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Tropes in translation

An analysis of Dutch creative collocations and compounds translated into English

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Case Study 3: *Sluiterijd/ Shutterspeed*

7.1 Background: The Novel

Sluiterijd (2002), translated by Ina Rilke as *Shutterspeed* (2007), is the last book in a trilogy written by the Flemish writer Erwin Mortier. The novel could be classified as a *Bildungsroman*, defined by the Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (2008) as “a kind of novel that follows the development of the hero or heroine from childhood or adolescence into adulthood.” In *Sluiterijd*, however, we follow the young hero Joris (who has been orphaned by his father, abandoned by his mother, and adopted by his aunt and uncle) in his journey only from childhood to adolescence. On this journey, Joris discovers the joys of learning and tries to uncover the circumstances of his father’s untimely death. These are revealed to him through snatches of conversation he overhears in his aunt’s shop, and through the piles of old photos that he keeps hidden under his bed.

The story is told from Joris’s point of view in a richly metaphorical language, with the camera, or fleeting images of the past, serving as the main motif. This *Bildungsroman* explores not only the young hero’s psychological development (through memories evoked by old photos) but also his literary development, both as a reader and as a writer. Early on in the novel we learn about his childhood reading experiences,

Er bestonden woorden die even zanderig tussen mijn tanden kraakten als slecht gespoelde spinazie, andere slikte ik als koortstabletten altijd in één keer door omdat ik vreesde dat ze heel vies smaakten. Jodium koesterde ik in een boek met de titel *Beginselen der Chemie*. Het klonk me mysterieus in de oren, alleen al omdat ik niet precies wist wat beginselen waren. (*Sluiterijd*, p. 38)

There were words that set my teeth on edge like grit in poorly rinsed spinach, others that I swallowed whole like aspirin for fear of them tasting vile. One of my favourite words was ‘iodine’, which I had come across in a book called *Principles of Chemistry*. The title sounded mysteriously pleasing to my ears, if only because I was unsure what ‘principles’ meant. (*Shutterspeed*, p. 33 – translation Ina Rilke)

And a few pages later we witness the young Joris struggling as a fledgling writer – perhaps an autobiographical note.

In de klas ging de meester altijd zuur met zijn rode balpen door mijn opstellen. Hij vond ze veel te zweverig of juist te log. Te bombastisch, zei hij op een dag, en het woord bleef als een vat buskruit voorzien van een lont door mijn gedachten rollen. ‘Ge schiet met tien kogels tegelijk naar één mus in de goot in de hoop dat er toch één vlak op zal zijn,’ zei hij terwijl hij mijn blad papier als een bebloed laken voor me op mijn bank legde. ‘Ge moet niet overdrijven.’

(*Sluiterijd*, pp. 40–41)

The master always used a red biro to write his niggling comments on the compositions I handed in. He thought them too high-falutin, or else too laboured. Too pompous, he said once, and the word rolled around my thoughts all day like a powder keg with a fuse. ‘You spray a lone sparrow in the gutter with bullets, hoping that one of them will hit the mark,’ he had said when he gave me back my composition looking like a blood-spattered bed sheet. ‘You shouldn’t exaggerate so.’

(*Shutterspeed* pp. 35–36, translation Ina Rilke)

7.2 Background: Author, Translator and the Translation

As we can see, “wrestling with language” is a theme in Mortier’s work, and the resultant quality of Mortier’s language, his “littéraire subtiliteit en fijngevoeligheid” (literary subtlety and sensitivity),⁴⁷ has been recognised by the reviewers of the Dutch and English (translated) versions alike. After the publication of *Marcel*, the first novel in the trilogy to which *Sluiterijd* belongs, the *Volkskrant* branded Mortier as a writer of “virtuoze zinnen” (virtuoso sentences). In a similar vein, the *NRC Handelsblad* wrote of Mortier’s novel *Godenslaap*, “Mortier schrijft zo goed dat je geneigd bent al het andere als bijzaak te beschouwen.” (“Mortier writes so well that you’re inclined to view everything else as a side issue.” My translation.)

If Mortier’s early novels were identified by the literary establishment as stylistic masterpieces, so too were Rilke’s translations. The entire trilogy won Rilke the Vlaamse Cultuurprijs in 2009.⁴⁸ But right from the start her translations of Mortier were lauded. A.S. Byatt chose *Marcel* for the *Times Literary Supplement* “International Books of the Year” (2001), and in a review for *The Guardian* of the second book in the trilogy, *My Fellow Skin* (*Mijn tweede huid*), she wrote:

47 Nederlands Letterenfonds <http://www.letterenfonds.nl/nl/boek/82/sluiterijd>.

48 This accolade was by no means Rilke’s first. In 2002, Rilke won the Scott Moncrieff Prize for her translation from French of *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* (Dai Sijie, 2000) and before that, in 1999, the Vondel Prize for her translations of *Roads to Santiago* by Cees Nooteboom (Harvill/Harcourt Brace) and *The Virtuoso* by Margriet de Moor (Picador). In addition, Rilke’s works were nominated ten times between 1996 and 2014 for other prestigious awards including The Independent Foreign Fiction Prize (now part of the Man Booker International Prize) and the IMPAC book award.

It is very sparsely populated with things and incidents, but what there are peculiarly unforgettable [...] This depends of course on the writing, and the quality of writing is not always easy to discern through the glass of translation. Mortier is fortunate in his brilliant translator, Ina Rilke, who appears to have picked up all the little theological and historical references, all the almost invisible linked motifs, and woven them into an English whose rhythms have an apparently easy clarity and subtlety. Between them they have made a clear and articulate work of art.

(A.S. Byatt, *The Guardian*)

The reviews of *Shutterspeed* were no less glowing. Paul Binding of the *TLS* (2007) wrote, “Ina Rilke’s translation catches superbly the novel’s constant subtle evanescence of attitudes and moods”; and James Smith noted Rilke’s “painstaking work that allows non-Dutch, English speakers to revel in Mortier’s exquisite prose” (in *The Guardian*), and described *Shutterspeed* as a “shimmering translation [...] with] an icy clarity that is, nevertheless, gentle and quietly moving” (for the Booktrust website, 2007).

These opinions are mirrored in the author’s own assessment of the translator’s work. In a tribute to Rilke for winning the Vlaamse Cultuurprijs 2009, Erwin Mortier wrote:

Wat Ina doet, daar is de term ‘vertaling’ eigenlijk ontoereikend voor. Het zou ‘hertaling’ moeten zijn. Of zelfs ‘hertovering’. Dat is dan wel een neologisme, maar daar zijn Ina en ik als het moet niet vies van. Ik weet dat Ina haar werk altijd beschouwt als een verlies ten opzichte van de brontekst, maar bij werkelijke getalenteerde vertalers zoals zij, die ik noch min noch meer als kunstenaars ‘in their own right’ beschouw, wordt die a priori ‘nederlaag’ op magische wijze een overwinning. Ik feliciteer Ina dan ook van harte voor deze meer dan verdiende lauwerkranen. (<http://www.erwinmortier.be/node/97>; retrieved 26/09/2018)

Mortier clearly believes that a translator must be given freedom, and welcomes the freedom that his translator takes – freedoms we will observe close up in Sections 7.3 and 7.4 below.

7.3 The Data

Using the technique described in Chapter 2.5.2 and 2.5.4, I generated a list of adjective-noun bigrams from *Sluiterijd*, and then extracted all those which had zero hits in the reference corpus nITenTen. Of these bigrams, I judged 31 to be creative. As explained in Chapter 2.7, judging whether or not a bigram with zero hits in the

reference corpus was actually ‘creative’ involved (i) supplementary Google searches (taking me from multi-billion word corpora to the trillions of words on the web); (ii) asking native speakers what they thought; (iii) and looking to see whether the word in question was figurative, i.e. whether it contained a rhetorical trope. The fruits of these findings will be discussed in Sections 7.3.1–7.3.8 below.

In addition to these 30 creative Dutch adjective-noun bigrams, I also found nine creative English adjective-noun bigrams which were the translations of more prosaic Dutch forms. These were the so-called ‘denormalised’ bigrams (which I discovered using the reverse test for normalisation described in Chapter 2.8) and will be discussed later on in Section 7.4.

All the bigrams have been subdivided into rhetorical tropes, and ordered alphabetically.

7.3.1 Antipersonification

gelakte kereltjes (gloss: varnished/lacquered young chaps) refers to the young admirers of a beauty called Isabella Van Callant, whom Joris’s aunt calls *dat nichtje*: ‘*Dat nichtje,*’ *zoals tante het kind altijd noemde, had zich intussen verloofd, misschien met een van de gelakte kereltjes die haar omzwermden die ene keer dat ik haar heb teruggezien, op een soiree in Brussel, tijdens de pauze in de foyer.* This bigram has been classified as antipersonification because the adjective *gelakte* (‘varnished’, ‘lacquered’) normally collocates with inanimate surfaces such as *OPPERVLAK* (‘surface’) *STAAL* (‘steel’/‘iron’), *HOUT* (‘wood’), *VLOER* (‘floor’) and *NAGEL* (‘nail’). This adjective therefore could be said to dehumanise the *KERELTJES* (‘young chaps’) with which it has been paired.⁴⁹ This effect has been neutralised in translation to “posh young men” in “‘That hussy’, as Aunt always referred to the girl, had in the meantime become engaged, perhaps to one of the **posh young men** dancing attendance on her one evening in the foyer of a Brussels theatre.” A non-normalising shadow translation might have read *LACQUERED YOUNG MEN* or even *VARNISHED YOUNG MEN*.

However my shadow translations are by no means perfect: English *LACQUERED* and Dutch *GELAKT* do not, as Hoey (2005) might conjecture, have the same phonetic primings: For instance, *GELAKT* is phonetically similar to (and might therefore trigger an association with) the Dutch adjective *GELIKT*, which occurs in the construction *EEN GELIKTE ZAKENMAN* (a flashy business man), whereas *LACQUERED* has no similar association. In other words the construction *GEL*KTE + HUMAN MALE* might feel more

49 The bigram could equally have been classified as metonymy since if the young men in question had slicked-back lacquered hair, they could be seen as lacquered by association with their hair. But whatever the classification, the usage is unusual because it applies a varnished finish (normally associated with inanimate objects) to animate people.

natural than the construction L*QUERED + HUMAN MALE, and this might in part account for the normalisation.

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

gepolitoerde jochies (gloss: french-polished lads) occurs in the sentence *Ze droeg haar ravenzwarte lokken in een dikke staart waarin glinsterende kettinkjes gevlochten waren en ze schaterlachte om elke kwinkslag die de gepolitoerde jochies in haar buurt haar in de oren fluisterden*. This bigram, like the last, refers to Isabella Van Callant's admirers but it takes the metaphor even further: this time the boys are not just lacquered, they have been French polished (GEPOLITOERD). And in addition to the antipersonification, there is some oxymoron: the smoothness of the polish is in stark contrast to the roughness suggested by the word JOCHIE ('lad'). Judging by its list of top collocates, JOCHIES are typically STOER ('tough'), ONDEUGEND ('cheeky'), even STINKEND ('smelly'), and often they get up to KATTENKWAAD ('mischief'). In translation, both the POLISH and the 'laddishness' have been dispensed with, and the oxymoronic contrast replaced by the single word "admirers". Thus the English translation reads: "She wore her jet black hair in a thick pony tail threaded with strands of glitter, and laughed uproariously each time one of her **admirers** leaned over to whisper some little joke in her ear." The bigram has obviously been normalised, but if you substituted "her admirers" for, say, THOSE POLISHED LITTLE LADS, the final clause of Rilke's beautifully crafted sentence might end up feeling rather clumsy (especially as it would involve a repetition of LITTLE: POLISHED LITTLE LADS ... LITTLE JOKE). In other words, a non-normalising translation (one which drew out the oxymoron) might have upset the balance of the sentence here.

NORMALISED

kartonnen handjes (gloss: cardboard hands) occurs in the phrase *[juffrouw Van Vooren] maakte [...] met een ijl gewapper van haar kartonnen handjes duidelijk dat ze niet in de stemming verkeerde voor veel gepalaver*. In this bigram, juffrouw Van Vooren's hands have been dehumanised by their cardboard modifier. This antipersonification has been neutralised in translation as "giving **stiff little waves** to say that she was in no mood for any palaver." The translation is compact: "stiff little waves" conveys not only the *kartonnen handjes*, but also the *ijl gewapper* ('thin/rarified waving'), which is treated separately below. Although the bigram has been normalised, the translation itself is inventive in that Miss Van Vooren's hand gestures have been vividly brought to life in the English version.

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

ijl gewapper (gloss: thin/rarefied waving), as we have just seen, occurs in the phrase *een ijl gewapper van haar kartonnen handjes*. And as we also saw above, the English translation condenses these eight words (made up of eleven syllables) into a phrase less than half the length in terms of both words and syllables. Yet despite its vividness, “stiff little waves” is more formulaic than *ijl gewapper*, whose adjective *ijl* (‘thin’ / ‘rarified’) does not (at least not in n|TenTen, nor in Google Books) combine with the noun *gewapper*. But what were the alternatives? Would, for instance, FRAIL LITTLE WAVES OF CARDBOARD/CARDBOARD-LIKE HANDS have worked here given that this phrase is immediately followed by the longish complement “[...] to say that she was in no mood for any palaver”?

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

7.3.2 Catachresis

gekalibreerde zebra's (gloss: calibrated zebras) occurs as part of a comical announcement at a circus: [...] *dames en heren, appels en peren... Mario Marconi met zijn gekalibreerde zebra's!* It is the clash⁵⁰ of register between the technical *kalibreren* and the exotic *zebra's* that makes this bigram funny and unusual. The catachresis has been preserved in English as “calibrated zebras” in “Ladies and gentlemen, our first spectacle [...] – Mario Marconi and his **calibrated zebras!**” even though this is an obscure expression. A normalising translation might, for instance, have opted for the more explanatory, ZEBRAS CANTERING IN UNISON. But Rilke’s translation preserves the comic obscurity.

NOT NORMALISED

genitale mechaniek (gloss: genital mechanism) occurs in the phrase *Volgens de meneer die het boek geschreven had, vertoonde de primitieve mens al een zeker besef van de genitale mechaniek*. The odd-sounding bigram has a comical ring to it, and this is reflected in translation: “According to the book’s author, primitive man already showed a certain awareness of the **genital mechanisms**.” In one way there is nothing surprising about this direct translation, but the inclusion of the definite article “*the genital mechanisms*” add to the comedy of the phrase by making it more specific. If the translator had wanted to normalise it, she could easily have removed the definite article in order to make the phrase sound more abstract and thus more tame.

NOT NORMALISED

50 There is a further clash between *gekalibreerde* and the clichéd and avuncular *dames en heren, appels en peren*.

geslonken coiffure (gloss: reduced/shrunken hairdo) refers to Miss van Vooren's hairdo and occurs in the sentence *Met haar donkere bril en het transparante sjaaltje dat haar weer enigszins tot normale proporties geslonken coiffure bedekte, maar waar twee krullen onderuit kwamen, zag ze er weer min of meer als haar oude zelf uit.*

Geslonken is an unusual epithet for *coiffure* because it normally collocates with words denoting resources or certain types of food, as in *GESLONKEN BUDGET* ('reduced budget'), *GESLONKEN RESERVES* ('diminished reserves') or *GESLONKEN SPINAZIE* ('wilted spinach'). In her typically succinct fashion, Rilke has conveyed the comedy of the ST, and she has done so by using the technique of an antonymic translation. Thus in the English, instead of a shrunken hair-do (*geslonken coiffure*) we get a "swollen hairdo" that has been reined in. The full translation reads: "With her dark glasses on and a filmy little headscarf reining in her **swollen hairdo** except for a curl on either side, she looked more or less her old self."⁵¹

NOT NORMALISED

hoekig ongemak (gloss: angular awkwardness) occurs in a phrase where Joris compares his own expression to that of his father's: *Wanneer ik mezelf een even hoekig ongemak tentoon zie spreiden [...].* This has been translated as "The sight of me wearing the same **strained expression** [...]." What makes this bigram unusual is the fact that *HOEKIG* (when predicated of people) normally combines with nouns denoting people's features (e.g. *EEN HOEKIGE KAAKLIJN* 'an angular jawline') rather than their emotions. But here it is Joris's *ongemak* (his 'unease' or 'discomfort') which is described as *hoekig* ('angular'). The translation "strained expression" seems to be a clear case of normalisation. However, given the length and complexity of the Dutch sentence, it is difficult to imagine a more workable solution. The entire Dutch sentence reads:

Wanneer ik mezelf een even **hoekig ongemak** tentoon zie spreiden, hier, op de drempel van de winkel, rond mijn twaalfde, op een zondag eind mei, bekruipt me nog steeds de duizeling van iemand die met de hielen op de rand van een afgrond poseert.

Rilke has funnelled *hoekig ongemak* into the single word "strained", probably so that she can fit the complex verbal expression *hoekig ongemak tentoon [...]. spreiden* into this long sentence. (Even if Rilke had used *ANGULAR* instead of *STRAINED* she still would have ended up with a relatively common collocation.)

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

51 The prepositional phrase *tot normale proporties* perhaps makes *geslonken coiffure* sound less odd than it would do in isolation.

ijle helm (gloss: rarefied helmet) refers once more to Miss van Vooren's hairdo after she has come back from the hairdresser's. This bigram occurs in a witty paragraph describing the entire hair-styling process: [...]*de canonisering van haar lokken in meerdere stadia verliep, tot ze in een fijnmazig weefsel van afzonderlijk opgespoten haren als een ijle helm op haar schedel stonden.* In translation the absurdity has been kept but in Rilke's characteristically succinct style whereby *fijnmazig weefsel* and *ijle helm* have been conflated into the single (and unusual) English bigram "finely meshed helmet" in "the sanctification of her tresses had to be undertaken in stages or they would not stand erect as a **finely meshed helmet** of individually lacquered hairs".

NOT NORMALISED

mercantiele hartelijkheid (gloss: mercantile heartiness) describes the way in which Joris's aunt greets her clients when she sees them at a circus.

'Hoe is 't, kindjes?' vroeg tante, een en al mercantiele hartelijkheid, terwijl ze me een duw in de rug gaf opdat ik minstens even vriendelijk gedag zou zeggen.
'How are you doing, girls?' Aunt crowed, all **mercantile heartiness**. She poked me in the back for me to greet them as warmly as she did.

Both *mecantiel* and *hartelijkheid* are low frequency and there is not, as far as I can see, an obvious way of normalising the Dutch bigram into a common English adjective-noun bigram. But Rilke could have, if she had wanted to, paraphrased the bigram to the more trite WITH A (BIG) SHOPKEEPER'S SMILE. Instead she kept to the rather unusual wording, adding her own creative flourish with the word "crowed".

NOT NORMALISED

stroeve elegantie (gloss: stiff/awkward elegance) refers to a pose held by Joris's young mother in an old photo. *Met een ietwat stroeve elegantie, knieën en enkels tegen elkaar, ziet ze er plotseling ouder uit dan ze was.* The bigram has been translated as "strained elegance" in "The slightly **strained elegance** of knees and ankles kept close together makes her look older than her years." Like the Dutch, the English bigram is unusual, but at the same time, it has a more familiar ring to it than the Dutch. Perhaps this is because "strained elegance" resonates with the more familiar phrase RESTRAINED ELEGANCE (66 hits in enTenTen).

NOT NORMALISED

7.3.3 Hypallage

opgewekte verrassing (gloss: high-spirited surprise) describes the surprise felt in the village shop when Joris's posh aunt and cousin suddenly arrive from Brussels: *Er deinde plotseling een lichte opschudding door de winkel, een opgewekte verrassing*. The personification here involves hypallage (a transferred epithet): although it is the people in the shop who are in high spirits (*opgewekt*) because of the surprise (*verrassing*), the high spirits are attributed to the surprise. Here the translator condenses the twelve-word Dutch sentence into the far shorter, "There was a **ripple of curiosity and surprise**". The metaphor "ripple" succinctly captures both *Er deinde plotseling* and *een lichte opschudding*; and the "curiosity and surprise" corresponds roughly to the *opgewekte verrassing*. Although the hypallage has been lost, the loss has been amply compensated for by the animation ("a ripple of curiosity and surprise") and by the vividness of expression.

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

7.3.4 Hyperbole

heroïsche Been (gloss: heroic bone) is a bigram taken from a biology text book that Joris has to read for school, a book which he is displaying to the customers in his aunt's shop: *Ik draaide het boek om en toonde aan het volk in de winkel een ets van de atlaswervel, volgens de schrijver een toepasselijke naam voor het Heroïsche Been dat de Schedel torst*.

Het Heroïsche Been is a grandiose way of referring to the atlas vertebra, the bone that connects the spinal column to the head. The hyperbole of this phrase has been kept in translation, an allusion to the Greek god Atlas in "I turned the book around so that everyone in the shop could see the picture of the atlas vertebra captioned *An appropriate name for the Heroic Bone that supports the Skull*." Although there is no normalisation here, there is nothing surprising about the translation either. This shows how sometimes an obvious or literal translation can produce a *creative* bigram in the target text, whereas a less obvious or inventive translation can produce a *normalised* bigram in the target text (as we saw with "stiff little waves" in 7.3.1).

NOT NORMALISED

onherroepelijk reliëf (gloss: irreversible relief/contrast) refers to the thin furrows left on paper by a sharp pencil, even after the words have been erased. These furrows are significant to the older Joris because they suggest that everything we say leaves indelible marks. This runs contrary to what Joris thought as a boy when he was not bothered by such marks: *Ik zie mezelf [toen] verrukt de kruimels rubber van het blad afvegen en zorgeloos negeren dat de punt van mijn potlood een onherroepelijk*

reliëf in het papier heeft geëst. This entire sentence has been translated as “I see myself happily brushing the rubber crumbs off my page, unperturbed by the **gouges** left in the paper by my sharp pencil.” Although the rhetorical flourish *onherroepelijk reliëf ... geëst* has been funnelled into the single word “gouges”, and to that extent normalised, the hyperbole inherent in the image itself has been kept: after all **GOUGE** collocates strongly with geographical reliefs like **TRENCHES**, **GULLIES** and **CRATERS**. In fact one could argue that the image has been strengthened given that “gouge” appeals more immediately to the senses than the rather aloof description *onherroepelijk reliëf*.

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

roemrijke rivieren / vorstelijke oceaan (gloss: glorious rivers / regal ocean) occur together in a sentence purporting to be a quote from Joris’s geography schoolbook: “[Palissy heeft] na lang en moeilijke observatie nauwkeurig vastgesteld dat onze *roemrijke rivieren en zelfs de vorstelijke oceaan* zich laven aan de kleinste sneeuwvlok in het hooggebergte.” *Roemrijk* (‘glorious’) is a grand word, often used in combination with words referring to history and heroic deeds (**VERLEDEN** ‘past’, **HISTORIE** ‘history’, **GESCHIEDENIS** ‘history/happenings’, **WAPENFEIT** ‘feat of arms’, and **OVERWINNING** ‘victory’). In English, the alliterating hyperbole of *roemrijk* has been toned down and expressed as the more general “great”. Similarly the adjective *vorstelijk* (‘regal’/ ‘princely’ / ‘generous’) has not been translated lexically but hinted at grammatically in the plural ending of “oceans”. The English translation of the entire sentence reads: “[Palissy] established, after long years of study, that each snowflake falling on the top of a mountain helps to feed the world’s **great rivers**, and even the **oceans!**” A possible shadow translation might have read **RENOWNED RIVERS AND EVEN THE REGAL OCEAN**. But note how the word “oceans” has been moved to the end of the sentence (where the weight of the utterance lies), thereby acquiring importance. This is a very subtle form of compensation

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

7.3.5 Metaphor

lenige lachjes (gloss: supple giggles) refers to the giggles that Joris hears as his aunt and uncle go upstairs to their bedroom after Sunday lunch: *Na het eten daalden als vanouds haar giljetjes en wonderlijk lenige lachjes de trap treden af. Zij en oom Werner waren naar boven gegaan, om de kost wat te laten zakken, zoals oom altijd zei*. This has been translated as “After lunch I caught the sound of her muffled squeals and strangely **sinuous giggles** drifting down the stairs. She and Uncle Werner had gone up for a rest, to settle their stomachs, as Uncle put it.” The Dutch bigram combines an adjective which normally says something about the body (e.g.

LENIGE LIJF/LICHAAM/FIGUUR ‘flexible body’) or about the mind LENIGE GEEST (‘flexible mind’) with the unusual partner *lachjes* (‘giggles’). The translator has opted for the zero-frequency “sinuous giggles”, rather than a normalising alternative like HIGH-PITCHED GIGGLES or UNCONTROLLABLE GIGGLES. Note too the phonetic effects of the translation: the repeated sibilants (“muffled squeals and strangely sinuous sgiggles”) and the repeated stressed high vowel /i/ in sinuous sgiggles, imitative of a HEEHEE giggling sound.

NOT NORMALISED

7.3.6 Oxymoron

flagrant medelijden (gloss: flagrant pity) is an odd turn of phrase, combining as it does the positive noun *medelijden* (‘compassion’ or ‘pity’) with the negative modifier *flagrant* (‘flagrant’), whose top collocates, much like the English, are SCHENDING (‘violation’), TEGENSpraak (‘contradiction’) and MISKENNING (‘denial’). The bigram occurs in the sentence *De jochies die ik op school in de rij ruw in de rug stampte, riepen onveranderlijk een flagrant medelijden in me op*, and has been translated as the single word “pity” in “The boys I jostled when we stood in line at school always made me **pity** them.” With the omission of the epithet “flagrant”, the oxymoron has been neutralised. The shadow translation “[...] made me pity them FLAGRANTLY” would have been possible, although perhaps it emphasises the epithet more than in the Dutch.

NORMALISED

gegoede burgertrutjes (gloss: well-to-do middle class frumps/ trouts) occurs in passage where the Joris hero is learning to vent his hitherto repressed anger towards his mother:

*De woede die dan in me opwelt heb ik nooit op hen gericht, onbewust wel op mijn moeder. Ik kon naar de beste scholen, alle reizen maken die ik wilde en kiezen uit alle **gegoede burgertrutjes** die ze als boeketten voor me uitstalde tot het me liefde eraan te snuffelen*

Some of that anger seems to have been funnelled into this bigram. It is a bigram close in form to the common collocation *gegoede burgerij* (‘the well-to-do bourgeoisie’), only much more unusual and more angrily negative. Here *gegoede* combines not with its usual partner *burgerij* but with the abusive *burgertrut*, defined by Van Dale NL-EN as “narrow-minded cow/bitch”, “prudish cow/bitch” and “stupid (old) bag”. The resulting bigram is somewhat paradoxical, certainly in a context which

otherwise presents the girls as desirable spoils. The paradox has been resolved in translation to “pert middle-class girls”.

The anger welling up each time I stand there is not directed at them, but subconsciously at my mother. My mother, who enabled me to attend the best schools, to travel as much as I pleased and to take my pick from the **pert middle-class girls** she presented to me like strongly scented bouquets.

Despite normalising the oxymoron, the translator shows great sensitivity to the alliteration connecting the salient words of the latter part of the sentence: *burgertrutjes ... boeketten ... beliefde* -> “pleased ... pick ... pert ... presented”.

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

goddelijke verveling (gloss: divine boredom) describes Joris’s state of mind during a long summer when he had nothing better to do than stare at insects crawling about in the cracks between flagstones. The bigram has been classified as an oxymoron because it contrasts the positive word *goddelijk* (‘divine’) with the negative word *verveling* (‘boredom’), whose top collocates include *dodelijk* (‘deadly’) and *chronisch* (‘chronic’). This positive/negative dichotomy has been toned down in translation as “divine indolence”. I see this as a toning down because “indolence” (which is in fact closer to laziness than boredom) is more positively tinged: for instance enTenTen gives 10 hits for LUXURIOUS INDOLENCE compared to 2 hits for LUXURIOUS BOREDOM (a distinction which comes out even stronger in Google Books [See Appendix 3a]). A more oxymoronic shadow translation might have been DIVINE BOREDOM, although the poetic register of “indolence” (which according to the Google ngram viewer is less common now and more old-fashioned than BOREDOM) is perhaps more in keeping with Mortier’s style.

NORMALISED

plechtig briefje (gloss: solemn little letter/ note) combines the weighty word *plechtig* (‘solemn’) with the diminutive *briefje* (‘little letter’ or ‘note’). It refers to a note written by Miss van Vooren (in her capacity as church warden) to the village boys who were acting as canopy bearers for the church.

*Een paar dagen voordien had juffrouw Van Vooren aan alle dragers een **plechtig briefje** gestuurd, in het sierlijke maar ietwat steriele handschrift dat ik van haar boodschappenlijstjes herkende, waarin ze iedereen, ‘in het bijzonder onze*

nieuweling’, verzocht om zeker een halfuur op voorhand samen te komen bij de sacristie.

The contrast between the diminutive noun *briefje* and its semantically weighty modifier *plechtig* has (at least to me) an amusing feel to it. But this contrast has been neutralised in translation to the single word “note”:

*Several days ago Miss van Vooren had sent the canopy bearers a **note**, in the flowing but somewhat sterile hand so familiar to me from her shopping lists, telling everyone, in particular the new member, to be sure to present themselves at the sacristy at least half an hour ahead of time.*

Translating the bigram as A SOLEMN LITTLE NOTE would have kept the oxymoron, but there are reasons why a translator might not want to do this. First the lexical diminutive LITTLE is more intrusive than the grammatical diminutive -JE. Second, the immediate co-text conveys the ‘gravity’ of the situation through its register: namely the fastidiously parenthetical remark “in particular” and the imperative tone of “to be sure to present themselves”.

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

ziekelijke rijkdom (gloss: sickly wealth) occurs in the sentence *Er waren dagen dat ze haar **ziekelijke rijkdom** onmogelijk binnenskamers kon houden* and has been translated as “There were times when she was incapable of keeping her **wealth of afflictions** to herself.” This bigram is oxymoric to the extent that it combines the negative *ziekelijk* (which collocates with e.g. negative words like JALOEZIE (‘jealousy’), ACHTERDOCHT (‘suspicion’) and DRANG (‘compulsion’)) with the positive *rijkdom* (which collocates with positive and expansive words like ONMETELIJK (immeasurable) and ONGEKEND (unprecedented)). The English preserves the oxymoron, producing a witty variation on the common collocation WEALTH OF AFFECTION (which has 30 hits in enTenTen15 as opposed to 0 for “wealth of afflictions”). As with her translation of *stroeve elegantie* (see 7.3.2), Rilke has invented an unusual collocation which seems to flow off the pen because it resonates with a common collocation.

NOT NORMALISED

7.3.7 Personification

mahoniekleurige gestalte (gloss: mahogany-coloured form) refers to Joris’s father’s coffin and occurs in the sentence *Ik keek neer op zijn donkere, **mahoniekleurige gestalte**. Ze had een mooi nieuw lijf voor hem gekocht, mijn moeder, niet veel groter*

dan een reiskoffer. In itself, it is not unusual to modify *GESTALTE* by a colour or the suggestion of a colour (e.g. *DONKERE GESTALTE*, *ZWARTE GESTALTE*, *RODE GESTALTE*). What makes this bigram unusual, then, is the personification: in the ST, the coffin is referred to as a *gestalte* ('form'), a word which collocates strongly with *menselijk* ('human') and normally refers to living shapes and forms. This reflects Joris's perception of the coffin, which he equates with his father, the person. The translation has removed the human element from the bigram by simply rendering it as "mahogany box" in "I looked down at the dark, **mahogany box**. She had bought him a handsome new trunk, had my mother, not much bigger than a suitcase." A non-normalising translation might have been dark *MAHOGANY FORM*.

NORMALISED

nederig zand (gloss: humble sand) occurs in the long phrase (taken from an even longer sentence) *stof opwolkte dat ik weet niet wat allemaal geweest was, resten van stenen uit de ruimte, volgens de meester en zijn boeken, of bergflanken door de werking der wateren en hun gedurige knaging tot nederig zand vermalen*. The bigram refers to particles of dust in the air which were originally stone but which have been ground to dust by the "perpetual abrasion of water". The entire phrase has been translated as "dust particles that came from goodness knows where, from what had once been meteorites, if the master and his books were anything to go by, or from a rocky mountain ground down to **humble grains of sand** by the perpetual abrasion of water." The weighty "humble grains of sand" keeps the anthropomorphism in the Dutch (although the word "abrasion" in the same sentence reduces the animacy expressed in the Dutch *knaging* ('gnawing') in *hun gedurige knaging tot nederig zand vermalen*).

NOT NORMALISED

schuchtere lommer (gloss: timid shade) occurs in a phrase describing a photo of Joris's mother sitting in the shade: *onder het nog schuchtere lommer van een wilg, zit ze op een deken*. The clause has been translated as "she sits on a rug under a **greening** willow". The Van Dale defines *schuchter* as 'timid', 'timorous', but also 'tentative'; and the word collocates happily with human referents (e.g. *EEN SCHUCHTER MEISJE* 'shy girl') and with conscious endeavours (*EEN SCHUCHTERE POGING* 'a timid attempt'). Rilke has funnelled the bigram and its modifier (i.e. *nog + schuchtere lommer*) into the single word "greening", and in doing so has replaced the personification with a literal description.

NORMALISED

sullige droogboeketten (gloss: dopey bouquets of dried flowers) refers to a bunch of dried flowers on juffrouw Van Vooren's mantelpiece: *Op de schouw stonden sullige droogboeketten*.

Sullig ('wet', 'sappy' or 'dopey') normally combines with nouns denoting people (like *LERAAR* 'teacher'; *GOEDZAK* 'kind soul'; *JONGEMAN* 'young man'; and *JOCHIE* 'lad'). So its translation as "dreary" in "On the mantelpiece stood **dreary little bunches of dried flowers**" tones down the personification given that *DREARY* also collocates with non-human words like *AFTERNOON*, *WINTER*, and *WEATHER*. But what were the alternatives? For obvious reasons, *SAPPY* or *WET BUNCH OF DRIED FLOWERS* would have been ludicrous. Moreover Rilke's translation is effective in terms of alliteration: **dreary ... dried**.

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

7.3.8 Synaesthesia

donker verwijt (gloss: dark reproach) occurs in the sentence *Dagenlang verschanste ze zich in haar woonst, die als een donker verwijt tussen de cederbomen schemerde*. It is categorised here as synaesthesia because the adjective *donker* ('dark'), normally associated with colour or tone, modifies *verwijt* ('blame'/reproach'). The context in which this synaesthesia occurs involves personification and hypallage (transferred epithet) as well: the house (*woonst*) is capable of reproach (*verwijt*), which is dark (*donker*) by association with the dark (*schemeren*) trees. All three stylistic devices (synaesthesia, personification, and hypallage) have been omitted in the translation, which portrays the same situation but more literally: "For days on end she remained ensconced in her house amid the lofty cedars". Perhaps the dark reproach could have been hinted with the shadow translation *LOOMING CEDARS*.

NORMALISED

geplastificeerde jeugdigheid (gloss: plasticised youthfulness) combines the concrete image of plastic covering with the abstract property of youth(fulness). The phrase refers to Joris's mother's aging face plastered in make-up: make-up *dat haar later het uiterlijk van een pop verleende, een rimpelloze maar geplastificeerde jeugdigheid*. In translation, the synaesthesia disappears because the adjective "plasticised" is employed to modify the noun "doll" instead of the abstract noun *YOUTH*. The English translation of the entire phrase reads: "until in the end she became a doll, wrinkle-free and **plasticised**".

NORMALISED

glazig welbehagen (gloss: glassy well-being) occurs in the phrase about Joris's father: *cognacje in de hand, in de ogen een glazig welbehagen, half dronken, half verrukt*. It combines the concrete adjective *glazig* ('glassy') with the abstract noun *welbehagen* ('well-being'), and as such diverges from the normal use. *Glazig* collocates mainly with concrete nouns such as AARDAPPELEN ('potatoes') as in GLAZIGE AARDAPPELEN ('waxy potatoes') or OOG ('eye') as in GLAZIGE OGEN ('glassy/glazed eyes'); and by extension with BLIK as EEN GLAZIGE BLIK ('a glazed look'). The word *glazig* is, however, unusual in combination with *welbehagen* and has been omitted in translation in the sense that the entire fourteen-word Dutch phrase (quoted above) has been condensed into three words in English: "tipsy and dreamy". The deletion seems like an enormous liberty but the fourteen-word phrase quoted here is embedded in a convoluted one-hundred-word-long sentence, which reads:

Op het gemeentehuis ondertekende mijn vader als getuige het register, terwijl ze allebei ietwat verwaasd zitten toe te kijken, maar elders, alle plechtigheden zijn intussen achter de rug, staat hij schouder aan schouder met zijn iets schrieler evenbeeld onder de kruinen in de boomgaard, broertje-broertje, rokertje tussen de lippen, hemsboord losgeknoopt, cognacje in de hand, in die ogen een glazig welbehagen, half dronken, half verrukt, net als ik die zondag, slaperig van de port, terwijl ik de braadpan omgekeerd op het aanrecht zette en boven mijn hoofd tantes gilletjes als mussenjongen uit de dakgoot vielen.

At the registry office my father signs the marriage certificate as a witness, while Uncle and Aunt look on with a rather dazed expression, but out in the orchard, the formalities over and done with, he stands shoulder to shoulder with his slightly less robust look-alike, twin brothers, cigarettes between their lips, shirt collars undone, tipsy and dreamy, like me that Sunday, lulled by the port wine, setting the roasting pan upside down by the sink and hearing Aunt's little cries tumbling from the eaves like fledgling sparrows.

NORMALISED BUT NOT IN CONTEXT

wijdlopig meubel (gloss: long-winded/ verbose item of furniture) refers comically to Joris's aunt's dressing table and has been translated as "splay-legged piece of furniture. Etymologically *wijdlopig* means "een grote ruimte belopen" (a definition which according to Van Dale dates back to 1599), but its current meaning is less literal: the contemporary definition given by Van Dale is "verbose" or "longwinded", such as "een nogal wijdlopig hoofdstuk in het boek". The translation harks back to

the etymology of the word and in doing so brings out the comedy, replacing the synaesthesia (abstract + concrete) with personification.

NOT NORMALISED

7.4 Denormalisation

In addition to the 30 Dutch creative bigrams discussed so far, Sketch Engine unearthed 9 creative English adjective-noun bigrams independently of the NL-En pairings. Some of the creative English bigrams reflect creativity in the Dutch, albeit a creativity cast in another form (i.e. the Dutch ST was something other than an adjective-noun bigram). Each English bigram is discussed in detail below, along with the ST phrase from which it was translated.

7.4.1 Catachresis

flour-dusted eccentric are the words Joris uses to describe how he imagines God: “In my imagination He was a flour-dusted eccentric.” This is a literal translation of the Dutch, which was not detected in the search for creative NL adjective-noun bigrams because the ST counterpart is made up of a prepositional phrase followed by a noun: *In mijn verbeelding was Hij een met bloem bestoven zonderling.*

hoarfrosted-child forms part of a description of Joris’s dying uncle: “He had turned into an overgrown, **hoar-frosted child** howling in the night because of his dreams [...]” The original phrase was *met rijp bedekt* in *Hij was een groot, met rijp bedekt kind geworden dat ’s nachts van angst kon liggen krijsen om dromen [...]*. Rilke could have translated *met rijp bedekt* as FROST COVERED but instead opted for the more unusual word “hoar-frosted”, which alliterates with “howling”.

heaving mattress occurs in a passage depicting the grave in which Joris’s aunt, uncle and father have been buried:

“The grave resembles a king-size double bed, notwithstanding its triple occupancy. On the mattress lies a crucifix of polished black granite. Aunt resides on the left-hand side, and on the right, roughly at Uncle Werner’s feet, rests my father, considerably smaller in death than his twin brother, although the reverse was true in life. I picture them sometimes, crumpling up with laughter on the shared, **heaving mattress**, like children staying over at a friend’s house.”

De steen lijkt op een luxe tweepersoonsbed, ook al wordt het door drie beslapen. Op het matras ligt een kruisbeeld van gepolijst zwart graniet. Eronder rust aan

*de linkerkant tante, en aan de ander kant, ergens aan de voeten van oom Werner, mijn vader, stukken kleiner dan zijn tweelingbroer, het tegendeel van toen ze nog leefden. Soms stel ik me voor hoe ze proestend en giechelend in **de aarde liggen te deinen**, als kinderen op een logeerpartijtje.*

Rilke has extended the bed metaphor (the king-size double bed / *luxe tweepersoonsbed*) introduced in line 1 right up to line 5, turning Mortier's image of Joris's father and uncle rolling about underground (line 5: *in de aarde liggen te deinen*) into a "heaving mattress". Apart from the fact that "heaving mattress" is an unusual collocation — heaving typically modifies body parts (BOSOM, BREAST, CHEST); open expanses of water (OCEAN, SEA); and crowded places (METROPOLIS) — Rilke manages with this one image to suggest the brothers' writhing bodies (by association with heaving chest), their undulating movements in the earth (by association of with heaving sea); and lack of space (by association with heaving crowds).

7.4.2 Hypallage accusatory sight

At the end of the novel, Joris's mother returns from Spain, forcing Joris against his will to leave his aunt and uncle and move to another town with her. The phrase "accusatory sight" refers to the suitcase he will be taking with him: "First I just left it there, wide open. Perhaps I hoped the **accusatory sight** of it would be enough to give Aunt a stab of guilt each time she went past my room." This is a translation of *Eerst liet ik hem daar staan. Misschien hoopte ik dat het opengeklapte deksel **genoeg verwijt zou uitstralen** om tante met schuldgevoelens te overladen wanneer ze langs mijn kamer liep.*

"Accusatory sight" is a creative variation on the more common collocations ACCUSATORY STARE and ACCUSATORY GLARE; and it is a hypallage to the extent that the accusation has been transferred from the suitcase itself (in Dutch) to the very sight of the suitcase (in English).

7.4.3 Hyperbole

moth-free eternity occurs in the sentence "The smell of cinnamon, of wild thyme, and the primness of the lavender sachets piled up at the far end of one of the shelves, waiting to suffuse every wardrobe with **moth-free eternity**". This unusual bigram compresses a great deal of information: it conveys not only the phrase *een eeuwigheid zonder motten* but also *tot in haar vergeten jaarringen* in a sentence which reads as follows: *De lucht van kaneel, van bergtijn, de strenge lucht van lavendel in de tros met linnen zakjes op een hoek van een van de boorden, wachtend om elke klerenkast tot in haar vergeten jaarringen een **eeuwigheid zonder motten** in te prenten.* This

English creative bigram is yet another example of Rilke's ability to subtly condense and funnel information from the ST into the TT.

7.4.4 Metaphor

marbled rainbow stripes occurs in a phrase recounting Joris's hazy memory of his father: "I cannot possibly remember any of it, and yet I can see his face before me, vague and ethereal like the **marbled rainbow stripes** on the lenses of my binoculars." The unusual phrase "marbled rainbow stripes" a vivid and succinct way of capturing the bold phrases in the Dutch: *het is onmogelijk dat ik me er iets van herinner, en toch zie ik vaag zijn aangezicht, even etherisch als de regenboogkleuren die in de lenzen van de verrekijker in elkaar konden overvloeien.*

7.4.5 Personification

ramshackle, wheezy apparatus is Rilke's translation of **aftandse rammelkast**, a phrase describing Miss van Vooren's harmonium. Although **AFTANDS** can apply to human beings, as evinced by one of the examples given in the Van Dale (*die zangeres is al aftands* 'the singer is past her prime/has had it/seen better days'), it usually combines with inanimate objects, especially road vehicles and musical instruments. In contrast to this, **WHEEZY** usually modifies nouns denoting human beings or the noises we make (**WHEEZY INFANT**, **WHEEZY COUGH**, **WHEEZY VOICE**, **WHEEZY BREATHING**). By adding the word "wheezy", therefore, the translator has enlivened the phrase with some extra personification. Note too how the word English word "ramshackle" phonetically evokes the Dutch noun *rammelkast*.

7.4.6 Oxymoron

exquisite self-loathing describes Joris's ambivalence to being praised at school: "[When commended] I lowered my eyes modestly and relished the **exquisite self-loathing** brought on by the pride flushing my cheeks". Once again, we can see how compact Rilke's translation is: the contradiction conveyed by the negative *walgde* and the positive *verfijnde wijze* has been translated as the oxymoronic bigram "exquisite self-loathing" and reinforced by the verb "relished". The ST reads: *[Dan] sloeg ik deemoedig de ogen neer en walgde op de meest verfijnde wijze van de trots die ik op mijn wangen voelde blozen.*

7.5 Summary and Discussion

Of all the zero-frequency adjective-noun bigrams that Sketch Engine generated from *Sluiterijd*, I judged 30 to be creative. Of these, only 10 had NOT been normalised; that is, they had been translated into low frequency English bigrams which

preserved the rhetorical trope. They were the five bigrams categorised as catachresis, namely *gekalibreerde zebra's* (“calibrated zebras”), *genitale mechaniek* (“genital mechanisms”), *geslonken coiffure* (“swollen hairdo”), *mercantiele hartelijkheid* (“mercantile heartiness”) and *stroeve elegantie* (“strained elegance”); the hyperbole *heroïsche been* (“heroic bone”); the metaphors *lenige lachjes* (“sinuous giggles”), *ziekelijske rijkdom* (“wealth of afflictions”) and *ijle helm* (“finely meshed helmet”); and finally the personification *nederig zand* (“humble grains of sand”). It should be noted, however, that although classified as NOT NORMALISED the English bigrams did vary in terms of creativity, ranging from the resourceful “swollen hairdo” to the literal “heroic bone”.

One of the most striking results of this case study, however, is that two-thirds of the ST bigrams came out as having been normalised in some way: 20 of the 30 TT bigrams showed up as being relatively more frequent or more conventional than their ST counterparts. And yet translator Ina Rilke has been highly praised for her inventiveness by both literary critics and the author of this novel himself. Indeed, as we saw in Section 7.2, author Erwin Mortier responded to Rilke winning the 2009 Flemish Prize for Culture (Vlaamse Cultuurprijs 2009) by saying, *Wat Ina doet, daar is de term ‘vertaling’ eigenlijk ontoereikend voor. Het zou ‘hertaling’ moeten zijn. Of zelfs ‘hertovering’*. This tribute to Rilke’s creativity roughly translates as: “The term ‘vertaling’ [‘transferring from one language to another’] is not really an adequate description of what Ina does. It should be ‘hertaling’ [‘re-linguaging’]. Or even ‘hertovering’ [‘re-conjuring’]”.

In many ways, then, Mortier’s tribute to Ina Rilke can be seen as an invitation to take a closer look at her ‘normalised’ bigrams and to analyse how they function within their co-text; and this is exactly what I did. My analysis revealed that 18 out of the 20 cases involved a re-linguaging (*hertalen*) or a re-conjuring of the text (even in cases where the bigram seemed completely normalised, and had indeed been categorised as such). But what exactly did this re-linguaging involve?

Let’s begin with the most prominent feature of Rilke’s translation, namely her technique of condensing many semantic units in the ST into far fewer semantic units in the TT. Traditionally scholars have described – and explained – this technique by appealing the concept of ‘simplification’ (e.g. Baker 2000) or to the concept of ‘implication’⁵² (e.g. Klaudy and Károly 2003). But these concepts, because they

52 ‘Implication’ is the opposite or converse of ‘explicitation’ and is often taken to be antithetical to ‘normalisation’ (e.g. Øverås 1998). Just to make matters more complicated, simplification (which shares many properties with implication) is NOT taken to be antithetical to normalisation. In fact, it is taken to be akin to explicitation in that both, along with normalisation, are so-called translation universals. The status of these ‘translation universals’ was discussed in Chapter 1, but here is Klaudy and Károly’s 2005 (p. 15) definition of ‘implication’ versus ‘explicitation’ for the

contain many contradictions (see footnote 47), can tie us into all sorts of knots. Indeed, as we have seen with this translation, simplification can be quite complex: from one angle it can look like normalisation or even explication; from another it can look like subtle form of implicitation. Thus we saw how the two creative bigrams in the phrase *een ijl gewapper van haar kartonnen handjes* were normalised but at the same time conjured into the tiny space of just three short words “stiff little waves”, conforming to Klaudy and Károly’s syntactic definition of implicitation (see footnote 47). In a similar vein *ijle helm* and *fijnmazig weefsel* coalesced into the reduced phrase “finely meshed helmet”; and again in similar vein the twelve-word sentence *Er deinde plotseling een lichte opschudding door de winkel, een opgewekte verrassing*, despite losing its creative bigram *opgewekte verrassing*, melted (almost “magically”, to quote Mortier again) into the much shorter English phrase “There was a ripple of curiosity and surprise”.

We saw too how the unusual, oxymoronic bigrams *flagrant medelijden* and *plechtig briefje* were rendered simply as “pity” and “note”, and how by stripping these nouns of their incongruous adjectives (and hence normalising them), the hypocrisy signposted by *flagrant* and the gentle ridicule signposted by *plechtig* both had to be gleaned from implicit cues in the co-text, something which could be termed ‘semantic implicitation’. This kind of subtlety is also evident in the translation of *vorstelijke oceaan* into “oceans”, where the excesses conveyed by *vorstelijk* are expressed grammatically by a plural ending (“oceans”).

Rilke’s technique of syntactic implicitation also produces vivid if not tactile effects: thus the reduction of the bigram *onherroepelijk relief* to the unigram “gouge” produces a TT description which is arguably more tangible than that of the ST; the omission of *jeugdigheid* from the bigram *geplastificeerde jeugdigheid* so that “doll” (*pop*) falls directly within the scope of “plasticised” (*geplastificeerde*) arguably makes for a more easy-to-imagine description than that provided by the ST. These last two examples illustrate a vital point: contrary to the assumption upon which some scholarship rests (e.g. Frankenberg-Garcia 2009), implicitation and explication are not always polar opposites on a straightforward linear scale.

sake of completeness:

Implicitation occurs, for instance, when a SL unit of a more specific meaning is replaced by a TL unit of a more general meaning; translators draw together the meaning of several words, and thus SL units consisting from two or more words are replaced by a TL unit consisting of one word; meaningful lexical elements of the SL text are dropped; two or more sentences in the SL are conjoined into one sentence in the TL; or, when SL clauses are reduced to phrases in the TL, etc. Explication takes place, for example, when a SL [source-language] unit of a more general meaning is replaced by a TL [target-language] unit of a more special meaning; the complex meaning of a SL word is distributed over several words in the TL; new meaningful elements appear in the TL text; one sentence in the SL is divided into two or several sentences in the TL; or, when SL phrases are extended or “elevated” into clauses in the TL, etc.

Thus when “two or more words are replaced by a TL unit consisting of one word” or when “meaningful lexical elements of the SL text are dropped”, as Klaudy and Károly 2003 define implicitation, the translator might simultaneously be performing an act of explicitation to the extent that the resulting translation may well appeal more explicitly to the reader’s senses.

The previous three paragraphs linked Rilke’s conciseness to implicitation, but sometimes her conciseness seems to go well beyond it. Thus we saw how the bigram *glazig welbehagen* was entirely ‘relanguaged’ when the fourteen-word phrase in which it is embedded (*cognacje in de hand, in de ogen een glazig welbehagen, half dronken, half verrukt*) was reduced to “tipsy and dreamy”. However, this example does bear a relationship to implicitation in the following way: Rilke’s sleight of hand here, her ‘relanguaging’, or repainting the text with bolder brush strokes of her own, suggests a sort of risk-taking which is quite the opposite of the risk-avoidance Pym (2005) equates with explicitation. To that extent our last example (i.e. *glazig welbehagen*) could be viewed as anathema to explicitation.

We have just seen how out of the 20 NL creative bigrams that were ‘normalised’ in English, 10 were ‘normalised’ against a backdrop of implicitation, an interesting finding given that normalisation is usually associated with explicitation, and not implicitation (Øverås 1998). But against what backdrop were the remaining 10 NL creative bigrams normalised? As we saw in Section 7.3, the backdrop often involved an acute sensitivity to other aspects of style. Thus we saw how the positive/negative contrast expressed by *goddelijke verveling* was neutralised to “divine indolence” but how, on the other hand, the poetically-tinged “indolence” resonated more with the register of the novel than BOREDOM. More interestingly the choice of “pert middle class girls” to translate *gegoede burgertrutjes* at first seemed like a glaringly unmotivated case of normalisation but a close analysis of the co-text revealed how skilfully the (alliterative) cohesive links of the ST have been recreated – or re-conjured – in the TT: *burgertrutjes ... boeketten ... liefde* -> “pick ... pert ... presented”. This analysis also revealed how the word “pert” (in addition to contributing to the alliteration) plays on the ST metaphor of a bouquet of flowers, turning it into a *pert* bouquet of flowers. To a lesser extent, Rilke’s normalising translation of *sullige droogboeketten* is also compensated for by the alliterative effects it creates.

Apart from implicitation, register, alliterative cohesion and metaphor, this case study also brought to light an instance of normalisation which might have had to do with priming (a phenomenon noted also in Chapter 5). Thus the bigram *gelakte kereltjes*, (which in Dutch might have been triggered or primed by the more common bigram *gelikte kerel*) does not readily lend itself to a literal English translation with comparable primings.

There were also two cases where the backdrop to normalisation was what I vaguely termed “the balance of the sentence” (7.3.1). Thus we saw how the unusual bigram *hoekig ongemak* was funnelled into the single word “strained”, probably as a way of coping with the syntactically complex 44-word-long sentence in which it was embedded. We saw too how *gepolitoerde jochies*, was normalised to “admirers”, perhaps to avoid violating the end-weight principle, although this was something of a borderline case.

Clearer cases of normalisation were the following: the loss of hypallage in the translation of *donker verwijt*, and the loss of personification in the translations of the *mahoniekleurige gestalte* and *schuchtere lommer*. However, even across these four examples there were gradations and nuances.

In addition to the 30 creative Dutch bigrams discussed in the preceding paragraphs, Sketch Engine unearthed a further eight English creative bigrams, found independently of the NL-En pairings. These bigrams could be seen as compensating globally for the few Dutch creative bigrams that were completely lost in translation. The 8 English creative bigrams were the catachreses “flour-dusted eccentric”, “hoarfrosted-child” and “heaving mattress”; the hypallage “accusatory sight”; the hyperbole “moth-free eternity”; the metaphor “marbled rainbow stripes”, the personification “wheezy apparatus”; and the oxymoron “exquisite self-loathing”. Some of these bigrams (e.g. “heaving mattress” and “wheezy apparatus”) play on or elaborate metaphors already present in the ST; others, such as “moth-free eternity”, condense diffuse information into pithy bigrams providing yet more examples of Rilke’s technique of implicitation.