

Self-translation by Necessity: André P Brink's Case as Self-Translator

La autotraducción por necesidad: el caso de André P Brink como autotraductor

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Abstract: Since the banning of one of his books in 1975, the internationally renowned South African author, André P Brink started to translate his own work from Afrikaans into English in order to make his voice heard outside South Africa, at the same time commenting on the precarious position of those who were disenfranchised by the policy of the government of the time. Subsequently, until his sudden death in 2015, he has always translated his own work. Brink's translations offer a very comprehensive field of study for research. The possibility exists that a literary translator such as Brink might consistently show preference for specific stylistic translation devices. Brink was one of few international literary figures who translated all his own work as well as works by other authors from his home language, Afrikaans into English, which offers a particularly insightful view into the mind of this translator-cum-author. The purpose of this paper is to investigate whether a translator, like the author of an original work of fiction, leaves behind a distinctive trail unique to his or her own style of writing, coupled with his objective to convey his view on the state of affairs in the then South Africa.

Key words: André P Brink; self-translation; literary translator; banned literature; political comment

Resumen: Desde la prohibición de uno de sus libros en 1975, el autor sudafricano de renombre internacional, André P. Brink, comenzó a traducir su propio trabajo del afrikaans al inglés para hacer oír su voz fuera de Sudáfrica, al mismo tiempo que comenta sobre el Posición precaria de quienes quedaron privados de la política del gobierno de la época. Posteriormente, hasta su repentina muerte en 2015, siempre ha traducido su propio trabajo. Las traducciones de Brink ofrecen un campo de estudio muy completo para la investigación. Existe la posibilidad de que un traductor literario como Brink muestre sistemáticamente preferencia por dispositivos de traducción estilísticos específicos. Brink fue una de las pocas figuras literarias internacionales que tradujo todo su propio trabajo, así como las obras de otros autores de su lengua materna, afrikaans al inglés, lo que ofrece una visión particularmente perspicaz de la mente de este traductor y autor. El propósito de este artículo es investigar si un traductor, como el autor de una obra de ficción original, deja un rastro distintivo único a su propio estilo de escritura, junto con su objetivo de transmitir su opinión sobre el estado de cosas. en el entonces Sudáfrica.

Palabras clave: André P Brink; autotraducción; traductor literario; literatura prohibida comentario político

1. INTRODUCTION

To make laws is to make loopholes. Or, prohibition is the stepmother of invention. André Brink, an Afrikaans writer, has been creeping through and around South African censorship ever since one of his first books, *Looking on Darkness*, was banned in 1974 (Eder 1980).

In recent years, translation studies have considered the translator as more than a mere conduit and recognised that each translator displays a distinct style. From this it follows that it would be imperative for translation theorists to consider the matter of style, at least in literary translation, if one wants to argue that translation is a creative, and not only a reproductive activity. The purpose of this paper is therefore to investigate if a translator, like the author of an original work of fiction, leaves behind a distinctive trail unique to his or her own style of writing, in order to express his or her views on matters the translator wishes to convey to a wider audience. The work of the South African novelist André P Brink, who challenged his country's apartheid policies in his writing, will be used for this purpose. Brink was one of the most versatile figures in the South African literary industry: a novelist, dramatist, travel writer, translator, *littérateur*, critic and academic. He has been awarded the Hertzog Prize¹ twice (2000 and 2001).

1. The Hertzog Prize is an annual award given to Afrikaans-language writers by the South African Academy for the Sciences and Arts. It is the most prestigious prize in Afrikaans literature, and the highest accolade any South African author can be awarded.

He was a central figure in a South African literary movement that included prominent internationally renowned authors such as Breyten Breytenbach, J. M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer². Both the latter authors also received the Nobel Prize for literature.

Brink's *Kennis van die Aand* (1982, first published in 1973)³/*Looking on Darkness* (2000c, first published in 1973) was banned by South African authorities because of its frank depiction of a love affair between a white woman and a mixed-race man, a situation that was illegal according to the laws of the country at the time. The theme of the novel was met with outrage from more than one angle, «If this is literature», a prominent South African Dutch Reformed minister and brother of the then Prime Minister, John Vorster, pronounced, «then a brothel is Sunday school.» (Schudel 2015) Brink was declared an enemy of the state and put under surveillance. «There was a period when he was in almost-daily confrontation with the censorship apparatus», South African Nobel laureate J. M. Coetzee told Britain's *Guardian* newspaper in 2004 (in Schudel 2015). «He was subjected to a degree of persecution, some of it simply small-minded, some of it quite chilling. Though I did not know him personally at the time, it struck me that he responded with a great deal of courage and integrity, giving an example of how an intellectual should behave in confronting authority».

He became internationally known as a dissident writer dedicated to opposing his country's political orthodoxy and its long history of racial oppression (Schudel 2015).

Since the banning of *Kennis van die Aand* (not his first book⁴, but the first to be banned), Brink decided to translate his own work from Afrikaans into English. During the last half of the 1970s, the following books by Brink were banned: *'n Oomblik in die wind* (1976b/*An instant in the wind*, 1977), *Rumours of rain* (2000d, first published in June 1978) and *A dry white season* (1992, first published in 1979).

To ensure a wider readership, Brink began to write in English as well as Afrikaans. Subsequently, until his sudden death in 2015, he always translated his own work. He also translated the work of other South African authors into English, for example, Dan Sleigh's *Eilande* (2002/*Islands* 2004), as well as around 60 translations of world literature from European languages into Afrikaans, such as *Don Quixote* (Cervantes), *Alice in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll) or *The little prince* (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry) and plays such as *(Bobaas van die Boendoe* (*Playboy of the Western world* by J.M. Synge) as well as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III* (William Shakespeare).

Brink's translations offer a comprehensive focus of investigation. It offers the possibility of determining whether a self-translator such as Brink shows consistency

2. Some of Gordimer's books were also banned under the apartheid regime of South Africa.

3. In the in-text referencing, the date of the edition consulted and which is indicated in the reference list, is placed first, followed by the date of first publication of the book.

4. Brink has published since the late fifties of the previous century.

in style and approach. However, more so, because of the distinct *terminus a quo* of his decision to start self-translating, as well as the availability of reflections by Brink on his oeuvre, this investigation carries additional weight. As self-translator, Brink ranked amongst other international literary figures such as Vladimir Nabokov or Samuel Beckett, by translating his own work as well as the work by other South African authors from his mother tongue, Afrikaans, into English. Furthermore, as Brink was also a professor in English literature, it became a very conscious and self-reflecting act. It therefore offers a particularly insightful view into the mind of a translator-cum-author.

2. WHAT IS SELF-TRANSLATION?

In this context, «self-translation» is defined as the means whereby an author of a completed literary text subsequently reproduces it in a second language. Popovič (1976: 19) provides a basic definition of self-translation as «the translation of an original work into another language by the author himself». It can also not be regarded as a variant of the original text, but as a true translation (Popovič 1976:1 9). Either the mother tongue of the author, or an acquired tongue, may be the source language. The second text should resemble the first text sufficiently to present it as its translation, not an adaptation, hence complying with certain prerequisites (Whyte 2002: 64). Self-translation may involve more than one target language, native or acquired (cf. for example, Friedman, Rossman and Sherzer 1987). This was not the case with Brink, even though he was fluent in more than one European language. His work was translated into more than 30 languages (Leonard 2012)⁵, apart from into English, but this was not done by himself.

Self-translation may occur either after the original has been completed, or during the process of creation. In the case of the latter, the two versions develop almost simultaneously and inevitably influence each other. These two types of self-translation are sometimes referred to as «consecutive self-translation» and «simultaneous self-translation» (Grutman 2008: 259). As the following discussion will illustrate, this might be too simplified a description of the process of self-translation.

Jung (2002: 30) emphasises the advantage a self-translator has as «the fact that self-translators can access their original intention and the original cultural context of literary intertext of their original word better than ordinary translators». The practice of self-translation and the specific ways in which a self-translator recreates a text in another language take the following stance to the essentially literary problem on a self-translated text (Hokenson and Munson 2007: 161).

5. Apart from European languages, these also include, amongst others, Japanese, isiXhosa and Vietnamese.

They span two literatures while refusing anchorage in either one ... the specific ways in which they recreate a text in the second language and adapt it to a new sign system laden with its own literary and philosophical traditions ... diverges radically from [established] literary norms: here the translator is the author escapes the binary diverge radically from literary norms; here the translator is the author, the translation is an original, the foreign is the domestic, and vice versa. The by now solid literary traditions and cultural resonance are invoked, as usual in a single-language text, only to be amplified with echoes an allusions to the other canonical tradition and cultural space.

Yet another viewpoint is provided by Deborah Saidero (2011: 31), who states as follows:

[W]riting practices like self-translation have captured some critical attention for the insights they disclose on the dynamics and problems inherent in articulating different and multiple cultural identities. As a creative instance that allows an author to consciously produce double texts, self-translation is, in fact, a useful deconstructive lens, which reflects – and through which to reflect upon – what it means to be «translated» subjects both at the geographical-cultural and textual-linguistic levels.

As mentioned earlier, Brink, as literary scholar and author, self-consciously wrote about the act of translation and self-translation; hence offering a rich source of investigation on his approach and distinct stylistic approach to translation. As Brink was also a careful guardian of his literary legacy, the purpose of this paper is to establish whether what Brink offers as the reasons and nature of self-translation, do indeed correlate with what one finds in his translated texts.

Various reasons may be offered why an author would opt for self-translation. History contributed to the emergence of self-translations in the twentieth century, for instance, clashes and reconfigurations of empires (Hokenson and Munson 2007: 160). This includes, for example, the cultural dominance of a specific language in a multilingual society, which may encourage self-translation from a minority language to an internationally recognised language like English (Salibra 1977), while perfect or almost perfect bilingualism may encourage self-translation in either direction, irrespective of market-related considerations. The latter would certainly have been the case with Brink, but not the only one. Reasons for him to turn his attention to self-translation could also be what Saidero (2011: 32) refers to as follows,

... rather than representing an attempt to assert the potentialities and legitimacy of dialect ... or to convey an exotic charm ... self-translation is a vital act of transcreation and transformation. It becomes, in other words, a space of mediation and renegotiation

where transcultural exchange may occur, thereby allowing them to fuse and re-inscribe their multiple identities, selves, languages and cultures.

3. BACKGROUND TO BRINK'S ROUTE TO SELF-TRANSLATION – HOW DID BRINK START?

When the first edition of *Kennis van die aand*⁶ was published in 1973, it became the first Afrikaans book ever to be banned in 1974 by the erstwhile Publication Board of South Africa. This book became the symbol of the struggle against censorship for South African writers. In 1975, Brink translated it into English under the title, *Looking on darkness*, the first of his books published in the United States of America. The English translation by Brink was also banned in South Africa. The ban was lifted in 1982, on condition that it be published in hardcover only (presumably as price would then act as prohibiting factor), and not sold to any person under 18 (Terblanche 2015: s.p.). According to Meintjes (2013: 37).

Looking on Darkness (1974) heralded a totally new direction in the oeuvre. From this point onwards, the Brink novels would become *littérature engagée*, committed to exploring and exploiting the South African political situation specifically in order to comment on its neocoloniality in a way, which directly attempted to change it. In this regard, the oeuvre enters into an alliance with Camus' idea of universal revolt and Sartre's concept of individual freedom.

Brink was not the first Afrikaans author to translate between Afrikaans and English. Eminent SA authors from the 1930s onwards, such as Uys Krige and Elizabeth Eybers, translated their own work into English, in large part to reach a wider audience and because most of these authors were in effect bilingual.

Self-translation into English by Afrikaans authors increased after the Second World War and into the new millennium with the work of, for example, Elsa Joubert, Ingrid Winterbach and Deon Meyer. However, it was still not a common occurrence. Nonetheless, after the Second World War, translation and self-translation increased significantly the footprint of Afrikaans authors in English, either in translations by other writers, or in their own translations, for example, Jan Rabie or W.A. de Klerk. This Afrikaans footprint was further increased by South African Anglophone writers such as Stephen Gray, who wrote in both Afrikaans and English, while young black writers such as Sydney Sipho Sepamla, included Afrikaans or pseudo-Afrikaans poems in their anthologies (Brink 1976a: 38).

6. Direct translation: *Knowledge of the evening*

4. BRINK AS SELF-TRANSLATOR

The objective of translation has always been to open worlds, to gain access to a text or texts that would otherwise not have been accessible, or provide a stage for texts that would otherwise have remained isolated in a lesser-known language. In a 1982 interview with Geoffrey Wheatcroft of the *New York Times*, Brink indicated that he believed that he had spent his whole life crossing frontiers. He considered the translation of his own work as crossing yet another frontier. Brink states.

All writers address themselves in the first place to a specific audience, but an English writer here [in the USA] can survive by publishing in Britain and America. An Afrikaans writer, tied as he is to the language and to the publishers in this country, faces total silence (Wheatcroft 1982: s.p.).

Similar to the interpreter, a translator has often been regarded as acting exclusively as conduit or medium for this process alone, thereby not being granted the agency of a recognized voice. Not only does Brink offer a counter to this assumption, but also even more pronounced; Brink's style when translating his own work becomes the realisation of his ability to give agency to a censored author. The banning of *Looking on darkness* and Brink's decision to self-translate hence becomes an act of defiance and the impetus for him to write for a global audience. His translation becomes a true crossing of frontiers in more than one sense. By taking the conscious decision to not only write, but also translate for a bigger audience, while muted by his own, Brink contributed to breaking down the cultural barriers apartheid had constructed. Brink, the banned and concomitant powerless author in his mother tongue was hence able to take control of his work and its dissemination. He did this in part and most obviously by using characters in his novels suffering from the atrocities of apartheid, to reveal the true horror of this policy. At the same time, as this paper points out, Brink's decision to self-translate becomes an additional means of empowerment.

Examples of themes in novels following on *Kennis van die aand* are given next to illustrate his endeavour to inform South African as well as international readers of atrocities happening under an apartheid regime.

In *Houd-den-bek* (2000b/A *chain of voices* 2000a), set in 1825, a group of slaves stand accused of the murder of their owner, a wealthy Afrikaner farmer. Galant, family's chief hand, is the leader of the murderous band. Raised with the two sons of the house, he only realised in adulthood and rivalry over Hester, orphaned daughter of a tenant farmer, their different roles, and unequal futures and opposed stations in life. Hopes of freedom from slavery are dashed, and when promises of equal treatment are broken, bitterness, resentment, and eventually violence follow.

Brink's best-known novel, *A Dry White Season*, tells the story of a white South African man who tries to investigate the disappearance and subsequent death of the son of a black acquaintance. He encounters resistance at every turn, a cover up and, eventually, personal ostracism and violence. His wife leaves him, and his daughter turns over information to the police. Brink used actual court documents in the book, describing torture and systematic killings by security forces. «I wanted to make sure no one could say afterwards, "I didn't know" – the old sort of Nazi excuse – about the intolerably inhumane way the blacks are treated as a whole». (Brink, in Schudel, 1979) The book was banned because it was «calculated to undermine the status of the South African security police» and the «ability to ensure state security», but later lifted. Even when the film version was released in 1989, South African officials restricted its release.

In an interview with Nicholas Wroe, Brink stated that he had never felt obliged to write about apartheid; it was simply a product of the «parameters and conditions of your life. And if there was a choice between telling a straightforward love story, or a story with some kind of investment in the political situation, the latter would be more urgent» (Wroe 2001: s.p.).

One could therefore argue that the act of his first book being banned had a permanent effect on Brink's subsequent writing and his approach to authorship. By writing in English as well as in Afrikaans from then on, he ensured that at a global audience would take note of the wrongs of an oppressive government. The government of the day may have wished to silence him, but the result led to the opposite, a sense of agency and a conscious and deliberate approach to the establishment of a literary legacy for a global reader audience.

To emphasise how bold this deliberate step of Brink was, it is important to note that one of South Africa's most prominent literary figures, N.P. van Wyk Louw, envisaged in 1963 already the disastrous effect of the *Publications and Entertainments Act no. 26* (1973), which would lead to the banning of *Kennis van die Aand*. This certainly had an effect on Afrikaans literature, creating a timidity in approach, at the very moment when literature should speak truth to power, as Brink acknowledged in 1976: «[Afrikaans literature] certainly lost some of its verve and boldness. The decade of the *Sestigers* [1960s]⁷, which had started with so much promise and excitement, ended with something of a whimper» (Brink, 1976a: 43)⁸. «But also like them [the Sixtiers], he nevertheless came to challenge the stolid puritanism as well as the politics of the National party through his writing» (Walder 2015).

7. A collective name literally translated as «Sixtiers», for a group of Afrikaans authors who «spearheaded the renewal movement in Afrikaans literature in the 1960s» (Kruger 2008).

8. It is worth noting that the article referred to here was published within a year after the banning of *Looking on darkness*.

The turning point for Afrikaans literature was indeed the banning of *Looking on darkness*. Within a year, four more of his Afrikaans novels were banned (Brink 1976a: 44). What was initially the forte of Afrikaans at its inception, namely acting as a political instrument, developed into its Achilles heel? As the Afrikaner became politically dominant, Afrikaner nationalism emerged to the detriment of the majority of the country's citizens (Brink 1976a: 44) and a significant segment of Afrikaans mother tongue speakers. The easy choice for many Afrikaans authors could have been the route of escape and denial, refusing to write in Afrikaans, as many were bilingual, and thereby announcing the death sentence of this young language. Nonetheless, the option adopted by the younger authors of the time was rather to expand the scope of the language in a deliberate manner. Rather than refusing to write in Afrikaans, they would extend its reach by turning to translation and self-translation into English in addition to their own language, thus leading to the internationalisation of Afrikaans literature (Brink 1976a: 45).

Why Brink chose to continue writing in Afrikaans, is a striking example of the creation of agency. In the first instance, Brink believed that a particular language gave life to the creation of his respective characters and their actions (a matter to which I will return later on), and thus creating a dependency on Afrikaans. However, for Brink, another reason would be that Brink saw his work as means of addressing a major part of the white minority in his homeland in their mother tongue, to introduce them to and confront them with these atrocities.

According to Viljoen (in De Rainier 2012: 3), Brink described the context in which he had to operate as a writer as follows. The attempts of the *Sestigers*⁹ [of whom Brink was one] was to emancipate themselves «from a parochial Afrikaner culture, the suffocating political climate created by apartheid, the expansion of censorship to limit South African writers, [...] and meetings of writers with the ANC in the eighties» (Viljoen 2009). Brink's environment (the physical and political, as well as ideological and linguistic environment) thus inevitably had a significant impact on him and found explicit expression in his writing. In his academic essays and in many interviews, Brink's questioning of the responsibility of the writer comes across as a constant refrain. By the 1970s, Brink's essays frequently returned to this issue – especially with reference to the Afrikaans writer amidst a repressive society (cf. Lehmann 2005: 31). In *Concept*, Brink (as quoted in Grové 1980: 4) states his view of the writer, «He is the anarchist who accepts no authority outside the work itself; he is the terrorist who regards nothing as sacred, and attacks in the name of freedom ... the writer is the rebel who fights in the name of the essentially human values».

9. See footnote 8 above.

The provocative use of words such as «anarchist», «terrorist», «rebel» and «freedom» in this statement, arising from a context of political turmoil, clearly indicates Brink's passionate view of the social responsibility of the writer.

He states the following pertaining to his writing of *Looking on darkness*,

intrinsic motives (the urge to attempt «saying» the novel in a new language medium) as well as extraneous ones (censorship) combined to create the challenge. It became, purely on the level of the creative process itself, one of the most revealing experiences of my life: not «translating» the work, but rethinking it in the framework of a new language; even more important perhaps, refeeling it ... It helped me discover a lot about my own language – more than any other translation I attempted previously ... [It is worth noting] what difference there exists between the «loads» of emotional content the two languages can carry. Afrikaans ... is much more at ease with superlatives and emotions ... «valid» emotionalism in Afrikaans soon becomes unbearable in English (Brink 1976a: 45).

When Brink started to make notes for a next novel, *'n Oomblik in die wind*¹⁰ (Brink 1976), he found that some thoughts spontaneously came to him in English. The main theme of the novel is developed around a journey undertaken in 1750 by a white woman and a black man, from the wilderness of the Cape hinterland back to civilisation. Brink noted how the construction of the book was influenced by the impetus of thinking in English when dealing with the white character and in Afrikaans when imagining the black slave; how spontaneously the two languages associated themselves with the different spheres of experience of the main characters. When finally writing the books (more or less simultaneously), some sections from the Afrikaans draft fell away, while a couple of new ones appeared spontaneously, and vice versa. Brink describes this as follows, «[T]he same novel exists in two languages, but each language imposed its own demands on the final shape of the work.» (Brink 1976a: 46). One example (Brink 1976b: 13) is warranted here:

'n Oomblik in die wind: «Hy maak 'n gebaar; die breë mansjet aan sy mou flap om sy gewrig. Dis of die beweging haar skielik weer van sy voorkoms bewus maak: 'n nar in die wildernis» (Brink 1976b: 13).

[Direct translation: He makes a gesture, the broad cufflink on his sleeve flaps around his wrist. It is as if the movement suddenly makes her aware again of his appearance: a clown in the wilderness].

10. *An instant in the wind*

An instant in the wind: «He makes a vague gesture which draws her attention back to the broad cuff of his brocaded sleeve» (Brink 1977: 12).

According to Ehrlich (2009: 243), in *Kennis van die aand/Looking on darkness*, Brink followed common translation procedures, despite the fact that he had the authority and liberty that translators as a rule would lack. Brink himself described his English version of the text as, «a rethinking in a framework of a new language» (1976a: 45), pointing at a process of rewriting rather than that of a translation. By duplicating the writing of one narrative (Ehrlich 2009: 244), he thus gained further insight into the translation process. He repeatedly moved between the two versions until he was satisfied, «not just translating it but really re-feeling it in terms of the new language» (Wheatcroft 1982: s.p.).

An example of this is visible in the following extracts from *Kennis van die aand/Looking on darkness*, with a direct translation included, which at the same time indicates a typical scenario from the time *Kennis* was written in apartheid South Africa (1973), namely friendship between black and white persons:

Kennis van die aand:

Joubert: «U het so 'n vriendskap nie as ongewoon beskou nie?»

Richard: «Nie vir haar nie. Natuurlik nie. Ek het self baie vriende wat nie blank is nie. Ek het my nog nooit aan bande laat lê deur onredelike wette wat mense van mekaar probeer skei nie.

Die regter: «Antwoord net wat daar vir u gevra word, mnr. Cole. Die hof stel nie belang in politieke toesprake nie.» 'n Kort pouse. «Ek meen in elk geval dat u politieke bedrywighede u reeds by vorige geleenthede in die moeilikheid laat beland het, nie waar nie? En in die tronk» (Brink 1982: 28-29).

Direct translation by researcher:

Joubert: «And you did not regard such a friendship unusual?»

Richard: «Not for her. Of course not. I myself have many friends who are not white. I have never allowed myself to be fettered/hampered by unreasonable laws trying to separate people».

The Judge: «Please only reply to what you are asked, Mr Cole. The court is not interested in political speeches.» A brief pause. «I mean, in any case, your political activities have already landed you in trouble before in previous instances, not so? And in jail».

Looking on darkness:

Joubert: «And you found nothing extraordinary in such a friendship?»

Richard: «Not where she was concerned. Of course not. I've got many black friends myself. I've never allowed my friendships to be dictated by unreasonable laws trying to keep people apart.»

The Judge: «Please reply to the questions only, Mr Cole. This court is not interested in political speeches. A short pause: "I seem to recall that your activities have landed you in trouble before. And in jail» (Brink 2000d: 25-26).

Of one of his other works, *A chain of voices* (1995), Brink states again, «'To create a variety of distances between the different speakers, I wrote the voices of certain narrators in one language, others in another». *A chain of voices* relates the story of Hester in English. She is the wife of the slave owner, Barend du Plessis, and an urban sophisticate from Cape Town. By contrast, the story of Galant, the slaves' leader, is «rooted in the soil of Africa», and this character Brink wrote first in Afrikaans. From this followed the final draft of *A chain of voices* in English (Wheatcroft 1982: s.p.).

As Brink thus seldom followed the traditional translation avenues, he conceived of this rather as a process of rewriting or even of recreation and with this endowed the agency of an author onto the translated text. Two versions of the same were therefore never identical.

Sometimes, small little nuances, the construction of a sentence, or a paragraph ... But sometimes it is much more serious, sometimes there are whole episodes in one of the two versions that don't exist in the other one. Simply because for me, they don't work very well in the other one ... I can change what I want ... because it is my text (Peñalver 2015: 149).

In this way, Brink himself differentiated between himself as translator of another author's work and Brink as self-translator. In the case of the former, he endeavours to inhabit the author's mind and to remain as faithful as possible to that text. In the case of the latter, he grants himself greater creative freedom and, for this reason, he would not easily have allowed someone else to translate his work from Afrikaans into English (Peñalver 2009: 149-150). When asked why, he responded that he «sort of jealously want[s] to hold onto» what he has created (Peñalver 2009: 155). «Holding onto» or control, being directly related to the loss thereof at the moment of the censored banning of *Kennis van die Aand* and the spectre of the banning of subsequent novels, is more likely.

Once *Kennis* was banned, it meant – in the mind of the authorities – that it no longer existed. This caused Brink to translate *Looking on darkness*, hence ensuring that it continued to exist outside the confines of South African restrictions. This initial self-translation, his first, was to Brink a difficult process. Later, however, the act of self-translation came naturally, «... every book for me wants to be translated in a certain way» (Peñalver 2009: 151), Brink would explain.

He would apply different strategies in self-translation, depending on how the characters presented themselves. Some books (e.g. *Philida* 2012)¹¹ were written entirely in Afrikaans, and subsequently translated by Brink, or more or less rewritten in English. The following are extracts from the Afrikaans and English version of *Philida* to illustrate this in Philida's dialogue when she testifies in court how she was raped by the farm owner's son. In the Afrikaans text, which was written first, Philida speaks in a sociolect typical of the slaves of that time at the Cape. In the English dialogue, Brink distorts the English grammar to distinguish Philida's dialect from that of the magistrate's formal tone:

Ek sê: My Grootbaas, ek het begin met teësit, maar dit toe dat hy begin mooipraat en vir my sê nee, ek moenie bang wees nie, hy wil my nie seermaak nie, hy wil my net bly maak. As ek hom in my laat instoot, seg hy, dan sal hy sorg dat ek my vryheid kry wanneer die tyd reg is. Hy blo my voor die *Jirregot*¹² van die Bybel, hy sal self vir my by die *Landdrost* en by die *Gormint* gaan vryheid koop. Ek onthou, al dié praterij het my nog laat wonder hoe 'n ding soos vryheid 'n mens dan so kan kwes, wat dit was my eerste keer gewees en Frans het nie danig suutjies met my gewerk nie, daarvoor was hy te jonk en te jags.

En wat het toe gebeur? Toe hy klaarkom, toe staat hy weer op en hy maak sy broekriem vas (Brink 2012a: 11-12).

Grootbaas, in the beginning I try to, but that is when Frans begin to talk to me very nicely and tell me I mustn't be scared, he won't hurt me, he just want to make me happy. If I will let him push into me, then he will make sure to buy me my freedom when the time is right, that is what he promise me before the *LordGod* of the Bible, he say he

11. *Philida* is set in the Cape where rumours abounded that slaves were going to be set free. The main character of the novel is the mother of four children by the son of her master. Her master reneged on his promise to set her free and his son has to marry a white woman, selling Philida new owners away from the Cape. Philida decides to set off on a journey across the wilderness in her determination to be free. The novel was longlisted for the Booker Prize in 2012.

12. *Jirregot* - a distorted Afrikaans form of the words «Lord God», a phenomenon often found in the Cape dialect of the time *Landdrost* – magistrate; *Gormint* – another distorted Afrikaans form of the English «Government».

himself will buy freedom for me. But I remember thinking, how can it be that a thing like freedom can hurt one so bad? Because it was my first time and he didn't act very gentle with me, he was too hasty.

And then what happened? When he finish, he get up again and tie the *riem*¹³ of his breeches (Brink 2012b: 4-5).

Alternatively, he would start in English and rewrite the book in Afrikaans. In other instances, he would write one chapter in Afrikaans and then translate/recreate it in English, a useful method, because of the immediacy of the rewriting. This allowed him the advantage to compare the two versions. He would write descriptive passages in the one language, and a dialogue in the other. Another strategy that announced itself, as mentioned above for *A chain of voices*, would be that some characters would initially be associated with either Afrikaans or English. In all instances, the specific book would determine the strategy followed.

5. CONCLUSION

What started out as an endeavour to escape the tentacles of an oppressive censorship, eventually culminated in a way of writing and [self]-translation. Although Brink has had a lot of experience as a translator of work from another language into Afrikaans beforehand, *Kennis van die aand* set him on an entirely new road to becoming the sole translator of his oeuvre. His extensive knowledge of Afrikaans, his mother tongue, and English, as well as other European languages empowered him to continue along this route. Coupled with his skill as a novelist, and a precarious position inside South Africa, whose ideology of the time he rejected, he faced the possibility that «[he] might be a writer with no audience» (Wheatcroft 1982: s.p.). However, in this process, his identity as an author became linked with a permanent awareness of censorship and even state security, as articulated in a major portion of his oeuvre: «The hostility of Afrikaner officialdom is a particularly heavy threat for a writer. It's frightening ...» (Wheatcroft 1982: s. p.).

While employing as a translator many of the strategies involved in the process of a translator, he became a subjective commentator on the many results of an oppressive government policy, which he could express through the voices of his characters by means of his self-translation.

**André Brink died on 6 February 2015 an airline flight from Amsterdam to Cape Town after having just been awarded an honorary doctorate from the Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium. He was 79.*

13. A colloquial reference to a leather belt.

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