

Translating Warhol: *turbamento*, transmutation, transference

Reva Wolf

In interviews, the artist Ai Weiwei likes to say that the first book he read in English, after arriving in New York City in the early 1980s, was *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*, originally published in 1975. The reason, he has often said, is that Warhol's language was simple: 'It was easy to understand; it was written in Twitter language'; it 'was easy to read for a non-English speaker.'¹ However, residing within the seemingly simple language of Warhol's book are ambiguities, double meanings, and opaque descriptions, thus rendering the book—like Warhol's other publications—difficult to translate into other languages and sometimes even hard to comprehend for careful readers whose first language is English.

A recent translator of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* into Chinese, Kou Huaiyu, confronted such challenges in Warhol's use of terms that were culture-specific or employed in an unusual way or context. For example, a salesman at the

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¹ Evan Osnos, 'It's Not Beautiful: An Artist Takes on the System', *New Yorker*, 24 May 2010 (online version, 17 May 2010, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/05/24/its-not-beautiful>); 'By the Book: Ai Weiwei', *New York Times Book Review*, 3 January 2021, 6 (online version, 31 December 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/31/books/review/ai-weiwei-by-the-book-interview.html>). Other examples include: Christopher Bollen, 'Ai Weiwei', *Interview Magazine*, 28 June 2013, <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/art/ai-weiwei>; Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Ai Weiwei Speaks*, London: Penguin Books, 2016, excerpted in *ArtSpace*, 27 August 2016, https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews/features/book_report/ai-weiwei-hans-ulrich-obrist-interview-54126; and John-Paul Pryor, 'The Radical Influence of Drella', *Author*, 27 March 2021, <https://authormagazine.com/ai-weiwei-the-radical-influence-of-drella/>.

department store, ‘straightening out the Camp socks rack’, might be working at a rack of either socks for camping, campy socks as in the sense of Susan Sontag’s famous 1964 essay, ‘Notes on Camp’, or, since the word is capitalized, socks with the brand name Camp.² In other cases, the dialogue format within the book creates a clear confusion between the literal and the figurative, or reality and appearance, such as the conversation about whether the Swiss actress and model Ursula Andress *was* short or *looked* short.³

Approaches to translating Warhol

The ambiguities and at times deliberate openness to various possible meanings within Warhol’s language—which, for the purposes of this study, refers to a set of collaborative initiatives understood to be ‘by’ Warhol and in his voice—can create an immense challenge for the translator, inviting a mountain of questions on how to proceed.⁴ Should the translations be annotated, in order to explain to the reader the range of possible meanings of, for example, ‘Camp socks rack’?—an approach called ‘thick translation’ by one of its promoters, Kwame Anthony Appiah.⁵ Or should the meaning be left open by the translator, for readers to puzzle over? The second option has a certain attraction. As Deven Patel points out, Pat Hackett, when editing Warhol’s diaries, published in 1989, two years after he died, gave, as a reason why she chose not to use a glossary of names, that ‘it would go against—if not actually betray—the sensibility of what he was about’.⁶ (Hackett earlier co-authored Warhol’s 1980 book, *POPism: The Warhol ‘60s* as well as having worked extensively on *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*.) Perhaps a hands-off practice has a special resonance, furthermore, for a book of ‘philosophy’, a field with an extensive history

² Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975, 235; Kou Huaiyu, email to the author, 25 November 2020, and reply, 25 November 2020.

³ Warhol, *Philosophy*, 170; Kou Huaiyu, email to the author, 25 November 2020.

⁴ Capturing well this understanding of Warhol as an author is his query in reply to one of the collaborators on his *Philosophy* book, Pat Hackett, to something she said: ‘Oh, that’s great, can you put it in my language?’ recorded on one of the tapes created for the purpose of writing the *Philosophy* book; see Lucy Mulroney, *Andy Warhol, Publisher*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2018, 125. A suitable way to understand Warhol as an author is in terms of the concept of the ‘author-function’ as conceived by Michel Foucault in ‘What Is an Author?’ in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977, 113-38. On this point, see Douglas Crimp, ‘Our Kind of Movie’: *The Films of Andy Warhol*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012, 46-66.

⁵ Kwame Anthony Appiah, ‘Thick Translation’, *Callaloo*, 16: 4, Autumn 1993, 808-19.

⁶ Deven Patel, ‘Translating Texts, Translating Readers: Could Andy Warhol’s Writings Be Translated into Indian Languages?’ *Journal of Art Historiography*, 26, June 2022, 3; Pat Hackett, Introduction to Andy Warhol, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, ed. Pat Hackett, New York: Warner Books, 1989, xviii.

of publications containing expressions that have invited interpretation and debate—of exegesis. Jean-Claude Lebensztejn has proposed, regarding the wide range of existing translations of Laozi, that translators, almost by necessity, take creative liberty with ‘the indetermination of meaning resulting from the absence of inflections’ in ancient Chinese, the result inevitably being an act of interpretation.⁷ Then again, might Appiah’s ‘thick translation’ and an openness of meaning operate together? Aarón Lacayo, in a contribution to the growing field of ‘queer translation’, contends that if ‘translation is to be thick, it must preserve the density of unknown, irreducible bodies.’⁸

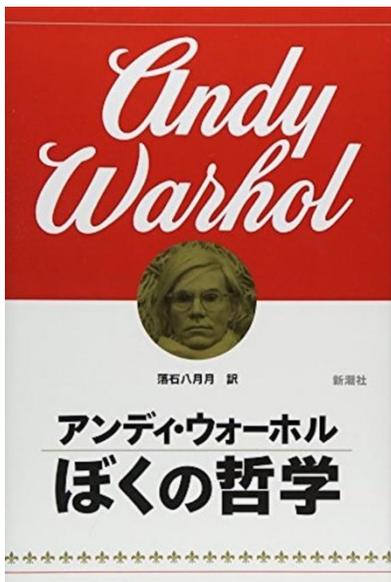


Figure 1 Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, trans. Augustmoon Ochiishi, front cover. Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1998.

Terms that are highly specific still can contain this type of density. While working on the Japanese translation of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, which appeared in 1998 and is still in print (fig. 1), Augustmoon Ochiishi was puzzled by Warhol’s statement, ‘I have to take off my wings’. Most readers whose first language is English also would have been befuddled. Indeed, even the ‘B’ with

⁷ ‘Le genie des auteurs du *Laozi*—l’un de leur genies—consiste à exploiter les vertus de la langue chinoise ancienne, l’indétermination relative du sens provoque par l’absence de flexions’; Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, ‘Laozi à la lettre’, *Ironie: Interrogation Critique et Ludique*, 157, June 2011, 6. It is not by coincidence that Lebensztejn finds a statement by a fifth century translator of Buddhist texts into Chinese, J.-C. Kumârajîva, relevant to analyses of translations of both Laozi and Warhol (‘Warhol in French’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, 26, June 2022, 14). The lack of a glossary in the *Diaries of Andy Warhol* did not deter translators: a German translation appeared in 1989, the same year as the English first edition, followed by a French version in 1990 (see Nina Schleif, ‘Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist: Andy Warhol in German—Translations and Cultural Context’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, 26, June 2022, n38, and Lebensztejn, ‘Warhol in French’, n3).

⁸ Aarón Lacayo, ‘A Queer and Embedded Translation: Ethics of Difference and Erotics of Distance’, *Comparative Literature Studies*, 51: 2, July 2014, 223.

whom Warhol was in conversation within this passage of the book apparently was perplexed: ‘Say that again.’⁹ Augustmoon explained, in an email that took the form of a poem, how she discovered the meaning of these ‘wings’. Her poem embodies the ways a word, even when it has a highly precise contextual meaning, evokes other meanings:

I will tell you my favorite anecdote.

Early on, there’s a description of Andy taking off wings, this is his morning ritual.

What are these wings?

Called up my friends who were Catholic (gay men) but nobody knew.

But then it fitted my romantic view of a sensitive Andy talking off white wings from his both shoulders in the morning

(Picture Wim’s: wings of desire).

But he uses 5 of them! Under eyes, around the mouth, one on forehead!

I called around but nobody knew.

Finally I called Lynn[e] Tillman & told the question & then Callie Angel[l] was introduced.

She the ultimate uptown girl knew every trick of that by-gone-era trade who said something like

I’ll take you to a cosmetic counter, kind of bandaid [sic] which stretches wrinkles.

It’s slightly old-fashioned.

Bingo.

So this is my favorite anecdote about wings by Angel.¹⁰

Augustmoon’s association of Warhol’s wings with an angel is magical—and poignant. Callie Angell, who had been working for several years on the catalogue raisonné of Warhol’s films, died by suicide in 2010.¹¹

In translating *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* into Chinese, Kou raised questions of meaning that put a spotlight on Warhol’s penchant for deploying language in the service of paradox, a strategy that is particularly obvious in the

⁹ Augustmoon Ochiishi, email to the author, 26 June 2019; Warhol, *Philosophy*, 6.

¹⁰ Augustmoon, email to the author, 26 June 2019. On the ways meanings emerge on the receiving end, see Alan H. Gardiner, *The Theory of Speech and Language*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932, 71-82. The author thanks Richard Woodfield for leading her to Gardiner.

¹¹ See Gary Comenas, ‘Callie Angell Tribute’, https://warholstars.org/callie_angell_obituary.html.

discussion of ‘nothing’ and ‘nothingness’. Readers are introduced to ‘nothing’ in the opening pages of the book: ‘I think about nothing. How it’s always in style. Always in good taste. Nothing is perfect – after all, B, it’s the opposite of nothing.’¹² ‘In Chinese’, Kou explained, ‘we can only say “I’m not thinking about anything”, we can’t say “I’m thinking about nothing.”’ Kou wondered – as native English readers might – how ‘nothing’ can also be ‘the opposite of nothing.’¹³ The Italian translator, in one of the earliest renderings of Warhol’s *Philosophy* into another language, published in 1983 as the inaugural work in the series *I turbamenti dell’arte* (*The Turmoils of Art*), apparently likewise wondered how to handle this ‘nothing’, since he put the Italian equivalent – *niente* – in quotation marks whenever it was used.¹⁴

The play of ideas, in which ‘nothing’ becomes a subject, was clearly of great appeal to Warhol. The topic of ‘nothing’ resurfaces near the end of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* with a twisting of the expression ‘to make something out of nothing’, followed by the at once self-ridiculing, self-effacing, and self-promoting proposal, ‘and if you really believe in nothing you can write a book about it.’¹⁵ A specific cultural reference is embedded in this conversation about ‘nothing’, appearing as it does in Warhol’s ‘philosophy’ book, written in the mid-1970s, at a time when the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre’s 1943 work, *L’Être et le néant*, translated into English in 1956 as *Being and Nothingness*, was a mainstay of academic study in the United States.¹⁶ ‘Nothing’ even appears as an entry in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, first published in the 1960s and reprinted in the early 1970s, shortly before *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* came out.¹⁷ The entry contains its own share of playful words on the

¹² Warhol, *Philosophy*, 8.

¹³ Kou Huaiyu, email to the author, 22 October 2020, and response of the author, 23 November 2022.

¹⁴ For the particulars, see Francesco Guzzetti, ‘La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the Turmoil of Art in Italy, 1983’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, 26, June 2022, 18 and n77.

¹⁵ Warhol, *Philosophy*, 183.

¹⁶ This author still has the collection of Sartre’s writings, containing extensive passages from *Being and Nothingness*, assigned for a college course on existentialism (*The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, ed. Robert Denoon Cumming, New York: Vintage Books, 1972). On Sartre’s significant influence in the mid twentieth century in the United States, see Walter Kaufmann, ‘The Reception of Existentialism in the United States’, *Salmagundi*, 10-11, Fall 1969-Winter 1970, 83-84, where he asserts that the ‘spell Sartre has cast over generations of American students ... has created an almost unique interest that courses in philosophy, religion, literature departments, and humanities have been designed to satisfy or to exploit. ... That existentialism elicits greater interest in the United States than any previous philosophic movement is almost entirely due to Jean-Paul Sartre.’ On Sartre’s influence more broadly, see Alfred Betschart and Juliane Werner, eds, *Sartre and the International Impact of Existentialism*, Cham, CH: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

¹⁷ P. L. Heath, ‘Nothing’, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vols. 5 and 6, ed. Paul Edwards, New York: Macmillan Publishing and The Free Press; London: Collier Macmillan, 1967; 1972 reprint edition, 524-25. The author is grateful to Eugene Heath for calling her attention to this encyclopedia entry.

seeming paradox of making something out of nothing. Here are some examples: ‘the narrow path between sense and nonsense on this subject is a difficult one to tread ... the less said of it the better’; ‘Nothing ... whether or not the being of anything entails it, clearly does not entail that anything should be.’¹⁸

Kou Huaiyu previously had translated *POPism* into Chinese (fig. 2), and that experience, too, had led him to a wide array of questions on meaning. The translation was published in 2014, not so much later than the French version, in 2007

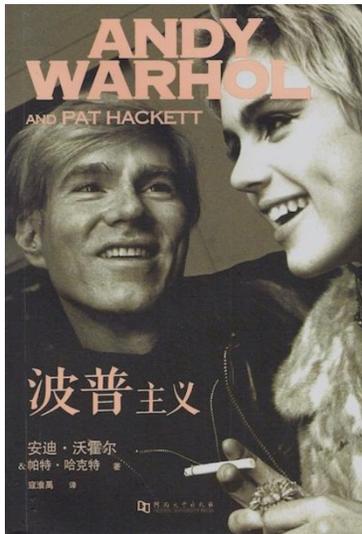


Figure 2 Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol '60s*, trans. Kou Huaiyu, front cover. Henan University Press, 2014.

(which perhaps could have benefited from Kou’s probing approach to translation), and the German, in 2008 (more successful).¹⁹ The series of exchanges between Kou and the present author on the difficulties of translating specific passages in *POPism* inspired an essay on specific translation issues raised by the experience, and, now, the ‘Translating Warhol’ project.²⁰ Kou’s questions corroborate a point that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak repeatedly has made: translation is ‘the most intimate act of reading’.²¹ Elaborating on this point, Spivak has proposed, within a discussion of the

¹⁸ Heath, ‘Nothing’, 524 and 525, respectively.

¹⁹ On the French and German translations, see Lebensztejn, ‘Warhol in French’, 4-5 and 13-14, and Schleif, ‘*Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist*’, 20-22.

²⁰ Reva Wolf and Kou Huaiyu, ‘Cosmic Jokes and Tangerine Flake: Translating Andy Warhol’s *POPism*’ / 宇宙的玩笑与橙色亮片漆：译介安迪·沃霍尔《波普注意》，in *Art as Life/Art as Idea: Complementary Modernisms in China and the United States / 艺术：生活或观念：交互视野下的中国和美国的现代艺术*, ed. Zhang Jian and E. Bruce Robertson, Goleta, CA: Punctum Books, 2020, 82-121; available, open access, at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv16zk03m>. This publication developed out of a conference of the same title held at the China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, in 2016; an earlier version of the conference proceedings was put out by the China Academy of Art in 2017.

²¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (quoting herself, from her ‘Translator’s Note’ for Aimé Césaire’s *Une saison au Congo*), ‘Translation as Culture’, included in the collection of Spivak’s essays, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, Cambridge, MA, and London:

hazards and promises of the field of Comparative Literature, that when reconsidering 'comparativism, we think of translation as an active rather than a prosthetic practice. I have often said that translation is the most intimate act of reading. Thus translation comes to inhabit the new politics of comparativism as reading itself, in the broadest possible sense.'²² Translation, then, is a way to gain a closeness through careful reading.

However, as the 'Translating Warhol' papers reveal, the kinds of intimate reading Spivak describes can only occur when the translator has the time and the will to get close. Still, no matter how conscientious and well-intentioned the translator, it is all but impossible not to err somewhere. In his discussion of the 1983 Italian translation of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, Francesco Guzzetti observes, as a general point, that the 'major challenge was to capture the colloquial, ordinary, sometimes trivial tone and language of the original. The result was less than successful in conveying this voice. It is not necessarily the fault of the translators. Some expressions are impossible to render in Italian.'²³ The book's parenthetical subtitle, (*From A to B and Back Again*), was not included in the Italian version, as Guzzetti points out, and the omission is perhaps indicative of the translator's inability to capture the book's tenor (or 'the right tone', as Jean-Claude Lebensztein puts it).²⁴

Before further probing the challenges the subtitle poses, it is worth considering more generally the significance of the choices made by translators and their publishers regarding outward appearances: book titles and cover images. In the case of the Italian edition of *Philosophy*, Guzzetti highlights the extremely interesting choice to have the book's cover feature a photograph of Warhol wearing a wig and make up.²⁵ In Italy, this image would have had a particular resonance in connection with Warhol's painting series of transvestites and transexuals, *Ladies and Gentlemen* (1975), which had been commissioned by an Italian art dealer and exhibited in Italy in 1975 and 1976.²⁶ At the same time, as Guzzetti observes, the *Philosophy* cover photo emphasizes the interplay of reality and appearance that is a

Harvard University Press, 2012, 255 (previous versions having been published in Isabel Carrera Suárez, ed., *Translating Cultures*, Oviedo: Dangaroo Press, 1999, 17-30, and in *parallax*, 6: 1, January-March 2000, 13-24).

²² Spivak, 'Rethinking Comparativism', in *An Aesthetic Education*, 472 (an article originally appearing in *New Literary History*, 40: 3, Summer 2009, 609-26).

²³ Guzzetti, 'La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the Turmoil of Art', 17.

²⁴ Guzzetti, 'La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the Turmoil of Art', 16; Lebensztein, 'Warhol in French', 13. On the problem of comprehending tone, understood as 'emphasis', within a mute text, and its relation to genres of writing and to the question of how much emphasis to place on implication, see E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967, 99-101. The author is grateful to Richard Woodfield for suggesting the relevance of Hirsch to the importance of 'hearing', and thus translating, tone.

²⁵ Illustrated in Guzzetti, 'La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the Turmoil of Art', figure 1.

²⁶ On *Ladies and Gentlemen* and Italy, see Guzzetti, 'La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the Turmoil of Art', 8-9.

theme of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*.²⁷ (This theme is manifested, for example, in the dialogue mentioned above about whether Ursula Andress *was* or *looked* short.) In her discussion of the German translation of *POPism*, Nina Schleif calls attention to the fact that the title was left in English instead of being rendered in German as *POPismus*. (In the French version it *was* translated—*Popisme*.) Schleif proposes that this choice was made to give the book a specifically American sound and look, coordinating with a cover design of red, white, and blue letters and a picture of Warhol in a grocery store pushing a cart loaded with merchandise.²⁸ Other cues, in addition to what is seen, are enlisted when the translation of Warhol to highlight his identity as an American occurs in television. Jean Wainwright considers, among other details, the ways music and other sounds mix with visual elements in the 2022 BBC Two television documentary *Andy Warhol's America* to cast Warhol as a reflection of the United States.²⁹

Returning now to the subtitle (*From A to B and Back Again*) of the *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, it is impossible, without some background knowledge, to grasp what this subtitle signifies. As Kou worked with care on his Chinese translation of the book (as yet unpublished), he sought guidance on the subtitle's meaning, asking two important questions that reveal why the subtitle might be challenging to understand, and, therefore, to translate (perhaps also a reason for its omission in the Italian version, although the significance of the alphabet letters would be more obvious for someone whose first language is Italian than for someone whose first language is Chinese): 'Does "From A to B & Back Again" mean phone calls made by A to B again and again? Is the meaning of the title clear to a native speaker or [must] one ... read the book before being able to figure out what it means?'³⁰ The response was long, with the aim of providing a sense of the several possible meanings that exist:

On one level, it refers to Warhol's conversations with Brigid Berlin or Bob Colacello or any 'B.' But it is meant also to playfully refer to 'from A to Z,' which is an idiomatic expression, alluding to the English alphabet, that means 'everything.' In other words, a book containing the 'a to z' of philosophy would contain everything; containing 'a to b' is very little. ... The reference to Andy and Brigid (or any other 'B') comes only after reading the book and knowing about the people. (Here is an interesting association, though it might be a coincidence: the novel *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf includes a character—the husband, Mr. Ramsay—who is a philosopher making his way through the alphabet, each letter representing a concept; he gets to the letter 'Q' and then is unable to progress to 'R.') There

²⁷ Guzzetti, 'La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the Turmoil of Art', 12-13.

²⁸ See Schleif, 'Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist', 20-22 and figure 3.

²⁹ See Jean Wainwright, 'Translating Warhol for Television: *Andy Warhol's America*', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 26, June 2022, 1-27.

³⁰ Kou Huaiyu, email to the author, 22 October 2020.

also is an expression in English, ‘getting from point A to point B,’ which refers to how we make logical inferences that lead us from one thing to the next ... another association that a native speaker could make.³¹

The German version of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, published eight years after the Italian, in 1991 (shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, probably not by coincidence),³² and reissued in 2006, *does* include the subtitle, without the parentheses but otherwise rendered literally—*Die Philosophie des Andy Warhol von A nach B und zurück*—although, like the Italian, the translation was flawed (Schleif considers it to be the ‘most negligent and faulty’ of all the German translations of Warhol’s writings).³³

These defects are reminders that Ai Weiwei’s assertion *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* is ‘easy to read’ is a bit misleading. In his book, Warhol even proposed that he preferred misunderstandings (and he set up situations for their occurrence):

If people never misunderstand you, and if they do everything exactly the way you tell them to, they’re just transmitters of your ideas, and you get bored with that. But when you work with people who misunderstand you, instead of getting *transmissions* you get *transmutations*, and that’s much more interesting in the long run.³⁴

Elaine Rusinko highlights this passage in her paper, ‘Andy and Julia in Rusyn’, calling attention to potentially problematic questions of human interaction that Warhol’s idea of ‘transmutation’ raises, specifically concerning Warhol’s

³¹ Author’s email to Kou Huaiyu, 23 November 2022. On the association of the ‘A to B’ in the subtitle of Warhol’s *Philosophy* with Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, see Arthur Danto, ‘The Philosopher as Andy Warhol’, in *Philosophizing Art: Selected Essays*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, 61-62, and Christopher Schmidt, ‘From A to B and Back Again: Warhol, Recycling, Writing’, *Interval(le)s* 2: 2-3: 1, Fall 2008-Winter 2009, 797; http://labos.ulg.ac.be/cipa/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2015/07/72_schmidt.pdf. Schmidt also observed that ‘A to B’ might allude, on another level, to the two sides of a cassette tape, A and B, which is relevant to the fact that tape recordings were used in creating the book; ‘From A to B and Back Again: Warhol, Recycling, Writing’, 807. Another meaning for ‘B’ is that it indicates a sequel, referring back to the ‘a’ in the title of Warhol’s previous book, *a: A Novel* (1968), discussed below; on this association, see, for example, Mulroney, *Andy Warhol, Publisher*, 122.

³² Other translations of the *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* came out soon after the demise of the Soviet Union, including in Czech, *Od A k B a zase zpět (Filozofie Andyho Warhola)*, trans. Jan Lamper, Zlín: Archa, 1990, and, later, in Russian, *Философия Энди Уорхола (от А к Б и наоборот)*, trans. G. Severskoy, Moscow: Aronov, 2001.

³³ Schleif, ‘Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist’, 11, 19-20.

³⁴ Warhol, *Philosophy*, 99.

relationship with his mother.³⁵ There certainly are a lot of transmutations in the translation of Warhol's words, as the 'Translating Warhol' papers by Guzzetti, Schleif, and perhaps above all, Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, attest.

Notes toward a history of translating Warhol

Var kommersiell konst mera maskinell?

Nej, det var den inte. Jag fick betalt för den och gjorde allt som de sade till mig. Om de sade till mig att rita en sko, så gjorde jag det och om de sade till mig att rätta den, så – jag gjorde allting som de sade till mig att göra, korrigerade den och göra den rätt. Jag måste hitta på och det slipper jag nu. Efter alla "korrigeringar" måste det finnas känslor i de där kommersiella teckningarna, de måste ha en stil. Det fanns känslor i attityden hos dem som jag jobbade för. De visste vad de ville ha, de pressade på, ibland blev de väldigt upprörda. Arbetsgången i kommersiell konst var maskinell, men det fanns känslor i attityden till den.

Figure 3 'Andy Warhol', *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*, 33: 3, March 1964, 172, detail, Swedish translation of Gene Swenson, interview with Andy Warhol in 'What Is Pop Art? Interviews with Eight Painters (Part 1)', *ARTnews*, 62: 7, November 1963, 26, 60-61. Penn Libraries, University of Pennsylvania.

Some of the earliest translations of Warhol's writings into another language are in French. A French version of *Philosophy* came out in 1977, just two years after its publication in English. And excerpts of the first chapter appeared still earlier in German, within a 1976 book on Warhol by the art historian Rainer Crone.³⁶ If these early French and German translations might be expected, an overview of the history of translations of Warhol's writings yields some surprises. Among the earliest translations are renderings of the experimental book, *a: A Novel*, originally published in 1968 by Grove Press. With its fragmented and often disconnected dialogue, which had been loosely transcribed from tape recordings, it would be impossible to imagine even Ai Weiwei describing this work as easy to read. Its classification as a work of experimental writing led to favorable reviews in Italy in 1969, to excerpts being translated into French in 1970 and 1975, and, quite remarkably, to a German translation of the entire book in 1971 (and, also remarkable, an excellent one at that, as Nina Schleif discovered, its high quality standing in sharp contrast to the German rendering of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, despite the latter's seemingly more simple language).³⁷

³⁵ Elaine Rusinko, 'Andy and Julia in Rusyn: Warhol's Translation of His Mother in Film and Video', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 26, June 2022, 20.

³⁶ Rainer Crone, *Andy Warhol: Das zeichnerische Werk 1942-1975*, Stuttgart: Württembergischer Kunstverein, 1976, 13-14; see Schleif, 'Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist', 6.

³⁷ Guzzetti, 'La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the Turmoil of Art', 19; Lebensztejn, 'Warhol in French', 1-2; Schleif, 'Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist', 11-16 (where attention is called to how *a: A Novel* fit with the image of the publisher, Kiepenheuer & Witsch (KiWi) as a promoter of avant-garde literature). Among more recent translations of the book is a Czech version, *A: román*, trans. David Záleský, Prague: Volvox Globator, 2001.

The earliest translations of Warhol's words are excerpts from interviews. Passages of a now-famous interview with Gene Swenson, published in a 1963 issue of *ARTnews* magazine, appeared in Swedish the following year, in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* (fig. 3), and then in German in 1965, within a book on Pop art. This same interview was rendered in Italian in 1967, again in a book on Pop art.³⁸ When the translation is of excerpts, what is included and what omitted can be revealing, as Schleif observes in comparing the 1965 German version of the Swenson interview with later ones, of 1970 and 1971.³⁹ A similar editorial process occurs when Warhol's work and life are translated for television, as Jean Wainwright highlights: 'decisions were made to throw some aspects into sharper focus while leaving out others altogether, either because they were superfluous to the narrative or they did not fit the framework.'⁴⁰

The dialogues contained within Warhol's films also have on occasion been translated, through the use of dubbing or subtitles, in the form of published scripts, and in the physical transfer from one medium to another. Nina Schleif found that the sexually explicit and politically charged *Blue Movie*, filmed in 1968 and first released in 1969, was screened in West Germany, and that it was dubbed, as was then common practice, and that the published film script, which came out in the United States in 1970, was published in German just one year later, in 1971 (a published film script itself being a kind of translation).⁴¹ Jean-Claude Lebensztejn makes note of the absurdity of using subtitles when the dialogues are often deliberately difficult or impossible to understand for audience members whose first language is English. He additionally draws attention to how the transference of the physical medium of the films to video and, nowadays, to digital, is itself a form of mistranslation in its alteration of the very appearance of the films.⁴²

With their sometimes incomprehensible dialogue, Warhol's films reenact, or perhaps symbolically represent, the gaps in human understanding that occur regularly in the course of human conversation. The idea is articulated in the *Philosophy* book when Warhol claims to prefer 'transmutations' to 'transmissions'. In 'Andy and Julia in Rusyn', Elaine Rusinko connects this assertion to Warhol's mother's dialogue in the 1966 film, *The George Hamilton Story* (which was never printed or shown publicly during his lifetime). Rusinko observes that posthumous analyses of the film have made note of Julia Warhola's nearly unintelligible words, and that her conversation with her co-star, Richard Rheem, is 'filled with imprecise

³⁸ Annika Öhrner, 'Warhol in Translation, Stockholm 1968: "Many Works and Few Motifs"', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 26, June 2022, 8; Schleif, 'Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist', 7-8; Guzzetti, 'La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the Turmoil of Art', 3.

³⁹ Schleif, 'Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist', 8-9.

⁴⁰ Wainwright, 'Translating Warhol for Television', 5.

⁴¹ Schleif, 'Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist', 11-12, 16-19.

⁴² Lebensztejn, 'Warhol in French', 8-12.

formulations, misunderstandings, and mispronunciations', and, moreover, that these lacunae are in fact the focus of Warhol's film.⁴³

In 1970, Warhol created three video *Factory Diaries* of his mother speaking her native Rusyn. At the time she was quite ill, with only a few years remaining, as Warhol certainly could see, and the videos gave him a mechanism through which to hold on to and preserve her voice, image, and expression. Rusinko proposes that 'Warhol presumably did not anticipate that the tapes would ever be translated. Consequently, they represent private, unmediated interactions between mother and son'.⁴⁴ The dialogue in these videos, as in *The George Hamilton Story*, takes difficulties of communication as its subject. Rusinko, who is the first person to have translated the language in these videos, points out that in one of them, Julia Warhola frequently asks her son, 'do you understand?' (*rozumish?*). In another, she asks, now in English, 'What's there, Andy? He understand, Andy? Nobody understand. I not happy, Andy.'⁴⁵ These words poignantly represent the basic need and desire to be understood and the frustration that results when understanding appears unattainable.

The importance of translation for understanding also is relevant when elements of identity are either revealed or concealed through the choices of translators and publishers. Annika Öhrner suggests that Warhol's exploration of gender identity in his films could be discussed more openly in Sweden in the late 1960s than in the United States and provides as an example a 1968 newspaper article by the artist Öyvind Fahlström.⁴⁶ In France, the excerpts of *a: A Novel* that were translated in 1970 appeared under a title that served to emphasize any gay content: 'How to Become a Professional Homosexual' ('Comment devenir un homosexuel professionnel').⁴⁷ Meanwhile, in the early 1970s, in India, the artist Bhupen Khakhar, by imitating Warhol's persona, would almost seem to suggest that 'how to become' is to perform—a kind of translation-through-doing in accordance with the idea of the poet, literary scholar, and translator A. K. Ramanujan that 'only a poem can translate a poem', as Deven Patel proposes, drawing upon studies in the growing field of 'queer translation'.⁴⁸ The cover of the 1983 Italian translation of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, showing the artist 'in drag', might be understood, like the French 'Comment devenir un homosexuel professionnel' as foregrounding Warhol's exploration of sexual identity.

These perspectives on Warhol's identity have not always advanced forward in translations of his books. In fact, the 2007 French translation of *POPism* 'normalizes' Warhol, as Jean-Claude Lebensztejn puts it, with 'queers' becoming 'weirdos' (*ces types bizarres*), for example. The idea of 'normalizing' is echoed in

⁴³ Rusinko, 'Andy and Julia in Rusyn', 20 and 15, respectively.

⁴⁴ Rusinko, 'Andy and Julia in Rusyn', 8.

⁴⁵ Rusinko, 'Andy and Julia in Rusyn', 11, 12.

⁴⁶ Öhrner, 'Warhol in Translation, Stockholm 1968', 11-12.

⁴⁷ Lebensztejn, 'Warhol in French', 1-2, n4.

⁴⁸ Patel, 'Translating Texts, Translating Readers', 2, 6, 7.

Nina Schleif's observation that the German edition of *POPism*, coming late in the chronology of Warhol translations, fit into an understanding of Warhol 'as mainstream – as history.'⁴⁹ Lebensztejn reveals how translation can be akin to censorship, whether conscious or otherwise. As the literary scholar Max Kramer similarly observed, a 'queer projection ... is bound to uncover a particularly intense *living-on* of denial and censorship in the translated texts of the modern period.'⁵⁰ Kramer gives as a case study the reference to someone's eyes (*Ses Yeux*) in Arthur Rimbaud's poem 'Vowels' ('Voyelles', first published in 1883), translated variously to be the eyes of a woman, a man, God, or a child. When the text in question is less ambiguous, however, as in Warhol's 'queers', the censorship resulting from the mistranslation seems less understandable. Not translating at all is also a form of censorship, of course. In certain places, such as Spain under the dictator Francisco Franco, Warhol's paintings, films, and books were prohibited by law.⁵¹

Translation and understanding

'Translating Warhol' also explores in various ways the significance of the etymology and meaning of 'to translate'. Jean-Claude Lebensztejn points out that in French, in the Littré dictionary, the first meaning of *traduire* is 'to transfer'. To transfer is to move, but its meaning might extend to 'transference'. Lebensztejn observes, elsewhere in his study: 'It is in their lapses and failures that translators insert their own fantasies'.⁵² Cultural 'transfer', understood as a form of translation by the historian Michel Espagne, is the framework within which Annika Öhrner situates her discussion of the 1968 Warhol exhibition in Stockholm.⁵³ In the same spirit, Deven Patel brings to the discussion another 'trans' word, 'transposition', underscoring A.K. Ramanujan's assertion that 'translations are never finished, only abandoned'.⁵⁴

When Ai Weiwei celebrated the 'easy' language in Warhol's *Philosophy* book, he envisioned the writing as symbolic of a particular spirit of democratization that he saw in Warhol: 'I think Warhol would have dreamed to have the Internet. If you

⁴⁹ Lebensztejn, 'Warhol in French', 5; Schleif, '*Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist*', 22. In a previous work, Lebensztejn observed a similar 'effet de normaliser' within the translation of Warhol's interviews; 'Zennish (Peel Slowly)' [review of *Andy Warhol. Entretiens 1962-1987*, ed. Kenneth Goldsmith, trans. Alain Cueff, Paris: Grasset, 2006], *Les Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, 97, Autumn 2006, 21.

⁵⁰ Max Kramer, 'The Problem of Translating Queer Sexual Identity', *Neophilologus*, 98: 4, October 2014, 543.

⁵¹ See, for example, chapter 3, 'Convulsive Memory: The Spanish Civil War and Post-Franco Spain', of Inez Hedges, *World Cinema and Cultural Memory*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 50-64.

⁵² Lebensztejn, 'Warhol in French', 8 and 6, respectively.

⁵³ Öhrner, 'Warhol in Translation, Stockholm 1968', 2, 10, 17.

⁵⁴ Patel, 'Translating Texts, Translating Readers', 4.

study Andy Warhol's philosophy from A to Z and back again, then every sentence is like a Twitter sentence. It's very interesting, light communication; not old democratic, but new democratic. That's very important.'⁵⁵ When the first translations of Warhol's writings into other languages were being produced, similar conceptions of him were circulating and these ideas sometimes affected the results. Nina Schleif proposes that the dream of a democratic art led in part to the creation of the early translations of Warhol into German. The vision of Warhol as an equalizer resonated with West German audiences because it had an air of familiarity, easily associated with the ideas of the so-called Frankfurt School or with Joseph Beuys' dictum, 'everyone is an artist'.⁵⁶ In Sweden, Annika Öhrner contends, Warhol was 'translated' in the context of a similarly socialist spirit. Öhrner notes that when the 1968 Warhol exhibition opened in Stockholm, 'issues of repetition, of art and democracy, and of original and copy were already cherished themes in the Swedish cultural debate and among artists, as illustrated by *Multikonst*, an exhibition [of 1967] which had an immense impact through the televised circulation of its openings, art and ideas'.⁵⁷ Öhrner explains how the use of reproduction in *Multikonst* was a means by which to create art that would be affordable to all and suggests that this spirit led to the focus on repetition in the Warhol show at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm one year later. Alternately, the shifting winds of culture and politics led to a revised perception, or a 'disturbance' (*turbamento*), in the 1980s, whereby, Francesco Guzzetti observes, in the writings of the art critic Germano Celant, Warhol becomes the 'Marx' of Pop art, celebrating the very aspects of capitalism (stars, businessmen, models, boxers, rock singers) that Beuys or the *Multikonst* artists had rejected, at least on the surface.⁵⁸

Perhaps a nagging question has remained in the back of the reader's mind while moving through this discussion: isn't it the case that Warhol didn't actually write 'his' books or even utter some of the words in published interviews? Therefore, why bother to study translations of what is not, may not be, or only partially captures, the artist's own voice? The answer to this question, as suggested in the introduction to the present study, is that while Warhol's books and interviews are collaborations, they are also 'by' Warhol, and about him and in his voice (however performative that voice might be). These works should not be understood as being either by him, or not, but as something more messy, a mixture. The debate about whether the publications should be considered 'by' Warhol has continued for some decades; maybe it is ready to be declared exhausted.⁵⁹ 'Translating Warhol' provides an example of how the conversation might shift direction entirely. So many questions regarding the relationship between Warhol's writings and his

⁵⁵ Pryor, 'The Radical Influence of Drella'.

⁵⁶ Schleif, 'Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist', 3-6, 15, 17-18.

⁵⁷ Öhrner, 'Warhol in Translation, Stockholm 1968', 15.

⁵⁸ Guzzetti, 'La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the Turmoil of Art', 15.

⁵⁹ A recent article to delve into this ongoing conversation is Carmen Merport Quiñones, 'Reading Color: Looking through Language in Warhol', *Criticism*, 59: 4, Fall 2017, 511-38.

visual art remain virtually unexplored, including, until now, the history and significance of the numerous translations of his words. 'Translating Warhol' opens the door to this extensive and fascinating field of inquiry and suggests a wide range of possibilities for further exploration. The translations of Warhol extend Warhol's collaborative approach to crafting language as a way to transmute and yet also to promote the human understanding Julia Warhola pleaded for in the *Factory Diaries*, and that, in the end, we all seek.

Reva Wolf, Professor of Art History at the State University of New York at New Paltz, teaches and writes on art of the eighteenth century to the present and on the historiography of art. She is the author of *Andy Warhol, Poetry, and Gossip in the 1960s* (1997), *Goya and the Satirical Print* (1991), and numerous articles and essays, and is co-editor of *Freemasonry and the Visual Arts from the Eighteenth Century Forward: Historical and Global Perspectives* (2020), which was selected as a 2020 Choice Outstanding Academic Title. Her co-authored essay, 'Cosmic Jokes and Tangerine Flake: Translating Andy Warhol's POPism', in *Complementary Modernisms in China and the United States* (2020), was the starting point for this guest-edited section of the *Journal of Art Historiography* on 'Translating Warhol'.

wolfr@newpaltz.edu



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