Ethico-aesthetics and the machinic repetition of literature in translation

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This article examines how translation practitioners might begin to develop a praxis that is based on an ontological polyvocality; one which allows for difficulty – even misconstrual and semantic breakdown – so that translations do not become mechanical reproductions, subsumed by systems of power, rather than machinic repetitions that allow for deterritorializations along lines of flight. Because, despite the fact that translations are regarded as relatively autonomous creations, they still conform; they are still produced in the socius which, in modern societies, aids the functioning of capitalism. The question arises: if translations – which are unavoidably a kind of literary repetition – are produced and constructed within capitalist societies, does this mean that they inevitably become mechanical reproductions rather than machinic repetitions? To answer this question, translation is investigated within the ethico-aesthetic framework developed by Félix Guattari and selected translations of passages in the oeuvre of the South African author Ingrid Winterbach are referenced.

Keywords: ethico-aesthetics, Deleuze and Guattari, Ingrid Winterbach, machinic repetition, mechanical reproduction

1. Mechanical reproduction or machinic repetition?

Translation is always repetition, a repetition of a particular kind, a “question of mimesis” (Vieira 1992: 70) that cannot be reduced to mere copying or reproduction in a different language but, instead, is an act that “virtualizes the notion of mimesis … as the production of difference in sameness” (de Campos 1981: 183 quoted in Vieira 1999: 110). It has even been said to be a repetition of a cannibalistic kind, a “nourishing” from two sources – the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) and context – and a polyphonic repetition that “heralds a postmodern aesthetics that reveals the relative inadequacy of traditional traductology” (Vieira 1992: 72). This postmodern aesthetic of translation has, in turn, been furthered by poststructuralist translation
Theories that investigate the structural imbalances of hierarchies inherent in these ‘repetitions,’ thus allowing for “an incisive interrogation of cultural and political effects, [as well as] the role played by translation in the creation and functioning of social movements and institutions” (Venuti 2012: 275). But despite the fact that translations – or literary repetitions – are regarded as relatively autonomous creations, they still conform, i.e., they are still produced. And if they are produced or “[f]abricated in the socius” (Guattari 1995: 130), which, in modern societies, facilitates the operational capacities of capitalism requiring that flows continually become more abstract, homogeneous and intersubstitutable (Surin 2005: 256), the question arises: When is translation machinic repetition rather than mechanical reproduction? ¹ For where, “in the conformity and correspondence between the life-form of the subject and the system of power that produced it, has the potential for change gone?” (Massumi 2002: xvi–xvii, emphasis added).

This, precisely, forms the core question of this article but, more specifically, I ask: How can the potential for intensive affect be transferred from a ST to a TT? ² To answer this question, I refer to the ethico-aesthetic framework developed by Félix Guattari (1995) in his final work, Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm, and relate it to Walter Benjamin’s 1936 essay, entitled “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” after which I provide a brief overview of the South African author Ingrid Winterbach’s life and works before analyzing translations of passages in her oeuvre in support of my argument.

2. Ethico-aesthetics: Mapping the new in contact with the real

In Guattari’s (1995) final work, he argues that aesthetics in itself “has no more transformative power than philosophical thought, scientific knowledge or political action” (Zagala 2002: 20), but that it does highlight a creative ethical process. Here Guattari does not refer to art solely in the sense that he and Gilles Deleuze do in What is Philosophy? (i.e., as a bloc of sensations constituting a compound of percepts and affects), but to an “artistry” or “power of emergence” (Guattari 1995: 102) that traverses all spheres. ³ The ethical part of his ethico-aesthetic paradigm could

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1. The socius refers to the organized society or the social megamachine.
2. Affect is more than perception or emotion; as used by Deleuze and Guattari, it refers to a kind of prepersonal intensity, or the capacity to affect and be affected.
3. In What is Philosophy?, Deleuze and Guattari argue that art is a bloc of sensations constituting a compound of percepts and affects. By this they mean that art is prepersonal in that affects and percepts are beyond affection and perception and are, thus, “independent of a state of those experiencing them.” In other words, a bloc of sensation exceeds lived experience, as well as the
therefore, in part, be said to constitute the mapping of the new “in contact with the real” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 12). Deleuze and Guattari, in their philosophical collaboration, distinguish between mappings and tracings; thus, whereas a tracing is a replica, a duplicate or a copy, which a translation can never truly be, a mapping is “open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 12). It could, therefore, be viewed as rhizomatic and with manifold entry points. Deleuze and Guattari explain (1987: 10) in *A Thousand Plateaus* how orchids and wasps enter into a rhizomatic relationship; the orchid imitates the shape of the wasp, drawing the wasp nearer and, in return, the wasp becomes “a piece in the orchid’s reproductive apparatus” by transporting and spreading its pollen. They (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 12) write:

> The orchid does not produce the tracing of the wasp; it forms a map with the wasp, a rhizome. What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious.4

If translation – the practices of translation – is seen as a map or, more accurately, a mapping, rather than a tracing, we can view it in terms of a Deleuzo-Guattarian ontology or diagram of reality that consists of, and is always in flux between, the virtual, the intensive and the actual or extensive.5 However, there is no hierarchy between these states and none of them exists prior to the others. Simply put then, the virtual may be regarded as the continuum of all potential real (but not actualized) existing and emergent properties inherent in heterogeneous multiplicities with the immanent capacity to deterritorialize along lines of flight.6 What this means is that, at any given moment, the arrangements of properties, capacities, singularities or attractors, etc., change along with changes in the actual. In translative terms, we may view the virtual as all the translational choices humans experiencing them and “could be said to exist in the absence of man [sic] because man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else; it exists in itself” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 164).

4. Deleuze and Guattari use the term rhizome to refer to the “connections that occur between the most disparate and the most similar of objects, places and people” and thus describes all aspects of the virtual, intensive and actual “as multiple in the interrelational movements with other things and bodies” (Colman 2005: 231).

5. The concepts actual and extensive are used synonymously.

6. Multiplicity here means “a complex structure that does not reference a prior unity” (Roffe 2005: 176). According to Deleuze and Guattari, multiplicity is thus constitutive.
available to translators that are real but have not as yet been actualized or intensified. Translation as a mapping, rather than a tracing, thus allows for all virtual possibilities to be available at all times to any given translator; it is a holding of the space of potentiality that allows for different interpretations, alterings, substitutions, and re-imaginings. It allows for original literary works, translations, and retranslations to have sameness with difference, single or multiple interpretations, to deterritorialize, and for the possibility of continually new rhizomatic and ever mutable formations that also extends to the diverse construals of readers. Translation as a mapping – as a holding of virtual potentiality – is also that which piqued my interest in terms of Ingrid Winterbach’s oeuvre. Specifically, I started wondering what becomes possible when translation praxis is viewed in terms of the virtual, the intensive, and the extensive. But before I look at this apropos of her oeuvre, I will provide a concise overview of the aesthetic part of Guattari’s ethico-aesthetic paradigm.

Typically, aesthetics could be said to be about the value judgment of beauty but, for Guattari, aesthetic judgment is that which holds potentiality. Thus, in aesthetic judgment, “I am not asserting anything about what is, nor am I legislating what it ought to be” (Shaviro 2012: 4). It is not about a judgment of ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ ‘beautiful’ or ‘ugly,’ but rather “part of the process by which I become what I am” (Shaviro 2012: 4). Thus, art as a becoming, may be said to be devoid of opinion and interest. But even though it is ‘disinterested,’ it is not neutral; it is still about “how it affects me” (Shaviro 2012: 5). Aesthetic affects, however, are not about representation; they do not represent an experience because they are immanent to the experience already. This kind of aesthetics also does not prefigure experience nor that which emerges from it. Rather, what it does is create a disruption that allows for a potentiality that “has never existed in the universe in quite that way before” (Shaviro 2012: 35) and that affects an individual as pure intensity.

When I first encountered Ingrid Winterbach’s novel Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat, my affective experience was one of being in contact with a minor

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7. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 213) “everything is political”; in fact, they argue that politics precedes being. Thus, the notion of becoming, which is central to their project, indicates a criticality of binary processes and the primacy afforded to identity and representation. Simultaneously, it describes the capacities of assemblages (or the temporary arrangements of processes, bodies and relations within and between structures, as well as that which emerges from these) to deterritorialize and thus denotes the “continual production of difference immanent within the constitution of events” (Stagoll 2005: 21). A practice of becoming can thus be said to effectuate the emergence of new subjectivities.
literature. Yet this was not my affective experience of the translation, *The Book of Happenstance*. That is, I was not ‘moved’ by it in the same way as I was by the original. But if ethico-aesthetics is not about a value judgment of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ or any other such simplistic binary, but rather about a mapping of that which is emergent, then can the translations of Ingrid Winterbach’s oeuvre be said to hold this potential for intensive affect despite the difference in the two experienced reading contexts? That is, are the translations of her novels *mechanical reproductions* or can they be described as *machinic repetitions* in that they map out the new through experimentation, thus transferring the potentiality for intensive affect from ST to TT?

Walter Benjamin wrote about mechanical reproductions already in 1936. He argues that “a work of art has always been reproducible” (Benjamin 1969: 218) in principle but that, by the 1900s, it had become reproducible in a standardized way (Benjamin 1969: 219–220) through mechanical reproduction. He writes (Benjamin 1969: 234):

> Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin movie. The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert. Such fusion is of great significance.

In other words, new technologies not only allow for the reproduction of art but, in fact, “technological reproducibility is a change in what art is or in what we think about it” (Mieszkowski 2004:39) and thus challenges ideas about the innate aesthetic subjectivity of art as well as audience ideology. Second, Benjamin (1969: 220) contends that “technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations that would be out of reach for the original itself.” This highlights at least two aspects: (1) that mechanical reproduction allows for a new kind of cultural experience that relies on a relational affect; and (2) that mechanical reproduction “has become an art in its own right” (Mieszkowski 2004: 39) so that “the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility” (Benjamin 1969:224). This is a view echoed by Derek Attridge (2004: 64) who argues that

8. Deleuze and Guattari argue for what they call ‘minor literature’ in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986). Basically, they argue that Kafka, within the major tradition of German, was attempting to create a minor literature, “one that experiments with language, ignores canonical models, fosters collective action and treats the personal as something immediately social and political” (Bogue 2005: 110). Ingrid Winterbach's work can also be viewed as minor literature in that it has a high degree of deterritorialization and treats the personal as immediately political.
singularity in literature (and, by extension, art) “does not occur outside the responses of those who encounter and thereby constitute it.” In terms of translation, Attridge (2004: 73) holds that “there is also a sense in which literary singularity, far from being opposed to translatability, goes hand-in-hand with it.” It could thus be argued that literary singularity demands a kind of mechanical reproduction through translation. But I want to draw a distinction here between technological reproducibility and mechanical reproduction as I will use the latter concept in this article to describe an undesirable context; one in which creative potentiality collapses and art becomes nothing more than capitalist replication – a tracing, rather than a mapping. Thus, while I do think that art and, in this instance, literary singularity in effect demands a technological reproducibility through translation (although this process, like much of art, technically requires people and technology), mechanical reproduction is used here to signify that which is not machinic repetition, which here refers to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of art as “a being of sensation and nothing else; it exists in itself” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 164).

In the next section I briefly contextualize Ingrid Winterbach’s oeuvre before undertaking an analysis of selected passages to evaluate the translations of her novels in terms of a mapping or tracing and to determine whether the translations retain the potentiality for intensive affect in the TT.

3. Of translation and Ingrid Winterbach’s oeuvre

Ingrid Winterbach (a.k.a. Lettie Viljoen) was born on Valentine’s day in 1948 and was a member of the group of Afrikaans writers who secretly met with exiled ANC members at the Victoria Falls Writer’s Conference in 1989. She currently resides in Stellenbosch, and her work forms an integral part of the contemporary canon of Afrikaans literature in South Africa and has been widely acclaimed. Her novels include *Klaaglied vir Koos* (1984); *Erf* (1986); *Belemmering* (1990); *Karolina Ferreira* (1993), which was awarded the M-Net Book Prize in 1994 and the Old Mutual Literary Prize in 1997; *Landskap met Vroue en Slang* (1996); *Buller se plan* (1999), the first novel published under the author’s own name; *Niggie* (2002), which won the Hertzog Prize for prose in 2004; the elegiac novel *Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat* (2006), which was awarded four national book prizes; *Die Benederyk* (2010), which won the M-Net prize for literature; *Die Aanspraak van Lewende Wesens* (2012) which was also awarded four national literary prizes; and *Vlakwater* (2015).9

9. *Klaaglied vir Koos* means “lamentations for Koos”; *Erf* means “erf” or “premises”; *Belemmering* means “impediment” or “obstruction”; Karolina Ferreira is the name of the protagonist in the novel of the same name, translated as *The Elusive Moth*; *Landskap met Vroue en Slang* means
In addition to Winterbach’s substantial oeuvre, there is a growing body of scholarly research on her work, addressing a diverse range of foci that include meta-textual and intertextual concerns, thematic recurrences and overlaps in her novels, her creative and idiosyncratic use of language and discourse (Botha and Van Vuuren 2006; Du Plooy 2006), and the positioning of her novels as a form of littérature engagée (Strydom and Van Vuuren 2011) through their implicit critique of embedded leitmotifs. Furthermore, it is argued that Winterbach’s novels offer resistance to the apartheid legacy in South Africa through the juxtaposition of different voices (Van Vuuren 2004), such as the inclusion of various dialects and registers, the use of the race pejorative in Niggie, and through her distinct feminist register (Botha and Van Vuuren 2007a; 2007b). Yet despite the increasing academic interest in Winterbach’s oeuvre, there has been very little theoretical discussion related to the translations of her novels. Heather Acott (2012) does discuss carnivalesque satire in The Elusive Moth and Heilna du Plooy (2006; 2009), the importance of symbols and signs in To Hell with Cronjé and The Book of Happenstance, but scholars have scarcely written about the actual practice of translating Winterbach’s novels, except for Anelda Susan Hofsajer (2011) who has published research on the method of self-translation in The Book of Happenstance. I was especially surprised by the fact that a writer of Winterbach’s stature had not received more attention from the English-speaking literary community, even in our country. This, along with Deleuze and Guattari’s work on minor literature and Guattari’s work on ethico-aesthetics, prompted me to think about the translations of Winterbach’s oeuvre, and translation studies in general, from a different perspective. To illustrate my argument, I look at selected passages from Niggie/To Hell with Cronjé, Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat/The Book of Happenstance and Die Benederyk/The Road of Excess.

“landscape with women and serpent”; Buller se Plan means “Buller’s plan”; Niggie means “cousin” but was translated as To Hell with Cronjé; Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat was translated as The Book of Happenstance but literally means “the book of chance and refuge”; Die Benederyk, which has been translated as The Road to Excess and means “the netherworld”; and Die Aanspraak van Lewende Wesens, which means “appeal to the living”, has been translated as It Might Get Loud.” Winterbach’s latest novel, Vlakwater (meaning “shallow waters”), was published in 2015 and has not yet been translated.
4. An analysis of the translations of selected passages from Winterbach’s oeuvre

4.1 Niggie/To Hell with Cronjé (2002/2007)

In Niggie (translated as To Hell with Cronjé by Elsa Silke), a novel about the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), particular consideration is given to “the ways in which characters use verbal and written narratives in an attempt to come to terms” with trauma (Human 2009a) and “on the processes of trauma recovery” (Van Coller and Van den Berg 2009). Furthermore, it “addresses postcolonial issues and predicaments such as a defragmenting identity, as well as the possible demise of the Afrikaans language and culture (Botha and Van Vuuren 2007b).

Of particular interest in terms of translation, is the way in which the characters Ben and Reitz (with one interjection from Willem in the Afrikaans version and two in the English translation) play word games through free association and homophony containing satirical elements. Another is the use of the race pejorative. Here follows an example of the word games (p. 29 in the ST and pp. 32–33 in the TT)

“Aasvoëloë,” sê Reitz, “waarmee hulle ons dophou.”
“Aasvoëlvet, as geneesmiddel,” sê Ben.
“Aasvoëlkrans,” sê Reitz, “waar aasvoëls broei.”
“Aasvoëltee,” sê Ben, “laat die diere vrek.”
“Aasvreter,” sê Reitz, “dier wat aas vreet.”
“Aaskewer,” sê Ben, “kewertjie wat op dierlike reste leef.”
“Bokdrol,” sê Reitz, “die drol van ’n bok.”
“Bokdruwe,” sê Ben, “verwant aan die bokduweltjie.”
“Bokmelk,” sê Reitz, “die melk van ’n bok.”
“Bokdrolbessie,” sê Ben, “die sap is soet en klewerig.”
“Jaspis,” sê Willem, “strate van jaspis en goud.”

10 A literal translation would read something like this:

“Vulture-eyes,” says Reitz, “watching us.”
“Vulture-fat, as medicament,” says Ben.
“Vulture-cliff,” says Reitz, “where vultures breed.”
“Vulture-tea,” says Ben, “kills the animals.”
“Scavenger,” says Reitz, “an animal that feeds on carrion.”
“Carriage beetle,” says Ben, “a beetle that feeds on dead organic matter.”
“Goat droppings,” says Reitz, “the droppings of a goat.”
“Buzzard,” Reitz says, “predatory bird.”
“Bird of prey, that hunts animals for food,” says Ben.
“Bone,” says Ben, “the remains after death.”
“Botfly,” says Ben, “dipterous fly with stout body.”
“Carrion,” says Reitz, “dead, putrefying flesh.”
“Carrion crow,” says Ben, “bird feeding mainly on carrion.”
“Devonian,” says Reitz, “geological period.”
“Devil,” says Willem, “lord of the kingdom of evil.”
“Devil’s coach horse,” says Ben, “large rove beetle.”
“Eland piss,” says Reitz, “the piss of an eland.”
“Everlasting,” says Ben, “plant used as remedy for a cold.”
‘Goldfield,” says Reitz, “district where gold is found.”
“Gold,” says Willem, “streets of jasper and gold.”
“Good heavens, Willem!” Ben exclaims. “Goldcrest, with its heavenly warbling.”

The Afrikaans version and English translation of these passages differ significantly as a direct translation reveals. With reference to translation methods, Lewis (2012: 228) argues that “the question [of translation] would, predictably, focus on a paradoxic imperative: how to say two things at once, how to enact interpretations simultaneously?” The exigencies of this imperative become highlighted in the above-quoted passages in that the word games and free associations are almost ‘untranslatable.’ That is, a direct translation becomes impossible as the phonetic quality of the Afrikaans lexicon differs in English when kept in the order in which it appears in the Afrikaans novel. The translation retains the general atmosphere and semantic flow of the original through what Lewis (2012: 235) terms an “abusive fidelity.” That is to say, the intensive affect is retained through “an abuse that estranges it from each other,” which allows the “trope” to “circulate between the two of them, exercizing both an irruptive and an integrative function” (Lewis 2012: 236). The reader, in both instances, moves through the landscape with Ben and Reitz, beholding nature through the eyes of a natural historian and a geologist, respectively, noticing predatory birds, carrion and death, as well as the regenerative

“Bokdruiwe [a type of thorn, literally translated as ‘goat-grapes’],” says Ben, “related to the bokduwweltjie [a related type of thorn, literally translated as ‘goat-thorn’].”
“Goatmilk,” says Reitz, “the milk of a goat.”
“Bokdrolbessie [a type of berry, literally translated as ‘goat-dropping-berry’],” says Ben, “the juice is sweet and sticky.”
“Jasper,” says Willem, “streets of jasper and gold.”
“Heavens, Old Boy!” says Ben. “Hemelkruid [a type of herb, literally translated as ‘heavenly herb’] – with its sweet scent.”
capacities of plants, which is then reinterpreted through the more conservative teleological perspective of Willem. The reader is thus confronted with opposing world views – i.e., territorialized and deterritorialized perspectives – in the same way through the original and translated texts. This type of translation strategy is used throughout To Hell with Cronjé and, as such, I argue that it is the abusive fidelity of the translation that constitutes “the destruction which must precede any true creation, and which frees the material to express its chaotic machinery in constructing sensations” (Zepke 2005: 167). It is through the abusive fidelity that the ethico-aesthetics of the original is retained in the translation. At the same time, these passages also reveal the difficulty of the task faced by the translators of Winterbach’s novels.

The use of the race pejorative in Niggie/To Hell with Cronjé is another particularly interesting and difficult translation occurrence. Botha and Van Vuuren (2006) observe that the censoring of these words and their consequent law enforced removal from the dictionary after the fall of Apartheid means that these words have been de-historicized. The question we are left with is this: Is it ethical to translate the kaffir-conjunctions used by Ingrid Winterbach in Niggie considering the history of Apartheid? The answer to this question – if seen from a moralistic point of view – is almost certainly no! But if looked at from a different kind of ethical framework, we could ask What is the race pejorative and conjunctions thereof doing and what can it do in translation? rather than asking What does it mean? I argue that Winterbach uses the race pejorative in Niggie/To Hell with Cronjé to: (1) serve as a reminder of Afrikaner history and the brutalities of Apartheid; and (2) to preserve these words in text, thus re-historicizing them, but in a way that actually questions the grand narratives of Afrikanerism and Afrikaner history rather than furthering any form of such nationalism. Furthermore, the kaffir-conjunctions reveal the entrenched Afrikaner social imaginary exemplified by the character Willem who holds that Afrikaners are a superior race at war with Black people who should be converted to (white) Christianity and serve the Afrikaner. In contrast, the characters Ben and Reitz reveal their disillusion with the war through their word associations, thus disrupting the normative Afrikaner framework, as is clear from their word games and these kaffir-conjunctions. This, I argue, is also indicative of an ethico-aesthetic process (pp. 29–30 in the ST and pp. 33–34 in the TT):

“Kafferbier,” sê Reitz, “drank wat Kaffers drink.”
“Kafferarbeid,” sê Willem, “werk wat nie geskik is vir wit mense nie.”
“Kafferbokrooitjie,” sê Ben, “n groot rooibruin skoenlapper.”
“Kafferbeul,” sê Reitz, “n beul wat Kaffers teregstel, of ’n verdrukker van Kaffers.”
“Kafferkalmoes,” sê Ben, “meerjarige struikgewas.”
“Kafferkaptein,” sê Willem, “hoofman van ’n Kafferstam.”
“Kafferkopverkie,” sê Ben, “kleinerige, bruin skoenlapper.”
“Kaffergraf,” sê Reitz, “dwarswal oor ’n pad om verspoeling te voorkom.”
“Kafferkraal,” sê Willem, “verblyfplek van Kaffers.”
“Kafferswawel,” sê Ben, “soort windswawel.”
“Kafferpond,” sê Reitz, “naam vir ’n pennie.”
“Kafferwoord,” sê Willem, “oorlog tussen Witmense en Kaffers.”
“Kafferkoringmuggie,” sê Ben, “klein galmuggie met helder vlerke.”
“Kafferkoring,” sê Reitz, “fyn diamanthoudende gruis.”
“Kaffersendeling,” sê Willem, “sendeling wat onder Kaffers werk.”
“Kafferpyl,” sê Ben, “’n knapsakkerwel.”
“Kafferhalfkroon,” sê Reitz, “ander naam vir ’n pennie.”
“Kaffernasie,” sê Willem, “nasie bestaande uit Kaffers.”

“Kaffir beer,” says Reitz, “beverage drunk by Kaffirs.”
“Kaffir work,” says Willem, “work not fit for white people.”
“Kaffir copper,” says Ben, “a large russet butterfly.”
“Kaffir hangman,” says Reitz, “an executor or oppressor of Kaffirs.”
“Kaffir chief,” says Ben, “a bird with an extremely long tail.”
“Kaffir captain,” says Willem, “chief of a Kaffir tribe.”
“Kaffir pebble,” says Reitz, “pebble found in gravel to indicate the presence of diamonds.”
“Kaffirboom leaf minor,” says Ben, “insect found on the kaffirboom.”
“Kaffir grave,” says Reitz, “hump across a road to prevent water erosion.”
“Kaffir kraal,” says Willem, “dwelling place of Kaffirs.”
“Kaffir swallow,” says Ben, “a kind of swift.”
“Kaffir pound,” says Reitz, “nickname for a penny.”
“Kaffir war,” says Willem, “war between white people and Kaffirs.”
“Kaffir-corn midge,” says Ben, “small gallfly with bright wings.”
“Kaffir corn,” says Reitz, “fine, diamond-bearing gravel.”
“Kaffir missionary,” says Willem, “missionary that works among Kaffirs.”
“Kaffir crane,” says Ben, “large bird with long legs and neck.”
“Kaffir half-crown,” says Reitz, “another name for a penny.”
“Kaffir nation,” says Willem, “nation consisting of Kaffirs.”

11. Untranslatable sentences are underlined. While many of the sentences could be directly translated, those that could not were substituted with phrases in a similar way to the language games in the previous quotation.
4.2 Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat/The Book of Happenstance (2006/2008)

In this novel, as in Winterbach’s earlier novels, death, loss and the subsequent experience of grief, as well as mortality and psychosis are central themes (Human 2009a; 2009b). In the novel, Helena Verbloem is collecting conjunctions with the word “droef” (mourning, mournful, rueful, doleful, forlorn). Toward the end of her collection of and deliberation on these conjunctions, “droef” is conjoined with the word “rooi” (red) as “droefrooi” (translated as “mournful red”). This is applied to much of the color spectrum and culminates in the following sentence: “Droeforanje, droefblanje, droefblou” (p. 81), translated in the TT as “mournful orange, mournful white, mournful blue” (p. 80). The translation itself is semantically sound, but important subtext pertaining to the thematic question of the death or longevity of Afrikaans and Afrikaner culture is lost in the translation as the Afrikaans text relies on assumed cultural knowledge. Afrikaners used to refer to the old South African flag as “oranje, blanje, blou” or ‘orange, white, blue’, though the word for ‘white’ in the Afrikaans is a loanword from Dutch to rhyme with orange. There is thus unavoidable rhythmic loss in the translation, although the collective lamentation of Afrikaners so poignantly captured in the original, I argue, could be conveyed in some sense in the translation by writing cultural-historical information into the narrative through a kind of mimicking of the author’s style, thus actualizing in the translation that which exists suggestively in the virtual of the original text. Such a strategy illustrates the methodological possibilities available to a translator, although it needs careful consideration in terms of its criticality to the central themes of the novel, as well as the effect of such additions with regard to the author’s voice and narrative style. Nonetheless, I would like to illustrate here how such contextual and intertextual allusion might be regained by writing cultural-historical information into the narrative as, I argue, this could make sense in some contexts in terms of ethico-aesthetic criteria; i.e., retaining the potentiality for intensive affect which, for me, is not retained throughout the existing translation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat</th>
<th>The Book of Happenstance</th>
<th>My translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maar dit is veral droef wat my interesseer. ’n Neerslagtige stemming. Van leed getuigend. Wat leed veroorsaak of daarmee gepaardgaan. Wat ’n somber stemmings te wek. Bedroewend. Ook ’n verbinding met selfstandige naamwoorde ter</td>
<td>It is especially droef that interests me. Woeful. Indicative of sorrow. Causing grief or accompanying it. Evoking a somber or doleful mood. Bedroewend – saddening. Also, in combination with colours, to indicate that a particular</td>
<td>But it is especially droef that interests me. Low in spirit. Testament to affliction. That which causes affliction or is accompanied by it. That which evokes a sombre spirit. Bedroewend – dispirited. Also in conjunction with nouns, like colours, as indication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat</td>
<td>The Book of Happenstance</td>
<td>My translation</td>
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<tr>
<td>aanduiding dat die genoemde kleur troebel, dof is en tot droefheid, treurigheid en neerslagtigheid stem. (Droefrooi.) En droefheid is die toestand of hoedanigheid van droewig, treurig, verdrietig wees; terneergedruktheid, neerslagtigheid; iets droewigs, treurigs; hartseer, teenoor blydskap. Is dit all? dink ek. So weinig woorde vir ‘n emosie met soveel skakerings – die ganse kleurspektrum – van droefwit to droefswart, van droefpurper to droeforanje. (Droeforanje, droefblanje, droefblou.)</td>
<td>colour is murky or muted and can elicit sadness, sorrowful and mournful; inclined to dejection, depression and despondency; something gloomy, cheerless and downcast, as opposed to joy. Is that all? I think. So few words for an emotion with so many shades? The complete colour spectrum – from droefwit (mournful white) to droefswart (mournful black), from droefpers (mournful purple) to droefrooi (mournful red). (Droeforanje, droefblanje, droefblou – mournful orange, mournful white.)</td>
<td>of designated colour being turbid, or murky, and which can elicit sorrow, melancholy, mournfulness. (Droefrooi – mournful red, rueful red.) And mourning indicating the state or quality of dolefulness, woefulness, chagrin; dejectedness, despondency; something mirthless, poignant, forlorn; heartbreak as opposed to joy. (To mourn the loss of.) Is that all? I think. Such sparing language for an emotion with so many hues. The complete colour spectrum – from droefwit (mournful white) to droefswart (mournful black), from droefpurper (mournful purple) to droeforanje (mournful orange). (Droeforanje, droefblanje, droefblou – mournful orange, mournful white.) The loss of a flag, the loss of a language, the mourning of the loss of.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another example, from the same translation, does however reflect the ‘rhetoricity’ of the original. Consider the following (shortened) passage and its translation (pp. 255–256 in the ST and pp. 250–251 in the TT):


Like the letter $D$, the cards for $G$ are also extensive. We work in silence. We put our shoulders to the wheel. There are many beautiful gh words, mostly of Hottentot origin. Gha (go). Ghaai (little Bushman apron). Ghaai-ghaai (sticky). Ghaai-ghaai (a game). Ghaaaisa (a dance). Ghaaiwortel (Ghaai root). Ghaan (girl). Ghaap (a kind of succulent). Ghaapgrawer (abusive name). Ghaas (elephant’s foot, a plant). Ghabba (thorny shrub). Ghabbe and ghaawwerig (bragging or showing off). Ghabera (sometimes also ghabbertjie, a lizard).
The translation of this passage contains several additions and omissions, but even so, the general rhetoricity of the Afrikaans is retained in the English translation, allowing the English reader to engage with the words from Hottentot origin in a way similar to that in which the Afrikaans reader would, thus "virtualizing" the notion of mimesis ... as the production of difference in sameness" (de Campos 1981: 183 quoted by Vieira 1999). Accordingly, I argue, even though the translation does not entirely actualize machinic repetition, it still allows for some degree of ethico-aesthetic engagement. 12

4.3 Die Benederyk/The Road of Excess (2010/2014)

Of translation and imitation, Attridge (2004: 73) writes the following:

> If the singularity of the literary work arises from its existence as a series of specific words in a specific arrangement, it may seem that a translation of the work into a different language will result in a completely new literary work, since none of those words survives in the new version. There is a sense in which this is true, and importantly so, for it underlines the distinctiveness of literary inventiveness and singularity: other kinds of inventive text – scientific, philosophical, theological, and so on – can be translated without loss of their singular inventiveness (at least to the degree that this inventiveness is not literary). 13

12. In her article, “The politics of translation,” Gayatri Spivak (1998/2012: 313) asks, “What is the place of ’love’ in the ethical?” to which she replies, “The task of the translator is to facilitate this love between the original and its shadow, a love that permits fraying, holds the agency of the translator and the demands of her imagined or actual audience at bay.” But the facilitation of this ‘love,’ Spivak argues, is, paradoxically, not possible in that it is impossible “to imagine otherness or alterity maximally. We have to turn the other into something like the self in order to be ethical” (Spivak 1998/2012: 315). Keeping in mind that Ingrid Winterbach jointly translated Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat with her brother, Dirk Winterbach, one might argue that this ‘self’ and ‘other’ remain ‘the same’ in both the Afrikaans and English texts as the author was present during the writing of both texts. Yet the translation still requires conceptualization in another language and therefore, by implication, in another culture that may not understand the ‘self’ in the same way the author does in both the original text and the translation. From this view, the direct translation of a sentence such as “Droeforanje, droefblanje, droefblou” (p. 81) into “mournful orange, mournful white, mournful blue” (p. 80) does not engage sufficiently with “the rhetoricity of the original” (Spivak 2012: 313). In this instance, for example, the word “mournful” could be further described and elaborated, reflected on, and woven into the narrative, as Winterbach does throughout the text with many archaic words. Such embellishment would thus not contravene her style and may be viewed as another example of an abusive fidelity or cannibalistic transtextualization.

13. While I mostly agree with this statement, it is also debatable as some non-literary texts, such as that of Deleuze and Guattari, require much inventiveness. I do not think ‘literary’ is as easily definable as is suggested in this quote.
Regarding such invention and imitation in translation, I was particularly interested to see how the translator of *Die Benederyk*, Leon de Kock, would deal with the Engfrikaans passages in *The Road of Excess* as the use of this form of code-switching (between English and Afrikaans, much like Spanglish) has become a mark of Winterbach’s singular voice. Of all the characters, Jimmy’s use of Engfrikaans is the most striking as it serves to not only illustrate his age (as Engrikaans is mostly spoken by the younger Afrikaner generation), but also his personality and manic disposition. Consider the following example (pp. 63–64 in *Die Benederyk* and pp. 62–63 in *The Road of Excess*):

“En anything goes. Kuns is nie meer alternative nie. Anything goes. Die diversity of possibilities is eindeloos. Alles kan gejustify word: figurative, abstract, New German Painting, performance, video, kitsch. Enige bloody genre, style, enige estetiese approach, enige political of societal of what have you point of reference. Take your pick. Dis die era van diversification van production en distribution, my vriend. Daar’s geen agreement oor wat belangrik is, of trendsetting, of left-field of pioneering is nie. Die prevailing taste in die art business is die taste van die ouens wat prevail. Elke Tom, Dick en Harry met genoeg kapitaal, ’n groot genoeg infrastructure en staff kan sy eie standaarde construct, elkeen in sy eie nis of network.”

“And anything goes. Art’s no longer alternative. The diversity of possibilities is endless. Anything can be justified: figurative, abstract, New German Painting, performance, video, kitsch. Any bloody genre or style. Any aesthetic approach. Any political or societal or what-have-you point of reference. Take your pick. It’s the era of diversification of production and distribution, my friend. There’s no consensus about what’s important, or what’s setting the trend, what’s left-field, or what’s pioneering any more. The prevailing taste in the art business is the taste of the dudes who prevail. Any Tom, Dick and Harry with enough capital, a big enough infrastructure and staff can construct his own standards, each in his own niche or network.

Engfrikaans, as I mentioned above, is “a form of code switching used by certain Afrikaans authors” (John 2004: 23). The effect of Engfrikaans may be seen as a form of protest against the rigidity of ‘standard’ Afrikaans and Afrikaner stereotypes and, in terms of translation, creates difficulty for any complete or monolingual English translation (without such a monolingual transfer losing the creativity of this particular form of code switching). Some readers, however, have voiced disapproval of Engfrikaans, such as Johannes Comester (2014) who writes the following (followed by my translation):

14. In the Afrikaans excerpt I underlined that which would need translating, though words like “konsep” and “standaarde” are close enough to “concept” and “standards,” respectively, that even a reader who does not understand any Afrikaans at all would perhaps catch the gist of the meaning.
I argue that the use of Engfrikaans in Winterbach’s oeuvre is not “a reflection of the state of decay” in Afrikaans but is a deliberate structural element, as her novels clearly demonstrate that she has a strong command of the Afrikaans language and is herself concerned with its decay. This is illustrated most clearly in *Die Boek van Toeval en Toeverlaat* in which these concerns are actualized through the lists of archaic Afrikaans lexicon. Engfrikaans, I contend, is used by Winterbach to create a becoming-space. Consider, for example, the following passage from *Die Aanspraak van Lewende Wesens* (p. 188, Maria Volschenk in conversation with her son Benjy):

> Hoe gaan dit? wil sy weet. Hy is ontwykend. Nee, dit gaan okay. (Dit help nie om langer uit te stel nie.) Wat makeer, vra sy hom, wat is die probleem?
> Hy’s actually soos in hierdie besigheid, hierdie kind of venture wat jy ’n besigheid kan noem maar dis ook nie actually eintlik nie, ennieway hy en twee ander ouens het dit soos in eintlik ge-initiate, hy sal haar soontoe neem, die premises is shit great, dis actually shit hot en die prospects is soos van ysislik, as hulle net, as dit nie was, dis soos van vast, die possibilities is endless, dis net soort van hierdie initial stumbling blocks, soos in obstacles, net erger. Maar dis eintlik soort van ’n ideal opportunity.15

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15. All the English words/phrases or Anglicized words/phrases have been underlined. A direct translation would read:

> How are things? she wants to know. He is evasive. No, it’s okay. (It doesn’t help to postpone any longer.) What’s up, she asks him, what is the problem?
> He’s actually as in got this business, this kind of venture that you can call a business but also as in actually not. Anyway, he and two other guys actually as in initiated it, he’ll take her there, the premises is shit-great, its actually shit-hot and the prospects are as in massive, if they only, if it wasn’t for, it’s as in vast, the possibilities are endless. It’s just kind of these initial stumbling blocks, as in obstacles, only worse. But it’s actually sort of an ideal opportunity.
This translation concretizes one of the ‘problems’ of translation, especially in a multilingual society such as South Africa where translation happens predominantly “into English, out of other South African languages,” so that “this monolingual privilege can be confirmed and extended” (Coetzee 2013: 3). But if we move away from a concrete (or extensive) translation such as mine given above and consider instead the virtual possibilities and intensive multiplicities that exist there – i.e., the in-between space that allows for a creative leap – there emerges an ethico-aesthetics that allows for an ontological polyvocality or intensity. The translated passage (footnote 13) can therefore be said to represent only one extensive possibility, but there are still many more possibilities that may in fact contain far greater creative possibilities. I am thus arguing here in favor of plurality; that is, a translation praxis that is not reliant on an ethics of moral normativity but, instead, seeks out the intensive or becoming-space. In terms of Engfriekaans, Philip John (2004), for example, argues convincingly that far from being an indictment of the decay of Afrikaans, its use reveals the creativity of the language and demonstrates Winterbach’s incisive humor. A failure to recognize this and preserve the use of Engfriekaans in some form or another in the translation reveals the translation as mechanical reproduction rather than machinic repetition, which is not to say that it lacks inventiveness, but rather that it lacks the “capacity to provoke new and singular responses” (Attridge 2004: 75). Also, Engfriekaans is in itself ‘untranslatable’ as it presupposes the use of two language codes in the ST, thus – in a sense – demanding the use of two codes in the TT as well. From this view, The Road of Excess cannot be seen to preserve the potentiality for intensive affect in its entirety. And considering that it is meant for a South African audience mainly (at least at this stage), I argue that the passages containing Engfriekaans – at least large parts of Jimmy’s speech, for example – could have been kept the way it is in the original as it retains enough content words to construct sense meaningfully from it, while simultaneously causing a rupture or fissure – a deterritorialization – for the reader. In this way, semantic breakdown may in fact allow for an ontological polyvocality. Using Engfriekaans also allows for the language variations that take place within a single language to be kept, thus causing Afrikaans to be diverse even within itself. In this way, translation might become a cannibalistic practice; one that transfers the potentiality for intensive affect from original to translated text.16

16. It should be said that The Road of Excess, though not singular in the way Die Benederyk is, is still a worthwhile read and there are instances in the text where Leon de Kock preserves a sense of the Engfriekaans beautifully, for example when Jimmy’s term “speeded-up” (p. 65) – a lexeme which combines the Afrikaans past tense construction with the English verb sped-up – is kept in the translation.
5. Conclusion

In conclusion, if the question of art – and of literature and translation as art – is approached from an ethico-aesthetic perspective, which is about immanent creativity and machinic potentiality rather than mechanical reproduction in the capitalist socius, then translation praxis can be approached in an entirely new way. From this perspective, as I have argued, translation is not merely about meaning and cultural transfer from a ST to a TT but becomes a site of creative potentiality – one that allows for an ontological polyvocality so that what is transferred from ST to TT is intensive affect. And, from this perspective, Ingrid Winterbach’s novels and translations – the latter at least to some degree – may be said to be art becomings or minor literature in that they map out the new in contact with the real through deterritorializations along lines of flight away from normative, territorialized perceptions, language use and thematic explorations in literature.

References


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