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The Architectures of Translation: A magic carpet-ride through space and time (or, the awkward story of how we dis/placed Krisztina Tóth's short fiction from Hungarian to English)

Ursula Hurley^{1*} and Szilvia Naray-Davey¹

Abstract: This interdisciplinary paper unfolds an account of a collaborative translation project, which draws on Ellen Eve Frank's concept of "literary architecture" to propose a process of "architectural translation". Our proposal is illustrated by a detailed account of our experiences translating the short fiction of contemporary Hungarian writer, Krisztina Tóth (b. 1967) into English. Staged as a journey through space, time and text, our enquiry frames the process in Barbara Godard's terms as one of dis/placement, finding resonances with Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subject and practices of feminist mimesis. Situating Tóth's fiction in a European feminist literary heritage, we deploy a range of concepts drawn from translation, architecture, literary criticism and feminist philosophy to synthesise a translation strategy which engages the spatial, not only as a metaphor but a methodology for our project. In this account, we propose an architectural methodology as a tool for radical translators, and offer the process of translation as a way of thinking about internal and external spaces in postcolonial contexts.



Ursula Hurley

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ursula Hurley and Szilvia Naray-Davey are practice-based researchers, a creative writer and a translation specialist, respectively, working on literary translation in the School of Arts and Media at the University of Salford, UK. The research reported in this paper is a specific instance of a long-term collaboration, in which we seek to evolve effective translation strategies, capable of bringing contemporary Hungarian literature by women to an Anglophone readership. We share an interest in the representation of marginalised experiences, and in the materiality of cultural realia. Our ambition is to translate the whole of Tóth's short story collection, *Pillanatragasztó*, and to find an English publisher willing to support the project. More information about our respective research interests may be found here: <http://www.seek.salford.ac.uk/profiles/UHURLEY.jsp> and here: <http://www.seek.salford.ac.uk/profiles/SNarayDavey.jsp>.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Literature in minority languages is often confined to a small readership of native speakers, meaning that important accounts of political and cultural experiences are inaccessible to the wider world. This article describes how and why we collaborated to translate the short stories of Krisztina Tóth, a Hungarian woman writer, into English. To do the best job we could with the translation, we looked for ways to understand Tóth's work as fully as possible. We investigated her cultural heritage to learn more about her position as a woman writing in Hungarian. We used a range of ideas about translation to help us make her text accessible to English readers, while preserving the unique flavour of the Hungarian original. We discovered that thinking about translation as a kind of architecture, something that happens in spaces and places, was very helpful to our process. These insights may assist other translators of minority languages.

Subjects: Arts; Humanities; Language & Literature

Keywords: feminist translation; Hungarian literature; literary architectures; Ellen Eve Frank; Barbara Godard; Rosi Braidotti; Krisztina Tóth; minority languages

1. Introduction

Nothing is fixed. In and out the shuttle goes, fact and fiction, mind and matter, woven into patterns that may have only this in common: that hidden among them is a filigree which will with time become a world. (Barker, 1987)

This paper offers an account of an interdisciplinary experiment: it draws in literary criticism, translation theory and feminist philosophy to explore a process which seems increasingly to work with and through architectural concerns. It begins with a collaborative attempt to translate the short fiction of contemporary Hungarian writer, Krisztina Tóth (b. 1967) into English. We translators are two women working in Anglophone academia (we feel it important to situate ourselves). As a partnership, we combine a Hungarian native speaker, who is a theatre practitioner and translator, with an English native speaker who is a writer and critic of short fiction. Together we have developed a skill set and methodology which, we hope, equips us to attempt this work.

Tóth is an acclaimed poet and prose writer in Hungary but her short fiction is unknown in the Anglophone world. We felt called to attempt this translation because the texts engaged us deeply and we wanted to share that engagement with others. In its visceral and irreverent exploration of gendered subject positions, its disregard for taboo, its intriguing play with literary form and its overt attention to the architectural, Tóth's writing demanded our attention. No-one commissioned us; we simply decided to make the attempt, to see what would happen. To paraphrase Jessica M Laccetti, we seek "to authorise/show/tell Tóth's [our translations of her/our] complex and subversive stories" (Laccetti, 2017).

Our epigraph comes from *Weaveworld*, a fantasy novel by Clive Barker (1987). The plot of this novel concerns a whole world woven into a magic carpet, allowing it to be hidden, rolled up and moved through space and time, only to be unrolled upon someone else's living room floor: "a landscape—or rather a confusion of landscapes thrown together in fabulous disarray—was emerging from the warp and the weft" (Barker, p. 22). In the weaving and unravelling of different realities, the collision of the metaphysical and the domestic, Barker's novel is concerned with "the unbound anatomies of light and space" (Barker, p. 473) and, for us, articulates more precisely than any critical text the strange, difficult wonder of displacement - to use the term in Barbara Godard's sense (1989, p. 50)—that became the experience and the goal of our translation project: "so much variety pressed into so little space, not knowing whether turning the next corner would bring ice or fire. Such complexity was beyond the wit of a cartographer" (Barker, p. 23). Such complexity is the ground we must negotiate.

2. A note on navigation

Although we have described the difficulty of attempting to map our process of "fabulous disarray", we do not wish to impose upon our reader a similar experience of "not knowing" what the turn of the page will bring. Shortly, we will ask you to join us on our magic carpet-ride. Before take-off, in order to avoid any disorientation during the journey, we ask you to familiarise yourselves with our route by noting the following:

- We will begin with the idea of literary architecture, and how it enables critical enquiry to be staged as a spatial journey. In this, we adopt Ellen Eve Frank's concept from her groundbreaking text, *Literary Architecture: Essays Towards a Tradition*, (Frank, 1983) which has been developed more recently by architect critics/practitioners including Matteo Pericoli (2017) and Marko Jobst (2016). Frank's framework is our route map throughout.

- Tóth's cultural context and literary heritage require us to attend to issues of female representation and feminist critical traditions. In this, we encounter the enduring cross-cultural influence of Virginia Woolf and her manifesto for women writers, *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf, 1945). Woolf and her text will be our constant travelling companions.
- In order to combine literary and architectural concerns with an enquiry into translation, we will refer to contemporary translation theory, drawing most particularly on the work of Susan Bassnet (2006), Lawrence Venuti (2009) and feminist translation theorist, Barbara Godard.
- As the subject of our analysis is a text by a woman addressing overtly feminine/taboo experiences, the context of gendered subject positions and feminist translation practices is also relevant. Therefore, the feminist philosopher, Rosi Braidotti (2011), guides us to our final destination.

We will offer regular routing reminders during our flight. No doubt there will be turbulence. We are trying to navigate our translation from 1990s Hungary to contemporary Anglophone culture. We may find ourselves diverted: lost in a cloud of memories, beguiled by a thesaurus, or re-routed via Virginia Woolf's study. As befits such an unruly and resistant process, we draw on diverse critical resources from multiple disciplines, which risks fogginess. We will strive for clarity by highlighting each new course adjustment as we encounter it. For now, we hope you enjoy the journey.

3. Invitation to a magic carpet-ride

In this opening section, we set out the purpose of our magic carpet-ride. We begin by establishing the concept of reading as a spatial journey, drawing on Frank's manifesto to point out productive resonances with the complexities of the translation process.

At the beginning of *Literary Architecture*, Frank invites readers to experience the text as a journey, which begins with a tour through a house full of rooms. To begin this tour, the reader is asked to "sit in a child's wagon" (p. 3). Adopting this perspective, Frank suggests, serves as "a gentle admonition that our activity of perceiving be undertaken with curiosity, the seeing and taking note of entrances and exits, peripheries and contents" (p. 3). We ask our readers to join us in this spirit of curiosity. However, we ask you not to squeeze into a child's wagon, but to settle comfortably upon a magic carpet, a "weave world". Such a conveyance suits our tour very well. Our quest to explore the spaces of translation will shift from the material to the metaphorical and back again; between the architectural, "whose characteristic form seizes actual space as territory", and the literary, "whose characteristic form spells time" (Frank, p. 7); and beyond, into ruptures, gaps and dis/placements.

Accounts of translation practice resonate invitingly with Frank's assertions. Andrew Chesterman (1997, p. 20) reminds us that "etymologically, to translate is to 'carry across'". The carpet will certainly carry us, but where will it take us? And what should we take with us? With what must we equip ourselves, what must we carry across, in order to translate effectively? Traditionally, the answer would be obvious: words. Chesterman traces the origins of this logocentric notion to its roots in ancient Greece, where:

Language was seen as a structure, a whole consisting of arranged parts. The prevailing metaphor was an architectural one: as a building is made of smaller units called bricks etc., so language structure is made of smaller units called words. (p. 20)

If only words were so well behaved. We cannot fold them neatly into suitcases and then unpack them when we arrive at our destination, there to reassemble them like pieces of flat-pack furniture.

We may think that we carry words, but rather it is they who carry us. Words are the condition and mode of our tour. The magic carpet is woven from words. World and text weave and unravel each other in constant flux, making and unmaking. Words resist us and we resist them. As we shall see, this quality of what Teresa de Lauretis (1988, p. 9) describes as “being at odds with language” might be employed in the service of politically engaged translation.

At some point, process coalesces into product. Every translator reaches the point of having to choose, to dive into the swirling alphabet soup and emerge with a selection. Larson (2008, p. 16) describes this point as “working in the space of recoding—the terrain in which privileging one translation option (word/phrasing) over another takes place”. The reference to space is significant. Our carpet may be woven from words, but weaving is not solid. It is a structure of gaps and spaces. Architecture is more than a metaphor in this process. Space and structure give us our methodology. In the maelstrom of words, it was access to “spatial, wordless thought” (Pericoli, np), the gestic, that allowed us to work through and in resistances. Our exploration of the activity of translation becomes, in Frank’s terms, “our experience as an activity of being—entering and moving through interior space [... which] is governed by and utilizes the architectural structures we perceive, as we perceive them” (p. 5).

Many translators report the experience of inhabiting personal “inner spaces of translating” (Larson, p. 6). In one instance, this is described beguilingly as “looking about in a dark gray area lit with little glowing bars, like fireflies” (Larson, p. 7), but ultimately is perceived as something threatening, “an unstable inner space where, in the confusion, things risk seeming lost” (Larson, p. 10). We argue that things only *seem* lost in the complexity, but when we drop them they fall softly into our carpet, where they are held until such time as we rediscover them. The carpet is, therefore, not just a conveyance but also our document of process. It is both object and action. As well as travelling *on* the carpet, just like the characters in *Weaveworld*, we will journey *into* the carpet, exploring the constituent threads, complex as they are, as we enquire into the materiality of the translation process. In this way, we honour Frank’s approach, which seeks to “connect method with meaning” (Frank, p. 7).

4. Opening “doors”

Having established the apparently productive resonances between Frank’s concept of literary architecture and accounts of translation practice, the next step in our journey is to test the premise on a specific example. Here, we introduce our Hungarian source text in order to illustrate the particular insights that an architectural reading offers. In this section, we will deploy Frank’s spatial reading practice upon Tóth’s (2014) short story, “Doors (1993, July 17)”, seeking portrayals of internal and external structures. “Doors” comes from the collection *Pillanatragasztó* published in Hungarian in 2014. The title of the collection is usually translated as “superglue” or “instant glue”, indicating a thematic concern with contact, surface and connection, as well as the dangers of touching (and sticking) hastily. In the titles of both the collection and the particular short story, attention to the architectural is already overt, so we find a promising context for the application of Frank’s ideas.

Moving into the nuance of Frank’s proposal, she sets out two steps in her project to “marry” literature and architecture. First, “the noticing of internal architectural structures, those within the literary work” (p. 5). “Doors” is a story about a woman who, haunted by the gaze of her unattainable (married) male lover, seeks to resolve her obsession by initiating a sexual encounter with another man. While the family homes of the male lovers remain taboo, imagined spaces, other domestic and public spaces are engaged for the clandestine meetings. The experience of inhabiting a public telephone box is given in great detail (the story is set in 1993, before most people had mobiles). The sparse interior of the protagonist’s apartment is evoked; the bins and corridors of the apartment block. Most prominently, and predictably, given the title, doors are described frequently. Indeed, the word “door” appears 13 times in a story of less than 3,000 words. Entrances and exits, portals and thresholds are clearly a thematic concern of the narrative. Frank’s first step is achieved emphatically.

“The second task of this sort of reading would be a looking-up from the book to notice the same or similar structures outside, in the physical, external world” (Frank, pp. 5–6). In “Doors”, the protagonist undertakes meandering, circular journeys from her apartment, wandering the bars and streets of Budapest. The geography of the city is clearly rendered in the text. Churches, squares, shops and cafes map on to the “real” Budapest. Such is the verisimilitude of Tóth’s setting that, on a field trip to the city, we literally walked the protagonist’s route in order to situate ourselves in her reality. We found “a corner cafe on a shopping street” near Deak Square. Just like the fictional version, the bar had a “wood-panelled wall”—indeed it may have been Tóth’s model. Just like the protagonist’s date, we sampled the untranslatable “Unikum” liqueur to understand how strong it was, how drunk he was likely to become as the scene progressed. Thus, we find a clear correspondence between structures internal to the text and those in the physical world. However, Frank’s concept is not so simple. It is easy enough to read the symbolic aridity of the sweltering glass telephone kiosk, or the sterile emptiness of the narrator’s flat. Such readings, however, are the beginning, not the end of the exploration. Internal structures are complex. In Frank’s terms, they are “also structures of consciousness, conventions of perception, systems of belief, as well as the activities of thought and feeling” (p. 6).

When we read “Doors” for these features we find some interesting slippages between the spatial and the temporal; the physical and the spiritual; body and text. At the opening of the story, we are told: “The bloke is still standing in the phone box. He props the glass door open with his foot; the air is so boiling that the concrete is melting under the glass box. It is the 17 July 1993”. Here, environmental heat causes the foundations of the telephone box to melt, to lose their structural integrity. As if a consequence of this, we are told the precise date on which the story is set. It is as though the heat has melted dimensions, so that space becomes time.

The subtext to this description is the protagonist waiting her turn to use the phone box. The man occupying the box engages in a long and unsuccessful conversation with a reluctant female lover. When, finally, the man vacates the box, and ceases his domination of the technology, the narrator says: “It’s my turn, I am now allowed to step into the stifling heat”. Here, space becomes sensation as the physical structure of the phone box is represented by the experience of intense heat. Such slippages and transformations build throughout the narrative, as tensions around physical and bodily geographies accrue.

Notably, the need to defend geographical territory is bound up with the failure of language, and female bodily territory: “He burps out smudged sentences, foraging between my legs. I notice that his hand is completely bloody. Somehow, he needs sending home”. In burping out *smudged* sentences, voice and text hybridise. Language and signification become issues of bodily space. The menstrual blood seems to “mark” the man with the narrator’s influence, even though she rejects him. She tries to clean it off, “he shouldn’t be going home like this”, to remove evidence of his sexual transgression but also the symbolic pollution that the menstrual blood of his mistress would bring into the home which he shares with his wife and 3 children. The blood, however, resists her attempts to clean it off. At the end of the story when the man is run over by a car, she checks him for injuries, only to find that the evidence of his sexual trespass is still there: “I can’t see any blood. Only on his fingers, that didn’t come off”. This idea of marking or signifying with the body is echoed in the narrator’s own experience. Describing a recent head wound, she explains that “I am wearing the sign that I was going to him”. The textual and the physical appear to meld as the body bears the marks of its own story.

Frank’s description of “entering and moving through interior space [... which] is governed by and utilizes the architectural structures we perceive, as we perceive them” (p. 5) fits Tóth’s narrative enticingly. What could be a better example than a physical door which also acts as a portal into characters’ inner spaces? Furthermore, the doors in the story are often glass, or metaphorically transparent, so that we can see the experiences beyond them even if we do not go through them. The characters, however, often do go through them, and in one case the narrator-protagonist passes

violently through a closed glass door to further mingle the literal and the symbolic, the domestic and the metaphysical:

Six months ago I went through a glass door. His eyes were also shining through that. In my white dress, head first, effortlessly, I stepped through a closed door like some happy bride on a mission. Through an elongated second my glass veil hovered, sparkling in the air then came crashing down.

Here, the narrator recounts smashing bodily through a glass door, resulting in physical injury, with a distinctly serene and feminised perspective. There is a play on the duality of the word “through”. One may speak of going “through a door” where the implication is that one passes through the opening of the door frame; the open door has left a space. In effect, like “boiling a kettle”, going “through a door” is a figure of speech which compresses a more complex action. It is not the kettle that is boiled but the water within it. Usually, it is not the door that is passed through but the space left when it opens. We don’t bother to spell this out in daily discourse because a door is such a common structure that we all understand the shorthand describing our usual interactions with it.

The difference here, though, is that the narrator has literally passed through a closed door, in the same way as the haunting gaze of her unobtainable male lover can pass through glass. A casual *figure* of speech has become disturbing in its sudden and unexpected literal accuracy. There is a suggestion of transubstantiation here, particularly in the ecstatic religious imagery, of a body in flux between the material and the spiritual. As the narrator-protagonist of “Doors” tells us: “The wounds have opened doors on the body, letting a little spirit escape so there is almost nothing left”. After lengthy work in Larson’s “space of recoding”, we chose to use the word “spirit” (instead of “essence” or “will”) in our translation to illuminate Tóth’s concern with inner space, which our deployment of Frank’s approach makes available to our translation strategy.

5. Unbuilding

Thus far, we have demonstrated how Frank’s insistence on reading for literary architectures offers productive insights into the themes and techniques deployed by Tóth in “Doors”. Such a reading practice assists us in our efforts to translate “Doors” into English, making us aware of the text’s concerns and occupations on a level beyond the literal. Tóth’s striking descriptions of specifically female subject positions call attention to feminist concerns—we will attend to these aspects of the translation process in subsequent sections of the article, engaging the thinking of Barbara Godard and Rosi Braidotti. Before we do that, however, it is necessary to situate Tóth’s work in its cultural context and literary heritage, and to delineate more precisely the feminisms in play. This section, therefore, identifies the limited critical resources available to us in terms of theorising the traditions and heritages of central European women’s writing. We combine critical accounts of the Hungarian literary context with Frank’s process of “unbuilding” to arrive at a spatial/temporal understanding of Tóth’s concerns with female subjectivity.

Once again, these insights are generated by engaging yet more deeply with Frank’s mapping of inner spaces. Frank’s approach to spatial reading “requires a backward activity to precede it, the unbuilding or decomposing of existing structures” (p. 7). Practically, this “unbuilding is the ‘decomposing’, or the activity of analysis” (p. 8). Beyond a close reading of Tóth’s text, how else might we apply critical analysis to inform our translation choices? As may be expected when considering such a doubly marginalised text (written by a woman in a minority language), research located very little in the way of applicable critical frameworks. However, one text provided a key insight. Andrea Pető (2001, p. 253), in *A History of Central European Women’s Writing*, identifies Tóth as belonging to a new generation of women writers who “thematize questions of female identity as a new subject”, extending the work of previous Hungarian women writers (e.g. Agnes Nemes Nagy and Zsuzsa Rakovsky).

We pause here to consider what we understand by the idea of women writers who “thematize questions of female identity as a new subject” (Pető, p. 253), because this understanding will set the scope and parameters of our subsequent analysis regarding feminist translation practices. In the central European context, Agatha Schwartz (2008, p. 198) traces the emergence of concern with the roles and experiences of women to a “crisis of the female self” represented in the *fin-de-siècle* texts of Austria and Hungary, “rooted in male sexual violence or other forms of inhibition imposed on the free expression of female sexuality and creativity”. We can see the legacy of these concerns in the emotional and physical wounds, and the existential oppression experienced by the protagonist in “Doors” who appears, in her listless wandering, self-harming and chronic insomnia, to be experiencing a profound crisis of self.

Beyond the specific geo-temporal moment of the *fin-de-siècle* central European context, we can situate Tóth’s concerns as descending from broader lineages of feminist criticism. In 1929 Virginia Woolf, for example, criticised male writers who represented the female self as an “odd monster [...] the spirit of life and beauty in a kitchen chopping up suet” (p. 45). Instead, Woolf calls for a simultaneous prosaic/poetic representative strategy, which describes the domestic detail of “Mrs. Martin, aged thirty-six, dressed in blue, wearing a black hat and brown shoes”, while retaining the poetry of her being, recognising her as “a vessel in which all sorts of *spirits* and forces are coursing and flashing perpetually” (pp. 45–46, our italics). We had chosen to use the word “spirit” in our translation of “Doors” before we noticed the echo back to Woolf—the resonance is pleasing and further validates our translation strategy.

We find Woolf’s prosaic/poetic qualities throughout Tóth’s story, and we seek to honour them in our translation choices. A notable example in “Doors” occurs in the passage quoted above where the narrator describes the act of self-harm (walking through a glass door) in ecstatic, traditionally feminine terms, “like some happy bride”. The narrator is emphatically not a bride. If anything she is an “anti-bride”, engaging in sexual relationships with the husbands of other women. The arch comment that “I scrub the bath tub, like a good girl”, shows a reflexive awareness of prescribed feminine behaviour. Twice in the story the narrator mentions and then rejects essentialist roles. The first time, before her date, she muses: “I could be a human, woman, a mother” before concluding that she is none of these things, but “just a case that the wounds have made”. And again, towards the end of the narrative, she considers: “For two seconds, while I’m walking to the entry door, I’m a mother. Human, woman, mother”. As soon as she crosses the threshold and enters the building, she casts off these possible roles and reverts to being a solitary insomniac watching the dawn. In addition to Frank’s spatial insights, and Woolf’s call for prosaic/poetic representation, we may therefore read the plot of “Doors” as conforming to Pető’s definition of women writers who “thematize questions of female identity as a new subject”, “rejecting the term ‘role’, as a socially conditioned, that is masculine, definition in favour of a feminine ‘life form’” (p. 253).

When the creative writer in our partnership first encountered “Doors” she felt intuitively that it reminded her of Woolf’s writing. So we were pleased to discover that Pető identifies explicitly the influence of *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) upon contemporary Hungarian short fiction by women, and includes Tóth in this observation (p. 252). The echoes and the prosaic/poetic qualities noted above are no coincidence. Woolf’s influence is evident in other aspects of “Doors”, where the protagonist preserves her apartment as a clear, contemplative space, the integrity of which must be protected from male intrusion. We are given very little detail about the internal structure of the apartment, which makes the specific mention of “Piles of books, papers” more significant. The protagonist alludes to a University department in a way that suggests she has at least studied, if not worked, there. If she is not actually a writer, she is a serious reader.

It seems almost too easy, too superficial, to press the concept of literary architecture upon *A Room of One’s Own*—Woolf’s image of “sentences built [...] into arcades or domes” (p. 77) and her description of women who have “sat indoors [...] so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force” (p. 87) make the case almost too obvious to warrant the argument. It is perhaps

more interesting to think about *A Room of One's Own* as a kind of intellectual architecture. Stimpson (1992, p. 162) describes the essay as “Woolf’s room” (again the slippage between text and territory), summarising it as “a project that draftily houses us. In her power, failures, and perplexities, she [Woolf] is a major architect and designer of feminist criticism”. It is particularly exciting for us as translators to find in our “unbuilding” that a text so familiar to us as Anglophone feminist scholars has been taken up and put to use elsewhere, showing that “these borders are as fluid, as subject to redrawing, as those of counties and countries” (Stimpson, p. 175). The literary traditions in play here are important contexts for a perceptive translation, to understand potential sites of resistance, what is being resisted and how.

Given the importance of locating literary traditions for our translation project, it seems prudent, therefore, to look beyond the influence of Woolf, to trace this heritage of women writers who emphasise the subject of female identity further into the twentieth century. It may be relevant to note that in 1949 Simone de Beauvoir (1949) published *Le Deuxième Sexe*, radically deploying her own lived experience to illustrate the ways in which patriarchy relegates women to a position in which they struggle to achieve the freedom to define themselves. Sabine Sielke (2009, p. 23), furthermore, identifies a strand of feminist critical practices focused on “texts that thematize ‘female experience’ and identity explicitly”, which persisted until the 1970s. However, ultimately, feminist scholars came to regard such an approach as a “contradictory enterprise that bred its own hierarchies and principles of exclusions” (Sielke, p. 23). More recently, feminist writing practices have evolved to deploy what Teresa de Lauretis describes as:

the concept of a multiple, shifting and often self-contradictory identity, a subject that is not divided in, but rather at odds with, language; an identity made up of heterogeneous and heteronomous representations of gender, race, and class, and often indeed across languages and cultures ... (p. 9)

As translators, we find de Lauretis’ description an inspirational manifesto for our own practice. However, it may be argued (perhaps patronisingly) that the Iron Curtain excluded Hungarian literary culture from critical developments which questioned the emphasis on “female experience and identity”, thus leaving writers to look back to Modernist texts and the concerns of the fin-de-siècle. Does Tóth’s feminism seem dated in contrast with our own understanding of the term? If so, how do we respect the politics of the source text without imposing our own upon it? In fact, further “unbuilding” of Tóth’s story shows that this is not the case. “Doors” is cleverly positioned both to acknowledge and honour its literary heritage, retaining a “politics of experience” (de Lauretis, p. 10), while performing a subtle (feminist) critique of representation which is entirely cognisant of post-structuralist concerns about language, “which thus establishes the semiotic ground for a different production of reference and meaning” (de Lauretis, p. 10). These claims will be illustrated in subsequent sections, engaging the concept of feminist mimesis as a means of understanding Tóth’s strategy.

6. Rebuilding

Thus far in our journey, we have established the productiveness of Frank’s “literary architecture” in helping us to analyse (unbuild) our source text. Thanks to this approach, we have understood more fully Tóth’s literary context, her thematic and linguistic strategies, and the feminisms in play. All of the discussion offered to this point has been preparing the ground for reflecting critically upon the process of translation itself. In so doing, we move to Frank’s final step, rebuilding. However, extending Frank’s methodology, we will argue for the special status of literary translation, and its radical potential. Subsequent sections will then offer a detailed account of our translation process, drawing on translation theory, before concluding with a consideration of feminist philosophy and mimetic strategies in order to situate ourselves as translator/builders evolving an architectural methodology.

Elucidating her critical practice, Frank states that:

Writers who select architecture as their art analogue dematerialize the more material art, architecture, that they may materialize the more immaterial art, literature. In this way, architecture and literature relinquish an analogical relationship to marry as literary architecture. (p. 7)

We have established that this premise is applicable to, and offers productive readings of, Tóth's short story, "Doors". Frank sets out the synthesis of internal and external structures into experiential meaning, accompanied by the "unbuilding" of literary analysis so that, having understood these effects as fully as possible, we can undertake "the transformational process of building literary architecture" (p. 8). But where, in this process, does translation fit? We argue that translation adds extra layers of complexity and requires an additional step in this process. Beyond the building of literary architecture, we are building architectural translation. We build anew in a different linguistic, cultural and geographical space. We are taking the internal features of the text in its source language and translating them for differently situated readers in the target language. Our task is to arrange these internal features so that they can relate to a different set of structures in a different external world. We aspire, then, to rewrite (rebuild) Frank's assertion as follows:

Translators who select architecture as their art analogue dematerialize the more material art, architecture, that they may materialize the more immaterial art, translation. In this way, architecture and translation relinquish an analogical relationship to marry as architectural translation. (Our italics)

Politically aware translation practice may situate itself as an act of resistance, seeking subject positions which do not build or rebuild oppressive structures, and may draw attention, in unbuilding the source text, to marginalised sociopolitical positions in the source and perhaps the target cultures. This may engage the architectural in another important respect. Our work with Hungarian as a minority language¹ resonates with postcolonial contexts. In such contexts, states Felipe Hernández (2005, p. 126), "the task of the architect [...] can often be compared with the task of the translator". Hernández supports this claim by pointing out the architect's role in "a critical mediation between a vast diversity of cultural elements, which are often antagonistic, in an attempt to produce adequate spaces to satisfy the needs of specific societies and cultural groups" (p. 126). This account could indeed be describing our experience of translating literary short fiction from Hungarian into English—a quest to build "adequate spaces". In the next section, we offer a detailed account of how we attempted this in practice.

7. Falling into the carpet

We have claimed that framing translation as an architectural process opens up its radical potential (for example in feminist or postcolonial terms). In this section, we illustrate this claim by focusing on our Hungarian source text. Specifically, we address the challenges of translating the eruptions of other languages and genres, notably American song lyrics. Unfolding an account of our decision-making process, we draw on literary and translation theory to illustrate the complexities and resistances involved.

Our source text's title, "Doors", is given in English, even in the Hungarian original. This may be because the story makes prominent use of lyrics from the 1960s American rock band, The Doors. Characters in the story listen to, quote, recall and sing along with the band's original Anglophone recordings, with the Hungarian source text giving the lyrics in English, no translation offered. This shows the already complex intratextual relations between Anglophone and Hungarian cultural traditions, which need to be understood by anyone engaging in a translation between the two. Angus Batey (2015) describes Hungary as "a nation cut adrift from its continent by a language unrelated to any other on the face of the planet". This unrelatability can pose challenges for translators bringing

Hungarian culture into English—as Mátyás Bánhegyi (2013) points out, certain pieces of cultural realia are not easily explained to Western readers who have little knowledge of the socialist regime which shaped Hungary’s recent history. Hungarian people, however, are forced to engage in other languages and cultures if they are to interact with the world beyond their geographical borders. Tóth may therefore quite reasonably expect her Hungarian readers to cope with the English song lyrics.

Some readers, both Hungarian and English, may follow *The Doors* and their lyrics back to Aldous Huxley’s (2004) *The Doors of Perception* (originally published 1954), and perhaps William Blake’s (2000) first use of the phrase in “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” (originally published 1790). Thus, as Clive Barker writes in the first lines of *Weaveworld*: “Nothing ever begins. There is no first moment; no single word or place from which this or any other story springs. The threads can always be traced back to some earlier tale ...” (p. 5). Framing these qualities more theoretically, Gérard Genette’s *Palimpsests* draws attention to the “massive and explicit palimpsestuous” qualities of literary texts. Robin Nelson (2001, p. 20) likens the effect to that of archaeological layering, with “the traces of previous inscriptions remaining visible in the new text” (Prince, 1997). While these observations apply to all text, the processes of translation seem to multiply these features exponentially.

As the briefest consideration of “Doors” shows, beneath the fabric of narrative runs a set of powerful resonances, which a skilful writer may attempt to manipulate but which none of us can fully control, suggesting that, as Bakhtin (1981) proposes, language is something that is always populated with the intentions of others. By engaging with narrative, the reader is invited to explore her own memories and life experiences, and to draw on them as she constructs her own highly personal fictional dream, in which she stands in someone else’s space, becomes provisionally situated in another subjectivity and, we might argue, becomes an avatar within a literary architecture. These effects are amplified in the processes of translation, with translators becoming an additional layer in the palimpsest. Susan Bassnet explains that “translators are all the time engaging with texts first as readers” (p. 174). As reader/translators, we negotiate Tóth’s narrative in our own inner spaces, reading provisionally, across languages, cultures, subjectivities before we can begin the process of carrying the source text across to English. In effect, we must fall into the carpet before we can ride upon it.

So, we have identified resonances which are activated by the unmediated presence of American/English lyrics within the source text. But how do we read them? How do we “unbuild” the source text so that we can build a version in English? A Hungarian speaker singing American lyrics could be rendered as fluent and competent, or haltingly “foreign” and perhaps movingly inarticulate or even comedic. How, for example, does one judge the tone of this episode: “He takes it badly and pushes me back on to the bed. *Come on baby, light my fi-er, come on baby, light my fi-er*” (italics preserved from source text). The status of the italicised text is ambiguous. Sometimes, as in this example, the lyrics are present externally, as actual sound in the shared reality of the characters. At other times, the lyrics seem to be part of the inner monologue of the protagonist, playing in her mind as ironic commentaries on her situation.

Does the source text italicise the *Doors* lyrics simply to indicate their status as lyrics? That they are untranslatable cultural artefacts? Are the italics also part of the protagonist’s inner monologue? Or do they signify that we are hearing the recorded voice of Jim Morrison, a cultural constant which many readers could call up in their own minds? Do we also hear the drunken and sexually inept male character singing along? The Hungarian-speaking translator, to her initial alarm, could also hear a comedic eastern European accent. This was the last thing we wanted—to poke fun at someone speaking English as a “foreign” language, as if Anglophone hegemony were not dominant enough! However, it occurred to us that it may be important to bring out the potential comedy of the situation to show that this man is no sexual threat—he is intoxicated and incapable, still wearing his socks—despite the apparent aggression of pushing the female protagonist back on to the bed. We do not wish to shut down any of the possibilities offered in the source text, even if some are unpalatable to our postcolonial sensibilities. Is it possible that our translation can admit all of these readings

simultaneously? The feminist approach articulated by de Lauretis, in its accommodation of “self-contradictory”, “heterogeneous and heteronomous” subject positions (p. 9), appears to offer a possible solution. In the next section, we will engage translation theory, feminist philosophy and feminist theories of mimesis, to build a provisional translation strategy.

8. A singalong and a countersong

In our grappling with the issues raised by American lyrics in a Hungarian source text, we encounter (in this case literally) what feminist translation scholar Barbara Godard terms, “a singalong and a countersong” (p. 49). As readers we may sing along with the iconic Doors lyrics, hear them in our minds, even as Morrison’s counter-cultural voice is employed as a countersong to point up the ironic contrast between “Light my fire”, a plea for sexual passion, and the actual experience of the protagonist in all its unsatisfactory mechanics. We have entered into a process of engagement with multiple provisional and potential co-texts, offering emergent versions of the narrative in which we inhabit the “gap or the surplus which separates target text from source text” (Godard, p. 50). Godard celebrates “rupture and plurality” (p. 44) as inherently feminist qualities, claiming translation as transformation, focusing on “the role of the artist/translator as active reader and writer”, replacing the “modest, self-effacing translator” with a translator who “immodestly flaunts her signature” as “an active participant in the creation of meaning, who advances a conditional analysis” (p. 50).

This repositioning of the feminist translator subverts conventional understandings of the translator as “rewriter” and “recreator” in Bassnet’s terms (p. 174), and in Venuti’s terms as “reproducing a pre-existing text” (p. 165). Instead, “literary translation becomes a text in its own right so that the traditional boundary set up to separate original works from their translations collapses” (Godard, p. 50). In keeping with Frank’s concept of building, we argue that we have not straightforwardly reproduced a pre-existing text, but rather proposed a new version of the story that is a creative negotiation of respective cultural contexts. Here, Godard’s use of the term “translation” (and our experience of the process) chimes closely with the way in which architectural theorist Hernández uses it “to explain the process of transfer, displacement and transformation of culture across different and contesting cultural sites” where fissures and gaps are identified and explored (p. 127).

For Godard, women writers are already using a language marginal to the dominant discourse of the source culture. Hence, the polyglossia that we encounter in Tóth’s story may be read as a metaphorical acknowledgement of the “foreignness” of women’s language even within the source text. Describing the experience of waiting to use the phone box, Tóth’s protagonist uses the simile of needing to urinate, likening the situation to queueing for a public toilet with transparent walls, until, “finally relieved, you begin to release sentences from yourself”. The curious shift into second person in this analogy affirms Godard’s observation about foreignness, talking about self as other and linking, via simile, phone box and toilet, so that the act of speech is described in terms of publicly visible urination—at once taboo and yet necessary in the relief and release which follow. We need hardly point out the resonances of such descriptions in terms of women’s relationship with language and the right to speak.

In such features, we observe a “translation effect”, a “dis/placement” (Godard, p. 45) already present in the source text, before we embark upon the literal translation. To write her way into “subjective agency” (Godard, p. 45), a woman dis/places herself. How might we translate that sense of displacement? Godard clarifies as follows:

Although framed as a transfer from one language to another, feminist discourse involves the transfer of a cultural reality into a new context as an operation in which literary traditions are variously challenged in the encounter of differing modes of textualisation. (p. 45)

Translation in this sense is “used by women writers to [...] communicate new insights into women’s experiences” (p. 45). We may clearly identify such a project in Tóth’s text, when, for example, the

protagonist tells us that her period starts, just as her drunken lover is trying to kiss her in the lift. It is our job as translators(builders) to communicate(structure) this experience as accurately as possible for the Anglophone reader. We spent some time trying out phrases, which all felt awkward. The problem was to do with passivity and naming. “I came on” was too much of a euphemism. “My period started” sounded too distant. “I feel my period start”, which is provisionally our preferred translation, returns the experience to a perceiving “I” and embodied sensation in the “real time” of the narrative.

As translator-builders, we had to project our understanding—using empathy, imagination, life experience—into Tóth’s position of dis/placement. And here we may argue that Godard’s work on feminist translation leads us to Rosi Braidotti’s concept of the “female, feminist, nomadic subject”. Braidotti’s manifesto for active transformation through a creative re-appropriation of subjectivity resonates strongly with Godard’s delineation of feminist translation practice. Anne Daniell (2002, p. 153) summarises this call to action: “Braidotti advocates [...] for women’s deliberate, mindful mimesis of female subjectivity as a method for bringing about change and diversity in women’s identities”. Mimesis is of course the concern of realist fiction and in Tóth’s text we see a visceral, perhaps shocking and at times revelatory rendering of female subjectivity. While postmodernism generally has worked to critique representations of reality, Laccetti points out that “a contemporary feminist mimesis revitalises the voice (and authority) of the author, emphasising subjectivity as fundamental to the formation of a politicised feminist identity” (np).

We, as (un)builders, can identify the mimetic work of Tóth’s story. The text is rich in cultural realia, such as plastic carrier bags, cheap gym shoes, public telephone boxes, overflowing ashtrays, dirty bathtubs, houseplants, cellophane wrappers, particular street names and branded liqueurs. At one point when translating the episode in the overheated public telephone box, our Hungarian speaker exclaimed, “I can smell it!”. In this sense, we have “a concrete, sociopolitical location of identity” (Daniell, p. 154) as the “ground” (indeed our protagonist kicks stones in the dust) “from which further transformations of female identity may develop” (p. 154). There is, however, an archness to Tóth’s mimesis, a knowing touch of surrealism which may speak to the observation that “the construction of female subjectivity cannot be adequately elaborated within the anxious postmodern oscillation between complicity (representation) and critique (scepticism)” (Laccetti, np).

Thus, in the disembodied crooning of Jim Morrison; in the unobtainable lover whose blue-eyed gaze follows the protagonist around Budapest, apparently looking through walls; and in the odd prolepsis which reveals that “He will become a magician, across the sea he will achieve the first successful soul transplant”, we see Tóth keeping us on our toes, making the mimesis slightly slippery, to be handled with care. Laccetti would see this as confirmation of the requirement for feminist mimesis to “manipulate signification (as postmodernist parody does)” (np). This resonates with our earlier observation about the body as text, where language and signification become issues of bodily space. It also shows that Tóth’s feminism is not as outdated as it may have first appeared, but rather deploys literary heritage to effect subtly postmodern techniques. Through Frank’s process of “unbuilding”, we have been able to reach such insights and feed them into our translation strategy. In the next, and final, stage of our discussion, we attempt to distil our philosophy of architectural translation.

9. The power of particularity

As we begin to descend from our magic carpet-ride, we may wonder where we are going to land. Where has our journey taken us? In this final section, we attempt to delineate the kind of translation practice that would be capable of carrying the qualities of feminist mimesis across to the Anglophone reader. We continue to engage with Braidotti’s thinking, alongside Frank’s concept of “building”, as we attend to the particularity required for effective mimesis.

Braidotti’s figuring of subjectivity is “multi-faceted, in relation to others, and always evolving” (Daniell, p. 153). This conception allows us to place ourselves, with a self-reflexive awareness of our

own sociopolitical positions, in a dynamic relationship with the positions of Tóth, her protagonist, and the literary traditions in play. This description speaks also to Frank's definition of "building": "a building is not an object (product) only; it is, importantly, an activity" and "both building-as-object (product) and building-as-activity require and turn upon space constructs, the art of architecture" (Frank, p. 4). Again, the key to this translation practice appears to be in spatial relationships, the positioning of subjects in sociopolitical contexts and in the role of inner space to experience the processes.

Mimesis is necessary to establish the sociopolitical contexts in which subjects are situated. Beyond its technical function, mimesis may also be understood as a spatial process. In keeping with Braidotti's thinking, "in the very process of mimesis, a space for creativity is opened" (Daniell, p. 154). Architectural translation is strongly present in the reference to "space", and specifically, "mimesis becomes the opportunity for transformation [...] Change happens in and through the concreteness of particularity" (Daniell, p. 153). Thus, to achieve Frank's "building" and Braidotti's "multi-faceted subjectivity" we spent a great deal of time and effort attending to the particularities of Tóth's mimesis. We had to immerse ourselves in the post-socialist context of 1990s Hungary to understand the powerful cultural significance carried by a particular kind of cheap gym shoe, a "low class" carrier bag, a belittling insult.

In these cases of cultural realia, we found that they had no equivalent in English, and that the majority of Anglophone readers would simply not pick up on the significance unless we built/wrote it into the internal structures of the new text. It is not the work of this account to delve into technicalities here. Suffice to say that, like all translators, strategies at our disposal included shifts, adjustments, restructures, transpositions, replacements, changes, omissions and additions (Bánhegyi, p. 91). In the careful use of such tools, we embrace a "continuing provisionality, aware of process, giving self-reflexive attention to [translation] practices" (Godard, p. 50). In this sense, we believe that not only have we become nomad translators, our practice "a dynamic, continuous happening", (Daniell, p. 150) but, in placing our translation between Anglophone and Hungarian cultures, we have also made of the text a nomad, "a hybrid composed of various contexts as opposed to claiming one specific ethnic identity" (Daniell, p. 150).

In so doing, we must, however, pause to consider these nomadic practices and ask "how [our] various sojourns affect, and perhaps help to renew or destroy, such places" (Daniell, p. 152). An extension of this question is also to ask what the translation does to the source text, given that they now exist in relation to each other. This is pertinent in our work with a minority language and a culture emerging from a history of political oppression into the hegemony of Western capitalism. As Anne Daniell points out:

there is another aspect to Braidotti's nomad that opens space for the valuing of concreteness, including that of particular places and communities. It is, indeed, through her feminist methodology that Braidotti approaches this valuing of the particular, the given or sustained patterns of identity. (p. 152)

In architectural translation, we unbuild the source text, passing it through our neurons to build an equivalent structure in a different language. We identify the key, particular internal features of that text and carry them gently on our magic carpet, incorporating them sympathetically into the new building. "A previous pattern must to some extent be renewed in order also to be transformed" (Daniell, p. 153). In building the most accurate mimesis possible of female subjectivity in 1990s Hungary, we do renew a previous pattern. We do so in order to invite our readers to inhabit that specific subject position, offer them an encounter with otherness that, in its own dis/placement, can encourage all of us to "reinvent notions of femaleness and womanhood in a manner that defies rather than perpetuates a monolithic essentialism and empowers freer modes of agency for all those identified as women" (Daniell, p. 153).

10. Conclusion

In unfolding this story, we wish to acknowledge (without giving a lengthy account of) the ground from which we begin. We are not reinventing the established association between architecture and literature. Marko Jobst traces this association from Ancient Greece via the Renaissance, and offers a useful summary of notable contemporary developments. As Jobst elucidates this long history, “it becomes clear that the question of the relationship between the literary and the architectural is not so much to be invented as simply brought into focus” (p. 56). However, Jobst offers a cautionary question: “how are we to make productive links between architecture and literature in ways that would push the existing discourse beyond where it already finds itself?” (p. 56). Beyond, indeed, where Frank situates us? Jobst seeks “a way forward in writing architecture that learns directly from literary precedents” (p. 56). In our enquiry, in which we are positioned as translator/builders evolving an architectural methodology, we are seeking a way forward in translation practice which learns directly from architectural precedents. It is our position as translators that offers a contribution to this interdisciplinary conversation.

As Hernández notes, “Only rarely has the concept of translation [...] been used within architectural circles in order to engage with the wider spectrum of social, cultural and political practices to which architecture is intrinsically related” (p. 127). Furthermore, it is an architectural reading of the translation process that opens “liminal spaces between and within cultures that bring to light the fissured nature of languages and cultures” (Hernández, p. 127). In engaging these spaces as sites of productive resistance, we hope to contribute not only to conversations around Translation Studies, but also to contribute to the development of the notion of “architectural translation” in order to “encourage the production of new architectures and spatialities that would respond more accurately to the complex realities of our cultures and peoples” (Hernández, p. 127).

11. Epilogue

“They felt the book begin to tremble in their custody, growing warm. Then it flew out of their hands towards the window” (Barker, p. 720).

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Note

1. Hungarian is identified as a minority language and comes under the protection of the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Treaty 148). Retrieved May 18, 2017, from <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/148>.

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