168, 169, 171, 175, 184, 186, 187, 190, 193, 199, 207, 216, 218, 219, 235, 237, 238, 239, 240-243, 245, 252, 257, and 258.

allow the reader to follow the French, but their positioning makes the text difficult to read, as the reader is forced to code-switch while reading. A monolingual reader would be able to see the pattern that existed in the French source text (Leiris 2003: 35), and follow the semantic meaning. Yet the French disrupts the reading process, offering an excessive possibility for meaning creation that was not in the source text as the words are now doubled. The reader hesitates between a sound pattern and the meaning of the words.

Similarly, the songs in the section 'Songs' (Leiris 1991: 7-17) are all given in French with an English translation that does not attempt to reproduce rhyme or metre but does give the meaning of the words. In that section of *Scratches*, Leiris describes his relationship with songs, and how, when he was too young to read he would mishear the lyrics, creating a whole different meaning for the song. For example, in a song sung by a friend of the family, he misunderstands the word 'clairet' as being addressed to the singer's parrot, rather than the modifying the preceding noun: 'Quand je bois du vin clairet' [When I drink pale red wine] (Leiris 1991: 8). The young Leiris thus understood the song as 'Quand je bois du vin, Clairet' [When I drink wine, Clairet], where Clairet was the parrot, even though the narrator, who is looking back on the event, would know that this was not what it meant. Farther on, the young Leiris understands the name of a family, '*les Tréforts*' as the '*Très forts'* [very strong] (9-10). The problem for the translator here is that these words are inseparable from their French setting: while it is conceivable that a parrot could be called 'Clairet', because English adjectives are almost always placed before nouns, the end of the song's line would be 'pale red wine', losing all hint of an apostrophe, and as such the possibility of confusion. The translation needs to reproduce Leiris's confusion, and by keeping the French it becomes possible to show how that confusion can arise.

I include here a table of some other examples of Davis's use of French in the

English text of *Scratches*. It is not exhaustive, but it illustrates the type of usage and the various strategies Davis uses to allow the English reader to understand the French.

Page	French in text	Davis's means of explaining the term	Other comments
7	*pleurer comme une madeleine*	Footnote explaining idiomatic meaning	Footnote explains ambiguity: 'a *madeleine* is also a cookie'
15	an *étable*, a *retable*, a *totem*, a washbasin with water that is either *potable* or *non potable*	Footnote: 'Stable; altarpiece; totem; drinkable; and non-drinkable'	
19	*"Un bar-e-bier ... de qualité, de qualité, de qualité!"*	Gloss: [a ba-er-ber of quality]	
20	*guérites*	In text: 'sentry boxes – *guérites*'	
21	*Passer au falon, au tourniquet*	Footnote, giving both idiomatic meaning (to be court-martialled) and literal meaning	
22	*patois patoisant* and *ouailles* from the *paroisse* of *Fouillis-les-Oies*.	Footnote: 'Babbling dialect and minister's flock from the parish of "Middle-of-Nowhere"'	
27	King Pétaud	Footnote: explanation of the term, as well as relation between Pétaud, *pet* and fart	
36	*M* the majesty of *mort* [death] or *mère* [mother]; C the concavity of *cavernes*, *conques* [conchs], or the *coquilles* [shells] of breakable eggs	Gloss after French words, but connectors in English	
66	the *tu* is *tué*	Gloss after expression: [the intimate you is killed]	
83	Just as a violin has its *âme*	Gloss: [sound post, lit. "soul"]	
102	Salpêtrière hospital ("*salle Pêtrière*," as I called it)	No explanation	Translation could be '"Dirty Pêtrière" as I called it'
143	*ça me serre le coeur*	Gloss: [it gives me a pang, lit. "squeezes my heart"]	English text does not use œ in *cœur*
199	*cri de coeur*	No explanation	Expression is not uncommon in English, but italicisation makes it appear foreign
237	between *idole* [idol] and *plâtre* [plaster], for example, by way of *idolâtre*[idolatrous]	Gloss after the word	
258	*tantôt*	Gloss: [later, presently]	

In some cases there are only isolated instances of French words or expressions; these

are less problematic to the reading of the text as an English text than the cases where French and English are interwoven, as in the example above from page 33 or the examples from pages 15, 22, 36 and 237 in the table. Davis's choice of footnotes or in-text glosses does not alter the effect of strangeness that such a heavy presence of French has. For footnotes, there is a part of the text which is opaque to the target language reader which is clarified by finding the extratextual gloss. Glosses interrupt the reading process but simultaneously allow the reader to continue reading the text without changing eye position.

Davis's translation strategy in *Rules of the Game* practises a form of what Philip E. Lewis (2004) calls 'abusive' translation. He explains that 'the abusive work of the translation will be oriented by specific nubs in the original, or points or passages that are in some sense forced, that stand out as clusters of textual energy' (2004: 263); those moments in the text when there is an abuse of the norms of the source language. It will try to 'rearticulate analogically the abuse that appears in the original' (ibid.), recreating the relationship to language of the source text. As Davis writes in the translator's note, in a not altogether dissimilar language: 'Certain words, phrases, labels or remarks which fell upon his ears ... are, for him [Leiris], not only sounds of sentimental importance but also so many knots where the threads of his remembrances and associations, ideas and moods, come together' (1991: xi). These 'knots' in the text are often untranslatable puns, such as those relating to the songs mentioned, or patterns of sounds, such as 'ver' (Leiris 1991: 109), which could be '*vert, verre* or *ver*' [green, glass or worm], as well as relating to Véronique and *vert-de-gris* [verdigris]. To reconstruct these phonological patterns in English may not be impossible, but one would almost certainly not reconstruct the same semantic pattern. In a novel this might be an option, depending on how important the semantic meaning of the words was for the narrative, but in an autobiography there is more of an obligation to retain the existing networks, as they refer to a life actually lived

in that language, and to translate them would distance the text significantly from its moorings in the references of that life. The text ends up full of French words and expressions, but it does retain many of the networks of words that exist in the source text, and ties the target text to the source text at those moments when the source text itself plays with the French language. Interestingly, Davis's use of French reduces in *Scraps*, where there are only 61 pages out of 241 which have French words on them,[4] a reduction from one half to one quarter. This mirrors a shift in the emphasis of Leiris's autobiography from his relationship to words to his relationship with people, which I explore further in the next section.

Davis does not so much 'rearticulate analogically' Leiris's 'abuse' of French, but reproduces the French alongside English. This non-translation is also a failure of translation because it highlights the non-equivalence between the French and English terms. Davis's translation is transgressive in this respect. Davis's position in the literary world at the time of the translation may have given her the possibility of translating in such a way, although Leiris's status as a well known surrealist poet may also have contributed to the willingness of the publishers to accept such an unconventional translation.[5] Davis had already published 18 books in translation before *Scratches*, including her translation of *Brisées*, which although it tends towards literalism never strays too far from what is acceptable. She would have been known for her translations of Blanchot, which had received reviews in the *New Yorker* (Updike 1981) and *The New York Times* (Sorrentino 1986). Davis had also published three books of short stories: two for small presses, *The Thirteenth Woman and other stories* (1976) and *Story and other stories* (1983), and one for the major publisher Knopf, *Break it down* (1986). This latter

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[4]   These are pages 5-7, 10-12, 14, 17-19, 21, 23-31, 33, 36, 42, 49, 51, 53, 55, 58, 64-66, 70, 73, 74, 77, 79, 83, 95, 102, 103, 106, 108, 116, 124, 131, 154, 176, 177, 178, 181, 182, 192, 202, 205, 215, 218, 225, 226, 233, 235, and 239.

[5]   Despite growing acceptance of using French terms in academic texts (Gaddis Rose 2000: 298), it is still uncommon for a translation to use a significant amount of foreign words in fiction or other literary genres like autobiography.

received a special citation from the PEN/Ernest Hemingway Foundation award, a recognition that may have led to Davis receiving a Whiting Writer's Award in 1988 (Ziolkowski 1993). She would thus be no longer the little known writer/translator that she had been for earlier translations, especially those she wrote with Paul Auster: her status put her in a position to be able to break norms, as Gideon Toury (1995: 169) notes that certain translators may.

However, Davis's strategy in her translations of Leiris did not become the norm for her translations. Her four books of translations of Pierre Jean Jouve (1995, 1996, 1997a, 1997b) are much less experimental in translation strategy. She does, however, reproduce Jouve's unconventional use of shifting perspectives (from first to third person) and changes in tense (from past to present) in her translation of *Le monde désert* (Jouve 1926, trans. 1996), suggesting that the focus on style that begins in her work on Blanchot was still present. Even her translation of Proust, for which her aim was 'to stay as close as possible to Proust's original in every way' (Davis 2002a: xxxi), did not resort to the same practices, and arguably did not produce such a difficult and foreign text as her translations of Leiris.

Davis's strategy of using French words in an English text in *Scratches* and *Scraps* is in fact suggested in some of her own writing which predates the Leiris translations. Two stories in *Break it down* rely on the use of the two languages: 'The Letter' (Davis 1986: 49-56), and 'French Lesson 1: Le Meurtre' (Davis 1986: 128-36). 'The Letter', which I analyse more fully in chapter eight, tells the story of a female translator who receives a French poem from her former lover, written out by hand. The story revolves around the translator's attempts to understand the meaning of the poem/letter, which is not the meaning of the French poem itself but her former lover's reason for sending it to her: a central expression is '*nous nous retrouvions*, we found each other again' (55), which she thinks may refer back to their agreement to meet again, although she isn't

sure. The French in 'The Letter' is provided with an English gloss, allowing a monolingual reader to follow it, but at the same time producing an alienating effect.

'French Lesson 1' contains much more French,[6] and resembles some of the passages from *Scratches* that I analyse above in its combination of French and English. The story is shaped like a primer used for teaching language:

> *Les chiens* cringe in the presence of their master, *le fermier*, and bark at *les chats* as *les chats* slink mewing to the back door, and *les poulets* cluck and scratch and are special pets of *le fermier*'s children until they are beheaded by *le fermier* and plucked by *la femme* of *le fermier* with her red-knuckled hands and then cooked and eaten by the entire *famille*.
> (Davis 1986: 129; original emphasis)

This appears to be a parody of the primer genre, which would not give such information as the dogs' fear of their master, nor the morbid (although entirely normal) end of the chickens. As a parody it mirrors other of Davis's stories, which similarly take existing texts and alter them (see chapters seven and eight). Davis does not give English glosses in the story, partially as the French words are fairly basic and partially as a primer would not either: the point is to learn the meaning of the words in context. A reader could determine that 'les chiens' referred to dogs, as they bark, or 'les poulets' are chickens as they 'cluck and scratch' and become dinner.

The use of French in the stories creates an atmosphere of distance, stalling the reader's comprehension and enacting a movement of interpretation in the case of 'The Letter' and re-creating, albeit with a twist of adult knowingness, a childhood experience of learning a language in 'French Lesson 1'. The reason for using French in the translations is different, as it ties the translated text back to its source, and recounts the story of Leiris's initiation into language and life, reproducing the moments that his French childhood produced that a childhood in English could not. The textual effect of French in English in both the translations and the stories is to increase the difficulty for

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6   McCaffery (1996: 59) sees this use of French as an example of translation influencing Davis's writing, yet there is not necessarily any connection to translation; any writer who has used a French primer and has a reasonable knowledge of French could have written a story that mimics a primer.

the English reader, who now has to read the French, even if there is an English gloss or explanation. Only a translator who was confident of herself would suggest such an action, which would be likely to be rejected by more conservative publishers.

Davis's use of French in her own stories and in her translations of Leiris shows a link that is unique in her œuvre. Techniques that are present in her own writing reappear in the translations, and those earlier stories could be read as training for her translations. There is much more evidence of a dialogue at the level of style between her works and her translations than is the case with Blanchot. The translations suggest an important link between the two writers, which is further supported by stories by Davis that make reference to Leiris.

With reference to Leiris

The two texts by Davis which are based on intertextual references to Leiris suggest that Leiris has influenced Davis's writing in ways that go beyond simple ideas of stylistic influence. 'Swimming in Egypt: Dreams While Awake and Asleep' (Davis 2007b: 35-44) narrates a sequence of dreams and dreamlike moments that appears to be almost a rewriting of Leiris's *Nuit sans nuit et jours sans jour* (1961). In this work Leiris records, in chronological order, a sequence of dreams and waking moments that appeared like dreams. In her text, on the other hand, Davis decided to recount dreams and dreamlike moments, but not identify 'which were which and sequence them according to a logic that was not necessarily chronological' (Davis 2007b: 38), as well as 'shaping the dreams as [she] liked' (ibid.).

The relationship between Davis's text and Leiris's here seems at first glance to be one of direct influence. Indeed, Davis notes that the text 'illustrates the way in which a work of literature (in this case, Leiris's *Nuits sans nuit et quelques jours sans jour*) can exert an influence that produces a concrete result years later on' (Davis 2007b: 7).

Davis's project is directly inspired by Leiris's book, which she records having 'acquired ... many years ago, soon after it was published in Richard Sieburth's translation' (Davis 2007b: 37). The genesis of 'Swimming in Egypt' was not, however, immediately related to her reading of *Nights as Days, Days as Nights* (as Sieburth titled his 1987 translation), but to an experience that appeared extremely dreamlike to Davis, of driving up what should have been a road, according to her map, but which turned out to become a forest path. This experience made her 'contemplate Leiris's book with fresh interest and devise a project of [her] own' (Davis 2007b: 37) which became the text 'Swimming in Egypt'.

The explanation of the writing of 'Swimming in Egypt' is included in the text itself, which was published in a short volume on translation. It seems that Davis needed a text which could represent her Leiris translations. The other two texts in the volume, which deal with Davis's relationship to her translations of Maurice Blanchot and Marcel Proust, are based on previously published material, although two sections of 'Swimming in Egypt' were published as a broadside by Kore Press of Tucson in 2007, according to the copyright notice for *Proust, Blanchot and a Woman in Red.* Davis (2007b: 38) notes that the experience took place 'recently', and the piece could have been written for the pamphlet. While the other two texts in the pamphlet deal directly with works Davis has translated, this one refers to a text translated by someone else (and read in translation by Davis), complicating any supposedly simple relationship between translation and influence.

The second text is a lot more tenuous in its connection to Leiris, and does not refer to Leiris himself, but to Michel Butor. 'To Reiterate' (Davis 1997: 83) was first published in the magazine *Pequod* in 1986, before Davis published her translation of *Brisées*. It begins: 'Michel Butor says that to travel is to write, because to travel is to read.' This appears to refer to a footnote in Leiris's essay on Butor's *La Modification*,

reproduced in *Brisées,* which quotes Butor as saying 'words on a page are only markers on a road the reader himself is traveling' (Leiris 1989: 212n). If this is the quote that Davis is referring to, then she has reversed his metaphor from reading is a form of travelling to travelling is a form of reading. 'To Reiterate' develops this analogy further, linking translating to writing, reading, and travelling, until 'to read is also to read, and even more, because when you read you read, but also travel, because traveling read, therefore read and read' (Davis 1997: 83). The text folds in on itself, doubling meanings and questioning a received understanding of the relationship between writing, translating, reading, and travelling. Its connection to Leiris remains slim, but it at the same time shows a usage of language that brings attention to itself which suggests an affinity between the two writers, even before Davis had started to translate *Brisées* or *Rules of the Game*.

Davis's texts that have an intertextual connection to Leiris, albeit a submerged one in the case of 'To Reiterate', avoid direct interaction with Leiris's texts: they do not quote or otherwise integrate Leiris's writing into Davis's own. They place Leiris in a position of inspiration; as something to emulate, although with variation, in 'Swimming in Egypt', and as the (probable) source of a quote that provided the stimulus for 'To Reiterate'. Both texts position Davis in relation to Leiris, making him into a precursor, although at the same time demonstrating Davis's difference from him.

Breaking the rules of the game

The point of contact between the two writers is not only apparent in these texts, however, but also in the affinity they have for writing in a way that privileges the poetic function of language. This section reads how Leiris uses language in *La Règle du jeu* to question his unconscious, playing with misreading and mishearing in order to develop his autobiography, moving on to question how Davis manipulates language. I suggest

that she reflects formal elements of Leiris's writing, but does not have the same autobiographical motivation. There is, therefore, also a form of dialogue between the two writers, which again plays out in how Davis responds to Leiris's work.

Throughout *Rules of the Game* Leiris interrogates the role of words in his life, and nowhere more so than in the first volume, *Scratches*. The first section, '...Reusement!' (Leiris 2003: 3-6; 1991: 3-7), describes the entry into the world of words of the young Leiris. While the child Leiris described in this section is already a speaking subject, capable of forming sentences and talking, he begins to be able to contemplate words in relation to each other, and to some extent as objects in themselves rather than just carriers of meaning, suggesting Leiris's later poetic vocation. The process could be read as an entry into Lacan's symbolic order, which represents the social aspect of language. As Lacan notes, it is through language that the idea of the incest taboo can come into existence, as it is due to linguistic concepts of family relations (i.e. who is mother, sister, aunt, cousin) that one can recognise which people are taboo (Lacan 1966: 156-57). Slavoj Žižek (2006: 8) likens the symbolic order to the rules of a game of chess. The symbolic order represents the rules of the 'game' of social interaction, and Leiris's understanding of this 'game' grows in '...Reusement!'

The young Leiris shouts out 'reusement', only to be corrected, told that he should say 'heureusement' (Leiris 2003:5; 1991: 5). The effect is one of revelation:

> Appréhender d'un coup dans son intégrité ce mot qu'auparavant j'avais toujours écorché prend une allure de découverte, comme le déchirement brusque d'un voile ou l'éclatement de quelque vérité. Voici ce vague vocable – qui jusqu'à présent m'avait été tout à fait personnel et restait comme fermé – est, par un hasard, promu au rôle de chaînon de tout un cycle sémantique.
> (Leiris 2003: 6)

> Suddenly to perceive in its entirety a word that I had always mangled before felt like a discovery, as though a veil had suddenly been torn away or some truth exploded. This vague utterance – which until now had been private and in some sense closed – had suddenly and fortuitously been promoted to the role of a link in a whole semantic cycle.
> (Leiris 1991: 5)

Leiris's awareness of the word as a word increases, and at the same time through the knowledge of the word 'heureusement' he can connect it to the word 'heureux' [happy], a connection that allows Leiris to go on to note the change from a personal expression (...reusement) to a more socialised and shared expression (heureusement) which is understandable by other people, and at the same time connected to a series of other words.

Yet 'heureusement' is not the only word around which this section revolves. The object that causes the child's exclamation is a toy soldier, and the word soldier is repeated in each of the first six paragraphs, although Leiris notes how little import the fact that it was a soldier had on him, being more interested in the fact that one of his toys had fallen and could have broken (2003: 4; 1991: 4). As he notes, 'soldat, cela n'évaillait aucune résonance définie en moi ' ['I had no definite response to the word "soldier"'] (ibid.). Yet this word, 'soldat' [soldier] dominates the first half of the section. It is the only thing in the first few paragraphs which is sure: all other descriptions are questioned or multiplied – 'Un soldat neuf ou ancien' ['A new soldier or an old one'] (2003: 4; 1991: 4), 'Un soldat vraisemblement français' ['Probably a French soldier'] (ibid.). The theme of soldiers, and the image of manliness that they represent, becomes more important later in the latter two sections of *Scratches* which describe Leiris himself as a soldier: the word soldier is by no means arbitrary.

The whole '...Reusement!' section forms an introduction to *The Rule of the Game.* The opening provided by the word 'heureusement' into a more social view of language is mirrored by the movement in the first two volumes away from the personal to a more social vision; from Leiris the child to Leiris the adult, engaged in a war. Hand in fact sees *La Règle du jeu* as 'playful variations on the theme of producing self-representation' (2002: 86), although he goes further and bases his analysis of the whole

work on his reading of '...Reusement!', stating that 'we find that *Biffures*'s opening "...Reusement!" scene encapsulates the general drama of the whole autobiography' (Hand 2002: 172). Not only is the question of the social introduced here, but also, less obviously, the figure of the soldier, and, more obviously, a question of language. It is Leiris's fascination as a child with the way the word 'heureusement' connects to the word 'heureux' that allows him to picture a social world, 'd'obscurément sentir ... en quoi le langage articulé ... me dépasse, poussant de tous côtes ses antennes mystérieuses' (Leiris 2003: 6) ['to sense obscurely ... how articulated language ... went beyond me, thrusting mysterious antennae in all directions' (Leiris 1991: 6)].

All the sections of *Scratches* apart from 'Dimanche' (2003: 169-237) ['Sunday' (1991: 154-215)] are constructed around readings or misreadings of words, clearly shown in the confusion between 'Je bois du vin clairet' [I drink pale red wine] and 'Je bois du vin, Clairet' [I drink wine, Clairet] (2003: 8; 1991: 8) in the section 'Chansons' (2003: 7-18) ['Songs' (1991: 7-17)], which I discussed earlier. This form of misreading (or mishearing) and the subsequent confusion that ensues appears often throughout *Scratches*, and Leiris explains his intention to use the word 'bifurs', meaning bifurcations or railway junctions and sounding almost the same as 'biffures' [crossings out] to describe the material he was using (2003: 262; 1991: 238). His attention is focused on what he calls

> [les] trébuchements ou glissements de pensée se produisant à l'occasion d'une fêlure, d'un miroitement ... ou d'une quelconque singularité ... se manifestant dans le discours
> (Leiris 2003: 262-63)

> [trippings or slippings of thought occurring as a result of fracture, a dazzling flash ... or some singularity or other ... manifesting itself in speech
> (Leiris 1991: 238)]

Hand describes this as 'the *astonishment* of the subject-in-language' (2002: 89; original emphasis), which he sees as grounding *Biffures* in a 'graphological' scheme; it follows

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Leiris's development in language rather than his biological development. Lejeune agrees when he notes that Leiris's work considers 'son histoire comme celle d'un *être de langage*' [his story as that of a *being of language*] (Lejeune 1975: 7; original emphasis). The development in language does not exclude his social development – rather it situates Leiris's autobiography on the level of the symbolic, despite its continual returning to what Kristeva (1974: 19) calls the pre-Oedipal semiotic elements of language.

Sections like 'Alphabet' (Leiris 2003: 33-68; 1991:31-63) and 'Il était une fois...' (2003: 128-168) ['Once Upon A Time...' (1991: 117-153)] use the sound of the word as a starting point for further reflection. In 'Once Upon A Time...' this reflection is mainly at the beginning, with isolated moments later on, but in 'Alphabet' it seems to continue throughout the text, with various words and sounds providing the impetus. Thus Leiris manages to associate the word 'alphabet' with horses, expressions like 'coup de foudre' [love at first sight], dice, letters, sensual impressions. He goes on to include biblical names, which often cause him to pause because of the diaereses in the French versions of the names Caïn and Moïse (2003: 50-52; 1991: 47-48). Finally he moves onto French history (2003: 62; 1991:58). The shifting pattern of association is the formative principle of the text, rather than narrative or argument.

This development by association is what Hand (2002: 86) refers to as the 'musical form' of *Scratches*. The text appears to be constructed more like a symphony, with recurrent themes that intimate and reference each other, rather than a narrative text. This is strange in the genre, which Bran Nicol describes as 'a really rather conservative form of prose writing' (2006: 105). However, as Maurice Blanchot (1949: 239) notes in relation to another text of Leiris's, autobiography is always in a state of flux; it has no constant subject but one that is in a state of becoming. Leiris's writing mirrors this constant movement, and the recourse to the semiotic and phonological elements of

language overshadows a more strictly logical and rhetorical development. Lejeune (1975: 160) sees the autobiography as being written like a poem, and notes how Leiris will search for the centre of a series of associations, while also allowing himself to develop secondary chains of association (1975:164). This can be seen in the ranging from the alphabet and letters to the diaereses in biblical names (in French), which then lead on to French history in the section 'Alphabet': it is possible at the same time to read a chronological movement hidden behind the chain of associations, as one learns the alphabet first and then other things.

The form of sections in *Scratches*, then, tends towards a description of the effect of language on the young Leiris, and allows the movement of each section to develop around a chain of associations. In the second volume, *Scraps*, the focus on language is reduced, although not absent. Indeed, while words continue to play an important role in 'Mors' (Leiris 2003: 289-356; 1997: 1-71), they lead here into a discussion of death, a subject which Leiris explores in this section, ranging from thoughts of his own mortality (2003: 305; 1997: 18) to the death of others (e.g Max Jacob, 2003: 322 ; 1997: 35), to the theatricality of death (2003: 327; 1997: 40-41) and even zombies (2003: 336; 1997: 51), which represent a suspension of death. Yet the central theme of the section, death, is not mentioned for 16 pages (2003: 304; 1997: 17). Before then there are reflections on the theatre, a trip to the Antilles, the theme of waking, his family, self-reflexive passages about writing, and even corrections to *Scratches*. These latter take the form of actual corrections, where Leiris had misquoted songs (2003: 299; 1997: 11), and reflections on the sound of words (2003: 297-299; 1997: 10-11). All these subjects lay the ground work for themes that will reappear throughout 'Mors'.

While 'Mors' seems more focused than the earlier sections, it still proceeds by association, sometimes leaving the reader wondering how Leiris has moved from one theme to another. He tries to explain the process in the text:

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> J'opère une série de glissements, d'obscurité à sommeil, de banlieue à désert, d'oubli à Zuyderzée, d'insecte à somnambule, de solitude à mort
> (Leiris 2003: 310)
>
> [I am performing a series of shifts: from darkness to sleep, from suburb to desert, from oblivion to the Zuider Zee, from insect to sleepwalker, from solitude to death
> (Leiris 1997: 23)]

Yet he never really explains the process of association; he only asserts that that is what he is doing. The effect, again, is that the text reads more like a prose poem than a narrative.

'Mors', like much of *Biffures*, tends towards a privileging of what Kristeva (1974: 83) calls the *géno-texte,* that is, the part of the text which is filled with the pre-Œdipal drives of the semiotic (Kristeva 1974: 19), manifested as phonological and graphological patterns. In the early parts of Leiris's *La Règle du jeu,* the *pheno-texte* (Kristeva 1974: 84), or the communicative aspect of the text, tends to be submerged under the *géno-texte*, although both are present, and both are, as Kristeva (1974: 84) makes clear, essential to the meaning of the text. The writing, therefore, operates like a controlled version of free association: it aims to recover Leiris's unconscious through the return to the semiotic. Pontalis also notes the free association in the text, but argues that it 'rules out choice and system' (1992: 134), thus making it limited. Indeed, this ruling out of conscious choice is the significant element of free association. However, Leiris does make choices over the beginnings of his chains of association, and follows through these chains in order to discover the unconscious significance that exists simultaneously with the conscious meaning for him of those words or phrases.

The privileging of the semiotic over the symbolic in Leiris's autobiography represents the return to childhood implicit in the first part of *Biffures*, but in the later parts and 'Mors' in *Fourbis*, the theme is no longer of childhood, and the semiotic aspects of the text seem more like an attempt to reunite individual (child) and social

(adult) selves. However, the final two sections of *Scratches* involve less word-play, and 'Les Tablettes Sportives' (Leiris 2003: 357-461) ['Sports notebook' (1997: 73-180) and '«Vois! Déjà l'ange...»' (2003: 462-520) ['"Look! Already the Angel..."' (1997: 181-241)] in *Fourbis* even follow generally linear narratives. The first describes Leiris's interest in sports as a child and leading up to his time in the army, at the beginning of the second world war, while 'Look! Already the Angel...' describes an affair he had with a prostitute called Khadidja, also when he was a soldier. These last two sections can be seen as a development of the tendency in the first two volumes of *The Rules of the Game* to move toward social interaction and the symbolic order (already hinted at in '...Reusement!'), away from a child's unconnected world of individual language. *La Règle du jeu*, then, begins by exploring the child's relation to language, which is also a relation to the social world. This social world gains in importance as the work progresses.

Davis also explores language use and the social, questioning the established order by demonstrating how language is used to build this order. Where Leiris uses language as a means of self-exploration, Davis's texts invite the reader to question their own assumptions about the symbolic order of language. For example, in the story 'They Take Turns Using A Word They Like' (Davis 2001a: 98) the difference stresses of words are emphasised:

> "It's *extraordinary*," says one woman.
> "It *is* extraordinary," says the other.
> [Quoted in full; original emphasis]

Davis's story seems like a caption for a non-existent *New Yorker* style cartoon; one that is tinged with a surprisingly metaphysical question, with the focus on being in the second woman's utterance. The almost repetition is discomforting; from the title the reader would expect something different, for example, different words that they might like. The repetition of the words arrives as a shock; the change in emphasis is the difference between them, but it is left to the reader to interpret what that difference may

mean. The story provides the impetus for a thought, and the difference between the two utterances causes the reader to imagine what the two woman might look like, how they would sound, why one would like the word 'is', etc. Here Davis stages Jakobson's (1960: 357-358) poetic function, making the reader of the text focus on the words themselves, and the reader is confronted with the words as words, facing a revelatory moment in a similar way to the young Leiris in '...Reusement!' (Leiris 2003: 3-6; 1991: 3-7), but Davis differs from Leiris in that she does not give an interpretation, leaving it up to the reader to question their own expectations and understanding.

Other stories by Davis are also structured around what seem to be minor grammatical features, such as 'Examples of *Remember*' (Davis 2001a: 28), 'Honoring the Subjunctive' (Davis 2001a: 71) and 'Example of the Continuing Past Tense in a Hotel Room' (Davis 2007a: 201). These stories, each of which is no more than two lines long, focus the reader again on the structures of language involved, but not explicitly interpreting them. In 'A double negative' the grammatical construction demonstrates the character's ambivalence towards having children: 'she does not want to not have had a child' (Davis 2001a: 66).

In the story 'Grammar Questions' (2007a: 27-29), a grammatical structure is similarly used as cover for an emotional development. The question of how to refer to a dying or dead person in the present or past tense allows the narrator to explore, albeit obliquely, how she will react to her father's imminent death. Through the questions it unfolds that the father is in hospital, cannot eat, and is not conscious. Here it is not so much grammar itself that worries the narrator, but rather what it is used to refer to – a person to whom she has emotional connection. Language may exist as a symbolic system, but 'Grammar Questions' reminds the reader that it is referential: the way one uses language is important because it refers to people.

'Letter to a Funeral Parlor' (Davis 2001a: 74-75) similarly takes the language

used to refer to the dead as its starting point, specifically a complaint over the word 'cremains'. The narrator/letter-writer notices several instances in which the language of professional undertaking is distanced from the experience of the bereaved: 'your representative used the words *loved one* to refer to him. That was comfortable for us, even if the ways in which we loved him were complicated' (74; original emphasis). The word 'cremains', though, is uncomfortable for the family and the narrator explains why, referring to its status as a portmanteau word and how it makes them think of 'some kind of chipped beef dish' (75). Here, again, sensitivity to language is used to explore the relationship between the narrator and their dead father. There is still an element of humour in both these stories, but rather than being solely humorous they develop a narrative of mourning around the (mis)use of language.

Davis, in 'Letter to a Funeral Parlor', reminds the reader that words do not just refer to other words, but rather to people and things outside of language, a referent. Marjorie Perloff has noted this tendency in Davis's fiction, which she says 'renew[s], however elliptically, the contact words make with their referents' (1989: 212), although she does not highlight the interpersonal nature of this renewal. The referent in 'Letter to a Funeral Parlor' is the narrator's father, who is now dead. While there is language to refer to the father, he also exceeds language: he is more than how he can be described. As people (and things) exceed language, they are not wholly assimilable to the symbolic order. Lacan calls 'réel' [real] that which lies outside of the agreed illusion of the symbolic order (1973: 53-54). This real he says appears with the force of a 'rencontre' [encounter] (1973: 54); an encounter which is always traumatic. The narrator of Davis's story turns away from the symbolic order, which reduces their father to 'cremains', preferring the trauma of their encounter with their father, in all its difficulties.

Where 'Letter to a Funeral Parlor' refuses the play of language and so the symbolic order, 'A Mown Lawn' (Davis 2001a: 2) playfully combines a privileging of

the poetic function which echoes Leiris's writing and an explicit criticism of the symbolic order. The text was published in *The Best American Poetry 2001* (Hass and Lehman 2001: 67) as a poem, although Davis prefers the designation story, which she says she finds 'more elastic' (Manguso 2008). 'A Mown Lawn' begins 'She hated a *mown lawn*' (original emphasis in all quotations from this story); the italics distance the words from their communicative function. The reader is therefore unsure whether it refers to an actual area of grass that has been cut, or the words 'mown lawn'. The second sentence places words as combinations of symbols (letters) and phonemes, but also reverts to semantic meaning at the end: 'Maybe that was because *mow* was the reverse of *wom*, the beginning of the name of what she was – a *woman*.' The words 'mow' and 'wom' are anagrams of each other, foregrounding their material nature and suggesting the sort of play that is possible in language. The return of semantic meaning, 'woman', at the end of the sentence brings back a connection between phonemes/graphemes and a signified. The signified in this case is part of the symbolic order: by describing 'woman' as 'the name of what she was', Davis separates the word from the entity (or possibly state) of woman.

This questioning of the word 'woman' is also present in another of Davis's stories, 'Suddenly Afraid' (Davis 2007a: 189): 'because she couldn't write the name of what she was: a wa wam owm owamm womn' (quoted in full). 'Suddenly Afraid' echoes the phrasing in 'A Mown Lawn', separating the name 'woman' from the condition of being a woman, but also foregrounds an anagrammatic play in the way the words after the colon approach asymptotically the word 'woman' – the reader can infer this word from the failed attempts at writing it. In both texts, then, the word seems to exist in itself, separate from what a woman is.

The two texts highlight how the symbolic order, where words are accepted as having a meaning, is separate from a real existence. Lacan notes that the real is 'cela qui

gît toujours derrière l'automaton' [that which always lies behind the automaton] (1973: 54), the automaton here being the acceptance of standard meanings for English words, and especially the word 'woman': Davis shows how the word itself need not mean anything, and a woman is always distinct from the word 'woman'. This could be related to an experience of translation, where there is constant confrontation with different words that apparently refer to the same object, state or condition, thus highlighting the arbitrary connection between signifier and signified. Davis's foregrounding of 'woman' is also similar to the way that Leiris interrogates his reactions to words throughout *Scratches*, although here, as in the earlier examples, Davis does not fully develop the exploration of the word's meaning, rather leaving the reader to question their own understanding.

'A Mown Lawn' resembles Leiris's autobiography in the way that it develops through a series of associations, as do the sections of *Scratches*. From 'lawn' it goes to 'man' to '*Nam*, a bad war. *A raw war*', then back to 'lawn', which the narrator notes 'was a contraction of *law man*'. The question of law then holds for several sentences before meeting resistance from the narrator, who appears not to like the conformity involved in mowing a lawn: 'A *lawn* not *mown* grows *long* she said: better a *long lawn*.' The obvious alliteration and assonance here, as well as a staccato rhythm of single stressed syllables, make the text sound like a tongue-twister, but again it does not quite let go of semantic meaning – as the best tongue twisters do not, either. The text has moved from considerations of sound to feelings of claustrophobia caused by surburban conformity in America and intimations of the connection of surburbia to neo-colonial wars, with the two references to (Viet) Nam. Here there is a connection between the mown lawn of the title, the conformity it represents, and imperialism.

'A Mown Lawn' advocates for a resistance to conformity, a refusal to play by the rules of the game, not only in its semantic content, but in its form: the anagrammatic

play foregrounds the arbitrary connections between word and meaning, signifier and signified. As the Lacanian symbolic order is intimately connected to language (Lacan 1966: 155-157), this undoing of language questions the symbolic order. It does not return to a real referent, as 'Letter to a Funeral Parlor' does, but it opens a space, like Davis's other stories, for the questioning of received ideas.

Davis's undoing of the fabric of language in some of her stories reflects Leiris's method of analysing words in *Scratches.* They both use an investigation into language to structure their texts. In the case of the shorter stories, though, Davis does not perform the analysis herself, but rather creates a space of confusion that requires the reader to analyse the text. Leiris, on the other hand, seems to be interested in analysing for his sake: the reader is left outside of the process, following along but not required to analyse words for themselves. Where Leiris excludes the reader from the text, Davis's stories includes them.

The difference can be explained by the difference in the projects of the two writers: Leiris is writing autobiography, and wants to develop an understanding of events and words in relations to his own life. Patrick Sauret describes the construction of *Scratches* as a 'série d'exercices de lecture ainsi qu'une description du mode de lecture employé' [series of reading exercises as well as a description of the way of reading that is used] (1995: 46). He calls what Leiris is reading 'autogramme[s] ... la traduction verbale d'un fragment d'existence' [autograms ... the verbal translation of a fragment of existence] (ibid.). The material in *Scratches* is therefore intimately linked to Leiris's actual existence. The text cannot really exist without reference to the life of Michel Leiris, even if it only refers to certain aspects of that existence. Leiris's foregrounding of the poetic function, then, focuses his analysis on the words in his life, and so he needs to analyse those words himself, in order to come closer to an understanding of his relationship to them. Leiris is expressly trying to learn about

himself, writing that *La Règle du jeu* 'visait, originellement, à être moyen de m'éclairer pour une conduite plus cohérente de ma façon de vivre' (Leiris 2003: 296) ['was originally intended to be a means of enlightening me for a more coherent conduct of my way of living' (1997: 9)]. The text is, in Blanchot's words, 'un acte réel' [a real act] (1949: 238): it is not only supposed to be literary, but also an intervention in Leiris's life. Leiris therefore fills in interpretations, explains how certain words are meaningful to him, as he is searching for a meaning that belongs to him.

Davis, on the other hand, is writing fiction. Her stories need not be referred to her own life, although several can be, such as 'Letter to a Funeral Parlor' (Davis 2001a: 74-75), which refers to a father who was an English professor, as was Davis's (Knight 1999: 525). Yet here Davis distances the story from her own life by casting it in the form of a letter of complaint, and not including details or names. When questioned about the autobiographical nature of her fiction by Knight, she commented that some of work has a basis in her life 'but there are always fictional elements' (1999: 547). The example of 'Swimming in Egypt' (Davis 2007b: 35-44), which emulates a text by Leiris, demonstrates how Davis distances herself from the text: Davis copies Leiris's basic process, recording dreams and dream like moments, but changes them so they have a fictional form, rather than one which is autobiographical.

Even the narrator of Davis's novel *The End of the Story* (1995) writes in a way that divorces what she writes from herself, and she notes: 'I began to wonder how the things I was writing could be formed into a story, and I began to look for a beginning and an end' (Davis 1995: 198). The narrator is thus transforming the writing from autobiographical to fictional, by making the material follow the dictates of narrative form. There is, therefore, a refusal of the autobiographical in favour of fictionalisation. The text is never confessional, but takes elements from the life of its writer.

Davis says that this is what she also does: 'I still define myself as a fictional

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writer for lack of another term, but I'm not really inventing. I'm taking what I see, the material I'm given, and arranging it, and really doing very little invention' (Stewart Atwell and Espach 2009). The refusal of the idea of literature as invention here questions one of the tenets of literature as an institution that I discussed in chapter one. Davis's writing frames and shapes 'the material [she is] given' through a focus on formal elements into literary texts. This echoes a process of translation, which also arranges existing material; however, translation involves another process of recreation from one language to another. Not all writing is translation as the process of writing involves a level of selection and choice that is not open to the translator: the writer can do whatever they want, whereas a translator must, as I argued in chapter one, produce a text that is deemed equivalent to another text.

Davis chooses strange instances of word use and grammar to write about, but she leaves the reader to find their own interpretations for them because the work is not about the author, unlike Leiris's autobiography, but about those strange instances. If Davis interpreted them for the reader, then the work would be more about her. By leaving the reader to fend for themselves, the texts allow the reader to question meaning, and to question the symbolic order that shapes meaning. Yet at the same time she returns to a sense that meaning is not just linguistic or symbolic: there are people and things that language refers to. To reduce them to linguistic devices is to ignore their reality. Hence the horror at the word 'cremains' – it reduces the remains of the body of a loved person to a neologistic trade term.

The texts that are mostly based around language are mainly from *Samuel Johnson is Indignant* (2001) and *Varieties of Disturbance* (2007), both of which date (mainly) from after Davis's translation of Leiris. It would be hasty to ascribe the way she questions words and language to her experience translating Leiris, however. Davis has her own project in questioning language that differs from Leiris's exploration of the

self: Davis's questioning focuses on the social, interpersonal aspects of language use. Leiris does explore both social and linguistic aspects of his life, but the two are less intertwined through *La Règle du jeu* than they are in Davis's stories. Leiris can be read as a precursor, as he uses a similar technique, but Davis develops and refines this technique in her own way. Davis's own textual productions, in the form of 'Swimming in Egypt' and 'To Reiterate', which I discussed earlier, reinforce the reading of Leiris as a precursor for Davis's work. In both these texts, though, as in the stories discussed in the latter half of this section, Davis's application of Leiris's techniques is always veiled: either by fictionalisation or other forms of displacement. Davis can be said to take formal elements from Leiris, but not content.

It is equally possible to read their relationship as a form of extension of Davis's writing. By approaching the autobiographical in Leiris's work, she can write in a way that is outside of her own, usual style. She said in an interview with Larry McCaffery that she liked translation because translating allowed her that ability to write like someone else (McCaffery 1996: 75). Translating Leiris would allow her to explore his lyrical autobiographical mode without writing something that is openly autobiographical. Her translation therefore offers the chance to write as if writing autobiography, but as the autobiography belongs to someone else, it becomes fictional. It cannot have the same intended purpose for Davis as it does for Leiris: it will not act as intervention in her life. What it does become is an exercise in writing, a literary game. It is like a found text that has been reworked by Davis, echoing her other stories which incorporate the work of others that I analyse in chapters seven and eight. As a text by Davis, it loses the seriousness and purposefulness that Leiris accorded it and it becomes similar to Davis's other works in its literariness. It acts like a graft as it becomes part of Davis's work, but the possibility of reading it within the context of Leiris's work never vanishes. Both readings are possible at the same time, and the

oscillation between the two is indicative of any translation by Davis: they can be part of

her work and the work of someone else. The tension is not and cannot be resolved.

Chapter 5   Proust and rewriting

Davis's relationship to Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* is the most complex of her relationships with texts she has translated. She has openly admitted to his influence on her writing of *The End of the Story* (Knight 1999: 529), but her translation of *The Way by Swann's* (Proust 2002) comes late on in her career as a writer and translator – it is even possible to read it as the culmination of her career as a translator. Davis's move towards a more literal form of translation, that began with Blanchot and which her Leiris translations also follow, albeit in an idiosyncratic style, continues with her translation of Proust. She has stated how her 'aim in the present translation was to stay as close as possible to Proust's original in every way, even to match his style as nearly as [she] could' (Davis 2002a: xxxi). This literalist approach allows Davis to focus on the precision of Proust's word choice and syntax, which is mirrored by her own precision in the translation as well as in her own stories.

The chronological position of the translation makes it difficult to read the translation as a source of influence, as it comes after many of her stories were published. However, the French text, or even Scott Moncrieff's earlier translation (Proust 1922), could have influenced Davis in her writing. Her novel *The End of the Story* (1995) contains several intertextual references to *In Search of Lost Time*, which position it as a Proustian novel. In addition, there are similarities of form and technique that position Proust as a precursor for Davis. *The End of the Story* begs to be read in a tradition that stems from Proust. But Davis subverts the teleological nature of Proust's novel in her own, writing a narrative that has no goal to reach.

The aim of this chapter, then, is to read Davis's translation of Proust not only in relation to the other extant translations, which will clarify Davis's approach, but also in relationship with her own work. The work of retranslation in this project means that it

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differs from Davis's other major translations, as her translation of Proust must differentiate itself from the previous ones. This it does through her literal approach. *The Way by Swann's* has the most paratexts of any of Davis's translations, and I draw on these as evidence of an engagement with Proust's novel which goes beyond Davis's normal involvement with her translations. The second half of the chapter focuses on a comparative reading of *The End of the Story* and *In Search of Lost Time*. My goal in this reading is to show how Davis's novel resembles and goes beyond Proust's, providing a postmodern reworking of his themes. The position of Davis's Proust translation in her œuvre, then, is somewhat complex, as it provides both a source of influence and a textual dialogue.

(Re-)Translating Proust

The translation of *À la recherche du temps perdu* edited by Christopher Prendergast, of which Davis's translation of *The Way by Swann's* is the first volume, is a retranslation. The translations from Blanchot and from Leiris were first translations. The status of *The Way by Swann's* as a retranslation allows a different perspective on Davis's translation techniques, due to the possibility of comparing them with the previous translators' strategies. At the same time, the translation plays a part in Davis's corpus of translations, needing to be read alongside them and her own creative writing as part of her authorial œuvre. This section first interrogates how the retranslation affects the work, before analysing how Davis's translation differs from her predecessors. I argue that she is more literal, and this stems from her belief in the precision of word choice in Proust's work, which is a feature shared with Davis's own writing.

Retranslations serve a different function to first translations as they offer a new approach to an already translated text. As Antoine Berman notes: '[l]orsque la traduction est re-traduction, elle est implicitement ou non "critique" des traductions précédentes'

[when the translation is a re-translation, it is, implicitly or not, a 'criticism' of the preceding translations] (1995: 50). Gideon Toury also emphasises that even though all translations are 'always something that hasn't been there before' (1995: 166), this is especially the case for re-translations: they must produce something that was not already present in previous translations.

Christopher Prendergast's general editor's preface certainly does what it can to explain why a new translation of Proust is necessary in English, even though he concedes that 'the more sceptically minded' might decide that there is no reason (Prendergast 2002: xiv). This statement is, however, a falsely modest one: Prendergast spends much of the preface demonstrating how C. K. Scott Moncrieff's translation distorts Proust's writing, 'shower[ing it] with cascades of Edwardian purple prose' (xi), and how Terence Kilmartin's revision, which tried to produce 'a less ornately garlanded, more direct mode of writing' (ibid.) still falls short of that objective. Prendergast argues for a less recognisable Proust, one that is 'often strange to even French ears' (ibid.); he speaks of 'the sheer strangeness of *À la recherche*' (xx) and of Proust's 'making-it-strange' (ibid.). Prendergast's view of Proust rests on the Russian Formalist notion of art as something that makes us view things anew (Shklovsky 1991: 6), and his 'making-it-strange' is a reference to the concept of *ostranenie*, making strange.[1] This strangeness of Proust has, following Prendergast, been obscured by the Scott Moncrieff translation and Kilmartin's revisions of it. He states that throughout the new translation, 'the foreignizing conception has prevailed' (Prendergast 2002: xv), pointing the reader to Lawrence Venuti's (1995) work on foreignisation, although without entailing the level of textual manipulation that Venuti argues for.[2] Prendergast prefers a rather more literal

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[1] See Shklovsky 1991: xviii-xix for considerations of how to translate *ostranenie.*
[2] Venuti (1995: 310) states that 'contemporary translators can introduce discursive variations, experimenting with archaism, slang, literary allusion and convention'. What Venuti suggests is a 'practice of writing' (ibid.) that increases the strangeness of the text. This is quite different than the type of literalism and 'foreignization' that Prendergast supports.

approach than C. K. Scott Moncrieff's or Terence Kilmartin's.

It is tempting to think that all re-translations aim for literalism:[3] Goethe (2004: 66) suggests that the final stage of translating is a translation that 'comes close to an interlinear version', but first translations will produce more assimilative versions which acquaint the public with the work.[4] However, James Grieve's 1982 translation of *Swann's Way* was translated in such a way that he would rewrite Proust's sentences 'into a syntax which might have been that of an author writing in English' (Davis 2002a: xxxi), although Grieve saw his work as an effort to dispel the myth that Proust was 'abstruse' (dedication to Proust 1982, unnumbered page). Both Davis and Prendergast in their introductions say little about Grieve's translation, preferring to foreground their difference from the canonical Scott Moncrieff/Kilmartin translation. Their reticence may well be more than artistic, as James Grieve was the translator of the second volume for the new translation, and to deride his translation in prefaces would undermine any project of translation that included him as a translator. Grieve, on the other hand, complained about the Penguin translation and its project of foreignisation in an article in *Meanjin,* provocatively entitled 'Working with the Demented', which was published after the translation in 2005. Grieve states that 'there's a lot of [foreignisation] about these days – there always was, though it used to be called bad translation' (2005: 101), and complains about the lack of uniformity across the volumes (2005: 102-103). Grieve's conception of translation is quite different to Davis's, which can be seen below when I compare their translations of *Du côté de chez Swann.*

What is interesting about a retranslation is not any supposed movement towards a more literal translation, but in the text's relationship with other existing translations of

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[3]   Williams and Chesterman (2002: 72) characterise this supposition as the 'retranslation hypothesis', although the idea does not originate with them.

[4]   André Lefevere (2004) showed how such a process took place for the translations of Bertolt Brecht's plays, which at first seemed too strange to be performed as they were and so were adapted to target cultural norms, before being retranslated in a more literal way.

the same work. In the case of Davis's translation of *The Way by Swann's*, it is also interesting to see how the translation relates to her other translations. The translation is thus caught in (at least) two networks: that of translations into English of *Du côté de chez Swann* and the network of Davis's translations. *The Way by Swann's* is the translation that Davis has written most about. In contrast to her short introductions for Blanchot and Leiris, and the normal lack of translator's paratexts in her translations, she wrote the 15 page translator's introduction (Davis 2002a), as well as notes. She gave a talk in 2001 called 'The Architecture of Thought' (published as Davis 2001b), much of which was reused in the introduction. Another article entitled 'A Problem Sentence in Proust's *The Way by Swann's*' (Davis 2002b) was reprised in a slightly different form, along with other material, in 'A Proust Alphabet' (Davis 2007b: 9-27). She also wrote a story about the translation, 'The Walk' (Davis 2007a: 72-82), which includes extracts from both her own and the Scott Moncrieff/ Kilmartin translation. The extract in 'The Walk' happens to be the same as the section where the problem sentence[5] came from, although Davis does not refer to the sentence in the story, but to the scene from which it comes. As Davis (2007b: 11) notes, she worked on *The Way by Swann's* from 1997, and continued to revise the manuscript until 2004, when the American paperback was published (under the title *Swann's Way* - the American publishers being less adventurous than the British[6]). That is the longest time recorded that she worked on a single text.

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[5] The sentence is: 'De grilles fort éloignées les unes les autres, des chiens réveillés par nos pas solitaires faisaient alterner des aboiements comme il m'arrive encore quelquefois d'en entendre le soir, et entre lesquels dut venir (quand sur son emplacement on créa le jardin public de Combray) se réfugier le bouvelard de la gare, car, où que je me trouve, dès qu'ils commencent à retentir et à se répondre, je l'aperçois, avec ses tilleuls et son trottoir éclairé par la lune.' (Proust 1954: I, 115; Davis 2007b: 23). Davis's translation reads: 'From gates far apart, dogs awakened by our solitary steps sent forth alternating barks such as I still hear at times in the evening and among which the station boulevard (when the public gardens of Combray were created on its site) must have come to take refuge, for, wherever I find myself, as soon as they begin resounding and responding, I see it, with its lindens and its pavement lit by the moon.' (Proust 2002: 116). In 'A Proust Alphabet' (Davis 2007b: 9-27) she gives the final clause as 'with its lindens and its sidewalk lit by the moon' (23); the shift to 'pavement' in the book version may well have been an editorial decision of the British publisher.

[6] The American publishers were in general less comfortable with the foreignised text than the British, as Grieve (2005:102) notes, and changed many of the features, naturalising the dialogue presentation and providing the translations of quotations from earlier writers, which the British publisher had left in

The translator's introduction for Penguin appears to be part of the project of the translation: by allowing the translator to explain the translation, there is more apparent transparency in the translation process, which should gain the reader's trust. This manoeuvre would allow the new translation a position of credibility that it would require if it were to supplant the canonical translation. The other paratexts, however, were written on Davis's own initiative and show her engagement with the text. In 'A Problem Sentence in Proust's *Swann's Way*' and 'A Proust Alphabet' Davis works through the difficulties she had with the translation, and she explains clearly her working process and decisions. There is great deal of reflection about the text, and how to achieve her goal of 'stay[ing] as close as possible to Proust's original' (Davis 2002a: xxxi). The use of a scene from Proust in 'The Walk' (Davis 2007a: 72-82) also suggests that the novel was playing on Davis's imagination. In that story, a translator and scholar of Proust go for a walk around Oxford, get lost, and finally find themselves near the restaurant where they plan to eat. The translator sees a parallel with the moment in *The Way by Swann's* where after a long walk the narrator and his family find themselves at the back gate of their house (Proust 2002: 116). No other translation refracts like this into Davis's own stories, although other translations are alluded to but not mentioned by name, for example in *The End of the Story*, where she refers to 'a long autobiography written in a difficult style by a French ethnographer' (Davis 1995: 21), which corresponds with a description of Leiris's *Rules of the Game*. Her translation of Proust becomes more central to a reading of her own œuvre of stories through its greater presence in her writings; not just as a translation, but as a subject of essays and the inspiration for a story.

Davis's continued and varied engagement with *The Way by Swann's* can be explained by her attitude towards Proust's writing, which, as I have already mentioned,

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French with a gloss.

she admits influenced her (Knight 1999: 529). Her avowed translation style of literalism shows a great respect for how he constructs his novel at a micro-level. She considers that her practice for this translation was yet more literal than her translations of Leiris: 'in my work on Proust, I tried to take that close fidelity a step further, reproducing, when I could, even the sounds and the punctuation of the original' (Davis 2007b: 7). Yet her translation of Proust does not take the same recourse to using French in the body of the text as she does in her Leiris translations, except for translations of verse, and this was a general editorial decision (Prendergast 2002: xvi). The result is that her English must now try to follow Proust's sound and sense: as if Davis was translating a poem. As she (2007b: 13) remarks, Proust was also extremely attentive to sound. Davis gives the example of the word 'contigu', which she translated as 'contiguous', which although it may sound strange in English, carries the contamination of the word 'contagion', which she also saw hinted at in Proust's French, and with which it shares a Latin root, *contingere* (Davis 2007b: 13-17). In the introduction she mentions her attention to Proust's punctuation, and explains how she tried to match it 'comma for comma' (Davis 2002a: xxxv), a practice that Grieve (2005: 101) thought unnecessarily literal.

An example will show how Davis's translation differs from both Scott Moncrieff's and Grieve's, and test her claim of 'close-fidelity'. The following passage comes from the end of the first section, as the narrator is having his first, revelatory experience of involuntary memory, an experience he is finding difficult to hold on to:

> Arrivera-t-il jusqu'à la surface de ma claire conscience, ce souvenir, l'instant ancien que l'attraction d'un instant identique est venue de si loin solliciter, émouvoir, soulever tout au fond de moi? Je ne sais. Maintenant je ne sens plus rien, il est arrêté, redescendu peut-être ; qui sait s'il remontera jamais de sa nuit? Dix fois il me faut recommencer, me pencher vers lui. Et chaque fois la lâcheté qui nous détourne de toute tâche difficile, de toute œuvre importante, m'a conseillé de laisser cela, de boire mon thé en pensant simplement à mes ennuis d'aujourd'hui, à mes désirs de demain qui laissent remâcher sans peine.
> (Proust 1954: I, 46)

Will it reach the surface of my clear conscience, this memory, this old instant

which the attraction of an identical instant has come so far to call to, to move, to raise from the very depths of myself? I do not know. Now I feel nothing more, it has finished, perhaps descended again; who knows if it will come back up from its dark? Ten times I have had to begin again, lean out towards it. And each time the cowardice that turns us away from any difficult task, from any important work, advised me to leave it, to drink my tea while thinking only about my current worries, about my desires for tomorrow that can be pondered without difficulty. (my literal translation)

The first translation that I will analyse is Scott Moncrieff's, which was published as early as 1922 and set the standard for how Proust was received in English. Scott Moncrieff's translation *was* Proust in English for nearly sixty years, and cannot be overlooked: both Grieve and Davis are translating against this early translation, and it is against Scott Moncrieff's Proust that their translations will be measured by a reading public.

Will it **ultimately** reach the clear surface of my consciousness, this memory, this old, **dead** moment which the magnetism of an identical moment has travelled so far to importune, to disturb, to raise up out of the very depths of my being? I cannot tell. Now **that** I feel nothing, it has stopped, has perhaps gone down again into its darkness, from which who can say if it will ever rise? Ten times over I must essay the task, must lean down over **the abyss**. And each time the natural laziness which deters us from every difficult enterprise, every work of importance, has urged me to leave the thing alone, to drink my tea and to think merely of the worries of to-day and of my hopes for to-morrow, which let themselves be pondered over without much effort or distress **of mind**.
(Proust 1922: 60-61; C.K. Scott Moncrieff's translation; words in **bold** have no discernible equivalent in the source text)

Scott Moncrieff's translation is 144 words long, compared to 116[7] in the source text; a substantial increase, most of which comes from additions and bellifications. His translation tries to domesticate the French for a target audience, tailoring it to a more ornamental taste. He follows the French in its sentence structures, but he does add extra meanings, some of which seem to contradict the original: memories for Proust are emphatically not 'dead' moments, as Scott Moncrieff would have us believe. There is also what appears to be a mistake in this translation: Moncrieff translates 'lâcheté' [cowardice] as 'laziness' – again, seemingly against Proust's meaning. Kilmartin corrects

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[7] Using the French method of counting words, i.e. counting contractions (l', etc.) as words, which a computerised English word count does not do.

this in his revision (Proust 1981: 50). Kilmartin also revises 'gone down again' to 'sunk back', and removes the 'that' from 'Now [that] I feel nothing', an addition by Scott Moncrieff that obscured Proust's meaning in the first place: Proust is describing a state, not a sequence of causal events that the 'that' implies. The 'clear' in the first sentence, which Scott Moncrieff transfers from 'consciousness' to 'surface', Kilmartin leaves alone.

Grieve translates differently, reformulating the text to fit target language expectations of sentence structure and syntax:

> I could not tell now whether this memory, this old moment that had been sought out inside me and set in motion at such a long distance by an identical moment, would ever surface into the daylight of my consciousness. I could feel nothing. It was stationary, or might have sunk back to the bottom, never to climb up out of the dark again. I had to go back to the beginning and try to concentrate on it many more times. And each time I tried, the pusillanimity that distracts one from any difficult task or work of importance kept whispering to me to forget it, just drink my tea and think of my present problems and my wishes for the future, which I could mull over without any trouble.
> (Proust 1982: 34; Grieve's translation)

Grieve changes sentence structures around, avoiding situations where there would be a pronoun referring to a noun that has not yet been mentioned, as there is in the first line of the French ('Arrivera-t-il ...'). He loses the precision of the French text: his narrator says he feels nothing, but the French narrator no longer feels anything ('je ne sens plus rien'); where the French narrator has to begin again ten times, Grieve's must try many times. Grieve's register is consistent apart from 'pusillanimity', an extremely formal word that seems out of place here, although it does mean 'timidity' or 'cowardice'. Its formality means that attention is drawn to it in a way that attention is not drawn to the neutral 'lâcheté'. On the other hand, Grieve does not produce errors nor add extraneous information that alters meaning, as Scott Moncrieff did. If one only paid attention to what meaning is reproduced in translations, then Grieve has been faithful to the text. He has followed a process of what Eugene Nida (2004: 156-57) calls 'dynamic

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equivalence', rewriting the text so as to be understandable in the new (target) culture, with the 'naturalness of expression' that Nida recommends. Grieve's translation seems to have very different aims to both Scott Moncrieff's and Davis's, which both aim to maintain Proust's style in the translation to some extent.

Davis's translation looks quite different to both Grieve's and Scott Moncrieff's:

Will it reach the surface of my limpid consciousness – this memory, this old moment which the attraction of an identical moment has come so far to summon, to move, to raise up from my very depths? I don't know. Now I no longer feel anything, it has stopped, gone back down perhaps; who knows if it will ever rise up from its darkness again? Ten times I must begin again, lean down towards it. And each time, the timidity that deters us from every difficult task, from every important piece of work, has counselled me to leave it, to drink my tea and think only about my worries of today, my desires for tomorrow, which may be pondered painlessly.
(Proust 2002: 49; Davis's translation)

Davis uses 119 words; much closer in length to the source text than Scott Moncrieff. She makes no additions of words, and keeps adjectives connected to their corresponding nouns. Most of the time she uses cognates, which makes the translation sound similar to the French: for example 'counselled' for 'conseillé', or 'painlessly' for 'sans peine'. Yet she translates 'claire' as 'limpid', even though 'clear' would appear to fit her strategy, and maintain the alliteration on *c* that is present in the source text. 'Claire' is, however, placed before the noun, in an inversion of the normal order in French, which foregrounds it slightly. Davis's choice of 'limpid' enacts a similar foregrounding, but this falters as the meaning of 'limpid' seems less obvious than 'clear'. Alternatively, she may have chosen 'limpid' to avoid the connotations of lack of guilt that 'clear consciousness', with its echo of 'clear conscience', has in English. Davis chooses much plainer, less markedly literary verbs at the end of the first sentence than Scott Moncrieff, in keeping with her perception of Proust's style as unaffected. Her 'attraction' is also less ornamental than Scott Moncrieff's 'magnetism'.

Her choice of 'timidity' for 'lâcheté' at first seems to be out of keeping with her

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strategy of translating closely, as 'lâcheté' is a stronger notion than 'timidity'. Yet it does fit in with her idea of translating the sound of Proust's sentences. In her introduction, she remarks that there is an 'ABBA structure of vowel sounds in this [phrase]: *lâcheté qui nous détourne de toute tâche*' (Davis 2002a: xxxi, original emphasis). The repetition of vowel sounds is more complicated than ABBA, as there are five different vowel sounds used, but it does appear almost palindromic, beginning and ending on the 'â' of 'lâcheté' and 'tâche' (the 'e' being silent). The connection of *lâcheté* and *tâche* also takes place with the rhyme on /ʃ/. Another important structure of repetition is on /t/ and its voiced counterpart /d/. 'Timidity' plays into the sound structure of the phase in English: 'the **t**imi**d**i**t**y that **d**e**t**ers us from every **d**ifficult **t**ask'. The letters highlighted in bold show the pattern of alveolar /t/s and /d/s, linking 'timidity', 'deter' and 'difficult'. There is also a weaker rhyme on /i/ in '**t**i**mi**di**ty**' and '**d**i**ffi**cult', a connection that was not present in the source text, but one that does not seem out of place: the cowardice is at the difficulty of the task, rather than the task itself. Scott Moncrieff seems to plow over the sound system of this phrase, although one might hear a faint connection on the /z/s of 'la**z**iness' and 'enterpri**s**e', and Kilmartin flattens the phrase entirely with 'cowardice'. Grieve's choice of 'pusillanimity' also seems to ignore any sound patterns in the text. Davis's translation here is much more attentive to how Proust's sentences affect the reader, and recognises that there is more to the text itself than just its locutionary meaning: it affects the reader through sound as well as the meanings of the words.

Davis gives an explanation for her literalness and the attention that she pays to the phonic qualities of Proust's writing. In the section of her introduction which is about Proust's style, Davis notes how, for Proust, form and content coalesced – '[t]he shape of the sentence was the shape of the thought' (Davis 2002a: xxx). In a rare case of Davis providing an interpretation of a text she has translated, the first part of her introduction (xxii-xxvi) is dedicated to her reading of the novel, which mentions the narrative but

focuses on the themes and the ideas introduced in the volume, foregrounding the thought that lies behind the shape of Proust's sentences. This is not to say that she presents Proust's novel as a novel of ideas, but that she presents the expression of the novel as being related to the ideas that circulate within it.

The key to understanding Davis's translation practice in *The Way by Swann's* lies in this joining of form and content. She dismisses Scott Moncrieff's beautification of Proust's style, which she sees as 'essentially natural and unaffected' (Davis 2002a: xxx), because to beautify Proust is to derail the sense of his sentences: Proust wrote certain words because those words best expressed his thought. Davis admitted in an interview that she too would be extremely precise in her choice of words when writing her own fiction, even 'putting an X instead of a word if [she couldn't] think of what the word should be' (Ziolkowski 1997). Her translation of Proust, then, mirrors a mode of writing that is already present in her own stories: that of exactness in expression. Ben Marcus (2007), in a review of *Varieties of Disturbance*, noted that Davis's Proust seemed 'much more aligned with the aesthetic practised by the translator herself' rather than the more ornamental Proust of Scott Moncrieff, highlighting a similarity between Davis's writing and her translation. Davis's translation of Proust, therefore, can be read as extending this preciseness of her own writing style into her translation work. The translation becomes an extension of her writing.

Her precision in translation and Proust's in writing the text can also be seen in how Davis translates Proust's characterisation, especially its mimetic elements. Many of the characters have their own little linguistic idiosyncrasies, from Françoise's less elevated speech (e.g. Proust 1954: I, 54-57; 2002: 56-60) to language of the 'little clan' around Mme. Verdurin (e.g. Proust 1954: I, 189; 2002: 191), which mark off their speech from the narrator and help the reader to identify each of the characters. Proust is mimicking

the speech of others, and this mimicry is important to the novel: without it the polyphony of the novel would disappear, reducing the text to an overlong monologue.

Davis translates the linguistic traits of Proust's characters with similar peculiarities in English, as can be seen in the following example, which appears near the beginning of 'Une Amour de Swann'. Odette is writing to Swann, and the narrator summarises much of the letter but includes short quotes which are clearly identified as Odette's voice:

> Quelque temps après cette présentation au théâtre, elle lui avait écrit pour lui demander à voir ses collections qui l'intéressait tant, 'elle, ignorante qui avait le goût des jolies choses', disant qu'il lui semblait qu'elle le connaîtrait mieux quand elle l'aurait vu dans 'son home' où elle l'imaginait 'si confortable avec son thé et ses livres', quoiqu'elle ne lui eût pas caché sa surprise qu'il habitât ce quartier qui devait être si triste et 'qui était si peu *smart* pour lui qui l'était tant'.
> (Proust 1954: I, 196; original emphasis)

> Sometime after this introduction at the theatre, she had written to ask if she could see his collections, which interested her so, 'she, an ignoramus with a taste for pretty things,' saying that it seemed to her she would understand him better when she had seen him in 'his home',[10] where she imagined him to be 'so comfortable with his tea and his books', though she had not hidden her surprise that he should live in that part of town, which must be so dreary and 'which was so un-*smart* for a man who was so very smart himself'.
> (Proust 2002: 199; original emphasis)
> [The superscript 10 refers to a translator's note stating that 'home' is in English in the original.]

Davis's translation here clearly follows the shape of the source text. While there are only two instances of Odette using English words, the use of quotation marks distances her speech/writing from the narrator's own. Her 'jolie choses'/'pretty things' reduces Swann's artistic collections to trivial things, as does her imagining him comfortable with his tea and books. While Davis's Latinate 'ignoramus' literarily translates 'ignorante' it is a little too elevated in register. This has the effect of making it seem as if Odette is putting on airs to talk to Swann, trying to use language that she thinks will be more fitting of his intellect. The French does not give this impression, as 'ignorante' is a less marked word, and Odette's anglicisms are used throughout the novel, rather than just to impress

Swann. Davis extends Odette's character through her use of a cognate: here her precision in language choice overlooks an aspect of characterisation.

In the rest of this example, Davis manages to recreate the difference and strangeness of Odette's writing (and speech) through a variety of devices. Davis cannot make 'home' seem foreign in English, as it is already an English word, but by providing it with a note she effectively makes it seem strange and in need of explanation. Her use of 'un-smart' in the last part of the sentence has the same effect of making strange a familiar word. This final quotation from Odette's letter is the only part of the sentence where Davis makes explicit things which are implicit in the French, which she does by adding an extra 'smart'. The French, if translated extremely literally, would read: 'which was so little *smart* for someone who was so much so'. It is arguable that the second 'smart' is needed in English; Odette's expression in French is pretentious only in its use of an English word, whereas a direct translation would be marked by its formality. Davis's translation style here is not over literal, but still mirrors the French linguistic elements, apart from when they become awkward in English.

In this translation Davis translates following both the spirit and the letter of the text, and tries to translate even the sound patterns of the text. The translation is literal in the sense Berman (1999: 14) gives literal: 'attention portée au jeu des signifiants' [attention paid to the play of signifiers], rather than a naïve definition of word-for-word. Davis achieves her goal of staying as close the shape of the French as possible within the confines of English, without resorting to using French words in the text as she had done with Leiris. In a way, her translation of Proust does 'take that close fidelity a step further', as she says (Davis 2007b: 7), but it can also be seen to be developing qualities that have long existed in her translations: her translations of Blanchot's fiction already show an attention to the tone and diction of the text, even if Davis translated them in such a way that she would often make the meaning of sentence more explicit. It would,

however, be wrong to see the strategy of the Proust translation as a sublimation (*Aufhebung*) of the other translation strategies, combining the foreignness of the Leiris translation with the literariness of the Blanchot translation. The methods are specific to their texts and the histories of those texts: Leiris's work is autobiographical and focused on language, requiring a certain level of connection to that language. Davis's translations of Blanchot were the first translations of those texts: there was no canonical model to correct or compare with. Davis's translations of Blanchot provide readable, literary versions of texts that could not otherwise be read in English. The Proust translation has the luxury of being able to be more literal, because the text is already known in English.

The literalness of the translation, and the attention that Davis pays to recreating Proust's literary effects, makes this translation appear as an extension of Davis's own writing, aligned with her author-function. This may appear counter-intuitive, as there appears to be less freedom when translating in the literal style that Davis has taken but because how she translates resonates with elements of her own writing practice, it becomes part of that writing practice. Davis's practice in this translation therefore problematises the distinction, based on Susan Bernofsky's work (2005: ix-xi), made in chapter two between 'service' and 'strong' translation. It produces a translation that provides a trustworthy representation of the source author and at the same time echoes the translator's own writing practices. Here the metaphor of the graft for translations in a writer's œuvre helps explain the relationship between the texts: Proust's novel is recognisably still Proust's novel in Davis's translation, but her translation of it can also be seen to belong to her own work due to its correspondences with elements of her own writing. The translation is therefore received as both part of her work and something external to it. The tension is not resolved, but offers a productive possibility for reading Davis's work through her translation of Proust.

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A Proustian novel

The importance of Proust for Davis's own writing can be shown in a reading of her

novel *The End of the Story* (1995), which was written before she began translating

Proust. The novel intersects with Proust's novel on a number of levels, from intertextual

reference to similarities in form and theme. Where the translation enters into dialogue

with Davis's other writings, her novel enters into a dialogue with Proust's. This section

focuses on *The End of the Story* and how it presents itself as a Proustian novel, before

continuing with an analysis of the texts' thematic and formal affinities, which focuses on

memory and structure. The texts dance around each other with multiple points of

correspondence, but Davis's shows a much more postmodern conception of the novel,

and can be read as a dialogic rewriting of Proust's.

    The End of the Story contains numerous more or less explicit references to

Proust. Karen Alexander (2008: 171) rightly mentions the tea that both begins and ends

the narrative (Davis 1995: 11, 231), which seems to serve as a point around which the

novel rotates, just as the moment with the madeleine and the tea is a point around the

narrative of the first part of *The Way by Swann's*, 'Combray', pivots. For Proust this

moment is a point of entry into a new layer of memory. Eventually it is recognised as a

moment of what could be called resonance, and it is these moments of resonance that

Marcel[8] recognises as joyous (1954: III, 873). For Davis, however, it serves as the end

of the story: 'I think one reason the cup of tea in the bookstore seems like the end of the

story even though the story went on afterward is that I did stop searching for him at that

point' (1995: 230). The two authors use the device differently.

    There are several obvious moments of intertextuality that neither Alexander nor

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[8]   The name Marcel is used with great caution; while it helps to differentiate the narrator of *À la recherche du temps perdu* from its writer, it is also contentious whether or not the narrator and Marcel (the hero) are identical (see Martin-Chauffier 1971). The convention in this chapter, as in Genette 1972, is to allow 'Marcel' to refer to both narrator and hero.

Christopher Knight (2008) mention: one of the characters in *The End of the Story* is called Madeleine, in what could be read as a reference to the *Recherche*'s most famous moment. Yet this reference seems not to signify much other than its own referentiality: the Madeleine character is not particularly central to the story, as she is the narrator's flatmate (Davis 1995: 24), although she does reappear often and does stop the narrator from visiting her love-object at work (164). Another apparent reference to Proust is a section that begins 'For a long time, there was the same pattern to our days and nights' (67), which cannot but remind the reader of the famous opening of *The Way by Swann's*: 'Longtemps, je me suis couché de bonne heure' (Proust 1954: I, 3), or in Davis's translation: 'For a long time, I went to bed early' (Proust 2002: 7). The section develops into a narration of their habits, rather than a reflective passage as in Proust, but the echo reminds the reader of Proust. These explicit references seem to serve no purpose other than to ally the novel to the *Recherche*, which allows it to be read as part of a Proustian tradition, foregrounding certain elements of the text, such as memory.

Memory is a significant trope in *The End of the Story,* along with the novel's questioning of narrative possibility. Critics have remarked on this: Alexander states that '[m]emory plays a prominent role' (2008: 171) in the novel. Knight explicitly compares the two writers: 'as with the French novelist [Proust], memory is central to her [Davis's] work' (2008: 210). I contend that while memory is important at the beginning of *Swann's Way*, it becomes less significant as the novel develops. The question of the prominence of memory in the *Recherche* is one taken up by many critics, for example, Walter Benjamin, who thought that the novel describes not 'a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered' (1968: 198). This sort of statement has affected how the novel has been received, giving an impression that the novel is only about memory.

Part of the problem of the perceived importance of memory in the *Recherche* lies in the way the volumes are split up, and the relation of the first volume to the whole of

the novel. Many of the main themes of the novel as a whole are rehearsed or prefigured in the first volume: Swann's love for Odette is almost a model for Marcel's of Albertine; the musical phrase by Vinteuil makes its first appearance; many of the characters are mentioned very early on (albeit obliquely); the question of art appears, not only in the form of Swann and his collections, but also in the young Marcel's first piece of writing, about the steeples of Martinville (1954: I, 181-82; 2002: 181-82). Early readers of *Du côté de chez Swann,* including the reader for the publishers Fasquelle, Jacques Madeleine, seemed to have had difficulty with the shape of the novel. Madeleine's reader's report begins by noting that '[a]u bout des sept cent douze pages de ce manuscrit ... on n'a aucune, aucune notion de ce dont il s'agit' [by the end of the seven hundred and twelve pages of this manuscript ... you have no idea, no idea whatsoever, what it's about] (Madeleine 1972: 13). The novel does provide the reader with a key to its interpretation, but only in *Le temps retrouvé*, where it is explained that it all leads to the possibility of writing. This is why Deleuze describes the novel as an 'apprentissage d'un homme de lettres' [apprenticeship of a man of letters] (1970: 8).[9] Deleuze's viewpoint, though, is from a time after the whole of the *Recherche* was published; Madeleine had seen only the manuscript of *Du côté de chez Swann* and Proust's covering letter, which he admitted 'apporte quelque éclaircissments' [brings some clarifications] (1972: 13), although he also noted that the reader of the novel would not have access to that letter (1972: 13-14), and so would not be able to benefit from those clarifications.

Going beyond the first volume, the reader realises that Proust's novel is about many more things than just memory, which is the focus only for the first part of 'Combray'. Gérard Genette's (1972: 83-88) patient analysis of the structures of narration

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[9] Blanchot (1959: 24) argues that the *Recherche* is not a *Bildungsroman*, however, as the understanding of what it takes to write appears as a revelation at the end, with the feel of the cobblestones in the Guermantes' courtyard, rather than as a gradual understanding that would normally take place in that genre.

in the *Recherche* shows how the narrative actually tends toward chronological development (with some analeptic and proleptic sections) after the end of 'Un Amour de Swann' and the beginnings of the narrator's love for Gilberte (which takes place in the last section of *The Way by Swann's*). This later, more linear narrative structure reverses the impression given by the first pages of the *Recherche* that it is a novel about memory and childhood, which play less of a role in the developing story.

Importantly for how Proust's work is to be read in relation to Davis's, the two writers' approaches to memory differ. As Knight (2008: 201) points out, memory in Davis's work is haunted by the possibility of other choices. This is related to her project in *The End of the Story* of a questioning of narrative, which can also be seen in her other stories (chapter three above analyses this tendency in her story 'Story', for example). Memory, for Proust, is something other than this: even within *Swann's Way* memory is more of a possibility for creation than something to be interpreted or a site of multiple possibilities. The 'Combray' sequence, for instance, does not question the possibilities other than the narrator's mother not kissing him goodnight when Swann visits (Proust 1954: I, 23-36; 2002: 17, 26-39), but rather narrates the occasions as Marcel remembers them.

At the beginning of *Swann's Way*, the first section of 'Combray' has an intertwining of memory and narration that shows the difficulty that the narrator is having in remembering, but it never questions the multiple possibilities of that remembrance. The narrator writes that during his nights of insomnia,

> je passais la plus grande partie de la nuit à me rappeler notre vie d'autrefois à Combray chez ma grand'tante, à Balbec, à Paris, à Doncières, à Venise, ailleurs encore, à me rappeler les lieux, les personnes que j'y avais connues, ce que j'avais vu d'elles, ce qu'on m'avait raconté.
> (Proust 1954: I, 9)
>
> [I would spend the greater part of the night remembering our life in the old days, in Combray at my great-aunt's house, in Balbec, in Paris, in Doncières, in Venice, elsewhere still, remembering the places, the people I had known there,

what I had seen of them, what I had been told about them.
(Proust 2002: 12)]

From here the description of his life in Combray begins, including the description of Swann's visits and the emotional turmoil they would cause the narrator. The narrative soon returns to the present moment, or at least the moment of narration, and the narrator writes that he remembers nothing of Combray other than this 'pan lumineux' (1954: I, 43) ['luminous panel' (2002: 46)] of Swann's visits. 'Cela était en réalité mort pour moi' (1954: I, 44) ['It was really quite dead for me' (2002: 46)] he writes, because the only memory he has of it is furnished by voluntary memory. The narrative then proceeds to the moment of involuntary memory, caused by the madeleine and the tea, before beginning section two of 'Combray', which carries on without further substantial reference to the narrator's present until the paragraph beginning 'C'est ainsi que je restais jusqu'au matin' (1954: I, 186) ['Thus I would often lie until morning' (2002: 146)], which also introduces, although is not part of, the narrative of 'un amour que Swann avait eu avant ma [Marcel's] naissance' (1954: I, 186) ['a love affair Swann had before [Marcel] was born' (2002: 146)]. Genette (1972: 85-89) sees in this movement back and forth to a central, indeterminate position, that of the nights of insomnia, a mimicking of the '*difficulté de commencement*' [*difficulty of beginning*] (1972: 88; original emphasis). Once the novel has reached the section after 'Un Amour de Swann', 'Nom de pays: le nom' (Proust 1954: I, 383-427), it begins to settle into a generally linear narration. Once the narrator has found a way of remembering, the question of how to remember retreats to the background of the novel.

The back and forth movement of beginning is also present in *The End of the Story*, which also eventually settles into a fairly linear narrative. The novel begins with a description of the last time the narrator saw the lover (Davis 1995: 3), then it tells the story of his poem-letter (4), before narrating the last time she went looking for him (5-

11). There is then a meta-fictional section (11-13), which explains the tea as the end of the story, and the narrator's idea that 'the beginning didn't mean much without what came after, and what came after didn't mean much without the end' (11). Then the narrative of the relationship begins, with their first meeting, and continues in a fairly linear way until it ends, with the tea in the bookshop.

Where Davis differs from Proust in her narration is that her narrator continues to interrupt the narrative to discuss the possibilities that she might not be remembering it correctly. Proust's narrator does not doubt the efficacy of his memory, especially after the madeleine incident (which, it should be remembered, takes place very near the beginning). *The End of the Story*, on the other hand, questions its own reliability: 'Have I got that particular incident right?' asks the narrator (Davis 1995: 231). The narrative is about the possibility not only of remembering but recounting that memory; the narrator is trying to remember how those events happened for her, and is struggling with the difference between her ability to narrate them and what took place.

For the narrator of the beginning of the *Recherche*, the difficulty of remembering lies in the fact that he is trying to remember, that he is relying on 'la mémoire de l'intelligence' (1954: I, 44) ['the memory of the intelligence' (2002: 46)]. This too is what the narrator of *The End of the Story* is using: for her there are no moments of revelation. She is forced into using material supports, such as phone bills (Davis 1995: 137) or photographs that her friend Ellie has sent (171), yet she finds that these material supports undermine her memory:

> I did not know those faces, I did not recognize them. I did not know those prominent cheek bones. I did not know the man who belonged to them ... Looking at the pictures made me think that I don't really know what sort of person he was, either, because I never saw him from the outside.
> (171)

Here the narrator faces the problem of the subjectivity of memory; when faced with something that is as apparently objective as a photograph, she cannot equate that with

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her memory of the person. As she says later, however, 'I wrote about him so much that he was no longer quite real' (196); the act of writing makes him into something other than he was. As she continues to write, however, she begins to wonder if what she had written 'could be formed into a story' (198): memory gives way to narration, or moreover, memory and narration become confused. The narrator does not seem able to decide which is more important to her: 'I have been telling the story as accurately as I can, but I may be mistaken about some of it, and I know that I have left things out and added things, both deliberately and accidentally' (228). Here she wants her story to be accurate although she also questions her memory and her narration. The last scene of the novel is a revisiting of the cup of tea in the bookstore, where the narrator questions the accuracy of her memory of that event, but at the same time highlights its place within a well formed narrative:

> And since all along there had been too many ends to the story, and since they did not end anything, but only continued something, something not formed into any story, I needed an act of ceremony to end the story.
> (Davis 1995: 231)

Davis's storytelling is shaped by the need to tell a story and the difficulty in doing so. Unlike Proust, she focuses on this difficulty in the narration itself.

The narration of *The End of the Story* is complicated by its division into multiple time frames, one of which is the time of the events of the story and another of the writing of the story. This latter features the narrator's current husband Vincent. He is separated from the time period of the central relationship; he becomes a figure which is external to that narrative yet he remains in the narration of the novel. The narrator mentions that Vincent wants to read the novel (Davis 1995: 39), which draws attention once again to fact that the reader is reading a self-conscious novel. The metafictional aspect of *The End of the Story,* the regular reminders to the reader that this text is a

novel,[10] that it could have been written differently,[11] usurp the centrality of the relationship with the young man. What becomes central, or as central, is the story of how the narrative has been narrated. Knight notes that the two levels, rather than 'displacing the other ... seem to inhabit one another' (2008: 214-215).

Davis's novel is therefore centred on two elements: the relationship, and how to tell the story of that relationship. The two are inextricably intertwined, for without the relationship there is nothing to narrate, but without the narration there is no novel of the relationship. The actual events of the narrative have faded into the narrator's memory. She questions how much she can know, at the same time as she points to her own unreliability as a narrator. Proust's narrator's reliability is not questioned within *In Search of Lost Time*. His difficulty at the beginning of the novel to tell the story does not lead to unreliability, but rather the opposite: by showing how he struggles to remember the past through voluntary memory, when he does remember the past through involuntary memory this remembrance is trusted, because it is involuntary.

Proust's novel does signal its own constructedness, but in a way that is more subtle than in Davis's. One of the central features of Proust's novel is what Genette calls 'récit *itératif* [*iterative* narrative] (1972: 148; original emphasis). Genette points out that often 'une seule émission narrative assume ensemble plusieurs occurrences du même événement' [a single narrative utterance brings together in itself several occurrences of the same event] (ibid.). In other words, a single event in the narration of the story is used to refer to multiple events. A marker of this repetition is the use of the imperfect tense, which allows a single sentence to describe multiple past events (e.g. he would go out everyday at 5pm). This, notes Genette, is not uncommon in literature (ibid.), and it is also to be found on many occasions in *The End of Story*, where it is used for the

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[10] E.g. on pages 11, 22, 32, 38-39, 42, 50-51, 56, 61, 66, 82-83, 87, 99-100, 119, 125, 135-137, 140, 166-167, 190-192, 195-198, 228, and 230-231.
[11] E.g. on pages 19, 34, 45, 50, 62, 87, 106, 125-126, 135-137, 167, 196, 221, 228, and 230.

description of repeated events, etc. For Genette where Proust differs from other writers

is his use of the iterative in singular scenes, visible in

> certaines longues conversations entre Léonie et Françoise (tous les dimanches à
> Combray!), entre Swann et Odette, à Balbec avec Mme de Villeparisis, à Paris
> chez Mme Swann, à l'office entre Françoise et «son» valet de chambre, ou de la
> scène du calembour d'Oriane
> (Genette 1972: 152)
>
> [certain long conversations between Léonie and Françoise (every Sunday at
> Combray!), between Swann and Odette, at Balbec with Mme. Villeparisis, in
> Paris with Mme. Swann, at the office between Françoise and "her" valet, or the
> scene of Oriane's pun]

Proust writes these scenes using grammatical markers of repetition, i.e. the imperfect

tense, but yet the scenes themselves describe what should be singular events. In the

scene of Oriane's pun (Proust 1954: II, 464-465), which recounts a scene from a dinner

where Oriane tells a joke, the dialogue between Oriane and Basin is reported in the

imperfect tense: e.g., 'Écoutez, Basin, disait la duchesse' [Listen, Basin, would say the

duchess] (464), or 's'écriait M. de Guermantes' [would cry M. de Guermantes] (ibid.).

The effect is to make what should be a singular conversation into a repeated event: this

joke of the duchesse de Guermantes would be told in the same way every time, she

would react one way, her husband another. The singular becomes iterative.

The confusion between singularity and repetition can be read into many of the

themes of Proust's novel. The moments of involuntary memory, be they the madeleine

or the paving stones, as well as the response to the steeples at Martinville or Vinteuil's

little phrase, are all moments where the singular event becomes resonant with other

events. It is repeated and singular at the same time. The response to such moments takes

place, therefore, out of time. The experience of involuntary memory is an experience

which brings together chronologically distant moments. As Blanchot notes, 'ces instants

privilégiés ne sont pas des points immobiles' [these privileged instants are not immobile

points] (1959: 30). The moments can take place anywhere and connect the narrator to

any and all similar points in the past.

Davis's impression of Proust's technique, which she describes as 'going deeply into the impression that a thing made on him as a child or as an adult, exploring the nuances of the effect of an experience on the narrator' (Knight 1999: 529) seems false in light of his use of iterative narrative and the focus on the moments which connect the narrator to other moments: Proust does not go deeply into a single moment, but is searching for those single moments which resonate across time. They are therefore not singular, but always iterative. The narrator's protestation against the misunderstanding of his work[12] that appears in *Le Temps retrouvé* that '[l]à où je cherchais les grandes lois, on m'appelait fouilleur de détails' [where I was seeking great laws, they called me a scourer of details] (1954: III, 1041) seems to clarify the narrator's relation to the singular – he is more interested in finding grand schemes than focusing on the unrepeatable event.

The confusion of singular and iterative, not only in the narrative but also in the presentation of relationships as a series (Deleuze 1970: 82), each similar but different to the previous, tends towards a collapsing of the singular into the general. As the narrator remarks in *le Temps retrouvé*, what he experiences in a moment of involuntary memory is not just a moment of the past, but 'quelque chose qui, commun à la fois au passé et au présent, est beaucoup plus essentiel qu'eux deux' [something which, common to both the past and the present, is much more essential than either] (III, 872). What the narrator is searching for are essences, which Deleuze describes as the 'unité de signe et de sens, telle qu'elle est révélée dans l'œuvre d'art' [unity of sign and meaning, such as it is revealed in the work of art] (1970: 51). Here is also the root of the apprenticeship that Deleuze (1970: 9-20) sees in the *Recherche*: the narrator must develop his understanding of signs until he arrives at this possibility for the signs of art.

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[12] Which may mirror the misunderstandings of early critics of *À la recherche du temps perdu,* as *Le temps retrouvé* was still being written after *Du côté de chez Swann* was published.

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Davis's narrator's aim is far less grandiose: she is trying to tell a story that might answer her questions (Davis 1995: 198). It could be read as demonstrating 'l'incredulité à l'égard de métarécits' [the disbelief in metanarratives] that Jean-François Lyotard (1979: 7) sees as defining the postmodern: there is no overarching narrative to which she is trying to find answers, just a local and personal one. While the conclusion of *In Search of Lost Time* appears to give the novel a unity,[13] the ending of *The End of the Story* appears to leave more questions and to disrupt unity. Nikolai Duffy (2005: 188-189) views the increasing fragmentation of Davis's novel as an attempt to escape the need to be completist, to say everything, as the fragment form itself reveals the possibility of always saying something else. According to Duffy, '[m]eaning ... takes place in the narrative's flight from itself, from the story, from the end' (2005: 190). If this be so, then meaning in *The End of the Story* comes from the inability of the novel to finalise meaning, to decide on one version or interpretation of events. As the narrator says 'he [the unnamed lover-object] may think that many parts of this story are wrong, not only the facts, but also my interpretations' (Davis 1995: 228); the possibility that the story might be told differently, that it might be read differently, leads to plural meanings.

Rather than telling just one story, the narrator is faced with the impossibility of any story.[14] Indeed, Knight regards *The End of the Story* not as a conventional, linear novel, but as a 'novel conceived architectonically – as a set of juxtaposed elements rather than a series of unfolding events' (2008: 209). Yet he also remarks that the narrator feels that she should be able to solve the puzzle, that she 'never quite gives up the notion – that gives point to the investigation – that there must be a right way of doing things' (2008: 215). While she may never give up that notion, nor does she arrive in the novel at any one solution, with uncertainty dogging her to the very end, where she

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[13] Although one that can be disputed, as various critics do, including Deleuze (1972: 149), Blanchot (1959: 33) and Gray (1992: 115-37).

[14] Like the narrator of Blanchot's *La Folie du jour*, which concludes: 'Un récit? Non, pas de récit, plus jamais' (Blanchot 1973: 30) ['A story? No. No stories, never again' (Blanchot 1999: 199)].

both accepts the tea at the bookstore as an end – 'I still feel that it is the end, and I think I know why now' (Davis 1995: 230) – and questions her perceptions and memory of that event – 'Have I gotten even that particular incident right?' (ibid.). The one story is deferred, questioned, but still searched for. It is as if the narrator of *The End of the Story* would like to arrive at the epiphanic conclusion that Proust's narrator does, but at the same time cannot. There is a complex and contradictory relationship to narrative in the novel that fits Linda Hutcheon's idea of postmodern art as a 'critical revisiting' (1988: 4) of previous art forms: the novel is structured around narrative, but at the same time questions the possibility of narrative.

Proust and Davis, then, in *À la recherche du temps perdu* and *The End of the Story* are linked by certain affinities. Both novels fight any sort of easy classification or straightforward reading, even if Proust's novel tries to provide itself with a key to such a reading. The novels meet at various points, such as their questioning of memory, but appear profoundly different in other aspects, such as the teleological nature of the *Recherche* and the impossibility of finality in *The End of the Story*. They seem intertwined in a way that never allows a simple relationship between them, but rather one that is always complex: reading *The End of the Story* in relation to Proust's novel allows elements of each to illuminate elements in the other text.

The references to Proust in *The End of the Story* would present *In Search of Lost Time* as a precursor, but at the same time Davis's novel has a very different *modus operandi* than Proust's. Davis's narrator seems obsessed by the (im)possibility of narrating the events, while Proust's narrator is more interested in what the events will lead to. Davis's carefully literal translation of Proust helps to highlight this network of connections between the texts. The intertextual relationships between their texts can only alert the reader to the way in which Davis uses Proust's work, but a comparative reading offers an understanding of what their relationship is. Davis does not imitate

Proust, but rather places herself in a Proustian tradition, which she also questions and develops. The concept of precursor is apt: someone who has come before, which means that their work is now outdated and new approaches are needed. Again, as with her translations of Leiris, the relationship appears to be both an influence and a response: a dialogic extension of Davis's own writing, which makes her Proust translation central to how her œuvre is received. Davis's Proust translation is therefore read in such a way that it illuminates elements of her own work, as well as bringing to light the elements of Proust's work that resemble Davis. It ties the two authors together. The translational graft offers an expanded way of reading Davis's writing, as has also been the case with Blanchot and Leiris, because it offers another context in which to read that writing.

Chapter 6   Work-for-hire translations: any relation?

Lydia Davis groups her translations into those she calls 'work-for-hire translations'

(2007b: 7) and her other translations. She does not name this second group, but it

includes the translations from Maurice Blanchot, Michel Leiris, and Marcel Proust. The

current chapter questions the relationship of the 'work-for-hire' translations with the rest

of Davis's œuvre.'Work-for-hire' is a term derived from US Copyright law. A work

'made for hire' is defined as:

1. a work prepared by an employee within the scope of his or her employment;
   or
2. a work specially ordered or commissioned for use as a contribution to a
   collective work, as part of a motion picture or other audiovisual work, *as a
   translation*, as a supplementary work, as a compilation, ...
(17 USCode Section 101; emphasis added)

All translations that are commissioned are, according to American law, works-for-hire.

Davis's separation of her translations into two categories cannot be understood

as an accurate appraisal of the genesis of some of the texts as commissions and others as

creative works in their own right. Rather, Davis appears to be expressing a judgement

about her own relationship to the texts, with those she called 'works-for-hire' being less

important to her than the other works to which she does not give that name. Davis's

division of her translations into 'works-for-hire' and other works is not, therefore, to be

taken as literal reading of the legal status of the texts. Her Proust translation, for

instance, was commissioned (Knight 1999: 529), and she stated in an interview with

Amy Boaz for *Publisher's Weekly* that she undertook her translations as paid projects

(Boaz 2003). Davis said: 'If I were only a professional translator, I would work

differently: I would research books and propose them to publishers, I have never done

that, because it's been work for money, work to support myself' (ibid.). If this statement

is to be trusted, then all of Davis's translations were commissioned and as such

technically works-for-hire.

Davis's separation of the two groups also seems motivated by an interest in shaping the reception of her work as a writer. As I noted in chapter two, an author's comments on their own texts, including translations, will affect how they are received by an audience. By categorising much of her translation work as projects undertaken solely for payment, Davis effectively draws a line between those translations and her own fiction, as well as between those translations and the translations from Blanchot, Leiris, and Proust. As she does not mention the 'work-for-hire' translations by name in interviews or other paratextual material, they are never individualised into books, but remain an undifferentiated mass of translation projects. In a similar way to how, as chapter two saw, Paul Auster relegated the translations he did for publishers in the seventies to not having anything 'to do with literature, or [his] own writing' (1997: 273), Davis relegates the majority of her translations to a position outside of her authorial œuvre. They are, according to their absence from her interviews, not worth considering.

However, the texts are not just indiscriminate translation work. They are separate, individual literary texts. Davis's work as a literary translator needs to be approached differently than if she had been an in-house translator for a company. In that case, her translations would have been 'works-for-hire' in both the literal (legal) sense and in the more metaphorical sense which Davis applies. Such translations would, like legal documents written by Franz Kafka (2008), have held some interest for scholars, but would almost certainly not have been perceived to form significant relationships with the rest of her writing. As Davis translated literary texts, however, there are opportunities for comparison with other texts signed by Davis. The 'work-for-hire' translations are not different in kind from the books by Proust or Blanchot that Davis translated, but rather in the degree of investment that Davis shows towards them.

There is one paratextual element that appears in translations of Blanchot, Leiris,

and Proust that does not appear in the 'work-for-hire' translations: a preface or introduction. While a translator's preface or introduction may well be an editorial decision, it is striking that only the writers to receive one are those who Davis elsewhere highlights as important to her. The lack of paratextual intervention in the work-for-hire translations implies a lack of engagement on Davis's part. Her name appears on the texts, but she does not appear as a visible translator in the sense of one who makes themselves present in the text through prefaces, footnotes, or other interventionist methods.[1]

Davis's lack of engagement may be traced to a low estimation of the source texts. She remarks that her translation style is different for the 'work-for-hire' translations: the 'extreme fidelity' with which she translated Blanchot, she says, 'was not always necessary or even desirable in some of the work-for-hire translations [she] had to do before and after' (Davis 2007b: 7). The translation of these texts, it is implied, did not benefit from close attention to style. The quality of the writing in the 'work-for-hire' translations would, following Davis, be lesser than in the cases of Blanchot, Leiris, and Proust.

The 'work-for-hire' writers are often by much less well known and less prestigious writers, for example contemporary writers such as Conrad Detrez or Danielle Sallenave. These writers had, at the time of writing, only been translated into English by Davis.[2] There are also better known writers included in Davis's 'work-for-hire' grouping, such as Michel Butor or Pierre Jean Jouve, but the works translated by Davis are not the works for which they are well known. For example, she did not translate one of Michel Butor's early novels (e.g. *La Modification* from 1957) for which Butor is known as an experimental writer (see Spencer 1974), but rather his travelogue

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[1] Some of this may well be due to genre conventions: a translated novel, unless it is a classic text (e.g. Proust), will seldom allow translator's footnotes.
[2] Search carried out on COPAC, catalogue of British academic libraries (17/10/2010).

La génie du lieu [The Spirit of Place] (1958), which in Davis's translation becomes *The Spirit of Mediterranean Places* (1986). Nonetheless, a contemporary review of the translated text remarks that Davis 'deserves to be congratulated on her success in reducing this affectation of French avant-gardism to relatively readable English' (Roditi 1986), suggesting that Butor's experimental reputation preceded him, and affected how the text was received in America. The lesser renown of these 'work-for-hire' texts may have influenced Davis's distancing of herself from them – after all, being known as the translator of Proust and Blanchot gives a certain cachet that being the translator of a lesser known writer like Justine Lévy does not.

Despite Davis's implicit rejection of these texts, there are visible points of contact between some of them and Davis's own work. It would be unwise to dismiss them out of hand. This chapter takes the translations of Léon-Paul Fargue and Danièle Sallenave as examples. Reading them still reveals elements of Davis's œuvre, despite her apparent disinterest and her relegation of them to 'works-for-hire'. Her translations of the poet Léon-Paul Fargue were commissioned for *The Random House Book of Twentieth Century Poetry,* published in 1982. The editor, none other than Paul Auster, wrote that his choice of whom to commission for new translations was predicated on similarity: 'My aim was to bring together compatible poets – so that the translator would be able to exploit his [sic] particular strengths as a poet in rendering the original into English' (Auster 1982: xlviii). Auster saw a connection between Davis and Fargue. The chapter first questions Auster's linking of Davis and Fargue. It then moves onto Davis's rewritings of Sallenave whose *La Vie fantôme* (1986) Davis translated as *Phantom Life* (1989) for Pantheon books. Sallenave is one of only four female writers that Davis has translated, the others being Justine Lévy, Elizabeth Badinter and Anne-Marie Albiach. Davis normally only talks about male writers she has translated. My choice of Sallenave stems from this gender bias in Davis's statements, as well as the fact that Sallenave is an

experimental writer, like Davis. Davis has only translated one book by Sallenave and does not mention her in interviews. I argue that, despite Davis's implicit distancing of herself from the translation, Sallenave's *Phantom Life* presents thematic similarities with Davis's *The End of the Story* (1995), and can be read, tentatively, as a precursor to that novel. Davis's translation of Sallenave is very conventional, but offers a revision of elements of the text, notably the agency of the female characters.

Léon-Paul Fargue: an arranged marriage

Fargue is one of the two poets that Davis has translated; the other is Anne-Marie Albiach (1988).[3] Davis is mainly a translator of literary prose, and her excursions into poetry form only a very small part of her translation work. In many ways they cannot be taken as representative of her habits as a translator or as a writer. However, the relationship between her translation of Fargue's poems and her own work is worthy of attention because of Auster's comments that he tried to bring similar writers together when commissioning new translations for *The Random House Book of Twentieth Century French Poetry* (1982: xlviii). This section questions Auster's observation, asking if it is based on a superficial reading of both Davis and Fargue as writers of prose pieces of an uncertain genre, or if there is a deeper affinity in theme or style.

Fargue published poetry in book form from 1911 to his death in 1947 (Auster 1982: 611). The poems are collected in *Poésies* (1963), prefaced by Saint-John Perse. Fargue's poetic output is quite varied, ranging from his earlier, formal poems in *Tancrède* (Fargue 1963: 33-52, first published 1895), to prose poetry in *Poëmes* (1963: 81-144), which was originally published in 1912. Fargue's later poetry returns to verse, but he never fully abandons the prose form. Only one of Fargue's poems in *The Random*

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3   Davis only translated one poem by Albiach on her own, '«The extreme voice the light»' (Albiach 1988: 41-44). She also collaborated with Joseph Simas on translating 'Nudity As Display' (Albiach 1988: 127-148).

House Book of Twentieth Century French Poetry is in verse; 'Postface', translated by

Kenneth Rexroth as 'Nocturne' (Auster 1982: 58-59). The other six poems are in prose

(Auster 1982: 46-57). In addition to the three translated by Lydia Davis, two are

translated by Wallace Stevens, and one by Maria Jolas. The selection includes five

poems from *Poëmes*. 'Dans un quartier...' and 'Une odeur nocturne...' are translated by

Wallace Stevens as 'In a quarter...' and 'A Fragrance of Night...' (Auster 1982: 50-53).

Davis translates 'Dans les villes jaunes...', 'Le boulevard...', and '"On a trouvé..."' as 'In

yellow towns...', 'The Boulevard...', and 'On the Body...' (Auster 1982: 46-49; 52-53).

The overuse of ellipsis marks in these titles stems from the fact that Fargue himself did

not give the poems titles, and the titles that Auster uses as editor are the first few words

of the poem.[4] Auster's choice of poems is affected by his decision to use 'already

existing translations whenever possible' (1982: xlvii), leading to his use of the

translations by Jolas, Rexroth, and Stevens, all of which are credited as being

'[r]eprinted by permission of …' in the acknowledgements page of the anthology

(Auster 1982: 625).

The use of already existing translations does not explain Auster's commissioning

of Davis's translations of three further poems from *Poëmes*. There may, of course, be

non-literary reasons for the commission (a favour, for instance), but the question that is

more relevant for how these translations relate to Davis's œuvre is what this commission

says about the writings of both Fargue and Davis. Auster comments that:

> Only in cases where translations did not exist or where the available translations
> seemed inadequate did I commission fresh translations. In each of these cases ...
> [e.g.] Lydia Davis's Fargue ... I have arranged the marriage with care. My aim
> was to bring together compatible poets
> (Auster 1982: xlviii)

Auster here suggests a connection between Fargue and Davis. From the selection of

texts, it would appear that Auster viewed Fargue as a prose poet (six out of seven poems

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[4]   This convention is also used by the unacknowledged editor of *Poésies* in the 'Table de matières'
      [Contents page] for that volume (1963: unnumbered page).

in the anthology), and found that the texts from *Poëmes* were most representative of Fargue's poetry. Perse's preface to *Poésies* reinforces this impression of Fargue: 'C'est sous ce mode poétique [poème en prose], sans métrique ostensible ni régularité rhythmique, qu'il a donné le meilleur de son œuvre de poète' [It's in this poetic mode [prose poem], which has no ostensible metre nor rhythm, that he has produced the best of his poetic œuvre] (1963: 18). If Fargue's best work as a poet was produced in prose, then it follows that a 'compatible poet' in English would be a writer of prose. Davis is, if nothing else, a writer of prose. Surely, though, this cannot be the only connection between Davis and Fargue. There must be a connection that is more substantial than the fact that both of them write short prose pieces.

At the time that Davis was commissioned to translate Fargue's poems, she had only published one collection, *The Thirteenth Woman and other stories* (1976), and she would have been working on the stories which would form 1983's *Story and other stories,* some of which were published in magazines before being collected in that volume. Auster, as her husband, would have no doubt had access to this work before publication, and would therefore be basing his comparison with Fargue on the stories collected in both these volumes. My comparison between the two writers will therefore refer mainly to Davis's stories in *The Thirteenth Woman and other stories* and *Story and other stories*.

All three poems that Davis translated are written in the first person, and all abound in ellipsis marks (i.e. …), reflecting a hesitant speech or thought. They are lyric, in the sense of representing a subjective view from the perspective of a first person speaker. Two of the three poems, 'Dans les villes jaunes...' and 'Le boulevard...', are impressionistic descriptions of city scenes. Both of these poems have a speaker who is observing the city in a series of impressions. The third poem, 'On a trouvé...', narrates the speaker's reaction to a *fait divers* in the paper. The description of a dead body

reminds them[5] of an old teacher, but the poem never clarifies if the body is the teacher, or if it is just the speaker's reaction.

The rhythms of all three poems suggest film; a series of images with fades between.[6] Even 'On a trouvé...' follows this structure, despite appearing to tell a story. 'Le boulevard...' is more like a a series of images, which build an overall picture of an area of a city through their juxtaposition. It begins:

> Le boulevard défile et bâille … Une train crie derrière les haies …
> Des filles en couleurs fortes cousent et attendent aux portes de bouges.
> Au bruit de pas noirs qui arrivent, leur regard tourne comme un astre …
> Germaine et son amie traînent contre une palissade, au bout d'une rue vide, sous le temps couvert …
> (Auster 1982: 49; original ellipses)

> [The boulevard unfolds and yawns… A train cries out behind the hedges...
> Girls in bright colours sew and wait in the doorways of hovels. At the sound of approaching black steps, their gaze turns like a star… Germaine and her friend loiter by a fence, at the end of an empty street, under an overcast sky]
> (my literal translation)

The ellipsis marks function as fades from one image to the next, slowing the progression of images while still allowing juxtaposition. The style could be called 'soft-montage', as it avoids the shock effects that montage normally brings. The images here flow into each other, whereas in normal montage images are cut together with little or no indication of boundaries between them.

There is a move from a general observation to a more detailed view, from the street to named individuals. The boulevard is personified by the use of the verb 'bâiller' [to yawn] in the first sentence, which serves to introduce the notion of waking after a nap or after a pause. The train behind the hedge is also slightly personified by the use of 'crier' [to cry/shout], which suggests a human agent although is not limited to one. The sound is the screech of the train on the tracks. The train, like the use of the word

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[5] The gender of the speaker is unclear in the poem, and so the gender neutral plural pronoun has been used in preference to a mixed gender singular pronoun like s/he, for which there is no emphatic pronoun.

[6] It is questionable whether this response would have been common in 1912, when audiences would have been less acquainted with film and its conventions.

'boulevard', gives a sense of urbanity to the scene. The descriptions of girls in doorways suggests squalor, despite their bright clothes. Germaine and her friend may be prostitutes; the implication is there in their loitering outside at the end of a street in bad weather.

Fargue does not develop these images, but gives only a glimpse to the reader. There is only an inference of what activities the girls might be up to (other than sewing and waiting). Fargue's next paragraph moves on to addressing a second person 'Souviens-toi' [Do you remember] (ibid.). The rest of the poem continues as a series of impressions of what appears to be a working class, dilapidated district of the city, where '[l]a ruelle est si mal pavée que tout le monde a l'air d'y boîter' [the alley is so badly paved that everyone walking there appears to limp] (ibid.).

The last paragraph offers a key to reading the rest of the poem. It describes, in the imperfect tense, the speaker and a second person's entries into what appears to be a brothel, and the madam, and a sexual act: 'et ton cœur qui battait quand tu prenais la fille' [and your heart beating when you took the girl] (ibid.). Fargue, again, does not linger on this image, but this time, rather than the fade between scenes he uses the poetic equivalent of the jump cut – an m-dash: 'et ton cœur qui battait quand tu prenais la fille – et les soldats qui longeaient le chemin de fer – et ce regard d'une femme à sa fenêtre' [and your heart beating when you took the girl – and the soldiers walking along the railway – and that look from a woman at her window] (ibid.). The poem cuts to the image of the soldiers after the sexual act, but cuts away again as quickly. It is unclear where the soldiers are – behind the hedge where the train was at the beginning of the poem, or elsewhere? The use of the imperfect suggests that the soldiers were present more than once, otherwise the *passé simple* would have been used. The woman's look, though, could have occurred once or many times. There is no verb to give it a temporal aspect.

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The brothel scene, including the woman's gaze, serves as a point by which to interpret the rest of the poem. The shift to an imperfect tense in the final paragraph, which begins 'Rappelle-toi nos descentes sourdes' [Remember our muted descents] (ibid.), gives the reader an impression that the majority of the poem consists of a return to a quarter visited previously for illicit activities. There is some implicit commentary about the conditions in this district: 'Les murs s'observent avec la lassitude de vieux partenaires, et comme les éternels vis-à-vis d'un bal pauvre' [The walls observe each other with the fatigue of old partners, and like eternal encounters at a poor ball] (ibid.). Again there is personification: it is as if the whole quarter is alive, and showing the weariness of its inhabitants. The narrator, and the addressee, would seem to come from a different socio-cultural background to that of the quarter: they are slumming, and engaged in exploitation of the local girls. Fargue does not stress this critique, and the narrator appears nostalgic for the earlier time within the poem, when he visited the brothel with the addressee.

Davis's translation differs from the source text in a number of ways, although she does not change the structure of the paragraphs or the sequence of the images. Her main strategy includes the amplification of certain elements through her word choice, which gives a more vivid impression. For example, the train of the first line now 'wails behind the hedge' (Auster 1982: 50). The brightly dressed girls 'sew and wait in the doorways of brothels' (ibid.) rather than in the doorways of hovels. Davis is interpreting the 'bouges' [hovels] of the second paragraph through the revelations of the final paragraph. Her translation makes explicit elements which would only be inferred in the French text. For the reader of Davis's translation, then, the sexual act in the poem comes as less of a surprise than it did in the French poem because it is more clearly foreshadowed by the reference to brothels. In another example, the 'ciel couvert' [overcast sky] becomes 'stormy skies' (ibid.). The image is stronger, more filled with

foreboding. Likewise, the second person's 'cœur qui battait' [heart that was beating] becomes 'and your heart pounding' (ibid.) in Davis's translation. The translation seems much more overwritten than the French; it tries harder to be poetic.

One reason for Davis's over-translation of Fargue can be found in Auster's preface to the volume. Auster states: 'It seemed more important to me to give those readers who have no French a true sense of each poem *as a poem* than to strive for word-by-word exactness' (1982: xlviii; original emphasis). If what Vermeer (2004) calls the skopos of the translation was to produce a poetic translation, then Davis's consistent use of more dramatic vocabulary can be interpreted as an attempt to make the poem read as a poem in English. Yet Davis's translation is, at the same time, generally accurate 'word-by-word': it is the choice of words that gives her translation a different feeling to the source text. Davis would later criticise this same tendency to embellishment in Scott Montcrieff's translation of Proust in her preface to her own translation of *The Way by Swann's* (Davis 2002a: xxxiii). She calls his word choices 'dressier' than Proust's. Yet in her translation of Fargue's poem, Davis's own word choice is 'dressier' than Fargue's.

The embellishing strategy suggests a distrust of the source author's poetic ability. The consistent choice of 'dressier' words fills a lack in the original poem. Davis's translation passes a judgement over Fargue: he is not poetic enough to be taken as a poet in English. He does not use enough poetic lexis. Whether or not Davis believed this, her translation enacts this judgement. It is a judgement that overlooks Fargue's use of metaphor, where a cat can become 'deux pastilles de lune' (Auster 1982: 48), 'two lozenges of moonlight' in Davis's translation (Auster 1982: 49). The translation is much more literal in this example than many of the examples discussed above and recognises the poetic form of Fargue's writing, which is based around metaphor and rhythm. Perse comments of Fargue that '[l]a plus métaphorique des poètes de son temps fut aussi le

plus musical' [the most metaphorical of the poets of his time was also the most musical] (1963: 23). His use of rhythm, which I have been describing in filmic terms, is also poetic: it builds through juxtaposition of images, rather than narrative or argument. Fargue's lexical choices tend to be more banal than Davis's translations of them, but they are embedded in a poetic discourse. The word choices themselves are less important than the overall shape of the poem. Davis's embellishments, then, appear to be a misreading of Fargue's poetic project, although one that arguably fulfils the skopos of producing poetic translations.

Davis's own writing differs from Fargue's and from her translations of Fargue. Davis's stories at the time, and after, tend to avoid such use of metaphors or even concrete description. For example, her story 'The Thirteenth Woman' (1976: 9) does not use description or metaphor. It builds through a series of negative statements, e.g. 'no mail came for her, no one spoke of her, no one asked after her' (ibid.), which are then subverted by the concluding statement: 'and yet in spite of all of this she continued to live in the town without resenting what it did to her' (ibid.). There are no ellipses, no shifts of image as in Fargue's poems, just an accumulation of statements about the woman. The story is written in the third person, as are many of the stories in *The Thirteenth Woman and other stories*. These stories are not impressionistic, but they do not always follow traditional narrative arcs either. 'The Thirteenth Woman' is presented much more like a parable or a puzzle than a story with characters performing actions. A story like 'The Patient' (Davis 1976: 23) does have a narrative, telling the story of a woman who is operated on by an inept doctor, but who falls into a coma until he kills her some time later. The style in 'The Patient' resembles the style of 'The Thirteenth Woman': what description there is relates to the characters, although it would be hard to say what they might look like. The reader is told that, as a consequence of the woman's coma, the doctor's face becomes 'gaunt', but the story does not provide any other

physical description of the man. It does recount his medical training (or lack of it), and his reactions to the woman's coma. Neither of these stories can be said to resemble Fargue's poetry, beyond the superficial resemblance of being short prose texts: there is little connection on the levels of content or form.

In some of Davis's later stories, there are elements of juxtaposition, but they function in a different way to Fargue's use of the trope. For example, 'What You Learn About Baby' (Davis 2007a: 115-124) is a sequence of observations about a baby. Each is, however, a short paragraph and has its own subheading. 'Traveling with Mother' (Davis 2007a: 197-198) is also constructed from a series of observations; this time the divide between each one is marked by a number. This is different to Fargue's sentences with ellipses between them; a flowing juxtaposition is central to Fargue's impressionistic poems. The combination of images in Fargue's work allows his poems to present a variety of scenes that run into each other, giving a larger picture. Davis's work uses juxtaposition much more sparingly, and in a way that allows each image to be much more clearly separated. The effect is that Davis presents a series of distinct observations that connect through their theme, rather than images which interlink.

Auster's 'matchmaking' (1982: xlviii) of Davis and Fargue appears to be based on a very superficial reading of both writers, as little joins them other than writing in prose. Fargue differs as a writer from Davis significantly, in both style and content: he is impressionistic and constructs his poems from a series of images, while Davis tends to write (especially at the time of the translations) in short narrative form, with little description. Her translation of Fargue supplements his work by using more vivid lexical choices, which imply a negative judgement of his writing as insufficiently poetic.

The translations of Fargue take, therefore, a marginal place in Davis's œuvre: representative neither of her own work nor of her translation strategy, which tends to be more literal in the case of writers she feels an affinity for (i.e. Blanchot, Leiris, and

Proust). Auster's comments in the introduction to *The Random House Book of Twentieth Century French Poetry* bring the two writers together, but further comparative reading suggests that it is only those comments which unite them.

Danièle Sallenave: a sympathetic writer?

While an editorial comments suggests that Fargue and Davis can be brought together as writers, despite the fact that there is little beyond that to link them, the connection between Sallenave and Davis is suggested by similarities in their literary output.[7] Both women have written experimental fiction, as well as translating. Davis only translated one novel by Sallenave, *La Vie fantôme* (1986) [*Phantom Life* (1989)], and does not speak about her in interviews or other paratextual material. This section will compare the two writers' work, focusing on *Phantom Life* and Davis's *The End of the Story*, as well as reading Davis's translation strategies, which reveal her attitude to Sallenave's work. This lack of engagement does not stop there being several connections between the two novels, and I argue that Davis revises some elements of Sallenave's novel in her own, which makes it a form of precursor.

Sallenave was born in 1940 and began publishing fiction in the 1970s, like Davis. Sallenave's early fiction, for example *Paysage de ruines avec personnages* [Countryside of Ruins with Characters] (1975), is experimental, and consists, writes Bruno Thibault, of a 'collage de fragments narratifs discontinus et de monologues intérieurs' [collage of discontinuous narrative fragments and interior monologues] (2000: 346). In addition, Sallenave co-founded the journal *Diagraphes* which published work by Barthes and Derrida, among others (ibid.), and she has also published critical essays (e.g. Sallenave 1976), suggesting a greater interaction between theory and practice in her work than in Davis's.

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[7]   Biography and bibliographical information for Sallenave can be found in Thibault 2000.

Both women have translated, but Davis's engagement with translation is more substantial. Davis wrote many translations from the 1970s onwards, and their relationship to her fictional œuvre is complex and extensive. Sallenave also translated, but much less: two novels by Italo Calvino (1976, 1982), a book by Pier Paolo Pasolini (1980), and one by Roberto Calasso (1976). In an interview with Bruno Thibault, Sallenave talks about these translations as stemming from a time when she felt 'une grande passion pour l'Italie et surtout pour sa langue' [a great passion for Italian and most importantly Italian] (Thibault 2000: 348). Her translations are generally from the early part of her career, and can be readily thought of as forming part of her apprenticeship as a writer. She encourages this reading when she says in the same interview that translation was like 'une gymnastique, un assouplissement de ma propre langue. Mais je serai tout à fait incapable de dire en quoi j'ai été influencée' [gymnastics, making my own language more supple. But I would be totally incapable of saying how it influenced me] (ibid.).

The connection between their literary outputs would have been clearer in the late 1980s, when Davis translated Sallenave's novel. Both women were lesser known writers, and Davis would have been known for her translations of Blanchot as much as or more than her own fiction. She had only published one book with a major publisher, *Break it down* (1986), and would be considered an experimental writer, like Sallenave. However, Davis counts Sallenave's novel among her 'works-for-hire', and she seems to think there is little connection between it and her work. Reading both novels together reveals that there is more connection than Davis's paratextual statements suggest.

La Vie fantôme tells the story of schoolteacher Pierre and librarian Laure's adulterous relationship in the French town of R in the late 1970s. It is a relationship that takes place in afternoons in Laure's apartment, in the times when Pierre can safely get away from his wife Annie and his children. The relationship cannot develop beyond this

point: Pierre will not leave Annie and the children. Laure toys, towards the end of the novel, with ending her liaison with Pierre. She is dissatisfied with it: 'Leur amour lui parut une chose artificielle et froide, une vie fantôme' [Their love seemed to her an artificial and cold thing, a phantom life] (Sallenave 1986: 295). The last scene of the novel, however, shows Pierre and Laure back where they started, in Laure's bedroom (Sallenave 1986: 302-303), suggesting that she cannot give up the relationship.

A feeling of stasis pervades *La Vie fantôme*. The novel is not told in chronological order, and narrates the earlier lives of both Laure and Pierre as well as the time of their affair. There is consequently no real tension or suspense in the novel, except for one scene where Laure and Pierre are nearly caught by Annie. In this part of the story, Pierre borrows a house in Calvados from a colleague of Annie so that he may recover from a bout of bronchitis. As Annie will not be there, he invites Laure to stay with him (Sallenave 1986: 279). All goes well, and the couple spend several days together, until Annie decides to pay an unannounced visit while the couple are out at breakfast (Sallenave 1986: 282). Luckily, Pierre goes home to fetch his wallet, meeting Annie before she can enter the house and find Laure's clothes. He pretends to have lost his keys, and rushes back to the café to send Laure home, averting disaster (Sallenave 1986: 284). The status quo is therefore threatened, but not altered; the idyll in Calvados is untenable, as Pierre and Laure cannot escape from the fact of Annie. Their relationship is predicated on the impossibility of it developing, and this scene enacts the necessary third part of their relationship. Annie, or the threat of her, must be present. Other than this incident, the main question throughout the novel is what will happen to their relationship, but there is no real turning point or resolution: Pierre and Laure continue meeting, despite occasional setbacks.

There is an element of social criticism implicit in Sallenave's portrayal of Pierre as someone who has given up his youthful intellectual ambition for his bourgeois family

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life (e.g. 1986: 82). He experiences the events of 1968 as 'lointain[s]' [far away] (Sallenave 1986: 81), something seen on TV but not having an immediate effect on his life. Pierre tries to return to his earlier interest in art, planning writing a book (270), which he then abandons (277). His interest in art is more a facilitator for his continuing conversation with Laure, although Pierre frames the conversation as quite one-sided: '"J'ai besoin que tu m'écoutes," disait Pierre, "j'ai besoin que tu m'approuves, il n'y a qu'à toi que je peux raconter cela"' ['I need you to listen to me,' said Pierre, 'I need you to approve of me, there's no one else I can tell this to'] (Sallenave 1986: 267; punctuation altered). Pierre appears to be more the protagonist of the novel than Laure, whose thoughts are sometimes relegated to parentheses after Pierre's (e.g. 269): the narration reflects her secondary role in her own story.

La Vie fantôme is a much more realistic novel than Sallenave's earlier writing, presenting characters and settings that are recognisable. It was praised by some critics, according to Deidre Dawson, 'as an encouraging return to literary realism and traditional values' (1988: 237), while it was criticised for being little more than 'a trivial tale of adultery in a provincial French village' (ibid.). Praise and criticism here do not really say anything different: a tale of adultery can be realistic and reinforce traditional values. Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* could also be reduced to the same criticisms. However, this reading of the novel as realistic smoothes over, I contend, the tendency within the book to avoid fulfilling the reader's expectation of narrative development or resolution. The way the novel presents the whole pasts of its characters allows it to be read as more than just a novel; there is also a documentary element to it. Sallenave herself sees her writing as a form of *littérature engagée* [committed literature] (Dawson 1988: 237), and this can be read in the implicit questioning of gender relations in the novel. Yet *La Vie fantôme* does not become explicitly feminist: neither Laure nor Annie break free of Pierre, and each is unable to overcome her traditional role as mistress or wife.

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The lack of female agency in *La Vie fantôme* is mirrored and reversed by the absence of the male protagonist in Davis's *The End of the Story* (1995), published six years after Davis's translation of Sallenave's novel. In Davis's novel, the unnamed female narrator tells the story of her relationship with an unnamed male character from a perspective after the end of the relationship. In what follows, I argue that Davis can be seen to be revising elements of Sallenave's *La Vie fantôme* when writing her own novel.

The narrative techniques used by Davis differ immensely from Sallenave's realistic narration. Sallenave uses an omniscient narrator, who has access to the thoughts and feelings of the various characters, and who gives the reader little reason to be mistrustful of them. The narrator of *The End of the Story* is homodiegetic (i.e she is telling her own story), with a constant set of reminders to the reader that she has a limited perspective, and that she might be remembering the whole story incorrectly. The narrator is much less reliable in *The End of the Story* than in *La Vie fantôme.* For example, on seeing photographs of her former lover, she notes that she does not recognise him, and that this brings her to question how much she knew him (Davis 1995: 171). As a result of being the narrator, the female character is given much more agency in the narration itself, and also within the development of events. The silence of Annie and Laure's afterthoughts are replaced by an absence of the male side of the story.

On a thematic level, there are also revisions. Pierre's abortive ambition to be a writer is responded to by the narrator of *The End of the Story* in two ways: she is writing the novel and her profession is translation. In addition she also writes stories, one of which is mentioned right at the beginning (Davis 1995: 4). This story she has written as a reaction to a letter she received from her former lover, which contained nothing but a poem. Artistic activity functions as a stand-in for communication in this case, rather than providing a pretext for conversation as it did in *La Vie fantôme*. Nor is writing any longer an escape into a more intellectual, less practical world, as Pierre would have it,

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but rather it is a daily practical activity. It is de-romanticised in Davis's novel: the narrator speaks of working every day on the novel, which does not stop her becoming confused about it (Davis 1995: 22). Translation receives a similar practical description, and is connected to an economic reality that grounds it as professional activity, albeit one that does not pay well. The narrator says that because translators are paid by the word, 'the more carefully they work on the translation, the less they are paid for their time' (Davis 1995: 85). Translation cannot be treated like an art form under such economic circumstances. Pierre gives up trying to write when faced with lesser practical difficulties, allowing writing to remain unsullied as an activity of the mind. Davis's narrator, on the other hand, cannot but be focused on it as a real-world activity.

The stories of the relationships in the two novels represent similar but divergent possibilities. The relationship in *La Vie fantôme* appears to continue indefinitely: as I have already noted, there is no clear resolution, and the narrative ends where it began, with Pierre and Laure in Laure's bedroom, the relationship apparently continuing in whatever form it must take. The narrator in *The End of the Story* notes at the beginning that there is an end, although one which is contingent on not being able to find her former lover: 'the fact that he wasn't there … made an end possible. Because if he had been there, everything would have had to continue' (Davis 1995: 9). The events that this comment refers to take place in the narrative roughly three years after the end of the relationship itself. The narrator has continued to think about her former lover, and not finding him is the end of the story. There is the possibility, however, that her involvement with the man could have continued, although not necessarily as a relationship. Like Laure, the narrator remains connected to the man with whom she has had an affair. Unlike Laure, the affair has ended, and so does the narrator's connection. Davis's novel can be read as responding to *La Vie fantôme* as it offers the female character much more agency, both in terms of what takes place and in the narration.

One element that is not fully revised in *The End of the Story* is a view of

alienated female sexuality. Laure is estranged from her body during oral sex with Pierre:

> Les yeux toujours fixés sur elle, Pierre s'inclinait lentement, et, pour finir,
> enfouit son visage entre les cuisses de Laure. Ses mains qui la tenaient aux
> hanches lui parurent glacées, elle y posa les siennes comme pour les rechauffer.
> Mais, à partir de ce moment, la partie inférieure de son corps, qu'ils tenaient tous
> les deux, lui parut separée d'elle-même, étrangère, soumise à une loi brutale.
> (Sallenave 1986: 256)

> [His eyes fixed on her, Pierre lent forward slowly, and, finally, buried his face
> between Laure's thighs. His hands on her hips felt frozen, she placed her own
> [hands] on them as if to warm them. But, from that moment, the lower part of
> her body, which both of them held on to, seemed to her to be separated from
> herself, alien, subject to a brutal law.]

Laure's discomfort leads her to feel as if her own body does not belong to her. Pierre has

here, as elsewhere in the novel, more agency than Laure. She later realises that she has

seen a side of Pierre that she does not expect, where he became 'un être différent, brutal,

appliqué, et oui, c'était le mot, violent' [a different creature, brutal, purposeful, and, yes,

that was the word: violent] (Sallenave 1986: 258). The discomfort is not with the act

itself, but rather the control that Pierre takes over her body in the act. This appears to be

the brutal law that Laure experiences her body's subjection to: Pierre's desire, which she

has no control over, even though it relates to her body.

The narrator in *The End of the Story* also experiences a dislocation of self and

body during sex in the aftermath of the relationship: 'When my body stopped being

merely useful and became what it was supposed to be, a sexual thing, this change

seemed odd to me, and arbitrary' (Davis 1995: 203). The reasons are different, as the

narrator is at this point in the narrative spending time working on intellectual activities

in an attempt to overcome her depression after the end of the relationship. Her body is

therefore reduced to something that is 'merely useful', and her potential as a sexually

active individual is forgotten. However, when she does have sex with a man, she lays

'there thinking that it was beginning to seem like a distant, mechanical operation. There

was so much glass in the way' (Davis 1995: 203-204). The glass in the way is metaphorical, not literal; it is a description of how distanced the act feels to the narrator. She says that she could see it but 'could not feel anything at all' (Davis 1995: 204). She is alienated from her body having sex; she experiences it as if it is only a visual phenomenon and not a tactile one. Interestingly, her complaint is not that she feels alienated, but that there is 'no confusion of our bodies' (ibid.). While alienated from her own body, she is also clearly delineated by that same body, which she finds difficult to accept as a sexual thing.

There are two reasons given in the novel for the narrator's dissatisfaction with this encounter. The first, which she is clearly conscious of, is that this man is not her former lover, and his physiognomy is different. 'This was not the man I was used to' (Davis 1995: 203) she says, before explaining how his body is unfamiliar. The second reason, which she mentions but does not elaborate on, is the man's control of the situation. Like Pierre, the unnamed lover takes the initiative: '[he] gave me instructions, though gently' (ibid.). The narrator is therefore excluded from her own desire, as the man's instructions guide her in her actions. Her reaction is less extreme than Laure's, but still shows a degree of alienation. The narrator, as I have said, would have liked there to have been a confusion of bodies, yet the man's control stops this, alienating her from herself and making her conscious of his body and his desire. Despite the rewriting of Laure's role that takes place in *The End of the Story*, the narrator is still affected in similar ways by male characters. The narrator echoes Laure, although she acts with more purpose and agency through much of the novel.

The translation shows an attitude to *La Vie fantôme* that suggests a reading of the novel as conventionally realist. There are changes of paragraphing throughout, such as giving each new reply in a conversation a new paragraph. Sallenave's French text does not do this, allowing the conversation to take place within a paragraph. The effect in

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French is to force the reader to pay attention to which character is speaking, as there is a small risk that they can become confused. The English text makes it much more explicit when turns have been taken. Using new paragraphs for new speakers is a target language convention, and relatively un-intrusive, as it does not alter the dialogue itself. However, it does show a target oriented strategy, at least in relation to what Toury calls 'matricial norms' (1995: 59), i.e. the shape of the text. Sallenave's rather long paragraphs are also split up at other times. The reason for this seems only that it makes the text easier to follow for the reader, who can now break their concentration and find their place again with much more ease. The orientation towards a target audience of this strategy is clear. On the other hand, the way the chapters are broken up is not altered, and the text appears to have been translated without large scale cuts. Davis is therefore giving a fair representation of the text on the macro level, suggesting a tendency towards what Bernofsky calls 'service translation' (2005: ix), where the translator 'subjugates his [sic] own authorial intention to that of the author of the original text' (ibid.). 'Service translation' does not preclude a degree of domestication, and the alteration of paragraphing is a minor intervention in terms of altering the signification of the text, although it does affect the reading experience.

However, on the micro level (lexis, syntax, etc), there are a number of changes in the translation that more clearly affect how the text is read and the reader's creation of meaning. One clear example is how Davis translates the French terms for teaching qualifications. The French terms are 'CAPES', which translates to a qualification allowing someone to teach at high school, and 'agrégation', which is more complicated to translate, but is generally recognised as the qualification that allows someone to teach at a university. Davis translates them as 'lower-level state examination' and 'higher level exam' (Sallenave 1989: 63; corresponding French text Sallenave 1986: 80), which erases the important information that these are teaching qualifications. This information

does not need to be made explicit in the French, as a French reader would be aware of these exams. An English language reader, on the other hand, is left with a very imprecise sense of just what exams Pierre has passed (and failed). The 'state exams' give the impression that he is some sort of civil servant, and not a particularly good one. On the other hand, the term 'professeurs' [high school teachers] (Sallenave 1986: 110) is translated by the cognate 'professors' (Sallenave 1989: 86). Strangely, this feels appropriate in context, as the passage deals with Pierre becoming a teacher, although in the French text he fulfils their expectations (he does become a high school teacher), whereas in the English he does not (he fails the examination to become a university professor). Davis's translations in these cases do alter the experience of the text, but reflect a target oriented strategy that minimises the foreignness of the text by removing or smoothing over source culture specific terms.

The oral sex scene offers evidence of Davis's intervention as a translator because, as she does in her rewriting in *The End of the Story*, she gives Laure more agency in her translation. Sallenave writes:

> Il [Pierre] s'était agenouillé au pied du lit, la forçait d'écarter les jambes. Elle fit un mouvement de résistance.
> (Sallenave 1986: 256)

> He [Pierre] knelt at the end of the bed, forced her to spread her legs. She made a movement of resistance.
> (my translation)

> He [Pierre] was kneeling at the end of the bed, and forced her to open her legs. She resisted.
> (Sallenave 1989: 207; Davis's translation)

The important thing here is not the increase of cohesion caused by adding a conjunction (and) in the first sentence to unite the two clauses which are brought together in the French only by a comma splice. Davis has increased Laure's resistance, and therefore her agency here. 'She resisted' is less ambiguous than 'elle fit un mouvement de résistance.' In the French text, Laure's resistance is limited to just a movement, a

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gesture. In English she is much more active: the imprecision of her resistance allows the reader to assume that it is much greater than the French text allows for. The translation gives Laure more agency than she has in the French text, but reduces the ambiguity of her reaction. The domesticating strategy of the translation would suggest such a change, as it makes the text more explicit. On the other hand, it alters the impression of Laure's complicity in what takes place. In French she is ambivalent about what will happen, in English she is resistant. As I have argued earlier, Laure's agency in the French text is reduced, and all she can do is make a movement of resistance. This is, I think, a deliberate feature. The English translation, by increasing her resistance, increases her agency. Her submission to Pierre's desire is therefore accomplished moreover as a result of his violence – he forces her to open her legs – than because of Laure's own complicity.

Davis's translation ignores some of the more subtle elements of the French text. It is a domesticating translation in many respects, altering the text at the level of the paragraph and at sentential level. The paragraphing changes are quite evident, as is the elimination of culturally specific items. The changes at sentential level are much more subtle, but alter the complicated balance of power in the novel. The translation does not follow the 'extreme fidelity' (Davis 2007b: 7) that Davis said she practised in her translations of Blanchot, Leiris, and Proust. Rather it takes liberties with the text in ways that make it less demanding of the target language reader. The translation strategies suggest that Davis treated this as a 'work-for-hire', and her silence about it in paratexts would seem to confirm that impression.

There are, however, a number of echoes of *La Vie fantôme* in Davis's *The End of the Story*. The latter novel appears to approach a similar subject from a different angle, shifting the balance of power in the relationship and giving the female character much more agency. Whether or not Davis is or was conscious of this is a moot point: reading

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the two texts together produces parallels between them. It forms part of her œuvre as a comparative text to *The End of the Story.* It may be considered an influence, but not in the conventional, positive sense: there is a negative reaction to it that is played out, subtly, in Davis's own novel.

Complicated connections

Davis's 'work-for-hire' translations can be read in relationship to both her own writing and her other translations. In the case of Fargue, there appears to be little linking the two writers beyond their production of short prose pieces. Stylistically and thematically they are somewhat different writers. In the case of Sallenave, the two writers approach a similar narrative situation, but differ in their handling of it. Davis gives her female narrator in *The End of the Story* much more agency than Laure (or Annie) in *La Vie fantôme,* and Davis's novel can be read as a form of reaction to Sallenave's. In terms of the taxonomy that I developed in chapter two, Fargue's work would fit into the category of little or no relation with Davis's own writing, but Sallenevave's novel could be considered a form of training for Davis as it present a precursor to her own novel, albeit one that she revises and questions, suggesting that there is also a form of dialogue between the two novels.

As translations, both Fargue's and Sallenave's texts show strategies that differ from the 'extreme fidelity' (Davis 2007b: 7) that Davis claims as her approach to Blanchot, Leiris and Proust. The work-for-hire translations are much more domesticating, producing texts which have become oriented towards the target language readership. In the case of Fargue's poems, this target orientation takes the form of an embellishment of the text, while in Sallenave's novel, Davis removes foreign elements and adapts the presentation of the text, especially the paragraphing. In addition, there is an element of ideological intervention in the translation, which gives Laure more

agency than she has in the French novel. The translations, then, represent different strategies from those used for the texts that Davis identifies as important to her.

These 'work-for-hire' translations form a graft onto Davis's work, as they can be connected to her work and at the same time they produce a text which cannot be assimilated into that work. The connection between Davis and the two writers is complicated. The fact that one author has translated another does not necessarily imply a deeper connection. Through a closer reading, what connection there is can be teased out. However, there is always the risk, as in any comparison, that the reader finds connections because they are looking for them rather than that they exist. This is not a problem if the premise of a reader-centred criticism is accepted, but then whatever connection is found can only ever be accepted as provisional, and reliant on each individual reader's perceptions.

The readings in this chapter could be supplemented with readings of Davis's work in relation to Conrad Detrez, or Justine Lévy, or any other of the authors she has translated. Similar results could be found, connecting their work to hers, albeit in more or less concrete ways. There is no space to do so within this thesis, and nor is it entirely necessary: the results would be similar, showing a variety of relationships with Davis's own writing and translation strategies that tended to be domesticating. Davis has made clear in paratextual material that many of these texts are uninteresting to her. The connections with the texts are more complex than Davis's rejection allows, although they are still less concrete than with Blanchot, Leiris and Proust. The translation strategies suggest that Davis values these 'work-for-hire' texts less, because her translations are much less respectful of the source texts; in these translations, she adapts and alters to make the texts more acceptable to the target audience. They cannot be considered central to her literary œuvre, but they do remain appended to it.

Chapter 7   Marie Cure revisited

One of the texts that Davis translated, Françoise Giroud's biography of Marie Curie, *Une femme honorable* (1981), takes a unique place in her œuvre. Davis does not mention it by name in interviews, and it falls into the group of her translations which she calls her work-for-hire translations (2007b: 9), but it serves as a source for her story 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' (Davis 2001a: 99-119). As chapter one saw, there needs to be an explicit acknowledgement of a text's status as a translation, as it is this acknowledgement that makes it accepted as an equivalent to the source text. Due to the fact that a translated text looks, physically, like any other text, if it lacks the requisite acknowledgements, for example a translator's accreditation on the title page and/or an acknowledgement on the copyright page stating that it is a translation, then the text appears to be an original work, and is read as such by the reader. There is also a question of the legal status of a text; an adapted text or a translation should be acknowledged as a derivative work. There is no notice that Davis's story contains translations on the copyright page of the book publication of Davis's story, either in hardback (Davis 2001a) or paperback (Davis 2002c), or in the recent *Collected Stories* (Davis 2009). 'Marie Curie' therefore appears to be an original story: there is no acknowledgement that it could be anything else. At the same time, 'Marie Curie' appears to contain literal translations from Françoise Giroud's *Une femme honorable* (1981), 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' thus appears to be *de jure* an original work and *de facto* a translation: it is both a translation and not a translation. Here the distinction between translation and writing breaks down: Davis's story questions the boundaries between translation and other intertextual forms of writing.

I argue in this chapter that 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' can be considered a parody and also a translation of *Une femme honorable*. This makes it into a

form of rewriting, showing a dialogue with the source text. This dialogue differs from the relationships of Davis's work to her translations of Blanchot, Leiris, and Proust, which are based in an admiration for those writers. It is closer to the relationship of her writing to her translation of Sallenave's *La Vie fantôme* (see chapter six above), which she responds to obliquely in *The End of the Story*. But the relationship between 'Marie Curie' and *Une femme honorable* is much more direct. I first analyse how Davis herself considers the text, drawing on its publication history and the introduction provided with its original magazine publication (Davis 2000a, 2000b). The next step is a consideration of how 'Marie Curie' differs from conventional translations, especially Davis's own translation of *Une femme honorable*, before moving on to an analysis of how 'Marie Curie' resembles other stories by Davis that also use abridgement and quotation, 'Extracts from a life' (Davis 1986: 57-61) and 'Lord Royston's Tour' (Davis 1997: 84-114). In these other stories, Davis also uses quotation from another writer's work to construct her own story. The process resembles translation in its incorporation of another writer's work into Davis's own, and can also be seen as forming grafts onto Davis's writing. As the stories are presented as Davis's own, and not as a text by another author as a translation is, the stories are more clearly perceived as central to her œuvre. Finally, drawing on Linda Hutcheon's (1985) theory of parody, I analyse how 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' is a parodic text. Parody, like translation, relies on an explicit relationship between two texts, yet 'Marie Curie' obscures its relationship with its source text, meaning that it evades easy definition.

Throughout the chapter I make reference to copyright law, as it is central to the idea of literature as an institution that I invoked at the beginning of chapter one and it offers a framework which provides pointers for understanding the relationship of derivative forms of writing, such as translation, adaptation and parody, to their source texts. However, I want to make the disclaimer that this chapter should by no means be

read as actually questioning the legal status of Davis's story. As I argue below, I think it would come under fair use as a form of parody.

Lydia Davis's 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' does not declare itself to be a derivative work in the general sense, nor a translation. There is no source text cited throughout its publication history in book form, nor in its original publication in *McSweeney's* (Davis 2000a). The original publication was, however, accompanied by an exchange of letters between the editors of *McSweeney's* and Davis (Davis 2000b), where Davis alluded to a biography of Marie Curie that she once translated.

Davis provided the editors of *McSweeney's* with an explanation of the provenance of the text, saying:

> I once had to translate a biography of Marie Curie (I've often had to accept jobs I didn't like) that was written in a rather "cute" style that is not uncommon in some permutation in certain French writers/publications. As usual, though I was bored and irked by the job, I was also amused by the style and its possibilities, so after a while, I began copying out into awkward English the more absurd sequences or sentences. I always envisaged using bits like these to compose a shortened "life" of Marie Curie in awkward translationese.
> (Davis 2000b: 27)

Here Davis provides a full explanation of the composition of the text, along with her reasons. She makes an even clearer statement slightly later: 'this Marie Curie piece is my abbreviated and deliberately awkward and literal translation of excerpts of a real book by a real French author' (ibid.).Yet this explanation does not account for the lack of acknowledgement found in the book publications; indeed it appears to acknowledge that the text is some form of translation, while not appearing to legally designate the text as a translation. The source text is not named, and as such this acknowledgement is also not an acknowledgement: it points towards the provenance and the same time obscures it. Curiously, Davis goes on to say that in a book, she would 'acknowledge the source' (ibid.), as she had for other 'excerpt stories'. She did not, however, in any book. This leads to question of why she does not: if the work is derivative, in the legal sense

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of being an adaptation in British law (Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (ch.48), Section 21(3)(a)(i)) or a derivative work in American law (17 USCode Section 101), then it must require some sort of acknowledgement.

The book publications of the text do not give an obvious indication of the status of the text. From reading the story alone it is difficult to divine that it has an intertextual relationship to Giroud's book, although it may suggest an intertextual provenance to the reader, as it did to the editors of *McSweeney's*. 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' is made up of 39 short sections, ranging from one line to roughly a page, and there is a clear narrative, albeit a compressed one: reading the whole story gives the reader a potted history of Marie Curie, from birth to death. The story is marked stylistically by a certain 'awkward English', as Davis (2000b: 27) describes it. For example, the register appears overly formal in phrases like 'at the precise moment which it was suitable that he should appear' (Davis 2001a: 103). There is both a grammatical and a lexical unfamiliarity in expressions like 'Marie is assured of obtaining her license in July' (ibid.).

The editors of *McSweeney's* felt the English to be uncomfortably strange, and initiated what became the letter exchange that in effect prefaces the magazine's publication of 'Marie Curie' with something resembling a cry of despair:

> Dear Ms. Davis,
>   We just read the first few sections of the Madame Curie piece and we think we should stop. We think we first need to read an introduction, of your devising, explaining the process by which you've created this. We are, because we are stupid, still unsure about the piece's provenance – who wrote, who translated, are you abridging, etc.
> (Davis 2000b: 27)

McSweeney's was not a stranger to unconventional texts. In the same issue there is a note on style, stating that the editors were 'with this issue instituting a rule we are calling Our Almost Unquestioning Embrace of All Authors' Stylistic Quirks or Whims, So Long As They Are Reasonably Well-Thought-Out Rule' (McSweeney's 2000: n.p.),

with examples of where they had not changed punctuation, spelling and grammar in some of the stories in the volume. Even with this 'rule', the editors, who included writer Dave Eggers, felt that Davis's story was too unconventional. They later relate how they gave the story to one of their interns, 'Matt', who spent 'an hour fixing all the awkwardness, having assumed the piece needed a copy edit' (Davis 2000b: 28), despite the fact that this intern had 'just finished *Break It Down*, and so [knew Davis's] work' (ibid.). The awkwardness of the English in 'Marie Curie' is integral to the story, which Davis had to explain to the publishers of what was an avant-garde journal[1] for them to accept.

Davis eventually assented that some sort of introduction to the text might be necessary, but voiced concern: 'The trouble is, if there is an intro or even an afterword, the piece is radically changed: it is reduced to an exercise, something more mechanical than I want it to be' (Davis 2000b: 28). I would agree that with a clear introduction explaining the mechanics of the piece, the story becomes reduced to nothing more than an example, appearing arbitrary and losing its narrative impact. The solution chosen by *McSweeney's* and Davis was to conduct the introduction in a more subtle way: the letter exchange becomes the introduction to the piece, although separated from it by over 100 pages. It is quite possible that the reader would not find the introduction,[2] or if they did, they could choose not to read it. The story is left to stand alone, but there is an explanation available should one be necessary and the reader take the initiative to find it. The exchange of letters is not reproduced in any of the book publications of the story, suggesting that Davis later felt an introduction unnecessary.

The other concession Davis made to the editors of *McSweeney's* was to change the title of the piece slightly, to 'Translation Exercise #1: Marie Curie, Honorable

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[1] Albeit one which was planning to 'rush headlong into the *World of Normaler* [sic] *Fiction*' (McSweeney's 2000: n.p).

[2] The academic reader, especially, would be unlikely to find it: if the story was ordered on inter-library loan, the only text to arrive would be the story itself, without the rest of the issue to give it context.

Woman'. On the first page of the story (Davis 2000a: 139) the title appeared like this, although in a different font:

TRANSLATION EXERCISE #1:
MARIE CURIE,
HONORABLE WOMAN

The normal title/subtitle hierarchy is reversed: the subtitle appears larger and thus more important than the actual title, which is now the significantly smaller 'Translation Exercise #1'. Although the text now seems to present itself as some form of translation, the reader, especially one competent in the codes of *McSweeney's* and/or Davis's own writing, might not have automatically assumed that it is. The text could be, given its context, a pastiche of the 'awkward English' of translationese; the pastiche, for example, of a translation by a student-translator. The title encourages the reader to approach the style of the text with suspicion: it becomes seen as a rhetorical embellishment, rather than central to the text. By reverting to the original, non-explicative title in the book publications, Davis indicates that the style is central to her conception of the story. Indeed, in the correspondence with the editors of *McSweeney's* she notes that what 'interests [her] about this [piece] is the two forms of awkward English ... combined with what is an interesting and moving life story' (Davis 2000b: 27). The style for Davis is therefore counterbalanced with the narrative; a reasonably clear and emotionally striking story is cloaked in an awkward narration. Marjorie Perloff has noted how Davis's fiction 'renew[s], however elliptically, the contact words make with their referents' (1989: 21), and it is clear that Davis is not only interested in formal experimentation, but also some sort of narrative or emotional charge: stories like 'Letter to A Funeral Parlour' (Davis 2001a: 74-75) and 'Grammar Questions' (Davis 2007: 27-29) develop around language structures but tell stories of mourning (see chapter four above). Davis's work may not be realistic in the sense of 'realism' as a genre, with no

elaborate characters or plots, but it is emotionally realistic. In the case of 'Marie Curie',

this emotional element appears in the real Marie Curie's story, which is a story of

overcoming adversity and losing loved ones. Davis's return to an unexplained version of

the text in the book publications leaves the reader to find this story underneath the

formal experimentation; in the magazine publication, the story is obscured by the focus

in the introduction and new title on the style of the text.

Despite the possibility of reading the text as autonomous, 'Marie Curie' does

appear to be translated. If an extract is placed next to the corresponding text from *Une*

femme honorable, it becomes apparent just how literal a translation it can be:

> Pierre Curie has come on stage in Marie's life at the precise moment at which it
> was suitable that he should appear.
> The year 1894 has begun. Marie is assured of obtaining her license in
> July. She is beginning to look beyond, she is more available, and the spring is
> beautiful. Pierre is already captive to this singular blonde person.
> (Davis 2001a: 103)
>
> Pierre Curie est entré en scène dans l'existence de Marie au moment précis où il
> convenait qu'il apparût.
> L'année 1894 est entamée. Marie est assurée d'obtenir sa licence en
> juillet. Elle commence à regarder au-delà, elle est plus disponible, et le
> printemps est beau.
> (Giroud 1981: 64)
>
> Pierre Curie est déjà captif de cette singulière petite personne blonde.
> (Giroud 1981: 66)
>
> [Pierre Curie entered the stage of the existence of Marie at the precise moment
> that it was convenient that he appear.
> The year 1894 has started. Marie is assured of obtaining her degree in
> July. She begins to look beyond, she is more available, and the spring is
> beautiful.
> ...
> Pierre Cure is already a captive of this singular little blond person]
> (my literal translation)

Other than translating 'existence' as 'life', and softening the subjunctive by using

'should', Davis's text appears to be a fairly literal translation of the French; she even

retains the perfect tense of the first sentence, although in standard English this would

probably be rendered as a preterite, referring as it does to an event in the distant past.

The French uses the perfect tense to imitate speech (as spoken French avoids the *passé simple*), in an attempt to make the register less formal; the effect of the perfect tense in English is rather to make the text seem awkward and stilted. Some of the problems of comprehension in Davis's story are cleared up by the French text: Marie's license, for instance, is not a license but a *licence*, a bachelor's degree. The metaphor of Pierre being a captive seems less marked in French than English, where the more common expression would be the verbal phrase 'captivated by' rather than 'captive' as a noun.

What becomes clear in this comparison is that Davis is abridging the source text in the creation of the story 'Marie Curie'. The sentence about Pierre Curie comes a couple of pages later than the first part of the paragraph. The story is around 20 pages, and the biography is around 360, and it is apparent that Davis omitted much of the material. Lawrence Venuti (1998: 64) notes that if a translation were to omit or alter a significant amount of the source text, it may not be legally regarded as a translation but rather as an adaptation or some other derivative work. The amount of abridgement in 'Marie Curie' would mean that it may thus not legally be considered a translation.

A professional translator would not translate the text in the way that Davis appears to have done in 'Marie Curie', even leaving aside the abridgements, and Davis did not do so in her full translation of *Une femme honorable*:

> Pierre Curie entered Marie's life at just the right time.
>   The year 1894 was nearly half over. Marie was sure of receiving her degree in July. She was beginning to look ahead, she had more time on her hands, and the spring was beautiful.
> [...]
> Pierre Curie was already captivated by the unusual little blonde woman.
> (Giroud 1986: 48-49)

Here Davis translates in a far less literal manner, using more colloquial and idiomatic expressions. Rather than translating 'licence' literally she uses the equivalent 'degree', and she avoids the strangeness of Pierre's captivity by using the more idiomatic 'captivated'. Nor does she abridge vast portions of the text – most of what she removes

in the story is present in the translation. Davis's actual translation of *Une femme honorable* fits more with a conventional idea of what translation should be, and therefore it is worth considering how 'Marie Curie, Such Honorable Woman' differentiates itself from translation as a practice.

It could be argued that as 'Marie Curie' repeats neither the expression of *Une femme honorable* nor *Marie Curie: A life*, neither the source nor its recognised translation, then it is a new piece of writing. In copyright law, only the way a text is expressed can be copyrighted, not the ideas in the text (Goldstein 2001: 184-185). While the idea/expression divide in theory could accommodate the viewpoint that 'Marie Curie' is an original piece of writing, it is unclear how much water it would hold if legally tested. Siva Vaidhyanathan (2001: 105-112) reports that a significant precedent for reading the idea/expression divide is *Sheldon* v. *Metro-Goldwyn* (1934), where the judge in the Second Circuit Court of Appeals in New York, Learned Hand, gave his opinion when the case was appealed (1936) that, when judging the similarity of two works, one must pay attention to the 'very web of the author's expression' (quoted in Vaidhyanathan 2001: 109). This 'web of expression' idea Hand clarified by suggesting different elements that combined make the work: 'plot, character, means of revelation, setting, themes' (ibid.).[3] Under this web of expression, it seems that Davis's story is in many ways significantly similar to Giroud's – it contains the same characters, the same plot, the same setting, the same themes. The main difference is the compression of Davis's story, which would mean that it could be viewed as not being a translation, and indeed the prior existence of an acknowledged and authorised[4] translation would

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[3] Genette develops a similar notion of 'identité opéral' [operal identity] (1994: 201) which is guaranteed by '*sameness of meaning*' (1994: 202). Genette's term refers to the work in translation: this 'sameness of meaning' is expected of the source and target texts, although he suggests that it is not a guaranteed result of translation (1994: 203). Theo Hermans (2007: 105) however notes that 'operal identity' is *created* by the act of recognising a text as a translation; for Hermans 'operal identity' seems to a condition of the text. Hand's remarks are intended very differently; they are supposed to give a reader the tools to see a similarity verging on sameness, and are thus based on a more pragmatic usage.

[4] If only in the tacit sense of authorisation implied by all translations of a work in copyright: at some

suggest a very different aim to the two texts. Davis's story 'Marie Curie' is not supposed to provide a full biography of Marie Curie in the same way as *Une femme honorable* and *Marie Curie: A Life* do. This difference in aim, intent and market would clearly separate the two works, stopping the story from being viewed as plagiarism of the book.

It could still be argued that Davis's story was derivative of Giroud's book, in the form of an adaptation, and would consequently need to acknowledge this. On the other hand, copyright does not extend to 'news of the day or to miscellaneous facts having the character of mere items of press information' (Article 2(8) of the Berne Convention (Paris Text, 1971)), so Davis could thus be seen as only using the 'miscellaneous facts' of the biography of Marie Curie written by Giroud, and would not thus be infringing on her copyright.

However, more is at stake here than a simple use of Giroud as a source for information, especially considering how the story literally translates some of the biography. Were the works in the same language, it would look like Davis had cut out strips of Giroud's text and pasted them together following their original sequence, with a few adjustments. This also seems to be Davis's process in the two other stories which appear to be abridgements of the other texts, 'Extracts from a life' (Davis 1986: 57-61), based on Shinichi Suzuki's autobiography *Nurtured by love* (1969), and 'Lord Royston's Tour' (Davis 1997: 84-114), based on the Reverend Henry Pepys's memoirs of Lord Royston (Royston 1838). Both of these stories receive acknowledgement of their sources on the acknowledgements page of their respective volumes, despite that not being strictly necessary for 'Lord Royston's Tour', which was based on a work which was in the public domain, and so legally required no attribution. The acknowledgement for 'Extracts from a life' notes that the text is 'used by permission of Exposition Press'

point in the process, the owner of the copyright will have agreed to the work being translated. What part they play in the process after that is by-the-by: there is an initial authorisation which stops other translations being published (at least until someone else buys the translation rights).

(Davis 1986: n.p.): the process of abridgement in this text was thus viewed as creating a derivative work.

Both these stories have formal similarities with 'Marie Curie', apart from their status as abridgements of other texts. All three stories are built around multiple sections which have their own subheadings. In the case of 'Marie Curie', these subheadings are Davis's own (i.e. they do not appear in the source text). All three stories also recount compressed biographies, in the first person for 'Extracts from a life', and in the third person for 'Marie Curie' and 'Lord Royston'. 'Lord Royston' is different from the other extract stories as it deals with only a short period of its subject's life, but it resembles them in other respects. The compressed narrative with section titles is a form that Davis also uses for stories which do not claim to be derivative, e.g. 'Mrs. D. and Her Maids' (Davis 2007a: 87-111) or even 'What You Learn About Baby' (Davis 2007a: 115-124), which does not recount the whole life of a baby but rather a series of observations which are given titles. The form allows the texts to have explicit narrative development and yet be discontinuous. The section subheadings have a *Verfremdungseffekt* as they appear as a comment upon the narrative, but also seem to act like intertitles in silent film, providing a summary and introducing the next scene. In the extract stories this orientating function of the titles appears to be clearer, yet the disorientating nature of the implicit commentary provided by the titles cannot be fully negated.

Davis's extract stories develop from her sense of the potential in the source texts. Talking to Larry McCaffery about 'Extracts from a Life' and 'Lord Royston's Tour', Davis noted that 'both started with [her] reading something with pure delight and pleasure' (McCaffery 1996: 74), and that she saw a potentiality in both, 'this other text [that] seemed to be there *in potential* – there was something a great deal more interesting in [them] than what [she] was reading, the same language with a different shape and intention' (ibid., original emphasis). The motivation for the two other excerpt

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texts seems not so different from the motivation for 'Marie Curie', which also came out of an interest in the 'style and its possibilities' (Davis 2000b: 27). Each text, then, works through a recontextualisation of the narrative elements: each one uses its source text as raw material, and Davis sculpts her story from the block of the other text. In 'Marie Curie' there is a second process of translation of the source text into English, but the story could also function as an excerpt story in French – the process of selection and editing would then be the same as it was for 'Extracts from a Life' and 'Lord Royston's Tour'.

Larry McCaffery suggested that the process of abridgement and selection in these stories 'shares a lot with translation' (1996: 74). While Davis agreed, she also saw a difference: 'it's obviously more of a transformation. But it must be related' (ibid.). Both processes entail a source text that is reworked into a target text which is a different text but which bears traces of its origin. There is a recontextualisation of the material, leading to a change in meaning, although how this change is affected is different between translation and abridgement: translation recontextualises the whole text into a different cultural and linguistic context, while abridgement takes the material out of its original context and places into a new, reduced context without changing the language. The products of both processes can thus be read doubly: as independent texts, without reference to their source texts; or as a reworked form of their source texts. It depends on the reader's previous knowledge of the texts in question. In the case of 'Lord Royston's Tour' and 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman', only very erudite readers may know the original, as Pepys's memoir was apparently not reprinted,[5] nor was Davis's translation of *Une femme honorable.*[6] *Nurtured by love,* the source text for 'Extracts from a Life', was more popular, going through at least 18 printings,[7] but may still be unknown to

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[5]   There is no record in COPAC for it other than the 1838 edition.
[6]   There is no record in COPAC for it other than the 1986 edition.
[7]   COPAC lists several editions, but the first edition is listed as being on its 18th printing (see

Davis's readers. As such these texts would most likely be read in the context of Davis's work; whereas translations in general would more likely be read in the context of the writer of the source text – Davis's translation of *The Way by Swann's* (Proust 2002) is more likely to be read in the context of Proust's work by a non-academic audience than as a piece of writing by Davis.

What makes 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' different from the other two 'excerpt stories' is the lack of accreditation. The accreditation of a source text for these stories means that they can legally be regarded as derivative, and thus requiring permission from the copyright holder of *Nurtured by love* in the case of 'Extracts from a life'. If 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' was regarded as a parody, then it would, according to Goldstein (2001: 300), be exempt from the usual requirements for authorisation. Parody is one of the extensions of the fair-use rule that allows people to copy copyrighted works for certain purposes, such as personal study, scholarship or some educational uses. As Goldstein notes, 'though nowhere expressly exonerated in the Berne text, [parody] is widely accepted across the Berne Union as a permitted use, presumably on the ground that it meets Article 9(2)'s standards' (2001: 300). Article 9(2) protects the idea of fair use:

> It shall be a matter for legislation in the countries of the [Berne] Union to permit the reproduction of such works in certain special cases, provided that such reproduction does not conflict with a normal exploitation of the work and does not unreasonably prejudice the legitimate interests of the author.
> (Berne Convention, Paris Text 1971, Article 9(2))

The Convention is vague here: it is not made specific what these 'certain special cases' might be, and each individual country will interpret them differently. In the UK, the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988 explicitly states what the law understands as permitted uses of copyrighted material (Sections 28-76). US law also states what is to be understood by 'fair use' (17 US Code Section 107). Parody is not explicitly

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http://copac.ac.uk/search?rn=1&au=suzuki&ti=nurtured+by+love&sort-order=ti%2C-date [accessed 10/11/2010]).

mentioned in either country's law. According to Goldstein:

> In common law countries such as the United Kingdom and Canada, parody may be assimilated to the fair dealing exemption for the purpose of criticism so long as the parody meets the statutory requirement of sufficiently identifying the original work and its author.
> (2001: 301)

Goldstein seems to suggest here that all parodies *must* identify their source text, yet 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' does not really do so. Linda Hutcheon offers the opposite perspective to Goldstein, and differentiates parody from adaptation: 'Like parodies, adaptations have an overt and defining relationship to prior texts, usually revealingly called "sources". Unlike parodies, however, adaptations normally announce this relationship' (2006: 3). Parodies would not normally announce their source text, but would still allow it to be clear that there is a source text, even an identifiable one. For example, the film *Shaun of the Dead* (Edgar Wright, 2004) parodies the earlier *Dawn of the Dead* (George A. Romero, 1978), but does not announce its affiliation other than in the rhyme of the title: there is no explicit recognition of the earlier text as a source. Many European nations, according to Goldstein (2001: 300), generally allow parodies so long as they do not present a direct conflict with the original work's sales or marketability, i.e. '[do] not conflict with a normal exploitation of the work and [do] not unreasonably prejudice the legitimate interests of the author' in the words of the Berne Convention. As noted earlier, 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' is a very different work to Giroud's *Une femme honorable*, and it is unlikely that it would be confused with it, and so would not affect the sales or reputation of that book.

The law does not explicitly define parody, as it does not define translation. The landmark parody case in American law is *Campbell* v. *Acuff-Rose Music, Inc* (1994), where the U.S. Supreme Court offered the following rule-of-thumb for deciding if a work was a parody: 'whether a parodic character may reasonably be perceived' (quoted in Goldstein 2001: 301). The statement has the structure of *petitio principii*, where the

thing defined is used as part of the definition: according to the U.S. Supreme Court, a parody is that which has a 'parodic character'. The parodic character would be something that pertained to parody. The definition ends up being cyclical, seemingly defining nothing.

The history behind the Supreme Court's pronouncement is complicated, and explains the cyclical definition. In previous musical parody cases, according to Vaidhyanathan (2001: 146-147), courts decided whether or not a song was parodic by how it criticised or satirised the original song. Acceptance of parodies changed over time, and Vaidhyanathan further notes, 'throughout the 1960s and 1970s, courts began recognizing that parody had cultural value' (2001: 147). The song in the case of *Campell* v. *Acuff-Rose Music, Inc.* was Two-Live Crew's song 'Pretty Woman', which, as the title suggests, relied on Roy Orbison's song 'Oh, Pretty Woman'. The District Court ruled that it was parody, and thus fair use. The Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the judgement, and the U.S. Supreme Court then reversed the appeal court's decision. The judge, Justice David Souter, decided that Two Live Crew's song did criticise Orbison's song (Vaidhyanathan 2001: 146-148). This means that parody could be legally viewed as a form of criticism, and could therefore be accepted as form of fair use according to 17 USCode Section 107. Parody could then become exempt from the normal rules of copyright infringement.

One of the definitions of parody, then, would involve a critical distance from the source text. Indeed, parody is generally viewed as having 'a humorous or satirical purpose' (Wales 2001: 286), and would therefore demonstrate a critical distance from the text parodied. Linda Hutcheon criticises the narrow range of intent normally accepted for parody in her *Theory of Parody* (1985: 5). Her definition offers a similar view to the legal viewpoint of parody as criticism: 'Parody is ... repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity' (Hutcheon 1985: 6). This critical

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distance is common to the theorist's and the jurors' definitions, and sheds light on the involuted 'parodic character': parody needs to criticise the work being parodied. Otherwise the parody is no longer a parody, but some other form of intertextual relationship, be it plagiarism, adaptation, translation, etc. Hutcheon elsewhere establishes a difference between parody and adaptation by calling adaptation 'repetition without replication' (2006: 7): 'critical distance' is not implied by adaptation, although some sort of difference is.

For Davis's 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' to be a parody there should be some sort of criticism apparent of *Une femme honorable*. The text appears as a narrative piece, without commentary or explication, making it difficult to locate a clearly critical approach to Giroud's book in the story itself. In *McSweeney's* the story was augmented by an introduction in the letters page, but seeing as in the book publications no mention is made of this introduction nor the revised title ('Translation Exercise #1'), then the introduction will be left aside for the moment, to focus on the story in the form that the reader of its book publication in *Samuel Johnson is Indignant* (Davis 2001a) and the *Collected Stories* (Davis 2009) would experience it.

The construction of the text hints at some sort of critical distance. If 'Marie Curie, So Honourable Woman' consisted of literal translations of every sentence from Giroud's *Une femme honorable* in the same order as they appear in the French book, then it would be a translation of that text. Literal translation on its own need not suggest any form of critical distance – Vladimir Nabokov's (1975) translation of Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* was written from a position of homage rather than critique, and is supposed to be literal. Yet literal translation in other cases could be a critique: it could be used to show how badly a text is written, or how ridiculous French idioms become when translated into English. There is certainly a touch of the ridiculous to some of the formulations in 'Marie Curie':

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> The body is removed to a police station. An officer picks up his telephone. But Pierre Curie no longer has ears to be annoyed that he belongs, in death as in life, to the number of those for whom one disturbs the Minister of the Interior.
> (Davis 2001a: 108)

Pierre's humility is described here, although the 'in death as in life' seems somewhat cliched, and the sentence in which it appears seems overly formal, stilted, and awkward. The small details seem incongruous: why is it important that the officer picks up his telephone? This should be a moment of high pathos, but the way it is presented undermines that pathos through a juxtaposition of the trivial and the serious.

> The corresponding French text is slightly different:

> Et il [le commissaire] prend son téléphone. Mais Pierre Curie n'a plus d'oreilles pour s'agacer d'appartenir, même dans la mort, au nombre de ceux pour qui l'on dérange le ministre de l'Intérieur.
> (Giroud 1981: 181)

> [And he {the chief of police} picks up his telephone. But Pierre Curie no longer has ears to be annoyed that he belongs, even in death, to the number of those for whom one disturbs the Minister of the Interior.]

Davis has added the detail of Pierre's being moved to the police station; in the French text he is still lying dead in the street. The other difference is the translation 'même dans la mort' [even in death], which Davis translates in 'Marie Curie' as 'in death as in life': she expands on the meaning of the French, adding a cliché.

The selection of material and the use of summary ('The body is removed to the police station') to link the narrative together highlight that there is more going on here than transcription. Selection itself presents a critical distance, although one not markedly positive or negative: to select is to choose from a collection of potential components. There is a system implied by choice – why one thing and not the other? – which would lead to the construction of a text that had a critical relationship to its original text. This would seem to be the case for forms of abridgement: yet not all abridgements are parodic.

'Marie Curie' becomes parodic in its selection of material. Rather than fairly

representing Giroud's book, Davis selects only those bits which appear awkward or amusing to English language readers. The addition of a cliché in the example appears to suggest a movement of caricature taking place in the text. The removal of any other context and the cumulative effect of so much 'awkward English' means that the reader is forced to pay attention to the style, and especially how it seems inappropriate, in English at least, to the narrative it is telling: moments of pathos appear amusing, highly serious moments appear ridiculous. Davis's introduction supports this reading, as she remarks that she copied out 'into awkward English the *more absurd* sequences or sentences' (Davis 2000b: 27; emphasis added).[8]

So it seems that 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' could be considered a parody in the legal sense: it demonstrates a critical distance from the source text and at the same time represents no threat to a 'normal exploitation of the work and does not unreasonably prejudice the legitimate interests of the author' (Berne Convention, Paris Text 1971, Article 9(2)), as it in no way tries to compete with Giroud's text as an authoritative (if somewhat *sui generis*) biography of Marie Curie. This would account for the lack of accreditation in book form, as accreditation would not strictly be necessary. The text still uses translation as means of composition, but cannot strictly be considered a translation due to its abridged form.

In artistic terms, however, the status of the text as a parody is less certain. Linda Hutcheon stresses how parody relies on the reader's recognition of the parodic text as parodic, which entails their knowledge of the text being parodied:

> When we speak of parody, we do not just mean two texts that interrelate in a certain way. We also imply an intention to parody another work ... and both a recognition of that intent and our ability to find and interpret the backgrounded text in its relation to the parody.
> (Hutcheon 1985: 22)

For Hutcheon, the reader must have access to the source text, or at least must be

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[8]   In conversation with Larry McCaffery, Davis also mentions writing down 'an absurdly accurate translation of a sentence that was already sentimental and stupid' (McCaffery 1996: 75).

familiar with it, and be capable of seeing how the parodic text is critically distanced from it. Hutcheon (1985: 57) later notes that the works tend to be parodied more the more famous they are. Davis's 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' is a parody of a fairly obscure biography in a different language, which is nowhere referred to by name. For the reader to recognise it as a parody, they must find the French text and compare it with Davis's story. The monolingual English reader would not be able to complete this exercise, and so for them 'Marie Curie' cannot be said to be a parody in Hutcheon's sense.

If parody works on a double-coding, pointing the reader to the original text as well as the parody itself, in the case of 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' one of those codings, the source, is barred: no longer easily accessible to the reader, who nevertheless remains aware that there is a source text. The relationship could be schematised in the following way:

$$TT \qquad \neq \qquad \cancel{ST}$$

'Marie Curie', as TT, is not identical ($\neq$) to its source text (ST), which the reader has no access to, and so has been placed under erasure ($\cancel{ST}$). The relationship between the two texts is not one of identity, but there is still a relationship between the two texts, despite the reader not having access to the source text. This could also said to be the case for 'Lord Royston's Tour', where only the very erudite would have knowledge of the original text, which, being published in 1838 and never reprinted, is not well known. 'Extracts from a life' present a more dubious possibility, as *Nurtured by Love* is more accessible,[9] although it is questionable what sort of crossover there would be between its and Davis's readers, and the book is not as well known as many more literary works. The effect on Davis's readership would be more likely to follow the same path as the other two excerpt stories, of a barred double coding.

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[9]   It appears to still be in print.

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This barred double coding is also a feature of conventional translation. Translations which aim to make available in one language a text written in another language, i.e. the great majority of commercial translations, posit no access to the original for their 'model reader',[10] or at the most a very limited access. Davis's work for hire translations (see chapter six) would generally come under this category. The model reader of the translation is left with the knowledge that there is an original text, but is not assumed to have access to it. The result is that while translations have a double coding, the source side is barred:

$$TT \qquad \approx \qquad \text{S̶T̶}$$

The relationship here is one of equivalence (≈) rather than non-identity, as the translation is supposed to represent an equivalent to the source text. The target text is read in the knowledge that there is another text which it is related to, but that text need not be accessed by the reader themselves. They are only aware of its existence.

Even re-translations partake of this barring of the source text. A re-translation will interact with a previous translation of the same text, for example Scott Moncrieff's *Swann's Way* (Proust 1922) in the case of Davis's *The Way by Swann's* (Proust 2002), and as such provide a hypertextual experience for the reader. The nature of this experience is not the same as adaptation or translation; the re-translation is not necessarily directly linked to the previous translation. It would therefore appear as a parallel text to the previous translation, rather than a derivative form. The two target texts are experienced as different, the newer translation producing something 'that hasn't been there before' according to Gideon Toury (1995: 166). Nonetheless, both translations will generally create a model reader who is assumed not to have access to

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[10] The term is Umberto Eco's (1979: 7). The model reader is the reader that the author envisages when writing, someone 'supposedly able to deal interpretatively with the expressions in the same way as the author deals with them' (ibid.). Schiavi (1996) makes the point that this model reader necessarily changes as the text is translated, away from the source language reader to a target language reader. The translator creates a new model reader for the translation.

the source text, resulting in a triangle where the two target language texts are considered to be distinct, while at the same time both are also deemed to be equivalent to (and thus translations of) a source language text which the reader knows exists but does not have access to:

$$TT1 \quad \approx$$

$$\neq \qquad \qquad \text{~~ST~~}$$

$$TT2 \quad \approx$$

Davis's 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman', then, acts like a translation in its creation of a model reader who does not have access to the source text. The story does not openly admit to its translational origins. It does not refer the reader to the earlier translation, so it cannot be considered a retranslation. It is at once a parody, an abridgement, and a translation, without really being reducible to any of them. 'Marie Curie' manages to be original and derivative, in the legal and the artistic senses of these terms. The story therefore breaks down the boundaries between translation and original composition. It demonstrates how similar translation is to other explicitly intertextual forms of writing, especially parody in Hutcheon's (1985) formulation, as both are marked by a double coding where one side is obscured or barred.

'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' recontextualises its source material in a way that allows criticism of that source material, while still telling an emotional life story. As in other stories by Lydia Davis, such as 'Letter to A Funeral Parlour' (Davis 2001a: 74-75) and 'Grammar Questions' (Davis 2007: 27-29), formal innovation is combined with an affective core. The translational origin of the text, rather than its translational status brings up a further question about how Davis's translations relate to her œuvre. Here a marginal translation provides the source for a story which is constructed through and in translation. Translation becomes part of the process of composition, and creates a story which is clearly part of Davis's œuvre as a writer. A

marginal translation, which she says she disliked (Davis 2000b: 27), becomes a source

for a story and so would appear to become more central. However, the translation itself

remains peripheral: it does not become an influence, but rather a source of raw material.

As was the case with 'The Walk' (Davis 2007a: 72-82) which incorporated a quotation

from Proust's work into one of Davis's stories (see chapter five above), Davis draws on

her translation of Giroud's novel to create something new. Where 'Marie Curie' differs,

however, is that Giroud's text could not be considered an influence on Davis's writing –

nowhere does she suggest it might be, and, as mentioned, her comments on the

translation itself are negative.

     'Marie Curie' also reflects the way that Davis sees her writing as the

arrangement of material, as chapter four saw. It clearly resembles a found object that has

been manipulated, and it foregrounds the recontextualisation of other writers' materials

that is present in some other of Davis's stories, such as 'Kafka Cooks Dinner (Davis

2007: 9-18) or 'Southward Bound, Reading *Worstward Ho'* (Davis 2007: 68-71),

analysed in the next chapter. Davis creates an intertextual space in these stories that has

affinities with translation, creating new works from already existent texts. 'Marie Curie'

is, however, the only text by Davis which fully operates in a translational space of

possibility, beyond the confines of normal definitions of translation, abridgement and

parody, highlighting the interrelations between these concepts.

Chapter 8   Translation as composition

As I argued in chapter one, translations are a subcategory of intertextual works. Translation is different from other intertextual writing practices because of the target text's declared equivalence with the source text. Equivalence is unique to translation. However, that does not mean that translation does not share many other similar qualities with other intertextual practices. Davis often uses other texts as a source in her own stories, such as 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' (Davis 2001a: 99-118), which, as the previous chapter showed, is constructed around literal translations from Françoise Giroud's *Une femme honorable* (1981). Other stories have a different relationship to their quoted materials. 'The Walk' (Davis 2007a: 72-82), for instance, cites different translations from Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann* to demonstrate different characters' perceptions of an event, while 'Kafka Cooks Dinner' (Davis 2007a: 9-18) develops through a pastiche of Kafka's style. 'Southward Bound, Reading *Worstward Ho*' (Davis 2007a: 68-71) combines citation and pastiche in a way that allows it to comment on Beckett's *Worstward Ho* (1983) while at the same time recounting its own narrative. The citational nature of all of these stories means that they recontextualise material from elsewhere, creating moments in the text which are doubly coded, pointing the reader to another text while also forming part of Davis's story. This type of double coding is similar to the double coding of translation, where the target text is both a new text and representation of the source text. As I argued at the end of the previous chapter, the double coding in translation is often barred: the source text is inaccessible for the (monolingual) target language reader.

This sort of double coding is often associated with postmodern art, which Linda Hutcheon (1989: 4) characterises by its rewriting and revising of past art forms. Certainly, in postmodern American fiction – the literary context for Davis's work – there

is much rewriting of other texts. Christian Moraru dedicates his book *Rewriting* (2001) to the rewritings in prose authors like E.L. Doctorow, Robert Coover, Paul Auster, Kathy Acker, and others. In poetry, too, there is no shortage of writers using elements of others' work in their own texts. But the use of others' texts is not limited to postmodernism, or contemporary literature: Gérard Genette's monumental study of intertextual literature, *Palimpsestes* (1981), covers examples from the ancient Greeks onward. Davis is not alone or unique in her use of other writers' texts as the basis for her own.

What is interesting about her use of intertexuality is how it resembles translation, and how it can be read as a non-conventional form of translation. The stories that I analyse in the first half of this chapter resemble translation in their use of other texts as sources and references. They differ, crucially, in their status as Davis's stories. The stories are attributed to Davis, and while they refer to, cite, and mimic other writers, they are part of Davis's œuvre of stories. They are first read as works by Davis, secondly as intertexts. This is the reverse of translation, which is often read first in the context of the source author, and then, if at all, in the context of the translator.

I am convinced, however, that there is a significant parallel between Davis's intertextual stories and her translations. The former function as the other side of the coin to translation: their apparently opposite positioning in Davis's œuvre is what binds them together. The first half of this chapter investigates her use of other writers' texts in her own stories. The result is a similar space to translation, but one that has been internalised into Davis's work. The concepts of collage and montage, with the recontextualisation inherent in these practices, provide a framework for understanding Davis's intertextual stories. The distinction between her translations and her own stories is problematised here.

The second half of the chapter changes tack, questioning the use of translation as

a figure that appears in Davis's stories, most importantly 'The Letter' (Davis 1986: 49-56). The stories do not translate another text in the sense of creating an equivalent text in another language, but they present characters translating within the diegetic frame of the story itself. Translation, in these stories, becomes central to Davis's storytelling and therefore her own work, but without taking the concrete form of an actual translation of another text.

Collage, quotation, and pastiche

Collage and montage are two practices that use quotation as part of the creative act. As Marjorie Perloff notes in *The Futurist Moment*, collage as it is currently understood is very much a product of the early twentieth century, although the idea of sticking different materials together, as the French word *collage* literally means, has been around a lot longer (Perloff 1986: 45-47). Modernist collage is a more specific practice, according to Perloff, as it 'always involves the movement of materials from one context to another, even as the original context cannot be erased' (1986: 47).

Collage is a familiar feature of modernist and later poetry, which will often quote and incorporate earlier texts. Perloff writes about the collages created by protomodernist and modernist poets such as Apollinaire, William Carlos Williams, and T.S. Eliot (1986: 72). A more postmodernist work like Ted Berrigan's *Sonnets* (2007: 27-76), for example, is also created from a collage of his own earlier work, citations, conversations, and other textual materials. Yet collage can be subtler, for example where an artist may use material from somewhere else as an element in their own work, rather than basing the entire work around cutting-and-pasting. Davis uses this more subtle form of collage in her use of quotations in stories such as 'The Walk' and 'Once a Very Stupid Man'.

Davis's use of quotation sometimes borders on montage. Whereas collage produces abstract images, montage generally uses already existent images in combination to create a new figurative image. One of the more famous examples is

Figure 1: Richard Hamilton 'Just What Is It that Makes Today's Homes So Modern, So Appealing?' Collage, 1956. Collection: Kunsthalle Tübingen, Tübingen, Germany

Richard Hamilton's 'Just What Is It that Makes Today's Homes So Modern, So Appealing?' (1956).[1] In this montage, the viewer is presented with an image of a sitting room, with sofas and easy chairs, posters on the walls, and a tape player in the bottom centre. The two inhabitants of the room are both pictured in black and white, while the rest of the work is in colour, highlighting the different provenance of the images. The man appears to be a weight-lifter, and is carrying a giant lollipop, while the woman sits on the sofa. Both appear to be naked. The ceiling of the room is a picture of the moon. On the back wall there is a poster, which on further inspection turns out to be the cover of a magazine, *Young Romance*. Hamilton's picture is made from quotations from other works. Hamilton's sources are magazine and advertising images, rather than any prestigious or canonical source. The individual parts of the picture are therefore doubly recontextualised; first into the picture itself, and the representational meaning that it has, and secondly they are placed into a context of 'fine art' rather than popular culture.

A literary montage would have to create a cohesive whole, linked together by narrative or argument. Modern poetry allows for a discontinuity that narrative does not;

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[1] Image source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hamilton-appealing2.jpg [Accessed 8/6/2010]. Image used under fair dealing for research and criticism (Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (ch. 48) Sections 29 &30). Image resized and altered to greyscale to allow for B&W printing.

poetry's lines need not connect to each other in a logical fashion, nor need there be an overall meaning to the poem. There are, however, narrative works that use aspects of other works in a different situation, for example the rewritings of earlier texts described by Christian Moraru (2001), or more concretely, a novel like Terry Pratchett's *Lords and Ladies* (1992), where the characters from his Discworld series are involved in the plot of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. William Burroughs describes a related practice in his essay 'Les voleurs' (Burroughs 1986: 19-21), where he suggests stealing parts of others' works, from the descriptive passages of Conrad to the 1930's backdrops of Hopper's paintings.[2] In all cases there is less quoted material than in a picture like Hamilton's. Literary montage would tend more to a parodic, adaptive use of its sources rather than the more literal quotation of visual montage.

Davis's 'Marie Curie' (Davis 2001a: 99-119; see chapter seven above) could also be considered a montage. It takes material from Giroud's *Une femme honorable* (1981) and recombines it into a new narrative frame. It would be an unusual montage, using only one source and keeping it in roughly the same order, but the principle of recombination of already existent elements is the same. Yet the fact that the material in 'Marie Curie' is translated would alter the profile of that material. The distancing from the source text caused by the process of translation would mean that if 'Marie Curie' was re-imagined as a pictorial montage then instead of using photographs pasted together to create a new image, it would use paintings of photographs, and the paintings would then be pasted together. The quotational origin of the material is obscured, placed *sous rature* [under erasure]. It is also arguable that the actual origin of the material is rendered almost irrelevant by its placing in a figurative image in Hamilton's case, or in a narrative text in Davis's.

Yet it is also possible to read the texts in relation to their source texts, as

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[2]   This latter would be difficult in a written work, although the mood of Hopper's paintings has arguably been borrowed by innumerable works.

transformational works, as the previous chapter did with 'Marie Curie'. Neither reading, either as original works or as derivative works, can really exclude the other whose possibility remains as a trace; its absence makes it present. Texts that are built from quotations could be considered to hinder or make impossible a comprehensive, holistic reading. This type of reading would take Aristotle's three poetic unities of place, time and action as a starting point, although it would not expect these unities as such, but rather the unity of the text, in the fashion of Cleanth Brook's 'well wrought urn' (see Brooks 1947). Even post-structualist writers such as Deleuze and Guattari search for a unity to the text, which they say must 'tenir debout tout seul' [must stand up on its own] (1991: 155).

A parallel again appears with translation, which produces a text which is intended to be read without access to its source. However, any reading of the translated text is complicated by the absent presence of the source text. The reader can ignore that source text, but as soon as the illusion of wholeness breaks down – the faults and 'discontinuities' of translation that Venuti's (1995: 29) symptomatic reading searched for – then the source's spectral presence is felt. Where the collage of 'Marie Curie' differs is its incorporation of that discontinuity into the form of the text itself, by offering a narrative that is interrupted by section titles that also serve to provide a framework which gives the appearance of continuity. Translations and collage forms cannot be reduced to being original or derivative, as they produce texts that use other texts.

The recontextualisation of material need not be as transformative as it is in the case of translation and montage. Citation, while working on a smaller scale, takes elements of one work and places them in another. The cited material, just as in collage, points to another text, but at the same time forms an intrinsic part of the new text where it has been placed. Two stories by Davis use what appear to be long quotations from other texts: 'Once a Very Stupid Man' (Davis 1986: 137-41) quotes from a story from

the English translation[3] of Martin Buber's *The Way of Man* (2002, translation first published 1950); the other story is 'The Walk' (Davis 2007a: 72-82), mentioned in chapter five, which quotes a passage from Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann* in both Davis's and Scott Montcrieff/Kilmartin's translation. The two stories are similar in their narrative and their use of quoted material; both redeploy the words of others to help show the state of mind of a character in the story.

In 'Once a Very Stupid Man' an unnamed woman is shown to be having difficulty dressing, which reminds her of a story she read on the subway, which she then reads to her male companion before thinking a little further about it. In 'The Walk' an unnamed female translator and an unnamed male critic wander round Oxford, ending up, magically, back at the place where they began, which reminds the woman of the passage in *Swann's Way* where Marcel's father would bring the family back from a long walk, suddenly stopping at a gate, only to demonstrate to Marcel and his mother that it was their house (Proust 1954: I, 114-115). She quotes this passage, in the Scott Moncrieff/Kilmartin translation, which she states was the version the critic preferred (Davis 2007a: 77). A second anecdote, this time about a librarian seeming to magically make a building also reminds her of the passage, which is then quoted in Davis's version of *The Way by Swann's* (Proust 2002).

The announcements on the copyright pages of the books in which the two stories appear are worded differently, reflecting differing relationships with their source texts. In *Varieties of Disturbance* (2007a), where 'The Walk' first appeared in book form, the excerpts from the translations of Proust are named as 'quotations'. In *Break it down* (1986), on the other hand, it states that 'The tale in "Once A Very Stupid Man" is adapted from a traditional Hasidic story recounted in Martin Buber's *The Way of Man*'.

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[3]   There is nothing in the 2002 edition to state this is a translation, other than a different copyright date (1948) from the date of the original British publication (1965), but there is a book published by Buber in 1948 called *Der Weg des Menschen, nach den chassidischem Lehre* [The Way of Man, after the Hasidic teachings] which would appear to be the source text.

This designation suggests a greater distance from the source text than is the case in 'The Walk'. Indeed, there are several layers of disassociation here: the tale is 'adapted' rather than quoted, and the source itself is a retelling of a traditional story. The possibility of quoting a traditional story is questionable: traditional stories exist in no fixed form. The story itself would be in the public domain while Buber's retelling of it is not. Davis's adaptation is really of Buber's retelling, rather than the traditional story.

Adaptation seems too strong a word for the treatment the story receives in 'Once A Very Stupid Man'. It is quoted almost verbatim, and the two texts look like parallel translations. Nothing changes until the third sentence:

> There was once a man who was very stupid. When he got up in the morning it was so hard for him to find his clothes that at night he almost hesitated to go to bed for thinking of the trouble he would have on waking. One evening **he finally made a great effort, took paper and pencil** and as he undressed noted down exactly where he put everything he had on. The next morning, **very** well pleased with himself, he took the slip of paper in his hand and read: 'cap' – there it was, he set it on his head; 'pants' – there they lay, he got into them; and so it went until he was fully dressed. 'That's all very well, but now where am I myself?' he asked **in great consternation**. 'Where in the world **am I**?' He looked and looked, but it was a vain search; he could not find himself. 'And that is how it is with us,' said the rabbi.
> (Buber 2002: 22-23; **bold** text denotes material not in Davis's version)

> There was once a man who was very stupid. When he got up in the morning it was so hard for him to find his clothes that at night he almost hesitated to go to bed for thinking of the trouble he would have on waking. One evening he **took paper and pencil and with great effort**, as he undressed, noted down exactly where he put everything he had on. The next morning, well pleased with himself, he took the slip of paper in his hand and read: 'cap' – there it was, he set it on his head; 'pants' – there they lay, he got into them; and so it went until he was fully dressed. **But now he was overcome by consternation,** and he said to himself: 'This is all very well, **I have found my clothes and I am dressed**, but where am I myself? Where **am I**? **And** he looked and looked, but it was a vain search; he could not find himself. And this is how it is with us, said the rabbi.
> (Davis 1986: 138-39; **bold** text denotes material not in Buber's version)

Davis's change of word order in the third sentence (beginning 'One evening...') changes the meaning slightly, focusing the great effort on how he noted down the places where his clothes were. Buber's text locates the great effort in the act of noting down where things were, and possibly the process of thinking of this action. The fourth sentence is

identical, but the fifth sentence is very different. Davis here stresses the man's consternation and trouble, making him 'overcome' by it. Her interjection in the man's utterance to himself, 'I have found my clothes and I am dressed' makes explicit an implicit process of thought in Buber's text. The man has succeeded in overcoming a practical problem, but has lost track of himself – it is ambiguous whether or not it should be read metaphorically, i.e. losing himself in space as well as losing his identity. The stress Davis adds to 'Where am *I*?' highlights his losing a grip on himself, seemingly beginning to panic.

Davis's version of the story, while appearing very similar to the source text, does alter it, focusing on how the man was now, after having solved the material problem of his clothes, upset by the more metaphysical problem of his own position. The man in the story is made to mirror the woman in Davis's story, who is also having difficulty with her identity, as well as not being able to find her clothes. In the context of Buber's work, though, it becomes clear that the story itself is a parable. Before the tale is recounted it is explained, suggesting how the reader should interpret it: 'he must find his own self, not the trivial ego of the egotistic individual, but the deeper self of the person living in a relationship to the world' (Buber 2002: 22). The lost clothes are the outward appearances of the self, but in paying attention to those the very stupid man loses track of his relationship with the world.

Davis's character in 'Once A Very Stupid Man', and to a lesser extent in 'The Walk', is appropriating the quotation as an expression of her own thought. The changes in the Hasidic tale show evidence of the character's preoccupations, and her own waning feeling of selfhood – on the next page she calls herself a 'bearded man' (1986: 140). In a move typical of Davis, the character then wonders about the causality involved: she is unsure if she was reminded of the tale, or if, rather, reading the tale made it possible for her to lose her clothes. In the same way, later in the same paragraph and at the very end

of the story, she cannot decide if there is a great noise outside coming in, or if 'something in [her] had gone out into the street to make such a great noise' (Davis 1986: 141). Her sense of self is no longer limited by her body, but she seems different to the man of Buber's story; she is not focussing on her 'trivial ego', but is excessively open to outside influence, to the point that she can no longer distinguish between herself and other. Marjorie Perloff suggests that the woman and the character in the parable are quite different, as the man sees that identity is spiritual, whereas the woman's 'quite contrary perception [is] that we cannot ... tell where the "clothes" end and the inner person begins' (1989: 212). Both characters can be seen to suffer a breakdown of identity, but the man in the parable loses himself, whereas the female character loses the sense of her own boundaries (just as the quotation problematises the boundaries of the text). While there is a difference here, the two perceptions are still related as perceptions of identity loss.

Other stories by Davis use quotation in a way analogous to how these characters do; the text is appropriated, used for a purpose that fits its new environment. In 'Kafka Cooks Dinner' (Davis 2007a: 9-18), a first person narrator, assumed to be Kafka, describes the anxiety caused by preparing dinner for a certain Milena, who, if the characters are related to their real counterparts, was Kafka's Czech translator. The anxiety is exaggerated by the memory of a dinner prepared for a previous fiancée, Felice.[4] The story feels absurd because Kafka's style, which it pastiches, appears overwrought for the everyday activities it describes: 'What a man! He must have moved mountains!–whereas I did almost nothing but mix the kasha as instructed by Ottla' (Davis 2007a: 16). There is an acknowledgement in *Varieties of Disturbance* that '[s]ome of the material in [the story] was taken from *Letters to Milena* by Franz Kafka' (Davis 2007a: viii), although there is no notification of permission being granted for

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[4] Davis's story 'Meat, My Husband' (Davis 1997: 5-7) also centres on the anxiety caused by having to prepare dinner for a loved one.

citation on the copyright page. It difficult to know from this acknowledgement what that material might be; nor are any quotations clearly marked in the text. There is something unusual in this, as Theo Hermans notes that quotations 'tend to be signalled and bracketed to separate them from the surrounding discourse' (2007: 69); this is the case with the citations in 'The Walk' (Davis 2007a: 72-82) and 'Once A Very Stupid Man' (Davis 1986: 137-141). However, in artistic montage, the signalling tends to be less explicit in form, for example the different colour schemes of pieces in Hamilton's 'Just What Is It that Makes Today's Homes So Modern, So Appealing?' In literary montage there may even be no acknowledgement of sources, as in 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman'. Reading Kafka's letters (Kafka 1990) reveals that there are passages which Davis has adapted, often attributing them to another speaker or otherwise disguising them. For example, the image of Kafka floating under a bridge in a boat, which in the story a friend says 'it was as if Judgment Day had arrived and my coffin had been opened' (Davis 2007a: 13), is a reworking of the story in the letters (Kafka 1990: 16-17), where the comparison is made by an employee in slightly different words. Davis does not quote the anecdote verbatim, but rephrases and recontextualises it, meaning that, for legal purposes, it is not a quotation.

There are statements in the story which are hyperbolic when related to cooking: 'As I plan this meal, I feel like Napoleon would have felt while designing the Russian campaign, if he had known exactly what the outcome would be' (Davis 2007a: 12). In the letters, a similar remark is made about Kafka's travel plans: 'I feel like Napoleon must have felt if, while at the same time he was designing the Russian campaign, he had known exactly what the outcome would be' (Kafka 1990: 24). Similarly, the quote above about moving mountains comes from the reaction to something in Milena's letter (Kafka 1990: 9), and not from Felice's description of Kafka's food, as the story has it (Davis 2007a: 16). The doom-laden tone of such statements fits the popular image of

Kafka, influenced by the atmosphere in his novels *The Trial* and *The Castle*, where the characters appear unable to escape their fate. This reading of Kafka does seem to be a persuasive meme, one that James Hawes (2008) has tried to dispel. Davis's text plays on the image of Kafka's despair and morbidity, extending it into absurdity by juxtaposing it not with existential problems but everyday worries. The story begins 'I am filled with despair as the day approaches when my dear Milena will come' (Davis 2007a: 9), a statement that appears overly dramatic – especially when the source of such despair would appear to be normally pleasant visit of a loved one. The trouble is caused by the choice of what to offer her: the narrator wants to avoid potato salad as it is 'no surprise to her anymore' (ibid.). The description of his struggle to find a suitable menu is elaborate: 'Now and then I summon all my energy and work at the menu as if I were being forced to hammer a nail into a stone, as if I were the one hammering and also the nail' (ibid.).

The reader is constantly teased throughout this piece by passages that sound like Kafka, but may only be pastiches. Richard Dyer remarks that pastiche is deformative, 'it selects, accentuates, exaggerates, concentrates' (2007: 56). It plays not with the thing itself, but rather with the stereotyped image of that thing. While 'Kafka Cooks Dinner' does contain reworked quotations from *Letters to Milena*, one of the effects of the pastiche of Kafka's writing style is that the whole text appears as if it could be citation. The text is received as if it were a montage, and the reader cannot, without recourse to the source text, decide what is original to the story and what is taken from the source. Here 'Kafka Cooks Dinner' is different from 'Once A Very Stupid Man' and 'The Walk', which explicitly mark their quotations as quotations, but similar to 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' and the excerpt stories, especially in the way that citations are altered in 'Marie Curie' by translation into English. 'Kafka Cooks Dinner' is received by the reader as if it were made from quotations, although it also contains elements written

by Davis.

In the visual arts, there are some works that operate on a similar principle: they appear, on first viewing, to be found objects, but after some study turn out to be fabricated by the artist. An example would be Jeff Koons's *Popeye Series* (2002-ongoing)[5], where what appear to be inflatable swimming pool toys, for example a giant lobster, turn out to be made from aluminium and painted to resemble rubber toys. The 'toys' are placed in positions that would be impossible for rubber shapes to maintain, such as a boat filled with heavy objects and maintaining a rigid shape, or as load-bearing parts of a chain. The viewer's acceptance of the authenticity of the objects is thus challenged by the works, which seem physically impossible. The *Popeye Series* plays with the expectations of the viewer, who has come to accept the use of found objects and other heterogeneous materials in modern art, and so accepts the 'rubber toys' at face value, at least initially.

The reader of 'Kafka Cooks Dinner' also expects a citational work, as the acknowledgements page suggests it might be, and accepts passages that appear Kafka-esque as being citations from Kafka, whether or not they are. Davis, like Koons, is playing with the reader's literary competence and knowledge of the tradition of quotational works – collage, montage, found object – that other of her stories play a part in. 'Kafka Cooks Dinner' appears as an ironic addition, taking part in and at the same time refuting the tradition.

Davis's use of pastiche can be considered, like translation, to set up a correspondence between her work and the work of the author who is the object of the pastiche. It encourages the reader to associate that author with Davis's author-function, and to draw comparisons. Davis's œuvre is therefore made more porous by her use of pastiche and translation. It is not just made up of her own writing, but of multiple

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[5]   Exhibited at the Serpentine Gallery, London, from 2 July to 13 September 2009.

authors.

This can be seen in her story 'Southward Bound, Reads *Worstward Ho*' (Davis 2007a: 68-71), which also plays with citation and pastiche, combining the two in a text that provides explicit and implicit commentary on its source, Samuel Beckett's *Worstward Ho* (1983). In the story's publication in *Mark Joseph: New and Used* (Joseph and Krukowski 2006: 25-27; 29), the two parts were published separately, although the function of one part as a commentary on the other is still implied by their proximity in position and content.[6] In its book publication, which will be the focus here, the text is split in two by the placement of one part in the position of a series of footnotes to the other, recalling conventions of academic commentary.

Although there are more words in the footnotes, the part of the text that is not in footnotes is typographically identified as the main part. It narrates the tale of a woman reading Beckett's *Worstward Ho* on a bus. It is written in a pastiche of the extremely terse style of Beckett's text:

> In van, heading south, sits on right or west side, sun in through windows from east. Highway crosses and recrosses meandering stream passing now northwest and now northeast under. Reads *Worstward Ho*: On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on. Said nohow on.
> (Davis 2007a: 68)

Davis quotes from Beckett's text throughout both parts of her story, and while the citations are not marked off by quotation marks in the main text, they are clearly identified at citations by being prefaced by the verb 'reads', as in the example above. Passages from Beckett's text are thus incorporated into the pastiche, allowing the reader to see how it differs. Davis's main part is not as severely minimalist as *Worstward Ho*, which tends to more staccato rhythms, and shorter sentence structures, e.g. 'The eyes. Time to try worsen. Somehow try worsen. Unclench' (Beckett 1983: 27). There is the

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[6] The two parts of the text were, according to the copyright page of *New and Used*, originally published separately: one in 1989 and one in 1993. The *Varieties of Disturbance* version highlights the links between them.

flavour of Beckett's style in the repetitions in the second sentence above, 'crosses'/'recrosses' and 'now northeast and now northwest under'. The syntax is surprisingly straightforward, however, with only the parenthesis 'passing now northeast and now northwest' breaking a strictly logical sequence in this sentence. The initial sentence, constructed of several fragments, is closer to the style of *Worstward Ho*. Davis's sentences contain more information, using commas where Beckett uses full stops. Davis has commented on her early fascination with Beckett's syntax (e.g. McCaffery 1996: 66), and this text plays out some sort of homage, with Davis mimicking Beckett's late style, although producing a more fluent version of it.

The other part of the story is told in footnotes which appear to be comments on the main text. They do not comment, however, in the discursive sense of commentary, but offer a retelling of the same passage in a more conventional narrative form. For example, the first paragraph of the main body reads: 'Sun in eyes, faces east, waits for van bound for south meeting plane from west. Carries book, *Worstward Ho*' (Davis 2007a: 68). The sentence structure is elliptical, with no clear sense of who the subject may be. There are references to directions which structure the sentence in such a way that there appears to be a clockwise movement around the compass dial. The two forms of transport also offer structuring elements to the sentence. There is then a paratactic connection with the second sentence. The first footnote, in contrast, reads as follows:

> She waits near the highway before the entrance of HoJo's for the van going south. She is going south to meet a plane from the west. Waiting with her is a thin, dark-haired young woman who does not stop walking back and forth restlessly near her luggage. They are both early and wait for some time. In her purse she has two books, *Worstward Ho* and *West with the Night*. If it is quiet and she reads *Worstward Ho* on the way south, when she is fresh, she can read *West with the Night* on the way back north, when it will be later and she will be tired.
> (Davis 2007a: 68)

Here the footnote provides information that the main body of the text does not give, including other characters and an explanation of why she has *Worstward Ho*. The

footnote text connects to the main body through words which appear in both versions (south, west, plane, book, *Worstward Ho*). The footnotes are paraphrases of the main text – translations into the same language according to Jakobson's notion of 'intralingual translation' (1959: 233). Yet at the same time they provide more information than a paraphrase would normally allow for: the sparse narrative of the main text, which is filled with the movement of the van and the character's reading, is fleshed out to include other travellers and several stops of the bus in the other footnotes.

The story, as a whole, produces a commentary on *Worstward Ho*. It narrates the character's reading of that text, first in a form that mimics the source text, and then, in the footnoted section, in a more narrative form. The narrative itself focuses on the reading, and finishes with its end. The character has had mixed reactions to the book, liking some sections and not others, notably the beginning and the end. The connecting thread that drives the action, such as it is, then, is the reading of Beckett's text, and the character's reactions to it. This does not yet account for the pastiche of the main part, which reproduces the style of the text being read by the character in the tale. The pastiche acts in tandem with the narrative in the footnotes, and can be seen as providing a commentary in a different manner. The imitation of Beckett's style is the product of a reading, which is not explained, as it is in the footnotes, but rather performed in the construction of the text itself. It can be viewed as homage, although the criticisms in the other part suggest that this homage is not unequivocal. However, the levels of the commentary are different: the intradiegetic comments belong to the character, whereas the implicit comment performed by the pastiche belongs to the implied author of the story. Translation and reading in 'Southward bound, reads *Worstward Ho*' appear as both the form and the content of the story. The content is the narrative of the reading of *Worstward Ho*. The form involves translation/reading doubly: first as the paraphrase of one part of the story by the other; secondly in the reading of Beckett that the text itself

performs.

Like the other texts in this section, the story complicates any attempt to read it in a unified way: the citations of Beckett's work push the reader towards that work, just as the pastiche mimics and questions his style. Davis incorporates the work of others into her own work in these stories in a way, just as her translations of Leiris and Proust do, which places her in a dialogic relationship with those other writers. However, that relationship is never simple, and her use of pastiche as well as quotation provides a critical distance. Sometimes the readings of the works are delegated to characters within the stories, as in the case of 'The Walk', 'Once an Honest Man', and 'Southward Bound, Reads *Worstward Ho*', which disrupts any identification of their opinion with Davis's own. Some of the characters appropriate the texts as expressions of their own thoughts, creating a double-coding that allows the original significance of the quoted material to be obscured. The meaning of these works remains unstable, though, as the original significance is never fully erased – if the reader knows about it then it can affect their acceptance of the character's reading. The citations are never fully recontextualised in Davis's stories. Like translations, they become grafts: part of her work while still remaining the work of others. The stories in this section, then, highlight how similar translation is to other intertextual practices, and how they are brought together in Davis's work, which produces translational creative writing.

Translation in Davis's stories

There are other stories by Davis that take translation as a starting point, but not in the form of another text that is translated. Davis sometimes uses translation as a theme, writing about translation within the diegetic frame of her stories. In other stories, characters are seen translating, and their translation drives the story along. Here translation becomes a narrative device. Some of the characters in Davis's stories are

translators. The narrator and her husband in 'The Bone' (Davis 1986: 88-90) were living in Paris, 'translating art books' (1986: 88) at the time of the story, which does not go on to mention translation but rather narrate how her husband was saved from choking. Similarly, in 'Thyroid Diary' (Davis 2001a: 76-91), the narrator is a translator, but the story focuses much more on the problems of having an under-active thyroid gland. The significance of the central character's professional status as a translator is much more prominent in 'The Walk' (Davis 2007a: 72-82), which was analysed in the previous section: she appropriates a passage from her translation of Proust to help express her own state of mind, which comes about as the result of a walk around Oxford, which forms the main narrative of the story. In *The End of the Story* (1995) and 'The Letter' (Davis 1986: 49-56), the fact that the central character is a translator is much more significant: in 'The Letter' the character's reading of a poem in French forms the second half of the story, and provides insights into her personality while also allowing a narrative development through her reactions to the letter itself. In addition she, like the narrator of *The End of the Story,* translates in a time of personal crisis. Since *The End of the Story* begins by mentioning a story very similar to 'The Letter', leading Christopher Knight to note that it 'echoes' it (2008: 205), translation in both texts will be analysed together.

Rather than focusing on the representation of the translator, as has been a recent trend in Translation Studies (e.g. Anderson 2005, Curran 2005, Milahalache 2005, Maier 2006, Wilson 2007, Cronin 2009), this section focuses on how translation is used within the story as a device to shape the narrative. Importantly Davis's story and novel do not belong to the group of texts that Wail S. Hassan has called 'translational literature' (2006: 754a): their narratives do not take place between cultures, but rather within a highly educated part of American culture, where the characters have knowledge of a foreign language and use it in their professional activities, but do not draw a hybrid

identity from that knowledge. The narrator of *The End of the Story* recounts how if she is 'at a party and [says] to a man that [she is] a translator, he often loses interest immediately' (1995: 85) and walks away. There is nothing here of the romanticised traitors (Anderson 2005: 174- 179), cross-cultural lovers (Wilson 2007: 386-387), or devious textual manipulators, as in Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1981: 126-127). Davis's texts do not bring 'attention to the "invisible" agency of translators and to the "fluency" and "transparency" of their translations' (Hassan 2006: 754b), but rather the characters translate as a professional activity: only the reading of the letter, which is the centre of the story 'The Letter' but is also mentioned in *The End of the Story* (1995: 96-97), brings a contact between professional and personal lives.

Before reading 'The Letter', there is another story by Davis that, while it does not place translation at its centre, builds around reading a book in French. 'Foucault and Pencil' (Davis 1997: 10-12) shows a character reading and reflecting about a book by Foucault at the same time as they[7] are thinking about an argument they are having with someone else. The way in which the character in 'Foucault and Pencil' uses reading as a means of avoiding approaching a conflict they are having with another person who is absent is a more important connection with 'The Letter'. Here too reading and translation are used as a way of intellectualising a delicate interpersonal situation in order to deal with it. The fact that the character in 'Foucault and Pencil' is reading in a foreign language implies a possibility of translation, and through reporting in English parts of the text being read Davis's story actually performs an act of translation, for example in the phrase 'harder to understand when subject of sentence noun like thought, absence, law' (1997: 12). The nouns would not be these words in a French text, but rather their French equivalents. The story does not focus on translating the text, despite containing translations within it. There is also a metaphorical translation between

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[7]   The gender of the character is unknown, and rather than using the neologistic pronoun 's/he' or even 'he/she', it seems preferably to use a gender neutral plural 'they'.

Foucault's book and the argument, where the difficulties of comprehension are carried over from one domain to another.

'Foucault and Pencil' is quite elusive on details of the argument that the character is involved in, or even their identity. All the sentences are written in a subjectless notational form, which avoids the normal deictic markers of identity, i.e. his, her, my. For example, 'Sat down to read Foucault with pencil in hand' (9). The subject of the main verb is left unclear. Habit would suggest that such a notational form would refer back to the speaker, as it mimics note-taking which presumes the identity of the subject of the sentence is already known.

The story develops along two axes. The first is the understanding of Foucault's book, and the second is the understanding of the situation of conflict that the central character finds themself in. The character alternates between thinking about the argument and trying to read Foucault, and the growing understanding of both is presented in parallel, although in neither understanding does anything become clear other than the problem itself. As the last sentence states:

> Put down Foucault and pencil, took out notebook and made note of what was now at least understood about lack of understanding reading Foucault, looked up at other passengers, made note of same question about argument as before though with stress on different word.
> (Davis 1997: 12)

The solution is not that the narrator now understands the problem in either case, but rather that they understand the conditions of the problem.

Reading is just one of the processes of understanding, but the exploration of that process, or moreover its failure, forms the centre of this story. Rather than solely describing a character reading, the story develops through the process of reading: it is the fits and starts that are of interest. Davis uses the process of understanding a text as a metaphor for understanding a situation, through the juxtaposition of the two narratives. The character thinks first of how to understand the argument, before attempting again to

read Foucault and noticing the difficulty. Then they think again of the argument, using a different metaphor than previously. They go back to reading Foucault, realising that there are some points that are easier to understand and some harder. Their problem with Foucault is not solved, but framed in a way that makes a solution possible. Their rethinking of the argument is positioned in this space of possibility. The understanding of the book and the argument appear to build upon each other: it is as if they are one and the same. The character seems to be experiencing greater clarity of mind as the story goes on, allowing them to understand both the situation they are in and the book they are reading.

Reading substitutes for thinking about the argument, as if an abstract idea allows the central character to comprehend something more emotional and less yielding to analysis. Josh Cohen remarks that 'self-consciousness serves ... as a passage to incomprehension' (2010: 502) in Davis's work. The move into abstraction would side-step the negative results associated with self-consciousness: by analysing a proxy situation, which has little or no relation to the emotional disturbance, the character can achieve an understanding that would have eluded them if they had approached the problem head on. Other characters in stories by Davis, notably 'Grammar Questions' (2007a: 27-29), analysed in chapter four, or 'Break it down' (Davis 1986: 20-30), utilise abstract problems to work through emotional difficulties; where they try to work out the problems directly, as in 'Story' (1986: 3-7), they reach an impasse.

Translation in a linguistic sense becomes central in the story 'The Letter' (1986: 49-56), and here too the character uses translation as a form of intellectual proxy for an emotional problem. The central character in this story is a translator who is suffering the after-effects of a love affair. The first half of the story recounts her difficulty with the end of the relationship, which are quite similar to the narrator's in Davis's novel, *The End of the Story* (1995). The relationship ended 'stormily' (1986: 49), and the translator

still thinks of her ex-lover, with different friends providing information regarding his whereabouts and situation. The story is set about a year after the break up, when she receives a letter from him. In the meanwhile she has been translating 'because it was the only thing she could do' (1986: 51): translation serves as a way of taking her attention away from the pain of the break-up.

If this were the sole use of translation in the story, it would present an interesting slant on the representation of the translator, but 'The Letter' also makes translation a central device in its narrative progression. The second half of the story shows the translator character's attempts to read the letter that her ex-lover has sent. She collects it from the post office, half recognising the handwriting; when she realises whose handwriting it is she 'swears aloud over and over' (1986: 52). Hoping that it will contain a cheque for some or all of the money he owes her, she opens the letter, which turns out not to be a letter but rather a poem in French, copied out in his handwriting, and signed by him as if it were a letter. The poem is never identified, although a reference to *'pure things'* (1995: 97) when speaking of a letter/poem from a lover in *The End of the Story* suggests that the poems may be the same poem in both texts. The novel's narrator cannot find the poem in an anthology where she was looking for it. However, she does give a translation of the first line: '*We have thought pure thoughts*' (ibid.). The poem appears to be Paul Valéry's 'Le bois amicale' (1929: 13) although it is misquoted: Davis's '*nous nous retrouvions*' (1986: 55) appears in the poem as 'nous nous sommes trouvés' (Valéry 1929: 13, line 13). The text is otherwise obscured by the handwriting, which the character finds difficult to read, and which is not presented in the story. The reader of 'The Letter' is therefore unlikely to identify the poem, although Davis provides enough information for the reader to understand its significance within the story.

The rest of the story narrates the central character's attempt to understand the letter. She postpones the moment of confrontation that reading the letter represents, first

going to a meeting that she is already late for (1986: 52), then by continuing work on a translation (1986: 53). When she speaks to her current lover, she does not mention the letter, although she does talk about the translation. Finally she takes the letter to bed with her to read it. Her secrecy and the act of reading the letter in bed suggests that she, at some level, views the letter as a substitute for her ex-lover; she shields her current lover from a potential source of jealousy.

She begins her interpretation of the letter not with the words, but with the material features: envelope, postmarks, handwriting, before moving on to the paper of the letter. Johnny Payne (1993: 170) notes that the central character has 'formidable powers of observation', and she is rigorous in her reading of the external features of the letter, even down to the traces of decisions not made: 'He might have hesitated writing her last name, because there is a small ink blot in the curve of one letter' (Davis 1986: 53). She is here unable to know whether or not he hesitated, or indeed what that hesitation might mean, despite there being marks that could be interpreted as pointing towards that conclusion. Karen Alexander (2008) sees this type of analysis as a central feature in Davis's work, and there is a consistency between the character's reading of the outward features of the letter in this story and the narrator's obsessive dissection of the costs of a romantic trip in 'Break it down' (1986: 20-30), or the narrator's obsessive rehashing of her lover's story in 'Story' (1986: 3-7). Marjorie Perloff also notes how, despite the character's speculation about the conditions in which the letter was sent, there is only one fact: the place of the postmark (1989: 209). Yet there is also a return address, which Perloff chooses not to view as a fact, possibly as it is not as 'objective' as a postmark, which is imposed by a system outside of the control of either the letter's writer or its reader. The woman in the story chooses to overlook the address, or rather to ignore its function as locating her former lover. As she asks of herself: 'Does he want an answer to this? It is more likely that he is not sure she is still here and if she is not still

here he wants his letter to come back to him so he will know' (Davis 1986: 54). This is a wilful avoidance of the possibility of contact, just as the poem avoids the personal contact that a real letter would involve. The central character is ambivalent towards this possible reopening of communication with her ex-lover, an attitude also present in her mix of happiness and anger at receiving a message from him (1986: 53).

After examining the materials of the letter, she moves on to its content. She notes first the date, May 10, and her name at the top. The form the letter takes is: 'The date, her name, comma, then the poem, then his name, period' (1986: 54). The poem, as the character notes, is the letter. She reads it several times, unable to decipher a specific word. She guesses that it should be '*obscures*' as that rhymes with '*pures*' (ibid.). In the story the French words are written in French in italics, and given a gloss in English, meaning that a reader with no knowledge of French should be able to follow the narrative. At the same time giving the words in French forces the reader into an analogous position to the central character: the reader must try to interpret the words. The presence of the original French words, which were absent in 'Foucault and Pencil', means that there are blocks to comprehension: they must be read and pronounced, separate from the meanings assigned to them by the gloss, which comes to exhibit only the semantic meaning of the words.

The poems itself is never quoted in full, only as short phrases. It is about two people, one described as a '*compagnon de silence*, companion of silence' (1986: 55) who die and find each other again. Her interpretation lingers over this finding each other again: 'She examines the word *retrouvions* slowly, to make sure of the handwriting, that the letters really spell finding each other again' (1986: 55). She sees this as the message of the poem/letter: that her ex-lover still thinks there is a possibility, in the future, of them meeting up again. But then she doubts this, questioning her interpretation. Finally, she gives up reading it, only to sniff it, hoping to smell him, yet all she 'is probably

smelling is the ink' (1986: 56). As Johnny Payne notes, the central character inhabits a 'misery-ridden space of lovelorn interpretation, heartsick hermeneusis' (1993: 171); she interprets to try to find the trace of her ex-lover, yet this interpretation brings her no closer to him. Although, if her attitude towards him is ambivalent, her incomplete interpretation is a symptom of that ambivalence: she cannot read the poem because she does not want an unequivocal answer. Her questioning of her own reading is a movement away from any knowledge of her ex-lover. Her self-consciousness questioning leads to a willed lack of comprehension.

'The Letter' presents another case where reading and interpreting are central to the narrative development of one of Davis's stories. The character's reading of the letter is what drives the story forward. If it be the case that this analytic narrative is characteristic of Davis, then what makes this story and 'Foucault and Pencil' stand out from the rest of Davis's stories is the use of an explicit act of reading or translation. Rather than solely performing the action of interpreting or analysing, as a story like 'Break It Down' (Davis 1986: 20-30) does, these stories dramatise the act of reading.

The stories make translation into a central trope. The interaction between the characters takes place as an act of translation – metaphorically in 'Foucault and Pencil', and literally in 'The Letter'. Payne also links the narrator's interpretation in the latter story to translation. He argues that 'The Letter' enacts the secondariness of translation, and, in association, femininity (Payne 1993: 178-79). The act of interpretation is seen as a secondary act, and female secondary to the male – the two concepts have been commonly linked throughout Western history (Chamberlain 2004: 306). As Payne himself points out, however, '[t]he letter never appears integrally ... but rather as a function of the woman's process of interpretation' (1993: 178). The whole story is presented from the viewpoint of the female recipient of the letter; she cannot be viewed as secondary in her relationship to the man. Indeed, Payne goes on to note how the story

shows 'the original masculine idiom depends at all points on her "necessary" and active cognition' (1993: 181). As such the female reading is necessary for the masculine writing, reversing the traditional gendered view of translation. Payne (1993: 179-180) explicitly compares this to Jacques Derrida's notion of the indebtedness of the original to the translation (Derrida 1985b: 152), where the original needs the translation to survive: the reading of the letter is essential for the survival of the letter, meaning that the reader becomes more primary than the text.

   Davis's story does not accept translation or interpretation as a secondary activity. Both are activities that are important to the character's possibility of understanding her situation, and so are primary activities to her, and by extension, to the narrative. As Payne (1993: 181) succinctly notes, the reader 'is forced back onto the woman's process of reading, rather than onto the letter'. Yet this reading could not happen without the letter. The process of reading is reliant on something to read, but at the same time need not be secondary to it: the text interpreted need not be more important than the interpretation.

   Payne deems that the central character's activity as a translator only substitutes 'one object of interpretation for another' (1993: 179). The character in 'The Letter' does use the act of translation as a way of making herself busy to avoid thinking about her ex-lover; first when they are splitting up (Davis 1986: 51), and secondly as she postpones reading the letter (1986: 53). The narrator in *The End of the Story* also translates to avoid thinking about her former lover (1995: 158-159), explaining more fully that translation work and thinking about words stop 'his image [swimming up] between me and the work and causing a fresh pain' (1995: 159). The intellectual activity of translation is used, as reading is in 'Foucault and Pencil', as a way of not facing a direct emotional challenge.

   I would argue that here is, however, a difference between the receipt of a letter

and reading a literary text: letters are addressed to a recipient, and there is an assumed communication between the sender and the receiver. Letters imply a transferable meaning. Literary texts, on the other hand, have no clear addressee. The process of interpretation involved in reading a letter is different from translating a literary text: the first results in the deciphering of a message, whereas translation results in the creation of an equivalent text in another language. Translation as working practice places the translator in a writer's position, unable to read the work as a message, but reading a letter places the reader in the position of a receiver. Her translation activity can be seen as an attempt to maintain control, which reading the letter would make her relinquish.

Translation serves as a narrative device in 'The Letter' as reading does in 'Foucault and Pencil': it pushes forward the narrative, although there is no real conclusion in either of the stories. Both stories use interpretation of texts as a way of dealing with emotional situations, although in 'The Letter' the text itself is the cause of the problem. Translation is, importantly, possible where reading is not – the character in 'The Letter' can translate various parts of the poem into English, and work on commissioned translations, yet she cannot read the letter: she cannot interpret its meaning with regard to her relationship with its sender. When she tries to find its message, she enters into the same space of doubt and continually questioning as Davis's other characters do when they try to face an emotional problem directly. While she can find other ways of producing signifying patterns, she cannot reach a single understanding of what those patterns might mean: she can only arrive at a range of possibilities.

Both of the stories in this final section produce a commentary on an absent text, Foucault's book in 'Foucault and Pencil' and the unnamed poem in 'The Letter'. They show the character struggling with a text that is not revealed to the reader, and so participate, like the other texts in this chapter, in the production of a barred double code:

they refer to and point the reader towards another text, but remove access to that text at the same time. On the other hand, it is not important to know what the text referred to is to read and understand the stories: a knowledge of Foucault will not help understand the argument that the character is having in the first story, and access to Valéry's 'Le bois amicale' will not clarify the intent or the meaning of the letter in the second story. Something in each story remains incomprehensible beyond the story's intertexts.

Translation is both a thematic and formal component of these stories: the boundaries between Davis's activity as a writer and as a translator are broached as the two come together in 'The Letter'. There is an important interaction between the translation and storytelling in this story. Translation becomes a means of moving the narrative forward. Yet all the stories analysed in this and the previous chapter go some way to blurring the boundaries between translating and writing stories: either by making translation into composition, as is the case in 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman', or by demonstrating how translation is one of a range of intertextual tools, rather than a singularly different process, or, finally, by making translation into a narrative device. Translation becomes central to the writing process.

The intertextual stories in this chapter rely on a manipulation of material into a new form; in 'The Letter' and 'Foucault and Pencil' this manipulation is obscured by its incorporation into a narrative, but there still remain strong intertextual impulses which disrupt a fully unified reading of the stories. Translation as a conventional activity, i.e. the production of texts that are recognised and acknowledged as translations for a public ignorant of the source language, still remains distinct, however, from the use of translation as part of a creative strategy, due in part to the problems of copyright, but also because this form of translation has a very different end. In stories that use translation or other forms of intertextuality, the source material is presented in a new context, with new material to interact with. In a translation, the context does change, but

the text is presented as a whole; the structures tying it together remain, even if altered.

Davis's incorporation of translation into her stories, either thematically or practically, brings her translation work closer to her own writing. Translation becomes part of her own stories. The use of intertextual elements has a similar effect, presenting multiple grafts of other writers' work onto Davis's œuvre. The boundary between her work and other writers' becomes ever more porous. Davis's work is effectively decentred by this grafting; the perception of her as an author cannot be centred solely on her stories, but must also take into account her translations, and how they resonate throughout her work.

Conclusion

The central question I have been asking in this thesis is how Lydia Davis's translations relate to her body of stories and her novel. I answered this using a theoretical framework, developed in the first two chapters, and close comparative readings of Davis's translations and her own stories in the remaining six. I put forward the hypothesis that translation is a form of writing in the target language that produces texts which are deemed equivalent to already existing texts in another language. The fact that equivalence is recognised by a readership, and not based on solely a textual relationship, means that translations are still considered equivalent even though they produce different effects and meanings to their source texts. The inevitable intervention of a translator, which poststructuralist translation theorists like Arrojo (1998: 25) and Hermans (2007: 27) highlight, does not pose an obstacle to this form of equivalence. Importantly, this intervention leaves traces of the translator in the translated text, and I argued that these traces allow a translation to be recognised, as adaptations often are, as belonging to the translator. When the translator is a writer, which is the case with Lydia Davis, their translations can therefore be read as part of their œuvre as an author.

Translations are not automatically accepted in that œuvre, just as not all texts by a writer are considered central to it (Foucault 1994: 801-802). Translations that are not signed are very difficult to connect to an author's other work, as they do not share an authorial signature, and are not identified as being part of their work. Signed translations become more central to an œuvre when there are perceivable connections with other works; for example, formal or thematic parallelisms, statements made in prefaces or elsewhere by the translator that link the texts with their own, intertextual echoes in the author's works, traces of features of the author's writing style in their translation strategy, etc. When these elements are present, a reader is more likely to read

the translations as belonging to the translator's work, rather than just the source text author's. The configuration of these connections will generally allow the translations to be read as having little connection, having influenced the writer, or forming a dialogue with the writer's other texts.

Once a form of connection has been found with an author's other texts, their translations form a graft on their work, as I proposed in chapter two. They are not fully assimilated, as they produce hybrid texts that belong to both the source text author and the translator. There is always an irreducible difference in translations that cannot be accounted for by placing them in an author's œuvre. They are therefore always in a liminal position; both inside and outside the work. They can be read as part of the œuvre but not reduced to their place in it; they always offer something more.

In Davis's case, as I demonstrated through close readings in chapters three to seven, there are often multiple connections with her own work in her translations. The relationship between Davis's stories and her translations is, it turns out, not just one relationship but many. Each of her translations has its own relationship with her stories, which led to individual, semi-independent readings of texts that Davis has translated. My analyses link together through a shared goal of identifying how Davis translations interact with her stories and her novel, as well as through a shared methodology, which I proposed in chapter two, of seeking out traces of Davis in her translations, reading her translation strategies as a comment on the translated text, and also reading Davis's own writing in relation to the translated texts.

Sometimes the relationship between Davis's texts and her translations is negligible and there is little to connect the translation to Davis's other writing, as was the case with her translations of Léon-Paul Fargue that I analysed in chapter six, where the connection between them was found only in Auster's editorial comments that they were 'compatible' poets (1982: xlviii). Davis's translation style when there is little

connection tends towards a target oriented or domesticating translation, as was the case with her translations of Fargue, Sallenave (chapter six) and Giroud (chapter seven). These last two translations provoked responses from Davis in her stories. Sallenave's *La Vie fantôme* (1986) is reprised and revised by aspects of Davis's *The End of Story*, specifically in relation to the agency of the female characters. Davis rewrites the affair to give the female character more power over her own destiny. The reaction to Giroud's *Une femme honorable* (1981) appears in the retranslation, abridgement and parody of that book that Davis's story 'Marie Curie, So Honorable Woman' (Davis 2001a: 99-119) performs. Here a translation that Davis has admitted disliking (Davis 2000b: 27) becomes the raw material that she edits and rearranges in one of her own stories. This recycling reconnects a marginal translation to the rest of Davis's œuvre. My analyses of her translations of Sallenave and Giroud demonstrate that even the translations that Davis rejects as being solely work-for-hire (2007b: 7) can form significant connections with her own writing.

For the translations of Blanchot, Leiris, and Proust – writers Davis admires – the relationship between her own writing and the translations is never simple. Davis's translation strategy for these authors tends towards literalism, although each author is translated slightly differently: when translating Blanchot, Davis sometimes makes the translated text more cohesive than the source, but she still recreates the diction and ambiguity of Blanchot's narration. For Leiris, she follows his syntax while also making it more cohesive. Her translation of Leiris stands out because of her recourse to placing the French words or expressions in the text with an English gloss, which disturbs the English reader's experience of the text. Finally, in her translation of Proust she tries to follow Proust's French as closely as possible, while still producing a readable English text. As I argued in chapter five, the precision with which she chooses words in her translation of Proust mirrors her stylistic precision in her own stories.

Davis's stories show affinities with each of these authors, but at the same time they create different narrative situations and have distinct artistic goals. Her stories resemble Blanchot's *récits* in their rejection of narrative closure, but whereas Blanchot's characters discount the possibility of narrative, Davis's narrator in 'Story' (Davis 1986: 3-7) cannot accept the story she is told because she doubts the source of the story. As with other of Davis's stories, an intellectual conundrum covers a more emotional base. This focus on the emotional and interpersonal elements of language is an important feature of Davis's work, and where she differs from Blanchot, whose characters are caught up in intellectual and philosophical conundrums that minimise their emotional involvement. Davis began translating Blanchot at the same time she began publishing her stories, and he is central to her early career as a writer and translator, but she also rejects the coldness of his writing in her own. There is, therefore, an element of revision in her dialogue with him.

Her stories' relationship to her translations of Leiris is one of dialogue, although she explicitly sets him up as an influence through intertextual allusion. As with Blanchot, her writing has affinities with Leiris's, most notably in highlighting the materiality of language in their works. Where Leiris's work is confessedly autobiographical, Davis's is carefully presented as fiction, and so the goals of their writing differ: Leiris's *La Règle du jeu* cannot be read without reference to his life, but Davis creates artistic objects that are divorced from her as a person. Through translating Leiris Davis can experiment with the form of autobiography, because that autobiography is not her own; her translations of him offer her an opportunity to write in a way that would be out of place in her œuvre. The irreducible difference remains, and the translations both are and are not characteristic of her work. Once again they appear like a graft as they both break down and reinforce the distinctions between her work and Leiris's: *Rules of the Game* can be read as an extension of Davis's work, but it

is at the same time Leiris's autobiography. There is a tension here that mirrors all intertextual activity, which, as I discussed in chapter eight, never loses the associations of its original context.

Davis's novel *The End of the Story* explicitly positions itself as a Proustian novel, through allusion and parallel structures. The novel gives a postmodern rewriting of *In Search of Lost Time*, disrupting the teleological focus of Proust's work with a narrative that consistently questions its own possibility and ends where it begins. There is no greater goal for Davis's novel than to tell its story, where Proust's presents a theory of art. Proust is an influence on Davis and a partner in a literary dialogue: traces of his approach can be found in Davis's novel, but that novel simultaneously questions the possibilities of a Proustain approach. Davis's novel can therefore be read as a response to and a questioning of Proust's.

The trends of how translations relate to a writer's other writing that I described in chapter two, i.e. no relation, influence and positioning, and dialogue, blur with Davis's responses to Blanchot, Leiris and Proust. These writers appear as influences, showing a way of writing which has affinities with Davis's own, but Davis responds to them by the way she questions their work in her own. She therefore challenges any reading of these writers that posits them solely as precursors. Her translations of them also question this reading, as her translations of Proust and Leiris repeat elements of her own writing; the use of French within an English text in Leiris's case, and the careful precision in Proust's. Her translation of Blanchot is more conventional, and offers fewer traces of Davis's authorial presence. In all cases, the translations offer something irreducible to Davis's own writing – an excess – which at the same time is strongly connected to Davis's œuvre.

As her translations of Leiris, Proust, and Blanchot, as well as Giroud and Sallenave, interact so strongly with her fictional œuvre, her author-function cannot be

approached without reference to her translations. Her identity as a writer is couched in the fact that she is also a translator. Her identity as a translator, too, cannot be separated from her production as a writer. The two intertwine. Her œuvre is therefore decentred. The grafts of different writers that translation brings, as well as the intertextual allusion that Davis uses in some of her stories (which I analyse in chapter eight), alter and affect her identity as a writer. Her translations become part of her writing. They are distinguishable from her stories by the way that they are published and paratextually identified as translations, but they are equally relevant to any reading of her work as those stories.

The concept of an œuvre, where a unity is posited among texts by an author (Foucault 1994: 802), is equally questioned by Davis's work. An œuvre is really a network of texts that are perceived to be connected by an authorial signature and by repeated elements, e.g. themes, scenes, stylistic choices, etc. The connections between the nodes are more or less strong, depending on how the texts interrelate and interact. The stories by Davis are strongly connected by their publication together and their status as her stories. The translations also form connections; her translations of Blanchot, Leiris, and Proust form strong bonds, through the importance Davis accords them, as well as the textual and intertextual connections with her own stories. Her statements position these translations as canonical, central to her work. Davis's other, non-canonical, translations form connections, e.g. her translation of Sallenave links to *The End of the Story* through Davis's rewriting of Sallenave's novel in her own. Even Davis's translations of Fargue can be seen to form a part of the network, but with much weaker connections to her own stories and her other translations. Davis's own comments try to shape the reception of the texts, as I argue in chapter six, but they can only guide readers: reading the texts themselves will offer possibilities to see connections that Davis has no control over.

Furthermore, from reading Davis's work, translation can be seen as one among many intertextual writing practices. It constucts texts with barred double codings, where the source text is obscured but still present as a trace when reading the target text. This sort of barred double coding exists in many of Davis's stories, even in texts which appear to be less intertextual, such as 'Foucault and Pencil' (Davis 1997: 10-12), analysed in chapter eight. Here the source text is not mentioned, but the characters are involved in reading and interpreting a text, and that text haunts Davis's story.

Translation in Davis's work is not, therefore, confined solely to those texts which can be identified as translations, but is also present in less explicit forms. Davis offers through her own stories the possibility of a translational writing which is not translation; texts that use translation but which do not create translations. Davis's interest in writing as 'arranging' material (Stewart Atwell and Espach 2009), which I mentioned in chapter four and which is evident in her story 'Marie Curie' (chapter seven) and the texts in chapter eight, can also be seen as analogous to translation, as translation is also the arranging of other's material. However, translations are the only form of text which are deemed equivalent to another text: other forms of textual manipulation, including adaptation, 'bound intertextuality', parody, etc, which I discussed in chapter one, are not equivalent.

Davis's use of translation therefore complicates not only notions of an author's œuvre but also ideas about translation and writing. Her translations are and are not her own work, grafting another, always inassimilable element onto the network of texts that are associated with her. At the same time, her own writing appropriates and re-uses elements of translation as a practice as well as actual elements of her translations. The boundaries between her writing and her translations become less distinct. They do not, however, break down entirely: her translations are still recognised and identified as translations, and her stories equally have the status of stories. Both sets of texts give

evidence of Davis's authorial presence, as well as the presence of other authors. Her work is haunted by translation, either in its conventional, recognised form, or in a less restricted sense. Davis's writing challenges the possibility of the work as a closed system; it always opens out through its inclusion of other writers' work within it. Davis's work is therefore filled with voices and texts other than her own. Translation is just one among many ways in which her work can be seen to fracture, breaking down its own boundaries. This mirrors the constant movement towards the other in Davis's stories and the porosity of subjectivity that leads characters to use other people's words to express themselves (e.g. 'A Very Stupid Man', see chapter eight), or rely on external supports for their memories (e.g. *The End of the Story*, see chapter five), or wish for confusion between self and other (e.g. the narrator of *The End of the Story*, see chapter six). The form of Davis's work, then, mirrors its content. There is a consistent drive towards opening a space for communication and interaction, even if it is difficult for this interaction to take place – as it often is in Davis's fiction.

Appendix:

List of Davis's Translations

Year	Author	Title	First published	Notes
1975	Saul Friedländer and Mahmoud Hussein	*Arabs and Israelis: A Dialogue*	1974	Paul Auster co-translator
1977	Jean Chesneaux, Françoise le Barbier, and Marie-Claire Bergère	*China from 1911: Revolution to liberation*	1975	Paul Auster co-translator Chapters 1-3 translated by Anne Destenay
1977	Jean-Paul Sartre	*Life/Situations*	1976	Paul Auster co-translator. Republished in UK 1978
1978	Maurice Blanchot	*Death Sentence*	1948	Republished 1998
1979	Jean Chesneaux	*China, the People's Republic*	1977	Paul Auster co-translator
1979	Attilio Colombo	*Fantastic Photographs*	1979	
1979	Claude Nori	*French Photography: from Its Origins to the Present*	1978	
1979	Georges Simenon	*Aboard the 'Aquitaine' in African Trio*	1936	Paul Auster co-translator
1981	Maurice Blanchot	*The Madness of the Day*	1973	
1981	Maurice Blanchot	*The Gaze of Orpheus and other literary essays*		Ed. by P. Adams Sitney
1984	Conrad Detrez	*A Weed for Burning*	1978	
1985	Maurice Blanchot	*When the Time Comes*	1951	
1986	Michel Butor	*The Spirit of Mediterranean Places*	1958	Republished 1997
1986	Conrad Detrez	*Zone of Fire*	1984	
1986	Françoise Giroud	*Marie Curie: A Life*	1981	
1987	Maurice Blanchot	*The Last Man*	1957	
1988	André Jardin	*Tocqueville: A Biography*	1984	Robert Hemenway co-translator
1989	Michel Leiris	*Brisées: Broken Branches*	1966	
1989	Danièle Sallenave	*Phantom Life*	1986	
1991	Michel Leiris	*Scratches*	1948	Republished 1997. Part 1 of *Rules of the Game*
1992	Emmanuel Hocquard	*Aerea in the Forests of Manhattan*	1985	
1993	Maurice Blanchot	*The One Who Was Standing Apart From Me*	1953	
1995	Elisabeth Badinter	*XY: On Masculine Identity*	1992	
1995	Pierre Jean Jouve	*Hélène*	1936	
1996	Pierre Jean Jouve	*The Desert World*	1926	
1997	Pierre Jean Jouve	*Hecate*	1928	Part 1 of *The Adventure of Catherine Crachat*
1997	Pierre Jean Jouve	*Vagadu*	1930	Part 2 of *The Adventure of Catherine Crachat*
1997	Michel Leiris	*Scraps*	1958	Part 2 of *Rules of the Game*
1997	Justine Levy	*The Rendezvous*	1995	
2002	Marcel Proust	*The Way by Swann's*	1913	Published in the USA as *Swann's Way*
2009	Vivant Denon	*No Tomorrow*	1777	First published in *The Libertine Reader* (Feher 1997: 732-747)
2010	Gustave Flaubert	*Madame Bovary: Provincial Ways*	1856	

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