

**Dos versiones de
the task of the translator of Antigone**

**de
Anne Carson***

Traducción y pedacitos

javier pavez

* Anne Carson, “the task of the translator of Antigone”, en *Antigonick. (Sophocles)*. Trad. Anne Carson. New York: A New Directions Book, 2015, pp. 3-6. Translaciones: Javier Pavez. Ánimos y corazón, les agradezco sus lecturas a Marcia Bustamante y Franchesca Rotger.

...renuncia del traductor de Antígona

Antígona, cariño,

en griego tu nombre nombra el contra-nacimiento, algo como eso o bien
“en vez de nacer”

Mas, ¿qué hay “en vez de nacer”?

No es que queramos entenderlo todo

Ni incluso asir, ni dirigir algo

Queremos tender hacia *algo más*

Sigo retornando a Brecht

quien te hizo hacer toda la obra atada a una puerta en tu envés

puede una puerta portar sentidos diversos

de tu puerta me quedo por defuera

extraño es que también te quedes afuera de tu puerta

esa puerta carece de adentro

o si tiene un adentro, eres la única máscara que no puede entrar en ella

para el linaje que allí vive, las cosas han ido irrecuperablemente mal

tener un padre que es también tu hermano

significa tener una madre que es tu abuela

una hermana que es tanto tu sobrina como tu tía

y otro hermano al que quieres tanto que quieres tumbarte con él

“muslo a muslo en la sepultura”

o eso dices de refilón tempranamente en la pieza

pero después nadie lo menciona nuevamente

entender¹

Conjugar

Del lat. *intendĕre* 'dirigir', 'tender a'.

Conjug. modelo.

ETIMOLOGÍA. Del latín *intendĕre*; de *in*, *en*, y *tendĕre*, tender: catalán, *entĕndrer*; francés y provenzal, *entendre*; italiano, *intendere*.

understand *ʌndəˈstænd* grasp or know the meaning (or the fact) of OE.; recognize as present or implied xvi. OE. *understandan* = OFris. *understonda*, OIcel. (as a foreign word) *undirstanda*; cf. MLG. *understān* understand, step under, MDu. *onderstaen* (Du. *-staan*), MHG. *understān*, *-stēn* (G. *unterstehen*), and with another prefix, OE. *forstandan*, OS. *farstandan*, OHG. *firstantan*, MHG. *verstān*, *-stēn* (G. *verstehen*), MDu. *verstaen* (Du. *-staan*). Hence **understanding**¹ intellect, intelligence. xi. late OE. (tr. L. *intelligentia*; cf. MSw. *undirstandning*, Icel. *undirstaðning*); (pl.; joc. sl. or colloq.) footwear; legs, feet xix. ¶ In xv–xvi three forms of the pp. were current, *understanden*, *understand(e)*, *understanded*, the last of which occurs in no. xxxv of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion (1563) and is echoed in mod. writing ('understanded of the people'); pp. *understood* appears after 1550. For a similar use of a comp. of the vb. 'stand' cf. Gr. *epistānai* understand, know.

Chorus: you're clumsy it's true
clumsy as your father
remember how Brecht had you do the whole play
with a door strapped to your back

Antigone: oh I don't want to talk about him
or him
or him
all that plowing in the dark
I go to them now
one final intersection
O my brother you have despoiled me

person *pɜːsn* †character, part played; human being xiii; living body of a human being; individual personality xiv; (theol.) distinction of being in the Godhead xiii; gram. (so L. *persona* in Varro, Gr. *prósōpon* in Dionysius Thrax) xvi. – OF. *persone* (mod. *personne*) = Pr., Sp., It. *persona*, Pg. *pesoa* = L. *persōna* mask used by a player, one who plays a part, character acted ('dramatis persona'), character or capacity in which one acts person as having legal rights, human being, in Christian use of the Trinity (for Gr. *υπόστασις*). perh. f. Etruscan *phersu* mask, and used to render Gr. *prósōpon* face, mask, dramatic part, person (f. *prós* to, towards, *ōps* face). The normally developed var. *parson* (xiv–xvii) has been differentiated with a special meaning; *person* is a reversion to L. form. So **pe-rsonable** having a well-

*L'a-bou-de-course.
L'anti-humanisme de Sophocle.
La loi d'ex nihilo.
La pulsion de mort illustrée.
Un complément.*

joh, tú siempre exageras! --mi padre solía decirme

y dejemos aquí la nota de Hegel denominando a la feminidad "la eterna ironía de

la

comunidad"

¿Cuán seriamente podemos tomarte?

¿Eres "Antígona en el entre-dos-muertos", como plantea Lacan?

o una parodia de la ley y de la lengua de Creonte ---así, Judith Butler

occasion əkeiːzən favourable juncture of circumstances; reason, ground, cause XIV (Wycl. Bible, Ch.); juncture calling for action, particular case or time of happening XVI. – (O)F. *occasion* or L. *occiō(n)-* juncture, opportunity, motive, reason, (later) cause, f. *occās-*, pp. stem of *occidere* go down, set, f. *ob* OB-+*cadere* fall; see CASE¹, -ION. Hence **occa'sion**AL¹ †casual XVI; happening on or limited to a particular occasion XVII; cf. late L. *occāsiōnāliter* as occasion arises, F. *occasionnel* (XVIII). ¶ L. *occāsiō*, through OF. *acheison*, *achaison*, AN. **ancheisoun* (= Pr. *acaizō*, Pg. *(a)cajão*, It. *(ac)ca-gione* :- Rom. **accāsiōn-*), was repr. in ME. by *achesoun*, *anchesoun*, *encheasoun*, aphetic *chesoun*.

que en ti también encuentra "la oportunidad y el peligro para un nuevo campo de lo humano"?

luego, otra vez, "un ejemplo del leer-dentro-como-captura y del sentido moral masculino"

según el juicio de George Eliot, mientras que para varios estudiosos modernos

(previsiblemente, quizás)

reverberas como un terrorista

Ocasión. Femenino. Oportunidad ó comodidad de tiempo ó lugar, que se ofrece para ejecutar alguna cosa. || Causa ó motivo por que se hace alguna cosa. || Peligro ó riesgo. || Anti-

y Žižek te compara triunfalmente con Tito

el líder de Yugoslavia diciendo ¡NO! a Stalin en 1942

hablando de los '40s, causaste una gran impresión en el alto mando

nazi

y simultáneamente en los líderes de la resistencia francesa

cuando todos ellos se sentaron en el auditorio

de la *Antígona* de Jean Anouilh

la noche del estreno en París, 1944: No sé qué de qué color eran tus ojos

pero puedo imaginarte, ahora, entornando tu mirada

volvamos a Brecht, quizás sea el que mejor lo haya captado

llevar la propia puerta hará que una persona sea

desgarbada, exhausta y extraña

intellect iːntilekt knowing and reasoning faculties of the mind. XIV (Ch., Trevisa). – (O)F. *intellect* or L. *intellectus* perception, discernment, meaning, sense, f. pp. stem of *intelligere*; see below. So **intelle·ctiōn** understanding. XVII. – L. *intellectiō(n)-*. **intelle·ctive** pert. to the understanding. XV. – late L. *intellectivus*; cf. (O)F. *intellectif*. **intelle·ctual**¹ of the intellect; †spiritual, ideal XIV (Trevisa); †intelligent XV; highly gifted with understanding XIX. – L., f. *intellectus* understanding; cf. (O)F. *intellectuel*. **intelle·ctualism**. XIX; after G. *intellectualismus*. **intelle·ctualist**. XVII (Bacon). **i·ntellectua·lity**. XVII (Florio). – late L. (Terullian). **intelligent** inte·li·dʒənt quick to understand. XVI (Hawes). – prp. of L. *intelligere*, -*legere* lit. choose among, f. *inter* INTER-+*legere* pick up, gather, choose, read (see I·ECTION). So **inte·lligence**. XIV (Gower). – (O)F. – L.; hence **intelligencer**¹ informer, spy, messenger XVI; as title of a newspaper XVII. **intellige·ntsia**, -*tzia* the 'intellectuals'. XX. – Russ. *intelligenciya* – Pol. *inteligencja* – L. *intelligēntia*. **inte·lligible**. XIV (Trevisa, Wycl. Bible).

Ismena: Sí, Antígona. Es horrible, claro está, y yo también compadezco a mi hermano, pero comprendo un poco a nuestro tío.

Antígona: Yo no quiero comprender un poco.

Ismena: Él es el rey, tiene que dar el ejemplo.

Antígona: Yo no soy el rey. Yo no tengo que dar el ejemplo... La pequeña Antígona, la sucia bestia, la tozuda, la mala, hace lo que le pasa por la cabeza, y después la meten en un rincón o en un agujero. Y lo tiene merecido. ¡Bastaba con que no desobedeciera!

Ismena: ¡Vamos! ¡Vamos!... Ya juntas las cejas, miras hacia adelante y te largas sin escuchar a nadie. Escúchame. Tengo razón más a menudo que tú.

Antígona: No quiero tener razón.

Ismena: ¡Trata de comprender por lo menos!

Antígona: Comprender... Es la única palabra que teñes en la boca, todos vosotros, desde que soy muy pequeña. Había que comprender que no se puede tocar el agua, el agua hermosa, fugitiva y fría, porque moja las losas, ni la tierra porque mancha los vestidos. ¡Había que comprender que no se debe comer todo a la vez ni dar todo lo que se tiene en los bolsillos al mendigo, ni comer al gigante hasta caer al suelo, ni haber

por otra parte, podría ser conveniente

si vas a lugares que no tengan una obvia entrada, como la normalidad

o una salida obvia, como el clásico doble vínculo

bueno, ese es *tu* problema

a mí me atarea traducirte a ti y a tu problema,

a través del inglés, desde el griego antiguo,

sacar todo lo que se tiende escondido en este pueblo, tu pueblo

crímenes y horror y años juntos, una familia, lo que llamamos una familia

“uno de mis más tempranos recuerdos”, escribió John Ashbery en la *New York magazine*,

en 1980,

“es el de intentar despegar el papel decomural de mi habitación,

no por animosidad alguna

sino porque algo fascinante parecía haber

detrás de sus galeones, globos terráqueos y telescopios”.

lo cual me recuerda a Samuel Beckett, que en una carta delineaba

sus propias aspiraciones hacia el lenguaje como

“horadar brecha tras brecha hasta que lo que se esconde detrás

se filtre a través”

Antígona, cariño: también eres alguien que mantiene la fe

con una estructura orgánica profundamente *otra* que se tiende justo debajo de lo que vemos o lo que

decimos

eres, para citar a Creonte, *autonomos*

palabra formada por *autos* “sí mismo” y *nomos* “ley”

La autonomía tintinea como una especie de libertad.

Pero tú no estás interesada en la libertad

tu diagrama

Art/John Ashbery

HANGING GARDENS

“... Many people's first aesthetic experience is of wallpaper, and it is usually the illusionistic, break-through-the-wall kind...”



Floral lines: Detail from Edouard Muller's Le Jardin d'Armide wallpaper, 1855.

“WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH OUR Walls?” wondered an American art critic, Clarence Cook, in the title of a promotional pamphlet published for a New York wallpaper firm in 1880. About 150 answers to his question are assembled in the Cooper-Hewitt Museum's new show of wallpaper and other wall coverings from its rarely seen collection—the largest in the country and one of the finest anywhere. Wallpaper, being both utilitarian and fragile, is one of the most ephemeral artifacts. Often it survives only because somebody decorated a trunk or a hatbox with it. Its origins and history are sketchy, and it is frequently impossible to ascertain its provenance, period, or even its quality. It is also a stepchild even among the decorative arts. A few noted artists have tried it, among them Marie Laurencin, Graham Sutherland, and Andy Warhol (who has a roll of super-saturated cows in the show). Many of its best designers have been better known in other fields, including William Morris, the illustrators Walter Crane and Kate Greenaway, and the English architect C. F. A. Voysey. But in the twentieth

wallpaper since its beginnings, which go back at least to the fifteenth century. She suggested that the aim of the show was to illustrate as variously as possible the two main trends in wallpaper design—the illusionistic one and the strictly two-dimensional, geometrical one.

The two strains have always coexisted and have long been the subject of aesthetic controversy. Charles Eastlake, the great self-appointed tastemaker for late-nineteenth-century Britain and America, prescribed that a wall “should be decorated after a manner which will belie neither its flatness nor its solidity... All shaded ornament and patterns, which by their arrangement of color give an appearance of relief, should be strictly avoided.”

But the general public hasn't always agreed. Many people's first aesthetic experience is triggered by wallpaper, and it is usually the illusionistic, break-through-the-wall kind. One of my earliest memories is of trying to peel off the wallpaper in my room, not out of animosity but because it seemed there must be something fascinating beyond the surface pattern of garlands, globes, and telescopes. It is the figural kind that is given prominence in the show, just because at its best it is more spectacular than anything devised by a geometer. Another kind of illusionism is also highlighted—trampé l'oeil papers imitating marble, textiles, wood, tile, wicker, for at various times wallpaper has imitated just about everything.

One of the major illusionist works on view is a floral panel from the set entitled *Le Jardin d'Armide*, designed by Edouard Muller for the Paris firm of Desfont and Karth. The series was a first-class medal at the Exposition Universelle in 1855 and was one of the hits of the Second Empire show at Philadelphia two years ago. A well-known flower painter, Muller surmounted formidable technical problems to create a printed surface that is eerily close to painting. Another tour de force is *Le Jardin d'Armide*, excerpts from a series of 28 panels that required 1,500 woodblocks to print, even though it is entirely

Kreon [to Antigone]: you knew it was against the law

Antigone: well if you call that *law*

Kreon: I do

Antigone: Zeus does not

Justice does not

the dead do not

what they call *law* did not begin today or yesterday

when they say *law* they do not mean a statute of

today or yesterday

they mean the unwritten unfailing eternal ordinances

of the gods

that no human being can ever outrun

of course I will die

Kreon or no Kreon

and death is *fine*

this has no pain

to leave my mother's son lying out there unburied

that would be pain

es coserte a ti misma a tu propia mortaja usando el más fino de los pespuntos

¿cómo traducir esto?

Tomo inspiración e impulso de John Cage que, cuando le preguntaron

cómo compuso 4'33", respondió

"La construí gradualmente a partir de múltiples y mínimas piezas de silencio"

Antígona, no aspiras,

más que John Cage, a una condición de silencio,

quieres que escuchemos el sonido de lo que acaece

cuando todo lo normal/musical/cuidado/convencional o piadoso es quitado

lejos

¡oh, hermana e hija de Edipo!

¿quién puede ser inocente al transar contigo?

Tabula rasa alguna hubo jamás

siempre estuvimos ansiosos por ti

quizás conozcas ese poema de Ingeborg Bachmann

de los últimos años de su vida que despunta

"mis gritos, los pierdo"

Antígona, cariño,

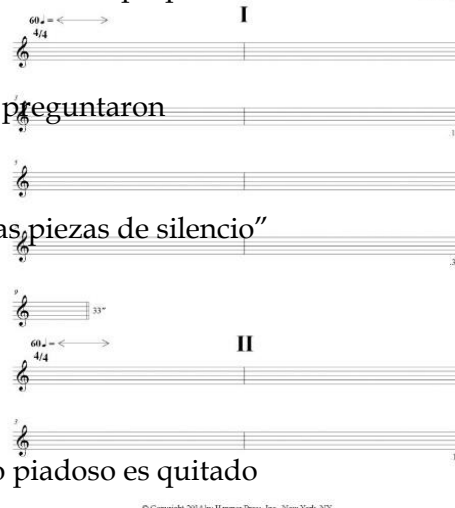
lo tomo como tarea, don y renuncia del traductor

contra-mandato de que pierdas alguna vez tus gritos

4'33"

for any instrument or combination of instruments

John Cage



[I lose my screams]

I lose my screams
the way another loses his
money, his dough,
his heart, I lose
my mighty screams
in Rome, anywhere,
in Berlin, losing
screams for real
on the street until
my brain turns
blood red inside,
losing everything,
not the least the outrage
that one's screams can be lost
on any given day
and anywhere.

restitution, la restitution du sens. Comment entendre une telle restitution, voire un tel acquittement? Et quoi du sens? Quant à *aufgeben*, c'est aussi donner, expédier (émission, mission) et abandonner.

forbid (v.)

Old English *forbeodan* "forbid, prohibit" (past tense *forbead*, plural *forbudon*, past participle *forboden*), from **for-** "against" + *beodan* "to command" (from PIE root ***bheudh-** "be aware, make aware"). Common Germanic compound (compare Old Frisian *forbiada*, Dutch *verbieden*, Old High German *farbiotan*, German *verbieten*, Old Norse *fyrirbjóða*, Swedish *förbjuda*, Gothic *faurbiudan* "to forbid").

In Middle English the past tense was *forbad*, the plural *forbade*, the past participle *forbode*. Related: *Forbade*; *forbidden*. Expression *God forbid* is recorded by early 13c. *Forbidden fruit* is from Genesis ii.17.

la tarea de la traductora de Antígona

Antígona querida

Tu nombre en griego significa algo como “contra el nacimiento” o

“en lugar de nacer”

¿qué hay en lugar de nacer?

no es que queramos entenderlo todo

o incluso entender algo

queremos entender *algo más*

Antigone: we begin in the dark
and birth is the death of us
Ismene: who said that
Antigone: Hegel
Ismene: sounds more like Beckett
Antigone: he was paraphrasing Hegel
Ismene: I don't think so
Antigone: whoever it was whoever we are, dear sister
ever since we were born from the evils of Oedipus
what bitterness pain disgust disgrace or moral shock
have we been spared
and now this edict
you've heard the edict

Sigo volviendo a Brecht

que te hizo hacer toda la obra con una puerta atada a tu espalda

una puerta puede tener diversos significados

Me quedo fuera de tu puerta

lo raro es que tú también te quedes fuera de tu puerta

SPEAKER: Birth was the death of him. Again. Words are few.
Dying too. Birth was the death of him. Ghostly grinning
ever since. Up at the lid to come. In cradle and crib. At
suck first fiasco. With the first totters. From mammy to
nanny and back. All the way. Bandied back and forth. So
ghostly grinning on. From funeral to funeral. To now. This
night. Two and a half billion seconds. Again. Two and a
half billion seconds. Hard to believe so few. From funeral
to funeral. Funerals of ... he all but said of loved ones.
Thirty thousand nights. Hard to believe so few. Born dead
of night. Sun long sunk behind the larches. New needles
turning green. In the room dark gaining. Till faint light
from standard lamp. Wick turned low. And now. This
night. Up at nightfall. Every nightfall. Faint light in room.
Whence unknown. None from window. No. Next to none.
No such thing as none. Gropes to window and stares out.
Stands there staring out. Stock still staring out. Nothing
stirring in that black vast. Gropes back in the end to where
the lamp is standing. Was standing. When last went out.

esa puerta no tiene interior

o si tiene un interior, eres la única persona que no puede entrar en ella

para la familia que vive allí, las cosas han ido irremediablemente mal

tener un padre que también es tu hermano

significa tener una madre que es tu abuela

una hermana que es a la vez tu sobrina y tu tía

ANTIGONE:
Screaming for unity you live on discord.
CREON:
So first in discord here and then in the field against Argos!
ANTIGONE:
Of course. Exactly. When you have need of violence abroad
Then you'll have need of violence at home.
CREON:
And me, so it seems to me, in her goodness she'll give to the
vultures
And never mind then if Thebes, so at odds
Falls as a feast to foreign rule?
ANTIGONE:
You, the rulers, threaten and threaten the city will fall
At odds, will founder and feast on it others and foreigners

y otro hermano al que quieres tanto que quieres acostarte con él

“muslo a muslo en la tumba”

o eso se dice oblicuamente al principio de la obra

pero nadie lo vuelve a mencionar después

¡oh, siempre exageras! mi padre solía decirme

y dejemos aquí la nota de Hegel llamando a la mujer “la eterna ironía de

la

comunidad”

¿Cómo de serio podemos tomarte?

¿Eres “Antígona entre dos muertes”, como dice Lacan?

o una parodia de la ley de Creonte y del lenguaje de Creonte --- así Judith Butler

Antigone is the occasion for a new field of the human, achieved through political catachresis, the one that happens when the less than human speaks as human, when gender is displaced, and kinship founders on its own founding laws. She acts, she speaks, she becomes one for whom the speech act is a fatal crime, but this fatality exceeds her life and enters the discourse of intelligibility as its own promising fatality, the social form of its aberrant, unprecedented future.

El acto de Judith Butler entonces Antígona es la ocasión para un nuevo campo de lo humano, logrado a través de catachresis política, la que se da cuando el menos que humano habla como humano, cuando el género es desplazado, y el parentesco se hunde en sus propias leyes fundadoras. Ella actúa, habla, se convierte en alguien para quien el acto de habla es un crimen fatal, pero esta fatalidad excede su vida y entra en el discurso de la inteligibilidad como su misma prometedora fatalidad, la forma social de un futuro aberrante sin precedentes.

que también encuentra en ti “la ocasión para un nuevo campo de lo humano”?

además, “un ejemplo de intelecto y sentido moral masculino”

es el juicio de George Eliot, mientras que para varios estudiosos modernos

(quizás previsiblemente)

suenas como un terrorista

y Žižek te compara triunfalmente con Tito

el líder de Yugoslavia diciendo ¡NO! a Stalin en 1942

hablando de los años 40, causaste una buena impresión en el alto mando

an act is *feminine*. Antigone's “No!” to Creon, to state power; her act is literally suicidal, she excludes herself from the community, whereby she offers nothing new, no positive program—she just insists on her unconditional demand. Perhaps we should then risk the hypothesis that, according to its inherent logic, the act as real is “feminine,” in contrast to the “masculine” performative, i.e., the great founding gesture of a new order; in the case of Lacan, his dissolution of the *Ecole freudienne* would be “feminine,” and he would pass over to the “masculine” side only by his gesture of founding the new *Ecole de la Cause*. The line should be drawn from Antigone to Simone Weil, the Catholic mystic and French resistance fighter who ended her life in London by means of suicidal starvation and served Rossellini as the model for Irene in *Europa '51*. In this perspective, the difference masculine/feminine no longer coincides with that of active/passive, spiritual/sensual, culture/nature, etc. The very masculine *activity* is already an escape from the abysmal dimension of the feminine *act*. The “break with nature” is on the side of woman, and man's compulsive activity is ultimately nothing but a desperate attempt to repair the traumatic incision of this rupture.

nazi

y simultáneamente en los líderes de la resistencia francesa
cuando todos ellos se sentaron en la audiencia
de *Antígona* de Jean Anouilh



la noche del estreno en París 1944: No sé de qué color eran tus ojos
pero puedo imaginarte poniéndolos blancos ahora
volvamos a Brecht, tal vez sea el que mejor lo haya entendido
llevar la propia puerta hará que una persona sea
torpe, cansada y extraña



por otro lado, puede ser útil
si vas a lugares que no tienen una obvia entrada, como la normalidad
o una salida obvia, como el clásico doble vínculo.
bueno, ese es *tu* problema
mi problema transmitirte a ti y a tu problema
a través del inglés desde el griego antiguo
y a todo lo que se esconde en este pueblo, tu gente
crímenes y horror y años juntos, una familia, lo que llamamos una familia
“uno de mis primeros recuerdos”, escribió John Ashbery en New York magazine

1980,

“es el de intentar despegar el papel tapiz de mi habitación,
no por animosidad
sino porque parecía que debía haber algo fascinante

It is indeed getting more and more difficult, even pointless, for me to write in formal English. And more and more my language appears to me like a veil which one has to tear apart in order to get to those things (or the nothingness) lying behind it. Grammar and style! To me they seem to have become as irrelevant as a Biedermeier bathing suit or the imperturbability of a gentleman.⁵ A mask. It is to be hoped the time will come, thank God, in some circles it already has, when language is best used where it is most efficiently abused. Since we cannot dismiss it all at once, at least we do not want to leave anything undone that may contribute to its disrepute. To drill one hole after another into it until that which lurks behind, be it something or nothing, starts seeping through – I cannot imagine a higher goal for today's writer.

detrás de sus galeones, globos y telescopios”.

esto me recuerda a Samuel Beckett, que describió en una carta

sus propias aspiraciones hacia el lenguaje

“hacer un agujero tras otro en él hasta que lo que se esconde detrás de él se filtre”

querida Antígona: tú también eres alguien que mantiene la fe

con una organización profundamente *otra* que se encuentra justo debajo de lo que vemos o lo que

decimos

citando a Creonte, eres *autonomos*

una palabra formada por *autos* “sí mismo” y *nomos* “ley”

La autonomía suena como un tipo de libertad.

pero no estás interesada en la libertad

tu plan

es coserse a tí misma en tu propio sudario usando las más pequeñas puntadas

¿cómo traducir esto?

Me inspiro en John Cage que, cuando le preguntaron

cómo compuso 4'33", respondió

“La construí gradualmente a partir de muchas pequeñas piezas de silencio”

Antígona, no,

más que John Cage, aspiras a una condición de silencio

quieres que escuchemos el sonido de lo que sucede

Hekabe's language has something of this rotted-away quality. Victors and victims carve at one another in a sort of exhausted end-game bereft of fine phrasing. Verbs are savage. Adjectives minimal. Figures rare. When Euripides does allow himself to unfold a metaphor, he does so in such a way as to decline it to bare fact. For example, in the third choral ode, he introduces the oldest metaphor in the Greek tradition for the ruin of a civilization: rape.

In Greek poetry cities were figured as female and the same word was used to denote the battlements or towers of a city and the headdress, veil or bindings that cover a woman's head. These bindings were not optional for women: to keep the head properly covered in public was a mark of civic status and sexual respectability. Within this social code, within this ancient metaphor, the integrity of women, cities and civilization is all bound up together. To rape a city is to pull off its headbinding, to wreck its crown of towers. Such a city will be as polluted as a fallen woman. Its honor is over. But of course rape is not just a metaphor in wartime. Nor would the women of the chorus of *Hekabe* be

Silence is as important as words in the practice and study of translation. This may sound like a cliché. (I think it is a cliché. Perhaps we can come back to cliché.) There are two kinds of silence that trouble a translator: physical, metaphysical. Physical silence happens when you are looking at, say, a poem of Sappho's inscribed on a papyrus from two thousand years ago that has been torn in half. Half the poem is empty space. A translator can signify or even rectify this lack of text in various ways—with blankness or brackets or textual conjecture—and she is justified in doing so because Sappho did not intend that part of the poem to fall silent. Metaphysical silence happens inside words themselves. And its intentions are harder to define. Every translator knows the point where one language cannot be rendered into another. Take the word *cliché*. *Cliché* is a French borrowing, past participle of the verb *clicher*, a term from printing meaning “to make a stereotype from a relief printing surface.” It has been assumed into English unchanged, partly because using French words makes English-speakers feel more intelligent and partly because the word has imitative origins (it is supposed to mimic the sound of the printer's die striking the metal) that make it untranslatable. English has different sounds. English falls silent. This kind of linguistic decision is simply a measure of foreignness, an acknowledgment of the fact that languages are not algorithms of one another, you cannot match them item for item. But now what if, within this silence, you discover a deeper one—a word that does not *intend* to be translatable. A word that stops itself. Here is an example.

4'33"

FOR ANY INSTRUMENT OR COMBINATION OF INSTRUMENTS

John Cage

cuando todo lo normal/musical/cuidado/convencional o piadoso es quitado

lejos

¡oh, hermana e hija de Edipo!

¿quién puede ser inocente al tratar contigo?

nunca hubo una pizarra en blanco

siempre estuvimos ansiosos por ti

quizás conozcas ese poema de Ingeborg Bachmann

de los últimos años de su vida que comienza

“Pierdo mis gritos”

Antígona, querida,

lo tomo como la tarea de quien traduce

prohibir que alguna vez pierdas tus gritos

Mis gritos, los pierdo
como otro pierde
su dinero, sus monises,
su corazón, mis gritos
grandes, los pierdo en
Roma, en todas partes, en
Berlín, pierdo en
las calles gritos,
verdaderos, hasta que
mi cerebro se llena de sangre
por dentro, lo pierdo todo,
tan sólo no pierdo
el pavor de que
uno pueda perder sus
gritos, cada día y
en todas partes

the task of the translator of Antigone

dear Antigone:

your name in Greek means something like “against birth” or “instead of being born”

what is there instead of being born?

it’s not that we want to understand everything

or even to understand anything

we want to understand *something else*

I keep returning to Brecht

who made you do the whole play with a door strapped to your back

a door can have diverse meanings

I stand outside your door

the odd thing is, you stand outside your door too

that door has no inside

or if it has an inside, you are the one person who cannot enter it

for the family who lives there, things have gone irretrievably wrong

to have a father who is also your brother

means having a mother who is your grandmother

a sister who is both your niece and your aunt

and another brother you love so much you want to lie down with him

“thigh to thigh in the grave”

or so you say glancingly early in the play

but no one mentions it again afterwards

oh you always exaggerate! my father used to tell me

and let’s footnote here Hegel calling Woman “the eternal irony of the
community”

how seriously can we take you?

are you “Antigone between two deaths” as Lacan puts it

or a parody of Kreon’s law and Kreon’s language — so Judith Butler

who also finds in you “the occasion for a new field of the human”?

then again, “an exemplar of masculine intellect and moral sense”

is George Eliot’s judgment, while to several modern scholars you
(perhaps predictably)

sound like a terrorist

and Žižek compares you triumphantly with Tito

the leader of Yugoslavia saying NO! to Stalin in 1942

speaking of the ’40s, you made a good impression on the Nazi high
command

and simultaneously on the leaders of the French Resistance

when they all sat in the audience

of Jean Anouilh’s *Antigone*

opening night Paris 1944: I don't know what color your eyes were
but I can imagine you rolling them now
let's return to Brecht, maybe he got you best
to carry one's own door will make a person
clumsy, tired and strange

on the other hand, it may come in useful
if you go places that don't have an obvious way in, like normality
or an obvious way out, like the classic double bind
well that's *your* problem
my problem is to get you and your problem
across into English from ancient Greek
all that lies hidden in these people, your people
crimes and horror and years together, a family, what we call a family
"one of my earliest memories," wrote John Ashbery in *New York* magazine
1980,
"is of trying to peel off the wallpaper in my room,
not out of animosity
but because it seemed there must be something fascinating
behind its galleons and globes and telescopes"
this reminds me of Samuel Beckett who described in a letter
his own aspirations toward language
"to bore hole after hole in it until what cowers behind it seeps through"

dear Antigone: you also are someone keeping faith

with a deeply *other* organization that lies just beneath what we see or what

we say

to quote Kreon you are *autonomos*

a word made up of *autos* "self" and *nomos* "law"

autonomy sounds like a kind of freedom

but you aren't interested in freedom

your plan

is to sew yourself into your own shroud using the tiniest of stitches

how to translate this?

I take inspiration from John Cage who, when asked

how he composed 4'33'', answered

"I built it up gradually out of many small pieces of silence"

Antigone, you do not,

any more than John Cage, aspire to a condition of silence

you want us to listen to the sound of what happens

when everything normal/musical/careful/conventional or pious is taken

away

oh sister and daughter of Oidipous,

who can be innocent in dealing with you

there was never a blank slate

we were always already anxious about you
perhaps you know that Ingeborg Bachmann poem
from the last years of her life that begins
“I lose my screams”
dear Antigone,
I take it as the task of the translator
to forbid that you should ever lose your screams

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