There is an assumption among translators that to translate a translation is bad practice since a photocopy of a photocopy deteriorates in quality. However, translators of 8th century Baghdad ignored this when translating Ancient Greek texts into Arabic through a Syriac intermediary. These Arabic texts then entered Christian Europe in the 12th century through Castillian and Hebrew translations that were again translated into Latin. Four photocopies in total. While these textual movements ignited the European Renaissance, they also carried hundreds of Arabic words into European languages. Christian Hawkey's new book-length poem, *sift*, explores these Arabic etymologies to propose a different form of translation based on the multifaceted history, plasticity, and materiality of language.

Originating as part of a programme by Six Degrees Museum, *sift* developed from a translation of the Moroccan philosopher Abdessalam Benabdelali's *In the Mirror of the Other*. Hawkey, however, had no knowledge of Arabic before translating this work, thus questioning the norm where translators become intimate with the text through their familiarity with the language. Hawkey's translation, instead, is a free-associative thinking which opens Benabdelali's text in unexpected ways to problematise translation itself. To examine the difference between Hawkey's translation and the norm, I have broken the translator's assumption and translated a short passage of Hawkey's translation of Benabdelali's *In the Mirror* into Italian. Two photocopies.

al-ginn
ginnī
oineg
ّجن

come uno specchio
oscuramente...
i primi specchi erano scuri

e comunque merdosi —
il rame lucidato   strofinate
con pietra la parola
orientalismo
ed aladino appare
nel DNA
di un solo capello grigio
caduto
dalla testa di
robin williams

la storia del nUSAtro imperialismo
la violenza spavalda   io

per poco non scrivevo
violette

un orizzonte alto fina alla cintola   una cintura
un confine che rapina
gli occhi a mano armata
apre gli occhi alla nazione
per chiarire
nano nano
la commedia è
la forma più alta
della dominazione

imparare a sellare un cavallo
mi fece
il primo segno
i loro occhi morbidi quasi sempre marroni
sussultano
il sottopancia
alog aim al
stretta

avvicinatevi allo specchio
attentamente
e come un gatto
annusate
(i loro occhi   discokugeln
le traduzioni
alla polvere di cometa
(i neuroni specchio
delle lingue

This section begins with 'a mirror' [uno specchio] to evoke translation's traditional aspiration that it can transparently reflect the text as its equivalent. This belief originates in the idea that meaning is inherently predefined in words and reflects an already existing reality, thus making meaning transferable across languages. For Hawkey:

'colonialism
when it represents itself
[...]
insists on

blunt transparency'

to conceal how its ideologies inform the creative autonomy of translation and its representation of other cultures through word selection and paratexts. He shows that these mirrors are actually 'dark / and shitty' [scuri / e merdosi] and warns us to 'approach the mirror / carefully' [avvicinatevi allo specchio / attentamente].

Hawkey instead proposes the imagery of 'text / tiles' to highlight the translator's creative autonomy, (as opposed to the assumption that translators merely reflect a pre-existent reality) as well as the relations between English and Arabic since *gauze* comes from قزة [Gaza] and damask from Damascus. History becomes 'the weaving' of different cultures and words, 'ongoing' and multifarious to inform our contemporary identities. This richness is evoked through 'the hues / that resist / [colonial] transparency' to become a different translation, full of and attentive to our historical relations. The process where history and politics 'language us', construct us within language, is described as the fullness of colouring: from the 'inten / cities of color' built on the imperial trade in cochineal dyes, the 'grey hair' [capello grigio] of an outdated representation, to the 'blue light' of technological connectivity.

While translation - literally meaning: to be transported across - implies that linguistic and cultural borders can be traversed, Hawkey exposes how translations often mediate between cultures, their boundaries and identities by establishing distinctions of power between them, like:

'a border holding
an eye up
to nation'

[un confine che rapina
gli occhi a mano armata
apre gli occhi alla nazione]

The border, established by the colonial gaze, xenophobically excludes others to form the cultural and geographical nation, contrasting its desire to survey everything within and outside its borders. The phrase, 'holding / an eye up' was the most difficult to translate due to its polysemantics: to support, delay, endure, hold up at gunpoint but also *to hold a mirror up to something*. I translated it twice both as *aprire* [open] and *rapinare a mano armato* [to hold up at gunpoint], to suggest revealing, like *holding a mirror up*, as well as the implicit violence therein.

Within colonialism's transparent representation, it excludes alternate perspectives to aggrandise and universalise itself, making 'etymology / the study of / contamination'. Hawkey gestures to how dictionaries affix meanings through definition selection, since *sift* itself is structured as a dictionary, prefaced by the word and its etymology:

al-jinn

<div align="right">

jinnī

nnij

[*al-ginn*

ginnī

oineg]

</div>

while the subsequent lines are the definition and example sentences. Translators also affix meanings between languages by constructing equivalencies (cane ≈ dog), but can also facilitate the movement of texts, and words across borders. Hawkey's etymological tracings demonstrate the English language's indebtedness to other languages to create a dictionary of relationality rather than fixed control. He traces these influences:

<div align="right">

'not 2

purify

but 2 refuse

2 throw out

the refuse'

</div>

in turn revealing our historical and linguistic relations that traditionally have been refused as 'refuse'.

While translations are produced interactively with other texts and ideologies, they also produce understandings of other cultures by becoming metonymic evocations of that culture as a whole — as my Italian excerpt evokes the poem as a whole. The folkloric tales from *1001 Nights* have become an essentialised evocation for Middle Eastern and North African cultures as a whole, despite its antiquatedness and these cultures' diversity. So entrenched is this orientalist representation that 'aladdin appears in the DNA' [aladino appare / nel DNA] of western culture. Orientalism promises a panoptic total surveillance from a cultural and militaristic vantage point:

<div align="right">

'exhausted   the forced

regime of the eye   wanting

no border'

</div>

The pun on 'exhausted' as both comprehensive, 'wanting / no border', and 'exhausted' as tired indicates its outdatedness, that grey hair [capello grigio] of Robin Williams who voiced the Genie in *Aladdin* (1992, Disney). While in the Italian release he was voiced by Gigi Proetti, the later reference to 'nanu nanu' [*nano nano*] from *Mork and Mindy* in which Robin Williams starred, would make the change to Proietti incongruous. Moreover many Italians are necessarily aware of Prioetti's role in the film, whereas Robin Williams is a more internationally recognised figure due to American cultural dominance.

The particularity of the orientalist perspective, despite its panopticon promises, is described as Clint Eastwood's infamous squint. For like the colonial imagination:

> 'that squint that narrows
> what is seen
> lines it
> within a sight
> sovereign settler assessing
> what exists'

The narrowness doesn't permit other opinions to enter its worldview so it reduces the cultural dynamism and existence of others so that it can be appropriated 'within a sight'. Translation as a practice also advances this since it subsumes the culture and text into an understanding solely in terms of one's own language [1]. This narrowness is constricting, described as:

> the girth strap'
> taorht ym
> 'tightened
>
> [il sottopancia
> alog aim al
> stretta]

Our bodies, thoughts, and desires are inescapably attached to and constricted by this imagination, making it the translator's task to construct a differently collective 'here' that imagines alternatives outside the colonial narrowness.

Postcolonial translators sought to redefine translation from its appropriative history towards an encouragement of multiple perspectives. Translator Michael Cooperson, inspired by Benabdelali, argues the translator should not be preoccupied with difference, rather 'bring readers into a space where many kinds of understanding, and many kinds of enjoyment, are possible' [2]. *sifr* creates this by aligning the text on the right hand side and using boustrophedonical orthography (where at the end of the line, the following line turns in the reverse direction) like the Arabic script to embody how 'translation does not merely transform the translated text [...] it also transforms the translating language' [3]. This transformation is facilitated by the inherent movement of translation where:

> 'learning to saddle a horse
> it made me
> the first sign'
>
> [imparare a sellare un cavallo
> mi fece

The horse as translation parochialises the translator, their understanding and culture, by transporting them into a space where they become one amongst multiple signs and languages.

Translation can also break borders of understanding and of self. For the critic Gayatri Spivak, the surrendering of self in translation to the text requires a certain intimacy that makes translation an ethical and erotic act through the relating of self to other [4]. Hawkey describes the translator as 'a gutter / gulf self' that is expanded by translation and prepared to surrender to another. This 'gulf breaking' shows how that emptiness is filled by another language through translation, which can unfortunately be informed by coloniality such as the *Gulf* War. Hawkey intersperses *sift* with French, Dutch, Spanish, and German phrases, such as 'discokugeln' [disco ball] which signals his inability to think monolingually. For writers cannot write in one language if they know more than that language, attesting to the personal transformation through language learning. While in Dutch he mentions 'mijn lippen' [my lips], a liminal space where language enters and exits, his combination of languages with 'avecmachen' [with making] or 'hacer mid' [making with] more directly represents the linguistic cross-pollination of translation. The making-with becomes a synonym for the translation space where multiple understandings cohabit the translated text and the translator themselves.

Translation facilitates the movement of words between languages through calques, loanwords and the untranslatable. The etymologies that begin each section of the poem provide historical examples of the multidirectional ways languages inform one another. Language's multiplicity is also evident in puns, which Hawkey uses throughout such as 'cheerios', both the cereal and goodbye which I translated with both words adjacent [cheerios l'arrivederci] since I wasn't able to find an Italian word that combines both. However, the pun in 'the history of us imperialism', as the USA and the plural pronoun which implicates us in the colonial imagination, I translated with the tmesis of *nostro* [us] and *USA*: *nUSAtro*. Hawkey doesn't just show polysemantics but creates new relations through fracturing and juxtaposition like:

> 'swaggering violence   i
>   almost wrote
>   violets'
>
> [la violenza spavalda   io
>   per poco non scrivevo
>   violette]

While these reveal the hidden violence of language and the intimacy needed to imagine alternatives, they demonstrate language's plasticity, that despite its violent history it can produce new alternatives through slippages along its inherent relationality. Language is shown as a social phenomenon which we all enter, replete with the historical and cultural movements, and whose problems and possibilities we inherit.

sifi has an indirect intimacy with Benabdelali's text that doesn't depend on colonial domination and assimilation; rather it is proximate, free flowing, and elaborates on the text's intention, language and history. My photocopy translation, hunched over the text, holds *sifi* tightly and belabours meanings and the difficulties therein to preserve as much as possible, but in doing so it distorts the text while feigning transparent accuracy. Hawkey's translation, however, is a study, more a sketch than photocopy, that focuses on certain details of Benabdelali's text.

For translator Maria Tymoczko, it is insufficient to represent alternatives, instead they must be explicitly stated [5]. Hawkey's *sifi* becomes a paratext, the translator's note framed as translation that lays out his alternative to colonial transparency, in favour for one that does not represent a totality but instead recognises overlapping and partial elements and histories between Arabic and English. The moments of self-reflexivity jolt us from the lyricism to remind us of the construction of the poem and invite us into the difficulties of attentive translation and the translator's position therein. *sifi*'s indirectly intimate ethics, historically and linguistically informed, create an attentive translation that, in Benabdelali's words, is "transformation, renewal, transmigration, openness, cross-pollination, profusion, and life" [6].

[1] Eric Cheyfitz. 1997 [1991, New York: Oxford University Press]. *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

[2] Michael Cooperson. "The challenges and pleasures of translation". in *Book Brunch.* 24 June 2021. Accessed 5 March 2022.

[3] Abdessalam Benabdelali. "In The Mirror of the Other". ["Fi mir'at al-akhar" [In the Mirror of the Other], from *Fi al-Tarjama / De la traduction* [Of Translation]. Casablanca: Toubkal, 2006] translated by Samuel Wilder. Edited by Omar Berrada. in *New Six Degrees Museum.* 10 April 2015. Accessed 5 March 2022.

[4] Gayatri Spivak. 1993. "The Politics of Translation." in *Outside in the Teaching Machine.* New York: Routledge. 179 - 200.

[5] Maria Tymoczko. 2014 [1999, Manchester: St Jerome Publishing] *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation.* New York: Routledge.

[6] Benabdelali. "In The Mirror of the Other".