

WAVES — A form, a tool — Santiago Artozqui

I would like to present a literary form which mixes poetry and translation, and as such, encompasses both creative and translation fields. This form, while being based on a traditional approach to translation, i.e. a translation which focuses on rendering as best as possible the meaning, the rhythm and the sound of the original text, is nonetheless a creative translation, because, as we shall see, it produces new knowledge. It is also a tool, and we will see how and why.

Contributors to this project (alphabetical order):

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Frédéric Werst

This form is constructed around a primary cell — the source —, a short poem which starts and ends with the same word or syntagm. Then, this poem is translated, and the translation is positioned back to back with the original, symmetrically along a vertical axis.

je	I
laisse	leave
un sillage	a wake
un peu vague	a bit vague
un instant	an instant
dans la mousse quantique	in the quantum foam
au caprice	at the whims
du temps	of the times
le	the
souffle	blast
d'une fractale	of a fractal
sculptée sur une crête	carved on a crest
un simple	a simple
doute	doubt
un	an
je	I

This diptych is the first occurrence of the form, which will itself be called the wave. To make the next step, we

must first suppress the last line of the poem, which, by construction, is the same as the first one, and then copy the translated version on the left side of the axis, under the original.

	je	I
	laisse	leave
	un sillage	a wake
	un peu vague	a bit vague
	un instant	an instant
dans la mousse	quantique	in the quantum foam
	au caprice	at the whims
	du temps	of the times
	le	the
	souffle	blast
	d'une fractale	of a fractal
sculptée sur une	crête	carved on a crest
	un simple	a simple
	doute	doubt
	un	an
		I
		leave
		a wake
		a bit vague
		an instant
in the quantum		foam
		at the whims
		of the times
		the
		blast
		of a fractal
carved on a		crest
		a simple
		doubt
		an
		I

Then, we translate this translation (and not the original) into another language, and we put it on the right side of the axis, under the first translation.

	je	I
	laisse	leave
	un sillage	a wake
	un peu vague	a bit vague
	un instant	an instant
dans la mousse	quantique	in the quantum foam
	au caprice	at the whims
	du temps	of the times
	le	the
	souffle	blast
	d'une fractale	of a fractal
sculptée sur une	crête	carved on a crest
	un simple	a simple
	doute	doubt
	un	an
	I	Yo
	leave	dejo
	a wake	una estela
	a bit vague	algo vaga
	an instant	un instante
in the quantum	foam	en la espuma cuántica
	at the whims	al capricho
	of the times	del tiempo
	the	el
	blast	soplo
	of a fractal	de una fractal
carved on a	crest	tallada en un canto
	a simple	una simple
	doubt	duda
	an	un
	I	yo

And so on...

je	I
laisse	leave
un sillage	a wake
un peu vague	a bit vague
un instant	an instant
dans la mousse quantique	in the quantum foam
au caprice	at the whims
du temps	of the times
le	the
souffle	blast
d'une fractale	of a fractal
sculptée sur une crête	carved on a crest
un simple	a simple
doute	doubt
un	an
I	Yo
leave	dejo
a wake	una estela
a bit vague	algo vaga
an instant	un instante
in the quantum foam	en la espuma cuántica
at the whims	al capricho
of the times	del tiempo
the	el
blast	soplo
of a fractal	de una fractal
carved on a crest	tallada en un canto
a simple	una simple
doubt	duda
an	un
Yo	je
dejo	laisse
una estela	un sillage
algo vaga	un peu vague
un instante	un instant
en la espuma cuántica	dans la mousse quantique
al capricho	au caprice
del tiempo	du temps
el	le
soplo	souffle
de una fractal	d'une fractale
tallada en un canto	ciselée dans un chant
una simple	un simple
duda	doute
un	un
yo	je

We can see something which takes the shape of a waveform, especially if you flip it horizontally. Hence the name: waves.

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je |
laisse | leave
un sillage | a wake
un peu vague | a bit vague
un instant | an instant
dans la mousse quantique | in the quantum foam
au caprice | at the whims
du temps | du temps
le | the
souffle | blast
d'une fractale | of a fractal
sculptée sur une crête | carved on a crest
un simple | a simple
doute | doubt
un | an
I | Yo
leave | dejo
a wake | una estela
a bit vague | algo vaga
an instant | un instante
in the quantum foam | en la espuma cuántica
at the whims | al capricho
of the times | del tiempo
the | el
blast | soplo
of a fractal | de una fractal
carved on a crest | tallada en un canto
a simple | una simple
doubt | duda
an | un
Yo | je
dejo | laisse
una estela | un sillage
algo vaga | un peu vague
un instante | un instant
en la espuma cuántica | dans la mousse quantique
al capricho | au caprice
del tiempo | du temps
el | le
soplo | souffle
de una fractal | d'une fractale
tallada en un canto | ciselée dans un chant
una simple | un simple
duda | doute
un | un
Yo | je

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But let us go back to the vertical representation since it is easier to read.

This representation, in addition to graphical qualities which we found interesting, has undeniable advantages for the people who are interested in translation. It allows a swift comparison between different languages in terms of sounds, concision and proliferation. We can also spot grammatical, lexical or syntactic differences. For instance, the absence of a determiner will appear as a blank, a word absent from the lexicon of a language will be rendered by a periphrasis, a borrowing or a neologism. (Of course, in such a case, the periphrasis is the only one which will be visible graphically, and both the borrowing and the neologism will only appear when reading).

To finish a wave, we make one last translation from the last occurrence into the starting language, and thus, the original poem appears for the first time in full form, with its last line identical to its first one.

At this point, we can consider that we have defined the canonical form of the Wave.

According to our typology of translations, we can spot three translations with prefixes at work in the Waves:

- A sort of serial translation, i.e. a translation from another translation, which we have named “retranslation”.
- A translation into several languages, which we call “polytranslation”.
- A new translation into the original language through translations into other languages, which in our typology goes by the name of “retrotranslation”.

Even if in Outranspo, we don't mind concatenating prefixes, we thought that “re-poly-retro-translation on a vertical symmetry” would be better called something else, so we named it “Waves”.

Before going any further, we may note a couple of things. To begin with, this definition lacks flexibility, as for instance, it forces us to find at every step a translator able to work from the last language of the wave into a new one. Although conceivable in theory, this can get complicated in

practice. Furthermore, it fixes the comparison between languages into the chronology of its making, which is indeed a limit. This led us to give more flexibility to the constraint, in different ways.

Let us imagine a poem written in a language A, and then translated into languages B, C and D.

What happens when the last language of the wave is a dead-end for some reason or another, for instance because the language in question is very rare and it is impossible to find a translator from this language?

This is precisely what happened when I asked Frédéric Werst, whom I hereby thank for accepting, to translate a prototype of a Wave into the language he invented: Wardwesân. Obviously, it won't be simple to find a translator from Wardwesân into Romanian, for instance. So, the first amendment is a transgression of one of the most fundamental rules of translation: we insert the language W between two others, in the middle of the wave, which will make it appear as a translation from a language other than the one from which it was actually translated.

A	B
B	C
C	D
D	A

A	B
B	C
C	W
W	D
D	A

Because of this transgression, we will name this wave the trans-wave. By taking this step, we lose something on the deontological side. But if we accept and extend this principle of recombination for the wave poems, we can compare each language with all the others. Of course, every time we add a language to a wave, the number of possible recombinations grows. In fact, for n languages, the number of recombinations is $n!$

For instance, for three languages A, B, and C, there are six possible recombinations.

A	B	A	C	B	C	B	A	C	A	C	B
B	C	C	B	C	A	A	C	A	B	B	A
C	A	B	A	A	B	C	B	B	C	A	C

More generally, for n languages, there are $n!$ possible recombinations.

$$n! = n(n-1)(n-2)(n-3)\dots$$

$$\text{For instance, } 6! = 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 720$$

So we can see that for six languages, there are 720 possible ways to recombine the wave, even if most of them are only permutations of one another, like the first and the fifth in the table above. In fact, there are “only” 120 truly

different set ups of the wave.

These recombinations are likely to unveil aspects of the poem which would not be visible otherwise, and that is why they are interesting. On the other hand, there are too many of them for us to handle manually, but I will comment on that later on.

Let us come back for a moment to the canonic wave. So far, we have only considered an ideal version of the concept, in which each translation would be “perfect”. Obviously, this is not an ideal we are aiming for, first because it does not make much sense to postulate that a translation is perfect, but most of all because when it is not perfect, things become much more interesting. To illustrate this, I will take the wave displayed on page 5 as an example.

I would like to draw your attention to the evolution of the line “sculptée sur une crête” in this wave.

“sculptée sur une crête” => “carved on a crest”

“carved on a crest” => “tallada en un canto”

“tallada en un canto” => “ciselée dans un chant”

According to the rules we made, each translator working on the wave does not have it in full, he only gets the cell (or the occurrence) he is working on. This will allow the appearance of erratic variations, depending on the homonymies between the languages involved as well as on

the interpretation of the translator, which will draw the wave towards meanings not thought of at the beginning of the process.

This is why the translation into the original language in the last cell is important. It allows us to see the transformations that may have taken place along the different translations. It is necessary to state that these transformations are never “errors”, because within Outranspo, as you may have understood, the errors of translation do not exist, and the differences that some interpret as such are merely translations for which prefixes have not yet been found. Here, “crest” which could perfectly well have been translated as “cresta”, becomes “canto”, which means “edge” or “ridge”, but which is a homonym of “canto”, “song”.

In the same vein, in the wave where Frédéric Werst’s contribution appears, a lucky coincidence has resulted in the appearance of a pun in the Wardwesân version which did not exist in the original. The word “gera”, which means “hope”, is an homonym of “gera”, “rain”, and so the metaphor “liquid hope” gains the image “liquid rain”— all the more interesting since the world of the Wards has an arid climate. In the canonical version of this wave, the translator who comes after is likely to try to render this double meaning, which will lead the poem towards senses it only held in potentia.

Friday night vendredi soir
 people wrack up on échoue
 on bars dans des bars
 where lonelineses flutter où les solitudes faseyent
 in a breeze sous une brise
 of cold alcohol d'alcool froid
 and et
 stare fixent
 impervious impavides
 at a drop deux doigts
 of liquid hope d'espoir liquide
 filling en comblant
 the empty hours les heures creuses
 still left to live qui restent encore à vivre
 until next jusqu'au prochain

 vendredi soir na wandardēs werw
 on échoue abwedama
 dans des bars arkad waneu ab bar
 où les solitudes faseyent ak atha kendama age kawaghēn ega
 sous une brise pēn warbed
 d'alcool froid ax eda alkāl
 et jamar
 fixent baraghama
 impavides the yawant ramazh
 deux doigts sentashar
 d'espoir liquide axad gera ab wema
 en comblant jatwa mazama
 les heures creuses ba kanze zawen
 qui restent encore à vivre ab sawēn ek akharēn
 jusqu'au prochain ank aga

 na wandardēs werw le vendredi soir
 abwedama on fait naufrage
 arkad waneu ab bar dans de vagues bars
 ak atha kendama age kawaghēn ega où on est seul comme une voile mal tendue
 pēn warbed sous la brise marine
 ax eda alkāl faite d'alcool froid
 jamar et puis
 baraghama on se verse
 the yawant ramazh sans peur de rien
 sentashar une petite goutte
 axad gera ab wema de pluie d'espoir
 jatwa mazama on remplit ainsi
 ba kanze zawen les heures vides
 ab sawēn ek akharēn qui ne sont pas encore écoulées
 ank aga jusqu'à un autre
 werw ab wandardēs vendredi soir

 le vendredi soir On Friday nights
 on fait naufrage we are cast away

dans de vagues bars	in vague bars
où on est seul comme une voile mal tendue	where we are as lonely as a loose sail
sous la brise marine	under a sea breeze
faite d'alcool froid	of cold alcohol
et puis	and
on se verse	we pour ourselves
sans peur de rien	without fearing anything
une petite goutte	a small rain drop
de pluie d'espoir	of hope
on remplit ainsi	thus filling
les heures vides	the empty hours
qui ne sont pas encore écoulées	which have not yet flown by
jusqu'à un autre	until another
vendredi soir	Friday night

When we look at this wave the proximity between English and French becomes apparent, as the symmetry along the vertical axis is strong in the first part of the wave, where the two languages are back to back. On the other hand, we can see that Wardwesân breaks this symmetry more or less in the same way for both languages, which may suggest that Wardwesân is as far from one as from the other. Of course, a simple poem is not enough of a corpus to draw definitive conclusions, but the wave still provides a hypothesis that could be confirmed within a larger corpus.

We also can note that on the line “où les solitudes faseyent”, the dissymmetry is important, and thus, it indicates the probable presence of a periphrasis in the translation, and as Frédéric Werst has confirmed, this is indeed the case.

It is also interesting to compare the first and last version of the poem in English, and to see how it has evolved.

It now becomes apparent that the two forms of waves do not aim at the same target: the canonical wave favors liberty and natural evolution, whereas the trans-wave favors the comparison between languages. This explains the choice of our subtitle: “a form, a tool”.

Now, I would like to go back to the point we left aside at the beginning, when I mentioned the rapid growth of the number of possible combinations every time you add one language to the wave. Obviously, one feels like a dash of computer science might help to handle it all.

So eventually, we would like to develop an application or a piece of software which would allow anybody to recombine a wave according to their own criteria, by imposing their own constraints on the way they recombine. For instance, one could forbid two romance languages to appear back to back, but of course, many more can be found. Obviously, the wave must be long enough for it to be interesting.

Later, if we are really optimistic, we can imagine being able to present the Waves in art exhibitions, where, through touch-screens, people could play with them, recombine them in different ways while the poems are projected on a wide screen. It would also be possible to superpose an audio recording of any two versions, to hear where they match and where they differ, and how. Accordingly, by subtracting matching sounds or graphemes from a poem and its

translation, one could hear or see what is left: a physical substrate of the differences between languages.

I would like to comment on one last point which comes naturally to mind. If you discard the constraint according to which the first and last lines must be identical, you can apply this technique to an existing corpus of poems, for instance you could take a sonnet from Shakespeare and build a wave with all the translations of it you can find. Of course, the result will probably be less pleasant to the eye, as the sonnet has a regular metric, but it should all the same provide new information, not only on translation, but about the sonnet itself, because with the multiplicity of points of view enhanced by the graphical and audio presentation, each person will find connotations he or she had never thought of.

Other forms of poetry, as haiku, also have formal structures which could easily be treated similarly. Of course, another possible use of the wave would be to compare different translations of a poem into the same language. The possibility to combine them according to a give constraint (for example chronologically, geographically, or by their metric...) would certainly provide useful knowledge.

The following waves are the first results of this idea. We have already started to develop them, and asked translators, poets and writers to lend a hand. We are now trying to take the next step and find means to develop the software.

Anne-Laure Charbonneau (Wo)

Si If
 des hommes et des femmes men and women
 debout standing
 la nuit at night
 sur une place in a square
 dans une ville in a city
 ou une autre
 trouvaient le moyen found a way
 de vivre to live
 mieux better
 avec un simple with a simple
 If Si
 men and women hommes et femmes
 standing debout
 at night dans la nuit
 in a square sur une place
 in a city dans la ville
 found a way trouvaient la façon
 to live de vivre
 better mieux
 with a simple munis d'un simple
 Si So feke
 hommes et femmes Gour yi ak djiguen yi
 debout Diogeul
 dans la nuit Thi fanan bi
 sur une place Thi ben endroit
 dans la ville Thi ben ville
 trouvaient la façon Set ben djigo
 de vivre Bou am ben adjouna
 mieux Mo gueux
 munis d'un simple Ak ben tutti
 So feke
 Gour yi ak djiguen yi
 Diogeul
 Thi fanan bi
 Thi ben endroit
 Thi ben ville
 Set ben djigo
 Bou am ben adjouna
 Mo gueux
 Ak ben tutti
 So feke

ORBITE

Santiago Artozqui (Fr) – Lily Robert-Foley (En) – Nathalie Koble (Frm) –
Irène Gayraud (De)

Orbite	Round
creuse et sombre	dark hollow
sourire	diamond
adamantin	smile
une faux à la main	a forgery in the hand
la finance tourne	finance constellates
autour de nos futurs cadavres	our future corpses
comme un satellite en	like a satellite turns
Round	ronde
dark hollow	oscure riens
diamond	de dÿamant
smile	souris
a forgery in the hand	faus semblant en la main
finance constellates	vif argent estoile
our future corpses	noz chairs tosttransies
like a satellite turns	comme lune tournant
ronde	Reigen
oscure riens	Dunkle Sache
de dÿamant	Aus Diamant
souris	Lächle
faus semblant en la main	Vorwand in der Hand
vif argent estoile	Quecksilber sternklärt
noz chairs tosttransies	Unser festgefrorenes Fleisch
comme lune tournant	Wie ein drehenden Mond
Reigen	
Dunkle Sache	
Aus Diamant	
Lächle	
Vorwand in der Hand	
Quecksilber sternklärt	
Unser festgefrorenes Fleisch	
Wie ein drehenden Mond	
Reigen	

DÉSIRER

This wave has split, as two translators worked from Lily's translation.

Santiago Artozqui (Fr) — Lily Robert-Foley (En)

Split 1: Fipsi Seilern (De) — Irène Gayraud (Es) — Pablo Martin Ruiz (Pt)

Split 2 : Aya Nabih (Ar)

Désirer	Desire
ne peut se résumer	can never add up to
à vivre dans l'attente	living in waiting
béate	gaping
d'un avenir	the future
dont on sait bien	that we know
qu'il laisse à	leaves something to be
Desire	Dürste
can never add up to	Wirt nie in beenden
living in waiting	Leben in Fegefeuer
gaping	Ewig
the future	die Zukunft
that we know	dass wir kennen
leaves something to be	lässt etwas zu sein
Dürste	Sed
Wirt nie in beenden	nunca terminará
Leben in Fegefeuer	la vida en el purgatorio
Ewig	eternamente
die Zukunft	el futuro
dass wir kennen	que conocemos
lässt etwas zu sein	deja que algo sea
Sed	Sede
nunca terminará	jamais acabará
la vida en el purgatorio	a vida no purgatório
eternamente	eternamente
el futuro	o futuro
que conocemos	que conhecemos
deja que algo sea	deixa que alguma coisa seja
Sede	
jamais acabará	
a vida no purgatório	
eternamente	
o futuro	
que conhecemos	
deixa que alguma coisa seja	
sede	

Désirer Desire
 ne peut se résumer can never add up to
 à vivre dans l'attente living in waiting
 béate gaping
 d'un avenir the future
 dont on sait bien that we know
 qu'il laisse à leaves something to be
 Desire الرغبة
 can never add up to لا يمكن أن تتسجم أبداً
 living in waiting مع الحياة في انتظار
 gaping مباحة
 the future المستقبل
 that we know الذي نعرفه
 leaves something to be تاركة شيء يكون
 الرغبة
 لا يمكن أن تتسجم أبداً
 مع الحياة في انتظار
 مباحة
 المستقبل
 الذي نعرفه
 تاركة شيء يكون